

# POLICY BRIEF

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## Governance, Education, Trade, Finance, Religion, and Gender: Ekai Kawaguchi’s Notes on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Tibet\*

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### *Government and Governance*

The politico-governance landscape in 20<sup>th</sup> century Lhasa oversaw a system of hierarchical government—one in which, the hierarchy was composed of both, clerical and lay departments, each consisting of an equal number of men. The 165 priests belonging to the higher ranks attending to the affairs of the State bore the title “*Tse Dung*.” The lay officials with corresponding rank and number held the title “*Dung Khor*.” The most visible distinguishing mark between the priests and laymen was that while the former shaved their hair and wore priestly robes, the latter did not.<sup>1</sup> The priestly functionaries of higher ranks were subjected to control by four Grand Secretaries, bearing the title “*Tung yk chen mo*”, though the real powers were vested in the senior-most priest. Similarly, four “*Shabpe*” (Premiers) were appointed over the higher lay officials.<sup>2</sup> Only one among the four “*Shabpe*” held precedence in wielding real power, while the other three were his councilors and advisers.

The Cabinet was composed of four Prime Ministers, three Ministers of Finance, two Ministers of War, a Minister of Household, a Minister of Religion, a Minister of Justice, and four Grand Secretaries belonging to the Order. All these high positions were assumed by men belonging to only the privileged classes. It was very rare that it got filled up by the *Ngak-pa*, *Bon-bo*, and *Shal-ngo* castes.

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\* This is the fifth and concluding paper in a continuing series tracing the travels and journey of Ekai Kawaguchi–Japan’s first successful explorer inside Tibet in 1900. The narrative, citations, and arguments of this paper are primarily excerpted and based on Kawaguchi’s personal memoir published in 1909, titled *Three Years in Tibet*, [Theosophist Office, Vasanta Press, Adyar (Madras) British India.]

1 Chapter LXII, *The Government*, p. 434.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 428.

The Tibetan administration was a peculiar mix of feudal partaking and modern system of local government. Relations between the peers and commoners apparently resembled feudalism, while the lord of the manor and the inhabitants shared a relationship akin to that between the sovereign and its subject. The lord levied a poll-tax on the inhabitants, with even the poorest being non-exempt from this obligation. The levy generally varied according to the means of the payer. Every freeholder was compulsorily obliged to pay land tax.<sup>3</sup> The sole means of escape from paying taxes was, perhaps, by becoming a monk.

In the beginning of the 1900s, the Tibetans were divided into two distinct classes of people—one being subject to control by the lords of the manors, and the other, to the central government. The task of revenue collection was entrusted to two or three Commissioners who were appointed from among the clerical or lay officials of higher ranks. Invested with judicial and executive powers, they were dispatched every year to the provinces to collect revenues (that included taxes, imposts, and import duties). These were paid either in cash or kind.<sup>4</sup> A Premier drew an annual salary of about 600 koku or 4000 bushels of wheat. The first Lord of the Treasury drew 360 koku.<sup>5</sup> The Grand Lama was placed in a highly anomalous position, for he was not a political chief, as per Ekai Kawaguchi.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Education and Social Classes***

The subject of education was not widely diffused throughout Tibet in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the second capital city, Shigatze, children were primarily taught three

subjects; writing, arithmetic and reading. There was no provision for teaching except at monasteries. Consequently, children belonging to ordinary families were left illiterate, especially the girls. The sons of ordinary people were refused admissions to government schools. The only worthy educational institutions were found in the premises of the Lhasa Palace, and at Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Shigatze. The system of training priests was rather well developed. Receiving comparatively advanced education was possible only at religious schools.<sup>7</sup>

Foreign explorers often expressed surprise that Tibet, at that time, had no printed newspapers during that time. The paper used for printing was of native origin. The leaves and roots of the plant used for this purpose were poisonous. The white-colored roots produced excellent tough fiber which made the paper sufficiently strong and durable. However, the paper was not white owing to the poor quality of bleaching. Kawaguchi observed that booksellers in Lhasa did not sell their books in houses, but in open stalls at the courtyard lying in front of the western door of the great temple-shrine of the Buddha Shakyāmuni, called *Cho Khang*. At any given time, there were ten such bookstalls in Lhasa and two or three at the Shigatze *bazaar*.<sup>8</sup>

