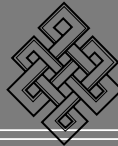


History of Tibet



Tibet's close proximity to China has meant that much of Tibetan history has been written down and recorded by the Chinese. The Chinese have a much longer history of written language and it wasn't until the 7th century that the Tibetans adopted a writing system of their own. This script seems to have been created for the sole purpose of translating the Buddhist Canons brought from India. The recording of Tibetan history was definitely not a high priority, mirroring the example of India, which also has scarce historical records from the time.

Bearing in mind the upheavals that China has endured with invasions, revolutions and civil wars, there is no way of telling how and to what degree the history of centuries has been adapted, corrupted or simply rewritten. This situation has been compounded by a lack of archeological evidence and the cultural destruction inflicted on Tibet during the Cultural Revolution.

In fact, there is a hopeless gap between the history of Tibet as accepted by the Tibetans themselves and the one put forward by the Chinese and taught to Tibetan children using Chinese texts.

A very rough summary of these divergent views goes something like this:

China: "Tibet has always been a part of China."

Tibet: "Gee, we never thought of it that way."

The Tibetan side of the story doesn't often get a chance to be aired, though. So here is an attempt, possibly a reckless one for a guidebook, to discuss both the Tibetan and Chinese versions of the history of the area. Each is the 'truth' seen from their respective points of view.

TIBETAN HISTORY FROM THE CHINESE POINT OF VIEW

Tibet as we call....

Tibet is the south-western border region of China. The people inhabiting Tibet have a long history dating back to the Neolithic Age and from early times already had connections with the Han Chinese living in Zhongyuan to the east.

During the Tang period (618-907), there were inter-marriages between the royal families of the 2 peoples and treaties were signed bringing close political, economic, and cultural ties. This strong connection, over time, built a solid base for the establishment of a unified nation.

Even now, at the Potala Palace in Lhasa, there stands a statue of Princess Wencheng, who came from the Tang royal family and in 641, married King Songtsen Gampo (c.618-649), ruler of T'u-Fan (Tibet). The square in front of the Jokhang Temple in the city, is also home to a stone obelisk erected in 823 to commemorate the Sino-Tibetan peace treaty signed the year before.

The inscription reads:

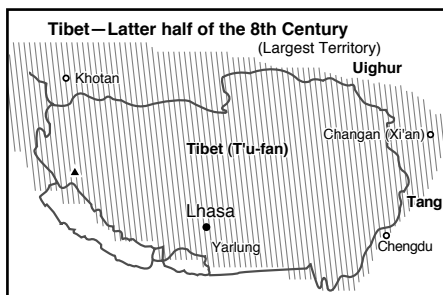
"The conference on the uniting of the country of the father-in-law and the country of the nephew, and the conclusion of the peace treaty, eternally never changing, has been witnessed and recognized by both the gods and the people, and shall be praised for ages and generations to come."

TIBETAN HISTORY FROM THE TIBETAN POINT OF VIEW

Legend has it that the first Tibetans were born from the union of a monkey and an ogress. The first king of Tibet appeared 2,000 years ago, 418 years after the death of the Buddha Shakyamuni, (Prince Gautama Siddharta) and the king's arrival is marked as the beginning of the Tibetan calendar. It is either said that the king descended from heaven or that he came from India. Since then, different tribal groups have joined together and gradually formed the country of Tibet.

The 32nd king, Namri Songsten, expanded the influence of Tibet, making expeditions as far afield as Persia, but it was his successor, Songsten Gampo (c.618-649), who actively spread the teachings of Buddhism throughout the areas under his control. The king had 3 Tibetan empresses, but as Tibet grew in power and influence the adjacent countries of Nepal and China sought out alliances and wished to remain on friendly terms with their neighbor. As a sign of friendship, royal princesses were sent to marry Songsten Gampo and these 2 women played very important roles in the development of Buddhism in the Tibetan lands. During this time the famous Jokhang Temple was constructed.

