2. une chronologie du Tibet monarchique et classique, des débuts de la monarchie à 1967, date à laquelle la Révolution culturelle a atteint le Tibet; 3. la liste des sites archéologiques tibétains avec, chaque fois que cela est possible, le nom tibétain, le nom chinois ou d’usage, la région, la localisation, l’altitude, l’époque ou la culture concernées; 4. les cinq catégories de savoir selon neuf sources tibétaines, du IXᵉ au XXᵉ siècle.

La liste des caractères chinois, une bibliographie impressionnante, classée par langue du titre (pp. 230-238), et un index général concluent l’ouvrage.

L’érudition de l’auteur, sa finesse d’observation et sa grande prudence laissent peu de place à la critique et il paraîtrait mesquin de chicaner sur des points de détail. État de la question, disions-nous en commençant, mais aussi œuvre de réflexion nourrie par la fréquentation des sources et une rare acuité d’analyse, ce livre de référence ouvre nombre de pistes nouvelles et oblige à sortir de la routine dans laquelle s’enlisait peu ou prou l’histoire de l’art tibétain. On ne saurait trop recommander sa lecture à tous ceux qui s’intéressent au Tibet et à sa civilisation.

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Dr. Kuo Li-ying’s study deals with a complex of beliefs and ritual practices that have come to play an extremely important role in Chinese Buddhism: the confession of sins and transgressions, both collective and individual, as a means to effect moral purity, to remove mental obstacles and to obtain positive karmic retribution. The basic elements in that complex, both in monastic and lay Buddhism, had been part of the Indian heritage, but once transplanted into the Chinese environment they have led to a whole range of new and original developments. As in so many other cases, the popularity of confessional rituals in Chinese Buddhism cannot be isolated from the Chinese cultural context. In that respect the book is somewhat disappointing. In the Introduction (pp. 8–11) the author has made some remarks about the role played by ritualized confession and expiation in early and medi-
eval China, both in the Confucian and the Taoist tradition, but without giving those environmental factors the attention which they deserve.

In ch. I of the First Part (pp. 19–57), the chapter title “L’acte de contrition dans les vinaya” covers—somewhat confusingly—two subjects which are basically different: the fortnightly collective ritual of confession uposadha (jing zhu 淨住), which forms the very heart of the Discipline in monastic Buddhism, and the various formulations of Mahāyāna rules collectively known as “The Bodhisattva Vows” (pusa jie 菩薩戒) which mainly (though not exclusively) belong to lay Buddhism. Both types of ritual share the element of confession, but as regards structure and function they are worlds apart. During the uposadha ceremony, the whole corpus of monastic rules is recited before the assembly of monks belonging to one “parish”, starting with the gravest prohibitions warranting permanent expulsion; after the recitation of each rule, monks who have sinned against it are supposed to confess their transgression, and they are punished according to a scale of sanctions ranging from permanent excommunication to rebuke. The Mahāyāna rules show a completely different pattern, although some elements have been borrowed from the Vinaya. The rite of the Bodhisattva Vows is essentially one of devotion and self-dedication, the solemn promise to realize the Bodhisattva ideal, made before the Buddha (represented by his image, or by a master who himself has taken the Vows) and an (invisible) assembly of Bodhisattvas; the prohibitions largely refer to lay believers, and the texts do not mention any punishments for specific transgressions. Confession forms part of the liturgy, but does not predominate.

Thus, in the most authoritative text of the pusa jie type, the (apocryphal) “Scripture of Brahmā’s Net” (Fanwang jing 愛網經, T 1484), the confession of sins only forms part of the thirty-third rule; it states that the devotee has to practise it in front of images of the Buddha and of Bodhisattvas during seven days. In order to make sure that he is indeed purged of his sins, he has then to wait for the manifestation of some lucky sign that confirms the absolution—an interesting feature that is greatly elaborated in later scholastic treatises. According to the sixth century Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi 智顕, such signs are of four kinds, that are linked with different conditions; they range from (on the lowest level) apparitions seen in dreams up to the spontaneous inner realization of doctrinal truths.