

Tibetological Collections & Archives Series [part 2]

The Bonpo Katen Cataloguing Project

Research >
Central Asia

A whole set of manuscripts of the Bonpo canon, the Kanjur part, was long hidden away in the vicinity of the dBal-khyung Monastery in Nyag-rong when the Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan were harshly subjugated by the Chinese during 1957–58. After relaxation of the strict control by the Chinese at the beginning of the 1980s, it was deemed safe to bring out what was hidden.

By Samten G. Karmay

There was some cause for anxiety as this manuscript set of the canon was the only surviving copy in the whole of Tibet after the Cultural Revolution. It was therefore a matter of great urgency to make new copies by reproducing the manuscripts lest anything irrevocable should happen to the unique copy. But due to the great number of volumes, it represented a prohibitively costly enterprise to have them published. Mr sKal-bzang phun-tshogs with the staunch support of his friend Lama Ayung finally overcame all the obstacles. They encountered both financial problems and non-cooperation on the part of the people who claimed to have been the owners of the manuscripts. Ultimately, the publishers had the backing of the Sichuan government as well as several Tibetan officials, who were mostly rNying-ma-pas working in Chengdu and the whole printed edition was published



Dori Heiligers-Seelen

Organizing the Tibetan canon at the library of the Kern Institute for shelving in accordance with the Osaka/Triten Norbutse catalogue.

in Chengdu from 1985 to 1988. The new print was decried by the 'owners of the manuscripts' and other Bonpo as of poor production quality. However, the main concern of the publishers was in fact to quickly bring out new copies of the manuscripts so that there would be no unrecoverable loss should anything happen to the unique original manuscripts.

It is this edition of the Kanjur, the first part of the canon, of which Per Kværne obtained a copy for the Uni-

versity of Oslo. In 1996, he there began organizing a group of scholars in order to make an analytic catalogue, which is now being prepared for publication.

However, the Katen, the second part of the canon, does not seem to have survived in any one set of manuscripts or printed editions either in Tibet or anywhere else. Although a great number of the texts that theoretically belong to the Katen part of the canon were published in India by Tibetan refugees with the encouragement given by Gene

Smith during the 1960s and 1970s, no systematic collection of the whole of it has so far ever been made. Sog-sde bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma, the publisher of the present collection, therefore felt the urgent need of assembling together the Katen texts that were still available, even though scattered over various locations.

In assembling the texts Sog-sde bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma seems to have made no attempt to select texts as the Abbot Nyi-ma bstan-'dzin would have suggested if he were alive (see the accompanying article by the same author on p 17). Given the predicament of the cultural and religious situation in Tibet, it is understandable that Sog-sde bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma has collected texts almost indiscriminately and wherever he could lay his hands on them for his new edition of the Katen texts. It made no difference whether a text belonged to the old or new Bon tradition. The present collection of his edition that made its way to the Triten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu in 2000 has 300 volumes, not counting the texts that belong to the Kanjur part of the canon and a number of gsung 'bum that have, in fact, come along with the collection.

Another characteristic of Sog-sde

bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma is the lack of any systematic approach to his action. The texts in this collection are not arranged in any kind of order nor are the volumes numbered coherently in a particular way. It lacks a general title in spite of the claim that it is the 'Bonpo Tenjur'. There is no indication of the place where it is published, nor a date of publication. In other words, it is a totally disorganized mass of texts. We have therefore preferred to use the term Katen (bka' rten) which is the traditional term for this part of the canon rather than describing it as the 'Bonpo Tenjur'. However, it must be pointed out that the collection does indeed contain a considerable number of rare and extremely important works that had thus far never been published before. Moreover, however poor the quality of the reproduction may be due to the process of reproducing the old manuscripts by means of photostat, the value of the publication is all the same great and there is no doubt that scholars will highly appreciate having such texts in their 'original form'. In this sense the publisher is to be warmly congratulated for this vast undertaking and his strenuous efforts in bringing out this composite collection.