In government schools, the lessons consisted of learning only by memory, penmanship and counting. Kawaguchi described counting as a primitive affair being taught by means of pebbles, pieces of wood, or shells. Perhaps the greatest problem for the Tibetans, according to Kawaguchi, was being ignorant and incapable of doing arithmetic and calculations. Moreover, they did not possess an abacus to count with,

3 Ibid., p. 429.

4 Ibid., p. 431.

5 Ibid., p. 432.

6 Ibid., p. 433.

7 Ibid.

8 Chapter LXV, *Currency and Printing Blocks*, p. 463.

and resorted to beads of a rosary. For an instance, in order to add five and two, they first counted five, and then, two beads on the string, and then counting the whole number—thus making sure that the total number was seven. Kawaguchi witnessed this on ample occasions and termed it a ‘very tedious process.’<sup>9</sup> The subject matter of learning by memory was that of Buddhist Texts. The documents to be presented to the Dalai Lama were laced with high-flown phraseology and characters rarely used in ordinary writing. These characters at times were not found even in Buddhist Texts.<sup>10</sup>

Both by law and custom, Tibet’s higher classes enjoyed special privileges that went a long way. Ranks were amply visible on the surface in Lhasa and in other metropolis. The aristocrats were distinguished as noble men with refined manners. There also existed the one lowest class in the scale of social gradation. This was sub-divided further between fishermen, ferrymen, smiths, and butchers. People belonging to this lowest grade were prohibited from becoming priests.<sup>11</sup> The four classes that were entitled to enter and serve in the government institutions were:

- 1) *Ger-pa*, (the peers)
- 2) *Ngak-pa*, (the mantra clan)
- 3) *Bon-bo*, (the Old Sect clan), and
- 4) *Shal-ngo*, (the families of former chieftains)

The peers comprised of descendants of former ministers and generals, and contained the supreme class called *Yabshi*. This was composed of the families of the 13 Grand Lamas (at that time) past and present, and also the descendants of the first King of Tibet, called *Tichen Lha-kyari*. They all held the rank of

Duke. The descendants in the direct line of that King existed till when Ekai Kawaguchi wrote his memoirs, and perhaps later. Their head was entitled to occupy the same rank as the Grand Lama, the only difference being that he did not possess any power in public affairs. The highest positions in the Tibetan Hierarchy were within the easy reach of the *Yabshi* men, who could become Prime Ministers or other great dignitaries of state provided they were judged to possess qualifications for undertaking those high functions.<sup>12</sup> All the remarks about the *Yabshi* applied to the families of the Dalai Lamas installed at Lhasa. The other Patriarchs at Tashi Lhunpo also possessed *Yabshi* of their own, although they did not enjoy the same privileges as the others. Descendants of the Dalai Lama’s relatives and those of the former King were thus considered as the royal families of Tibet.<sup>13</sup> Of these, one were referred to as *De-pon Cheka* (the families of generals) representing the descendants of the generals and captains who rendered distinguished services when Tibet was engaged in war, thereby earning great respect from the public and privileges as well.

Ranking next to the peers was the *Ngak-pas* class or miracle workers, considered to be descendants of the Lamas who worked miracles and played an important part in the social being of Tibet. They were entitled to assume the function of administrators.<sup>14</sup> Following them was the third class named *Bon-bo*—belonging to the religion *Bon* that prevailed in Tibet long before the introduction of Buddhism. The *Bon-bo* priests left behind them a class of people who represented Tibet’s old social institution. The *Bon-bo* people held a distinct role in public affairs that was more ceremonial than being religious. It consisted of worshipping local

9 Chapter XXVII, *Bartering in Tibet*, p. 148.

10 Chapter LXIII, *Education and Castes*, p. 442.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 435.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*, p. 436.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 437.

deities, and undertaking ceremonies intended to secure their favor. Most villages in remote areas such as Tsar-ka in the Himalayas belonged to the *Bon-bo* class. Acting as local magistrates or administrators, they were considered to be descendants of ancient families and therefore commanded great respect from the neighbors.<sup>15</sup> The fourth and final *Shal-ngo* class was comprised of descendants of ancient families who acquired power in the locality on account of their wealth either through money or land. The Tibetans being a conservative race succeeded, by and large, in keeping their hereditary property intact.

