Tibetan Studies in Japan

Hajime Nakamura

This is a short article which is aimed at giving a brief survey of Tibetan studies in post-war Japan. When necessary, reference will be made to studies proceeding the War. First the writer wanted to have his students keep a list of reference works in this field, but as it has become clear that Western scholars and intellectuals are very eager to know how our studies are progressing, he tentatively mimeographed and distributed copies of it to several persons. Subsequently, at the request of the Organisation, this slightly revised version was published.

It is impossible to mention all the Tibetan studies in Japan in this short article because the publications and articles are so numerous. Therefore, they have been limited to the following.

(1) All the works which were awarded prizes by the Academy of Japan;
(2) All the works which were recommended as valuable or noteworthy in "the Japan Science Review. Humanistic Studies" published by the Union of Japanese Association of Humanistic Studies. (文科系學會連合編集, 研究論文集);
(3) All the works which were recommended as noteworthy by the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies (日本印度學佛教學會);
(4) All the works which were mentioned in "Bibliographie de l'Orientalisme Japonais", published by the "Maison Franco-Japonaise";
(5) The works by Japanese scholars which were reviewed in Western journals, or referred to as authoritative by Western scholars;
(6) The works which were considered noteworthy by the author.

Therefore, although this article is not exhaustive the author hopes that this will give a fairly accurate perspective of post-war Japanese scholarship in Tibetan studies.

I Language

Formerly several introductory books to the Tibetan language were published. E. H. Johnston clarified that the Tibetan characters are very similar to those of a stone inscription (500 A. D.) found at Gorakhpur. This fact betrays that Characters had already been instituted before Thonmi-Sambhota.

S. Yoshimura asserts as follows:

— 732 —
When the beginning of Tibetan Script is investigated in terms of historical circumstances, not only must the common sense purpose of translating Buddhist texts be considered but also the political condition under which the Tibetan tribes built their nation. This script adopts the Chinese character in form and the Sanskrit in grammar. In terms of years, this script is said to have been made before the year 566 A. D.

Grammatical problems in classical Tibetan should be studied very carefully in relation to those in Sanskrit. Studies along this line have been launched very successfully by S. Inaba.

Thon-mi sam-bho-ta's *Sum-cu-pa* and *Rtags-kyi hjug-pa* are the two basic texts of the Tibetan languages. Dbyaṅs-can-grub-pa’s and Si-tu’s commentary on them and on the *Sum-cu-pa* are important.

The grammar of Candragomin, the famous Indian grammarians, wielded much influence on Tibetan grammatical science.

But Inaba ascertained some noteworthy rules concerning conjugation of verbs, beyond the rules set forth in classical grammars. He distinguishes active and passive voices throughout present, imperfect and future, and fixed an elaborate list of conjugation of verbs. This study demands examination by other scholars. Young scholars are going still farther. Z. Yamaguchi advocates the necessity of launching grammatical studies by means of linguistic approach, beyond comparison with Sanskrit. He says, e. g. the *la-don* which denotes the objective case is occasionally used as the objective nominative. The conjunction *de* was formed by the demonstrative pronoun *de* and the *de* preceeded by *s* caused *ste*, *s-te*. *De* occasionally means nothing but emphasis. Even such a simple sentence as “A is B” can be expressed in various ways with different connotations.

Among Tibetan lexicons the best-known is the *Mahāvyutpatti*, which is highly esteemed by Japanese scholars. It is likely that the work of compiling *Mahāvyutpatti* began in 814 A.D. and ended in 824 A.D. or a little later. A voluminous Tibetan lexicon based upon classical works was published in Japan, and an Eastern Tibetan Dictionary based upon the field work of some scholars in collaboration also was published.

Tanden Kasamatsu (笠松軍侍): チベット語 (in アジア問題講座—民族の歴史篇(2)) Dec., 1939.

Shoko Watanabe and Hajime Kitamura: チベット語 (in 世界言語概説 ed. by Sanki Ichikawa and Shiro Hattori, vol. 下 Tokyo, Kenkyusha, 1955.)


