

Introduction:

Islam in the Tibetan Cultural Sphere¹

José Ignacio Cabezón

Students of Tibet and its surrounding areas often treat Tibetan culture as if it were homogeneous: ethnically, culturally, linguistically and religiously. But this is of course far from true. Walking the streets of Lhasa (the capital of Tibet) even today -- during a period of Chinese occupation, when the movement of peoples is strictly controlled -- one is struck by the diversity of the city and its inhabitants; and one wonders what this Himalayan urban center must have been like before 1959, when people from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, Central Asia, Mongolia, China, and even Southeast Asia had greater access to the "Place of the Gods."² Even though the confluence of peoples from different cultures is only a shadow of what it once was, it is nonetheless possible to imagine, even today, how diverse this great city (and Tibetan culture generally) really was.

It was during a visit to Lhasa in 1991 that I saw my first Tibetan mosque. Of course, Tibetologists like myself are not unaware of the fact that Muslims exist (and that they play an important function) in Tibetan society, but being concerned principally with Buddhism (and to a lesser extent with Tibet's native religion, Bon) we -- unconsciously, I think -- work under the presupposition that Tibetan culture is monolithically Buddhist.³ We tend to glean how unfounded that presupposition really is only when confronted by something that challenges that stereotype: a mosque in the heart of Lhasa, a walk through its Muslim quarter, a conversation with a man that looks more Kashmiri than Tibetan, and of course, the present book.

It is one of the great virtues of the work contained in these pages that it helps to break the stereotype of Tibetan cultural homogeneity by providing us with a different perspective[†] on Himalayan life in the period from World War II to the final takeover of Tibet by the Chinese in 1959. More important than the Himalayan societies that are the subtextual focus of Abdul Wahid Radhu's memoirs, however, is the lens that is Radhu himself, for the author was a Ladakhi Muslim who travelled throughout Tibet and Central Asia and lived for portions of his life in Lhasa. Belonging to the family responsible for transporting the offerings of the Ladakhi king to the Dalai Lama (in the famous Lo phyag caravan⁴), his work provides us with an invaluable insider's perspective on Islam in the Tibetan cultural sphere.

Little has appeared in Western languages on this important topic. The only full-length monograph on the subject is in Urdu, and apart from an occasional short article,⁵ we tend to find only passing references to Islam in works that deal otherwise exclusively with Buddhism in Tibetan culture.⁶ Given this state of affairs, the remarks that follow are meant at most as an impressionistic (and necessarily incomplete) overview of Islam in Tibet and its surrounding areas. It is my hope, however, that this essay, together with the work presently being done by a new generation of young Tibetan Muslim scholars in exile, will one day lead to a more detailed and scholarly study of this field, whose full and systematic investigation remains one of the great lacunae of Tibetology.

Islam spread to Tibet from two directions. Moving from Arabia through Persia and Afghanistan, it reached China through the ancient silk routes in Central Asia.⁷ From Ningxia and other points in China it moved to eastern Tibet (Amdo). Chinese Muslims, known as Huis, eventually settled in Siling, and the Kokonor region generally, and from there carried on trade with central Tibet.⁸ Though many of these merchants remained permanently in

Good for
blurb
and

eastern Tibet, where large pockets are still to be found, some, like their brethren from the west, eventually moved to Lhasa,⁹ where they preserve their religion and customs in a small and tightly knit community to the present day. The Lhasa Muslim community is composed of Chinese, Kashmiris, Nepalese, Ladakhis, and Sikh converts to Islam (the latter being descendents from prisoners taken during the Dogra wars).¹⁰ They are divided into two quite distinct subcommunities: those of the Choṭa (Small) Masjit, who are principally of Kashmiri origin (though those of Nepalese, Ladhaki and Sikh origin are also affiliated with this group),¹¹ and the Bara (Large) Masjit, who are primarily Chinese. Each group had its own ruling council and leader (dpon po), with administrative ties to different ministries of the Tibetan government.¹²

Known as the Ho pa gling pas, for the area of the city (Ho pa gling) in which they dwelt and had their mosque (the Bara Masjit = "Large Mosque," also called rGyal lha khang = "Royal Temple"),¹³ the Chinese Muslims of Lhasa tended to be butchers¹⁴ or vegetable farmers (see Radhu's account below). Like the Kashmiri Muslims, they belonged to the Sunni sect of Islam (Hanafi tradition), had their own imam, their own ~~Madrasa~~ ^{madrasa} or religious school -- in which the Qur'an and the basic tenets of Islam were taught¹⁵ -- and had a separate cemetery known as the Kygasha, 15 kilometers outside of Lhasa. Their burial customs seem to have varied from that of their Kashmiri counterparts.

Islam also spread from the West: from Turkestan, Baltistan and Kashmir into Ladakh and principally through Ladakh to Western Tibet and Lhasa. It appears that Baltistan was conquered by Muslim forces around the beginning of the 15th century. Originally Tibetan Buddhists, the Baltis were converted to Islam.¹⁶ In the late 16th century, during the reign of the Ladakhi King 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal, the Baltis, under the leadership of ~~Ali Mir~~ ^{"A-li-mir,"} invaded Ladakh and "burnt all of the religious books with fire, threw some into the water,

destroyed all of the temples, whereupon they again returned to their own country."¹⁷ Although it disappeared throughout substantial portions of Central Asia,¹⁸ Buddhism was revived and thrives in Ladakh until the present day. However, in the mid-17th century the reigning king, bDe legs rnam rgyal, was forced to convert to Islam (and to build a mosque in Leh) as a condition for receiving the help of the Moghul ruler of Kashmir to fend off the invading Mongols.¹⁹ His heir, however, continued the sponsorship of Buddhism. Later Ladakhi kings would at times show an interest in Islamic culture of their own free will (see below), and today there is a sizable Muslim community in Ladakh (principally in its capital, Leh) that consists of both Ladakhi and Kashmiri Muslims. Islam also penetrated Nepal, where pockets of Muslims are found -- even in the culturally Tibetan portions of the country -- to this day.²⁰

