

47

Autumn 2016

EBHR

**EUROPEAN BULLETIN
OF HIMALAYAN RESEARCH**

European Bulletin of Himalayan Research

The *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* (EBHR) was founded by the late Richard Burghart in 1991. It is the result of a partnership between France (Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes, CNRS, Paris), Germany (South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg) and the United Kingdom (School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS]). From 2014 to 2018 the editorial board is based at the South Asia Institute (SAI) in Heidelberg, Germany and comprises William Sax (SAI, Managing Editor), Christoph Bergmann (SAI), Christiane Brosius (Karl Jaspers Centre, Heidelberg), Julia Dame (SAI), Axel Michaels (SAI), Marcus Nuesser (SAI), Karin Polit (SAI), Mona Schrempf (Berlin), Anja Wagner, Astrid Zotter (SAI), Heleen Plaisier, and Arik Moran (University of Haifa, book reviews editor).

The EBHR's contributing editors are

Martijn van Beek (University of Aarhus)
Tone Bleie (University of Tromsø)
Ben Campbell (Durham University)
Pascale Dollfus (CNRS, Paris)
Martin Gaenszle (University of Vienna)
David Gellner (University of Oxford)
Ingemar Grandin (Linköping University)
Marie Lecomte-Tilouine (CNRS, Paris)
Chiara Letizia (University of Milano-Bicocca)
Fiona McConnell (University of Newcastle)
Axel Michaels (University of Heidelberg)
Matthew Nelson (SOAS)
Judith Pettigrew (University of Limerick)
Philippe Ramirez (CNRS, Paris)
Anne de Sales (CNRS, Paris)
Surya Subedi (University of Leeds)
Mark Watson (Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh)
Astrid Zotter (University of Heidelberg)

The following address should be used for correspondence:

William Sax
South Asia Institute
INF 330, 69120 Heidelberg
Germany
Email: william.sax@urz.uni-heidelberg.de

For subscription details and back issues (>3 years)
<http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/ebhr>

The EBHR is published from Kathmandu in collaboration with
Social Science Baha (<http://www.soscbaha.org>)

EBHR 47

ARTICLES

- Hyolmo, in time 9
Robert Desjarlais
- To Kill or not to Kill? Helambu valley as a no kill zone, the issue of blood sacrifice and the transformation of ritual patterns in Hyolmo shamanism 15
Davide Torri
- 'My name is Maya Lama/Hyolmo/Syuba': Negotiating identity in Hyolmo diaspora communities 40
Lauren Gawne
- Yolmo women on the move: Marriage, migrant work and relocation to Kathmandu 69
Seika Sato

CONFERENCE

- Studying Documents in Pre-modern South Asia and Beyond: Problems and Perspectives 96
Simon Cubelic and Astrid Zotter

BOOK REVIEWS

- Yangdon Dhondup, Ulrich Pagel, and Geoffrey Samuel: *Monastic and Lay Traditions in North-Eastern Tibet* 100
Antonio Terrone
- Charles Ramble, Peter Schwieger, Alice Travers: *Tibetans who Escaped the Historian's Net: Studies in the Social History of Tibetan Societies Environment in India* 103
David Templeman
- Georgios T. Halkias. Honolulu: *Luminous Bliss: A Religious History of Pure Land Literature in Tibet* 107
Karen Liljenberg
- Marion Wettstein: *Naga Textiles: Design, Technique, Meaning and Effect of a Local Craft Tradition in Northeast India* 111
Eva Fischer

EDITORIAL

The essays in this special issue were first presented as contributions to a workshop on the Hyolmo organized by the research project “Negotiating Boundaries in Religious Discourse and Practice” and sponsored by the Cluster of *Excellence Asia and Europe in a Global Context*, at Heidelberg University on 14-15 November 2014. Originating near Kyirong in Tibet, the Hyolmo migrated hundreds of years ago to the Helambu Valley in Nepal. During the past century they have continued their migratory journeys in search of work: to Kathmandu, India, the Middle East and, more recently, New York, London, Israel and elsewhere. In the present cultural and political climate of Nepal, where ethnicity looms so large as a political and cultural issue, how does such a mobile and diasporic community define itself? The essays in this special issue respond to that question in terms of religious practice, self-designation, and migrant labour. Davide Torri, who organized the original workshop, analyzes the tensions between, on the one hand, rituals of animal sacrifice associated with shamanic side of Hyolmo religion, and on the other hand pressures from the Buddhist side not to perform such rituals. Lauren Gawne writes about the multiple ethnonyms used by Hyolmo to designate themselves, which are surprisingly diverse. Seika Sato compares the traditional movement of Hyolmo brides to the homes of their husbands with the contemporary movement of Hyolmo women in search of work. Despite their geographical isolation, the Hyolmo are evidently caught up in processes of mobility and identity transformation that are typical of many peoples around the world in the 21st century.

William Sax, Editor
European Bulletin of Himalayan Studies

To Kill or not to Kill? Helambu valley as a *no kill* zone, the issue of blood sacrifice and the transformation of ritual patterns in Hyolmo shamanism.

Davide Torri

Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe*, Heidelberg University

ABSTRACT

With this paper I want to highlight patterns of change that are affecting Hyolmo approaches towards shamanic rituals, especially the ongoing debate surrounding the practice of ritual sacrifice. While the issue is surely related to the conceptualisation of the Helambu valley as a Buddhist sacred land, the practice is also challenged by other factors. As a matter of fact, blood offering is increasingly seen as a despicable action and many shamans, influenced by Buddhist ideas and/or due to a certain degree of social pressure, are transforming and adapting their rituals in order to cope with this challenge to the very core of their every transaction with the spirit world. Among the other relevant factors that affect the perceptions and practices of blood sacrifice, the urbanisation of Hyolmo and their transformation into a urban middle class plays a role, as does the idealisation of the Helambu valley as a sacred space where both ritual activities involving animal sacrifice and the consumption of meat are strongly discouraged and socially sanctioned.

Shamanism and Buddhism among the Hyolmo

It is a well-known fact, as amply demonstrated in the works of several renowned scholars (Samuel 1993, Bellezza 2005, Ramble 2008, Balicki 2008), that Buddhism, encroaching and spreading across the Tibetan plateau and the Himalayan slopes and valleys, has incorporated indigenous, pre-existing religious complexes of a different nature, absorbed several elements from it in a constant process of adaptation, and introduced important changes in terms of beliefs and practices (Kapstein 2000, Kapstein and Dotson 2007, Heirman and Bumbacher 2007). In these processes, stretched over time and space, one of the main areas of conflict with the other religions has been the issue of animal sacrifice, the so-called 'red offering' (Tib. dmar chod). According to popular ideas, local deities prefer the red offering,

European Bulletin of Himalayan Research 47: 15-39 (2016)

consisting of blood and meat, over the white one. The shift from the red to the white one marks also a movement toward stabilisation, domestication and pacification of the aforementioned deities. The original domestication of territorial gods and spirits operated by Padmasambhava corresponds to their cooptation into the Buddhist sphere, while their preference for blood is considered a step back towards the supposed darkness of pre-Buddhist times. This liminal dimension of practices and beliefs is the realm of the shaman, subordinated to a Buddhist worldview that incorporates him and assigns him a space for his activities: shamanic local deities become local Buddhist worldly deities. Debate about the red offering has characterized the dialectic processes between Buddhism and other religions since its inception, when Buddhism started confronting and challenging other Indian religions on ethical grounds and took a clear stance on animal sacrifice (McDermott 1989, Keown 2005).

