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## A note on transliteration system used：

Latse Library uses the Tibetan Himalayan and Digital Library（THDL）Simplified Phonetic
Transcription of Standard Tibetan for Tibetan terms that appear in our English－language articles．For more information on this transliteration scheme，please visit：www．thdl．org （see under＂Reference＂tab）．

## Correction

The editors would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Dr．Hartmut Walravens of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin，Germany，to our previous issue．Dr．Walravens gener－ ously provided the image for the article La dwags kyi ag bAr（p．29），which was captioned only in Tibetan

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NEWS FEATURES


## Latse Hosts Tibetan Calligraphy Workshop

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N October 14-16, 2005, Latse
Library welcomed experts
in Tibetan calligraphy from around the world to participate in a landmark event: a workshop, the first of its kind, devoted to Tibetan calligraphy, calligraphic art, and Tibetan writing culture.

The Tibetan Calligraphy Workshop was conceived by Latse Library with the aim to recognize tradition as well as explore innovation in Tibetan writing, and to share these calligraphic arts with a wider audience. Latse wanted to highlight the life's work of an older generation and also to acknowledge new and artistic interpretations of Tibetan calligraphy. As with all of our programs, it was also Latse's goal to bring together calligraphers of different backgrounds, life experiences, and styles, so that the workshop could best represent the past and the present of Tibetan calligraphy, inspiring younger generations and new audiences with the beauty and importance of this medium so that it may be continued into the future.



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TENZIN CHOZIN (RIGHT) GIVES HER PRESENTATION ON FEMININE AND MASCULINE WRITING STYLES. SEATED NEXT TO HER AND ASSISTING WITH TRANSLATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS IS TENZIN GELEK OF TRACE FOUNDATION.



The three-day event, which was open to the public and free of charge, included demonstrations of various calligraphy styles and traditions, paper-making and ink-making, panel discussions, an exhibition of Tibetan Calligraphy and Writing Materials, as well as opportunities for visitors to meet with calligraphers and learn techniques firsthand.

## Workshop Opening

Latse Library had originally scheduled the workshop for the fall of 2004, but due to travel difficulties faced by some key participants, the event was postponed for one year. All the invited participants, dedicated to the aims of the workshop, graciously rearranged their schedules to gather at Latse one year later. Therefore, it was with a sincere sense of gratitude to their patience and goodwill that Library Director Pema Bhum welcomed the workshop participants and audience on the morning of October 14. The Venerable Dhongthog Rinpoche Tenpe Gyaltsen led a prayer in homage to Thönmi Sambhota, the father of Tibetan script. The workshop weekend was then officially started with the public opening of the workshop exhibition. On display were








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calligraphy examples and art by workshop presenters, writing materials and tools for penmaking and ink-making, rare books and book covers, and other examples of the styles and applications of Tibetan calligraphy.

When planning the event, Latse staff sought a way to ensure that the actual act of writing would be the main focus, and could be demonstrated in the best possible way to the audience. Latse made use of an Elmo visual presenter that uses a camera mounted over a writing surface, and with a conventional projector can project live video feed of whatever the camera captures, in this case the presenter's hands, pen and paper. This special equipment was ideal in allowing a large audience to view the calligraphers in action.

## A Wide Variety of <br> Backgrounds and Styles

Each participant in the workshop demonstrated his or her own expertise, representing the wide variety of writing styles in Tibetan as well as the different facets of writing culture.

Rigzin Samdup, as first presenter of the workshop, began with the basics: an introduction to calligraphy pens and pen-making. Rigzin Samdup, who traveled from Lhasa to take part in the workshop, learned calligraphy


CLOTH CONTAINER TO HOLD AN INK POT.

as a student at Nyarongsha, and as an older student, taught younger children at the school (see related article on Rigzin Samdup and his early schooling in this issue). He has spent most of his life learning different styles of calligraphy and has continued to tutor both children and adults in writing in Lhasa for these last few decades. Tibetan calligraphy is written with a thin length of wood, the tip cut at an angle. In his presentation, Rigzin Samdup showed and discussed the various wood types that are used for pens, and the different ways one carves pen-tips depending on the type of calligraphy style. In a later presentation, Rigzin Samdup then demonstrated to the audience how ink is made, explaining the ingredients used for ink—primarily ash, water, and a natural glue substance-and then the process of combining these materials to produce ink. (See accompanying piece for the "recipe.") Rigzin Samdup shared with the audience his exceptional skills in ümé, the Tibetan cursive script, as he then applied the freshly-made ink to paper. In another presentation focused on Writing Materials and Accoutrements of the Aristocratic Class, Rigzin Samdup showed the audience the writing-related accessories that an aristocrat or government official always had on hand or wore on his person. Items attached to
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RIGZIN SAMDUP (FAR RIGHT) DEMONSTRATES HOW TO CARVE THE PEN TIP. WITH THE USE OF A SPECIAL PROJECTOR DEVICE, AUDIENCE MEMBERS WERE AbLE TO VIEW THE PROCESS UP CLOSE.

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at the "Meet the calligraphers" activity, a young student Watches as phuntsok dhumkhang demonstrates his art



















one's belt, for example, included a pen-holder, as well as a little round cloth container to hold the inkpot. Rigzin Samdup also gave a special demonstration of lap-writing, a method used when one has no convenient writing surface. Paper that has been folded accordian-style is held in the palm of the hand, with the hand placed upon one's lap; the top exposed panel is written upon (the hand serving as a flat surface) and then folded underneath to expose a new panel that one can use to continue writing.

Dhongthog Rinpoche Tenpe Gyaltsen, the fifth incarnation of his lineage, studied calligraphy at Menshö Dzongsar Shédra Shédrup Dargyéling in Derge. He came to the United States and settled in Seattle, Washington, where he established the Sapan Institute. Dhongthog Rinpoche publishes many works, most of them written and printed in his own handwriting. Dhongthog Rinpoche writes exceptionally elegant and precise üchen, the "book" script often used for religious texts. His presentation at the workshop focused on the Derge style of üchen script.

At seventy years old, Phuntsok Dhumkhang could be considered to be among the

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TWO WORKS BY LOSANG THONDEN．ON THE LEFT IS A SAMPLE OF DRUTSA SCRIPT，WHILE THE WORK ON THE RIGHT SHOWS THE STAGES OF ÜMÉ SCRIPT，FROM BASIC AND LARGER，TO MORE FLUID AND SMALLER．


older generation of calligraphers．However， his singular style represents new directions in Tibetan calligraphy．Born in Lhasa in 1935 into a noble family，Phuntsok Dhumkhang served as a lay official in the Tibetan government，and also has life－long experience as a teacher and musician．Highly regarded as a calligrapher and artist，Phuntsok Dhumkhang has shown his works in exhibitions in Kathmandu and Boulder，Colorado．For the Calligraphy Work－ shop，he gave a presentation on his unique artistic style that uses calligraphy－sometimes in a combination of scripts－to add visual interpretation of words or idioms．For exam－ ple，the word $/ u$（klu）or naga，is written so that the overall form resembles curve of a naga＇s snake－like body．While other contemporary Tibetan calligraphers have adopted use of a brush to create larger artistic works，Phuntsok Dhumkhang insists upon using the traditional Tibetan stylus；he simply makes them very large and wide to achieve the oftentimes strik－ ing，fluid effect．Phuntsok Dhumkhang also demonstrated traditional document format－ ting and writing etiquette，how to format let－ ters for certain officials，high lamas，and so on．

Losang Thonden was also born in Lhasa． Highly regarded as a language teacher and educator，he has served as Secretary of the



SAMTA (ON LOAN TO LATSE COURTESY OF RIGZIN SAMDUP).
the user covers the writing surface with flour, chalk powder, OR EVEN TSAMPA AND THEN WITH A STICK OR PEN TIP WITHOUT INK SCRATCHES THE MESSAGE INTO THE POWDERED SURFACE. THE RECIPIENT CAN READ THE MESSAGE, ERASE IT BY WIPING OFF THE SURFACE, AND USE THE SAME SAMTA FOR ANY MESSAGE IN REPLY. GIVEN THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF THIS METHOD OF COMMUNICATING, SAMTA WERE OFTEN USED TO EXCHANGE MESSAGES OF SECRET OR SENSITIVE CONTENT. the sender would place a wax seal on the side of the stacked BOARDS, OR ON THE LEATHER SLEEVE, TO BE DELIVERED INTACT TO the recipient. The recipient would break the seal to access the message, and could easily erase the message after reading.

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Council for Tibetan Education, as well as Tibetan Language and Cultural Officer in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. Losang Thonden is an expert in a variety of writing styles, and also explores innovative formatting of calligraphy. Losang Thonden's presentations included a demonstration of the samta (sam Ta), or stacked writing tablets used for exchanging correspondence (see photo). He also made a demonstration of the drutsa ('bru tsha) or "seed" script, an elegant script that is often used for book titles or greeting signs, etcetera. In the exhibition, visitors could see Losang Thonden's mastery of other scripts, including Hor yik (Mongolian style), Lantsa script (a special Tibetan script used to transliterate Sanskrit words), and various styles of kyuk yik. Losang Thonden was the calligrapher for the logo of Latse Library.

Another workshop participant with his own

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WORK BY JIGMÉ DOUSHE वहिजाइशे
unique style of artistic interpretation of Tibetan calligraphy was Jigmé Doushe of France． Jigmé Doushe has studied the calligraphy of different cultures for over 20 years．He has carefully cultivated his skills in Tibetan cal－ ligraphy especially，and strives to attract a wider，Western audience to this disappearing art form．Jigmé Doushe＇s presentations in the workshop reflected his approach to Tibetan calligraphy，which combines traditional script and contemporary interpretations，colors，and design．He gave a lecture on＂Tibetan Pale－ ography：Roots and Development of Tibetan Letters＂（see related article in this issue）．He then demonstrated his artistic style，and how he makes use of larger，flat pieces of wood as a stylus for creating large－sized works．

Based in New York City，Tenzin Chozin did not travel as far as her peers to participate in the workshop．Originally from Lhoka in Central Tibet，Tenzin Chozin received formal instruc－ tion in calligraphy since childhood．After many years of practice，she created her own style in kyuk yik which was well received by other cal－ ligraphers．In her presentation，Tenzin Chozin discussed and demonstrated the feminine style of cursive writing，or mo yik（mo yig）．Mo yik，used by both sexes，is the reserved，neat style that is used to reflect a personality that is


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WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT TENZIN CHOZIN WITH A SAMPLE OF HER WORK．



JIM CANARY DURING HIS PAPER－MAKING DEMONSTRATION．

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modest（as opposed to the sometimes flamboy－ ant masculine style used by bolder individu－ als）．Tenzin Chozin also demonstrated several samples of her own kyuk yik writing style．

Another member of the newer genera－ tion of calligrapher is Tashi Dundrop，origi－ nally from Kardze in Kham，and currently living in Chengdu，Sichuan．Tashi Dundrop studied Tibetan calligraphy from a young age．His considerable skills，especially in the üchen script，earned him an award in Tibetan calligraphy competitions in his hometown． Now working as a researcher in Tibetan stud－ ies，Tashi Dundrop continues to practice and explore different calligraphy styles．His pre－ sentation in the workshop focused on the üchen script．He also discussed his research in support of the theory that some Tibetan let－ ters are derived from pictograms，and exhib－ ited work that demonstrated these ideas．

Participant Jim Canary played a signifi－ cant role in the planning of the calligraphy workshop．Currently Head Conservator at Lilly Library of Indiana University in Bloom－ ington，he has dedicated over thirty years of his life to studying Tibetan language and culture．He has traveled extensively in the Himalayan region researching Tibetan book craft，including papermaking，calligraphy and

NEWS FEATURES



AT THE PAPER-MAKING SESSION OF THE TIBETAN CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP, AN AUDIENCE MEMBER POUNDS BOILED WOOD INTO PULP.


printing. Jim Canary is also a founding member of Paper Road Tibet, which among other projects teaches the art of traditional papermaking to communities in Tibet in order to preserve this vanishing craft, as well as provide a livelihood. Trace Foundation supported Paper Road Tibet in 1997 with a research grant for travel to Tibet. For the workshop, Jim Canary was pleased to be able to give a highly successful mini-course in traditional paper-making on the sunny, warm afternoon of the second day of the conference. Held on the outside terrace of Latse Library, Jim Canary involved visitors in making paper by hand using traditional Tibetan methods. He showed the audience how to pound into paste wood that had been boiled; the paste is then added to water. Jim directed some visitors on how to construct frame molds with wood, tacks, and cheesecloth, while showing others how to sieve out the pulp from the water evenly onto the molds. The frames were then left to dry in the sun and visitors were able to take their hand-crafted paper home at the end of the day. Jim Canary also presented a video he made in Tibet on paper-making in Lhasa. He helped Latse to film the proceedings of the workshop, and also contributed many items to be displayed in the exhibition.


































