

AMONG
TIBETAN
TEXTS



HISTORY &
LITERATURE
OF THE
HIMALAYAN
PLATEAU

E. GENE SMITH

STUDIES IN INDIAN AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM

AMONG TIBETAN TEXTS

*History and Literature of the
Himalayan Plateau*

E. Gene Smith

edited by Kurtis R. Schaeffer
with a foreword by Jeffrey Hopkins



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

Wisdom Publications
199 Elm Street
Somerville MA 02144 USA
www.wisdompubs.org

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Smith, E. Gene, (Ellis Gene) 1936–

Among Tibetan texts : history and literature of the Himalayan Plateau /

E. Gene Smith; edited by Kurtis R. Schaeffer; foreword by Jeffrey Hopkins.

p. cm. (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-86171-179-3 (alk. paper)

1. Buddhism—China—Tibet—History—20th century. 2. Buddhist sects—China—Tibet. 3. Buddhism—China—Tibet—Doctrines. I. Schaeffer, Kurtis R.
II. Title. III. Series.

BQ7644.S65 2001

294.3'923—dc21

2001025869

ISBN 0-86171-179-3

06 05 04 03 02

6 5 4 3 2

Cover design and interior by Gopa & Tedz

Wisdom Publications' books are printed on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines for the permanence and durability set by the Council on Library Resources.

Printed in Canada

Dedicated in humility to the late Deshung Rinpoche
Kunga Tenpai Nyima. Whatever of value there may be here
is a result of the learning imparted by him.

Publisher's Acknowledgment

THE PUBLISHER gratefully acknowledges the generous help of the Hershey Family Foundation in sponsoring the publication of this book.

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Foreword

THIS COLLECTION OF ESSAYS provides a taste of Gene Smith's encyclopedic knowledge of Tibetan literature. A veritable treasure trove of information and insight about Tibetan culture, he has stood at the gateway for hundreds of us who have approached him for directions throughout the vast region of Tibetan influence, stretching from Tibet itself to Kalmyk Mongolian areas (where the Volga empties into the Caspian Sea), to Outer and Inner Mongolia, to the Buriat Republic of Siberia, to Bhutan, Ladakh, Nepal, and Sikkim. Written in the late 1960s and early 1970s during Gene's tenure in South Asia with the Library of Congress, these essays evince his command of biography, history, doctrine, tantra, ritual, and bibliography. Gene reads both the lines and what is between the lines, putting together fascinating and proactive conjectures, and Kurtis Schaeffer has most ably preserved his legacy here.

As great as his intellectual prowess is, so great is his character. Modest, warmhearted, jovial, kind, and liberal with time and energy, he is a healer, bringing people together, softening their disruptions and encouraging mutual appreciation. I remember his flat in New Delhi during my travels to the region, and how Gene provided an oasis for a whole generation of scholars coming of age at that time. Supremely generous with his knowledge and hospitality, Gene could always be counted upon to provide a new avenue for one's research, and the steady stream of visitors at his home made it a veritable salon, where one could mingle with lamas from the exiled Tibetan community and some of the most fascinating personalities on the subcontinent.

When I recently visited his home in Cambridge I found a House of Book, with each room assigned to an area of Tibetan literature—books on shelves on all four walls of every room, books neatly piled on Tibetan carpets in the center of each. The only room not dominated by books was the kitchen! He led me to the Room of Jo nang, a current focus of my research, where he enthusiastically introduced a myriad of texts. Gene's current efforts to make this wealth available digitally through his Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center will ensure his enormous contributions reach even more eager scholars.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this book is how well these early studies have stood the test of time, the way they still provide countless jumping-off points for further research and reflection. Their publication is long overdue, and we are richer and wiser for it.

Jeffrey Hopkins
University of Virginia

Preface

THE STUDY OF TIBET has remained a special passion of mine for over four and a half decades. The papers in this volume, which have been so ably edited and restructured by my good friend Kurtis Schaeffer, were written between 1961 and 1973. There has been much exciting work done in Tibetan studies over the three decades since, and many of the ideas and conclusions herein have had to be modified. Nonetheless, it seems that these introductions played a small part in extending the frontiers of our knowledge.

