

the book remains an excellent reference and a good read. A lower price would make it more accessible to general readers and scholars alike.

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Buddhism and Empire: The Political and Religious Culture of Early Tibet. By MICHAEL L. WALTER. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009. xxvii, 311 pp. \$182.00 (cloth).
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Buddhism and Empire: The Political and Religious Culture of Early Tibet is a fascinating collection of observations on a wide variety of topics which fall under the interpenetrating categories of religion and politics during the Tibetan imperial period (c. 620–842). *Buddhism and Empire* is a book primarily for specialists in the study of Tibet, China, Inner Asia, Nepal, and India or Indo-European culture. It is not intended to be read cover to cover, even by specialists. Rather, *Buddhism and Empire* is organized as a series of micro-reviews of previous knowledge on select subtopics in light of new primary sources and the author's many years of research into this area. The lack of a cohesive narrative is actually beneficial for the reference work style of the book and makes it quite easy to find relevant information for one's own research agenda. Michael Walter does have an over-arching thesis, that "research into authentically early sources shows that the principal context in which religion functioned during the period of the Tibetans' entry into history was part of their political culture" (xvii). While some might find justifications to counter his thesis, the topics chosen here do well to support Walter's perspective on early Tibetan religion.

After the introduction and before the main body of his text, Walter makes a strong methodological point regarding what sources ought to be used in a proper study of religion during the Tibetan imperial period. For Walter, we should restrict ourselves to only using sources that can legitimately be said to have been written in Old Tibetan language, especially the oldest strata of Old Tibetan. However, we must then first define what texts can be considered Old Tibetan. For Walter, those texts must be pre-*Sba bzhed* and prior to "Dunhuang" documents. In addition to a positive list of qualities an authentically Old Tibetan document should possess, Walter provides a convenient checklist of attributes for disqualifying texts or passages of texts from being authentically Old Tibetan. Concomitant with his preference for authentically Old Tibetan documents, Walter begins to develop his concept of the Imperium as a meta-level logic at play throughout the discourse practices of imperial era Old Tibetan authors.

After the brief excursus on Old Tibetan, *Buddhism and Empire* begins with “Religion and politics in Tibet’s imperial government, and the place of Buddhism therein.” The second chapter focuses on key syllables in early Tibetan terms for religion and political offices, namely *sku*, *bla*, and *lha*. The third chapter hypothesizes that some of the rituals of the Imperium had Central Asian origins. The fourth chapter should have been named “Religion and the emperor” instead of “The intersection of religion and politics” since the emperor is its real concern. Finally, the *Buddhism and Empire* ends with appendices on the religio-political significance of gold and Bon, a select bibliography of texts not cited *in situ* and an index.

In chapter 1, Walter’s main point is that scholars of early Tibet should look to Indo-European culture, especially Scythian court life, for insights into the roles religion might have played in the Tibetan empire. Walter provides us with a bevy of comparative examples present in Tibetan and Scythian court life, some of which he later expands into longer subtopics in *Buddhism and Empire*, such as oath-taking, the use of gold ritual items, especially those that fell from the sky, the importance of mountain cults, and the mythology of the origins of the *btsan po*, in particular how they actually took birth, whereas the aristocracy came from the *lha* via sky-ropes. Walter uses CECC (Central Eurasian Cultural Complex) to refer to the Tibetan empire’s cultural analogies with its Western neighbors. Walter’s insistence on Central Asia and not East Asia or South Asia as Tibet’s most important culture influence is perhaps reflective of his years of working at Indiana University, home to a robust Department of Central Eurasian Studies for half a century.

Walter also makes the point that the rule of the *btsan po*-s was not the imposition of an aristocracy over the people, but one clan organizing both the aristocracy and the people, while the whole system was manipulated by the Sangha who had experience at other royal courts, especially Khotan. Similar to their activities in China, at the Tibetan imperial court the Sangha adopted already extant Tibetan terminology to Buddhism more than the other way around in an attempt to popularize Buddhism. At first, the Tibetan imperial government was a confederation of clans bound to the ruler through oaths. The promise of materialistic and social rewards is significant enough to explain their loyalty. Later, Khri Srong Lde Btsan (d. 797) [Walter’s transcriptions herewith] used the Sangha to supplement a stretched clan system. When the Imperium was at its greatest geographical reach, the Sangha were functioned like a literati administrative class. “Imperium” derived from Roman usage, functions as a shorthand throughout *Buddhism and Empire* to refer to “the authority of the *btsan po* and the indivisibility of his office from the physical domain ruled by Tibet under his leadership” (p. 38, n. 1).