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## Meeting the Artists \＆Learning About the Art

Audience members were given an opportunity to meet and talk with the calligraphers on Sun－ day afternoon，the third day of the workshop， at an activity called＂Meet the Calligraphers．＂ Visitors could watch and learn alongside the calligraphers，who were each seated at tables around the library＇s Reading Room．The workshop participants generously accepted requests for writing samples in the form of aus－ picious sayings or verses，which visitors then took home with them．

One of the primary aims of the Tibetan Cal－ ligraphy Workshop was to bring together cal－ ligraphers from all backgrounds and styles so that they might learn more about each other＇s skills and techniques．Towards this aim，Latse scheduled a roundtable discussion at the end of each day where a particular topic was exam－ ined by selected participants．At the end of the first day the topic＂How I Learned Tibetan Cal－ ligraphy＂was explored，with Phuntsok Dhum－ khang speaking about the role Tibetan writing played among aristocratic and government cir－ cles；Jigmé Doushe sharing how his passion for writing and scripts led him to pursue Tibetan calligraphy in his native France；and Tashi Dundrop describing how he learned Tibetan calligraphy as a student growing up in Sich－ uan Province in China in the 1980s and 90s．

On the following day，Dhongthog Rinpoche，Rigzin Samdup and Losang Thon－ den were discussants in the panel on＂Prac－ tice and Development of Writing Skills．＂ Again，each participant had his own unique experiences in how they practice their callig－ raphy，and how learning one style led to the exploration of others．Dhongthog Rinpoche stressed the importance of diligent practice by quoting a relevant Tibetan idiom saying that to become a calligrapher one must copy four volumes of text：Once you have fin－ ished the first volume，throw it into the wind． Upon completing the second volume，throw it into the fire；and the third into water．The fourth one you may offer to your teacher．

Dhongthog Rinpoche，Phunstok Dhum－ khang and Rigzin Samdup participated in the panel on＂The Future of Tibetan Calligraphy＂ on the third and last day of the workshop．Rep－ resenting an older generation，they wondered at the fate of Tibetan calligraphy in the face of the increasing prevalence of $\ddot{c}$ chen in modern


DHONGTHOG RINPOCHE (CENTER, SEATED) LEADS A CLASS IN WRITING ÜCHEN AS PART OF THE TIBETAN CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP.
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publications and on the internet. Rigzin Samdup spoke of the growing trend in Tibet for schoolchildren to learn üchen rather than the traditionally taught ümé. The speakers unanimously emphasized the importance of impressing upon younger generations of Tibetans, as well as a world audience, the beauty and value of Tibetan calligraphy if it is to survive.

## Related Activities

Other institutions and organizations planned events in conjunction with the workshop. The Modern Tibetan Studies Program at Columbia University invited Rigzin Samdup and Phuntsok Dhumkhang for a discussion with students and faculty. Latse Library also hosted a special event for members of the Society of Scribes, a New York based educational organization of calligraphers, which invited Phuntsok Dhumkhang to demonstrate and explain the different styles of Tibetan calligraphy to its members.

Latse organized several sessions of calligraphy classes at the library with Dhongthog Rinpoche, Phuntsok Dhumkhang and Rigzin Samdup for interested members of the community to learn firsthand the basics of writing precise Tibetan calligraphy. Phuntsok Dhumkhang made a special appearance at the Latse Library Children's program to guide the










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## RIGZIN SAMDUP'S METHOD OF INK-MAKING

To make ink that is well-suited for Tibetan paper, Rigzin Samdup prepares the following ingredients:

- Bark from the kyer wa (skyer ba) plant (Barberry). The bark has an inner layer of sticky sap, a white spiderweb-like substance. Pieces of the bark are placed in water, and the resulting soaking liquid has a slightly sticky consistency.
- Dron tal (sgron thal): ashes from soot.To collect the ashes, a metal grate or mesh is placed above burning pinewood. The soot or düdrek (dud dreg) that collects on the grate from the smoke is scraped off and crushed fine using a smooth horn tool and ladle-like instrument called a nag kyok (snag skyogs) as a sort of mortar and pestle.
- Other ingredients include water; oil to make the ink more fluid; and crushed rock sugar (ka ra), which makes the ink more lustrous.

The ingredients are mixed together and the ink is ready to use. The liquid from the kyer wa plant helps to suspend the soot ashes more evenly throughout the mixture, and provides for a consistency that is ideal for use on Tibetan paper. For a solid form of the ink, which is easier to transport, the liquid ink is spread on the hands and allowed to dry a little. The ink-maker then rubs his or her hands together, forming tiny pellets or crumbs of ink. The ink pellets can be reconstituted with a little water.

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THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE TIBETAN CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP. BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: JIM CANARY, TENZIN CHOZIN, TASHI DUNDROP. FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: LOSANG THONDEN, PHUNTSOK DHUMKHANG, DHONGTHOG RINPOCHE, RIGZIN SAMDUP, JIGMÉ DOUSHE.



young students in writing their Tibetan alphabet.

## Sharing the Art of

 Tibetan CalligraphyLatse hopes to make available highlights of the Tibetan Calligraphy Workshop on the library website in the future. Latse has also collected works and writing samples from all the participants, which can be easily accessed by visitors to the library. A small exhibit of writing materials will remain on display for the greater part of 2007, and various works by workshop participants will be on permanent display around the library. It is our hope that we may continue to share with a larger audience the valuable contributions made by the participants towards a better understanding and appreciation of Tibetan writing. ■








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NEWS FEATURES


## Losar Concert 2006



LOSAR CONCERT 2006 PERFORMERS (LEFT TO RIGHT) DADON, PHUNTSOK DHUMKHANG AND JAMYANG KYI.



N March 25, 2006, in celebration of the Fire-Dog Year,

Latse Library with the Modern

Tibetan Studies Program at Columbia Univer-
sity presented Losar Concert 2006. The perfor-
mance showcased both traditional and modern

Tibetan musical talents, with artists from around
the world appearing together on one stage.

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Veteran musician Phuntsok Dhumkhang has life－long experi－ ence in music performance and education．In the early 1960s， he joined the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts（TIPA）as a musician and artist．He eventually became the director of TIPA from 1965 to 1970．A singer，songwriter，and expert player of the dranyen among other instruments，Phuntsok Dhumkhang has shared his passion and talent for music with numerous students both in India and abroad．He gives special attention to the folksongs of Tibet of different genres，periods，and prov－ enance．In the 1990s he released an album entitled＂Songs of Tibet＂containing rare tunes from a bygone age．

Phuntsok Dhumkhang demonstrated how Tibetan classical music continues to be alive and beloved even in these modern times．The audience responded enthusiasti－ cally to his classical and old folk songs，including nangma and tözhé pieces．Phuntsok Dhumkhang＇s voice is gentle and earthy，and he played his own accompaniment on the dranyen．He also played a flute solo for the piece＂My Guru （Bdag gi bla ma），＂a haunting，serene melody．For his sec－ ond set，Phuntsok Dhumkhang was joined by his former student Dhodak，now living in the New York City area． Together the two performed additional Tibetan classics．

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The modern beat and rap sampling of the pre－recorded back－ ing track for＂Karma（Las＇phro）＂at the start of Jamyang Kyi＇s set took some by surprise．Jamyang Kyi＇s compositions，while based on traditional folk music from all regions of Tibet， express this respect for tradition through the medium of mod－ ern pop music．Although not as familiar to audiences outside Tibet，Jamyang Kyi＇s soulful voice and engaging stage pres－ ence quickly won the audience over，and by the end of her second set，the crowd was clapping along to the beat，and gave her a standing ovation．Jamyang Kyi currently lives in Xining，Qinghai Province．She is an award－winning journalist and television reporter，but her true passion is singing and song－writing．She has released several recordings including the CD Prayer and two VCDs，Distant Lover and Karma．

The second half of the concert featured singer－songwriter Dadon and her band．Dadon grew up in Lhasa．She received a formal education in classical music，and in 1985 joined the Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe，where she began to sing professionally．In the late 1980s，Dadon entered and won numerous singing competitions in China，the first Tibetan to do so．She recorded and sold millions of albums during the













NEWS FEATURES

late 1980s and early 1990s. After coming to the United States, Dadon has performed at national and international venues and events, with famous Western singers and composers. She continues to develop her own musical styles and write her own compositions, and has also composed songs for several film soundtracks. Dadon's band consists of John McDowell on keyboards and vocals; Michael Wimberly on African drums and percussion; Ken Rich on bass; and Peter Moore on guitar. Her set represented the various stages of Dadon's career, including crowd favorites such as the love song "The Flowing Blue River" (Shang shang chu mo sngon po), a hit song from the 1980s, and compositions from her more recent U.S.-released albums including the soulful "Gyi Ma Gyi" (Happy, Not Happy) from her 1997 album. Other selections reflected Dadon's




















exploration of the music of other cultures and styles; the piece "Oma Wani Yea" is based on a Lakota Indian melody with lyrics in Lakota. Translated as "I Roam," the imagery evoked in the song was beautifully expressed by Dadon's spiritual rendering, accompanied by various members of her band.

To close the concert, Phuntsok Dhumkhang and Jamyang Kyi joined Dadon and the band onstage for a rousing rendition of the popular "The Way We Are Gathered Here Now" (Nga tsho 'di la 'dzoms 'dzoms), with each singer taking turns in leading the chorus, while the crowd also sang and clapped along. Losar Concert 2006 was a special gathering in itself, with Tibetan artists of different generations, backgrounds, and styles, joining together in song.























SInger dadon performing at losar concert 2006



Singer Jamyang kyi.























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## New York City: Yak Cheese Tasting

ON May 19-26, 2006, Trace Foundation and the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity presented Tibetan Yak Cheese Week, a celebration featuring

Ragya Yak Cheese, produced on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau thanks to a project designed and implemented by Trace Foundation. All the Cheese Week events and activities took place at Trace Foundation's Latse Library.

Ragya Yak Cheese is a cheese made with the milk of the female yak, the dri. With the involvement of master cheese makers first from Nepal and then from Italy, the Ragya Yak Cheese Factory in Golok in Amdo (Qinghai Province) has perfected a hard mountain cheese. Although unusual, the making of this cheese falls in line with the many ways the nomads process milk, including butter, yogurt, and churwa, a local variety of cheese, to preserve its rich nutritive value that is especially important in such a harsh environment. The benefits of using the milk of the dri is manifold: dri's milk has twice the fat content as cow's milk, making for an especially rich cheese. Moreover, the local Tibetan nomad community can sell the excess milk from their herds to the factory, providing a source of income. Profits made from sales of the cheese are then used to sustain a local school.

