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Anne-Sophie Bentz, *Les réfugiés tibétains en Inde: Nationalisme et exil*, Paris & Geneva: PUF & The Graduate Institute Publications, 2010, 264 p., ISBN: 978-2-13058-580-0.

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[1] This book focuses on the concept of nationalism as it relates to Tibetan refugees who have settled in India. The author, who has a doctorate in International Relations, was prompted to write it by the fact that no analytical study had ever been made of the nationalism of the Tibetan population and also no studies had been published of nationalism in Tibet itself. Dr Bentz proposes that the concept of nationalism be examined by looking at it in the context of the situation of Tibetan exiles. Her approach is based largely on multidisciplinary literary sources, but she also conducted a nine-month investigation in India (in the period between 2004 and 2008), involving some twenty interviews and a questionnaire that was answered by more than 50 refugees in twelve different settlements.

[2] The assumption on which the book is based is that the Tibetan nation appeared with its exile, was influenced by the Dalai Lama (the author prefers to call him by his birth name Tenzin Gyatso) and was then reappropriated by refugees. According to her, exile is an appropriate situation for the strengthening of Tibetan nationalism for two main reasons. Firstly, the situation of exile has a psychological impact: for the Tibetan resistance (nationalists) it provides better opportunities for access to resources and more freedom of expression. Secondly, the concentration of refugees in many 'camps' set up throughout India encourages people to subscribe to the idea of a Tibetan nation (p. 4). To that can be added the centralization of political

decision-making (in terms of development, international relations and relations with the media) through the establishment of a government in exile in Dharamsala (northern India).¹

[3] The introduction sets out very clearly the theoretical bases for the concepts of nation and nationalism. Basing herself on the work of R. Brubaker and B. Anderson, among others, the author defines the nation according to both objective and subjective criteria (p. 8), the latter being more difficult to identify and analyse. Thus, the nation is at one and the same time a practical entity, an institutionalized cultural and political form and a contingent event, three elements that influence the inherent political nature of any modern nation (p. 7). Two variables are to be taken into account in defining the nation: the political nation is tantamount to the idea of self-determination, and the cultural nation relates to protection of the cultural heritage. And it is precisely to these two challenges—the one relating to politics and the other to identity—that the Dalai Lama, who has been based in India for more than 50 years now, is attempting to respond.

[4] Anne-Sophie Bentz begins her argument (Chapter 1) with a historiography of Tibet. She compares the views of Tibetan, Chinese and Western historians whose writings have become works of reference, in order to put into perspective the way in which the history of Tibet has been used for national and nationalist purposes. While the partiality of Tibetan and Chinese writers may seem obvious, Western historians are also seen to take clear-cut attitudes. After explaining the different versions of the founding myth of Tibetan civilization, the author points out that myths evolve as interests change over time: miraculous and divine kings glorified by Tibetans in song and legend were progressively replaced by religious kings as Buddhism spread in Tibet (pp. 47 and 48).

[5] The author also analyses the institution of the Dalai Lamas and the international treaties that have been signed. The latter point is interpreted in three different ways: the Tibetans and the Chinese adopt the hypothesis that the status of Tibet was clearly defined even before the treaties were signed: for the Tibetans Tibet is an independent State, while for the Chinese Tibet is an integral part of China. Westerners, however, infer the status of Tibet from these treaties, which means different interpretations according to the agreements signed (p. 68).

¹ See also (Humeau 2010, Baujard 2008 and Frechette 2002).

[6] At the end of this historiographical review, the author concludes that there was a Tibet before 1951 and a Tibet following the Chinese invasion, but by then it was a Tibet in exile. Tibetan nationalism creates not only the nation but also, through Tibetan historians the history of the nation. In other words, Tibetan historians reinterpret history and make it into a national history.