When Buddhism was introduced in Tibet it already had a long tradition of polemical writing against blood sacrifice and the cults based on these practices, involving the ritual worship of local deities and spirits which were still to be incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon, despite being degraded to a lower status (Ruegg 2008). The repertoire of texts rejecting the so-called red offering was adapted to the new environments and enriched by several texts directly aimed at the eradication of the heterodox rituals. This ideological and ethical struggle was directed against differing expressions of belief and spirituality and their religious agents, variously identified in the texts as *gshen* or followers of the *bön* religion (Martin 2001, van Schaik 2013), exponents of the village religion (Ramble 1990, 2008) and the heretic lamas of the Tibetan dark age of fragmentation (Dalton 2011).

Yet, despite their formal allegiance to Buddhism, the practice of animal sacrifice must have been very resilient among Buddhist communities of the Himalayas, and not an easy one to eradicate, as it probably was and still is grounded in the material and pragmatic needs of people concerned with daily survival, wealth and fertility issues (Mumford 1989, Balicki 2008)¹. Moreover, the practice continues to be a relevant part of the rich

1 In the works of Mumford (1989) and Balicki (2008), we see examples of similar patterns related to conflicting practices due to the co-presence of shamans and lamas among different groups, namely the Gurung of Nepal and the Lhopo of Sikkim (India). In one case, the Gurung shamanic religious specialists reclaim the right to perform the

repertoire of ritual techniques of what can be seen as the other half of Himalayan religions, a shamanic religious system,² or systems, which still thrives and reclaims its space despite countless efforts by numerous agents at eradication, appropriation and domestication (Riboli and Torri 2013). Among the Hyolmo, one such shamanic religious specialist is called *pombo* or *bombo*. The specific aim of this paper is to highlight patterns of change affecting Hyolmo shamanic rituals, especially in light of the ongoing debate surrounding the practice of ritual sacrifice.

The employment of ritual violence (including animal sacrifice) in the course of religious activities continues to be a major point of friction opposing the two different sets of ritual techniques (shamanic and Buddhist) characterising the village religion of the inhabitants of Helambu Valley, also known as Yolmo *beyul*. Although the two components of Hyolmo spiritual life are inherently different, they constitute, for the villagers, just different parts of same ensemble. This paper is limited to the analysis of the role of violence and animal sacrifice in the aforementioned shamanic rituals and the current trend which, at present, seems to be oriented towards the refusal and rejection of these practices, combined with a general aversion to animal killing in the valley.

Up to ten years ago animal sacrifice in the context of shamanic rituals seemed to be the norm, but due to concurrent, multiple factors including social change and the increased influence of Buddhism, the practice seems to be coming to an abrupt end. The increased influence of Buddhism is surely one of the key factors in the contemporary ethnic revival process

annual deer sacrifice for their ancestral deities, while the Buddhist clergy is trying to reformulate the local socio-religious sphere by incorporating the local deities into the wider classes of supernatural beings wandering through the six worlds. The adoption of a shared worldview, grounded on the theory of karma and revolving around the notion of *samsara*, offers the Gurung people as well as supernatural beings a gradual path toward salvation. Among the Lhobo, the field of religious activities is shared among different religious specialists (village lamas, pawo and bonghting), all of whom are looked upon with equal contempt by educated lamas from major religious establishments, since village practices and specialists seem to be concerned only with mundane, apotropaic activities revolving around local deities instead of pursuing the higher ethical aims of the *dharma*.

- 2 The presence of religious specialists, variously named, which we may collectively term “shamans” despite pertaining to many different religious systems yet showing similar features has been attested in many of the Himalayan cultures. See, for example, Balicki 2008, de Sales 1991, Desjarlais 1992, Hitchcock and Jones 1976, Höfer 1981, Holmberg 1996, Maskarinec 1995, Mumford 1989, Peters 1998, Riboli 2000, Riboli and Torri 2013.

and probably the cornerstone of the whole narrative that sustains, shapes and upholds Hyolmo identity. Increasingly, blood offerings are seen as despicable and many shamans, influenced by Buddhist ideas and/or due to a certain degree of social pressure, are transforming and adapting their rituals in order to cope with this challenge to the very core of every transaction with the spirit world. In order to understand what is at stake, it might be useful to look at two inter-related themes: firstly, the relationship between Hyolmo culture and the specific part of Nepalese landscape that the Hyolmo inhabit and claim as their ancestral land, in which their relatively recent history as a distinct group is rooted and which seems to constitute the source of all identity-related claims; secondly, how these ties with the landscape are activated to provide legitimate narratives to the unfolding process of ethnic revival, the invention of Hyolmo identity, in which large segments of the Hyolmo people are involved in an ongoing process of self-reflection, research and selection in order to define themselves vis-à-vis other groups and cultures in the wider framework of Nepalese civil society and state.

Hyolmo identity

Who are the Hyolmo? In order to provide the reader with a working notion and at the same time permit an analysis and discussion of the specific topic of this paper, I will limit myself to an extremely concise definition which despite its brevity still retains some conceptual validity: the Hyolmo could be identified with a particular group of families from Helambu who link their distinct identity to a specific part of Nepal, and who refer to a set of sacred stories that place this Himalayan valley in the wider context of Buddhist sacred history and provide them with a more or less homogenous and coherent shared memory. The symbolic and practical values binding local communities to specific landscapes have been already fruitfully analysed (see, for example Ramble, 1997 and 2008) and I will not delve further into this: it will suffice here to note that the Hyolmo, as many other communities, retain a specific relationship with the landscape. It is worth noting that the Helambu Valley, or *yol mo gangs ra*, the ‘secret land screened by snowy peaks’, seems to be tied to the Buddhist arch-narrative related to the great mystic and master credited with the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, Guru Padmasambhava (Blondeau 1980, Dalton 2004). During the eight century C.E. Padmasambhava, together with others,

apparently chose this place as a hidden valley for retreat, meditation, and refuge in time of danger, foreseeing a gloomy future, and prepared the area by hiding holy texts (Tib. *gter ma*) and various kinds of relics. The very same valley was also one of the retreat places of the great yogi Milarepa (Quintman 2008), during the Twelfth Century C.E. So carefully prepared and recursively blessed by the great masters of the past, the secret land was then finally opened by the 15th Century *tertön* Ngagchang Shakya Zangpo – known for the renovation of the Bodhnath *stūpa* carried out in the Kathmandu Valley, and the establishment of the Yolmo *tulku* lineage (Ehrhard 1990 and 2013). From this preliminary sketch, the importance attributed by the Hyolmo to the connection between their land – a sacred hidden land – and overarching Buddhist narratives that reach far beyond this small plot of land, deep into the ancient history of Tibet and Nepal, appears very clearly. In specific ethnographic literature, the Hyolmo seem to be late newcomers. In previous literature they were in fact simply known as Helambu Sherpa (Bista, 1972, Goldstein 1975) or Helambu Lamas (Clarke 1980a, 1980b). During the 1990s, several scholars started using the ethnonym Yolmo (Desjarlais 1992, 2003, Ehrhard 1990, 2013, Gawne 2010, 2011, Sato 2006, 2007), which is an exact transliteration of the Tibetan name of the Helambu valley. More recently, community associations started using the word Hyolmo, which appears to be a transliteration from the Nepalese (*devanāgarī*) script. It is with this term that they are now officially recognised by state agencies.

