



Modern Tibetan Studies Program
Celebrating 20 years



'20' cover images - Top to bottom

Rebgong Tashikhyil Monastery protector's hall, Qinghai summer 2006 (Photo: Gray Tuttle)

Mani wheels, summer 2019 (Photo: Victoria Yuyuan Liu)

Stupa marking a sacred site at the mouth of Qinghai Lake visited by the 10th Panchen Lama, taken in summer 2015 (Photo: Eveline Washul)

Saddled horse in a summer pasture in Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, summer 2016 (Photo: Eveline Washul)

Tibetan manuscript (Columbia University Library Collection)

Darding (an arrangement of prayer flags) in Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, summer 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)

'20' inside cover images - Top to bottom

Crowds gathered at Rongwo Monastery, Rebgong, Malho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, to watch the cham dance in February 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)

Farm transportation, Rebgong, Malho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, summer 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)

Caterpillar fungus (*yartsa gunbu*) traders, Qinghai, summer 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)

Motorcyclist crossing Rebgong Bridge, Rongwo, Qinghai, spring 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)



This anniversary celebration report was produced as part of a 20-year program review led by Marta Jagusztyn, in collaboration with Gray Tuttle, Eveline Washul, and Stuart Wright. The main text of this report was drafted by Stuart Wright with invaluable contributions by Lauran Hartley, visionary support from Marta Jagusztyn, and insightful editing by Ariana King.

Thanks to all MTSP faculty and students, past and present, especially those who assisted in this project; and to the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and the C.V. Starr East Asian Library for their ongoing support.

Thanks also to all our external partner organizations (Rubin Museum of Art, Treasury of Lives, Latse) and individual scholars for participating in our project evaluation.

And finally, thanks to the Luce Foundation and other funders, for making the first 20 years of the MTSP possible.



More than two decades ago, a novel idea was born – to bring a contemporary focus to Tibetan studies. Upon its establishment in fall 1999, the Modern Tibetan Studies Program at Columbia University became the first academic program dedicated to modern Tibet. Now, twenty years later, we step back to survey the achievements of the Program and its unique contribution to the study of modern Asia, with an eye to the future.

Columbia's Modern Tibetan Studies Program (MTSP) started as a vision of Professor Madeleine Zelin, then director of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI). The Program was formalized when Mr. Robert Barnett was invited to teach part-time and host talks on contemporary Tibet as a WEAI Visiting Research Scholar. Over time, the Program evolved; its community of faculty and scholars grew, encompassing language teachers and library staff. It has since become the most robust program in Tibetan studies in North America, with scholars in religion, history, literature, anthropology, film, and culture.

Today, the MTSP is comprised of faculty, staff, students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, and visiting scholars. They collaborate across the University with the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, the C.V. Starr East Asian Library, the Department of Religion, Barnard College, the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, as well as with other schools and organizations in the region.

It is a time of exciting change for the Program, with greater synergy between all aspects of the Program and a renewed vigor brought by engaging with younger, multidisciplinary scholars with fresh ideas and energy. We will continue to support these innovative minds and serve as a vehicle for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty to bring new ideas to the fore. The MTSP has also taken concrete steps to strengthen our partnerships with area museums and non-profits to make the most of academic resources for modern Tibetan studies that exist at Columbia and in New York City for the benefit of the wider academic community.

With these changes, we aim to bring modern Tibet into academic and public conversations and to engage the study of modern Tibetan culture and society with global intellectual trends.

Dr. Eveline Washul, Director, Modern Tibetan Studies Program, 2019-present

Professor Gray Tuttle, Leila Hadley Luce Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies, Director of Modern Tibetan Studies Program, 2018-2019

December 2019

1980s – 1990s

Interest in Tibetan Studies increases steadily and significantly.

1998

Columbia University provides funding to the C.V. Starr East Asian Library for Tibetan-language acquisitions.

1999

Professor Madeleine Zelin, as director of Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI), initiates the founding of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program (MTSP), and invites Mr. Robert Barnett as a WEAI Visiting Research Scholar.

2001

The Tibetan Language Summer Program at Tibet University in Lhasa runs for the first time (and continues annually through 2006).

Robert Barnett

Robert Barnett was invited to Columbia University as a Visiting Research Scholar in 1999. A co-founder of Tibet Information Network (TIN) in London, he brought significant expertise on contemporary Tibet. In 2000, he was assigned the role of Adjunct Research Associate. Mr. Barnett began teaching courses in EALAC on Understanding Modern Tibet in 2001.

In 2002, he was assigned the role of Adjunct Research Scholar of Modern Tibetan Studies, and MTSP outreach and events programming accelerated dramatically thanks to his coordination. He was awarded a PhD from Cambridge University in 2003. Dr. Barnett retired in January 2018.

1 | The History of an Integrated Academic Program

In 1999, Professor Madeleine Zelin, then director of Columbia's Weatherhead East Asian Institute, created the Modern Tibetan Studies Program in response to interest from students. The Program was founded with the intention of complementing those highly regarded classical Tibetan studies programs already established at Columbia and other major universities in the United States and designed to contribute in particular to studies of contemporary China and Inner Asia.

Tibetan studies in North America and Europe has generally been dominated by a focus on religion and religious history and is often grouped with South Asian Studies. Columbia was unique in shifting the focus to modern Tibet and allowing for the study of Tibet through the East Asian lens.

In 2003, the Henry Luce Foundation provided major funding for Tibetan studies – specifically, modern Tibetan studies – at Columbia University, when they gave \$500,000 to the MTSP and endowed a new chair in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, the Leila Hadley Luce Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies, awarded to Dr. Gray Tuttle in 2005.

During the 2000s, scholars at different institutions in North America and Europe helped shift the focus to include the study of contemporary Tibet. The field has diversified, with increasing numbers of students

trained in anthropology and geography, as well as environmental and education studies. Scholarly interest in Tibetan studies has grown significantly, to over 200 Tibetan studies scholars in North America – though many work in isolation, without the focused support of a Tibetan studies program within their departments.

In the midst of this change, Columbia placed particular emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning about Tibet. The result has been the creation of a uniquely vibrant space for teaching, learning, and sharing knowledge about modern Tibet, which serves as a hub for visiting scholars from around the world. In particular, increasing numbers of students from East and South Asia are studying modern Tibet at Columbia, and the Program has hosted Tibetan studies scholars from across Asia, North America, Europe, and Australia.

Tibetans raising *lungta* ("wind horses") in Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, summer 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)



What is the Modern Tibetan Studies Program?

Columbia's Modern Tibetan Studies Program is a unique hub for teaching and learning about Tibet and a venue for scholarly interaction, rigorous academic research, and discussion on Tibet.