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The story of Ragya Yak Cheese begins with the vision of Jigme Gyaltsen, a senior monk from Ragya Monastery in Golok. Ten years ago he searched for a way to support the children at the primary school of which he is the founder and principal. With the help of a grant from Trace Foundation, which, around that same time, was interested in exploring cheese-making as a means to promote culturally appropriate economic development in the region, Jigme Gyaltsen established a cheese factory. The factory invited local nomads to sell the milk produced by their yak herds to the factory, which in turn, processed the milk into cheese. With the help of Trace Foundation, the cheese underwent the necessary United States Department of Agriculture examination before being readied for export to America. The finished wheels of cheese are shipped to the United States by air, and through a distributor, find their way into gourmet and specialty shops on the east coast of the United States, with plans to expand to the west coast in the near future. Future sales
of the cheese will generate funds for the Jigme Gyaltsen Welfare School.

In 2004, Jigme Gyaltsen and Trace Foundation joined Slow Food, an international movement founded in Italy in 1986 and dedicated to preserving regional cuisine and products from around the world. Together they formed the Tibetan Plateau Yak Cheese Presidium, an economic development project designed to improve and promote the quality of Ragya Yak Cheese. The presidium has yielded unprecedented cooperation between European and local cheese makers, as well as opportunities to gain international attention with the participation of the cheese in key international Slow Food events held in Italy such as Terra Madre, Cheese, and Salone del Gusto where presidia from around the world showcase their projects and products.

Tibetan Yak Cheese Week offered an opportunity for New Yorkers not only to sample the cheese, but also to meet Jigme Gyaltsen and learn about





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the story behind the project．The week was offi－ cially opened with a wine and cheese recep－ tion on Friday，May 19．Master cheesemonger Daphne Zepos，who volunteered her time and energy to help the project prior to the event，not to mention the many hours during cheese week to ensure the proper handling of the cheese，cre－ ated a magnificent centerpiece that reflected the cheese＇s journey from grassland to table，with original packing boxes on the bottom，whole rounds of cheese to form a base，and sliced chunks decorated with fresh herbs and fruit． About 250 guests including area Slow Food members，representatives from the food indus－ try，academics，and local Tibetans attended the reception and were able to sample the Ragya Yak Cheese alone and as the featured ingredient in creations by local chefs．Chef Riccardo Buitoni of Ristorante Aurora in Brooklyn created a delec－ table agnolotti stuffed with a yak cheese fon－ dant．From restaurant I Trulli，Chef Martschenko grated the yak cheese to make delicate frico， or baked crisps，that were accompanied by a savory eggplant caponata．Ethan Kostbar of Rose Water Restaurant developed an artichoke，fava bean，and arugula salad tossed with yak cheese shavings and salsa verde．New York City－based chef Stephen Primich ran the food preparation at the event，finishing the various dishes for pre－ sentation and serving．The recipes will be made available on the official Ragya Yak Cheese web－ site（see below for details）．U．S．based represen－ tatives of Smeraldina Corporation from Sardinia， Italy，graciously donated cases of their sparkling and natural artesian waters for the event．Also offered at the reception were wines from Italy that paired nicely with the cheese and cheese appetizers．

Representatives from Slow Food，Project Man－ ager Paola Vanzo of Trace Foundation，and Jigme Gyaltsen all spoke to the gathering to tell them more about the project．This was followed by the screening of a short documentary，shot on location by Andrea Cavazzuti，an Italian vid－ eographer based in China．The film beautifully narrated the story of the school and the project．

In conjunction with Yak Cheese Week，there was also an exhibition entitled Thogang：From the Tibetan Plateau，with photographs by Lois Conner，a leading photographer based in New York．In addition to photographs taken during the photographer＇s visits to Tibet over a span of ten years，the exhibition featured photos of the cheesemakers and the cheese－making process．

The week continued with additional screenings of the film as well as a presentation by Jigme Gyaltsen on the Jigme Gyaltsen Welfare School as part of the Latse Library Lecture Series（see news article on the series in this issue）．He also visited some area schools，and met local cheese suppliers．

For Jigme Gyaltsen，who was visiting New York for the first time，Yak Cheese Week was the cul－ mination of years of hard work and dedication， as he was able to，in a sense，follow the cheese from its journey from the grasslands to the eastern shore of the United States．To meet the consumers，to see their faces as they tasted the cheese and hear their feedback，and to witness how chefs and others were making use of the cheese，proved to be a tremendously rewarding and greatly valued experience，one he happily took back to Golok and the Ragya cheesemak－ ers，who were eager to learn how their cheese was received in such a faraway land．

Visitors to Yak Cheese Week were also able to take away with them a better sense of the region where the cheese is produced：through Jigme Gyaltsen，the photo exhibit，the film，and espe－ cially through the cheese．Ragya Yak Cheese can be compared to an aged goat cheese，mild and slightly granular in texture．But the cheese also has additional herbal and grassy notes that hint at the cheese＇s origins，transporting the taster to the grasslands high on the Tibetan plateau．

Ragya Yak Cheese is available at select stores in the United States．For more information please visit the website：www．tibetcheese．org，or write to info＠tibetcheese．org


Jigme gyaltsen（left），and the homepage of the ragya yak cheese website（right）：www．tibetcheese．org


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NEWS FEATURES


## Honoring

## Dr. Dawa Norbu


dawa norbu among his schoolmates at dr. graham's homes school in kalimpong, 1964. dawa norbu is fourth from the left IN THE BACK ROW. Photo courtesy of Rinchen Lhamo.



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LL of us here at Latse Library and Trace Foundation were saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Professor Dawa Norbu on May 27, 2006. Dawa Norbu was a devoted teacher and dedicated researcher who made significant contributions to the field of Tibetan Studies. On the 49th day of his passing, July 15, Latse Library held a memorial service for prayers and a tribute to the life and work of this remarkable scholar.

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DAWA NORBU DURING HIS STUDENT DAYS AT DR. GRAHAM'S HOMES SCHOOL, 1964 (LEFT), AND AS A PROFESSOR IN DELHI (RIGHT). Photos courtesy of Rinchen Lhamo.



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Dawa Norbu was born into a family of farmers in the village of Tashigang near Sakya in southern Tibet in 1949. An account of his early family life can be found in his book Tibet: The Road Ahead (HarperCollins Publishers India, 1997). When talking about his childhood he writes, "Born and brought up as I was at a most critical juncture in our history, I was able to taste both the religious old Tibet and the progressive new Tibet." Dawa Norbu exhibited a great love for learning from a young age. He writes of studying with a "burning intensity." After his family left Tibet for India, he taught himself English while also faithfully practicing Tibetan calligraphy.

In 1963 he became a student at the Dr. Graham's Homes school in Kalimpong. He graduated high

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MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR DR. DAWA NORBU.

school in 1969, whereupon he worked for several months in New Delhi before enrolling in St. Stephens College in Delhi University. Despite his heavy studies, he also served as editor of Tibetan Review, the first monthly journal in English on Tibet. In 1974, his first book Red Star Over Tibet was published by Collins. In 1976, Dawa Norbu went to graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley to pursue a doctorate degree in Political Science. Upon finishing his degree, he taught at San Francisco State University before returning to India in 1983. In 1987, Dr. Dawa Norbu became an Associate Professor in the School of International Studies of the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. His area specialties were Chinese Central Asia and Tibet, and non-western nationalisms.

Professor Norbu was a pioneer in the study of Tibet in a political context, researching Tibet in terms of contemporary history, politics and international relations. He was among the first scholars to insist upon new ways of thinking about Tibet, as notions of Tibet in a predominantly religious or cultural context persisted in scholarship. He also challenged the biases in scholarship, however and wherever they occurred. He would find that not everyone could tolerate a close examination of traditional ideas and thought.













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During his career, Dr. Norbu published roughly ten books and numerous research articles, many of which can be found in Latse's collections. He served as a visiting professor at the University of Durham, United Kingdom, and as a visiting scholar at Harvard University, and regularly participated in international conferences and seminars.

He was held in high esteem by his students and colleagues alike, and his contributions to the field of modern Tibetan studies will continue to have impact for future scholars.

Dr. Dawa Norbu is survived by his wife Rinchen Lhamo and their two children.

For the memorial service, Latse invited two monks to read prayers and recite mani in dedication to Dr. Norbu. Afterwards, there was a slideshow of photos graciously loaned to us by Dr. Norbu's widow. The selection included photos from his childhood and student days, college years, and professional career. Former Latse Librarian Sonam Dhargay gave an introduction to various publications by Dawa Norbu. And finally, audience members were asked to share their personal reminiscences and thoughts of Dr. Norbu and how he affected their lives, to which several visitors responded with stories reflecting warmth and respect.

Dr. Norbu's legacy lives on through his research. Please visit or contact Latse Library for assistance in locating articles, books and other publications by Dawa Norbu.

NEWS FEATURES


The Tibetan Language Program for Children at Latse bysonam ongeno


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FOR many Tibetans who live in New York the Children's Program at Latse Library has come as a blessing. The program, designed for young children ages 2 to 5, has helped their little ones familiarize themselves with the Tibetan alphabet, the language, songs, and folk tales from their motherland. It has also provided a sense of community and belonging for the parents.

A great number of Tibetans all over the world live in cultural settings other than their own, and compared with other immigrants around the world, the challenges of preserving their culture, tradition and values is multifold. In New York I would say it is a Herculean task for parents to make their children appreciate and identify with customs, traditions, and values that their children do not see around them, are not born into, or find alienating when it comes to their peers. Without a sense of belonging, without instilling the pride, without discovering the fun in learning, and above all without the opportunity and an environment conducive for such learning with other children, it often becomes difficult for the little ones to stay the course.

The program at Latse has taken care of most of these challenges by bringing children and parents together to learn, appreciate, socialize and celebrate their language and traditions. It has also managed to help them strengthen their identity as Tibetans.

The program, however, is not restricted to Tibetans only. Anyone interested in having their children learn the language or Tibetan traditions is openly welcomed. There is no hard and fast rule about attendance and the relaxed environment in which

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children can be themselves makes learning fun and enjoyable．As a non－Tibetan I found the classes helpful for not only my son but also for myself．I have always been eager to learn the mother language from which my own，Dzong－ kha，is derived．Dzongkha is the language that is spoken by the Bhutanese in Bhutan．If there is any other language that is the closest to Tibetan it is Dzongkha but there are still many differ－ ences．Anyone coming from the Himalayas knows the benefit of understanding or read－ ing Tibetan．While my son and I may not have advanced to that level yet，we have learnt that our cultural affiliation with the Tibetans has also given us a sense of belonging to a community that is very much like our own．Because our cultures are more or less the same it has also helped me expose him to the ways of people from my part of the world，be they Tibetan， Nepali，Sherpa，or Indian．

Lauran Hartley，parent and Tibetan Studies Librarian at Columbia University；Tashi Yang－ zom，a Tibetan medical doctor；and Kristina Dy－Liacco from Latse Library were the key peo－ ple in initiating this program and making it suc－ cessful．Their dedication to start this program and keep it going has certainly paid off．Since its inception in September 2005 it has consoli－ dated from a sketchy and tentative program， with teachers on a voluntary basis，to a more structured one with about fifteen regular attend－ ees and a regular instructor．Initially donations were collected for the volunteer teachers and Latse provided the materials．While it still wel－ comes donations，Latse now supports regular instructors：Jampa Choezom，a former teacher who lives in New Jersey，and Deckyie Dolker， a Latse staff member．They too have contributed greatly to the program．

On a typical Saturday the children arrive at the library at 11：30 a．m．and once they have their name cards they gather with Jampa and Deckyie or a parent volunteer，depending on the lesson plan for the day．They may start off with a song in Tibetan that evokes the images of all the various animals that roam the Tibetan plains and the sea，the alphabet song，or one that identifies parts of the body．At each lesson， children memorize a new letter of the alphabet by writing it out in their notebook，recognizing it out loud in front of the class and then col－ oring it on a piece of paper．There are similar









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LATSE LIBRARY CHILDREN'S PROGRAM CELEBRATES LOSAR BY MAKING KAPSÉ, TRADITIONAL NEW YEAR TREATS.
lessons with numbers and colors, names of household objects and animals, and so on, in Tibetan. The class usually winds down with a traditional Tibetan folk tale or more conventional story. The creativity with which the lesson is planned around games, songs, and arts and crafts has the children attentive for an hour and a half. During this time the parents usually sit and socialize over cups of tea.

