



RAIJA HARRI

Chanting, Singing and Reading

Cultural contexts of Tibetan literacy



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the ways culture impacts on adult literacy education. In this research I attempt to create a picture of Tibetan cultural literacy. In other words I attempt to define the cultural components that essentially influence adult literacy education. The research interest rose from the practical dilemmas which surfaced in implementing an adult literacy programme in Amdo Tibetan communities in Qinghai Province in the People's Republic of China (PRC). I needed to understand the foundation on which Tibetan literacy teaching was based in order to grow professionally and carry on with the project. No studies on this subject were available. Though many studies have been carried out on socio-cultural literacy, none have been done in a Tibetan context.

Drawing on theory from sociolinguistics, New Literacy Studies and theorists who view literacy as situated activity, I have explored Amdo Tibetan literacies both in daily life and in adult literacy classes for twelve months in 2004-2005 and 2010. Using an ethnographic perspective with qualitative research methods such as observation, interviews and photography it was possible to explore literacy practices and to analyse the ways in which the Amdo Tibetans are dealing with literacy in daily life. Furthermore, I have been able to find out the ways Tibetans view literacy, and how cultural values and traditions are embedded both in everyday literacy practices and in classroom situations. This study discusses how the meaning and uses of Tibetan language literacies take shape in cultural and social circumstances, which have in turn shaped literacy practices and literacy teaching into the form that they are today.

This study shows how attitudes and ways of thinking of a patriarchal society, cultural values and traditions influence the methods of adult literacy teaching, teaching dynamics and classroom activities along with curriculum and its goals. It also reveals how different discourses of literacy play different roles in individual's

life, and of society. This study also touches on the issue of mother tongue literacy education by discussing the role of cultural activities in promoting mother tongue literacy practices among minority language people. This study can be also seen from the perspective of multicultural teaching situations as it deals with cross-cultural and multicultural elements in teaching.

Even though this study concerns various cultural issues in Tibetan literacies, similar cultural phenomena in literacies can be found around the world. Therefore, this study presents one specific kind of cultural literacy, while acknowledging that literacies do vary from one culture to another.

Keywords: literacy, adult education, culture, Tibetans, ethnographic research, minority people

Abstrakti

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli löytää tiibetiläisen kulttuurin vaikutus aikuisten lukutaidon oppimiseen. Tutkimuksessani pyrin luomaan kuvan tiibetiläisestä kulttuurisesta lukutaidosta eli määrittelemään ne kulttuuriset komponentit, jotka olennaisesti vaikuttavat aikuisten lukutaidon oppimiseen tai jotka olennaisesti ovat osa lukutaitoa ja sen oppimista.

Tutkimusintressini virisi käytännön pulmatilanteista, joita kohtasin työssäni amdo-tiibetiläisten aikuisten lukutaitoprojektin kouluttajana ja johtajana Kiinan Qinghai-provinssissa. Kysymykset aikuiskoulutuksen opetusmenetelmien ja opetusohjelman relevanttiudesta, lukutaidon käytössä arkipäivässä sekä naisten vähäinen osuus lukutaito-opettajina antoivat sysäyksen tutkimukseen. Itselleni tutkimuksen tarpeellisuutta lisäsi aiheesta saatavilla olevan tutkimuksen puute. Vaikka sosiaalikultuurista lukutaitoa on yleisesti paljon tutkittu, niin kulttuurisidonnaisen lukutaidon tutkimusta tiibetiläisessä kontekstissa on vaikea löytää.

Turvautuen sosiolingvistiikan, sosiokulttuurisen ja New Literacy Studies -teorioihin sekä niiden teoreetikkojen tutkimuksiin, jotka käsittävät lukutaidon tilannesidonnaisena tapahtumana, olen tutkinut amdo-tiibetiläisten lukutaitoa sekä arkipäivän tilanteissa että lukutaitoluokissa yhteensä 12 kuukauden aikana pääasiassa vuosina 2004–2005 sekä 2010. Etnografinen lähestymistapa kvalitatiivisten tutkimusmenetelmien myötä mahdollisti lukutaidon merkityksen ja lukutaidon käytön tarkastelun tiibetiläisestä perspektiivistä käsin.

Tutkimus selvittää tiibetiläisen patriarkaalisen yhteisön asenteiden ja ajatusmallien, kulttuurin arvojen ja traditioiden vaikutusta aikuisten lukutaito-opetuksen opetusmetodeihin, opetuksen dynamiikkaan ja aktiviteetteihin sekä opetusohjelmaan ja opetuksen tavoitteisiin. Tutkimuksessa tulee myös ilmi lukutaidon eri diskurssien

erilaiset roolit niin yksittäisten ihmisten kuin yhteisön elämässä sekä kulttuuristen aktiviteettien vaikutus vähemmistökansojen äidinkieliseen lukutaito-opetukseen ja sen soveltamiseen jokapäiväisessä elämässä.

Tämän tutkimuksen tulokset edustavat yhtä kulttuurilukutaitoa, joka muuttuu kulttuurista toiseen. Lukutaidon kulttuuristen ominaisuuksien ja sidonnaisuuksien tunnistaminen edesauttavat kulttuurisesti relevantin ja asianmukaisen aikuisten lukutaito-opetuksen kehittämisen. Kulttuuriset sidonnaisuudet oppimiseen ja opettamiseen tulevat ilmi myös muissa opetustilanteissa, joissa on mukana eri kulttuurien edustajia, joten tämän tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan tarkastella myös monikulttuuristen opetustilanteiden perspektiivistä. Tällöin tutkimus tuo esiin myös opettajan kulttuurikompetenssin merkityksen aikuiskoulutuksessa.

Asiasanat: lukutaito, kulttuurilukutaito, aikuisten lukutaito-opetus, kulttuuri, tiibetiläiset, etnografinen tutkimus, vähemmistökansa

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1. Research Introduction

1.1 Literacy in Context

Literacy is a fundamental part of our education and working life. The ability to read and write is the first skill to be learned in our long path of formal education. Further education is also based on early literacy acquisition. Therefore, it is not surprising that along with UNESCO (e.g. 2011) and the World Bank (2003), many educators and professionals of international development implementation regard literacy as a human right and a prerequisite for educational opportunities. Teaching literacy is often one project within a wider development programme being implemented in developing countries, where the adult population has not had access to literacy education for one reason or another. It is assumed that once people learn to read and write they can learn other skills which assist in eradicating poverty, ensuring development and democracy in their societies.

Literacy is also a foundation for professional development and growth. When employees have difficulties in reading and numeracy skills they have difficulties in keeping up with their professions, which clearly was pointed out in an Australian study. Industry Skills Councils (2011, 5) reports: “Literally millions of Australians have insufficient language, literacy and numeracy skills to benefit fully from training or to participate effectively at work.” Similar reports concerning work force literacy skills have been published in Europe, which show that adult literacy education is needed not only in developing countries, but also in developed countries. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training has set a high priority for literacy by stating: “a good literacy level should be at the top of the European agenda” (2010, 5).

Since literacy is regarded important by policy makers and educators it has been widely researched. Literacy education and research on literacy world wide have had

many phases and forms in the last decades. Discussions on literacy have varied from literacy skills to social literacies, from emotional literacy to digital literacy, and so forth. In all these contexts literacy has a special connotation depending on the context of literacy. Yet, in all of them literacy includes skills for creating meaning and the ability to apply that understanding to a particular situation (life situations, computing, etc). Furthermore, I believe it is the cultural context of literacy which conveys the meaning to people. People create meaning and understand literacy based on their own cultural experience and practices. Literacy practices that are meaningful in one society may not be the same in another society, because societies differ by their culture: different beliefs, social hierarchy, shared values, etc. (Gee 1994; Street 1990).

The cultural aspect of creating meaning and understanding literacy triggered off this research, which is a study of Tibetan adult literacy practices and literacy education in the Amdo Tibetan region in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The main focus of the research is on the influence of culture on adult literacy teaching. However, because everyday literacy practices should be the basis for teaching and learning, literacy in adult literacy classes are also looked into. I will explore different views of literacy, uses of literacy, purposes for literacy in the everyday life of the Amdos in order to find out the ways Tibetan cultural elements influence on and construct adult literacy education.

The research is a continuation of the Master of Philosophy research, which was done in King's College London. The thesis "Literacy in Education and in Everyday Life: Tensions in Tibetan literacy practices" was approved by London University in 2009. That thesis concerns Tibetan everyday literacy practices in multilingual and in multicultural environments, and it is the basis for this research.

1.2 Rationale to the Research

In order to understand the research questions which are explained later on in this chapter, it is important to look briefly at the two main issues that form the

background to this research: the origin of the Tibetan literacy education and the reasons for the continuous need for adult literacy education.

First, one of the main characteristics of the Tibetan literacy practices is the origin of Tibetan literacy education. The foundation of Tibetan literacy education is in the Tibetan monastic education. In monasteries, literacy teaching has focuses on religious literacy teaching which is conducted by monks who have learned literacy in monasteries. Even though the curriculum of monastic education covers subjects such as astrology, medicine and religious dialectics not all monks study these subjects. Monks have different careers and duties in the monastic society and those duties such as clerical work, academic research and labour influence the need for different literacies. However, all monks are required to acquire literacy in order to be able to recite daily prayers. As a whole, the religious use of literacy is dominant in monasteries. My hypothesis is that as monastic literacy teaching is the foundation of modern Tibetan literacy education it has a significant affect on current literacy teaching.

Second, there are around 1,2 million Tibetans out of China's five million Tibetans living in Qinghai Province (China Statistical Bureau of the People's Republic of China 2001). According to available statistics at the time when this research was started, most Tibetans in Qinghai Province are semiliterate or illiterate (China Statistic Press 1995). They can read neither their mother tongue Tibetan nor Chinese (Mandarin variety). This is due to two main reasons. First, their nomadic life style combined with the remoteness of their dwellings has complicated the organisation of literacy teaching for them. Second, motivation for acquiring literacy may have not been very strong, which is a common issue in adult literacy education (cf. Rogers 1999).

Most Tibetans in the research area live nomadic life in small towns and villages in mountainous rural areas. In these areas living conditions are very harsh and the annual per capita income is low. Based upon per-capita income, Qinghai is one of the poorest provinces in China. According to the China Statistical Yearbook 2002 (China Statistical Bureau of the PRC 2002) rural per capita income in Qinghai was 1,557.32 RMB whereas in Tibet Autonomous Region per capita disposable income

was 7,869.16 RMB and in Shanghai per capita disposable income was 12,883.46 RMB. The difference between rural and urban per capita income is significant in Qinghai Province. According to the Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2001 (China Statistical Bureau of the PRC 2001) the provincial urban population was 1, 80 million and 3, 38 million in rural, accounting for 34, 76% and 65, 24% of the total respectively. While the urban per capita disposable¹ income in Qinghai in 2001 was 5 853 RMB, the rural per capita net income was only 1 610 RMB (Horstia, E. & Murray, M. 2006). Therefore, about two-thirds of the population of Qinghai live at a significantly lower economic standard than their urban counterparts.

Harsh living conditions and low income create obstacles for the provision of education. Even though the government has established boarding schools in townships and county centres, Tibetan children do not always go to school. Even if they go to school, the drop out rate is high. This is due to three main, world wide known common, reasons: families cannot financially afford it, the distance to a school is too far and/or children are needed to help in domestic work.

The issue of gender is involved in a Tibetan education tradition. Traditionally boys have had better opportunities for education than girls. There have always been significantly more monasteries for boys to enter than nunneries for girls, and after government schools were established in 1950's boys continued to have the same privileges regarding education opportunities. It has been regarded as more important to provide formal education for boys than for girls. Additionally, girls have more domestic responsibilities than boys do.

Finally, even though the literacy situation among young Tibetans is improving there is a huge need for literacy teaching in the age group of 15-45 years. The literacy rate among Tibetans in Qinghai Province varies from one per cent to over eighty per cent in the age group of 15-45 years² (China Statistic Press 1995). People from that age group suffer from the educational opportunities or they are school dropouts who have never put in practice what they learned in literacy classes.

¹ Disposable income equals with income (total income) minus income tax on that income.

² Measured in terms of the percentage of illiterates and semi-literates in that age group of the population.

One of the developmental and educational goals of the Chinese government is to promote literacy throughout the whole country (Ministry of Education 1995). This is a huge task, but the Chinese government has been successful in its mission in some regions of the country. However, the task has not been completed in some minority people's areas such as in Tibetan areas. The Ministry of Education of the PRC has the aim that the Tibet Autonomous Region will be literate by 2020 (Ministry of Education 2005).

Amdo Tibetan society in Qinghai is also changing and they are facing new social challenges.³ According to the recent regulations of depopulating the Tibetan Plateau Tibetans will be moving to towns and townships (China Brief 2003; Foggin 2008). In these new challenges the acquisition of literacy is generally recognised as increasingly important. Tibetans, like most people around the world, recognise the importance of literacy for self-confidence and further education. Very often Tibetans see literacy as a set of skills, which are the same for all people whether they are farmers, factory workers, etc. As far as I know, that has caused most of the Tibetan literacy programmes to use the same methods for all students without taking into account different needs and uses of literacy in daily life.

At present, national and international organisations provide Tibetan adult literacy education in Qinghai Province. Literacy teaching tends to adopt an alphabetical method, which emphasises learning sounds (cf. Millard 1997) and in a Tibetan context, an emphasis on reciting texts. Students are expected to learn to read and write prescribed texts. This approach to literacy raises questions of relevance and appropriateness for the types of learners in question. This issue prompted me, as Scribner and Cole (1981) suggest, to try to gain understanding of Tibetan social systems that generates Tibetan literacy practices in Amdo Tibetan communities.

3 Amdo Tibetans, who speak the Amdo dialect of Tibetan and are from the Amdo region are called Amdos or Amdo Tibetans (See Chapter 2).

1.3 Research Question

This research started as a result of my personal need for understanding Tibetan literacy. At that time, I lived in the research area and I worked as the Project Manager of the Tibetan Literacy Programme, which was implemented in co-operation with Tibetan minzuban⁴ of Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Hainan TAP), Jian Hua Foundation (Hong Kong) and Fida International from Finland.

The Tibetan Literacy Programme was able to assist around 19 000 Tibetans learn to read and write their mother tongue. The project trained more than 500 adult literacy teachers in villages. To my knowledge this project has been the only project, which has trained Tibetan adult literacy teachers in Hainan TAP and possibly in the whole province. It was a pioneering experience to train cross-culturally, and to observe literacy teaching and learning.

As I taught trainers, observed teaching situations and observed Tibetan daily life, I became confused when I could not make sense of the context of teaching and its relevance to daily life. I tried to figure out why literacy was taught as it was in adult literacy classes. As a western literacy practitioner and a trainer I understood that literacy teaching was not only about development goals and different literacy teaching methods, which are often related to a language structure, but I had to go beyond these issues. I learned that getting to know the cultural context of literacy teaching was professionally important to me.

As I was pondering over the whole situation I wondered how strong the Tibetan cultural influence on education was. I knew that Tibetan life has changed from the times literacy teaching was established in monasteries. I wondered whether or not it would be appropriate and beneficial for literacy learners if teaching methods and the content of teaching were modified in order to meet the needs of literacy in current Tibetan communities. Would the Tibetan community be ready for possible changes

⁴ The Department of Minority People

in adult literacy teaching or was it only me who was expected to adjust into the local system?

How, then, could I find answers to my questions? The only way I could see was to dive into Amdo Tibetan culture and explore the relationships between literacy and cultural practices. I followed Scribner and Cole's following suggestions:

“In order to identify the consequences of literacy we need to consider the specific characteristics of specific practices.” ... In order to do so, “we need to understand the larger social system that generates certain kinds of practices (and not others) and poses particular tasks for these practices (and not others)” (Scribner & Cole 1981, 237).

Accordingly, I aimed to gain a better understanding of how cultural values, beliefs and practices influence adult literacy education in Amdo Tibetan communities. One could say that through this research I attempted to become literate in Tibetan cultural literacy by identifying cultural characteristics in Amdo Tibetan literacy practices, e.g. role of women and men in literacy practices, power relations in literacy practices, roles of different kinds texts in communities, etc

Finally, the main research question concerns the ways Tibetan daily literacies are culturally constructed and the influence of the Tibetan culture on adult literacy education. I attempt to find an answer by dividing the main research question into sub-research questions such as:

- What is literacy for in Tibetan communities?
- What are gender roles in literacy practices?
- What is the role of religion in literacy practices?
- What motivates people to acquire literacy?
- What is the role of the Tibetan language in literacy practices?
- How is power demonstrated both in society and particularly in literacy practices?

All these questions are followed by a question “why” to find reasons for different practices. A further question “how” is a means to find the ways these different issues are involved in Tibetan literacies and in adult literacy education.

1.4 Research Location

This ethnographic research is located in Qinghai Province, which is situated in Western China. Because Qinghai Province was part of the ancient Tibetan Kingdom it has a significant Tibetan population living on the Tibetan Plateau. Within Qinghai Province my research investigates literacy teaching in adult literacy classes in Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Hainan TAP). Hainan TAP is one of seven prefectures of Qinghai Province and the majority (63%) of its population is Tibetan (China Statistical Bureau of the People’s Republic of China 2001).

Most Tibetans live in rural towns, townships and villages. Within these locations my research sites can be categorised as Tibetan nomadic and settled communities (that Tibetans call “farmers”). These two different kinds of communities differ from each other not only by their livelihood and economic situation but also by their language use. Nomadic Tibetan villages are monolingual communities in Amdo Tibetan whereas people in settled communities are more exposed to Chinese (see Figures 1 and 2). Therefore, it is important to explore literacy practices in these different kinds of communities in order to get an accurate picture of Amdo Tibetan everyday literacy practices, including adult literacy teaching.

Tibetan communities deploy different kinds of literacies. The quantity of written texts varies in different locations of Tibetan society. Street signs, shop advertisements, and newspapers are very common in settled communities, but in nomadic villages those signs and texts are rare. There simply are no streets, so there is no need for street signs as seen in the photo below. There are very few shops, if any, so there is no need to advertise. Newspapers exist, but due to long delivery distances, they arrive slowly or not at all to remote villages. Yet, there are still some literacy practices going on in nomadic villages, and there is a need for literacy education.



Figure 1. A nomadic village in Tongde

This research touches multicultural literacies. In Hainan TAP the available written texts exist not only in the Tibetan language but also in Chinese (Mandarin variety of Chinese). Tibetans are increasingly exposed to Chinese in one way or another. All official documents are in Chinese, street and shop signs, advertisements etc. have Chinese texts on them as seen in the photo on the next page. Even though minority schools for Tibetans are established, some of them teach Tibetan only as a subject that is similar to the practice in Chinese schools. Large numbers of Tibetan children attend Chinese medium schools, where Tibetan is taught as only one of a number of subjects. Tibetan literature has a long history, but it is dwarfed by the volume and the wide range of Chinese literature.

In many contexts of daily life, literacy is linked with social and cultural identities, which is especially complex in a multicultural and multilingual environment where only one culture and language has prestige (Heller 1987; May 2001). Tibetan culture has a long history and a written language that has existed for hundreds of years. My hypothesis is that understanding Tibetan culture enables us to understand Tibetan literacy practices. In other words, Tibetan cultural influence is strong on Tibetan literacies despite the surrounding Chinese culture.



Figure 2. A market street in Chapcha

1.5 Linking up with Previous Research

Studies in the Tibetan language and its dialects do exist and research in Tibetan education in Tibetan Autonomous Region has been thoroughly documented. Yet, to my knowledge, no research has taken place in Tibetan everyday literacy practices in the Tibetan region.

In recent years more research has been carried out on China's minority nationalities. Postiglione et al. (1999) and Hansen & Jun (1997) and Hansen (1999), among other scholars, have looked into various educational issues among minority nationalities in China. Their studies have brought into discussion such issues as language of education, status of minority people, bilingual education, literacy education, etc. Stites (1999) looked at three case studies in his research on literacy education. His research concentrated on policy issues and bilingual education policy among minorities. Zhou's (2000) study on literacy education among minority nationalities in China was based on national statistics which provides new knowledge of literacy situation among minority nationalities. Zhou has also studied bilingual education among nationalities and language policy issues in minority education (Zhou 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). All these studies provide valuable background information of educational debates and concerns to the current study, and are referred to in the

current study later on. However, it is mainly Stites (1999, 2001), who gives some insight of literacy practices of minority people at the grass-root level in the PRC.

Besides research in bilingual education in China, other aspects of the Tibetan language and culture have been widely researched. However, to my knowledge no research has been carried out in Tibetan daily literacy practices outside school. Most research on Tibetan literacy has taken place in a school context, e.g. Lin (2006), Postiglione, Jiao & Gyatso (2006) and Seeberg (2006). Additionally, some research on adult Tibetan literacy teaching has been carried out in an exiled community in India. However, I have not come across any similar research which has studied Tibetans' everyday literacies in out-school contexts in the PRC. Studies in Tibetan language and its dialects do exist and research in Tibetan education in Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) has been thoroughly documented, but to my knowledge, no research has taken place in Tibetan everyday literacy practices in the Tibetan region.

1.6 Research Summary

As a whole, this research is about getting to know and to understand the relationship between adult literacy education and the use of reading and writing in Amdo Tibetans' daily life. Furthermore, this current research aims to shed light on the link between cultural practices and literacy practices, and how and in what way cultural practices influence literacy practices, including adult literacy education. Through inquiries about culture and literacy I will be in a position to find answers to the nagging questions in my mind "Why do they teach literacy as they do? Is this kind of literacy teaching relevant to everyday life?" "What do Amdos use literacy for?" "In what way literacy is practised?"

As mentioned, the research field is wide and one piece of research is only able to explore these issues within limits. Because the Tibetan region is large and there are various Tibetan dialects, it would be virtually impossible to cover Tibetans' literacy practices in the whole region within one piece of research. Therefore, I have chosen to concentrate my research on Amdo Tibetans' literacy practices in Qinghai

Province. This research is restricted to a specific area and dialect, and thus it is a case study of certain Tibetan people and their literacy practices. However, my hypothesis is that the outcome of the research will have implications for the understanding of the other areas within the Tibetan region, especially in Amdo Tibetan areas in Qinghai Province.

1.7 Research Overview – Content of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapters one to four present the research interest and research environment along with theoretical and methodological background of the thesis. Chapters five and six present the outcome of the field research and discussions on various issues of Amdo Tibetan adult literacy education.

Chapter 1 presents the outline of this thesis including the rationale for this research, the research question and the research structure. In this chapter, I provide an overview of my research interest.

Chapter 2 provides a description of the research environment. I introduce Amdo Tibetans who are the main participants of this research. I give a brief introduction to their history, culture and language. In this chapter I also familiarise the reader with the regional administrative hierarchy of the research area.

Chapter 3 critically reviews theoretical issues in researching Amdo Tibetan literacy. It provides the theoretical background for my research which draws upon theories of sociolinguistics and theorists who view literacy as situated activity. In this chapter I also discuss different views of culture in the context of the research topic.

In Chapter 4, the focus is on the validity and reliability of the methodological approach which I have used in this research. I explain research methods used in this research, and their appropriateness to the research. I also present an account of ethical issues which concern my research methods and my ways of doing research.

Chapter 5 presents and analyses the data on literacies in the context of Tibetan cultural practices. In this chapter I discuss how Tibetan literacy practices are constructed by monastic literacies and other cultural views, traditions and beliefs.

Chapter 6 presents and analyses the data in the context of Tibetan adult literacy acquisition. In this chapter I discuss Tibetan language literacies along with adult literacy teaching, and how they are both grounded on and embedded in Tibetan culture.

Chapter 7 presents a conclusion of my research findings which emerged from qualitative data analysis. Implications of this study for further research will be considered. This chapter demonstrates the potential contribution of this study on the field of adult literacy education, and especially in the Tibetan region.

2. Setting the Scene

The main components of this study are culture and literacy acquisition researched in the context of Tibetan culture, Tibetan education, and the Tibetan Literacy Programme. The Tibetan Literacy Programme was implemented in the Amdo Tibetan region, which provides the cultural scene for this research. I will start by introducing the Amdo Tibetans, the main participants in this study. I will look at their life, their culture, and also the origin of their education as well as an overview of current education in the area. I will also introduce the Tibetan Literacy Programme, which provides the empirical data for this research.

2.1 Amdo Tibetans - Who Are They?

“All over China, Chinese people don’t know these dialects. Immediately when they hear you are a Tibetan they think you are from Xizhang (Tibet Autonomous Region). People don’t know where Qinghai is; they don’t know Amdo. People don’t know the difference between Amdo and Tibetans from Xizhang.”

(A Guomang village meeting)

The quote above is an excerpt from a group meeting of village people in Tongde County in Hainan T.A.P. Even though the argument may not be entirely true, I think it has a grain of truth in it. Tibetans in general are known to people all over the world. The current Dalai Lama and Tibetans in exile have made great efforts to make the Tibetans’ political situation and Tibetan Buddhism known. However, Amdo Tibetans are less known.

2.1.1 The Tibetan Region and the Amdos

Tibet's history is documented from the early 7th century (Kapstein 2006). During the following century, the Tibetan empire extended from the current northwest border of India to Xian in China, and from South Nepal to the southern border of Mongolia. The eastern area of Greater Tibet was divided into two provinces: Amdo and Kham. Amdo was the north-eastern-most province of Tibet, while Kham was the eastern province of Tibet. Central Tibet, U-Tsang, was at the centre of the state. U-Tsang had an important political and religious role, because the government and religious centres were located in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.



Figure 3. The Tibetan region and the territorial borders of the People's Republic of China.

It seems that the Amdo region did not have any particular significance until it started to gain religious importance (Kapstein 2006). Gelukpa (one of the Tibetan Buddhist sects) monasteries were founded in Amdo. Especially Kumbum, which is located near Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province, still has importance and a high status in the Tibetan Buddhist world. Dalai Lamas born in the Amdo region have increased the significance of the Amdo region. The 14th Dalai Lama, the current spiritual leader of the Tibetans, is the latest Amdo-born Dalai Lama. He was also the

political leader of Tibetans in exile until August 2011 when his political successor was inaugurated in Dharamsala, in the Himalayas in India.

Before the historical stage of the establishment of the Tibetan Autonomous Regions (TAR), the political and social history of the Amdo region differs from TAR. According to Huber (2002a) the eastern areas of the Tibetan Plateau were not incorporated within the single political entity of Greater Tibet during the rule of Dalai Lamas in the pre-modern Lhasa based state. The eastern areas were governed by smaller traditional polities. After the revolution of 1911 in China, the family of warlord Ma gained power in Qinghai. The family ruled Qinghai for 20 years until the Republican government took over and created a county-based ruling system with Hui and Han magistrates (Huber 2002). The Chinese communists could continue with the existing county system after 1949. Thus, the Amdo region has been under Chinese administration and influence for a longer period of time than TAR, and it is not as well known a Tibetan region as TAR is.

Nowadays, most Amdos live in Qinghai Province. Qinghai Province is located in northwest China, north of the TAR. The total population of this province is over 4.5 million people, of which approximately fifty-eight per cent are Han nationality (Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2001). The remaining forty-two percent consist of mainly five national minority groups: Tibetan (20%), Hui (14%), Tu (4%), Salar 1.7%) and Mongolian (1.6%).⁵ Generally speaking, Amdos speak Amdo Tibetan, a Tibetan dialect, as their mother tongue. Huber (ibid.) claims that Chinese is the lingua franca in many communities in the Amdo region regardless of the ethnicity of these communities. Whereas Janhunen (2000) claims that Amdo Tibetan is the lingua franca in the Amdo Tibetan region. Seeberg (2006) has the same view of the status of Amdo Tibetan as Janhunen in the Amdo communities in her research areas in Gansu and Qinghai Provinces. Based on my own experience and observation I see Amdo Tibetan as the lingua franca among Amdos, but I consider Chinese (Mandarin) as the lingua franca in cross-cultural communication between different national minority groups and between majority people and Amdos in Qinghai Province.

5 There are a small number of other national minorities as well e.g. Kazak, Bonan and Uyгур.

We have seen above that the word “Amdo” can refer to a geographical area, a people group, or to the language of this regional people group. Tibetans from the Amdo region are Amdos. Currently, the majority of Amdos live in the larger part of the Qinghai Province as well as in south-west Gansu and north-west Sichuan province. The total number of Amdos is said to be around two million, and half of them live in Qinghai Province (Norbu, Peet, dPal Ldan bKra shis & Stuart 2000). Also the dialect of Tibetan, which the Amdo people speak is called Amdo. Thus the usage of “Amdo” can be confusing. For that reason I have chosen to employ the word “Amdo” for the Tibetan people of the “Amdo region”, and “Amdo Tibetan language” for their language.



Figure 4. Tibetan dancing in an Amdo village, visitors' jeep in background.

Tibetans from other Tibetan areas speak different dialects of the Tibetan language, they dress differently and their way of living may be different to the Amdos. However, all Tibetan groups have the same cultural core values and practices (cf. Hofstede 1991). Therefore, it is appropriate to use “Tibetan culture” as a general concept to refer to the culture of all of these Tibetan groups.

2.1.2 Language and Literacy Materials

Since there is no literacy without language, a brief introduction to the Tibetan language is necessary. The aim is not to give a thorough linguistic description of the language but merely to give some background information regarding the language where Amdo Tibetan literacy is implemented.

The Tibetan language

Amdo Tibetan is one of the three main dialects of the Tibetan language. The other two dialects are Kham, and Ü Tsang also known as the Central dialect (Denwood 1999, Bayer 1992). In this context I define a dialect as “the form of a language that is spoken in one area with grammar, words and pronunciation that may be different from other forms of the same language” (Oxford Advanced Genie 2001). All three of the main Tibetan dialects have several sub-dialects, and the division of the dialects is geographical.

Amdo Tibetan is mainly spoken in Qinghai but also in Gansu Province and in the north-western part of Sichuan province in the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC). Kham is spoken in Sichuan province, the north-western area of Yunnan Province, the north-east of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and southern Qinghai Province. Ü Tsang is spoken in TAR.

The Ü Tsang dialect is regarded as the standard Tibetan language (Bayer 1992, Denwood 1999, Kapstein 2006). Therefore when any features of the language are discussed at a general level, the core of the discussion is in the Ü Tsang dialect. Whereas when Amdo and Kham dialects are under discussion they are specifically mentioned. Therefore when linguists, including Coulmas (1989), categorise Tibetan as a tonal language they refer to the Ü Tsang dialect which has two tones. Whereas, according to SIL International, the Kham dialect has four tones (Gordon 2005), called Khams. The Amdo dialect differs from these two by not being a tonal language.

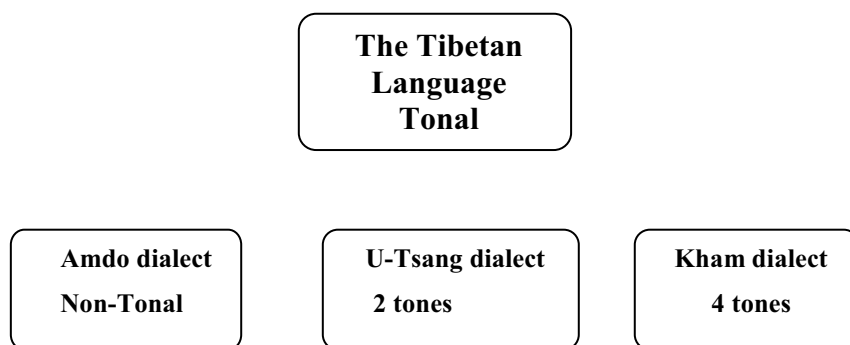


Figure 5. The Tibetan language and its main dialects

The distinction between these three dialects is not only tonal, but also lexical, phonetic and grammatical. The traditional writing system that was developed in the seventh century can represent each of these main dialects, but the spelling system varies from one dialect to another. Also the phonological differences between the dialects are great enough to make them mutually unintelligible (Denwood 1999). Sometimes knowledge of the national Chinese language solves the communication problems between different Tibetan dialect groups. For example, Tibetan students, who come from different Tibetan regions to study at the Central Institute for Nationalities in Beijing,⁶ communicate with each other in Chinese. While spoken dialects are very diverse within the Tibetan area, written varieties are standardised to a remarkable degree considering their huge geographical extent and the historical range of the language (Coulmas 1989, Denwood 1999).

These three main different dialects have different positions within the Tibetan language. According to Prins (2002), from a linguistic point of view, a Kham dialect holds a midway position between the Ü Tsang and the Amdo dialects. Along with being the standard dialect of Tibetan, Ü Tsang has prestige because of its religious, cultural and historical importance. Lhasa, the capital of Tibetan Empire and of the current Tibet Autonomous Region has been, and partially still is, the administrative and religious centre of the whole Tibetan region. From that perspective the Amdo

⁶ The Central Institute for Nationalities in Beijing is an institute established for students from minority people groups in the PRC. But Han Chinese students who plan to work in minority people's areas can study there as well.

and Kham dialects have a different status within the Tibetan language, which can be seen in the quote at the beginning of this chapter. Tibetans in TAR, their dialect, and their capital Lhasa are known around the globe. This does not apply to the Amdos.

The Amdo Tibetan dialect

Around two million Tibetans within the PRC speak Amdo Tibetan as their mother tongue, but “there is no universally accepted “standard” Amdo Tibetan” (Norbu et al. 2000). Amdos who are literate have difficulty understanding unfamiliar words which do not exist in the spoken form but exist in the literary form. For example, TV news in the Qinghai Province is broadcasted in the literary “Amdo dialect”. That means that the news manuscripts are written in the standard Tibetan form but they are read using Amdo Tibetan pronunciation. Even though the pronunciation is according to the Amdo dialect, not all Amdo speakers understand the broadcasted news because of the lexical differences.

Because there is no officially standardised literary form of Amdo Tibetan, lexical items are not written consistently throughout the Amdo region (Norbu et al. 2000, Prins 2002). Thus, teaching literacy in Amdo Tibetan is not a straightforward matter. It is not uncommon that well educated Amdos write the same lexical items differently. For example, I observed Amdo Tibetan language translators’ discussions on the correct writing forms of various lexical items in their written tasks. Quite often there were a couple of different opinions regarding the correct written form. The use of various suffixes, for example, was not always clear. In the end, in this case, the translators agreed upon using one particular literary form.

Basically, Amdo speakers learn a local dialect of Amdo Tibetan as their mother tongue. That dialect is spoken in their specific area (cf. “Diglossia” as in Ferguson 1964; 1971; Schiffman 1997). The Amdo dialect in Hainan TAP, the locale of this research, differs from the dialect of the Huangnan Prefecture, which is also located in Qinghai Province. Furthermore, there are also local dialect variations within Hainan TAP. However, looking into sub-dialects of standard Amdo Tibetan is beyond the purpose of this study.

Despite inter-regional language differences, Amdo speakers have a strong regional identity as Amdo, which both refers to the dialect and to the region within the larger Tibetan region. Even though Amdo Tibetan varies “along the valleys” so to speak, some researchers, as mentioned earlier, still consider Amdo Tibetan to be the *lingua franca* in Qinghai Province, or at least in the Tibetan autonomous prefectures in Qinghai Province (Janhunnen 2000; Seeberg 2006).

It can be stated that Amdo Tibetan is a living dialect of the Tibetan language. It differs from standard Tibetan and the Kham Tibetan dialect. According to the Ethnologue of SIL International (Gordon 2005) Amdo speakers do not find Central Tibetan and Kham dialects of Tibetan intelligible. The Amdo dialect does not have an official standardised literary form, which limits its use in publication. For example, Norbu et al. (2000) clearly define the dialect choice they use in the “Modern Oral Amdo Tibetan” language primer. In a way, Amdo can be seen as an oral dialect with the means of utilising Tibetan script to produce varied forms of Amdo texts. This, then, has an influence on the acquisition of literacy in Tibetan in the Amdo region as the standard Tibetan (Ü Tsang) is the literary form of the language. Literate Tibetans from different parts of the Tibetan region can communicate by using the same literary form of the language.

Diglossia

One significant feature of the Tibetan language is the distinction between spoken and written forms of dialects. The Arabic language is often given as a classical example of this phenomenon called ‘diglossia’ (e.g. Saiegh-Haddad, E. 2003; Eviatar & Ibrahim 2000). Linguistically the spoken form is called Low language and the literary form High language (Ferguson 1971; Fishman 2002;). The difference between Low and High languages is not only phonological, but there is also significant diversity in the vocabulary and use of grammatical particles. Concerning the Tibetan language Denwood claims:

"From the sociolinguistic angle, Tibetan shows what is probably an extreme degree of social separation between spoken and written forms within the same language, manifested by an extreme reluctance of Tibetans to write what they speak" (1999, 21).

Written Tibetan is the standard form of the language and it is the language of communication between people who are literate in Tibetan. Written Tibetan publications include academia, media, religious publication, journals, comics, personal correspondence, etc. Written Tibetan is also referred to as a literary form of the language. Basically, all written text is in the literary form. The literary Tibetan language can be categorised into different levels: high, medium and low (See Figure 6).

Since Tibetan TV and radio use literary form as well, not all Tibetans understand all that is broadcasted. According to my informant, literate Tibetans can understand 70 per cent of the speech in the programmes and non-literate Tibetans 50 per cent of the speech. If they are able to watch the programme a few times their understanding of the speech increases. Nomads can understand the official news and programmes better because their vernacular, Drokpa, is closer to the literary form of the language. Farmers in settled communities have more difficulties in understanding literary Tibetan than people in nomadic areas (Harri 2009).

A spoken language has many varieties. A common Tibetan saying goes: “Every monk has his own sect. Every valley has its own dialect.” (Willis 2000; Kapstein 2006). Spoken varieties of the language do not have standardised grammar, therefore Denwood (ibid.) writes that Tibetans are hesitant to write the spoken form of the language. However, some songs and proverbs are written by using a lexicon of a spoken form. This kind of practice is partially due to the lack of adequate knowledge of the literary form of the language (Oswald 2006), i.e. the authors of songs and poems may not know literary Tibetan well enough in order to write it correctly. Even though the literary form is more appreciated than the spoken form, Tibetans like such songs of which the lexicon is of the spoken form because they can understand the meaning of those songs (Harri 2009).

The issue of diglossia is a significant part of the Tibetans’ language learning and especially of literacy acquisition. Schiffman (1997) argues that due to diglossia a spoken variety of the language is the mother tongue of speakers. Therefore, Amdos learn a spoken form as their mother tongue and the literary form of the language is

learned as a second language through education. Some scholars are of the opinion that literary and spoken forms of the Tibetan language are so diverse that they can be considered two different languages (Willis 2001).

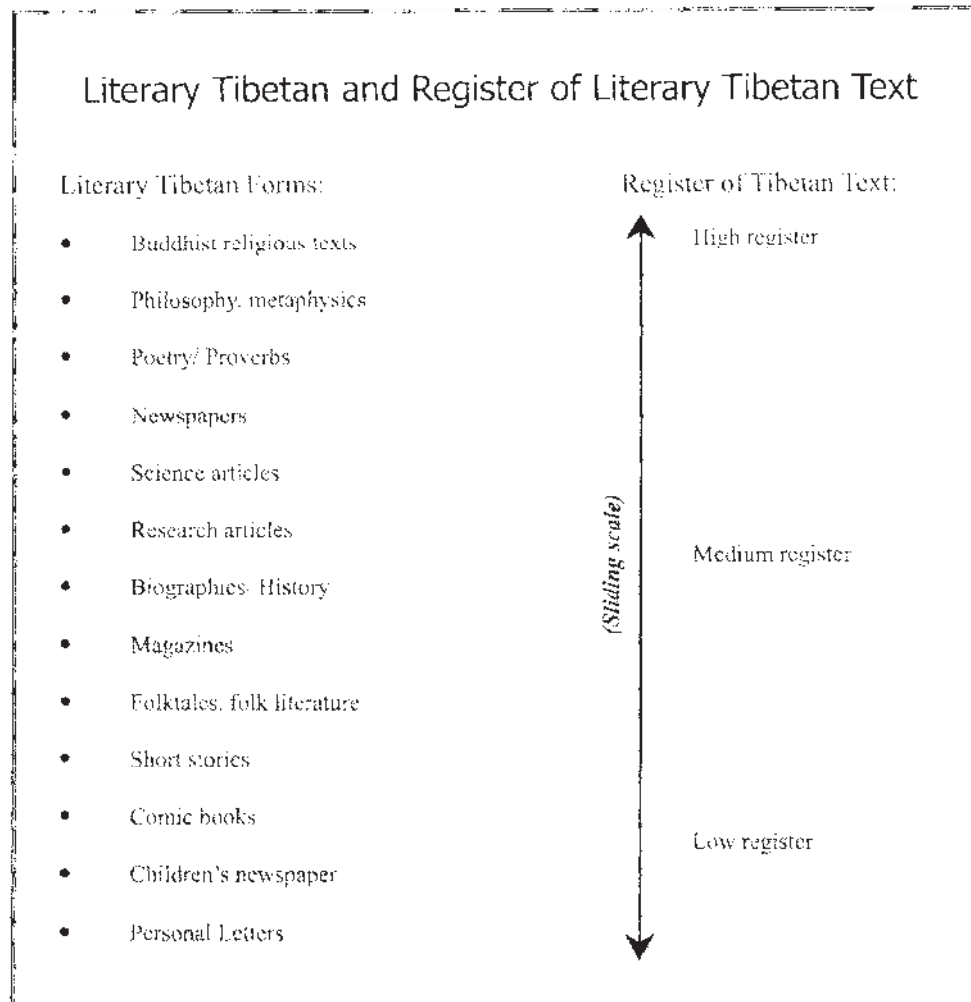


Figure 6. Literary Tibetan and Register of Literary Tibetan Text (As in Willis 2001, 9).

Even though the list above covers the whole range of different kinds of Tibetan texts it does not mention Tibetan songs which are important part of Tibetan life. One could categorise them under poetry but based on my experience I believe an additional category for songs should be added to the register of literary Tibetan text. Especially, songs that are written by using a lexicon of a spoken form present low register of the language.

The writing and spelling system

According to Denwood (1999) the Tibetan writing system was based presumably on the spoken Bön dialect or dialects of the 7th century. Bayer (1992) assumes that, in the beginning, the writing system was apparently developed more for administration purposes than for religious purposes. Whereas Goldstein-Kyaga (1992) says that it is the general opinion that the writing system was developed for religious purposes, as the Buddhist texts needed to be translated into Tibetan.

Coulmas (1989) defines the Tibetan writing system as “a syllabic alphabet of the Indian type” (p. 143). The Tibetan language, which uses Indic scripts derived from Brāhmī, has basic symbols representing consonant + vowel sequence (Comrie et al. 1997). The Tibetan alphabet or symbols consist of 30 basic letters: 29 consonant signs, and one independent vowel sign. In addition there are 4 vowel signs, which can be combined with any basic letter sign. A syllable cluster is indicated by a dot at the upper right corner of a consonant and the end of the sentence is indicated by a vertical stroke:

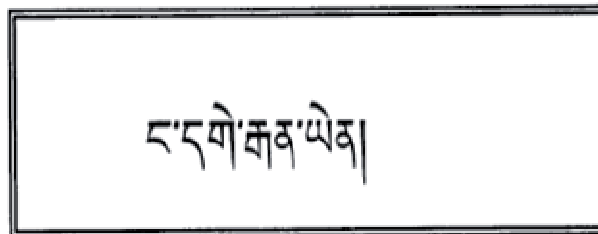


Figure 7. An example of a Tibetan sentence

According to Coulmas et al. (Coulmas 1989, Comrie et al. 1997) the difficulty of reading the script is due to changes in the sounds of the language while the script itself has not changed since it was incepted. There have been few modifications in the writing system, but it has always retained the same spelling system. The spelling system varies between the dialects, which is one of the distinctions between the main three dialects.

The Tibetan Script			
Consonants:			
ཀ _{ka}	ཁ _{kha}	ག _{ga}	ང _{nga}
ཅ _{ca}	ཆ _{cha}	ཇ _{ja}	ཉ _{nya}
ཏ _{ta}	ཐ _{tha}	ད _{tha}	བ _{da}
པ _{pa}	ཕ _{pha}	བ _{ba}	མ _{ma}
ཅ _t sa	ཆ _t sha	ཇ _d za	ཉ _w a
ཟ _z ha	འ _' a	ཡ _y a	ར _r a
ལ _l a	ཤ _s ha	ས _s a	ཏ _h a
ཨ _a			
Vowels:			
འི _i	ཨ _u	འེ _e	འོ _o

Figure 8. The Tibetan alphabet

The writing styles

Another aspect of Tibetan literacy acquisition is the writing styles. Written Tibetan texts are hand-written, carved or printed in different styles. The hand-written style (ume) is equivalent to western cursive style. It is mainly used for personal correspondence and definitely not for official purposes. The printed and carved styles (uchen) are equivalent to western print style. They are used for official and religious purposes. Papers and magazines are printed using uchen style. The appearance of print and cursive styles differs remarkably. (See the examples of styles Figure 9.) The printed style is easier to read than the cursive style. Therefore, in general Tibetans learn first the printed style, which is most commonly used. At least that is the practice among Amdos in Qinghai Province. Literacy students both in school and in adult literacy classes learn the printed style.

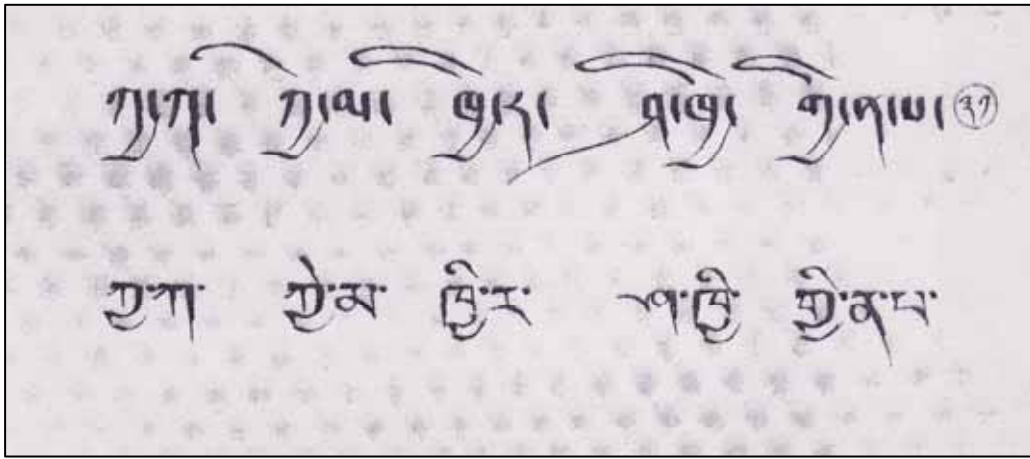


Figure 9. Top: a hand-written style (ume); bottom: a printed style (uchen)⁷

Finally, all these different features of the Tibetan language and its Amdo dialect influence Tibetan literacy acquisition and the ways the Amdo Tibetan is learned in literacy classes (See Chapter 5).

Tibetan language literature and other literacy materials

Even though Tibetan is a minority language in the PRC, the literature in the Tibetan language has a long history and has been published in multiple volumes, which shows the importance of written material in Tibetan culture and society. Tibetan Minzuban of Hainan TAP in Gonghe made an inventory of all Tibetan books and magazines within Hainan TAP. The project was part of a nationwide survey, which was coordinated in Beijing. The overall aim of the project was to collect all the Tibetan literature which has ever been published or printed in the PRC. The survey encompassed collections in private homes and in public institutes. By 2007, Minzuban in Gonghe had listed around 3000 different titles in Hainan TAP (Harri 2009). The collection consisted of Tibetan language magazines, books, newspapers, songs and poems. The main titles amongst everything published through the years and now collated concerns Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan history and education (Harri 2009).

⁷ As in Lhadar (1996).

The tradition of publishing literacy materials continues. Currently there are eight publishing houses and a growing number of printing houses capable of printing Tibetan text (Costello 2002). Qinghai Publishing House in Xining is a well known publishing house for Tibetan literature throughout the whole Tibetan region. Even though the Government has restricted religious education in monasteries, it supports publishing Tibetan language literature despite the fact that most literature is about religion. According to Costello (ibid.) many publishing houses receive funding and subsidies from various government organisations, increasing the number of books published in Tibetan throughout the PRC.

Another venue for promoting the use of the Tibetan language is through the publication of Tibetan language newspapers and magazines. Four magazines in the Tibetan language, “Sbrng Char”, Rtser Snyeg, Mtsosngon Mangtsog Sgyurtsal and Gangrgyn Medok, are published four times a year and can also be subscribed to. There are also two other magazines, Ribo Nyida and Tsosngon Slobgso, which are published in Qinghai Province. Ribo Nyida is issued once a year and Tsosngon Slobgso six times a year. These magazines consist of articles on general issues in Tibetan life. Two newspapers, Tsosngon Nyire Tsgpar (Tibet Daily) and Gangryn Gzonnu Tsgpar (Qinghai Tibetan News), have been published since the 1950s. Qinghai Tibetan News is a locally published newspaper, which is promoted especially in work units. The Qinghai Science and Technology Work Unit, and the Qinghai Provincial Judicial Department publish their own weekly newspapers, which are Bodkyi Tsnrtsal Tsgpar and Tsosngon Krimslugs Tsgpar respectively. Despite an inefficient distribution system, Qinghai Tibetan News and other newspapers can be seen in Party Offices in remote townships in Qinghai Province (Harri 2009). The newspaper is often delayed though, because it is a translated copy of news written in Chinese newspapers, and the articles in the paper do not focus on Tibetan issues but on general issues in the country.

Party and other government workers form the main readership of Tibetan newspapers. Private individuals do not have a great interest in newspapers and they seldom make an effort to subscribe to them (Harri 2009). Especially in remote areas, individual people do not subscribe to the newspapers but they can read the papers at

Party offices and Minzuban offices in county centres. People who are interested in reading newspapers and magazines usually have access to them.

Tibetan language literature provides material for people to practise literacy. Even if the list of subjects and topics is not as extensive as in Chinese literature, nevertheless there is plenty of material for people to read.

2.1.3 Socio-economics of Amdos

Tibetan society had a rather clear distinction between social classes (casts) in old Tibet. The major difference was made between land-owners and ‘commoners,’ which also describes the economic situation of Tibetans that time. Usually land owners were the wealthy ones who, at least partially, built up their economic superiority by the labour of peasants. Also marital arrangements have been seen more or less as business arrangements. Kapstein (2006, 198) writes: “In Tibet, one might say, economy trumped biology when it came to the conventions of marriage.” Therefore, marital relations have varied according to the social class of bride and groom.

There have been four kinds of Tibetan marital relations: monogamy, polygyny, polyandry and polyandrygyny are all known in a Tibetan region. According to Duncan (1964) and Chodga (1992) monogamy has been the most common marital relation, especially among commoners, who do not own land or properties. The preference for monogamy has yielded to economical concerns. Marriage has been the way to keep property in family, which has led to a practice of polygyny and polyandry and even polyandrygyny in old Tibet. Polygyny and polyandry have been mainly practised among the nobility and the wealthy families in order to keep the family property and family together. Two or three brothers have had one common wife that shared the load of labour on the field and also kept sons together in order to avoid any deviation of inheritance. Similarly, in wealthy households with daughters but no son polyandry was to retain property within family.

As mentioned above, traditionally marriage has been largely a business transaction in one way or another. Parents, possible landowners and monks, all have had a say about marriage. They all had to agree on marriage before it could take place: parents choose a spouse for their child, fortune teller monks consult the stars for a favourable day and hour, and landowners have to give their blessing to the matter if marriage is organised under landowners. Parents have had responsibility to give dowry for the bride and arrange final severance for the bride from her parents to become part of the husband's family. In old Tibet young brides became more like slaves in their in-laws' families but traditions have changed and girls have more freedom (Chodga, *ibid.*). More and more love marriages take place when girls and boys choose their own spouses. Yet, it is a common practice that young couples ask their parents' blessing to love marriages.

Usually Amdos do not practise cross-cultural marriages, especially not with Hui Muslims. Some Amdos marry Han Chinese but that is not encouraged by families. One Amdo girl within the research area was dating a Han Chinese man whom she had known since her college times. It took a couple of years for her parents to become accustomed to the idea of a Han Chinese son-in-law and to agree to the marriage.

