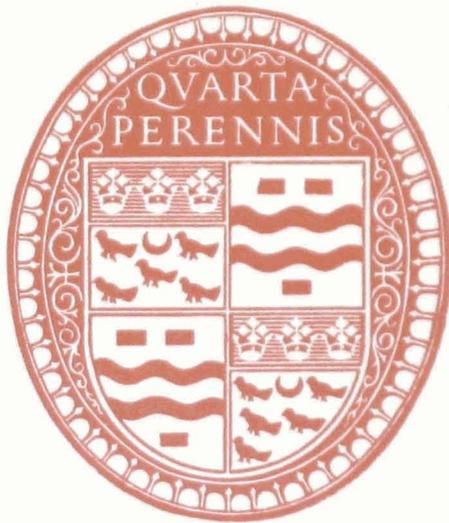


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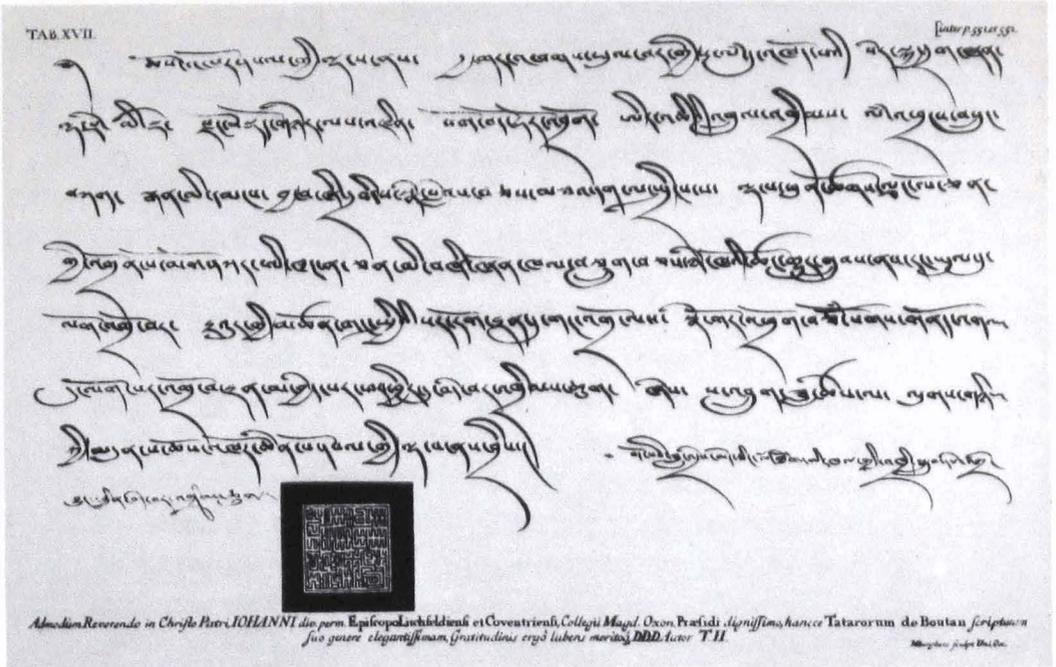
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A NOTE ON THE RESOURCES FOR TIBETAN STUDIES AT OXFORD

By MICHAEL ARIS

I INTEND briefly to discuss the valuable holdings in Oxford of material in Tibetan as assembled since the early nineteenth century. The collections are small by comparison with those of the British Library and the India Office Library but contain many items of singular interest. Together they bear witness to a continuing, if somewhat sporadic, devotion to the field of Tibetan Studies on the part of individual Oxford scholars. The collections also reflect the Bodleian's capacity to acquire material relating to important disciplines which are otherwise not represented in the University at large. The time is right for a summary appraisal because recent years have seen the dissemination of many thousands of Tibetan texts reprinted by refugees in India under a scheme administered by the U.S. Library of Congress known as the Special Foreign Currencies Program (formerly the PL 480 Program). Before attempting to grasp the full dimensions of this extraordinary *embarras de richesse*, surely it is important to take stock of the older collections among which those of Oxford certainly deserve consideration.