The MTSP provides an integrated center for the study of modern Tibet with seven major components: research and publications, language teaching, librarianship, undergraduate and graduate training on modern Tibet, a graduate student group, a very active events program, and collaborative projects with domestic and international partners. All of these components have helped to solidify the unique platform that the MTSP provides to a field that often lacks centralized institutional support.

Columbia's proximity and links to important institutions and organizations such as the Rubin Museum, Latse Library, the Treasury of Lives, New York City's vibrant Tibetan community, and other New York institutions have all proved vital in ensuring interdisciplinarity, diversity, and cooperation in modern Tibetan studies. In particular, since New York is home to the largest community of Tibetans outside Asia, MTSP at Columbia provides opportunities for young Tibetans to attend events and listen to a range of scholars, filmmakers, poets, and pop stars speaking about the realities of contemporary Tibet. In recent years, the MTSP has been striving for greater collaboration with these and other organizations, thanks to the collective efforts of Professor Gray Tuttle, Dr. Lauran Hartley, Mr. Pema Bhum, and the new MTSP Director, Dr. Eveline Washul.

According to a current Tibetan graduate student born in India, the Modern Tibetan Studies Program offers a “depoliticized” environment in which to study and understand Tibet.

Left page: C.V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University (Photo: Columbia University Archive)

This page – top left: Khenpo Sodargye, Dan Smyer Yu, and Gray Tuttle in discussion: “*Why Is Tibetan Buddhism Becoming Popular in China?*” Rubin Museum of Art, April 2013 (Photo: Pema Tashi)

Top right: Students during Tibetan New Year celebrations at the Columbia University Language Resource Center – Tenzin Yewong Dongchung, Wenwen Li, Victoria Yuyuan Liu, and Riga Shakya, 2018

Bottom: PhD student Riga Shakya and respondent Professor Per Sørensen (Leipzig University) at “Beyond Empire and Borders: the Third International Conference on the Qing Dynasty and Inner Asia,” hosted at Columbia University, October 6-7, 2017 (Photo: Gray Tuttle)



Eveline Washul

Eveline Washul was appointed as Director of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program at Columbia University in July 2019, bringing interdisciplinary skills from history and anthropology. Dr. Washul graduated from Columbia University in 2007 with a master's degree in International Affairs and East Asian Studies, and graduated from Indiana University in 2018 with a PhD in Anthropology and Central Eurasian Studies. Dr. Washul returned to Columbia as a Postdoctoral Research Scholar at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute in July 2018, and as an Adjunct Lecturer in EALAC, before being appointed as MTSP Director in July 2019. Her dissertation examined how the particularities of Tibetan relationships to places shape their transition from rural to urban livelihoods in the late-socialist reform period in the People's Republic of China. She is currently working on a book manuscript that examines the history of geographical regions in Tibet.



Why Study Modern Tibet?

The study of modern Tibet offers valuable understandings about pressing social and scientific issues impacting the world.

Tibet is significant as an ecological and geopolitical region, central to connecting Inner, East, and South Asia. As the highest place on earth, Tibet is often called a “third pole,” with major glaciers and rivers that bring water to about one third of the world's population. The impact of climate change on Tibet and the repercussions for much of Asia are of major concern for scholarly and grassroots communities. The emergence of China as the world's second largest economy and the significance of western China in China's “Belt and Road initiative” make the study of contemporary Tibet as timely and as important as ever.

With intensifying state-led economic development and the increasing impacts of climate change in the contemporary period, the populations and high plateau of Tibet are at the forefront of rapid socioeconomic and environmental change. Tibetan culture has also long been influential within Asia; since the 20th century, that impact can be seen across the globe.

We expansively define *modern* as the period from the 17th century to the present. In doing

so, we break with other definitions of modern Tibet that view its modernity as a disruptive force tied to its incorporation into the People's Republic of China in the 1950s and the upheavals that followed in the ensuing decades. We see modern Tibet as starting in the 17th century due to internal developments on the Tibetan plateau: the development of a bureaucratic state, the dramatic expansion of standardized monastic education and thus literacy, and the growth of trade and pilgrimage networks that connected Tibetans in new ways. By defining modern Tibet as having its beginnings around the 17th century, we also recognize the engagement of Tibetans with global intellectual transformations occurring in a period when the mobility of people, ideas, and goods was expanding throughout the world.

The Modern Tibetan Studies Program is concerned not only with ‘Tibet’ as the Tibetan regions incorporated in the People's Republic of China (one quarter of the territory of the People's Republic of China is recognized as Tibetan “autonomous” regions), but also with all areas where Tibetan peoples traditionally reside. This includes the study of Tibetan peoples and cultures within the Himalayas, cross-border studies involving areas such as China, India, Bhutan, and Mongolia – and, additionally, the contemporary diasporic contexts.

Top: *Tibetan Buddhism and Political Power in the Courts of Asia*, Rubin Museum of Art, April 2018, Gray Tuttle, Riga Shakya, William Dewey, Lan Wu, Eveline Washul

Centre: *Tibetan Literature in Translation: Pema Tsenden's Stories of Tibet*, Lauran Hartley, Pema Bhumi, Michael Monhart, Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, December 2019

Bottom: Columbia alum Dr. Stacey van Vleet speaks at the symposium, *Myriad Teachings with One Nature: Buddhism in China and Inner Asia*, held October 5-6, 2018

2 | Teaching & Learning about Modern Tibet

The Modern Tibetan Studies Program starts from the presupposition that being able to understand Tibet's past is key to understanding contemporary Tibet, and vice versa – and both are critical to thinking through the challenges that lie ahead for Tibetan communities. As many of our former and current doctoral students testify, Columbia University was their preferred university because the MTSP does not view Tibetan history singularly through the lens of religious studies. Rather, Tibetan religion and society are explored primarily through historical and contemporary perspectives – from the role of the Dalai Lama since the seventeenth century to present concerns about his future incarnations, from the destruction of thousands of monasteries in the 1950s and 1960s to the present growth of massive monastic settlements in Kham, or from traditional ideas of sacred space to Tibetans transitioning to modern urbanized settings.