Amdo Tibetan society is patriarchal. Traditionally girls have not been regarded as capable as men and a Tibetan phrase "*skye-dman*" describes this kind of thinking. In daily life, girls are often called *skye-dman*, which means low-born (Aziz 1989). This kind of view of girls has created obstacles for girls' opportunities for education and developing a career, as we will see later on in this chapter. The situation of girls is changing with time, and in modern Tibet girls have a better standing in society than before. Yet, old practices and views can still be strong today. I discussed with some village people in a nomadic area of Tongde County. Men described women having difficulties finding time for learning literacy because women are busy with taking care of grandparents and animals. At the same time men explained their freedom to get on the bike and ride to a township centre, and for boys going to school. I observed a similar situation in a nomad's tent as I stayed overnight in our friend's tent: women and men had different tasks. While the men were chatting with the guests, the women prepared a meal by starting from scratch: kneading noodle

dough, rolling it, cutting the noodles, chopping onions and making soup on a clay stove using dried sheep and yak dung as fuel.

Despite inequality in society, Amdo women have always had more freedom than some other patriarchal societies in Asia. Butler (2003, 14) mentions how early travellers were struck by the physical freedom of Tibetan women, and how they openly mixed with men. Possibly for this reason, Tibetan women have been involved in trading along with men in some parts of the Tibetan region. However, traditionally men have been in charge of politics, household management and legal matters and women have taken care of domestic duties. Contrary to Butler's observation, in the research area women were usually too shy to join our discussions when men were around.

Still today Tibetan women and men have different roles in households in nomadic families and within society. Women are usually busy with domestic duties: milking yaks twice a day, preparing food, churning butter, spinning yak wool, weaving long tent fabric, etc. Children and men are in charge of herding cattle, and men take care of business outside the home such as trading various dairy products: milk, yoghurt, and butter; and also meat, sheep and yak hair. Because of the different roles of women and men they have had traditionally different uses for literacy in every day life, and that will be discussed later on in this study.

The Amdos' main mode of livelihood is animal husbandry, and most Amdos in Hainan TAP live a nomadic life. They graze sheep and yaks on wide and open fields on the Tibetan Plateau. Their life is divided between three seasons: winter, summer and autumn pastures. Due to their nomadic way of living, Amdo Tibetans used to live all year round in black tents made of yak wool which were easy to transfer from one location to another. Time has changed and so has Chinese law. The law limits the herding land both in summer and winter, and nowadays most Amdos in Hainan TAP live in mud brick houses during the cold winter season. When summer arrives, in May - June, they load their yaks with tents and other essential household items, and move their sheep and yaks up to the mountains. There they set up their tents and build mud clay stoves inside the tents for the summer months (June, July and beginning of August). In August it is again time to load the yaks and move closer to

the winter pastures and in late September they finally move back to the winter pastures and winter houses. The herding cycle of the year is completed.

Most Amdos earn their income from selling animal husbandry products. Similar to the herding seasons, different activities around selling products take turns according to the seasons of the year. Animals are slaughtered and meat sold, usually in winter when the weather is cold. Meat has to be stored in the corner of a tent or in a separate tent. There are basic items in Tibetan tents such as mattresses or carpets to sleep on, pots for cooking, a clay stove to cook on, and simple wooden cupboards to store kitchen-ware. Modern electric household equipment is missing for one main reason: there is no electricity. Radios and tape recorders can be run on batteries or on solar power. Another source of income is yak and sheep hair, which is cut and sold in the summer when animals can survive without their thick hair.

Some Amdos live permanently in settled communities in towns and close to county centres. Because the land is mountainous and largely infertile, only a few farmers can get their income from agriculture. It is estimated that only 10 per cent of Amdos earn their livelihood from crop cultivation, such as highland barley, corn, wheat and potatoes (Horleman 2002).

Amdos in Qinghai Province have one more seasonal source of income. That is: picking caterpillar fungus, which is a wild plant that grows on the Tibetan Plateau. The harvesting season is very short in spring, and picking caterpillar fungus on the high mountains is hard work, also the daily harvest varies from zero to a couple of hundred grams. Yet, people are eager to pick these plants because it provides a good additional income for them. Caterpillar-fungus is a well known herbal medicine and it is sold for a high price in Asia. The Economist (2010) called it the new gold as the price of caterpillar fungus was almost the same as of gold: \$30 per gram.



Figure 10. Tents on autumn pastures.

Even though the provincial government, along with the assistance of the Central Government, has made efforts to improve the socio-economic situation in the area, half of the counties are designated as poverty areas. In those counties, the annual income per capita was less than 550 CNY (approx. 66 USD) (Fida International 2003). According to the China Human Development Report 2005 the average rural per capita income (GDP) in Qinghai was 3 712 CNY (UNDP 2007-2008).

Tibetan societies in Qinghai Province are changing and they are facing new social challenges. The Central Government of China passed new regulations less than a decade ago, and nomadic Tibetans are obliged to move from the remote areas of the plateau to towns and townships (China Press 2002; CHINA BRIEF 2003; Goodman 2006; Foggin 2008). The Government is moving nomadic Tibetans away from the grassland for environmental reasons: to protect over-grazed plateau land, and the ecology and headwaters of three rivers, Yellow, Yangtze and Mekong. Nomadic Tibetans are required to move either to new resettlement villages on the Tibetan Plateau (Foggin 2008) or to some other areas of Qinghai province. The land for animal herding is limited to summer pastures, and the rest of the year animals are in sheds.

In these changes in society, Tibetans are compelled to learn to a non-Tibetan, "a new culture" as one nomadic Tibetan says about the challenge to move to towns. He referred to the consequences of the new settlements: nomadic Tibetans will be exposed to Han culture more than before, and that would have some influence on their culture. The Tibetan language as an essential component of the cultural identity (Dorjee & Giles 2005) is under pressure of change as a means of communication and medium of education. Chinese language will be the language of education. Also, Tibetans face new livelihood challenges, as they have to find a new way of living. They cannot earn their livelihoods from animal husbandry in the traditional way but they have to learn new skills to earn a living. This change is not only about a new environment and a new skill, but also about a new way of thinking.

2.1.4 Religion

It is almost impossible to form a picture of Tibetan culture without presenting the basic features of their religion, Tibetan Buddhism. Religious life has always had a close connection to politics and societal life. In the time of the Tibetan kingdom, the monastic establishment became strong and it shared power with the Tibetan aristocracy and through its hierarchs it became prominent in political life and with the leaders of the Tibetan states (Aran 2009). Even today, Tibetan Buddhism is an essential part of Tibetan culture and it plays an important role in Tibetans' life and has an impact on their literacies and literacy practices.

Originally, the Tibetans' religion was Bön religion, which is full of mythology. When Buddhism from India reached the Tibetan region in the seventh century it merged with Bön religion. According to Cabezon & Jackson (2006) the magical character of Tibetan Buddhism originates from Bön religion. Tibetan Buddhism, with its unique characteristics of the system of reincarnating lamas and the vast number of deities, conquered Tibet thoroughly. Bell described the status of Tibetan Buddhism as following: "Its power is planted wide and deep" (1931, 169). In other words, Tibetan Buddhism had filtrated all aspects of Tibetan life including politics, economics and culture.

T Tibetans in the old society, before the People's Republic of China was established, regarded religion as "a symbol of their country's identity and the superiority of their civilization" (Goldstein 1998a, 15). Monasteries and the institution of the monk have been at the centre of Tibetan Buddhism. Monasteries receive offerings as religious practice from individual Tibetans (Kohn 2007), which support the monastic system in the Tibetan region. People often give yaks, sheep, barley and butter as offerings, and money is usually offered to monks on their visits to families.

Families had a custom to send boys, and also some girls, to monasteries and nunneries. It is believed that dedicating a child, especially a son, to a monastery would bring great privilege to the child and at the same time the parents would gain merit. These two reasons may be the most common motivation to send a son to a monastery (Goldstein 1998b). This practice is still meaningful despite the Chinese influence. In old Tibet the number of monks and nuns equalled ten to twenty per cent of the population (Bass 1998; Goldstein-Kyaga 1992). Before 1959, when China invaded Tibet, around 600 000 monks and 27 000 nuns lived in monasteries and nunneries. Within 45 years, in 1995, the official number of monks and nuns had decreased remarkably. The total number of monks and nuns was 200 000, of which 120 000 were lamas and nuns, and around 1700 were 'Living Buddhas' (Embassy of China 2005).

Living Buddhas are reincarnated successors of deceased leaders of monasteries. Monks who are given the special title of Living Buddha are more respected than others. They have more privileges as young monks than other young monks, e.g. they receive private tuition in a lamasery and receive expensive gifts from visitors who come to meet them. This reincarnation system for the Living Buddhas is uniquely practised in Tibetan Buddhism, and it is not found in other forms of Buddhism (Lopez 2007).

Even though the number of monks and nuns has diminished, Tibetan Buddhism is an essential part of Tibetan life (Epstein & Wenbin 1998), and the religion is one of the fundamental dimensions of most Tibetans' cultural identity (Dorjee & Giles 2005). Religious practices are linked with the Tibetan Buddhist notions of karma, rebirth and enlightenment (Goldstein 1998a), which form the understanding of

morality and the existence of life. Pilgrims prostrating themselves on the ground are a common scene at monasteries or on high mountain roads. People make long pilgrimages in the hope of gaining merit. They hope that suffering on pilgrimages will win a better rebirth or cure an illness. Tibetans engage Tibetan Buddhist practices in their daily life: regular visits to temples; offerings and prayers to various deities, accompanied by burnings of juniper boughs; prayer flags promoting fortune and blessing on high hills and next to dwelling places⁸; prayer wheels are spun; beads of rosaries are worn in the hands of the users, etc. On the project monitoring trips it was a tradition to stop on mountain passes to throw a pile of “lung ta” in the air. “Lung ta”, (meaning Wind Horse), is a small piece of paper with religious texts and symbols that is believed to bring good luck when it is thrown.



Figure 11. Prayer flags put up on a bridge

The wheel of life presents the Buddhist ideology of the continuous cycle of birth, life and death from which a person finds liberation through enlightenment. Performing rituals, such as those mentioned above, are ways of gaining merit, and are important in shaping the future. Gaining merit by doing good deeds and performing rituals can result in a better life after rebirth. Possibly at one point in the

⁸ Prayer flags are made of pice of cloth in five different colours (yellow, white, blue, green and read) and imprinted with a prayer or mantra.

chain of rebirths a follower of Tibetan Buddhism can disembark from the wheel of life and reach the ultimate goal of Buddhism, buddhahood (cf. Kohn 2007).

2.2 Tibetan Education

2.2.1 Monasteries - Origin of the Tibetan education

The traditional Tibetan education system originates in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which are also called lamaseries. In old Tibet,⁹ monasteries were education centres, where the education was based on Tibetan Buddhism and concentrated on religious issues. The idea of education was “towards the working of the mind rather than towards the external world” (Goldstein – Kyaga 1992, 72). The main goal of the teaching was a religious one, and the main purpose was to learn the inner values of the human mind. Samdhong Rinboche (1977, 25) states that the Tibetan traditional education system aimed at “guiding individuals for attaining elevation and perfection”, which describes the purpose of the monastic education.

Modern-type schools did not exist in old Tibet. All teaching was done privately or in monasteries until the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Poor people could not afford education. Aristocrats and government officials would teach their boys, but again only a very few girls had the opportunity for formal education. Only if there was a specific need for a girl’s education a teacher was provided (Bass 1998).

Along with the establishment of the PRC, schools were founded in Tibet. In those schools teaching concentrated on writing and memorising texts, which was a familiar learning method from the monastic schools. Norbu (1998) recalls, “Pupils left school with a prodigious memory but little else”. There were no classes in a western sense. The teaching was divided into four grades according to the level of writing ability. The students learned first to write the print style (uchen) which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. The next step was to learn how to write the

⁹ Old Tibet refers to the period of time before 1950.

handwriting style (ume) on wooden boards. Finally in the fourth grade students were able to write using the handwritten style of the Tibetan language on paper. According to Norbu (1998) school exams concentrated on the beauty of the writing. Traditionally Tibetan families sent at least one son to a monastery. This practice had two functions: it provided education and enabled a better social status. Boys learned reading and writing along with Buddhist philosophy. In the early years of a monk's monastic life the main emphases in learning were on memorising and reciting Buddhist texts and oral teaching. Later on the curriculum consisted of other subjects such as Sanskrit, medicine, art, dance and philosophical dialectics (Goldstein-Kyaga 1992). In addition, a monastic education was a channel to gain better social status in old Tibet (Goldstein-Kyaga 1992; Goldstein 1998b). A monastic career was highly respected by Tibetan society. Still today, monks' duties include religious activities both in and outside monasteries. They visit families in communities to perform religious rituals, especially in times of birth, illness and death. These religious visits are an essential part of Tibetan life, and they provide income for the monks as families pay the monks for their services.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, traditional Tibetan society regarded girls as inferior to boys, which then has affected girls' education. Tibetan society did not give many opportunities for girls' education (Bass 1998; Goldstein-Kyaga 1992). Whatever opportunities there were they were unequally distributed in society: only women from aristocratic families had the advantage to have access to education and religious sources.

Even though, in theory, women and men are equal in religious practices, a woman who entered a nunnery had, and still has, fewer opportunities to make a similar career to a monk. Aziz (1989) argues that throughout their monastic life boys have far better chances of being promoted to high monastic ranks than girls do. Similarly Burton (2003) mentions that normally women could not receive the high religious education that is available to monks, and therefore, only a few women became abbesses to govern nunneries. Accordingly, a nun could gain some social prestige by these positions (Butler 1989).

On the other hand, women are respected. However, it was not considered important to educate girls “to have book learning” (Majupuria 1990). Girls had responsibilities in domestic duties, which also occupied their time. While girls were working boys went to school. Additionally, education was seen as a collective interest as opposed to an individual’s interest (cf. Robinson-Pant 2001; 2004b). Families considered education from a family’s point of view, and accordingly a family should benefit from education, not only a single member of a family. Therefore, a girl’s education was not viewed as useful. She, according to tradition, would move to her in-laws’ house after getting married and bring all the benefits from her education to her new family. As a result, the girl’s parents, who would have financed her education, would not benefit from it (Muduo 2004).

Amdo societies have changed, and people’s attitudes towards girls’ education have changed. These changes are bigger in towns than in villages. Chodga (ibid.) lists various achievements of modern Tibetan women who are involved in science research, elementary education, sports and health work etc. However, in villages people tend to follow the old cultural practices more closely than people in towns and cities (Harri 2009).

2.2.2 Current Tibetan Education

Current Tibetan education follows the rules of the education system of the PRC, which officially has 55 minorities and the Han majority. According to Zhou (2000) the minority population consisted of 91 million people in 1990. These minorities speak over 80 languages, of which 30 have written forms. The Han majority speaks Chinese (Chinese Mandarin variety), which is the lingua franca of the country.¹⁰

The development of bilingual education is legitimised in the PRC Constitution, which supports the study of minority languages in autonomous regions. The Fifth National People’s Congress, which is theoretically the highest authority in the PRC, adopted the Fifth Constitution of the PRC. That constitution in 1982 guaranteed

¹⁰ I use the word Chinese for both the standard written language and the standard spoken language of Chinese. The spoken variety is also known as Putonghua.

education for non-Han nationalities in the autonomous regions of the country. Thirteen years later in 1995 the Education Law was amended giving an option for non-Han nationalities to provide teaching in minority languages. The principles of bilingual education for minorities give minority people the right to develop their own language. The Education Law Article 12 states that "schools and other educational institutions primarily for "minority" nationalities may use the spoken or written language in common use among the ethnic group or in the locality as the language of instruction" (Ministry of Education 1995).

According to Wang (2003) the legislation of ethnic minority education is not governed by one single regulation only. The two essential documents are "Suggestions Concerning Enhancement of Undertakings of Ethnic Minority Education" and "Circular Regarding Print and Distribution of the National Program for the Development and Reform of Ethnic Minority Education". In these documents the state encourages the use of Chinese and the minority language simultaneously, both in teaching and in the training of ethnic minority teachers.

The Chinese government has set lower admission standards at higher education for ethnic minority people to promote and recruit ethnic minority students. Universities are encouraged to organise ethnic minority classes (*minzu ban*). Also there are several Institutes for Nationalities (*minzu xueyuan*) in the country that provide higher education for ethnic minority people. These institutes were originally established to train minority people in order to integrate them into the cultural and political mainstream of Chinese society. The medium of instruction varies but in general both Chinese and minority languages are used in Institutes for Nationalities.

Bilingual education is governed by China's legislation, but according to Zhou (2005a) due to the narrow interpretation of equality of legal status for the language of the 55 minority groups, minority languages do not have equal status in practice. First of all, it is worth mentioning that not all minority people of the PRC have mother tongue education. According to Zhou (2005b) that is basically for two reasons: either the minority language does not have a written form and/or the number of speakers is rather small. Secondly, the practice of bilingual education in China is not standardised throughout the country. That is due to the fact that the

policies of central government are not always consistent with the needs of those who live in the periphery. Research into bilingual education in China suggests that several conclusions can be drawn. Postiglione (1992, 332) argues "the great diversity that exists between national minority situations makes generalisation virtually impossible."

It is not only that the situations between different national minorities vary, but also the situation within one ethnic minority group varies. The different situations of two different minority peoples can be seen in Hansen's (1999) research. She researched bilingual education among Naxi and Tai people, who live in two different locations in Yunnan Province. Her research clearly shows how the different practices of implementing bilingual education have different results. Among Tai people state education clashes with the traditional Buddhist education and the values of the culture. Thus state education has not succeeded. Naxi people did not perceive state education as foreign, and state education was successful, and provided the means to express themselves as an ethnic minority.

Chinese state education seems to have four main goals. First, it attempts to achieve a high degree of cultural and political homogenisation in order to make communication possible among different peoples in different parts of this huge country. Second, it tries to ensure the integration of peripheral areas into the Chinese state. The third essential goal of the education system is to promote patriotism and loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The fourth goal is to "improve quality" and civilise the "backward" parts of the country (Hansen 1999, 4). Most of the "backward" regions are inhabited by ethnic minority people who do not speak Chinese as their first language. In order to integrate the ethnic minority people of the PRC into the mainstream, the state education system provides bilingual education for minority people.

Tibetan language education has always had its own recognised status in the education system of the PRC. The remoteness and economic underdevelopment of the vast Chinese periphery has made it possible to preserve the culture and the language of Tibetans. The majority of Tibetans speak at least one of the three main Tibetan dialects that are Amdo, Kham and the Central dialect. The Chinese

government has made limited efforts to integrate Tibetans into the cultural, political and economic mainstream of Chinese society. However, the central government launched its developmental programme “Open Up the West” (Xibu da kaifa) in October 2001. The main aim of the programme is to bring the western parts of PRC to the same developmental level with the rest of the country. The focus has been on economic development and infrastructure rather than on education in the region of Qinghai Province, Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Xingjian. Connecting Lhasa to the national railway network in 2006 was part of this developmental programme as well as building highways between prefecture capitals and Xining in Qinghai Province.

Bilingual education has not reached Tibetan areas in the same way it has reached some other less remote ethnic minority people areas in the PRC. Tibetans inhabit TAR, Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan Provinces. Most Tibetans in this region are semi nomadic pastoralists, and they inhabit the poorest and most inaccessible regions of the country. Traditionally their education level is one of the lowest in the whole country. Among the seven least literate province-level territories in the PRC are TAR, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan Provinces (Lamontagne 1999). According to Lamontagne, illiteracy is a discriminating characteristic between the ethnic minority groups and the Han in the provincial level territories, which have a large presence of minority people. That is the issue in many western territories of the PRC. Tibetans (ibid) are one of the ten least literate minorities in the PRC. That is a literacy level of less than forty per cent in the age group of 15-45 years (China Statistic Press 1995).¹¹

In Qinghai Province the educational level is lower than that of the national level. The national level of educational development is around seventy per cent whereas in Qinghai Province it is fifty-four per cent (Lamontagne 1999). The least educated nationalities in Qinghai Province are the Salar and Tibetans. On the other hand, some other ethnic minorities in Qinghai Province have very a high educational development level. Such minorities are the Yi, Koreans, etc that are not the original people of the province.

¹¹ There is no official definition of a literate Tibetan available. Officials in Hainan TAP defined a literate person as a one who has finished six years in primary school.

A low literacy rate is usually related to developing countries where the socio-economical or even geographical environment hinders access to literacy teaching. There are mainly four (universal) reasons for the low literacy rate of Tibetans in Qinghai Province and especially in Hainan TAP: the remoteness of dwellings, transhumance practices, the low standard of living and language of education. As most Tibetans in Hainan TAP live in remote villages it has been difficult to organise education for children. The low density of population makes it even more complicated. Villages are scattered “all over” the plateau and so-called natural villages may consist of only a couple of families. Families then have to send their children to the closest bigger place, which can be an administrative village¹² or township or a county centre. Often these schools are boarding schools where village children can have board and lodging. Even though, in recent years, the government has assisted families by reducing school fees, lodging expenses can be a hindrance to sending children to school. Families cannot afford lodging fees at all, or they can afford it only for a couple of years. During those years children acquire literacy and numeracy. The nomadic way of living adds to the problems of organising education. The government has provided tent schools, which have been used on the summer pastures, but tent schools have not solved the problem. Lastly, language can cause a barrier for children’s education. There are two kinds of Tibetan schools: Tibetan language medium schools and Chinese language medium schools. The first one teaches Chinese as a subject and the other subjects are taught in Tibetan. The latter one teaches Tibetan as a subject and all other subject are taught in Chinese. Therefore, when a Tibetan village child goes to a Chinese medium school he has difficulties in understanding the teaching.

The government of the PRC has claimed that, “The 9-Year Compulsory Education - plan of the government has been implemented in different phases through the vast country. It should be basically universalised and illiteracy among young and middle-aged groups should be basically eradicated.” (The Ministry of Education, 2005). This may be an accurate statement of many places in the PRC but it cannot be verified yet in Hainan TAP in Qinghai Province.

¹² An administrative village consists of a number of natural villages.

2.2.3 “Wipe Away Illiteracy”

The driving force behind adult literacy programmes in the PRC has been the central government’s objective to “wipe away illiteracy” in a whole country (Wang & Li 1990). Since 1949, the government of the PRC has worked towards making universal literacy a reality (Stites & Semali 1991; Peterson 2001). According to the Ministry of Education of the PRC the 4th Nationwide Census in 1990 showed that the adult illiteracy rate in the age group 15 - 45 years was sixty-two per cent (The Ministry of Education 2005), which was a catalyst for a nation wide campaign for literacy teaching, especially among adults in an age group of 15-45 years. The ultimate goal is to have literacy rate of over 90 per cent (The Ministry of Education 2005).

The government has implemented two kinds of literacy courses for the adult Tibetan population: Chinese and the Tibetan language courses. According to officials in Hainan TAP, the Chinese language literacy teaching did not meet the purpose of the course. Adult learners who did not speak Chinese found acquiring Chinese literacy difficult and class attendance was low. In the end, officials decided not to continue the Chinese language courses for Tibetans. The Tibetan language literacy courses have reached more Tibetans. This course is designed to meet the basic needs of literacy. That is, people learn to read and write Tibetan. After finishing the course they should be able to write simple letters and read simple texts in everyday contexts. A final examination completes the course and assesses the literacy skills of students. In some counties officials keep records of students who have passed the final examinations, and through their records they may obtain the status of being a literate town or township. This status is an important indicator to show that an administrative area has reached the government objectives in literacy education.

Different provinces and autonomous regions were allocated different objectives concerning the timetable and goal of literacy programmes within the whole country. The more developed provinces with better economic status and educational development along with higher population density were allocated a shorter time schedule than areas with low population density and lower economic status and lower educational development. The most developed provinces were given time

until the end of 1995 to reach the goal of less than five per cent of illiteracy. Qinghai Province, in where this research area is located, was supposed to reach its goal by the year 2000 with the result of having less than fifteen per cent illiteracy among the 15-45 age group, but the goal was not reached in allocated time.

2.3 The Tibetan Literacy Programme

2.3.1 Partners of the Project Implementation

In the 1990s the Central Government of the PRC had assigned the dead line for “wiping away illiteracy” to be completed by the millennium. Tibetan officials of the Hainan Tibetan Language Committee (HTLC) in Hainan TAP were under pressure to manage the task in the allocated time. They searched different opportunities for programme implementation, and in the end they established co-operation with Jian Hua Foundation and Fida International¹³. These three counterparts carried out the Tibetan Literacy Programme (TLP) in 1999-2005, which provided the main literacy educational scene for the current research.

Fida International is a Finnish NGO with Christian principles. Fida International works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and it is currently one of the main recipients of government funding for development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries. Qualifications for a partnership organization with MFA require the organization to work according to the general principles and policies set by the MFA. Accordingly, the developmental goals of implemented development programmes agree with the emphasis and goals of the MFA. Currently special emphasis is on education, reducing unemployment and improving status of women and children (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland 2006). The scope of the TLP included providing assistance for ethnic minority people’s education, which met the criteria of the MFA. Regarding Fida International, it provided the know-how for sustainable development in the field of

¹³ At that time, Department of Development Cooperations of Finnish Free Foreign Mission.

adult literacy education along with the administration of financial resources for the Tibetan Literacy Programme.

The Jian Huan Foundation is a Hong Kong based organization, which was established by businessmen from Hong-Kong. Initially, the main scope of the organization was to coordinate English language teachers to meet the huge demand of native language teachers in mainland China. Since the late 1990s the organization has brought in professionals for various development programmes such as medical and community development programmes. The Tibetan Literacy Programme was among the first development programmes of the Juan Hua Foundation whose main responsibility was to be a link between Fida International and the Hainan Tibetan Language Committee (HTLC/Hainan Minzu Ban in Chinese) at the beginning of the project implementation. Later on the Jian Hua Foundation provided programme personnel as well.

The Hainan Tibetan Language Committee is a government department of Hainan TAP. The department is in charge of all Tibetan cultural issues within the prefecture that includes language and religious issues of local Tibetans. For example, all government bilingual documents are processed in the department; the official relationship between the government and Tibetan Buddhist monasteries is through the HTLC. Because the department has the expertise in the Tibetan language, the Government of Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture delegated the task of organizing the adult literacy teaching to the HTLC. Besides the language expertise, the department was in charge of the logistics of the programme, which included communicating with the county level departments of the government and arranging training courses for trainers and village teachers.

The implementation and the content of the programme were executed in co-operation with Fida International, the Jian Hua Foundation and the HTLC.

2.3.2 The Content of the TLP

The Tibetan Literacy Programme was implemented in 1999 - 2005. According to the first project proposal the content of the programme was the following: “This program includes literacy course material preparation, teacher training, and literacy courses for non-literate adults. Course materials (including a literacy primer) must be prepared in the local Tibetan Amdo dialect. Training is aimed at professional primary school teachers and literate Tibetan women with no formal training.” (LKA 1998, 2). All these components were included in the programme, and during the implementation time four volumes of literacy primers were written and published, 30 literacy trainers and 600 village literacy teachers were trained. The programme reached 19 000 students who attended the classes in 300 villages and townships within four counties of Hainan TAP.

The ultimate development goal was to, “improve living conditions through improved literacy” which was planned to be achieved by improving the quality of the teaching materials and methods, and therefore to improve the literacy rate in Amdo communities (LKA 1998).

One essential feature of the programme was the language of literacy. It was believed that mother tongue literacy education would be the best choice for Amdos for a number of reasons. Worldwide, mother-tongue literacy education is promoted by educators because:

- Learning to read is easier and faster when students understand the meaning of what they are reading.
- It is easier to understand the basic processes involved in reading – such as sound- symbol or meaning-symbol correspondence in the mother tongue.
- Learners also can write faster in their mother tongue, as soon as they are taught how the respective writing system works

Additionally most Amdos in villages are monolingual Amdo speakers and there are hardly any opportunities to speak Chinese in their daily environment (Harri 2009).

Curriculum and primers

The curriculum of teaching consisted of two main teaching periods in two consecutive years, which were chosen to correspond to the cycle of nomadic life of the Amdos. Each year teaching was organized around August - December, after the summer herding season on the high mountains was over, and before the Tibetan and/or Chinese New Year time started. The rest of the year people were occupied with herding and farming, or picking caterpillar fungus.

Literacy primers were written particularly for this programme. HTLC hired an experienced teacher to write primers and to develop the curriculum together with the researcher, who represented adult literacy education expertise. This local teacher has taught the Tibetan language both in primary schools and in monasteries in Qinghai Province. His approach to teaching the language was traditional. The researcher's approach to teaching was to modify the traditional methods to adjust literacy teaching to the needs of current Tibetan communities. A few adjustments were made but in the end the primers followed the traditional way of teaching the language. Following the principals of international development co-operation it was believed that local partners should have the ownership of the programme. HTLC obtained the copyright of the primers and accordingly they had to make the final decision of the curriculum and the content of primers

The first volume of primers introduced the alphabet, and according to literacy tradition the primer consists of language drills for learning various grammatical issues of the syllabic language. The second volume focused on teaching words and short sentences. As a result, during the first teaching period students learned the alphabets, building up simple words and understanding basic grammar including comprehending short sentences.

The third volume taught simple grammar, and the fourth volume included more complicated grammatical issues, more complex words, and sentences in short stories, which were based on the daily life of Tibetans. Accordingly, the second teaching period consisted of building up complicated words and teaching more complicated grammar of the language. Students who finished the whole course acquired the level of literacy, which is equal to the level of class six in primary

school. A student should have been able to read and understand rather complicated text in relation to his/her own living environment.

Teachers' training

A common problem in minority language adult literacy education is the lack of teachers (Robinson 1990), which was recognised by the programme implementers of the TLP. Therefore, training trainers and teachers was one essential part of the programme. The training had three immediate goals: to train teachers to teach adults, to introduce new teaching methods, and to bring some community development issues to discussion in communities.

Even though the government had organized adult literacy classes, training teachers to teach adults had not been a part of their programme. Most teachers in the government programme were schoolteachers who taught adult literacy classes in their vacation time. Since they were schoolteachers, government officials regarded them as appropriate professionals for literacy teaching, even for adults (See Chapter 3.3.1).

In the TLP, teachers and trainers were chosen by local township and village elders and who were influential in their localities. The teachers were mainly middle school graduates. The trainers were primary school teachers and government employees from the Tibetan Language Working Committees of different counties. The common perception was that teaching adults follows the same model and principles as teaching children (Horstia & Murray 2005). Therefore, it was important to improve the professional skills of the teachers. The training courses included Tibetan language issues, some principles in adult education, and interactive teaching methods to expand a variety of their teaching methods, and therefore hopefully to improve the quality of teaching (Tibetan Literacy Programme 2005). Since the need for literacy teachers was urgent and immense it was crucial to train trainers first, and they taught village literacy teachers in county centres close to their villages.

Another aspect of training trainers and teachers was to introduce some issues of community development at literacy classes. During the training, student teachers and trainers were introduced to participative methods, such as participative action

research methods, to stimulate development ideas in Amdo communities. As teachers and trainers were respected in their communities the idea was to test developmental issues and ideas with them. Possibly they could convey the ideas to their communities for the benefit of communities in rural areas.

Trainers' training courses were designed for one week at a time, and they were necessary to the programme. Without trainers, who were primary school teachers, middle school graduates and language (Tibetan - Chinese) translators, it would have been impossible for the programme managers to train 600 village teachers. That task was given to trainers of whom some performed as village teachers as well. A training course for trainers was a valid testing ground for ideas and teaching methods, which were not yet commonly used in Tibetan villages. For example, numeracy was not included into a curriculum of Tibetan adult literacy courses. On the first training course of the TLP numeracy teaching was introduced by doing some simple daily life numeracy practices such as teaching how to tell the time, and teaching calculation by using money. Numeracy teaching was not accepted by trainers and numeracy had to be excluded from the curriculum.

Students

Most students of the TLP were from the age-group 15-45 years. In general, 15-18 year old students would not be considered adult literacy students but due to the Chinese government policy these adolescent students attend adult literacy classes. According to the Chinese policy, people who are not within the compulsory education age group are required to attend adult literacy classes (Ministry of Education 2001).

Literacy students were either illiterate or semi-literate. Most of them had never gone to school and had never learned to read and write. Some students had gone to school for a year or two, as described earlier in this chapter, but due to a lack of post-literacy activities in their daily life they had forgotten what they had learned in school. Even though Tibetan literature is plentiful (poems, newspapers, songbooks, religious materials etc.) they can be hard to get hold of in remote villages, and so people do not have many opportunities for reading practice.

The disparity between genders is a universal phenomenon in education especially in developing countries, which causes more need for adult literacy education for women than for men. In Qinghai Province the ratio was fifty-two per cent of Tibetan men and eighty-four per cent of Tibetan women were semi-literate or non-literate at the planning stage of the TLP (China Statistic Press 1995). The TLP implementers recognized the literacy gap between genders in the first project proposal (LKA 1998). Despite the concern of a greater need for literacy teaching for women than for men gender sensitive literacy teaching was difficult to carry through. The participation of women both as teachers and as students was less than of men. The main obstacles had cultural grounds that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

2.3.3 Location

The vast grassland areas of Qinghai Province are inhabited mainly by Tibetans, who are engaged in agricultural occupations such as cultivation, animal husbandry, and forestry. Qinghai Province is located at a high altitude: Forty per cent of the area is above 4 000 m and sixty per cent of the area is above 3 000 m. Around thirty per cent of the land area in Qinghai Province is uninhabitable due to its high altitude.

Qinghai Province is administratively divided into one prefecture-level city (Xining), one prefecture and six autonomous prefectures, of which Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Hainan TAP) is one. The next level lower in a regional political hierarchy is the county level. Counties consist of various numbers of townships. Further down, the townships rule two kinds of villages: administrative villages and 'natural' villages. An administrative village consists of a different number of 'natural' villages. Thus an administrative village is scattered over a vast area. In a Tibetan area one 'natural' village may be comprised of only one extended family, which lives in a couple of black tents or mud brick houses within sight of each other as seen in the picture on the next page. Thus a 'natural' village is somewhat like a hamlet especially in a nomadic area.

The TLP was implemented in Hainan TAP, which is situated in the alpine grassland region of Qinghai Province. The Chinese name of the prefecture "Hainan" describes

its location "south of the lake," which refers to the biggest salty inland lake in China. Qinghai Lake, which is around 100 km long, is an important land mark for Tibetans who call it Kokonor.

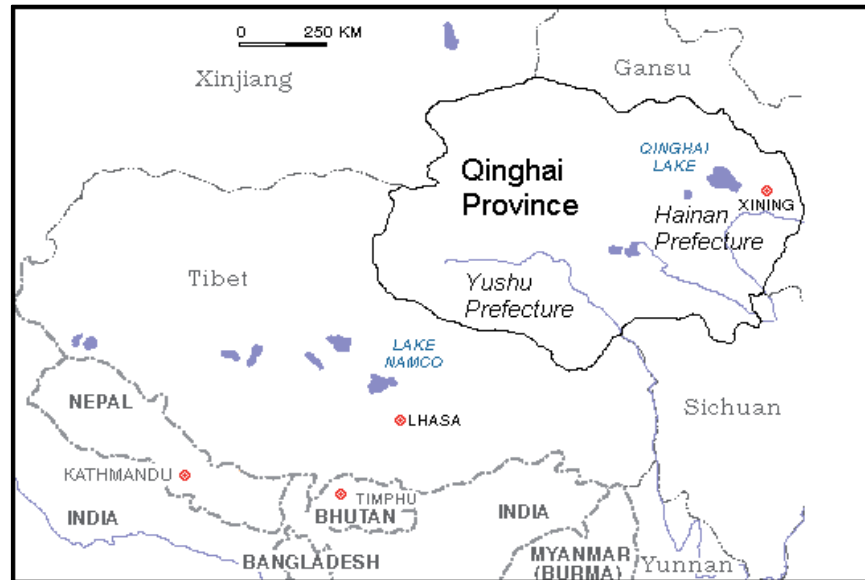


Figure 12. Qinghai Province and its neighbouring territories ¹⁴

Hainan TAP is at the crossroads of Lhasa, Xining and Yushu. Lhasa is the holy city of the Tibetans. People gain religious merit by making a pilgrimage to Lhasa. Xining is the capital of Qinghai Province. It is the administrative city of the province: all provincial government offices are situated in Xining. It is also the commercial hub of the province. Yushu is the southern prefecture and an administration centre of Qinghai Province, and the main road from Xining to Yushu goes through Hainan TAP. As a result of being located at the crossroads of these three cities some parts of Hainan TAP are in continuous contact with the “outside world” through travelling, TV, radio and the Internet. Yet some Tibetans in the prefecture do not travel outside their home environment; they do not have access to radio, TV or to the Internet. If they have watched TV somewhere they make comments to travellers like us: “You are a foreigner! I have seen foreigners on TV.”

¹⁴ As in Pyykkönen (Harri) & Foggin 1999.

2.4 Relevance to the Research

I have attempted to set the scene for where this research was carried out. Amdo Tibetan literacies take place in an environment that is influenced by Amdos' history, languages, nomadic livelihood practices, cultural practices, religion, and education.

Continuing Chinese influence started earlier in the Amdo's history than anywhere else in the Tibetan region. The features of the Tibetan language influence the uses of language in daily life: one form of the language is for spoken communication and another one is for written and official communication. Nomadic life hinders access to education and literacy materials. Cultural practices, including religious practices, have been significant in bringing in the orthography of the Tibetan language, setting up education, providing arenas for literacy practices, and forming the roles of genders. Traditional Tibetan education has built the foundation for current education and the education of the PRC forms it as it is at the moment.

Then, the Tibetan Literacy Programme is at the focus point of the current research. With all its activities it provides the forum for a heuristic process of the study.

3. Researching Cultural Influence on Literacy Education

Researching cultural influence on literacy practices requires both cultural and literacy theories to draw on. I will open some windows on culture to lay a foundation for the concept of cultural influence. Then I will explore some views and theories of literacy, which lead to discussions on the issues that appear both in culture and literacy practices. Lastly, I will discuss the relevance of the theoretical choices for this current research.

3.1. Cultural Context

The cultural contexts of the current research are found at the core of this research and at the research setting. The aim of the study is to find how Tibetan culture influences adult literacy education. Cultural studies are wide and deep, which can lead researching culture beyond the scope of the research in hand. I attempt to mark boundaries of culture by keeping in mind a question “What aspects of culture are relevant to researching literacy?” By doing so I hope to find the core components of culture in which literacy is embedded in, and in what ways and to what extent culture determines literacy practices and literacy education.

Another context of culture in this research is through the research setting. The research is carried out in a multicultural setting in which these different cultures and their co-operation add different flavours to the study. There are a few different ethnic cultures at the meeting point: Tibetan, Chinese and Finnish. It is obvious, I guess, that these cultures differ from each other. From the researcher’s point of view it is a learning process to become familiar with the unknown (cultural practices), to understand “what is going on?” and to be able to act as a mediator between the West and the East (Agar 1996; Alred, Byram and Fleming 2003; Kaikkonen 2004).

3.1.1 Defining Culture

There is no single definition of culture. The definition of culture can be oversimplified as referring to some everyday connotations or it can be understood to mean a wide range of human phenomena (Lankshear 1997a). In an everyday context culture is often referred to as fine art: “Let’s go to watch *Madame Butterfly*.” It can also be defined as a way of living - e.g. what we eat and how we eat. Culture can be viewed as artefacts - e.g. a display of Tibetan culture. These are just simple examples of meanings of culture.

In social science culture is viewed in a broader and deeper sense than a daily phenomenon. It is understood as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs and behaviour, and shared values, goals and practices that characterises a people group (e.g. an ethnic group, an institution, an organisation). This view of culture is stated in the Declaration of The World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City in 1982:

“In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO 1982, 1).

There are different perspectives of culture within the field of anthropology. For example, Roberts (2000) differentiates focus points of cultural anthropology and social anthropology. According to Roberts (2000, 23) cultural anthropology tends to focus on beliefs and values as cultural systems in their own right; social anthropology ties this ‘cultural’ dimension to the institutional structure of social relationships. Furthermore, there are two significant views of culture within social science: an essentialist and a non-essentialist view. An essentialist view sees culture as a more concrete reality: nation culture with clear boundaries between different social groups along with their own behavioural patterns. A non-essentialist view is interpretive by its character and socially constructed (Holliday 1999; 2001). One could say that essentialists build up stereotypes of ethnic groups and cultures as

physical entities whereas non-essentialists understand culture as a movable concept without time boundaries and stereotypes. According to Holliday (ibid.) the essentialist view of culture is dominant. I will look at first some definitions of culture that follow the essentialist view of culture. Later on, as I will discuss characteristics of culture and I will explore more of the non-essentialist view of culture.

An essentialist view of culture sees culture as a concrete social phenomenon as mentioned above. According to this view culture refers to prescribed ethnic, national and international entities which is clearly presented by Hofstede (e.g. 2001). Another view of culture is a non-essentialist one. The non-essentialist view of culture sees culture as “a movable concept used by different people at different times to suit purposes of identity, politics and science” (Holliday 2000, 1). This view of culture is not pre-fixed into certain nation culture or to a certain group of people. Quite a contrary, this notion of culture refers to cohesive social groupings and it “allows” people to belong to many cultures. For example, Baumann (1996) reports in his research that people in Southall belonged to different communities and different cultures so that there were cultures across communities.

Hofstede, a well-known specialist on organisational anthropology and international management, presents the essentialist view of culture. He has taken a cultural anthropological starting point for a definition of culture. He defines culture “as collective programming of the mind; it manifest itself not only in values, but more in superficial ways: in symbols, heroes and rituals” (Hofstede 2001, 1). He also includes to his definition that members of different groups or categories of people are distinguished by their different collective programming of the mind (Hofstede 1991). Hofstede regards values the core of culture: that is where people’s feelings come along. Therefore, people’s behaviour can be predictable to certain extend. In our actions we choose something over others based on our values. Then Hofstede moves on towards social anthropological view of culture by stating that beliefs and values are learned and used within organisational/societal relationships (Hofstede 1985). However, he also argues that a person determines his behaviour in a certain situation, i.e. it is not the relationships that determine beliefs and values but a decision is made at the individual’s level. As individuals we are influenced by our

culture but at the same time we make our own choices based on our personal values and beliefs. For example, this becomes apparent in roles of men and women in society. Women choose a profession that is usually chosen by men in their society, or men attending domestic duties that are done by women only in their society.

Hofstede's argument agrees with Hannerz's (1992) who argues that beliefs and values are not necessarily determined by social relationships. Members of the same cultural group make individual choices concerning values and beliefs, and that they can be against the values and beliefs of that particular social group as mentioned above.

Another view of culture, which is close to the social anthropological view of culture is of Freire (1974). He argues that people create a culture by being engaged in relationships with others and with the world. He mentions cultural process and how we perceive ourselves as social, historical, and cultural beings as he writes:

“Because they are not limited to the natural (biological) sphere but participate in the creative dimension as well, [humans] can intervene in reality in order to change it. Inheriting acquired experience, creating and re-creating, integrating themselves into their context, responding to its challenges, objectifying themselves ... [humans] enter the domain ... of History and of Culture. As [humans] relate to their world by responding to the challenges of the environment, they begin to dynamize ... and to humanize reality. They add to it something of their own making, by giving temporal meaning to geographic space, by creating culture.” (1974, 4-5).

Lévi-Strauss (1966), a French anthropologist, defines culture as systems of shared meaning and understanding. People of the same culture can understand the cultural meanings of various symbols, which can be behavioural, words and objects (Spradley 1979). Whereas for “outsiders” meaning making of the same cultural symbols is a learning process. For example, responding to a teacher's statement “It is so hot in this classroom!” depends on our cultural understanding. Some people would take it as a statement and others would take it as a request to open a window depending on their experience or their cultural knowledge in a particular culture. As Spradley (1980, 6) defines “culture as the acquired knowledge people use to

interpret experience and generate behaviour.” Cultural background is a base for understanding social behaviour, experience, and for the ways people perceive meanings for different phenomenon and issues around them. It is culture that provides us with tools to construct our worlds, conceptions of our selves and our powers (Bruner 1999).

Lastly, it is quite obvious that culture is an ambiguous concept. Even the interpretation of “culture” is largely culturally bound (Koivunen & Marsio 2007). We interpret the concept of culture based on our own education and upbringing in our personal and cultural environment. My approach to culture in this study is socio-cultural: beliefs, values, relationships and social power within an ethnic group. I will look at these components of culture, how they are embedded in cultural practices, and the ways they have an impact on literacy practices and literacy education in Amdo communities.

3.1.2 Elements and Characteristics of Culture

As we have seen above, depending on our definition of culture we find different elements and categories within it: cultural performances, values, relationships, beliefs, etc. Häyrynen (2004) has categorised cultural elements as following:

- Culture as the highest form of human knowledge and skill (e.g. progression of the civilisation process, art as high culture, mass culture, etc.).
- Culture as a way of life (e.g. a group’s way of life and identity, language, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.).
- Culture as a mental knowledge and value system (e.g. value, belief and sense system, collective and cognitive consciousness).

These cultural elements can be perceived as different levels of culture. Hofstede (1994) organises cultural elements above to describe the depth of culture by grouping them differently. He categorises them into four different groups: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Symbols represent signs, pictures, way of dressing, etc, that are recognised by members of that culture. Heroes are highly respected persons (real or imaginary) in a culture. Rituals are culturally collective activities such as

ways of greeting and social ceremonies. Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over to others. He illustrates the four categories as the skin of an onion: symbols represent the most superficial manifestations of culture, and the values the most deepest manifestations of culture (Hofstede 1994, 7). Heroes and rituals are in between these two as illustrated in following:

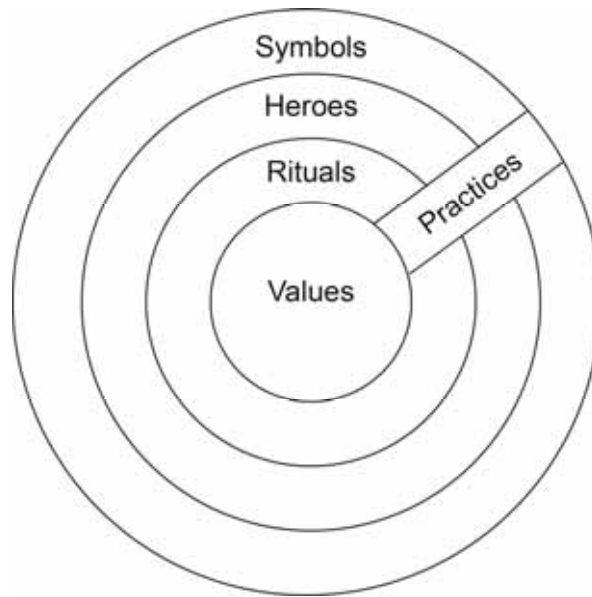


Figure 13. Onion diagram of culture. (Adopted from Hofstede 1994, 9.)

Cultural peculiarities are manifested in these elements, and as such they provide a window to grasp differences between cultures. These elements are the ones that give an experience of “emic” and “etic” to describe one’s position in a culture: outsider or insider (cf. Headland 1990). We are outsiders or insiders depending on our cultural belonging to the cultural elements and cultural manifestations in them. Emic provides an insider’s perspective and explanations to cultural peculiarities, and etic presents an outsider’s perspective to cultural manifestations. Both perspectives can be used to differentiate cultures from each other by accounts of gender, region, religion, generation and social class.

Culture is not static but it changes along the years. Hannerz (1992) illustrates it as a flow of a river. One can never step into the same river twice because of its constant flow. According to Hannerz, (1992, 4) culture acts similarly, you can perceive its structure but it is entirely dependent on ongoing processes. Therefore, culture has a past, present and future. Kramsch (1998, 7) views it linearly on a time line segment as following: “The culture of everyday practices draws on the culture of shared history and tradition...people can identify with the way it [a society] remembers its past, turns its attention to the present, and anticipates its future.” If we think of, for example, shared values, which form the core of culture, according to Hofstede (2001). Even though these values are hard to unlearn they may change along the years: what had been regarded ugly has turned to be praised as beautiful; what had been regarded respectable has become less respectable, and so forth. Also, referring to Street and Kramsch above, the ways of doing culture change. We speak English differently from the Victorian times of English; the way of greeting changes, and so forth. Culture is an ongoing process.

Another feature of culture is that it is multi layered. According to Hofstede (1994, 10) “people unavoidably carry within themselves different cultural patterns of thinking and feelings that correspond to different layers of culture”. For example, Swedish-speaking grandparents who practise dentistry in Helsinki correspond to at least four different layers of culture: grand-parenting (generational group), Swedish speaking population in Finland (minority group), professional culture of dentists (vocational group), and Finnish culture (national level culture). Possibly for this reason, Nurmi & Kontiainen (1995, 66) argue, “Culture is not a precise word to cover a precise social phenomenon.” They point out that every culture has subcultures, which vary from regional to ideological subcultures. It seems impossible for one person to be able to socialise in all subcultures within his/her own environmental culture. Yet, as Hofstede (ibid.) stresses everybody belongs to various subcultures.

One of the basic features of culture is that it is learned. Culture is not inherited through our genes. We learn it in our environment, and it is constituted in our daily practices. If we think of a value system, Hofstede (1994, 8) explains how children learn the basic value system of their culture by the age of 10, and they learn it

firmly. This value system becomes a natural part of their life, and they unconsciously hold to it. According to Hofstede this cultural pattern is hard to unlearn, and unlearning is more difficult than learning it the first time. Because culture is learned we can learn other cultures besides the one we were born into. We can become bi-cultural and multicultural by living bi-cultural or multicultural environment. For example, Spradley (1979) mentions children becoming bi-cultural by living constantly in two different cultures, e.g. school and home.

Baumanns' (1996) research in Southall, a large suburban district of London, reminds of Spradley's bi-cultural theory. People in Southall belonged to number of different communities and cultures. It was not by their ethnic background or/and their place of birth that Southallians defined their communities and cultures. One person could belong to various communities with their various cultures, and those culture could contradict each other. For example, Baumann (1996, 5) mentions a person who can speak as a member of the Muslim community. Then the same person takes sides against Muslims as a member of the Pakistani community. In a third community the same person takes sides for Hindus and Christians. There are no stereotypes of nation cultures but a cultural belonging is formed by different elements of culture that changes along with a "community shift".

Baumann's research is a good example of the theory which sees culture being socially constructed as discussed earlier in this chapter. Holliday (1999), among others, has been developing this conceptual debate around culture as a social construction. He has brought into discussion two paradigms of culture: large culture and small culture. Large culture refers to the essentialist view of culture as Hofstede and others understand it. Social groups, "national", "international" presents large cultures. According to Holliday most research in applied linguistics is placed around large ethnic, national and international cultural differences. As a consequence "this large culture approach results in reductionist overgeneralization and otherization of foreign educators, students and societies (p. 237)." Therefore, he argues for distinguishing small cultures from large cultures is crucial. The concept of small culture is not the same as sub-culture. Small cultures do not necessarily have onion skin relationship to large culture (cf. Hostede *ibid.*). They can be independent groups that make their own culture by cohesive activities. For example,

multinational companies make their own new cultures worldwide, or small educational institutions have similar classroom practices to international practices beyond the borders of the nation. The concept of small culture does not concern the size of a social grouping but it concerns the paradigm through which to look at social groupings. It also explains activities that are difficult to explain or pinpoint by using the paradigm of nation culture.

Street (1993) argues that culture is a verb; it is something what people do. We could connect this to both theories of culture that has been discussed above. On the one hand, according to the essentialist view, it can be used to stereotype a membership of a group and its behaviour: in Christian culture people GO to church; in Finnish culture we HAVE a sauna bath, etc. To be more explicit with these two examples we have to open more layers to find what kind of activities going to church includes or having a sauna bath means. Yet, activities in both of these cultural customs vary according to the environment and mega-culture; e.g. singing and preaching in churches are done differently in different parts of the world. On the other hand, members of these people group can refer to their culture according to the activities they do in their various social groups. Their cultural belonging is constructed by social activities as Holliday and others view culture. Accordingly, it can be considered accurate to claim people are “doing culture” instead of “something being culture”.