(3) Shyuki Yoshimura (芳村修基): チベット文字創定の事由 (Ryukoku Daigaku Ronshū, An aspect on the Origin of Tibetan Writing, No. 355, 1957.)


S. Inaba: チベット語古典文法學 (Chibetto-go Koten Bunpo-gaku Classical Tibetan Grammar). Kyoto, Hōzōkan, 1954. This book is aimed at: (1) thorough analysis and study of classical Tibetan based on Thon-mi sam-bho-ta’s grammatical works, (2) the elucidation of the peculiarities of Tibetan grammar due to influences of Sanskrit, and (3) to aid the research of Tibetan Buddhist texts. This work was highly appreciated by G. Morichini in East and West, published by IsMEO, year 6, 1955–56, pp. 172–175.

(5) S. Inaba, IBK, vol. 1, No. 1, p. 85.


(10) Z. Yamaguchi, in Tōyō Gakushō, vol. 39, No. 4. In this connection he must take the Chinese into consideration, which would enable him to explain in a much wider context. In Buddhist syllogism the assertion (pratijña) ends with de or ste; this fact can be cited as another proof for his assertion. These conjunctions have something in common with the Chinese 是. (H. N.)


(12) 西藏藏和四譯對校 “翻譯名義大集” ed. by Kyozaburo Sakaki. Kyoto University, Faculty of Letters, 1916. 2vols. The Tibetan index to it was edited by
Tibetan Studies in Japan (H. Nakamura)

Kyoyo Nishio (西尾京雄), Kyoto, Butten Kenkyukai 佛典研究會, 1936.


II History and Travel Records

Some introductory works to the history and culture of Tibet have been published in Japan. The authenticity of the descriptions of Bu-ston's: Chos-hbyun and Gshon-nu-dpal's Deb-ther svon-po was confirmed with inscriptions found in recent years. Some historical facts have been made clear, based upon Chinese documents, Tung-huang documents and Tibetan inscriptions. Buddhism was first fostered on nomadic grounds in Central Asia, and the idea of a "Supreme Lama" by which Lamaiists overwhelmed the Shamanists.

King Sontsan-Gampo (Sroh-btsan sgan-po) was the founder of the unified state of Tibet, and introduced Buddhism into his country. He possesses many similarities with Prince Shotoku of Japan and other Buddhist kings of Asia.

The date of king Glañ-dar-ma has been a problem of much controversy. Aoki fixed the date of his ascension in the year 841 A.D. and the date of his death and persecution of Buddhism in 901 A.D. In the historical records of the Ming dynasty (明實錄), there are some materials relevant to Tibet, and they were published in a collection.

Japanese scholars published interesting travel records. A field survey in the central Nepal region revealed that some Tibetans are nomadic, and that even the agricultural Tibetans belong to pastoral people. There are three kinds of polyandry, 1) a wife possessing brothers as her plural husbands, 2) in fewer cases a set of plural husbands is composed of an uncle and a nephew, 3) father and his real sons have a common wife if she is not an actual mother of the sons.


Bunkyo Aoki: 西藏文化の新研究 Tokyo 有光社 1940.

Bunkyo Aoki: 西藏の民族と文化 Tokyo, 髙原社 1942.

Tokwan Tada: チベット Tokyo, Iwanami, 1942. (岩波新書)

Juntaro Ishihama: 西藏史 (支那地理歴史大系 vol. 12.) Tokyo, Hakuyōsha, 1943.

Kentaro Omura (大村謙太郎): チベット史概説, Tokyo, the Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1958. 244 pp. This is an introduction to history of Tibet up to the occupation by the Communist China. A collection of treaties concerning Tibet in the Appendix is valuable.


(2) The portions of Bu-ston's 'History of Buddhism' which concern Tibet was translated into Japanese, by S. Yoshimura (Bukkyogaku-Kenkyu, No. 6) and H. Sato (Kodai Chibetto-shi Kenkyu, vol. 2, 1959, pp. 845-873.)