Unlike Ladakh, the area we consider to be Tibet today experienced neither Muslim conquest nor forced conversion to Islam.²¹ A variety of Tibetan sources attest to the fact that Tibetan rulers conquered large portions of Central Asia upto Persia.²² There are also reports of Muslims ruling (and even founding!) Tibet,²³ but all of these accounts must be taken in context. During the 8th and 9th centuries Persians, Uighurs, Turks and Tibetans vied with one another for control of portions of Central Asia.²⁴ In one particularly interesting episode we find the ruler of Kabul, originally a vassal of the Tibetan king, converting from Buddhism to Islam (sometime between 812 and 814 A. D.) and capitulating to the Arabian ruler Al-Ma'mûn. As a token of his sincerity he is said to have presented what, from the description^s, appears to have been a gold Buddha statue to Al-Ma'mûn, who sent it to Mecca, where it was melted down to make coins.²⁵ However, these and other such incidents occurred in a portion of Central Asia that, though part of the Tibetan empire of the day, has for centuries been outside of the sphere of Tibetan influence. Despite the fact that Tibetans

and Arabs were in contact even from this relatively early date, it seems that Muslims began settling in the region of Western and Central Tibet consistently only in the twelfth century.²⁶

Although Muslim traders were already a well-established presence in Lhasa and in other major cities²⁷ in Tibet considerably before the seventeenth century, the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) marks a turning point for Islam in Tibet institutionally. According to oral tradition, a certain Pir or Ahon²⁸ living in Lhasa in the seventeenth century used to do his prayers on an isolated hill at the edge of the city. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, the "Great Fifth Conqueror" (rGyal ba nga pa chen po), as he came to be known, spotted the man doing "prostrations" (phyag 'tshal) every day on the hill and asked that he be brought to him. The Pir explained that he was worshipping according to the precepts of his religion, and that he did so on the hill because no mosque existed in the area. The Dalai Lama then sent a representative to a site near the hill and had him fire arrows in each of the different directions. A house was built at the place from which the arrows were shot. The plot of land within the confines of the arrows was then bequeathed to the Muslim community, and the area came to be known as rGyang mda' khang (The House of the Far-Reaching Arrows). It became the site of the first mosque and cemetery. But the fifth Dalai Lama provided more than land to these Muslims of Kashmiri origin. He is said to have given official patronage to the 14 elders and 30 youths who were the original occupants of this site.²⁹ The fifth Dalai Lama's proactive stance in regard to the Muslims of Lhasa seems to have been part of a larger policy of encouraging ethnic, cultural and economic diversity in the country (mi sna mgron po, lit. "the invitation of peoples"). Despite the fact that proselytization was prohibited, the policy otherwise entailed complete freedom of religious practice and exemption from restrictions that were recognized to be grounded in Buddhist morality and customs (e.g., the prohibition against eating meat during the Buddhist holy month of Sa ga

lower c.
of word
1127

zla ba, and against covering the head in the presence of the monastic community during the sMon lam festival).³⁰ In addition, Muslims were given considerable freedom to settle their own legal affairs internally in accordance with Islamic law (shari'ah), to open their own shops and to trade freely without having to pay taxes.³¹

Traditionally, Tibetan muslims have adhered to the dietary laws of Islam: ^{for example,} eating only ^{car} meat that has been slaughtered in the appropriate way (halla). The wealthier members of Lhasa's Muslim community would make the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life, and the Kashmiri portion of this community even had agents (associated with the ^t Monnara Masjid in Bombay) to help them in this regard.³²

Today the rGyang mda' khang, bequeathed by the fifth Dalai Lama, is also known as the Kha che gling ga (Muslim Park), since a portion of the land is used as picnic grounds and site for communal functions by the Muslim community of Lhasa. Recently, a traditional Tibetan arch or "gate" (sgo) has been built to commemorate the spot where the original house stood. Eventually, a mosque was built in the center of Lhasa (the Chota or "Small" Masjid), but the mosque at the rGyang mda' khang was originally the only place for prayer and friday meeting, and it was for this reason that it came to be known as the The Friday Masjid. The Muslim men of Lhasa would walk the several kilometers each friday for the meeting and then share the traditional friday meal together. Leftovers would be brought back to Lhasa as "blessed food" (tshogs)³³ to be shared with those who could not come. Although it is the Lhasa Chota Masjid that is the main center of regular worship today, the rGyang mda' khang mosque has been rebuilt and is occasionally used, especially during festival days. In addition to housing the cemetary and park, the area is also the residence of the imam of that community.

Although Buddhism was known to Muslim historians much earlier, Muslim scholars began writing seriously about Buddhism from about the 11th century.³⁴ The Tibetan Buddhist intellectual community, on the other hand, probably first began hearing about Islam from the refugee monks of Khotan and other ^{parts of} Central Asian ^{that were} ~~cities~~ escaping the Muslim persecution of Buddhism in this area.³⁵ It is not surprising, therefore, that Islam should be treated in less than a sympathetic manner in Tibetan Buddhist scholarly sources. It may be of interest to mention a few of the passages that refer to Islam here, if only impressionistically, to counteract the prevailing tendency in modern sources to portray too rosy a picture of Buddhist-Muslim interaction. Many of the Tibetan works, written, as we have said, after -- and therefore influenced by -- the Muslim conquests of Central Asia and North India, refer to Muslims by the perjorative term kla klo (Sanskrit mleccha: barbarian), though the term is not synonymous with the word "Muslim."³⁶ Still, texts like the Kālacakra Tantra, which was transmitted from India to Tibet in the eleventh century, often use the term to refer almost exclusively to Muslims.³⁷ One of the most interesting, though least flattering, accounts of Islam in Tibetan Buddhist texts is found in the writings of the sixteenth century scholar Tāranātha, who maintains that the prophet Mohammed was a fallen, vindictive Buddhist monk!