The common people were divided into two grades, one called *tong-ba* and the other named *tong-du*. The former being superior included all those common people who had not fallen into an ignoble state of slavery. *Tong-du* represented the ‘petty’ people whose rank was one grade lower than the other. This class of poor tenant-farmers was engaged in menial services.<sup>16</sup> The *tong-ba* distinguished from the others by possession of property, while poverty was a distinguishing feature of the *tong-du*. Kawaguchi opined that the rigid canon of social caste rendered a strict line of demarcation that continued to separate the above two classes. No ordinary people shared a seat to eat alongside anyone belonging to the *tong-du* class. This strict rule of social etiquette was in force even among the four divisions of the lowest class, that is, the ferrymen, fishermen, smiths and butchers. Of the four, the first two ranked higher than the remaining two. The smiths and butchers were prohibited from eating in the same room as common people. However, the ferrymen and fisherman were allowed to do so.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Tibetan Trade and Industry***

Kawaguchi stated in his memoir that judging by the sheer number of traders, the *Forbidden Land* [Tibet] without exaggeration could have alternatively been a “nation of shop-keepers.” The monasteries often traded on a large scale. While the government itself was not a direct trader, its regular agents enjoyed various privileges, including the liberty to requisition for horses to carry goods or take the lodgments gratis. The peers too were traders, mostly by proxy though.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Currency and Printing Blocks***

Kawaguchi described that products and commodities were either bartered or purchased with regular coins. He specified that there was only one kind of legal tender—a coin (24 sen silver) piece that was further divided. In Lhasa, the unit of transaction was four sen. There were six gradations of value reaching finally to a *tanka*. Thus, four sen was referred to as a *khakang*, eight sen a *karma*, twelve sen a *chyekka*, sixteen sen a *shokang*, twenty sen a *kabchi*, and twenty-four sen a *tanka*.<sup>19</sup> In places that perhaps were not as prosperous as Lhasa and Shigatze, it was impossible to make a purchase of less than one *tanka*, owing to be the absence of divided pieces of smaller value.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Trade with British India and Nepal***

In November 1901, Tibet decided to procure iron from Calcutta for the purpose of manufacturing small arms at an arsenal situated at Dib near Che-Cho-ling on the banks of the river Kichu, which flows to the south of Lhasa.<sup>21</sup>

15 Ibid., p. 438.

16 Ibid., p. 439.

17 Ibid., p. 440.

18 Chapter LXIV, *Tibetan Trade and Industry*, p. 458.

19 Chapter LXV, *Currency and Printing Blocks*, p. 461.

20 Ibid., p. 462.

21 Chapter LXIV, *Tibetan Trade and Industry*, p. 447.

The manufacture of improved firearms was considered a great boon to the country. Few individuals were identified and authorized by the Tibetan Government to proceed to Calcutta and procure the iron supply. This was the time when the departure of Tibetan merchants to foreign countries for business transactions had become quite frequent. They initially proceeded to British India, next to China, and lastly to the Russian territories, although trade with Russia was very minimal. Tibet's ties with Russia were majorly political and not quite as much commercial.<sup>22</sup>

Wool was the most significant Tibetan product exported to British India. The quantity of wool sent abroad was phenomenal according to Kawaguchi. During the peak season, there would be 5000-6000 mule-packs going to Darjeeling, about 1500 packs to Bhutan, nearly 2500 packs to Nepal, and about 3000 packs to Ladakh. Kawaguchi simultaneously issued a disclaimer that the figures he cited could be far from precise since his estimates were based on his own observations and information obtained from the traders. Quantities, greater or less, were sent to China and also westward to Mānsarovar.<sup>23</sup>

