

Roland Bielmeier, Das Märchen vom Prinzen Cöbzan, Beiträge zur tibetischen Erzählforschung herausgegeben von Dieter Schuh Band 6, VGH Wissenschaftsverlag Sankt Augustin, 1985, 253 p. Reviewed by R.K. Sprigg (formerly of SOAS, University of London).

The volume under review is the sixth in a series on the oral literature of Tibet. Earlier volumes dealt with traditional narrative in central and eastern Tibet, in Amdo and Trayap, among the herdsmen of western Tibet, and, as volume 3 in the series, another contribution by the author of Das Märchen on oral texts among the herdsmen of Kyirong and Tingri, in southern Tibet, Viehzüchter-erzählungen sowie Erzählut aus sKyid-groñ und Diñ-ri. I am not, unfortunately, familiar with the series as a whole; and, in any case, I am not qualified to consider this volume as a contribution to research in oral literature in general ('Volksliteraturforschung'); in this respect, I can only report that one of the three aims of this book is to publish a representative traditional text in the Khapalu sub-dialect of the Balti dialect of Tibetan, spoken in the extreme north west of the Tibetan-speaking area, administered by Pakistan.

The Tibetan text of the legend of Prince Chobzang (jo-bzang) occupies only nine pages, each line being numbered for easy reference, and is followed by a German translation (28-47).¹

The author introduces his text and the analysis of it by recalling the boundaries within which Tibetan is spoken, in order to be able to place the Balti dialect in relation to the Tibetan-speaking area as a whole ('Skizze des heutigen tibetischen Sprachgebietes', 13), and especially to the geographically and linguistically close Purik and Ladakhi dialects ('Regionale und traditionelle dialektale Einordnung des Balti', 14-15). In this he is anticipating detailed grammatical and lexical comparison with cognates from these other two dialects later in the book. For all three dialects, the main constituents of the West-Tibetan group, he gives a survey of sources from 1842 to 1982 ('Literatur zum Balti, Purik und Ladakhi', 16-22).²

The title of the book and its sub-title, 'Eine tibetische Erzählung aus Baltistan', give little indication of the breadth of Bielmeier's interests in the field of Tibetan dialectology; it is his second sub-title, 'Text, Übersetzung, Grammatik und westtibetisches vergleichendes Glossar', that accurately indicates the scope of the book; for it is far from being merely an oral text with a translation into German. In fact, the grammatical analysis, preceded by a phonetic and phonemic analysis ('Deskriptive Untersuchung zur

¹ My own romanization follows Wylie 1959.

² Tucci 1949 refers to a further publication: 'A.H. Francke, - - - Ladakhi songs, Leh. Francke-Paalzov, Tibetische Lieder aus dem Gebiet des ehemaligen westtibetischen Königreiches, in Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen, XXXIV, p. 93' (7).

Grammatik des Balti anhand des oral tradierten Erzähltextes unter Hinzuziehung von Purik und Ladakhi', 49-152) takes up nearly half the book; and the glossary ('Westtibetisch vergleichendes Textglossar mit vollständigem Stellenverzeichnis', 153-246) takes up most of the remaining half. From a casual reading of the title I had not expected the comparison with Purik and Ladakhi forms; it came as a welcome bonus.

By contrast, the Balti dialect material is strictly, and intentionally, limited to the text of 'rgyalu čobzañ'; and here the author has made use of a novel and interesting approach, in presenting his phonemic, grammatical, and lexical analysis, that he claims to be new at least in Tibetan dialect studies: 'zumindest im Bereich tibetischer Dialekte ist es neu, eine grammatische Bearbeitung eines unbekannten Dialektes ausschließlich aufgrund eines geschlossenen Textkorpus' vorzunehmen und grammatische Ergebnisse nicht aufgrund von isoliertem Wortmaterial oder einzeln abgefragten Paradigmen zu gewinnen' (5). Before accepting Bieltmeier's claim I first re-examined de Roerich's Le Parler de l'Amdo (1958). De Roerich does indeed make considerable use of textual material (in fact his Rebkong and Banag Amdo texts outnumber Bieltmeier's by twenty-three to one, and fifty-two pages to twenty-two); but he does not treat his texts as a closed corpus; nor are his phonological and grammatical analyses keyed to the text in the way that Bieltmeier's are. Doubtless de Roerich's comparable sections 'phonétique' (15-30), 'morphologique' (31-54), and 'vocabulaire' (107-59) are consistent with his 'Extrait de la légende de Gesar', 'La légende de l'origine du lac Kuku-nor', and other such texts; but Bieltmeier has gone further, and contextualized every entry in his glossary (155-236) by referring to the appropriate line or lines of his text. As examples I give two entries from 'Westtibetisch vergleichendes Textglossar':

'áo (5,1/6,5/6,22/6,25/7,14/13,8) "Mutter", áola (6,4) Dativ, áosi (6,6) Ergativ, áobiseka (4,23) postpositionale Fügung der determinierten Form, vgl. s. v. -seka, áowečizis (4,13) Ergativ beim unbestimmten Artikel; áo mli áta (6,23/7,2/7,9) "mein lieber Sohn" (idiomat.); áo zu (6,25/7,4) "bitte Mutter", (7,14) "danke Mutter" (idiomat.); Read áo neben ama "mother, mama"; Sprigg 1966:187 [áo] "mother" und ibid. 188 [ámá] "mummy, mother (archaic)"; Rangan 7,14 ama "mother"; Ramsay ámá "id."; Hoshi (203) 'ama "mother, mama"; ST ma, nach Jäschke 604 daneben auch a-ma (155).

