

A History of Tibet

Asian Studies/History 276

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Fall 2002

This course asks three questions: What was old Tibet? Is Tibet part of China? What's going on there now? Each of these questions has its own methods of study, which I will briefly introduce below.

What was old Tibet? In this section we look at Tibetan culture before the reappearance of the Chinese in 1950 and the eventual incorporation of Tibet into the People's Republic of China. We'll examine traditions as they were expressed in social, political and religious forms. Above all, religious, for it is a truism--which we must examine in this course--that everything Tibetan is touched by Buddhism. Our objective here is less a mastery of the chronological development of institutions than a familiarity with the web of connections, assumptions, and social practices that characterized the old society. We will spend about half the semester with these issues, not only for their intrinsic interest but because most Tibetans still live partially in "old Tibet," and we cannot grasp current events without becoming temporary inhabitants of that realm.

Is Tibet part of China? This is the issue that has most riled anyone concerned with Tibet in the last hundred years. Chinese fundamentalists claim Tibet has been a part of China ever since the thirteenth century. Tibetan nationalists claim that Tibet has *never* been part of China. We will examine this history, from the seventeenth century onward, to see what narratives best fit the historical processes we discern in it. For this section of the course we will adapt the language of international relations, testing how well concepts such as "nation-state," which derive from the experience of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, explain matters in Central Asia.

What's going on now? We'll look at Tibet since 1950, in an attempt to understand the contradictions of the Chinese presence.

In each section of the course we will read first-person accounts, secondary material by western scholars, and period documents. Because the Tibetan environment (physical & religious) is so profoundly different from our own, we will also watch a video every Monday night at 7:00 p.m. in Searles 315; these will help us visualize such novel landscapes. Though this is a history course, it obviously has a large component of religion. All this will require us to develop a wide range of sensitivities.

Attendance is required at all class meetings and video showings, and more than two absences will adversely affect your grade. This is not because I'm going to be saying priceless things, but because the course is oriented to discussion and viewing. It's simply not possible to reproduce that experience in any other medium. I'll be asking you to do a lot of writing, both in and out of class. Most of these will be short papers--no term papers and also no mid-terms in this class. Some of the assignments are indicated on the syllabus, but others will be developed as we go. Because this writing constitutes part of

your preparation for class, it will be important to do it by the due date, and late papers will not be accepted except for medical reasons. I expect that it will take you between three and four hours per class meeting to complete these diverse tasks.

Instead of a written final exam, we will have individual oral exams in my office. Together as a class we'll develop the questions to be discussed there, so you will be able to prepare effectively. I'll also ask you to suggest a grade for yourself on class participation, broadly defined to include in-class contributions, effort and so on. We will need to establish a set of criteria on class participation that we all find acceptable. I'll ask you to bring a short self-evaluation statement with you to the oral exam.

I will not put grades on your written work, though I will make extensive comments. However, if you're concerned about your grade at any point in the course, please come see me. I will also offer everyone the chance for a mid-term grade check--I'll require this of first-year students in the course. **Be sure to save all your written work**, because I will ask you to turn it in to me with your final paper at the semester's end. The final grade will be determined on the basis of short papers (65%), final exam (15%), and class participation (20%). My office is at 38 College Street. Office hours are Tuesday and Wednesday, 9:30 to 11:00, and by appointment. My phone is -3524, and my e-mail address is <kidder>.

The following books should be available for purchase in the basement of Moore Hall:

Siebenschuh and Tashi Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*
 Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*
 Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*
 Lobsang Lhalungpa, *Life of Milarepa*
 Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*
 R. A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*
 Chögyam Trungpa, *Journey Without Goal*

Question 1: WHAT WAS OLD TIBET?

Beginning with four introductions: to the land, its history, to Buddhism, and to Tibet in the late 1940s.

Monday, 9 September--getting started

Tonight, Monday evening, 7:00 p.m. in Searles 315: video showing of *Tibet--Where Continents Collide*, a geological introduction to Tibet, and *Tibet--the Lost Mystery*, which tells the history of Tibet from 1900-1950. Total running time: about two hours.

Wednesday, 11 September--looking at the land

Assignments:

- Please read quickly through the handout *Tibet--Where Continents Collide*, pp. 2 - 10. Don't worry much about technical geological terms.
- Make a sketch map of Tibet, showing places indicated on the hand-out. To get everything in, please stick two ordinary-sized pieces of paper together.

Monday, 16 September--looking at the history (1)

Assignment:

- Write a five page account of Tibetan history. Steal this from an encyclopedia or similar source, but don't use Tom Grunfeld's *The Making of Modern Tibet*, which we'll get to later on. Devote about two pages to the early period, up to 1400 or so; and one page each to 1400 to about 1800; 1800 to 1950; and 1950 to the present.

Monday night video, 7:00, Searles 315: *Tibet--the Bamboo Curtain Falls*, the history of Tibet after 1950. Running time: about one hour.

Wednesday, 18 September--looking at the history (2)

Assignment:

- Read R. A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, chapter 1, "Habitat and Inhabitants," pp. 19 - 44. Read this quickly, as confirmation of what you already know. Don't blow it by getting bogged down in names!

