



Part 1: Prehistoric and Ancient Tibet (? – 620 AD)

? - c. 500 BC (Neolithic Tibet)

Early Tibetan tribes (Ch'iang/Poeba) migrated from the Koko-Nor region to Tibetan Plateau, and merged with the native inhabitants.

c. 500 BC–625 AD

Zhangzhung or Shangshung culture and kingdoms in western and northwestern Tibet.
Prehistoric Bön religion

Meanwhile in China



1. Early history

ca 2100 BC – 264 AD

Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties and expansion of Han people (c. 2100 – 256 BC)

Confucius and Confucianism

Spring and Autumn period (722–476 BC)

Warring States period (476–221 BC)

Seven Military Classics

Han dynasty (202 BC–AD 220)

Taoism and Laozi

Buddhism and its expansion into China and around it



2. From Three Kingdoms to Jin Dynasty

ca 265 – 1209

Three Kingdoms and Western Jin (AD 265–316)

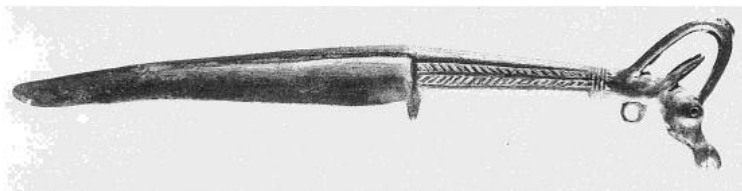
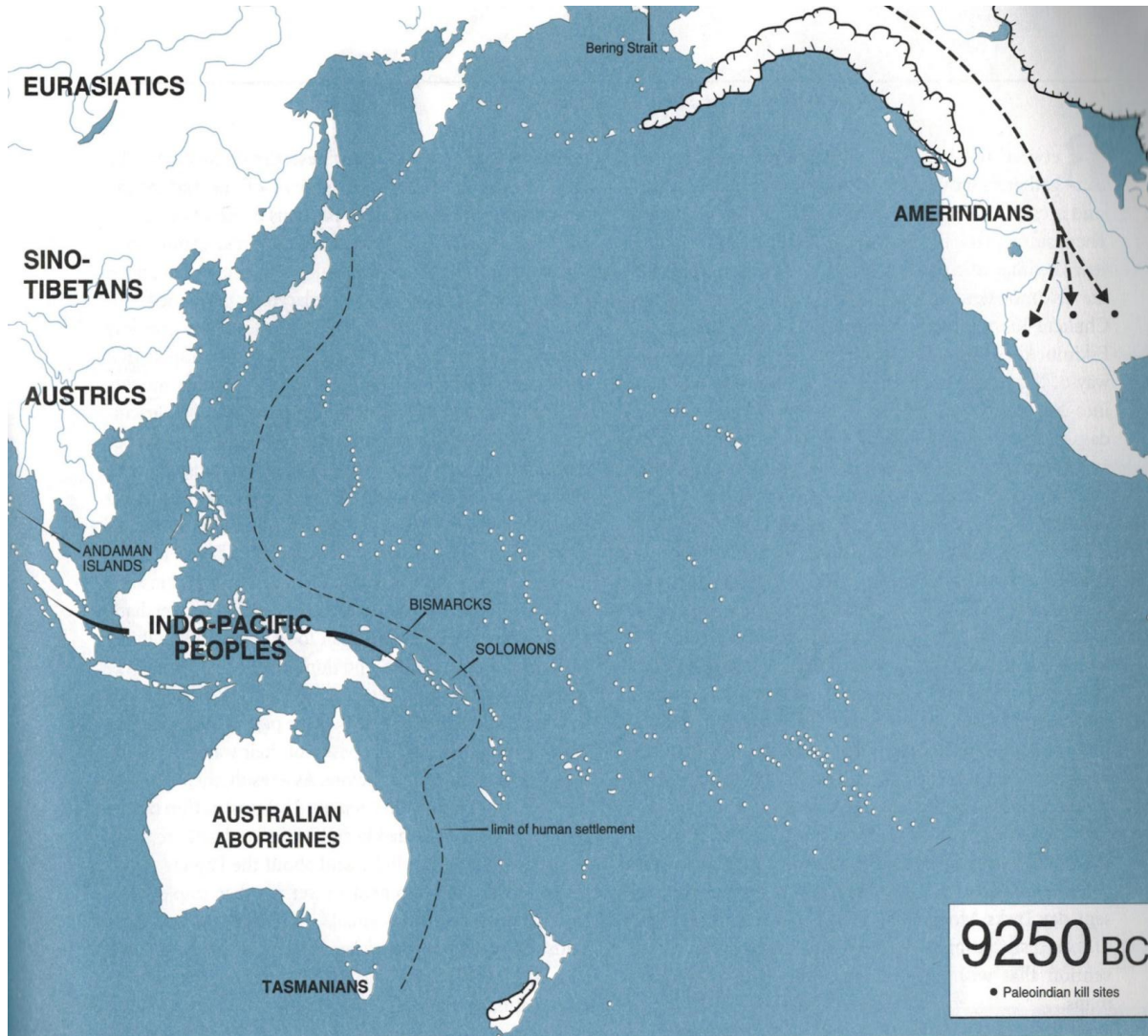
Sixteen Kingdoms and Eastern Jin (AD 304–439)

