

What other institutional mechanisms were available to the Qianlong emperor for his efficacious partaking in the Tibetan Buddhist world? Focusing exceedingly on emperors, the Qianlong emperor in particular, results in an inadequate understanding of Qing China and the Tibetan Buddhist world.

Ishihama is also cautious about competitions for Manchu patronage within the Tibetan Buddhist world. Mukden's Shisheng monastery demonstrates, in Ishihama's opinion, the missionary accomplishments of the Sakya School in the early seventeenth century. But the Geluk hegemony deeply changed the historical narratives of the time; Ishihama's short discussion is inspiring, but one wonders if the Geluk School fully excluded others in the seventeenth century. Research shows that other schools were present at the Qing court with support from powerful princes at late as the 1730s. Matters were also complicated within the Geluk School. Chapter 10 indicates that the Sixth Panchen Lama tactically added a figure from central Tibet into the Amdo-originated Lcang Skya lineage of incarnations. Moreover, much attention is paid to highly respected Buddhists at the court. However they also traveled and wrote extensively: for instance, the Lcang Skya spent considerable time on the road and produced an enormous amount of writing. What, then, can one learn about the Buddhist world and the Qing at the margins from these writings? In other words, studying Qing-Tibetan Buddhist relations begins with the court, but should not stop there.

These questions aside, this book engages Qing imperial management with the Tibetan Buddhist world thoughtfully. It should thus not only be of interest to scholars of Tibetan history and of Qing frontier management, but also be inspiring to those interested in religion in multiethnic empires in early modern time. Some readers can also utilize the appendixes, which include Romanized versions of Mongolian, Tibetan, and Manchu stele inscriptions, and Chinese materials in the original script (pp. 260–305). Several chapters, such as chapter 5, on the significance of the Yonghegong in Beijing, and chapter 10, which compares the differences in reconstructing the lineage history of the Qianlong emperor and that of the Lcang Skya, would be particularly important to translate into English for a wider audience.

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*Tibet: A History.* By SAM VAN SCHAİK. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011. xxiii, 324 pp. \$35.00 (cloth)  
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As Research Manager at the International Dunhuang Project, Sam van Schaik has helped lead the way in preserving, cataloging, and studying rare Tibetan

manuscripts. Moreover, he has demonstrated a breadth of scholarship, ranging from the religious writings of the eighteenth-century Great Perfection master Jigme Lingpa to paleography and tenth-century pilgrimage along the Silk Road. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that he has endeavored to present an overview of the entirety of Tibet's history in his *Tibet: A History*. Although the book is not the only choice for those seeking an introduction to Tibetan history and culture, as I will discuss below, it certainly ranks among the "go-to" sources.

The book is arranged chronologically, placing the narrative "in the flow of time which is the driving force of any story" (p. xviii). The first two chapters are the book's strongest, which is not surprising given Van Schaik's expertise in Dunhuang materials.

The book begins with one of the most oft-touted incidents of Tibetan history, Tibet's sacking of the Tang capital of Chang'an in 763. After this exciting opening, the chapter leads us through the backstory leading up to this event, beginning with the *tsempo*, or divine king, Songtsen Gampo. This chapter makes ample use of two Dunhuang works, the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and the *Old Tibetan Annals*, something three previous introductions do not (i.e., Hugh E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History*, 2nd ed. [Boulder, Colo.: Shambhala, [1962] 1984]; R. A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, trans. J. E. Stapleton Driver [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, [1962] 1972]; Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History*, 1st ed. [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967]). Van Schaik helps correct the romantic notion of Tibet and all its inhabitants as faithful Buddhists during the early imperial period. For instance, he translates a passage from the *Enquiry of Vimalaprabha* in which we read about the "great stupas and monastic gardens" of Khotan being "burned by the red-faced ones" (i.e., Tibetans; p. 18).

Van Schaik's second chapter recounts the marriage of the Chinese princess Jincheng to the Tibetan emperor, her attempts to patronize Buddhism in Tibet, and other paradigmatic events from the late imperial period, with more nuance than previous historical overviews. In his account of the emperor Trisong Detsen's patronage of Buddhism, van Schaik first explains how the important nobleman Ba Selnang was dispatched to China, where he met and learned from a famous Zen teacher, an event leading to the invitation of Zen teachers to Tibet (p. 37). Apart from Matthew Kapstein's *The Tibetans* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), van Schaik's *Tibet* is alone among the well-known introductions to Tibet in explaining that there are alternate endings to the famous Samye Debate (p. 39). Van Schaik even provides the reader with a unique view of Tibet's earliest Buddhist discourse as found in an ancient missionary pamphlet (p. 32).

