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Geistige Heimat im Buddhismus aus Tibet: Eine empirische Studie am Beispiel der Kagyuepas in Deutschland. By Eva Sabine Saalfrank. Ulm: Fabri Verlag, 1997, viii + 529 + xxx pages, ISBN 3–931997–05–7, DM/SFr 34.–.

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This contribution on one aspect of developments within Buddhism in Germany is the slightly revised publication of a dissertation submitted to the Department of Anthropology, University of Ulm, in 1994. Its focus is on developments and activities at *bKa-brgyud* (Kagyu) centers rather than on doctrine. Thus, the field of study is defined in the vocabulary of the social sciences as *subculture*, or *spiritual subculture*, an enclave within German society where Eva Saalfrank herself is spiritually at home. As a graduate student of anthropology, she gathered her sources with qualitative methodological instruments favoring material from an oral history approach. Her study offers an ethnography with an in-depth insight into acculturation processes.

In order to place the scope and aim of this study within a wider context and in order to understand that it deals with aspects of a very recent phase within the history of Buddhism in the West, some remarks on the starting point and the period of time at which Eva Saalfrank gathered material seem advisable, along with some comments on the current situation in Europe.

The statistically-evaluated questionnaire (reproduced in supplement I–XIII) which served as a pre-test reflects the situation in 1986. Although it was laid out during a summer camp (Chime Rinpoche) visited by people from all parts in Germany, and for three months in Kamalashila Institute, and although material concerning the main Drikung-Kagyu center was taken into account, Kamalashila Institute, established in a castle thirty kilometers west of Bonn and Cologne, is the main starting and reference point. In the 1980s this place was accepted as the most important focus for Kagyu-orientated activities in Germany. It was chosen on the advice of His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa, but the establishing phase was overshadowed by its patron's death. However, it was visited by most Kagyu masters and it hosted Kalu Rinpoche, who celebrated the Kalachakra Ritual there in 1984. Moreover, key events organized by the Deutsche Buddhistische Union (German Buddhist Association) took place there during the unsuccessful struggle to gain for Buddhism the legal status of a religious corporation. Since 1986 the Kagyu association has shared the castle with a Zen group. While inter-Buddhist integration went on, the role of the Association in Kagyu activities in Germany and Europe disintegrated, although on the official, organizational level the Association remained the focus of Kagyu orientated groups up to the end of the 1980s. However, potential for conflict existed right from its inception, though it manifested in shifts and schismata only around the news of the reincarnation(s). The Association, which runs Kamalashila, can be characterized by a relative lack of continuity in terms of member structure and programs, and it was less successful

in establishing connections with official levels in German society compared, for example, with that Tibetan center in Hamburg founded in 1977, originally open to all Tibetan schools, which hosted *dGe lugs geshes* and won His Holiness the Dalai Lama for its patron. During the time that Saalfrank collected her sources, in the second half of the 1980s, members and friends of the Karma-Kagyü Association in the Kamalashila Institute, urged by Sharmapa, started a periodical, *Dharmanektar*, and dropped it, struggled for applicable structures for systematic studies (Khen-po courses) in vain, and established the Drub khang in Halscheid as a place of retreat which saw only one three-year retreat.

In footnotes Eva Saalfrank refers to a separate unpublished study by herself which deals with processes of institutionalization, but she does not list it in the literature appendix. Consequently, apart from some remarks on conflicts in the 1990s in a one-page supplement, the topics discussed above are dealt with only *en passant*. In this foreword from 1997 she correctly writes that her study deals with Kagyü history in Germany before the schism (p. viii).

Eva Saalfrank formulates two general aims or motives. In the introductory part of the book the question is raised as to what extent *understanding of the foreign* (*Verstehen des Fremden*) is possible. This discussion seems to introduce a buzzword from ethnographic literature (*das Fremde*) into an ongoing theological interreligious dialogue. Indeed, this formulation is in line with Eva Saalfrank's thanks to a Protestant foundation for a scholarship on page vii. When the reader is informed of a personal motive, namely setting Kagyü adherents apart from practitioners of New Age spirituality, this can easily be accepted in a study undertaken by a practicing Buddhist who has taken refuge at the feet of a Kagyü master. However, a reader unfamiliar with the current discourse on religious minorities in some European countries including Germany will miss the point, which has to do with the position of Buddhism and in particular Tibetan Buddhist schools in countries where history and constitution grant extraordinary privileges to institutions associated with Christian churches. While Buddhist—and especially Tibetan Buddhist—teachers were invited to and became respected and active members in all kinds of interreligious dialogue activities organized by theologians (for example in the Hamburg University-based interreligious dialogue begun in 1984), other theologians were organizing anti-cult activities. They started watching Buddhist organizations, and especially Kagyü centers, after the Sixteenth Karmapa's Black Hat Ceremony in 1977, and found in Ole Nydahl and his Karma Kagyü Network a welcome target for their polemics (for example, Dialog Center Danmark-Germany). Some anti-cult views managed to find their

way into the interim report of the German parliamentary commission published in 1997 (Saalfrank's study was published only in that year!), where we learn from a passage on Buddhist circles that "Conflicts have arisen in this sector nearly exclusively around Tibetan Buddhist groups" ("Zwischenbericht der Enquete-Kommission 'Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen.'" *Deutscher Bundestag - Drucksache 13/8170* (July 7, 1997) p. 45: "*Buddhistische Kreise...Konflikte hat es in diesem Bereich fast ausschließlich um Gruppen des tibetischen Buddhismus gegeben.*"). The authors of the final report (Drucksache Nr. 13/10950 [1998]) try to avoid the danger of stigmatization by naming groups.

