



Dr. Abu Bakr Amir-uddin Nadwi, Tibet and Tibetan Muslims. Translated from Urdu by Prof. Paramananda Sharma, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives: Dharamsala, 2004, Pages. 93 (i-xvi, 1-93 P.), Rs. 125, ISBN: 81-86470-53-2.

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Dr. Abu Bakr Amir-uddin Nadwi has written a book "Tibbat aur Tibbati Musalman" in Urdu, which was published at Nadwatul Ulema: Lucknow 1979. It is the first ever book on Tibet in Urdu edition. This book is translated in English by Prof. Paramananda Sharma in 2004, published by Library of Tibetan Works and Archives: Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh. The book consists of five chapters dealing with the origin of Tibet, its early kings, the emergence of Tibetan Lamas, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, the propagation of Islam in Tibet and Tibetan Muslims, Tibet through the mirror of history, the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the migration to India and the Tibetan refugees and Muslim migrants' problems and difficulties. This is the first historical book regarding Tibetan Muslims in Tibet.

The first chapter of the book is about the origin of Tibet, its early kings, the emergence of Tibetan Lamas, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, and the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Ancient historians have variously named this country as 'Tehbat' and 'Taibat', but the famous Arab historian Yagut Hamir, in his book 'Maajam-al baldan' refers to it as 'Tabba', 'Tibet' and 'Tubbat'. He normally preferred 'Tibet' to the other two nomenclatures. The oldest references to Tibet and the Tibetan kingdom in Arabic literature have their origin in Turkish sources. Arab historians believe that it was the great Yemen ruler Tubba-ul-Agran who first colonized Tibet; the Tibet kingdom had thus its origins in Yemen. He has given the geographical status of Tibet, China and India from the perspective of Arabs. He also described the dress and food habits, products and minerals, animal and wild life, important buildings and gardens and important places of worship and monasteries etc. Bon was the ancient religion of Tibet, believed in a kind of nature worship. The great Indian tantric teacher Padmasambhava fused the nature worship and other rituals of Bon religion. He became the founder of the present day Lamaism which was a branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Nadwi gave the descriptions of the Dalai Lama (1st Gedun Drup to 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso) and the Panchen Lama and also narrated the spread of learning and art in Tibet and the spread Buddhism in Tibet.

The most important part is chapter two i.e. 'The Propagation of Islam in Tibet and Tibetan Muslims'. The author illustrates how Islam as a religion was tolerated and sustained under a Buddhist nation. The author gives original data regarding the history of the various Tibetan Muslim communities. Nadwi writes various names of famous figures that spread Islam in Tibet by founding hereditary lineages or spiritual groups. For examples, Hazrat Sayyad Ali Hamdani came to Kashmir in A.D. 1373 or 1381 and his teaching converted most of the population to Islam. This lineage of Hamdani flourished in Kashmir till the eleventh Century of the Hijri era. Some Islam preachers came to Kashmir with Sufi saint Sayyad Ali Hamdani who spread Islam in Ladakh and Baltistan; some of his disciples entered Tibet. It has been heard from elders that many god-men came to Tibet who preached Islam in Tibet among whom the names of Peer Puraula and Maulvi Munshi Basheer Ahmed are well known. The Sinpa Khache or the Singh Muslims lineage comes from Dogra officers who were taken prisoners during their failed invasion of Tibet in 1814. The Tibetan government gave him the title of 'Jami', the supplier of meat to the Dalai Lama. People belonging to this family still use the word 'Jami' as their caste name. Maulana Sayyed Ahmed Shaheed is said to have initiated "nine people who, after receiving the vows at his hands, had gone to Tibet; these included three women also (...) in order to exhort the people to follow the path of righteousness i.e. Islam". Another most important point is that Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) gave the Muslims a written document under his own seal and signature to protect Muslim settlers and officializing their 'citizenship' in Lhasa. During Fifth Dalai Lama's reign the Tibetan Muslims enjoyed several privileges in Tibet; it's continued till 1950s. Central Asian Naqshbandi Sufi master Asfaq Khawaja (1626-1694) played a vital role in the aspect of religious history of Muslim in Tibet. The

Naqshbandi Sufis had a great impact on Tibetan Muslim. The Kashmiri saints Hazrat Makhdoom Shah on Hari Parbat or Baba Rishi in Gulmarg and of Amir Sayyad Ali Hamdani at Khanqah Mualla and Hazrat Bal Shrine attract large crowds of supplicant people asking for boons and favours. Lhasa had two Muslim cemeteries: Gyang-de Gang and Kuga Sha Gyang-de Gang which belonged to Baghlar Muslim. Tibetan Muslim had four mosques in Lhasa, two in Shgatse and one in Tse-thang. These mosques were very beautiful and they had two schools (Madrassa) in Lhasa and one to Shigatse.

The third chapter narrates the historical background of Tibet and the fourth chapter also describes the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the migration to India. A great man, Lord Shenrab Miwo was born in 1063 B.C. who founded a new religion and named it 'Bon'. During the reign of King Songten Gampo (b. A.D. 620) Tibet became a formidable military force. He introduced Buddhism from India and made it's the state religion of Tibet. The first Buddhist monastery Samye was founded by Padmasambhava. In A. D. 763, Tibetan armies occupied the Chinese capital and took the Chinese empire prisoner. Following another China-Tibet war which resulted in the defeat of the former, a peace-treaty was signed with Tibet in A.D. 821. Lang Darma ascended the throne in A.D. 838. He tried to revive the Bon religion and many Buddhist monks were murdered. A dark age descended on Tibet from A.D. 842 to A.D. 1247. The Sakya Lamas came to power and twenty Sakya Lamas ruled Tibet from A.D. 1254 to A.D. 1350. The Sixth Dalai Lama died in exile A.D. 1706 at Lithang. After his death Dzungaria Mongol attacked Tibet and besieged Lhasa. Tibetan requested the Chinese Manchu Troops who helped the Seventh Dalai Lama stop the Mongol advance beyond Kumbum. This was the beginning of the Chinese influences in Tibet. After that China attacked Tibet several times and finally on 9 September 1951, thousands of Chinese troops poured into Lhasa and started destroying all racial, cultural and religious traditions. On 10 March 1959, the Tibetans revolted against the Chinese and thousands of men, women and children were killed. On 17 March 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama with his followers left Tibet and took asylum in India. In chapter five the author has written on Tibetan refugees and Muslim migrants and its problems and difficulties.

Dr. Nadwi, as an author, has an unbiased stance on the subject matter of his book which offers an objective perspective without any trace of emotional involvement with the topic. This book, though very tiny, with not more than 100 pages, is the first historical take on "Tibet and Tibetan Muslims" in Tibet. Nadwi dedicates most of his attention to the Kashmiris in Tibet known as Khache. He does not mention the North-Eastern Tibet or Amdo regions which remain an Islamic centre with the majority of Muslims present there; they have an intermarrital relationship with the Tibetans. James Millward has aptly remarked on this book, "Research into the historical connections between Tibet and Islamic states, like the study of Tibetan Muslims themselves, remains in its infancy". This book, it can be expected, will enkindle the scholarly interest towards the study of Islam in Tibet and surrounding Himalayan regions.

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