The third chapter follows the downfall of imperial Tibet and the interim "Dark Age" that, in traditional accounts, separates it from the "Second Dissemination" of the dharma.

Chapter 4 picks up with the Indian Buddhist master Atisha, his disciple Dromton, and other eleventh-century religious figures, lineages, and schools. After introducing the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, the chapter focuses on the priest-patron relationship (after which the chapter is named) between the Sakyapas and Mongol rulers.

Chapter 5, “The Golden Age, 1315–1543,” is a thorough account of the religious history of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Tibet (although it begins and ends with a brief discussion of the Phagmogru myriarchy). In addition to discussing important figures and subjects such as the Karmapas, Longchenpa, Tsongkhapa, and the creation of the Buddhist canon by Buton, the chapter also introduces important topics such as the Bon religion and the role of *terton* (“treasure revealers”) in establishing links with Tibet’s imperial legacy.

Chapter 6 covers an equally lengthy span of time, beginning with the third Dalai Lama Sonam Gyatso and his historical meeting with the Tumed ruler Altan Khan in 1578 and ending with the rule of the seventh Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso in the mid-eighteenth century. In between, one finds a discussion of “The Great Fifth” (Dalai Lama), his influential “governor” Sangye Gyatso, and the various political maneuverings undertaken by the Dalai Lama’s government in its involvement with the Mongols and with the Manchu Qing Dynasty.

Chapter 7 starts and ends with the British presence in Tibet and otherwise discusses Tibet’s foreign relations. An abrupt change in focus takes the reader to the kingdom of Derge in Eastern Tibet and the nonsectarian Buddhist traditions that arose there in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Chapter 8 brings the reader fully into the twentieth century. It mostly follows the peregrinations of the thirteenth Dalai Lama in his attempt to secure foreign support for an independent Tibet.

Chapter 9 discusses the Tibetan government’s earliest interactions with the Chinese Communist Party. Land reforms and Chinese Communist attacks on monasteries in Eastern Tibet aggravated an already tense situation in Lhasa, whither thousands of Khampa refugees had fled. This leads to the fourteenth Dalai Lama’s flight to India in March 1959. The final chapter discusses the political and structural changes that took place in Tibet in the ensuing decades, the Tibetan government and religion in exile, and the record of negotiations between the Tibetan and Chinese governments. It even discusses the most recent, major uprising in Tibet of 2008 when the entire plateau ignited in a protest that was quickly suppressed by the state.

The book’s ideal audience comprises undergraduate students and also historians of Asia and Tibetan Buddhism. The former will no doubt find the story-like telling of historical events—be it of Trisong Detsen’s conquest of Chang’an or of Milarepa’s laborious, spiritual trials—captivating. Scholars will benefit from the copious endnotes referencing the most recent research on a given subject. The ability to speak to both audiences distinguishes this book from other available introductions, though each has peculiarities to consider if assigning them for an undergraduate course. Richardson’s *Tibet and Its History* is overly focused on the modern period, devoting more than twice as much ink to the twentieth century alone than to the rest of Tibetan history. Stein’s *Tibetan Civilization* does not aim to provide a chronological study but rather a topic-structured depiction of Tibetan culture. Shakapba’s *Tibet: A Political History* lacks an account of religion and its role in Tibetan history. The historical chapters of Kapstein’s *The Tibetans* are relatively shorter, and the occasional analytical framing may make a less felicitous read for the student craving stories. The current work presumes a

certain familiarity with Tibetan geography, which is not adequately introduced, and with eminent figures from Tibetan history, many of whom are mentioned only once before the text moves on to another subject. Moreover, Van Schaik is averse to crafting his own narrative, which means that novices to Tibetan history may at times find it difficult to follow.

