

## **Tibet Studies**

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This paper goes into the reasons why 'Tibet Studies' are an important contemporary field of research, the topics which need urgent attention and the state of Tibet studies in India.

An interesting aspect of 'Tibet studies' is the diversity of the fields to be researched. It covers topics as disparate as geography, environmental sciences, climatology, geology, archeology, paleontology, biology, religion, sociology, and of course strategic studies and historical research, to cite a few.

### **A Relatively New Research Field**

For the past few decades, Tibet has been a fascinating field of research, and it will remain so. About ten years ago, while on a visit to France, I came across a series of newspaper articles written soon after the People Liberation Army (PLA) had invaded the Eastern Tibetan province of Kham in October 1950.

It was fascinating to go through these old clippings. The impressions and perspectives that most senior correspondents and Tibet 'experts' of the time had about the Roof of the World at that turning point of Tibet's history were an eye-opener.

I eventually wrote about some of the issues highlighted by the French press during the period between October 25 and November 10, 1950<sup>1</sup>. The main objective was to show how Tibet had been perceived and the ideas prevalent in the media (as well as in the general public) when the PLA walked into Tibet. During the course of this short period<sup>2</sup> most

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<sup>1</sup> To read the paper, see

[http://www.claudearpi.net/maintenance/uploaded\\_pics/TibetAnotherWorld.pdf](http://www.claudearpi.net/maintenance/uploaded_pics/TibetAnotherWorld.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Three weeks only.

aspects of the political, cultural and mythical life of Tibet were depicted in certain detail (if not with accuracy) in the French press. The poor 'general' knowledge of the situation on the ground was immediately noticeable. The main conclusion which emerged from most of these clippings is that Tibet was an unknown world. An article in *Le Parisien Libéré* resumed the situation: "[Compared] to other parts of the world, Tibet has an inappreciable advantage: one can say anything without worrying about being contradicted. The reason for this is simple: the best informed people know only the boundaries. Only the rarest of the travellers, exceptionally brave, went through this land. They can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Nobody really penetrated Tibet."

Many believe today that Tibet holds a special place<sup>3</sup> on this planet. For several reasons Tibet studies need to be developed further and deeper.

## **1-- Why are Tibet studies important?**

I have mentioned a few of the fields which require research. I will enumerate some which are, according to me, the most significant.

### **a- The Environment**

Tibet is the highest plateau on earth. According to an article in *The People's Daily*<sup>4</sup> a group of international scientists have recently created a joint study group for the environment of the 'Third Pole' area as the Tibetan plateau is known.

Quoting Yao Tandong, the director of the *Institute of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Research* with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese publication explains: "Like the South and North Poles, environmental changes in the 'Third Pole' have attracted increasing worldwide attention against the backdrop of concerns over global climate change."

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<sup>3</sup> And role to play.

<sup>4</sup> <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90881/6913151.html>

The 'Third Pole' covers more than 5 million square km at an average altitude above 4,000 meters. Tibet is one of the most vital places for the ecology of the planet with the sources of 11 major Asian rivers and 1,000 glaciers located on the high plateau.

As Yao put it: "The environmental changes in the 'Third Pole' will directly affect the economic and social development in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and neighboring countries, and will directly or indirectly affect the livelihoods and even survival of the 1.5 billion residents there."

During a group discussion with some Asian scholars, the Dalai Lama affirmed further: "Some ecologists, including scientists of the Chinese Academy of Science, have realized that rate of global warming [is different in Tibet]. While it grows at an average of 0.1 degrees [for the rest] of planet; it [increases] by 0.3 degrees for the Tibetan plateau. It means that it goes faster [on the Tibetan plateau]."<sup>5</sup>

His main argument was: "We need more studies from the part of the countries [served] by rivers [originating in Tibet]. We have to educate people about this issue. People have to realize that the ecology of the [Tibetan plateau] is very important. Some Indian scholars once told me that because of Tibet's dry climate and high altitude, when some damage occurs, nature takes more time to recover. We also have to take this aspect seriously. Tibetan environment is rather delicate."

This is one important field of study. Greater collaboration will be needed between scholars and scientists of the Himalayan States to understand the tremendous changes occurring on the plateau.