In the early years of Tibetan studies at Columbia University, Professor Robert Thurman's class on Tibetan Buddhism was one of the largest classes on campus, with over 100 students each semester it was offered. In 2001, Mr. Robert Barnett began teaching adjunct courses in EALAC. Over the years, Columbia has offered over thirty different courses on Tibet, such as *Space and Place in Urban Tibet*,

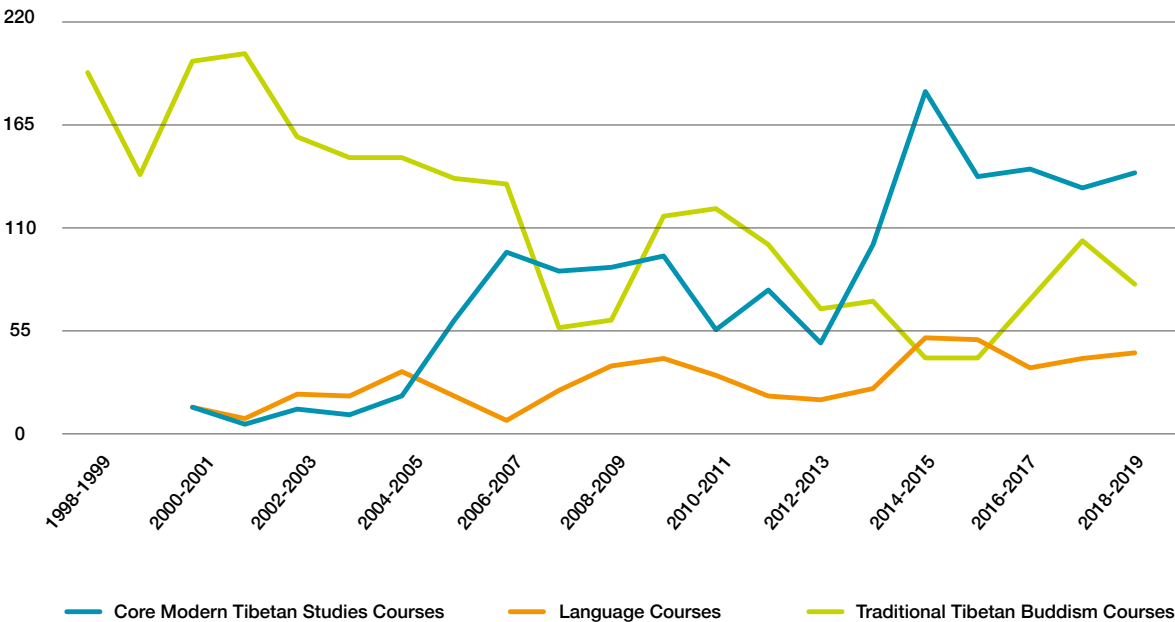
Tibetan Civilization, Rise of Modern Tibet: 1600-1911, and *20th Century Tibetan Literature*, with the majority of classes now focused on modern Tibet. They attract a wide range of students from across disciplines: mainly History, Religion, Anthropology, and Ethnic Studies, as well as a wide range of undergraduates from all schools and departments who take the Global Core classes we offer.

2001

Robert Thurman

Robert Thurman was endowed as the Jey Tsong Khapa Chair in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism in the Department of Religion in 1988. This was the first endowed chair in Tibetan studies at any university in the United States. Professor Thurman worked closely with Professor Madeleine Zelin at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute during the early days of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program, including on the grant proposal that led to the endowment of the Leila Hadley Luce Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies. Professor Robert Thurman retired in June 2019.

Number of Students enrolled in classes focused on modern Tibet versus traditional Tibetan studies



At the undergraduate level, as part of the Columbia Core Curriculum requirement, all undergraduate students are required to take a non-Western civilization class. With several Global Core courses available on Tibet (including topics like *Biographical Writing*, *Examining Indigeneity in Tibetan Contexts*, and *Sacred Geography*) undergraduate students across Columbia and Barnard College have a rare opportunity to study the full range of Tibetan civilization.

At the graduate level, modern Tibetan studies can be chosen as a concentration within the MA degrees in East Asian Studies in EALAC, in Religion, at the School of International and Public Affairs, or in Regional Studies–East Asia. At the PhD level, students can specialize in modern Tibetan studies within the departments of History, East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALAC), and Religion.

Professor Gray Tuttle, a leading scholar in his field and passionate advocate for the study and appreciation of Tibetan culture, is now the senior Tibetan specialist at Columbia. In 2018, he was

promoted to full professor and received the Lenfest Distinguished Faculty Award for excellence in teaching and mentoring. The award is one of Columbia’s highest faculty honors and is a reflection of Professor Tuttle’s commitment to his students and research.

With the support of the Rubin Foundation and WEAI, Professor Tuttle has worked with a variety of partners at Columbia (the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Columbia University Library’s Digital Scholarship Coordinator Alex Gil and the Tibetan Studies Librarian Dr. Lauran Hartley) to bring a wide range of digital humanities projects into the classroom. A key assignment in several classes is the object biography, which allows students to select a single cultural artifact as their primary source for analysis and tell its “life story.” Examples of this and other projects, from interviews of Tibetan restaurant owners in Queens to reviews of Tibetan sites and museums around NYC and descriptions of sacred spaces in the Tibetan world and beyond can be found at: <http://www.tibetanculture.weai.columbia.edu>.

The Program also benefits from Dr. Eveline Washul’s dual training in Tibetan history and anthropology. In addition to leading the Program’s agenda as Director of the MTSP, Dr. Washul has taught a range of courses at Columbia, including *Ethnographic Tibet*, *Early Tibetan History and its Relations with China*, *Space and Place in Urbanizing Tibet*, and *Examining Indigeneity in Tibetan Contexts*. Dr. Washul’s approach is to teach classes that not only train students in research-based understandings of Tibet, but also in the broader context of Tibet’s relations with China and the Central Eurasian region.

MTSP courses aim to ground student learning in primary sources and emphasize the importance of critical thinking, analytical skills, and evidence-based thinking. Students are challenged to rigorously question common assumptions. The Program aims to impart students with a sense of responsibility to accurately represent information to the best of their abilities and to use knowledge in ways that meaningfully engage the communities to whom they owe their debt of knowledge.



Gray Tuttle

Gray Tuttle is a scholar of twentieth century Sino-Tibetan relations as well as Tibet’s relations with the China-based Manchu Qing Empire. Professor Tuttle received his PhD in Inner Asian and Altaic Studies from Harvard University in 2002 and came to Columbia University in 2005, when the Henry Luce Foundation endowed a new chair, the Leila Hadley Luce Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies. The professorship was created as a central pillar of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program, to advance Modern Tibetan Studies at Columbia and in the United States by developing interdisciplinary scholarship and innovative teaching about modern Tibet. Professor Tuttle is the author of *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China* (Columbia University Press 2005), co-editor of *The Tibetan History Reader* (Columbia University Press 2013) and is currently working on a book entitled *Amdo, Tibet: Middle Ground between Lhasa and Beijing*, which explores the history of the spread of Geluk religious institutions from Central Tibet to Amdo and their eventual incorporation into the Manchu Qing imperial framework.

The guiding principles of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program are:

- 1) To foster a cooperative approach within the field;
- 2) To use interdisciplinary methods of study;
- 3) To conceptualize the subject as a regional and cross-border study involving areas such as Tibetan communities within China, Mongolia and the Himalayas; and
- 4) To prioritize interaction with scholars from Tibetan regions.