The next most significant item was musk and tails of yaks, furs and leathers. Musk was sold cheaply in the districts and it cost about one-tenth of the price in Japan.<sup>24</sup> Though the musk deer was found almost everywhere in Tibet, its principal habitation was in remote districts such as Kongbo, Tsari, and Lo. Tibetan musk was sent in far larger quantities to China as compared to India, despite the fact that transportation to India was easier. Almost all

goods from Tibet to China travelled through Tachien-lu, and were more or less sent to Yunnan. Japan used to obtain the prized 'Yunnan-musk' from China. It was Kawaguchi who discovered that the 'Yunnan musk' came originally from Tibet.<sup>25</sup>

The exports to Nepal comprised wool, yak-tails, salt, salt-petre, and woolen goods. Various kinds of woolen goods went to the districts lying north-east of Tibet (i.e., the north-western parts of China and Mongolia). The primary imports coming from India were woolen cloth for decorating temples, silk handkerchiefs, Burma crepes, Benares brocades, silk tissues, and cotton fabrics.<sup>26</sup> The imports from Bhutan or Sikkim comprised tussore-silk goods, woolen fabrics, and cotton goods. From India, Kashmir, and Nepal, the imports included copper utensils, grains, dried grapes, dried peaches, dates, medical drugs, and precious stones of various kinds (including diamonds, rubies, agates, turquoises and corals). Of these, turquoises and corals were the most popular among Tibetans for their use as accessories.<sup>27</sup>

***Trade with China***

The imports coming from China comprised, most distinctly, of all silk fabrics of sundry kinds, including brocades, tussore-silk, crepes and satins. In terms of value, tea stood first on the list of Chinese imports. From what Kawaguchi estimated, the quantity of tea arriving at Lhasa alone would cost an estimated 650,000 yen annually. For Tibetans, tea was the most popular beverage throughout the year. The prices rose, going further westward, owing to the cost of transportation. For a brick costing

22 Ibid., p. 448.  
 23 Ibid.  
 24 Ibid., p. 449.  
 25 Ibid., p. 450.  
 26 Ibid., p. 452.  
 27 Ibid., p. 453.



two yen seventy-five sen at Lhasa, it would cost three yen twenty-five sen in western Tibet.<sup>28</sup> The ‘blood-horn’ of the “Precious Deer” found in the wild districts of south-eastern and north-western parts of Tibet was the most valuable item among commodities on the export list to China. This horn made for a medicine that was highly valued by Chinese physicians. A pair of high quality horns, therefore, fetched a high price of 500 Japanese yen.<sup>29</sup>

Kawaguchi described many customs concerning business transactions that prevailed in Tibet. For instance, the mode of selling woolen and cotton pieces was peculiar. The standard measurement was the length of two outstretched hands, while another measurement mode was based on the length from the elbow to the tip of the fingers. This measurement was determined by the buyers—implying that a large person enjoyed the advantage of getting a longer measure with the merchant being subjected to a disadvantage. This primitive mode of measurement was generally applied to native products only. For measuring foreign cloth, the unit of measurement was a square, each side of which was equal to the breadth of the cloth. This was referred to as a *kha*—which varied with the breadth of each piece of cloth.<sup>30</sup>

Buddhist books, images, and pictures were sent to Mongolia.<sup>31</sup> Tibet also obtained a large amount of gold from Mongolia—more in the form of donations to Tibetan Lamas than as the price paid for Tibetan goods. The influx of gold from Mongolia enabled Tibet to keep the balance of its trade. The Tibetans saw a necessity of extending their sphere of trade with foreign

countries instead of confining their commercial operations within the narrow bounds of Tibet. As a consequence, a large number of the inhabitants began proceeding every year to China, India, and Nepal on commercial enterprises.<sup>32</sup>

Tibet could not afford to adopt an exclusion policy economically, even though it conveniently adopted the policy for political reasons. Enforcement of economic exclusion would have invited serious internal trouble, simply because it would have put a stop to the inflow of gold from Mongolia among others.<sup>33</sup> Since the time of the war between Japan and China, and the Boxer Rebellion, the inflow of Mongolian gold to Tibet had virtually ceased.<sup>34</sup> If Tibet would have prohibited traders to embark upon foreign trade, it would have been unable to get any goods or supplies from India, China and other countries. Kawaguchi opined that closure of Indian markets for Tibetan wool would have been unendurable since India was the most important consumer of this staple produce. As a direct consequence, the sheep-farmers would have been threatened with starvation.<sup>35</sup> The farmers were part-time traders too. As the work on farms decreased during winters, the farmers proceeded to northern Tibet to collect their stock of salt, obtained from the salt lakes found in the region. Subsequently, these men started for Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim, in order to sell their goods.