### **b- Buddhism on a frozen plateau**

Once upon a time, Buddhism flourished in India. The decline and disappearance of the Buddhist faith from the Indian subcontinent had incalculable repercussions on the politics of Tibet and Central Asia.

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<sup>5</sup> A talk with a group of Asian scholars, April 24, 2010 (Dharamsala, India).

Tibet, which had looked to the South for more than six centuries as the source of its knowledge and strength, had to search for another support and consequently had to find new protectors to preserve the Buddha Dharma.

The monasteries of Tibet became the last repositories of the ancient wisdom which had been virtually destroyed in India, its land of origin. The causes for the disappearance of Buddhism from India are many. Different reasons have been assigned to the demise of Buddhism in the subcontinent, but the consequences for Tibet need to be studied further. Here are some of the factors why Buddhism is today barely present in India.

- The revival of Hinduism and the conversions undertaken by Adi Shankaracharya;
- The degeneration of Buddhism which was not kept in its pristine form in the great monasteries of Northern India
- The loss of princely patronage
- The most beautiful temples, the large prayer and community halls, the hostels, libraries and observatories were devastated again and again and razed during the raids of the Turkish armies under Ikhtiyar Khalji in the closing years of the twelfth century.

What is of interest to us is that after the arrival of the barbarian hordes, the vigour of the monastic life in the hot plains of India was transferred to the desolated monasteries and caves of the Tibetan high plateau.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A Tibetan monk, Dharmasvamin, who visited Nalanda in 1235, left us a very sad picture of the plains of Bihar where 1,800 years earlier the Buddha had propagated his message of compassion and non-violence. What he saw in Nalanda was only destruction; he could not recover a single manuscript from what was once one of the richest libraries in the world. Finally, he met an old monk in his nineties who could teach him some Sanskrit. Dharmasvamin studied for some time with the old monk, and when he was warned that the Muslim troops were approaching again, he carried his old master on his shoulders and hid until the raiders had gone. The image of the old monk on the shoulders of his Tibetan student marks the end of the cultural influence of India over Tibet. The source had gone dry!

A new era began.

Tibet studies are important for the good reason that Tibetan Buddhism has had (and still has) a positive effect on the evolution of mankind. In one way, it belongs to the intangible heritage of the planet and has its origin on the subcontinent.

The Dalai Lama affirms: "I consider Indians as my gurus, because we follow the Nalanda tradition. All our concepts and way of thinking comes from the Nalanda Masters. Therefore, we are the chelas and Indians are our Gurus. I also often say that we are reliable chelas, because after the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Nalanda tradition was established in Tibet, after that in our gurujis' own home, lots of ups and downs happened. Over thousand years, we have kept intact the Nalanda tradition. That means that we are reliable chelas."

Buddhism continued to be practiced in several Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, Taiwan or China. However, the form which was practiced in India was left only in Tibet and after the events of 1950's, it could have been a great loss for mankind had it been lost forever. In a way, the arrival of the Dalai Lama and his followers in 1959 was responsible for the revival of the Nalanda tradition in India. As the Dalai Lama explains: "The important point is that during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Tibetan Emperor invited a great master of Nalanda. His name was Shantarakshita. He was a famous, well-known scholar and master of Nalanda. He went to Tibet and spent the rest of his life there. He introduced Buddhism in Tibet. That is why I consider that Tibetan Buddhism is the authentic tradition of Nalanda. ...Therefore the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is the Nalanda tradition which combines the Sanskrit and the Pali traditions as well Buddhist Tantrayana. Masters like Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Chandrakirti wrote tantric treatises in Sanskrit." Today, Buddhist studies (particularly Tibetan Buddhist studies) have become truly popular in the West<sup>7</sup>. Enter any bookshop in France, UK or

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<sup>7</sup> There is also a revival in most Asian countries.

the US (or even in India), the largest selection of books on a single subject is probably 'Buddhism'. The Dalai Lama often makes the distinction between Buddhist Religion, Buddhist Philosophy and Buddhist Sciences. It is the last, the 'science of the mind' which needs to be further studied and compared to 'modern' sciences<sup>8</sup>. It could help solving some of humanity's personal and collective problems. In this way Buddhist studies are relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **c-- A spiritual research**

Perhaps more than the purely religious tradition, the spiritual aspect requires our attention and study. As a consequence of the invasion of Tibet in 1950, a new way of life, less compassionate, less enlightened slowly took over the Roof of the World.