Southern and Northern Dynasties (AD 420–589)

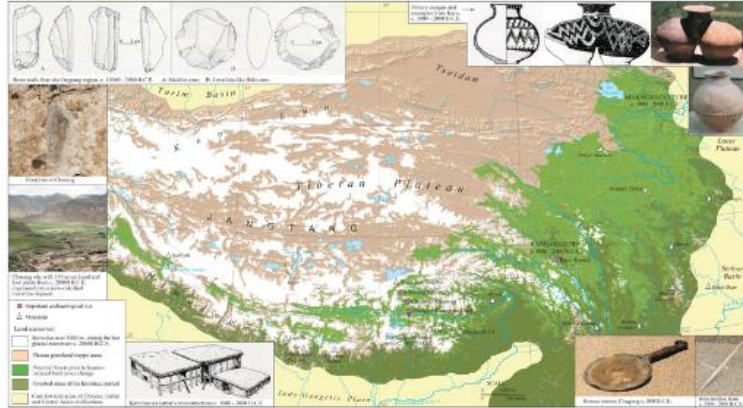
Sui dynasty (AD 589–618)

Expansion of Christianity (Nestorianism)

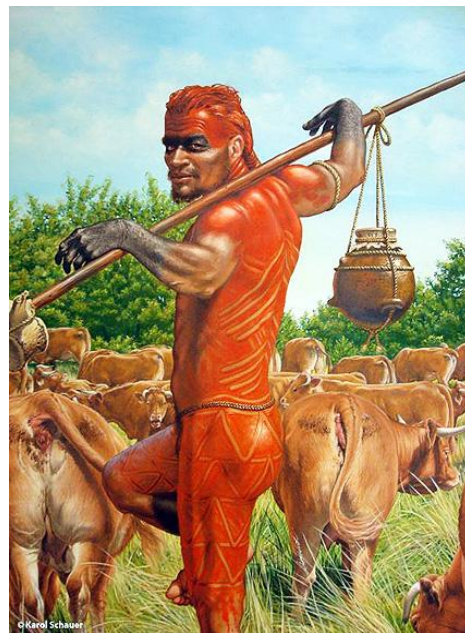
Tang dynasty (618–907), expansion of Islam and the Battle of Talas



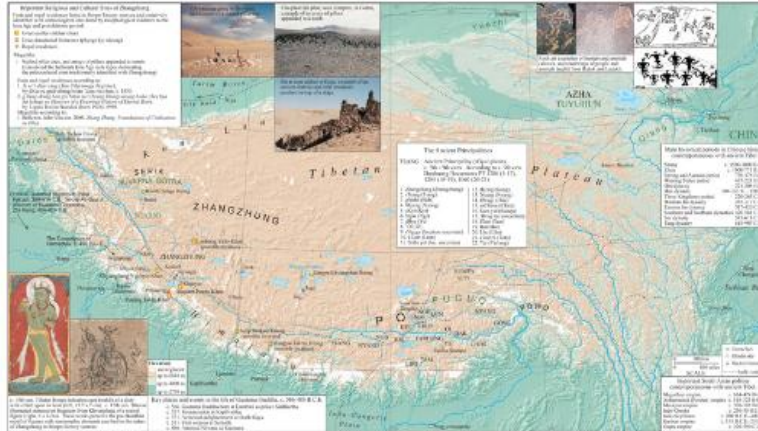
Paleolithic and Neolithic cultures on the Tibetan Plateau, circa 30,000–2000 BCE