To date the Bodleian Library possesses 188 Tibetan manuscripts and 329 Tibetan xylographs (designated 'blockbooks'). It has 248 primary sources in western editions and these are complemented by a further 125 items of a similar nature under the same roof in the Indian Institute Library, which also possesses 330 works of secondary literature on Tibet. In addition to complete runs of the relevant journals, the two libraries between them have full sets of the *Serie Orientale Roma*, the *Asiatische Forschungen*, and the *Śata-Pitaka Series*, all of which are important for Tibetan Studies. The Pitt Rivers Museum has four sets of Tibetan manuscripts, a reflection of the magpie habits of many army officers and civil servants in India who left their acquisitions to this 'museum of a museum'. Unfortunately most of the texts are in fragments but among them is a fine example of a Tibetan musical score, the *dByangs-yig tshangs-pa'i rol-mo* ('The Musical Notation [entitled] the Music of Brahma', Beasley



Tibetan passport of 1688 issued to an Armenian merchant, 'the White-Head I-wang-na, guest of Phun-tshogs ICang-lo-can of Lhasa'. From Thomas Hyde, *Historia religionis veterum Persarum* (Oxford, 1700), plate 27.

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Collection 357). The library of the Oriental Institute, the Balfour Library (Pitt Rivers Museum), and the Tylor Library (Institute of Social Anthropology) also possess small collections of secondary literature, as do some of the college libraries. Although I shall not deal now with the collections of Tibetan art at the Ashmolean Museum (the Scratton Collection particularly), St. Antony's College (the Hailey Collection), and the Pitt Rivers Museum, the comprehensive holding of books on Tibetan art in the Library of Eastern Art in the Ashmolean should be mentioned. In addition, approximately 1,000 glass-plate negatives, formerly the property of Sir Charles Bell (1870–1945), who was the British political representative in Lhasa, have recently been discovered in the library of the Far East Centre, St. Antony's College. They provide a full documentary record of life in traditional Tibet, and probably date from Bell's mission of 1920–1. The collection has now been deposited at the Pitt Rivers Museum.

The Bodleian's collections are by far the most significant. Although some work remains to be completed on their cataloguing, by and large their contents are known and accessible. This is due in great measure to the labours of Mr. John Driver, formerly of St. Antony's College, who prepared a description and report on the manuscripts and 'blockbooks' acquired up to c. 1970, thus furnishing material for any future descriptive catalogue. In recent years Mr. David Barrett of the Library has been engaged in preparing a complete card catalogue. It would have been difficult to undertake the present contribution without these materials to hand.

The earliest known interest in Tibetan shown at Oxford came with the University's publication in 1700 of the *Historia religionis veterum Persarum* by Thomas Hyde (1636–1703), who was Bodley's Librarian, Laudian Professor of Arabic, and Regius Professor of Hebrew. Among the medley of Central Asian scripts reproduced in this work is found a facsimile of a passport issued by the Tibetan government in the year Earth Dragon (1688) to an Armenian merchant whose name is given as *I-wang-na* (Jovannes?). This interesting document (see pl. XXIII) may have been the first example of Tibetan to appear in Europe. The translation of it by Kőrösi Csoma Sándor (Alexander Csoma de

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Körös, see below) which appeared in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, ii (1833), with the wrong reading of the merchant's name as *It'hang-na*, is bound into the Bodleian copy of the 1760 edition of the *Historia*, suggesting that the work was still in print well into the nineteenth century.