Let us now turn to the socio-political environment of contemporary Nepal, which affects notions and attempts at defining specific identities among several minorities of the country. After two successful democratic movements (one in the 1990s and one in the 2000s), a protracted civil war (Hutt 2004, Lecomte-Tilouine 2013), the fall of the Hindu monarchy and the following process of re-writing the Constitution, Nepal has witnessed a flourishing of movements reclaiming political spaces along deeply marked ethnic lines (Gellner et al. 2008). The rationale behind this phenomenon is that the Hindu monarchy was engaged in a long-term process or project of sanskritisation (Srinivas 1952), in order to create a national identity along the values and the aims of the high caste groups that constitute the upper societal segments of the Kingdom (Höfer 1979) and, to a certain extent, the people's war and the democratic secular movements represented a political answer to that project. In this process,

which is still unfolding and at least to a certain extent is hindering the writing of the new Constitution, all groups, but especially those groups gathered under the umbrella-organisation of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), have been involved in the collective effort to achieve a definition of their specific traits, features, and customs and the preservation, revitalisation and display of cultural heritages (Lawoti & Hangen 2013).

In the case of the Hyolmo, the identity revival process is conducted mainly by well-educated, relatively wealthy and politically active urban elites, and a certain kind of Buddhist heritage seems to constitute the main factor with which they articulate their cultural distinctiveness and specificity. This process of coming closer and closer to Buddhist orthodoxy has been sparked not only by the close proximity to Buddhist institutions in Bodhnath, where they live side by side with different Buddhist communities, establishments and traditions, especially those linked to the very powerful and rich web of Monasteries built by the Tibetan diaspora, but also by the resettlement of a significant part of the population of Helambu/Yolmo in the Kathmandu Valley in recent years. Becoming more orthodox, moreover, helps them to claim a higher status in relation to other communities, as in the case of the Tamang, with whom they are often neighbours both in Helambu and in Kathmandu³.

In this cultural and social project, the display of a “proper” Buddhist identity is in tension with the other part of their religious and spiritual life, a set of shamanic practices and beliefs revolving around the complex figures of specific religious specialists locally known as *pombo* or *bombo*. It is worth noting that Hyolmo society is made up of several patrilineal clans, of whom the highest status is attributed to the so called *lama rigs pa*: traditionally, in fact, Hyolmo Buddhism was centered on non-celibate village lamas who transmitted their religious role and knowledge⁴ from

3 Hyolmo settlements in Helambu are near to villages inhabited by other communities, especially Tamang and Hindu low castes. Although both Tamang and Hyolmo are Buddhists, the latter claim a superior status derived from religious authority and the maintenance of religious shrines and temples. Historically, the land on which these shrines were built was granted or donated by Kathmandu kings in exchange for ritual services. Over time, Hyolmo families in charge of the temples and shrines became a kind of landed gentry (Clarke 1980c).

4 Traditionally, Hyolmo lineage lamas are followers of the *jangter* (‘northern treasure’) transmission, started by *tertön* Rigzin Gödem (1337-1408), who was also the teacher

father to son and took care of village shrines, as the religious needs of their fellow villagers⁵. The other part of Hyolmo society, the patrilineal clans known collectively as *mangba rigs pa*, host and support the shamanic religious specialists, all the while adhering formally to Buddhism, too. Through the Hyolmo kinship system, we could say, multiple religious lineages flow: hereditary lamas on one side, and *bombo* lineages on the other, both further differentiated internally.

The upholding and displaying of Buddhism as the key factor of Hyolmo identity has greatly tarnished the legitimacy of *bombo* specialists, whose practices have begun to be considered superstitious and backward by well-educated and urbanised Hyolmo.

Hyolmo shamanism and the issue of sacrifice

A certain degree of antagonism has always characterised the relations between the two religious practices; however they should be considered a unified religious system, in which authority and legitimacy are evaluated by the sponsors of rituals, who contract the religious services of the lama or the *bombo* according to their own specific needs of the moment. The religious field of the Hyolmo, in fact, appears to be a unified whole of shifting asymmetries between the two poles represented by the religious specialists, each of them the upholder of a different ethical worldview. It must be noted, too, that Buddhism has the upper hand in this game: the more structured and organised religious establishment of the *dharmā*, relying on an elaborate written tradition and a wide set of rituals for nearly every aspect of the life of the people, enables the lama to fulfill nearly all the religious needs of the people, from divination to healing, exorcism, spiritual advice, and post-mortem rituals ensuring a smooth passage towards a new birth, perhaps closer to enlightenment.

The competition between the two systems is inscribed in witty tales about past confrontations between lamas and shamans, ranging from local memories to old myths, or even the famous race of Milarepa and

of Shakya Zangpo, the founder of the first shrine in Helambu. The *jangter* tradition is considered to be part of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism.

5 It should be noted that nowadays, several members of the younger generations seek religious education even inside the Tibetan monastic institutions, thus abandoning the tradition of the village lamas of Helambu/Yolmo. Moreover, monastic careers have been embraced by members of the *mangba rigs pa*, thus adding further level of complexity (i.e. the not uncommon case of a *bombo*'s son becoming a lama).

Naru Bon to the summit of Mt. Kailash (Oppitz 2013: 418-438). Among the Hyolmo, several stories testify this competition for hegemony, usually focusing on the privilege to, and the knowledge of how, to perform funeral rites. Almost invariably, the *bombo* has at the end to hand over the right to perform the proper *post mortem* rituals to the lama, while at the same time retaining the right to perform on behalf of the living. This corresponds to a religious division of labour which, while maintaining hierarchies, creates a space for a multiplicity of approaches, practices and beliefs. Both practices were considered legitimate, and even related to a certain extent: in the folkloric materials from Helambu, it is often mentioned that the lama and the *bombo* of the tales were, after all, brothers.