Lastly, one more character of cultural phenomenon: power. As mentioned above, cultural anthropologists view culture as social systems of relationships. As such, cultural phenomena include power relations that operate between and within human groups (Lankshear et al 1994, 14). These power relations are clearly visible, e.g., in the status of men and women, and between generations in societies. Old men tend to have a more powerful status than young women in many societies. These associated power relations of different groups cause societal structures and hierarchy, and cultural protocols. We have heads of states, managers of companies, politicians, workers, etc. All of these people relate to each other according to social or hierarchal power they possess. The hierarchal structure and the volume of power at different levels of it can be measured according to the size of network connections a person can actively mobilise (Bourdieu 1986).

Institutional and an individual's social influence depend on their position in society, and that power influences cultural practices in society. This can be clearly seen in societies in which a particular ideology has a strong impact on culture. The whole social structure and value system is based on the ideology of that society. When the prominence of the ideology decreases for one reason or another, symbols of the ideology become less visible or less prominent. On the other hand, when the powers of ideology become more prominent cultural symbols reflect that accordingly.

3.1.3 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a political term to describe the existence of people from different cultures in a society. However, the concept of multiculturalism is in transition. Traditionally multiculturalism is understood as the coexistence of different ethnic minority groups in a society in comparison with monocultural nation-states (Kymlicka 2001). These minority groups have their particular social dimension of life and most likely their own languages, and often they have tried to amalgamate to the main-stream and to a nation-state.

Ethnic pluralism has caused debates and challenges in multicultural societies, and possibly the main challenges are equality between races, language groups, ethnic groups, casts and social groups in society. One of the challenges concerns education: how to organise equal education for students from diverse cultural backgrounds? American educator Banks was challenged by the ethnic pluralism of the US and the lack of pluralism in education system. He set a major goal for multicultural education in the US "to reform the school and educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality." (Banks 1993, 3). The government of the PRC has organised bilingual education for ethnic minority people, but it is not bi-cultural education. Text books for ethnic minority children's education originate in Han culture (Stites 1999). Therefore, Tibetan and other minority children learn majority Han culture through minority language education.

Castles (2002) argues that multiculturalism is not regarded anymore a manoeuvring system between different ethnic groups, but multiculturalism is an essential component of modern society, and it is primarily a Western society phenomenon. As such, multiculturalism abandons the myth of homogenous and monocultural nation-states. At the same time it means “recognizing rights to cultural maintenance and community formation, and linking these to social equality and protection from discrimination” (Castles 2002, 1156) similar to Banks’ efforts in education.

I acknowledge Castle’s argument with a note that the transition of the concept of multiculturalism has not taken place in the PRC, neither in India. Both countries have a big number of different ethnic groups with their own languages and other cultural elements. From my point of view, as a researcher in the PRC, multiculturalism in the country does not abandon the idea of the nation state since ethnic minority people struggle for minority language education which strengthens their cultural heritage, and for employment opportunities in their mother tongue (See Zhou 2005b; Reuters 2010).

3.1.4 Interculturalism

Interculturalism is another phenomenon within cultural studies that is involved in this study. Sociolinguist researchers brought up the term of an intercultural speaker in 1990s (e.g. Byram 1997; Kramsch 1998). Alred, Byram and Fleming (2003) define an intercultural speaker as a person, who in interaction with otherness at a specific context and time, can bring the two cultures into relationship and mediate between different values, beliefs and behaviours. An intercultural speaker can be a language learner who does not acquire language competence of a native speaker but he learns to understand the “otherness” of a new culture. He can become a mediator between his own culture and another. Roberts mentions that an intercultural speaker has a capacity to understand the dynamic of “otherness” and to mediate between one’s own culture practices and those of others (2000, 31). He can reflect both cultures, his own and the other. That is the strength of an intercultural speaker; he can understand that meaning is relational. He can become an intermediary in potential conflicts of behaviours and beliefs of his own culture and the other’s.

A capability to act as an intercultural speaker is gained by living in the societies of other cultures. Understanding differences between cultures are learned through analysing behaviour and meanings in the particular culture, and by developing particular cultural knowledge as well as general cultural knowledge through a long term interaction.

Alred et al. (ibid.) among other researchers and educators have expanded the use of the word intercultural and the concept of interculturality to other domains of experiences, which can be described as being between cultures. Alred et al. make a difference between intercultural experience and becoming intercultural. Intercultural experience occurs between particular groups, whereas becoming intercultural requires a long term involvement in other cultures other than our own. A constant traveller searching for new experiences does not have, most probably, interest, time or capability to dwell in new cultural experiences to deepen the mind. When intercultural experience challenges our customary modes of perception, thought and feeling about our own culture and how we respond to new cultures, and we are aware of our culture, we can become intercultural. Hence, Alred et al. (2003, 4) argue, “ when intercultural experience leads to creative, rather than defensive, learning a concomitant is serious self-reflection and examination, bringing with it consequences for self-understanding and self-knowledge. “

Intercultural experience is a learning process, in which self-reflective learning leads to meaning making through cues, symbolic models and through language. In that process a learner crosses his comfort zones, and becomes more familiar with his own culture. Often we do not observe our own culture, and we do not challenge our ways of action, in brief: we lack an awareness of our own cultural environment. Intercultural experience is not enough to act inter culturally. We need to become intercultural. Being intercultural is the capacity to process our experiences, to reflect and analyse experiences between particular groups and to act upon the insights which the analysis brings. An intercultural person has gained competence in being in-between socially, culturally and internationally. Lustig and Koester (1999) mention that intercultural competence is the individual's ability to unfreeze their own awareness of their own cultural limitations. In the end, an intercultural person

has a more profound, tolerant and integrated sense of self (Alred et al 2003), and he can act as a mediator between his own culture and the other.

Holliday's (1999) notion of small and large cultures brings in the notion of middle cultures. Middle cultures are formed at the interface of large cultures, and according to Holliday, they are formed across nations, e.g. between expatriates and local people. Therefore, the notion of middle cultures has similarities with interculturality. People, who participate in middle cultures, are the ones with the intercultural competence. They provide the ground on which dealings with two different parties, cultures, take place.

3.1.5 Implications of Cultural Studies on this Research

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, cultural studies are involved in the current research in two ways: in the research setting and as a component of the research interest.

Intercultural and multicultural issues arise from the research setting with three dimensions: between Amdo culture, Han Chinese culture and a researcher's Western culture. There are clearly significant differences between the two Asian cultures and Finnish culture. Also, Amdo culture differs significantly from Han Chinese culture. Therefore, research interventions and contexts of this current research involve cultural practices from three different nation cultures that lead into cross-cultural encounters between these cultures.

According to Kaikkonen (2004) unfamiliarity causes racism, xenophobia, prejudice, ethnocentrism, stereotypy, tolerance/intolerance in cross-cultural encounters. These matters make cross-cultural communication and encounters challenging, and sometimes even problematic. Lack of trust, misunderstandings, reluctance for learning new ways of doing and thinking, etc. are caused by unfamiliarity. We feel more comfortable with our own familiar ways of functioning, our belief system and values. We know how to communicate and behave according to our own cultural

norms whereas we need to learn the norms of communication and behaviour of the culture we work in.

To work in a cross-cultural setting is, in the beginning, a leap to an unfamiliar territory. Living in a multicultural environment has different phases. During the first phase, the well known “honeymoon” with a foreign culture, everything is exiting and maybe even exotic. When this phase ends a new foreign culture becomes more foe than a friend. The issues that have been exciting become demanding and even frustrating. In that process it is helpful to remind ourselves to be aware of our own culture and how it influences the way we behave, and how others perceive and respond to us (Schneider and Barsoux 2003). Cross-cultural working and living is a learning process for both (all) parties involved in the situation.

In this kind of research with an ethnographic approach cultural awareness and cultural knowledge cannot be separated (cf. Roberts 2000). As a foreign researcher, an outsider in an Amdo community I processed cultural awareness and cultural growth in order to become an intercultural person. I regard it as part of my professional growth. I learned, I think, a great deal of Amdo culture while working among Amdos. I also assume that my closest Amdo colleagues learned something of Finnish cultural ways of working and thinking processes. In this thesis, I attempt to interpret Amdo’s cultural ways of learning literacy to Western readers.

The other context of culture lays in the research focus of this study: the ways Tibetan culture influences adult literacy education. Researching cultural influence is a difficult task. To analyse and estimate cultural influence is based on the definition of culture (Häyrynen 2004). As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the concept of culture is ambiguous with many layers and levels that make estimating cultural influence a challenging task. Therefore, I have decided to narrow the scope of culture in the current research. I will apply both the Hofstede’s (1994) “onion diagram” of manifestations of culture and Häyrynen’s (ibid.) categories of culture as they both cover the aspects of culture that are relevant to this research. They provide a structure to look into Amdo’s way of living, their beliefs, values, and social hierarchy.

I acknowledge that my approach narrows down the scope of value, belief and communication systems that usually includes religion, art, history, science and language (Häyrynen 2004). However, culture is a broad field and all these issues cannot be researched fully in one doctoral thesis. Also, at the core of this research is the influence of culture on adult literacy education. Often linkage between culture and literacy is researched through the language, and language only (e.g. Gee 1990; Lankshear 1997b; Senft, G., Östman, J-O & Vershuren, J. 2009). Language is part of culture, which then could be explored further as interfunctional relationship of language and thought (cf. Vygotsky 1962). Bruner, who is fascinated by Vygotsky's work, has developed further the connection between language and thought. He has researched how learning and thinking are situated in a cultural setting (Bruner 1999). However, language is not the only component of culture as we will see later on. I attempt to find out how the other components of culture are involved in literacy acquisition in a Tibetan context. Yet, I acknowledge that language is imminent both in culture and in literacy that it is impossible to ignore the involvement of language in researching literacy. Language issues will inevitably surface throughout this current study.

As mentioned above Holliday (1999) has brought contrasting notions to the discussion of culture, especially in the field of applied linguistics. He argues that culture is not a static condition but it is moving, which reminds of Street's idea of culture being a verb. This particular character of culture agrees with the idea of Hannerz (1992) who views culture being in a constant change. Yet, Holliday views culture as socially constructed, and this view of culture is shared by Street but not with Hofstede and others.

Holliday's small culture theory can explain similarities of behaviour, social structure, etc. in small groups in different parts of the world. The notion of small culture provides a paradigm through which to look at social groupings. Therefore, a small culture paradigm is a useful tool for researching cultural issues (in education) and it fits well with the notion of culture being a verb. Even though a small culture paradigm contrasts with other cultural theories that are discussed above, I will not ignore it totally in my research. I believe, a small culture paradigm assists to dive into different layers of "onion skin – culture".

I understand that Holliday's small culture theory provides a heuristic means in the process of interpreting group behaviour. It assists in finding answers to "why" and "how" questions in my research (See Chapter 1). Even though Hofstede's theory of culture and Holliday's theory of small cultures contradict each other by the view of culture I believe I can use them both in researching cultural phenomena in Amdo communities. Hofstede's theory provides a means to the analysis of social events at the macro level whereas Holliday's theory of small cultures provides a means to look at micro levels of culture and how Tibetan culture is socially constructed in classroom settings.

3.2 Researching Literacy

Discussing literacy is not a straightforward matter. We interpret the word "literacy" in many ways, and accordingly it has many meanings. First of all, views and metaphors of literacy vary according to approaches to literacy and what literacy stands for in individual people's thoughts, and in the discourses of societies and institutions. Second, different models of literacy cause us to look at different kinds of processes of literacy acquisition, e.g. psychological model vs. ideological model. Third, similarly to defining culture, defining literacy is a complex issue. There are many definitions of literacy, which often are related to the context of literacy as we will see in this chapter. All of these matters are embedded in a wide range of discourses of literacy.

3.2.1 Literacy Research Approach: Social Theory of Literacy

Literacy theories have evolved along the years. Once an act of reading was regarded as literacy. Then it was expanded to include writing, then numeracy. Nowadays we do not discuss only one kind of literacy practice but many kinds of literacy practices. Since the late 1980s a social theory of literacy, which is also known as New Literacy Studies, has gradually become the base for discussions on literacy and literacy research.

A social theory of literacy was triggered off by dissatisfaction of the conceptions of reading and writing being based on over-simplistic psychological models of literacy (Barton 2001). Street (1984) introduced two terms in literacy studies: “autonomous model of literacy” and “ideological model of literacy”. The autonomous model of literacy refers to technical skills of literacy which are fluent and versatile, universal and instrumental, and literacy is extracted from historical, social and cultural contexts. The ideological model of refers to social contexts literacy. According to Street, literacy is not a neutral act as it is often promoted to be but literacy involves the values, ideologies and beliefs of the society. Street (1990; 2001; 2003; 2006) along with Heath (1983), Gee (1990), Bloome and Greene (1992), Scribner and Cole (1981), and Barton (1994), just to mentioned a few, have been discussing, developing and promoting a social theory of literacy. A social theory of literacy has widened the idea of literacy in the context of every day life (Hamilton, Barton, & Ivanič 1994), religion (Maddox 2007), multilingual situations (Martin-Jones & Jones 2000), cross-cultural situations (Street 1993), visual use (Kress 2000), and so forth.

The basic unit of a social theory of literacy is that of literacy practices (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic 2000, 7). Literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilising written language in people’s life, i.e. literacy practices are the ways people use literacy in their daily life. Because literacy practices are embedded in social practices they are not observable units: we cannot observe values, beliefs, feelings and social relationships. Literacy awareness, discourses of literacy and what people make of literacy are included into these cultural ways of literacy practices both at an individual level and at a society level. On the one hand, people have their own ideas of what literacy is for and how they use literacy in their daily life. On the other hand, they process literacy with a connection to each other: they share common ideologies and social identities.

There are many kinds of literacy practices depending on the domain of literacy as indicated above. Religious practices represent one domain. Other domains are school, work place, government offices, home, etc. All these domains have different contexts of literacy, and the meaning of literacy is conveyed accordingly. Street

argues (1993) that literacy can be understood only in its social contexts in where it is embedded.

Another core element in a social theory of literacy is a literacy event. The concept was developed by A.B. Anderson and Stokes (1984) and by Heath (1994). Events are observable episodes, which emerge from literacy practices and are shaped by them as seen in the Heath's definition of literacy events: Literacy events are "occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies" (1994, 74).

Literacy events are daily life activities which people are involved in regularly, and in which texts are involved. Some events are linked into more formal occasions than others. In some occasions the number of participants is greater than in others. The common feature in all events is a text. Texts are crucial parts of literacy events which can be such activities as a mother reading a book to her child, a shopkeeper checking his order sheet, a shopper reading his shopping list, a priest preaching his sermon, or a teacher teaching in classroom.

Barton and Hamilton (2001) have stated the main proposition of a social theory of literacy as being the culmination of practices, events and texts. They argue that "literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these are observable in events which are mediated by texts" (2001, 11). As a whole, literacy competencies are situated and constructed in social and cultural contexts, and due to this, some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others. Official literacies in government bureaucracy or in banks are more dominant than private notes on notice boards; colourful advertisements on TVs draw more attention than small packets of medicine in a pharmacist shop; religious readings in a religious community are more influential than poems in a second language. We cannot arrange literacies by order of importance or how good they are or any similar factor because literacies can be understood only by their context.

Multiliteracies

Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through process of informal learning and making sense. This has lead to the concept of multiliteracies

which has evolved within New Literacy Studies. The New London Group (1996) devised this concept to describe different kinds of literacies when multiple communication channels along with the diversity of languages and cultures are involved in literacy practices. Pedagogy of multiliteracies broadens the view of literacy to incorporate other modes than language only. According to a multiliteracy theory the textual is also related to the visual and meaning is made in multimodal ways (Cope & Kalantzis 2000). One example of this is the World Wide Web (www) and its multiple ways of combining texts and pictures for different meanings. Another example is how people find their ways in shopping malls by touching the screen of the interactive facility map.

Multiliteracies present one feature of a social theory of literacy that of literacy as historically situated. Similar to culture, literacy has past, present and future, and it changes along the years. To understand current literacy practices we need to take into account its history. For example, I believe, it is necessary to reflect current Tibetan literacy practices on their history to find out answers to my research questions. It is not only the current practices that provide answers to my questions but also the historical context, the roots of Tibetan literacy practices. Also, multiliteracies are embedded in Tibetan religious literacies. For example, *thangkas* and other religious visuals are every day literacies in Amdo communities. Then, mobile phones present another kind of multiliteracies in every day life. Mobile phones present both a different language (Chinese) and a different mode of literacy (Harri 2009).

Cultural literacy

The connection between culture and literacy is imminent as a social theory of literacy implies. Often the relation between culture and literacy is discussed from the language point of view as culture and literacy is seen to culminate in language (e.g. Gee 1990). Language is an essential part of both of them: without language there is no literacy, and language is seen as one core element of culture.

However, in this study I explore also how the other aspects of culture besides language are connected to literacy. I understand literacy as a social act. It is something people do with reading and writing in connection to any every day event.

Street (1986) and others have shown that cultural beliefs, values and customs are embedded in literacy practices. I would like to look at literacy as it emerges from culture and how literacy is shaped through cultural beliefs, values, social relations and customs, and which can be understood in that particular cultural context. I would like to call this kind of literacy that is shaped by cultural practices cultural literacy but that term has been already deployed by Hirsch (1984).

Hirsch (ibid.) invented a term “cultural literacy”. He refers to the core of knowledge that is presumably shared by the members of a given culture. His notion emerged in an American cultural context, and it has been criticised to be mono-cultural (e.g. Scholes 1988; Scott 1989; Walters 1992). Later on, Hirsch along with his colleagues published a cultural dictionary of “What all Americans Should Know” (Hirsch, Kett & Trefil 1988; 2002). Hirsch’s definition of cultural literacy concerns language use and terms in an American context. “We know instinctively that to understand what somebody is saying, we must understand more than just the surface meanings of words; we have to understand the context as well” (1988, 3). Hirsch goes on and discusses the importance of context of literacy. According to Hirsch et al. (2002), cultural literacy is the context of what American people say and read, and as such it is part of making an American American (2002, x).

In the current research I apply a broader meaning to the term of cultural literacy than that of Hirsch. I take the concept of cultural literacy out from the American context and give it a culturally neutral context, i.e. non-American, non-Finnish, non-Tibetan, etc. In this sense, cultural literacy can appear universally with the bounds of a community as defined by particular culture. I understand cultural literacy as the ways literacy is taught, acquired and applied in a given people group in the context of shared values, beliefs and relations. In this sense cultural literacy takes into account values, beliefs and power relations of a community along with its tradition according to a social theory of literacy. Therefore, my understanding of cultural literacy follows more of the concept of situated literacy (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic 2000). According to that concept literacy is situated in different geographical places, domains, and cultural contexts, and that issues of power are important (Barton & Hamilton 2005).

Different uses and purposes for literacy is a cultural phenomenon. In some cultures reciting and memorising texts are culturally appropriate ways of engaging literacy (Boyarin 1992). In some cultures literacy is about critical thinking, promoting abstract thoughts and rationality. In some cultures literacy is gender bound: certain literacies are for women and some others are for men. Thus, a meaning of literacy is contextualised in culture, and there are different literacies within one culture.

Heath (1980) put forward seven contextualised uses of literacy based on her research in a working class community in the southern United States. Based on Heath's research Baker (2006, 320) developed the idea of uses of literacy to needs of literacy at societal level:

- Literacy is needed for survival (e.g. traffic signs, food packet labels)
- Literacy is needed for citizenship (e.g. bureaucratic forms, newspaper)
- Literacy is needed for learning (e.g. text books, examinations sheets)
- Literacy is needed for personal relationships (e.g. personal letters)
- Literacy is needed for personal pleasure and creativity (e.g. reading for fun)
- Literacy is needed for employment (e.g. work related reading and writing skills)
- Literacy is needed for community development and political empowerment (e.g. Literacy can empower marginalised communities.)
- Literacy is needed to empower the mind (Literacy is seen as means of reasoning and reflecting.)

These needs of literacy have different emphases in different cultures and communities. In multilingual societies some of these needs are met only in majority language, e.g. literacy for citizenship, employment and survival. For cultures, who perceive literacy as memorisation and transmission of stories revealing cultural heritage, emphasis for literacy is less on community development and empowering mind than in some other cultures. The needs for literacy vary according to the culture and environment of the individuals. In some cultures religion with religious readings and other kinds of religious literacy practices are essential. Therefore, I

have extended the list above by adding into it “literacy is needed for religious purposes”. I have learned that literacy for religious purposes cannot be categorised into any of the other categories of literacy needs in society. This kind of ritual reading does not necessarily interpret the text but it is satisfying to a reader (Linnakylä 1995).

As I research Amdo literacies I attempt to find out why literacy is taught the way as it is, why literacy is applied as it is. Baker (2006, 331) argues, “Literacy is not a separate cultural event, but mirrors in its form and function general socialization practices.” Following Baker’s argument, my hypothesis is that the answers to my questions are found, at least to some extent, in Amdo cultural practices.

3.2.2 Literacy Metaphors

There are several metaphors associated with literacy. They usually describe how people approach literacy, especially how governments and development agents view literacy in their policies.

One of the common metaphors for literacy appears in government policies as they set their goals to “eradicate illiteracy” or “swipe away illiteracy” as if illiteracy is a disease that has to be cured. As discussed in the previous chapter the government of the PRC has an approach of illiteracy being a sickness, which needs to be cured by providing literacy education for illiterate people. Street (2001) criticises the common practice to call people “illiterate” if they cannot read and write. According to Street a word “illiterate” can be twisted into “ill-literate” which then cause an association of someone being ill. Thus again, there is a metaphor for illiteracy causing illness.

Freire (1985) illustrates traditional literacy education as being banking, and knowledge is deposited in a person. The balance in a bank increases along the learning process, which is a way Freire sees literacy. This metaphor can be criticised as viewing illiterate people as dumb people who passively receive the “gold of

literacy education”, and it ignores tacit knowledge that people have acquired already.

Another metaphor, which is deeply rooted in the context of literacy and educational practice, is the concept of literacy as a set of skills. This has been a very useful strategy in reading programmes at all levels of education. These skills of reading and writing are taught in the way of scaffolding when new knowledge is based on prior learning. Learning skills starts with pre-reading skills, and it proceeds with steps of learning new skills on the ladder of reading. This way literacy is seen as a psychological variable that can be measured and assessed (Barton 1994, 12). Barton (ibid.) argues that the idea of skills is a particular way of thinking about literacy, and it is a metaphor the same way as the others.

These are just a few examples of existing metaphors for literacy, and views for approaching literacy policies. One common factor for all of them is that action is required, either cure or control, or anything between these two. Possibly, for this reason these metaphors have been used for promoting literacy education in developing countries. These metaphors provide a simple path for the journey from “illness to health” which is easy to explain to people and it gives a useful framework for a programme implementation. Barton (ibid.) has presented some metaphors, responses and applications as presented in Figure 14 (next page).

Governments and international agencies have adopted these different metaphors to literacy education in various ways. The government of the PRC views illiteracy as ignorance which by training can lead to mastery of the language (Hainan TAP 1998). Fida International as a development agent has chosen an approach of oppression and deprivation as starting points, and better living standards and empowerment of participants as responses by literacy education (Horstia & Murray 2005). UNESCO (2011a) promotes literacy for empowerment, training, welfare and therapy so that people can practise literacy as a lifelong learning towards active participation in society. Their core idea is “not what literacy can do for people but rather what people can do with literacy” as UNESCO (2011b) has stated in its literacy strategy.

Condition	Response	Means	Goal	Application
Sickness	Treatment	Clinical intervention	Remittance	Dyslexia
Handicap	Rehabilitation	Compensatory aids	Alleviation	
Ignorance	Training	Instruction	Mastery	Orthodox literacy tution
Incapacity	Therapy	Counselling	Adjustment Assimilation Autonomy	
Oppression	Empowerment	Political organization/ legislation	Rights	Conscientization
Deprivation	Welfare	Recallocation of material resources	Benefit	Positive discrimination
Deviance	Control	Isolation, containment, Physical coercion	Correction, conformity	Negative discrimination

Figure 14. Some metaphors for literacy. (Adapted, Barton 1994,13)

3.2.3 Literacy Policy Approaches

There are different approaches to literacy depending on the view of literacy and policies around literacy. I will look at a few commonly used approaches and views of literacy: an autonomous approach (literacy as a set of skills), functional literacy, UNESCO's view of literacy and a critical approach to literacy.

An autonomous approach to literacy is based on Street's (1984) idea of the autonomous model of literacy. In the autonomous approach literacy is viewed as a set of skills that are neutral in its aims and universal in its uses. An autonomous approach to literacy makes use of alphabetic literacy: people learn to code and encode alphabet as they acquire reading and writing skills. For this reason an autonomous approach does not specify any particular language but it can be utilised with most languages all around the world. Also, it is believed that this approach is neutral in its aims since the skills of reading and writing do not involve values and beliefs (Street 1984). However, literacy as a set of skills appears to be neutral but in practice it is not. Reading and writing skills can be promoted and employed by politics, religion, or any other non-neutral agent for its own purposes.

Many international agencies adopt an autonomous approach to literacy in their implementation of literacy programmes or for evaluating the impact of their programmes (Robinson-Pant 2001). An autonomous approach provides a framework for a programme implementation that is non-problematic or less problematic in terms of setting development indicators and goals for the programme (cf. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland 2012). Statistics of literacy in a community can be provided at the beginning and at the end of the programme implementation. Thus, developmental indicators and results of the programme can be easily produced. Also, an autonomous approach to literacy is a traditional one, and it is a well known and a familiar approach to literacy in developing countries. That facilitates a literacy programme implementation in communities.

Another approach to literacy is functional literacy. Functional literacy was first mentioned by UNESCO in the 1960's by stating that the content and learning of

reading and writing should be in the context of preparation for work and vocational training (Verhoeven 1994; Yambi 1994). Functional literacy has a practical stance as it aims to enable people to be functional and strategic in their use of literacy. Functional literacy concerns the purpose, text type, medium, situation and the context of literacy. In other words, a functionally literate person can engage in all the activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community, and also for enabling him/her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his/her own and the community development.

Some educators, e.g. Baker (2004), regard functional literacy as at a lower level: functionally literate people are able to read road signs, recognise buses on certain bus lines, etc. This view of functional literacy is about reading and writing skills that can be put in use for basic reading. Some others, e.g. Linnakylä, regard functional literacy at a higher level: a functionally literate person is able to fill forms, explore deeper layers of the text and its meaning, comparing and contrasting, and putting forward arguments and different viewpoints (Linnakylä 2007). This kind of view of functional literacy sees it contextual, historical and sociocultural by its nature.

Functional literacy was regarded as “the approach” to literacy. Educators have hailed it as a major advance over more traditional concepts of reading and writing because it takes into account the goals and settings of people’s activities with written language (Scribner 1984). Since functional literacy was “covered” it became popular in international development programmes. However, Lavin (1982) and Scribner (ibid.), among others, criticise the functional literacy approach for false promises. They argue that even tender probing reveals the many questions of fact, value, and purpose that complicate the application of functional literacy to educational curricula.

Functional literacy practices require understanding the text in its given context and as necessary to being able to apply it to everyday life. A common definition for functional literacy is the ability to use information in various formats to function effectively in modern society. The government of the PRC along with other governments of developing countries (cf. UNESCO 2003; the World Bank 2003)

has expanded the concept of functional literacy to include economic development. The Ministry of Education of the PRC states:

"The old evaluation standard is based on the Chinese characters recognized by illiterates while in the new standards, more attention will be given to the real capacity of learners. Various ways and measures for functional illiteracy eradication will be explored so as to meet the needs of economic and social development and the whole public" (The Ministry of Education 2001).

The State Education Commission of China advocates functional literacy in adult literacy education. It advocates functional literacy programmes to improve the standard of living in underdeveloped areas of the PRC (Wang & Li 1990), which keeps with the definition of UNESCO's that leads to development of individuals and communities. Wang and Li claim that the functional literacy programmes have been a breakthrough in promoting literacy education among Chinese farmers. In these functional literacy courses students have learned other practical skills such as sewing and chicken-raising along with other information which is relevant to farming. Similarly UNESCO (2004) reports about a literacy programme in Qinghai Province that was designed to respond to the needs of farmers and herdsmen in daily life.

UNESCO's policy on literacy has changed along the years. Earlier UNESCO viewed literacy is a set of skills for reading, writing and calculating (UNESCO 2004). Then, as mentioned above, functional literacy was the approach to literacy. In recent years UNESCO has moved beyond the notion of a set of skills. Global Monitoring Report 2006 has a pragmatic view of literacy; "literacy" refers to "a context-bound continuum of reading, writing and numeracy skills, acquired and developed through processes of learning and application, in schools and in other settings appropriate to youth and adults" (UNESCO 2006, 31). UNESCO's current view of literacy is that literacy is not only about reading, nor only about writing, but is about applying them both with comprehension in daily life contexts. UNESCO has moved from a set of skills - approach towards a functional approach to literacy with recognition of literacy as embedded in different cultural processes in an individual's life.

A Brazilian educator Paolo Freire has fought against social disparity through literacy. He argues that literacy can lead to social emancipation but only if learners are challenged for critical thinking instead of the common practice of memorising texts:

“If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorising and repeating given syllables, words and phrases but rather, reflecting critically on process of reading and writing itself and on the profound significance of language” (1985,10).

Freire’s view of literacy is often called critical literacy since he challenges people to “read the world”, and as critically literate they will not be manipulated by anyone. Critical literacy at its best helps people to expand their reasoning, seek out multiple perspectives and think critically. As a result people do not believe written texts at face value: advertisements are unconvincing, political texts are read critically, etc. Freire’s idea was to teach literacy to adult learners so that they could be empowered through literacy, and become socially active through critical thinking and reasoning. This emancipatory view of literacy sees literacy active, autonomous, authentic and ethical in its uses and purposes (Luukka & Leiwo 2004). Because of its nature, the theory of critical literacy has spread from informal adult literacy education to formal education in wider context; e.g. mathematics, social studies and science (E.g. Lankshear 1997; Luke & Freebody 1997).

3.2.4 Definitions of Literacy

Looking at definitions of literacy is an overwhelming task: there is not only one definition of literacy but many. One reason for such diversity of definition is culture: different cultures have different uses and purposes for literacy. In some cultures an act of reading and writing is regarded literacy. In another culture literacy concerns an ability to construct meaning while reading. Then, in some cultures literacy is understood in a sociocultural context: literacy is more than skills of reading and writing, it is a source for empowerment of action, thinking and feeling through understanding different kinds of texts (Wells & Chang-Wells 1992). Thus

we can distinguish three culturally bound definitions of literacy: functional skills, construction of meaning and the sociocultural definition of literacy (Baker 2006), which I look at more closely.

Literacy as functional skills is a traditional way of defining literacy: an ability to read and write. People around the world can learn the skills regardless of their language and environment. Once literacy skills are acquired they can be used for learning further knowledge but as such they are only a set of neutral skills. Yet, these skills are easily employed by different agencies, and they lose their neutral nature as we will see later on.

This definition is suitable for educational purposes because of its psychological or cognitive nature. This definition has a cognitive psychology viewpoint on reading and writing. Bhola (1994) calls it “literacy of marks”. In that literacy is defined as a coding system which is built up by marks: “the ability of a person ... to code and decode, that is, read and write, a living and growing system of marks – words, numbers, notations, schemata and diagrammatic representations - all of which have become part of the visual language of the people ... both the specialist and the non-specialist” (Bhola 1994, 30). This kind of definition refers to the psychological process of acquiring literacy, i.e. people can make sense of words by learning to code and decode them mark by mark (letter by letter). Additionally, the competence of literacy as the set of skills of reading and writing can be measured and assessed which is required in an educational context. Therefore, literacy as a set of skills has become the definition of school based literacy.

In the 1960's, UNESCO developed the idea of literacy as skills a bit further by defining literacy as “The ability to read and write in the mother tongue.” This definition of literacy which includes mother tongue was accompanied later on by Gudschinsky (1979), who regards literacy as an ability to read and understand written text as if it were in an oral form and to write orally expressed text appropriately. Her definition is rather comprehensive as she draws together writing, reading, speaking and understanding and their relationship in literacy.

Gudschinsky's definition of literacy moves towards the construction of meaning. The construction of meaning is processed based on the reader's past experience and understanding of the text in its social context. According to the construction of meaning a reader brings meaning with himself to texts. That is, the meaning of a text depends on the reader's cultural and personal experience along with his personal understanding of the text in the particular social context in which the reading occurs (Baker 2008, 326). Therefore, different students with different experiences and cultures form different meanings for the same text.

A sociocultural definition of literacy overlaps with the construction for meaning definition. A sociocultural definition of literacy takes account of cultural beliefs and values, and the meaning of text is not created only by personal experience but also by cultural meanings and heritage: a person can be functionally literate but culturally illiterate. A person can read a word without fully understanding its meaning unless he knows the cultural context.

The definition of literacy varies according to cultures and discourses, and has lead to evolving literacy theories as seen earlier in this chapter.

3.3 Cultural Phenomena and Literacy

Whether literacy is perceived as a social practice or as a technical skill, literacy is never a neutral variable. It always has consequences both in the individual's life and in that of a community. Literacy through its content and context has an impact on people's way of thinking and perceiving their social surroundings. It can also be seen the other way round, people's social surroundings and cultural behaviour influences literacy, and how they learn literacy. Socio-cultural issues, such as power, gender, beliefs and values, and development, are tightly interwoven within literacy practices. Therefore, they cannot be ignored in a discourse of literacy as a social act.

3.3.1 Cultural Context of Adult Literacy Learning

When discussing the cultural context of adult learning I understand “culture” as an overarching concept that signals the social context of learning and the power of learning in a particular culture (Thorpe, Edwards & Hanson 1993). The cultural and conceptual nature of literacy form the context of adult literacy learning that involves issues such as gender, age, and values. The norms of culture provide a familiar learning environment. According to Mezirow (1991, 1) learning provided by our parents with their idiosyncratic requirements is experienced as rewarding as we grow older. In other words, a culturally familiar way of learning is seen both appealing and edifying for adult learners.

The context of learning is culturally sensitive. Meaning making is central in the learning process. We make meaning by clues and symbols which are responsive to culture (Gee 1990). Individual members of a particular culture learn their cultural peculiarities and behavioural norms from the “emic” perspective. According to Holliday (1999) they also understand how their culture is constructed and how the nature of the knowledge is brought about in this culture. Therefore, meaning making is a culturally embedded process: what is intelligible in one culture may be idiosyncratic in another. We make sense of issues based on our cultural knowledge which concerns not only the content of learning, and learning methods, but also people who are involved in a learning process. The role of men and women both as students and teachers vary in different cultures: The age of teachers can raise concern or receive appreciation; the marital status has an impact on appropriateness of being a teacher; motivation for learning is culture bound.

Bruner discusses the relationship of culture, mind and education. He argues that education is “a major embodiment of a culture’s way of life, not just a preparation for it” (1999, 13). Therefore, according to Bruner, it is the culture that set the norms and essentials for a good way of life to the members of any particular group of people, and education is at the core of it. Culture consists of interaction between powers of individual minds and the means by which the culture aids or thwarts their realization. Further more, Bruner discusses various matters that relate directly to the education system of any people group or culture. Such culturally formed issues are

interpretation of meaning, constrains in forming of meaning, constructing reality, passing on knowledge (interactional knowledge), externalization of collective “works”, the instrumental nature of education, institutionalised education, formation of identity and self-esteem, and modes of thinking and feeling. Bruner argues, and rightly so, that education is not a technically managed information process but “a complex pursuit of fitting a culture to the needs of its members and of fitting its members and their ways of knowledge to the needs of culture” (1999, 43). Bruner’s idea of constructing cultural reality and formation of meaning reminds of Holliday’s perspective of culture.

Situational learning theory (Brown et al. 1989) considers knowledge and learning processes to be situated in culture, and being a cultural product within that culture where knowledge and learning take place. As discussed earlier in this chapter, values are at the centre of culture. They impact learning because deeply rooted cultural values and modes of thinking are difficult to separate from learning processes (Nisbett 2003). If we think of adult literacy learning, in some cultures literacy learning is about memorizing text whereas in some other cultures it is about learning with critical thinking. Literacy learning as memorizing text does not support, for example, reflective learning but a critical approach to literacy does. Similarly, depending on the culture it can encourage or discourage transformative learning, which is about interpreting an old experience from a new set of expectations. A transformative thought gives a new meaning and perspective to the old experience (Mezirow 1991) but this kind of learning is dependent on cultural values and modes of thinking.

Motivation for learning is a personal issue but it is also influenced by culture. Learners have their own personal models of thinking, images that are based on their experiences, and their attitudes towards learning (Ruohotie 1998). When a learner considers that learning literacy is interesting it provides a positive attitude towards learning. However, a positive attitude may not be satisfying enough for acquiring literacy if the learner’s environment does not encourage learning. Ruohotie (ibid.) writes about internal and external reward. An adult literacy learner has his/her own expectations for acquiring literacy, which motivates his/her learning. The surrounding social system may not support his/her image about future or the use of

literacy, as is the case in acquiring literacy in a minority language in a multilingual and multicultural context. Minority mother tongue education does not open the doors for higher education in the majority language or to employment. However, I believe, cultural practices encourage minority people to acquire literacy in their mother tongue. It provides the means to attend the cultural practices which are familiar to them, and which often meet the expectations of a learner. Thus, they are rewarding.

Learning is a process that causes a change, or it can provide an opportunity for a change. There are different approaches to learning but all of them differentiate adult learning processes from those of children. Adult learning is seen more autonomous than children; adults are more capable for reflection; and they have more life experience to draw on (Barton et al. 2007). Adult learners can reflect their learning on their personal life experience which is the base for a holistic learning process (Ruohotie 1999). Therefore, adult learning programmes should confirm and not deny the adulthood of students. Rogers et al (2010, 48) suggest that adult learning programmes should “promote personal growth, the identification and full exploitation of the talents of the individual; to encourage the development of a sense of perspective; to foster confidence, the power of choice and action, to increase autonomy rather than to deny it.” Yet, I argue, adult literacy education is also culture sensitive: not all cultures differentiate adult literacy teaching from literacy teaching to children. Even though different societies and social groups have different types of literacy, and literacy has different social and mental effects in different social and cultural contexts, basic literacy teaching in classrooms is the same for children and adults in some societies.

3.3.2 Religion and Literacy

We can approach religion as a cultural phenomenon from various angles. Bourdieu approaches religion from the point of view of sociology of culture. From his point of view religion is an analogical domain of culture, similar to art, philosophy, or any other domain of culture. According to Bourdieu’s theory of sociology of culture,

culture involves symbolic power and cultural capital, and accordingly religion can be analysed as a system of symbolic power (Swartz 1996).

From the individual's point of view, religion is about shared knowledge among peers in a society. It gives guidelines for communally accepted ways of behaviour: what to say, how to behave, what to wear, etc. In other words, people construct their social identities by membership of a religious group. Even though some researchers such as Cerulo (1997) do not include religion as an identity category I believe, among others (e.g. Howard 2000), that religion plays an important role in maintaining group identity and solidarity.

Religious practices are the means to build up both an individual's religious identity and group identity and solidarity. People act according to their religious beliefs, and religious practices are an aspect of behaviour motivated by people's belief. We can see the manifestation of religious practices appearing in prayers, reading holy books, fasting, visiting temples, making pilgrims, keeping count of rosary beads, etc.

Religious practices are based on shared knowledge which is transferred orally and through literature. People learn religious practices from different sources: religious leaders, parents, members of society and religious literature. In very religious societies people learn these practices from early on in their lives whereas in more secular societies religious practices are less important for individuals. However, in every case religious practices form links between members of society.

This "religious link" is also seen in social hierarchy. In many societies religious leaders are respected and they hold high positions in communities: mullahs in Muslim societies, lamas in Tibetan Buddhist societies, and priests in Christian societies. This high social position provides them with power. They can direct people: what to do, when to do it, what to read, etc. Especially this last one, what to read, interests this research. Religious powers often provide people literacy teaching, reading materials and instructions how to read them. Religious heritage is seen in literacy practices in communities (Boayrin et al. 1992). In some cultures reading aloud with an audience is the way of doing literacy. In some other cultures reading quietly is the cultural way of practising literacy.

Religious practices include religious literacies which honour and attend to individuals' knowledge and ways of knowing and doing. Therefore, religious literacies are not only about reading holy books but they are also about religious activities in which texts or visual images are embedded (cf. Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001). In the Tibetan world such activities are reciting holy texts of Buddha, reading the teachings of Dalai Lama, putting up prayer flags, etc.

In brief, religious practices form one module of culture. They are often interwoven tightly into cultural practices as daily routines and ways of doing things. Also, religious practices involve not only issues of belief but also of power. Religious practices that comprise text or visual images in a way or other are cultural literacy practices. Religious practices form a familiar contact point for many literacy learners as they provide culturally familiar way of learning which is rewarding (cf. Mezirow 1991). Members of the community share knowledge through these practices, they feel accepted by their community, and they are one way of forming their cultural identity.

Yet, there may be one hurdle people have to overcome: the language of religious literacies. Usually in religious societies people need to acquire literacy in more than one language if the language of religious practices is not the same as the language of the society. The religious language may not even be the language of the society as often is an issue in Muslim societies when Arabic is the language of the Koran and ritual prayer but not of the society (e.g. Maddox 2001; 2007), or diglossia divides the language for high and low forms of the language. A low form of the language is for a daily use, and a high form for a religious purpose.

3.3.3 Literacy and Power

We cannot discuss literacy as a social act without drawing power and social hierarchy into the discussion (cf. Luke 1996; Carrington & Luke 1997). Literacy, or should I say literacy practices, and power relations are linked together. Literacy practices in society have different dimensions and levels. Power relations and

literacy practices are interwoven in a number of different ways in society, both in the life of individuals and in the operations of institutions. As Bourdieu (1991) argues, literacy is a powerful element which is utilised in many different ways in society both on an individual level and on an institutional level. Also, literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships. The relationship with literacy practices and social power relations is too intricate to put into a formula. It interacts in different directions at different levels in the same manner as the world-wide-web.

Politically, power is always used to rule others and political power play is always part of literacy education (e.g. Bourdieu 1991; Peterson 2001; Gurnah 2000). The question is who receives literacy teaching and by whom and what the ultimate purpose to teach literacy is. The learners are dependent on teachers; these teachers are under the rule of their superiors, and so forth. The core of teaching can vary from a certain ideology to a religion, just to mention two examples out of many. Literacy has often had a covert purpose in its practices and that purpose is always decided by people with power: marginalised groups can be transformed by literacy education and the elite of the society can use literacy to gain more power (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977).

People's access to literacy depends on power relations and how they are constructed in society. The familiar saying "knowledge is power" is very relevant to literacy education. Literacy is a means to acquire more knowledge and for that reason, it is a way to gain more power. As Street argues "Literacy is thus more a matter of personal identity, knowledge and power than of functional skills." (Street 1990, 2). Not all knowledge is obtained by literacy, but an immense quantity of knowledge results from how literacy is utilised. Nevertheless, the one who has power can decide what kind of literacy is practised. Political and religious institutions have used their power for choosing the theories and scopes of literacy. Mao gave his speeches. His political proclamations were written on notice boards in Tibetan villages. Missionaries have often carried out literacy programmes where the transmission of religious texts has been an essential part of the programme along with other readings. Social power changes affect literacy education as can be clearly seen in Tibetan literacy practices. Tibetan literacy education has been removed from

the control of religious authorities to be controlled by the political powers of the PRC. That change along with the other changes within a Tibetan society has influenced Tibetan literacy practices enormously; the government has established bilingual minority education, Internet cafes are found in remote areas, mobile phones are commonly used, etc. Tibetan people have been given new arenas to use literacy, but a question remains “Does this give individual Tibetans more power in a society?”

Literacy practices are shaped by social rules, which regulate the use and distribution of text and who may have access to them. Whatever institution is in charge of literacy education organises it in order to make literacy serve the purposes of that institution in a given context and circumstances. Luke (1994, 309) argues that literacy is "institutionalised, these selections and constructions serve particular class, cultural and gendered formations". Therefore literacy education has different purposes depending on the social structure of the society and in what class of the society those who receive the education are.

According to Bourdieu the distribution of economic (wealth, income and property) and cultural capital (knowledge, culture and educational credentials) are not equally distributed in societies (Bourdieu 1991; Swartz 1997). Based on the Bourdieu's theory, Amdos as an ethnic and linguistic minority group are socially in a disadvantaged position due to their cultural capital. Tibetans are an ethnic minority group, which is generally seen in a disadvantaged position. Their culture is looked down on by majority people and they are said to be “backward” or “behind”. Their income is below the average income in Qinghai Province as seen in Chapter 1. Traditionally Tibetans have lived in black woollen tents which do not present an elitist way of living. Tibetan language education has lower status in society and there are fewer opportunities in higher education in the Tibetan language (Stites 1999, Zhou 2005b). Lin, who has done research on Tibetans in Qinghai Province, writes that Han officials describe ethnic minority people including Tibetans as “three backwardness” which refer to low level of economic productivity, cultural and education standard and living standards (Lin 2006).

Literacy around the world is seen as a means of personal and communal development, to empower people by developing powers of thinking and reasoning (Freire 1994). The Freirean theory of freedom in education is to a considerable extent about individual thinking and power relations in societies (Freire 1990). According to Freire learning and activism form the core of human life (Freire 1998). Thus, literacy is a gate for learning and activism that is related to political power in society. In a Tibetan context two influential political powers are monasteries along with religious leaders and the government of the PRC.

Power is multi-layered in society. It appears not only between institutions and groups but also between genders. There is female/male power dynamic in literacy practices and literacy education. Literacy is a site for power struggle and resistance (Zubair 2001; Robinson-Pant 2004c; Aikman & Unterhalter 2005; Unterhalter 2005).

Literacy and gender are key issues in global literacy education. There are many similarities in different cultures around the world: for one reason or another girls' education has been marginalised. Women are often left out of formal schooling and they are the majority participants in adult literacy programmes. Usually for women literacy is a means of self-improvement. UNESCO estimates that in 2008 there were 776 million illiterate adults in the world and 64 per cent of them were women (UNESCO 2008a). According to the China Human Development Report 2005 (UNDP 2008) the female illiteracy rate was 34 per cent and male illiteracy rate was 15 per cent in Qinghai Province.

The reasons why girls do not attend literacy education or education in general are diverse. Common obstacles are due to poverty, access to education and culture. According to Unterhalter (2007, 7) "The poorest parents wish to educate their daughters but cannot because of want and other dimensions of discrimination". Often cultural systems and hierarchal structures of society are at a core of gender related discrimination. Men and women have different roles in social interactions that influence the uses of literacy in society. Traditionally in many cultures men have interacted between home and society; they are involved in business, etc. Therefore, it has been seen important and appropriate for them to acquire reading

and writing skills, and boys have been given opportunities for education to follow in their fathers' steps. At the same time, women have taken care of domestic duties which have not involved any reading and writing activities. As a result, literacy education has not been regarded as crucial for them as for boys.

Then, who decides about girls' and women's education? Generally, decisions regarding women and literacy education, and the extent to which they can practise it, are determined by men, not the women themselves. Rockhill (1994, 246) argues: "Once literacy carries with it the symbolic power of education, it poses a threat to the power relations in the family. Men need to feel in control; not only does this mean having more power than their wives, but controlling what they think and do."

When men have the power to control education opportunities of women they may consider women's literacy education to be useful, not in terms of an individual woman, but because it is beneficial for family and society. Women learn to read because they ought to help with their children's homework; or women acquire literacy to receive a micro-credit loan for a small family business. Robinson-Pant (2004a, 16) argues that a woman should have the opportunity to acquire literacy for her own sake as a human, for her own personal development, not only for the benefit of her society.

Literacy is also gendered. Men and women have different kind of literacy practices in different cultures. In some cultures, women are encouraged to help their children with their school work, and to read stories to them, but it is not appropriate for women to read newspapers, for example. Men are the ones whose task is to keep up with the news and politics by reading the news. Even though it is important to help children with their reading practices, reading the newspaper has a higher status.

Literacy is often seen as a foundational element in a process to empower women in developing countries (Westen 1994). To empower people through literacy, literacy practices need to be conducted within a cultural and social context which is a challenge to a literacy campaign. To plan and to implement a literacy programme for women usually challenges hierarchal structures of society and power structures within families. For example, in order to avoid confrontation with their husbands

indigenous Aymara women in Bolivia concealed their attendance at literacy classes from their spouses. According to the women, men believed that the power structure in their families would change radically if women learned to read and write (Pyykkönen 2003).

Street (1995) suggests that many failures in literacy campaigns are due to a lack of understanding of the "cultural and conceptual nature of literacy" (1995, 34). In many societies literacy teaching for women should take into account both individual and community needs to be culturally appropriate, and to meet the needs of individuals. Cultural knowledge is a base for successful literacy teaching for women, and for the whole of society.

Literacy – from backwardness to empowerment

“To be literate is to have the disposition to engage appropriately with texts of different types to empower action, thinking and feeling, the context of purposeful social activity” (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992, 147).

The concept of empowerment can be interpreted in a number of ways. A common occurrence of empowerment appears with a notion that includes democracy and globalization. In the context of adult literacy, empowerment means equipping non-literate adults with the knowledge and skills that enable them to participate in their social environment and to affect the political system in their environment. Non-literate adult students are usually marginalised by their gender, social class, ethnicity and habitat that also affect feelings. Therefore, empowerment in the context of adult literacy concerns also adult learners’ feelings (Stromquist 2000) which I interpret as strengthening students’ self-esteem. Strengthening adult literacy learners’ self-esteem enables transformative learning which leads to empowerment. As Ruohotie (2000, 21) argues empowerment along with the use of learner’s resources is both the objective and prerequisite of transformative learning.

In the daily life of adult literacy students empowerment comprises of cognitive, economic, political and psychological dimensions. As literate people they are able to acknowledge the realities in their societies and how they function (Freire 1994); they can have access to independent means of support which help them to make

more autonomous decisions; they can participate in policies of their society; they feel more competent and capable for actions on their own behalf (Stromquist 2000). Often the psychological dimension is a prerequisite for other dimensions which become apparent in the achievements of individual students of adult literacy education. Literate people are more confident in participating in social activities, and they feel more autonomous in their decision making and attending to their businesses outside home (Pyykkönen 2003).

How, then, is empowerment transmitted in societies? "Empowering" people implies that to be able to empower someone, one has to have the power to do so, which means that power is not equally distributed (cf. Bourdieu 1991). Cameron (1992) argues "It [empowerment] entails that people can acquire or be given more power than they currently have, just as they could acquire or be given more money or more goods" (1992,18). However, those who possess power in society can use it according to their policies and purposes. On the other hand, those who have obtained less power are, in one way or another, dependent on those who possess more power. According to Bourdieu (2007) power is always unequally distributed in society, and people from disadvantaged groups have unequal starting points for reconstructing their habitus through literacy education. With regard to Bourdieu's theory Amdos as a minority people with their own language are in a disadvantaged position (cf. Bourdieu 1991; Carrington & Luke 1997). Additionally, transformative learning, which is involved in the empowerment process, is closely connected to the norms of the dominant culture (Ruohotie 2000). Then, the question arises: "Is it possible for Tibetan language literacy education to facilitate the empowerment or transformation of Tibetans in their cultural context?" This question can be approached from the angle of motivation as a device for empowerment. According to Nokelainen (2003, 149) a motivational approach to empowerment emphasizes the individual's cognition, perception and subsequent emotions. In rural areas most Amdo Tibetans live in mono-cultural and mono-lingual Tibetan communities, and cultural practices are important to them. Therefore, it is appropriate to approach Tibetan culture as a motivational construct for empowerment.

3.3.4 Language of Literacy - a Site of Power

As literacy is influenced by power relations in society, so is the language of literacy. Norton argues that, "language is not conceived of as a neutral medium of communication, but is understood with reference to its social meaning" (Norton 2000, 5). Different languages in multilingual societies have different social meanings depending on the contexts in which they are used. Furthermore, people relate to languages in different ways, and languages can be used inclusively or exclusively, i.e. they can indicate group identity or lack of it (Heller 1987). At the same time different languages are related to different social structures, and in these social structures power is distributed differently (cf. Bourdieu 1991). Therefore, languages have different social status, especially in multilingual societies such as in the PRC.