It was at that same time that the religion of the barbarians arose. Some say that there arose in the past in Kashmir a bTsun pa dPal len; some say that he was also the student of bTsun pa Ku na la. There was a certain gZhon nu sde who, though learned and an expert in the scriptures, had no faith. He became extremely disturbed when he was expelled by the Saṅgha for violating the training; and so he left for the country of Shu li ka, that lies beyond Tho gar, thinking, "I will create a religion that can rival the Buddha's teachings." He changed his name to Mā ma thar and, changing his appearance, he created the religion of the barbarians, that advocates violence as its doctrine, and then hid, seeking refuge in the abode of a great demon of the Asura class called "Bi ṣli mli." The demon

Saṅgha

demi-god

blessed him, and he succeeded in learning many spells, such as the spell for conquest.³⁸

Other texts are usually more laconic in their reference to Islam and Muslims. A biography of Padmasambhava, one of the founders of Buddhism in Tibet, mentions that he used his magical powers to sink the boats of Mo la dā na (Multān) of sTag gzig (Persia) when the latter attempted to attack Uḍḍiyāna (the Swat Valley).³⁹ Many sources attest to the presence of Muslims in the Mongol courts, even after the Mongols had been converted to Buddhism. A biography of the 13th century bKa' rgyud pa master 'U rgyan pa mentions that he tricked the Persian door-keepers of Kublai Khan by making himself invisible.⁴⁰ Finally, it is worth mentioning here the great 20th century Tibetan polymath dGe 'dun chos 'phel, who is one of the few Buddhist scholars of Tibet who ever took an active and sympathetic interest in Islam (see Radhu's account of meeting dGe 'dun chos 'phel below), to the point of actually using examples from the Qur'an in his most important philosophical work, the kLu grub dgongs rgyan.⁴¹

Chinese historical sources tell us that a certain Mahmud was responsible for leading a Dsungar Mongolian caravan bearing gifts for the Dalai Lama in the year 1747. On the latter Petech writes, "It is surprising to see a Muslim in charge of a Lamaist mission whose purpose was in the main religious; it is a striking example of the good understanding reigning between the various religions in Central Asia in this period."⁴²

Most Tibetans, however, had little knowledge of the historical and religious texts just mentioned. Their encounter with Islam came in the form of the direct contact they had with ordinary Muslim traders: in the east from China, and in the West from India (Bihar, Kalimpong, and especially Ladakh and Kashmir). Indeed, the Tibetan word for Muslim, Kha che, also means "Kashmiri."⁴³ Even before the economic incentives established during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama, Muslim traders from the West were already one of the major

sources of many items indispensable to Tibetan life.⁴⁴ These included principally saffron (kha che skyes, kha che gur kum,⁴⁵ kha che sha skam/kha ma), dried fruit, sugar and textiles. The merchants returned with Tibetan shawls, salt, gold, Chinese turquoise, yak tails (sold to Hindus for use in ritual), but especially wool, musk and tea. Some of these merchants had their permanent residences outside of Tibet proper, but many, as we have seen, settled in Tibet's larger cities, where they became the nucleus for small, but often prosperous and culturally thriving, Tibetan Muslim communities.⁴⁶ It was not uncommon for the men of these communities to take Tibetan Buddhist wives (who then converted to Islam). Although they sometimes wore dark head-coverings on special occasions, Tibetan Muslim women were never veiled, and, as is the case with their Buddhist sisters, enjoyed considerable freedom in Tibetan society, having an especially "strong say in commercial matters."⁴⁷

Little is known about the Muslim communities in other parts of Tibet. We know that mosques existed, for example, in Shigatse, Tsethang and Siling, and that the first two of these communities had imams associated with them, but apart from this we can say little else. Before 1959 the greatest number of Muslims seem to have been located in Lhasa, where their population is estimated as being upwards of 2000.⁴⁸

Only further research will be able to determine the extent of mutual influence and syncretism between Buddhism and Islam in the Tibetan cultural sphere. From the material presently available one gets the impression that the two communities kept their religious and cultural identities fairly separate. However, there are some indications that the boundaries between the two was, especially in the Western Himalayas, somewhat fluid. In regard to Purig, located between Baltistan and Ladakh, Francke states, "even nowadays a traveller to this district can make interesting observations with regard to the half-Lamaist kind of