When the class is over, families, many of who have come from as far as Kingston, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, bring out their packed lunches for all to share. This is in some ways the highlight of the program. A variety of food from all over the world—South Indian biryani, pasta, pizza, Tibetan dumplings, söja, and sha baklep, Bhutanese ema dhatsi, Irish corned beef and cabbage - is laid out on the table for a Saturday afternoon feast. Even this activity is infused with some tradition as before eating the children are taught to "give thanks" the Tibetan way, with the meal prayer, or jamchö.

The program has also successfully managed gatherings for the community outside the class. Picnics and field trips have been organized which have complemented the community spirit and the camaraderie between families. What is so accommodating about the program is how it welcomes relatives

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or any visiting member of a child's family to participate in all of its social functions.

The first Losar under the program (February 2006) was ushered in with the parents cooking the gutuk (dgu thug), the traditional New Year's Eve soup, and preparing the model sinmo or demoness that serves to take away all the evil auras from each and every member. Although Losar is celebrated in my culture too, it was interesting to observe the religious detail with which the Tibetans celebrated. A visiting dranyen (Tibetan lute) musician, Phuntshok Dhumkhang from Dharamsala, played and sang Tibetan folk songs to the children. For my son who has seen the dranyen only as a decorative piece hanging on the wall of our living room, it was a wonder to see the instrument come alive in the hands of an expert.

While I see how the program has greatly benefited my son (it has been such a pleasure hearing him name colors and animals in Tibetan and sometimes even count in Tibetan numerals), I have also personally gained from it. I have widened my circle of friends and acquaintances and enriched my life with stories, over a cup of tea or while preparing gutuk, about the lives of these people I interact with every Saturday morning. I realize we are all here trying to help our children stay connected to a world and way of life that we have left behind and hope to keep it alive for them through "language."

Sonam Ongmo is a Bhutanese writer living in New York. She contributes articles to two newspapers in Bhutan, the Bhutan Times and Kuensel. Her two children Mapem and Liam are regular attendees of the Latse Children's Program.








## Speaker Series 



LOBSANG PALDEN TAWO AND TSERING TOPTEN NELUNG AT THE RELEASE PARTY FOR THE LOSAR CONCERT 2005 DVD.



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THIS past year, an interesting variety of speakers and presenters participated in Latse Library's Speaker Series.

In August 2005, Dr. Nida Chenagtsang gave a two-day Kunye Traditional Tibetan Massage Workshop, which was quite popular with area patrons. Dr. Nida, who hails from Malho in Amdo, is a highly-regarded Tibetan medical doctor and ku-nye specialist. In 2001, he opened the Ku-nye International Studio, the first of its kind, in Rome, Italy. He is the author of several books and articles on traditional massage, and has conducted courses around the world on massage, mantra healing, dream analysis and geomancy. For the workshop at Latse, Dr. Nida first gave a lecture on the history and development of ku-nye traditional Tibetan massage, which was followed by a practical hands-on session in fundamental techniques.

In September, Latse was pleased to welcome author Sienna Craig and artist Mary Heebner for an evening of poetry and artistry. Dr. Craig is an anthropologist with extensive












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experience in work－ ing in Tibet and Nepal，and is the co－founder of the non－profit organi－ zation Drokpa．Dr． Craig read her own poetry from the book A Sacred Geogra－ phy：Sights and Son－ nets of the Himalaya and Tibet，and also showed slides of the areas that inspired her writings．The book is a collabora－ tion between daughter and mother，featuring poetry by Dr．Craig in a book designed and cre－ ated entirely by her mother，artist Mary Heebner． The lovingly crafted text has handmade paper with illustrations and color schemes that cap－ ture the mood and sentiments expressed by the

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sonnets．Ms．Heebner discussed the process of papermaking，book design，and of artistic col－ laboration，and at the end of the evening，she graciously presented Latse Library with a copy of the limited edition chapbook version of $A$ Sacred Geography．

In late September，Latse welcomed back Tser－ ing Topten Nelung and Lobsang Palden Tawo， headliners from the Losar Concert 2005 （for a full article on this event，please see Latse Library Newsletter Fall 2005），for a party celebrating the release of the concert DVD．Losar 2005：A Con－ cert by the Masters has twenty－one tracks from the musical event that featured Mr．Nelung，Dr． Tawo and singer－songwriter Palgon from Amdo． Mr．Nelung and Dr．Tawo greeted fans and cheer－ fully signed their copies of the DVD．

In December 2005，Senge Tsering of the Baltistan Cultural Foundation presented a talk entitled＂An Introduction to Balti Language and Literature，＂ providing a fascinating glimpse into the culture


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DR. PADMA'TSHO.



















of Baltistan. Senge Tsering introduced Baltistan as home of Baltis, who are ethnically and linguistically related to Ladakhis and Tibetans. Historically Baltistan comprised the western part of Ladakh, but the land is currently under the control of Pakistan. Senge Tsering, who is originally from Shigar, Baltistan, also discussed with the audience initiatives to preserve the language and re-introduce Tibetan script in the region.

Dr. Padma'tsho, assistant professor in the Postgraduate and Tibetan Departments of Southwest Nationalities University in Chengdu, visited Latse in February—during the coldest days of the winter of 2006-and made a presentation on the cham or ritual dance for Padmasambhava. In her talk, Dr. Padma'tsho introduced Padmasambhava through discussion of the cham held at Katok Monastery in Kham in 2004 for the anniversary of the birth of Padmasambhava. Her presentation, which was illustrated with slides, discussed the form, performance and meaning of the ritual as a way of understanding devotional practice to Padmasambhava.

Later that same month, Latse Library hosted a book launch reception for returning guest speaker André Alexander of the Tibet Heritage Fund. The new title, Temples of Lhasa: Tibetan

 (Tibet Heritage Fund) ìjें André Alexander बसास थेळथा रिए

















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Buddhist Architecture from the 7th to the 21st Centuries (Serindia Publications, 2006), is the fruit of many years of hard work and research in central Tibet by Mr. Alexander and the Tibet Heritage Fund. As part of the launch, Mr. Alexander showed a short film on the work of the Tibet Heritage Fund, and spoke about new projects in Ladakh and Mongolia. He then joined a reception held in his honor, and signed copies of his book for visitors and friends.

During her stay as a visiting researcher at Columbia University in the spring, journalist
Jamyang Kyi stopped by Latse for a discussion entitled "Contemporary Tibetan Women's Issues in Amdo." Ms. Jamyang Kyi, who also performed at the Losar 2006 Concert, lives in Xining, Qinghai Province, and is an award-winning television writer, reporter, and editor for the Tibetan language section of the Qinghai Provincial Television Station. Her informal discussion focused on recent encounters with women and girls in











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Amdo as part of her ongoing research on the social status of Tibetan women.

As part of Tibetan Yak Cheese Week in May (see related article in this issue), Latse featured a lecture by Jigme Gyaltsen of the Ragya Yak Cheese Project. Jigme Gyaltsen, a senior monk from Ragya Monastery in Golok in eastern Tibet, is the founder and principal of the Jigme Gyaltsen Welfare School in Golok, which is supported by Trace Foundation. He spoke about the challenges and rewards of establishing a school for Tibetan children, and the role the cheese plays in sustaining the school and the local Tibetan nomad community.

In June 2006, Latse Library welcomed back poet and filmmaker Dorjicering Chenaktsang (also known as Ljang-bu) to preside over a screening of his new documentary film Tantric Yogi, a work on the ngakpa of Amdo. The film, which premiered on the United Kingdom's Channel Four, follows a group of yogi from Rebkong as

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they make a giant offering bread and other preparations for an historic gathering thousands of ngakpa that occurs only once every sixty years. The audience responded warmly to this rare and personal glimpse into the personal lives and situations of Tibetan ngakpa.

Following the screening, Latse hosted a Poetry Reading featuring special guests Ljang-bu (Dorjicering Chenaktsang), Chakmo Tso, and Palden Gyal. These three famous poets recited their works to an intimate gathering of friends and library patrons. Other readers included Professor Lozang Jamspal of Columbia University and New York resident Jinpa Dhargay.


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LITERARY FEATURES
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FEATURED AUTHOR


## A Discussion With

 Writer Tashi Dawa by Patricia schiaffiniCONSIDERED the most influential Tibetan author writing in Chinese, Tashi Dawa acquired national fame and scholarly international attention in the 1980s for his innovative magical realistic stories. His works represented a clear break with previous Tibetan and Chinese literary conventions: they were characterized by a mix of real and dream-like situations, a disruption of time and structure, a lack of heroic themes and characters, and a sometimes obscure and always ambiguous engagement with socio-political issues.

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LITERARY FEATURES
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FEATURED AUTHOR


In the mid－1990s，however，Tashi Dawa stopped writing fiction． While his many faithful readers and enthusiastic literary critics took his silence as a temporary hiatus，observers who had all along criticized his＂Western＂ and＂modernistic＂style attrib－ uted it to the xiahai（lit．＂leaping into the sea＂）tendency at that time，by which many intellectu－ als in the PRC abandoned cul－ tural endeavors to carry on more lucrative businesses．When in 1999 I asked Tashi Dawa why he had discontinued fiction writing， he answered：＂I may get back to it later in life．Now I am interested in exploring other media，such as film or writing via the Internet．＂

Indeed，Tashi Dawa has writ－ ten prolifically since the mid－ 1990s—but mostly essays（some on paper，some on the Internet） and scripts for feature movies and documentaries．He contin－ ues to live in Lhasa，where he serves as Chairman of the Writers Association of Tibet（Ch．Xizang zuojia xiehui），Vice Chairman of the Association of Literature and Arts of Tibet（Ch．Xizang wenxue yishu jie lianhe hui）and Vice Chairman of the Association of Cinema and Television Artists of Tibet（Ch．Xizang dianying dian－ shi yishujia xiehui）．

I met Tashi Dawa for the first time in 1994 and on several other occasions that year，as I was translating some of his sto－ ries．We spoke again in New York in 1998 while he was tour－ ing several American universi－ ties with a delegation of the Chi－ nese Writers Association，and the following year in connection with my fieldwork at the Asso－ ciation of Literature and Arts of Tibet in Lhasa．This more recent interview with Tashi Dawa was conducted on 6 August 2006 at





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the Tibetan restaurant Makye Ame in Beijing. Tashi Dawa was in the capital city for a couple of weeks; he was also scheduled to attend a Tibetan writer's conference in Sichuan before returning to Lhasa.

As we sit down to talk once again, we reminisce about the past and exchange news on our personal lives and common friends. When I display my little MP3 recorder and my notebook Tashi Dawa exclaims in surprise:

TD: You are not planning on interviewing me, right?
PS: Yes, I would like to know what you have been up to in the last couple of years.
[Tashi Dawa laughs]
TD: You know, I do not give interviews anymore. PS: Why?
TD: Not much to say.
Tashi Dawa is known among his peers to be a person of few words, but when you ask him about things he loves, like literature and film, he can talk for hours - and then time really flies with him.

PS: Well, then this is not an interview, just a friendly talk. How about that?
TD: In that case, okay. (Ch. Na, hao ba.)