2003

A major donation from the Henry Luce Foundation endows both a new chair and provides a five-year “Integrated Tibetan Studies Grant” to support the MTSP’s language teaching, events, visiting scholars and exchanges, and research.

2004

The Tibetan Eco-Tourism Project commences.

2005

A new position, the Leila Hadley Luce Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies, is awarded to Dr. Gray Tuttle.

C.V. Starr East Asian Library establishes a special fund for Tibetan materials in 2005–2006 to respond to new teaching programs in the University.

3 | Excellence in Language Training

Columbia University is one of the strongest centers for modern (colloquial and literary) and classical Tibetan language. It is one of the few places in the United States where students can take three consecutive years of Tibetan modern language classes. The Modern Tibetan Studies Program also works with inter-university arrangements that allow New York University, the City University of New York, and, in the case of language courses, Yale and Cornell students to cross-register at no extra cost through the Language Resource Center. All MTSP courses are open to students in any of the Consortium of New York Universities.

Tibetan language courses at Columbia began before 1988 with Lozang Jamspal teaching courses in classical Tibetan language. When Professor Robert Thurman began teaching in 1988 he added courses in advanced Tibetan translation. Courses in modern Tibetan language were added when Tenzin Norbu Nangsal joined Columbia in 2000. In 2001, Columbia – in partnership with the University of Virginia and Tibet University – established the first Tibetan language program for foreign students in Central Tibet. The intensive Tibetan Language Summer School, based at Tibet University in Lhasa, ran from 2001 until 2006.

Lozang Jamspal

Lozang Jamspal taught elementary Tibetan classes during the 1980s. He earned his doctoral degree at Columbia University in 1991 and joined the faculty as Lecturer in Classical Tibetan after which he taught advanced classical Tibetan courses between 1991 and 2012.

Tenzin Norbu Nangsal

Tenzin Norbu Nangsal, a graduate of Tibet University, Lhasa, was employed as a modern Tibetan language instructor at Columbia from 1999 to 2014. Additionally, he was employed as a part-time Tibetan Studies Specialist in Columbia’s C.V. Starr East Asian Library in 2004 through 2006, until his language teaching became a full-time position in late 2006.



Monks at Rongwo Monastery, Rebong, Qinghai, February 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)



Enrollment in Tibetan language courses increased significantly in 2014 with the arrival of Mr. Sonam Tsering, employed as the Director of the Tibetan Language Program. Sonam Tsering has developed a three-year course in modern colloquial and literary Tibetan, and currently teaches six courses per academic year. His vision is to promote Tibetan as a major language at Columbia University, rather than it existing on the margins. Sonam Tsering earned a teaching award in 2019 for his dedication to his students and innovative teaching. For example, he has developed learner-centered curricula and teaching materials that incorporate multimedia

instructional technology (including audio and video clips of Facebook and WeChat as well as real Tibetan television shows made available to students on YouTube) for interactive and collaborative language learning in the classroom. His classes at Columbia are linked via high-definition video-conferencing with students at Cornell and Yale as part of Columbia’s Shared Course Initiative (SCI). Classical literary Tibetan has been taught by Pema Bhum and Konchog Tseten since 2015, and these courses are also shared with students at Cornell and Yale.

Young student monks in Machen, Golog, Qinghai, summer 2013 (Photo: Stuart J. Wright)

Tibetan calligraphy at a Tibetan New Year’s party (Photo: Victoria Yuyuan Liu)



Sonam Tsering

Sonam Tsering has been the Director of the Tibetan language program at Columbia since 2014, and is responsible for teaching three years of modern Tibetan. Originally from Rebgong (Qinghai, PRC), Sonam later lived in the Tibetan community in exile in India, co-founding and editing *Bod kyi dus bab* (*Tibet Times* newspaper). Sonam completed a degree in social anthropology at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), University of London, in 2005. Between 2009 and 2014, he taught Tibetan language at SOAS, the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations in Paris, and the University of Michigan. Since Sonam’s arrival at Columbia University, enrollments have more than doubled. He also facilitates distance language teaching that reaches Cornell and Yale Universities.



Pema Bhum

Pema Bhum, a renowned Tibetan author, scholar and Director of the Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library in New York City, has taught second year classical Tibetan at Columbia since 2015. Pema Bhum holds an MA in Tibetan Studies from the Northwest Nationalities Institute in Gansu, China, where he also taught Tibetan language and literature. After his arrival in India in 1988, he founded the first independent Tibetan language newspaper in exile and the first Tibetan literary magazine, and served as a founding director of the Amnye Machen Institute in Dharamsala, India. He also taught Tibetan language and literature at Indiana University for two years.



Konchog Tseten

Konchog Tseten teaches first year classical Tibetan at Columbia University. He has a graduate degree in Tibetan medicine and currently practices as a Tibetan medical doctor in New York City.

As Director of the Tibetan Language Program, Sonam Tsering is keen that students should increase their cultural awareness alongside developing language skills. He organizes various social activities including a spring language program picnic event and a Tibetan New Year’s party. Although from the Amdo region of Tibet, Sonam Tsering teaches the general Tibetan

speech comprehensible to all educated Tibetans. To increase undergraduate interest in Tibetan language, he has secured National Resource Center funding through WEAI to plan a summer school program in the northeastern region of Tibet, which will be the only program of its kind.

4 | Pioneering Tibetan Studies Academic Librarianship & Collections

The C.V. Starr East Asian Library houses more than one million titles in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, and western languages. Its unparalleled Tibetan Studies Collection and incomparable librarianship is further testimony to Columbia's position at the heart of modern Tibetan studies in North America.

The origins of the Tibetan Studies Collection can be traced to the early 1960s when the university first began receiving Tibetan books and serials through a program administered by the Library of Congress. This established Columbia as one of the first universities in North America with a sizable Tibetan collection. In 1998, at the urging of director Amy Heinrich and the Chinese Studies Librarian Fran LaFleur, Columbia University approved funding to routinely purchase Tibetan-language materials for the East Asian Library and to hire the first Tibetan language bibliographic assistant.

In addition to its Tibetan studies materials in Chinese and western languages, the Starr Library now holds more Tibetan-language titles than any other academic research library and comprises the most comprehensive collection in North America. Its holdings include:

- Tibetan-language monographs: 14,000+ titles
- Tibetan-language periodicals: 170+ titles
- Archival collections: 233 linear feet
- Audio-visual materials: 2,000+
- Digitized oral-history interviews: 65
- Tibetan-language electronic books: 16,000+ volumes
- Tibetan-language rare scrolls: 15
- The library continues to acquire Tibetan-language print and manuscript materials at a rate of approximately 900 new volumes per year.

Chopathar Wayemache

When the Modern Tibetan Studies Program was founded, the C.V. Starr East Asian Library hired Chopathar Wayemache as full-time Bibliographic Assistant. With Tibetan and Chinese language skills and specialization in contemporary Tibetan music, Chopathar was the first support staff member ever hired to work exclusively on the Tibetan Studies Collection, and served for seventeen years, until July 2015.