Turning to those items which have struck me as particularly interesting and significant, in the approximate order of their acquisition, in 1806 the Bodleian bought what was in all likelihood the first major collection of Tibetan documents to enter the country. These are found among the papers of Samuel Turner (1749–1802), who was sent by Warren Hastings in 1783 to the court of the Panchen Lama. His *An Account of an embassy to the court of the Teshoo Lama, in Tibet* (London, 1800) is rightly regarded as a great classic of Tibetan travel literature, but the preservation of some of his papers in Oxford is known to few people. Among one set of twenty-eight documents bound together (MS. Tibet. a.8) is found the original of the letter from 'Jigs-med Seng-ge, 18th Deb Raja of Bhutan (regn. 1776–88), which Turner reproduced on plate XIII of his *Account* as an example of the Tibetan cursive hand. Included in this set are one further letter from the Deb Raja and three sent by the steward of the infant Panchen Lama. MS. Tibet. a.7(R) consists of an incomplete history of Tibet written in cursive on a scroll of 189 lines. The work lacks both title and colophon and there is no indication as to date or authorship, but it is very likely the 'abridged history of Tibet, from their own annals' which the Lama's regent and his companions had promised to Turner (*Account*, p. 278). It covers in brief the entire period from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries and opens with a typical cosmology. Although representing a late and developed tradition, the work has undoubted value. MS. Asiat. Misc. a.4 contains a further forty-nine items, mostly correspondence received by Turner up to four years after the date of his mission. Nearly all the documents were written by munshis in the employment of the Bhutanese government in a heavily Persianized medieval court Bengali and stamped with various seals in Tibetan, Mongolian, Persian, and Bengali.

In 1809 the Library acquired a true oddity, only recently identified as Tibetan. This is the *Inscrip.[tio] Calmucor.[um]*

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Sanskr.[itica] (MS. E. D. Clarke Or. 41), in fact a Kalmuk prayer-flag consisting of parts of two sutras containing protective *dharanis* written in Tibetan on red linen. It had been obtained in a Kalmuk camp on the north-east shore of the Sea of Azov by the Revd. Edmund Daniell Clarke (1769–1822), a great traveller, antiquary, and mineralogist of his day. Unintelligible as it was to the Kalmuks at that time, the elders of the tribe had faithfully copied it out and presented it to the eccentric gentleman with much ceremony, saying it contained the essence of their religion. (For Clarke's description of the incident, see his *Travels in various countries*, pt. 1 (London, 1810), 333–4.)

This strange event on the westernmost fringe of the Tibetan cultural empire points to the source of several of the Bodleian's most valuable documents, for it was in the old region of Western Tibet, and British-administered Ladakh in particular, that the modern discipline of Tibetology was really born. The founding figure is reckoned to have been the Hungarian scholar Kőrösi Csoma Sándor (1784–1842) who set off in 1819 on a romantic quest for the origins of the Magyar people. He ended up spending about eight years in the monasteries of Zangskar and neighbouring regions, during which period he prepared his *Essay towards a dictionary, Tibetan and English*, published in Calcutta in 1834 (Tib. d. 23). Perhaps the most poignant of the Bodleian's treasures is a manuscript containing a first draft of half of the Tibetan entries in his famous dictionary. The hand is very likely that of his collaborator, the 'Brug-pa lama Sangs-rgyas Phuntshogs, who presumably gave this draft its Tibetan title of *Bod-skad-kyi ming-mdzod* (MS. Ind. Inst. Tib. 2).

One of the acquisitions by the Indian Institute in the nineteenth century does no credit to the manner in which it had been procured in Sikkim. It is sufficient to give the title 'Manuscripts and impressions . . . taken from the interior of an idol in the Buddhist temple at Namtchee in Independent Sikkim in Feb. 1861, on the march of Colonel Gawler's force into the country . . .' (F. a. 4(8)). From the number of mantras and yantras in this collection it seems the desecrated image was probably large and highly venerated.

It was not until 1885 that the Bodleian showed a decisive interest in Tibetan with the purchase of the large and important

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Schlagintweit Collection, for which Emil Schlagintweit himself provided a manuscript catalogue ten years later in 1895. The collection contains some 207 works in 118 items (sixteen of which are in non-Tibetan languages). Perhaps the single most important item is a history of Ladakh (the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*, MS. Tibet. c.7) in pursuit of which Hermann Schlagintweit had conducted subtle negotiations in 1865 with the ex-king of Ladakh, 'Jigs-med rNam-rgyal. Emil Schlagintweit published his own edition of this crucial document in 1866, and it was incorporated much later by A. H. Francke into his critical edition of 1926. Many of the Schlagintweit texts are standard central Tibetan blockprints and it seems most of these were obtained through the offices of a famous political monk of that time, the Chibu Lama, who acted as the representative of Sikkim in Darjeeling. Included in the collection, however, is a set of thirteen Persian manuscripts which the Schlagintweit brothers had acquired from one Haider Khan, the hereditary Moslem ruler of Shigar, the northernmost district of Baltistan (often called 'Little Tibet'). Among these are found histories of both Baltistan and Shigar itself; as far as I am aware, none of these documents have ever been properly studied.