As different languages have different social status in any society, the highest position usually starts from the top with the majority language. According to Skuttnab -Kangas (1995) minority languages seldom have high status in a society and different minority languages of a society may not have the same status. With regard to the languages in the PRC Chinese has the highest status and power in the country. It is the official language and the lingua franca of the country, and it has political power. On the other hand the Tibetan language has lower status than Chinese. Because the social status of languages varies people's attitudes toward them vary as well not only internally but also externally. According to Baker (2001) when a (minority) language is perceived to co-exist with poverty, unemployment and lower social status, it has a negative effect on the language which then may influence people attitudes towards the language. Whereas a (majority) language which is associated with higher prestige in society with better education, better employment etc. has an opposite effect. Even though Tibetan language literacies are manifold (See Chapter 2), the uses of Tibetan literacy are much more limited compared to the majority language Chinese. There is the prospect that the use of the Chinese language, with its higher social status, can provide better employment and education opportunities that may cause a language shift from Tibetan to Chinese.

Since the language of literacy is significant, choosing the language for literacy causes debates. The power relations of a language of literacy have two different dimensions: language is used for power and language is embedded in power. Collins and Blot (2003) argue: "Power is pervasive in the official literacies of nation states and colonial regimes, but it is a multifaceted power. It is a power of imposition, of conquest "of language and by language", "but also of self-fashioning in language" (2003, 154). The power of its holder is used to choose a certain language of literacy and at the same time language is used to select certain literacies. The power of language is based on the status of the language in its environment as has been clearly seen during periods of colonialism and in languages with diglossia. When Vietnam was governed by France, the language of education was French, not Vietnamese; or when Sweden ruled Finland, the language of education and government was Swedish and the Finnish language was only used by the public and clergy. Similarly, due to diglossia a higher form of Tibetan has prestige, and people who know that form of the language can obtain more power in society.

Even today, the issue of the language of literacy is related to social and political power. Societies that have several languages have challenges in this matter and in language policies in the country. Majority language literacy is often seen as a means of building up national identity and homogeneity (Baker 2006) which is an issue in the PRC (e.g. Ministry of Education 2001; Hansen 1999; Postiglione 1999, 2006; Stites 1999; Thøgersen 2001). Using and teaching Chinese is promoted in the whole country both in schools and elsewhere in society. Dominant literacies which are related to the official institutions of the country (Hamilton 1998) are in the majority language: government documents, bank statements, postage stamps etc.. Therefore, people without majority language literacy are not perceived as productive or active citizens compared to those who are literate in the majority language. They also tend to have problems with education and employment (Baker 2001). Ironically, people without majority language literacy can be even blamed for having a lower social status and for causing social problems for themselves on account of their low standards of literacy in the majority language (Baker 2001;cf. Hansen 1999). Marginalising people in terms of their competence in the majority language of a country does not occur only in multilingual developing countries but also among immigrants in western societies. Immigrants who are not literate in the

language of their new country of residence are seen as marginal groups in a society (Baker 2006).

Minority language education is under constant discussion around the world (e.g. Baker 2001; Skuttnab-Kangas 1981; 1995; Hornberger 2002). The choice of the language of literacy is not only a power issue or a political problem. It can be the result of both of them. The majority language has gained prestige such as Chinese in Qinghai Province, which then may cause a decline in the minority languages leading to problems in literacy education in these minority languages. Even though Fishman argues for mother tongue education he sees that "the mother tongue is not necessarily always the best medium of instruction" (Fishman 1989, 472). This is true especially when the language environment is hostile and the very language is brutalised, causing rejection of those who speak them exclusively and also causing negative attitudes towards the minority languages. Thus, in terms of psycho-educational reasons mother tongue education may not be productive in a minority language. Also, a literate environment is crucial for keeping up literate activities (UNESCO 2004). Therefore, when the literature in a minority language is minimal implementing mother tongue education is debatable. Based on my own experience in literacy teaching I argue that people need opportunities and access to post-literacy activities in order to sustain literacy. For example, some young students of the TLP were drop outs from school. They had learned to read and write Tibetan but forgot the skills because they never used them after studying in school for a year or two. However, when the language environment is favourable, mother tongue literacy education is preferable. UNESCO and other international organisations and even national organisations see it as more and more important to instruct literacy education in the mother tongue (e.g. Hornberger 2002).

Mother tongue education has been researched enormously both in the home country context and also with immigrants in their new home countries, and it always concerns language maintenance at home, in society and at school. Fishman (1980) argues that a positive attitude towards mother tongue (L1) education is inherited from parents and society, not from school. However, more recent researches point to a different picture by arguing that domains of central and continuing salience such as workplace, home and school, are all important for language maintenance

(Edwards 2006). School and education has its significant role in language maintenance and for that reason Quechua language was chosen to be taught both to indigenous Quechua speakers and majority Spanish speakers in Bolivia (Hornberger 2002). This then strengthens the status and the use of the minority language in society. This is also an issue among Tibetans in the PRC.

The Tibetan language in literacy education is both a political and power issue. Even though the PRC has a bilingual education policy and minority regions are strongly encouraged to use minority languages both as a medium of instruction and in textbooks (Ministry of Education 1995), in practice in the national minority regions Chinese has power over the minority languages (cf. Department of International Cooperation & Exchanges 1998; Zhou 2005). Schoolbooks are translated from Chinese to the Tibetan language and the curriculum of minority education is based on the curriculum of Chinese medium education. In addition, higher education is in Chinese and people have better employment opportunities if they are competent in Chinese. All these socioeconomic issues originate from the notion of strengthening a national identity through the use of Chinese (cf. Hansen 1999). Even though the Tibetan language is not endangered at the moment, there have been discussions about the future of the language regarding the use of the Tibetan language vs. the Chinese language in the Tibetan region (Ragbey 2003; Stites 1999; Tournade 2003; Upton 1999; Muduo 2004).

Minority language education is a wider issue. Lack of adequate teaching materials and competent teachers in minority languages often hinder minority language literacy education (Baker 2006; Robinson 1990). Especially in developing countries, it is easier to use the existing literacy material in the majority language than to develop good materials in minority languages. This is not only a question of wills but also of adequate resources. Robinson (1990) estimates that the establishment of a sustainable literacy program in a minority language may take up to ten years. It appears to me that Tibetan adult literacy education has had two main obstacles similar to elsewhere in the PRC (Hansen 1999; Stites 1999; TNW 2004; Upton 1999; Muoduo 2004): lack of resources and will. There have been teaching materials, but not enough teachers, not sufficient funding and a lack of will to organise literacy teaching in Tibetan.

Choosing the language of literacy can be seen from another perspective, that is, in the use of literacy. Heath (1983) in her research found out how groups from different social backgrounds used literacy in different ways and in different contexts. Baker (2001) has defined different uses of literacy in society depending on the context of literacy. These uses are based on the needs of the user within the society. They are listed as: need for survival, for learning, for citizenship, for personal relationships, for pleasure and creative instincts, for employment, for community development and for the empowerment of the mind. These different needs are linked to the different cultural and social practices in a community, which lead to the decision of which approach to literacy to use. According to Baker (2001) different literacy approaches are linked to a language of literacy in different ways. A socio-cultural approach to literacy raises the importance of mother tongue literacy. People become culturally literate: culturally embedded values and beliefs enable them to create meaning from what they read. Whereas, functional literacy concerns skills, and that is linked with economic development and employment. According to Baker (2001) functional literacy is perceived as people understanding their place in society. Therefore, it is not surprising that immigrant families in the West value schooling in the majority language but at the same time send their children to community schools to learn their mother tongue. Children acquire skills to integrate with their new society and they learn literacy which is connected to their cultural heritage and conveys the values of their origin.

The same phenomenon occurs among Tibetans and other national minorities in the PRC. Parents are willing to send their children to Chinese medium schools for socioeconomic reasons (Ross 1999; Stites 1999; Ma 2007; Lou 2008). The Tibetan language is usually the home language but children are formally educated in Chinese in some parts of the Tibetan region (Zhou 2005c). As a result not all Tibetan children have an opportunity to acquire literacy in their mother tongue but they learn new culture through Chinese literacy education and literacies. This may have consequences on their life: they do not become fully literate in Tibetan and neither in Chinese because they do not understand the concepts of Han culture.

This then leads us to the discussion of language and ethnic identity. I understand identity in a broad sense as the shared characteristics of members of a group,

community and region (Crystal 1997). Even though identity is not the same as culture it is embedded in culture through language, and cultural rituals and symbols. People feel belonging with these elements of their group.

Language and ethnic identity are linked together in a complex way in post-modern societies and the language-ethnicity link has been subject to considerable debate (e.g. Heller 1987; Blackledge 2004; May 1999; 2001; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004). Some scholars argue that language is not an essential component of identity and it has only symbolic and emotional value (Liebkind 1999). But most scholars agree that language can be an important characteristic of ethnic identity (Joseph 2004). I tend to agree with that. However, I acknowledge that the language and identity issue is multilayered and languages may not be only markers of identity but also “sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity or discrimination” (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004).

According to Heller (1987) ethnic identity does not remain unchanged and ethnicity becomes important only when different social groups come into contact with each other. In isolation it does not matter if you are Tibetan, English, Mexican or a Gujarati since there is no need for negotiating ethnic identities within the same people group. Nyman-Kurkiala (2002) explains the process of Swedish speaking young students who became aware of being minority people in Finland after travelling to areas in Finland where only Finnish was spoken. On the other hand majorities are usually less conscious of ethnic identity than minorities (Fishman 1999). But in multilingual contexts such as in some Amdo communities negotiating identities takes place every day because “different ideologies of language and identity come into conflict with each other with regard to what language or varieties of languages should be spoken by particular kinds of people and in what context” (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004, 1). E.g. Amdos are constantly interacting with other ethnic groups and the boundaries of their living environment are in a process of change as we have seen (Chapter 2). Therefore, according to Heller’s view (1987) Tibetans are in the situation where they are exposed to possible changes in identity, and in that situation of negotiating identity language is ultimately inseparable from culture (Joseph 2004). Then, do Amdos create new multiple identities in their new

language and cultural surroundings (cf. Grossberg 1996) or do they just adjust to a new culture without "losing" their old ethnic identity of which language is prefixed?

Literacy practices in a mother tongue are linked with people's cultural practices and heritage, and according to Iredale (2001) people's identity "is formed and transformed according to the cultural systems surrounding the person" (p. 241). Therefore, I can expect that Amdos in rural villages on the Tibetan Plateau may have different positions in their surroundings depending to what extent they are in contact with non-Tibetan people. On the other hand, in the context of my research I understand ethnicity as an individual's membership in a social group that shares a common cultural and ancestral heritage of which language is one component (Edwards 1994; Fishman 1997; May 2001). Language as a symbol of ethnicity carries values beyond its functional value (Blackledge 2000). Therefore, a language is more than a communication tool within the same ethnic group, it is a part of the ethnic identity as I believe is an issue concerning Tibetans in the Tibetan region.

3.3.5 Literacy and Development

Development discourse includes various approaches both at societal (including global governances) and individual's level. At the individual level development is personal growth that includes: improved awareness and identity, developing talents and potential, building human capital. At the societal level development concerns a planned change of political and economic structures. Development at the societal level is possible through growth of individuals, which is clearly pointed by President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. He has said: "For real development means growth of people ... If real development is to take place the people have to be involved" (as in Swanz 2009, 29). Robinson-Pant discusses the same issue by saying that there is more than one kind of development that can be measured in terms of societal change but how individuals are involved in development and their perception (Robinson-Pant 2000,3).

One theory of development is the "social development" approach, which focuses on institutions, structures, processes and policies that effect the living environment.

According to Hall & Midgley (2004), social development approach enables to tackle issues of poverty and inequality. Other theories of development such as modernization, developmentalism, world system, etc., have different ideologies. For example, the theory of modernization carries the idea of social improvement: modern societies are more productive, children are better educated, and the needy receive more welfare.

The dominant discourses on development in the PRC have been influenced by modernization theory. Han people are at the superior level of civilization and non-Han people in peripheral areas are the beneficiaries in the China's civilizing projects (Hansen 1999). Development means bringing backward peripheral people, usually ethnic minority people, into the civilization of mainstream Han people including Han culture, education, etc.

"Civilizing projects" form only one section of development efforts in the PRC. The government of the PRC has made strong efforts for national development of which economic development has become a phenomenon. Along with economic development, people of the PRC have seen improved infrastructure in the rural regions of the vast country. International development organizations such as UNDP assist development both at societal and individual's level by promoting sustainable human development to help build resilient nations and to empower people to improve their lives. UNDP's main focus areas in the PRC are poverty reduction, governance, and issues of energy, environment and climate change, and global issues (UNDP 2012).

It is generally believed that literacy is related to societal development and that literacy leads to better economic outcomes. Different international development organisations and agencies have literacy programmes as a part of their scope of development activities. The Education For All movement defines literacy as a core element of basic education and it is one of the six goals set in Dakar at World Education Forum 2000 (UNESCO 2004). Similarly, The World Bank considers education including adult literacy as "one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and lays a foundation for sustained economic growth" (The World Bank 2008). The latest Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO

2011) urges development agencies worldwide to set improving adult literacy education to be a leading priority in the international agenda. Governments around the world link literacy to economic and social development, and therefore literacy campaigns are often seen as the best remedy to treat illiteracy (Verhoeven 1994).

Traditionally, literacy and development are linked together. According to Baker in developed and developing countries “literacy is often associated with progress, civilisation, social mobility and economic advancement” (2001, 319). It is said that literacy promotes development and that improved literacy improves health and economy as in Robinson-Pant’s (2001) research in Nepal. OECD (1995) conducted research about the connection between literacy and economy in various countries. The conclusion was that better literacy skills improve employment prospects, which correspondingly improves the economy. This theory underlies many adult literacy programmes, e.g., the ultimate goal of the Tibetan Literacy Programme (TLP) is to improve people's lives. In this context literacy can be seen only as a means to reach the goal of social and economic improvement.

Sometimes literacy per se has been credited a bigger value than simply as a means to an improved life as Carrington and Luke (1997, 97) argue: “It would appear, then, that literacy per se has become equated with the advancement and overall well-being of individuals, communities and entire societies”. If this is the situation then apparently the view is based on the autonomous view of literacy that having reading and writing skills would equate with the well-being of a family. How, then, can literacy programmes, especially mother tongue literacy programmes, guarantee that literacy would be sustained in society if literacy itself is a mark of societal well-being? The question concerns the functional level of literacy since it can be problematic among ethnic minorities to prevent a relapse in literacy skills after basic literacy education if there are no post-literacy activities (cf. Verhoeven 1994). Various post-literacy activities, such as keeping accounts, reading a TV manual etc., would sustain people’s skills of reading and writing in society. Without access to any literate activities people are likely to lose their newly acquired reading and writing skills, and become semiliterate.

There are talks about myths and facts around literacy. Graff (1979, 1994) discusses the literacy myth. People have different beliefs and ideas what literacy is about, such as, literacy is supposed to be a cure for personal and social un-development as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Graff (1991) argues that literacy is merely an enabling factor than a causative factor. As such literacy can enable people to develop but it does not cause development. Literate people can learn by reading about various issues of everyday life, such as hygiene, health care, animal husbandry, and so on, that are beyond the reach of illiterate people. However, the ability to read and write per se does not cause any development in people's lives.

It is specifically functional literacy that is seen to be a key element in literacy towards economic development and better employment in society. The issue of functional literacy and its influence on economic growth and social development was set forward in the World Conference of Ministers of Education which took place in Teheran in 1965 (UNESCO 1966). Since 1960's functional literacy programmes have been a considered choice for adult literacy programme planners in developing countries worldwide. It is expected that functionally literate people continue to use the acquired skills to develop various skills and gain better general knowledge in their daily life context. The following statement is an example of reasons for promoting functional literacy: "A functionally literate person is expected to have the ability to continuously use the acquired skills by reading newspapers, books on better farming, sanitation and nutrition, as well as to keep records and simple accounts" (The Minister of Education of Tanzania as cited in Yambi (1994, 291).

The Ministry of Education of the PRC made a direct link between functional literacy improvement and poverty alleviation. As economic development is one of the goals of literacy education in the PRC it is important to implement literacy programmes for Amdos in Qinghai Province who have not reached the same economic standards as for example the eastern provinces of the country. Eastern provinces have experienced economical growth in China, which has not touched the Tibetan regions. According to the China Statistical Yearbook 2002, Qinghai Province was one of the poorest provinces in the PRC.

On the other hand, illiteracy in the PRC is associated with the concept of “being behind”. “Being behind” seems to have a social context, but not so much in the context of private individuals. “Backwardness”, which is often related to the minority people of the PRC (Hansen 1999), is seen as a problem of the Tibetan community. According to Bhalla and Qiu (2006), the authorities of the PRC explain that the backwardness of the minority people is due to lack of culture and its adverse effect on economic development. Similar situation occurs in India where “left behind” was brought up among transhumant pastoralists who wanted to acquire literacy in order to gain social development (Dyer & Choksi 2001; Dyer 2006).

Functional literacy programmes have been considered effective in terms of economic and social development. However, some researchers, Rogers et al. (2004) and Barton (1994) among others, have voiced a critical opinion concerning functional literacy programmes. They argue that it is an assumption that functional literacy leads to development and functional literacy teaching in common literacy programmes does not meet the needs of adult learners. Functional literacy teaching should be modified according to the changing needs of adult learners. Literacy programmes should offer potential learners meaningful and relevant skills which they can use in their daily life and livelihoods.

The “Literacy for livelihoods” approach is one modification of functional literacy programmes. This kind of literacy programme incorporates literacy teaching among the various skills which are being learned to enhance livelihoods. However, according to Rogers et al. (2007) adult learners may not be motivated to learn literacy since on their priority list learning livelihood skills is higher than acquiring literacy for their daily needs.

It seems that the Chinese Communist Party follows the Baker's (Ibid) idea as the following statement indicates: 'The Fifteenth meeting of the Communist Party Report says, "... this is a historical period where many people will travel from illiteracy to developed education..." (Hainan TAP 1998). 'Wiping away illiteracy' is a very essential part of literacy discourse among the Chinese government and the Communist Party officials. The PRC, through the government and different instances, has been working on 'wiping away literacy' for the last five decades

(Ministry of Education 2005). There have been mass campaigns all over the country. The government has reported that the PRC had been able to eradicate illiteracy among young and middle-aged people by 2000 (UNESCO 2004). However, I assume that reports from rural areas, especially in the western regions, may not agree with this report because organising education in rural areas of the PRC is more problematic than in urban areas. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has set its new regional goals for literacy education for young and middle aged people. Compulsory education has been increased from six years to nine years of education. The age group of 15-45 years is under special attention concerning literacy education. By the end of 2007 all provinces should have reached their goals of illiteracy rates of 5 %. However, the Ministry of Education is concerned that “For Tibet, it will take more than 20 years to fulfil the same objective.” (Ministry of Education 2005, 3).

Literacy is an essential condition for each people’s cultural development, but whether or not culture supports development is a debatable issue. According to UNESCO (1982; 2009) it does, but Järvinen (2008) argues that culture does not always support development. However, the Chinese government has set its goals for social, political and economic development and literacy campaigns are the major way to reach those goals (Ministry of Education 2001). Also, Fida International, the partner of The Tibetan Literacy Programme, regards literacy a means to societal and individual’s development (LKA 1998).

What about everyday functional literacy?

Functional literacy is a global issue in literacy education. The article “The Challenge of Functional Literacy” in the Times of India (2006) discusses how functional literacy is not achieved in many countries. The columnist Aiyar claims, based on global research, that half of children who complete primary education are functionally illiterate. “They cannot read simple texts or do simple sums.” (p. 8)

If we move from the definition of functional literacy to everyday functional literacy we may see different results in terms of teaching literacy. To my understanding people may not acquire functional literacy skills according to the definition of UNESCO and which is described by Aiyar above, or how Yussen, & Smith (1998)

define everyday functional literacy tasks. They regard everyday functional literacy tasks such as, filling out an application, understanding a newspaper article, or understanding quantitative information from a graph. I define everyday functional literacy as general words and phrases which people use in every day life and they can recognise them in a written text. Therefore, acquiring everyday functional literacy would enable people to recognise single words and possibly write them as well which, then, may help them to use their skills to some extent in their every day functions in a society.

I believe that everyday functional literacy tasks sustain adult learners' skills, and everyday functional literacy assists people in personal development and empowerment. I also argue that common slogans to encourage adult learners to acquire literacy, such as "It is easier to find a shop when you literate." and "You are not cheated at the bazaar." derive from everyday functional literacy. People learn to recognise single words, which is a booster for further personal empowerment and development.

Another approach to literacy and development

Rogers (2001) suggests that there are two key approaches to literacy which are gateways to development. The first one is the "literacy-leads-to-development equation" (Rogers 2001, 206), which is also adopted by the government of the PRC as discussed above. The second approach is that illiterate people are surrounded by an anti-development system, which does not encourage illiterate people towards better economic development.

Despite the efforts of the PRC authorities to take into consideration minority people groups as they plan literacy campaigns, private individuals may not perceive literacy teaching for minority people as being important. My Chinese language teacher could not understand why Tibetan herders might need literacy skills. He could not foresee any event where literacy would be needed in the lives of nomadic people. He considered Tibetans more or less as non-literate people living in their black yak hair tents, herding their yaks and sheep. Therefore, according to him, Tibetan herders (nomads) cannot integrate properly with the civilised Chinese culture and society. Although it is possible that Tibetan literacy skills would help Tibetans to

integrate with Chinese society better and earlier in their history, this does not always correspond with the attitudes of individual Han Chinese people. In a development sense, the surrounding society may be a barrier for change in Tibetan society or in any other minority people society in the PRC or elsewhere in the world. This is not because of the PRC government policy, but due to the individuals' attitudes towards minority people groups.

It is also possible that the immediate environment of learners does not encourage development through literacy. I believe that some issues and cultural practices hinder development; either it is the context of literacy or the ways literacy is taught.

3.4 Researching Amdo Literacies - Choosing Theoretical Guidelines

As mentioned in Chapter One I had lived and worked in the Amdo area for a couple of years before starting the current research. I recall one occasion in that pre-research time when I had a discussion with one Han official from the Education Bureau of Qinghai Province. While discussing Tibetan literacy education he was straight about his opinion: teaching Amdo literacy would be a waste of time. He pictured Amdos as nomads who live in black woollen tents and herd their yaks and sheep without any touch and connection to literate activities in their lives. Therefore, they would not require any literacy teaching.

When I started researching Amdo literacies and literacy practices I had a different kind of picture of Amdos in my mind and also a different approach to Amdo literacy teaching to that Han educational official. My approach to researching Amdo literacies was not whether or not Amdos require literacy education but rather in what way and in what contexts they use literacy in daily life. I knew that the prototype picture of Amdos living in black yak woollen tents did not present the whole picture of Amdo life. Also, I had noticed some of the complexity of Amdo literacy practices through my work and in my mind I had questions such as “Why literacy is taught as it is in adult literacy classes?” “Is Tibetan adult literacy teaching relevant to everyday uses of literacy?” These are some of the questions I have asked

myself and my Amdo friends, and participants in this research. These kinds of questions concerning the social use of literacy were triggered by the theoretical framework which I have chosen for my research.

My research on Amdo literacy practices is grounded on a social theory of literacy (e.g. Barton 1994a; Hamilton, Barton, Ivanić 1994; Heath 1983; Street 1984, The New London Group 1996). In this perspective, I do not see literacy on its own in isolation from a social context, but literacy is in one way or another embedded in a social context, i.e., a learning process in a school or religious activities in a place of worship. Since a social theory of literacy perceives literacy in a social context, a given cultural environment gives meaning to literacy practices. In other words, literacy practices are embedded in cultural practices that convey the meaning for literacy practices. People understand and view literacy based on their cultural values, beliefs, and customs. Therefore, literacy is also linked to social hierarchy and power relations.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the starting point for my research was a need to understand Tibetan literacy practices. According to Street (1990) understanding the concept of literacy is based on understanding the concepts of knowledge and truth within a society, which varies from one social group to another. The notion of literacy as a social activity is based therefore on the understanding that the value of literacy depends on the whole socio-cultural context where reading and writing is taking place (Street 1995). When I think of my research among the Amdos it is not only the Tibetan culture that shapes the Tibetan literacy practices but also Han Chinese culture influences Tibetan literacy practices. Therefore, in order to understand Amdo literacy practices, which form the environment for adult literacy education, I have to take into account the socio-cultural context of Amdos including the languages which are involved in their literacy practices in different contexts of life. However, in the current research Han culture is presented only as a reference point concerning mainly the language use in communities.

The following quotation from Barton (1994a) describes partially the theoretical guidelines for my research on literacies and literacy practices among Amdos:

“Literacy has a social meaning; people make sense of literacy as a social phenomenon and their social construction of literacy lies at the root of their attitudes, their actions, and their learning.” (Barton 1994a, 28)

Since my research interest is to find out in what ways cultural practices are part of adult literacy teaching and acquisition of Amdos, New Literacy Studies (NLS) provides a perspective to examine issues such as power, gender and religious systems that impact on the conceptualisation of literacy in society (Barton 1994b; Hamilton; Barton & Ivanic 1994; Street 1984; 1995). My primary approach is that literacy has to be understood both as a social activity and a discourse in a given cultural context.

Barton and Hamilton (2001, 8) have set out a number of propositions about the nature of literacy as social practice that I have taken as a guideline for this research:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- Literacy is historically situated.
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

Additionally, I have extended the list by adding two notions of Barton. The first notion is that literacy is a symbolic system, which has both a cognitive and cultural basis (Barton 1994). Language, a symbolic system, mediates between us and society. It is important to recognize that our thinking is constructed and supported by social practises around us. Therefore, literacy practices are influenced by society; its values and attitudes towards literacy. The second notion concerns life long learning which support the idea of adult literacy learning.

I have, furthermore, incorporated Street's ideological model of literacy. Street portrays literacy as being tightly bound to notions of identity, economic, social and political power (Street 2001). These four issues act as pointers for this research in the vast field of culture and literacy.

4. Doing Ethnography – Methodological Choices and Analyses

The current research is based on an orientation towards qualitative research. My aim is to find answers to the questions “what” and “why” in various contexts in Amdo life, and to find their perspectives to different issues around literacy. Therefore, I believe, a qualitative research approach is the best methodological fit to this particular research problem, a key for guiding the research design process.

It is a widely held belief that there are two methodological paradigms to choose from: the quantitative and the qualitative (Hammersley 1992). I could have chosen the other option for a methodological paradigm: a quantitative one. However, because of the nature of quantitative research I did not regard, as a real option, a methodological paradigm for this research. Quantitative research aims to find patterns regularities, causes and consequences, and for that reason one of the characteristic of quantitative research is said be to an application of principles of positivism (Alasuutari 1999; Scott & Morrison 2005). Bryman (1988) asserts that researchers of quantitative research form a structure in which theories determine the problems. Researchers address themselves to these problems in the form of hypotheses derived from general theories.

Qualitative research has approaches that are underpinned by a set of assumptions about the way the social world operates (Silverman 2001). The most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is the accuracy of “viewing events, norms, values, etc from the perspective of the people who are being studied” (Bryman 1992, 61). Qualitative research is determined by a data process. A researcher has to proceed with the research inductively from empirical data towards developing more general ideas regarding theory or methodology (Alasuutari 2004). It has hermeneutic characteristics as it seeks to understand the perspectives of the people studied, and it focuses on finding answers through them (Hammersley 1992;

Norman & Lincoln 1994). Therefore, qualitative research is characterized by understanding, interpretation and contextuality in a particular case. These characteristics were the reasons to choose a qualitative orientation to the current research. More specifically, I decided to use an ethnographic research orientation which is one form of qualitative research, and which focuses on cultural studies.

Ethnography is a commonly used research strategy in social research. According to Sileverman (2001) an anthropologist Malinowski's (1922) research in Papua New Guinea became the hallmark of ethnographic research of today. Since the 1960's ethnography has become more widely advocated and practised even in other academic fields such as education, health, social work and business, just to mention a few. Yet, along the years there has been criticism of ethnography not meeting qualifications of scientific research and not distancing itself clearly from the model of natural research (Hammersley 1998). Discussion around ethnographic research has also concerned the role of reaseacher and developments of ethnographic texts. The early ethnographers have been criticized of lacking reflexivity and positionality in their research. On the other hand, ethnography has contributed to researching complex social studies, informing culture-bound research theories, and if needed, it provides a good strategy for discovering grounded theory (Spradley 1979).

4.1 Ethnography

Ethnography aims to present the views of people who are researched and ethnographic research is based on how these people see the world around them (Spradley 1979; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

Some people argue that there is no one single definition what counts as ethnography (cf. Bloome & Green 1997). R.F Ellen (1984) captured the variation of meanings for the term of ethnography in the academic fields. For example, ethnography can refer to empirical accounts of a culture of a social group or it may refer to an academic subject (as in Bloome and Green 1997). Ellen suggests that it is not wise to employ the word "ethnography" in one sense only but it is important to acknowledge that there are differences in definitions and it is important to know the differences.

Because of a lack of common definitions of ethnography, a wide range of uses for the term of ethnography exists in social and educational research. Some researchers claim to do ethnographic research when they describe their studies using methods which are characteristics in ethnographic research such as participant observation, open-ended interview questions, etc (Heath 1994). Yet, the core of ethnographic research is not only the particular research methods but also ethnographic theory. Similarly, Spradley (1979, 9) defines “Ethnography is a culture-studying culture.” His definition includes both research methods and ethnographic theory, and this can be considered as “a full scale” ethnography (cf. Heath 1980). Spradley’s definition also derives from anthropology, the origin of ethnography, and it consists of a full length of field work along with interpreting and building up a theory, and producing a full written text to report ethnographic research results.

Within all these different interpretations of what counts as ethnography Bloome and Green (1997) drew distinction among three different approaches to ethnography: doing ethnography, adopting ethnographic perspective and using ethnographic tools. According to them doing ethnography consists of “the framing conceptualising, conducting, interpreting, writing and reporting associated with a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group.” (p.183). Doing ethnography takes accounts and meets the criteria of the selected field or discipline. I would interpret doing ethnography as doing ethnographic research in its full scale which Heath (ibid.) referred to. Another approach, adopting an ethnographic perspective, has its research guide lines and foundation in theories of anthropology and sociology. It allows a researcher to have a more focused approach to everyday life in a chosen culture or social group. The third one, using ethnographic tools, refers specifically to methods and techniques used during the field work. These tools, such as participative observation and open-ended interviews, are typical methods in ethnographic research.

4.1.1 Doing Ethnographic Research

What does it mean to do ethnographic research in practice? According to Atkinson and Hammersley (1994, 248) ethnographic research usually involves the four following features:

1. A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a particular social group, rather than - setting out to test researcher's own hypothesis
2. A preference of working with unstructured data on the field
3. Focusing on a small group of people or doing research on a small-scale
4. Analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and actions of human beings.

As a result, many ethnographic studies are case studies of a people group in a certain location and in a certain environment. However, these ethnographic case studies can present other social or people groups in similar situations.

Doing ethnographic research is a lengthy process (Davies 1999), which starts with framing research questions and results with a theory through on-going analysis of data. During that process an ethnographer aims to find out the cultural knowledge of that particular group by mingling with, interviewing and observing people. As Roberts et al. (2000, 4) put it "The ethnographer goes out into 'the field' – a cluster of huts on a small atoll or the kitchens of a neighbouring housing estate – in order to participate in the lives of a specific group and learn about their everyday affairs and what gives meaning to them."

To participate in people's lives, and to find out the cultural knowledge requires language. Cultural knowledge is transmitted through the language: what people say and how they say it. Therefore, it is beneficial, usually even necessary, for an ethnographer to learn the language of the researched people group in order to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation during the process (Spradley 1979). It is not only in a cross-cultural setting when language can cause misunderstanding or misinterpretation but also in a sub-cultural setting within the same main culture. For example, Tibetans often talk about minority people, and by minority people they

mean Tibetans. When they talk about other ethnic minorities in China they specifically mention them by their name, e.g. Hui people. It is crucial for a researcher to learn the semiotics and semantics of the people s/he is researching.

The field work is a process of becoming familiar with unfamiliar (Davies 1999). During his field work an ethnographer becomes familiar with the life of people he is researching. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe this phase that an ethnographer participates “overtly or covertly” in people’s daily lives for an extensive period of time by observing their lives and asking them questions. This could mean observing the roles of men and women in a household and finding the reasons why different tasks are divided between men and women. Agar (1996) suggests “What is going on here?” as a very useful phrase for an ethnographer during the field work. Without finding answers to that question it is difficult to grasp cultural meanings in that people group. Therefore, it is important that these both, participant observation and asking questions/interviewing people, go together. A researcher does not find the cultural meanings for different daily practices by only observing people; asking questions is crucial in finding cultural meanings (Spradley 1979).

Even though a field period of an ethnographic research is usually considered as one phase of the research there is no dividing point between field work and analysis. The nature of ethnographic research is that observational research, data collection, hypothesis construction and theory building are interwoven, one cannot separate them into different phases of research.

4.1.2 An Ethnographic Perspective

I decided to use an ethnographic perspective for this research, since it is holistic in nature, aiming to understand the culture studied and being both thorough and extensive. However, I have wondered myself whether or not I have been doing ethnographic research (Bloome & Green 1997) instead of having an ethnographic perspective. For the sake of clarity and transparency I think it is important to maintain the distinction. Even though I have closely observed local life for a long

period of time, I do not consider myself doing ethnography in the sense in which Bloome and Green (1997) define it as “the framing conceptualising, conducting, interpreting, writing and reporting associated with a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group” (p.183). In addition, Hammersley (1992) regards ethnographic research as focusing on a small group of people or doing research on a small-scale. Furthermore, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) indicate that an ethnographer participates “overtly or covertly” in people’s daily lives for an extensive period of time by observing their lives and asking them questions.

However, I have been studying the life of Amdos in different research sites, which are scattered around within one prefecture. I was able to stay with them in the same villages for a limited period of time, although I mingled with some people more often and for longer periods of time than with the others. I was not with people when they got up, ate their tsampa¹⁵, I did not accompany children to school, or ladies to their daily duties, etc. However, since Davies (1999) views ethnography as a research process, I feel I carried out ethnographic style research, despite not fully meeting Bloome and Green or Hammersley and Atkinson’ definitions. In the research process I collected data by mingling with, interviewing and observing people, and therefore I think an ethnographic perspective is an appropriate definition for my research methodology.

4.1.3 The Role of a Researcher

A researcher has a significant role in ethnography, as in qualitative research in general. Being an ethnographer is not only about observing and interviewing people it is an ability to engage him or herself in research, and to be part of people’s everyday life. As Ball (1990) argues an ethnographer himself is the primary research tool with which he has to find, identify, and collect the data (p.1). Additionally, Ball (ibid.) sees two essential functions for the role of the researcher in qualitative research:

¹⁵ Tibetan food of roasted barley flour mixed with sugar, tea, yak butter and “Tibetan cheese.

"First, the engagement of the self is basic to the conduct of fieldwork, and secondly, self awareness provides the mechanism for analysis of data within the fieldwork process and the evaluation of the adequacy of data outside of the immediacies of fieldwork" (Ball 1990, 158).

The final product of the research ultimately reflects a researcher's personality and his commitment to the research. The way a researcher is engaged in his or her ethnographic fieldwork will be seen in the outcome of the research. Firstly, because an ethnographer is involved in the research by his or her personality it is acknowledged that ethnographic research is not value free, due to the researcher's own values, beliefs and ideologies (Scott 1999). Second, it can be quite tempting for a researcher to take sides on different issues on the field. Research is inevitably affected by the way an ethnographer relates to people in the field, and his or her way of doing observation and interviews. But it is important for the outcome of the research that the ethnographer aims to be as impartial as possible. Heath & Street (2008) suggest keeping a non-intrusive stance while listening, asking questions, looking around what is going on on the field. Third, at the same time, while an ethnographer is being an observer he is being observed. A classical example is Agar's (1996) experience in India, when he was observed by the village people and he felt like a stranger. A researcher has to find a way of handling this situation. Ultimately, even though an ethnographer is a participant observer s/he is an outsider in cross-cultural situations. Lastly, usually an ethnographer is an outsider on the field. However, during the research process, he is subject to the same social constructions as the people he or she is researching (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). In whatever ways the social system works, an ethnographer is under the same rules. This can create obstacles or it can be beneficial for a researcher. For example, in many Asian cultures, relationships are important in social life and it is valuable for an ethnographer to know "the right people" to carry out his or her research without hiccups.

During my research I was an outsider to the Amdo communities. Not only was I not a local Amdo, nor a Han researcher, but specifically, I was a "big nose", a local term people employ for "a Caucasian". Because of political history and tensions between Amdos and Han, it was an advantage that I was a Caucasian researcher since I was

politically impartial in a research situation. Yet, at the same time I was not a total outsider since I was working as a director of the Tibetan Literacy Programme. On the one hand, that position provided me with a good network among leaders and literacy teachers within the prefecture. It also allowed me easy access and authorisation to visit communities. On the other hand, my position may have been a disadvantage because people in villages may have perceived me as being above them in a social hierarchy. This perception may have affected their responses in some interview situations.

Before carrying out the fieldwork I assumed that people were more likely to give me official and "politically correct" answers instead of expressing their own honest opinions. The phenomenon of giving official answers does not occur only among private individuals in villages, who readily give "correct" answers but also among teachers and government officials who tend to do the same (cf. Stites 2001), something I encountered on my pre-research trip. As I held a discussion with some middle school teachers they brought up the issue of mother tongue education and argued for Tibetan language education. Their expressions, in order to meet my expectations, became what they perceived that I was looking for. It became clear to me that I needed to find a way to go deeper, below the surface, in my interviews and interactions with people in my research. However, all discourses - the official discourses and the "real discourses" - needed to be followed up and analysed in my research. In the end, I believe that my fear of receiving politically correct answers was unfounded, at least to the extent that it would affect the result of the study.

4.1.4 Positioning

I sometimes felt like an outsider because of the lack of language proficiency, as will be discussed in the next section. Also, I have to admit that I even looked different from the people whom I researched. I was a stranger similar to Schutz's stranger (Schutz 1964 as mentioned in Hammersley & Atkinson 1995) or Agar's (1996) experience of "being a stranger" in India where people observed closely his life. In remote villages I was more under observation by the village people than they were under mine. People were curious to feel white skin and yellow hair. They had only

seen foreigners on TV and now they had the first opportunity in their life to have a close look at a foreigner in their own village. Therefore, even though my position as a programme director may have had some negative effects on my role as a researcher, it definitely provided me natural access to visit officials and villages.

In addition the Tibetan Minzuban¹⁶ of Hainan TAP was the local counterpart of the Tibetan Literacy Programme (TLP) (See Chapter 2). The leaders and other staff were very favourable to me and through them and with their blessing I was able to proceed with my research. This was a crucial factor in my research and without it I would not have been able to start and carry out my research in this part of the PRC. So, as Hammersley and Atkinson note:

“It is salutary to remind ourselves that the ethnographer is very much part of the social world he or she is studying, and is subject to distinctive purposes, constraints, limitations, and weaknesses like everyone else” (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995, 287).

Therefore, even as an outsider I was partially an insider because of my connections (guanxi) in wider society while also being under the same constraints as others in my research area. My position can therefore be seen as a middleman or an intercultural person as discussed in Chapter 3. Being neither a local person nor a totally unknown person in society, I was a conduit for information from two directions: from West to East and the other way round. New and old information (knowledge) would flow between these two entities and I was somewhere between them. My research was influenced by both literacy policy and literacy practice, and I hope to contribute something new and useful to both these areas.

As an outside researcher, I was both a participant and an observer. I wanted to keep a non-intrusive stance (Heath & Street 2008), and yet I was listening, asking questions, looking around what was going on. My role as a project director led to my participation in some literacy events and practices in communities. However, in

¹⁶ The Department of Minority People

general, I was acting more in the role of an observer than that of a participant. Even when I was teaching and training teachers I continued to observe.

It is acknowledged that my research is not value free, due to my own values, beliefs and ideologies (cf. Scott 1999). However, as a researcher my goal has been to be as impartial as possible. At the same time, my research inevitably impacts the way I relate to people in the field, and my way of doing observation and interviews has impacted the outcome of the research. In other words, the final product of the research is ultimately affected by my personality and the way I conducted the research.

In all my research work I wanted to be reflective (cf. Davies 1999). Reflexivity is seen in how I conducted my fieldwork and my data analysis. My role as a researcher, and how I have been engaged in the research process is significant. Moreover, my role as a researcher not only encompasses doing fieldwork but also the evaluation and processing of data outside fieldwork. At the same time, as Coffey (1999) suggests, it is recognised that I am myself a research tool and therefore the research is partly about the ethnography of myself. This piece of research is, therefore, not only about Amdos as the participants of the research but also about the interactions and reflexivity of myself as a researcher.

4.1.5 Language Resources

Language learning is a fundamental part of ethnographic research in a cross-cultural situation and I, therefore, had concerns about my Tibetan and Chinese language abilities in doing research in Hainan TAP. As I wrote in Chapter 2, I lived in the area for six years prior to the start of my research project. During that time I learned some Chinese, and although I managed well in daily communication situations and had a working knowledge of Chinese, reading was difficult. I also studied Amdo Tibetan for just over a year before starting my research. My knowledge of Tibetan was limited, and I needed to rely on an interpreter in interviews. However, I could understand more than I could speak which became obvious during interviews which were conducted in Tibetan. As I followed the interactions between an interviewee

and the interpreter I could point out some misunderstandings or inaccuracies which were dealt with immediately. Occasionally I used Chinese in interaction with officials and formally educated Amdos, but with individual village people Chinese was inadequate as they mostly spoke Tibetan. In interactions with village people I had to use my best knowledge of Tibetan, and when it was insufficient I had to rely on an interpreter.

Using a local interpreter was the best solution for my language problem. First of all, she helped me with more complicated issues, such as translating documents (which was needed a couple of times), and she assisted me in discussing political issues. Another vital function for her was building a bridge between communities and myself as a researcher. The local custom requires that an outsider is introduced to a community by an insider. My interpreter, most of the time, was a local Amdo woman. She had been working as an assistant of the Tibetan Literacy Program (TLP). Due to her job and connections in the area she was an appropriate person to introduce me to various communities in the research area. Since this interpreter was quite content speaking English we could communicate with each other in English, Chinese and Amdo. Occasionally, twice, I had to rely on someone else. Those times I communicated with an interpreter in English and Chinese. All except one formal interview were conducted in Tibetan and translated into English. One formal interview was conducted in English.

4.1.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity in academic research looks at the truthfulness of the research claims. Especially in ethnography validity concerns the correspondence between research and the real world instead looking at only measurement as in quantitative research. Because of the nature of ethnographic research validity has less importance than understanding the world of researched people (Maxwell 2002). In other words, if a researcher does not grasp the cultural meanings he or she cannot make valid claims. Validity, both empirical and theoretical, in ethnographic research is ensured by a reflective working pattern throughout the whole research process (Eisenhart & Howe 1992).

Regarding carrying out the research, the ideal situation would have been for me to have had good proficiency in Amdo Tibetan, since the use of interpretation may result in misunderstanding or misinterpretation (Spradley 1979). Even though I could follow basic conversations I was aware of being an outsider, and wished I could have communicated better with people. However, even though an insufficient knowledge of Tibetan made my research more complicated in terms of relationships with people, I do not see the language problem affecting the result of the research in terms of reliability and validity. I think I have been able to ensure both empirical and theoretical validity (cf. Eisenhart & Howe 1992) and reliability by having a good working relationship with my assistant and being able to check my data constantly. That, then, enabled me to correct misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Reliability in academic research is about replicability or consistency. In order to achieve reliability in that technical sense, a researcher has to manipulate conditions so that replicability can be assessed (Wolcott 2001, 167). Due to the nature of ethnographic research this is an impossible task. I, the researcher, could not try to make something happen on the field, nor could I make it happen two or three times. Yet, I observed similar daily life situations on streets, literacy classes, etc.. Reliability in that technical sense should not be regarded as a critical component of this research indicating research objectivity. However, the circumstances and the social structure of other Tibetan groups in Qinghai Province and even in the wider Tibetan region are similar to Amdos'. Therefore, I believe, the outcome of this research can represent other Tibetan groups as well.

4.1.7 Ethics

The role of the researcher is essential in ethnographic research which emphasises the importance of the ethics of the researcher. Ethnographic research deals with people, and therefore it is a researcher's responsibility to guarantee confidentiality and provide anonymity (cf. Denscombe 2002) to interviewees by obtaining permission to collect data (Winter 1991) and by using pseudonyms (Gubrium & Holstein 2001).

Also, a researcher has to be honest about his role in the society where the research is carried out (Denscombe 2002). Following a code of ethics means honesty and integrity. Integrity, which is a key issue in doing research, applies not only to interactions with participants of the research but also to the ways in which data is interpreted, used and presented. In ethnographic research integrity is ensured by a researcher following a code of ethics by keeping close to the data and by being truthful to it. A researcher has to check possible ambiguities and inaccuracies in the data to ensure integrity and reliability in his/her study.

When I started my research (M.Phil.) under King's College London, I was not required to submit a separate ethical approval for my study. However, I have been aware of several sensitive issues in my research, such as possible social implications concerning ethnic minority issues or identifying the participants of the research. I have therefore given special consideration to these ethical issues through out the whole research process up to date (cf. British Educational Research Association 2004; The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics 2002).

I had worked in the research area prior to my research project which gave me time and opportunity to gain trust among county officials and private individuals who knew me. These people were the key people in my research, and I did not want to lose their trust in me. Through them I was able to gain the trust of others who then participated in this research. It was my responsibility to guarantee confidentiality and provide anonymity to my interviewees by obtaining permission to collect data, and by using pseudonyms as mentioned above. Before interviewing participants I asked permission to use a Dictaphone during the interview and to use the information given in this research. I explained to the interviewees through my Amdo assistant that the information given would be reported anonymously in the research and they were asked to sign a simple consent form (Appendix No.2). The form was written in Tibetan. If the interviewees were illiterate, a thumb print was accepted as consent, after an oral explanation of the study had been given by my assistant. The assistant also helped the non-literate people to sign the form if they did not know how to do it by themselves or if they were too ashamed to put a thumb print.

Another issue was group meetings which I attended and honesty about my role in them (Denscombe 2002). In these meetings with officials, teachers, village leaders etc., I was officially introduced by a representative of the Tibetan minzuban of Hainan TAP and each time it was explained to the other attendants that I was collecting data for my research during our visit.

Integrity, which is the key issue in doing research, does not apply only to interactions with participants of the research but also the ways in which data is interpreted, used and presented. In all this I have attempted to follow a code of ethics by keeping close to the data and be truthful to it. For example, I encountered some translation problems in one interview and both the interpreter and I realised that. After transcribing the interview another person checked the transcription and corrected the translation mistakes that concerned the interviewee's information. Similarly, I have checked other possible ambiguities and inaccuracies in the data in order to ensure integrity and reliability in the study.

Throughout my research I attempted to follow requirements that research should be conducted with integrity and in line with generally accepted ethical principles. Principles in scientific research include honesty in communication, reliability in performing research, objectivity, impartiality and independence, openness and accessibility, duty of care, fairness in providing references and giving credit, and responsibility for the scientists and researchers of the future (The European Science Foundation 2011, 5). For example, I paid attention not to breach confidentiality and to avoid violation of protocols among participants and in the wider research community. It was my duty to be careful with the collected information and the ways it was collected along with its interpretation in order not to lead into improprieties of publication that would cause any conflict of interest or appropriation of ideas.

4.2. Collecting Data and Research Methods

Bloome and Green (ibid.) indicate that an ethnographic research consists of two main parts: studying a social or cultural group, in other words doing a field work;

and writing up a report through interpreting and conceptualising collected data. The field work, which usually requires a long period of time, includes making cultural inferences from three sources: what people say, how they act and what artefacts they use (Spradley 1979). Each of these three different sources have to be tested over and over again in order to gain a good understanding of the cultural meanings of a researched group. In that process ethnographic field work usually consists of observation, interviews, collecting information from local sources, field notes and photography.

4.2.1 An Overview and Rationale for the Research Design

This particular study includes an extensive period of field research, during which I lived in the research area for over 13 months. After the pre-researched trip when I collected data for a pilot study, the fieldwork consisted of another three different trips. The first field trip took place during August 2004 - April 2005; the second trip during July -September 2005, the third trip during November - December 2005, and the fourth trip July 10-16th, 2010. During the first trip to Hainan TAP, I did research in three counties: Gonghe, Guide and Tongde. Some of the data was collected in remote villages, some in county centres. I visited some research villages twice and some of them I visited only once during my first fieldwork period. The latter ones I also visited on my second and third trips. On the last visit in 2010, I visited Gonghe where I concentrated on interviewing people and checking some previously collected data.

Rationale for the research design was based on the decision of using ethnographic perspective as the research methodology as the best fit for this kind of research, and my work in the TLP. At times these two main factors did not fit well because I was a foreigner in the Tibetan region. For official reasons I had no choice to live or stay by myself in rural villages or townships but to be based in Chapcha (Gonghe County Centre) and make research trips from there. Also, because I was working in the project while carrying out the research I had to fit the research plan into the work schedule. I never visited literacy classes alone with my assistant but with a group of colleagues from the office of the HTWC or other personnel of the TLP. The

research tasks had to be adjusted with my tasks as the TLP personnel. We usually stayed a couple of days in one county at the time, which allowed us to visit a number of village literacy classes during one day and to discuss with local officials at the same time. This kind of busy schedule did not stretch for very long observation sessions but these official visits enabled me to visit communities and talk with individuals that could have been beyond access without the TLP. These trips provided me good opportunities to spend hours and hours with our teachers and trainers while we travelled on mountain roads, stayed overnight in guesthouses or tents and ate noodle soup for breakfast. We talked, I interviewed some of them, we shared our life stories, we told jokes, and laughed at them. These people took me under their wings. They made my research happen despite government restrictions. I do not believe that political constraints have affected the amount and the quality of the collected data as can be seen in the list of collected data (Appendix No 1) and the final outcome of the research. Yet, I acknowledge that, if I had been able to stay longer periods of time in some locations, e.g. observing the same literacy classes on consecutive days, I could have possibly collected a bit different kind of data.

Data collection methods in the field consisted of observation, formal and informal interviews, photographing, a survey and collecting local documents. With all these methods I attempted to collect information, which would give me an answer to my research questions, which primarily focus on the relationship between everyday literacy practices and cultural practices in adult literacy teaching in Tibetan society in the PRC. In brief: what cultural elements and practices influence adult literacy teaching and how?

I believe that the foundation of the research was laid before the actual research was started: I was familiar with various issues before I “officially” started to research them. Therefore, when the actual field work started I knew about some of the contentious issues regarding literacy policies and the politics of language. I had learned some culturally and politically appropriate ways to carry out my research. I also knew my own limitations in some practical issues. For example, I knew that it would be easier and faster for me to record interviews on tape than to write them down on paper. Tape recording allowed me to concentrate on listening to my interviewees instead of figuring out in what language I should write down my

interview notes. Later on I could replay the actual, precise interviews as many times as needed, which was one of the other advantages of tape recording.

Different research activities did not have their own special slots in the schedule on the first two field trips. There were three main branches of issues that I focused on: literacy in society, literacy in the TLP, literacy in monasteries. Then these branches had other branches, such as language, gender, etc. The main effort was made to reach the goal; data which was collected by different methods should build up the big picture. For example, interviews filled slots which had remained obscure after taking observation notes. Then, the purpose for the third field trip in 2010 was to check again some issues which needed to be clarified while analysing data and writing up the thesis outside the research field. Throughout the whole research project, as in any ethnographic research project, data processing and analyses took place simultaneously with data collecting.

4.2.2 Observation and Field Notes

One of the main data collection methods in ethnography is participant observation (e.g. Hammersley 1995). Observation usually results in an immense quantity of field notes. Field notes are a very important part of any ethnographic study and cover many different everyday observation situations on the chosen field (e.g. shopping at the market, classroom situations, etc.). Field notes give much food for thought, and help a researcher to develop a concrete picture of the overall situation on the field.

Field notes are one of the main ways of recording data on the field. Even a small scale of ethnographic research results in relatively big amount of field notes about all kinds of activities on the field, e.g. language uses in a community. Along with other notes researchers keep their own personal journals to record their personal feelings, emotions and personal identity work that surface with engagement of the research (Coffey 1999).