2007

January: Dr. Lauran Hartley is hired in the C.V. Starr East Asian Library at Columbia University through funding from a Starr Challenge Grant, becoming the first full-time dedicated professional Tibetan Studies Librarian in North America.

May: The Wutaishan and Qing Culture conference is held, marking the first joint conference with the Rubin Museum of Art.

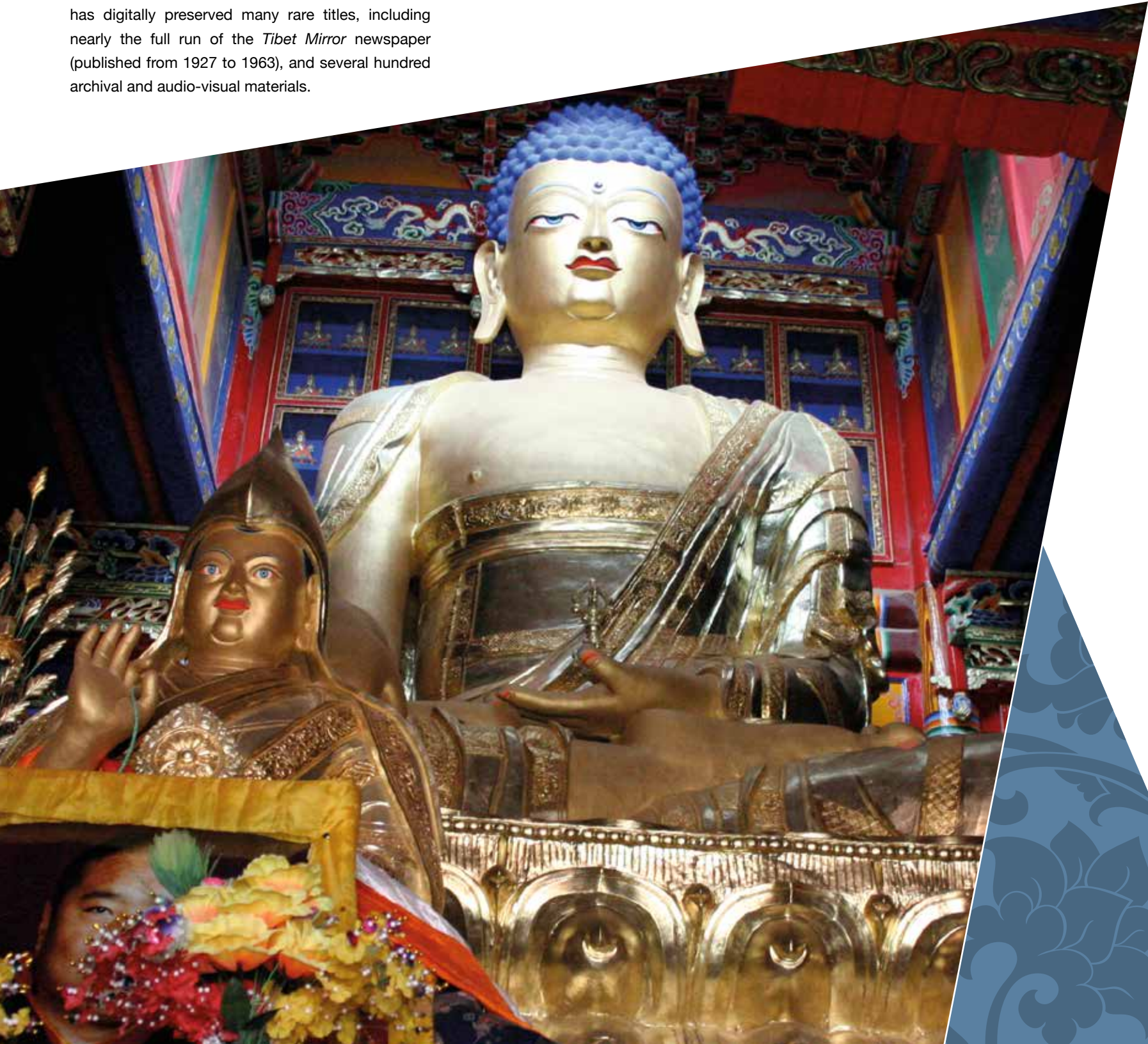
2009

February: The two-day Tibetan Studies and Social Sciences Workshop is held.

September: Khorlo, the MTSP student group, is founded.

Tibet-related materials are also housed at some of the 20 other libraries at Columbia University, including missionary-related holdings at the Burke Library, several early manuscripts in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and art and material culture objects in the Art Properties collection of Avery Art Library. Additionally, Columbia University Libraries has digitally preserved many rare titles, including nearly the full run of the *Tibet Mirror* newspaper (published from 1927 to 1963), and several hundred archival and audio-visual materials.

The development of the Tibetan Studies Collection has been led since January 2007 by Dr. Lauran Hartley. As a full-time Tibetan Studies Librarian, Dr. Hartley has leveraged her position to dramatically widen the scope of Tibetan studies acquisitions and librarianship for the benefit of Columbia University and the international community.



Lauran Hartley

Lauran Hartley has served as Tibetan Studies Librarian for the C.V. Starr East Asian Library at Columbia University since January 2007. After completing a PhD in Tibetan Studies at Indiana University in 2003, with a dissertation on Tibetan literary discourse and social change in the PRC, Dr. Hartley taught Writing Tibet: ‘Tradition’ and Change in Twentieth-Century Tibetan Literature at Columbia University in 2003, Survey of Tibetan Literature at Indiana University in 2004, and Religions of Tibet at Rutgers University in 2006. She continues to teach Survey of Tibetan Literature (in 2011 and 2017) to undergraduate and graduate students at Columbia University. In addition to co-editing the book *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change* (Duke University Press, 2008) and serving as Inner Asian Book Review Editor for the *Journal of Asian Studies* from 2009-2015, she has also published several literary translations and articles on Tibetan intellectual history.

In 2013, the Henry Luce Foundation awarded \$300,000 to Columbia University Libraries/Information Services to fund the Tibetan Studies Librarian position at the C.V. Starr East Asian Library until permanent funds could be secured. In 2017, with funding from the Starr Endowment and other university support, the position became permanent. Dr. Hartley remains the only full-time dedicated professional Tibetan Studies Librarian at any North American university.



Lobsang Dondrup

In December 2015, Lobsang Dondrup joined the C.V. Starr East Asian Library as Tibetan bibliographic assistant. A native of Qinghai Province, he brings multiple languages (Tibetan, Chinese, Amdo dialect, and Monguor) to the job. Lobsang completed his master’s degree in film at the City College of New York, and previously worked as Photographer and Media Consultant for the Trace Foundation’s Latse Library. In addition, he has co-edited two documentary films, co-founded the Tibetan Folk Video-Audio Studio in Xining, and served as Field Research Assistant for the University of Kansas Monguor Language Study Project, from 2003-2006.