[7] Chapter 2 sets out the symbols associated with the Dalai Lama and then discusses how he stands at the very foundation of the Tibetan nation. Tenzin Gyatso has promoted the figure of the Dalai Lama by making Buddhism the basis of Tibetan identity: it becomes the main identifying reference (p. 86). His aim is to convince the world that the Tibetan nation has always existed, which seems paradoxical in view of the arguments developed in the chapter on historiography. It is by ensuring the preservation of traditions and customs that he seeks to achieve this objective (p. 102). The problem is that the preservation of traditions *through* institutions is an artefact of Tibetan culture, a 'museum nation', according to the author, in the sense that the systematic preservation of items chosen as representative of Tibetan culture led to denying the development of the Tibetan nation. Tibetans hand down an idealized vision of a perfectly successful preserved culture because they want to satisfy Westerners who are seeking the exotic and the authentic. It is therefore tempting to turn the Tibetan nation into a mythical nation (p. 103). The Tibetan nation has to appear authentic and modern if it is to please Western donors (whom the author calls 'patrons'). The concept of a democratic nation has therefore been adopted by the Dalai Lama, and the structure of the Tibetan central administration is founded on this idea (p. 108). Belonging to the Buddhist religion, which is surprisingly little discussed by the author, is another criterion enabling Tibetan exiles to (re)define the Tibetan nation. The very dynamic monasteries reestablished in India are indicative of the pervasiveness of the Tibetan religion and its individuality: they bolster the self-image associated with the Tibetan nation (p. 105). Finally, the author describes the two renowned nationalist tools, namely the media and education. Although the media (newspapers, radio and television) were created somewhat belatedly, Tibetan schooling was established very early on with the support of the then Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru (p. 124). With these two instruments, which were clear objectives of the Tibetan nation, the Dalai Lama was able to format and shape the younger generation, and preserve the perennial sense of Tibetan identity. Similarly, the Tibetan language, which has been standardized in exile, seems the best testimony to Tibetan unification and a rising Tibetan nation.

[8] In Chapter 3, the author adopts what she calls a grass-roots approach, in contrast to the previous section. She provides the internal perspective of the Tibetan people and a glimpse of the way in which their identity has been reconstructed according to the objectives set by the Dalai Lama. In this part of the book the author discusses the limits of the Tibetan model, which is regarded by many researchers as 'a successful exile'. She shows how the Tibetan nation undergoes a degree of decay in the sense that the population seems increasingly to be satisfied with its situation without necessarily feeling the need to resume the struggle to return to Tibet. Tibetan identity is also harmed by the conflict between collective success and individual success (p. 149). The lack of job opportunities in India within the settlements leads young Tibetan graduates to turn increasingly to the West, with a consequent fragmentation of the community. Taking Indian citizenship in order to gain access to Indian jobs is also a stopgap measure being chosen by more and more young Tibetans. But refugee status remains more than anything else a status of identity; abandoning it runs counter to Tibetan political demands, and amounts to renouncing the Tibetan nation. The statements made by the Tibetans interviewed by the author bear this out.

[9] The Tibetan nation is also faced with external influences, particularly that of the host country, India. In fact, it is the place of India in this triangular relationship (between territory of origin, diaspora and host country) that the author has chosen to address in the final chapter of her book. This time she adopts a chronological approach, because, as she explains, India has evolved over the past 50 years. In this part of the book we find a piecing together of the various aspects of Indian government policy in international relations which reveal the obstacles to the rise of Tibetan nationalism. Several levels are addressed: the State-to-State level (with China), the interpersonal level between the Dalai Lama and Nehru, and finally the intercommunity level (between the local Indian population and the Tibetan exiles). Even if the attitude of India 'undermines the chances of success of Tibet's appeal to the United Nations' (p. 179) because of India's desire to defuse the conflicts with China, it is undeniable that the Indian Government has welcomed the Tibetans and their leader in the best possible conditions. India's benevolence has taken the form of providing significant financial support which has furthered various nationalist activities which India itself does not back. Also, the existence of Indian associations set up to support the Tibetan cause also demonstrates the role of India in the Tibetan nationalist movement. However, on an intercommunity level, the author describes the fragility of relations

between Tibetans and Indians. Tensions and conflicts very often arise in the camps, despite the image of closeness that the local Tibetan authorities are at pains to convey.

[10] In conclusion, stating that the Tibetan nation exists is tantamount to permitting the 'identity gap' (p. 226) created by deterritorialization to be filled and to legitimizing the struggle for Tibetan independence in the eyes of the parties concerned, *i.e.* the West, the Chinese and the Indians. But Anne-Sophie Bentz ponders on the future prospects for Tibet and the Tibetan nation. The struggle to return to Tibet and the nationalist movement which has become more bitter in exile have, in the past 50 years or so, given way to disenchantment. The word 'nation' has become a taboo (p. 229); it is preferable to speak of Tibetan 'civilization' or 'culture'. It is in fact for the Tibetan authorities to make compromises, to restore the dialogue with China by proposing autonomy rather than independence.

[11] Finally, this book can be criticized more, or is more questionable, on form than on substance. The English quotations in the French text and the (too) numerous footnotes make for tedious reading. On the other hand, the author is to be congratulated for her formidable compilation and systematic critique of secondary and primary bibliographical sources. The impressive bibliography at the end of the book may facilitate research for many experts in the field. The book does make the current Tibetan situation and the issues of exile intelligible, but it is a matter for regret that the fieldwork carried out by Anne-Sophie Bentz has not been used more, especially in the second and third chapters, as that would have made the story a little more lively, revealing interactions and differences between the camps and in general bringing a more anthropological approach to bear on the subject.

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