

Asian Civilization: East Asian V2365
Introduction to Asian Civilization: Tibet
Columbia University
Time: T/Th 5:40pm-6:55pm

Course description

This course seeks to introduce the sweep of Tibetan civilization and its history from its earliest recorded origins to the present. To do this, we must answer two questions: “What is Tibet?” and “What is a civilization?” Currently, cultural Tibet is a much larger entity than typically understood, covering an area the size of Western Europe. The Tibetan civilization, as a cultural formation that is capable of transforming other cultures, is also a much broader phenomenon than typically recognized. At its greatest extent, Tibetan civilization dominated much of inland Asia, extending into parts of Iran and the Middle East following the Mongol invasions, west to the Volga and north to Siberia (again among modern Mongols), and east to Beijing. Following the Tibetan diaspora in the 1950s, Tibetan civilization has become a global phenomenon.

We will consider what makes Tibetan civilization distinctive. The course examines what civilizational forces shaped Tibet, especially the contributions of Indian Buddhism, sciences and literature, but also Chinese statecraft and sciences and, less significant, Persian influences. Elements of all these neighboring civilizations combined with existing elements of Tibetan traditions to form what we now call Tibetan civilization. Tibetan Buddhism is a central element of Tibetan civilization and has shaped the politics, economy, national identity, education and society of Tibet (and sometimes neighboring regions as well). Alongside the chronological history of Tibet, we will explore these aspects of social life and culture. Thematic topics, such as the economy and material culture, structures of power (clan and family, social, religious and gender hierarchies), legal codes will be examined in each chronological period. The religious life of Tibet will be central to our study: the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bön, the arts and sciences (including medicine, dance, music, and fine arts), religious practices (pilgrimage, meditation, scholastic debate, popular devotions) and literature (canons, biography, poetry, history, liturgy, etc.).

Evaluative mechanisms (i.e. requirements)

- 1) Attendance, participation and weekly posting of paragraph which either a) responds to one of the weekly study questions (on-line in courseworks); b) raises other questions about some part of the readings; or c) interprets a selected passage. The weekly paragraph, to the length of 20 to 25 lines, must be submitted to the electronic bulletin board by 5:00 p.m. on the day preceding your discussion section. (20%).
 - 2) Brief essays: Everyone will be required to submit two brief essays (roughly 4 pages, double spaced), one before mid-term break and one after, deadlines to be announced. The essays should address problems raised by the primary sources through your own analysis and discussion and *should not focus* mainly on the historical context or broad generalizations we may have discussed (15% each)
- (continued)
- 3) Mid-term examination conducted in-class on Tuesday, Oct 24, consisting of short-answer identifications [IDs] and a choice of essay questions (20%)

- 4) Final examination conducted during exam period (IDs & essay questions). With instructor's permission, a paper (15-20 pages) may replace exam. (30%)

Academic Integrity

This course is taught in the spirit of the guidelines for academic integrity of Columbia College, the School of General Studies, and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. We expect all work to be the original work of the student her or himself. Papers may be discussed with other members of the class but may not be copied in any part from the work of anyone else, including from printed or Internet sources.

Disability Support

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to see the instructors as soon as possible. Also, stop by the Office of Disability Services to register for support services.

Required Reading:

Kapstein, Matthew T. *Tibetans*. 2006 by Blackwell Publishing. (available for purchase Sep 27, until then, relevant chapters available on-line under courseworks, see below)

Losang Lhalungpa *Life of Milarepa*, 1977.

Schaeffer, Kurtis. *Himalayan Hermitess: The Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Nun*, 2004.

Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol; Matthieu Ricard, Constance Wilkinson, and Michal Abrams, trans. *The life of Shabkar: the autobiography of a Tibetan yogin*, 1994.

Lobsang Gyatso, (Blo bzang rgya mtsho, Phu khang Dge bshes); with Sparham, Gareth. *Memoirs of a Tibetan Lama* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1998).

www.courseworks.columbia.edu: scanned copies of other reading materials

Week 1 (9/5) Introduction to Class & Why Tibetan Civilization is Taught

Lobsang Gyatso, *Memoirs of a Tibetan Lama*, pp. 7-84.

(9/7) **Introduction to Tibet** (Regions & Monastic Life)

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, Chapter 1 "The Vessel and Its Contents"

Lobsang Gyatso, *Memoirs of a Tibetan Lama* pp. 84-198

Week 2 (9/12) Overview of Tibetan Society, Chinese Occupation & Exile

Lobsang Gyatso, *Memoirs of a Tibetan Lama* pp. 199-22.

Courseworks materials (www.courseworks.columbia.edu, look under course number):

Elliot Spring, "Exile and Dissent: The Historical and Cultural Context," in *Tibet since 1950*, pp. 30-37.

Tsering Shakya, "Whither the Tsampa Eaters?"