Rebgong Yershong Monastery Interior, Qinghai 2006 (Photo: Gray Tuttle)

2011

December: Columbia University hosts the Third International Conference on Tibetan Language in collaboration with the Trace Foundation, Latse Library, and the Shang Shung Institute.

2012

The conference, Tibetan Performance, Past and Present: Multidisciplinary Avenues of Research, is held, thanks to the support of the Center for Ethnomusicology.

Dominique Townsend graduates as the first PhD in Modern Tibetan Studies and is hired by the Rubin Museum. She now teaches at Bard College, New York.

4 | Publishing Novel Research

Faculty and staff alike are dedicated to publishing new work on modern Tibet, which has traditionally been neglected in comparison to research on traditional Tibetan religion and philosophy. Nine books on modern Tibet have been directly authored by MTSP faculty and staff since the Program's establishment, ranging from a survey of modern Tibetan literature (Lauran Hartley) to a memoir of life in Lhasa (Robert Barnett) to books on the history of cultural contacts between modern China and Tibet (Gray Tuttle).

The Program is also active in publishing other scholars' works through a number of series. With assistance from Lauran Hartley and a number of other scholars on the editorial board, Gray Tuttle edits the first book series dedicated to Modern Tibetan Culture with Lexington Books, an imprint of Rowman and Littlefield. To date this series has published ten books covering topics as diverse as modern Tibetan poetry, economic development in Tibet, reporting on environmentalists working in Tibet, as well as a host of historical books focused on eastern Tibetan history.

The Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute is the main series at WEAI that co-lists books on modern Tibet, in conjunction with various presses such as Columbia and Cornell University Presses and Lexington Books. These books include works on Chinese and Tibetan historical interactions, Chinese state development in Tibet, and ethnic protests in Tibet and Xinjiang.

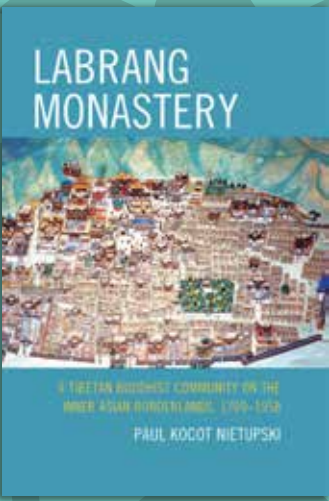
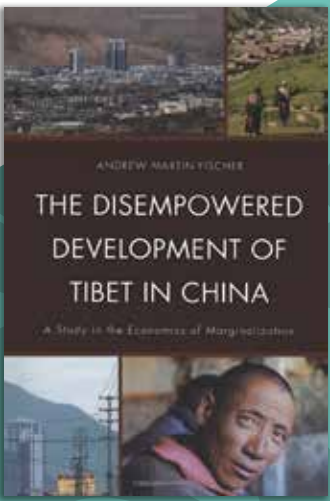
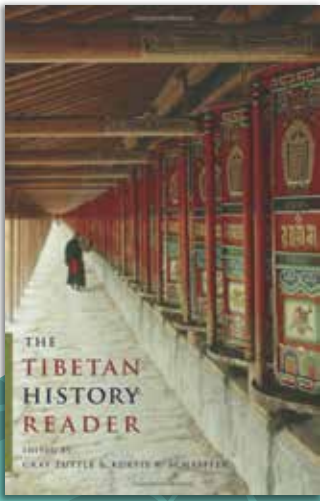
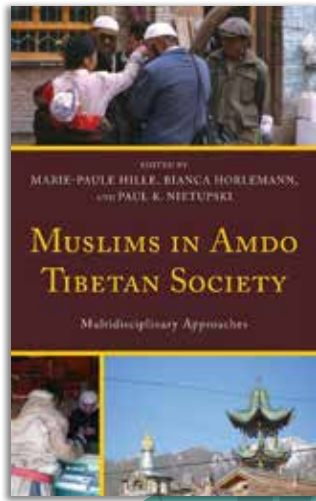
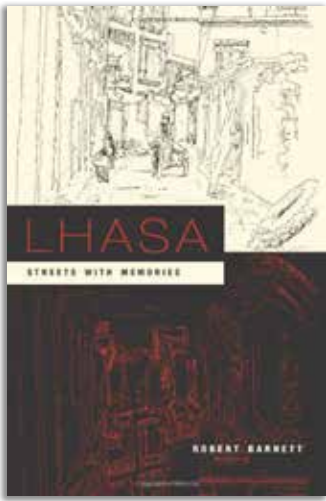
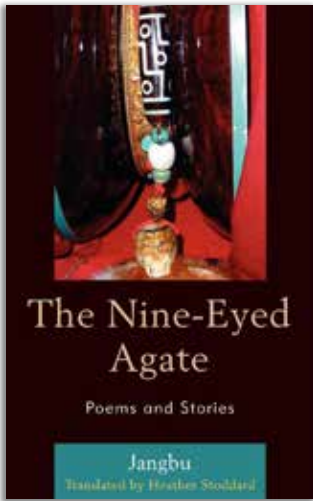
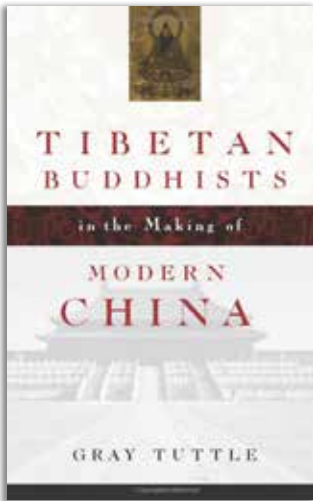
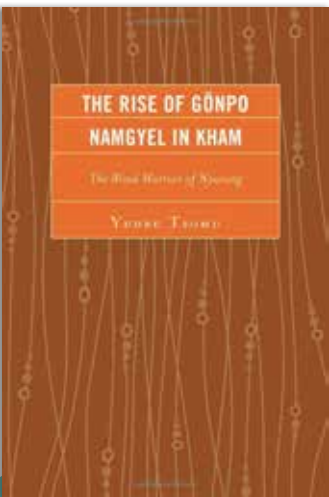
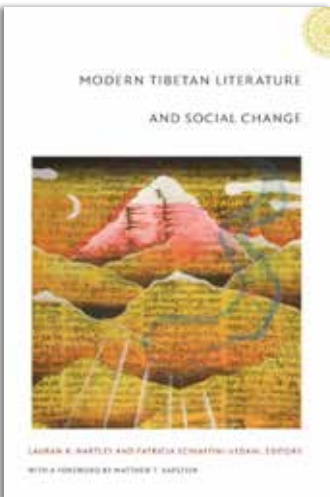
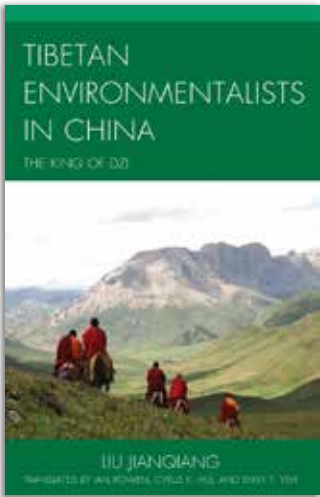
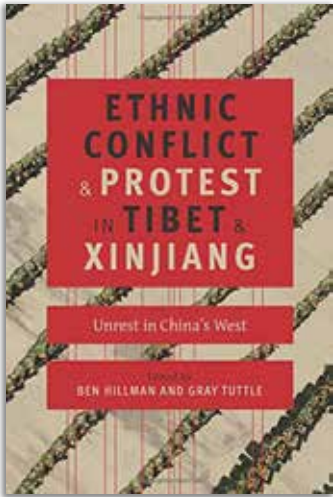
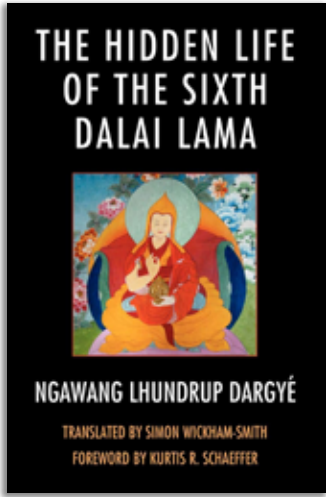
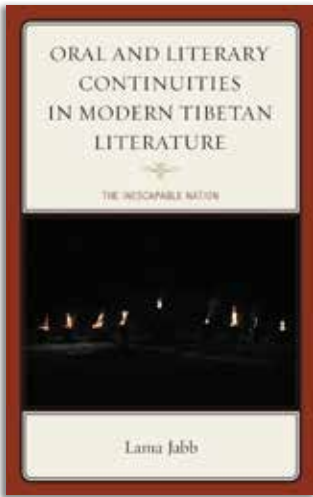
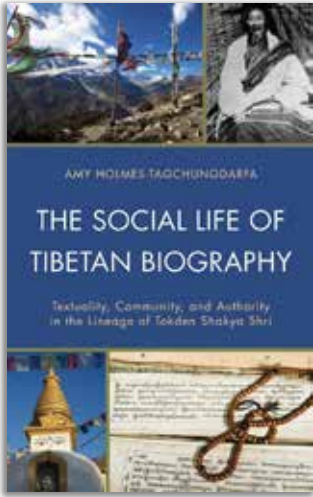
Four additional edited volumes have grown out of conferences co-sponsored by the MTSP: two in conjunction with the Rubin Museum based on art history materials and two in conjunction with Latse Library, based on a Tibetan language conference held at Columbia University. In total, the MTSP has brought twenty-six books to press throughout its twenty years in existence.