For me the most pleasing memento of the travels of the Schlagintweits is found outside their collection, in the Indian Institute Library which possesses a set of linen (?) proofs (F. c. 4 (18)) of the illustrations for Emil Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet, illustrated by literary documents and objects of religious worship* (Leipzig, 1863). The last item in the proofs never found its way into the book. It shows a so-called 'Bhutia Map' of the commercial route from Assam to Lhasa by way of Tawang, complete with mythological beasts, snow mountains, and temples. It was drawn for the brothers by the 'Kauang Rajah' at Narigum in 1856. It holds a special appeal for me as I followed the same route as far as Tawang with my family in 1979.

Until this century Tibet remained virtually closed to foreign scholarship and it should cause no surprise that the Bodleian's acquisitions in the nineteenth century all came from the fringe of the Tibetan world. In 1904 the Younghusband Expedition forced its way to Lhasa to counter an imagined Russian threat from the north and Lt.-Col. Austin Waddell accompanied the

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mission to collect works of Tibetan scholarship. His activities appear to have been sanctioned partly as a result of the recommendations of F. W. Thomas, then Librarian of the India Office Library, whose Tibetan interests always tended to outweigh his devotion to Sanskrit. At all events, Waddell procured a huge mass of original Tibetan material, by both gift and plunder. The collection was somewhat arbitrarily, but munificently, divided and presented by the government of India to the British Museum Library, the India Office Library, Cambridge University Library, and the Bodleian Library, the last receiving some 131 volumes. Included among these were ninety-one volumes of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, the Kanjur (*bKa'-gyur*), representing an incomplete set of the Narthang edition prepared in 1732 during the reign of the VIIth Dalai Lama. Unfortunately several of the volumes were badly mutilated by rodents. Meanwhile the Derge edition has been purchased in an Indian reprint edition and it is intended that this should be followed by the acquisition of a full set of the Tenjur (*bsTan-gyur*), the commentaries on the canon, from the original blocks at Derge. The Chinese authorities have recently announced the reactivation and refurbishing of the huge printery there.

The Younghusband Expedition also produced valuable results in the form of collotype facsimile copies prepared by the Clarendon Press of two letters addressed by the Chinese Amban in Lhasa to the Tibetan public at the time of the expedition, and a letter in reply from the Tibetan cabinet (MS. Tibet. c. 24). They were given by Sir William Herschel in 1908 and still await study.

Even after the Younghusband Expedition it was really only on the western periphery, which lay beyond the reach of the Tibetan government, that foreign scholars could pursue their interests. The German Moravian missionaries at Leh and other centres in the Western Himalayas were all prodigious scholars. An extremely rare product of their efforts can be seen in the Bodleian's copy of A. H. Francke's *First [and second] collection of Tibetan historical inscriptions on rock and stone from West Tibet* (Tib. d. 37 (1-3)). These were mimeographed in Leh in 1906 and 1907 on a portable press which now lies under dust in the old mission library, surrounded by piles of those tracts in

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almost every Central Asian language which used to be sent from Leh along the old caravan routes that are now closed. Francke's pioneering collections of ancient inscriptions have never received the attention they deserve. This is partly due to the importance of the Tibetan discoveries of Sir Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot at Tun-huang. It was at Merton College that Stein wrote his classic account of the discovery of the sealed polyglot library in his *Ruins of desert Cathay* (London, 1912). Few at that time realized the effect his discoveries would have on the rise and development of Tibetan Studies. For the first time authentic documents dating from Tibet's dynastic period which ended in the ninth century became available to modern scholarship. Stein unfortunately had a very tenuous formal connection with Oxford. His great collections remained in London where F. W. Thomas and others soon began to glean the Tibetan treasures. Late in his career Thomas came to Oxford to occupy the Boden Chair of Sanskrit, and here he continued to pursue his first love to the neglect, it seems, of his official bride. He is still remembered by many in Oxford today and by all students of Tibetan as the foremost British Tibetologist of the first half of this century. Some of his Tibetan texts were given to the Bodleian and at his death the Oriental Institute Library acquired part of his personal library.