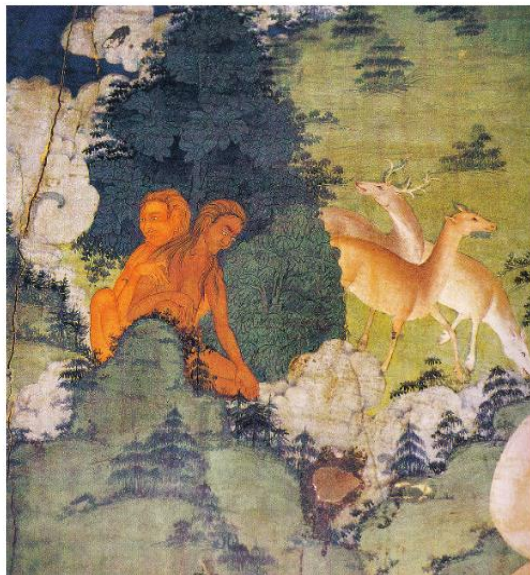
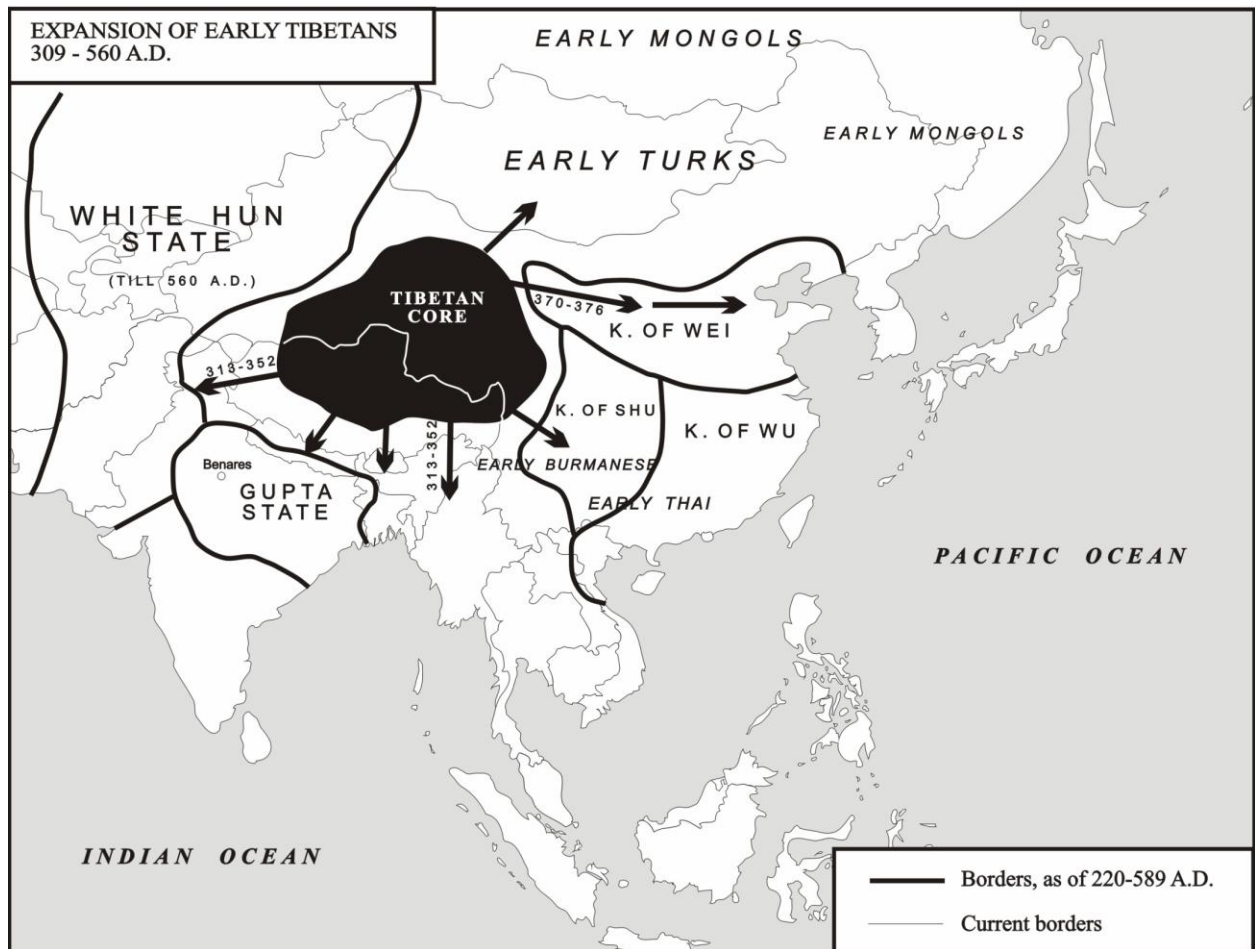
Most of the evidence for the initial human occupation of the Tibetan Plateau during the Paleolithic consists of numerous scattered assemblages of stone tools. It is estimated that nomadic hunters were drawn to the wild hooved animals of the plateau grasslands beginning about thirty thousand years ago. The earliest evidence of human activity is hand and foot prints impressed into a now-calcified surface layer from about 20,000 BCE at Chusang in Central Tibet.