Optional: Melvyn Goldstein, "The Dragon and the Snow Lion: The Tibet Question in the 20th Century," in *China Briefing, 1989*, Anthony J. Kane, ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 129-167.

(9/14) **Tibetan Pre-history, Myths of Early Tibet & Rise of Imperial Tibet** 7th-8thc.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, Ch2 "Pre-history & Early Legends"; CH 3: Introduction & "The Rise of the Tibetan Empire"

Dreyfus, George "Proto-Nationalism in Tibet"

Week 3 (9/19) Introduction of Buddhism (India, China) 8th-9th centuries

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH3: "Later Monarchs and the Promotion of Buddhism" & CH7: "Buddhist Basics"

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

1) Li and Coblin 1987. *A Study of Old Tibetan Inscriptions*. Institutionalization of Buddhism and treaties with China

2) *Old and New Tang Annals* & "Prayers at the Dega Tempe celebrating the 821/2 treaty between China and Tibet".

3) Abidharma Sampler.

Questions to which you should post answers (25 line paragraph) in the Discussion section (see left hand column of courseworks website) by 5pm the day before you meet in for discussion:

1) For the *Old Tibetan Inscriptions*:

What do these inscriptions suggest about the ability of the clans to hold onto power? How effective was the emperors' ability to enforce his edicts? Using evidence from the inscriptions, described what happened to a clan or clan members if they were suspected of disloyalty?

2) For the *Tang Dynasty Annals* & the "Prayers at the Dega Temple celebrating the treaty": How reliable are such records? What factors do we have to take into consideration in judging this reliability? Consider especially how diplomatic missions are described as well as what details might have been omitted and why?

(9/21) Zenith & Decline of Imperial Tibet (War & Peace with Tang China) 8th-9th c.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH3 "The Empire's Implosion"

Secondary and Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

1) Beckwith 1987. "The Tibetans in the Ordos and North China: considerations on the Role of the Tibetan empire in world history." 10pp.

2) Thomas. *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents concerning Chinese Turkestan*. 2pp.

Discussion Questions:

1) Despite the abrupt fall of the Tibetan Empire, Beckwith feels that it bequeathed a significant legacy, one that would play a vital role in the development of northeast and east Asian history. What was this legacy and do you find his argument convincing?

2) Thomas: What do the Tibet Annals and the "Tibetan texts on Chinese Turkestan" tell us about the administrative ability of the empire? How about the position of the tsenpo? The role of Buddhism? Do these and the other primary sources we have looked at reveal other hints as to the nature of society and rule during the period of Tibetan military expansion?

Week 4 (9/26) Tibet in Fragments 10-11th c.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH7: Introduction & "Propitiation, Therapy & Life Cycle"

Courseworks materials:

1) Extract from the Per Kvaerne, *The Bon Religion of Tibet*

2) Davidson, *Renaissance Tibet*, Ch 2

(9/28) Revival of Buddhism at Tibet's Margins, Return to Center

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, Chapter 4: Introduction & "Dynastic Successors & Gugé Kingdom"

Courseworks materials:

1) Selections from *The lotus-born : life story of Padmasambhava* / "composed" by Yeshe Tsogyal; "revealed" by Nyang Rel Nyima Ozer pp. 55-116, 160-162, 174-175.

2) Selections from John Snellgrove's *Nine Ways of Bon*

Optional reading: Davidson, Chapter 3, *Tibetan Renaissance*

Questions to consider for this week's primary readings:

In later literature, the Bon and Buddhists are often depicted as fierce enemies. Does there seem to be animosity between the Buddhists and the Bonpos in these fairly early texts? If so, what are the indications? If not, do they deal with each others traditions at all, and how so?

What elements of these texts seem to derive from early traditions? What elements seem to be newly introduced?

Week 5 (10/3) Renaissance Tibet 11th-12th c.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, Chapter 4: "The Buddhist Renaissance;" CH7 "Monastic Institutions and Education," & "Tantrism and Yoga"

Primary Source: Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa*, 9-46

(10/5) "New" Schools of Tibetan Buddhism (Kadam, Sakya, Kagyü; Bön)

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH7, "Major Orders and Schools"

Primary Source: Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa*, 47-74, 108-203.

Questions: What elements of Buddhist tradition seem similar from this period (the Milarepa reading) and the earlier periods we have studied? What is different? What about the political situation: what similarities and differences do you see between this period and earlier periods? What other useful insights into contemporary society can we glean from Milarepa's biography? (Remember this text was not actually written until the 15th century, so it does not transparently reflect the 11th-12th centuries, but it reflects at least what the author imagined life to be like at that time, based on earlier biographies of Milarepa).

Week 6 (10/10) Tibet under the Mongols 13th-14th c.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, Chapter 4: "Mongols and Tibetan Buddhists"; CH8 "Sites of Learning"
Read first five pages carefully, skim next five pages; the rest of the chapter is relevant to this week and next week.