Ferdinand Hamer, Martyr in China

In the late summer of the year 1900 the West was horrified by the news of the misdeeds of the Boxers in China. The Boxers not only besieged the embassies of the civilized world in Beijing, but had also assassinated thousands of Chinese Christians, Chinese priests, and European missionaries. A century later, in the year 2000, a symposium was held in Shandong to commemorate the uprising. On 1 October, the national holiday of the People's Republic of China, Pope John Paul II proclaimed the canonization of 120 people who had been killed in China for their beliefs.¹ The canonization evoked a furious reaction from the Chinese authorities. In their opinion this was a typical example of Western post-colonialism! The Dutch catholic society was also quite surprised as – among the 120 canonizations – they missed Bishop Hamer. Ferdinand Hamer, who in July 1900 had been assassinated in the most atrocious way. Ferdinand Hamer, the very example of the missionary-martyr....

Research >
China

By Harry Knipschild

Just over twelve months ago I began my research on the life and work of Ferdinand Hamer in China. In this article I will give special attention to one aspect to the missionary work of Hamer, namely the continuous periods of extreme drought on the north of China. In *History in three keys. The Boxers as event, experience and myth* (New York, 1997), Paul A. Cohen explains in detail the enormous influence of natural phenomena on the life and actions of the Chinese farmers in the Shanxi and Shandong provinces. Working with oral sources and authentic documents of the Boxers and American missionaries and sisters, the American historian explained the reaction of the local farmers to the flood of the Yellow River in 1898 and the extreme drought in the period thereafter. The Chinese peasants experienced the catastrophes as a disturbance of the harmony of heaven, so they gave it a religious meaning. They blamed the foreigners for the crop failures and the ensuing hunger; on their flags they carried their device: 'Support the Qing; destroy the foreigners'.

In periods of extreme drought there was not much work to be done in the fields. The peasants, therefore, had ample time to unite in groups or gangs. In the years of the Sino-Japanese War (1894), unofficial groups for self-defence, with such names as the Big Sword Society and the Plum Flower Boxers, were frequently called on to perform a protective

function in Shandong. These groups were always antagonistic towards the Christian religion.

After 1894, the West behaved more and more in an imperialistic manner. In this respect the German apostolic vicar (Bishop) of Shandong, Johann Anzer, played a prominent part. He manipulated the opinion of Emperor William's Germany to his advantage, resulting the German annexation of the seaport town of Qingdao after the murder of two missionaries. He also built a church in the birthplace of Confucius. In response, the farmers united into new gangs, Boxers United in Righteousness. The Boxer Uprising started in Shandong and, fed by lack of rain, spread to Beijing and further inland.

The Belgian Mission in the North

After the treaties of Tianjin and Beijing in 1860, Theophile Verbist, chaplain of the Belgian army and director of the Belgian section of the Holy Childhood, founded a new missionary congregation with the intention to save the Chinese children and, especially, their souls. Pope Pius IX assigned the CICM congregation (also called Scheut after the village of their main residence, near Brussels) the whole of Mongolia. In 1865, the first four missionaries, accompanied by a servant, departed from Belgium for the Far East. They hardly had any opportunity to prepare themselves - for instance, they no knowledge of the Chinese language.

The Belgian pioneers crossed the Great Wall near Beijing and arrived in the village of Xiwanzi. They started working with the help of a few Chinese priests, with Latin as their lingua franca. Ferdinand Hamer, aged twenty-five, was by far the youngest member of the group. Unexpectedly, his young age quickly became an advantage, as he was reasonably quick in learning the Chinese language and able to acclimatize to the long, cold Mongolian winters, the local food, and the Mongolian way of living. In contrast, two of his companions, including Verbist, died from spotted typhus within a few years.

Less than thirty years old, Ferdinand Hamer, the son of a grocer in Nijmegen, became a veteran of the Mongolian mis-

sion in an inhospitable and dangerous territory - dangerous, indeed, as it soon became clear that most of the Chinese were inimical to the faith of the West. But each year, new young men from Belgium and the Netherlands arrived in Mongolia – men who were prepared to sacrifice everything for their ideal: the conquest of Chinese souls. They brought with them Western knowledge and technology, Western medicines and medical science; they founded orphanages and schools; and they felt supported by European military supremacy along the Chinese coast. Moreover, the missionaries had money at their disposal, which was essential for buying all sorts of goods, for buying food, and for buying land on which to build churches and other buildings.

