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ulation and so on, in such a way that the present religious situations in these four kingdoms are also various. In Bhutan and Ladakh, the Tibetan forms of Buddhism are largely dominant, whereas Hinduism is the principal religion of Nepal and Sikkim, but several groups of animists are found here and there, in the highest parts of the Himalayan valleys. Besides, we can note Hinduism's evident and numerous influences on Buddhism, and vice versa, in all these countries. Often, the zealous propagation of a religion was intimately tied with a political aim. It was especially the case with the Hinduisation of Nepal, as A. Vergati and Ph. Sagant explain clearly and in detail, giving numerous illustrative anecdotes. Moreover, we find described in this book the history of the various Buddhist sects that came from Tibet to Ladakh, the way of life in Buddhist monasteries in Bhutan and Sikkim, the beliefs and rites of the animists of Sikkim, the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon of Nepal, the various religious festivals in these four kingdoms, and their art, architecture, sculpture, and painting—all of them essentially religious.

The book reads easily and the numerous illustrations increase one's pleasure in it. Therefore, we can thank its authors for having given to us this fine work on the history and the civilisation of the four principal Himalayan kingdoms—a work in which a prominent place is given to their religions, especially to Buddhism.

André Bareau

Wings of the White Crane: Poems of Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683–1706), translated by G.W. Houston. Historical Introduction by Helmut Hoffmann. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982. xxi + 53 p. Rs. 50.

The Rain of Wisdom, translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee under the Direction of Chögyam Trungpa. Boulder: Shambhala, 1980. xxiii + 384 p. \$9.95.

Songs of Spiritual Change, by the Seventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Kalzang Gyatso. Translated by Glenn H. Mullin, in accordance with instruction received from Geshe Lozang Tenpa and L.N.

Tsonawa. Illustrated by Kevin Rigby. Ithaca, NY: Gabriel/Snow Lion, 1982. 205 p. \$9.95.

Tibetan poetry has received little sustained attention from Westerners, either scholars or poets. What attention there has been has come chiefly from scholars: R.A. Stein's fine work with the Gesar epic and the songs of 'Brug pa kun legs; Garma C.C. Chang's translation of the *Mi la mgur 'bum*. These scholarly translations may or may not be accurate; seldom are they poetic. Tibetan poetry has yet to attract a Western poet capable of translating it—either directly or with a collaborator—in the same engaging way that Kenneth Rexroth has translated from Japanese, Ezra Pound and Gary Snyder from Chinese, and Robert Bly and W.S. Merwin from Indic languages.

There are a number of reasons for the relative neglect of the Tibetan poetic tradition. First, Tibetan has been studied for a relatively short time by very few. Thus, the bulk of the tradition simply has not been exposed. Second, its singsong rhythm and consistent metrical patterns make its formal transposition into Western poetical modes a daunting task, for reproduction of the original style will sound alien, while a rendition in contemporary poetic idioms will stray dangerously far from the original: *traduttore, traditore*.

Third—and, I think, most significant—the *content* of Tibetan poetry is almost invariably religious and philosophical, and this sophisticated content is tremendously compressed within the relatively simple poetic forms that contain it. Take two typical lines (admittedly, liturgical): *sdo sngags chos gzung nyes spyod tha dag sdom / dge chos kun sdus spyin bzhis 'gro don byed*. These are rhythmically pleasing and conceptually comprehensible to any educated Tibetan. Unpacked and translated literally into English, however, they read: "Adhering to the Dharmas of sūtra and tantra, I vow (to refrain from) all faulty activities; / collecting all virtuous dharmas, I will act for the sake of transmigrating beings through the four (types of) giving." How is such content to be made understandable, let alone poetically pleasing, to a Western reader? Philosophical poetry (Eliot and Stevens notwithstanding) has long been out of vogue in the West. The reigning style (at least in America) derives from the broadly "imagistic" tradition of Pound and Williams. This style, in turn, has helped dictate the sorts of foreign poetry that have proven attractive: haiku, Chinese "landscape" poetry and many of the Indian lyrics translated emphasize mood and image at the expense of specific philosophical or religious content. This, pre-

sumably, makes their appeal more "universal." Tibetan poetry hardly lacks mood or imagery. By and large, however, its moods and images are so closely intertwined with specifically Buddhist themes that it cannot be translated without reference to those themes. This makes it less attractive to a potential translator in the first place, and tremendously difficult for someone who *does* attempt a poetic translation—for he has few Western models on which to draw in giving a specifically poetic shape to such complex material.