Faculty and staff are also very active in the peer review of other scholars' research and publications through a wide variety of university presses and academic journals. Collectively the Modern Tibetan Studies Program faculty and staff have reviewed over two dozen book manuscripts for twelve different presses in Europe and the United States. We have also reviewed dozens of articles for fourteen journals in the United States, England and Australia, covering fields in area studies, politics, literature and history.

Our most prolific contribution to scholarship has been in the publication of a wide range of journal articles and book chapters, as well as introductions to books, translations of articles and books, and book reviews. Collectively, the faculty and staff of the MTSP have published well over a hundred such works. In terms of representing research in domestic and international conferences and presentations, the faculty and

staff of the Program have been involved in over 160 events, whether giving invited lectures or organizing, presenting and responding to panels and workshops.

This work to advance modern Tibetan studies through research, publications and presentations has been crucial in establishing the field as a viable one, with a significant audience in academia and beyond.



Examples of publications by the Modern Tibetan Studies Program

6 | Advancing Knowledge About Modern Tibet Through Public Events

Over the years the MTSP has developed several ways of bringing modern Tibet to diverse conversations and audiences. The public events program has long been serving the academic community and also introducing modern Tibet to wider audiences. Public events have included a variety of lectures, workshops, panel discussions, film screenings, and performances attended by scholars, students, Tibetan community members, and the general audience in New York City and beyond. The public events hosted or co-hosted by the Modern Tibetan Studies Program have been as diverse as conferences on *Mapping the Tibetan Cyberscape* and *Tibetan Buddhism and Political Power in the Courts of Asia*.

Academic books with major influence on the field have been presented as part of the public events program. In 2014, Emily Yeh from the University of Colorado gave a presentation on her award-winning book *Taming Tibet*. In 2015, Andrew Fischer from the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague introduced his book *The Disempowered Development of Tibet*. Tibetan religion in the contemporary context also remains an important focus. Events in recent years involved visiting religious leaders, including from Tibet's Larung Gar and Yachen Gar Buddhist Academies.

In 2019 alone, MTSP organized twenty-two public events. Notably, *Ten Years of Tibetan Cyberspace in Translation*, held in the spring, celebrated the anniversary of the launch of the Tibetan cultural website *High Peaks Pure Earth*. At another spring event, Yangchuk Tso, a Tibetan pop singer and actress, gave a presentation on contemporary pop music and cinema in Tibet. These packed events brought speakers from as far as London and Tibet and attracted young professionals from the nearby Tibetan communities in Queens and New Jersey.

2014

Mr. Sonam Tsering is hired as Director of the Tibetan language program.