Mohammedanism (sic) prevailing there."⁴⁹ The fluidity of religious and cultural boundaries is evident among people both high and low. There are cases, for example, of Ladakhi kings adopting Turkoman dress.⁵⁰ More significant, perhaps, is a Persian translation of an inscription said to have been preserved at the Awwal Masjid^t in Srinagar, founded by the Ladakhi⁵¹ king "Rinchan Bhoti" (Riñcana Bhoṭṭa, and according to Francke the Lha chen rgyal bu Rin chen of Ladakh historical records, mid-fourteenth century), a Buddhist convert to Islam who also usurped the throne of Kashmir. The inscription says of Riñcana that "his face claimed Islam and his hair adorned Paganism. He controls both Paganism and Iṣām, and takes interest in both."⁵² Equally interesting is the case of the Ladakhi king Tshe brtan nam rgyal (b. 1711), whom Petech describes in detail in The Kingdom of Ladakh.⁵³ Though beginning his life as a Buddhist, this fascinating figure, who had an addiction to Central Asian horses, showed a consistent interest in things Muslim. His second and third wives were Muslim. He is said to have been inclined to the Shi'a form of Islam, took the title 'Āqibat Mahmud Khan for himself, and introduced Muslim type coinage into Ladakh. Finally, to turn to the common folk, Francke tells us that on his tour of the Indian-Tibetan border regions in 1909 he found in "Chigtan" a Buddhist temple "in charge of two Muhammadans (sic) who said they were descended from its Buddhist keepers. Their house-name is Lha-khang-pa (temple keeper) or dGon-pa-pa (monastery keeper). These people still light the butter-filled lamps in the temple, and look after the altar. They told us that the temple was still visited by their Buddhist neighbours from Da and Hanu who pay adoration to its old deities."⁵⁴

Of course, Buddhism and Islam mutually influenced each other not only at the political and folk levels but in the artistic, scientific and literary spheres as well. The influence of Islamic art and architecture (from Persia, Kashmir and Moghul India) on their

Himalayan counterparts is well known.⁵⁵ In the field of music, Butt mentions the popularity of the Nang ma (possibly from Urdu Nagma) style of classical operatic song, which he says was introduced by Muslims into Tibet at the turn of the century.⁵⁶ Muslims also made contributions to Tibetan medicine, one of the more famous practitioners of this science being Kha che paṅ chen zLa ba mngon dga', the author of several well-known medical treatises in Tibetan.⁵⁷ Tibet's most famous Muslim literary classic, The Autobiography of Kha che Phalu (Kha che Pha lu'i rnam thar), has been translated into English.⁵⁸ Written in the genre of "words of advice" (legs bshad), it is particularly interesting for its synthesis of Muslim and Buddhist ideas into a harmonious whole. It is this fact that has made it endearing to -- and even claimed by -- both Muslims and Buddhists. However, references to Godhar (one of the names of Allah), to the unity of God, and to other tenets of Islam, make it clear that Phalu (possibly Fazur-allah) was a Muslim. What is more, a bilingual Arabic/Persian manuscript of the text is said to exist in India.⁵⁹ From these few examples it is clear that Muslims have made lasting contributions to the classical arts and sciences of Tibet. In some instances they have even achieved a kind of synthetic holism in their work that allows the beholder glimpses of two worlds simultaneously: the Muslim and the Buddhist, the Tibetan and the Arabic. Apart from some of the cases mentioned above, it seems to me that Mosque architecture in Lhasa is another fine example of this phenomenon.

Though well integrated into Tibetan society economically, culturally and linguistically, the members of Lhasa's Muslim community probably maintained a stronger sense of religious and ethnic self-identity than that found in the border regions. This is to be expected, given their commitment to preserving their religion in the face of the overwhelmingly Buddhist world that surrounded them. But despite their strong identification with Islam, the Muslims

of Lhasa considered Tibet their homeland. In 1959 many members of this community pressed for their being considered foreign nationals (that is, citizens of India), but this was seen by them primarily as a politically expedient move.⁶⁰ After the final Chinese takeover of Tibet in that year this was to prove to their advantage, as it allowed the Indian government a basis for claiming them as Indian citizens.⁶¹ Even after Indian intervention on their behalf, however, only a few hundred Muslims made it out of Tibet. They settled as refugees principally in India and Nepal. We find today concentrations of Tibetan Muslims in Kathmandu, Darjeeling and Kalimpong, though the largest community is to be found in and around Idd Gah in Srinagar (Kashmir). Their plight and frustrations during the first two decades of life in exile is recounted in a moving article in Tibetan Review.⁶² After a period of tremendous hardship in Chinese-controlled Tibet -- a period that included boycotts (even with regard to food!) of the Muslim community -- those in Tibet who survived the Cultural Revolution find themselves in a relatively better position today. Like their Buddhist brothers and sisters, however, Tibetan Muslims continue to be victims of an authoritarian Chinese regime that still deprives them of even the most basic human rights, like freedom of speech. If nothing else, it is my hope that the present work will help in some small measure to focus attention on the Tibetan Muslim community, both in Tibet and in exile. May the hardships of exile, diaspora and life under Chinese colonial rule not weaken the resilience and determination for survival that these remarkable men and women have shown throughout generations in their Himalayan homeland.

