PREFACE

This book was constructed to fulfill a quite special need existing within the Buddhist Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin. Its aim is the adequate linguistic preparation of students of Tibetan religion and culture who are preparing to do fieldwork for a PhD, and thereafter, among the learned lamas and geshes living in the Tibetan communities in India, Nepal, etc. As such it seeks to provide an intermediate Tibetan textbook of the type which has long been available for the teaching and study of the more familiar languages, French, German, Italian, and the like, the kind of book in which the student is exposed as much to the culture of the respective country as to a more advanced practice of the language.

At the University of Wisconsin this book is used for the second year course in spoken Tibetan. It presupposes a familiarity with the Manual of Modern Spoken Tibetan: Lhasa Dialect by Goldstein and Nornang, at the first year level. At Wisconsin, the second year course meets five times a week for three classroom and two laboratory sessions, respectively. In the laboratory, the student listens to and practises the language material by means of tapes, while in the classroom he works with a teacher on the exercises to be found at the end of each lesson.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first, the lecture material is varied, whereas the second part represents the continued exposition of a single topic. The latter in particular is representative of the kind of work a student will be doing with Tibetan scholars in India and elsewhere, where long exposition is devoted to a single given text or subject.

The language of these lectures will be rather more familiar to students of literary Tibetan than to those of modern spoken Tibetan. The language is, of course, modern Tibetan: Lhasa dialect, such as employed by scholars in discussing and lecturing on the subjects of Buddhist philosophy, religion, Tibetan history, etc. The vocabulary, however, is taken almost wholly from the literary language and the mastery of it is an act of learning independent of the learning of the modern Tibetan language in general. The working relationship between the literary language and the modern spoken is complicated by the fact that the term "modern spoken Tibetan" covers a variety of Tibetan dialects, whereas literary Tibetan covers a uniform literary usage employed in writing without dialectal differences, by the speakers of the various Tibetan dialects. Thus, for example, if five scholars speaking five different Tibetan dialects, say, of Kham, Amdo, Gtsang, Lhasa, and Northern Tibet, were to write down beforehand a lecture on philosophy, history, etc., their language usage would be quite uniform. However, in lecturing ex tempore, as is the custom, each will have recourse to the idiomatic usages of his own dialect, even though the core of his vocabulary will be that of the literary language. Accordingly, the
peculiarity of these lectures here is that the vocabulary is mainly that of the literary language, whereas the dialectical superstructure is that of the Lhasa dialect.

Here, the principal differences between the Lhasa colloquial and literary usage are to be found in the verb forms and in words and expressions other than those belonging to the technical terminology of Buddhist philosophy. The literary equivalents of modern Lhasa words and expressions need not be given here in a textbook concerned with the spoken language. These may be learned by advanced students either by the reading of appropriate literary texts by native Tibetan scholars, or by memorizing specially prepared dictionaries of the literary language.

In using this book, the student should bear in mind that one of the most important consequences of the difference between the literary and spoken usage of Tibetan is that in writing the language in Tibetan orthography, there is no way to write some of the verb forms which are actually in use in the spoken language. Thus, if one were to write phonetically in Tibetan orthography, those verb forms used in the Lhasa colloquial, for instance, the resulting sentence would become unintelligible, since it would be employing particles and combinations of particles unknown to the literary language. This ought not, however, to become a problem for the student, since the verb forms in question are comparatively few, and quite regular, and the phonetic units which are spoken, as opposed to those which are written, may be learned from the tapes of the lectures themselves, e.g. ཕོ་རེ ་pronounced yoo ree.

In the English translations of the lectures, diacritical marks are not used in rendering Sanskrit words into English orthography, although they are employed in the vocabularies and notes. Also, although the translations intend at all times to be intelligible, they do not always intend to be idiomatic English, as well. They are designed to assist the students with the Tibetan text, and in particular to show how the phrases and clauses of the often long periodic sentences are related to the main concluding verb of those sentences. This appears to be the principal problem of a student of Tibetan after he has overcome his bewilderment at the manner in which the various combinations of monosyllables form simple meaning units.

The Tibetan lectures of this text have been recorded by the University of Wisconsin Language Laboratory on tapes which are available there at a nominal cost.

The western calendar dates for historical events are often controversial. The dates as given in the lectures do not follow a single authority, and some of these dates are quite open to question.

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