After this lengthy excursion, a detailed summary seems appropriate in order to facilitate the interested reader's access to a rather voluminous study lacking an index.

In Saalfrank's study, essential impulses for structuring the *Erkenntnisinteresse* (drive for knowledge) are derived from Glock's *Dimensions of Religiosity* and from concepts formulated within the sociology of knowledge by Berger and Luckmann. The publication consists of three parts. The core part (pp. 75–460) is headed "*Empirischer Teil...*" and has between pages 280 and 281 nine pages of nicely-reproduced color prints which document examples of equipment in places of worship, from private altars to *stūpas*. The empirical part is preceded by chapters on the history of research and followed by an analytical part (pp. 461–529). Appendices include the questionnaire with statistical analysis, the question manual used in interviews, and maps with quantitative data quoting Martin Baumann (*Deutsche Buddhisten*, 1993).

The introductory part offers an outline of the framework and developments of Buddhism in Germany (pp. 12–47), a definition of the field, and a discussion of methods, sources, schemata and keynotes for interpretation and also on the researcher's situation (pp. 48–74) as an insider fearing hassles from her academic peers.

The second, main part (pp. 75–460) starts with an outline of the field under study, which is structured according to categories of Saalfrank's field definition (norms, *Leitbilder*, and so on of a subculture) and illustrated by quotations from interviews and questionnaires. A separate chapter focuses on the process of verbal autonomy (*sprachlicher Autonomisierungsprozess, autonomer Sprachbezirk*). It includes a list of terminology and examples illustrating the insiders' colloquial style and the texts used in rituals. For analysis, Saalfrank does not use philological arguments, but creatively applies and continues what K. J. Notz (*Der Buddhismus in Deutschland in seinen Selbstdarstellungen*, 1984) had begun in a study on the early reception of Buddhism in Germany; Saalfrank discovers that her Buddhists and

those Notz studied use hardly any terms in common. The analytical key term for the next two chapters is *distribution of knowledge*. Here, the roots of institutionalization are traced in a variety of simultaneous individual activities. Sources for descriptions of such activities include the autobiography of the controversial activist Ole Nydahl and a sample of interviews with and letters from people who set up places for meditation practice, invited lamas, organized key events, and established associations, shops, publishing companies, and so on in Germany. Chapter four of this part deals with distribution of knowledge through teachings. Three *styles* serve as examples for tracing a process of reinterpretation. This section is wound up by applying a three-phase model for acculturation which offers not much more than a quotation from other studies, but Eva Saalfrank supplements this article with a prognosis and an evaluation of parts of her questionnaire giving *motives for the adaptation of a foreign system of symbols* (pp. 229–231).

Chapter five (pp. 232–301) deals systematically with the role of visible symbols relating to the key term *spheres of identification* (*Identifikationsraume*). By way of introduction, different foci are listed, ranging from participation in *teachings* (that is, through lectures or explanation of religious practice by lamas visiting or residing at centers in Germany), initiations and *pūjās*, to the individual practice of meditation, pilgrimages to Buddhist places in Asia, and integration of art forms. With this background, the role and function of Tibetan art and of the presence of Tibetan teachers is described and analyzed. While in all preceding chapters the importance of the teacher's presence was mentioned, here different role aspects are systematically discussed. The role of art is documented on color photographs from individual and group places for religious ceremonies and illustrated by quotations from interviews, *inter alia* with people engaged in *stūpa* construction in Germany.

Chapter six traces aspects of acculturation processes on the level of individual lives. Most pages are devoted to the presentation of material from in-depth interviews (pp. 325–426: *biographische Portraits*), which illustrate different types of lifestyles and degrees of commitment, the most extreme being the traditional lama-training in a three-year retreat. All this is introduced by data ranging from age to political interest. These data had served Saalfrank as an aid in finding appropriate or representative interview partners. The demographically relevant data (training/profession, age-structure) outlines the position of the subculture's members within German society in 1986 (II.6.1 - *Versuch einer gesellschaftlichen Verortung des Feldes*, pp. 303–325). It is supplemented by a mainly France-based Tibetan lama's observations given to Saalfrank in 1992, which indicate

changes (pp. 319ff.).

The final chapter of this second part deals with communication and interaction between the subculture and its surroundings. On the individual level, relevant information from interviews and questionnaires is condensed into a *pattern of reaction*. Concerning resonance to the presence of Buddhist centers—two main ones, set up already in the early 1980s in rural areas, Karma-Kagyü in Wachendorf (the above mentioned Kamalashila Institute) and Drikung-Kagyü in Medelon were selected — neighbors and landlords are quoted and newspaper reports are analyzed to illustrate the complex role of the local authorities as well as the media and its advisors from the anti-cult scene. One example demonstrates a far-reaching conflict which came to be taken up by all of the big weeklies in Germany; the other (Wachendorf-Kamalashila) shows a fairly conflict-free process of acceptance resulting in mutual respect.

Chapters within Part III, the analytical section (pp. 462–529), are headed by key terms indicating dimensions of religiosity. These are discussed with reference to arguments formulated in literature mainly from sociology, quoting Weber, Berger, Luckmann, and Bourdieu, among others. The study concludes with an overview of the results in short paragraphs (pp. 526–529).

Obviously, Eva Saalfrank has diligently taken up threads from other studies which touched her field. Her aim, to trace as many aspects as possible from different perspectives, inevitably invites criticism. Different things can be taken up, according to any reader's disciplinary background; someone with a philological training, for example, will criticize the lack of reflection on how to transliterate. Occasionally an unfortunate impression is produced by verbal awkwardness. Some sentences seem to formulate unfounded views, but the diligent reader remembers that ample evidence for the statement has already been given before. Deficits in revision?