Notes

1. This essay was written during the tenure of an Alexander von Humboldt fellowship at the Institut für Kultur und Geschichte Indiens und Tibets at the Universität Hamburg. I take this opportunity to thank the A. v. Humboldt Stiftung, Bonn, and my colleagues in Hamburg for making my time in Germany as pleasant and fruitful as it was.
2. The literal meaning of the words lha sa. Dawa Norbu, "The Europeanization of Sino-Tibetan Relations, 1775-1907: The Genesis of Chinese 'Suzerainty' and Tibetan 'Autonomy'," Tibet Journal, vol. XV, no. 4 (1990), pp. 29-39, also points out that upto the nineteenth century Lhasa was "for Asian standards, a fairly cosmopolitan city," and that "what caused Lhasa to tighten its doors to Westerners was the rise of British imperialism in South Asia which since the 1840s expanded into the Himalayan regions which had traditionally been a Tibetan sphere of influence." The point to be emphasized here is that Lhasa became the "Forbidden City" only to Westerners (and then only after the mid-nineteenth century). Other -- especially Himalayan -- peoples continued to travel in a relatively unhindered fashion in Tibet and maintained their access to its capital until the country came under Chinese rule.
3. Nor are Western Tibetologists the only ones with such a bias. mGar rtse rTa mgrin rgyal, "Bod kyi chos lugs grub mtha' so so'i ming byung tshul rags rtsam gleng ba" (A Rough Overview of the Origins of the Different Names of Tibet's Religions), Bod ljongs Zhib 'jug, 1987 (no. 2), pp. 130-137, includes a discussion of Bon, but fails to mention Islam. A glance through current periodicals published in Tibet and China confirms the dearth of material on Islam in Tibetan language; see, for example, Per K. Sørensen, A Provisional List of Tibetological Research-Papers and Articles Published in the People's Republic of China and Tibet, Nepal Research Center Publications, no. 17, ed. Albrecht Wezler (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991).
4. For a more scholarly treatment of the Lo phyag see Luciano Petech, The Kingdom of Ladakh c. 950-1842 (Rome: IsMEO, 1977), p. 78 passim. For a discussion of the Lo phyag during the period of British colonial rule and its political implications (or lack thereof) see John Bray, "The Lapchak Mission from Ladakh to Lhasa in British Indian Foreign Policy," Tibet Journal, vol. XV, no. 4 (1990), pp. 75-96.
5. H. R. H., Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, "The Moslems of Central Tibet," Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society, vol. 39, nos. 3-4 (1952), pp. 233-240, where several earlier references to Muslims in Tibet are also cited; Atallah Siddiqui, "Muslims of Tibet," Tibet Journal, vol. XVI, no. 4 (1991), pp. 71-85; Abdul Ghani Sheikh, "Tibetan Muslims," Tibet Journal, vol. XVI, no. 4 (1991), pp. 86-89; Masood Butt, "Muslims of Tibet," Tibetan Bulletin, Jan.-Feb. 1994, pp. 8-9, 16; Masood Butt, "Muslims of Tibet: Past and Present," typescript of lecture delivered on tour of Germany (1994), unpublished.
6. For a recent example see G. Samuel, Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Society (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), p. 112.
7. R. A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, trans. from the French by J. E. Stapleton Driver (London: Farber and Farber, 1962), p. 71, mentions the role of Khotan as a Muslim center

after 1006. On Islam and Muslims in Central Asia see, for example, Rahula Sankrityayana, History of Central Asia: Bronze Age (2000 B.C.) to Chengiz Khan (1227 A.D.) (Calcutta and New Delhi: New Age Publishers Private Ltd., 1964), and Luc Kwanten, Imperial Nomads: A History of Central Asia, 500-1500 (Leicester University Press, 1979).

8. Butt, "Muslims of Tibet: Past and Present," p. 3. In contemporary times, the most famous of these Sino-Tibetan Muslims was probably Ma Pu-fang, the governor of Tsing-hai, who is perhaps best remembered (negatively) for his role in the events surrounding the 14th Dalai Lama's exodus from Amdo as a child. See, for example, Gunther Schulemann, Geschichte der Dalai-Lamas (Leipzig: VEB Otto Harrassowitz, 1958), pp. 423-424.

9. Concerning the origins of the Chinese Muslims of Lhasa, the theory that they were originally part of the entourage that accompanied the Chinese princess who would become the wife of the Tibetan king Srong bstan sgam po in the seventh century is undoubtedly spurious; the theory that they were part of the entourage that accompanied the Chinese Amban who came to Lhasa at the time of the seventh Dalai Lama, though otherwise unsubstantiated, is perhaps more plausible. See Prince Peter, "Moslems of Central Tibet," p. 239.

8. On the conversion of Dogras to Islam in Tibet see Abdul Ghani Sheikh, "Tibetan Muslims," p. 87. In Lhasa they are known as Sing pa Kha che, or "Singh Muslims," because many of them bore the surname "Singh."

11. Prince Peter, "The Moslems of Central Tibet", p. 234 states that the Muslims of the Choṭa Masjit are also known as Lhasa Muslims (Lha sa kha che), as opposed to those of the Bara Masjit, who are known as Ho (originally Hao) pa gling Muslims, or Hui-hui, the name under which the Chinese know them.

12. Prince Peter, "The Moslems of Central Tibet," pp. 234-235, states that Chinese Muslims were responsible to the Ministry of Agriculture, since they originally arrived in Lhasa as prisoners of war, and were given to this office as agricultural workers. The Kashmiri Muslims were responsible to the Ministry of Finance, since they originally arrived in Lhasa as traders.

13. Tibet Handbook: A Pilgrimage Guide (Chico, Ca.: Moon Publications, 1990), p. 201, states that this mosque was built in 1716, rebuilt and expanded after it was destroyed by a fire in 1793 and rebuilt again after it was destroyed in 1959. The area occupied by the mosque covers, he says, 2600 square meters, and it attracts as many as 600 people for Friday worship. He states as well that Chinese annals written during the 18th century give the Muslim population of Lhasa as being under 200, *but gives no source*.

14. David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 203, imply that Ladakhi Muslims were also butchers.

15. According to Prince Peter, "Moslems of Central Tibet," pp. 235-236, the Qur'ans of these two communities were in Arabic, but only the imams had knowledge of the language. The medium of instruction, at least in the case of the community of Kashmiri origins, was Tibetan.

16. A. H. Francke, A History of Western Tibet: One of the Unknown Empires (London: S. W. Partridge and Co., n.d.), p. 90; Stein, Tibetan Civilization, p. 83, states that this took place in the 16th century.