(4) Hisashi Sato: 古代チベット史研究 (Kodai Chibetto-shi Kenkyu Historical Study of Ancient Tibet), vol. 1, 496 pp. The Society of Oriental Researches, Kyoto University, 1958. This is a very detailed study on ancient history of Tibet from the time of unification of the tribes up to the Queen Btsan-mo-khoń-co's entering Tibet (710 A.D.). In the second volume (1959) he traced Tibetan History up to the events before and after the alliance of the chang-ching (長慶) period (A. D. 821-824). He advanced further steps ahead of Western studies hitherto held.

All the studies hithertofores on the 唐蕃會盟碑 have been summarized and reviewed by Taishun Mibu, Shukyo Bunka No. 13, 1958, Dec. pp. 55-64; and by H. Sato: Kodai Chibetto-shi Kenkyu, vol. 2, 1959, pp. 874-931.


(7) Bunkyo Aoki: Study on Early Tibetan Chronicles: Regarding Discrepancies of Dates and their Adjustment (in English). Tokyo: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, (The Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai) 1955. 161 pp. The object of this study is to adjust the discrepancies of the dates observed in the early Tibetan Chronicles between the sixth and the tenth centuries. It has made free use of Chinese material in addition to Tibetan sources in setting up a new chronological order. Aoki's thesis was criticized by Alex Wayman, PhE.W. vol. VI, No. 2, pp. 153-156. But Aoki, who had studied in Tibet, brought much important material. His tables and Diagrams are carefully prepared and include valuable materials. Miss Chie Nakane (Toyo Bunka Kenkyusho Kiyo, vol. 5, Feb. 1954, pp. 184-208) analyzed stories about the ups and downs of Buddhism during the years 841-978, as recorded in the Dpa-gs-is-bsam-ljon-bsaṅ, and concludes that the persecution took place exactly in 841, and that sixty years should be added to the chronology after the birth of Bla-cen (891 A. D.).

(8) 明代西藏史料. 明實錄抄. (Historical Materials concerning Tibet under the
Tibetan Studies in Japan (H. Nakamura)

Ming Dynasty. An Extraction from Ming-shih-lu, the Veritable Records of Ming. 452 pp. Ed. by Jitsuzō Tamura and Hisashi Sato, and published by the Society of Oriental Researches (滿蒙史料刊行會), University of Kyoto 1959.

(9) Ekai Kawaguchi: 西藏旅行記 Tokyo, Sankibo Busshorin, 1941.


III Tibetan Scriptures and Lamaism

Buddhism was introduced into Tibet in the first half of the seventh century, when Tibet was under the rule of King Sron-btsan-sgpan-po. The king sent Thon-mi Som-bho-ta to India to learn both the Indian language and its literature. Thereafter, the Tibetans were able to translate the Sanskrit texts into their own language. The Tibetan Canon is divided into two main parts—one is known as Bkah-hgyur (Kanjur) and the other as Bstan-ḥgur (Tanjur). The former consists of the teachings and sermons (sutra) of the Buddha, as well as the discipline (vinaya) to be observed by Buddhists, whereas the latter is a collection of treatises and expositions, together with rules of religious rites and hymns. The tripiṭaka has been seen many editions since the 13th century, but those which are best known are the Peking, Sde-dge and Snar-thaṅ editions. The Sde-dge edition of Tohoku University consists of 4560 books, and the Peking edition of Otani University consists of 3522 books. The Lha-sa edition also is authentic. The Tripitaka printed at the lamasyery of Côme which is located in the south-west of Kanshu Province (甘肅省) is called the Cone edition. Based upon these editions, critical Tibetan texts of some Buddhist works translated from Sanskrit have been published by Japanese scholars. The Den-kar-ma is the oldest catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Scriptures. Many Tibetan priests went to India, and scriptures were translated by Tibetans. To print the Tripitaka was a very expensive job which could be accomplished only with the aid of a king.

Following the scriptures many extra-canonical works have been composed. They have not yet been fully investigated.

Side by side with the translation of Buddhist scriptures, Tibetan Buddhism developed along its own line. From India Śāntarakṣita (c. 680–740 A. D.) and Kama-laśila (c. 700–750 A. D.) came to Tibet, and established the foundation of Buddhism
Tibetan Studies in Japan (H. Nakamura)

there. Kamalaśīla’s Bhāvanākrama (The Stages in Order of Buddhist Meditation) is a very important work. His standpoint is defined as Yogācāra-Mādhyamika-vāda. Jñānapāda (c. 750–800 A. D.), a Vajrayāna master, also wielded much influence in later periods.