Some of the field notes are not written down on the field. For one reason or another, some issues, or details of phenomena occur to a researcher's mind after the field

work is finished. These head notes, as Sanjek (1990) calls them, are of the field experience even though they are written down afterwards. They do not have less value than those field notes that are written down on the field. Maybe, head notes shed light on the nature of ethnographic research, which is an on-going, reflective process until the very end.

Since I had lived in the research area previously, my acquaintance with local people provided me with opportunities to visit homes as well. Because literacy is embedded in so many activities of people's lives, observation covered a wide range of aspects of people's lives. Although my research focuses on one aspect of life, namely in what way Amdos utilise literacy in daily life, observation covered a much wider range of everyday activities in the daily life of Amdos in their natural environment. I mingled with people in public places and observed the Tibetan way of life in streets, markets, shops, banks, offices, Internet cafes, schools, adult Tibetan literacy classes and teachers' training courses. I observed what languages people spoke in the market and other public places. I paid attention to what kinds of text were displayed in shops, streets and even in people's homes. I tried to find out by observation two practical issues. Firstly, what language(s) Amdos needed to know so that they could attend to their daily business. Secondly, I was keen to find out the type and language of various written texts which are commonly seen in a society. In homes, I also observed what kind of texts were around, not only in terms of books and other printed material, but also texts and pictures which were used as interior decorations and labels on day-to-day commodities such as soft drink bottles, chilli paste jars and candies.

I visited two Tibetan primary schools. One of them, a village school, had Tibetan as the medium of teaching and the other, in Tongde County Centre, had Chinese as the medium of teaching. In these schools I attended three classroom teaching situations focusing my main observation on making notes about how Tibetan language was taught but also observing how mathematics was taught in the Tibetan language. I used an observation chart in these classroom observation situations. I noted down different activities that took place during a teaching period and the amount of time spent on each activity. For example, I wrote down on a chart the main categories and detailed activities as a lesson proceeded, such as "Yesterday's work review",

“Correcting homework”, “Reading aloud”, “Continue teaching yesterday’s grammar”. Activities under these main categories were, for example, “One student answers well. Other students clap their hands rhythmically for his good work.” and “A teacher asks the meaning of a word and all pupils give an answer together.” These issues I have used as background information for my adult literacy teaching research.

In addition to classroom observation, I examined the study books, which were used in different levels of the cultural and Tibetan language classes.

In adult literacy classes and literacy teachers’ training classes I focused my observation on teaching methods, classroom interactions and study books. I wrote notes and took photographs of what was taught and how it was taught. I visited 16 adult literacy classes on the first trip and ten more classes on the second trip. On my final trip to adult literacy classes, which was connected to the final evaluation of the Tibetan Literacy Programme I visited 13 adult literacy classes but those visits were very brief. However, they were still beneficial, showing what had been learnt in the literacy classes (See Chapter 5).

I also visited one lamasery but unfortunately was not able to attend a literacy class there. I had an extensive interview with the Head Lama but I was not given an opportunity to observe language teaching. It turned out that if the Head Lama had realised that I was the one who had been helping his people learn their mother tongue he would have permitted me to observe the teaching. He was very grateful for the TLP, which gave me important *guanxi* in doing my research.

Finally, I have to admit that being familiar with the research area and the people has worked against me in some situations. An unfamiliar situation and cultural scene keeps the ethnographer from taking too many things for granted (Agar 1986). It makes the observer sensitive to the research situation. I feel I would have been more alert in many daily life situations if I had been new to the area and assume I would have been able to observe information more carefully and not unconsciously miss some small details. It is possible that I did not write down some data which was obvious to me as I knew the culture. For this reason, I think, I still have a lot of head

notes (cf. Sanjek 1990) which have not been written down but which have unconsciously guided my thoughts and appeared in my writing.

4.2.3 Interviews

When survey type of research focuses on multiple choice questions and fully structured interviews with participants, ethnographic interviews are conducted with open ended questions. Quite often ethnographic interviews are semi-structured, which gives an interviewee an opportunity to voice his thoughts and ideas more freely than in fully structured interviews. Some of the interviews are brief chats on the street that can enlighten a researcher to what is going on at that particular moment. But for long, semi-structured interviews, it is important for a researcher to establish good relations with the interviewees. For example, on my research on Tibetan literacy practices it was crucial for me to have a good relationship with people on the field. Otherwise I would have received so called official opinions from the interviewees and not their own opinions as I did (cf. Stites 1999).

Although extensive use of observation was my main research tool in gathering data on people's lives, I also collected data by interviewing people in different social settings and contexts. During my field research in Hainan TAP I talked a great deal with Amdos from different backgrounds and with some foreign Tibetan language experts as well. I chatted with people as I visited their homes or they visited me, met them on the street, at schools and in offices. The main focus of these discussions was on literacy in every day life: in what situations and in which language people practise literacy. Thus, our discussions varied from the Tibetan language and Chinese use in Tibetan areas to Tibetan literacy education and social changes in the area.

The interviews are of three different kinds. I conducted fifteen formal interviews, of which fourteen were recorded by a tape-recorder and one was recorded by writing. All formal interviews were semi-structured and I used open-ended questions. I recorded 18 hours of interview data (e.g. Appendices No. 3, 5, 6). Secondly, I conducted twenty informal interviews with various people, from which I gathered 9

hours and 11 minutes of interview data. Thirdly, I attended three group meetings where I could collect both observation data and partially participate in the meetings. Additionally, as I was visiting classes of the TLP I had opportunities to meet with local cadres, teachers and students. Data from these situations were a mixture of observation notes and brief chats, and officials provided information about different issues concerning the implementation of the programme. Informal interviews, chats and data from meetings were recorded in writing.

According to Ryen (2001) it is important for a researcher to establish good relations with the interviewees because it facilitates valid data collection. Accordingly, in this research all formal interviews were organized through the people who were working in the TLP which was culturally appropriate and gave rapport to the interview situation. Some interviewees had some connection to the TLP whereas others were private individuals with no connection to the project.

One set of interviews was more formal with officials in different counties. The formal interviews were conducted both as group meetings and as individual interviews. Besides the formal interviews, I interviewed teachers in two Tibetan primary schools and one Tibetan middle school, using a group meeting format. In these meetings I found out about the use of the Tibetan language in schools and school books, and we discussed the pros and cons of using the Tibetan language as a medium of teaching.

I also interviewed a group of village people. We talked about literacy use in village homes and literacy education. It seems that one cannot talk about Tibetan literacy education without touching on the status of the Tibetan language in education. So we talked about that as well. There were several potential problems with group discussions: people might be shy to speak, they might only voice an official opinion of discussed matters or some members of group meetings might be too dominant. The latter was experienced in a group discussion in Tongde where some men were more dominant than others and women did not contribute to the discussion unless specifically persuaded.

The same issues were covered in interviews with four individual teachers, Mr Hui, Old Teacher (Mr), Mr Dorje and Mr Merangdzol. Mr Hui and Old Teacher are teachers by their profession and they were also teachers at the TLP. Mr Dorje is a middle school principal. Mr Merandzol is a government official whose responsibilities included adult education. Interviews with Mr Norbu, Ms Drokmo, Ms Tsomo, Ms Nyima and Mr Tenzin covered issues about women and literacy education along with various issues within literacy teaching since they are currently or have been earlier involved in education. We also discussed women's careers outside the home. With three other interviewees, Tsoksum, Lhabi, and Lhamo, we also discussed the issue of being a literate vs. a non-literate Tibetan and what this means in the context of the PRC. Mr Tsoksum is a college student and Lhabi and Lhamo are non-literate housewives. I also had an opportunity to meet a high status Lama who lives and teaches in one fairly large lamasery in Hainan TAP. He is a well known scholar of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan language in Qinghai Province. We talked extensively about various issues of literacy education in lamaseries, our conversation covering general issues of teaching literacy in lamaseries in the past and present, and the current emphasis of literacy teaching in lamaseries. An interview with another monk, Tserang, gave strength to the data on monastic literacies and I was able to discover data convergence between two different informants (cf. Denscombe 2003) as these two interviews complimented each other in terms of the content and validity of the data.

Another set of interviews was more spontaneous and took place in various locations including trips to the research sites, market places, bus stations and homes. Beforehand I assumed that the main difficulties these interviews were likely to encounter would stem from the fact that although Tibetans are generally friendly and curious towards foreigners they might feel uncomfortable to speak candidly to me. But I did not encounter problems with people and was able to collect a reasonable amount of data out of these spontaneous interviews or chats. For example, an interview with Mr Norbu was not planned before hand but as we were travelling out to remote villages we started to chat about Tibetan adult literacy education.

Because Amdo Tibetan society is rather small and “everybody knows everybody” I do not feel free to give more detailed descriptions of my interviewees in the interests of protecting anonymity.

4.2.4 A Language Survey

I conducted a language survey in Chapcha, which is the county centre of Gonghe County. Within three days we were able to do brief interviews with 60 Tibetan people at the Tibetan market, where most of the Tibetans do their shopping. Because the interview time was just before the Tibetan New Year festivals there were a lot of people from the countryside doing their New Year shopping. Since I am “a big nose foreigner”¹⁷ I anticipated I would stand out easily and people would either gather around out of curiosity or not talk to me at all. I therefore asked a Tibetan university student to help me out in the situation. He conducted the very simple survey interviews for me without causing any trouble in the process. The only problem was that Tibetan women were not willing to be interviewed on the first day. On the other days more Tibetan women were willing to be involved in the survey (Appendix No. 8).

The survey concentrated on Tibetans’ language use outside the home. I wanted to find out what languages Tibetans use while they do their shopping, banking and visit government offices in the county centre. This was done as a means of triangulation to test the validity of data already obtained by observation and interviews.

4.2.5 Photographs

Photographs are usually part of ethnographic research, and they have different functions in research. Photography was one of my data collection tools. Similar to Barton & Hamilton’s (1998) research in communities I took photographs in various situations and recorded some field notes by photographing the kinds of situations where a written text was part of Tibetan daily life, such as street signs, notice

¹⁷ We foreigners were often called as “big nose” by local Chinese people.

boards, notices on poles and walls, advertisements, religious signs and symbols, and labels on daily products. This amounted to hundreds of photographs, of which I used only a fraction for analysis. I also recorded some videos of language and literacy in schools and cultural situations, such as people singing a welcome song to guests.

Collecting data using photography had two main functions. Firstly, the aim of using photographs was not to illustrate my thesis with bright pictures of exotic Tibetans, but to emphasise and clarify various issues under discussion. Davies (1999) argues that the use of photographs in ethnographic research can be seen as having greater power to convince than the use of written text. However, I did not choose to use photographs on account of their possible convincing power, but rather to back up the arguments in my thesis. Because photographs may potentially cause problems since what I see in a picture may not be what readers see in a picture I have attempted to use photographs selectively and strategically. Secondly, photographs have been assets in analysing data which have been collected by other methods (Ball & Smith 1992). Some photos in this research have been taken to capture an action where a text was involved so that it would help in the data analysis. A picture captures the situation as it is, whereas written notes about the issue may be insufficient. The latter use of photographs was meant to be merely a supportive form of collecting data. Photography was to complement the way the other research tools in this research document literacy practices and texts (Hodge & Jones 2000).

While processing and analysing my data the supportive role of photographs became essential in that process. I was able to refer to certain situations by looking at photographs and I could check my written data comparing it with the photographs. The common saying “one picture tells more than thousands words” became obvious. Photographs have been a good back-up for my observation notes in many situations, a good tool for analysis, and a constructive way of presenting my data to readers.

4.2.6 Local Documents

The fifth method of collecting data was local documents, texts and articles. These documents range from informal texts to official documents. Official documents,

newspapers, the documents of the Tibetan Literacy programme, religious texts and pictures, other local literature shops signs and advertisements are all examples of local data sources.

Since I was working with the TLP I had built a rapport with the minzuban of Hainan TAP. This relationship –*guanxi*– was an asset and made it possible for me to collect some local data. I was able to gather some local documents concerning general issues of education in the PRC such as language use regulations in education in Qinghai Province, Tibetans school attendance statistics in Hainan TAP and Qing Ke Pa, which concerns social change and vocational training for Tibetans in Qinghai Province. As I worked with the TLP I was granted permission to use the entire collection of the Tibetan Literacy Programme (TLP) documents for my research.

All these documents gave an idea of how Tibetan literacy education is organised and implemented by different institutions in Hainan TAP. For example, among the TLP documents are five samples of exams, which the students of the TLP took. These samples showed me what issues are seen as important in the process of learning to read and write Tibetan. Local Tibetan language school books and adult literacy programme materials reveal the goal of local Tibetan literacy education.

4.2.7 Research Site

The research site is wide and full of variety as I explained in Chapter 2. In order to collect comprehensive and thorough data of literacy practices I needed to address the different groups and settings of Amdos. The different sites of the research area are some distance apart from each other. Some sites are nomadic villages and some are towns with settled communities (See Chapter 2). Thus social settings and contexts are not the same. All these settings have their own social activities where literacy is situated. Because social contexts and institutions vary within my research area, literacy practices vary as well. (cf. Martin-Jones et al. 2000) The main variations are caused by geographical location and livelihood. For example, social contexts and literacy types are not the same in lamaseries as they are in nomadic villages. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns focus on religious literacy events and

practices whereas nomadic herders may read texts on food packages. Therefore, I collected data using the methods mentioned above in a number of different types of settings: lamaseries, nomadic and settled communities, schools and adult literacy classes.

4.3 Analysis

My analysis of ethnographic data started already during the field period. As mentioned above it is crucial that the collected data represents the meanings of the researched people, not of the researcher. Spradley (1979) warns a researcher not to impose his or her own theory on the people under research before their own view of the world is found out.

One of the dangers in doing ethnographic research is a researcher not distancing him or herself from the data which causes writing up to become descriptive instead of being analytical. Therefore, it is important to find a systematic method for analysis. There is no one particular method for analysis in ethnographic research. However, ethnographic data is often analysed by using grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), or developing systematic typologies (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995) or any similar process which utilises different categories to emerge from the data (Silverman 2001).

Grounded theory provides a tool for systematic data analysis. In its simplest model it has three stages. During the first stage a researcher attempts to form categories which give insight into the data. The next step is to fit these categories with many appropriate cases to test their relevance. On the third stage these categories are developed into more general analytical frameworks (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

Some other ways of analysing ethnographic data are, for example, to use thinking units, key words and mind-mapping, as explained below.

4.3.1 Analysing Interviews

The first step towards analysing the data of this research was transcribing and recording interviews. All formal interviews which were tape-recorded were fully transcribed and other spontaneous interviews were recorded by writing. Then analysing data of this research did not follow the grounded theory. Yet, there were some similarities such as categorising text and using keywords (cf. Corbin & Strauss 2008). The first step was to read the interviews and process the issues that arose from the data. I called it the preliminary analysis. I simply wrote down thoughts that arose from the data as seen in the preliminary interview analysis of Tsoksum (Appendix No 5). In the beginning of the data analysis process I applied the concept of 'thinking units' as in Ely (1991). Thinking units enabled me to categorise key concepts of the data similar to grounded theory. These elements became the key elements for mind-mapping, which I used in the data analysis process.

In a coding process I used key concepts and key words as mentioned above. After having a summarized version in my mind I went through the data and elicited key concepts and words (Appendices No. 4, 7). This step was the main phase in finding key issues in the data and, at the same time, I looked at possible inaccuracies in the data. My aim was to find what kind of literacies Amdos are involved in and how they learn literacy. Accordingly key concepts and keywords evolved such as literacy, literacy education, education, language of literacy, social context of literacy, institutional context of literacy, illiteracy, motivation for literacy acquisition, religious literacy etc.

Coding mind-mapping became an important tool to create links between different categories (thinking units) and to organize my thoughts and the process of analysing the data. Mind-maps took new angles and shapes as analysing proceeded further. In the process of analysing data I had various versions of mind-maps but all through the process the key concepts and their subcategories such as the Tibetan language, monasteries, schools and adult literacy classes have essential roles. For example, the Tibetan language has different kinds of roles in the society and in individuals' lives. Therefore, it has different kinds of connections (schools, monasteries, homes, culture etc.) on mind-maps (Appendix No. 10).

Because the data was substantial and key concepts evolved accordingly, I was not able to fully utilise all the data, key concepts or issues which evolved. Data which concerned Chinese language literacies in Amdo communities was used as a reference point for this current research which is built on the previous work of M.Phil. that concerns multilingual literacy practices in Amdo communities. Multilingual and multimodal literacies cannot be totally ignored since they have to be involved in developing analysis. Other issues such as Tibetan nomadic and farmers' dialects emerged from data, but they are far too big issues to discuss properly in addition to some other Tibetan language issues in this one piece of doctoral thesis.

4.3.2 From Literacy Events to Literacy Practices

For text analysis purposes I have made use of a distinction between literacy events and literacy practices (Barton 1994a; Heath 1983; Street 2000). In this context, text presents both written texts and oral utterances such as interviews (Halliday 1994), which are transcribed.

I have used the concept of literacy events for analysis. The concept was developed by A.B. Anderson and Stokes (1984) and by Heath 1980's (Heath 1994). Heath's definition of literacy events is "occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies" (1994, 74). The concept of literacy events has been useful to identify what kind of literacies Amdos are involved in in their daily life. For example, Amdo Tibetan literacy events vary from learning to write the alphabet in school to reading newspapers, from browsing on the internet to meditating on religious drawings, called *thangkas*. Thus Amdo Tibetan literacy events include different modes such as visual and computer literacies along with printed texts.

Multimodality is an essential characteristic of Amdo literacies (cf. Kress 2000; 2003). Besides multimodality multi-literacy characterizes Amdo Tibetan literacy events. The New London Group (New London Group 2000) refers to multi-literacy as modes or channels of communication, which involves literacy. Electronic

devices, printed texts and information technology are current ways of communication and literacy among Amdos. However, most of these “electronic literacies” are in Chinese, and they were discussed in my previous work (Harri 2009).

Tibetan multi-literacy events are not only about text but also about semiotic forms of communication. Besides written texts Amdo literacy events consist of signs and symbols in several languages, which are used in certain social contexts. For example finger signs for numbers are used at market places especially when communicating with people other than Amdos. Tibetan Buddhist practices consist of numerous religious signs and pictures, which are communicated in Tibetan. Mani stones as in the picture below (Figure 15) are one example of such religious artefacts. This particular sample includes both Tibetan text and five of eight auspicious religious signs, which are only understood through Tibetan religious practices.



Figure 15. A mani stone

The notion of literacy events helps me to understand and to identify different ways of using reading and writing in Tibetan communities. The concept of literacy practices needs deeper analysis. According to Street, literacy practices attempt “both to handle the events and patterns around literacy and link them to something broader

of a cultural and social kind” (2001, 11). Through social and cultural contexts literacy events get their social models, which give events their meanings. Then, in order to find out meanings of Amdo literacy events it was necessary to talk with people to find out how their literacy events were connected to their everyday life.

4.4. Summary

In this chapter I have endeavoured to pull together each section of my research in adherence to the framework of ethnographic research (defined for the purpose of this study as “an ethnographic perspective”). According to Maxwell “understanding is a more fundamental concept for qualitative research than validity” (Maxwell 2002). In my research I have attempted to gather a real understanding of the Amdos’ experiences (cf. Silverman 2002) and their ways of being involved in literacy. I have used the methodology and methods which I found most appropriate to the research topic. My aim was to find ways in which the Amdos are involved in literacy in daily life, and to explore what they learn and how they learn in literacy classes.

Ethnography is a holistic research strategy, in which a researcher has a crucial role. I would say that the role of a researcher is both the weakness and the strength in ethnography. In order to carry out ethnographic research a researcher has to be ready to commit himself to a search for meaning, and that means being ready for taking risks, facing uncertainty and discomfort (Ball 1990, 1). Living with the people being researched is not always easy, collecting valid data is troublesome, and analysing data is time consuming. If a researcher faces major problems during the research it will most likely result in work which may be descriptive or may not present the world view of a researched group.

Having an ethnographic approach to my research enabled me to build an in-depth picture of Amdo literacy practices. My research process has been long and wide and yet, at some points of analysing data I wish I had spent even longer periods of time with the people I was researching, asking them more questions or observing more attentively some daily situations. In other words I did not manage to do my research without pitfalls. However, the data I was able to collect has provided me with a

deeper understanding of the Amdo uses of literacy. This research project has also given me further insights into myself.

During the research process it has become clear to me that I, as a researcher, am subject to same social constructions as the people I have researched (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). I was as dependent on the same “*guanxi*” (relationships) system as any other member of the society. My previous working and living experience had helped me to build “*guanxi*” which proved to be mainly beneficial for me. People whom I knew introduced me to the people I needed to meet for my research. Without “*guanxi*” I would not be writing these words here now. Although I was connected to ‘insiders’, I would never myself be regarded as an insider, and have attempted to keep my status and position in the role of objective researcher and analyst.

5. Tibetan Cultural Phenomena in Everyday Literacies

The common discourse of literacy teaching includes teaching reading, writing and numeracy. Monastic literacy teaching aims to release students from ignorance to master the language (cf. Barton 1994; see Chapter 3) done through teaching reading, and possibly writing and numeracy. Researching Amdo literacy in its cultural context is a complex task for one main reason: both culture and literacy are wide and complex fields to study. Both of them have ties to many layers and components of society.

Cultures differ, as do connections between literacy and culture. In researching cultural influences on Amdo literacy education and literacy practices, some of the cultural connections and values become noticeable earlier than others. In the end, cultural values and beliefs emerged from data in connection to gender, power, language, religion and views of literacy. These components are not independent units, but spread over society like a web. They correspond to each other in some way, as Spradley explains (Spradley 1979). Therefore, to unpack Amdo cultural elements and their influence on Amdo literacy is a demanding task.

Analysis and estimation of cultural influence is based on the definition of culture (Häyrynen 2004). I have adopted a socio-anthropological view of culture as shared meanings and understanding (including social behaviour) within a group. I have looked at the influence of culture on literacy in the context of the patriarchal culture of Tibetans.

If we look at one element of culture – religion -- we can present Amdo culture using Hofstede's onion diagram (see Figure 16). Religion can be found in three different "skins": symbols, rituals and values (the centre).

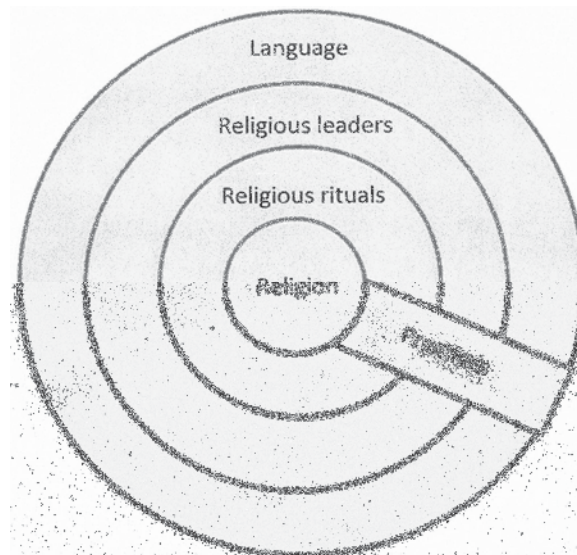


Figure 16. Religion as a cultural element in Amdo society

I start to unpack the cultural influence from the core of the culture: values (cf. Hofstede 1991). Amdo's worldview is based on Tibetan Buddhism, which forms their value system and is an essential part of their cultural identity. Amdos' social context and experiences are within that value system and form the learning context for adult learners. Mezirow and others remind us that without taking into consideration the social context and experiences of adult learners it is difficult to understand the context of learning (Mezirow 1991; Jarvis 1987; Nurmi & Kontiainen 1995). Therefore, it is important to look into the cultural environment of adult literacies first before we can discuss the features of Amdo adult literacy education, and how they are influenced by culture and everyday literacy practices.

5.1 Religion and Literacy Practices

5.1.1 Tibetan Buddhism - a Source of Literacy

Based on my data, Tibetan literacy practices are very much linked together with religious practices, the Tibetan language and ethnic identity. Like in many other cultures the source of Tibetans' literacy practices is in religious practices (cf.

Maddox 2006; Zubair 2001). Even though Tibetan culture has changed over the years and secularism continues to gain ground, there is still a very strong bond between religious practices and literacy practices, which influences the whole of society. Kapstein's note, which he wrote more than a decade ago, is still valid "The Tibetan assimilation in Buddhism is in evidence throughout the entire range of Tibetan writing during the past millennium. Whether we turn to medical treatises, manuals of divination, law codes, or poetry, not to speak of properly religious works, we are likely to encounter at least some token of Buddhism's presence." (2000, 20).

One essential component in both of these practices is the language. Written Tibetan language was originally developed for religious purposes and from there it has spread to every day use (Goldstein-Kyaga 1992; Kapstein 2006). At the moment it is a rich language, which can be used for every aspect of life. Even though Chinese language now has a big influence on Tibetans' lives, the Tibetan language is still a strong part of Tibetan identity. Also Tibetan ethnic identity has a strong foundation in Tibetan Buddhism (Goldstein & Kapstein 1998). Language is not the only component noticeable in Amdo literacies. There are other components of culture that are embedded in literacy practices, as Street suggests (cf. 2001). Religion is one of them as we can see in the following discussion, based on the collected data.

Tibetan Buddhism has a high importance in Tibetan life, and literacy practices have perhaps been more related to religious practices than to anything else. They are interwoven with each other, as Mr Hui explains:

"Tibetan culture and religion is related. The culture and religion and education in Tibetan are somehow connected. Very much, you cannot separate them." (Mr Hui, INT. No. 9.)

Mr Hui's statement implies that it is impossible to separate Tibetan culture, religion and education from each other. I have been able to identify a number of similarities between monastic literacies and secular literacies in everyday life and adult literacy education. First of all, to understand Tibetan literacy education and practices in the 21st century, we must look back to the 7th century. That is, Tibetan Buddhist monks

developed the orthography and writing system of the Tibetan language, as mentioned above. Secondly, the goals of literacy teaching are similar to monastic literacy teaching. Thirdly, teaching methods of adult literacy education resemble monastic teaching methods. Fourthly, ways of practising contemporary literacy follow the same pattern as in religious literacies. Fifthly, religion is the main source for the Tibetan language literature and its practices provide a forum for literacy practices. Finally, the religion motivates people to acquire literacy. For all these reasons it is important to look at religious literacies in monasteries and in every day life.

5.1.2 The Context of Literacy in Monasteries

The social context of literacy practices in monasteries is grounded in the livelihood of being a monk. Within a monastic community, monks are involved in different kinds of literacy practices. Even though monastic life concentrates on Buddhist teaching, a monastery requires people with different skills, as does any community. A monastic community delegates work for monks in monastic education, administration, clerical duties, construction, canteen, etc. Therefore, the use and the need for literacy vary according to the duties and status of monks in a monastery.

The most common monastic literacy practices are embedded in religious practices. Reading aloud and reciting texts are the main ways in which religious literacy is practised in monasteries. That is an activity in which all monks are involved, regardless of their position and various responsibilities in a monastery. That is also a popular perception of literacy in monasteries.

Religious reading practices are an important part of being a monk. The first goal of “being literate” as a monk is to be able to recite Buddhist scriptures. As such, reading practices take the form of recitation. After memorising a text, monks do not read the text any more, but rather recite it by heart. This is explained by Tserang, a monk for over 20 years, who describes his early months in a monastery:

"In the morning I got up at 6 o'clock and memorised the text from after breakfast until 11 AM. At noon I had a break and then I memorised Buddhist scriptures from 2 to 7PM. After dinner I had to review what I have memorised during the day. Next morning my teacher checked what I had learned and I had to recite a text by heart. If I recited the text well then he gave me another piece of text. First he taught me the text and then I had to learn and memorise it." (Tserang, INT No. 7)

Religious reading practice resembles a turning wheel with three phases that take turns time after time: reading – memorizing – reciting. An ability to read enables monks to do their religious practice, which is to recite Buddhist Scriptures. Therefore, Tibetan religious reading practices in monasteries are only partially about reading text. They are mainly about being able to memorise and recite texts.

According to Boyarin (1992) reading practices get their meanings through cultural context and the ways they are practised in a particular culture. Tibetan religious reading practices, memorizing and reciting texts, acquire their meaning through Buddhist philosophy. Yet, from some perspectives, chanting and memorizing texts are not regarded as literacy practices as such, since they do not involve active reading. Governments' definitions of literacy have a tendency to rule out this kind of literacy. In Bangladesh, Koranic literacies and Madrasa schooling were specifically disregarded as literacy for census purposes, because the utility and meaning of such literacy practices were seen as heavily dependent on the religious context (Maddox 2006). Similarly Tibetan religious literacy practices are dependent on the context of Tibetan Buddhism. However, before chanting people may need to learn to decode texts. Therefore, these kinds of reading practices can be considered as one type of literacy practice. But they can only be understood through the cultural and religious contents in which they are imbedded, just as Martin-Jones et al. (2000) and Street (1993) argue, with regard to the contextualisation of literacy practices in societies.

5.1.3 Literacy Teaching and Learning in Monasteries

Main features of monastic literacy education

Just as literacy practices are contextualised (Martin-Jones 2000), so is literacy teaching. Due to religious uses of literacy in monasteries, literacy education has four main features: learning correct pronunciation, becoming a fluent reader, memorizing and reciting texts, with less emphasis on comprehension of text. Since reading texts is the main religious literacy activity, it is logical that the emphasis of literacy education in monasteries is on practising to read texts, which comprises the major portion of classroom practices in monastic literacy education (INT No. 7). The ultimate goal of monastic literacy education is memorizing Buddhist Scriptures, which is achieved by learning to read fluently. Since monks read texts aloud in monasteries in the process of becoming a fluent reader, a student needs to learn correct pronunciation of the language.

According to my interviewees, correct pronunciation is foundational for fluent reading and writing (INT. No. 1; 2; 7; 10). However, even though practising correct pronunciation is important in monastic literacy practices, pronunciation is not standardized in practice (cf. Willis 2001, INT. No. 1), and every monastery has its own standards of correct pronunciation. Those standards are based on the local dialect of the Amdo Tibetan (See Chapter 2). According to a common Tibetan saying “Every Tibetan valley has its own dialect.” (Willis 2001; Kapstein 2006). Therefore, the location of the monastery dictates the standard form of pronunciation, which can then differ from the standard of a monastery located in neighbouring regions. As a result, despite the fact that nowadays most monks and nuns have gone to school and can read and write at the time they join a monastery / nunnery, they are required to attend literacy classes in the monastery to build a foundation for reading practices according to the practice of that local monastery.

“When a newcomer comes to this monastery, he does not need to learn how to read and write, but he has to learn some pronunciation. After monks can read fluently they can join the gathering in the monastery.

(The Head Lama, INT. No. 2)

The Head Lama also points out that different reading practices are connected to the hierarchy of a monastery. One motivation for learning to read fluently is to reach a higher status in a novitiate in a monastery. In the beginning of their novitiate, monks practise reading outside the big hall where monks read scriptures together, yet independently. After achieving required reading fluency, novices are allowed to join the gathering in a monastery. This social reason increases the importance of becoming a fluent reader in a hierarchical monastic community.



Figure 17. Monks are reading in a hall of a monastery.

Monks who are involved in manual labour are able to read morning prayers, but their other duties within a monastery do not involve literacy (Bass 1998). Their literacy practices are minimal, mainly reading their daily prayers. In contrast, clerical scholars present another extreme in the monastic hierarchy and the use of literacy. For example, one of my interviewees is a well-known Lama and a scholar, the author of many religious books and articles (INT No. 2). His involvement in literacy is comprehensive: chanting morning prayers, involvement in discussions of profound Buddhist Scriptures, writing books, teaching literacy and Buddhist philosophy to Living Buddhas, etc.

In the end, being a monk is the basis of monastic literacy practices, but internal duties form an individual's literacy practices according to his needs of literacy in the monastery (cf. Baker 2006). However, every student must process through the monastic way of learning literacy.

Learning and teaching methods

In monastic literacy teaching, the main emphasis is on teaching reading (INT No. 10), so reading practices take a major portion of time out of a novice's daily life. According to the Head Lama, the main qualification of a teacher is the skill of pronunciation. He says:

"A teacher will be a person who has the best pronunciation in the monastery." (The Head Lama, INT. No. 2)

This can be understood in the light of importance of correct pronunciation, which sets the qualifications for a teacher. This statement emphasizes what is earlier discussed about pronunciation.

The teacher's role is to teach alphabets so that a student learns them correctly. The methods of teaching used are very limited. The teacher's role is mainly to guide a learner to read fluently by giving him reading tasks and to make sure he acquires the skills of reading needed in a monastic community. Tserang explains his experience as a novice:

"A teacher corrects the reading of a student on the first day, but on the following day the reading should be fluent. If the reading passage is long it may take long period of time to practise reading and memorize the given text fully. I usually memorise the Buddhist Scriptures four hours in the morning and five hours in the afternoon." (Tserang, INT. No. 7)

The main learning method in monastic literacies is repetition. Required fluent reading skills are attained by much repetition of a text, and the focus of learning is on memorizing. Focus on memorizing a text can shift the goal from learning to read into memorization and religious reading practices. This, in turn, may lead to the

issue of what actually “counts” as literacy, as mentioned earlier in this chapter (cf. Maddox 2006). The line between reading practices and chanting practices in monastic learning process seems to be fine.

Barton (1994) argues that people should learn literacy in the context of their daily literacy practices and communication. Concerning the monastic communities, the process of learning literacy meets the needs of religious uses of literacy, whereas reading texts is apparently more useful for most people in monasteries than writing texts. As a religious practice, the act of reading is important for gaining merit (as mentioned in Chapter 2). Monks do not necessarily reflect on the ideas behind the text, which contrasts with Freire’s teaching (cf. Freire 1989). The focus of teaching is not on comprehending the text, which becomes apparent in Tserang’s experience of reading practices in monasteries:

“When I was learning to read fluently, my teacher did not check whether I understood a text or not. Teaching focused on memorizing a text, so that was what I did. Sometimes I wanted to know the meaning of a text I was reading, but I could not ask my teacher. At that time, not all monks could explain the meaning of Buddhist Scriptures and teachers emphasise on how well a student can read, not on a meaning.” (Tserang, INT No.7)

In a popular perception of monastic literacy is the predominant view that literacy is to memorize texts and chant them. However, that is not the whole truth. Monks, who acquire literacy beyond fluent reading skills, learn to read for meaning. More advanced literacy learners are usually monks who dedicate their lives to philosophical dialectics, such as The Head Lama who was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Traditionally monks have also studied Tibetan medicine and astrology in monasteries (Goldstein-Kyaga, 1992), and for these studies monks are bound to learn more than the basic skills of reading.

I suggest that the career of a monk and types of literacy practices are linked together. My suggestion is based on the reading practices of monks but also on the practice that learning to write is not compulsory in monastic literacy classes (INT No. 2; 7; 9). The interview situation with Old Teacher (INT No 10) revealed that

monks are “known to be good readers but poor in writing skills”, because it is not compulsory to learn to write. It is more or less a student’s choice how much he wants to learn writing (Tserang, INT No 7). Therefore, mastering the language does not necessarily include mastering writing, but merely means mastering reading in the context of daily uses of literacy in a monastic community.

Functional literacy in monasteries

With regard to functional literacy, UNESCO defines a functionally literate person as follows: “A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development” (UNESCO 2008a, 1). Functional literacy is often linked with both social and economic development, as discussed in Chapter 3. The focus of monastic literacy is not specifically on economic goals, but rather it aims primarily to prepare one for further religious education in monasteries. Therefore, primary functional literacy activities in monasteries differ from those in secular society (such as doing accounts or reading fertilizer instructions). Literacy skills acquired by monks can be a base for personal development, for example in religious education and numeracy for astrology. Since monastic literacy is acquired in a religious context, it is primarily functional with respect to further studies in the same field, i.e. vocabulary, grammar etc. Therefore, early literacy studies are the basis for further religious studies.¹⁸

As a community, a monastery delegates different duties to different monks. Monks who are involved in practical duties (such as drivers or those who are in charge of supplying daily goods) need everyday functional literacy for their duties as they interact with wider society outside the monastery. Yet most texts in society are in Chinese and all dominant literacies are also, by and large, Chinese (Harri 2009). Therefore, acquiring literacy in Tibetan is not sufficient for any duties requiring cross-cultural communication in the wider society.

¹⁸ College students, who attend teaching in monasteries, have acquired their functional literacy skills in school. Therefore, in this context, functional literacy teaching in monasteries concern only monks and the monastic society.

In the end, monastic literacy teaching and uses of literacy are contextualised by being a monk (or a nun) in a monastic community. Need for literacy varies according to the duties of each monk or nun. But the main need for literacy is to enable participation in religious practices, i.e. for reading and chanting purposes.

5.2 Religion and Amdo Literacies in Communities

Most Tibetans are Tibetan Buddhists, and Tibetan Buddhism has had a profound influence on Tibetan thought and culture throughout their history (as described in Chapter 2).¹⁹ According to Kapstein, "Religion pervades most aspects of traditional Tibetan life and culture, and the dominant, institutional religious system is Buddhism" (Kapstein 2006, 205). Tibetan Buddhism is an essential part of Tibetan cultural identity, which is apparent in daily life (see Chapter 2).

From the perspective of language and literacy, Tibetan Buddhism and ethnic identity are cultural elements which assist Tibetans in maintaining both their language and mother tongue literacy practices, along with forming discourses of literacy.

5.2.1 Religion as an Inspiration for Literacy Practices

One of the key issues in adult literacy learning, or in adult education in general, is motivation (Ruohotie 1982; Rogers 1999). Without motivation, we cannot expect success in learning. Religious literacies are commonly known to motivate people to acquire literacy. Tibetan Buddhism is one of the main cultural elements motivating Amdos to acquire literacy in Tibetan, despite the pressure of the majority language, Chinese, and its dominant literacy practices (Harri 2009).

As Tibetan Buddhism is an important component of Tibetan culture, and as literacy is contextualised in culture (cf. Street 1993; Martin-Jones 2000), Tibetan Buddhism has two main impacts on Tibetan literacy practices. When religion is important to

¹⁹ Tibetan Buddhism has adopted magical features from Bön religion that are different from other kinds of Buddhism.

people, they will make an effort to learn the language in order to learn the religion. Through reading (and writing) practices, Amdos improve their knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, their culture. Religious reading practices are a driving force to acquire literacy in two ways: Amdos are motivated to acquire literacy by the desire to access religious texts, and that motivation is strengthened by their society. Here are two examples of many similarly expressed views:

"In White Helmet village in Tongde, adult literacy students were motivated by Buddhist Scriptures, stories and songs to acquire literacy."

(OBS. No. 19).

"So it is very good to know how to read and write, so they can read Buddhist Scriptures."

(Mr Hui, INT. No. 9).

One common Tibetan saying goes "Kha, ka is the source of religion". "Kha" and "ka" are the first two consonants of the Tibetan alphabet. Religion in this context means scriptures and people tend to understand that a religion means a book (Ms Dako, INT No. 29). That is to say, religion is revealed in religious scriptures. Through reading Buddhist Scriptures, Tibetans have an opportunity to gain understanding of their religion. On the other hand, without knowing the alphabet, one cannot read books. As the saying goes, 'The alphabet is the source of religion'. In the Tibetan context, the reverse is also true. 'Religion is the source of the alphabet,' since the writing system was developed by monks.

Amdo society encourages individual Tibetans to practise their religion, which involves uses of literacy in Tibetan: the religion provides an arena for literacy practices. From early on, most Tibetan literature has dealt with religion and its philosophy, which are still the most popular topics (e.g. Cabezón & Jackson 1996; Danwood 1999; Kapstein 2006; FN No. 6; 11). The main subject of printed books and other related materials in the Tibetan language is Tibetan Buddhism. The shopkeeper of the biggest Tibetan bookstore, located near Tibetan shops at one of the main bus stations in Xining, says:

“60 % of all Tibetan publications (books and magazines) which are sold in this bookstore, are religious books.” (FN No. 6).

As Tibetan reading materials are primarily Buddhist, and as Tibetans are inspired by their cultural (religious) reading practices, Tibetan Buddhism has a crucial role and influence in Tibetan literacy practices in general, but also in literacy teaching. Tibetan Buddhism provides motivation both to acquire literacy and to access post-literacy materials, and it forms the ways Amdos understand literacy.

Monastic education has been a pillar of literacy education since the ancient times of Tibetan society (see Chapter 2). However, since 1949 the government of the PRC has taken responsibility for literacy education, and monasteries are no longer the main provider of Tibetan literacy education. According to the Education Law and Article 8, "The state shall separate education from religion. Any organization or individual may not employ religion to obstruct activities of the state education system." (Ministry of Education 1995). Therefore, families no longer send their young children to monasteries to the same extent as in the past (see Chapter 2 and 3).

Nevertheless, monastic education still has its place among ordinary Tibetans. Monastic literacy education has a good reputation among primary school teachers and college students. For that reason, monasteries have become appealing to young college students who regard monastic language teaching as a good basis for language studies. Tsoksum, who studies in Beijing, says:

“In the monastery we can learn well, not only the grammar but the language as a whole, through Classical Tibetan Scriptures. If you have learned basic Tibetan well then you go to a monastery and learn more. I will improve my Tibetan because teachers there [in the monastery] are better than in school.”

(Mr Tsoksum, INT No. 1)

According to Tsoksum and another college student, Lhundrub (INT No. 2) monasteries have become language schools for Tibetan college students (e.g. INT No. 1; 2; 9; 10; FN No 2; 13). The Head Lama from the Guinan Monastery says:

“Some years back only some college students came to the monastery to learn Tibetan, like those who are going to take an exam in their schools, etc. But now we are getting more, like 150-200 students on holidays. More and more college students are interested in learning the language in a monastery.”

(The Head Lama, INT No. 2)

There are two key elements in monastic education that appeal to lay people. Firstly, it is culturally appropriate - even desirable - to study in a monastery, as religion is still one of the key elements in Tibetan life (as discussed in Chapter 2). Even if people cannot commit their whole life to a monastery, at least they can spend some period of time there. Secondly, the long tradition of teaching the Tibetan language has given monastic teaching a high status especially in early literacy teaching. The monastic way of teaching literacy appeals to people who prefer the traditional way of teaching literacy that emphasises reading skills.

In Tibetan communities, the traditional way of teaching literacy is based on the cultural view of literacy. According to Baker (2006), one of the cultural ways of understanding literacy is literacy being the reciting and memorising of text. This is also a Tibetan cultural view of literacy (as discussed earlier in this chapter). For that reason, I believe people feel comfortable with the monastic way of teaching literacy. A teacher from Tongde County explains:

“If they use traditional teaching methods in schools, then the results are good. Teaching in monasteries gives good results in literacy acquisition. New teaching methods have come up with new school books, but the traditional methods are much better. If teaching is teacher-centred (as in monasteries), then students learn better than with the new methods, when students have a bigger role than before.” (A Tongde Teacher, INT No. 22)

The features of being culturally relevant and having a good general reputation have kept monastic literacy teaching widely desired and alive in Tibetan society, despite changes in society.

Lastly, there are different needs for literacy in communities. Baker (2006) has listed these in seven categories: learning, citizenship, survival, personal relationships, employment, personal pleasure and creativity, empowering the mind, community development and political empowerment. One need for literacy in Amdo communities deals with personal pleasure: literacy is needed for gaining religious merit. Others have categorised this kind of literacy as ritual reading practices (Linnakylä 1995), which is a precise description of this kind of religious activity.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, religious literacy practices are essential in Tibetan life, and religious practices are one of the motivations for Amdos to learn to read. Religious reading is merely reciting a text rather than understanding its content. Therefore, religious literacy practices do not always concern cognitive issues in reading practices, but rather religious understanding of the practices. As Mr Huis says, people do not necessarily comprehend the text that they read:

"It is good that people learn to read so that they can read Buddhist scriptures." But at the same time he says: "They cannot understand [Buddhist scriptures.]. Our level of knowledge is so limited and one cannot read it. It's like an airplane flying in the sky. It is so far away. The religion is so deep and your knowledge is so limited." (Mr Hui, INT. No. 9)

Despite the fact that Buddhist Scriptures are written in a high literary form, which is rather difficult to understand, people like to read them. (See a language issue in Chapter 2). People in Goma village point out the importance of religious reading by saying:

"Buddhist scriptures are read every day. Religious books are popular."

(A group interview, INT. No. 23)

Holy books, religious books and thangkas (religious drawings) are very common in Tibetan homes. They are given a special place in homes, as seen in the following picture:



Figure 18. A home altar: holy books and pictures are supported by secular books. A thangka can be seen on the wall on the left.

It is the act of reading which is important in this context. Therefore, these kinds of reading practices by private individuals and non-clergy appear to have contradictions, which can only be understood in their cultural context and the way of understanding literacy.

Besides reading holy books and prayers, religious literacy practices consist of numerous visual signs in daily life such as prayer flags, auspicious signs and wind horses. These examples of religious literacy practices represent a high percentage of Tibetan daily literacy practices, which all have their origin in Tibetan Buddhism. Ordinary people do not understand the texts and visual signs of religious literacies. But this fact does not seem to lessen the importance of such literacy practices to these people. According to Pintchman (2007, 4), ritual practices produce “specific types of meaning and values through particular strategies”. These are the cultural rituals Hofstede (1991) mentions that form cultural practices, and as such they are important in Tibetan culture.

This discourse of literacy practices has also influenced secular reading practices. It is a common phenomenon that a Tibetan can read a piece of text without understanding the content, of which the following is an example:

“The boy, around 15 years old, read the text very fluently. Afterwards I asked him some questions about the text but he could not tell what the text was about.”
(Max 2005, FN. No 14)

I argue that religious reading practices have impinged on Tibetan secular reading practices and people do not always make a distinction between the two. As a result, reading is primarily practised as a religious act in order to gain merit.

From a Western point of view, there appears to be a contradiction between reading practice and its purpose. It seems that Amdos like to read the text even though they do not understand it. Therefore, their motivation for reading is purely as a religious act to gain merit. From their point of view, reading religious books and Buddhist Scriptures, even without understanding them, is beneficial because the religious content of the act of reading makes the reading practice meaningful, not the comprehension of the content. This is similar to religious reading practices in rural Pakistan, in which “ritualistic readings have a symbolic significance and mean a lot to the village people” (Zubair 2001, 193), even though the text itself is not understood. The Head Lama says:

“Most villagers know the benefits of the Tangka or Longta, but they don’t know why there are animals on it and what it means. But they know that if they use Longta, they know that Longta will bring them good luck. “
(INT No. 2).

Tibetan folk rituals in villages form an integral part of religious life and at the same time strengthen village solidarity and identity (Epstein & Wenbin 1998). Buddhist texts, in one form or another, are part of an individual Tibetan’s rituals. Travellers put up colourful prayer flags on high mountain passes, where one can see masses of these flickering pieces of printed cloth, sending prayers to the gods. Prayer flags “decorate” bridges over rivers and walls outside houses. On the same high mountain passes, one can find hundreds of small pieces of paper on the ground. They are wind

horses²⁰ that Tibetans throw in the air, believing this will add blessing on their lives. The walls of restaurants are decorated with auspicious symbols. Old women spin their prayer wheels and count their rosary beads. On their annual visits to homes, monks read Buddhist Scriptures and carry out other religious ceremonies. Having a home altar with a picture of the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders' is also commonly seen. All these religious rituals are means of gaining merit or asking blessings from the deities or spirits of the mountains and, as such, they are important to people. Because they are regarded as being important, people keep on practising them. These are activities in which Tibetans are commonly involved and in which Tibetan language literacy practices are embedded. Therefore these literacy practices meet both community goals and individual aspirations.

5.3 Other Cultural Discourses of Literacy

Different discourses of literacy are culturally bound (Baker 2006). People view literacy in their own cultural context, which varies from reading aloud to empowering thinking and feeling in their social context (Boyarin 1992; Wells & Chang-Wells 1992). Literacy is not only about cognitive skills but also about feelings about being literate in a social context, e.g. people feel empowered by being able to write their names on official documents.

There are also different needs for literacy in any given society: for survival, citizenship, learning, personal relationships, pleasure and creativity, personal development, employment, community development, political empowerment and empowering the mind (Baker 2001). The needs for literacy vary according to the society and the way to meet these needs varies according to the languages that are used within the society. Minority languages do not often meet the needs for literacy in a wider society (Skuttnab-Kangas 1995).

Discourses of literacy in Amdo communities are formed by cultural practices (as seen above) as are views of literacy, and of understanding what literacy is for.

20 A wind horse is a piece of paper (around 5 cm x 5 cm) and it has a religious picture and some text on it. People usually throw 20-30 pieces of wind horses at a time.

Different elements of Tibetan culture can be presented with the Hofstede's onion diagramme. Earlier in this chapter we focused on religious influence on Amdo literacy practices. Now we can look at it based on values of a patriarchal society. Values of patriarchal society are at the centre; rituals of society include both religious rituals and non-religious ones; cultural heroes such as Gesar along with religious leaders, village leaders and teachers present Tibetan heroes; symbols include the Tibetan language and other signs. These cultural elements form Tibetan literacy practices.

5.3.1 Literacy for Gaining Knowledge

One of the needs for literacy in communities is for learning (Baker 2006). This can lead to an assumption that literacy is the only way for learning. Literacy acquisition is often linked with learning and gaining more knowledge in life, as if learning takes place only through the written text (Barton 1994). That then, subconsciously or consciously, ignores all the other ways of learning through oral information, etc. Even though Tibetan literate materials are manifold and literacy practices are diverse, the Amdos' idea of literacy acquisition and literacy practices follows the philosophy that through literacy people can gain more knowledge. This discourse of literacy is shared both by literate and non-literate Amdos. My informant, Lhabi, who is a non-literate woman running her own yoghurt business, shares her thoughts:

"If I knew how to read and write then I could learn more. Then knowledge will also increase." (Lhabi, INT. No.6).

Even though Lhabi is content managing her small business, she feels that she would do better if she could learn from books instead of having someone explain what to do and how to do it. Learning by reading is regarded as a better way of learning than learning only by oral means. Possibly, I would add, printed text is more powerful in people's minds than oral knowledge. Kraus (1991) refers to the same issue of printed text and power in a Chinese context by exploring different power relations of Chinese calligraphy.

The idea of gaining knowledge by reading leads to reading practices in Amdo communities where reading is often associated with work and study, and as such reading practices are linked with situated work-place and school literacies (cf. Hamilton & Barton 1998). Career people, such as doctors and teachers, focus their reading practices on professional literature, and reading often takes place at work. Tsoksum, my interviewee, says that his parents (a government worker and a primary school teacher) do not have any books at home, because

“They only read at work.” (Mr Tsoksum, INT. No.1).

Ms Lhabi, who is mentioned above and who is married to an ex-teacher, explains her husband's reading practices:

"When my husband was teaching everyday, he had many books - enough books for a couple of months. He was reading all the time. He read Tibetan magazines because he was a Tibetan teacher. After he finished his work as a teacher he has not been reading that much." (Ms Lhabi, INT. No.4)

Teachers in the Guide follow the same pattern that reading is work related:

We have long working days so we don't read anything in the evenings. Everything we read is related to our work as teachers.” (INT. No. 20)

Tibetan doctors tend to read only professional literature and reading takes place at their clinics, as a doctor in Tongren said:

"I don't read anything at home but at work." (Goma village, INT. No. 5)

Similar habits are met elsewhere, e.g. a village doctor in Guinan says that he keeps all the books at the office, and he does not read anything at home (FN No.1).

A notion of “study” is not only related to reading books but also to reading Tibetan magazines. Tsoksum shed light on to that issue:

"If someone buys a Tibetan magazine, she must be a student."

(Mr Tsoksum, INT No.1)

Similarly Lhabi seems to think that her husband read Tibetan magazines because they were related to his work as a teacher, as cited above. According to Tsoksum and Lhabi, even magazines are associated with "gaining knowledge", not for pleasure. Maybe for this reason comic books and storybooks are less common than religious and other books in bookshops; people read mainly for study purposes (FN No. 6; 11). However, it could also be the other way round - that because of the lack of so-called pleasure reading materials, Tibetan people associate reading with study and gaining knowledge.