17. A. H. Francke, Antiquities of Indian Tibet, Part II (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1926), p. 106. The excerpt is from the La dvags rgyal rabs (Genealogy of the Ladakhi Kings), translated by Francke. The Tibetan (p. 38) reads: gsung rab thams cad me la brsegs/ la la chabs la bkal/ gtsug lag khang thams cad gshig nas/ rang gi yul la log song/. I have replaced Francke's original "monasteries" with the more appropriate "temple." It is not uncommon for the few authors who write on the subject of Tibetan Muslims to paint too rosy a picture of the relationship between Buddhism and Islam in the Himalayas. Like most religious communities living in close proximity, there have at times existed tensions, and outright hostility, between the adherents of these two religions. This seems to have been especially true in the early Mongol court; see Igor de Rachewiltz, et. al., eds., In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period (1200-1300) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1993), pp. 555, 579-80. Even in the early twentieth century there have been instances of the desecration of Buddhist sites by Muslims, something that occurred, as we see here, much more frequently in the heyday of Muslim power in Central Asia. For a description of a more contemporary incident of this kind see A. H. Francke's account of the destruction of a stupa by a "Muhammadan" just three years prior to his visit; in Antiquities of Indian Tibet, Part I, "Personal Narrative," (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., n.d.), reprint of 1927 edition. But if Muslims have at times committed atrocities against their Buddhist brethren, so too have Buddhists against Muslims. After the conquest of the Turks by the Ladakhi King bKra shis rnam rgyal in the 13th century, he is said to have built a "protectors' chapel" (dgon khang) over the dead bodies of the defeated Muslim soldiers; recounted in the La dvags rgyal rabs, see Francke, Antiquities, Part II, p. 103. We know as well of the execution of a group of 14 Chinese Muslims in Lhasa (probably for proselytizing) during medieval times; see Siddiqui, "Tibetan Muslims," p. 76. Still, considering that they have shared over 500 years of history in the same geographical area, Muslims and Buddhists in the Tibetan cultural region have a comparatively good record of inter-community relations.

18. Giuseppe Tucci, Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims in the Swat Valley (Calcutta: The Greater India Society, 1940), pp. 12, 30 stresses the extent to which Buddhism had declined in the Swat Valley in the three centuries (13th to 16th) that separated the two pilgrims whose accounts he examines; see also pp. 39, 77 for accounts of their interactions with Muslims and for details of funerary practices in the region.

19. Francke, A History of Western Tibet, chapter IX. Interestingly, it was during the reign of bDe legs that the treaty with Tibet leading to the institution of the Lo phyag caravan (described in this book) was signed.

20. The one and only Muslim invasion of Nepal occurred in the year 1349. It was then that the Muslim ruler of Bengal, Sultān Shams ud-dīn Ilyās invaded Kathmandu, damaging or destroying many of the Hindu and Buddhist holy sites of the valley. See Luciano Petech, Mediaeval History of Nepal (c.750-1482), 2nd ed. (Rome: IsMEO, 1984), pp. 124-127.

21. Although see Stein, Tibetan Civilization, p. 83, who states that "the Sultan Said Khan of Kashgar and his general Mirza Haidar had, for instance, penetrated to Central Tibet in 1531-1533."

22. See, for example, the portion of the Genealogies of Zha lu translated by Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 656. Of course, the fact that Tibetan kings ruled portions of Central Asia is attested to in a variety of Tibetan-language historical sources. The La dvags rgyal rabs (Petech, Antiquities, Part II), for example, recounts Khri srong lde btsan's (late eighth century) conquest of Turkestan (p. 87), and Ral pa can's (early ninth century) conquest of much of Central Asia "upto Persia" (p. 90). On knowledge of the Tibetan threat to certain Arabian caliphates see Christopher Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power Among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs and Chinese During the Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); also Butt, "Muslims of Tibet: Past and Present," p. 1. Per K. Sørensen, Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, An Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century Tibetan Chronicle: rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'ime-long (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994) p. 452 n., mentions that sKyid-lde Nyi-ma mgon (late eighth, early ninth century) had two consorts, one of which, from the name (sTag-gzig-gza'), appears to have been Persian. (sTag-gzig-gza')
ba'c 'm

23. Siddiqui, "Muslims of Tibet," pp. 71-72. See also Abubakar Ameruddin Tibbati (Nadvi), Tibbat aur Tibbati Musalman (Tibet and Tibetan Muslims, Urdu) (Lucknow: Nadwatul Ulema, 1979), the only full length monograph on the subject. A portion of Beckwith's annotated bibliography (The Tibetan Empire, pp. 238-240) deals with the Arabic sources relevant to this period. See also Md. Mahmud's letter to the Statesman (Dec. 15, 1950) cited in extenso in Prince Peter, "Moslems of Central Tibet," p. 239; as well as the latter's account of "Timur (Tamerlane's)" incursions into Tibet.

24. See Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire, especially pp. 154-168.

25. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire, pp. 161-162.

26. Butt, "Muslims of Tibet: Past and Present," p. 1. Petech writes that in the thirteenth century the Ilkhans of Iran, entrusted by the Mongols with overseeing portions of western Tibet, "kept their representatives in the P'ag-mo-gru fief and built and endowed Buddhist temples in their Iranian territories. Khan Argun (1284-1291) was surrounded by Buddhist monks, some of them Tibetan. After his death, however, the Ilkhans accepted Islam and in 1295-96 Buddhism was suppressed and its temples and monasteries were destroyed. The connection with Tibet had probably ceased before that." Luciano Petech, Central Tibet and the Mongols: The Yuan-Sa-skyia Period of Tibetan History (Rome: IsMEO, 1990), pp. 11-12.