It is not that Old Tibet was perfect, far from it, but centuries of research in the monasteries and caves of the Roof of the World had produced some results, principally in what we could call the sciences of the mind.

It is interesting to quote from the writings of Apa Pant, the Political Officer in Sikkim who was dealing with Tibetan affairs in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs in the 1950's. Pant was not only aware of the diplomatic and strategic importance of Tibet, but was also conscious of the humane aspects of the disappearance of an ancient civilization. Pant writes: "With all its shortcomings and discomforts, its inefficiencies and unconquered physical dangers, here was a civilization with at least the intention of maintaining a pattern of life in which the individual could achieve liberation. Without the material conveniences that others have come to expect, the Tibetan as I found him was a cultured, highly developed,

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<sup>8</sup> One interesting anecdote is recounted by the Dalai Lama: "One great Indian nuclear physicist, Dr. Raja Ramanna told me that he once read this text of Nagarjuna, he was surprised when he found in this text the concept of quantum physics and relativity. It was mentioned there. He was surprised. The West discovered these concepts at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when some Indian sages like Nagarjuna knew it 2,000 years ago. As a physicist, [Dr. Ramana] was really surprised."

intelligent person whose vision, supported by the constant example of the monastic order, was fixed upon the objective of reaching Nirvana."<sup>9</sup>

Though Pant readily admitted that he had always felt "a great admiration for China's culture and civilization, for its long history and indeed for its new revolution", he was nonetheless saddened by the Chinese incapacity to accept (or even understand) a philosophy not fitting with the Party line<sup>10</sup>.

In the 1950's, the Chinese Generals would not (or could not) understand the Dalai Lama's efforts to improve Tibetan society while maintaining an 2000-year old tradition.

Pant, like many of his colleagues, felt that the Tibetans had a lot to learn from the Chinese: "In my travels in Tibet I observed how disciplined the Chinese were. All their activities were directed towards the building of a new culture, a society of 'new men'.

Pant often discussed these points with the Chinese Generals posted in Lhasa, but they could only answer in terms of efficiency and discipline. Pant pondered: "The one so apparently inefficient, so human and even timid, yet kind and compassionate and aspiring to something more gloriously satisfying in human life; the other determined and effective, ruthless, power-hungry and finally intolerant. I wondered how this conflict could resolve itself, and what was India's place in it."<sup>11</sup>

This last sentence sums up the deeper ramifications of the survival of Tibet as a separate nation. Was it possible to preserve and develop these human qualities in a new Tibet? The future would soon show that it was not.

In many ways, the old Tibetan civilization with its pluses and minuses is an interesting subject to study. Though there were a lot of injustices and many wrongs, at the same time the society lived in a certain peace and

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<sup>9</sup> Pant Apa, *Mandala – An Awakening* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, 1978), p. 112

<sup>10</sup> Is it not the main reason for the failure in the relations between China and the Dalai Lama?

<sup>11</sup> Pant, op. cit., p. 115.

contentment which is rare to find today on our planet where 'money' has become the yardstick by which everything is measured. Higher your GDP, more powerful is the State or the individual. The Buddhist society lived knowing fully well about the impermanence of all things, this probably gave the inhabitants of the Roof of the World a unique philosophy of life which is now getting acknowledged in the West (and in Asia as well), particularly after the recent financial crisis that many see as a societal crisis. In a way, the old Tibetan society, once the imperfections are recognized and discarded, could prove to be an alternative model of life for many<sup>12</sup>.

#### **d--Tibetan Medicine**

Apart from the Buddha Dharma, many other aspects of Tibetan culture are worth studying. I shall cite only one: the Tibetan system of Medicine, known as *Sowa Rigpa* (the Art of Healing). It is an interesting example which demonstrates the influence of neighbouring countries on the culture of Tibet.

During the reign of King Trisong Detsen, physicians and medical experts from India, China, Central Asia, Persia and even Greece gathered in Samye for a Medical Council to compare their knowledge. Thereafter, the great physician Yuthok Yonten Gonpo the Elder, prepared the first compilation the *Gyud Shi* or the Four Tantras, based on the prevalent indigenous Tibetan knowledge. However several features from other systems, particularly from *Ayurveda*, were incorporated. An original Tibetan Art of Healing was born.