## PS: What has kept you busy lately?

TD: As you know, these past years I have been mostly writing scripts for films and documentaries. I have also written short essays and continued my editing work for [the journal] Literature from Tibet and other literary projects. I have just collaborated with Chinese Central Television (Ch. Zhongyang Dianshitai) on an episode for their acclaimed series Explore and Discover (Ch. Tanshuo, faxian). It is called "The Tibet of the Sky" (Ch. Tianshang de Xizang), which introduces Tibet's history, culture and nature a bit more in depth than other such programs have done in the past. Before that, I was involved in the production of the movie Kekexili. ${ }^{1}$

[^0]PS: I heard you were involved also in a musical.

LITERARY FEATURES


FEATURED AUTHOR


TD: Yes, I wrote the script for Gangla Meiduo, a movie with very strong musical content.

PS: Gangla Meiduo? Like the bar in Lhasa?

TD: Yes, it is the same name. It was the first film directed by a friend of mine, Dai Wei, who previously had directed very successful music videos. The score was composed by Lao Zai, who also composed the music for Kekexili.


PS:It seems that in the last ten years almost everyone who wanted to make a movie or a documentary in Tibet soughtyour advice, orwanted you to be involved in their productions. How do you feel about this?

TD: This happens very often, and if I can be of help I am happy to do it. Sometimes they ask me to write scripts, and sometimes they ask me to be involved in the production.

PS: I have seen some of these films, starting with the oldest ones such as the TV series based on your story "Basang and her Siblings" (Ch. Basang he ta didi meimei men), or the documentary No. 16, Barkhor South Street (Ch. Bakuo nan jie shiliu hao) ${ }^{2}$ and especially the more recent Kekexili, and they were of great artistic and documental value. And the last two


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works gained international recognition as well. But sometimes filmmakers must approach you with projects that do not meet your artistic standards or do not reflect Tibet in a way you consider appropriate or acceptable. What do you do in these cases?
TD: Sometimes it happens that I can have some influence on the artistic aspects of the film, or I can help clarify the misunderstandings about Tibet or Tibetan culture. Otherwise, I do not associate myself with projects that I have reservations about.

PS: Writing scripts is totally different from writing novels. For example, as a writer you are in control of your novel, but when you write a script there are other people and circumstances involved. How do you see your role as a scriptwriter?
TD: Yes, it is very different indeed. When I write scripts it is usually at the request of others. What I am doing then is helping the filmmakers achieve their goals. And I am certainly not the master of the script, because many times the filmmaker does not completely agree with my take on things. There is a great deal of compromise and negotiation.

PS: Can this be frustrating sometimes?
TD: [Pauses] It is not frustrating if you understand your role: the movie for which you are writing a script is not one of your own stories. Most of the times you are just making somebody else's idea happen in the best possible way.

## PS: What is it about film that attracts you so much?

TD: I really love film. I love both watching movies and being involved in their production. Recently, I was even convinced by a friend to have an acting role in his movie. [Laughs]

PS: Is that so?
TD: Yes. [The writer] Ma Yuan persuaded me to play a role in a movie he wanted to film. The story was based on his own short stories. I don't like acting, but I agreed since it meant being involved in moviemaking, to some extent, and it was an opportunity to work with good friends.

PS: But you performed before, when they filmed the TV series based on your story "Basang and her Siblings."
TD: Well, but that was just playing the role of myself, Tashi Dawa the writer. In Ma Yuan's movie I had my first fictional role.

LITERARY FEATURES


FEATURED AUTHOR


PS：What kind of role？
TD：［Laughs］Not a very nice one．I played the role of a wom－ anizer who ends up doing some ugly things．［We both laugh］

PS：I thought Ma Yuan was your friend．．．how come he chose you for such an unbecoming role？
TD：［Laughs］Yeah，I wonder about that too．．．［Pause］I have no idea whether it will ever be released．It was Ma Yuan＇s first attempt at film directing and it was a good story，but content－ wise it may not get approval for









release．In any case，it was fun to work with friends．

PS：With your passion for film and all the experience in writing scripts， producing films and now even act－ ing［Tashi Dawa laughs］．．．would you ever become a film director yourself？
TD：I don＇t think so．I worked with novice movie directors and I was able to give them useful advice，which makes me think that I could do a good job if I were to direct my own movie． But being a director means fac－ ing many more challenges than just directing or communicat－ ing your vision to actors．You have to work with lots of differ－ ent people，do a lot of public relations，go around asking for money，deal with officials etc． You know how I am．．．．I am not suited for that kind of work．
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PS: What kind of movies inspire you?
TD: I realize that I look at movies in the same way I approach reading. If I like a movie I try to see all the movies that a filmmaker has done before, in the same way that when I like a book I try to read all the books written by that author. But, I don't have a favorite director or movie. I think my taste is very eclectic. I have a fairly big collection of movies by directors as different as Kubrick, Coppola, Scorsese or Almodóvar.

PS: Going back to literature. As a writer, and as an editor, how do you see the recent developments in Tibetan literature?

TD: As you know, modern literature in Tibet is a fairly recent development. We cannot really talk








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about modern literature before the 1950s, and even then literature was written mostly by Han writers sent to work in Tibet, many of whom worked for the People's Liberation Army. Those works were descriptive and had a strong educational purpose. There were some Tibetan writers then too; they mostly wrote poems.

The Cultural Revolution was a total vacuum, so we cannot talk about modern literature again until the late 1970s and early 1980s. At that time there was a literary boom in Tibet, which reflected developments in the hinterland. Many of these writers were also Han people sent to work in Tibet, but they eventually left. In the 1980s, many Tibetans started writing in Tibetan as well, so we started seeing great works produced in Tibetan language. We saw the great potential of Tibetan literature.

The problem is that the will to write diminished during the 1990s. People were busy trying to make money, and literature lost ground to other forms of entertainment. I consider myself an avid reader, but for quite some time I almost stopped reading literature because it was hard to find books of high literary quality. Then there was another resurgence of literature in the late 1990s and early 2000.

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PS: In my opinion these ups and downs since the 1950s were very much influenced by political and economic developments. Would you say that from the late 1990s on we are finally seeing a steady growth of modern Tibetan literature?

TD: We are seeing a revitalization of Tibetan literature. That's for sure. A higher number of literary works are published each year, and bookstores are full of new releases. There is also another development: many more Tibetan writers are now writing in Tibetan. A quick look at the membership of the Writers Association of Tibet shows that change. If you were to look at the roster from the early 1980s, you would see right away that most of the writers were Han and the few Tibetan writers listed wrote in Chinese language. But now, most of our members from Central Tibet are of Tibetan nationality and most of them write in Tibetan.

PS: But somehow it feels like this Tibetan literary flourishing is primarily outside the TAR.
TD: Your appreciation is right. There is a higher degree of creativity coming now from other Tibetan areas like Aba (Sichuan) or Xining (Qinghai). Tibetan literature is flourishing there. They are now publishing many literary magazines. There is a new generation of young and talented [Tibetan] writers.

PS: How do you see the immediate future of modern Tibetan literature?
TD: I am not sure. I am optimistic, but I also see a certain degree of cultural conservatism among young educated Tibetans that may not be positive for literature.

PS: That reminds me of the old

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## AN EXCERPT FROM"FORWHOMTHE BELLTOLLS" <br> by Tashi Dawa

The magistrate's son shoved his hands into his pockets. His bored, melancholy face was fresh and soft as butter. He walked around the spacious, quiet courtyard, unwilling to go back into the house.


Maddened by the bright color of the indigo flowers, a flock of butterflies fluttered up and down.

High walls surrounded the boy. Rarely did he get the opportunity to go outside. He was always shut up here in the family's courtyard. Every morning his father set off to work, surrounded by his secretaries and the rest of his entourage, while his mother sat the whole day in the parlor reading a little book that she never finished, occasionally glancing out the window to keep an eye on the gatekeeper sunning himself by the main gate.

The high stone walls of the magistrate's white two-story mansion had witnessed the passing of many years. White birches and clumps of weeds filled the rear of the courtyard. Cold and damp permeated the air here. Weeds burst through the cracks between the stones. It was desolate, lonesome. Here, the magistrate's son was allowed to play by himself. In the rounded corner of the wall, stone steps led up to a small platform that the first owner had built as a lookout post. the boy wasn't quite tall enough to see over the wall, so a servant had piled up enough stones so that he could just peep over the edge. His perspective expanded--he could see the world beyond the wall: a road, an abandoned field, a river, a bridge, and beyond the bridge, across the river, the common people's district. Off in the distance were mountains. But it was all monotonous, dull, lifeless.

The magistrate's son made friends with the gatekeeper, a solitary old man who liked to sun himself sitting at the base of the wall. The old man's body had a metallic smell, like a broken-down, abandoned war chariot. He'd spent his whole life opening and closing the gate for so many magistrates, one after another, that he couldn't count them all He wasn't too fond of the present master of the mansion, a man whom he never saw smile. Nor was the gatekeeper fond of the magistrate's wife, constantly reading that little book that she never finished. Her broad parlor window faced the main gate, and she kept gazing out at him, as if trying to fathom some dangerous tendency in the gatekeeper's mind.

The magistrate's son stuck a piece of candy into the gatekeeper's mouth and sat down beside him in the sun. Sucking the candy, the gatekeeper mused to himself about the latest rumors he'd heard from the other side of the river, "Well, isn't that life? It never changes, eternally the same, but every few years somebody starts thinking they're tired of phony life, and yearns for meaning. So they start a revolution, change everything, then gaze out, pleased as can be, on a new heaven, a new earth. After a while, somebody else thinks that life looks phony, and turns the whole world upside down all over again."
—Translated by Herbert J. Batt

Herbert J. Batt is a poet and translator. He received his Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Toronto and has taught in China and Poland. He is also editor and translator of the anthology Tales of Tibet: Sky Burials, Prayer Wheels, and Wind Horses (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), from which this excerpt was drawn with permission of the translator.

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debate over what constituted Tibetan literature. Is it still relevant to question whether works in Chinese should be considered part of Tibetan literature?

TD: Of course it is relevant to talk about these issues. However, there is no such debate now. Not for lack of interest, but rather for lack of opportunities or venues to do so. I am sure that if the debate were reopened, writers would have different things to say now. I would like to know myself what the younger generation thinks about this topic. During the 1980s, some argued that Tibetan literature was only those works written by a Tibetan, in Tibetan language and about Tibetan traditions. Maybe the debate could be more productive if we were more open and inclusive.

PS: What can be done, or what is being done, to reinvigorate literary production in Lhasa and other areas of the TAR?

TD: We could benefit greatly from interaction with Tibetan writers living in other provinces. Right now it is very hard for us in Lhasa to know in detail what is being written in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. Nor do they know what we are doing. In part, this is because we all belong to the writers associations of the provinces in which we live. It would be ideal if we could also belong to an Association of Tibetan Writers that would bring together all Tibetan writers working in different parts of China. However, this is not possible at the moment.

In Central Tibet we now have some young writers with the potential of finding their niche in the Tibetan literary scene, but there are not yet many nationally or internationally known








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Tibetan literary figures in the TAR. We are making an effort to identify and nurture these young talents. One specific initiative we have started is to try finding local writers outside Lhasa by hosting writers' conferences in other areas of the TAR. We go there, meet with local writers, and bring their works back to publish in our association's literary journals. Sometimes we go through all the trouble of organizing such an event but no local writers show up! Nevertheless, we had a successful conference in Shigatse (Ch. Xigaze) last year and will host another in Lhokha (Ch. Shannan) in October. I travel as much as I can to coordinate or take part in events like these. For example, in September I will attend a conference on Khampa literature that will be held in Sichuan.