27. In his 1952 article Prince Peter, "The Moslems of Central Tibet," p. 234, mentions that, in addition to Lhasa, Muslim communities were known to exist at "Shigatse, Tsetang (in the Yarlung valley), Lha-tse dzong and Dri-kung (north of Lhasa)." He gives the approximate population of Muslims in Lhasa, Shigatse and Tsethang as 350, 150 and 20 families, respectively.

28. Pir (Urdu), and Ahon (Chinese), are the terms used to refer to a muslim who is religiously cultivated, often a religious teacher of Islam (a mulla).

29. I have found this oral tradition mentioned in none of the literature. The closest reference is to be found in Prince Peter's, "Moslems of Central Tibet," p. 238, where he states, "The first theory (on the origins of the Muslim community in Lhasa) is that the Great Fifth Dalai Lama applied to the Moghul emperor of Delhi for advisers, and in reply received a certain number of Musulmans who set themselves up at his Court. A second theory is that the same Fifth Dalai Lama, desirous of showing that he was the ruler of the Universe and that people from the whole world attended his tem-del (levées), caused Moslems to come to Lhasa in a purely representative capacity; a Persian is supposed to have come first, others from India following afterwards. A fresco in the Potala palace is said to represent this attendance of turbanned outsiders on ceremonious occasions." (first insertion mine)

30. Siddiqui, "Muslims of Tibet," p. 74.

31. Siddiqui, "Muslims of Tibet," pp. 74-75; also, Tibetan Review, vol. XIII, no. 11, p. 26. Although Prince Peter, "Moslems of Central Tibet," p. 237, states that his Tibetan informants (from the Lhasa kha che portion of the community) complained of having to pay a tax for each child born to them.

32. Prince Peter, "Moslems of Central Tibet," pp. 237-238, who states as well that he had heard reports of Arab Hajj agents visiting Lhasa in the late 1940's!

33. The Tibetan word tshogs, literally "accumulation," is of course borrowed from Buddhism, where it refers to the food offerings made in the context of Buddhist (especially Tantric) ritual practice. For those of us concerned with the complexities of the translation of Indian Sanskrit words into Tibetan, and of Tibetan (Buddhist) nomenclature into English, one of the most interesting aspects of the study of Tibetan Islam has to do with the question of translation: in the latter case, the translation of Arabic and Urdu (Islamic) nomenclature into Tibetan. The present example is case in point. Perhaps more than anything else it shows that Tibetan Muslims did not find anathema the practice of borrowing terminology from their Buddhist brothers and sisters.

34. For references see Eric J. Sharpe, Comparative Religion: A History (La Salle, IL.: Open Court, 1975), p. 11.

35. In the eighth century. See David Snellgrove, Buddhist Himalaya: travels and studies in quest of the origins and nature of Tibetan religion (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1957), pp. 147-148.

36. The Tibetan scholar Thu'u kvan bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma says; for example, that "it seems that most of those who belong to the system of the barbarians (kla klo) are non-Buddhists who, relying upon neither logic nor meditation etc., instead crookedly expound the confusion that is the irreligiousness of the world, and strongly advocate violence as their religion. It seems that those called Hou zi and Thean ku^{tu} in contemporary India? China? (rgya) etc. belong to the lineage of the barbarians"; Thu'u kvan grub mtha' (Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), p. 468. See also Stein, Tibetan Civilization, p. 55.

37. See Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 598f. See also John Newman, "Islam in the Buddhist Kālacakra Tantra," paper read at the 1989 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, unpublished.

38. See Laufer, Loan Words in Tibetan, T'oung pao 17 (1916), p. 484. The passage is found in Tāranātha's History, dPal gyi 'byung gnas dam pa'i chos rin po che 'phags pa'i yul du ji ltar dar ba'i tshul gsal bar ston pa dgos 'dod kun 'byung, ed. Antonius Schiefner, Taranathae de Doctrinae Buddhicae in Indi Propagatione (Petropoli: 1868), Suzuki Research Foundation, Reprint Series 2, p. 63. See Schiefner's trans. in Tāranātha's Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien (St. Petersburg: Kommissionäre der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1869), p. 79; and Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya's in Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi and Co., 1980), p. 117. The Tibetan reads: dus de tsam na kla lo'i chos dang por byung ba'ang yin te/ kha cig kha che'i yul du btsun pa dpal len 'das pa'i dus su byung zhes zer la/ 'ga zhig btsun pa ku na la'i slob ma yin yang zer te/ mdo sde 'dzin pa mang du thos pa yin yang dad pa med pa gzhon nu sde zhes bya ba zhig byung ste/ de bslab pa 'chal ba dge 'dun gyis gnas dbyung byas pas cher 'khrugs te/ sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la 'gren par nus pa'i chos rtsom mo zhes tho gar gyi yul gyi rgyab shu li ka zhes bya ba'i yul du songs/ ming ma-ma thar zhes par spos/ cha lugs bsgyur nas 'tshe ba chos su smra ba'i kla klo'i chos brtsams te/ lha min gyi rigs kyi gdon chen po bi sli mli gnas su sbas shing gtad do/ /bdud kyis byin gyis brlabs te/ gyul las rgyal ba la sogs pa'i rig sngags mang po'ang grub bo/.

39. In the early eighth century? See Giuseppe Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls (Kyoto: Rinsen Book Company, 1980), reprint of the 1949 ed., p. 87. Interestingly, the word gying (derived from Arabic jinn) is also used in writings associated with Padmasambhava; see Laufer (Tibetan Loan Words, p. 484) for a discussion and references.

40. See Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 159. On Muslims in the Mongol courts, and on Kublai Khan's edicts against the practice of Muslim customs after the death of the "Saracen" Ahmad, see Igor de Rachewitz, et. al., eds., In the Service of the Khan, p. 117 passim (especially p. 555, 579-80). Stein, Tibetan Civilization, p. 163, also mentions Mongol-sponsored debates between Nestorian Christians, Muslims and Buddhists.