In 1878, the CICM mission was extended to the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, and Xinjiang. Ferdinand Hamer, now thirty-eight years old, was designated the first Bishop of that enormous territory by Pope Leo XIII. In 1889, he was transferred to 'Western Mongolia' (Ordos), a mission area where many organizational problems had to be solved. In the end, it was not until 1891 that he could make a start there, as his serious stomach complaints forced him back to Europe for a time. While in Europe, he managed to collect enough money to build a huge church in his episcopal village of Sandaoho, not far from the Yellow River.

The first years of the 1890s brought extreme drought to the north of China (an offshoot of the Gobi desert). The Chinese farmers, who had settled north of the Chinese wall, died in great numbers. Hamer, however, had money at his disposal, so instead of building his church, he bought food. In his letters home he was able to report: 'From all sides the poor people have come flocking in, hoping to be received into the bosom of the Church and get some temporal relief. During the last two months we have acquired more than two thousand people asking to be baptized, people which, under normal circumstances, would never have the idea to become Christians without being animated by necessity'. In other Mongolian areas, where the mission did not have much money, more than a thousand Christians were slaughtered. The years 1891 and 1892 were a sort of pre-Boxer uprising.

Hamer and the Boxer Uprising

A new drought, only seven years later, aggravated the situation in the Ordos mission. By then, the financial resources had been depleted, and any available money was invested in agricultural land in order to give the converts a solid base.

Notes >

¹ Among them was the French missionary Chapdelaine, whose untimely death in 1856 gave the French an alibi to invade China, in cooperation with the British, and force the Qing government to ratify the 'unequal' treaties of Tianjin and Beijing (1858/1860). From then on, missionaries were allowed to travel inland and preach the Christian faith, while the Chinese were able to live according to the 'religion of the West'. The French Emperor, Napoleon III, was now the acknowledged protector of all European missionaries and converts of the Qing emperor.

Southeast Asia in the Eyes of Egyptians

Research >
Southeast Asia

It would not be far wrong to say that contemporary Arabs are inclined to be parochial regarding non Arabs. But regardless of this Arab-centrism, the fact remains that Southeast Asian Muslims, perhaps in marked contrast to Middle Easterners, have developed an extensive curiosity about the Middle East and its educational centres. There is a whole industry involved in producing translations from Arabic into Indonesian and Malay, as well as distributing Arabic music and films among Southeast Asian (Muslims).

By Mona Abaza

The exercise of comparing these two regions, the Islam of the so called periphery and that of the centre, leads to the impression that the dissemination of knowledge, religious or secular, has been rather a one-way relationship. In other words, the Middle East seems set to play a hegemonic role as a donor of 'authentic' culture and religious supremacy, while Southeast Asians remain cast as its syncretistic recipients. Still, this statement disregards the fact that there exists a contemporary Middle Eastern gaze towards Southeast Asia, which is deserving of further attention. This short note is about how some Arabs perceive and produce knowledge about contemporary Southeast Asia, a regional configuration that is relatively new in their geo-political discourse and which is often blurred with a vague notion of 'Asia'.

Travel Accounts

Until today, for many Middle Eastern scholars the only 'Other' worthy of study, and with which a dialogical (yet paradoxical) discourse may be perpetuated, is still the West. Certainly, the encounter with the West in the last two centuries is best exemplified in travel accounts of Arabic speakers to Europe and the United States. The archetype of such a genre was the sojourn in France of Rifa`al Tahtawi (1801-1873), who was among the first Egyptian Azharites to study abroad. Tahtawi's five years in Paris (1826-1831) and his description of the manners and customs of the French epitomizes crossing boundaries and the bridging between tradition and modernity.