The ancient Tibetan world, circa 2000 BCE to 600 CE



The advent of the first Iron and Bronze Age societies on the Tibetan Plateau, distinct from earlier Neolithic cultures, is poorly understood. Detailed archaeological surveys have been conducted only since the 1970s. But what little is known does make it clear that after about 2000 BCE, social complexity led to the construction of stone forts and cemetery complexes and the rise of societies with chiefs and forms of territorial control. Crop cultivation and animal husbandry constituted the economic basis of these polities. Shamanistic and animistic religions were widely practiced. Later written records claim that Bon was the main religion of this period and Zhangzhung in Western Tibet was the main political authority,



. Traditional account of the origin of the Tibetan people from the mating of an ape and an ogress in the Yarlung Valley of Central Tibet. Mural in the Potala Palace, Lhasa, circa seventeenth century.



Zhangzhung or Shangshung culture and kingdoms in western and northwestern Tibet c. 500 BC–625 AD



Zhangzhung or Shangshung was an ancient culture and a group of kingdoms of western and northwestern Tibet, which pre-dates the culture of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet.

Zhangzhung culture is associated with the Bon religion, which in turn, has influenced the philosophies and practices of Tibetan Buddhism.

Zhangzhung people are mentioned frequently in ancient Tibetan texts as the original rulers of central and western Tibet. Only in the last two decades have archaeologists been given access to do archaeological work in the areas once ruled by the Zhangzhung.



Recently, a tentative match has been proposed between the Zhangzhung and an Iron Age culture now being uncovered on the Changtang plateau in northwestern Tibet .



According to Annals of Lake Manasarowar, at one point the Zhang Zhung civilization consisted of 18 kingdoms in the west and northwest portion of Tibet.

The Zhang Zhung culture was centered on sacred Mount Kailash and extended west to Sarmatia and present-day Ladakh & Baltistan, southwest to Jalandhar, south to the Kingdom of Mustang in Nepal, east to include central Tibet, and north across the vast

Chang Tang plateau and the Taklamakan Desert to Shanshan. Thus the Zhang Zhung culture controlled the major portion of the "roof of the world".

Mount Kailash	
 <p>The north face of Mount Kailash</p>	
Highest point	
Elevation	6,638 m (21,778 ft)
Prominence	1,319 m (4,327 ft)
Coordinates	 31°4'0"N 81°18'45"E
Geography	
 <p>Tibet Autonomous Region, China</p>	



Tibetan Civilization

R.A. STEIN



According to Rolf Alfred Stein author of Tibetan Civilization, the area of Shang Shung was not historically a part of Tibet and was a distinctly foreign territory to the Tibetans. According to Rolf Alfred Stein, "...Then further west, The Tibetans encountered a distinctly foreign nation. - Shangshung, with its capital at Khyunglung. Mt. Kailāśa (Tise) and Lake Manasarovar formed part of this country., whose

language has come down to us through early documents. Though still unidentified, it seems to be Indo European. ...Geographically the country was certainly open to India, both through Nepal and by way of Kashmir and Ladakh. Kailāśa is a holy place for the Indians, who make pilgrimages to it. No one knows how long they have done so, but the cult may well go back to the times when Shangshung was still independent of Tibet.

How far Shangshung stretched to the north , east and west is a mystery.... We have already had an occasion to remark that Shangshung, embracing Kailāśa sacred Mount of the Hindus, may once have had a religion largely borrowed from Hinduism. The situation may even have lasted for quite a long time. In fact, about 950, the Hindu King of Kabul had a statue of Viṣṇu, of the Kashmiri type (with three heads), which he claimed had been given him by the king of the Bhota (Tibetans) who, in turn had obtained it from Kailāśa.”



Climatologic research indicates the Chang Tang plateau was a much more liveable environment until becoming drier and colder starting around 1500 BC.