A further point must quickly be added, however: it is open to question whether "poetic" translations of much of Tibetan poetry really are desirable. Much that is in "verse" is explicitly liturgical or didactic in function, its "poetic" form chiefly a mnemonic expedient. Still, even when we have eliminated the great body of "verse" literature that may not constitute "poetry," there still remain a considerable number of works whose personal point of view and manipulation of mood, image and symbol more closely approximate what we in the West *do* consider poetry. They are "worth" translating poetically, but they are idiosyncratically Tibetan and Buddhist, so the problems cited above must still be confronted. Three recent translations of Tibetan poetry illustrate varying attempts at solutions to the problems.

If any Tibetan poet should be accessible to Westerners, it is Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho, the Sixth Dalai Lama, who had a short, unhappy life, and wrote of it in poems that are at once the most explicitly confessional in Tibetan literature and the least explicitly intertwined with Buddhist religious and philosophical concerns (their alleged "tantric" content seems to me in most cases problematic). G.W. Houston has provided us with a complete edition of the Sixth Dalai Lama's poems—53 in all—in Tibetan script, Roman transliteration, and English translation. It is an admirable work, though it contains some disappointments. In the first place, the Tibetan-script version (whose calligraphy is poor) sometimes varies from the Romanized version, usually by the inclusion of readings found in Das' edition. Presumably, the Tibetan-script version is the preferred one, but Dr. Houston has included no explanatory material to this effect, nor has he always chosen best: in no. 17, for example, Das' reading for the second line (*yid la 'char rgyu mi 'dug*) seems, better than Dr. Houston's choice (*yid la yang yang shar byung*), to convey the irony that when meditating the author cannot clearly visualize his guru—while when he is not meditating he is obsessed by the image of his beloved. Similarly, in no. 16, the Romanized *'khrid* is preferable to the Tibetan-script *'khid*.

In translating, Dr. Houston has opted for a concise, direct style, often employing rhyming quatrains. This captures rather well the rhythmic feel of the poems (most of whose lines are hexasyllabic), and often stands as fine poetry on its own, e.g., no. 1, "Behind peaks of eastern mountains / The shining white moon appears, / And one girl's face / Turns round in my mind"; and no. 52 (from which the book derives its title), "If only white cranes / Do grant me wings, / I shall not go far; / Only to Lithang, then home."

There are other instances, however, in which the results are less felicitous, particularly when Dr. Houston resorts to rhyme. No. 17 (*bsgom pa'i bla ma'i zhal ras / yid la 'char rgyu mi 'dug / ma sgom byams pa'i zhal ras / yid la wa le wa le* = "When I meditate, the face of my guru / will not arise in my mind; / When I don't meditate, the face of my beloved / is clear, so clear, in my mind"), for instance, undergoes a number of contortions to reach a rhymed form: "When meditating, I cannot retain / My guru's face to see; / Not meditating, I cannot restrain / My loved one's face in me." Similarly, no. 51 (*ga ler phebs shig byas bas / ga ler bzhus shig gsung gi / thugs sems skyo yong byas pas / mgyogs po 'phrad yong gsungs byung* = "I bade her farewell; / 'Stay well,' she said. / This saddened her heart, / So I said, 'We will meet again.' ") loses its elegaic quality and approaches doggerel when translated as: "I said goodbye to her. / She replied: 'Goodbye.' / Because this made her cry, / I said: 'Soon again we say hi!'"