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<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that during their meeting at the White House in February 2010, the Dalai Lama told President Barak Obama that he should think that GDP cannot be the criterion to judge a society, factors like happiness also should be taken into account. We do not know what the reaction of President Obama was.

Yuthok Yonten Gampo the Younger paid 6 visits to India during the 12<sup>th</sup> century to complete the work of Yuthok the Elder<sup>13</sup>. The 156 Chapters of the *Gyud Shi* is considered as the essence of Tibetan medical knowledge and are still studied not only in Tibet, but also in the entire Himalayan belt and Mongolia.

While a proper English translation of the Four Tantras is still in preparation, modern technologies should be used to 'test' the potency and efficacy of this traditional system which should then be disseminated.

### **e-- Strategic studies**

India, Tibet and China are three old nations. In the course of their history, each one has developed its own characteristics; each has also gone through different phases, though there is no doubt that the current times may certainly be counted among the most tense and complex.

As we have seen, for centuries, India and Tibet have shared a common spiritual search. During the seventh century AD, the Roof of the World discovered Buddha's teachings. This was an important turning point in the history of Tibet.

Tibet's conversion to Buddhism had a dramatic consequence on its political history: a non-violent Tibet could no longer defend itself. It had to look outside for military support to safeguard its frontiers and to protect its Dharma. Help came first from the Mongol Khans and later the Manchu Emperors, who were themselves followers of the Buddha's doctrine.

Another era began with the British took control over India: the subcontinent's relation with Tibet, which had always been spiritual, became strategic and economic.

The Crown's officials saw the Land of Snows as an opportunity to open new markets and create a convenient buffer zone between India and the

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<sup>13</sup> Yuthok Yonten Gampo the Younger was said to be the reincarnation of Yuthok the Elder.

Russian Empire. China was too weak to react meaningfully but continued to pretend to be the suzerain of Tibet.

For the three nations, the ball started rolling at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when a young British Colonel, Francis Younghusband entered the holy city of Lhasa in July 1904. At the end of his stay in the Tibetan capital, Younghusband forced upon the Tibetans their first Agreement with the mighty British Empire.

But political deals with colonial powers were never simple; China was extremely unhappy at not being a party to the accord. Ten years later, wanting to show fairness, London called for a tripartite Conference in Simla to settle the issue: the three main protagonists sat together at a negotiation table for the first time. The result was not fully satisfactory as the Chinese only initialized the main document, but did not ratify it.

Despite the often proclaimed 2000 year-old friendship between India and China, the two nations had little contact except through foolhardy monks such as the pilgrim Xuanzang who, fourteen centuries ago crisscrossed North India in search of the places where his master, the Buddha had lived and preached. An interesting aspect of Sino-Indian relations is that these pilgrims left a detailed description of the Indian subcontinent, while similar Indian records hardly exist. In general, relations were very limited in scope.

After the 1950's events on the Tibetan plateau, India and China have become neighbours. In 1962, a short war erupted between the two Asian giants. It has left deep scars (at least in the Indian psyche). One consequence is a bitter border dispute which continues till date. One of the most fascinating studies for scholars involved in geopolitics is the past (and present) relations between India and China. Many believe that the future of Asia (and the planet) depending on these two 'emerging' world powers. It certainly requires in-depth studies and analyses for which the national archives of China and India should be opened. To understand issues is undoubtedly the shortest way to solve them.

## **A Brief History of Tibetan Studies**

As mentioned earlier, before 1959, very few serious studies were undertaken on Tibet, its culture and civilization, even in Europe. It does not mean that some scholars had not tried. The main problem was the difficulty to access primary material.

I once interviewed Prof. Dagpo Rinpoche, a well-known Tibetan scholar, who settled in France in the early 1960's. Soon after Tibet's invasion, a few Lamas had been invited by the Rockefeller Foundation to open five centers of Tibet studies in Europe in Denmark, Italy, Germany, UK and France<sup>14</sup>. The declared objectives of the Foundation were to help local 'tibetologists'.

