Tibetan at the SOAS Library

The long history of Tibetan Studies at SOAS is reflected in the School’s excellent library holdings. The library has nearly every work on Tibet, its language and history, published in any major European language. The library also holds many hundreds of texts in Tibetan including the entire Tibetan Buddhist canon, both Kanjur and Tanjur, which together amount to over 300 volumes. The School is currently redoubling its efforts to collect Tibetan language literature.

Key Staff

Dr Ulrich Pagel (Reader in Languages and Religions of Tibet and Central Asia) specialises in Tibetan Language and Literature, Buddhism in Central Asia and Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

Dr Nathan Hill (Senior Lector in Tibetan) was educated at Harvard University. He has also studied for shorter periods in France, Nepal, Tibet and Japan. He came to SOAS in 2008 after teaching at Harvard University and Universität Tübingen. At SOAS he teaches courses in Tibetan language and history and serves as undergraduate tutor for Tibetan.

Samuel Griggs

BA Chinese and Tibetan

As a first year at SOAS, studying Tibetan as a joint degree with Chinese, I chose modules in Elementary Modern Tibetan and Cultural History of Tibet. Our lessons are fast paced and it is hard to describe the amount I have learnt during these first three months. My classes are taught by a leading specialist in the field who continually inspires us with his enthusiasm for the subject, even at nine o’clock in the morning! Being taught once a week by a native Tibetan speaker has been invaluable in improving our pronunciation.

At SOAS, there is an incredible number of resources available to students of Tibetan outside class; with the British Museum on our doorstep, it is so easy to see first-hand the artefacts which relate to what you learn in Cultural History. In my first term alone there have been ten public events both in and around SOAS; ranging from documentary screenings, to lectures presented by leading scholars; it’s amazing when you meet face-to-face the academic who has written one of your set texts!

Next year, I am travelling to China for a study year abroad. I hope to use my knowledge of Tibetan to speak to the locals and maybe even try some of the infamous yak butter tea!
TIBETAN STUDIES AT SOAS

The School of Oriental and African Studies, in 1950, became the first institution of higher education in the United Kingdom to offer Tibetan. Today the study of Tibetan language and culture continues with international staff, a variety of events and resources, and a unique interdisciplinary BA programme.

Undergraduate Degrees

Tibetan Studies can be:
- combined with Chinese, Development Studies, Economics, Geography, History, History of Art and Archaeology, Linguistics, Social Anthropology or the Study of Religions
- taken over 3 years
- taken over 4 years with a year abroad

All students on the course attain a basic command of both Modern and Classical Tibetan. Students can later focus on either Modern or Classical Tibetan and culture.

Entry Requirements

- A Levels: ABB
- A Level Language preferred
- IB: 34 (5/5/5)

Postgraduate Degrees

MA Tibetan Linguistics and Language Pedagogy
- is unique in the world
- trains native speakers of Tibetan to become more effective teachers
- provides an appreciation of the concepts, modes of analysis and theoretical approaches in the area of Language Pedagogy, including second language learning theories and teaching methodologies

Through this programme SOAS hopes to raise the quality of Tibetan teaching internationally, and promote the long-term viability of the Tibetan language in Tibet.

The Future

In addition to graduate destinations in the private or NGO sectors, SOAS graduates in Tibetan Studies have gone on to PhD programmes in Tibetan Studies at SOAS, Harvard, Oxford, and other universities. Scholars of international repute such as Tsering Shakya and Samten Karmay received their training at SOAS.

Circle of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies

Each year for over a decade this lecture has invited four or five of the world’s most eminent scholars of Tibetan Studies to present their research at SOAS. The content of these presentations covers a wide range of Tibetological research including art, archaeology, architecture, history, language, music, philosophy and religion.

Tibetan Studies Outreach Lecture Series

This series of lectures and events proposes to bridge the gap which sometimes exists between the academic study of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism and the general interest in these subjects among the public. These talks are frequently organised jointly between SOAS and other London based Tibet related charities and NGOs.

Tibetan at the Language Centre

Courses in Tibetan are available for members of the public not studying on a formal degree programme through the SOAS Language Centre.

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