Hyolmo shamanism, which could also be termed a form of popular⁶ *Bön*, seems to be based on the worship and appeasement of ancestral other-than-human beings on behalf of the community. The whole host of these beings has been defined, according to Buddhist cosmology, under the collective name of worldly deities, still subject to the whims of karmic bondage, and extremely capricious in their relations with human beings: *klu*, *btsan*, *bdud*, and the like, together with the lords of the soil, the *sa bdag*, the mountain warrior-deities, the malevolent ghosts and various other entities inhabit, haunt and share the same space where human beings trod. The *bombo*'s role is that of mediator, negotiating for the wellbeing of his sponsors with the host of benevolent, ambiguous, menacing or overtly evil beings populating the cosmos. These beings, in fact, are thought to be responsible for many disruptions, misfortunes, disgraces, and for the spreading of various kinds of illness. In daily life, villagers are exposed to multiple interactions with the host of beings inhabiting the environment. Walking to and from the forest or across the streams, for example, is a common activity that may easily result in a contact with one of the non-human entities: a kind of encounter that could become inauspicious if

6 The expression *popular* or *village bön*, is used here in the sense of a non-Buddhist tradition that shows very similar traits to religious complexes that are elsewhere denominated as shamanism, and especially those of Northern Asia (Mongolia, Siberia, etc.). This was acknowledged by Balikci (2008: 12-17) in her study of village religion in Sikkim, and by Samuel (2013: 78-97) in a clarifying paper in which he shows the multiple areas of application to which the word *bön* could be fruitfully applied, and identifying at least five different contexts: 1) ancient *bön* and *gshen* in Dunhuang materials; 2) organised tradition of *yungdrung bön*; 3) invoker, conjurer-priest of the Himalayas; 4) shamans (i.e. Tamang *bombo*, etc.); 5) Buddhist negative stereotypes of *bön*.

not undertaken with the necessary precautions. The same can be said for numerous economic activities related to the land, from agriculture to hunting. At any time human beings are exposed to the actions of the non-human agents, who punish any misbehavior, pollution, or breaking of a taboo almost automatically. Several entities, then, feed on human life-forces or go hunting for souls. A specific folk illness, common across South and South-East Asia and beyond, is the so called soul-loss syndrome⁷: many shamanic rituals are devoted to the recovery and reintegration of the lost soul into the human body. Shamans are responsible also for the annual rituals related to specific clan deities and ancestors, as well for performing divination to answer the many doubts that may arise in the course of the life of the individual.

Animal sacrifices in the context of shamanic rituals are mainly related to the outcome of a series of events culminating in a healing rite that involves exchange between the human and the other-than-human. Schematically, the typical sequence of events could be summarised as follows: 1) a problem arises; 2) a divination is performed; 3) if the outcome of the divination shows the involvement of other-human entities, or is a result of witchcraft or ascribed to planetary influence 4) a ritual is often performed to deal with the forces held responsible. This ritual often involves exorcism or appeasement, or both, to solve the crisis. In the Tibetan context, such rituals are commonly called “ransom rituals”.⁸

Shamanic rituals are usually held at the house of the patient, who is responsible for all the expenses, and providing the elements used in the rite itself, along with food and drink for all the people who attend the ritual, and compensation in goods or cash for the *bombo*, who is usually accompanied by his attendants or helpers. Rituals are typically a nocturnal affair, conducted mainly from sunset till the first hours of dawn. In case of prolonged rituals, requiring more days to be completed, the shaman stops performing at daybreak, only to resume the following evening. The purified ritual space is prepared by introducing specific elements arranged according to a schema that is supposed to recreate the cosmic

7 On the topic of soul-loss among the Hyolmo see Desjarlais 1992, while for a general discussion on the topic, related to the Buddhist Himalayan contexts, see Gerke 2007.

8 As such, they are performed also by Buddhist lamas, with the main difference being that the substitute for the afflicted individual is an effigy (Cabezón 2010: 20) while in shamanic contexts it is a real animal.

order: dough images of deities and spirits are prepared and arrayed on a tray, together with cups of home-made liquor, grain (wheat, corn, rice), eggs, juniper twigs, and incense-burners. Everything is temporary and used only during the performance of the ritual: after it is over and the deities and spirits involved have been dismissed, no sign is left on the sanctified ground to show that the space was used for any ritual purpose.

If the ritual involves the sacrifice of a living being (generally a chicken or a goat), the act of killing itself will be conducted outside the house, generally near a crossroads, to make it difficult for the negative entities, lured outside the house by the promise of blood and meat, to retrace their way to the house and to the human host. As a precaution, the way back to the house is also disguised with branches, or by tracing crosses on it to mislead the hungry entities and prevent them coming back inside. The logic of shamanic ritual, in this regard, is quite straightforward: a life for a life, blood for blood, flesh for flesh and once appeased, the spirit must be sent away.

The shamanic rituals are usually performed with a therapeutic aim. Illness is mainly conceived as the intrusion of a pathogenic agent – an evil, malignant being, feeding on the life energies, soul-forces, breath, flesh, bone and marrow of the patient or sponsor, gnawing his or her internal organs or causing madness. Illness in itself could be conceived as a form of possession. In many cosmologies of the Himalayas, in fact, illness seems to be the domain of malevolent other-than-human beings. Furthermore it could be also inflicted on human beings by deities who usually play a more benevolent role towards human beings: if forgotten, neglected, not properly worshipped, or if their sacred places are trespassed without acknowledging them or, even worse, if those very same places are polluted, they can react hastily, inflicting illness and disgrace upon the trespassers. The illness inflicted, physically located inside the human body, could also be linked to a very specialised pathological scheme mirroring the cosmological distribution of those other-than-human entities inside and outside the human body: subterranean beings are known to attack the legs and veins, lords of the middle land affect the torso and the breathing system, higher entities strike the head, the eyes and the mind (see also Desjarlais 1992). In this process, the shaman acts as a warrior-exorcist: With his physical and spiritual weapons, aided by shamanic ancestors and other powerful spiritual beings, he attempts to

defeat, banish, scare away or force into a truce the intrusive agent. The health of the patient, usually the sponsor of the ritual, must be either won or negotiated. The rite in fact may consist of multiple phases, involving adorcism, which may be a voluntary, desired or curative possession by a spirit (i.e. conjuring of helping spirits, ancestor and protective deities) along with the calling of the evil spirit held responsible for the illness in order to negotiate the release of the patient and exorcism (its banishing) after appeasement. Appeasement is usually obtained through the offering of a ritual substitute: the life, blood, flesh of an animal is offered as ransom for the life of the patient, as already mentioned.

Another set of rituals focuses on healing an illness called “soul loss syndrome” in the anthropological literature. To retrieve the soul (life forces, life breath, vital energies, etc.), the shaman has to travel through different dimensions and worlds, including the underworld. Often, the soul is, here too, a ransom has to be offered: the life of an animal.