The introductions were not intended to be finished products. Except for the translation of a passage from the *Rgya bod yig tshang* contained in chapter 8, which I completed in 1961, all of the essays included in this volume were written to introduce and place into context photomechanical reprints of classical texts produced in India, which were then acquired for U.S. research institutions through the Public Law 480 program (hereafter PL480).

I first traveled to India in quest of Tibetan books unavailable in the United States in 1965. Thousands of texts were to be seen in private collections and libraries in India. Tibet House in New Delhi had just opened its doors, and I spent much of my time there or traveling to various centers in India. I joined the Library of Congress in New Delhi as a consultant for Tibetan and Indic languages in 1968, and it was there that I came into contact with the PL480 program.

The Public Law 480 program allowed for the purchase of current publications from the developing world with payment made from blocked foreign currency owed to the U.S. Government. This program was funded from the sale of excess agricultural commodities and allowed the Library of Congress to purchase new impressions from all of the blocks in India, Nepal, and Bhutan and to encourage refugees to print the treasures they had been able to carry from their homeland. The program for the acquisition of Tibetan library materials began in 1961 and eventually resulted in over 4000 Tibetan bibliographic titles, some of which were over 200 volumes. By 1965 the PL480 program in India was well established, and the New Delhi Field Office was acquiring and processing thousands of titles per year in a variety of languages.

The excess rupees were also used for cataloging and shipping these library materials to research institutions in the United States. The only restriction was

that the funds had to be used for publications that had appeared within the two calendar years immediately preceding the date of imprint. Because of the bureaucratic precedent, Tibetan books could be reprinted and copies purchased for U.S. institutions that were a part of the PL480 program. A similar program was administered by the Lal Bahadur Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute for the purchase of South Asian imprints for Canadian research libraries.

The titles had to be cataloged in accordance with the first edition of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules. Tibetan personal names presented special problems, as did subject headings and the classification schedule for Buddhism. The convention of the book in Tibetan culture is very different from that of Western book, a fact that led us to devise various schemes of binding or boxing Tibetan books for a Western library context.

The introductory essays were created so that selections could be made on the basis of the English title pages and the acquisition of these books justified. The introductions also had the mundane intent of providing librarians with the information needed to begin the task of incorporating Tibetan literature into the structure of Western library science. They gave examples for the establishment of the names of Tibetan authors, provided a historical chronology to justify the dates of the lamas who wrote, showed how Tibetan sources could be used by Western scholars and librarians, and provided in the books themselves the means for accessing the facts contained therein.

Due to time constraints and the fact that I was serving as a U.S. Government bureaucrat with other responsibilities, the introductions and prefaces were created in the early morning hours. They reflect personal concerns about where our understanding of textual accessibility was going and the quest for filling in gaps in our knowledge of the field. They had to be written within a day or two since the reproductions had already been completed. There was little time to mull over the ideas and conclusions. There were no specialized libraries that could be used to check the Tibetological facts in Delhi in those years.

In 1972, I joined the Library of Congress as a U.S.-based employee. This brought an end to my efforts to write signed introductions to Tibetan texts, because the official clearance process was long and tedious. In the end I finally decided to abandon signing them. With the increase in bureaucratic responsibilities, we began producing unsigned introductory pieces, title pages, and more detailed tables of contents in order to provide an entree into the treasures of Tibetan literature.

The series involved Lokesh Chandra of the International Academy of Tibetan Culture, Tibet House, Sonam Topgay Kazi, and Ngawang Gelek Demo Rinpoche in the publication of most of the introductions and prefaces

included in this volume. Much of the content of the introductory matter consisted of tables of contents and outlines. All of these have been removed from the materials published here. The tables of contents can now be found incorporated into the outline module of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center website located at www.tbrc.org. Here we have begun to enter searchable contents and topical outlines (*sa bcad*) as a special feature for researchers. One must mention here that some of the texts were written using the differing Library of Congress and American Library Association (ALA) systems of transliteration, as well as a few in Pelliot. It has therefore been a great problem in standardization.

