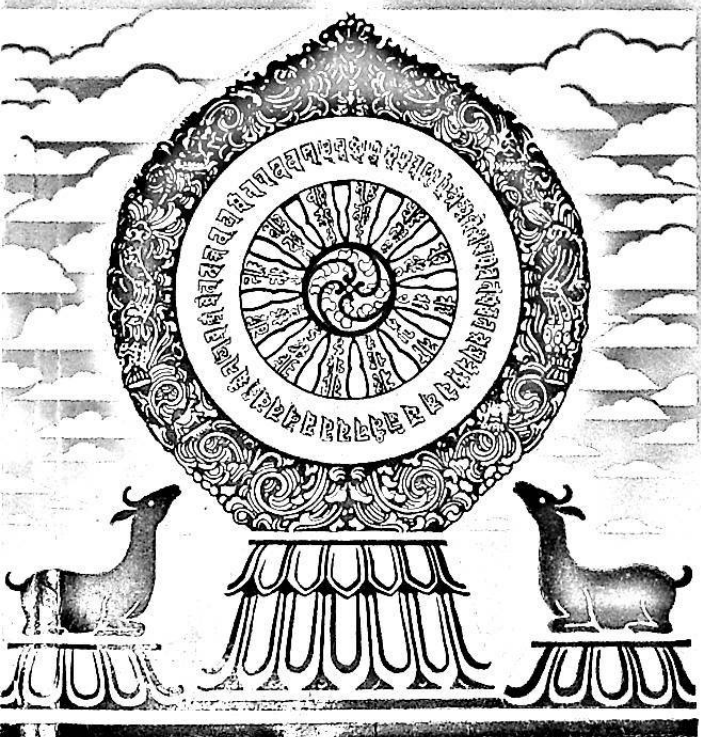




CHINA STUDIES SERIES

HIGHLIGHTS OF TIBETAN HISTORY

Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing



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FOREWORD

The Tibetans, a nationality of the Chinese nation, number some 3,450,000 according to 1978 statistics. They are the most widely distributed of all nationalities in China and are spread over one-fourth of the country's land area. They live in compact communities mainly in Tibet, an area with a population of 1,700,000. They also inhabit Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces. The history of the Tibetans, as revealed by archaeological findings, can be traced to the Neolithic period. Leaving myths and folklore aside, Tibetan history, beginning in the sixth century A.D., covers more than 1,400 years. Historical records of the Tibetan nationality in the Tibetan and Han languages deal with varied subjects and are voluminous. In both amount and variety, they rank second only to the historical records of the Hans, the most numerous of all China's nationalities.

The highly developed Tibetan culture is an important component of the Chinese culture and a prized asset in the treasure-house of world culture as well. It embraces numerous writings on literature, history, religion, philosophy and other subjects. Its science and technology (medicine, calendars, architecture, etc.) and arts (painting, sculpture, dancing, etc.) have a distinctive national style and have attained advanced levels. In fact, the Tibetan culture, created and developed over a long period of time by the wisdom and talents of the Tibetan people, has made outstanding contributions to world culture as well as to Chinese culture. It is the pride of

not only the Tibetans but also the whole Chinese nation.

Over the past century scholars of various countries have undertaken comprehensive studies of Tibetan history, language, religion and culture. Some ancient Tibetan documents have been collated and translated. Organizations devoted to Tibetan studies have been established in some countries. All this shows that Tibetan history and culture have become important research projects of modern times.

In China, following the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic, progress was achieved in the study of Tibetan history. However, it was, as in other fields of endeavour, held back by the turmoils of the decade-long "Cultural Revolution" which started in 1966. Now, study has resumed with fresh momentum following the end of the "Cultural Revolution" and it is hopeful of making still greater progress.

The study of Tibetan history, like other subjects in historical studies, should first of all be viewed in relation to the law of social development common to all mankind. The Tibetans have gone through primitive society, slave society and feudal society and finally leaped into socialist society through social reform. This should be explained in the light of the evolution of Tibetans from ancient times to the present. The concrete contents of Tibetan history serve to enrich the illustrations in the history of social development and corroborate the conception that historical development of Tibetans is inseparable from the general law of social development.

Moreover, in studying the historical development of Tibetans, it is necessary for us to relate this subject to the historical development of the Chinese nation. We bear in mind not only the striking features of the historical development of Tibetans. Still more important is the fact that this development has been inevitably

influenced and restricted by development of the Chinese nation as a whole. Since Chinese history has been created by the joint efforts of all nationalities within the boundaries of China, the history of Tibetans as one of the nationalities naturally forms an inalienable component of Chinese history. It provides eloquent proof of the intimate ties between the development of Tibetan nationality and that of the whole Chinese nation. All evolutions and changes that have taken place in Tibetan society are closely related to and inseparable from those of the Chinese nation as a whole.

This book, completed by referring to many works by scholars both at home and abroad, is meant to give an outline of Tibetan history. The authors try to explain, according to the basic viewpoint of historical materialism, factors affecting the historical development of the Tibetans. We present the history chronologically and subject by subject involving the major events and important figures.

We sincerely invite suggestions and comments from our readers to help produce a possible new edition.