Changing the pattern: toward the suppression of the blood offering

Unchallenged for many years, this ritual pattern has for the past fifteen years or so been subject to increasing criticism,⁹ and has declined very rapidly. Indeed it is, not only shamanic activities, but every act involving the spilling of blood that has become a sensitive issue. With the revival of Buddhism linked to Hyolmo identity, and the spiritual relevance the landscape has been endowed with through the renewed recognition of being a land blessed by Padmasambhava (H. *beyul*), the villagers have stopped consuming meat and killing their farmyard animals. The village of Timbu on the way to upper Helambu, is virtually the last place where meat can still be consumed. Like other parts of Nepal (i.e. Khumbu and Tsum areas), local Buddhist communities refrain from consuming meat in places they consider to be particularly holy, and especially in those connected to Guru Padmasambhava. Among the Sherpa of Khumbu, for

9 While the practice itself was not directly challenged, it was frowned upon by village lamas. In the Buddhist view, the worldly deities and local spirits are still embedded in the wheel of rebirth, and as such still subject to laws of causality and dependent origination: as all the other sentient beings, they are still following the laws of karmic retribution. Feeding them with blood and flesh, according to lamas' perceptions, amounts to satisfying their dark appetites and cravings, thus distracting them from the path towards enlightenment they supposedly undertook once tamed and domesticated by Padmasambhava.

example, meat is still available due to the presence of lodges and guest-houses for foreign trekkers heading up to the Everest Base Camp, but there is a growing campaign against it, so that most of the meat is brought up by porters from the plains below. This is something different than the legal ban on slaughtering cattle under monarchic rule: it is a deliberate ban on animal slaughter by local communities who embrace Buddhism and inhabit areas of Nepal which they believe are infused with spiritual powers by Padmasambhava. The decision is made by local village committees and enforced only through social pressure, a process that started around 15 years ago. It should also be noted that Hyolmo lama voices are hegemonic in the villages, and they actively supported the social ban on killing. There is neither any law nor authority checking the activities of slaughtering for meat consumption, or ritual activities. Because of this, it cannot be ruled out that, privately, some households still kill animals for rituals or simply for food. It is common knowledge, for example, that animal sacrifices are even in some villages on the left ridges overlooking the Melamchi river. On the other hand, I can testify that meat was never part of the meals in any of the households I visited during fieldwork . As an example, let me relate what I heard in September 2014:

During the summer, towards the end of the monsoon season, some workers were building a road linking two villages in Helambu. They were not locals, but rather called from outside, and they came up with a bulldozer. Their daily wages included food, and they asked that meat be part of the meal. We agreed on a meal including chicken. You know, if we give them meat they will work better. So we bought a chicken in Melamchipul Bazaar, and brought it up here, to them, where they usually had their meals. The chicken was already dead, but the cook had to take away all the feathers from the body, in order to cook it. Few hours later a woman (the owner of the plot of land next to the road construction site) came along the road, saw the feathers on her land, and began shouting. She was furious, believing the workers had killed the chicken in her fields. She went back to the village and called for a village meeting, supported by other women. They asked, "Who will cleanse the land from the pollution derived from killing a chicken there? The land is polluted now!" Only after a long discussion the issue was settled. The cook explained that the

chicken was already dead, and that he was just cleaning it to cook it, and people were satisfied with the explanation. The chicken was killed in Melamchi, and not in Upper Helambu.¹⁰

The act of killing is seen as especially polluting, and thus it has been banned by the community. It underlies a fundamental change of attitude regarding violence, or, specifically, the killing of animals (sentient beings) according to a Buddhist perspective. The people of Helambu, it should be added, are not vegetarian. Whenever they have the chance, they choose to eat meat. But they have adopted a very clear stance about killing animals (and not only for ritual purposes) in their daily life, and especially in the land they inhabit, because of its intrinsic sacred qualities. Once I was walking on what used to be a road, before the Spring 2015 earthquake, with a friend originally from a village near Sermathang, but now living in the Kathmandu valley, when he told me this story:

I once attended the marriage of a friend with my cousin, and we brought some meat and whiskey with us, for the wedding party. It was sunset when we reached here, and very dark. The road to the village is not long, as you can see, but that night it took us ages to reach here. At some point, not even halfway, we stopped, because there was something wrong with the road. It was never ending and we were not making any progress. It was scary! Then we realised what it was: we were carrying the meat, that's why! We threw it away, and started the motorbike again. This time we were able to make some progress and reach the village. The morning after, I went back looking here and there for the bag with the meat I had thrown away, but it was nowhere to be found. The deities of the land were probably enraged because we had polluted the area".¹¹

It seems the moral ban on killing and meat is a self-sustaining subject, enforced through self-regulation by the people themselves, and even enlarging its field of action.

This is not an entirely new phenomenon, but rather an expansion of the field of moral imperatives already present in Hyolmo communities.

¹⁰ Personal communication, Bodhnath, September 2014.

¹¹ Personal communication, Sermathang, Sept. 2014.

H Yolmo society is split into two main groups¹² as mentioned before, to which different kinship units belong. Members of the lama *riba* always refrained from killing animals, but they were not and are not vegetarians: whenever they wanted to eat meat before, they asked a member of the *mangba riba* to kill an animal, and consumed meat even in the villages. Nowadays, most people in Yolmo society have aligned themselves with the upper segments of the Yolmo social structure, and have adopted the lama *riba* attitude toward killing and the consumption of meat. As a result, the Helambu Valley is becoming a no kill zone: it is almost impossible to find someone willing to slaughter an animal.

This attitude towards killing has, in turn, had a huge impact on shamanic rituals and on *bombo* who are active in the area. Much social pressure has been directed towards them. Yolmo identity seems to have been oriented mainly along Buddhist lines, and its coming closer, as we have seen, to a kind of Buddhist orthodoxy, due to the greater influence of educated lamas. Because of this, *bombo* practices have been changing themselves, and not only in Helambu. Even Yolmo shamans performing their rituals in the Kathmandu valley have altered their ritual patterns to meet the general consensus of the society.

Although Buddhism has become the pivotal trait the Yolmo have chosen to represent themselves, and shamanism seems to be losing ground, both in Helambu and in the Kathmandu valley, *bombo* practices here and there have shown a high level of resilience, and their main traits seem to be the ability to cope with change and to adapt. How do they cope with the ban on killing, which tends to undermine their role as religious specialists and foster their decline? In a long history of confrontation and mutual adaptation, Buddhism has often tried to appropriate shamanic practices, while at the same time eradicating some of its irreconcilable aspects, like animal sacrifice, which has often been at the forefront of confrontation between the two systems.

In relation to the issue of blood sacrifice, which has been practically banned in Helambu (with a few exceptions: it seems that shamans on the

12 This split is actually overcome through marriage alliances between lama and *mangba riba*. But it should be acknowledged that this is perceived as a substantial change in status, and marrying into the lama *riba* is considered a social advancement. This kind of upward social mobility also promotes alignment with the ideas, beliefs and customs of the upper segments of the Yolmo society.

left side of the valley divided by the Melamchi Khola still retain the blood sacrifice as part of their ritual repertoire¹³), the ritual pattern has been altered in order to be accommodated into the new context.

