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NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translated from the French original by Peter Brown

- ¹ This work is a reponse to the pamphlet *Tibet in a Hundred Questions and Answers* (Peking, Beijing Information, 1988, 124 p.), distributed in China for foreigners, whose aim was to show that Tibet has belonged to China ever since the thirteenth century. *Le Tibet est-il chinois?* (Is Tibet Chinese?) is set out in a fashion similar to the work that it challenges. It takes up the series of questions and answers, organising them in nine sections (the historical facts; the issue of human rights; the policies towards the Dalai Lama; the issue of demography; religious beliefs; culture and education; economic development; living conditions; the Lhasa riots), and in so doing proposes a scientific response. The work is divided into two distinct parts, one on the history of Tibet, the other on the current situation.
- ² The historical part is based on the Tibetan military might from the seventh to the ninth centuries, a consideration of the supposed dates Tibet first belonged to China, and the Tibetan definition of international relations, including Sino-Tibetan relations. This part ends with a refutation of the arguments used by the Chinese to justify their invasion of Tibet and a reminder of the 1959 Tibetan uprising.
- ³ The Tibetan empire of the seventh to ninth centuries is described as a powerful state whose aggressive kings expanded their territory overseas and received embassies from China, the Arab world and various Turkish states. Later, in the thirteenth century, the Tibetans came under the rule of the Mongol empire that settled in Lhasa. We learn,

however, that the Chinese view, according to which the Mongols of the Yuan, the conquerors of China, considered themselves Chinese and set up their empire as a Chinese one, cannot be sustained. Finally, the dynastic history of the Yuan (1271-1368) and, later, that of the Ming (1368-1644) excluded Tibet from the territory of China, hence the difficulty for the Chinese sources to agree on the date at which Tibet became a part of China under the Mongol dynasty of the Yuan.

- 4 During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), it seems that, beginning in 1721, the Manchurians gradually incorporated Tibet within the Chinese political system, in particular by establishing a military garrison and an embassy in Lhasa, and participating in the setting up of new Tibetan administrations. However, the influence of the Qing diminished in Tibet throughout the nineteenth century. During the Qing dynasty, the chaplain-donor relationship was in full swing. This relationship was established at all levels of Tibetan society and, from a Tibetan point of view, also determined political relations. The Tibetan masters acted as spiritual masters, while the Manchurian emperors were the providers. The Manchurians brought military protection to a Tibet that had no army and gifts enabled Buddhism to flourish. The Manchurians played on this relationship in order to establish a de facto protectorate over Tibet, as, from their viewpoint, Tibet was part of their empire.
- 5 Finally, the British domination in India and the growing interest of the British in Tibet changed the traditional politico-religious balance that had determined relations between China and Tibet up to the beginning of the twentieth century. Between 1913 and 1950, Tibet enjoyed independence with absolute power over both its internal and external affairs. In 1950, the expansionist and unificatory desires of Communist China were at the root of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. In fact, the Chinese justification for invading Tibet in 1950, particularly that according to which the Tibetans themselves allegedly asked to be freed from foreign influences, is refuted. This part concludes with an analysis of the 1959 Tibetan uprising, brought about by the Chinese occupation of Tibet.
- 6 The second part of the work is an account of the contemporary situation in Tibet. To the Chinese argument according to which Tibetan society has evolved towards one of greater equality and justice, Western scholars reply with facts. The Chinese feel that Tibet was feudal and repressive. However, while Tibetans share the view that traditional society was inequitable, there is little evidence of any oppression. Again, according to the Chinese, Buddhism is flourishing in Tibet, although some Chinese political accounts and texts would appear to show the opposite.
- 7 The Lhasa riots and the motivations of the demonstrators are also significant. Some one hundred and fifty peaceful demonstrations were put down by force between 1987 and 1996. The introduction of martial law in Lhasa in 1989 remains the most repressive measure imposed by the Chinese in Tibet, whose residents are the victims of imprisonment and suspicious murders. The Chinese accuse the Tibetan government in exile of being behind the disturbances. Robbie Barnett explains that we cannot expect the existence of the Dalai Lama in exile to represent for Tibetans a lasting possibility for regaining their national identity in one form or another. It is difficult to claim that such an aspiration to independence is merely the result of a conspiracy or an artificial provocation by those living in exile. He also informs us of the terms used by the Tibetan demonstrandum to define their objectives: they wanted to be free of Chinese law and to enable the return of the Dalai Lama.

- 8 Questions remain, however, to which it is not easy to provide any answer, such as the issue of demography. The Chinese, like the Tibetans themselves, play on the uncertainty of Tibet's borders (according to whether the Tibetan provinces of Amdo and Kham are included or not in the statistics) and censuses.
- 9 Finally, the treatment of the subjects of culture and the economy, for example, offer another view of Tibetan society. The author shows its development and its opening up at the same time as regretting the obliteration of traditional Tibetan culture.
- 10 Any reader keen to get an idea of the history of Tibet will be gratified to find a historical analysis and understanding of a great number of subjects, as a counterpoint to the Chinese rhetoric and propaganda about Tibet. Western reactions to the Chinese questions and answers are level-headed and well presented. They form a homogenous whole that reveals little known aspects of Tibetan society, both past and present.