In the 8th century, during the reign of King Trisong Detsen, Tibet finally occupied Xi'an, the imperial capital of the Tang Dynasty. During this period, Guru Rinpoche



(Padmasambhava) was invited from India to help with the spread of Buddhism in Tibet and Indian-style Buddhism was adopted as the official national religion.

During the reign of King Tri Relpachen in the 9th century there was again war between Tibet and China, in which Tibet emerged victorious. The countries signed a peace treaty which defined the borders between the 2 countries and stone pillars were erected in 823 to mark this agreement, one in Lhasa, one in Xi'an, and one at Mt. Gungu Meru on the border. These stone pillars carry the following inscriptions in both Tibetan and Chinese:

"Tibet and Tang shall respect the current borders. Hereafter, neither country shall invade the adjacent land with armed force."

The Revival of Buddhism

In the early 13th century, the Mongolian leader Genghis Khan established the kingdom of Mongol Khan in northern China. Tibet, led by the Tibetan religious leader Sakya Pandita (head of the Sakyapa order), decided to submit to the powerful Mongols.

In 1279, the Mongol Khan administration unified all of China, establishing the Yuan Dynasty. They established a central government following the example of the Han and the Tang before them, which allowed them to rule over every area and people of China. Tibet was one of those areas that officially became an administrative region ruled by this central government. Despite the repeated rise and fall of the many dynasties that ruled over China, Tibet has always been under the control of the central government.

The 14th century saw the rise of the Ming Dynasty and the third emperor Chengzu, who ruled from 1403 to 1424, and who granted Tibetan local religious leaders titles such as 'Religious King' and 'King.'

Tibet continued to increase the lands under its control until 841 when the Bonpo king Langdarma was assassinated due to his harsh oppression of Buddhism. This action plunged Tibet into 3 centuries of political upheaval and warlord rivalry.

Buddhism was gradually revived starting in the Guge Kingdom in Western Tibet. High priests from India were invited to Tibet to help spread the teachings across the country.

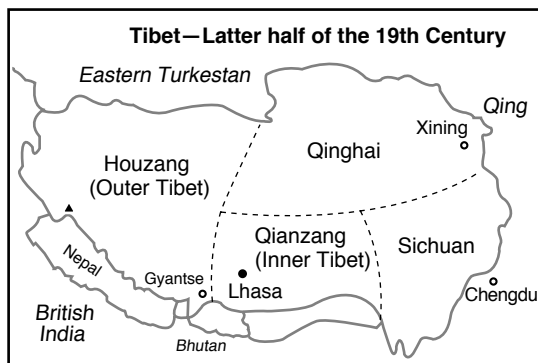
In the 13th century, Tibet came under threat from the advancing Mongols who had already subjugated China and had even reached as far as Eastern Europe. The Mongol Army attacked Tibet and in the face of this aggression the country was forced to accept them as their rulers. The Mongol emperors were impressed by the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism and the religion spread to Mongolia. The Mongols became zealous advocates and during the Yuan Dynasty, established by Kublai Khan in 1260, the head lama of the powerful Sakyapa order in Tibet was appointed as the head religious figure in the empire, enabling the Sakyapa to take control of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama Administration

The Qing Emperor Shizu, who ruled from 1645 to 1661, established the political and religious positions of 'Dalai Lama' and 'Panchen Lama' and appointed an ambassador to Tibet to supervise the Tibetan regional administration, which was also extensively reformed. He also determined the exact borders between Tibet and Sichuan, Yunnan, and Qinghai.

The Gelukpa order, founded by Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), became the dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism in the 16th century. The Gelukpa leader Sonam Gyatso (1543-88) received the title of 'Dalai Lama' from the Mongolian leader Altan Khan. Since then, the Dalai Lamas, who are revered as the incarnation of Avalokitesvara, have wielded both political and religious power over the country.