The first time I heard a *bombo* talking about the issue of blood sacrifice was in 2008. Being quite old, he was not practising anymore, except for smaller rituals not involving trance or possession states. Here, as elsewhere in Nepal, such states involve the violent shaking of the body. Given the duration of many shamanic rituals, such shaking requires high levels of stamina and endurance, and above a certain age it is common for shamans to stop performing the rituals that require it. The *bombo* told me that there were two different kinds of *bön*: white and black. “White” *bön* refrained from killing and sacrifices, black *bön*, deemed necessary to deal with powerful and dangerous entities, was largely based on animal sacrifice. He also gave a historical explanation of sorts:

At the time of the first king of Tibet, sacrifices were done. This is because the gods were asking for a red offering. People at that time were ignorant and they started using blood. But the gods were actually asking just for anything red. From that first mistake, the practices of black *bön* evolved. Then, much later, Shenrab came to establish the white *bön*.¹⁴

His explanations were very interesting, since they drew a direct connection between his own practices and the *jungdrung bön*. He also showed me some booklets from the Triten Norbutse Monastery, located at the other end of the Kathmandu Valley. It should also perhaps be mentioned that one of his sons was a very accomplished *gelugpa* monk, which might have influenced his reflection about his own practice and how it was related to the religious culture of Tibet. At that time I had documented several rituals which included animal sacrifice, and I quickly dismissed his statement, not realising that it hinted at future changes that would be important to the *bombo* of the Hyolmo community.

After a few years, it became obvious to me that contemporary Tibetan

13 One possible explanation could be the distance from the main Buddhist settlements in the area, Sermathang Tarkhegyang and nearby villages, where Buddhist shrines are located and the majority of the population is belonging to the lama *riba* groups.

14 M.B., personal communication, Bodhnath, 16 April 2008.

influences (both Buddhist and *Bön*), sparked by the Hyolmo revival, were consistently opening inroads into Hyolmo shamanism. So I decided to consult several *bombo* on this topic, both in the Kathmandu Valley and in the Helambu villages.

In 2014, I interviewed B.P., a famous Hyolmo *bombo*, who is a member of a renowned lineage of powerful shamans, and I had heard that he, too, had ceased to perform the blood offering. In a previous interview with him in 2008, he told me that animal sacrifice was not always necessary, but that in case of very serious illness he could see no other way than a sacrifice to save a sick person's life. In September 2014, he framed the same concepts in a very different manner: the red offering does not necessarily need to be the blood/animal sacrifice, he said:

It could be anything red: powder, fruits, flowers, coloured ribbons etc. I have tried. I have been performing the rituals in exactly the same way, but without any killings. The ritual works even if I don't use blood. Spirits are happy even without it.¹⁵

B.P. is one of the more charismatic and respected *bombo* among the Hyolmo. He was a disciple of M.B., whom I interviewed in 2008, so it was only natural that he followed the trajectory hinted at by his *guru* seven years previously. In the recent years, B.P. has been engaged in various activities related to the preservation, as he says, of the heritage of Hyolmo shamans: organising collective rituals, discussing with fellow *bombo* specialists, comparing their knowledge, and also entertaining relations with Tamang shamans¹⁶. He was also actively campaigning for the end of animal sacrifices, and probably it was partly through his popularity, speeches and deeds that the substitution of a real animal with an effigy, smeared with red powder, or an egg, was becoming a reality.

Of course the whole process was not without some resistance. In some upper villages the practice continues, even in the Helambu valley. For example Mehme P. (83 years old), an old *bombo* who is not performing rituals anymore, said,

¹⁵ Personal communication. Tinchuli, 12 September 2014.

¹⁶ These aspects of his activities were something completely new: ritual knowledge was traditionally regarded as secret, and shamans were known to be extremely suspicious of sharing it with their colleagues.

People do many things. They do this and they do that. I think we do not have to listen to others. We should do what has to be done, according to our knowledge, according to the teachings we have received. A sacrifice is not always necessary, but in serious circumstances, or when dealing with very powerful beings, a red offering has to be done. Now I am not doing rituals anymore, although you can see my drums are still here (he points to two shamanic drums hanging from a nail on the wall). If I were called to perform again, I would do as I always did, according to what I know.

His words summarise his position, which we could term traditional in the strict sense. What other *bombo* living in Kathmandu valley or even in nearby villages were doing, was none of his business. Although the concept of *beyul*, the sacred land, and the ban on killing animals for food on one side, and the ritual killing by shamans on the other are two topics that are not necessarily related, there is an obvious connection which could also offer an explanation to the aforementioned persistence of animal sacrifice (and presumably consumption) in the villages on the left side of the valley: the revival of ideas about the sacred land (*beyul*) is part of the socio-political revival of the Hyolmo as a minority group seeking recognition by the state, and as such it is essentially an urban phenomenon which was later projected onto the Helambu settlements¹⁷. This revival has centered on the assertion of an organic link with a specific Buddhist heritage, from which the Hyolmo *bombo* were initially excluded. While *bombo* living in urban areas felt much pressure to adapt to the new frames of Hyolmone-ness, those living in villages detached from the Buddhist shrines and from the influences of the lama *riba* families may not feel the same degree of pressure to conform to the new norms.

In other cases, the decision to relinquish animal sacrifice seems to respond to more individual concerns and experiences. Mingmar B., for example, worked in the fields, and together with his wife had a small lodge along the path leading to Milarepa's meditation cave¹⁸. In his mid-fifties,

17 Due to the proximity of Helambu to Kathmandu valley, the ancestral land of the Hyolmo has been interested by depopulation in favour of the Kathmandu suburbs of Bodhnath, Tinchuli, Chuchchepati, Jorpati.

18 Unfortunately, his fields and lodge were wiped away by a landslide during the Spring 2015 earthquake.

he is still an active shaman. In certain months, he is actually so busy with rituals that he has little time for his fields. When asked about the animal sacrifice, he replied very frankly,

Since ten years I do not perform animal sacrifices anymore. Actually, since I heard a speech by the Dalai Lama in Ladakh. I was greatly impressed by him. Before, I was always doing animal sacrifice. I cannot even count the chickens and goats I have sacrificed. At least a hundred goats, at least! Chickens I have no idea how many. Now this is over. I am still performing many rituals. As I told you, sometimes I have no time for myself, there are so many are the people asking me to perform (rituals) for the clan-deities. But I do not kill anymore”.¹⁹

His explanation was linked to the crucial event of hearing the Dalai Lama, which made him reflect on his karmic debts. As noted above, although the Hyolmo *bombo* adhere to Buddhism, they are at the same time conscious of following another tradition, which they regard as their own even though they don't expressly name it. They perceive it as separated from the *dharma*, but still legitimate. Being a *bombo*, after all, is a part-time affair: when they are not performing they engage in their own economic activities, and even attend Buddhist rituals. Several of them also maintain Buddhist altars in their homes.