Meanwhile Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, Fellow of Jesus College, was doing more than perhaps anyone to disseminate popular interest in Tibetan religion through his famous translations of Tibetan Buddhist texts, published and many times reprinted by Oxford University Press. (Indeed, the Bible apart, his *Tibetan book of the dead* (1927) appears to be one of O.U.P.'s all time bestsellers. And it should be recalled that the Press has also published major works of Tibetan scholarship by Sir Charles Bell, Herbert Guenther, Hugh Richardson, and David Snellgrove.) Reading the works of Evans-Wentz today one is forced to admit that their virtues derive mainly from the contribution of his chief collaborator, the great Sikkimese scholar Dawa Samdrup, who assisted several foreigners who were themselves unable to cope with the Tibetan. Some of Dawa Samdrup's draft translations passed to the Bodleian with the death in 1964 of Evans-Wentz who bequeathed his papers to it.

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Among a total of fifty-four items are found manuscripts and xylographs of some value.

This briefest of surveys has concentrated more on the major collections than on the single acquisitions, and it necessarily reflects my own historical interests. Much more could be said about the liturgical, ritual, and philosophical texts in Tibetan though I do not believe there are many of exceptional rarity. It should be said, however, that the Bodleian does possess the first and most beautifully illuminated volume of the collection of rNying-ma-pa tantras known as the *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum*, purchased from Sotheby's in 1909 (MS. Tibet. a.24 (R)). Most of the remaining volumes of this unique manuscript collection are preserved in the India Office Library.

Note. The substance of this article was delivered at the annual conference of the SCONUL Group of Orientalist Libraries held at Wadham College, Oxford, on 11 January 1980.

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THIS SOCIETY was founded in 1925, on the lines of the National Art-Collections Fund. Its object is the provision of an income for the purchase of rare books and manuscripts for the Bodleian Library, supplementary to the amount allocated by the Library out of its ordinary funds. In 1945 it was incorporated as a private company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital, and with licence to omit the word 'limited' from its title. The liability of each member in the event of liquidation is limited to fifty pence.

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A selection of Library publications is listed below. A complete list is available on request. Orders should be addressed to the Librarian, Bodleian Library, Oxford OX1 3BG. Postage and packing extra. Publications may also be ordered from B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., Broad Street, Oxford.

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A SUMMARY CATALOGUE OF THE LOVELACE COLLECTION OF THE PAPERS OF JOHN LOCKE IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY. By P. LONG. Price £1.25.

MANUSCRIPTS OF BYZANTINE CHANT IN OXFORD. By N. G. WILSON and D. I. STEFANOVIĆ. 1963. Price 60p.

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MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS IN RHODES HOUSE LIBRARY. 1. Africana. Repr. 1971. Price £3. Suppl. 1971. Price £2. 2. Non-Africana. 1970. Price £2. Supplementary accessions and cumulative index. 1978. £3.

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UNION LIST OF SERIALS IN THE SCIENCE AREA, OXFORD. Stage II. 1970. Price £5. Suppl. 1. 1971. Price £3.

OXFORD LIBRARIES OUTSIDE THE BODLEIAN. By PAUL MORGAN. 2nd ed. 1980. £3.75.

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EDWARD THOMAS, 1878-1917. 1968. Price 30p.

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THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY AND ITS FRIENDS. 1970. Illustr. £1.

THE JOHN JOHNSON COLLECTION. 1971. Illustr. £1.50.

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MANUSCRIPTS AT OXFORD: R. W. HUNT MEMORIAL EXHIBITION. 1980. Illustr. £9.

EUROPEANS IN LATIN AMERICA. 1980. Illustr. £2.50.

DOCTRINA ARABUM. 1981. £1.

ENGLISH HYMNS & HYMN BOOKS. 1981. £1.50.

TOWN & GOWN: 800 YEARS OF OXFORD LIFE. 1982. Illustr. £3.