

1–5 of the Princeton translation in pocket-sized editions, with the English in full paragraphs, with the colophon formulae omitted, with parallel Sanskrit text on the left-hand facing page, with notes omitted, and with pruned introductions. The ideal companion-volume to the Princeton *Yuddhakāṇḍa* is seemingly not to be.

As for the narrative contents, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is one of the most extraordinary, most brilliant, most terrible, and most loved of humankind's literary creations, and those who have not yet done so should start with the *Bālakāṇḍa*. In the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* Rāma's enmity with Rāvaṇa comes to a head: their armies fight at length (hence the title), and Rāma kills Rāvaṇa. Despite his misgivings in terms of the results for his and his family's reputation, Rāma takes his abducted wife Sītā back. His term of exile completed, he returns to Ayodhyā and rules it in proverbially righteous fashion; and if the story were to end there, he would live happily ever after.

Many scholars have imagined that the story once did end there, as it does in the *Mahābhārata* version (*Mahābhārata* 3.258–275). Some of the same scholars have imagined that Rāma was once just a man, and that his also being an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu was a later addition. One significant contribution of the Princeton team has been their having taken a hard line against this latter idea, showing through their cumulating introductions that Rāma's dual character and his forgetting his divine identity are vital aspects of the drama (see for example pp. 50–51; at *Rāmāyaṇa* 6.105, now that he has killed Rāvaṇa and discharged his divine mission, Rāma is told who he really is). With regard to the former idea, we now await the Princeton *Uttarakāṇḍa*.

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BUDDHISM AND EMPIRE. By MICHAEL WALTER. pp. xxvii, 311. Leiden, Brill, 2009.
doi:10.1017/S1356186310000350

Walter puts forth two bold and thought-provoking theses: that the Tibetans have been significantly influenced by the Indo-Europeans in prehistory and that the Tibetan empire was Buddhist already at the dawn of history. To treat these two ideas within the covers of one volume was a mistake. Not only does Walter fail to provide detailed treatment of the primary sources and full consideration of previous scholarship, his work employs a highly idiosyncratic system for citations, and is peppered with spelling errors and inconsistencies.¹ Neither argument comes across as careful and persuasive. Walter's analysis relies on new interpretations of a number of key concepts in Old Tibetan religion and political philosophy. While always interesting his proposals are seldom convincing. I discuss two terms *bla* and *sku-bla* in detail.

Walter sees his suggestion of Indo-European influence as in opposition to the Tibeto-Burman hypothesis. Many of Walter's methodological objections to Tibeto-Burman linguistics as currently practised are spot on.² However, his total despondency regarding the potential of Tibeto-Burman linguistics is unwarranted. While he is correct that Tibeto-Burman studies "cannot [...] be said to have any import for the study of the intersection of early Tibetan, Chinese and Burmese cultures",

¹The Sanskrit word *saṅgha* is misspelled *sangha* throughout. Mongolian *altan ordo* is written *altan ordu* (p. 291). 'Géza Uray' becomes 'Geza Uray' (p. 125). The famous 16th century historian is Dpa'-bo Gtsug-lag on page 124 but Dpa'-bo Gtsug Lag on the facing page (p. 125). Works in the bibliography are not ordered chronologically, e.g. Beckwith's publications are listed in the order 1984, 2006, 2006, 1983, 1977, 1993 (p. 297). The dictionary *Dag yig gsar bsgriḡs* was not published in Dharamsala in 1990 (p. 114) but rather in Xining in 1979 (Bsam-gtan 1979).

²In particular his scepticism concerning Matisoff's 'allofams' (p. 83).

(p. 84) this is simply due to a lack of research. Walter's theory of the post mortem deification of the Tibetan emperor is used to demonstrate links to the Indo-Europeans. China and Burma share such a tradition, and indeed share the practice of deifying heir bearing queens as well as kings (Itō and Takashima 1996: p. 102, Aung-Thwin 1985: pp. 52, 159).

Like his opponents Walter is mesmerised by the status of Chinese. He does not consider the possibility that the study of other Tibeto-Burman languages, such as Tangut, Newar, Metheri or modern languages could shed light on Tibetan cultural history. Demonstrating the value of such an approach, Brandon Dotson has drawn attention to parallels between Old Tibetan funerary rituals and those of various Tibeto-Burman speaking groups of Nepal (Dotson 2008: pp. 46–47).

Both of Walter's theses may be correct.³ His emphasis on Indo-European elements in Tibetan culture draws attention to an important area that deserves to receive more attention. Unfortunately, although in earlier studies of *rini* and *nonis* Walter has demonstrated himself to be a careful and competent philologist (1998a, 1998b, 2004), he does not bring these skills to bear in this monograph. The book is physically a noticeable step down in quality from volumes in the same series.

bla

In Old Tibetan texts the spellings *bla*, *brla* and *rla* are generally identified with Classical Tibetan *bla*. Walter appears unaware of this variation; he suggests that *bla* means 'government' and "in Old Tibetan documents it never means 'soul' or the like" (n. 51 p. 153). However, in a sentence such as the following from the medical text PT 1044 a translation 'soul' is much more sensible than 'government'.

(53) . . . *mye btsa dpyad hdi ni // tshes* (54) *grais-te sbyar-te / brla ga-la gnas-pa / brtags-nas / thog-du ma bab byaḥo //*

one needs to calculate the time, determine where the *brla* is residing [at that time] and not apply [moxibution] there (translation follows Yoeli-Tlalim 2008: 231).⁴

In PT 1146 the *bla* leaves a boy's body and he dies (Karmay 1998: p. 316); in the funerary text IOL Tib J 734 the compounds *rla-khyim* 'soul house' and *rla-lam* 'soul path' are equally hard to make sense of in Walter's theory (cf. Dotson 2008: pp. 44–45). Finally, the coincidence of Classical Tibetan *bla* 'soul' with Burmese *prā* 'soul' would be shocking if in Old Tibetan *bla* meant only 'government'.

sku-bla

Dismissing with broad strokes the consensus that the term *sku-bla* refers to a class of divinities (Macdonald 1971: p. 304, Stein 1983: pp. 201–205), Walter follows the earlier suggestion of Thomas that the *sku-bla* are men (Thomas 1951: p. 16). Walter's argument relies primarily on the self-evidence that gods are strictly carnivorous.