PS: But here we are also facing bigger issues. For example, writing literature was socially well-received—if not fashionable—during the 1980s. But this is not the case any more. Also, writing literature does not pay the bills. How do you nurture literary talents when you have to face all these social and economic deterrents?
TD: Well, to some extent you are a writer if you have it inside you. Nobody can nurture you to be a good writer if you do not have that talent already. All we can do is to identify those who have it and try to provide better conditions so that they can devote themselves to writing. I am now considering a way to provide grants which would allow writers a one-year sabbatical to complete a literary work. The ideal would be to offer a stipend of 1000 RMB per month so that these writers could take some time off from work in order to write or travel for the purpose of interviewing people or doing research to support their writing. They should, of course, commit to completing their works in the proposed time. It would be like signing a contract. [Pauses] It would be great if we could find funding to support ten writing projects a year in the TAR.

## PS: There is much to do, but you seem optimistic.

TD: Literature will never die. Some people predicted the end of literature with the growth of other media, such as film or the Internet, but that has not happened. We like to watch a movie or to read something on the Internet, but we still love to keep a book close to our pillow. Reading a book gives you an intimate experience that you cannot find anywhere else. It is certainly too bad that nowadays society does not value literary writing as it did in the 1980s. I am aware that social encouragement, money, or education alone cannot create good

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TASHI DAWA ON LOCA
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PHOTO COURTESY OF
TASHI DAWA


writers, but I think we should try to create a supportive environment, including economic incentives, in the hope that this will make things easier for those who really want to write.

The conversation drifts again to personal topics and to remembering Jiayang Xire (Tib. Jamyang Sherab), a Tibetan writer and mutual friend who passed away two years ago in Lhasa. It is late. The waitstaff may need our table for other customers, and Tashi Dawa a break. We say goodbye until the next time life brings us together to talk about Tibetan literature and to reminisce about old times.

1 Tashi Dawa was associate producer of the internationally acclaimed film Kekexili (English title: Mountain Patrol), directed by Lu Chun in 2004. This was one of the first films from mainland China to win "Best Film" at the Golden Horse Awards (2004), which showcases films from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China. The film was also awarded "Best Cinematography" for the work of cinematographer Cao Yu. Kekexili is about Tibetan volunteer patrols working to protect the endangered Tibetan antelope from poachers, who slaughter these animals to sell their precious skins.

2 In 1996, Tashi Dawa produced the documentary No. 16, Barkhor South Street, which was directed by Duan Jinchuan and won the 1997 Grand Prix du Cinema du Reel in Paris. It documents the day-to-day operations of a neighborhood committee in Lhasa where local communist cadres listen to the complaints of ordinary citizens and try to resolve their disputes.

Patricia Schiaffini (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 2002) is founding director of the Tibetan Arts and Literature Initiative (TALI), a non-profit organization that seeks funding to support Tibetan literary projects, including the publication of Tibetan children's books. (See www.talitibet.org.) She also teaches Chinese at Southwestern University, and until recently served as Director of the Oldenborg International Center at Pomona College. Dr. Schiaffini's articles have appeared in World Literature Today and Journal of International Affairs, and she is co-editor of the forthcoming Writing Tibet: Modern Tibetan Literature in Society.





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Learning Calligraphy in Nyarongsha School
by Rigzin Samdup

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NOctober 14-16,2005,LatseLibraryheldaTibetanCalligraphyWorkshopandExhibition
(see related story on in this issue ). One of the featured participants was Rigzin Samdup,
a former official for the Ganden Podrang government who still lives in Lhasa. To hear

Library, Pema Bhum, spoke with Rigzin Samdup in early October 2006. Rigzin Samdup's remarksfollow:

If we look back at the history of Tibetan calligraphy, we do not see any great change in the Tibetan script since the time of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617-82). Prior to his rule, it seems there were various styles of Tibetan calligraphic writing. Last year, a calligraphy competition was held in Lhasa and more than 120 different writing samples were submitted. But those writings were created in thangka-format and for exhibition; we would be hard-pressed to say that all were calligraphy styles used in actual practice. Among these, a great many such as the "Number Letters" and the "Dakini Code" are rarely utilized. And yet, other writing styles-such as the "Kham Script" of Kham, the Ütsang regional script, or the Khyungpo area-are used but differ greatly from each other.

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ILLUSTRATION BY RIGZIN SAMDUP SHOWING VARIOUS WRITING MATERIALS. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FOLDED PAPER USED FOR LAP WRITING (TAPSHOK) ; INK POT (NA BUM); FLAT BOTTOMED INK POT (TSIK NA NÖ); KNIFE FOR CARVING PEN TIP (KYUKDRI); BAG OF CHALK WITH STRING THREADED through, used for marking lines on a writing board (tikgyal); solid glue stick (kachina); bOArd used for practicing letters (Jangshing).

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THE FIFTH DALAI LAMA (LEFT) AND THE THIRTEENTH DALAI LAMA (RIGHT).


Calligraphy since the founding of the Ganden Podrang administration has not experienced much change. This was due to efforts to unify the written script. There are even historical records documenting the interest of Tsang and the central government (sde pa gzhung) in the cultivation of a standard and unified script. We also find copybooks and historical records regarding the standardization of the Tibetan script from the early twentieth century during the reign of the thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933). Thinking primarily of its government staff, the government made resolutions regarding calligraphy and how exams would be administered. These were propagated by the Tsé (Rtse) School and the Finance or Accounting Office (Rtsis khang). Copybooks which prescribed these can still be found in Lhasa. It used to be that when exams were given to government staff, the level of calligraphic skill was given priority. So, calligraphy became widespread for awhile. Eventually, by the time of our generation, the first subject we studied-and from a very young age-was calligraphy. For instance, I started school when I was six. The classes were not as comprehensive as they are these days. Aside from memorizing multiplication tables, certain calculation methods (cha phran), spelling rules, and a few prayers, we spent most of our time studying calligraphy. I think the levels of calligraphic study will be clear if I describe in detail the school I attended and the different stages for studying handwriting there.

## Starting Private School

The school that I went to was Nyarongsha. I recall clearly that Lhasa had many private schools then. Nyarongsha was the main one,


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but there were also the Jarpa Khangsar School, the Pelpung School, the Gorkha School, etc. These different schools were located throughout the Lhasa area for the sake of convenience. Except for the Tsé School, the Finance Office School and the Medical and Astrological Institute, most of the schools in Lhasa were private. At that time, Nyarongsha School had the most students and was regarded as having the best classes. For that reason, most of the aristocrats sent their children to Nyarongsha.

Previously, the Telegraph Office School (Tar khang slob grwa) had been the most famous. It was named this, because it seems the teacher worked at the Telegraph Office. In recent Tibetan history, during the time of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, the postal system was expanded. At the same time, devices for modern communication-the telegraph and telephonewere established. The person responsible for the telegraph office was called Teacher Tarkhang (lit. Telegraph). The telegraph building housed both the office and the teacher's private living quarters. For that reason, the teacher held classes at the Telegraph Office. Because Teacher Tarkhang was a government employee, his handwriting was good; it met the government requirements. Therefore, many in our older generation today say that they went to the Telegraph School.

Those in our generation who were children of aristocrats mostly went to Nyarongsha. Let's start from when one first entered Nyarongsha. Prospective students needed to apply to Nyarongsha on a day that was astrologically auspicious. On the day of application, one performed certain rituals: offering a khatag to the teacher, offering droma [roots resembling tiny sweet-potatoes] and rice to the students, and asking the teacher for advice. As the first lesson, it was customary for the student to sit briefly in front of the teacher, who would hand him or her a cup of tea. Then the teacher would recite Tsongkhapa's Praise to Mañjusri while the new student echoed him line-by-line. After the poem, the new student went to his designated seat, and offered a khatag to the head of the class and droma and rice to the rest of the students. That concluded the procedure for entering Nyarongsha School.

## "Certain Expectations"

There were many private schools at that time. I don't know about other schools, but Nyarongsha School had no system for paying tuition. I never even heard of this. One could go to school without paying tuition. However, there was something like tuition when first asking that a child be admitted to the school; you could not go empty-handed. The parents of the child would make some sort of offering to the teacher in accordance with their means. For holidays throughout the year, including the New Year, one would also offer a special gift to the teacher. In addition, parents or guardians would go to make an offering and take this chance to ask for advice from the teacher regarding their child's studies or behavior. There








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was no clear amount for which it could be said ＂This is the tuition＂such as it is today．However， in accord with the local custom and times，stu－ dents certainly perceived that something should be offered，and teachers had a certain expecta－ tion that something would be offered．This tradi－ tion has not remained in schools today，but we still see it in Tibetan society．

Due to class distinctions in society at that time， there were also something like class－levels in the school．Students in the school were divided into three groups．Our school had two floors． The teacher lived upstairs，and his quarters had a large verandah．Most of the aristocrat－children stayed on the upper－floor verandah．But，not all of the students seated there were aristocrats． Sometimes，the naughty ones from the lower group were seated on the verandah so that the teacher could keep an eye on them easily．If they sat where the teacher could see them，then it made a difference in their obeying the rules． The remaining students were seated in two groups：an＂upper＂group and a＂lower＂group． The upper group was the row closest to the head of the class．These were aristocrat children，chil－ dren of businessmen，and monks．In short，these were the ones who had purposely come to study at school．The lower group consisted of the

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servants of aristocrat families who had been sent along to serve the aristocrat children. For example, from our house three of us went to school for the purpose of studying, but six servants also accompanied us to school. We were nine in total. There were two reasons for the servants to attend school: one was to look after us and the second was so that they too would have the chance to study. In the future, if it were necessary for the servant to take responsibility as the steward (phyag mdzod) of the family, for example, then this was the only way for him to receive the necessary education. In any case, the group who came as servants stayed in the lower group. They were seated a bit farther from the head of the class. This group of students was not strictly supervised in their studies. They came not expressly for study, but studied on the side while accompanying us. The others (aristocrats) came expressly for school and needed to demonstrate some results. So, if they were seated next to the head of the class, it was easy for the latter to control the younger students' behavior and to supervise their studies; they were in the upper group. Small chores at school, whether it be getting water or sweeping, were done by those in the lower group.

Despite this distinction between the upper and lower groups, there was no difference between boys and girls. Generally speaking, girls were allowed only in the upper group, not the lower group. Because children of aristocrats and merchants were supposed to study-whether male or female-one didn't see in any way that the school valued the boy students but not the girl students. After an exam, students needed to line up according to their test results, from best to worst. [The first student would reprimand the second by flicking him with a piece of bamboo. The first and second had the right to reprimand the third, the fourth student received three flicks, and so forth.] Here too there was no separation of boys and girls. But, sometimes, the girls took their exam as a separate group. This was mainly because the way of beating was different: boys were flicked on the cheek, but girls were never hit on the face. Since beauty was important for girls, a different method was used; girls were punished on the palms.

## Levels of Instruction

As for the different staff positions: first, there was the teacher, who was foremost. If any students were advanced enough to take on teaching responsibilities, then they too served as teachers. While I was at the school, several students who had already graduated nevertheless stayed to teach in place of the teacher, help supervise the studies of the students, or correct the younger students' writing. However, the teacher was most important. Under the teacher were two class heads (rgan bdag). Next were four teaching assistants (rgan g.yog), and then four different study monitors (zhib 'go or zhib 'jug ' $g o \quad b a$ ). There could be more, depending on the number of students enrolled, but at least four were required. The first

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CALLIGRAPHY BY RIGZIN SAMDUP: TSHUK RING (TSHUGS RING).

monitor was called the chidrel (Tib. spyi gral, general corrector). (The term drel should be understood as the one who corrects the students' handwriting.) After the chidrel was the tsukshib (Tib. tshugs zhib, form monitor), then the tsukring shibko (Tib. tshugs ring zhib 'go, "elon-gated-form monitor"), and finally the kashib or kakai shibko (Tib. ka zhib or ka kha'i zhib 'go, "alphabet monitor"). These ranks referred to the level of classes, as well as to the different stages of calligraphy study. We began our studies under the ka zhib, with whom we learned the alphabet. Next, under the tsukring shibko we studied the elongated-form and the short-form scripts; and then under the tshukshib we studied the small script (tshugs chung). [See illustration.] Finally, with the chidrel shibko we continued to work on the elongated-form and short-form scripts, in addition to the cursive style.

