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FOCUS

PROJECT

Paradiese in der Landschaft: Die Hügelgräber im frühen Zentraltibet

Ich beabsichtige ein Buch zu schreiben, das wichtige Teile meiner jahrelangen Grundlagenforschung zu den frühmittelalterlichen tibetischen Hügelgräbern zusammenfasst (4.-10. Jh. u. Z.). Die der Forschung vielfach noch unbekanntes Tumulusfelder in den alten zentraltibetischen Territorien sind spektakuläre Monumente der vorbuddhistischen Geschichte des Landes. Text, Ethnografie und eine Analyse, die Bestattungsanthropologie und Anthropologie der Landschaft kombiniert, bilden die methodischen Zugänge zur Untersuchung dieser Bestattungsform, zu der es nur wenig grabungsarchäologische Daten gibt. Die Gräber sind in die Landschaft eingeschriebene Repräsentationen des in alten Quellen als "Land der Freude" (gayül) beschriebenen Paradieses und Bestimmungsortes des Verstorbenen, wohin dieser auf rituelle Weise (und im Fall gesellschaftlicher Elite von reichen Gaben begleitet) geführt wurde. Mit der Etablierung des Buddhismus im Hochland (ab dem 10. Jahrhundert) verschwand diese mit älteren euroasiatischen Steppenkulturen verwandte Grabtradition, blieb aber indirekt weiter existent in Form einer teilweisen Integration der Anlagen in die spätere buddhistische Klassifikation der Landschaft. Diese Beobachtung vom Wandel in der Nutzungsgeschichte von Monumenten bildet den Anlass zu einer Diskussion von "Identität", die ich in diesem Zusammenhang aufgreifen möchte. Sie erörtert den Sachverhalt konkreter historischer Genealogien von Zeugnissen einer älteren Tradition in Relation zur Geschichte wechselnder Diskurse von Zugehörigkeiten in kultureller, religiöser, ethnischer oder auch nationaler Hinsicht.

Lektüreempfehlung

Hazod, Guntram (mit Per K. Sørensen und Tsering Gyalbo). *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet. A Study of Tshal Gung-thang*, 2 Bde. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007.

- "The Plundering of the Tibetan Royal Tombs: An Analysis of the Event in the Context of the Uprisings in Central Tibet of the 9th/10th Century." In *Tibet After Empire: Culture, Society and Religion between 850-1000*, herausgegeben von Christoph Cüppers, Robert Mayer und Michael Walter, 85-115. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2014 (LIRI Seminar Proceeding Series vol. 4).

- "Wandering Monuments: The Discovery of the Place of Origin of the Shöl Stele of Lhasa, Orientations." 41, 3 (April 2010): 31-36.

- "Imperial Central Tibet - An Annotated Cartographical Survey of its Territorial Divisions and Key Political Sites." In *The Old Tibetan Annals. An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History*, herausgegeben von Brandon Dotson und Guntram Hazod, 161-232. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009.

The Great Beyond - Its Locus and Properties: A Chapter from the Burial Mound Tradition of Pre-Buddhist Tibet

The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible. Oscar Wilde

My work report stems from a chapter of my current book project - a documentation and study of the early burial tradition in the Tibetan highlands. Like many of the older cultures in the Euro-Asian sphere, for quite a long time (during the early kingdom and the imperial period from about the fourth to the ninth century) interments in Tibet had their visible expression in burial mounds and certain elite funeral sites of enormous size. The graves also constituted the visible completion of ritual procedures designed to ensure the deceased's journey to the afterworld. As with many other older cultures, the sources providing us with information as to the nature of life in the Tibetan hereafter indicate imagined parallels to earthly life. But in the literature there are surprisingly few detailed attempts to concretize that heaven where afterlife society pitched its camp even though the empirical data pertaining to Tibet allow for much more subtle treatments.

A peculiarity of the pre-Buddhist highland communities was that they apparently had no word for religion; and so far as I know this also held for other similar early nonliterate cultures. In this regard it seems hardly expedient to take up the afterlife issue within the category of religion since this would mean separating out something that simply can't be; any religious aspects of these cultures are inseparable from the organization of kinship networks and those processes entailed in the formation of communities. This necessarily included the site where these processes were carried out - the landscape, defined here as that living space which was appropriated and apprehended conceptually by the group. The heaven in the singularity of a "reflected heaven" was part of this appropriation. It is clear in the sources that life in both the earthly realm and beyond shared the same geography. Thus, in the search for the afterlife we are referred back to the commonplaceness of the visible landscape. Furthermore, descriptions of this paradisiacal "Land of Delight" refer to a specific place in the landscape known to all.

Paradise did not encompass all of the beyond. We must see it in conjunction with the larger sphere of the "supernatural" even if this conjunction is not so explicitly registered. I call this sphere the "Everyday Life of the Beyond" - a sphere with which humans regularly interacted. It was obviously different from paradise. It is the ritual architecture of the grave which provides certain indices allowing us to more precisely draw the boundaries between these beyond dimensions of life.

Lastly my progress report will grapple with a question which is hardly new but is ever being posed albeit in slightly different ways in the literature: With respect to Tibet and Buddhism, what happened to old notions of the afterlife and the practices of "heathen" cultures after such drastic and far-reaching developments as the spread of world religions? In terms of Tibet we can make certain surprising observations that serve as points of reference for a more comprehensive "Theory of the Great Beyond."

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Hazod, Guntram (2018)

Territory, kinship and the grave in early Tibet : on the identification of the elity tombs in the burial mound landscape of Central Tibet

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Hazod, Guntram (Beijing,2018)

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Tribal mobility and religious fixation : remarks on territorial transformation and identity in imperial and early post-imperial Tibet

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Hazod, Guntram (2010)

Wandering monuments : the discovery of the place of the origin of the Shöl stele of Lhasa

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Hazod, Guntram (Wien,2007)

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Denkschriften ; 361

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