Also, alas, there are a number of instances in which Dr. Houston either misses or obscures meanings contained in the original Tibetan. In no. 6, for example, *nyin mo lag tu ma lon* seems to mean not "Daily affairs have no end," but something more like "I cannot handle the everyday." Describing the ferry in no. 10 as "senseless" (*sems pa med*) makes it sound purposeless, given current usage of "senseless"; "insentient" might be preferable. In no. 16, *sems pa 'gor kyang mi thub / byams pa'i phyogs la shor song* is less accurately translated as "My mind always fought / Slipping home to you" than as something like "My mind was unable to stay, / and fled toward my beloved."

There are relatively few typographical errors. The only one of any significance occurs in no. 48, where the translation has "Rinchen" for the Tibetan *rigs 'dzin*. Helmut Hoffmann's introduction is an interesting study of the Sixth Dalai Lama's possible relation to "heretical" religious sects. Desirable, too, would have been a more general introduction to the Sixth Dalai Lama's life, and some remarks by Dr. Houston on his method of translating.

Dr. Houston's work, then, is not without its drawbacks, both in edition and translation, but it is an admirable attempt to come

to grips *poetically* with a Tibetan work, and I hope that it will stimulate reflection and further efforts from those who are interested both in poetry and things Tibetan.

The Rain of Wisdom is a translation of the text generally known as the *bKa' brgyud mgur mtsho* (The Ocean of Songs of the bKa' brgyud pas), a collection of the *vajra dohās* sung by masters of the bKa' rgyud lineage, from Tilopa and Nāropa, through Marpa, Mi la ras pa and sGam po pa to the various red hat and black hat hierarchs. In addition, a number of poems by Chögyam Trungpa, who oversaw the translation, are included. Trungpa warns in his foreword that "These songs should not be regarded as ordinary poetry, as a purely literary endeavor" (xiii). They are, rather, didactic, instructing the reader on various aspects of Buddhist practice, both Sūtrayāna and Tantrayāna. Most importantly, the songs "are the life examples of our forefathers to inspire devotion" (*ibid.*), personal accounts of frailty, doubt, faith, struggle and, ultimately, spiritual triumph. Like the *dohās* of the Indian *mahāsiddhas*, the songs of the bKa' brgyud masters celebrate spiritual attainment, and are explicitly inspirational in intent: to this day, "Students are . . . advised to read this book for instructions when their life is filled with disruption and uncertainty and neurosis" (*ibid.*).

Recognizing that their material does not represent a "purely literary endeavor," the Nālandā committee has produced a careful, rather literal translation. The rhythms of the original thus are sacrificed, and the translation preserves (usually in their Sanskrit forms) a number of Buddhist technical terms that hardly can be considered "poetic," but what is lost stylistically is more than adequately recovered by the overall accuracy and comprehensibility of the translations.

A number of poets stand out by virtue of their mastery of structure, particularly their effective use of parallel constructions: Chöying Dorje, Lodö Dorje, Ngötrup Gyaltzen, Rinchen Pal and, of course, Milarepa (the translators maintain phonetic spellings throughout). Most poems are too long to reproduce here; this passage from the song of Ngötrup Gyaltzen may serve as a brief example:

When I dwell in places of solitude,
 These apparent objects of the six senses
 Are like the spreading of a forest fire.
 How joyful, all these arising as companions!
 Ah la la, how wondrous is the Accomplished One of
 Nyemo!
 Ah la la, what joy in the snow and slate mountains!

The mind is the essence of emptiness.
 Uncorrupted by words,
 It is like the moon reflected in water, unattached to
 appearance or emptiness.
 How joyful, this freedom from confusion arising as
 luminosity!
 Ah la la, how wondrous is the Accomplished One of
 Nyemo!
 Ah la la, what joy in the snow and slate mountains!
 Ah la la, what delight of this little child in the snow
 mountains!

The translation is only rarely cluttered by such phrases as “dualistic fixation,” and although it might be argued that such terms as “prajñā,” “upāya” and “kleśa” could easily have been given English equivalents, one’s gratitude for the reliability of the translation far outweighs the stylistic inconvenience entailed by the inclusion of Sanskrit terms.