In Tibetan Tantrism the practice of Anuttarayoga has been prevalent. In this practice the following were most important: 1) Guhyasamāja, 2) Sambara, 3) Hevajra, 4) Mājñunā, 5) Yamantaka or Yamāri, 6) Kālacakra. In this practice there were the two main branches, i.e. the utpattikrama and the nispattikrama, the former being the way leading to the latter. For example, Nāgārjuna’s Piṇḍikṛtāsādhana belongs to the former, whereas his Pañcakrama belongs to the latter. The Piṇḍikṛtāsādhana is based on the Guhyasamāja. The 68th chapter of the Vajramālā-tantra (Tohoku, No. 445) has close connection with the Pañcakrama. In Tibetan Lamaism Manḍalas also are used. Ādibuddha is regarded as the same as Vajrasattva.

Atiśa (982–1054 A. D.) left India for Tibet. His Bodhipathapradīpa (byač-chub lam gyi sgron-ma, A Torch for Realizing Enlightenment) sets forth religious practice. The Kārgyu sect, greatly influenced by him, was founded by Mar-pa Chos-kyi blo-gros, whose disciple Mi-dla-ras-pa was.

Śākyāśriibhadra, who was affectionately called Kha-che-pan-chen (Kāśmiramahāpaṇḍita) by the Tibetans (1127–1225) stayed in Tibet in between 1204–1214, and wielded great influence in Buddhism there. His numerous works are concerned with Kālacakra, Anuttarayogini, Mahāyoga, Yoga, Logic, Lam-rim, Vinaya etc.

After the persecution by Lān-dar-ma sects came out anew. The Bkah-gdams-pa school founded by Atiśa is one of them. The Bkah-gdams chos-hbyun gsal-bahi sgron-ma (Tohoku, No. 7038) written by Rtse-thaṅ las-can kun-dgaḥ rgyal-mtshan in 1494 and the fifth volume of the “Blue Annals” (Deb-ther sjon-po) is an important work when considering the history of the sect. The Buddhism of Khams as well as that of Dbus and Gtsan, was greatly influenced by the Bkah-gdams-pa sect.

Tshoṅ-kha-pa (1357–1419) was an important religious reformer. He wrote many books, among which the main one is the Lam-rim-chen-mo. He composed a book of verses, the Lam-rin bsduds-don, in order to render the thought of the above-mentioned work understandable to all persons.

The Sanskrit original of the Kālacakra-tantrarāja was found, but it has not yet been published, consequently, the Tibetan version alone is available. According to the commentary Vimalaprabha, the ally of Viṣṇu and Śiva is formed in order to defeat the Muhammedans who were sweeping over India. It contains elements of fortune-telling and astrology, and uses the Muhammedan era. This work seems to
have been composed between c. 1027—c. 1087 A. D.

In Tibet a terrible rite (called sgrol, bsgral-las or gsad-las) of killing a man by curse (abhicāra) for the sake of personal religious emancipation was instituted. It was set forth in the Vajrabhairava-tantra, and was established by Rwa the Interpreter (c. 1550–1110).

The Lamaist method of study consists principally of memorization of basic texts and mutual examination by the question-answer method. The five courses are as follows: 1) logic (based on Dharmakirti’s Pramāṇavārttika), 2) Prajñāpāramitā (based on the Abhisamayālaṅkāra), 3) Mādhyamika (based on the Madhyamakāhṛdaya), 4) Abhidharma (based on the Abhidharmakosā), and 5) Vinaya (based on Guṇaprabha’s Vinayasūtra). However, all of Buddhism was regarded as a single unit, according to Tshoṅ-kha-pa. The point of unification is Prajñāpāramitā-Mādhyamika thought.

Texts of Buddhist idealism, e.g. Viśīṭaguhyaṭhāpaṇḍa-vyākhyā, were also studied in Tibet.