For example, at the alphabet-stage, students first studied the plain alphabet [without vowels, superfixed letters, etc.]. We then learned how to draw subfixed ya and $r$ a, and how to write a " $u$ " with the subfixed ya and $r a$. The next step was to learn how to write the superfixed letters. All of this was taught at the alphabet-level, but only gradually in such stages.




































CALLIGRAPHY BY RIGZIN SAMDUP: TSHUK TUNG (TSHUGS THUNG).


When I first started school-that is, once I had completed all of the obligations for being admitted-one of the [more advanced] students from the chidrel level was assigned to me. That student took responsibility for me. I sat down on the floor and placed the writing board on my lap. He stood behind me. I held the pen but he would then place his hand over mine and show me how to write the alphabet. This is called hand-[guided] writing and I needed to practice like this for several days. Because the new students were young, it was the advanced students who would do all of the tasks related to studying calligraphy: making the pens, washing the boards, drawing the lines, etc. The length of time for hand-[guided] writing depended primarily on how well the student had learned it. Generally speaking, one could start writing on his or her own within three or four days. After that, one needed to take the writing board for learning the plain alphabet together with a pen and offer these to the kashib. The kashib would make corrections in ink and would write model-letters for the plain alphabet on the student's board. The student would take this and for the first time use a pen dipped in ink to begin tracing on top of the letters written by the teacher; in this way we learned the relative thickness of the line and the tight or relaxed nature of the stroke. We would then approach the teacher again for corrections. Students would continue practicing in this way. We needed to study like this until mastering this level of writing for ourselves.

On the day that a student could write the plain alphabet correctly by himself, the kashib would give him a copybook



































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CALLIGRAPHY BY RIGZIN SAMDUP：TSHUK CHUNG（TSHUGS CHUNG）．

with the alphabet written on paper．Using this copybook as a model，the student began writing on paper for the first time．This too was taught in stages as with the writing board．First，we would study the thirty consonant letters，which the kashib would correct．Then we studied the subfixes ya and ra，how to write a＂$u$＂with those，and finally how to attach the superfixed letters．There were no tables to write on as there are today；rather we had to write on the paper while holding it in our lap，just as we had held the writing board in our lap．Once we started practicing on paper，each student needed a place to put their copybook and their ink．The only options，however，were to the right，to the left，or in front．Students would thus argue with whomever they were seated next to．And when people walking back and forth would knock over the ink in front of a student，this too was cause for dispute．Thus，the students were always quarreling among themselves．When this level was completed，the stage of alphabet－ study was finished．

Next began the stage called＂elongated－form＂ （tshugs ring）and＂short－form＂（tshugs thung）． At this stage as well，we had to continue writ－ ing on writing boards．The copysheets for this level were not only for the alphabet；the words















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CALLIGRAPHY BY RIGZIN SAMDUP: KYUK YIK ('KHYUG).

themselves had to be learned. For example, they might contain aphorisms by Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) or an abecedarian poem where each line starts with a different letter of the alphabet. There were many different copysheets. After practicing with one sheet for three or four days, we would be given a different one. And after another three or four days, we would be handed yet another. It was impossible to master everything about the handwriting on a single copysheet. But, the more copysheets you could work with and imitate, the more far-reaching your own handwriting skill would become. Until that stage of study was complete, we needed to keep practicing with new copysheets.

Once you had mastered writing on paper, the "elongatedform" stage was complete and the stage of "form correction" (tshugs zhib) began. At this level one stopped writing the "elongated-form" and practiced writing both the "shortform" and the "small-form" scripts. While one started by first writing large letters, gradually they became smaller and smaller. If one practiced and mastered the elongated-form and the short-form, then one began studying cursive under the chidrel shibko. At that point you had entered the chidrel stage of study.

## Paper and Pens

When practicing on paper, we were not allowed to use the thick good-quality paper. We were required to practice on cheap and very thin paper, which was just barely opaque. After writing on one side of this thin paper, we needed to turn






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it over and continue writing on the other side. The reason for this was that when writing letters the pressure exerted on the pen should be light and even. If one accidentally pressed down in the slightest, the paper would rip. Also, when drawing ink from the inkwell, it was helpful to develop the habit of taking just a little bit. If the nib of the pen had too much ink, then it would cause a blotch on the paper. If you took too little ink, then the ink started running out when you were only half-way finished with the letter.

The paper we used then was not like today's. Tibetan paper was very wide and long. It did not have lines such as paper does now. Also the person writing would not draw lines with pencil or pen; the lines were folds in the paper. The writer had to think about how big or small he wanted his letters to be and then fold the paper for that; this was his line. It didn't matter if you were going to use the whole paper or not, you needed to fold the entire sheet. One would hold the folded paper in the left palm and then rest the left hand with the paper on the right knee. [We were seated cross-legged.] To continue writing, you needed to keep unfolding the paper. When a student first started using paper, he needed to measure the line using the width of his finger(s). However, once used to it, you could judge the width by eyeing it. The ability to keep the rows of folds straight and even and the margins standard were factors in determining whether a student would pass this stage of study.

One needed to show what he or she had written on the paper to the class head who would determine whether or not it met the requirement. The class head would make the necessary corrections by writing on that very paper. The student would take those corrections as a model and continue to practice; again he or she needed to show it to the class head. We practiced writing by using the model of the class head's corrections until he finally accepted them. If the class head accepted the writing, then he stopped making any corrections and would give the student a new copysheet. The student then studied using this new sheet as a model.

When our handwriting was corrected, there were different colors of ink for correcting handwriting at each level. The teacher's ink was red. The class head's ink was blue. The ink of the various monitors was black. It was very rare to


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THE MAIN DOORWAY TO NYARONGSHA．

have the opportunity for the teacher himself to correct our work．However，sometimes the teacher would call a particu－ lar student forward and ask him to sit in front．The student would be very happy to receive the teacher＇s own handwrit－ ing，that is，the corrections the teacher himself had penned． The teacher would make handwritten corrections on both the wooden boards and on paper．The student considered it extremely valuable．If the corrections were on a writing board and the student needed to wash off other letters to erase them，he would preserve the teacher＇s corrections by not letting the water touch that area．When it was finally no longer possible to preserve the letters，the student would place in his mouth the powder from where the teacher had written and rub some of it on his throat．If the corrections had been made on paper，then the student would rip off the paper where the corrections were and eat it．

## Final Exams

Nyarongsha also gave exams at each level，whether it be for the elongated－form，the short－form，the small－form，or cursive．We had to write the same verse in each script．The verse was such that it contained everything：the thirty con－ sonants，the four vowels，and the reverse letters．When one could write the verse well in the elongated form，you were considered to have mastered tsukring．Similarly，when you could write the short－form，small－form，and cursive scripts well，then you were said to have mastered each of those levels of calligraphy．

At each stage of study－tsukring，tsuktung，tsukchung，and cursive－one first practiced on writing boards．Once a stu－ dent had mastered that level with the writing board，he then practiced writing on paper in various stages，such as I have described above．After finishing all the levels of study，one was considered to have completed the stages of studying cal－ ligraphy．From that time on，it was only a matter of improving one＇s practice；the formal studies were complete．









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LITERARY FEATURES


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## Origin of the Tibetan Script：

JIgmé doushe with his work：the heart sutra written to show the development of tibetan script．






## Myths and Realities by Jean-Michel (aka Jigme) Douche

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ORE than 1500 years after the appearance of the

Tibetan script, it is time to revisit the question of its origins. With the many manuscripts discovered
during the twentieth century by adventurers such as Aurel Stein
(England), Sven Hedin (Sweden) and Paul Pelliot (France), the sands
and dust of Central Asia have revealed an historic reality that had vanished for one millenium.

Trade routes (now collectively known as "The Silk Road") allowed for
the spread of Buddhism to China from North India and Gandhara (pres-ent-day Afghanistan and Pakistan). Cities like Taxila, Gilgit, Kashgar,

Khotan, Kucha and Dunhuang thus served as important crossroads for material and spiritual exchange. Likewise, these paths facilitated the diffusion of Indic and Aramaic scripts during the first millenium of the common era. The walled-up caves of Dunhuang, which in effect contained a fabulous library, are a symbol of this cross-cultural exchange.

Their discovery in 1904 gives us the opportunity to examine early

Khotanese and Persian documents, as well as the oldest extant Tibetan
manuscripts, dating to the eighth and ninth centuries.

## Theories of Transmission

Twenty years ago, when I first began studying Tibetan, the ready answer to my questions regarding the origin of the Tibetan script was more or less consistent. It seemed all agreed with the conventional account: the Tibetan script was invented in the seventh century by the minister Thönmi Sambhota who was sent to India for this very purpose by the great religious protector King Songtsen Gampo. The minister modelled his letters on the Indian alphabet. As further explanation, it is typically argued that the Tibetan üchen (lit. "with head") script was derived from the Indic Lantsa script, and the more cursive ümé script (lit. "without head") was derived from the Indic Wartu script. Such was Tibetan tradition and the account generally carried forth by western Tibetologists.

As a French calligrapher, I followed the same approach that I had used to study the Latin script, which was to practice all of the historic styles from paleographic documents and to study the origins and historical development of related alphabets. In the case of Latin, this meant the alphabets for Phoenicean, Greek, Etruscan, Roman, etc. In the case of Tibetan, I have looked at the scripts of India and Central Asia.

Before offering my own theory, let us first review the four main theories espoused thus far regarding the origin of the Bodic script. (I find this linguistic term more suitable, as it derives from the ancient word "bod" referring to Tibet or Tibetan.)

1) The great teacher and historian Büton (12901364), compiler of the first Tibetan Buddhist canon, reports that the script invention results from Thönmi being commisioned to India by king Songtsen Gampo during the seventh century. He cites as his main source the Manikhabum, a terma or "hidden treasure text" discovered in the twelfth century.

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2) Since the seventeenth century, grammarians such as Sonam Penjor (writing in a grammatical treatise in 1810) explain the origin of the two main scripts like this: üchen comes from the Indic Lantsa or "headed" script, and ümé from the Nepalese Wartu or "headless" script.
3) The scholar Gedun Choephel (1905-1951) points to the Indic Gupta script as the origin for the üchen script, which he argues was then transformed by cursivity into the ümé script. His position appears in the January 1938 issue of the Kalimpong-based Tibetan newspaper The Tibetan Mirror (Tib. Yul phyogs so so'i gsar gyur me long).
4) The contemporary Nyingma master Namkkhai Norbu has argued that the Tibetan ümé script stemmed from the Zhangzhung script, while the üchen script was derived from the Indic Lantsa script. As evidence, his book The Gzi Necklace (1981) offers two script plates to demonstrate that Tibetans had a written language prior to the seventh century.

All of these hypotheses, which take üchen as "The Tibetan Script" (that is, as the default script for comparison), are based on the letter form extant only since the twelfth century, some six hundred years after the founding of a Tibetan script. Given that the üchen script of the twelfth century closely resembles the "strongheaded" Indic Nagari script, it is typically assumed that ümé developed as a cursive rendering of üchen.

Such reasoning is called into question by at least three complicating factors: it is impossible that the Tibetan writing system founded in the seventh century or thereabouts was derived from either the Lantsa or Wartu script, for these scripts did not appear in India until the eleventh century! Secondly, the name of the putative founder of the Tibetan script, Thönmi Sambhota, is unknown in royal chronologies of the seventh century ${ }^{1}$ when legend claims he lived. His name appears only in the Manikhabum, written in the twelfth century. Finally, the form of the letters appearing in the Old Tibetan documents from Dunhuang, for example, are more square in shape. They do not have the pronounced "head" nor the lengthened stem of present-day üchen scripts.