These terms, and a number of others, are explained in some detail in a glossary near the end of the book. The glossary is generally careful and helpful, but some of its definitions are problematic. The “two accumulations” (of merit and wisdom), are made to sound as if they are simply cause and effect; traditionally, their practice is parallel and mutually reinforcing. Although “ārya” is “an epithet of the enlightened ones: arhats, bodhisattvas and buddhas,” it more specifically connotes one who has attained the path of seeing (not all bodhisattvas are āryas). The “three families” refer most often not to adherents of Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, but to practitioners of the Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna and Bodhisattvayāna. “Maitrī,” which, as one of the four immeasurables, is usually directed to others, is idiosyncratically regarded as “friendliness to one-self.” “Sampannakrama” is somewhat misleadingly described as formless meditation (a definition that hardly covers the complex manipulation of the subtle body that is entailed by so many completion stage practices), and is incorrectly said to give rise to the utpatikrama (it is the other way around).

The translators have provided a lengthy Afterword, which discusses the bKa’ brgyud lineage and its teachings, the text, and the lives of the masters represented in the collection. My only reservation here—a mild one—is with the discussion of bKa’ brgyud teachings, which seems weighted toward the occasionally idiosyncratic interpretations of Chögyam Trungpa. Vipāśyanā, for instance, is the development of “a field of nowness” (296), Vajrayāna is said to center on an appreciation for the “sacredness of the world” (298) and mahamudrā is “the realization that

the most fundamental and sacred truths of all are expressed in the simple, unadorned reality of everyday life" (293). These definitions may be defensible, but they are not comprehensive, and betray a distinct "psychological" bias.

Certain terminological problems (all in the Afterword and Glossary) notwithstanding, *The Rain of Wisdom* is a fine work of translation. Though it is written more with the Buddhist than the Buddhologist in mind—it has little footnote apparatus—it nonetheless displays careful scholarship, and bodes well for future undertakings by the Nālandā Translation Committee.

Comparable in both approach and quality in *Songs of Spiritual Change*, Glenn H. Mullin's translation of a number of poems by the Seventh Dalai Lama, Kalzang Gyatso (bsKal bzang rgya mtsho, 1708–1757). Though all dealing with Buddhism and the author's relation to it, the poems display a wonderful variety of style and approach, from conventional didactic summaries of the path, to Buddhist transpositions of folk songs, to "alphabetical songs" in which each verse must begin with a letter of the Tibetan alphabet, to skillfully rhetorical "question" songs, to intensely personal confessions of doubt and weakness. An instance of the latter, and perhaps the most beautiful poetry in the book, is this excerpt from "An Autumn Day" (128):

The sky of unstained space,
I thought to blend my mind with it;
The center of fresh, hanging clouds,
I thought to touch their softness.

Like mist in the wind,
This mind yearns to drift;
Before the sun turns red and sets,
I would leave behind all squalor.

In this and many other passages, Mr. Mullin displays a fine balance between fidelity to the author's intention and a sensitivity to the sounds of poetic English. His ear betrays him only occasionally, as when, in "A Song in Couplets" (129–30), he achieves rhyme at the price of contorted syntax; or in the occasional use of a clearly Western term like "spiritual evolution" or "neurotic."

Songs of Spiritual Change also contains an excellent historical and doctrinal introduction, a translation of a biography of the Seventh Dalai Lama, and a Glossary. The Glossary is useful and careful, being marred only by wrong or inconsistent spellings of a number of the parenthetical Tibetan terms (e.g., *rSangs rgyas* for *sangs rgyas* and *kun rDob bDen pa* for *kun rdzob bden pa*). As with *The*

Rain of Wisdom, however, there is little basis for complaint: *Songs of Spiritual Change* is a sound and mellifluous translation, as good a rendition of Tibetan poetry as has appeared in English, and Mr. Mullin is to be commended for it.

Roger Jackson

Where West Meets East



The *Vajradhatu Sun* is a bi-monthly Buddhist newspaper reporting on the growth and ferment in the contemporary Buddhist world, both in the West and in Asia. Regular features include a Buddhist News Summary, interviews with leading teachers and scholars, profiles of artists and writers, book reviews, up-to-date coverage of the arts, psychology, science, health, and the on-going dialogue between the East and West. Plus current news of the Vajradhatu Sangha.

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