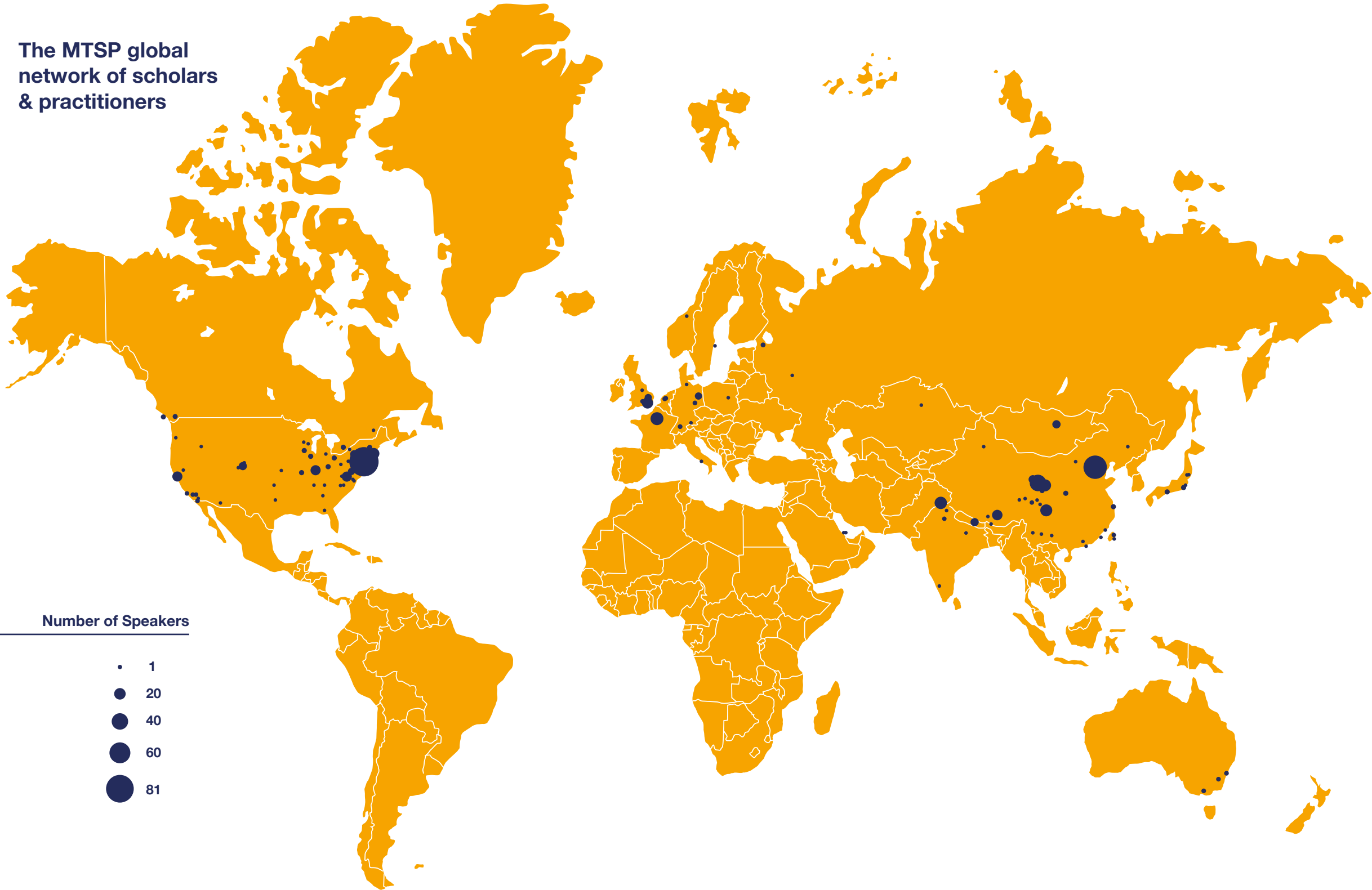
2015

Mr. Pema Bhum begins to teach classical Tibetan at Columbia University.

Luce/ACLS funds the first translation-based reading workshop on eighteenth-century Tibet.

In total, over 20 years, the Program has sponsored twenty-three major conferences and workshops, eighty-three lectures, and dozens of roundtables and discussions. Through its events the Program has hosted more than 400 speakers, including 140 Tibetan, 121 American, thirty-six Chinese, thirteen Mongolian, twelve French, ten Australian, nine English, eight Indian, six German, six Japanese, four Taiwanese, as well as Dutch, Italian, Austrian, Danish, Kazakh, Korean, Manchu, Polish, Swedish, Russian, Uighur, and Canadian speakers and visitors.

The MTSP global network of scholars & practitioners



Number of Speakers

- 1
- 20
- 40
- 60
- 81

Pioneering new approaches to Tibetan Studies

One of the goals of the MTSP is to develop new approaches to Tibetan studies not undertaken at other universities. For instance, in February 2009, Dr. Hartley organized a three-day conference and workshop – *Tibetan Studies and the Social Sciences: Data, Tools, Maps and Archives*. The conference was primarily concerned with research opportunities in Tibetan studies, including library resources in New York City, GIS (geographic information systems) applications, use of official Chinese statistics, and ethnographic fieldwork, including access issues. The topic of fieldwork – and alternative ways to research Tibet – was particularly timely considering the uncertainty following the political unrest that swept across the Tibetan plateau in 2008, and this was the first such academic conference focusing on social science research in modern Tibet.

2018

July: Dr. Eveline Washul returns to Columbia University as a postdoctoral research associate at WEAI.

December: The student-initiated peer-reviewed journal, *Waxing Moon*, is accepted by Columbia University Libraries Digital Scholarship as an online publication project.

2019

July: Dr. Eveline Washul is appointed as Director of the MTSP at Columbia University.

November: The BDRC-Columbia Libraries Linked Open Data Workshop is held.

November: Understanding Climate Change on the Tibetan Plateau round table is held as the first collaborative event with the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory.

7 Building the Foundation of a Modern Tibetan Studies Hub: Collaborative Projects

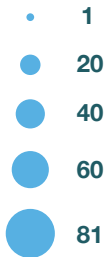
Serving the academic community interested in modern Tibet is a major priority for the MTSP. The MTSP team believes this is best achieved through creating and promoting the efficient use of diverse academic resources. This is often most effectively achieved through collaborative partnerships. To this end, MTSP has developed ties with institutions such as Latse, the Rubin Museum, the Treasury of Lives, the China Institute, the Asia Society, and other New York organizations related to Tibet. Numerous conferences have been co-sponsored with these local partners, including four conferences at the Rubin Museum of Art and a major international conference with the Trace Foundation: the Third International Conference on Tibetan Language, held over five days at Columbia University in December 2011.

The Program has also initiated new collaborations with several institutes at Columbia University in order to better reach out to other disciplines and connect modern Tibetan studies to the scholarly discussions of global issues. Collaboration with Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory will allow us to deepen the discussion on climate change in Tibet by linking it to global research and conversations on climate. Working with the Columbia Business School will strengthen the green enterprise project that supports Tibetans creating new sustainable businesses. Our on-going connections to the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race and the Center for

Ethnomusicology bring Tibetan topics into broader conversations on campus. Looking towards the future, the MTSP plans to continue to build on its existing projects and on an extensive network of Tibetan studies academic partners in the US and globally. The MTSP will act cooperatively with its partner organizations to build a modern Tibetan studies hub. We plan to do this through consolidating and strengthening the academic resources available to the broader Tibetan studies community and by providing platforms for intellectual exchange among Tibetan studies academics.

The MTSP North American
network of scholars
& practitioners

Number of Speakers



Amplifying the reach of resources created

Recordings of many public events as well as conferences are made available to wider audiences via the WEAI website, as well as iTunes and YouTube.



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