41. This work is currently being translated by Donald Lopez.

42. Luciano Petech, China and Tibetan the Early 18th Century: History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1950), p. 183.

43. For an alternative etymology see Siddiqui, "Muslims of Tibet," p. 76.

44. This is not to say that Muslims were the only traders. Even the Tibetan government was actively involved in trade. One of the most famous instances of this was the annual cha-pa (tea) caravan from Lhasa to Leh. See Bray, "The Lapchak Mission," p. 86.

45. As Laufer, Loan Words in Tibetan, pp. 474-475, has shown, this Tibetan word comes from a Persian source (kurkum, karkam, karkum). A plethora of others words for specific spices, fruits, plants, vegetables, metals, cooking utensils, precious gems and different types of cloth are also borrowed from Persian (Laufer, pp. 474-483); and still others, related to Islam as a religion and its practices (e.g. ma si ta/masjid = mosque, da fan/dafan = burial, ma zār/mezār = cemetery, ha lál/halal = meat properly slaughtered) are borrowed from Arabic (Laufer, pp. 483-485). To conclude this discussion, it may be of interest to cite Laufer at some length. "The Iranian loan-words in Tibetan are all derived from Persian, not from Pahlavī or Sogdian. The only traceable Pahlavī prototype may be the tribal name

Tadzik (Persian Tāzī) that underlies the Tibetan transcription Ta-zig, or in more Tibetanized writing sTag-gzig... The Tibetan name usually relates to Persia and the Persians, designated, though more rarely, also as Par-sig. Tāranātha employs Ta-zig also with reference to the Moghuls of India. It is difficult to determine the route over which the Persian loan words have migrated. Many may have come from Hindustānī; others may belong to an earlier period, and be due to a direct contact of Persian civilization with western Tibet. Arabic words are partially borrowed from Hindustānī, partially from Persian, or were spread also by Mohammedan (sic) traders in Tibet" (pp. 406-407).

46. My informants mentioned especially Chamdo and Shigatse as areas where large Muslim communities were to be found.

47. Prince Peter, "Moslems of Central Tibet," pp. 236-237.

48. My informants in Lhasa gave me the figure of 2000, which is also the size of the community given by Siddqui, "Tibetan Muslims," p. 84, and in Tibet Handbook (p. 201). But Thomas Arnold, Preaching of Islam (Lahore), p. 296, estimates it to be more on the order of 2000 families. It may very well be that the number 2000 has achieved a mythical status (like the traditional numbers given as the populations of Tibet's three largest monasteries pre-1959 -- 3,300, 5,500, 7,700), which, though perhaps accurate at a certain point in history, may today represent more a collective memory than an accurate representation of the actual Muslim population of Lhasa.

49. Francke, A History of Western Tibet, p. 95.

50. See Francke, Antiquities, Part I, p. 77.

51. Luciano Petech, The Kingdom of Ladakh c. 950-1842 (Rome: IsMEO, 1977) makes a case for the fact that there is not sufficient evidence "to specify the specific Tibetan country from which Rīncana Bhotṭa came" (p. 21).

52. Francke, Antiquities, Part I, p. 108. Of course it is impossible to say whether the "Paganism" refers to Hinduism, Buddhism or both, but this interesting figure was a Buddhist before his conversion. In any case, the inscription attests to the fluidity of boundaries we are discussing here.

53. Chapter 8, "The Twilight of the Ladakhi Kingdom."

54. Francke, Antiquities, Part I, pp. 100-101 (my insertions). See also his remarks in A History of Western Tibet, p. 95.

55. See, for example, Francke, Antiquities, Part I, p. 89. Also, Anne Chayet, Art et Archéologie du Tibet (Paris: Picard 1994), pp. 181, 208. As an aside, she mentions as well that Benjamin de Tudela (12th century) knows of Tibet as the source of silk, lapis, gold and musk. Giuseppe Tucci, Transhimalaya, trans. from French by James Hogarth (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1973), p. 143, recounts an incident in Rin chen bzang po's (958-1055) life in which he commissioned a statue from a Kashmiri Muslim artist, which he (Tucci) says "once again confirms the part played by Kashmir in the formation of Tibetan art"; see also p. 180, where he speaks of the influence of "Iranian and particularly Ghaznavi art" on Tibet.

56. Muslim violinists and flautists also seem to have been favorites as entertainers in the social events sponsored by Lhasa's aristocracy. See M. Butt, "Muslims of Tibet: Past and Present," p. 6. In fact, the Nang ma style may be much older than Butt supposes, dating from as early as the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama's regent, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, who appears to have been a connoisseur of this art form; see Krang dbyi sun, et. al., Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo, vol. I, p. 1508 (nang ma entry).

57. Born in a Muslim area of Western India, he studied traditional sciences from an early age and specialized in medicine. Krang dbyi sun et. al., Bod rGya Tshig mdzod chen mo (2 vol. ed.) (Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1993), vol. I, p. 192.

58. Dawa Norbu, trans., Khache Phalu's Advice on the Art of Living (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1987).

59. Norbu, Khache Phalu's Advice, pp. i-ii.

60. There was already precedence for this, as the British had in earlier times claimed the Ladakhis as citizens of India, which, according to Prince Peter ("Moslems of Central Tibet," p. 235), "occasionally led to trouble with the Tibetan government."

61. See Siddiqui, "Tibetan Muslims," pp. 79-81.

62. Tibetan Review, vol. XIII, no. 9 (September, 1978). For a more recent assessment see M. Butt, "Muslims of Tibet: Past and Present," pp. 7-8.