The “flow of time” is not “the driving force of any story,” but rather the storyteller is that driving force. Van Schaik’s *Tibet: A History* lacks a theoretical helm, and so is steered instead by the concerns found in normative Tibetan histories. Van Schaik does not articulate his own understanding of what constitutes Tibetan history, instead choosing to follow

those individuals who have been most influential in the making of Tibet, or have at least made the biggest impact on Tibet’s own historians and storytellers. . . . These are stories that, layer upon layer, have contributed to the cultural identities of Tibetans today, to the sense of what it is to be Tibetan. (p. xviii)

As such, the reader might expect van Schaik’s narrative to adhere to a standard conception of the stages of time in Tibet, beginning with a pre-Buddhist, “barbaric” Tibet, proceeding through the imperial period when Buddhism arises along with Tibet’s military might, passing through a “Dark Age” when centralized political rule crumbles and Buddhism suffers, and arriving in a flourishing “renaissance” when Buddhism is reintroduced to Central Tibet beginning in the eleventh century. The frustrating thing about such a narrative is that it occludes important aspects of Tibetan history—especially nonreligious events—and simplifies others.

As already described above, van Schaik deftly addresses the early centuries of Tibetan history. While the traditional narrative provides his chronological and topological framework, he adds details unknown to many normative histories and challenges simplistic presentations of the traditional narrative. Similarly, although van Schaik reiterates the “plunge” into a “dark age” as exemplified in Lang Darma’s coup d’état, he gives due attention to places and groups that defied such a “downfall,” such as Amdo, the Silk Road towns of Liangzhou and Tsongkha (pp. 49–52), and the *ngakpas* and tantric families of Central Tibet (pp. 63–66).

Later chapters of the book do less to challenge the normative narrative of Tibet’s past. Particularly disappointing is the book’s inattention to the findings of microhistories and social histories of Central Tibet, such as Per Sørenesen and Guntram Hazod’s *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet: A Study of Tshal Gung-thang* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), which clearly demonstrates that control of the Lhasa valley and in particular its cultic sites was perhaps the defining characteristic of Tibetan history beginning as early as the eleventh century and continuing up through the establishment of the Dalai Lama’s Ganden Podrang government. This development, led by powerful individuals and clans, helped shape Tibetan culture and politics in addition to

religion. Lama Zhang, who Sørenesen and Hazod (p. 36) call “the religious leader and founding figure of post-imperial times,” and who was responsible for the rise of the Tshelpa polity that protected and controlled the Lhasa valley and its important sanctuaries from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, is not mentioned by van Schaik. Nor are later lords of the area, such as the Kyormolung (skyor mo lung) and Kyishöpa (skyid shod pa) families, who had strong ties to the second and third Dalai Lamas and as such were instrumental in bringing the Gelug to power. According to Sørenesen and Hazod, “[The Kyishöpa ruler Bkra-shis rab-brtan] must be regarded as the most influential political figure in the second half of the sixteenth century in Central Tibet,” but he also receives no mention by van Schaik. Instead, stories of eminent monks and yogis, such as Dromton, Milarepa, Longchenpa, and Tsongkhapa, dominate his narrative of the earlier centuries, from the eleventh to the sixteenth.

Traditional narratives become even more undifferentiated when discussing what follows after the Gelug established order in Tibet. Van Schaik too writes, “though details would change, this is essentially the Tibet that endured through to the mid-twentieth century” (p. 129). In most introductions to Tibetan history, attention is oriented away from Tibet itself, since it is *basically* changeless, toward the only other factor that can define Tibet, namely its foreign relations, particularly those with China. Van Schaik makes notable efforts to avoid this pitfall when, for instance, he discusses the nonsectarian movement in Eastern Tibet. However, one could imagine a history in which an even better balance is struck between the goings-on in Tibet, on the one hand, and Tibet’s relationships with the Mongols, the Qing, the British, and the Chinese, on the other. (One example that comes to mind is Shakabpa’s detailed account of the political infighting between regents and other political factions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as his accounts of Tibet’s relations with other, less known foreigners in Sikkim, Bhutan, and Ladakh.)

Although one hopes that even more Tibetan sources, particularly archives, will soon see the light of day, it is no longer the case that, as Stein wrote in 1972 (p. 74), “we know nothing at all about the noble families and local principalities, and only a little about the conditions that allowed the flourishing of rich and powerful monasteries.” The abundance of literary and historical materials now available should enjoin scholars to continue to move beyond the exclusive or primary focus on religion and Sino-Tibetan relations in Tibetan history. (If the history of America was one of only churches and foreign relations it would be a tragic history indeed!) Future histories of Tibet must do more to illustrate its plagues, famines, feuds, wars, alliances, technological innovations, economic transformations, internal governance, and so forth. That said, van Schaik’s ambitious project should be counted as a success, and it should be read by students and scholars alike in an effort to further our understanding of Tibetan history.

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