Each of the papers pays tribute to the incredible knowledge of my teacher Deshung Rinpoche Kunga Tenpai Nyima, with whom I had the great privilege of studying on a daily basis from 1960 to 1965. Deshung Rinpoche had an encyclopedic mind. He was interested in the entire range of traditional Buddhist culture, from Tibetan and Sanskrit grammar to Mādhyamika philosophy, from ritual to the arts. Rinpoche had a special interest in history and was an authority on the nonsectarian (*ris med*) movement in which his practice was rooted. Although he was a Sa skya pa and a student of Gatön Ngawang Legpa, clearly in the tradition of the Lam 'bras, he was interested in all of the other wisdom traditions that had come to the Tibetan lands, including Bon. He told stories of Lama Tashi Gyaltzen, the Bon po master who began to phrase Bon teachings in *ris med* terms. This stood me in good stead when I first met the remarkable teachers of this tradition, Sangye Tenzin and Tenzin Namdak. Among Deshung Rinpoche's embodiments were a Rnying ma pa and a Bka' brgyud pa, and he sometimes joked that his next might be a Dge lugs pa. I sat with him most mornings for an hour or two while he was doing his morning prayers and asked him questions. The answers to these childish questions were written in series of blue notebooks in which I still find interesting insights. These notebooks formed the basic content of the forewords, prefaces, and introductions that appeared to the Tibetan books published under the PL480 program and reprinted here.

I would like to thank Tim McNeill and Kurtis Schaeffer for pushing the project forward. I also express my appreciation to David Kittelstrom, the head of the editorial department at Wisdom, to Sara Shneiderman for her care in copyediting, Maria Montenegro for her proofreading, and to Mari Jyvasjarvi for making swift work of the thankless task of indexing.

E. Gene Smith
Cambridge, Massachusetts
September 2001

Introduction

ELLIS GENE SMITH was born in Ogden, Utah in 1936 to a traditional Mormon family as the eldest of four siblings. His father was a scientist working in a federal guided missile program, and thus throughout Gene's youth the family moved a great deal. His primary and secondary schooling took place in both California and Utah. Upon completing high school in the early 1950s he received a congressional appointment to the military academy at West Point. During the summer of 1954 he wisely thought better of this career trajectory and fled to the wilds of New York City. After doing undergraduate studies at Adelphi College, Hobart College, the University of Utah, and the University of Washington, he began graduate studies in Seattle—largely to stay out of Vietnam. He took classes in anthropology and Inner Asian studies, with a special interest in Mongolian.

In 1959, after the Chinese invasion of Tibet, 80,000–100,000 refugees fled into exile. The Rockefeller Foundation, seeing the opportunity to promote Tibetan studies, funded the establishment of nine centers throughout the world, one of which was located at the University of Washington. Under the auspices of the Rockefeller grant to the Far Eastern and Russian Institute nine Tibetans were brought to Seattle for teaching and research. These nine included H. H. Dagchen Rinpoche and his wife, Damola Jamyang Sakya, as well as the Venerable Deshung Rinpoche Kunga Tenpai Nyima, tutor to the Sakya Phuntshok Phodrang. From 1960 to 1964 Gene had the good fortune to live with the Sakya family and study Tibetan culture and Buddhism with Deshung Rinpoche and the other Tibetan teachers settled in Seattle. He spent the summer of 1962 traveling to the other Rockefeller centers in Europe to meet with the Tibetan savants there. During this period he was working toward a Ph.D. under the directorship of Turrell Wylie. At this time the library at the University of Washington had very few Tibetan holdings. Deshung Rinpoche provided lists of books he felt the library should have, and Gene set about collecting microfilms of Tibetan texts from European collections. This marked the beginning of his bibliographic career. The

results of these efforts can be seen in Gene's early catalog of the Tibetan holdings at the University of Washington (Smith 1969).

