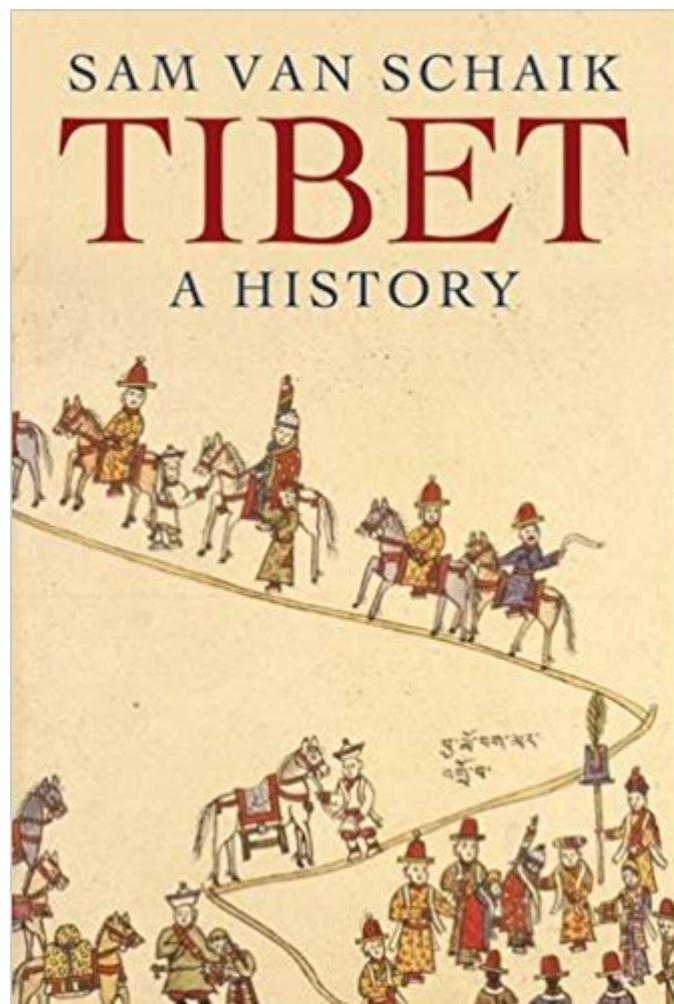


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# Tibet: A History



## Synopsis

Situated north of the Himalayas, Tibet is famous for its unique culture and its controversial assimilation into modern China. Yet Tibet in the twenty-first century can only be properly understood in the context of its extraordinary history. Sam van Schaik brings the history of Tibet to life by telling the stories of the people involved, from the glory days of the Tibetan empire in the seventh century through to the present day. He explores the emergence of Tibetan Buddhism and the rise of the Dalai Lamas, Tibet's entanglement in the "Great Game" in the early twentieth century, its submission to Chinese Communist rule in the 1950s, and the troubled times of recent decades. Tibet sheds light on the country's complex relationship with China and explains often-misunderstood aspects of its culture, such as reborn lamas, monasteries and hermits, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, and the role of the Dalai Lama. Van Schaik works through the layers of history and myth to create a compelling narrative, one that offers readers a greater understanding of this important and controversial corner of the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Remarkable . . . ambitious . . . [van Schaik] writes like a storyteller, keeping his reader intrigued." —Michael Sheehy, *Buddhadharma magazine*"A marvellous achievement, *Tibet: A History* provides a brilliant introduction to the ancient and varied culture of Tibet. Van Schaik expertly combines detailed research with compelling storytelling. Rich with details and lively vignettes, his narrative draws the reader into an imaginative universe, a world that will at once fascinate and complicate one's understanding of Tibet. This book will reward long-time students and

casual readers alike." •Jacob P. Dalton, author of *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*"Tibet: A History is an important and major history of Tibet written in narrative form by a leading scholar, in a style that is accessible, balanced and engaging, yet full of nuance, detail and up-to-date research findings." •Robert J. Barnett, Director of Modern Tibetan Studies, Columbia University

This timely and insightful history of Tibet spans from the seventh century to modern times, in a lively narrative that sheds light on the country's complex relationship with China, and it explores what it means to be Tibetan today.

I have enjoyed Sam van Schaik's translations of important Tibetan Buddhist texts and after reading his latest (Tibetan Zen: Discovering a Lost Tradition) and really enjoying its historic and archeological flavor discovered this book. I have also read several other history books on Tibet over the past 4 decades but find this one the most enjoyable and informative, sympathetic but also psychologically and historically perceptive. Van Schaik takes a narrative approach to weave an engrossing, balanced and fascinating tale of this unique culture's complex history. Too often in popular culture (both political and religious) Tibet gets painted with broad and romantic brush strokes. The actual story told here is much more human and interesting. If you are really interested in getting a firm and broad grasp of Tibet's history I strongly recommend getting a copy of A Historical Atlas of Tibet by Karl Ryavec to have as a reference and supplement when reading van Schaik's book.

This is a complex and often misunderstood story. Misunderstood because of the simplification that writers often resort to when the going gets tough and complicated. Sam van Schaik has made the research for my own book, *High Hopes, the history of Tibetan education in India, 1959-2015* much more interesting and he has made clear, issues which others had either skimmed through or avoided. I thank him for that. A very interesting read making one feel much better informed.

A good book that could have used more focus on secular issues and less on religion. Nonetheless this is a good primer on Tibetan history.

Excellent book, clearly written, jargon-free. Vast historical perspective of Tibet's conflict-ridden formation. Analysis underlines the historical formation of common practices, values, institutions.

traditions, historical stories, identities, etc. among Tibetans, along with the production of differences and hierarchies among themselves and others --i.e., always in relation with different groups from both neighbouring and distant lands. No reification, no romantic essentialist perspective, but complex, relational, conflicting and cohesive historical processes. Fantastic contribution to our understanding of the ongoing historical formation of peoples and their conflicting claims of unity, common territories, identities, etc. No good/evil, indigenous/foreign dichotomies taken for granted, but critically analysed. Hence, radical partisans of China-centred or idyllic-Tibet-centred perspectives are going to be challenged. Enjoy it.

Great overview

The content of the book looks wonderful. However...Yale was unable to secure the rights to reproduce the pictures. It would have been nice to know that before I made the purchase. On the page. (Perhaps I might have seen it in the preview, but I didn't and I haven't checked if it was visible.) And telling you to check the printed version just makes it worse. If I'd had access to the printed version, I wouldn't have bought the electronic version. Plus the maps are unreadable, at least to my eyes. I expect better from Yale, a great university press. And .

Five, because I am enjoying it so much. It's very well researched, and written succinctly, almost chatty and intimate - certainly without the odour of scholasticism. It adds to the growing recent histories that are dispelling the all-too- romantic ideas of Tibet the westerners often seems so infatuated with. Schaik is intelligent and balanced. I'm very keen to see how he treats the last sixty years - so I'll update this when I've finished!

this book is quite extensive and walks you thru over a thousand years of Tibet history. You get a good feel as to why Tibet is in its present predicament. Didn't read like a history book. It was more like reading several short stories. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand how Tibet's culture and History is unique to its people and anyone claiming otherwise is propagating false information.

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