5.3.2 Literacy for Pleasure

Another need for literacy is personal creativity and pleasure (Baker 2001). Tibetan literacy for pleasure deals with cultural and practical issues. Earlier in this chapter I mentioned religious practices in the category of personal pleasure. Music is another important component of Tibetan life, which is connected with literacy. Musical recordings, both audiovisual and audio recordings, are popular among Tibetans (FN No 14.). Tibetans like singing whenever they get together, an example of which is recorded in the following excerpt of the fieldnotes:

“We are having a farewell party with our literacy trainers of the TLP in Tongde County centre. The trainers have booked a cabaret for us. There are eight of us: six Tibetans and two foreigners. During the meal our Tibetan trainers get into Tibetan dancing and singing. One of them has taught Tibetan dancing in schools so he is good at it. All the trainers are good singers. They sing songs from their childhood, songs they have learned at school and some popular songs. Some trainers used chopsticks as drumsticks and some pretended to play the madrin. Everybody had fun and it was obvious that everybody enjoyed singing and dancing.” (FN No. 14)

According to Stewart (2000) Tibetan songs have had an essential role in Tibetan literature throughout the years, and songs have been an encouragement in the times of struggle. In Amdo villages Tibetan songbooks are very popular (FN No. 11). Women in literacy classes especially were eager to acquire literacy so that they could read songbooks and write songs:

“They want to write songs.” (OB, No. 4).

Tibetans treasure their own musical heritage. One popular theme in Tibetan music is the wild natural environment around them, the mountains and the sky, both important to nomadic people. Both the physical nature and the spiritual nature of mountains are significant. Tibetans worship mountain gods and they admire the high mountains of the Tibetan Plateau. Tibetan music has some of its roots in these feelings, inspiring people to sing songs just for pleasure.

From a literacy point of view one feature of the language in music is remarkable. Musical text can be written in a spoken form of the language, which people can understand more easily than the higher literary form. As discussed in Chapter 2, Tibetan text is usually written in literary form, which causes difficulties for Tibetans in understanding. Especially songs about surrounding nature can be written in a spoken form of the language (low form). According to Tibetan musicians and teachers, some songs contain some words from the lexicon of the spoken form of the language. Mr Hui, a teacher, writes songs and explains the issue of using the lexicon of a spoken form of Tibetan in songs:

“For instance, if you sing Tibetan songs, Tibetan traditional songs are played [composed] with madrin and sung. In those songs, if there are a lot of words in the spoken form of Tibetan, then listeners like to listen and singers also like it.”

(Mr Hui, INT No.9)

A similar issue occurs in poems, some comics and in easy reading books, which can be written in a lower form of the language. These kinds of literature were favourite reading materials in villages (OB No. 4-29). The Tibetan Literacy Programme provided “library boxes” for villages during the programme implementation. Those

boxes included around 40 different kinds of reading materials from comic books to marriage law books. Comics and storybooks were popular among literacy students. However, as mentioned above, storybooks, comics and general magazines have the fewest titles and least volume in the market. They are not easy to get hold of by ordinary village people.

I can think of two reasons why reading for pleasure is not one of the dominant discourses of Tibetan literacy practice. One reason has its roots in the language: people do not enjoy reading “the second language” that is the written language of Tibetan. Most literature is written in a higher form of the language, and Amdos do not read in the language they speak. The other one is also rooted in culture: it is not in the Tibetan culture to read for pleasure. For example, one old lady tells her story:

“Tailor lady says that she has never read anything after finishing school. They didn’t have many books at home and furthermore they were not allowed to read at home because there was no time for reading. Her grandma, who took care of her and her aunt were working in the family. Everybody was busy with work. She says “if I had a book I am not sure if I wanted to read.” She says that it is easy to learn, easy to forget. Later on she said, “I don’t know what kind of books I would like to read, maybe songs and stories. My memory is not good, I can’t concentrate.”

(Tailor Lady, INT No. 15)

It appears that Tailor Lady explains lack of pleasure reading in an Amdo culture: people in farming and nomadic families did not have time for reading activities. Yet, she herself prefers songs and stories, which are not that demanding for a reader. They are relatively short and language is easier for a beginner to handle.

However, Amdos who are literate in Chinese have adopted a habit for a pleasure reading. Thus assumingly, the diglossia of the language may have a bigger influence on reading practices than other cultural way of doing literacy.

Language, as one of the cultural elements among the other Tibetan cultural ways of viewing literacy, forms Amdo literacy practices and discourses of literacy in daily life.

5.3.3 Gender-based Literacies

Reading habits and needs for literacy are gender-based. Men and women have different needs for literacy and therefore they have different kinds of literacy practices according to the society in which they live. For example, men read newspapers and women read magazines, or men read law books and women read poems, etc.

In nomadic Amdo communities women's literacy practices differ quite clearly from that of men. This can be predicted in a patriarchal society, since women and men have different roles in daily life. Village leaders in Guinan County explained the need for reading materials as follows:

“There are a couple of books for students and party members in the village. Women would like to read poems, songs and novels. Village leaders (men) would like to have Gesar epics, scientific books (such as animal husbandry and agricultural books), religious books, food related books for women and books about “new things” for villagers to read.” (FN No. 13)

It seems that women are considered to be most interested in reading poems, songs and novels. Poems and songs are usually rather short and not written in a high form of the language, as will be discussed later on. Therefore they are easier to read and do not require much time or effort to read, which fits well with the daily demands required of women. Novels are considered also easier to read since they are situated in Tibetan life. Food related books relate to women's tasks at home as they are in charge of cooking.

It appears that men are considered to have more demanding literacy practices since they are responsible for household management and business. Also, reading Gesar

requires better language skills than reading poems, etc. This message from village leaders is not only about needs for literacy but also about cultural tradition and power relations (discussed later on in this chapter). Interest in poems and songs is, I believe, a strong cultural tradition among literate Amdo women. At the same time men are considered to be more skilful readers in Tibetan than women. Men can manage more difficult texts. Whether this statement is true or false, this is the general view on different kinds of reading habits and needs of literacy between men and women.

6. Tibetan Adult Literacy Education

6.1 Learning and Teaching

Until now I have been discussing features of religious literacy practices, everyday literacies and some cultural discourses of literacy along with language issues. They provide the cultural context and environment for adult literacy teaching and learning in Amdo societies. They also, at least partially, answer the question “What is literacy for?” which then guides the ways of teaching and learning in adult literacy classes.

6.1.1 Literacy - a Set of Skills

One fundamental element in Tibetan literacy is the Tibetans’ view of literacy. The predominant Tibetan view of literacy is that literacy is a set of skills of reading and writing, which is a common idea globally (e.g. Barton 1994, Street 1984). Literacy as a skill-approach is close to the traditional Tibetan way of learning literacy, which emphasises the skills of reading as we have discussed above in the monastic context. That literacy as a technical skill is neutral in its aims (Baker 2001) is only an assumption. Amdos do not necessarily notice the values and ideologies which underlie their literacy practices (as described above). The skills of reading and writing have their relative value as tools for further education, for religious purposes and for making it easier to carry out daily duties in a literate world.

The Amdo understanding of literacy has two parallel functions. On one hand literacy is a functional tool for getting other things done in life, as Barton and Hamilton have described situated literacies in their research in the UK (cf. Barton and Hamilton 1998). At the same time, literacy acquisition is a base for further learning and gaining knowledge (as explained earlier in this chapter).

The ultimate goal for literacy students in acquiring reading and writing skills is to be able to “learn more”, “learn new skills” or “learn a new job” (INT. 9; 34). This is described by some people of Goma village:

“After learning to read and write, I can think. First you have to learn to read and write, then you may think more about other skills in life. Then after having these skills maybe people would like to read a little more, think about what is good for daily life, for example how to raise animals. But first you have to have this skill to read and write. (Goma village, INT. No. 5)

The statement “after learning to read and write I can think” can be seen echoing the policy makers’ discourse. Goma village students were not alone with this statement. Similar statements were voiced elsewhere in the research area. For example, in Markhan village students said:

“If you don’t know how to read you cannot do anything.” and “My thinking has changed.” (FN No. 13)

As we can see, literacy for Amdos is "to be learned, not to be done" (cf. Rogers 1995, vi). People acquire literacy, but they do not ‘do’ literacy. As such, they ignore the social aspect of literacy (cf. NLG 2000). Rather, literacy is understood as a separate function and has its value in isolation. The context of adult literacy acquisition is not seen as important but once the skills are learned they are used according to daily need, as one interviewee says:

“Both farmers and herders have the same (literacy) course but their daily needs are different. Because this is only about literacy it does not matter. (Literacy is about learning to read and write, and therefore it does not matter in what context they learn these skills.- interpreted by RH).”

(Merangdzol, INT No. 13).

The underlying idea is that literacy acquisition is about learning the alphabet. Since the 1980’s, the provincial government of Qinghai Province has implemented an adult literacy course “Liang Qi” in Hainan TAP. This literacy programme has

adapted a skills approach to literacy teaching which, quoting Baker, focuses on learning that “the skills of reading and writing can be decomposed into vocabulary, grammar and composition” (Baker 2003, 323). Therefore, Amdo literacy students learn basic reading and writing skills. It is hoped, however, that even though functional literacy skills are not practiced in the course, students would later on be able to use their skills as functional tools in daily life. For example, students do not practice filling in forms or reading manuals but they are expected to be able to fill in forms, etc. The ultimate goal of the Liang Qi programme, according to one education official is:

“The main goal is that students can learn more skills after learning how to read and write. Immediately after the course a student should be able to write a simple letter and can fill simple forms.” (Merangdzol, INT No.13)

Barton argues (1994) that this view of literacy (as a set of skills) leads to the notion of discrete stages in learning, i.e. literacy students learn separate skills in a linear order. New skills are built on previously learned skills, as Merangdzol explains above. This view of literacy also influences the approach to adult literacy acquisition. To be literate is to have access to knowledge through written material. This approach to literacy can make the word ‘literacy’ a metaphor similar to other metaphors such as ‘sickness’, ‘ignorance’, etc. (cf. Barton 1994).

6.1.2 Language of Literacy

The language of literacy is an important issue, and language choice for literacy programmes influences the effectiveness of literacy learning (Robinson 2007). Language is also a cultural component, which in any society influences literacy acquisition in one way or another.

The TLP opted for a mother tongue literacy approach since most Amdos speak Amdo Tibetan²¹ as their mother tongue. Language survey in Gonghe town shows Amdo Tibetan as the home language, with over 90 per cent of Amdos speaking

²¹ Amdo Tibetan is one of the three Tibetan main dialects. See Chapter 2.

Amdo Tibetan at home. Amdo Tibetan is spoken less outside the home (Figure 19). Because the population of Gonghe town is diverse (including a great number of Han people), Amdos are forced to use Chinese while attending to their business matters. The situation is more favourable for Tibetan language use in smaller towns and villages within Hainan TAP.

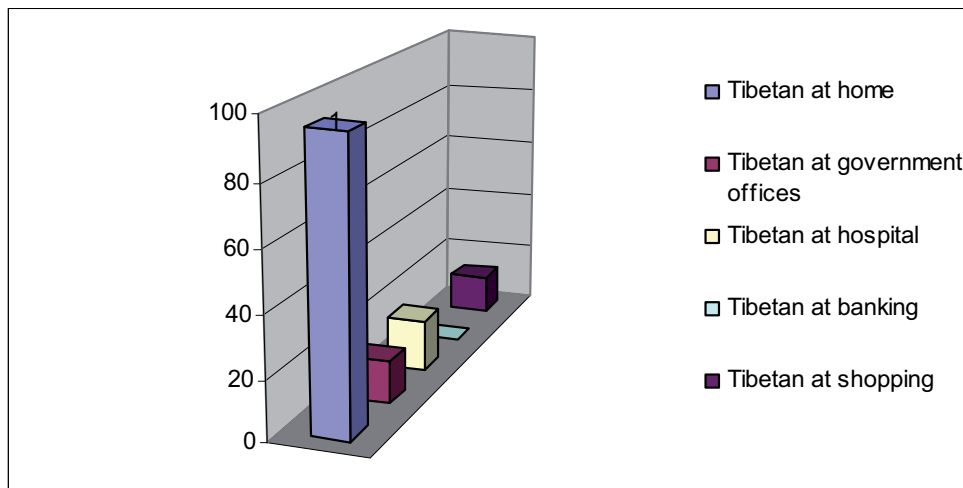


Figure 19. The Tibetan language use in different contexts in Gonghe town.

Diglossia

For Tibetan language learners, mother tongue literacy acquisition is not as straightforward a process as it may be for some other mother tongue learners. Some of the hurdles faced by Tibetan language learners are due to diglossia in the Tibetan language (see Chapter 2). Therefore, the benefits of learning one's mother tongue literacy is disputed. A diglossic language does not enable literacy learners to benefit as much as learners of a non-diglossic language. Due to diglossia, the vehicle for Tibetan literacy education is the literary form, rather than the spoken form of the Tibetan language. Tibetans do not learn to read and write the language they speak in every day life, rather they learn a higher form of the language, which they often call "written form". According to Tournadre (2003) diglossia constitutes an enormous obstacle for learning Tibetan, which also became obvious to me during this research.

Diglossia impacts literacy practices in the classroom, e.g. students have to learn new vocabulary, as the lexicon of the spoken form differs from that of the literary form. As a result, it is a common practice in literacy classes of the TLP that teachers explain the meanings of words in textbooks to students who know only the spoken form of the language (INT. No. 9; 10; 13).

“It is like we have in the second book (the number 2 primer of the TLP), they have a lot of words and a teacher has to tell them what they mean. When they read they learn to know the meaning.” (Old Teacher INT. 9)

To acquire literacy in Tibetan is to learn another language. Students do not learn to read and write the language they speak in every day communication but rather learn the literary form that is used in printed materials and in media. Thus the learning process can be confusing and students struggle. Here are two comments about learning Tibetan, one by a male student of the TLP and the second by the researcher:

“There is a difference between spoken and written (literary) language so sometimes I feel that maybe I am not speaking real Tibetan. The written (literary) form is very important.”

(The host in a group meeting, INT. No. 5)

“She reads aloud a bit from the easy book, which had a nice illustration. She understood the first page but straight after that she couldn’t understand the content of the second page. Then again she could understand the content of the third page. It became obvious that she had some difficulties with the literary form.”.

(FN No. 13)

Schiffman (1997), who has researched diglossia, refers to learning the literary form of language as ‘second language learning’, which describes well what adult Tibetans are doing in Tibetan literacy classes. Diglossia has a significant impact on their learning process by making it more difficult.

Mother tongue literacy learning and identity

Despite the difficulties that diglossia causes for learning, Amdos are motivated by learning their mother tongue. Language is one strong element of Tibetan ethnic identity, and as such it motivates people to learn. Lhabi, an illiterate housewife, says:

“Because we are Tibetans we should know what we have, our own language. Because I am a Tibetan I want to know Tibetan.” (Ms Lhabi, INT. No.4)

One 22-year old boy, who was a student of the TLP, says:

“I want to know how to read written language. I also want to know the language better and understand things.” (FN No. 13)

Tibetan language is “our language” which is something Amdos own as their Tibetan heritage. “Our language” is an indication of a boundary marker (Tabouret-Keller 1997 as in May 2001) for being a Tibetan. At the same time she also shows the importance of language.

Mr Dorje, a middle-school principal, continues discussion of mother tongue education from another angle. He sees the Tibetan language being a base for learning the second language:

127. R: How important the Tibetan language is for you?

128. D: For a Tibetan to know Tibetan language is like a person who can stand. Everywhere in a Tibetan area you can stand up just like a baby. Then to know Chinese then you can go to the gate. Then in China you can go out. Then if you know English you can go out from the country.

129. D: If you are a Tibetan and you don’t know how to speak Tibetan or use Tibetan. Even if you go out how to go out if you cannot stand up. Like that.

130.D: If you don’t know Chinese then it does not make sense for you to go out to the different. Then if you know English then you can go to everywhere.

131.D: In my heart the first thing is to learn Tibetan then English, Chinese whatever.

132.R: Tibetan is number one?

133.T: Yes. For Tibetans, Tibetan is always first, then Chinese, then English.

134.R: Both adults and children?

135.D: Yes. Age does not matter. (Mr Dorje, INT No. 11).

Dorje's statement and his illustration of mother tongue education fits with the research on the subject (e.g. Skuttnab-Kangas 1981). When Amdos learn first literacy in their mother tongue first it enables them to stand in society. People around the learner help him to use the newly acquired skills in the language environment. Dorje says that one cannot survive on the Tibetan Plateau without knowing Tibetan. However, he does not little the value of knowing Chinese and English. Mother tongue literacy acquisition assists in learning Chinese and other languages.

The value of Tibetan language literacy education is seen not only as keeping up with the cultural heritage or as a basis for second language learning. Mdses Se, a primary school teacher, praises his mother tongue and the importance of maintaining it, as exemplified in the following poem:

“The world is getting smaller but the Tibetan areas are becoming bigger. Now is the time that the whole world is becoming one. The people in a blessed Tibetan area are spreading everywhere. They left their mother tongue and spread all over the world. In the white river area, the mother tongue is like an old man looking after the boat.

In the corner of a city our mother tongue is like a woman who has an infectious disease. Nobody likes it, and they want to avoid it like taboo, so she could not even find a place to stay. (The meaning is that in a city nobody uses the Tibetan language. Majority people think that speaking Chinese is high standard and it is popular. A translator's comment)

In Tibetan we say that even if you forget your fatherland you should never forget your mother tongue.

We are the children of our mother tongue. Our parents are Tibetan language and it's writing. When we go to other areas our mother tongue is the warm place for us to stay. And when we are in darkness our mother tongue is a lamp to show us the good way. When we are cold the mother tongue is a fire and when we are hot the mother tongue is a rain. When we are hungry the mother tongue is butter and tsampa. When we are thirsty the mother tongue is milk and yoghurt.

Mother tongue; our friend when we suffer.

Mother tongue; is a stick to help to climb the mountain.”

“Tibetans can lose clothes and even a name but could we lose the language and the writing that our forefathers gave to us?

The day we don't have our mother tongue we stand at our own gate and we will beg for food and clothes. What we receive is shame and mocking. What we have lost is a whole world.”

(Mdses Se, 2005)

This poem is full of cultural elements of Tibetan literacy. The content of the poem above reminds us of the discussion of Hirsch's (1984) notion of cultural literacy. Figures of speech and concepts in the poem are clearly embedded in the Tibetan culture and the language; to understand the poem requires knowledge of Tibetan culture. There are a couple of issues I want to pay attention to.

First of all, the author shows his concern about the Tibetan language being endangered. It is not only the government of the PRC who promotes Chinese language education but many Amdos see that their children would have better opportunities for life if they knew Chinese but they do not foresee the possible consequences as the author does. He feels similar to the Quechuas (King 2001) and other minority people who fear that losing their language would change their identity as an indigenous people. Mdses Se says that the whole of Tibetan living is wrapped up in the Tibetan language. If the Tibetan language was not important,

there would be no need to worry about losing it. His fear is not groundless in light of social changes within everyday Amdo life and the implementation of bilingual education in Tibetan regions (see Chapter 2).

Second, a family and a home village or town are important to Amdos. When Amdos are asked about their home they always tell their place of origin even if they have not lived there. Parents are important and so is their fatherland. Land is not important as a heritage but also as a natural living environment. Amdos, who are used to live on the Tibetan Plateau, admire the natural beauty of it.

Third, the author writes about daily matters and how Amdos experience them. For example, they know what extreme cold is and how important rain is. They have gone hungry many times because of cold winters with heavy snowfalls, and summers with lack of rain. Amdos know the meaning of butter, *tsampa*, milk and yoghurt in their daily life. They are the staple food for Amdos. Similarly, the author uses the images of nature which is very close to Amdos' heart. These images are vivid in the minds of Amdos' who live in harsh conditions on the Tibetan Plateau.

Fourth, Tibetan culture as many other cultures in Asia includes the notion of shame and disgrace. The ethical standards guiding people's behaviour and social interactions is derived from this notion which is combined with the religious notion of gaining merit (the Law of Karma) (cf. Chapter 2). The author tries to get people to become aware of their attitude towards their mother tongue by using the notion of shame.

All these issues are very strong in Amdos' daily life and the author knows how to use these cultural elements for raising awareness of the status of the Tibetan language in Amdo communities in the PRC.

Tibetan as a minority language does not have equal status with Chinese language in the PRC. For example, official documents in banks, post-office etc. are in Chinese (Harri 2009). It is easier to get Chinese language textbooks than Tibetan language textbooks in schools. Dorje, principal of a Tibetan middle school, tells a story about Tibetan textbooks in his school:

D: The difficult thing was that we didn't have books yet. Books were all in Chinese. Even we were teaching in Tibetan still all the books were in Chinese. Then teachers themselves had to translate the Chinese books. Now we (a committee) is translating the books.

D: In past more students knew better Chinese, they were taught Chinese and all the subjects were taught in Chinese. Then they thought they will get better jobs.

R: Only the Tibetan language was in taught in Tibetan?

TL: Oleh. Only Tibetan was taught in Tibetan.

D: The goal was that Tibetans would learn much better Chinese.

D: But the result is their Chinese did not get much better.

R: Was that because they used Tibetan at home?

TL: They use Tibetan in life and they really didn't understand what they were learning. So they didn't reach the goal. " (INT No. 11)

Tibetan mother tongue literacy education has a significant role in the Tibetan language maintenance and keeping up with the culture and cultural literacies. However, Tibetan language education in schools is "easier said than done". Qinghai Province has adopted a form of legislation that gives priority for Chinese in education (Harri 2009). As a result new sets of textbooks are first published in Chinese. Tibetan textbooks, which are translated from Chinese, face delays in publishing. According to the officials of the Tibetan Middle School in Guide²² Tibetan textbooks are published a couple of years later than Chinese versions of the same books, which then gives two options for Tibetan medium schools. They can either choose to use an old set of Tibetan textbooks or teach using a new set of Chinese textbooks.

Choosing Chinese curriculum textbooks sets a bilingual tone in classroom literacy practices which explains the outcome of not learning well Chinese that Dorje mentions. Children who come from nomadic monolingual areas are not exposed to use Chinese in their living surroundings, which causes teachers to translate between

²² Guide Xian Minzu Zhongxue

Tibetan and Chinese in classroom. This kind of teaching practice has some problems. First, translating the texts during teaching hours demands a good deal of time from actual teaching and allows less time for other activities. Second, it is also stressful for a learner to learn through an undeveloped language when he has to concentrate on understanding the language and not the content of teaching (Skuttnab-Kangas 1981). Third, Chinese textbooks are not oriented to Tibetan culture. The textbooks merely introduce Han culture and because of that, children not only face difficulties in understanding the language of teaching but also they need to learn the meanings and concepts of the second culture. This kind of teaching reminds an assimilation type of bilingual education in which language minority children are temporarily allowed to use their mother tongue in classroom, e.g. children's answers are accepted both in their mother tongue and in majority language (Baker 2006).

Even though this last example is brought up in a school context it provides essential information about the language issue in education in the research area. The debate on the language of education is an ongoing issue in the PRC and around the world. Language of literacy has power as discussed in Chapter 3. Language of literacy education is not only a means to learn but it also conveys cultural meanings, and assists maintenance of culture and language. Therefore, it is not surprising that the role of Tibetan language in education and in daily life keeps the debate alive as the government of the PRC is aiming for integrating Tibetans into the cultural and political mainstream of Chinese society (cf. Chapter 3).

6.1.3 Steps of Teaching and Learning Literacy

According to Fordham, et al. (1995) people's expectations for learning and teaching are culturally determined and affected by the ways they have experienced learning and the teaching of literacy. A culturally familiar way of learning is rewarding and appealing to adult learners (Mezirow 1991). In Tibetan culture, the familiar way of learning and teaching literacy originates in monasteries. The teaching and learning methods used in monasteries have been adopted by both secular schools and adult literacy classes. This is partially due to monks, who have been teaching Tibetan in

schools. It is difficult to find trained teachers in remote villages. For example, many classes of the TLP in Xinghai County are organised in villages which are mainly populated by itinerant Amdos. It was difficult to find trained teachers to teach in these villages therefore some of the TLP teachers were monks. Village leaders in Xinghai explained:

“ Literacy teachers are good, yet they not highly educated. Some teachers are monks and some are high school graduates.” (OB No. 22)

These monks do not have any special teacher training (as seen in the previous chapter) but they are regarded as having a good command of the language and they have people’s respect as language teachers. These monks have learned the language in monasteries. We can say that they are “products of monasteries”: along the language they have also learned the teaching methods that are used in monasteries.

As a result, the cultural tradition, along with lack of trained and suitable teachers, has had a major role in perpetuating the same teaching and learning methods in secular literacy education as in monasteries. I suggest that these teaching methods, which are not free of religious values and ideologies, have conveyed their values and ideologies to secular teaching and learning situations (see Chapter 5). This can be seen as natural because religion is such an essential part of Tibetan culture and monastic education is a mother for current education.

Teaching methods in adult literacy teaching vary according to language and culture. However, two basic approaches to teach literacy are ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’. A top-down approach focuses on learning the meaning of language. A bottom-up approach focuses on recognising and decoding letters. These two approaches can be illustrated as following:

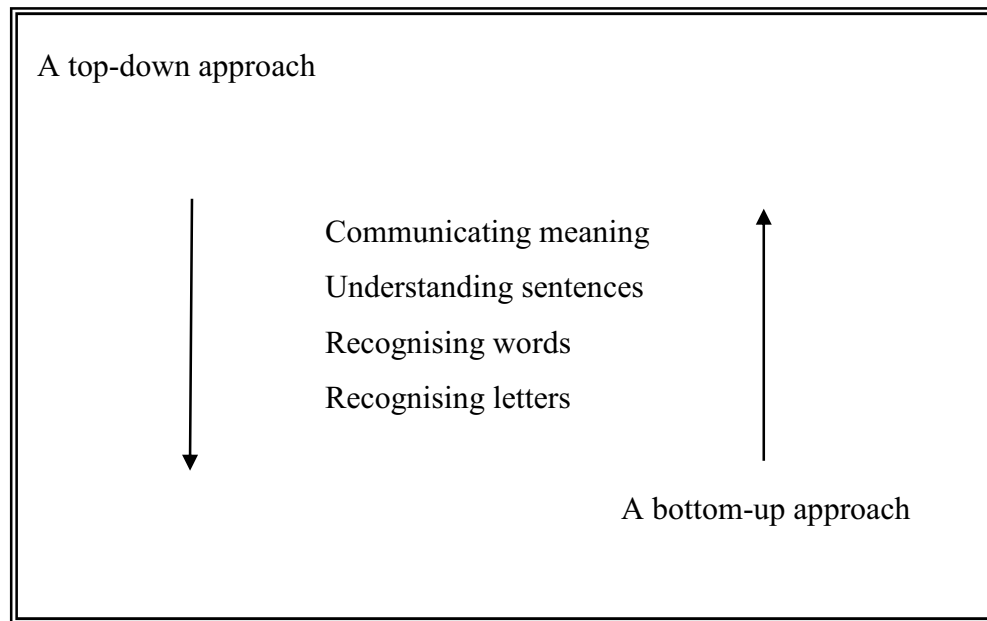


Figure 20. Two approaches to teaching literacy. (Modified from Fordham et al 1995, 61)

The Tibetan way of teaching literacy in adult literacy classes is a bottom-up approach. Both learning and teaching concentrates on coding and decoding texts. The idealized aim of Tibetan literacy acquisition has two pillars: good pronunciation and fluent reading. An experienced teacher stated that the goal of Tibetan literacy acquisition is, “to have a correct pronunciation and read well” (Old Teacher INT. No 9). So the immediate goals of adult literacy teaching outside monasteries are very similar to the monastic ones: emphasis is on correct pronunciation and fluent reading abilities, and correct pronunciation precedes comprehension.

Old Teacher, one of the interviewees, further explained the learning process:

“You cannot learn two things at one time: spelling, pronunciation and a meaning of the word. If you teach pronunciation and meaning at the same time that causes problems in reaching the correct pronunciation of a skilled reader.”

(Old Teacher, INT. No 9)

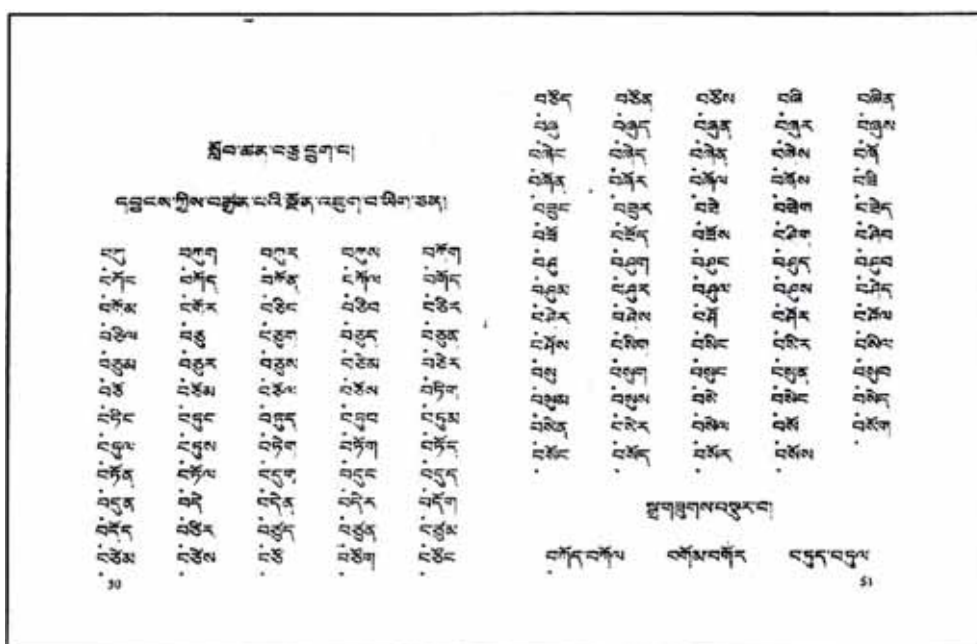


Figure 21. A section of lesson number 16 in the TLP primer.

The first pillar of adult literacy acquisition is to recognise the Tibetan alphabet (letters) and to decode text. At this stage the goal is to learn correct and clear pronunciation. The perceived importance of correct pronunciation is seen in the proportion of time allocated for this kind of reading practice in the classroom. The first primer of the Tibetan Literacy Programme first introduces the alphabet, and then gives instructions for writing the alphabet. The next seven lessons concentrate on drills for practicing pronunciation. The entire first primer is aimed at teaching spelling. The second primer focuses on words, the third primer focuses on making sentences, and the fourth primer teaches to read short stories.

Correct pronunciation is practised in the context of individual letters and syllables in different ways. Students learn the letters first, and then they learn which letters can occur together as syllables. As they spell out the syllables, they learn to distinguish the phonetics of the language.

Two pages from Lesson 16 in the TLP primer are shown in Figure 19. That lesson is for practising sounds of combined letters that form syllables. Correct pronunciation is stressed by the teacher. Learning to pronounce properly in the beginning is more

important than learning the meaning of words. A teacher, who has been teaching in primary schools, monasteries and adult literacy classes, criticizes a modern way of teaching literacy in primary schools:

“Now in the schools they are telling the meaning from the beginning. So the students they don’t know how to read yet but whatever they read they know the meaning. But their pronunciation is terrible even if they are in middle school and high school already they have problems.”

(Old Teacher, INT No. 9)

This comment highlights the general attitude towards what is important in Tibetan language acquisition. It shows a high appreciation for correct pronunciation as one characteristic of Tibetan literacy practices in general, not only in the learning context but also in every day life. People are conscious of how they pronounce Tibetan and they comment on other people’s reading by saying such things as "Her reading is clear" or "He cannot pronounce well." One interviewee, a Tibetan government official, was very self-conscious about his pronunciation, which becomes clear in an excerpt from my notes:

“Merangdzol did not feel comfortable that the interview would have been done by Dictaphone. He refused live recording because, according to his own estimation, his pronunciation was not good.”

(Notes on interviewing Merangdzol)

The interview was conducted in Tibetan and translated into English. But the ‘recording’ was written by hand in order to eliminate the possibility of anyone else listening to his recorded speech, as he felt his way of speaking did not meet standards of correct pronunciation.

A second pillar of Tibetan literacy acquisition is an ability to read fluently (discussed in the context of monastic literacies earlier in this chapter). Adult Tibetan reading practices in the classroom have the same emphasis on fluency in reading as monastic teaching (and school practices) has: students practise reading for the majority of their class time. During the whole course of the TLP around 90 per cent

of teaching time was spent on reading practice (OB No. 4-29). Repetition is the way of learning to read as seen in the extract below. The following example from a teaching situation follows a typical pattern of TLP classroom activities:

“A teacher reads the chapter from the previous lesson. He reads it all way through and students read it after him. He asks if all was clear to the students and then he moves to a new chapter. He reads the whole chapter first and then sentence by sentence. At that point, students (18 men) who are sitting on the ground (a time of autumn pastures) try to follow the text from their books. After that reading is finished a teacher asks students to read the sentences after him.

After this reading exercise a teacher explains the new words, eight of them, to the students. Because written language is different from spoken language, students don't recognise the words. A teacher writes the words on a small blackboard, which is leaning on his motorbike.

The teacher starts to read again, sentence by sentence, and students repeat after him. This time the teacher tries to focus on the students' reading, their pronunciation. He corrects few times. After this reading practice is over, the students were asked to read silently the whole chapter and straight afterwards they read it aloud again.

Around ten minutes before the class was over a teacher gave a writing exercise for the students. They were to write the new words into their notebooks and they were asked to copy the whole chapter at home.

(OB No. 15)

This kind of teaching and learning situation is structured by different elements of culture. First, a diglossic language causes difficulties for students in recognising written words in their primers which cause the practice of allocating more time to reading practices than to writing practices in a class. This issue will be discussed later on in this chapter. Second, as Mezirow (1991) states a culturally familiar way of learning is seen both appealing and edifying for adult learners. Students and

teachers are familiar with this kind of classroom activities: learning correct pronunciation is regarded to be at the focus point in language learning.

Other issues are also taken place here. A teacher and students have their distinct roles. Even though a teacher gives an opportunity to students to ask questions if they did not understand what they read it seems to be just a gesture. Based on my observations Tibetan students do not usually ask questions in a class but they show what they know if asked. I believe there are two reasons for this practice. One reason is the notion of shame and disgrace in Tibetan culture. Men students are ashamed of showing publicly their lack of knowledge or that they have difficulties in learning, and women are shy to speak publicly. Another reason is the role of a teacher. Teachers are respected in society and a teaching situation is authoritarian which does not encourage students into an independent dialogue in a class. As a result, teaching concentrates on a whole class not so much on individual learners. There is also a practical issue here. A teacher with limited working experience may not feel competent teaching a big number of adult learners. Some classes of the TLP consisted of 25-30 students. He may feel easier to concentrate on the whole class instead of sharing his attention to individuals.

Classroom reading practice teaches students good reading skills that enable Amdos to read fluently, which I would call the first phase of Tibetan reading acquisition. That point can divide into two lanes: “a religious path” and “a knowledge path”. If reading practice focuses on fluency of reading, there is a possibility that students learn reading for chanting purposes. As such, learning to read has reached its goal if people’s motivation for learning to read is for religious reading practices only. The other path, which can be called a knowledge path, takes learners beyond the chanting practices. For these kinds of readers, reading is more than learning a text by heart. They actually read a text, and they follow Freire’s suggestion that literacy students should reflect on the process of reading and writing itself, instead of only learning to memorize a text (Freire 1994). There is a significant difference between learning to read in order to memorize a text, and learning to read which goes beyond chanting the sounds.



Figure 22. Adult literacy teaching in autumn pasture

The relationship between reading and writing

Learning to write is one component of literacy education. Most people learn to read sooner and faster than they learn to write, which is also the case in Tibetan literacy acquisition. Tibetan language is easier to learn to read than to write. One idea behind stressing fluency in reading, according to Tibetan educational philosophy, is the understanding that fluent reading assists one in learning to write. While reading a text, based on syllables, students practise the sounds of the language that assists them to write correctly. However, writing practice is allocated only a fraction of the time spent on reading practice. Therefore, I think, writing practice is not seen as important as reading practice. This has further consequences on literacy practices. Lack of writing practice leads to a deterioration of their writing skills and then writing is difficult. When people find writing difficult, they do not necessarily practise it, which is explained by Merangdzol:

"Writing is difficult. People don't like writing because they don't know how to do it. Tibetan is easy to read and people like to read. But sometimes they read like monks, chant a lot, but they don't know the meaning. Also teachers find it difficult to write and for that reason they teach a lot of reading and tell the meaning of the words to the students." (Merangdzol, INT No.13)

It seems that because teachers find writing difficult they are reluctant to teach it. As a result, reading practices are allocated more time than writing practices in the curriculum of literacy teaching. This is obvious in fieldnotes which were written after visiting eight literacy classes:

“I did not see any writing practice during the teaching time, however I was told on one or two occasions that students do practice writing in the classroom. Teaching seems to concentrate on reading practice.”

(FN No. 4)

It is possible that people use reading skills more frequently than writing skills in daily life, and thus teaching reading is seen as more important than teaching writing skills. However, whether it is intentional or unintentional, this practice quite closely follows the pattern of monastic literacy education, which emphasizes reading practice and does not allocate much time or attention to writing practice.

Top level: learning comprehension

In a bottom-up approach, meaning in communication is at the top level of literacy acquisition. Meaning making of text is the final focus of literacy teaching as we have seen in the Tibetan context. With regard to comprehension of text, I recognise two main practices, representing two different uses of Tibetan literacy. One is the educational use of literacy and the other is religious use of literacy. Depending on a person's ideology of literacy, especially regarding reading practices, these two different practices promote varying purposes and values. Educational uses of literacy promote learning different skills and gaining information. Religious uses of literacy aim for gaining religious merit. As a result, comprehension in Tibetan literacy practices varies at an individual level, according to the use and ideology of literacy.

The educational goal of the TLP was that students would reach the Grade Six in primary school by the end of the programme. The goal was set at the time when compulsory education for Tibetans in Hainan TAP was six classes of schooling (DOC No. 1). That level of competence would be sufficient for students to manage various literate situations. By the end of the whole course, students would be able to

read (and comprehend) a rather high literary form of Tibetan, e.g. a marriage law book.²³ Students should also be able to write letters, read magazines, follow news, etc. However, reading magazines and writing letters were not practised in classroom settings, as they were not included in the curriculum (DOC No. 1). Teaching concentrated on issues in the textbooks, but the content of the textbooks provided lexicon and grammar for students to follow news, read magazines and write letters. In theory, if not in practice, students would be able to acquire the level of literacy required to participate in higher literary forms of literacy activities. The following story of one TLP student proves the claims of goals of the programme:

“He is a 38-year-old man with three children, who all go to school. Before joining the TLP he said that he was “only a shepherd”. After studying in the classes last year and this year he knows basic alphabets as he himself says. Other village people say that he likes to read to his children and he practices a lot with his children. Here he reads a short section of literacy book number four. He is very fluent; he knows what he is reading about. He can explain the content in his own words. He also reads a bit of Gesar (a famous Tibetan epic), which he does very fluently and without any problems. He is a superb reader. An easy book didn’t give him any challenge at all. Finally he is given a marriage law text, and he reads some of it aloud. Amazingly he didn’t have any problem in reading and understanding higher literary language. He could explain the content of the section of the law he was reading.” (FN No. 13)

With regard to religious use of literacy, a religious text is an object to gain merit in religious practices. Similarly to counting rosary beads, Tibetan Buddhist people gain merit by reciting religious texts time after time. In that kind of practice, comprehension of a text is not crucial. Despite the fact that the context of literacy practices and the uses of literacy are different in Tibetan secular literacy education than in monasteries, the same ideological features of literacy can be found in secular literacy education.

23 See “Diglossia” in Chapter 2.

An external evaluation of the TLP was carried out in December 2005. Two evaluators Horstia and Murray observed literacy teaching of the TLP for seven days. They also discussed with number of teachers and officials. The external evaluation report of the TLP shows:

“Many teachers tend to think that remembering words and sentences are more important than the practical application of the learned contents and increased knowledge gained through reading different texts. “

(Horstia and Murray 2005)

The educational view and the religious view of literacy are interwoven in Tibetan literacy practices. I suggest that this is possible because Tibetan cultural values are so closely related to religious values. Because of this, Tibetan literacy practices (including adult literacy teaching) do not fully support the notion that “Different domains of literacy have different literacy practices” (cf. e.g. Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic 2000). Instead, secular literacy practices (both in adult literacy classes and at home) have similarities with monastic literacy practices. However, despite this religious-secular feature of Tibetan literacy practices, people can acquire literacy that meets higher literary forms of Tibetan literacy, as seen above.

6.2 Amdo Women in Literacy Education

6.2.1 Girls and Education

Tibetan girls have had more freedom than girls in many other Asian societies. Yet, similar to many societies, there are great educational disparities between genders among Tibetans: girls have less opportunities for education than boys have (Lewis & Lockheed 2008; Postiglione 2009).

I perceive three main sources for educational inequality between genders in Amdo communities: poverty, attitude, and tradition. As mentioned in Chapter 2, girls have had more responsibilities in domestic duty than boys. Families cannot afford to educate both boys and girls, so girls are the ones left out, a universal phenomenon,

especially in patriarchal societies. At the core of the issue of Amdo women in education are modes of thinking and cultural tradition, deeply rooted in cultural values, and difficult to separate from the learning process (Cf Nisbett 2003). Amdo women are not considered as needing literacy skills since they work at home. Men act as windows to the outside world; women stay behind the windows. Also, there is the notion that literacy takes place outside the home. One of my interviewees is Tsomo, a literacy teacher. She explains:

“Women do not have to learn and write, that is what people say, especially at our age (around 40). People ask women: Where are you going? Even if you know how to write and read, you are at home.” (Tsomo, INT No. 13).

Negative attitudes toward girls’ education, along with cultural tradition, has kept most Tibetan girls in the Tibetan region out of school, without any formal education or else they are drop-outs, possibly having done one or two years in school (Zhou 2005c; Postiglione 2006; Seeberg 2006). This should have indicated a significant need for adult womens’ literacy teaching during the Tibetan Literacy Programme (TLP) implementation. However, more men than women participated in literacy teaching at the TLP. The ratio between men and women was 11,592 to 8,273 (TLWC 2010). Local sources, mainly men, provided two main reasons for women’s absence from literacy classes: Women are too busy with their domestic duties and they do not have time or energy to learn literacy (INT. No. 23; FN. No. 8). Yet:

“While men were learning to read and write many women were chatting and standing outside the classrooms. Some of these women were too shy to join the men in classes, some did not have enough interest for learning, and some did not have time and energy for learning literacy.” (FN. No 8).

Mens’ reasons for women not attending literacy teaching is partially different from the reasons women provide. Some women are interested in learning literacy but they do not feel comfortable joining men in a literacy class. Another reason for not joining teaching could have been that these women followed the tradition. As Tsomo said earlier literacy is traditionally linked with outside world, not home. Possibly some of these women were not interested in learning the skills of reading

and writing because they did not expect to have opportunities to use them home. My argument here, at this particular point, is that women talk differently about their role and literacy learning than men do.

Based on my observation notes, women in towns more actively participate in learning literacy than women in villages (ON 4-29). Even though the ratio between men and women students was high, there seems to be a stronger social influence in some places to encourage women toward literacy education than in others. One influential factor was a role model: women needed another female exemplar to motivate them to study. This phenomenon occurs all around the world. Educated women have educated children, both daughters and sons (UNICEF 2006). Yet it is difficult to find educated and literate women to act as a role model for other women in remote villages on the Tibetan Plateau. In county centres and towns, the number of literate women is higher than in villages because they have better access to education, are possibly in better financial situations than village people, and have more positive attitudes toward women's education (Mr Norbu, INT 12; Ms Tsomo, INT No.13). Worth noting, girls' attitudes toward their education is changing in villages. Nyima, one of the interviewees says:

“Nowadays in villages girls have got an idea, they recognise, that they need to know how to read and write to be able to do things and maybe work. They have realised that they can also have jobs. This is a change of mentality. Earlier they were discouraged.” (Ms Nyima, INT No. 14).

My female assistant in the TLP played an important role as a role model to village women in different locations. She grew up in a village and her parents encouraged her to go to school, even though there was only one other girl besides her in the class. After completing primary school she continued on to middle school in the county centre, and then moved to Xining to study in a college. After graduating, she returned to the county centre and was employed by the government of Hainan TAP.

“When I (researcher) first time visited village literacy classes, both men and women were amazed to see my Tibetan assistant TJ. She is equally bilingual

and literate in Tibetan and Putonghua and in addition, she is rather fluent in English.” (FN. No. 14)

It is not only the attitude that influence girls’ and women’s education, but also cultural tradition. Women and men have different roles in families and in Tibetan patriarchal society. There is a clear distinction between women’s and men’s duties. A Tibetan patriarchal socio-cultural environment implies that there are heavier domestic duties for girls and women than for boys and men. While Amdo women work hard at domestic duties, men have more free time, which they can use for studies and outside work.

This cultural tradition is strong, especially in villages. Norbu is another official within the TLP. He says:

“Girls get married and they have to do tasks in the family. They don’t have so much free time. Boys can teach as their part time job, so they are different. Especially in nomad families, the work of boys and girls is different. The work of boys is only to herd sheep, but for girls there are many tasks. Girls have very heavy tasks: they bring water, pick fire wood, and so many things.” (Mr Norbu, INT. No. 12)

These differing roles between women and men hinder women from attending literacy classes. It is not only that they lack time for studies, but it is also a cultural issue. It would be unprecedented for women and men to change roles in order to allow women to have time and energy for literacy acquisition. Yet, Ms Nyima and Ms Tsomo said above that Tibetan girls are more willing to study and get a job. In many ways my assistant contradicts with the “cultural” role model of a Tibetan woman: she is single; she has graduated from college; she has got a government job, she lives in her own apartment. She can be a role model to those young Amdo girls who are already keen on “breaking the tradition” and interested in working outside home. Younger generation of girls has different expectations regarding education (and possibly life in general) from previous generations; tradition is changing.

6.2.2 Cultural Values, Norms and Women as Adult Literacy Teachers

Amdo girls' education is influenced by the shared values of patriarchal Tibetan society (cf. Hofstede 1985). A woman's career is similarly influenced not only by the values of Tibetan culture but also by the shared understanding of societal behaviour (cf. Levi-Strauss 1966; Spradley 1979). Cultural values and norms of behaviour impact the ways Amdo women can pursue their career outside home.

One Amdo official, who was monitoring the TLP in her area, said:

“Because in Tibetan nomad villages women have a lot of work to do and men are doing nothing. So he can go and teach. It is proper for him to do than for a woman who has obviously work to do (at home).” (Ms Nyima, INT, No 14).

The Tibetan cultural tradition of not paying attention to girls' education results in a lack of women teachers in adult literacy classes. According to TLP statistics, there were two female trainers among 31 men trainers, and 196 female teachers to 539 male teachers. However, even though these female teachers were selected for training, only a few of them participated in the training and continued with teaching in the TLP classes. This is indicated in my field notes:

“During the first year of the TLP implementation I met three women teachers in adult literacy classes. Local village people said that they were good in Tibetan. At least one of them was a middle school graduate. In this last phase of programme implementation there were only three women as teachers. I have been asking to have more women teachers but local officials have always said that they didn't have good women teachers available. This year when we visited literacy classes I haven't met a single woman teacher. I think I have visited and observed around 30 classes within a year and no women teachers in them. There is one trainer, who is also a primary school teacher in a Tibetan medium school.” (FN. No.14)

Obviously, there are only a few literate women in villages who can perform as teachers since village life and tradition do not support girls' education the same way and to the same extent as it does boys' education. Additionally, there are three further cultural reasons, deeply rooted in teacher qualification, that hinder Amdo women from becoming teachers in adult literacy classes, especially in villages. Culturally defined qualifications for a good teacher in adult education require an ability to manage (control) students and a good command of Tibetan. An additional qualification for women concerns age: young women do not qualify regardless of their training and education (INT No. 12-14).

I explore the issue of an adult literacy teaching job a bit further by the following example. There was a small poster in a classroom in Naren village, in Tongde County. The poster, a rather ordinary piece of paper, stated the rules for a teacher and students of the TLP:

Rules for a teacher:

- 1) Need to follow the rules established by a county education bureau.
- 2) Must make plans for teaching sessions.
- 3) No alcohol while teaching.
- 4) Not allowed to come late for classes and let students leave early from class.
- 5) Must give homework for students every day.
- 6) Must keep the attendance register daily.
- 7) Must complete curriculum on time.

(OB No. 4)

There was a similar set of rules for students in Guomang Township:

- Missing one day of teaching penalty is 5 CNY
- Asking more than 7 days of absence, penalty is 7 CNY/day
- Not finishing homework, penalty 10 CNY

(OB No.5)

These set of rules give an idea what is expected from an adult literacy teacher. Teaching Amdo adults is not only about knowing the language but also about management skills and personal qualities /customs of a teacher. According to the

lists above most duties of an adult literacy teacher concern something else than teaching language. The qualities of a good teacher can be listed: good management skills, sobriety while working, an ability to plan the work, and compliant with the government. These rules could have been set to support a teacher in his job or to administer a teacher's performance in his job.

A woman teacher can follow the rules that are listed in the posters. However, she may not be eligible for the job because of the requirements for management skills. These requirements are not put in a written form but they exist in people's minds. It is believed that men can manage adult students better than women do, and for this reason officials and village elders appoint men as adult literacy teachers. I learned that this is not only about the ability to keep order in the classroom, but it is related to a wider belief that Tibetan men are more competent in doing their job than women in the same position.

“I think, if women are very knowledgeable they are good, but mostly men are better than women. If the women teach kids in kindergarten or in primary school, that is good for the students, women are very good in that. But they are not always very knowledgeable in how to teach men; if the men are old they will not study very hard. Women are not as knowledgeable as men are in that situation. “ (Mr Norbu, INT No. 13)

“To get adult learners to come to classes it has to be someone with more authority. Then men are better to tell people that you must come and study. For women it is more difficult to say that.” (Ms Nyima and Mr Tenzin, INT No. 14)

This extract from the interview discusses the power structure of patriarchal society. Women have power over children, men have power over women, and especially old men have power over young women.

Even though it is harder for women to get a job as a teacher in adult education, it is not impossible, but she must be of good character and know Tibetan well. Also, knowing nomadic pronunciation is an additional asset for women in Amdo

education. Nomadic pronunciation is regarded as better language than farmers' pronunciation in the Amdo region (Harri 2009). The following comments were made about the only woman trainer in the TLP:

“When men see a woman training many men, some even older than her, they think she must be very “lihai, bama” (hard working) otherwise a woman cannot teach. Also she has a nomadic pronunciation and people have high respect to her. There is also a good talk about her. She must be very great otherwise she cannot be a trainer as a woman.” (INT No. 13)

This statement contradicts with the statement of Mr Nyima and Mr Tenzin. It can be assumed that women's low self-esteem concerning their career outside home environment is rooted in the patriarchal culture but society is changing, and so is people's thinking. I believe it is right to say that culture is not static (cf. Holliday 1999).

Traditionally, Tibetan women in the old society have not been encouraged to study²⁴ (Aziz 1989), but in modern times they have had better opportunities for education and gaining a profession. Yet, being a career woman in villages is not common. Village women are not used to drawing attention to themselves and village women feel uncomfortable to step outside their comfort zone (cf. Yang & Zhang 1996, as in Cao & Lei, unpublished). On a few occasions women's reluctance to compete with men emerged from data as shown in the following excerpts:

“When people are called to a town or to a city for a meeting, women would say that why should I go to the meeting, I have nothing to say. This I have tried with the teachers in our school when I was a headmaster. In the meetings a man would say something and I tried to encourage and push girl teachers to say something. Because girl teachers were heaps better than boy teachers but they felt that they were girls so we are nothing and we don't say anything” (Mr Tenzin, INT. No 14)

²⁴ Old society, a time before the PRC was established.

“In township level they try to promote more women to get jobs and not to take men. Also women if they are called they say that they cannot do things or have things to do at home or they are busy and they don't want to do it. They don't want to take a job even if that is a school policy from the authorities, from government.” (Ms Nyima, INT No.14).