One theory is that the civilization established itself on the plateau when conditions were less harsh, then managed to persist against gradually worsening climatic conditions until finally expiring around 1000 (the area is now used only by nomads). This timeframe also corresponds to the rise of the Tibetan kingdoms in the southern valleys which may also have contributed to the decline of the plateau culture.

The Conquest of Zhangzhung

There is some confusion as to whether Central Tibet conquered Zhangzhung during the reign of Songtsän Gampo (605 or 617–649) or in the reign of Trisong Detsen (r. 755 until 797 or 804). The records of the Tang Annals do, however, seem to clearly place these events in the reign of Songtsän Gampo for they say that in 634, Yangtong (Zhang Zhung) and various Qiang tribes, "altogether submitted to him." Following this he united with the country of Yangtong to defeat the 'Azha or Tuyuhun, and then conquered two more tribes of Qiang before threatening Songzhou with an army of more than 200,000 men.

Early Tibetan accounts say that the Tibetan king and the king of Zhangzhung had married each other's sisters in a political alliance. However, the Tibetan wife of the king of the Zhangzhung complained of poor treatment by the king's principal wife. War ensued, and through the treachery of the Tibetan princess, "King Ligmikya of Zhangzhung, while on his way to Sum-ba (Amdo province) was ambushed and killed by King Srongtsen Gampo's soldiers. As a consequence, the Zhangzhung kingdom was annexed to Bod (Central Tibet). Thereafter the new kingdom born of the unification of Zhangzhung and Bod was known as Bod rGyal-khab."

Stein places the conquest of Zhangzhung in 645.

Zhang Zhung revolted soon after the death of King Mangsong Mangtsen or Trimang Löntsän, the son of Songtsän Gampo, but was brought back under Tibetan control by the "firm governance of the great leaders of the Mgar clan"



Figure 11.1 Tibetan cavalry soldier of Central Tibet in medieval armor, 1904.
Photo by Laurence Austine Waddell.

Bon, also spelled Bön (Tibetan: བོན་),

is a Tibetan religion. It is almost indistin-guishable from Tibetan Buddhism in terms of doctrines and rituals,



This is a mask of Mahakala in the Ladakhi Tibetan Buddhism Cham Dance he is called Great Death – Nagpo Chenpo.





**Praise of Mahakala,
a prayer written in 1305**

Let me eloquently praise in rhymes
Your mighty wisdom renowned to all
With three red circular eyes
With teeth grinding an entire human
With a sword in your right hand
You disperse countless doubts
With a skull and spear in your left hand
You crush the others
With a dark snake earring
With a black snake as your belt
Mahakala, who makes quiver from the
depths the hearts of bloody enemies
Though you are of a peaceful spirit
You frighten the demons
Give rest in peace, Mahakala
To all friendly sentient beings
Protecting scholars and the devout
Shatter your enemies bloody
Teachers, ministers, sons and daughters
May all illnesses and demons be pacified



Sontsen Gambo and Tibetan Empire (AD 620 - 649)



Figure 10.3 Traditional account of the sacred origin of kingship in Tibet showing the Yarlung Dynasty's first king, Nyatri Tsenpo, descending to earth via a sky rope and being greeted by herders. Mural in the Potala Palace, Lhasa, circa seventeenth century.