In 1964 Gene completed his Ph.D. qualifying exams and traveled to Leiden for advanced studies in Sanskrit and Pali. In 1965 Deshung Rinpoche suggested that he travel to India to study with Tibetan masters. A Ford Foundation Fellowship made this possible, and for the next year he studied with both Tibetan Buddhist and Bon po scholars and masters. Desiring to learn of the doctrines and practices of each school of Tibetan Buddhism as represented in the *Treasury of Instructional Methods* (*Gdams ngag mdzod*), he began his studies in Dge lugs pa thought with Geshe Lobsang Lungtok (Ganden Changtse), Bka' brgyud thought with Drukpa Thoosay Rinpoche and Khenpo Noryang, and Rnying ma thought with H. H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. After establishing fulfilling connections with these masters, he decided to remain in India to continue in-depth studies of Tibetan Buddhism and culture.

In the next years he traveled extensively in the borderlands of India and Nepal in a continued effort to gain firsthand knowledge of Tibetan life and letters. In 1968 he joined the Library of Congress New Delhi Field Office. He then began a project which was to span the next three decades: the reprinting of Tibetan books which had been brought by the exile community or belonged to members of the Tibetan-speaking communities of Sikkim, Bhutan, India, and Nepal. Using lists of rare books such as that of A khu Shes rab gyia mtsho, he selected works from private libraries for publication. Some of the publications were reproductions of block-prints and old handwritten manuscripts, while many were newly scribed versions of old manuscripts deemed too damaged to reproduce directly. He became field director of the Library of Congress Field Office in India in 1980, a position which he served for five years. In 1985 he was transferred to Indonesia, where he lived in Jakarta running the Southeast Asian programs until 1994, when he was deputed to the Library of Congress Middle Eastern Office in Cairo. Throughout these travels in various cultures and government bureaucracies Gene never left Tibetan studies behind, and by the time he returned to the United States he was in possession of one the most important collections of Tibetan literature in the world.

In 1997 Gene retired from the U.S. Library of Congress and moved from Cairo to Manhattan in order to engage in consulting work for Himalayan and Inner Asian Resources (HIAR), an organization dedicated primarily to preserving and disseminating Tibetan literature. After one year at HIAR Gene moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he helped to found the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) in 1999 along with Leonard van der Kuijp

of Harvard University. The TBRC is a library consisting of Gene's personal collection of Tibetan literature, as well as continuing acquisitions. As of 2001 the collection of Tibetan literature housed at the TBRC is the largest outside of Tibet (excluding canonical collections). The mission of the Center is to make this invaluable collection available to the public in a digital format.

The essays collected in the present volume were written over thirty years ago. With the exception of one (chapter 8) they were all written in New Delhi, without the benefits of a large research library. As Gene has made clear in the preface, they were all created with a very specific goal: to serve as prefaces to Tibetan works purchased by the Library of Congress. They were meant to be neither exhaustive studies of particular subjects, nor conclusively argued contributions to the field of Tibetan studies as it was then practiced in Europe. They were prefaces, introductions to single Tibetan texts, rough orientations to an only poorly understood body of foreign literature. Gene never intended to present a unified overview of the different traditions encountered throughout Tibetan history. That the essays do cover such a wide range of topics is a testament to the broad interests that Gene pursued during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as his remarkable ability to synthesize diverse materials into coherent accounts of hitherto unknown areas of Tibetan literature, history, and religious thought.