This open approach is exemplified by Mehme Dindup B. In his sixties, he is still a very strong man, smart and bold and always trying to have the last say in a conversation:

'I am a herder, I have many goats and yaks. I spend much time with them in the forest. One day, six or seven years ago, a very famous lama (Chatral Rimpoche) came here, and I went to pay homage to him. He was very famous. All the villagers were going to see him, to receive blessings from him. I brought cheese and milk, as an offering. These are the products of my work, so I brought them to him as a present. He asked my name, and when I said I am M.D.B., he said, "Oh, you are the very famous *bombo*, is it?" He knew about me. He told me I was doing a very good job in helping people, but he added also that I should stop

19 Personal communication, Upper Helambu, 14 September 2014.

performing animal sacrifices. “You have to keep to your true mission, which is to help people. You are from the *Bön kar* (White Bön). Refrain from practicing the *Bön nak* (black Bön). Your true tradition is the *Bön kar*, from Tibet”. After that, I stopped the sacrifices’.

Again, as in the previous case, it was the encounter with a renowned Buddhist lama, in this case Chatral Rimpoche²⁰, where the *bombo* appears very gratified by the recognition of his powers and deeds by the famous tantric *yogi*, which, apparently, succeeded in convincing him of the existence of two ways of the *bön*, the white one being more beneficial to the ritual specialist and to sentient beings (that is, more in line with Buddhist precepts) than the black one.

It seems that the movement against animal sacrifice is widespread amongst the Hyolmo, and that the *bombo* must learn to cope with multiple factors entailing social pressure and individual feelings. In their explanations we generally find two kinds of motivations: the first one is that rituals seem to be working even without the employment of violent techniques and the slaughtering of sacrificial animals. In many of the rituals I have witnessed recently, the living animal offered to the other-than-human has been replaced in various ways. In several instances I have seen the shamans using an egg, or a dough image (Tib. *gtor ma*) representing a yak or another ritual victim. All the shamans tend to make a clear statement about the ritual efficaciousness, which seem to be unaltered despite the substitution of a real animal with its representation; secondarily, the shamans also point to a specific event of their life after which they stopped killing animals. In many of the cases, this event was an encounter with a famous lama. Every shaman seems to be aware of this movement and they apparently engage in collective discussions on this topic with other shamans, fellow villagers, relatives and Buddhist lamas.

Conclusion

The use of violence (practical, symbolical, conceptual) has deep implications for the social positioning of agents, victims and witnesses. It

20 Chatral Sangye Dorje (1913-2015) was a renowned *yogi* tantric specialist, active in establishing retreat centers throughout the Himalayas, including one in Helambu valley. He was also known for his advocacy of vegetarianism and his opposition to animal sacrifices.

draws, defends, expands, bridges and/or negotiates boundaries between different parts of the Hyolmo culture and society. Religious violence has, after all, often played an important role in defining and contesting legitimacies in Nepal as elsewhere (Riches 1986: 11, Mumford 1989). Rituals constitute nodes where societal modalities are reflected upon, enforced, contested and even redefined, and shamanic rituals are no exception to this (Riboli and Torri 2013: 4).

Amongst the Hyolmo, a movement rejecting sacrificial violence opened up huge gaps in the shamanic tradition, subordinating it once more, and in a deeper way, to the Buddhist ideology, an important factor defining Hyolmo culture. It implies the acknowledgement and the acceptance that the Buddhist view is ethically superior, and that killing has to be avoided because of the karmic bonds it produces, the negative effects it has on all the sentient beings involved (both human and non-human), and the ritual pollution it creates. The *bombo* shares these views, despite the fact that his practices are grounded in a different perspective. While there is adherence to the Buddhist notions of non-violence, and also to the Buddhist view that local spirits should not be appeased – and corrupted – by blood offerings, at the same time this process of adaptation to the new ideas also shows the innate resilience of the shamanic complex, which is trying to cope with a swift and deep change. From a local rural society, the Helambu Sherpa, as they were known to outsiders until recently, have become the Nepal Hyolmo, a urban group that is economically quite successful in the Kathmandu Valley, and at the forefront of many NEFIN²¹ efforts and events to represent and display Nepal's ethnic diversity.

Ritual violence in the context of Hyolmo shamanic rituals can be understood as a position marker: its adoption or rejection indexes the position of the performers in a wider web of social relations. A shaman who sacrifices animals is pushed further to the margins, in line with the Buddhist tenets that constitute a relevant part of Hyolmo identity-building process. The reasoned rejection of animal sacrifice, on the other hand, can be seen as a means for coping with such change, a strategy of adaptation consciously chosen in order to react to marginalisation²².

21 Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, an umbrella organisation which includes dozens of *janajati Adivasi* groups.

22 The marginalisation invoked here is actually also a political one: besides being a *bombo*, a Hyolmo shaman is first and foremost a member of his community, especially

Will shamanic rituals, in the eyes of their sponsors, retain the same popularity, validity and efficaciousness as before? Despite so many statements that blood offering is not required, shamanic rituals have already undergone several changes to adapt to the new urban context, including the length of the rites (which has been shortened), the time frame (during the day instead of night), and the display of paraphernalia and proper shamanic dress (simplified and kept to the minimum to travel on public means of transportation in the Kathmandu Valley). Some old shamans, when confronted with the evidence of a failed healing ritual, and especially when engaging in debates about shamanic healing and western medicine, already point out the most obvious of the answers: the rituals should not have been changed²³. The same complaints could theoretically come from sponsors, who might not be willing to pay for what they could perceive as incomplete rituals, although in my experience this has never happened: sponsors and patients do not usually argue with shamans on the content, legitimacy, or efficaciousness of their practices. Essentially, the popularity of a shaman is dependent on his results as perceived by his sponsors, and on his ability to perform rituals. And of course, everybody knows that the trend could also be reversed at any time, due to changing conditions.

On the other hand, the debate, facilitated by living in close proximity, often in the same suburbs, has sparked a great exchange among usually solitary and reticent *bombo*, who now even organise community rituals and collective pilgrimages, and who make themselves visible at Buddhist and Hindu sacred sites, setting in motion a process of display and exchange of shamanic knowledge never seen before. This collective dimension of ritual action in the public sphere is quite a new phenomenon: in several organised political rallies taking place in the Kathmandu valley it is now possible to see groups of shamans parading together in full regalia to demonstrate for political issues like federalism, secularism and minority rights, under the banner of their various ethnic organizations or of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities. The increase in activities related to the public and collective sphere highlights the role of shamans as conscious agents

in a period of ethnic activism. Religious and social marginalisation never hampered shamanic practices, which instead seem to linger, and sometimes even thrive, even in the worst conditions.

23 On ritual efficacy, see Sax 2010.

involved in the processes affecting their communities, able not only to cope with change at ritual level, but also organising themselves in order to have a say over strategic matters in the definition, assertion and representation of ethnic identity.