After the Manchu Qing Dynasty came to power in China, ambassadors were placed in Lhasa. The Qing emperors had been followers of Tibetan Buddhism for generations and the relationship between Tibet and China was one of 'temple and patron.' Even so, contacts



with the Qing Dynasty gradually declined and by the 19th century Tibet had entered into a state of self-imposed isolation with its doors tightly closed to foreigners. Meanwhile the situation in the Asian areas surrounding Tibet changed dramatically, especially during the administration of the 13th Dalai Lama (1876-1933).

The British Invasion

Since the Opium War in 1840, the imperial powers have continuously attacked China, leading the country down the road towards semi-colonization. Britain invaded Tibet on a number of occasions and during one of these incursions in 1903 they actually overran Lhasa and proceeded to expel the 13th Dalai Lama.

Even though the British acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in the Sino-British negotiations held between 1904 and 1906, they still conspired to win control over the Tibetan Plateau.

Around the end of the 19th century, the British colonial government in India began looking to open trade links with Tibet and to assert its control over the country to stop Russian designs on the region. To further these aims, the British invaded in 1903-4 led by Colonel Francis Younghusband. A treaty was signed with the independent, sovereign Tibetan administration but this was contested by the Chinese. The Qing emperor insisted that the British go through them when dealing with Tibet. The British agreed and signed a separate treaty in 1907 that recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

The Administration by the People's Republic of China

In the fall of 1911, the Nationalist Xinhai Revolution overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established the Republic of China. Immediately after its establishment, the Republican government proclaimed China was a united country consisting of the Han, the Man (Manchus), the Hui, and the Tibetans. Taking advantage of the confusion generated by this declaration, Britain expelled the Chinese ambassador from Tibet, and pushed the Tibetan regional government into a declaration of independence.

However, both the Dalai and Panchen Lamas repeatedly proclaimed their wish to protect the unity of the Motherland and their support for the central government.

In 1930, the 13th Dalai Lama stated:

“What I wish from the bottom of my heart is the true peaceful unity of China.”

The confusion created by invasions and provocation by imperialists gradually subsided and the bonding between Tibet and the Motherland was allowed to strengthen.

In 1910, the Qing Army attacked Lhasa and the 13th Dalai Lama fled into exile in India. The following year a revolt broke out in China and the Qing Dynasty was deposed and the Nationalists came to power and proclaimed a republic. The Qing soldiers that had been stationed in Lhasa in an attempt to control Tibet were driven out and the 13th Dalai Lama returned to the country victorious and declared Tibet independent.

These years of freedom unfortunately lasted only until 1950 when 35,000 Chinese Communist troops, fresh from the victory against the Nationalists, invaded Tibet and seized Chamdo, the capital of eastern Tibet in a matter of days. Tibet, under the leadership of the newly enthroned 15-year old, 14th Dalai Lama, had virtually no armed forces and it was powerless to resist the onslaught.

The Tibetan government delegation that was summoned to Beijing the following year was forced to sign the 17-point agreement for the ‘Peaceful Liberation of Tibet’ under threat of war if they didn’t sign. At the signing of the treaty a fake official seal was used to legitimize the document. Neither India, Britain nor the United Nations would come to the assistance of Tibet and the promises of



In 1949, the Chinese people won a glorious victory in the People's War of Liberation, establishing the People's Republic of China. Although American and British imperialists continued to scheme for an independent Tibet, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), on its way to accomplishing the complete liberation of all of China, reached Chamdo in 1950. The following year the 17-point, 'Agreement Between the People's Central Government and Tibetan Regional Government Regarding the Method for Peaceful Liberation of Tibet,' was signed by the 2 governments.

Anti-Chinese forces abroad and many of the nobility within Tibet could not tolerate the peaceful integration of Tibet into the Motherland. These anti-revolutionaries often engaged in antagonistic and destructive activities, and finally raised arms against the People's government in 1959.

