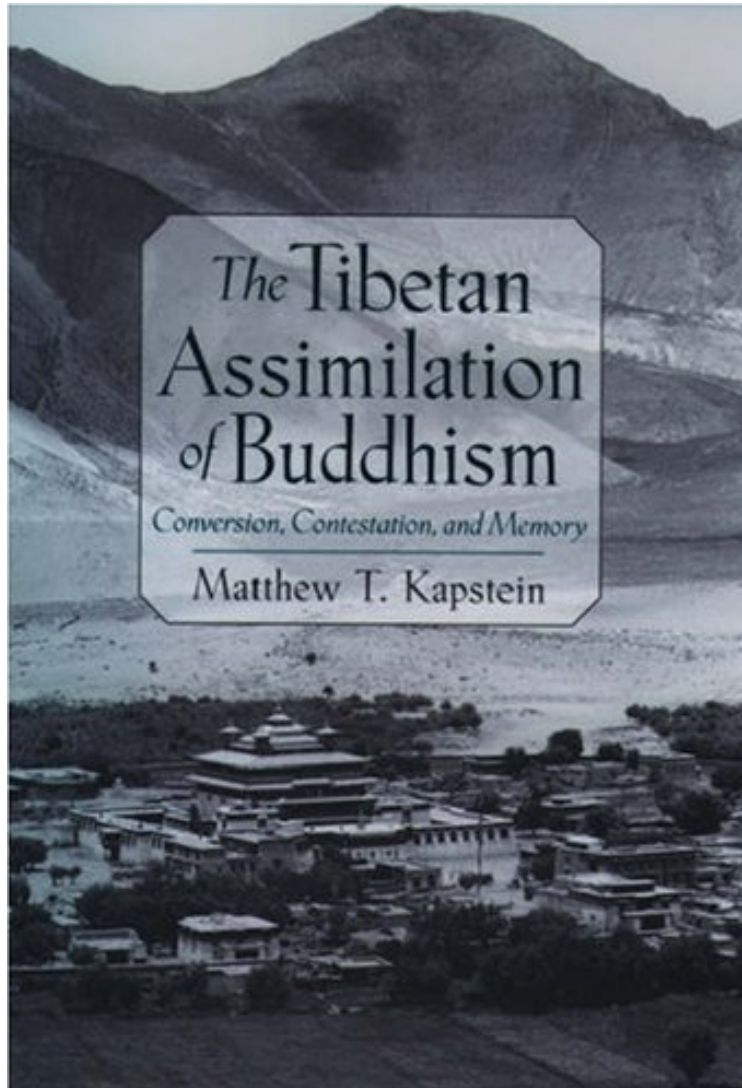


(Mobile book) The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory

# The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory

*Matthew T. Kapstein*

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#2947813 in Books Matthew T Kapstein 2000-09-21 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.10 x 1.10 x 6.00, 1.59 #File Name: 0195131223336 pages The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism Conversion Contestation and Memory | File size: 23.Mb

**Matthew T. Kapstein : The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Innovative approach to the study of Tibetan Buddhism By JPC In The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism Kapstein tells the story of the adoption of alien cultural elements and their

interaction with native tradition. Like Islamization in Central Asia, the assimilation of Buddhism in Tibetan did not entail a static replication of foreign elements, but a transformation of these elements in a new context. The Testament of sBa, for example, is not read as an historical document, but is examined to find the ways in which Indian Buddhism's influence was mitigated in favor of Chinese influence in short, it is not read as an historical record but as historiography. Kapstein traces the development of Tibetan historiography, and demonstrates the changing role of Chinese and Indian influence in the narrative, and how this was intertwined with the expansion and contraction of the Tibetan empire.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. not an easy read but worth the effort

By inner exile

Two-thirds of the book (Part II, III) are composed of earlier publications the erudite Tibetologist had collected and studied over 20 years, while only Part I contains new material.