Primary Sources, on Courseworks: "Multi-lingual Mongol Edicts concerned with Tibet" & Cyrus Stearns *Hermit of Go Cliffs* on Mongol invasion

(10/12) **Intellectual developments** ("National" Histories)

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

- 1) Sakya Pandita, translated by Bosson: *A Treasury of Aphoristic Jewels*
- 2) Sakyapa Sonam Gyaltzen, *The Clear Mirror*, 75-177, 255-266.
- 3) Pakpa, *Elucidation of the Knowable*, Extracts (10pp) & PDF of end of Chapter 3, Ch4-5.

Questions: How do these texts, written by Khon clan members of the Sakya tradition help shape your understanding of Tibetan civilization? What do you think their original purposes were? I have highlighted some of the places that these lamas inserted themselves or their political patrons into these texts. How important a role do you think such insertions played? If they were not a central purpose of the texts, what were the central purposes of such texts? What do you make of all the lists in these texts (see especially the Pakpa scanned text) and how do you think they were understood by their original audiences?

Week 7 (10/17) Era of Aristocratic Hegemonies (Struggles over Central Tibet) 14th-16th c.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH4: "The Successive Hegemonies" & "Tibetan Buddhism and the Ming Court"

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

Bilingual Ming Edicts concerning the Karmapa Lama

Questions: Compare the edicts from last week and this week. Aside from the contents, what does the material presence of these edicts convey? (Remember, most people were illiterate at this time, so you might consider these edicts as material objects as well)

(10/19) **Intellectual developments**

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

- 1) Autobiography of Tsongkhapa & selected Buddhist texts from *The Door of Liberation*
- 2) Heller, "The Autobiography of the Second Dalai Lama" & Associated Art

Questions: Compare the autobiographies of Tsongkhapa and the second Dalai Lama. How are they different, and who do you think their respective audiences were? What was the purpose of writing works like these? Finally, compare Tsongkhapa's Buddhist writings to those of Pakpa for Jingim: what would you describe as the central points of each of these works? What is different about their messages.

Week 8 (10/24) *Mid-term in-class exam*

(10/26) **Rise of Gelukpa Tibet and the Dalai Lamas** (Biographies, Histories) 16th-17th c.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, Ch5: Introduction & "Monastics and Monarchs"

Schaeffer, "The Fifth Dalai Lama"

Week 9 (10/31) Zenith and Decline of Reunited Tibet (New Government & Support) 17th-18th c.

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH5: "Between the Mongols and Manchus" & CH6 "Government and Law"

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

- 1) Fifth Dalai Lama's *History of Tibet* 1643, selections
- 2) Qing Dynasty Edicts to Dalai Lama & Panchen Lama

1) Read the Fifth Dalai Lama's *History of Tibet* closely, looking especially for indications of what makes for a legitimate government. What are signs of legitimacy, and what role does prophecy play in Tibetan politics? Also, look carefully for any indication that Gushri Khan transferred authority over any part of Tibet to the fifth Dalai Lama or his regents. Since this transfer of authority was supposed to have taken place in 1642, why would the fifth Dalai Lama not have written about it in 1643? If the transfer never took place, what does it mean for Tibet that Gushri Khan accepted a title from the Qing Emperor just before he died in 1655?

2) Compare these Qing dynasty (1644-1911) letters to the fifth Dalai Lama and the first (recognized) Panchen Lama to the letters sent to lamas by the Ming dynasty. Are there similarities or differences? Do you get any sense from these letters that the Qing exercised any authority in Tibet? Do you get the sense that conferring a title on Gushri Khan and the fifth Dalai Lama in the early 1650s somehow made Tibet subordinate to the Qing dynasty, based on these documents?

(11/2) **Intellectual Developments** (Women's Lives & Religious Ideals)

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH6 "Women in Traditional Tibet" & Conclusion

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

- 1) Samten Lingpa "The Life of Yeshe Tsogyal," 12-23.
- 2) Schaeffer, Kurtis. *Himalayan Hermitess: The Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Nun*, 2004. 15-45, 91-127, 131-184.

What similarities do you see between the two lives of Tibetan women? What impact does the Gelukpa religious and institutional establishment (at its peak during this period) seem to have had on the writing of these lives of Tibetan women? Do the Nyingma and Kagyü traditions, in which these two biographies were written, seem very supportive of the lives of actual women

practitioners? What can we learn about the social role of women and society in general from the life of the Orgyan Chokyi?

Week 10 No class 11/7 Go Vote!

(11/9) Manchu Protectorate of Tibet (Tibet Divided) 18th-19th

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH 5 "Regency and Retreat"; CH6 Introduction & "Property, Economy and Social Class"

Petech, "The Administration of Tibet during the first half-century of Chinese Protectorate" & Conclusion to *China and Tibet in the Early Eighteenth Century*.