***Tibetan Finance***

Understanding finances of the Tibetan Government accurately was not simplistic.

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28 Ibid.  
 29 Ibid., p. 450.  
 30 Ibid., p. 454.  
 31 Ibid., p. 452.  
 32 Ibid., pp. 456-457.  
 33 Ibid., p. 456.  
 34 Ibid.  
 35 Ibid., p. 457.

Kawaguchi stated that only the revenue officials were well informed about the Government's revenue and expenditure. Knowing the Minister of Finance on a personal level Kawaguchi gathered that a considerable margin of difference existed partly because taxes were paid in kind. The Government could not always realize the same amount of money from the sale of grains and other commodities collected by the revenue authorities. Statistical returns remained a concept unknown to Tibet.<sup>36</sup> Kawaguchi gave a short account of how tax collection was done and paid, followed by how was the collected revenue thus disbursed.

The Treasury Department of the Papal Government was known as *Labrang Chenbo* (meaning large Kitchen of the Lama). There were no financial documents such as drafts or money orders. The collected revenue had to be transported directly from each district to the central treasury, whatever the distance.<sup>37</sup> Among articles collected as revenue were barley, wheat, beans, buck-wheat, meat and butter. From districts in which custom-houses were established, there were various other things, such as coral gems, cotton, woolen/silk goods, raisins, peaches and animal-skin that were accepted. Kawaguchi summed up these methods of tax collection to be strange.

Tibet had another peculiarity—the use of an abundant variety of weights and measures. There were twenty scales for weighing meal, and thirty-two boxes for measuring grain. *Bo-chik* was the name given to an average size box, and it measured about half a bushel. However, the tax-collectors used measures half as large, or half as small, as these. Thus, the largest measure held three quarters of a bushel, while the smallest

held a quarter.<sup>38</sup> All Government expenses including salaries for priests and officers, and wages for mechanics and tradesmen, were paid with an average measure.<sup>39</sup> Besides, the officials and priests derived additional incomes from the land they possessed. The chief expense of the Government was service of the Buddha Shakyāmuni. The money used for the repair of temples and towers, and for purchase of stone lanterns and other furniture amounted to a large sum. However, Kawaguchi noted that the greatest proportion was spent for butter, which was used instead of oil for the myriads of lights that kept burning day and night. The stands arranged in rows in the temple of the Buddha in Lhasa alone, numbered no less than 2500. In some special cases it was 10,000 to even 100,000 lamps that were lit.<sup>40</sup> In front of the image of the Buddha in Lhasa were placed 24 large light stands of pure gold. All the oil used for the service of the Buddha was furnished by the treasury of the Tibetan Government.<sup>41</sup>

In each province there were two tax collection places for the government—one being the temple, and the second being the local government office. The people were divided into two classes: 1) those governed by the temple and 2) those governed by the local government. They paid their taxes to the Central Government through their respective Governors. In each local district there was a *Zong*—originally a castle built for warlike purposes, but in times of peace it served as a Government office where all government work was carried out, including tax collection. Located on the top of a hillock of about 300 feet, the *Zongpon* (chief of the castle) lived inside it. He was the chief Governor of the district and collected taxes to be further sent to the Central Government. The *Zongpon* was

36 Ibid.

37 Chapter LXXVII, *Tibetan Finance*, p. 554.

38 Ibid., p. 555.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., p. 556.

41 Ibid.

not paid by the Central Government directly, but subtracted the equivalent of his pay from the collected taxes. The Central Government did not send goods or money to the Local Government except on few occasions when special help from the national treasury was required. A person under the direct jurisdiction of the Central Government had to pay a poll-tax at times. Those who belonged to the nobility and higher class of priests were assessed by their landowners, although there was no definite regulation vis-à-vis their payment to the Central Government.<sup>42</sup>