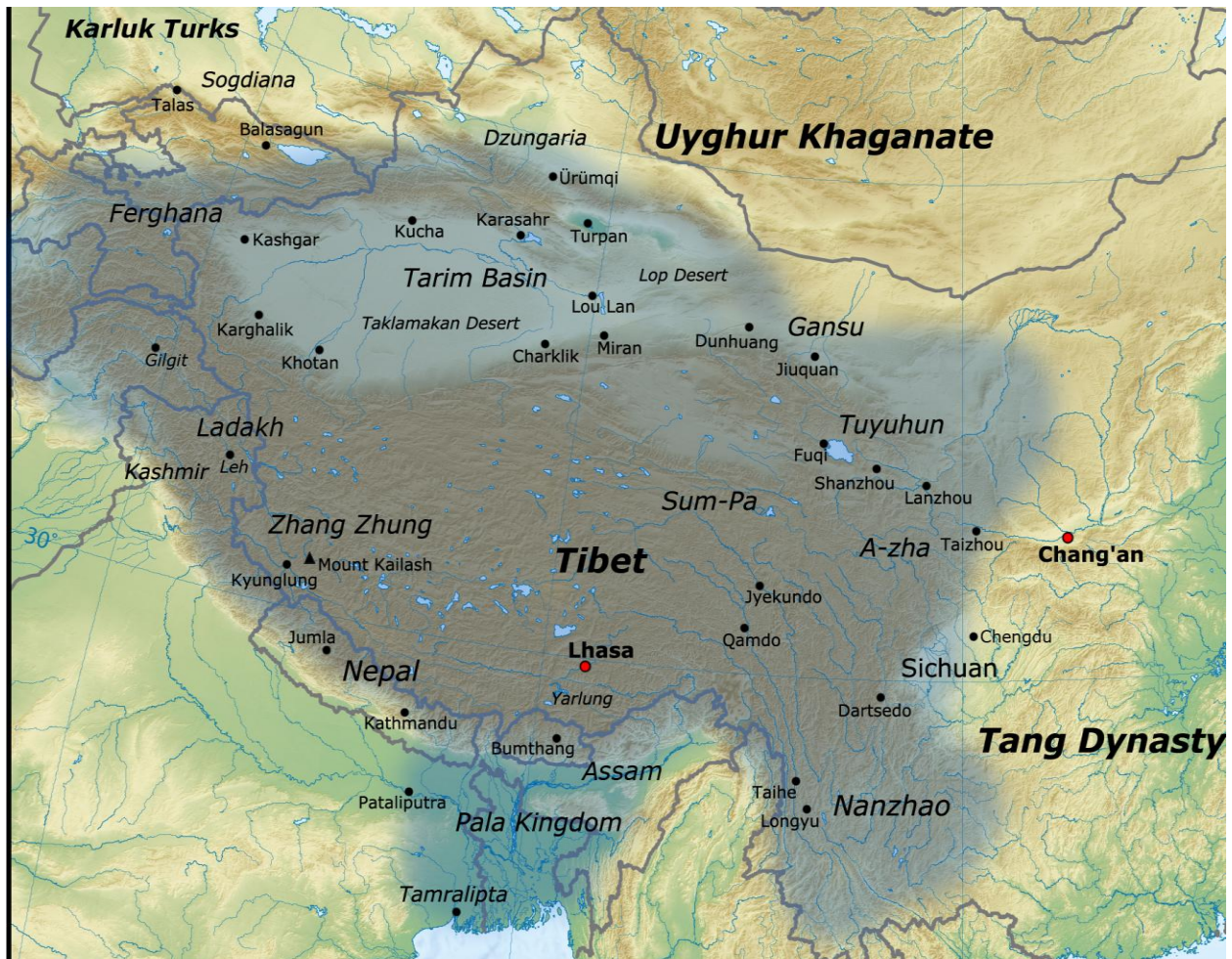
Figure 11.2 Tibetan infantry soldiers of Central Tibet in medieval armor, 1904.
Photo by Laurence Austine Waddell.

The soldiers of the Tibetan Empire wore chainmail armor and were proficient in the use of swords and lances, but were poor in archery. According to Du You (735-812) in his encyclopedic text, the *Tongdian*, the Tibetans fought in the following manner:

The men and horses all wear chain mail armor. Its workmanship is extremely fine. It envelops them completely, leaving openings only for the two eyes. Thus, strong bows and sharp swords cannot injure them. When they do battle, they must dismount and array themselves in ranks. When one dies, another takes his place. To the end, they are not willing to retreat. Their lances are longer and thinner than those in China. Their archery is weak but their armor is strong. The men always use swords; when they are not at war they still go about carrying swords.

— Du You

The Tibetans might have exported their armor to the neighboring steppe nomads. When the Turgesh attacked the Arabs, their khagan Suluk was reported to have worn Tibetan armor, which saved him from two arrows before a third penetrated his breast. He survived the ordeal with some discomfort in one arm.



Society

The Old Book of Tang states:

They grow no rice, but have black oats, red pulse, barley, and buckwheat. The principal domestic animals are the yak, pig, dog, sheep, and horse. There are flying squirrels, sembling in shape those of our own country, but as large as cats, the fur of which is used for clothes.

They have abundance of gold, silver, copper, and tin. The natives generally follow their flocks to pasture, and have no fixed dwelling-place. They have, however, some walled cities. The capital of the state is called the city of Lohsieh.

The houses are all flat-roofed, and often reach to the height of several tens of feet. The men of rank live in large felt tents, which are called fulu.

The rooms in which they live are filthily dirty, and they never comb their hair nor wash. They join their hands to hold wine, and make plates of felt, and knead dough into cups, which they fill with broth and cream and eat the whole together.