Dagpo was attached to Prof R.A. Stein, the author of the classic work, *The Tibetan Civilization*. With the blessings of the young Dalai Lama, Dagpo and one of his friends<sup>15</sup> left for France in 1960. He worked for years with Prof Stein at the famous School of Higher Studies<sup>16</sup>. Rinpoche recounted: that most Tibetologists knew how to read old texts, but had no idea about the pronunciation. For some time, he taught Tibetan pronunciation before getting an independent teaching assignment at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INACO). In France, the Tibetan language course started only in 1964. As there was no method to teach the language, Stein suggested to Rinpoche to use the same method that he had been using for the Chinese language. Eventually more and more students enrolled and a proper curriculum was developed.

The strange aspect of the new course was that students and scholars were not interested in Buddhism as a religious practice, but only by the intellectual aspects of the teachings of the Buddha. Those who wanted to practice had to remain discreet, otherwise they would be branded as "eccentric or worse, unbalanced", remembered Rinpoche. Buddhism was more a scholarly curiosity and in any case, the genres could not be mixed

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<sup>14</sup> Dagpo Rinpoche.

<sup>15</sup> Known as Geshe-la

<sup>16</sup> École des Hautes Études

up. I have cited this example to show that the level of Tibetan scholarly studies in the 1960's was still rather low.

### **The First Foreign Scholars in Tibet**

The first foreign Tibet 'scholars' came from different backgrounds: missionaries, diplomats, spies, adventurers, scientists and later, much later, academics.

The first to enter the 'Forbidden Land' were Christian missionaries. It is said that one Benjamin of Tudela left Sargasso in Spain in 1160 to travel to Tibet. Did he really visit the Land of Snows?

William of Rubruck, a Flemish Franciscan missionary and explorer who accompanied King Louis IX of France during the 7<sup>th</sup> Crusade, wrote that the Tibetan people "were held in abomination among all nations" due a ritual of drinking from the skulls of their parents. The Franciscan Odoric of Pordenone, who is said to have traveled to Tibet in 1325, also kept some records of his visit.

Two Portuguese Jesuit missionaries, António de Andrade and Manuel Marques reached the Roof of the World in 1624. The duo travelled from Agra to Delhi with Mughal Emperor Jahangir. They then visited Western Tibet crossing through modern Uttarakhand and apparently met the King of Guge and stayed with him for a month. Andrade and Marques managed to establish a mission at Tsaparang.

During the same century, two Jesuits, Johannes Grueber of Austria and Albert D'Orville trekked from Peking to Agra via Lhasa.

During the following century, the first true scholar<sup>17</sup> was the Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri who reached the Tibetan capital on March 18, 1716.

He stayed a few months in Lhasa, studied Tibetan language, culture and religion. His manuscripts give a rather accurate account of Tibetan

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<sup>17</sup> Perhaps not in the modern sense of the term.

geography, government, agriculture, customs, as well as Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and beliefs.<sup>18</sup>

The next trespasser-scholars were envoys from the Great Empires of the time<sup>19</sup>. They were usually adventurers, spies, diplomats or military men who wanted to explore unknown areas, open new trade routes and eventually map unexplored lands<sup>20</sup>.

The Britisher George Bogle, reached Shigatse in 1774, worked for the British East India Company. He became friends with the Panchen Lama at the Tashilhunpo monastery and married a Tibetan woman. He is probably the first Britisher who could understand the intricacies of Tibet's foreign policy, especially in its relations with the Chinese Ambans. Then, the gates closed. Tibet became the Forbidden Land.

The last foreigners to enter Lhasa for several decades were Fathers Huc and Gabet, two Lazarists who spent a few weeks in Lhasa and left detailed memoirs of their stay (including their expulsion under the Amban's order). Their main objective was to convert Tibetans to Christianity. It did not work and they were asked to leave the country.

In 1872, Nicholas Przewalski, a colonel in the Russian army, tried his luck from the northern steppes. He managed to collect some scientific information, but never reached Lhasa despite 3 attempts.

During the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it became a challenge for adventurers, soldiers and spies of all kinds to enter in the Holy City. Very few finally succeeded.

I should mention William Rockhill, a young American diplomat; George Littledale, an English nobleman and his wife, Annie Taylor, an English missionary who reached within three days' march of the Tibetan capital; Zen monk Ekai Kawaguchi, who disguised as a Chinese, entered Tibet in 1899 and lived in a monastery; a few Russians like Gombojab Tsybikov,

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<sup>18</sup> They were rediscovered and published by Luciano Petech in the 1950's.