Kawaguchi stated that all offerings made at the Buddhist Temple, and to the priests, at the time of the Great Assembly was handed over to the Treasury at once. This was to be given out only by the order of the Minister of Treasury.<sup>43</sup> Expenses were not fixed. The Pope could draw out as much as he pleased. It was said that since the accession of the then 13<sup>th</sup> Lama, the expenditure and revenue both had risen substantially.<sup>44</sup> The system of compound interest remained unknown in Tibet, however long the debtor prolonged his payment. Another subsidy given by the Government was six dollars extra pay per annum to each priest of the Three Great Temples.<sup>45</sup>

The Treasury of the Grand Lama was called *Che Labrang* (meaning the Lama's kitchen on the hill) since the Lama's Potala Palace is located on a hill. Potala is a castle, a temple, and a palace all at once. As a castle nothing equaled the Potala in Tibet, especially in view of the strength of its fortification. As a temple, it stood tallest amongst all other lamaseries of Tibet in terms of elegance. And, as a palace, no other building could surpass it. Representing

the highest type of Tibetan priesthood, the 165 aristocratic priests bearing the title of *Namgyal Tatsang* lived in one part of the castle. The property of the Grand Lama, following his death got divided. One-half of the property had to be divided among his relatives in his native place, and the remaining half got distributed among the priests of the Great Temples.<sup>46</sup>

Despite all the above grandeur, Kawaguchi was very critical of the area's water supply. Within the high walls that defended the dwellers from attacks of an eternal enemy, there was no water-well or spring. Water had to be fetched from a well that was situated at a descent composed of stone steps of about 150 feet and further crossing another 150 feet of level ground. In order to reach atop the hill, a 300 feet climb was needed—thus making the journey three quarters of a mile in all.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Army and Soldiers***

Protecting a country of six million inhabitants against foreign invasion and civil commotion was no easy task, although social order was not a duty to be discharged by the soldiers. Describing the people of Kham as 'natural soldiers', Kawaguchi said that Tibet's standing army comprised of around 5000 soldiers, though, he found the figure to be exaggerated. The two conflicts with Nepal, and one with British India, became the drivers for Tibet to accept the necessity of having a standing army. Ever since that time, Tibet's regular army stood with 1000 men at Lhasa; 2000 at Shigatze; 500 at Tingri (a vital fort on the Nepal frontier); 500 at Gyantze; 500 at Dam; and, 500 at Mankham. Besides, there were Chinese soldiers stationed in the country distributed equally at Lhasa,

42 Ibid., p. 557.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 558.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 559.

47 Ibid.



Tingri, Shigatze, and Tomo. Every 500 Tibetan soldiers were placed under a chief called *De Bon*. The soldiers received only one bushel of barley a month as salary and had no regular barracks to live in, though they were free from house-rent. Kawaguchi narrated how he often heard the locals complaining of the burden to build houses for the soldiers.<sup>48</sup>

Lhasa used to witness a grand parade/ maneuver once a year, for which the soldiers had to be present in the vicinity of a little village two miles north of Lhasa called Dabchi (on the road leading to the Sera monastery). This village hosted the shrine of Gesergi Gyalpo (saffron king) –revered as the God who drove away evil spirits.<sup>49</sup> The scene of the grand parade was north of this shrine. The parade was usually held towards the end of September or beginning of October every year, when the barley harvest season was over. During the early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century Tibet, archery was considered an essential art of warriors, though artillery was just introduced, and taught by Tibetans who had been educated and trained in British India.<sup>50</sup>

**Religion**

Religion was, by far, the most predominant and prevalent force that kept Tibet in good order. The masses would never resort to arms or protest against the Grand Lama whom they believe was, and is, the living Buddha. There were very few cases of rebellion in Tibet, whose history testifies that civil commotion only took place at the time of the Grand Lama’s death and the transition period thereafter when the next Lama would be too young to assume power, thereby, relying on agents and ministers, who often abused their powers.<sup>51</sup> Tibetans essentially

were very religious, and, to a certain extent, superstitious beings. They recognized the existence of a superhuman being that protected them, and were also sure of establishing communication with this being by means of their religious faith. Tibetans also strongly believed in the laws of cause and effect.<sup>52</sup>