1. Introduction: Death, Literacy, and Tibet's Buddhist Elite (pp. 1-20)

I. Conversion and Narrative

2. The Chinese Mother of Tibet's Dharma King: The Testament of Ba and the Beginnings of Tibetan Buddhist Historiography (pp. 21-37): The author examines why 'the later diffusion of Buddhism [in Tibet]' (bstan-pa'i phyi dar) falsely attributes king-emperor Trhi Songdetsen's (r. 756-97) parentage to the Chinese princess Jincheng (d. 739). "[S]he was remembered for having promoted Buddhist funerary rites among the nobility even before the conversion of the Tibetan court, and thus to have adopted a definite stance in the internal Tibetan debate on the contested issue surrounding [Bn] mortuary ritual and the Buddhist cosmology of karma and samsara" (p. 35). For a full, annotated English translation of an earlier version of the text under consideration ("The Testament of Ba"), see Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger's dBa bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha (Beitrage zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens) (German Edition) Vienna 2000.

3. The Mark of Vermilion: Rebirth and Resurrection in an Early Medieval Tale (pp. 38-50)

4. Plague, Power, and Reason. The Royal Conversion to Buddhism Reconsidered (pp. 51-65): "Inner Asian outbreak of what European medievalists now term Justinian Plague" (p. 42) wrought havoc in Tibet (739), causing numerous deaths among the nobility as well. As a result, the handful of foreign Buddhists (from Khotan) were expelled from Tibet, and religious practice was banned until circa 761. "Tibet rose to imperial greatness, ruling much of Inner Asia...largely on the strength of its indigenous resources and traditions. Within a few generations of the conversion..., however, the empire grew weak, and, riven by factional feuds among nobles, it collapsed. Evidently, the later monarchs' religious concerns led them to divert too much in the way of resources to the monks and monasteries, and to devote too little to the maintenance of Tibet's earlier strength" (p. 52). Kapstein argues there are no available data to support statements like the last one. "Buddhism interested the Tibetans in no small measure through its successful promotion of a particular, well-ordered, cosmological framework, which implied the ethical and ritual mastery of the cosmos it promoted, and through its institutionalized mastery of techniques, which conformed with the bureaucratic requirements of empire" (p. 59). Tibetan imperial state was viewed "as the body and mandala of Buddha Vairocana," as attested partly in the design and decoration of the first monastery at Samye (founded c. 779).

II. Sources of Contestation

5. From Korea to Tibet. Action at a Distance in the Early Medieval World System (pp. 69-84): Originally presented at a conference in 1995, this chapter attempts to trace the influence of Chan Buddhism in certain Tibetan lineages, while also underscoring the relevance of a Korean master of northern Chan named Kim Hwasang (Ch. Jin Heshang), based at Chengdu (Sichuan) in the 750s, for Tibetan religious context.

6. "What is "Tibetan Scholasticism"?" (pp. 85-120) makes use of two previous papers: 'Religious Syncretism in 13th Century Tibet: The Limitless Ocean Cycle' (1985) and 'From Dol-po-pa to 'Ba'-mda' Dge-legs: Three Jo-nang-pa Masters on the Interpretation of Prajnaparamita' (1997). A brief introduction to Buddhist hermeneutics with the help of examples from Sakya Pandita (1182-1251), Karma Pakshi (1204-83), and Dlpopa Sherap Gyaltzen (1292-1361).

7. 'The Purificatory Gem and its Cleansing' (pp. 121-37; first published under the same title in 1989) dwells on the Terma ([re]discovered treasures) tradition on the apropos of a 'late polemical discussion of apocryphal texts' generated by the Mongour (not Mongol!) Geluk scholar Sumpa Khenpo (1707-87).