In chapter 2, after an extensive argument against the linguistic category of Sino-Tibetan, Walter delves into the relationships between key syllables for early Tibetan political and religious terminology: *sku*, *bla*, *lha*, and *chos*, and a related term *gtsug lag*. Walter argues that these are not simply concepts, but categorical, bivalent terms. Walter’s work on these terms is very useful to those of us interested in how these syllables relate to each other and the nuances of meaning

expressed in many later bi-syllabic terms, whose semantic fields overlap in ways obscured in later texts, such as *sku rten* and *sku 'dra*. For example, we learn that *sku* became an honorific term at least by the reign of Khri Srong Lde Btsan. *sku drag*, meaning aristocrat or the aristocracy, comes from *drag po*, and illustrates the system originated in showing honorific fealty to the military leader or *btsan po*. The *btsan po* was both an individualized entity and the state embodied as an extension, a hidden dimension, of him. The Imperium then, expressed as *sku*, extended as far as his authority was recognized. Building on Walter's insight, we could then hypothesize how *sku rten* works so well as a term that covers the entire semantic range of *nirmāṇakāya*. *sku rten* is the basis (*rten*) of an honorific body that is simultaneously a concrete and limited three-dimensional object as well as a presence hypothetically penetrates all space and is always available to those who have the perceptive abilities to access it. In further support of this reviewer's hypothesis, Walter finds evidence that Srong Btsan Sgam-po's body was considered so vast that Avalokiteśvara and Vairocana could sit on his shoulders.

In chapter 3, Walter finds that Tibetan authors interested in Tibet's religious antiquity took their terms from inscriptions and that the longest-lasting and richest rituals were actually Buddhist, not Bonpo. We only have anecdotal and non-contemporary evidence of specifically Bon rites at the imperial court. In fact, the Sangha appears to have possessed the ability to perform any rite needed at court: treaty and oath rites, healing and protective acts, confession rites, and burial rites. The Bon-pos and Mu-steps-pas of the *Sba bzhed* are more reflective of an early Phyi Dar perspective on the place of the Sangha in court life of that time, then of non-Buddhist priests during the imperial period. Lastly, Walter makes a plea for more study of Tibetan ritual and observes that, "more than any other category of religious data, rituals help us connect values from the earliest known Tibetan culture with those of the most recent times" (p. 197).

The final chapter will be of interest to the largest readership since it not only focuses on the emperors, but in doing so it engages with central research foci in the short history of Tibetology such as *gtsug lag* and mountain cults, and proves itself to be the most relevant to scholars working on post-imperial Tibetan religion and politics. Walter knows his audience and titles one subsection, "Why Avalokiteśvara?" In short, the deity is paramount because of his previous political significance before the advent of Tibetan religion, and for his combination of qualities related to protection and power. Walter disagrees with Rolf Stein and Ariane MacDonald on the question of *gtsug lag*, arguing it should be considered a Buddhist term because it is first attested during the reign of Khri Srong Lde Btsan. Walter finds no evidence for *gtsug lag* as a term denoting opposition to Buddhism, and speculates it might have arisen at this time as a way for Khri Srong Lde Btsan "to assert that his support for Buddhism had the approval of all of his ancestors" (p. 229).

There are far too many intriguing observations on early Tibetan religion and politics in *Buddhism and Empire* to mention here. Certainly, some will prove controversial or will be disproven in time. But for those diligent scholars with

the patience and skills to seek the devil in the details, *Buddhism and Empire* is essential reading.

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JAPAN

Japan and the Specter of Imperialism. By MARK ANDERSON. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009. ix, 254 pp. \$90.00 (cloth).
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Drawing heavily on analysis from post-colonial studies, *Japan and the Specter of Imperialism* gives a novel account of the relationship between Western imperialism and the spaces of Japanese national political cultures. The strength of this work lies in its analysis of the debates on what constituted a nation. These debates raged across a broad set of disciplines (literature, philosophy, social sciences, art, ethics), colonizing the imagination via the production of knowledge about history, peoples and places, whilst simultaneously contributing to the formation of an oppressive and territorially aggressive Japanese nation-state.

Anderson argues that the key characteristics of the modern Japanese state—radical (some would say reactionary) nationalism and territorial ambition—can be traced to what the author calls the Ansei-treaty period (1858–1910). This period is marked by an anxiety in Japan’s ability to survive that had an external and internal dimension. Externally, the source of this anxiety was international law, or the law of nations, *jus genitum*, which in effect denied recognition of Japan as a sovereign entity on equal footing with other states in a space of competition and rivalry. As such, the Japanese experienced the Ansei-treaty period as semi-colonial domination; overturning the unequal treaties forced upon Japan by Western powers was both a political and existential goal. Internally, the question of Japan’s survival crystallized around how to secure the substantive condition for the survival of the Meiji State. Survival depended on finding new forms of rule, as the existing apparatus of the government was no longer considered up to the task of keeping Japan free from foreign control. Anderson brilliantly shows how the “national question” gave rise to a new field of politics where self-determination was linked with creating new forms of solidarity based on voluntary association.

Securing the substantive condition for the survival of the fledgling Meiji State became the endgame of Japanese politics. However, there was little consensus on how this was to be achieved. Anderson indicates that the reason for a lack of consensus was due to competing notions about what constituted the nation. The conflict was inherent in the notion of the nation itself: it was based both on a principle