Buddhism was so deeply embedded inside Tibet that no other religion could exist, leave alone thrive, in Tibet. The pre-Buddhist *Old Bon* religion discussed earlier in this paper had lost its original form and was replaced by the *New Bonism* (resembling the Ryobu Shinto of Japan according to Kawaguchi) –wherein the Sun God is interpreted as the incarnation of the Buddha. Kawaguchi asserted that the only two countries in the world that maintained the Mahāyanā teachings of Buddhism were Tibet and Japan. Moreover, he outlined three sacred places<sup>53</sup> in Tibet as:

- 1) Kang Rinpoche or *Mount Kailasa* in the north-western plain
- 2) Tsa-ri, a peak in the Himalayas in the south-east which formed the frontier of Assam
- 3) *Gaurishankara* or Chomo Lhari, often called Mount Everest (the highest mountain in the world)

What struck Kawaguchi in the reference of religions in Tibet was what he termed “Muhammadanism”, prevailing mostly among the Chinese, and descendants of immigrants from Kashmir. They numbered around three hundred in Lhasa and Shigatze, having two worship shrines in the suburbs of Lhasa, and two cemeteries on the periphery of a distant mountain. One of these shrines catered to the “Musulmāns” from Kashmir, as per

48 Chapter LXXVI, *The Tibetan Soldiery*, p. 550.  
 49 Ibid.  
 50 Ibid., p. 551.  
 51 Ibid., p. 549.  
 52 Chapter LXXVIII, *Future of the Tibetan Religions*, p. 561.  
 53 Chapter LXXXII, *Preparations for Departure*, p. 593.

Kawaguchi, and the other for the Chinese. Further, Kawaguchi was startled to witness "... the calm existence of Muhammadanism in a country where Buddhism was predominant."<sup>54</sup> Besides, the Christian missionaries did make efforts to try and introduce their religion into Tibet. However, since Tibet did not admit any foreigners, it was nearly impossible to penetrate into Tibetan interiors.<sup>55</sup>

***Status of Women***

The position of women bears a vital relation to the overall prosperity and greatness of a country and society. The women residing in Lhasa were regarded as models of Tibetan womanhood. The Tibetan women were treated almost equally as men. For instance, they received equal wages as men. Women were allowed to have their own savings, according to their social positioning. Although the women’s garments did not differ much in appearance from the men, it was the taste and elegance in dressing that set the women apart from men. Lhasa’s women dressed somewhat like Mongolian women. They wore a head-ornament made of turquoises or corals. Nearly all Lhasan women used an apron made out of the best Tibetan woven wool.<sup>56</sup>

Particularly noteworthy about Tibetan women was their skill in matters of trade and business. Women belonging to the middle and lower classes regarded trade as their specialized sphere of activity and were shrewd in conducting business. The women had no public duties and they did not undertake sewing, weaving and spinning. In fact, sewing was primarily considered a man’s job. Tibetans were incapable of producing yarn of even and fine size.<sup>57</sup> The women residing in the faraway provinces attended to farming and rearing cattle,

sheep and yaks. The most widespread business for them was manufacturing butter and other substances obtained from milk through the process of home-processing on fire.<sup>58</sup>

And thus, Japanese explorer Ekai Kawaguchi’s challenging five-year passage (that began in May 1897 from Tokyo) to the frontier and interiors of Tibet finally came to an end, when he sailed out from Bombay on April 24, 1902, and arrived at the Kobe pier in Japan on May 20, 1902. It is often said that a scholar can never really quench his/her thirst for knowledge. Indeed, it was this yearning for learning that led Ekai Kawaguchi to embark upon yet another journey to British India and Nepal in October 1904–this time with an objective of studying the Sanskrit language and other manuscripts.

54 Chapter LXXVIII, *Future of the Tibetan Religions*, p. 562.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 563.

56 Chapter LXVII, *Tibetan Women*, p. 473.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 475.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 478.