Today, new paleographic knowledge in association with calligraphic research and experience allows me the opportunity to reconstruct the evolutionary path of the bodic script forms.

## Evolution of the Tibetan Letter Form

To illustrate the development of the overall shape of Tibetan letters, I have chosen the first alphabetic letter: ka. By juxtaposing the same letter as it changed over time and geographic place, we can better understand the evolution of the letter's form as it advanced in different stages. Figure 1 depicts the earliest forms of the indic Brahmi script: (a) on pillars commissioned by King Asoka in the fourth century BCE; (b) during the Kushan empire of the second century ACE, and as it transformed into the Gupta script by the fourth century ACE (c). The Gupta script was then propagated in Central Asia (d), and took specific forms in various locales such as ( f ) Khotan and (g) Kuchea. (Figure 1e will be discussed below.)

Figure 1. Evolution of the Letter $k a$


In Figure 2, we can see how the bodic stem first emerged in the sixth century ACE, as evidenced in (a) rare rock inscriptions and a fresco that I have seen in Ladakh, formerly referred to as Smar. This form then developed into the Drutsa ('bru-tsha) form (see figure 2b), and what we might call the
"square" form as it appears on the Lhasa Zhol pillar (See figure 2c). The latter is concommitant with the appearance of the Indic siddham script (figure 3a) and the sarada script (figure 3b), which were more directly descended from the Gupta script and used to transmit tantric and buddhist teachings across northwestern India and Central Asia.

Figure 2. Emergence of the Bodic Stem


Figure 3. The siddham and sarada scripts


## Different Stages

My own studies and practice of Tibetan, Indic and Central Asian scripts (namely, Kharosthi, Sogdian, Khotanese, Kuchean, Turkish and Nestorian) and have approximated an extraordinary journey through time and geographic space, an intimate meeting with peoples. To strictly copy the text of an original manuscript or epigraph reveals details that might otherwise go unnoticed, as does the cutting of the tool.

This calligraphic exploration has led me to hypothesize: Due to the natural barrier comprised by the Himalayan mountains, a written script was introduced in the Yarlung area of Central Tibet via the western border, through the kingdom of Zhang Zhung. The banks of the Hunza and Indus rivers preserves the Indic and Central Asian scripts of travellers who carved their passings on rocks near bivouacs or fords. It is my conclusion that the first bodic script—Smar yig—comes from both Persia and India through the reference of the Khotanese script (Tib. li [yul] yig [ge]) or Sāka. This extinct language had strong affinities with Persian and the vernacular of Khotan, the oasis city of the Taklamakan Desert on the southern path of the Silk Road. ${ }^{2}$ The Khotanese knew both the slanting Indo-Bactrian Kharoshti script, which was considered to "resemble the ears of a donkey" (figure 1e) and was widely used in Gandhara, and the Central Asian Gupta script (figure 1d). ${ }^{3}$

In Zhang Zhung, the first bodic grammarians of the sixth century elaborated their Smar alphabet based on the Indic pattern but with adaptation for a non-indic language. They also used the peculiar system of representing vowels through diacritics, as was the case for Khotanese and Kharoshti. They reserved only the vowel A, which was now considered a consonant, and moved it to the end of the alphabet. Seven new letters (see figure 6) for translating the uniquely bodic sounds were designed by derivated forms: tsa, tsha, dza from ca, cha, ja; zha from sha; za from sa; the little "a" or a chung from the elongated Khotanese A; and wa from a subscript ba under the a chung.

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Figure 6：Evolution of the seven new letters from the Smar script to the＂square＂script

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The Smar alphabet is the first stage in the development of the Bodic script and the letters have a special look：they are simple and slanted，like Kharoshti，but with strong contrast in the strokes， like Khotanese．（See figure 7．）The pen used for the writing has a nib cut with a bevelled edge，such as that used by the Khotanese．The module of the shape is like an adobe brick left slanted to dry． Indeed，Sa－pag（lit．earth－brick ）is another name for the Smar script．

Figure 7．The Smar Script


The second stage is the Drutsa script，where each letter contains a central module with the the shape of a grain（＇bru）．（See figure 8．）The form resembles more a vertically－standing grain than a diamond． This gives a natural opportunity for a cursive form，using the roundness and the stretching of up and downstrokes．Tibetan cursive（＇khyug yig）is the natural descendent of the Drutsa script．The Drutsa script is more squat and drawn by a pen with a straight nib，changing the place of the downstrokes and upstrokes．The Drutsa script spread from Zhangzhung and remains associated with the Bön tradition．It could be considered an evolution of the Smar script adapted for the Tibetan pen．

Figure 8：The＂Grain＂Script（＇bru tsha）
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The third stage in the development of the Tibetan or Bodic script is a square variant，which was derived from the Drutsa script and influenced by Indic scripts of the time，such as the siddham（fig－ ure 3a）or sarada（figure 3b）scripts．It is typically found on monuments，such as the pillar of Lhasa Zhol，which dates to 763 ACE，because it is easier to carve straight lines on stone．It also conveys an powerful image．This writing style predominates Tibetan epigraphy of the eighth century．（See figure 9）Its steady and clear form became the reference script for Buddhist manuscripts and later for printed texts．

Figure 9．The＂Square Script＂

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The fourth stage occurred during the cosmopolitan time of the late imperial period，as Buddhism spread throughout the areas conquered by the Yarlung Dynasty．Translators and calligraphers hailing from India，Kashmir，Khotan，China and the Tibetan plateau itself worked together in Lhasa．During this extraordinary period，calligraphers enriched the line with a peculiar technique of pen－twisting，resembling the more fluid effect of the Chinese brush．

A simple bamboo pen，with its straight and broad nib，produces the thin line of the Indian metal stylus，the broad line of the Persian reed－pen（calam），and the variable line of the Chinese brush．This number of possibilities suggests the richness of Tibetan cal－ ligraphy and a major reason for why its visual form is so original．

During the ninth century，bodic calligraphy（yig gzugs）found its maturity through two form－families：the cut－up Shur（gshur）form（figure 2d）illustrated by the Drutsa script， and a slower more deliberate form called Zab（gzab）（figure 2e）illustrated by the Yig－ gru script．Both forms also had more or less cursive versions，and were the antecedents to the ümé and üchen scripts，respectively．

From the eleventh century，with the Second Diffusion of Buddhism，the Indic refer－ ence began to dominate much of Tibetan culture．In writing，the turn can be seen in the domination first of the urban Nagari script（figure 10c），followed by the con－ strated Lantsa script（figure 10d），and the rounded Wartu script（figure 10e）．

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FIGURE 10. Influential Indic Scripts of the 8th century (figures a and b) and 11-12th centuries (figures c-g)

a

b

C

d

e

f

g

From the twelfth century on, the scripts of the revealed treasure texts (ter yig) (figure 10f) and those of the master lotsawa or translators of Sanskrit (figure 10 g ) show the dominance of the headed letters (dbu can).

## The Tibetan Script Today

Paleographic investigations coupled with calligraphic practice can offer an important complement to historical research. Archaeological and textual sources from Tibet, India, Central Asia and China still have much to reveal to us, and our understanding could be deepened through collaborative work and exchange between scholars and calligraphers. It is my hope that additional research will be undertaken not only on the contents of documents but also on their container: the written script.

1 This refers to the Tibetan chronicles in the Dunhuang documents (British Library IOL Tib J 750 ).
2 The present-day name for Khotan is Yutian, located in Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the PRC.
3 Gilgit, formerly known as the kingdom of Brusha, can be considered the site where the Kharoshti, Khotanese and Bodic scripts converged.

Jean-Michel (aka Jigme) Douche practiced the art of the pen stroke for thirty years through paleography and calligraphy vis à vis the Latin script. He has since applied the same approach to Tibetan scripts, as well as Indic, Central Asian, and Chinese scripts. In his work, he joins past and present, study and practice, art and thought. He adds: "I want to thank the Nyingmapa monk Lodrö who strongly encouraged me to descend from the Himalayan heights to study and practice the scripts from India and the Silk Road."

#  J. Hillis Miller ${ }^{2}$ बत्रा 

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A LATSE IN CHANTSA, AMDO. PHOTO © A. ANTON-LUCA


## REMARKS ON THE TERM LATSE (LA RTSE)

by Pema Bhum
The following is reprinted from Latse Library Newsletter Fall 2003. The remarks are taken from the speech given by Director Pema Bhum at the library's inauguration festivities in March 2003.

As the name of this library is Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library, I would like to say a few words about the term latse* / la rtse (pronounced "la-tsey"). Those familiar with the Tibetan language know that the term refers to a high place or peak of mountain. The materials this library collects mainly focus on Tibetan culture, and this culture comes from the highest place on earth, the roof of the world.

Tibetans from very early times have expressed happiness and pride for living in the highest place on earth. There is a stone pillar in front of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa which was erected in the 820 A.D, well known as the Sino-Tibetan Treaty of 820 . On that stone pillar, Tibetans praise their homeland in elegant and captivating terms: "the center of the snow mountains, sources of the great rivers, high land and pure earth."

Even though they are living in the highest place in the world, Tibetans still feel dissatisfied, and possess a desire to go to an even higher place. Wherever you go in Tibetan lands, as a symbol that it is a Tibetan area, you can see in the distance on the peaks of mountains there are dried tree branches with prayer flags waving. If you look closely, you can see there is a constructed pile of earth and rocks, on top of which people have placed these tree branches along with ancient weapons, such as arrows, spears, and swords, also made of wood. On the tops of the branches are tied prayer flags, waving in the wind. These are known as latse.

In Amdo, the activity of erecting latse is termed latse tö (la rtse bstod.) The original meaning of the term tö is
＂to make higher．＂The term latse has different spellings nowadays，including＂lab tse＂and＂la btse．＂The term latse tö has a meaning of making something higher than the mountain peak．Through this term，you can see that the different spellings of latse are derived from the original meaning［／a－rtse］，a high place or mountain peak．

Tibetans are not even satisfied with making something higher than the mountain peaks，and try to link the mountain peak to the sky．In some areas of Tibet，they link latse together with a rope called mu tag（rmu thag）， a kind of wool rope with wool and strips of colored cloth． $M u t a g$ is a term that existed before Buddhism came to Tibet．In Tibetan historical documents for instance，there is a saying that earliest Tibetan kings came from heaven to the earthly realm by climbing down a mu tag．After their death，they return to heaven through that mu tag． Mu tag is a link between heaven and earth．

The custom of erecting latse is found only in Tibetan areas． This tradition is much stronger among the lay people than in the religious community．This tradition，which originat－ ed in pre－Buddhist times，except for a short time during the Cultural Revolution，has continued to present day．

In general，when one talks of Tibetan culture，Buddhism is a main part．However，our library is not focused on this．There are many libraries and institutes that focus on Tibetan Buddhism．We do not feel it is necessary to duplicate these collections and contributions．Our library strives to focus mainly on the culture of the lay people， the ordinary people of Tibet，and how this culture exists in modern times．

We see that this term latse is a symbol of Tibetan lay cul－ ture．We hope that this symbol expresses this culture＇s origin，vibrancy，and the spirit to attain greater and greater heights．We also hope that it expresses that this culture，which originated several thousand years ago， even in these days，despite so many changes，is still alive and strong．
＊Note：In this case，we have retained the library＇s own translit－ eration of the term．In THDL Simplified Phonetic Transcription，it would be latsé．
















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## SCENES FROM THE TIBETAN

 CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP そござ々牙々！



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[^0]:    PS: This film has gained a lot of international attention. What do you think about it?
    TD: I very much liked the script. I think it is a good story.

[^1]:    THE LHASA ZHOL PILLAR，INSCRIPTION ON THE EAST SIDE．FROM HUGH RICHARD－ SON＇S CORPUS OF TIBETAN INSCRIPTIONS（ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY，1985）PLATE 2
    