As far as Southeast Asia is concerned, a twentieth-century parallel may be found in Anees Mansur's *Around the World in 200 Days*. This remains one of the most popular Egyptian travel accounts, having been re-printed some twenty times. Having first appeared in 1962, the third edition was even introduced by the then Dean of Arabic culture at Cairo University, Taha Husayn, whilst the fourth was given a foreword by Mahmud Taymur.

Mansur travelled during the effervescent period of the Bandung conference. It is an account embedded in the 1960s middle-class Cairene constructions of an imagined, and perhaps anecdotal and distorted, 'Far East'. Mansur, who was sent as a journalist by the government, tells us that he had been dispatched to report on the Indian state of Kerala, where the communist party had won local elections. Mansur started his trip in India (Bombay) before going on to Tibet to interview the Dalai Lama, to the Maldives, Singapore, Indonesia (Jakarta and Bali), Australia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Japan, Hawaii, and, lastly, to the United States.

Mansur's style shifts between formal Arabic and a colloquial Egyptian which often verges on vulgar slang. It is filled with catchy, and perhaps racist, jokes and is frequently disrespectful towards the local populations and their customs – and even to the Dalai Lama. So while Mansur originates from the 'South', he reproduces the same stereotypes about 'Asians' found in colonial accounts. For example, his passages on Bali reveal the exploits of a misogynist constantly chasing women, and he is constantly fascinated by the strange and the fantastic. Still, he conceives of himself as a superior observer, remarking, for example, that the Indians speak an esoteric form of English with an awful accent. Still, it seems that what made this work popular is that it is among the first accounts of Asia in the post-colonial period, though it was paradoxically full of both non-alignment jargon and racial stereotypes, with photos of women in 'exotic' dresses.

While Mansur's travel account could be understood as a landmark of 'popular' literature produced in the time of South-South non-alignment interaction, not much has been published on Asia in the literary Egyptian circles since Mansur's account. The so called 'revolutionary' journalist and the 'Bandung effect' has been replaced by short-term, official, state-sponsored journalist missions which I will mention below.

Institutions and Research in Asia

Currently, the overseas research priorities of Middle Eastern scholars are dominated by a North-South dimension, be it towards Europe or the United States. The institutionalization of research programmes for the Middle East is furthermore tied to a North-South dynamic whereby funding is effectively restricted to facilitate either American or European interaction.

However, while there is no institutional backing that has led to the enhancement of Southeast Asian 'area studies' in the Middle East, this does not mean that there is no indigenous production of knowledge concerning other regions of the developing world. Indeed, whereas the academic field has not generated a significant accumulation of knowledge, it is in other domains, such as journalism or what falls under the rubric of travel literature, that a body of knowledge is manifested. There is indeed a range of accounts by contemporary Arab speakers who have travelled to India, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, which has sometimes – like the work of Mansur – been underwritten by narratives of national liberation, or Third World internationalism.

I have already mentioned that there is a blurring of the notion of 'Asia' for Egyptians and Arabs in general, and more specifically Southeast Asia as a part of the wider 'East'. Indeed, the term Southeast Asia is hardly ever utilized by Middle Eastern scholars. It seems that Egyptians have most probably inherited and perpetuated an orientalist legacy about Asia which would encompass Iran, Central Asia, the whole Indian subcontinent, Southeast, Japan, and China. In other words, anything eastwards of the Middle East and, moreover, non-Arabic speaking is considered to be 'Asia'.

Certainly the world of Asia and Southeast Asia remain *terra incognita* for the majority of the Middle East and Middle Eastern research institutes and universities. Many would then wonder if it is even worth speaking of area studies on Southeast Asia. But, as I mentioned previously, there are South-South dialogues and interactions taking place and exchanges worthy of attention, though these are primarily directed towards Africa, despite the rhetoric of Afro-Asiatism.

For example, Egypt created the league of Afro-Asian peoples solidarity in the sixties. Then, in 1963, the Organization of African unity was created. Today, the organization for Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity has launched a series of dialogues with Japanese and Chinese scholars which have resulted in exchanges of scholars from those countries.