As the intervening decades have proven, these essays were much more than the circumstances of their origin suggest. Gene's early writings combine exacting philological scholarship, attention to social and cultural history, and a zeal for Buddhist teachings. Not content to present Tibetan Buddhist doctrine as an isolated phenomenon abstracted from human history, Gene sought to understand the growing numbers of Tibetan books at his disposal within historical, cultural, and literary contexts. That he was able to succeed in this effort with relatively few sources makes these essays all the more remarkable. Works that are considered basic reading today in Tibetan studies were only just coming to light as these essays were being composed. Dudjom Rinpoche's history of the Rnying ma pa, a primary source for much of Gene's early writing on that school, had only just been written in the mid 1960s, and was practically unknown outside of India at the time Gene made use of it.

In the years since their limited publication, Gene's essays have developed a sort of cult status among those interested in Tibetan studies. Initially some twenty copies of each bound Tibetan volume produced for the Library of Congress were shipped to libraries in the United States. This of course means that Gene's essays, too, had—for all intents and purposes—an initial run of about twenty prints each in the States. Many of these languished unread in

universities in which there was no Tibetan studies program. But these originals were not to be the primary form in which the prefaces were read; it was as photocopies that they were spread. By the beginning of the 1980s, photocopied anthologies of Gene's prefaces were circulating from Seattle to Charlottesville, Bloomington to Bonn, New Delhi to New York, Hamburg to Kathmandu.



In the present volume the essays have been organized according to the particular school with which they are primarily concerned. The first sections present essays on the Rnying ma pa, Bka' brgyud pa, Sa skya pa, and Dge lugs pa, respectively. For several of the essays, this is really only a convenient approximation of their contents, since they range wide over the literature of Tibetan Buddhism. Chapter 17, for instance, presents a history of the various traditions that were included in the nonsectarian movement of the nineteenth century. Chapter 14 surveys the works by Bo dong Paṇ chen dedicated to the literary arts. Thus, the latter two sections are devoted to literary arts and the nonsectarian movement.

The volume begins with two essays dedicated to the Rnying ma pa school. The first of the two introduces the Rnying ma pa master Mkhan po Ngag dbang dpal bzang (1879–1941). The essay originally appeared as an introduction to this master's autobiography. And yet—as with so many of the essays to follow—Gene uses this occasion as an opportunity to provide an historical and doctrinal overview of the tradition preceding the life of Mkhan po Ngag dbang dpal bzang. The origins of the great monasteries of the Rnying ma school, the development of the treasure tradition, the major philosophical trends of the great Rnying ma scholiasts—all of these topics are surveyed in this essay. Chapter 2 continues the themes and issues raised in the previous essay by looking more closely at the life of Klong chen Rab 'byams (1308–64) and his *Self-Liberation Trilogy*.

The next five essays each discuss a particular aspect of the history and literature of the various Bka' brgyud schools. Chapter 3, "Golden Rosaries of the Bka' brgyud Schools," surveys the major early lineages of the Bka' brgyud in the context of one example of the golden rosary (*gser 'phreng*) genre of biographical writing. It also includes a brief discussion of the primary compiler of the work, Mon rtse pa Kun dga' dpal ldan (1408–75), and his tradition, the little-known 'Ba' ra Bka' brgyud. Chapter 4 continues this discussion by focusing on a work of the same genre from the Shangs pa Bka' brgyud tradition.

Chapter 5 provides an introduction to the life of the great “Madman of Gtsang,” Gtsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507), and the tradition immediately following him. This is one of the highlights of the volume; it exemplifies Gene’s method, creating a broad and detailed picture of a literary and cultural phenomenon by beginning with a particular text as its focus. The essay begins with a brief discussion of the madman (*smyon pa*) within the Bka’ brgyud schools, and then moves on to a detailed summary of the biography of Gtsang smyon authored by Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol (1494–1570). It then lists the various printed versions of the work for which Gtsang smyon was justly famous, the *Collected Songs of Mi la ras pa*, as well as the many works composed by Gtsang smyon’s disciples which were subsequently printed at Brag dkar rta so hermitage near Skyid grong in south-west Tibet.

The Fourth ‘Brug chen, Padma dkar po (1527–92), and his history of Buddhism (*chos ’byung*) are the subject of chapter 6. This short essay discusses the early development of the ‘Brug pa Bka’ brgyud pa school and the ‘Brug chen incarnation line. It then provides an outline of the contents of the history.