<sup>19</sup> Mainly the British, French and Russian Empires.

<sup>20</sup> An area (or even continent) would generally be accepted to belong to the Empire which managed to map it first. Such was the colonial rule.

Pyotr Kozlov and Ovshe Norzunovi or the intrepid French lady explorer, Alexandra David-Neel who later wrote tens of books on her journey to Lhasa and her meetings with the 'mystics and magicians' of Tibet.

In January 1904, Capt. Francis Younghusband led 5,000 Sikh and Gurkha soldiers onto the Roof of the world. For a few days, the Tibetan Army tried to stop them, but the battle of Guru soon ended with 700 dead Tibetan soldiers. In July 1904, Younghusband's troops entered the 'forbidden city' and forced a Convention upon the Tibetan government<sup>21</sup>.

One should also mention the Pundits. The Government of British India secretly engaged young people of the Himalayan belt<sup>22</sup> to survey the trade and pilgrimage routes in Tibet. They were trained by a British Captain, Thomas G. Montgomerie of the Great Trigonometric Survey located in Dehra Dun. Disguised as pilgrims or traders they counted their strides during journeys across Tibet.

Nain Singh and Kishen Singh, who hailed from the Johaar Valley in Uttarakhand, are the most well-known. They mapped the main Western and Southern Tibet trade route; for the first time, they determined the longitude, latitude and altitude of Lhasa and discovered some unknown sections of the Yarlung Tsangpo<sup>23</sup>. Though not suitably rewarded by the government of British India, they greatly contributed to the geographical knowledge of Tibet.

One of the first 'modern' scholars was Giuseppe Tucci, the Italian archaeologist, linguist, Indologist who visited Tibet several times in the 1930's, travelling thousands of miles on foot to produce some of the best books on Tibetan religion and culture.

A word about Rahula Sankrityayan: one of the most widely-traveled Indian scholars. The Buddhist monk who turned Indian nationalist and Marxist travelled for 45 years of his life. He was known as Mahapandita<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Represented by the old Regent as the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had left for Mongolia.

<sup>22</sup> From today's Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

<sup>23</sup> As the Brahmaputra is known in Tibet.

<sup>24</sup> 'Great Scholar' in Sanskrit.

Sankrityayan. He went to Tibet many times and brought back a number of original manuscripts in Pali and Sanskrit. Most of these palm-leaf texts originally belonged to the libraries of Vikramashila and Nalanda Universities.<sup>25</sup> Rahula Sankrityayan mastered the Tibetan language and published a grammar as well as a Tibetan-Hindi dictionary.

On one of these trips, he was accompanied by Gedun Choepel, the greatest Tibetan scholar of his generation, who had come to India to learn Sanskrit and rediscover the source of Tibetan knowledge.

It is Gedun Choepel who first pointed out the link between the Tibetan scripts brought from India by Thomi Sambhota during the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the Gupta scripts in use at that time in India.

Despite many others great scholars who visited Tibet, the knowledge about Tibet was rather restricted at the time of the Chinese invasion in 1950.

It is only after the Dalai Lama and his followers had managed to settle in India (and in the West) that the Buddha Dharma and the Tibet studies in general begun to flourish as never before.

### **What needs to be studied today?**

#### **a-- Ancient Tibetan History**

One important field of study which has been neglected in the past is archeology. However, recently Western and Chinese scholars have started to dig into the past of the Tibetan nation.

One should particularly mention John Bellezza who introduces himself on his site as a scholar, explorer, writer, and pilgrim: "John Vincent Bellezza is widely recognized as the foremost specialist in the cultural history of Upper Tibet. He has lived in the high Himalayas for over a quarter of a century. A visiting scholar at the University of Virginia, Bellezza has written extensively on the nomads, history and culture of Upper Tibet."

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<sup>25</sup> They had been taken to Tibet during the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century and preserved there. A couple of centuries later, the great Indian viharas were destroyed when the Turkish invaders ransacked them.

