Layne Negrin, *Gurdjieff in Tibet* (Brooklyn, NY: Always and Everywhere, 2025); ISBN: 978-0-9741079-0-5; 11, 554 pp.

The Asia Minor born Greek mystic G.I. Gurdjieff (1877-1949) often claimed to have been in Tibet, and to have sired children who remained there. However, when his pupil Yahne Le Toumelin eventually went to Tibet, as Gurdjieff had predicted she would, she concluded that "Gurdjieff had never set foot" in that land (pp. 65 and 283). Further, in all the pages of Negrin's massive tome, there is not one single piece of evidence supporting Gurdjieff's assertions that he had travelled to Tibet. At a time when Gurdjieff research is assuming a still modest but nonetheless increasing prominence in the study of Western Esotericism, a volume appears which testifies both to the mystique of Gurdjieff, but also to the reasons why some scholarly commentators frown on the research-efforts of insiders to the esoteric tradition in question. Layne Negrin aims to establish that Gurdjieff's system is basically a form of Tibetan Buddhism adapted for the West (pp. 100-101). It is organised in three parts. This first deals with a miscellany of matters, loosely organised around Gurdjieff's possible relation with Tibet. The second part is "Children Seeking their Roots," another assembly of materials concerning pupils of Gurdjieff and their relations with Tibetan Buddhism.

There has long been a tendency for Gurdjieff practitioners to study Tibetan Buddhism, especially those from the "Gurdjieff Foundations" (a particular stream within the Gurdjieff current associated with Jeanne de Salzmann and Lord Pentland). The third and shortest part is "Ponderings of a Grandchild," comprising pieces written entirely by Negrin himself to show how "Gurdjieff buried nonduality in his writings" (5). The appendix is an interview with Sophie Perks, who was told by Chögyam Trungpa that she is Gurdjieff's *tulku* (reincarnation) (pp. 449 and 101). Negrin states that he is presenting a theory of "the source of the Gurdjieff teaching" (p. 1). However, while he often refers to "evidence" or even "abundant evidence" for his assertions (p. 4), he also suggests that his "search" is consistent with "searches" for other origins of Gurdjieff's system in Advaita Vedanta, Sufism, and Christianity, for: "Perhaps it is some communal self manifesting in us as individuals that engages in these searches" (p. 4). He seems to suggest that his origins hypothesis is consistent with others, but then there are so many places where he asserts that Gurdjieff had been in Tibet and used Tibetan Buddhist ideas, that this element of the book seems either confused or disingenuous (of many examples, see the assertions and casual assumptions at pp. 3, 10, 67, 74, 99).

The first part is curiously headed "The Quest of Urgyen Tag," the latter being Negrin's hypothesised back-translation of Gurdjieff's epithet as the "Tiger of Turkestan," except that the name means "Uddiyanan Tiger," and there is not an atom of evidence the name has ever been used of any human being, alive or dead, until Layne ascribed it to Gurdjieff (pp. 66-68). It is typical of Negrin's style of assertion that he sees the inconsistency of his theory with Gurdjieff's statement but writes: "it is more likely Gurdjieff would have rendered *Urgyen* as Turkestan instead of *Baltiyi* because Uddiyana was hardly written about" (p. 68) He consistently produces an argument for the conclusion he wishes to arrive at, then when facts do not fit, dismisses them as Gurdjieff hiding his trail. Thus, when Gurdjieff says that the soul "finds its place" 7x48 days after death, Layne declares that this is evidence Gurdjieff knew the Bardo Thodol, and although that says it takes 7x7 days to "traverse the bardo", Gurdjieff must have modified the Tibetan to include a reference to World 48 (in Gurdjieff's system) because

that world is "subject to the law of cause and effect (or karma) … [and] karma is what determines the individual's next incarnation (p. 223)." Why Gurdjieff would be so devious in a group meeting which he had not intended to publish is not pursued. Yet, Gurdjieff never stated that World 48 was the only world with cause and effect, the one reference he made to karma presents a picture with no discernible connection with Buddhism, and he asserted that reincarnation was impossible for most people, for the simple reason that few of us are ever fully "incarnated."

Further, Gurdjieff specifically disavowed a Tibetan origin for his system and stated that he was disappointed in what he found there ().[1] In fact, the chief reason to think Gurdjieff was ever in Tibet is those comments. When Gurdjieff does speak of Buddhism and what he calls "Lamaism" which he treats as distinct from Buddhism, it is to say that they have been distorted and destroyed (Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* [New York: E.P. Dutton, 1950, pp. 240, 705-706). There is a further methodological issue which Negrin never grapples with: one can point to Tibetan analogues for episodes in Gurdjieff's writings, or to ideas with a certain similarity in both Tibetan Buddhism and Gurdjieff - but then why does Gurdjieff had to have gone there to know of the Tibetan parallel - if indeed he did? There is much evidence in *Beelzebub* and elsewhere that Gurdjieff read and wrote Greek, Armenian, Russian, Turkish, and at least some Persian. I know of absolutely none that he could read or write Tibetan - and Negrin produces none. He does assert that Tibetan words are used in Movement 15 of 39 (p. 184) but I have checked the Paris notes for this Movement, and the days of the week are given in French. That is, if Tibetan words are used in that Movement, it was not Gurdjieff who added them.

Then, he argues that Flinders Petrie was "Skridlov" from *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Although Gurdjieff said that he and Skridlov spoke in Italian, Layne asserts that they must have spoken in French, for Petrie did not speak Italian. To establish this, he seizes upon a reference to Gurdjieff being in Rome and playing a record of the Marseillaise to shoe-shine customers as having taken place in France, and uses this as evidence that Gurdjieff spoke French (p. 30) at a time when Ouspensky had said Gurdjieff did not read French ().[2] Further, he ignores the lengthy account of Gurdjieff's final meeting with Skridlov, "in the second year of the World War, in Piatigorsk, where he was visiting his daughter" (*Meetings*, p. 244). Petrie had one daughter, born in 1909. No more needs be said on that score, but just as decisively, Petrie was a racist and a eugenist: Gurdjieff had contempt for both. Although some hard-to-find pieces have been collected here, and it is certainly the only source known to me for Gurdjieff having been reincarnated in a pupil of the Shambhala Warrior, the book as a whole cannot be considered a positive contribution to the growing corpus of Gurdjieff-related material. The one thing it does establish that some in the Gurdjieff current, and especially the Foundation groups, zealously wish to see Gurdjieff's system as a form of Tibetan Buddhism, and even to reinterpret it in that light.

Joseph Azize
University of Sydney

[1] See for instance G.I. Gurdjieff, *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* [London: Book Studio, 2014], p. 172; A. R. Orage, *Orage's Commentary on Gurdjieff's 'Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson'* [London: Book Studio, 2013], pp. 145, 147, 161-2, 251.
[2] P.D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous* [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949], pp. 325-326.