With the economic take-off in the seventies and eighties, 'Asia' for the Arab World, in particular Japan, China and Southeast Asia started to gain increased prominence. The economic success of the Asian tigers triggered a curiosity to study and emulate this success story.

Of course, the affinities expressed between sections of the Middle East and Asia are not entirely novel. The Egyptian Wafd nationalist party maintained contacts with Indian nationalists in the 1920s. Jawarhalal Nehru's letters to his daughter were translated into Arabic by the late Ahmed Bahaa al-Din. The Algerian, Malek ben Nabi's writings on the concept of Afro-Asiatism also illustrate a great admiration of Ghandi's non-violent resistance. And, of course, the writings of al-Mansur emerged out of the context of reportages by Nasserite journalists on India in the sixties following up on the Bandung Conference of April 1955. Still, the image of a non-aligned East connected to Nasserite ideology has not been greeted with undiluted pleasure, and Ghandi's philosophy also inspired Nasser's critics, like the prominent feminist Doria Shafiq, who went on a hunger strike during Nasser's regime.

It was also in the spirit of non-alignment that the Paris-based, Egyptian intellectual Anouar Abdel Malek (who was among the first to direct a harsh critique towards orientalism) wrote an influential book titled *The Wind of the East* to remind the Arabs of the significance of 'looking East' and directing the gaze towards Asian civilizations such as China and Japan.' Abdel Malek argued that these ancient non-West-

continued on page 20 >

Preparing the Catalogue

Our colleague professor Yasuhiko Nagano has a genius for organizing our work. He came to Tritan Norbutse Monastery with four portable computers already installed with a Tibetan programme as a gift for the monastery. It was in March 2000 that we began to prepare the work on the catalogue with four monks led by Tenpa Yundrung. The monks learned how to use the computers within a week. However, to deal with such a mass of texts that has no obvious regular numbering was rather daunting. It took us a whole week simply to sort them out and put them in a kind of order. We did not rearrange the texts in any order since this would upset the already partially numbered parts of the collection and would also lead to confusion when other libraries obtain the same set of texts and try to use our catalogue. We therefore decided to follow the numeration of the volumes although, as mentioned earlier, this numeration is not always consistent. One of the problems the users of this catalogue may face is that the publisher has not set any limit to a conclusive edition so that there is no one 'set of the Bonpo Tenjur' with a

definitive number of volumes. In the present case the collection contains 300 volumes.

Tenpa Yundrung and his colleagues completed the compilation of the catalogue within ten months, as instructed. To underline the open-ended nature of our enterprise I may add that in March 2001, while we were reading the proofs of the catalogue in the Tritan Norbutse Monastery, news reached us that the publisher had added more volumes to the collection, as he kept finding more unpublished manuscripts ...! <

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More info >

This brief project description is part of the introduction to the volume, *A Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts*, published by the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka in 2001, *Senri Ethnological Reports* 24, *Bon Studies* 4.

Ferdinand Hamer,
50 years old



Because of the imperialistic behaviour of a new generation of missionaries, however, the hate of the non-Christians towards the converts had grown considerably. Within the mission itself there were conflicts of power: the Catholic mission did not want to cooperate with a new nearby Swedish protestant mission. When the mission purchased a new piece of agricultural land, problems with both the Mongolian authorities and the people arose: while missionaries and converts cleared this piece of land along the Yellow River, several of the original residents were killed.

In the letters that Hamer wrote to his family, it is easy to see that he was fully aware of all the oncoming dangers. In June 1900 he reported, 'Still no rain. What is going to happen here? Everything is as barren as in mid-winter. The wind is dry and full of desert sand. It is impossible to work on the fields. The people have nothing to eat and, unless we have heavy showers very soon, they will have no hope again for this year'. This time, Ferdinand Hamer had no money to buy any additional food, which could have turned the drought to his advantage. Only a few weeks later, the 'heathens' invaded the village where the Bishop, now almost sixty years old, had recently taken up residence. They killed many hundreds of converts and sold the women to Muslim traders. The invaders also seized Hamer and took him to a Chinese magistrate for trial, after which they burned him alive. Ferdinand Hamer became a martyr in China.



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