The 14th Dalai Lama had decided, of his own free will, to attend a theatrical performance at the Tibetan Military Area Auditorium. The rebels used this as an excuse to begin spreading rumors that the Hans were attempting to kidnap the Dalai Lama or that they were going to poison him. They attempted to stir up the people of Lhasa and coerced about 2,000 citizens into surrounding the Norbulingka, his residence. They threatened the Dalai Lama and then took him from Lhasa to Lhokha, in southern Tibet, where the rebellious forces were based.

Once the Dalai Lama had been removed from Lhasa, these counter-revolutionaries then gathered a mob of some 7,000 people to attack the political organizations, government offices, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The actions of loyal patriotic Tibetans and the PLA thwarted this attempt and the revolt was completely suppressed in the city of Lhasa in just 2 days. The defeated rebels, who had been fleeing to Lhokha, then made their escape to India.

Thanks to the 'Democratic Revolution,' the Tibetan people have managed to cast off the cruel yoke of feudal serfdom and for the first time in their history, they have achieved their freedom. Democracy was in place, farmers and

regional autonomy, freedom of religion and the guarantee of the Dalai Lama's position were all reneged on quickly by the Chinese.

The Tibetan people put up a fierce resistance in which hundreds of thousands of people were murdered. Even more people died of starvation as farmers were forced to turn their agricultural land over to wheat production instead of the far better suited traditional crop of barley. This disastrous policy, combined with a dramatic increase in the urban population due to Chinese immigration, caused chronic food shortages across the country.

In 1959, the Chinese commander in Lhasa ordered the 14th Dalai Lama to attend a theater performance at a Chinese military compound. Fearing for his holiness's safety, Tibetan people surrounded his summer palace, the Norbulingka, to protect him. The Chinese Army tried to intervene and the clash resulted in thousands of Tibetan deaths. To avoid an even worse tragedy, the Dalai Lama slipped out of the palace and fled to India where he established his government-in-exile in the Indian town of Dharamsala.

Later, the Communist government divided Tibet into an autonomous region, provinces, prefectures and counties, and it has continued to assert its control over the 6 million Tibetan people, labeling them as 'minority peoples.' Since the occupation, over 100,000 Tibetan people have fled to India, Nepal, Bhutan and elsewhere in the world.

The Cultural Revolution arrived in Tibet in 1966. Many monasteries and temples had already been severely damaged during the invasion and occupation of the country; these and many others were now razed to the ground. Along with the destruction of the buildings, much of the artwork and many religious objects were also destroyed or stolen. Anything that was seen to be traditional was seen as a threat to the revolution and all things Tibetan were banned. During this period, thousands lost their lives and more were imprisoned in forced labor camps.

Although some limited freedoms were restored immediately after the end of the Cultural Revolution,



herdsmen were highly motivated in their production to benefit the masses and modern industrialization began. All these glorious achievements have improved the Tibetan people's standard of living immensely.

Throughout the Cultural Revolution, Tibet, just as other regions in China, had the freedom of religion curtailed and many religious complexes were destroyed. After that period, though, freedom of religion in Tibet was totally restored. Religious activities were revived and shattered temples are undergoing vigorous, government-assisted reconstruction. In 1995, the Potala Palace's restoration was completed in time for the Tibetan Autonomous Region's 30th anniversary celebrations.

At the present time, we still see the Dalai Lama group and other 'Splitist' forces abroad at work, scheming to undermine the stability of the People's Republic of China and separate Tibet from the Motherland through the spreading of false rumors, counter-revolutionary propaganda and the inciting of riots.

there was a great repulsion felt by the Tibetan people as they were obliged to act as Han Chinese. This antipathy has been further fueled by the continued influx of Chinese migrants, which has actually turned Tibetans into a minority in Lhasa.