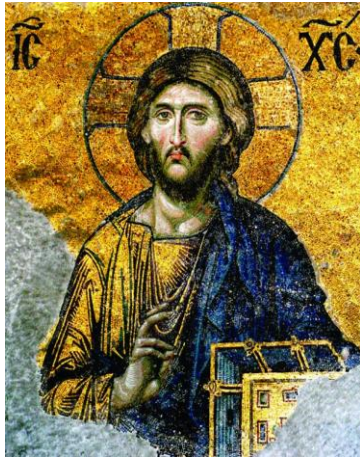


Decline

The reign of Langdarma (838–842), was plagued by external troubles.

The Uyghur state to the north collapsed under pressure from the Kyrgyz in 840, and many displaced people fled to Tibet. Langdarma himself was assassinated, apparently by a Buddhist hermit, in 842. A civil war that arose over Langdarma's successor led to the collapse of the Tibetan Empire. The period that followed, known traditionally as the Era of Fragmentation, was dominated by rebellions against the remnants of imperial Tibet and the rise of regional warlords.





Christianity (Nestorianism) in Tibet and around it (428 – early 14th Century)

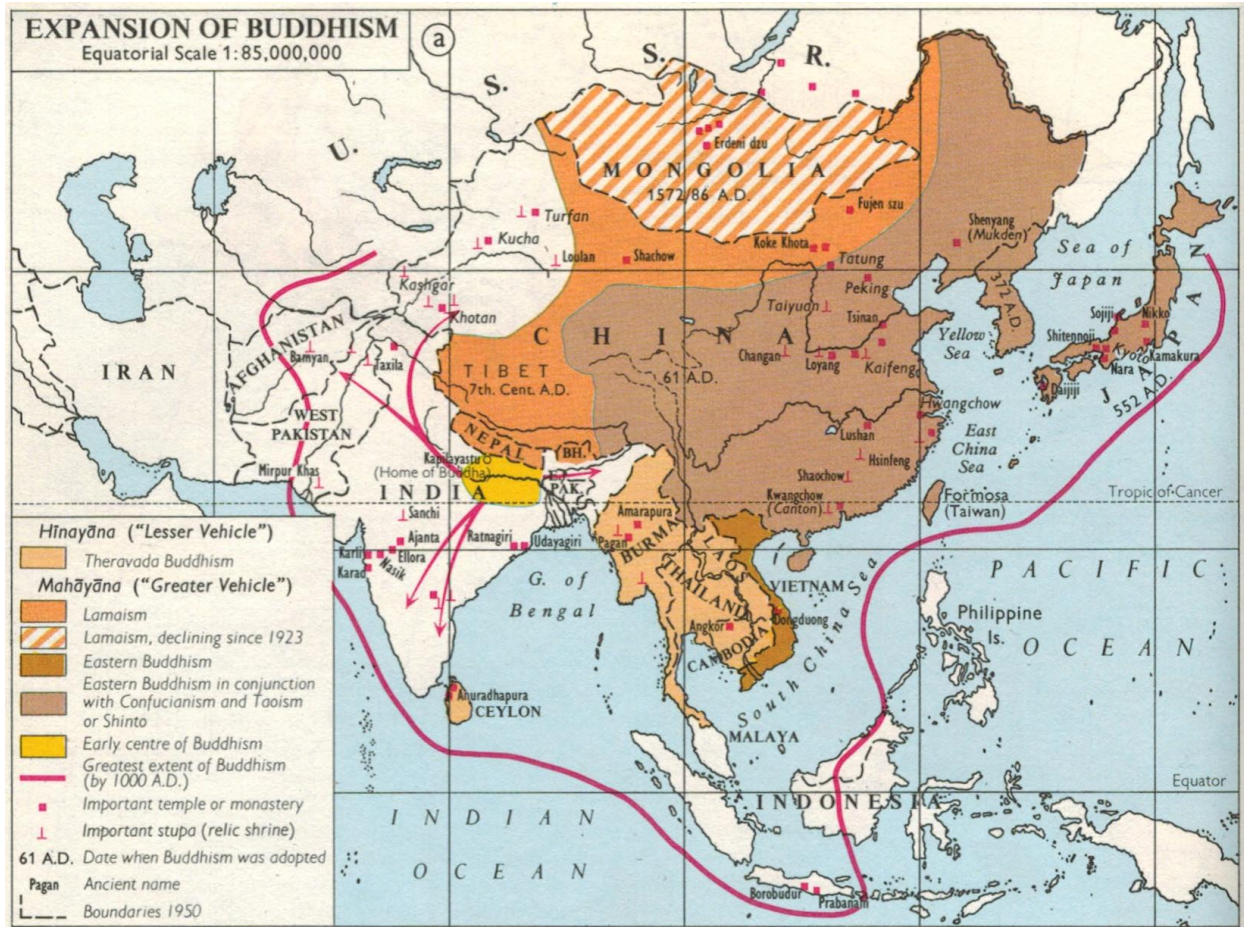




Buddhism in Tibet and around it (7th Century)

