

On-site Education of Practical Languages for Area Studies

Report in 2010

—Tibetan, Center for the Study of Developing Societies, India,
23 Aug. 2010 - 11Jan. 2011—

Year of Enrollment: 2010

Graduate School of Asian and Africa Areas Studies

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On My research theme and Language Training

My research will focus on the modern practice and social aspects of Tibetan Medicine in South Asia. Recent scholarship has tended to approach the modern practice of Tibetan medicine as a social system. This approach, however, has not clarified the ways in which Tibetan medicine has been received by different cultures, or the reasons for its expansion and establishment in South Asia. It is necessary to study the contemporary dynamics of Tibetan medicine in relation to regional issues of politics, sociality, and identity. I will thus take a detailed field approach to the investigation of people's lives and their practice of medicine, and interpret my findings within the larger context of the plurality of Tibetan medicine. My research area is Tawang of Arunachal Pradesh in north east India. Monpa who believe in Tibetan Buddhism live in Tawang, a high town on the border between India, Tibet, and Bhutan. Monpa is one of the 26 major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Monpa use Tibetan medicine unlike other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

On Language Training, I studied Tibetan language. Firstly I stayed at Dharamsala in north west India for 3 and a half months. I studied basic conversation and grammar of Tibetan in classes for foreigners at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in the morning. After classes I went to private teacher's home in the afternoon. I had classes of the library 5 days a week and private lesson 6 days a week. In the library there were 15 students and we have spoke Tibetan every time. Classmates served as a stimulus for my study. In the private lesson I had my Tibetan compositions corrected. The teacher told me not only about grammar but also about social customs and history in Dharamsala and Tibet. I enjoyed conversations with my teacher. Her talk was very interesting for me. Thanks to her lesson, I know the pleasure of conversation in Tibetan. When I had no class, I worked voluntarily in a restaurant with Tibetans and sometimes I went to talk with nuns. Secondly I researched around Tawang for about 1 month. I practiced speaking Tibetan through researching there. I stayed in Manjushree Orphanage. I researched in Tawang Monastery and Gyangon Nunnery, villages, Tibetan medicine clinic, Torgya which is Tibetan Buddhism festival. In the clinic I was able to conduct interviews with Tibetan medicine doctors many times in Tibetan. In Gyangon Nunnery and a village I learned some Monpa language with nuns.

My object of Language Training was to obtain skills for research in Tibetan. After Language Training, I could speak about daily life and my research topics in Tibetan. So, I have got some confidence in my Tibetan. But I have not studied well honorific words and reading. Honorific words are very important in Tibetan because Tibetan people use many honorific words to elders or persons of high rank. I can write and read some sentences in Tibetan but it is still difficult for me to read Tibetan books. I should learn more Tibetan and memorize many words.

Thank you very much for everyone who helped me on Language Training.