Belleza has worked extensively on the Kingdom of Zhang Zhung and the ancient Bon tradition. He needs to be emulated. One of the problems with Tibetan archeology is that, in the past, the Tibetan establishment was not truly interested to promote studies outside the Buddhist tradition. For a long time, the 'official' Tibetan civilization started with the introduction of Buddhism by the Three Religious Kings in the 7-9<sup>th</sup> century. But things have changed and one can hope that more research will be conducted in this fascinating phase of Tibetan early history.

Interesting also is the fact that more and more Chinese and Tibetan scientists are keen to study the Tibetan plateau. Archeology is today a multi-disciplinary science which includes paleontology, climatology, palynology, glaciology and many others fields.

Regarding the 'native' faith of the Tibetan plateau, it is worth noting the ground breaking work started by Prof. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche in Italy. He went to the West as an assistant of Giuseppe Tucci in the early 1960's and opened the doors to many scholars in the Bon research. Since then, many others such as Samten Karmay<sup>26</sup> have demonstrated the depth of the Bon tradition and its influence on Tibetan Buddhism (and vice-versa).

### **Modern History**

Regarding modern history, it is still a delicate subject because there are obviously two interpretations of the recent history of the Tibetan plateau. Primary sources are multiple. There is of course an oral history with some of the actors of the 1950 tragedy still alive. One can also find hundreds of

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<sup>26</sup> Samten G. Karmay was born in Amdo Province and attended a local Bonpo monastery from age eight to fourteen. He then followed a three-year course of Dzogchen meditation at Kyangthang Monastery. At twenty he obtained the Geshe degree at Drepung monastery. In 1959 he left Tibet and settled briefly in India. From 1961 to 1964, he was a visiting scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, where he earned a M. Phil. Degree and then a Ph.D. for his research on the origin and development of Dzogchen traditions. In 1980 he joined the National Centre of Scientific Research in Paris.

books or memoirs<sup>27</sup> through diplomats' dairies, adventurers' accounts<sup>28</sup> or biographies of Tibetan aristocrats today living in exile.

One can also access the Western diplomatic archives which give a fairly good idea of what happened from the 1940's to the 1970's. Particularly the *Foreign Relations of the United States* have declassified most of the diplomatic documents till the Nixon Administration (1969-1974). More recently, the Russian and Mongolian archives have been opened, throwing light on the role of the Buryat monk Agvan Dorzhiev and Tibet's relations with the Tsar of Russia and Mongolia.

It is still difficult to access the historical archives in China and India where the files relating to Tibet are still classified after 1913 for NEFA (area which includes Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan and Tibet) and 1923 for Gilgit (including Kashmir and Ladakh). In these circumstances, it is not easy to have a correct and complete picture of the events in the 1940's, 50's and 60's. One can hope that the Government of India will soon change this policy.

For other reasons, it is equally difficult to consult the Chinese archives, though the Tibet Studies have greatly progressed since the beginning of the 1980's. This was probably due to the visit of General Secretary Hu Yaobang in Tibet in May 1980 and the resulting decision to improve the local studies. But there still a long way to go before we are able to write a history of Modern Tibet taking into account all the sides.

### **What are the Centers of Tibet studies in India**

Since the Dalai Lama took refuge in India in 1959, India has become one of the main hubs for Tibet studies.

#### **a—The Central Tibetan University, Sarnath**

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<sup>27</sup> For example, the memoirs of Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer who lived 7 years in Tibet

<sup>28</sup> For example, French Alexandra David-Neel.

The Central University for Tibetan Studies is an Indian university located in Sarnath, near Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh State. The Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies was founded in 1967 to educate Tibetan students as well as youth from the Himalayan belt.

It was originally part of the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University in Varanasi. In the 1970s, the Government of India granted the Institute the status of an autonomous body under the Department of Culture of the Union Ministry of Education. From 1977 onwards, the Institute was provided 100% financial support by the India Government. In April 5 1988, the Institute was declared a 'Deemed University'.

In January 2009 the Institute became a full-fledged Indian University and a Tibetan, Prof. Ngawang Samten was nominated as Vice-Chancellor.

#### **b-- The Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh**

The Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS) was inaugurated in 1959 in Leh, Ladakh. It was first known as the School of Buddhist philosophy. It was established to cater to the needs of the local people in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh as traditionally the people of the mountainous region of Jammu & Kashmir were going to Lhasa to study in the large Tibetan monasteries. The Institute offers classes from standard VI to the PhD level. Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Tibetan literature and Buddhist philosophy are compulsory in higher classes and modern subjects such as mathematics and general science are taught in lower classes. The CIBS provides four special courses on local traditional knowledge such as amchi (or Tibetan medicine), thangka painting, sculpture and wood carving.