'bañ (10,9) "Kuh"; vgl. Read bañ "cow" und Read 84 de bañposi "That cow..." (determinierter Ergativ): vgl. Rangan 1975:62 ba-khañ "cowshed"; Ramsay balañ "cow" Koshal 190 bolañ "id." neben Koshal 1976:175 ba "id."; ST ba (157).³

³ My informant insisted on [ʔba:ŋ] for 'cow', a pronunciation that implies a compound of the two lexical items ba and -ang; possibly this phonetic difference is due to the difference in dialect between my Skardu material and Bieltmeier's Khapalu material.

The entries in brackets following the head-word refer to the appropriate line of the text, '5,1' etc. for 'ano', and '10,9' for 'ban', e.g. 'de ano na bu' (5,1).(30); 'Jene Mutter und jenen Sohn' (40); 'ano zu' (6,25), (31); 'Bitte Mutter' (41); 'ata ano' (13,8), (35); 'Vater und Mutter' (46); 'khwe e nor ban ganma' (10,9), (33); "sein anderes Vieh und die ganzen Kühe" (43).

This approach through contextualization within the Balti text might well have won Bielmeier a commendation from Firth, whose concept of collocation at the lexical level within a theory of levels of meaning also arises out of contextualization. I am thinking here of such passages as the following, from Firth 1957:

'As Wittgenstein says, "the meaning of words lies in their use". - - - You shall know a word by the company it keeps! One of the meanings of ass is its habitual collocation with such other words as those quoted above ['silly', etc.]. - - - The habitual collocations in which words under study appear are quite simply the mere word accompaniment, the other word-material in which they are most commonly or most characteristically embedded. It can be safely stated that part of the meaning of cows can be indicated by such collocations as They are milking the cows, Cows give milk. - - - The words are mutually expectant and mutually prehended' (11-12).⁴

Another of Bielmeier's entries:

'ādami (12,4) "irdisch, menschlich"; pers. arab. ādami (ādami)' (155),

identifies 'ādami as a loan-word, and gives the current Persian pronunciation, followed, in round brackets, by the Arabic original. In addition, all eighty loan-words found in the text are separately listed in 'Lehnwörterverzeichnis des Textes' (237-9); e.g.

'aphsūs "Mitleid, Bedauern", pers. afsus';

by far the majority of these loan-words are, as one would expect, attributed to Persian.

⁴ The collocation of gau with mata in the following phrase and clause from Khushwant Singh's short story 'Holy men and the cow-mother', "'we will shed the last drop of our blood to protect our gau mata (mother cow)" and 'the crowd yelled back: "Gau Hamari Mata Hai (The cow is our mother)"' (1969, 124), justifies him in leaving gau and mata untranslated in the English text; for no such reverent collocation of cow with mother is to be expected in English. On the contrary a typically derisive English collocation, entirely opposed to the veneration expressed in the gau mata phrase and clause, are to be seen in: "'There're only two kinds of women, Middleton, whores and breeding cows. - - - My mother was a breeding cow, - - -'" (Wilson 1956/8, 147). The collocation of moo with cow, hinted at in the phrase silly moo from a popular radio series, continues the jocular association.

Entries other than loan-words, such as *ño* and *bañ* above, not only provide corresponding forms from other West Tibetan dialects but, under 'SI' ('Schrifttibetisch'), give the corresponding Written Tibetan form too. These Written Tibetan forms also appear in a separate list, 'Index der im Glossar verzeichneten schrifttibetischen Aquivalente' (240-5), containing 467 entries, in each of which the Written Tibetan orthographic form is associated with its corresponding Balti spoken word or lexical item in phonemic transcription; e.g.

'a-ma:ño' (245); 'ba : bañ' (243).

The two lists, 'Lehnwörterverzeichnis' and 'Index der im Glossar verzeichneten schrifttibetischen Aquivalente', cannot fail to be as time-saving for the student of Tibetan dialects as they must have been time-consuming for the author to prepare.

The glossary is preceded by more than a hundred pages of grammatical analysis ('Deskriptive Untersuchung zur Grammatik des Balti anhand des oral tradierten Erzähltextes unter Hinzuziehung von Purik und Ladakhi' (49-152), introduced by a section on phonetics and phonology (49-71). The 'Phonem-inventar' gives five vowel consonant phonemes, three of which are bracketed to show that they are attributed to foreign influence.

Another dialect study that competes rather more closely with Bielmeier's than de Roerich's in his claim to have pioneered a new form of presentation is Tucci's Tibetan folksongs from the district of Gyantse (1949). This, too, gives the Tibetan text for these traditional songs, fifty-four in number, mostly work songs, together with eight pages of marriage songs from the Gyantse-Shigatse area, and follows it by translations into English, fairly heavily foot-noted with explanations and spelling corrections; e.g. on

'a joi sñiñ dañ adra ba
p'a yul byañ p'yogs Ra riñ' (19)

Tucci writes:

¹A jo means literally: "elder brother, lord". In this case it is used as a honorific form for "Your master, I", the lover, or husband.⁵

²Ra riñ misspelling for Rva sgreñ, treading of the maps, name of a town and of a province to the N.E. of Lhasa' (43).

The above two lines show a major difference between Tucci's study of these songs from the Tsang Province of southern Tibet and both Bielmeier's and de Roerich's texts in that they have been cloaked in Tibetan orthography. All phonetic detail has thereby been eliminated; and Tucci has not attempted a phonemic or a phonological analysis. Such notable characteristics of the Tsang dialect as backness of vowel (e.g. [-a:], -ɔ:, -u(1)]) in lexical items in which Lhasa Tibetan has frontness ([-e:], -ø:, -y(:)]), and Balti has [-ɛl, -ɔl, -əl], cannot, therefore, appear; e.g.

⁵ Jäschke's spelling 'a-jo' (603) agrees with Tucci's spelling 'A jo' in his note, not with the 'a jo-' in the first line of the song.