The formulae of Indian logic were applied to debates and developed in a minute way. Among the Mādhyamika texts Candrakīrti's Madhyamakāvatāra is most studied in Tibet; its Sanskrit fragments have been found out to some extent.

There took place frequent intercourse between Tibet and Tang. Chinese influence upon Tibetan Buddhism is noticeable. To illustare, the figure of the Sixteen Arhats (十六羅漢) was introduced into Tibet in the Tang period. The process of śamatha was compared to that of taming a cow by some Chinese Zen teachers. In Tibet the figure of taming an elephant in comparison to śamatha came to be composed after the 16th or 17th century. It is not yet clear whether it was influenced by the Chinese.

Tibetan texts occasionally throw light on the obscure aspects of Chinese Buddhism. 阿難, a disciple of Hiouen Tsang, wrote a 10 volume commentary on the Sandhinirmocanasūtra, of which the tenth volume and part of the eighth volume came to be lost. Prof. Inaba restored the lost parts into classical Chinese from the Tibetan version; this is a wonderful masterpiece of Japanese scholarship.

As the salient characteristics of the Tibetan ways of thinking the following can be mentioned: 1) weakness of consciousness of association among individuals, 2) absolute submission to a charismatic religious individual, 3) absolute adherence to the Lamaistic social order, 4) Shamanistic tendencies, 5) logical tendency along Tibetan lines.

For the studies of Lamaism the Vajrayāna of Mongolia should also be taken into consideration. In Mongolia the traditional scholarship of Buddhism has been
preserved. In the Mongolian (元) dynasty there was established the position of the Imperial teacher (帝師).

(2) A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons, ed. by Hakuju Ui, Munetada Suzuki, Yensho Kanakura and Tokan Tada. Published by Tohoku Imperial University, 1934, 2 vols. With regard to referring to corresponding Chinese texts, this surpasses the catalogues published in the West.
(3) The Peking edition of Otani University was lithographically published in 150 volumes, under the supervision of Otani University, by the Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, Otsuka Sakashita-machi, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo. The work was finished in 1958. The complete catalogue is due to be published next year. The Kanjur portion was formerly catalogued by Bunkyo Sakurabe.

S. Yoshimura explains, mainly, the Tibetan Tripitaka as being arranged into five groups, and clarifies the Tibetan Buddhist view-point of Buddhist Texts in comparison to the Chinese. [チベット仏教の研究法 an Introduction to Research in Tibetan Buddhism, Bukkyo Kenkyuho published by Bukkyo Gakkai in Ryukoku University, 1954]
(4) The Kanjur of the Lha-sa edition and the Tanjur of Sde-dge edition are preserved at the seminar of Tibetan studies of the University of Tokyo. A catalogue of these texts was compiled by J. N. Takasaki.
(5) The Toyo Bunko keeps the Kanjur and Tanjur of the Cone edition. This edition was explained by T. Mibu. According to him this may be classed with the Peking Edition for six reasons. A comparative list of the Tanjur Division in the Cone, Peking, Sde-dge and Snar-than editions was accomplished by T. Mibu. (Taisho Daigaku Kenkyu Kiyo, No. 44. March 1959, Tokyo, Japan, pp. 1–69).
(6) The Tibetan text of Asaṅga's Abhidharmasamuccaya was published by Otani University in 4 fascicles, and that of Prajñāpāramitā-Vajracchedikā-sphutārthaṭṭkā by the Seminar of Buddhism, Koyasan University.

The Buddhahāmi-sūtra and the Buddhahāmivyakhyāna of Śilabhadra, with the Tibetan Index to the texts, ed. by Kyoyu Nishio, Nagoya, Hajinkaku, 1940.

The Tibetan texts of many other Buddhist works of India have been edited by Japanese scholars. Suffice it to mention just some recent editions. S. Yamaguchi published the Tibetan text of the Mahāyāna-saṃgraha by Asaṅga (in 漢譯四本對照擴大叢龕 ed. by Gessho Sasaki, Tokyo, 日本佛書刊行會, 1959).