III. Myth, Memory, Revelation

8. 'The Imaginal Persistence of the Empire' (pp. 141-62) incorporates an earlier study called 'Remarks on the Mani Kambum and the Cult of Avalokitesvara in Tibet' (1992). "[E]ven among those Tibetan historians who are inclined to accept the validity of the Mani Kambum [itself a (re)discovered treasure said to have been extracted from a pillar of the Lhasa Jo-khang] and related traditions, there are those who see evidence in it not of flourishing Avalokitesvara cult in ancient Tibet, but rather of a secret transmission from Songtsen Gampo (r. 617-49) to a small number of worthy adepts, family members, and courtiers, who did not, in turn, transmit the king's teachings to a subsequent generation" (p. 148). The reader can also come across gems like the following one: "[Enlightened a]ction is freedom from hankering after whatever there is that arises incessantly in mind, whose nature is pure awareness...Being empty and free from grasping, it is like the moon reflected in water. Being free from all superimposed limits, it is without features that serve to define it. And because it has ever been present within you, it cannot be achieved" (from Trhi Songdetsen's spiritual advice to his daughter Trhompagyen, "Adornment of Town") p. 154.

9. 'Samantabhadra and Rudra. Myths of Innate Enlightenment and Radical Evil' (originally appeared under the same title in 1992) as told by the Dzogchen thinker Longchen Rabjampa (1308-63) and treasure-discoverer (tertn) Orgyen Lingpa (b. 1360). Allow me to offer an alternative to the author's interpretation of a description referring to the 'ground (of all)' ([kun] gzhi): He writes "[t]he ground in its indeterminacy is essentially empty (ngo-bo stong); in its unlimited potency is characteristically open, or limpid (rang-bzhin gsal)" (p. 169). Why

not, as is usually translated, 'its essence is emptiness, and its nature is radiance,' since, to my knowledge at least, 'gsal' is nowhere rendered as "open"? Whereas 'stong' is not infrequently seen as denoting "open(ness)". "The path of practice by means of which our recovery of [the primordial Buddha] Samantabhadra's ["Omnibeneficient", or simply 'All Good', Tib. Kun-tu bzang-po] enlightenment is to take place is...the path of the Great Perfection [rdzogs chen], whose skillful means are intended precisely to introduce sentient beings directly to their affinity with Samantabhadra...But what is one to do who is so bewildered by obscurations that he simply cannot perceive that to which he is to be introduced...? That was Milarepa's problem; perhaps it is also my problem; and it is possibly your problem, too" (pp. 169-70). Exactly. "The myth of Rudra 'explains' the origins of tantricism, in part because Rudrahood characterizes our nature as embodied persons who are constitutionally disposed to lust and self-protection, to arrogance and rage. Tantricism...is soteriologically necessitated by our being what we are, by our world's being as it is" (p. 176).<sup>10</sup> The Amnesic Monarch and the Five Mnemonic Men. "Memory" in the Great Perfection Tradition (pp. 178-201; first published in 1992). In addition to a concluding prayer, two timeless and allegorically instructive teachings are excerpted and analyzed from the vast corpus of the closely related cycles known as "The Penetration of the Intention of Samantabhadra" and "Primordial Purity, Self-Emergent and Self-Arises," both by the Jangter (Northern Treasure) Dzogchenpa named 'The Vulture Feathered awareness-holder' (rigdzin Gdemchen, 1337-1408). Extensive endnotes (pp. 204-72), exhaustive bibliography (pp. 275-303), index (pp. 305-16). Further reading: The peerless Herbert V. Guenther's (1917-2006) *Wholeness Lost and Wholeness Regained: Forgotten Tales of Individuation from Ancient Tibe* (SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies) 1994 SUNY. Michael L. Walter's *Buddhism and Empire: The Political and Religious Culture of Early Tibet* (Brill's Tibetan Studies Library) 2009 Leiden.

This book explores the Buddhist role in the formation of Tibetan religious thought and identity. In three major sections, the author examines Tibet's eighth-century conversion, sources of dispute within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and the continuing revelation of the teaching in both doctrine and myth.

convincingly argued ... informative and insightful \* The Middle Way \* A rich field of thoughtful analysis and a fertile seedbed of ideas about how Dharma was received and transmitted in Tibet up to the fifteenth century \* The Middle Way \* About the Author Matthew T. Kapstein is at The Divinity School and the College, University of Chicago.