Before we examine how different forms of territorial administration facilitated the growth and expansion of the Tibetan Empire, it is important to consider two key historical events, the formal introduction of Buddhism and the invention of Tibetan writing, which occurred during the Imperial Period. Starting in the 600s, Buddhist temples were constructed on ancient plans that were patently Indian; some of these temples still survive intact in Tibet today. But there does not seem to have been a mass conversion to Buddhism until well after the fall of the empire in the ninth century. Buddhism under the empire appears to have been more of a court religion that benefited from the patronage of specific emperors and their wives, especially the Chinese Tang Dynasty princesses.

The spatial pattern of imperial temple construction shows a clustering only in Central Tibet and the southern Himalayas. A few temples were also constructed along the main trade routes in Eastern Tibet, and otherwise there is no evidence of Imperial Period Buddhist temples constructed elsewhere on the Tibetan Plateau. But along the Silk Road oases in the Gansu Corridor and neighboring low-altitude valleys of the Yellow River watershed of the Tsongkha region in Northeastern Tibet, some earlier Chinese temples and new Tibetan constructions formed



After the Imperial Period many of these early temples came to be credited to geomantic efforts of the emperor Songtsen Gampo to subdue indigenous Tibetan earthly spirits and forces and tame them in the face of the arrival of Buddhism, though this concept seems to be largely a postimperial invention of tradition. One of the better-known mappings of these so-called Songtsen Gampo temples is detailed on this map according to a Tibetan text from circa 1200. In general, during the centuries following the fall of the empire, as Tibetan Buddhism continued to spread, Tibetan writers often assigned important religious developments to various actions of the emperors, who came to be referred to as religious kings, regardless of whether there was any evidence for such characterizations. An example that shows how the political and economic concerns of the emperors later became viewed largely in religious terms is the South Asian figure of Padmasambhava (called Guru Rinpoche in Tibetan).



The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism

The teachings on the Four Noble Truths are regarded as the central element of Buddhism, and are said to provide a conceptual framework for Buddhist thought. These four truths explain the nature of *dukkha* (suffering, anxiety, unsatisfactoriness), its causes, and how it can be overcome. The four truths are:

- The truth of *dukkha* (suffering, anxiety, unsatisfactoriness)
- The truth of the origin of *dukkha*
- The truth of the cessation of *dukkha*
- The truth of the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*

The first truth explains the nature of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is commonly translated as "suffering", "anxiety", "unsatisfactoriness", "unease", etc., and it is said to have the following three aspects:

- The obvious suffering of physical and mental illness, growing old, and dying.
- The anxiety or stress of trying to hold onto things that are constantly changing.
- A subtle dissatisfaction pervading all forms of life due to the fact that all forms of life are changing, impermanent and without any inner core or substance.



Buddhist Ethics

The five precepts are training rules in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries, and can meditate well:

1. To refrain from taking life (non-violence towards sentient life forms);
2. To refrain from taking that which is not given (not committing theft);
3. To refrain from sensual (including sexual) misconduct;
4. To refrain from lying (speaking truth always);
5. To refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness (incl. drugs and alcohol).

The precepts are not formulated as imperatives, but as training rules that laypeople undertake voluntarily to facilitate practice.

In the eight precepts, the third precept on sexual misconduct is made more strict, and becomes a precept of celibacy. The three additional precepts are:

1. To refrain from eating at the wrong time (eat only from sunrise to noon);
2. To refrain from dancing and playing music, wearing jewelry and cosmetics, attending shows and other performances;
3. To refrain from using high or luxurious seats and bedding, as well as from accepting gold and silver.



Figure 11.3 Buddhist deities being carved in rock. These sorts of carvings are often the only evidence for the spread of Buddhism to different parts of Tibet during the Imperial Period. Mural in the Potala Palace, Lhasa, circa seventeenth century.

Silk Road

138 BC – 420 AD

629 - 751

1210 - 1365

