

Discuss the conditions under which Buddhism spread to Tibet and why the Tibetans adopted Buddhism as the national religion.

Tibet is considered to be one of the geographically diverse regions on earth due to its unique location. Although an autonomous region but mistakenly considered a part of China, Tibet encompasses a vast terrain of China's Gansu Province and Pakistan's northern region (Kapstein, 2006, p.1). However, Tibet is considered a completely different region from either of these countries due to its political and cultural independence. Tibet's culture is heavily dominated by artistic traditions of classical Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism (Kapstein, 2006, p.1). Despite Tibet's status as the holy center of Buddhism, most of the people are oblivious to the fact that Buddhism did not originate from Tibet. In fact, Tibetans did not have any particular religion prior to the emergence of Buddhism in Tibet. The Buddhism spread to Tibet from its surrounding regions due to the efforts of Tibetan emperors and got adopted as its national religion because of the lack of a proper religion in the area.

Tibet Prior to Buddhism

According to a famous legend, the bodhisattva of compassion called Avalokiteshvara, took a detailed look at Tibet and realized that there was no indication that Buddha or his message ever reached this land. As far as Avalokiteshvara saw, Tibet was blessed with all the amenities of a perfect land but he was not able to find a single human that could become the candidate for discipleship (Kapstein, 2006, p.2). It is believed that Tibet remained a wilderness for many centuries and acquired the status of a civilization during the recent times. It was bodhisattva's divine agency that proved to be one of the major reasons due to which Tibet became a civilization (Kapstein, 2006, p.3). There is not much proof regarding the type of religion that prevailed in Tibet before the arrival of Buddhism. It is believed that when certain clans migrated towards Central Tibet from northern steppes, they introduced their own traditions and rituals to this region (van Schaik, 2011, p.24). However, when these nomadic clans got settled in the Central Tibet, they mingled up with the people already residing in this region. The people already living in Central Tibet not only worked on the fertile lands of this region but also practiced their own customs and traditions (van Schaik, 2011, p.24). Furthermore, the people arriving from China, India and Persia also brought and introduced their religious practices to the pre-existing religious practices in Tibet. All this happened prior to the arrival of Buddhism in this region (van Schaik, 2011, p.24).