Besides lacking authority over male students, women teachers are not regarded as having the same language competence as men; men have better knowledge of Tibetan language than women do. We had a meeting with some village people in Tongde: two participants were students of the TLP, two were teachers of the TLP, and others were officials of the village. One part of the discussion went as follows:

82. R: Is it ok if a woman is a Tibetan language teacher?

83. M: Because we sent boys to school they learn better Tibetan.

84. R: If a girl goes to school ...

85. TL: It will be the same but in my opinion men are always better.

86. M: In Tibetan (language) women are lower than men.

87. M. Men are better than women in studying Tibetan in school.

(Goma village, INT No. 5)

The same statement was mentioned by some other people as well. For one reason or another, people think that men are better in learning and teaching the Tibetan language than women. Therefore, there are not many women teachers in adult (literacy) education. Many Tibetan women teach in primary schools but even then it is believed that women cannot keep up in developing language skills due to their responsibilities at home. Ms Lhabi, an illiterate interviewee, was described by a literate relative:

“She is very hard working, always working. She really wanted to go to school which was behind the house but she was very busy. Then she watched the school every day.” (Interview notes of Ms Lhabi 1, INT No 4)

Adult literacy teaching is considered more demanding language-wise than primary school literacy teaching, and according to common belief, women are not capable of meeting this challenge, as mentioned previously.

Teaching in adult literacy classes of the TLP was demanding in one more way: teachers needed to commute between villages. Literacy classes of the TLP were scattered all over the Tibetan Plateau, along with the students. That means teachers needed to travel as well. One teacher had to teach in many natural villages (See the definition of a natural village in Chapter 2) which were apart from each other. One example from Xinghai:

“One group has teaching for 3-4 days and then a teacher moves to another group” (OBN No. 23).

A woman travelling alone between villages is not regarded proper for her. It is not only about her safety or hard travelling but it is something which women should not do in a Tibetan society.

One more cultural issue emerged from the data: a generational gap and a gender issue. According to patriarchal Tibetan culture, young Amdo women are not suitable to teach in adult literacy classes because young women are not supposed to teach their husbands or elder male family members or in public:

“But if a girl is teaching and her husband is in the class she does not feel in that respect. For you Raija, you can teach your husband Kari but Tibetan girls are not bold like you.” (Mr Norbu, INT. No. 12).

This issue brings to the surface the notion shame and disgrace and how people's behaviour is guided by it in Tibetan culture. According to cultural norms, it is embarrassing for an Amdo woman to be superior to her husband in public. Men would lose face in front of the community, and that should not happen in Tibetan culture. To avoid this kind of situation, young women were not selected as teachers within the TLP implementation since teachers were supposed to be members of local communities. If teachers were outsiders, e.g. women from towns, they could

have been eligible to teach in classes without a fear of acting against cultural traditions. In the end, “there were no women teachers in villages” (Interview notes of INT. No 13).

Cultural traditions and attitudes impact Amdo women’s education. They also influence motivations of adult literacy students. Tsomo, a woman official of the TLP, mentioned above that traditionally women stay at home and men travel. The same issue was mentioned from a different angle. I asked eight literacy students in the TLP about their motivations for acquiring literacy. Answers were as follows:

- Three men students mentioned that they needed literacy for travelling
- Two girls mentioned that they wanted to learn more
- One girl did not give any reason for attending classes
- One girl was interested in reading songs (Trial INT No. 37).

None of the girls mentioned that she wanted to travel. In another township, there was one business lady, who travelled between her remote township and Xining quite often. According to her, being literate was helpful, but travelling was not her motivation for acquiring literacy. She wanted to learn more, as was discussed earlier in this chapter. It seems that motivation for acquiring literacy is also gender-based. Some literacy practices are more natural both for men and women than others in Amdo communities. Those practices situated in certain daily occasions motivate women and men in different ways, according to cultural norms of behaviour and cultural values.

Amdo women in literacy and language education have obstacles to pursue their career both at home and in a wider society. But culture is not static; it is an ongoing process (Hannerz 1992). The attitudes and situation are gradually changing concerning women in education in Amdo communities. Nowadays parents send girls to school more eagerly than in past. Some older men regret that they did not send their daughters to school years ago, as one old man said:

I wish I had sent my daughters to school.”

(A participant in Goma village, INT No. 5)

“Since 2003, when school regulations changed, the drop out rate is low. At the moment 87 % of kids go to school. The leaders said that everybody must attend school. There is no chance to avoid school.”

(Minshuban people, INT No. 26)

These changes take place more easily in towns than in remote villages. However, we cannot anticipate changes in Amdo culture. How long will it take to have changes in attitudes towards women’s careers outside the home in Amdo villages? Will they have a future in adult education if they desire so? Ms Nyima comments on those questions:

“First thing is that girls have a lot of work to do at home. Secondly, the culture is that women should not study and go out. Things like that. Women work home and look after sheep and kids. It is a cultural thing. Third one is that girls have this feeling that if they are not good teachers students would not listen to them. They do not feel confident in teaching. This is sort of not encouraging girls to teach.

I was the only girl in my village to go to middle school. Others were boys. Everybody was saying that girls are not smart enough to study. They should do other things.

They might have been or might not have been girls ten years ago who have been to middle school. There were no girls who would have stood up and say that they wanted to be teachers in the TLP.

These days there is total change in mentality. Before they said that girls cannot get used to study. Now everybody says that if you haven't been to school and learned to read and write you are stupid.

In our project (TLP) if there had been equally qualified man and woman, a man would have been chosen to be a literacy teacher. Because in Tibetan nomad villages women have lot work to do and men are doing nothing. So he can go and teach. It is proper for him to do than for a woman who has obviously work to do.

If there had been a woman as an adult literacy teacher village leaders would say that this is a clever girl. She can teach. But adult literacy teachers are mostly men because they have to be away from home and it is easier for men to do it. To get adult learners to come it has to be someone with more authority. Then men are better to tell people that you must come and study. For women it is more difficult to do say that.” (INT No. 14)

In the end, attitudes towards women in education are changing. Earlier girls were regarded stupid and not being able to study (see Chapter 2). Now they are expected to study, at least in townships and county centres if not in villages. Women in county centres are working outside home. Some women are employed outside villages as mentioned earlier. However, a job description of an adult literacy teacher includes tasks that women are not regarded capable for or are not supposed to do according to commonly accepted behavioural guidelines in Tibetan communities. That is partially due to the power structure of patriarchal society: old men are respected and in social hierarchy they are above women. Women, who have had opportunities to study and who are capable for teaching, are usually young. Despite these acquired qualities for a teacher the power hierarchy of Tibetan society, male management skills and the assumption that men’s better knowledge of the language fight against women’s opportunities in adult education. Even though, society is changing and women’s opportunities for education are improving, a career in adult literacy education is still difficult for women to reach.

6.3 Literacy for Development and Empowerment

6.3.1 From Backwardness to Development

Literacy is often seen as a tool for personal empowerment, as a means for social and human development (e.g. Baker 2006; Freire 1994; Rogers 2001; UNESCO 2003b; Verhoeven 1994). It is said that as literacy improves, healthcare improves, employment improves, etc. Literacy is seen as a magic tool for progress and social progress (Graff 1979). Similarly to Hansen's (1999) research among ethnic minority groups in Yunnan Province, Amdos, as an ethnic minority group in the PRC, are constantly compared to other people groups who are said to be more advanced in development.

The way out from "backwardness" to development is through literacy. Amdos see that acquiring literacy is a key element in the process toward personal and social development. An Amdo official explained a link between literacy and "backwardness" by saying:

"We are all behind because we don't know our language, we don't know how to read and write our language." (OB No. 22)

This expression gives the idea that being able to read and write promotes development and lack of it causes social stagnation. This expression implies that others are moving forward, but those left behind stay socially immobile. Therefore, according to their understanding, the ability to read is not only for gaining new information for its own sake but also for promoting development. A similar situation occurs in India where "left behind" was brought up among transhumant pastoralists who wanted to acquire literacy in order to gain social development (Dyer & Choksi 2001; Dyer 2006).

Local Tibetan government officials in Hainan TAP have taken up the Chinese government slogans "we are backward" and "we are behind" because of illiteracy in the area (FN No. 23; 24), which is identical to the reports on ethnic minorities' education of Hansen (1999) in Yunnan and Lin (2006) in Huangnan in Qinghai

Province. These slogans show the symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991) that is exercised by officials. The politically correct solution to bring “backward people into civilization” is by education. Through literacy acquisition Amdos can obtain a better status in society, both nationwide and in local communities. There may not be any outward signs, but their self-esteem has improved which is one of the common outcomes of adult literacy programmes around the world (cf. Stromquist 2009). The change in self-esteem, or a desire for a change, was seen in some of the students in the Tibetan Literacy Programme. Tibetans are proud of being Tibetans (FN No. 5) but it appears they represent “left behind” because they lack reading and writing skills or they think that their language is not good enough for education (INT No 5; FN No. 1; cf. Luke 1996).

The notion “left behind” can be seen also from the Chinese perspective: “Left behind” is equal to uncivilized. The government of the PRC has had its civilization projects, which aimed at educating ethnic minority people groups and bringing them into the civilization of Han Chinese people (cf. Hansen 1999). If we look at the notion “left behind” from this perspective we can assume, I believe, that Amdo officials and village people could have adopted this notion from the majority people. This notion reflects the metaphors for literacy as sickness or ignorance that can be treated by treatment or training (cf. Barton 1994).

Personal transformation through adult literacy education and training leads to development (Mazirow 1991). Transformation concerns both private individuals and the whole of society and how people perceive themselves, the usage of their language and how they develop their skills (Bourdieu & Parreson 1977). This was seen in the change of people’s attitudes towards their children’s education. After learning to read and write, parents were more eager to send their children to school than before.

According to the project report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland (2005):

“During the first two phases of the project, the literacy rate in the target group (15- 45 year old) has increased in Gonghe and Guinan from 28% to

over 55%. And in Xinghai and Tongde from 28% to 38%. (The goal of the project is to increase the literacy rate to be over 60% in these four counties.)”

This change in adult literacy rate indicates literacy development among adult Amdos, which then transformed their attitudes toward children’s education. Parents were more willing to send their children to school after themselves becoming literate. One literacy student, from a remote village in Tongde County, shared about his experience:

"I send my three children to school now because I feel that learning is good for me. It was as if I found something which was lost when I came to the classes." (Tongde, FN No. 4)

In a nearby village, officials reported:

“Last winter there were 78 children in a primary school. After the literacy classes started in July, the number of children is 356.” (Tongde, FN No. 4).

The change of attitude towards children’s education became clear also in the Final Evaluation Report of the TLP (Horstia and Murray 2006). Children’s enrolment rate at school improved from twenty per cent to one hundred per cent in some villages within Hainan TAP.

Some people say that real development means growth of people (e.g. Swantz 2009). As discussed above, Amdos’ awareness of literacy and children’s education have improved and they have a desire to develop their talents, etc.. This is only one aspect of development among Amdos. The other aspects are improvement of economy and quality of life. It is believed that these two issues of social development are based on ability to read and write. Some Amdo county officials in Xinghai mentioned the following:

“The goal of literacy education is to improve economy, quality of life to be improved through literacy skills, literacy is a foundation for improving people's lives.” (FN No. 1).

At the time when this research data was collected, it was difficult to estimate whether or not the TLP has improved the Amdo economy. That kind of result can be seen and evaluated only in years to come. Thus these goals of improved life through literacy are only hypotheses based on political views of literacy. However, economic development and improved quality of life are anticipated results of literacy education in Amdo society.

6.3.2 Amdo's Functional Literacy

Functional literacy is always linked to personal and social development (as discussed in Chapter 3). UNESCO's definition of a functionally literate person includes two components: being actively involved in literate activities and an ability to function for his community's development using literacy skills (UNESCO 2008a). Functional adult literacy programmes in developing countries are often designed to teach subjects such as farming, hygiene, filling in government forms, etc., along with basic literacy skills. This kind of functional approach does not correspond with the Amdos' understanding of literacy education.

Earlier in this chapter we discussed literacy as a set of skills. Amdos see literacy as a foundation for further education and learning other skills. Literally, Amdos mean literacy is for further learning, since learning anything other than literacy cannot take place simultaneously with literacy acquisition. Mr Hui, one of the teachers of the TLP, explains the Amdo view of literacy learning:

"In the beginning when people are learning how to read and write, the learning process has to be simple. If you put the learning of other skills together with learning alphabets, it will make things too complicated for Tibetans. That would confuse them." (Mr Hui, INT No. 9)

Students in Xinghai speculated about their future after the course of the TLP:

"No one knows what will happen after the programme is finished, maybe people continue reading. Maybe we will learn new skills after the

programme. People will learn how to protect land and take better care of husbandry.” (OB No. 22)

Designing a curriculum for the TLP was based on the idea of “a culturally appropriate approach” to literacy learning (LKA 1998). The principal of adopting a culturally-sensitive approach to Tibetan literacy teaching resulted in a skills-approach instead of a possible functional approach to literacy in the programme implementation (DOC No. 1). The final curriculum consisted solely of teaching reading and writing Tibetan in a familiar Tibetan cultural context and using the methods that are known from monastic literacy education. Other topics, such as issues of hygiene or childcare, were not included in the curriculum. Notably, numeracy was also absent from the curriculum. Similarly to the TLP, the government adult literacy programme “Liang Qi” concentrates only on teaching reading and, to some extent, writing skills.

I believe this kind of thinking, which isolates learning reading and writing from acquisition of other skills, can be traced to the origin of Tibetan education: monastic purposes for literacy acquisition. It has been a cultural tradition to learn reading (and writing) for religious purposes, and did not require simultaneous learning of any other skills. At the same time we have to acknowledge that this kind of literacy learning practice is not a unique one in the world. There are other “cultures” that use a similar approach to teach literacy which brings in the small culture theory of Holliday. Holliday’s theory can explain this kind of “cultural” phenomenon that occurs universally, especially in education.

How then does “non-functional” literacy teaching function within government plans? Even though the TLP was not a functional programme as such, students learned literacy in their everyday context. The last section of the programme provided topics familiar to learners and issues of daily life. For example, students read stories about family customs, how to treat visitors, agriculture, etc. (DOC No. 1). Since these topics were taught as stories, they were not regarded as teaching

skills other than reading and writing. Students found them meaningful as the PAMEC²⁵ mid-term evaluation report shows:

“They (students) particularly liked Books Three and Four since they contain topics related to the villagers’ life, such as farming methods etc., and were therefore of direct use to the villagers” (Buys & Zenz 2003).

Literacy teaching of issues closely related to Amdos’ livelihood and cultural heritage is functional in the Tibetan language, but there are plenty of daily issues that require knowledge of Chinese. Amdos need to acquire literacy both in Tibetan and Chinese to become “functional” both in Amdo communities and in wider society. People need literacy in Chinese for filling in official forms in banks, post-offices etc. (Harri 2009). Therefore, competence in functional literacy varies according to language and the needs of literacy. I agree with Verhoeven (1994) who suggests that competence in functional literacy for ethnic minorities should be defined as taking into account the needs of literacy in terms of the multilingual and multicultural background of ethnic minority people. If we look at the situation in Tsoksum’s family, he tells the following:

“My brother went to a Chinese medium school and he got offended when Chinese people said that he couldn’t speak Tibetan properly. Then he said that he didn’t want to be a Tibetan, and refused to speak Tibetan from then on. He understands some but cannot speak. I went to a Tibetan medium school, and I studied Chinese as a subject. I prefer speaking in Tibetan but I don’t have a problem to speak Chinese. I use Chinese in offices if needed. I can speak English.” (INT No. 2)

This excerpt consists of many layers concerning minority language issues in the PRC, and shows some of the challenges Amdos face in multilingual and cultural communities. These challenges concern practical issues such as how to manage language challenges in dominant literacies in banks, post-offices and in other government offices as mentioned above (cf. Harri 2009, See Figure 17, p. 170); they

²⁵ PAMEC is a NGO located in Tianjin. It was one of the counterparts of the TLP and it ran an internal mid-term evaluation of the project in 2003

concern communication with grandparents and other Tibetan relatives; they concern communication with a non-Tibetan neighbourhood (See Figure 17, p.162); they concern education; they concern Amdos' ethnic and language identity. We can see that the needs of functional literacy vary according to the social context. Functional literacy of Amdos deals with a wide spectrum of literate activities both in Chinese and in the Tibetan language, and functional literacy should be defined accordingly.

What about everyday functional literacy?

Everyday functional literacy, concerning people's ability to recognise and understand individual words in an everyday life context, is often ignored in discussions of adult literacy education. This aspect or type of literacy was not planned for adult literacy students of the TLP. However, this type of literacy appeared often in discussions with Amdo students in two different contexts. One context concerns the multi-cultural living environment of Amdos alongside the majority language Chinese, which is the dominant language of official issues and for marketing (Harri 2009). The minority language status of Tibetan impedes everyday functional literacy opportunities in Amdo societies. The other context concerns Tibetan language everyday functional literacy practices in communities. The following statement gets to the point:

“I wish everything that we use everyday would have Tibetan on it. There are only a few labels in Tibetan on daily products. After this literacy programme we can read street signs and shop signs in Tibetan.”²⁶

(A group attendant in Goma, INT No. 5)

People who are functionally literate in their everyday life context may not be able to fill in forms or do simple accounts for their farming or manage other more advanced literary situations, but they are able to recognise words they are familiar with, such as milk, tea, etc. These people can buy daily goods by reading labels, they can find their way by reading street signs and they can take the right bus by reading destinations on buses. They can manage all these situations by being able to read a

²⁶ There are only a few daily products and consumer manuals available in Tibetan but most shop and street signs are bilingual Tibetan-Chinese in Hainan TAP (Harri 2009).

few words, rather by asking others. Women students of the TLP in Gomang Township said:

“We found it easier to do shopping after we have learned to read.”

(FN NO. 13)

Here, though, we have to remember that shop names and other signs in county centres are bilingual Tibetan-Chinese, mainly in Hainan TAP. Elsewhere they are only in Chinese (Harri 2009). Therefore, an ability to read Tibetan makes shopping easier only in some areas, e.g. public signs are mainly in Chinese and some in English in Xining. At the same time we have to remember that traditionally women do not travel; men travel. When women go shopping they usually travel to nearby county centres with family members or friends, and they do not usually go to the capital of the province. Men, though, travel more. They find reading Tibetan helpful.

Some male students of the TLP in a nomadic village in Xinghai said:

“Reading helps when you are travelling.” (INT No. 34)

Everyday functional literacy is not considered “advanced” literacy, but people still find it useful (as seen above). Common slogans that promote adult literacy around the world use every day context, e.g. “You can travel when you learn literacy.” or “Shopping is easier if you are literate.” These slogans, which have also been used in remote villages in Hainan TAP, do not necessarily refer to buying plane tickets or reading DVD booklets, which require a more advanced level of functional literacy. But they refer to these everyday contexts of literacy, at least in Hainan TAP. Some people do not seem to aim for more advanced literacy, but for using literacy in their everyday life context. However, Tibetan texts in everyday contexts are very few (Harri 2009) and for that reason Amdos in Hainan TAP have very limited opportunities to use their every day functional literacy skills in Tibetan. If they acquire literacy in Chinese that would broaden their opportunities for everyday functional literacy practices. We also have to keep in mind that literacy students of the TLP might have adopted the common slogans so well that they can probably voice these universal slogans as if they were based on their personal experiences.

This kind of literacy teaching can be regarded providing “just” basic literacy skills as some so called non-functional literacy programmes were reported to be in Nigeria (UNESCO 2008b). However, everyday functional literacy can stimulate positive attitudes towards learning and future perspectives as seen above. One key factor is that Amdos acquire everyday functional literacy in their mother tongue, which is a key element of their ethnic identity as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Even though learned skills are functional in certain, and possibly in rather limited contexts in society, they are useful, needed and desired. I would say that functional literacy is usually linked with economic growth and social development of societies whereas everyday functional literacy is a foundation for empowering individuals.

6.3.3 Literacy for Empowerment

Personal empowerment is one of the goals of the literacy programmes that are implemented by development agencies (e.g. Freire 1987; Barton 1984; Verhoeven 1994). Personal empowerment, which is gained through better self-esteem, is a result of gaining new skills in literacy classes. Tibetan adult literacy students experience inequality between themselves and Han Chinese or other minorities, one reason being lack of formal education (cf. Swartz, 1997). Even though a compulsory education law is being implemented, the dropout rate in nomadic regions has been high. Families have sent children to school for two to three years only, due to lack of economic resources or that children were needed for domestic duties or sometimes due to their attitude towards education. In the end, young people with lack of education feel incompetent in a literate society, as one literacy student explains:

“One literacy student in his twenties said that people in towns make him feel like a country pumpkin because he could not read and write.” (FN. No. 14.)

This statement carries great weight in its context: an illiterate man from an ethnic minority group in the PRC and a Han Chinese person are not equal. Quite the contrary, both facts (belonging to a ethnic minority group of the PRC and being illiterate) highlight ‘backwardness’, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Literacy acquisition has value as a mind-opener among adult students, to which Freire (1994) refers: "Teaching men to read and write is no longer an inconsequential matter of ba, be, bi, bo, bu, of memorizing an alienated word, but a difficult apprenticeship in naming the world." (p. 255.) Accordingly, some students of the TLP make comments like "Literacy opened for me a new world" and "My eyes are opened now." (OB. No. 23; FN. No. 2). These comments indicate that learning to read and write has become a useful tool for personal development. Furthermore, if we look at Ms Droma, in the following extract, another facet of literacy is evident:

“Droma, a 37-year old shopkeeper, was excited how literacy had opened a new world to her. She likes to read storybooks and learn more by reading.”

(ON. No. 17)

A new world is not only an “ability to think” but also an ability to delve into written texts, which were previously an unknown, closed world to her. Now she has the skills to gain more knowledge and make some personal progress (cf. Baker 2006.) Droma, and others like her, have experienced the transformation of their habitus to some extent through literacy education (cf. Bourdieu, 1991) and literacy has empowered them with new skills for life. (cf. Blackledge, 2000; Luke, 1996) However, Verhoeven (1994) argues that despite compulsory primary education, “many people do not reach a level of competence in literacy which is sufficient to cope with everyday demands” (1994, 4). Similarly, not all adult Amdo Tibetan literacy students would reach a functional level of literacy, enabling them to practise literacy in a way that would increase their knowledge. They practice literacy for religious purposes.

Religious practice is not the only context for newly literate Amdos to use their skills. Some students of the TLP, from a village in Xinghai County, explained how acquiring literacy has helped them. Their answers included the following:

- Can learn other things like mathematics and science
- Before we didn't know our own language
- We know our own culture better now

- Gain better self-confidence
- We can learn new things
- Can understand when go to market (FN. No. 13).

To ‘know their own culture’ is the only statement on the list that refers to religion. All others refer to empowerment, which they feel is now within reach through literacy.

Through better self-esteem, achieved by literacy acquisition, Amdos position themselves differently in society. They usually adopt different walks of life and have a wider spectrum of activities (OB No. 23; DOC. 2), which may be due to the ability to make more informed choices in life as literate adults (cf. UNESCO 2005). Women at the TLP mentioned being able to read songs and possibly write them too. Learning to read enabled them to practise literacy in the way they wanted, and at the same time it gave them more personal activities. That, as an achievement of literacy acquisition, is what Barton (1994) suggests for literacy work. People should be able to learn literacy according to their needs for literacy and communication practices that are familiar to them. As mentioned earlier, songs and music are generally an important part of Tibetan cultural life. Being able to read the words, and even to write them, is transformational in an Amdo’s life (cf. Mezirow 1991).

Another aspect of personal empowerment is gaining independence as an adult through literacy acquisition, as discussed in Chapter 3 (cf. Blackledge 2000; Lytle and Landau 1987; UNESCO 2005). Amdos attend literacy teaching in order to gain more personal independence. They see literacy as a tool for relating to the world around them. Reading and writing skills are a boost for independence in attending to different tasks in society, which would be more complicated without literacy. Travelling and shopping are two examples of such activities:

“One business woman in a remote village of Tongde says that she felt confident to do her business in Xining after she completed the course of TLP. Even though she does not know Chinese she says that she feels more confident visiting Xining than before. She thinks that knowing to read Tibetan is enough for her business purposes” (ON No. 15).

This aspect of literacy is also stressed by government officials. They promote literacy as a transformational tool for personal development by saying that literacy enables Tibetan people to be more independent in daily life (cf. Robinson-Pant 2004b; 2006; Rogers 1999; UNESCO 2003a, 2003b). Reading and writing skills are said to make travelling to the provincial capital or a shopping trip to the county centre easier for Amdos, as people can read signs (ON. No. 17). However, there is a contradiction here: Chinese signs are dominant in public places, and bus signs for destination are in Chinese (Harri 2009). Therefore, in this context, literacy is more of a booster for self-esteem and self-empowerment than an actual skill for doing something, such as reading bus signs (cf. Aikman 2001; Zubair 2001;2003).

Acquiring literacy in Tibetan is seen as the starting point for economic development and for “transformation”. Students, teachers and Tibetan officials agree that acquiring literacy makes a difference in life. Trainers of the TLP came to the following conclusions regarding the connection between literacy and development:

Literacy is a foundation for development.

Development is good for literacy.

Literacy makes sense for development.

Literacy is a real liberation for thought, which leads to development.

Literacy opens eyes to know more, which leads to development.

(Notes on Training, FN No. 2)

However, trainers did not specify what kind of development should result due to acquisition of literacy skills. The last two remarks refer more to personal and social development than to economical development. Through transformational learning Amdos can reach development.

Economical development through Tibetan language literacy has obstacles: the Tibetan language is not as commonly used in wider society; employment opportunities for monolingual Tibetan speakers are also limited (Harri 2009). Knowing Tibetan is an asset in the labour market in a Tibetan region, but lack of ability to use the Chinese language is a job seeker’s disadvantage. If we look again

at the results of the language survey (Figure 20 on page 193) we see how limited Tibetan language usage was in banks, government offices and even in shopping. Employers, who know Tibetan, can assist Tibetan customers, but many jobs require knowledge of Chinese or even English. There are a lot of forms to fill out in banks and offices. In shops one has to be able to read product manuals and labels, or write bills, which customers pay at a separate cash counter, etc. All these forms and bills are in Chinese (Harri 2009). Tsoksum, a Tibetan university student pondered his opportunities for employment and said:

“It is easier to get a job if you know Chinese, Tibetan and English.”

(INT No. 1)

Also, the final TLP report follows the same line:

“The real change in the area of poverty reduction was in giving people access to other employment opportunities. Since they now have literacy skills some individuals ran for and succeeded in attaining minor positions of public office such as a village secretary or a village party secretary. Many job opportunities are only open to people with literacy skills in Chinese, rather than in Tibetan and therefore this impact has been limited so far. In the absence of sufficient adult and vocational education as well as of affirmative employment policies to assist employment and training, the under-skilled Tibetans can easily lose out on economic progress.”

(The final report of the TLP 2005)

Since Tibetan speakers have fewer job opportunities, especially among nomadic people, economic development is not directly proportional to functional literacy achievement. However, better skills in animal husbandry, for instance, would improve the income of Tibetan families. These skills, according to Tibetan culture, have to be learned separately.

Rogers (2001) argues that different developments have different status; some are dominant while some are demeaned. Literacy as a means of development in Tibetan life concerns both the transformation of individuals and the development of

communities. On the one hand, global slogans of adult literacy education, such as a means for better employment and better health care, are not relevant in Amdo Tibetan communities. Those two fields have limitations without literacy in Chinese. On the other hand, better self-esteem and more independent daily life through Tibetan literacy acquisition are achievements in personal development towards further progress, since increased confidence often has social and political significance.

6.4 Finally – Cultural Context of Literacy Education

6.4.1 Cultural Values, Beliefs and Ideologies in Literacies

In its widest sense, culture includes the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO 1982). Culture is understood as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs and behaviour, and shared values, goals and practices that characterise a people group. Tibetan culture, with its unique components, is alive and well. Cultural values, beliefs and ideologies are powerfully embedded in Tibetan adult literacy education.

I have looked at cultural phenomena of Tibetan literacies in Amdo society as they emerge in cultural elements, such as gender, religion, generation, and social class. I have attempted to form a picture of Tibetan cultural literacy by looking into the ways Amdos interpret their experience and generate behaviour concerning literacy and literacy practices in society and in adult literacy classes (cf. Spradley 1979). It has become evident that patriarchy, religion and the cultural notion of shame and disgrace generate behavioural norms in Amdo society. Even though Amdo society is changing and it provides better opportunities for women to study and to work the cultural norms limit the job opportunities of women in adult education.

I have also looked into how cultural beliefs and values exist and are practised in relationships within Amdo societies (cf. Hofstede, 1985). For example, it is believed that men have better Tibetan language knowledge and management skills than women do. Therefore, they are regarded better teachers than women in adult literacy

classes. These societal relationships are structured by power, which also influences literacy learning and literacy practices. Issues of power are noticeable in literacies in Amdo society. Women have less power than men do, teaching situation is authoritarian, religious institutions have powerful position in communities, the government of the PRC shows its power by its legislations and rules in the Tibetan region, etc..

As discussed in this chapter Tibetan adult literacy education in a secular context corresponds to the ways literacy is practised in every day life and to discourses of literacy. It is influenced by the language of literacy, ethnic identity, cultural traditions and religious practices. These relationships are presented in the diagram on page 228 (Figure 23).

These different elements have various kinds of power relations to literacy (cf. Bourdieu 1991): The language of literacy is a site of power; religious and political institutions practise power in literacy practices; there are female/male power relations, etc. Tibetan Buddhism is the source of the language, monasteries have maintained the language by providing texts to read and language teachers both in schools and in adult literacy education. This then raises the question of the purpose of literacy. At the same time it confirms Street's statement of literacy being culturally constructed and a site of power. Then, Tibetan literacies are gender-based as women participate some literacy activities and not others. The government of the PRC adds its portion to the discussion of power in literacy: dominant literacies are in Chinese. Amdos either need to know Chinese or have assistance in attending their business in government offices. School books are first printed in Chinese and a couple of years later in Tibetan, and so forth.

The cultural influence on Amdo literacy education can also be seen as an onion diagram: the language of literacy, ethnic identity, cultural traditions, patriarchal values and religious values form the centre of the diagram as core values of the culture. Tibetan daily literacy practices are then influenced by daily practices, heroic stories of the society, different language practices, etc. They form the outer layers of the "Tibetan onion of literacy practices".

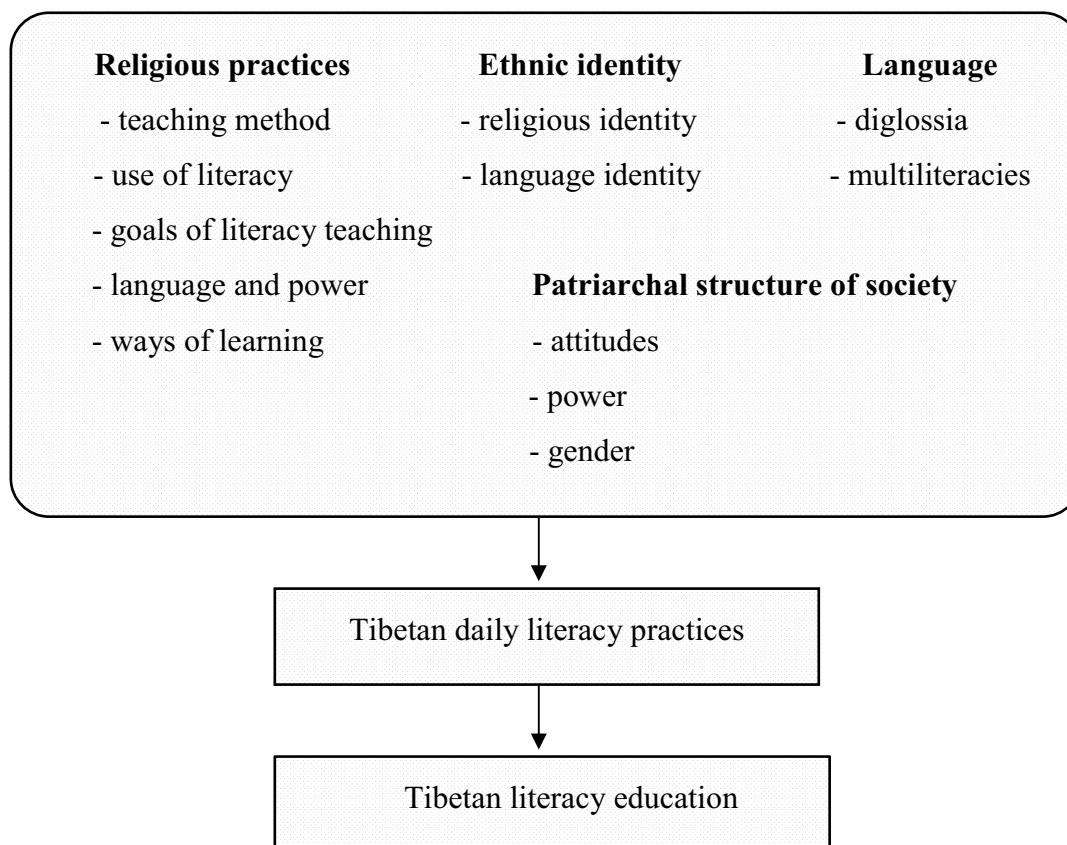


Figure 23. Relationships of Tibetan literacy and cultural elements

We can also look at the cultural phenomenon using Holliday's small culture paradigm (1999). In this case, we see similar practices with some other Asian non-nation cultures. For example, nomadic people in Rajasthan feel marginalised because they cannot read and write (Dyer, 2006) and that repetition of texts in class is commonly used in India. These phenomena can be explained through a small culture paradigm, rather than through the 'onion skin' approach. Therefore, we can talk about small cultures of education that exist beyond borders of nation cultures. Also, Holliday's small culture theory assists in analysing most classroom activities, and finds their relations to other literacy events and practices in Tibetan society.

6.4.2 Literacy and Different Power Relations

Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relations. Furthermore, literacy is utilised in many different ways in society, both on an individual and an institutional level (Bourdieu 1991). The photo on the next page

(Figure 24) gives an example of power relations of literacy in a multilayered way. The photo was taken in a class of the Tibetan Literacy Programme (TLP)²⁷. The local department of the Communist Party provided its hall for the TLP to use as a classroom. The pictures of communist leaders and the previous leaders of the PRC are placed in a high place in the wall in front of the classroom. Different kinds of texts in Chinese are placed below them. The main purpose for the gathering, the Tibetan language, has been given the lowest place in the room, in front of the students. The pictures in the room are reminders of the power relations in the society and the printed texts strengthen the message as, according to Kraus (1991), in China people have a respect for printed material.



Figure 24. Power relations in a literacy event

People have access to literacy depending on their position (social class) in society, gender and cultural formations (Luke 1994). As we have seen, traditionally in Amdo society, monasteries have possessed the highest authority not only over religious issues but also over politics, literacy practices and education. Even though the Ministry of Education has taken responsibility for organising education all over the PRC (Ministry of Education 1995), monastic influence is apparent in adult literacy

²⁷ The Tibetan Literacy Programme was implemented in Hainan TAP 1999-2005.

education and discourses of Tibetan literacy. Amdo boys have had better and more opportunities for education in monasteries than girls in nunneries.

Also, the ways of teaching, goals of teaching and discourse of literacy follow monastic patterns. Religious values are obvious both in adult literacy education and in literacy practices and discourses of daily life, e.g. learning to read without comprehension of a text is based on the religious practices and gets its meaning from the religion. Amdos can find this kind of reading practice edifying.

Kramersch argues that the culture of everyday practices draws on the culture of shared history and tradition, but also anticipates the future (Kramersch 1998, 7). The Tibetan culture of everyday practices has changed. The nomadic way of life is controlled by new strict government rules (See Chapter 2). The number of permanent houses is increasing and some Amdos must live in new government settlements. Similarly, the environment of Tibetan literacy has changed: it has emerged from the religious context into secular society. Yet, the role of religion in Amdo communities has not changed remarkably. Tibetan Buddhism is a bastion for keeping the Tibetan language alive and sustaining literacy practices. Religious books motivate language learners towards literacy acquisition and literacy practice. For example, village people are motivated to acquire literacy by religious books even though they cannot understand the high philosophical text in those books. Tibetan Buddhism promotes the Tibetan language by providing an arena for literacy practice: publishing literature and other literacy materials. Religious books are the majority in bookstores. In addition, many literacy practices are embedded in religious practices and some of them can be understood only through the values and beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism as mentioned above the reading practices.

According to Fordham et al. (1995) people's expectations of learning and teaching is often culturally determined and affected by the ways they have experienced learning and teaching literacy. In Amdo society, the familiar way of learning and teaching literacy originated in monasteries. Teaching and learning methods from monasteries have been adopted for us secular schools and adult literacy classes. This is partially due to monks who have been teaching Tibetan in schools. This cultural tradition has had a major role in carrying on the same teaching and learning methods in secular

literacy education as in monasteries. I suggest that these teaching methods, which are not free of religious values and ideologies, have conveyed their values and ideologies to secular teaching and learning situations. This can be seen as natural because religion is an essential part of the Tibetan culture. Monastic education is a mother for current education, and Tibetan Buddhism is still alive and well and powerful in Tibetan societies.

Religious impact and power relations can also be seen in viewing literacy as a set of skills (cf. Street 2001). Tibetan literacy education aims for skills of reading and writing, which are separated from learning other skills for life. Therefore, the way functional literacy teaching has been used in many adult literacy programmes (cf. UNESCO 2003; The World Bank 2003; Robinson-Pant 2004; Rogers 2004) contradicts the traditional way of teaching Tibetan literacy. However, everyday functional literacy teaching does not contradict in the same way. Everyday functional literacy teaching has already been implemented (e.g. in the TLP), resulting in everyday literacy skills being acquired by all adult literacy students. This type of literacy may not lead to remarkable economic development in Amdo society, but at an individual level it is a substantial achievement. Adult learners, especially women, find everyday functional literacy an important achievement since they feel more confident and more independent in travelling and shopping.

This view of literacy matches the cultural way of learning literacy: one has to learn the letters and syllables first before one can learn to comprehend words. Meaning making in written Tibetan causes obstacles for learners: Tibetan literacy learners are effectively second language learners when they acquire literacy in Tibetan. They become literate in the literary form of the language, which is not the language they speak everyday. However, learning the literary form of the language enables them, in addition to reading Tibetan text, to understand the news on radio broadcasts and on TV. The language of literacy has power and through it people may gain power by being able to obtain more knowledge.

The Tibetan language is an essential part of Tibetan cultural identity. In a changing, living language environment, the Tibetan language has survived as an essential component of Amdo life and in Tibetan society, Tibetan language is the main

communication tool (Janhunen 2000). Basically, even though Tibetan language is the language of everyday life in Amdo communities, it is a minority language within wider society. Therefore, it is competing with the Chinese language outside Amdo villages. As such the Tibetan language is the site of discrimination. Textbooks are first printed in Chinese and then possibly in Tibetan. Furthermore, textbooks are translated from Chinese textbooks that causes Tibetans to become culturally literate in Chinese before they can understand the concepts of teaching. Monolingual Amdo speakers have difficulty gaining employment in county centres, etc. (cf. Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004).

Female / male power relations in literacies

Amdos live in a patriarchal society where men are more powerful than women, which has caused literacy and literacy education to become a site for power and resistance (cf. Robinson-Pant 2004c; Unterhalter 2005). There is a female/male power dynamic in Tibetan literacy practices in Amdo societies. Even if boys have gone to school but they have only become semi-literate due to the lack of post-literacy activities, they will still have a second chance to attend adult literacy classes. There were more men than women participating in teaching in the TLP, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Girls have not had equal opportunities for education. There have been fewer nunneries than monasteries to start with. Their education has not been regarded as important as that of boys, so fewer girls have been sent to school. Also, adult women have not attended literacy classes to the same extent as men have done.

There is not only educational disparity between Amdo men and women, but also disparity in vocational opportunities for women in adult literacy education. Cultural systems and hierarchal structures of society are at the core of gender-related discrimination among Amdos. Men and women have different roles in social interaction. Cultural traditions, beliefs and behavioural patterns form people's understanding of what is appropriate for women to do in villages. Men have different kinds of literacy events and practices from women's. Traditionally men are thought to be more capable of complex reading practices than women.

Even though literacy is often seen as a foundational element in the process to empower women (Westen 1994), it is a challenge to implement an adult literacy campaign in a way that does not offend cultural tradition. I do not believe that women can be empowered by literacy both as educators and learners if they are marginalised by their actions. To empower people through literacy, literacy practices need to be conducted within an appropriate cultural and social context.

Finally - cultural context of literacy

Tibetan adult literacy education is situated in the cultural context of being an Amdo, a Tibetan. It follows the values and ideologies of Tibetan culture, of which Tibetan Buddhism is an essential element. The government of the PRC has blamed religion for the 'backwardness' of Tibetans. Amdos think that lack of literacy skills in Tibetan is the reason why they are "behind". I think acquiring literacy in Tibetan in this context may not be so much about social development but about the right to personal empowerment, the right of practising and maintaining one's own culture, of which language is an important element. I agree with Street's argument: "Literacy is thus more a matter of personal identity, knowledge and power than of functional skills." (Street 1990, 2) And I would add "of cultural context" as this all occurs in a Tibetan cultural context and not in isolation from their cultural values.

7. Conclusion

By drawing on theories from sociolinguistics, New Literacy Studies and theorists who view literacy as situated activity, I have explored Amdo literacies in the context of Tibetan culture in the Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Hainan TAP). I have attempted to find an answer to the question, “How do cultural elements form Tibetan literacy practices, and through them adult literacy education in Amdo villages?” This study of Amdos in Hainan TAP sheds light on cultural literacy in terms of Tibetan literacy practices, and different discourses of it. Using an ethnographic perspective it has been possible to explore every day literacy practices and their relationship to adult literacy teaching and learning. Furthermore, an ethnographic perspective has provided insights into the Amdo perspective on literacy, and I have analysed the ways in which the Amdos have taken hold of literacy in daily life. I believe I have been able to grasp Amdo cultural literacy in remote villages and townships in Hainan TAP.

It has become evident that literacy practices cannot be understood independently of their historical, cultural, social and political contexts, and they cannot be analysed in isolation from the social practices they are embedded in (cf. Barton 1994; Barton & Hamilton 1998; Martin-Jones & Jones 2000; Street 1984, 1995). The meanings and uses of Amdo literacies take various forms in local cultural and social circumstances, which have shaped literacy practices into what they are today. The historical development of literacy from monastic literacy education in an old Tibetan society to the current minority education in the PRC cannot be ignored. Therefore, above all, this study focuses on the current adult literacy education, taking account of the historical background and cultural elements. Compared to other Amdo communities in Qinghai Province²⁸, there are minor differences in the language environment but major similarities in social, cultural and historical

²⁸ There are Amdo Tibetan communities in other prefectures in Qinghai Province.

environments. Therefore, I suggest that despite those minor differences this case study can offer insights into other Amdo communities and their literacy teaching in the rural areas of Qinghai Province.

7.1 Overall Outcome

My personal need to gain better understanding of Tibetan literacies triggered off this research. My hypothesis was that Tibetan culture would give me insights into the issues in teaching adult Tibetans that bothered me as an adult literacy educator. I wondered why literacy was taught in a certain way in Amdo literacy classes; why there were only a few women teachers in the TLP, and so forth. The results of this current research are “more than I bargained for” as a researcher and as a literacy practitioner in adult literacy education.

The overall conclusion of the current research is: Tibetan cultural elements have their distinct influences on Amdos’ daily literacy practices and adult literacy education. Amdo literacies are embedded in Tibetan culture and its cultural practices in many ways. Cultural elements influence literacies from different angles: tradition, social patterns and behaviour, gender and generation, social hierarchy, religion, and power relationships. These elements impact, or should I say, form Tibetan literacies into what they are today. In particular, they form the ways literacy is practised and taught in remote Amdo villages.

Cultural ways of learning, teaching and practising Tibetan language literacy in Amdo villages is based on being a Tibetan. The cultural identity of a Tibetan is embedded in the Tibetan language and in Tibetan Buddhism (Goldstein 1998a; Dorje & Giles 2005). These two cultural elements are influential factors in Tibetan literacies both in every day practices and in adult literacy education. Additionally, other shared values and patterns of behaviour shape adult literacy teaching: gender issues being at the core of the cultural values and behaviour.

Tibetan literacy discourses have two main lines, which are formed by the shared understanding of what literacy is for in a Tibetan context. The religious literacies,

which by and large, are practised for gaining merit, form one discourse of Tibetan literacies. This discourse of literacy presents the religious values of Tibetan culture in literacy, and which are similar to religious literacies in societies such as Jewish or Muslim societies (cf. Scribner 1984). The other discourse presents the more cognitive aspect of Tibetan literacy. According to this discourse of literacy, reading and writing skills are a means to acquire more knowledge in various fields of life.

7.2 Monastic Influence

Tibetan Buddhism is an essential part of Tibetan culture, and a token of its presence can be seen in all kinds of Tibetan literature (Kapstein 2000). Monastic power has been useful to promote mother tongue education and the maintenance of Tibetan language in a society currently dominated by Chinese political and linguistic influences. Especially for adult learners religion is a strong motivator: religious books motivate people towards literacy acquisition and reading practices. Younger generation is motivated to improve their language skills in monasteries. Tibetan Buddhism promotes the use of the Tibetan language by providing an arena for literacy practices: publishing religious literature and other literacy materials. Religious books are the most sold items in Tibetan bookstores and they are available in remote areas as well. In addition, many literacy practices are embedded in religious practices, which, as I have shown in this thesis, can be understood only through the values and beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism.

Monastic literacies present one discourse of Tibetan cultural literacy. Monastic literacies primarily have for their context monks with religious duties. Therefore, they emphasise reading skills instead of writing and numeracy. Religious duties, such as reading prayers and chanting Buddhist texts, do not necessarily require comprehension of the text but merely fluent reading skills. That is often an issue in religious reading practices in Muslim societies and in other religious contexts of reading (cf. Collins 1995; Maddox 2006).

Religious literacies have a role in the process of social reproduction (Collins 1995). Monastic literacy practices in the Tibetan language have laid the foundation for the

current literacy practices. Monastic teaching methods have transferred their values and ideologies into the contemporary literacy education with debatable results. The monastic type of literacy practices can cause obstacles for further learning if religious ways of learning literacy are seen as more valuable than literacy for educational purposes (cf. Stites 1999). Therefore, Amdos may adopt the monastic way of using literacy and concentrate either consciously or unconsciously on the ideological values of monastic literacy, resulting in decoding texts but not making meaning of texts. This is in stark contrast with Freire's (1998) purpose of literacy acquisition, which is to understand and reflect on texts. However, some Amdos are pleased when they attain a level of literacy sufficient for religious reading practices, because they may see this kind of ritual reading as meeting the needs of their use of literacy in daily life.

Baker (2001) and Heath (1983) have categorised different needs for literacy in every day life. Literacy for personal pleasure and creativity is one of the needs. Religious reading, as some Amdos practise it, can be seen in that category. However, they may practise it because it is expected as a cultural duty. Then, these kinds of literacy practices do not fit into any of Baker's categories, not even into the category of literacy for citizenship. Therefore, I would add one more category "cultural belonging" that would describe better the role of religious literacies in Amdo (and other) Tibetan communities. People need literacy for participating in religious activities, especially reading religious texts aloud in a manner of chanting. These kinds of literacy practices, ritual readings, present one type of Tibetan cultural literacy. Ritual reading can be fulfilling: a person is satisfied by the atmosphere and ceremonies of a literacy event. (cf. Linnakylä 1995). In Tibetan literacies gaining merit is an essential part of ritual reading practices as in any other literacy practices in daily life. The value of these ritual reading practices is understood only in the Tibetan cultural context.

7.3 The Language of Literacy

Language is the core of literacy, and it is one of the cultural elements. In Amdo societies the Tibetan language is one essential part of their daily life. Similar to

Tibetan Buddhism language is one core component of Amdos' ethnic identity. The Tibetan language is treasured in many ways: songs, poems, history, stories, newspapers, etc. are written in the Tibetan language. Amdos, maybe not all, prefer acquiring literacy in their mother tongue, because that is the language most Amdos speak at home and in monolingual nomadic communities. Therefore, the Tibetan language is a natural choice for literacy acquisition for adult learners in the Amdo region.

The Tibetan language is a diglossic language which influences language learning. In literacy classes students learn the literary form of the Tibetan language, which differs enormously from the colloquial form Tibetan that they speak in everyday communication (Denwood 1999). Amdos speak Amdo Tibetan, a dialect of the Tibetan language. Yet, they have to learn to read and write the standard Tibetan language, which is the higher form of the Tibetan language. This feature of the language causes tensions in literacy acquisition and in daily life (Tournadre 2003). Therefore, Tibetan literacy learners are in the position of second language learners (cf. Schiffman 1997) when they acquire literacy in Tibetan. Some adult literacy learners become perplexed in the process of learning the standard Tibetan language which sounds different from the colloquial Amdo Tibetan and has a partially different lexicon from the colloquial dialect. This feature of the language is the source of some classroom activities and the ways Amdos learn the language. Teaching focuses on a repetition of sounds and syllables. People know how to speak Amdo but they have to learn to pronounce words which are written according to the standard Tibetan language.

Even though acquiring literacy in Tibetan can be a difficult process, learning the literary form of the language enables Amdos, in addition to reading Tibetan text, to understand the news on radio broadcasts and on TV since they learn the lexicon which is used in the media (See Chapter 2). Literacy education can force Amdos to develop their language skills beyond their everyday conversations to reach language competence, which enables them to communicate with a wider Tibetan society, and gain further knowledge in the fields of everyday use in their communities.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that not all people in remote villages feel a need for wider communication. Their literacy needs are met with a lower form of the Tibetan language. They are inspired and motivated for acquiring literacy by songs or poems that can be written in a lower form of the language. Amdos, who have not acquired a high proficiency of the Tibetan language, have two main cultural venues of doing literacy: music and religion. Reading and writing songs can be done in a low form of the written language, and literacy for chanting requires good reading skills. Language-wise these two literacy materials present two extremes of the register of the language: religious texts are far too complicated for beginners to comprehend, and standardised grammar for colloquial Tibetan does not exist. It is also debatable whether or not religious chanting is regarded as literacy because it merely requires good memory rather than reading skills. This is a debate that takes place in other religious societies too (Maddox 2001). Songs and poems are more “user friendly” since they can be written in a lower register of the language and the length of the text is shorter than some other written materials such as Gesar and other stories. I believe this feature is one of the reasons which motivates women to read poems and songs because they are easier for beginners to read and poems are not necessarily long which fit into the busy schedule of housewives. However, the lack of standardised grammar limits the availability of this kind of reading material, and opportunities for “real” mother tongue literacy practices of Tibetans are fewer than the literacy practices that are linked to the higher form of literacy materials.

Even though diglossia complicates the literacy acquisition process the Tibetan language is one of the motivations for learning to read and write. The Tibetan language creates the feeling of “belonging” as the participants in the current research expressed “we Tibetans, we Amdos, etc.” in the context of language learning. Thus, the Tibetan language as an element of Tibetan culture and ethnic identity has a strong value in promoting mother tongue literacy education in the times of pressure for non-mother tongue literacy acquisition.

In multicultural society, the status and use of minority language causes obstacles. Since Chinese language is more useful in wider society it causes pressure for minority language speakers such as Amdos to acquire literacy in Chinese. I understand that this kind of pressure is not as strong in remote villages as in county

centres since Amdos do not speak Chinese in remote nomadic villages. Therefore, I believe that geographical environment along with monastic tradition and ethnic belonging towards the Tibetan language keep the language alive and strong among Amdos. One example of that is the poem by Mdses Se. Cultural ways of using the language touches the innermost of Amdos since they know the culture and speak the language. Chinese language represents another way of living, different values and beliefs, i.e. another culture. Chinese language represents another culture that Amdos might have learned about or observed.