References

- Balikci, A. 2008. *Lamas, Shamans and Ancestors: Village religion in Sikkim*. Leiden: Brill.
- Bellezza, J.V. 2005. *Spirit-mediums, Sacred Mountains and Related Bon Textual Traditions in Upper Tibet: Calling down the gods*. Leiden: Brill.
- Bista, D.B. 1972. *People of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Blondeau, A.M. 1980. 'Analysis of the biographies of Padmasambhava according to Tibetan tradition' in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson. Proceedings of the international seminar on Tibetan studies, Oxford, 1979*, edited by Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi, pp. 45-52. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.
- Cabezón, J.I. ed. 2010. *Tibetan Ritual*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, G.E. 1980a. *The Temple and Kinship amongst a Buddhist People of the Himalaya*. D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford: Oxford.
- Clarke, G.E. 1980b. 'A Helambu History'. *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* 4: 1-38.
- Clarke, G.E. 1980c. 'Lama and Tamang in Yolmo', *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson. Proceedings of the international seminar on Tibetan studies, Oxford, 1979*, edited by Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi, pp. 79-86. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.
- Dalton, J. 2004. 'The early development of the Padmasambhava legend in Tibet: a study of IOL Tib J 644 and Pelliot tibetain 307'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*: 759-772.
- Dalton, J. 2011. *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*. New haven & London: Yale University Press.
- de Sales, A. 1991. *Je Suis Né de vos Jeux de Tambours: La religion chamannique des Magar du Nord*. Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie.
- Desjarlais, R.R. 1992. 'Yolmo aesthetics of body, health and "soul loss"'. *Social Science & Medicine*, 34(10): 1105-1117.
- Desjarlais, R.R. 1994. *Body and Emotions: The aesthetics of illness and healing in the Nepal Himalayas*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

- Desjarlais, R.R. 2003. *Sensory Biographies: Lives and deaths among Nepal's Yolmo Buddhists*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- Ehrhard, F.K. 1990. 'The Stupa of Bodhnath: a preliminary analysis of the written sources'. *Ancient Nepal. Journal of the Department of Archaeology* 120: 1-9.
- Ehrhard, F.K. 2013. 'A forgotten Incarnation Lineage: the Yol-mo-ba sprulskus (16th to 18th centuries)'. In *The Pandita and the Siddha: Tibetan Studies in Honour of E. Gene Smith* edited by Ramon Prats, pp. 25-49. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute.
- Gawne, L. 2010. 'Lamjung Yolmo: A dialect of Yolmo, also known as Helambu Sherpa'. *Nepalese Linguistics* 25: 34-41.
- Gawne, L. 2011. *Lamjung Yolmo-Nepali-English Dictionary*. University of Melbourne, Australia; World Oral Literature Project.
- Gellner, D.N., Pfaff-Czarnecka, J., and Whelpton, J. eds. 2008. *Nationalism and Ethnicity in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications.
- Gerke, B. 2007. 'Engaging the subtle body: re-approaching bla rituals in the Himalayas'. In *Soundings in Tibetan medicine: Anthropological and historical perspectives*, edited by Mona Schrempf, pp. 191-212. Leiden: Brill.
- Goldstein, M.C. 1975. 'Preliminary notes on marriage and kinship'. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 2(1): 57-69.
- Heirman, A., and Bumbacher, S.P. eds. 2007. *The Spread of Buddhism (Vol. 16)*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hitchcock, J.T. and R.L. Jones. eds. 1976. *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.
- Höfer, A. 1979. *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal. A study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Wagner, Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.
- Höfer, A. 1981. *Tamang Ritual Texts. I. Preliminary studies in the folk-religion of an ethnic minority in Nepal*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Holmberg, D.H. 1996. *Order in Paradox: Myth, ritual and exchange among Nepal's Tamang*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Hutt, M. ed. 2004. *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist rebellion*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Kapstein, M. 2000. *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kapstein, M. T. and Dotson, B. eds. 2007. *Contributions to the Cultural History of Early Tibet (Vol. 14)*. Leiden: Brill.

- Keown, D. 2005. *Buddhist Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lawoti, M., and Hangan, S. eds. 2013. *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nepal: Identities and mobilization after 1990 (Vol. 58)*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lecomte-Tilouine, M. ed. 2013. *Revolution in Nepal: An anthropological and historical approach to the People's War*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- McDermott, J.P. 1989. 'Animals and humans in early Buddhism', *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 32(4): 269-280.
- Martin, D. 2001. *Unearthing Bon Treasures: Life and contested legacy of a Tibetan scripture revealer, with a general bibliography of Bon (Vol. 1)*. Leiden: Brill.
- Maskarinec, G. 1995. *The Rulings of the Night: An ethnography of Nepalese shaman oral texts*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Mumford, S.R. 1989. *Himalayan Dialogue: Tibetan lamas and Gurung shamans in Nepal*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Oppitz, M. 2013. 'Enchantment and destruction', in *Shamanism and Violence. Power, repression and suffering in indigenous religious conflicts*, edited by Diana Riboli and Davide Torri, pp. 25-36. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Peters, L. 1998. *Tamang Shamans: An ethnopsychiatric study of ecstasy and healing in Nepal*. New Delhi: Nirala.
- Quintman, A. 2008. 'Toward a geographic biography: Mi la ras pa in the Tibetan Landscape'. *Numen*, 55(4): 363-410.
- Ramble, C. 1990. 'How Buddhists are Buddhist Societies? The construction of traditions in two Lamaist villages'. *JASO* 21(2): 185-197.
- Ramble, C. 1997. 'Tibetan pride of place: or, why Nepal's Bhotiyas are not an ethnic group', in *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom (Studies in Anthropology and History, 20)*, edited by David N. Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton, pp. 397-423. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Ramble, C. 2008. *The Navel of the Demoness: Tibetan Buddhism and civil religion in highland Nepal*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Riboli, D. 2000. *Tunsuriban: Shamanism in the Chepang of southern and central Nepal*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
- Riboli, D. and D. Torri. eds. 2013. *Shamanism and Violence: Power, repression and suffering in indigenous religious conflicts*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Riches, D. ed. 1986. *The Anthropology of Violence*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ruegg, D.S. 2008. *The Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism in*

- South Asia and of Buddhism with 'Local Cults' in Tibet and the Himalayan Region*. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences.
- Samuel, G. 1993. *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan societies*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Samuel, G. 2013 'Revisiting the problem of Bon identity: Bon priests and ritual practitioners in the Himalayas'. *Journal of the International Association for Bon Research*, 1: 77-97.
- Sato, S. 2006. 'Discourse and practice of Janajati-building: Creative (dis)junctions with local communities among the people from Yolmo'. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 11 (2): 355-388.
- Sato, S. 2007. 'I don't mind being born a woman: the status and agency of women in Yolmo Nepal'. In *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia, Vol. 1: Nepalis Inside and Outside Nepal*, edited by Hiroshi Ishii, David N. Gellner and Katsuo Nawa, pp. 191-222. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Sax, W. 2010. 'Ritual and the Problem of Efficacy'. In *The Problem of Ritual Efficacy*, edited by William Sax, Johannes Quack, and Jan Weinholt, pp. 3-16. London. Oxford University Press.
- van Schaik, S. 2013. 'The naming of Tibetan religion: Bon and Chos in the Tibetan imperial period'. *Journal of the International Association for Bon Research*, 1: 227-258.
- Srinivas, M.N. 1952. *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.