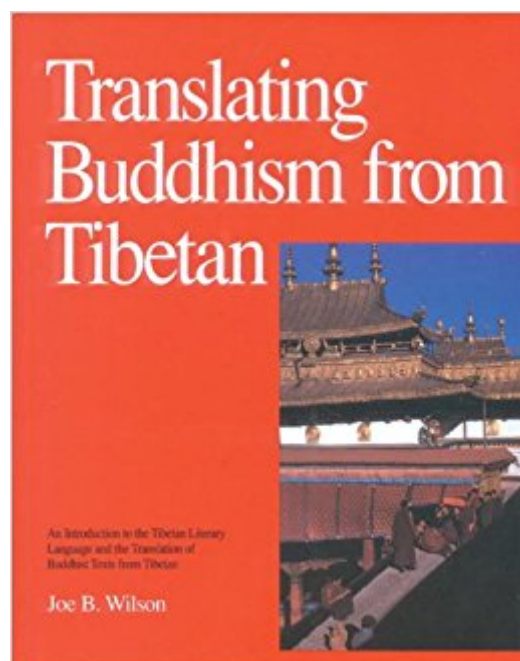




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Translating Buddhism From Tibetan: An Introduction To The Tibetan Literary Language And The Translation Of Buddhist Texts From Tibetan



Synopsis

This complete textbook on classical Tibetan is suitable for beginning or intermediate students. It begins with rules for reading writing and pronouncing Tibetan, gradually carrying the reader through the patterns seen in the formation of words and into the repeating patterns of Tibetan phrases, clauses, and sentences. Students with prior experience will find the seven appendices – which review the rules of pronunciation grammar and syntax – provide an indispensable reference. It balances traditional Tibetan grammatical and syntactic analysis with a use of terminology that reflects English preconceptions about sentence structure. Based on the system developed by Jeffrey Hopkins at the University of Virginia, this book presents in lessons with drills and reading exercises a practical introduction to Tibetan grammar syntax and technical vocabulary used in Buddhist works on philosophy and meditation. An extremely well designed learning system, it serves as an introduction to reading and translating and to Buddhist philosophy and meditation. Through easily memorizable paradigms the student comes to recognize and understand the recurrent patterns of the Tibetan language. Each chapter contains a vocabulary full of helpful Buddhist terms.

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Customer Reviews

"What an impressive production! It is a superb piece of work." -- Richard Hayes, Dept. of Religious Studies, McGill University

Text: English, Tibetan

This is indeed the best textbook on literary Tibetan - especially for students who wish to learn to read Buddhist scriptures in Tibetan . Other 5 star reviews have already provided very useful comments regarding this text, so I will just add two notes:(1) There used to be an audio cassette tape, now unavailable, that was made for this book. Using the tape, the student could HEAR much of the text, in what is essentially Central Tibetan dialect. Shambhala publications, which now publishes this textbook, is offering without charge, mp3 files of the original audio tape for this textbook. You can obtain the two mp3 files and a descriptive index (with timestamps) of the files, by going to Shambhala publications, and searching inside their website for this title.(2) If you get Translating Buddhism from Tibetan, also get the textbook/workbook "How to Read Classical Tibetan" by Craig Preston, who was a student of Joe Wilson and who uses Wilson's method and approach to learning Tibetan. Start with his (CP's) volume 1 -- as it spoon-feeds the student all the details needed to learn how to work through a translation of a Buddhist text (especially of that genre). It is INVALUABLE as a tool to help the student efficiently practice how to actually carry out a translation. After a student has developed some facility in undertaking a translation, based on having used these two books, there is another book to get, as well: A Tibetan Verb Lexicon by Paul Hackett (another student of Joe Wilson). This book provides translation and examples of a great number of verbs, and includes the category (I through VIII) of each verb, according to Wilson's classification scheme.... and ENJOY YOUR STUDIES ! You have here an excellent and fairly complete set of materials to help you learn literary Tibetan.

I am presently using Wilson's book as the primary textbook for an intensive Tibetan language course and am about 1/3 through the course. Having a skilled teacher to explain the grammar, syntax, orthography and doctrinal elements, or to expand upon Wilson's explanations of them is a must. (That's no criticism of Wilson's text, just a fact of language acquisition.) Wilson's text is well structured and detailed, and his explanations are quite lucid and accessible. There are audio files available to help with pronunciation recorded by a native Tibetan speaker. For an American English speaker not used to retroflex Ds and Rs, the recordings are indispensable. The text is intended for those who seek to become skilled translators of literary Tibetan Buddhist texts and commentaries. It is not for those seeking conversational Tibetan skills. Paul Hackett's "Tibetan Verb Lexicon" is intended (by Hackett) as a companion to Wilson. Hackett complements Wilson well. Two weeks into my course, I am making good progress. Wilson's text is a large part of my success thus far.

Either you like Joe Wilson's approach or you don't. Focussing on the 'dots' instead of the 'particles' is one approach, but there are arguments for and against it. However, if you decide to go with that approach then the book is consistent. And well-structured.

This book has been a superb aid in learning Tibetan for me. I started learning Tibetan last year at age 48 with Lama David Curtis and Joe Wilson's book (especially the "Tenglish") has been a wonderful support. It really works for me.

Very useful book for learners with a constructive introduction to Tibetan sentence structure and a useful basic vocabulary for classical Tibetan. Start with this book if you want to learn to read Tibetan and get a good basis. With the next edition please give us a lighter version and add an index!

Beware that Wilson uses Lhasa pronunciation rather than the more widespread Wylie translation. This affects k, g, ng, ny, c, b, p, sh, and s. Since I don't know if the Tibetans are speaking Lhasa it would be much easier to learn one at a time.

I am less enthused about this massive tome than the other reviewers. I have a feeling that the book has failed to make the transition from a very lively university course to a textbook. The approach using all the different 'dimensions' is rather idiosyncratic. The problem is that there are few other choices when it comes to Tibetan textbooks. There is a heavy reliance for examples on the literature of logic. In my opinion more examples from practice-related material would have been useful. Too much reliance is placed on traditional Tibetan grammar for my liking. And that romanisation is unnecessarily complex. Still, it is a very significant work, and in spite of its short-comings, is still the best in this small field.

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