H. Nakamura published the Vedantic portion of Bhavya's Tarkaivala which has been preserved in Tibetan alone. (Indo-Iranian Journal, vol. II, 1958, Nr. 3, pp. 181–190)
(7) Ed. with introductory notes by Shyuki Yoshimura, The Researching Society of the Eastern Sacred Books, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, 1950. 72 pp. + 11
pp. Yoshimura made clear that it was compiled in 824 A. D.
(8) The life of these priests was studied by S. Tachibana, Shukyo Kenkyu, NS. vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 120 f.
(10) H. Hadano made clear the economic background of printing the Tibetan Tripiṭaka, (Shoho 書報 April, 1959, pp. 16-18.)
(11) The extra-canonical works brought by Tokan Tada and preserved in the library of Tohoku University have been catalogued. (A Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works on Buddhism. Ed. by Yensho Kanakura, Ryuo Yamada, Tokan Tada and Hakuyu Hadano. Published by the seminar of Indology, Tohoku University, Sendai, 1953). They amount to 230 tomes comprizing 2083 numbers. This is the first catalogue of its kind. This was awarded the Japan Academy prize for 1955. The collector stayed and studied at the Se-ra monastery belonging to the Dge-lugs-pa Sect, the collection centers around this sect. Nevertheless it covers all the historical subjects of Tibetan Buddhism. A brief explanation in English is given to each of the item.
(12) A brief account of Tibetan Buddhism—Kogetsu Zenshu, pp. 130 f.; 193 f.; 243 f.; 291 f. Shyuki Yoshimura: Tibetan Buddhistology. The Basic Texts of Historical Lamaism. (English) Sept. 1953. Published by Research Society for the Eastern Sacred Books, Ryukoku University, Kyoto. This is a good and reliable introduction (Engl.) to history of Tibetan Buddhism chiefly based upon studies by Japanese scholars, including his own.
(13) The dates of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla were fully discussed by H. Nakamura (Shoki no Vedanta Tetsugaku, pp. 109-113). G. Tucci criticized Nakamura’s chronology (East and West, year 8, No. 1, p. 109). Alex Wayman stated in a personal letter to the author that in his opinion these dates can be ascertained more exactly. Referring to Paul Demiéville, Le Concile de Lhasa (Bibliothèque de l’Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, vol. VII, Paris 1952), I, 177, 183, etc., we find the Council of Lhasa placed between 792-794 A. D. Since Kamalaśīla was the chief Indian representative in this Council and did not live long after according to Tibetan accounts, he can be placed c. 740-800. Again, since Śāntirakṣita was invited to Tibet by King Khri-sriṃ Lde-btsan, who begins his reign 755 according to the Deb-ther s rin-po, Śāntirakṣita can be placed more exactly as c. 720-780. In any case, both their lives would have to fall within the eighth century A. D. and span most of that century.” However, Japanese scholars in general, are highly sceptical about the results of chronological studies by Western scholars, and they esteem the historical authenticity of Chinese documents.
(14) The Tibetan text of Bhāvanākrama (gsong-paḥi rim-pa) was critically ed. and tr. into Japanese by Yoshimura in op. cit.
(15) Yoshimura: op. cit. p. 3.
(19) *ibid.* pp. 101-177.
(22) The Guhyasamāja seems to have been composed in the Gupta period. (H. N.)
It refers to dināra (Jitsudo Nagasawa, Chizan Gakuho, 1956, February, pp. 12 ff.)
(27) Critically ed. with detailed annotations (in English) in Yoshimura: *Tibetan Buddhismology*, vol. 2, pp. 53-79.
(32) Hadano translated the fifth volume of this work into Japanese. He occasionally criticized and corrected Roerich's translations.
(37) H. Hadano; *Mikkyo Bunka*, No. 8, pp. 18 f.
(40) The characteristics of Buddhist studies in Tibetan monasteries were fully discussed in G. M. Nagao: *A Study of Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 1-34.
(44) Shuko Tachibana, *Shukyo Kenkyu*, NS. vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 119 ff.
Tibetan Studies in Japan (H. Nakamura)

(49) A detailed report on the present status of the studies on Mongolian Lamaism by Shuko Kanaoka, *Chizan Gakuho*, No. 6, April 1957, pp. 38–57.


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