Chapter 7 takes up the rich diaries of Si tu Paṇ chen Chos kyi ’byung gnas (1699–1776). Ranging from the cultural milieu of Khams in the eighteenth century, to general comments on the life of Si tu, and finally to a discussion of the diaries themselves, the essay evokes a multileveled vision of scholarship, society, and intercultural contact during this period of renaissance in Tibet.

With chapters 8 and 9 the focus turns to the next great tradition, that of the Sa skya school. The early history of the ‘Khon family and the genesis of the Sa skya school constitute the focus of chapter 8. This is the earliest essay in the volume, dating to 1961. As a part of the Inner Asian Colloquium at the University of Washington, Gene translated a portion of the *Chronicle of China and Tibet* (*Rgya bod yig tshang*) dealing with the life of ‘Khon Dkon mchog rgyal po (1034–1102) up to the founding of Sa skya in 1073. The copious annotations to this translation include many remarks by Deshung Rinpoche on the early history and geography of Sa skya and environs. Chapter 9 is dedicated to the philosophical writings of the Sa skya master from Mustang, Glo bo Mkhan chen Bsod nams lhun grub (1456–1532), and to the early history of Buddhist logic and epistemology in Tibet.

Chapters 10 through 13 all focus upon different masters of the Dge lugs school. These four essays all treat biographical literature in one way or another, and together present a detailed sample of this genre of literature among the Dge lugs pa from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Chapter 10 introduces the autobiography of the First Paṇ chen Lama, Blo bzang

chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1570–1662), and by way of this work goes on to discuss the political situation at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Tibet, as well as the development of Tibetan artistic styles at this time. “The Life of Lcang skya Rol pa’i rdo rje,” chapter 11, provides a convenient summary of the biography of the Second Lcang skya Lama, Rol pa’i rdo rje (1717–86), composed by the great scholar Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737–1802). A selection of various philosophical and historical works by Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma forms the subject of chapter 12. This essay contains a great deal of information on many masters active in A mdo during the eighteenth century, to whom Thu’u bkwan devoted biographies, as well as a survey of the contents of his most famous work of philosophy, the *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Tenets* (*Grub mtha’ shel gyi me long*).

Finally, chapter 13 moves from the northeastern reaches of A mdo to the southwestern edges of the Tibetan cultural world, presenting the life of Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1713–93), teacher of the Eighth Dalai Lama, ’Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1758–1804). This prolific scholar from Gtsang spent much of his career near Skyid grong, the Tibetan area just north of the Nepalese borderlands.

The next two essays depart from a strict emphasis on the major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism to look at the literary arts of medieval Tibet. Chapter 14, “Buddhist Literary and Practical Arts According to Bo dong Paṇ chen” is actually an amalgam of several prefaces to the first volumes of the massive collection of scripture and exegesis collected and authored by Bo dong Paṇ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1375–1451), the *De nyid ’dus pa*. The present essay thus touches on a number of subjects, including the development of the Bo dong pa tradition, the relation between Bo dong Paṇ chen’s *De nyid ’dus pa* and the Tibetan canonical collections, and the secular arts and sciences, including metallurgy, prognostication, Indian and Tibetan grammar, linguistics, and poetics. Chapter 15, “A Tibetan Encyclopedia from the Fifteenth Century,” analyzes the contents of one of the most interesting attempts to categorize knowledge in medieval Tibet, the *Treasury of Explanation* by Don dam smra ba’i seng ge. In this essay Gene pays particular attention to Tibetan place names and names of ethnic groups, providing a heavily annotated outline of the chapters dedicated to these topics in Don dam’s encyclopedic work.

The last two essays, chapters 16 and 17, move to the nineteenth century and the nonsectarian movement. Chapter 16 introduces the prolific scholar ’Jam mgon ’Ju Mi pham (1846–1912). In discussing Mi pham’s commentary on