Lastly, language of literacy is also linked with (everyday) functional literacy. Based on this research I understand that Amdos' functional literacy is not taught per se but it is learnt through literacy teaching in the context of everyday literacy events and cultural knowledge. In literacy classes Amdos' everyday functional literacy is embedded in stories about everyday Tibetan life which is familiar to a learner. This enables him to use newly acquired reading skills and to function appropriately in Tibetan communities. As Amdos have shown this kind of everyday functional literacy is empowering to a learner that then is an objective and prerequisite for transformational learning (cf. Ruohotie 2000).

Regarding functional literacy in Chinese language the social context of literacy is different from the Tibetan one. Also the need for functional literacy differs from Tibetan functional literacy. Therefore, I wonder, if everyday functional literacy in Chinese can be learnt the same way as in Tibetan because literacy practices vary according to social context, values and beliefs.

7.4 Literacy and Development

Literacy is often linked to development. It is believed that acquiring literacy improves people's lives and therefore the teaching of literacy is often used as a tool for poverty alleviation and improving the economy (e.g. UNESCO 2004; The World Bank 2003). With regards to Tibetan literacy and development, it is a question of power and the language of literacy. Because Chinese and Tibetan have different power relations in society, literacies in these languages do not have equal

opportunities to promote development. Proficiency in Chinese provides better opportunities for economic development in wider society than Tibetan does. For example, more jobs are available for Chinese speakers than for monolingual Tibetan speakers and Chinese medium higher education provides a wider range of choices than Tibetan medium higher education.

The idea that literacy education has the power to transform a non-literate person's life from darkness to light is commonly spread among the Amdo but it is a myth as Graff (1979, 1994) has argued with respect to claims for literacy at other times and places. This idea that "literacy leads to the transformation of society" is brought to society by well-intentioned educators and other officials, who follow the scheme of the Chinese government that education leads to social and economic development. This message has been spread so effectively that Amdos think they are "backward people" until they can read and write. They believe that acquiring reading and writing skills is the way forward towards social and economic development. However, literacy in itself does not promote social progress, as this thesis has demonstrated. Literacy is always linked to "the political and ideological contexts and their consequences vary situationally" (Street 1995, 24). I believe, as Graff (1991) argues, that literacy is merely an enabling factor rather than a causative factor.

The monastic literacies, as such, do not necessarily promote social progress outside of the religious sphere. Tibetan literacy teaching emphasises reading practices, which is remarkably similar to reading practices in monasteries. For example, reading practices are more important in the curriculum of adult literacy teaching than writing and other skills that are related to Amdos' livelihood. Learning fluent reading, which is the main activity in adult literacy classes, does not necessarily lead to success in social and/or economic development. Acquiring literacy in Tibetan can lead to personal development and empowerment. Literacy in Tibetan, especially everyday functional literacy, concerns more the development of individuals than the social and economic development of society. In particular, women see everyday functional literacy an important achievement since they become more independent in terms of travelling and shopping. However, this statement has to be noted. Traditionally women do not travel outside their living environment, especially not

alone. Therefore, either culture is changing and women travel more or some participants of the research were repeating politically correct slogans for literacy acquisition.

On the other hand, when Amdos have access to the kinds of reading materials that they are motivated to read they will put literacy into practice for personal development and pleasure. Literacy for personal development is often promoted as gaining knowledge, and reading habits concentrate on developing professional skills or professional studies, whereas literacy for pleasure consists of music: reading songs and writing songs and making music.

This aspect of literacy can be seen also from the perspective of cultural maintenance. Amdos love singing, dancing and making music; it is close to their heart. Then, “music literacy” is an asset for Tibetan literacy maintenance, not only the other way round.

At the same time, the status of the language chosen for literacy plays an important role in any possible social progress and development. In Amdo life, acquiring literacy in Tibetan can have a major impact on people’s lives, e.g. literate parents are more eager to send their children to school or people are employed as Communist Party secretaries in villages and townships. However, being literate in Tibetan does not provide equal opportunities with being literate in Chinese to gain social and economic development in wider society. For example, proficiency in Tibetan provides limited opportunities for participation in the mainstream (non-Tibetan) labour market whereas proficiency in Chinese provides better opportunities for employment. Tibetan language literacies are marginalized in the wider society.

In times of globalisation international languages are entering the Tibetan region. Some young university students meet the new phase in their lives. If they have left their villages to get higher education most probably they will not return to their villages. They are exposed to different cultures and life styles in the big cities, and they believe that knowing English is a great asset in the labour market. However, this kind of language repertoire is not required in remote villages in Hainan TAP at the moment.

As we have seen, literacy is embedded in cultural practices. Then UNESCO proclaims that “Culture, in all its dimensions, is a fundamental component of sustainable development” (UNESCO 2010, 2). Concerning literacy and literacy education, I can interpret this statement in two ways. One being that the support of all dimensions of culture in literacy education leads to sustainable development. Accordingly, literacy campaigns should ensure that they implement culturally relevant teaching that includes cultural ways of teaching and learning, and also culturally appropriate content of primers. Then, the counterpoint is: without cultural support to literacy education non-sustainable development cannot happen. If that is the case, sustainable development among Amdos faces difficulties because not all dimensions of the culture support development. That has become quite clear during this research. For example, literacy for chanting purposes without understanding the text does not support social or economical development. However, it can be an empowering spiritual experience for an individual. Another interpretation is that, unarguably, culture with its all dimensions is a core element of sustainable development. Based on this research I am hesitant to agree with this statement. I have understood that some elements of culture can resist development, or slow down the development process. Such elements in Tibetan patriarchal society have been educational tradition and nomadic way of living: negative attitudes towards education, especially girls’ education; reading has been regarded waste of time in agricultural society. Long distances to school and a nomadic way of living that has consisted of regular moves on the Tibetan Plateau have caused obstacles for children’s education.

If we think that culture is a verb we can draw the conclusion that people make culture correspond to their values and beliefs. Similarly, if real development is to take place people have to be involved in it. Then it must be up to the people within that particular culture that make social development to take place in their societies. Maybe, we can quote a commonly used slogan “my thinking has changed” from the literacy students of the TLP and believe that transformation of minds leads to development in Amdo villages. That has taken place: some practices and cultural values are changing which has facilitated a development process in some parts of the Tibetan region. In the midst of changes adult literacy education has been one

trigger towards social development. After learning to read and write parents have acknowledged the value of education and sent their children to school.

In the end, as discussed above there is a link between development and literacy in Amdo communities. Development through literacy has different levels: some development takes place at societal level and some at the level of individual Amdos.

7.5 Tibetan Literacy for Transformation and Empowerment

Literacy is often a tool for transformation and empowerment, which is also a goal of adult literacy programmes. Baker (1994) explains that empowerment through literacy is regarded as a response (a treatment) to the oppression of illiterate people. Literacy empowers adults by equipping them with knowledge and skills that enable them to participate in their social environment and affect the political system in their environment. Empowerment in the context of adult literacy includes gaining better self-esteem by becoming literate which then, according to Ruohotie (2000) is an objective and prerequisite for transformational learning.

In the context of the Tibetan language and literacy, transformational learning and empowerment can be seen as strengthening adult learners' self-esteem and as a change of mindset towards education as mentioned above. Literate Amdo parents feel empowered to send their children to school. They make choices to educate their children, which has not been a tradition in nomadic villages. It has been thought that children become herders, and literacy is not required for herding yak and sheep. Also, parents are able to learn new skills and to gain new knowledge concerning their daily life. However, lack of appropriate reading materials hinders or makes continuity of transformational learning and cognitive empowerment difficult in remote villages. Stromquist (2009) refers to the same issue by writing that cognitive empowerment through literacy is more dependant on both the content of the literacy programme and the abilities of students to continue their literacy development by moving into some form of literacy habit. There is a direct correlation between

Amdo's transformational learning and cognitive empowerment with their access to meaningful literature and their learning of some kind of literacy habits. There are basically three kinds of use of Tibetan language literacy in Amdo communities: literacy for religious empowerment, literacy for profession and education i.e. gaining knowledge, and literacy for pleasure. The first two usages are more common than the last one. Reading poems and music is for pleasure but other kind of pleasure reading is hard to find. Literacy in people's mind is associated with religion and education along with with career but not so much with pleasure.

Reading and writing music and reading poems can become that kind of literacy habit that enable Amdos to actively use literacy for their own pleasure in their cultural context. These kind of literacy activities act as a booster for continuity of literacy practices, and through them for better self-esteem which then leads to transformational learning and continuity of empowerment.

In the context of empowerment and transformational learning we cannot ignore the presence of Tibetan Buddhism, which is discussed earlier in this chapter. That element of culture and its reading practices can slow down an empowerment process in people's daily life. Surely, one can argue that the Tibetan language literacies can empower the spiritual aspect of a person as he can dwell on rituals that involve literate materials. However, I believe, it is not the skill of reading that empowers people but the way that they utilise reading and writing. Literacy is an enabling element in the empowerment of individuals in Amdo society..

7.6 Women and Literacy

Unequal opportunities for education between genders are of universal concern, especially in developing countries. In an Amdo region, girls' opportunities for education have improved but there is still a disparity between the genders in education. Cultural social patterns and traditions hinder women's access to adult literacy education and to job opportunities as adult literacy teachers in patriarchal Tibetan society. There are fewer women students than men in adult literacy classes even though, according to the statistics, the literacy rate of women is lower than that

of men. Additionally, hardly any women teach literacy to adults because of cultural traditions. For example, Amdo women work as primary school teachers in villages but not as adult literacy teachers with only a few exceptions. Thus, I believe, it is right to say that Tibetan culture limits women's opportunities to education in Amdo villages. However, we have to acknowledge that harsh living environments and remoteness of dwelling places of nomadic women causes obstacles for women to be adult literacy teachers. It is a practical issue not a cultural one in terms of value and behaviour. But it is a cultural issue in terms of way of living that causes different opportunities for women and men in adult education.

Amdo life and society is changing, the process is slower in remote villages than in the capital of the province and county centres. The woman's role in villages is to stay at home and take care of the family and domestic duties. Literacy materials are scarce in homes and villages, and women do not get out to participate in literacy events. Traditionally women should stay home and men go out. Therefore, literacy as a discourse for gaining more knowledge does not necessarily encourage women to acquire literacy because literate materials are scarce in villages. Women do not have many opportunities to be engaged in literacy practices at home. If they do, they are not considered to be equal with men by their skills. Men are regarded better readers in Tibetan and their engagement in literacy practices is wider and requires a good knowledge of Tibetan.

This is part of the argument of Tibetan literacies being gender-based: traditionally women have different kinds of literacy practices than men do. On the one hand women's desire to read poems, songs and religious books can be seen as a Tibetan tradition: young Amdo women at literacy classes follow in the steps of old Amdo women who are engaged in these kinds of literacy practices, or they would like to be if they were literate. On the other hand these are literacies women would do for their own benefit, not so much for their families and the wider community. Possibly, these would be the cultural literacy practices of women that could open up more varieties of literacies and literacy habits for village women.

Lastly, Amdo culture is not static. Attitudes towards women's education and their career outside home are changing. I believe adolescent girls with inspiring women role models will carry this change further.

7.7 Adult Literacy Education

It is my hypothesis that Tibetan culture and its cultural practices form the foundation for local literacy teaching. When I started to unpack my hypothesis of Tibetan literacy practices I did not expect to face so many contradictions in Tibetan literacy practices as I did. I assumed, for example, that if the emphasis from reading practices could be shifted to functional literacy practices, then learning for meaning would possibly have a positive impact on Tibetan language literacy teaching, and assist people in their use of literacy in daily life. As a Western researcher I assumed that learning which stresses the importance of fluent reading rather than understanding meaning was an out-dated way of learning. However, as Street (1984), Barton & Hamilton (1998), Martin-Jones & Jones (2000), suggest, literacy gets its meaning in its cultural context. Therefore, at the moment, for example, functional literacy teaching in the sense it is meant by international agencies such as UNESCO cannot be forced into Amdo Tibetan adult literacy teaching because such a concept cannot be adapted to Tibetan literacy teaching as discussed in the previous chapter. However, if we look at everyday functional literacy, we can see how literacy teaching can meet the needs of Amdos' use of literacy in daily life, though with considerable limitations. This type of everyday functional literacy can be embedded in Tibetan cultural ways of teaching literacy as the Tibetan Literacy Programme has shown. Everyday functional literacy empowers learners to use what they learn and to build on their knowledge based on the earlier knowledge.

I suggest that it would be worth paying more attention to everyday functional literacy teaching in order to improve both literacy teaching and learning as then both teaching and learning would remain in a familiar and cultural way of learning literacy. It would also be meaningful in a daily life context both for those learners who acquire literacy for education purposes, and those who acquire literacy for religious reading purposes in Amdo communities. However, even this kind of

literacy acquisition has limitations in a society as public texts in the Tibetan language are limited and people may have difficulties to access literacy materials. Therefore, increasing the use of Tibetan texts in society would improve the use of everyday functional literacy but that is such a large issue, which is beyond this thesis.

Additionally, even though Tibetan adult literacy education in the Tibetan language does not meet all the needs of Tibetans' use of literacy, it is definitely important in the Tibetan cultural context. Tibetan-language literacy education encourages maintaining the Tibetan language, which is an important element of Tibetan culture and identity as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Stromquist (1997) points out that it is a major challenge to provide an adequate literacy programme that meets the needs both of individuals and communities. It is not only that literacy is a socially situated experience, but that literacy settings themselves function as important social environments. Often literacy classes are the places where women have valuable opportunities to learn of their history and rights, self-esteem and leadership (Stromquist 2009). Women in Amdo communities do not have these kinds of opportunities since women learn together with men in literacy classes, and they are not supposed to be superior to men in learning and teaching situations. Additionally, literacy teaching concentrates on learning alphabets and reading skills, and traditional functional learning and teaching literacy does not fit into a Tibetan view of literacy acquisition. Therefore, Tibetan literacy classes are not the arena for learning women's rights, leadership, and so forth. Such subjects have to be taught later on in separate classes for women. Similarly, men are not learning functional literacy skills to meet the needs of such literate activities in their communities. The Amdo view of literacy learning consists only of learning alphabets and skills of reading and writing. Other skills have to be learned separately.

This brings up the question of modifying or changing adult literacy programmes in Amdo communities. Nabi et al. (2009) argue that teaching and learning in adult literacy classes should be drawn on the students' funds of knowledge and their literacy practices. Amdo communities are under pressure for change. They are in the

process of transition as mentioned in Chapter 2. The government is transferring nomadic Amdos from the open areas of the Tibetan Plateau to towns and townships (China Press 2002; Goodman 2006; Foggin 2008). This social change, being forced to live in settlements, opens up new venues and uses for literacy in Amdo communities. Amdos' literacy practices in the Tibetan language face new phases and challenges which will only be seen in the years to come. However, I predict that adult literacy teaching needs some modifications to meet the needs of new kinds of literacy practices, and the new knowledge Amdos acquire in their new surroundings. Yet, I wonder whether or not Tibetans feel comfortable with changes in the teaching approach and in classroom activities. Until now they prefer the old ways of teaching and learning. Teaching in literacy classes of the TLP was designed to have more interactive classroom activities but the teachers chose the old traditional way of teaching. Teachers were more familiar with the old traditional way of teaching which they most probably felt comfortable with and did not require extra effort in teaching. New, interactive, teaching methods can be felt as a threat to a man teacher who is used to being at the central point of the classroom activities and the source of the information. Possibly, I wonder, women teachers would feel and act differently since they do not want to draw attention to them as mentioned earlier. Therefore, we can speculate that women teachers would adopt new teaching methods easier than men.

If women teachers would response better to changes in teaching methods it could cause notable changes in adult literacy teaching. We could predict that classroom dynamics would change from being teacher centred to be student centred and possibly more women would join teaching. As such this would increase a number of literate women and induce significant changes in the Tibetan culture of adult education.

7.8 Literacy and Power

The Tibetan view of literacy is a set of skills of reading and writing. Street (2001) argues that this autonomous model of literacy is the choice of those who are in

power since it provides them with the opportunity to control how literacy is used. I believe, Street's argument is relevant in Amdo Tibetan societies.

In Tibetan society monasteries have traditionally been powerful institutions (Kapstein 2006), they have provided people reading materials that are mostly related to Buddhism (Cazebon & Jackson 1996). Access to Tibetan language literacy and modes of literacy has been provided by monasteries. On the other hand, in the new society²⁹ another powerful influence is the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which provides its own politically correct material for people to read. The CCP as an official institution of the PRC has power over the monasteries, and this power relationship has an impact on the everyday life of Amdos and their literacies. The language of these literacies is often Chinese, and the context is secular.

An Amdo individual's literacy practices are linked to power issues in society and languages in society, which cannot be ignored. Bourdieu claims that "language is not powerful on its own, but gains power by the use powerful people make of it" (1991, 5). In the Amdo context this claim has two different positions. Chinese literacy does not have equal status with Tibetan literacy in Amdo communities. Chinese literacy obtains its power and higher status through the context of its being the official language of the PRC. On the other hand Tibetan literacy has higher priority and status in Amdo communities but it is less powerful in the wider society of the PRC. This then influences what an individual can do with literacy. The purpose and the context of literacy dictate the language of literacy. The needs and uses of Tibetan-language literacy differ from the Chinese ones. Tibetan language literacy concerns cultural values and the social context of being Tibetan. Chinese literacy concerns various government and public functions of the PRC (Harri 2009).

Tibetan language literacies are also structured by power: institutional religious powers, patriarchal powers, the power of language, the power of cultural tradition, and gaining knowledge through literacy. These power sources influence first daily literacy practices, and through them adult literacy education. They set the norms in teaching situations and the goals for language learning as we have seen. They form

²⁹ The new society refers to the PRC in the Tibetan context. The old society is the one that was before the PRC was established.

the ideas and discourses of literacy. For example, women and literacy as a discourse is formed by these powers. Amdo women are regarded capable of learning the language but their engagement in literacy practices either in a personal level or/and as a teacher in class room is defined by powers of cultural tradition, religion and patriarchal systems. The cultural notion of shame and disgrace, the Law of Karma and the locale of living set the norms for women as learners of literacy, users of literacy and teachers of literacy.

Final words, the power of the Tibetan language literacies in Amdo communities is also about cultural literacy. Cultural elements of the Tibetan language are the forcing power for Tibetan language literacies. Mdses Se writes:

“We are the children of our mother tongue. Our parents are Tibetan language and its writing. When we go to other areas our mother tongue is the warm place for us to stay. And when we are in darkness our mother tongue is a lamp to show us the good way. When we are cold the mother tongue is a fire and when we are hot the mother tongue is a rain. When we are hungry the mother tongue is butter and tsampa. When we are thirsty the mother tongue is milk and yoghurt.”

7.9 Suggestions for Further Research

The results of the current research confirmed some existing theories and views of literacy. It became apparent that literacy and culture are linked together. Literacy practices are culture bound, their meaning and value are embedded in culture. However, there are some issues both of literacy and of culture that need to be looked at afresh and from a different angle.

Changes in culture, changes in literacy practices?

Literacy is a situated activity that changes along with cultural changes. Amdo communities are increasingly exposed to the “outside” world; some Amdos have faced cultural changes in new settlements the in past few years, and some others in

traditional Tibetan villages. Assumedly, people have had to adjust to changes in their living environment, which has possibly caused some changes in some cultural elements. A research interest here would focus on cultural changes concerning adult literacy education. Do these kinds of changes in the environment of ethnic minority people facilitate changes in adult literacy education? Would it be possible to organise literacy programmes in order to teach Amdos meaningful and relevant skills that they could use in their daily lives and in their livelihoods in the new settlements?

Influence of literate nomadic women

Through discussions with a number of people and observing life in nomadic Amdo communities in villages, towns and county centres I have understood that women's opportunities both for literacy education and for their own professional career are better in towns and county centres than in villages. Then, what is the impact of literate women on their families in nomadic communities? Is it true in nomadic communities, that literate women have educated children?

Multicultural interventions in adult literacy education

International development agencies emphasise culturally appropriate ways of implementing international development programmes. This brings forth two issues for research and for discussion:

- How to implement not only a culturally appropriate adult literacy programme but also a culturally relevant programme which could take into account the cultural elements that could support literacy acquisition and the use of literacy in every day life?
- Based on this research I believe that culture does not necessarily support sustainable development, which is a goal for international development programmes. What elements of culture are more likely to support sustainable development, and how are they connected to literacy education?

Everyday functional literacy

Functional literacy programmes along with literacy for livelihood programmes have been regarded as successful approaches to the teaching of adult literacy. I suggest that it would be worth looking into the “everyday functional literacy “ approach as it has been presented in this research. What would be the influence of teaching and learning “everyday functional literacy” in adult literacy classes in relation to the every day uses of literacy in developing countries?

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Appendices

APPENDIX NO 1

LIST OF COLLECTED DATA IN HAINAN TAP 2004 - 2006, 2010

INTERVIEWS (INT)

Tape recorded and transcribed:

No	Date	Interviewee	Length
1	26.01.2005	Tsoksum	120 min
2	20.03.2005	Monastery	75 min
3	12.03.2005	Lhamo 1	35 min
4	16.03.2005	Lhabi 1	50 min
5	03.04.2005	Goma village	60 min
6	04.08.2005	Lhabi 2	40 min
7	24.08.2005	Tserang	60 min
8	25.08.2005	Lhamo 2	15 min
9	Aug 2005	Hui	65 min
10	30.08.2005	Old Teacher	75 min
11	01.09.2005	Dorje	60 min
12	13.07.2010	Norbu	44 min
13	13.07.2010	Tsomo	37 min
14	16.07.2010	Nyima and Tenzin	62 min

Not tape recorded, only written notes:

No	Date	Interviewee	Length
15	17.03.2005	Taylor Lady	~ 60 min
16	11.08.2005	Merangdzol	55 min

Chats:

No	Date	Location / informant	Length
17	06.04.2004	Chapcha/Minzuban	10 min
18	07.03.2005	Chapcha/TLP Trainees	30 min
19	18.03.2005	Jara/one farming family	10 min
20	31.03.2005	Guide/Middle school teachers	30 min
21	01.04.2005	Xinghai/ Mr Norbu	10 min
22	02.04.2005	Tongde/ restaurant neighbour	10 min
23	03.04.2005	Tongde/ Tib. Primary School Principal	5 min
24	03.04.2005	Goma village/ village teachers	15 min
25	03.04.2005	Goma village / township teacher	15 min
26	03.04.2005	Goma village/ family	10 min
27	03.04.2005	Hainan TAP/Mr Norbu	30 min
28	09.08.2005	Tongde/Edu + other officials	20 min
29	10.08.2005	Tongde / Minshuban people	60 min
30	10.08.2005	Tongde/ Mr Ma	15 min
31	11.08.2005	Khargen valley/ Nomadic family	60 min
32	29.08.2005	Chapcha/Ms Dako	15 min
33	03.09.2005	Xinghai / township leaders	30 min
34	Sept. 2005	Chapcha / Ms Dako	15 min
35	Sept. 2005	Chapcha / Mr Norbu	10 min
36	Dec. 2005	Tongde / County leader	10 min

Trial interviews:

37	08.09.2004	Xinghai / nomadic village	10 min
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Attendance in meeting/minutes:

38	01.04.2004	Xinghai / County leaders + teachers	60 min
39	10.08.2005	Tsela/township leaders	45 min

OBSERVATION NOTES (ON)

Primary schools

No	Date	Location	Length
1	05.03.2005	Tondge County Tibetan Primary School	40 min
2	03.04.2005	Goma Township Primary School, class1	15 min
3	03.04.2005	Goma Township Primary School, class2	40 min

The Tibetan Literacy Programme

No	Date	Location	Length
4	06.09.2004	Guomang / class 1	20 min
5	06.09.2004	Guomang/ class 2	20 min
6	06.09.2004	Guomang/ class 3	15 min
7	06.09.2004	Guomang/ class 4	15 min
8	06.09.2004	Guomang/ class 5	15 min
9	08.09.2004	Tangnag/class 1	20 min
10	08.09.2004	Tangnag/class 2	20 min
11	08.09.2004	Tangnag/class 3	20 min
12	08.09.2004	Thartong/ class 1	15 min
13	08.09.2004	Thartong/ class 2	15 min
14	08.09.2004	Thartong/ class 3	15 min
15	09.09.2004	Xinghai/ class 1	20 min
16	09.09.2004	Xinghai/ class 2	20 min
17	16.12.2004	Tongde/class 1	20 min
18	16.12.2004	Tongde/class 2	20 min
19	16.12.2004	Tongde/class 3	20 min
20	16.12.2004	Tongde/class	20 min
21	16.12.2004	Tongde/class	15 min
22	18.12.2004	Xinghai/class 1	20 min
23	18.12.2004	Xinghai/class	20 min
24	18.12.2004	Xinghai/class 3	20 min
25	10.08.2005	Tsewa/ class1	30 min
26	10.08.2005	Tsewa/ class 2	30 min
27	10.08.2005	Tsewa/ class 3	10 min
28	12.08.2005	Suma Township/one big class	60 min
29	13.08.2005	Ngeteng/class 1	60 min
30			

In this table duration is estimated length of time.

LANGUAGE SURVEY (LS)

No	Date	Location	Volume
1	30.01.2005	Chapcha	64 people

FIELDNOTES (FN)

No	Date	Research location or file name
1	28.03.-06.04.2004	Pre-research trip
2	23.08.2004-25.02.2005	Chapcha, vol 1
3	Dec 2004	Chapcha, brief notes
4	16.-18.12.2004	Tongde-Xinghai fieldnotes
5	12.03.2005	Jara fieldnotes 0305
6	12.03.2005	Visit Xnn bookstore
7	29.03.-01.04.2005	Notes in Guide 04.05
8	01.04.-07.08.2005	Notes and thoughts folder
9	02.04.2005	Tongde Internet Cafe
10	08.04.2005	Xinghai internet cafe
11	30.08.2005	Visit a book shop in Chapcha
12	Sept 2005	Xining, Sept 2005
13	30.11.-04.12.2005	Evaluation trip
14	2006	Headnotes
15	10.-16.07.2010	Field trip

DOCUMENTS (DOC)

No	Date	Location or file name
1	1999-2006	TLP programme files
2	2000-2005	TLP training materials
3	2001-2005	TLP students' books, four volumes
4	2004	TLP samples of exams
5	2005	School attendance statistic in Hainan TAP
6	2005	China Education Law
7	2004-2006	Emails
8	2005	"Mother Tongue" poem, Tibetan
9	2005	Milk tea box
10	2005	Candy paper
11	2004-2006	Newspaper clippings
12	2005	Willis/Tibetan Language Issues
13	2005	Chapcha/Writing Styles

ARTEFACTS (AFT)

No	Date	Item
1		A picture of a mani stone

VIDEO CLIPS

No	Date	Subject	Duration
1	05.09.2004	Classroom, adult lit. teaching	30 sec
2	16.12.2004	Classroom, adult lit. teaching	30 sec

PHOTOGRAPHS

No	Date	Item
1-350	2004 - 2005	All kinds of daily life situations and classroom activities
1-12	2004 - 2005	Classroom activities, welcoming songs, teachers' training

APPENDIX NO 2

A consent form in Tibetan

གནས་ཚུལ་འདྲན་སྦྱོང་གྱི་ཕར་ལིང་འཐད་བྱུང་བ།
སྤུས་མོ་རྒྱལ་ལ་ཉ་རེ་ལྷིས་ཁོ་མོའི་King's College རུག་ཏུ་གསོལ་གྱ་ཆེན་མོའི་སློབ་སྦྱོང་
གི་ཆེད་དུ་ཐོད་གྱི་རྩིང་སེལ་གྱི་བའི་ཁྱོད་ཞིབ་འཇུག་གྱི་སྐབས། བདག་གིས་འདྲན་སྦྱོང་
ཀྱས་པའི་གནས་ཚུལ་འདི་རྣམས་ཁོ་མོས་བཀོལ་སྦྱོང་གྱི་ཕར་དང་རང་འཐད་པ་ཡིན།

རུས་མིང་། _____

མིང་རྟགས་འགོད་པ། _____

སྤྱི་ཚེས་དང་ས་ཆ། _____

A note: Signing this consent form interviewees agreed that all the information what they give can be used for this research which is carried out by the researcher under the supervision of King's College, London University. A similar form was used for interviews which were carried out in July 2010. Interviewees were to sign the paper, write a date of their interview and the place it took place.

APPENDIX NO 3

Interview frame for monk "Tserang"

24.08.05

1. I would like to know something about learning literacy in monastery but before we go to that could tell me something about your self? How old were you when you join the monastery?
2. Did your parents send you there or was it your decision to go to monastery?
3. Do have any other brothers or sisters who are in a monastery or in a nunnery?
4. What kind of monastery was your first monastery? Was it big or small?
5. Were you able to read and write Tibetan when you entered a monastery?
6. Did you have any literacy teaching in a monastery?
7. Could you tell about your experience about teaching or learning literacy in a monastery?
8. What were your days like in your early years in monastery?
9. Tell me about your reading practices in the monastery?
10. How much and in what way did you practice writing in the monastery?
11. What is your opinion of learning literacy in monasteries?
12. What do you think what are the main emphasis of teaching literacy in monastery?'
13. What do you think, does it help to write Tibetan if you can read fluently or is it the other way round?
14. What kinds of books did you read first in a monastery?
15. What kind of books do you read nowadays?
16. Do you know Chinese?
17. Please tell me your opinion of language of literacy. In which language Tibetans should become literate first and why?
18. What do you think about learning other than Tibetan language?

APPENDIX NO 4

Interview analysis of Mr Tserang

Lines	Full description	Summary
32-48	<p>R: How were the days and how many hours did you study?</p> <p>M: In the morning get up at 6 o'clock.</p> <p>M: then to memorize after breakfast until 11 o'clock in the morning then memorize.</p> <p>R: Then memorize what? Scripture or something else?</p> <p>M: yeah. Buddhist scripture.</p> <p>M: Afternoon, 2 o'clock then afternoon 7 o'clock to memorize.</p> <p>R: Five hours.</p> <p>TL: Five hours and then dinner.</p> <p>M: Then in the evenings review what has been memorized in the day time.</p> <p>R: You had a lot of reading practice. Did you do it alone or in the hall with the other monks?</p> <p>M: Not with a lot of monks but with like one teacher came with two or three students. They were together.</p>	<p>LEARNING LITERACY IN MONASTERY</p> <p>LEARNING SCHEDULE and STYLE</p> <p>LEARNING MATERIAL</p> <p>LEARNING SCHEDULE full time learning</p> <p>LEARNING STYLE memorizing</p> <p>Small groups.</p> <p>TEACHING METHODS</p> <p>LEARNING METHODS</p> <p>LEARNING SCHEDULE</p> <p>TEACHER'S JOB</p> <p>How can one memorize so much in one day? Did they learn how to memorize? Sounds like they were given a task without any instruction how to do it? Task orientated learning.</p> <p>GOAL OF</p>
49-62	<p>R: Ok, so when you read and your teacher was correcting your reading?</p> <p>M: The teacher will teach you the reading and then you have to memorize. Then the second morning you</p>	

	<p>have to go to the teacher and read it without looking.</p> <p>R: OK.</p> <p>M: Then teacher will teach you. Then teacher will teach you a new lesson.</p> <p>R: Are they very long? How many pages do they have to study every day?</p> <p>M. According to the monks. You know people are different. Some can memorize only a couple of pages, some can memorize many pages like five or ten.</p> <p>R: So one day you practice with teacher then you memorized it. The following morning you repeated what you have learned without using the book. That time, it sounds like you have to know it by heart. Maybe. Is that right?</p> <p>M: Yes.</p> <p>TL: He knows by heart.</p> <p>R: ok, so did they check that you understand what you were reading?</p> <p>M: no.</p> <p>R: ok, just practice that you can read nicely, fluently?</p> <p>M: yes.</p> <p>R: You were quite small and you were practicing these did you ever think “Do I understand it?”</p> <p>M: Many times.</p>	<p>LEARNING</p> <p>UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEXT</p> <p>FLUENCY OF READING</p> <p>LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF TEXT</p> <p>ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHING</p> <p>ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHER</p> <p>TEACHER'S POSITION</p> <p>TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP</p> <p>TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF TEXT</p> <p>TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHING</p> <p>What's the point to learn to read the text if you don't understand it? Religious merit?</p>
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	<p>R: Could you go back to your teacher or was it not a right thing to do?</p> <p>M. Only memorize.</p> <p>R. only memorize.</p> <p>TL. Cannot ask a teacher.</p> <p>R. is it because teacher is so respected or why?</p> <p>M: The teachers usually don't know the meaning.</p> <p>M. When I was a monk, went to monastery and in the beginning there were not many monks who knew the meaning of the scriptures.</p> <p>R. What scriptures, no monasteries or?</p> <p>M: Because they are not good teachers to explain the scripture. So nobody really knows the scripture.</p>	
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APPENDIX No. 5

Interviewing Mr Tsoksum

Chapcha 26.01.2005

Tsoksum, you know that I am studying at the London University and at the moment I am doing my research, which concerns how Tibetans learn how to read and write their own language. I look at such things as how written text is part of Tibetans daily life in Hainan Prefecture. Part of my research deals with the language issue and how Putonghua and Tibetan are involved in Tibetan education.

1. I would like to ask you some questions and hear about your experience in a local education system.
2. Please tell me about your family?
3. Do you come from a farming family or from a nomadic family?
4. How many people do you have in your family?
5. Your parents, have they gone to school?
6. What about your siblings?
7. Are there any people in your family who do not know how to read and write Tibetan?
8. Are there any family members who know only Putonghua?
9. Is your family a mono- or bilingual family?
10. Tell me about your schooling?
11. Did you go to a kindergarten before primary school?
12. Have you had your education in Tibetan or in Putonghua?
13. What have you studied so far?
14. How did you find the transition from Tibetan medium school to Chinese medium education?
15. How do you find your bilingual education?
16. If you could choose now would you like to have Tibetan medium or Putonghua medium education?
17. You became literate first in Tibetan, did that help you to learn Putonghua?

17. What language do you use at home with your parents and siblings? at the market?

18. With your relatives?

19. With your friends?

20. Hospital/Banking etc?

21. What kind of books do you read?

22. Do you read books in Tibetan or in Putonghua?

23. Does it make any difference for you if read Tibetan literature or Putonghua literature?

24. If you read just for leisure what language do you choose for reading?

25. I heard that you plan to study the Tibetan language in a lamasery for a couple of weeks. Could you tell me more about it? Why do you want to do so and what do you expect to gain?

26. I have one more question. How would you describe or what does it mean to you to be literate in a Tibetan culture in a Chinese context?

APPENDIX No. 6

Chapcha 02.02.2005

Preliminary analysis

Some issues rising from data: Interview Mr Tsoksum, part 2

This piece of interview has a lot of information about language use in Tsoksum's family. First I look at the various issues within the interview at the general level before going deeper into them. First of all Amdo (Tibetan) is the main language at his home. Amdo is the language what Tsoksum uses with his parents but with his only sibling, his elder brother, he uses Qinghai Hua. Whereas his brother has done all his education in Chinese medium schools and he does not know enough Tibetan so that he could communicate in Tibetan. Tsoksum's mother speaks Qinghai Hua with the elder brother and the same does Tsoksum. Actually according to Tsoksum his brother refuses to speak Amdo (line 52). When he was a child he did not even want to be a Tibetan. That is what he used to say when he was young (line 52). He does understand Tibetan but he cannot speak it (line 55, 56). Tsoksum himself has done all his education in Tibetan medium schools except kindergarten. (Other sources of information: there is no Tibetan medium kindergarten in Qinghai Province, most probably in a whole Tibetan region).

I do wonder why Tsoksum's parents decided to send these brothers to different kinds of school system language-wise. Elder one was sent to a Chinese medium system and the younger one to a Tibetan medium system. It seems that being a Tibetan student in a Chinese medium school, whose home language is Tibetan, has affected Tsoksum's brother's ethnic and language identity at least at early stages of his education. He has learned good command of Chinese, but he has not been able to learn his home language Tibetan. And he did not even want to be a Tibetan. I wonder how many of Tibetan children are in the same situation that they become literate in Chinese only and are not even able to verbally communicate in Tibetan. What is going on in this family? Is this family very typical Tibetan family language-wise?

Both these boys have got good education opportunities. I assume that formal education is highly valued by parents. It is not only that they are literate but that they have got further education as well.

Tsoksum's mother comes from the Qinghai Lake area, which means that she comes from the nomadic area. My assumption is that her parents speak only Amdo and Qinghai Hua but I have to check this from the other pieces of interview data from Tsoksum. Anyway she does not know how to read and write Putonghua but she can speak it with a poor pronunciation. Tsoksum's father comes from Guinan area and he comes from a farming family and area. Because he comes from the farming area, from a settled community, explains the fact that he knows Putonghua better than Amdo (lines 39, 40). He cannot read and write Tibetan but he speaks it fluently. However, Tsoksum says that he himself speaks Tibetan in his father's hometown (184) and at his mother's home. I do wonder how Tsoksum's brother communicates with his grandparents. Even though Tsoksum's brother does not know Tibetan well enough and he is not keen on speaking it with the other family members there is a very strong sense of using Amdo at home. That is despite of the fact that the father does not read and write Tibetan. Mother knows some Putonghua but maybe not enough so that it would be convenient to use at home. (My good guess here is that Amdo is used at home because these people identify themselves as Tibetans and want to keep up Tibetan language use at home.)

It seems to me that Tsoksum has got a strong Tibetan identity where Amdo language is playing a big role in it. According to himself if he needed to choose again what language he would use in education he would do the same: doing his education in a Tibetan medium school (132-135). Even though he knows Putonghua and Qinghai Hua he speaks Amdo whenever he is understood in the language. The next choice is Qinghai Hua (e.g. lines 46, 174-179). Qinghai Hua is used with his local non-Tibetan friends and in the market sometimes. If Tibetan or Qinghai Hua is not appropriate then he uses Putonghua when communicating with people (106-115, 163-167). Like he says in lines 106-115 that in the minority institute in Beijing they try to speak Tibetan all the time but sometimes there is a problem with a language and they need to communicate in Putonghua. That does not occur only

when communicating with his Tibetan schoolmates but also in a class room situation when a teacher does not speak Amdo.

That brings up another issue, which I think deals with the identity. Other minority national students like Mongolians in the institute cannot understand why Tibetan students speak Putonghua to each other. Mongolians in China can speak their own language despite of their regional background. Whereas Tibetan students from different areas of the Tibetan region do not have one common Tibetan language for communication. They have to use Putonghua if they can. This piece of data reminds me of the issue of the Tibetan language standardization. There has been a discussion going on for some years about standardising the Tibetan language in order to enabling Tibetans from different dialect backgrounds to communicate with each other. Anyway, Tsoksum says that he and his Tibetan schoolmates feel shy when they have to use Putonghua among themselves while other national minority people can listen to them. (140).

One underlining issue here is that even if you acquire literacy in Amdo it is not sufficient for education in a whole Tibetan region. It is sufficient for the Amdo region. Whereas Putonghua has prestige and it can be used more broadly within huge P.R.C... However, Putunghua is not a medium of teaching in small townships and villages in Hainan TAP.

Linked to the issue above is the Tsoksum's comment on lines 288-291 when he says that knowing Tibetan is sufficient for everyday life and Putonghua is not necessary. I do wonder if he really meant that and I have to check it with him. I assume that because he knows Putonghua he does not realise how much it is used even in Chapcha (Hainan TAP centre).

Another issue, which rises up from the data is Tibetans and reading habits. Tsoksum says that he prefers reading in Tibetan (248,249). He can read Putonghua as well but for him it is easier to read in Tibetan (247). However he could not say whether Tibetan or Putonghua was easier for him to read but because of Tibetan being his "own language" as he said he seem to prefer reading in Tibetan. I wonder

if this one is to do with the ethnic identity because he could not say which of these languages were easier for him to read.

What I find interesting is that Tsoksum seem to say contradictory statements about Tibetans' reading habit. E.g. Tibetans seem to associate reading to be part of studying. His parents do not have any books at home. Only students buy magazines. His parents do not read at home. His Tibetan friends read for fun. It seems that the whole part of interview 300-332 is not clear. In the beginning of it Tsoksum seem to say that only Tibetan students read Tibetan magazines and novels and reading is connected to their studies. I do understand that because he studies Tibetan language and culture and those magazines and novels are good ways of learning about them both. Actually I think that the only contradictory comments are on lines 330-333 when he says that Tibetans read for fun. Before that he seems to say just opposite.

The reason for Tsoksum's parents not having any books at home can have different reasons. They may find them too expensive to buy. However they both are well paid in their jobs, a teacher and a government official. Or they may not be interested in buying them because the father cannot read Tibetan. Or maybe they just do not like reading.

Tsoksum does not mention how many different kinds of Tibetan magazines are published and how many issues there are in a year.

This issue of reading with a deeper purpose makes me think what is the link between reading for study purposes, goals and means of literacy education and the written form of the language. If Amdo Tibetans read only for learning purposes then that may be one reason for the custom that 100% of Tibetan literature is written in a high standard language. Or it maybe the other way round that because all Tibetan literature is in a written form of the language people feel and associate it with a learning process because it is not how they would say and speak in daily life. There is no literature, which uses spoken language utterances etc. The grammar and lexicon are of the written form. This written form of the language differs enormously from so called spoken form of the language.

A link with my research question: From the literacy point of view Tibetan people should learn to read and write the written form, which is the current practice in literacy education.

So far this analysis of the interview has been on a very general level. I want to pick up some more detailed data in relation to literacy practices. As seen above Tibetans' literacy practices is not only about literacy practices in Tibetan but also in Putonghua. Children face this issue when they attend kindergarten or to primary school. Tsoksum learned first to write Putonghua as he went to kindergarten, where medium of teaching was only in Putonghua (76, 77), which he started to learn only when he was three years old (71, 141-147). Tsoksum had not spoken Putonghua before he entered kindergarten (153-156). Because he grew up in Amdo language environment he found it difficult to learn to read and write Chinese characters (157,158). He started to learn to read and write Amdo when he went to school at the age of five (148-149). After that all his education has been in a Tibetan medium education system. Yet he has studied Putonghua as a subject for twelve years. He says that he has not had a bilingual education but his knowledge of Putonghua is good. He is literate in these two languages but he prefers to read Tibetan whenever that is possible. That is because he is Tibetan as he gives the reason.

On lines 250-283 Tsoksum tells about his plans to go to a lamasery to learn Tibetan. He thinks that "in the monastery we can learn Tibetan well". There is something in the lamasery literacy education, which appeals to Tibetans. According to Tsoksum young people go to learn Tibetan language at monasteries after finished their middle school (277). Teacher are monks in the monasteries, so they do not have any special teaching qualifications. All the people with whom I have discussed about the language learning and literacy education in lamaseries have had a very high opinion of it. (Why so?)

Concerning his ability to write Tibetan I wonder what he meant when he said that he wanted to improve writing Tibetan.

APPENDIX No. 7.

INTERVIEW : Ms Lhabi 2

Chapcha 04.08.2005

- 1) Last time you mentioned that you once learned how to write your name but then you forgot it. How did that happen? What were reasons for that?
- 2) Last time you also told me that you had a cow and you sell yoghurt. I would like hear more about your life. Could you tell me about the day you bought your first cow, how did it go?
- 3) How do you manage your days in making yoghurt and selling it? Could you tell me about your ordinary day in making and selling yoghurt?
- 4) What about your day of doing shopping in Chapcha? How do you choose what to buy? How do you know what products to buy?
- 5) Tell me what happens when you go to a bank? How do you withdraw money?
- 6) Have you ever been to hospital? If so what happens when you go there?
- 7) When you walk along the streets do you ever wonder what is written in various signs above shops or on notice boards etc?
- 8) What do you think about the skills of reading and writing?
- 9) What is your opinion does it matter in what language a Tibetan should become literate?

APPENDIX No. 8

A Chapcha language survey

Chapcha language survey summary				
	%	Total	F	M
Number of attendants		64	19	45
Literate in Tibetan				
Can read and write Tibetan	77	49	14	35
cannot read and write Tibetan	23	15	5	10
Knowledge of Putonghua				
Can speak Putonghua	67	43	30	13
Cannot speak Putonghua at all	33	21	6	15
Can read and write Putonghua	53	34	12	22
Cannot read and write Putonghua	47	30	7	23
Shopping in Chapcha				
Tibetan only	13	8	3	5
Tibetan and Putonghua	33	21	6	15
Tibetan and Qinghaihua	36	23	6	17
Tibetan, Putonghua and Qinghaihua	16	10	3	7
Putonghua only	1	1	0	1
Qinghaihua only	1	1	0	1
Banking				
Tibetan only	8	5	1	4
Tibetan and Putonghua	17	11	3	8
Tibetan and Qinghaihua	14	9	3	6
Tibetan, Putonghua and Qinghaihua	2	1	1	0
Putonghua only	31	20	7	13
Qinghaihua only	23	15	4	11
Little Putonghua and Qinghaihua	3	2	0	2
No language choice mentioned	2	1		

	%	Total	F	M
Hospital				
Tibetan only	17	11	2	9
Tibetan, Putonghua and Qinghaihua	11	7	5	2
Putonghua only	11	7	2	5
Qinghaihua only	1	1	0	1
Government Offices				
Tibetan only	14	9	1	8
Tibetan and Putonghua	20	13	4	9
Tibetan and Qinghaihua	23	15	4	11
Tibetan, Putonghua and Qinghaihua	16	10	6	4
Putonghua only	9	6	1	5
Qinghaihua only	8	5	1	4
never visited	8	5	1	4
No language choice mentioned	2	1	1	0
The most used language at home				
Tibetan only	95	61	18	43
Tibetan and Putonghua	3	2	1	1
Tibetan and Qinghaihua	2	1	0	1
	%	Total	F	M
Language used with neighbours				
Tibetan only	38	24	4	20
Tibetan and Putonghua	12	8	2	6
Tibetan and Qinghaihua	44	28	10	18
Tibetan, Putonghua and Qinghaihua	6	4	3	1
Putonghua only		0		
Qinghaihua only		0		

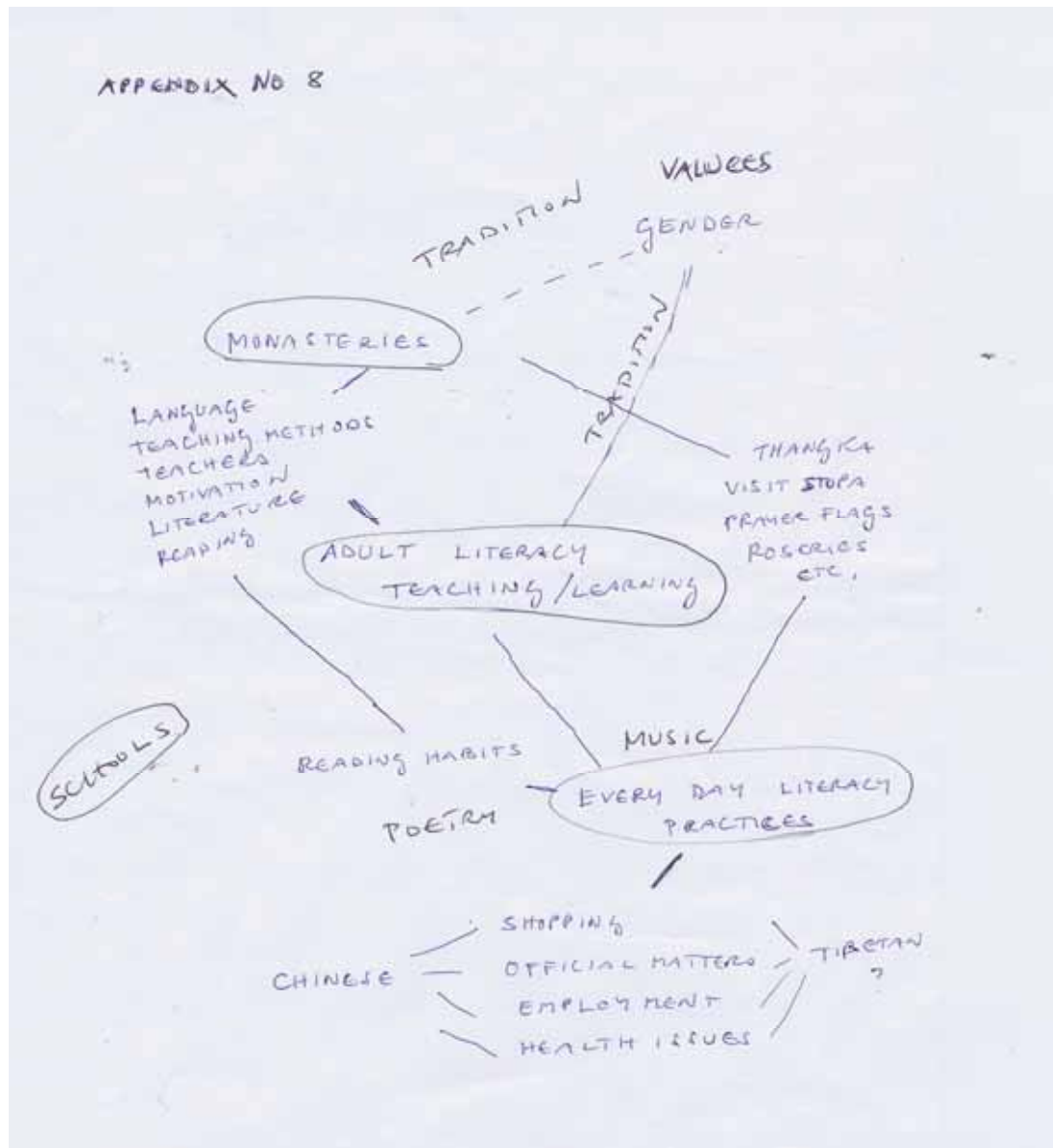
APPENDIX No. 9

Interview analysis, Tsomo

Lines	Full description	Summary
37-42	<p>Raija: Could you tell me about your experience as a trainer and as a teacher in the Programme? You were the only lady teacher in the programme.</p> <p>Ts: I learned so many things happily in your training and I wanted to pass it on to the teachers I was training. Of course it was no the same because I cannot copy you, but I tried my best. Those teachers, most of them, have just finished middle-school and some even of them have not been able to finish middle school, but they were quite good in reading and writing. Of course. It was very meaningful for me as a trainer.</p> <p>Raija: But then, you were the only woman as a trainer, how did the other trainers treated you?</p> <p>Ts: When men see a woman training many men, some even older than her, they think she must be very “lihai, bama” (hard working) otherwise a woman cannot teach. Also she has a nomadic pronunciation and people have high respect to her. There is also good talk about her.</p> <p>Raija: Oh, so other people were talking good about her.</p> <p>Translator: ya ya. So she must be very great otherwise she cannot trainers as a woman</p>	<p>TEACHERS' TRAINING</p> <p>WOMEN AS A TEACHER, only woman</p> <p>Learning new teaching methods ATTITUDE towards new teaching methods. A woman teaching men.</p> <p>Men's ATTITUDE towards A WOMAN TEACHERS.</p> <p>LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE, NOMADIC PRONUNCIATION gives more credit as a teacher. Implies that without this skill she would have not been so much respected as a woman teacher and a trainer.</p> <p>WOMEN TEACHERS need to earn respect as teachers.</p> <p>WOMEN TEACHERS UNEQUAL WITH MEN, have to work harder than men in order to be respected.</p>

<p>43-45</p>	<p>Ts: If a group encourages a woman to learn that would be good, that would be better. If more women encourage women (each other) and if women try their best in their study then situation would be different in villages.</p> <p>Raija: There are not many women teachers in villages, in adult literacy teaching, aren't there?</p> <p>Ts: Not even one. All men.</p>	<p>AN EXAMPLE OF OTHER WOMEN</p> <p>Women influences each other in villages, women should be encouraged to study more, would change a village. Indicating development would take place in villages through women? Or women would be treated better if they were literate and educated? Also indicating that women are not doing their best in studies. Why?</p> <p>A number of WOMEN TEACHERS</p> <p>ADULT LITERACY TEACHING MEN'S JOB</p> <p>All adult literacy teachers except one were men in the whole county.</p>
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APPENDIX No. 10



A mind map.

This particular mind map lays out the different connections of language and literacy in a community, such as:

- relationships between different languages and institutions
- roles of different languages in a community
- every day literacy practices and literacy teaching
- cultural elements and literacies