#### **c— The Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala**

The Library of Tibetan Works & Archives (LTWA) is an autonomous body under the direct supervision of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala. While coming to exile, the Dalai Lama (as well as ordinary refugees) brought a large number of old manuscripts from Tibet. In order to preserve them, the LTWA was founded in June 1970. A Tibetan-style

building was constructed for the purpose in Dharamsala. It is one of the most important institutions dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of Tibetan culture.

It houses two libraries, a museum, and archives for audiovisual, photographic and architectural documents. It holds some 110,000 titles in the form of manuscripts, books and documents; hundreds of thangkas (Tibetan scroll paintings), statues and other artifacts; and over 6,000 photographs. The library's oral history project is the first outside Tibet. The LTWA also runs a publishing house, distributing its own titles in Tibetan, English and Hindi, mostly on Buddhism and Tibetan culture.

#### **d-- Monastic Institutions in India**

Most of the important monasteries existing in Tibet have been reestablished in India. One should mention the three great Gelukpa monasteries of Drepung, Ganden and Sera, rebuilt in Karnataka State; the monastery of Sakya near Dehra Dun in Uttarakhand as well as important monasteries of the Nyigmapa and Kargyupa schools and of the Bonpo faith in Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh. They follow the same curriculum as in Tibet, to which is added the study of modern sciences.

#### **e-- Men-Tse-Khang**

Men-Tsee-Khang or the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute (TMAI) was established in March 1961 in Dharamsala. Initially, Men-Tsee-Khang was situated in a small room on the upper floor of an old house in McLeod Ganj (Dharamsala). Today the Institute has 48 branch clinics in India, Nepal and three residential doctors abroad.

Men-Tsee-Khang has several departments such as Pharmaceutical, Research & Development, Materia Medica, Editorial & Publication, Medical & Astro. College for training new doctors and astrologers, Herbal Product Research department. A lot of research on cancer, AIDS and other diseases is undertaken by the TMAI.

The Astrology department produces a wide range of annual almanac, calendars, amulets and horoscopes for individuals.

#### **f-- The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, Dharamsala**

The (TIPA) is the premiere exile institute entrusted with the responsibility of preserving and promoting Tibet's unique tradition of performing arts. In 1959 the Dalai Lama and some 80,000 Tibetans left their country for India. During the following years, many aspects of Tibetan culture and civilization were destroyed. One of the first decisions of the Dalai Lama was to take steps to preserve the traditional performing arts before they were lost forever. It was established in August 1959 in Dharamsala. The TIPA has today 112 members, including artistes, instructors, administrative staff and craftsmen, all of whom live on the institute's premises.

#### **g-- The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok**

Established in 1958, the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology sponsors and promotes research on the religion, history, language, art and culture of the people of the Tibetan cultural area, including Sikkim. The NIT library holds one of the largest collections of Tibetan works in the world, outside Tibet and a museum of Tibetan iconography and religious art.

The Institute was linked with the late Chogyal<sup>29</sup> Sir Tashi Namgyal and was declared open by the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru in October 1958. The building is an exquisite example of Sikkimese architecture.

This list is obviously not exhaustive. Further, some individuals are institutions in themselves. One could mention Prof. Lokesh Chandra, son of the famous Sanskrit scholar Raghu Vira who has been a Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research.

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<sup>29</sup> Maharaja of Sikkim

Lokesh Chandra is credited with 360 works and text editions. Among them are classics like his 'Buddhist Iconography of Tibet' or his 'Dictionary of Buddhist Art' in about 20 volumes. He is presently Director of the International Academy of Indian Culture.

There are also University Departments where Tibetan studies are undertaken. One should mention the Center of Indo-Tibetan Studies of Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan (West Bengal) founded by the poet and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

### **Conclusion**

The arrival of the Dalai Lama and his followers in India has given a tremendous boost to Tibet studies not only in India, but also in the West. However several fields have been neglected for different reasons. New research in these fields will open new vistas on the history of the high plateau, its geography, its culture and civilization.