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

18th c Qing Edicts on Tibet

Discussion Questions:

1) What does it mean to be a protectorate? How and why did the Qing empire (ruling China at this time) extend its control over Tibet? What was the impact of Chinese culture on Tibet during this period of Qing rule?

2) Summarize in your own words the nature of Tibetan society at this time. Who controlled the economy and politics of Tibet? How much social mobility was there between different classes of society? Do you see any connections with the early role of clans in Tibetan society?

Week 11 (11/14) Economic and Monastic Expansion

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH6: "Cultural Developments in Eastern Tibet"; CH6 "Marriage & Kinship"

Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol; Matthieu Ricard, Constance Wilkinson, and Michal Abrams, trans. *The life of Shabkar: the autobiography of a Tibetan yogin*, 1994. xviii-xxiv, 1-64, 349-393.

(11/16) Uniting Features of Tibetan Social Life

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH6 "Festivals, Pilgrimages, and Ritual Cycles"

Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol; Matthieu Ricard, Constance Wilkinson, and Michal Abrams, trans. *The life of Shabkar: the autobiography of a Tibetan yogin*, 1994. 447-546.

Discussion Questions:

1) What elements of the cultural developments described by Kapstein can be found in Shabkar's life story? Can we rely on such life stories for historical information?

- 2) What are some of the uniting features of social life in cultural Tibet, and how are they manifested in Shabkar's biography? Do we have similar patterns of social life, festivals, pilgrimages and rituals in the United States? How do these respective patterns help define Tibet and the United States respectively?

Week 12 (11/21) Invasions by British and Chinese (international trade & colonialism)

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH5: "The Life and Times of the Great Thirteenth" (to 1911)

Tuttle, "Global Forces in Asia," *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*, 34-67; 253-261; map.

Primary Sources, on Courseworks

- 1) Younghusband, *India & Tibet*, Selections 149-167, 192-106, 298-303, 336-342. This primary source was written in 1910 by the leader of the 1903-4 invasion of Tibet.
- 2) Memorials relevant to Chao-erh Feng from Teichman's *Travels of a A Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, p. 33-34, 111. The texts in small print are primary source materials on Chao Erh-feng (Zhao Erfang) and his occupation of Kham.

Optional readings:

- 1) Palace, "The Younghusband Invasion, 1900-1904," *The British Empire and Tibet, 1900-1922*, pp. 1-14.
- 2) Sperling, "The Chinese Venture in K'am, 1904-1911, and the Role of Chao Er-feng," 69-91.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How similar or different were the British Indian and Qing Chinese interests in Tibet? Were you persuaded by the argument that commercial interests were central to British involvement, while Nationalist interests were central to Qing involvement in Tibet?
- 2) With regard to Younghusband, pay special attention to how he discussed the casualties on both sides of the conflict (How do the deaths of white officers compare to those of Indian sepoy or Tibetan soldiers?).
- 3) The British invasion of 1904 and Zhao Erfeng's tactics from 1904-1911 were much more strongly resisted than the Chinese occupation of 1951, even though the Tibetan army was much weaker and more poorly armed in 1904. Why were Tibetans so willing to fight the British and the Chinese incursions in these two early 20th century instances? Consider the threat to religion perceived by Tibetans in these two instances.

(11/23) No class; Thanksgiving Break

Week 13 (11/28) Independent Tibet (Addressing Foreign Audiences)

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH5: "The Life and Times of the Great Thirteenth" (from 1911) & CH9 Introduction & "The End of Traditional Tibet"

Primary Sources, on Courseworks:

- 1) *The Dalai Lama's 1913 Proclamation*, trans. by Tsepong W. D. Shakabpa 173-174.
- 2) *The Mongol-Tibet treaty of January 1913* & Parshotam Mehra's article on this treaty 173-191.
- 3) "Tibetan missionaries in China: from the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Academy, Chongqing"
- 4) "The Panchen Lama's 1932 Ritual in the Forbidden City, Beijing & 1934 Ritual in Hangzhou"

Week 14 (12/5) Tibet-in-Exile & under the People's Republic of China (Pleas for help)

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH9 "Rebellion & Exile"

Song, "Reflections on the 17 Point Agreement 1951"

Goldstein, "Moving Beyond Stereotypes"

Wang, "Dispute between Tibetans and Han"

(12/7) Global Out-reach & Offers of Assistance (Tibetan Buddhism abroad)

Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, CH9: "The Promise & Perils of Century's End"

Cao, "Tibet through Dissident Chinese Eyes"

14th Dalai Lama, "Dimensions of Spirituality"

Kolas & Thowsen, *On the Margins of Tibet*, "In Search of Tibetan Culture" & Conclusion

re-read Tsering Shakya's "Whither the Tsampa Eaters?"