If one were considering offerings to spiritual beings alone, most likely meat would be used [. . .] When meat is mentioned as provisions for them [i.e the *sku-bla*], it is in a list with other foods [. . .] indicating it is to be consumed, not offered. (n. 39 p. 143).

³The case for continuities between religion in the imperial and post-imperial period is made in a more convincing way in his own earlier article (Walter 2004).

⁴Yoeli-Tlalim demonstrates that *brla* in this context is equivalent to *bla* in post-imperial medical texts.

The dichotomy which Walter sets up between ‘consumed’ and ‘offered’ belies a lack of familiarity with sacrifice. Does he believe that the Tibetans, in contrast to peoples the world over, did not consume the meat they sacrificed? Although cross-culturally meat is the ritual offering *par excellence*, the fruits of the earth, and indeed water, are not uncommon worldwide as ritual offerings. Although I myself do not feel “hard-pressed to consider radishes suitable offerings for spiritual beings” (p. 99) the question is moot because M.I.ix.4 (IOL Tib J 484) contains no word for ‘radish’. Thomas interprets *lha-phug* as *la-phug* ‘radish’ (Thomas 1951: p.387). This interpretation is not plausible.⁵ The word *lha* ‘god’ in this citation may well support the *sku-bla* as divine.

In Walter’s interpretation of the Rkoñ-po inscription a human being has sexual relations with a *sku-bla*. Since sexual relations between mortals and immortals are otherwise unattested in Old Tibetan texts, he concludes that the *sku-bla* are human. The interpretation of the inscription however relies on a misunderstanding of the grammar. In fact, the text says that Kar-po served as chaplain to the god who has been born of the union of the *sku-bla* of the imperial family with the local mountain deity De-mo (*gcan Kar-po ni* [. . .] *sku-bla De-mo-dan bśos-paḥi lha bdag bgyid*, ll. 5–7).⁶ Walter’s best piece of evidence that the *sku-bla* are men, that one appears to be “dispatched to a particular location” (p. 99), relies on M.I.iv.44 (IOL Tib N 199), where however the *bla* of *sku-bla* is an editorial emendation of (Thomas 1951: p. 354).

From a number of Old Tibetan texts it is clear the *sku-bla* are gods. Walter admits that in the *Envoys of Phywa to Dmu* (PT 0126) the *sku-bla* are presented as gods, but argues (citing Macdonald 1971: p. 305), that this text presents a divine mirror image of the mundane world, in which all the *dramatis personae* are divine (p.100). However, in the text itself neither the envoys of Phywa nor the lord of Dmu are explicitly identified as divine. In contrast, the *sku-bla* is identified with the *dgaḥ lha* ‘god of bliss’, the phrase *sku-bla gsol* paralleling *dgaḥ lha byed*. In the 尚書 *Shangshu paraphrase* (PT 0986), for the purposes of translation the *sku-bla* has been identified with the 天地神 and 明鬼神, Chinese divinities (Coblin 1991: p. 523). The *sku-bla* are quite clearly gods, and not men.

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⁵With laterals ‘h’ represents not aspiration, which is sub-phonemic, but rather devoicing, which is phonemic (Hill 2007: p. 474).

⁶For the construction *bśos-paḥi* ‘born of the union’ particularly as used with gods cf. PT 1286 l. 45 and numerous instances in the *Ldehu chos ḥbyuñ* (Mkhas-pa-ldeḥu 1987: 230ff, 2003: 258ff, folio 129bff).

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THE MONKEY AND THE INKPOT. NATURAL HISTORY AND ITS TRANSFORMATION IN EARLY MODERN CHINA.
By CARLA NAPPI. pp. xiv, 234. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2009.
doi:10.1017/S1356186310000465

This short book opens with a long “Ex-Voto” in which the author expresses her thanks to various institutions, persons and Habibna, her cat. The intellectually somewhat unusual introduction following these pages makes it clear what the book is about: simply put, it deals with Li Shizhen 李時珍 and his famous *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目. Its seemingly enigmatic title, *The Monkey and the Inkpot*, is derived from the English version of Jorge Luis Borges’ *El libro de los seres imaginarios*, which contains an entry called “El Mono de la Tinta”. The Spanish description of the *mono*, or monkey, goes back to Wang Dahai’s 王大海 *Haidao yizhi* 海島逸誌 (1791), a book on the countries and islands of the Southern Seas, with some paragraphs on strange creatures, plants and objects (on this work, see, for example, *Études chinoises* 13.1–2, 1994). Wang has named his “simiolus” *mohou* 墨猴, with good reasons: “Es muy aficionado a la tinta china, y cuando las personas escriben, se sienta con una mano sobre la otra y las piernas cruzadas esperando que hayan concluido y se bebe el sobrante de la tinta. Después vuelve a sentarse en cuclillas, y se queda tranquilo.” – Well, why did Wang add such a creature to his text, how did Borges perceive the issue, and which was the real reason for Nappi to choose the *mohou* for the title of her book? The answer would be a multi-layered endeavour and possibly somewhat too long for inclusion in a short review (in spite of the author’s explanations . . .). Suffice to say, the *mohou*, sometimes associated with