Since the fall of 1987 there have been a scattering of demonstrations and each time the Chinese authorities have brutally suppressed them, with loss of life or liberty for many of the participants. In Lhasa, martial law was imposed in 1989 and this lasted for a year and 7 months. Over time, the Dalai Lama has actually conceded the demand for full independence and he has called on the Chinese to hold peace talks, but China has chosen to ignore this. The Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his efforts to reach a solution without resorting to violence, however the Chinese have only responded by stiffening their attitude towards his Holiness and his government-in-exile. Estimates put the number of political prisoners jailed in Tibet today at more than 400.



The Dalai Lamas

Yukiyasu Osada

The Dalai Lama is regarded as the embodiment of Avalokiteshvara (Bodhisattva of Compassion). As Religious King, the highest authority of Tibetan Buddhism, and also the Tibetan political leader, the Dalai Lamas have reigned over both Tibetan religious and secular life.

- 1st Gendun Drupa (1391-1474)
- 2nd Gendun Gyatso (1475-1542)
- 3rd Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588)

The head of Drepung and Sera Monastery, Sonam Gyatso was invited by Altan Khan of Mongolia to Chabcha, Amdo (Gonghe, Qinghai Province) in 1578 and received the title of Dalai Lama (Ocean of Wisdom). The title of Dalai Lama started with the third incarnation, and the 2 predecessors were named Dalai Lama only later.

- 4th Yonten Gyatso (1589-1616)
- 5th Lobzang Gyatso (1617-1682)

The 5th Dalai Lama is commonly known as Gyalwa Ngapa (5th, the Great). Supported by Gushi Khan of Mongolia, Lobzang Gyatso became the head of all Tibet in 1642 and established the Dalai Lama's government. In the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama, Tibetan culture flourished, and this led to the construction of the Potala Palace.

When the 5th Dalai Lama passed away, the great regent, Desi Sangye Gyatso, who held absolute power in the country, suppressed the news of the death for 14 years while he was grooming the sixth incarnation and completing the Potala Palace.

- 6th Tsangyang Gyatso (1683-?)

Tsangyang Gyatso was born to a Nyingmapa family in Monyul (Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh in India). Maybe because he was offended by the dogged struggle for power, Tsangyang Gyatso grew to become a lover of the fast life and fell well short of the regent's expectations. He often escaped from the Potala Palace to play around and eventually

decided to return to secular life. Nonetheless, his personality and down-to-earth nature continues to appeal to Tibetans, and his love songs still delight the people.

It is said that Tsangyang Gyatso was relieved of the title of Dalai Lama by Lhazang Khan, who occupied Lhasa, due to his bad behavior, and he later died in Amdo, as he was being sent under escort to Beijing. His body was not preserved.

- 7th Kelzang Gyatso (1708-1757)
- 8th Jampal Gyatso (1758-1804)
- 9th Lungtok Gyatso (1805-1815)
- 10th Tsultrim Gyatso (1816-1837)
- 11th Khedrub Gyatso (1838-1855)
- 12th Trinle Gyatso (1856-1875)

After the 7th Dalai Lama passed away, there was a deadly struggle amongst the country's nobles for the seat of regent, who ruled for the Dalai Lamas until they came of age. All of the Dalai Lamas from the 9th to the 12th died unnaturally in their teens and early twenties.

- 13th Tubten Gyatso (1876-1933)

A pawn in the struggle between the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty and Britain, which eventually invaded Tibet, Tubten Gyatso was the first Dalai Lama to really be dragged onto the world stage.

- 14th Tenzin Gyatso (1935-)

Born in Taktser, Amdo, Tenzin Gyatso ascended to the throne in Lhasa at the age of 4. In 1950 the Chinese Communists invaded Tibet, and the Dalai Lama assumed his majority in the face of the aggression. After failed attempts to work with the Chinese, the Dalai Lama finally secretly fled to India in 1959. Since then, Tibet has lost its independence, and the Dalai Lama heads the government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India.

Appreciated for his adherence to non-violent struggle against the Chinese occupation, he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Although he lives in exile, the 14th Dalai Lama is still seen as the highest leader of Tibet and has continued with his pleas to the Chinese government for negotiations, while appealing to the international community for support.