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Françoise, Lhadze Namgyel & Tenzin Samphel  
(eds.), *Dictionnaire thématique français-tibétain du  
tibétain parlé (langue standard)*. vol. 2. *L'Homme,  
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Per Kværne

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- 1 This is the second volume resulting from the *Dictionnaire thématique* project. The first volume, focusing on *L'Homme. Anatomie, fonctions motrices et viscérales*, appeared in 2001, so this is *un travail de longue haleine*. The present volume, however, not only deals with a much more complex semantic field than the first, but the linguistic presentation is more complex as well. As the title of the volumes indicates, they deal with spoken Tibetan, more specifically the dialect of Central Tibet, the *lingua franca* in Tibet as well as in the Tibetan exile community. However, as the exodus of Tibetans to India took place more than fifty years ago, “langue standard” is no longer exactly the same inside and outside

Tibet. As Françoise Robin and Anne-Marie Blondeau point out, the situation is further complicated by the fact that spoken Tibetan has entered a phase of rapid change on both sides of the Himalayas (p. ii).

- 2 This is a consequence not only of different sources of loan words (English and Hindi in exile, Chinese in Tibet), but is above all caused by different social dynamics and developments, to which must be added the inevitable differentiation resulting from the limited degree of contact between Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. The editors have taken this linguistically complex situation into account; as they correctly observe, “[in fact, as far as we are aware, there is no comparative linguistic study dealing with the lexicography, morphology, or syntax of the spoken Tibetan of Lhasa and that of exile]” (p. ii, my translation).
- 3 It is the lexicographical documentation of this gradual evolution of two varieties of standard Tibetan that makes the second volume of the *Dictionnaire* particularly, although this was by no means the intention at the outset. The group of editors has been expanded not only by including Françoise Robin, a recognized expert on modern Tibetan, but also by two younger Tibetan scholars, Namgyal Lhadze coming from Lhasa and having the Lhasa dialect as her mother tongue, and Tenzin Samphel, born in India. The reader of the *Dictionnaire* will find that in a considerable number of cases, the two Tibetan collaborators in the project use different Tibetan terms to translate a given French expression. These differences are however not listed systematically, so anyone interested in exploring this aspect of spoken Tibetan would need to read through the entire dictionary (which might, however, be worth the effort). The editors only give one example in the foreword: “to speak” is usually *bshad pa* in Lhasa, while in the diaspora *lab pa* is preferred.
- 4 The *Dictionnaire* is not meant to be a practical manual, but rather a compendium of material for scholars of Tibetan interested in the semantics of that language. As such, it is a rich source of information, which should inspire others to study the phenomenon of the two varieties of standard Tibetan more closely. Hence it is also a reminder that in the field of Tibetan studies, it can never be satisfactory to have a working knowledge of one language only (in practice, English - apart, of course, from Tibetan), a fact highlighted by the publication of the massive *Wörterbuch der tibetischen Schriftsprache* of which the first fascicle appeared in 2005 and which has currently reached the letter *ta* (representing probably about one third of the lexical corpus).
- 5 The editors – Anne-Marie Blondeau, Françoise Robin, and their collaborators – are to be congratulated on having brought the *Dictionnaire thématique* project thus far. There is, obviously, an endless number of possible themes to choose from, but, whatever the theme may be, it is to be hoped that the third volume will not be too long in appearing.

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## AUTHORS

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