Monday, 23 September--Heinrich Harrer

Assignment:

- Please read *Seven Years in Tibet* from the beginning through chapter 6. Harrer gives much information that will help us answer all three questions I am posing in this course. Use your sketch-map of Tibet to trace his trip thus far (privately--not to hand in).

Monday night video: *Footprint of the Buddha* (one hour).

Wednesday, 25 September--Buddhism: the Hinayana (1)

Assignment:

- Please read Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, pages 1 to 89.

Monday, 30 September--Buddhism: the Hinayana (2)

Assignment:

- Write one page: What is Buddhism? Base your paper on *What the Buddha Taught* and the video we have seen.

Monday night video: *Himalaya* (about two hours).

Wednesday, 2 October--Harrer in Lhasa (1)

Assignment:

- *Seven Years in Tibet*, chapters 7 - 11.

Monday, 7 October--Buddhism: the Mahayana

Assignment:

- Read the handout on Mahayana Buddhism.

Monday video: *Seven Years in Tibet* (about two hours).

Wednesday, 9 October--Harrer in Lhasa (2)

Assignments:

- *Seven Years in Tibet*, chapter 12 to end.
- Please read Goldstein's account of the incident that Harrer calls "an attempted *coup d'état*," which is found on pages 464 - 521 of *A History of Modern Tibet*. Write a page on the nature and conduct of Tibetan politics.

Monday, 14 October--fall break

Wednesday, 16 October--Tibetan social organization

Assignments:

- Please read Goldstein's "Introduction: Tibetan Society," pp. 1 - 37. Go over this with great care, as it sets out some basic structures of Tibetan social organization as they existed at the end of the pre-modern period.
- Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, chapter 1, "Tibet As It Used To Be." [Go on to next page for more assignments.]
- Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, "Epilogue," pp. 289 - 92, on "feudalism" and the comparison to Europe.
- Siebenschuh and Tashi Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*, pp. vii - 34. (You own these last three books.)

Monday, 21 October--Vajrayana Buddhism and society (1)

Assignments:

- *The Life of Milarepa*, chapters 1 - 6, pp. 9 - 107.

Monday video: *Tibetan Buddhism--Cycles of Interdependence*, on daily life in culturally-Tibetan Ladakh. (About an hour.)

Wednesday, 23 October--Vajrayana Buddhism and society (2)

Assignments:

- *Journey Without Goal*, pp. 1-6, 19-63, 87-99, and 133-42.

Monday, 28 October--Vajrayana Buddhism and society (3)

Assignment:

- Handout from the *Hevajra Tantra*.

Monday video: *The Fields of the Senses* (about an hour).

Question 2: IS TIBET PART OF CHINA?

Wednesday, 30 October--Central Asia in the 1700's: Manchus and Mongols (1)

Assignment:

- Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, pp. 75 - 91.
- Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, chapters 2 & 3.

Monday, 4 November--Central Asia in the 1700's: Manchus

and Mongols (2)

Assignment:

- From the *Cambridge History of China*, please read the article by Joseph Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800," pp. 35 - 39 and 90 - 106.
- Zahiruddin Ahmad, *China and Tibet, 1708-1959*.

Monday video: *The Cup* (about two hours).

Wednesday, 6 November--Central Asia in the 1800s: India, the British, and the Russians

Assignment:

- In *The Pundits*, read Chapter Seven, "A Hardy Son of Soft Bengal," pp. 193 - 213.

Monday, 11 November--Tibetan options & world politics, 1900-1950.

Assignments:

- Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, chapters 4 & 5
- Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*, "Conclusion: The Demise of the Lamaist State," pp. 815-24.

Monday video: *Heart of Tibet* (about an hour).

Question 3: WHAT'S GOING ON NOW?

Wednesday, 13 November--hard times in the Middle Kingdom (1)

Assignments:

- Subscribe electronically to the World Tibet News.
- June Teufel Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions--Minority Nationalities*, pp. 7 - 41.
- Tashi Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*, pp. 35 - 88.

Monday, 18 November--hard times in the Middle Kingdom (2)

Assignment:

- Tashi Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*, pp. 89 - 168.

Monday video: *My Husband Doesn't Mind if I Disco* (30 minutes).

Wednesday, 20 November--meanwhile in Tibet: 1950-1980

Assignments:

- Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, chapters 6 - 9.
- "The Seventeen-Point Agreement"
- Handout: "The Resolution on Carrying out Democratic Reform," 17 July 1959.
- Han Suyin, *Lhasa, the Open City*, pp. 139 - 153.

Thanksgiving break

Monday, 2 December--1980 to the present

Assignments:

- Grunfeld, *Modern Tibet*, chapters 11 and 12.
- Tashi Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*, pp. 169 - 201.

- Melvyn Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon*, "The Post-Mao Era," pp. 61 - 99.

Monday video: *Kundun* (about two hours).

Wednesday, 4 December--and then?

Assignment:

- Goldstein, *Snow Lion*, "The Future," pp. 100 - 131.
- B. Michael Frolich, *Mao's People*, "Frontier Town," pp. 144 - 156.

Monday-Wednesday, 9-11 December

Oral exams in my office. Bring all your written work with you, as well as your self-evaluation on class participation.

No video this Monday night.

Wednesday, 11 December

Our last class.