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A Cutting-Edge Manual for Spoken Tibetan

In the past few years, spoken Tibetan has become increasingly popular in the Western world. More and more tourists, students, and scholars are travelling through Central Asian cultural areas both in China and in other Tibetan areas. This situation is rare to see Western tourists enjoying a walk along the Barkhor market in Lhasa trying to speak or utter some memorized Tibetan words and phrases to smiling shopkeepers and amused pilgrims. A well-written and all-round practical textbook is what we were all waiting for.

By Antonio Terrone

From the fortunate collaboration between Nicolas Tournaire, a PhD candidate at the Centre for Pacific and Asian Studies, University of Nijmegen. He is also affiliated to the Centre for Pacific and Asian Studies in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Dr Toon van Meijl is a senior lecturer at the Department of Anthropology and Develop-

The plurality of Tibetan dialects is well known, and is itself a hindrance to communication not only between Western travellers and Tibetans, but often even among Tibetans from different regions. Religious and historical circumstances have indeed given Lhasa a central position, and its dialect has become a sort of lingua franca for Tibetans transiting through Central Tibet for business, work, or pilgrimage. However, as far as I know, most Tibetans hardly use this term to refer to any ‘common Tibetan’ language. ‘Tibetan’ is one of the many names sometimes used for Tibetan, usually in Chinese, and it specifically translates the term pihlung, or common speech (of the Chinese language). While the people of Lhasa, for instance, usually refer to their spoken language as Khos Kha in the ‘Despondency Theory’. Instead, so marked by a great number of leading intellectual and charismatic Pacific spokesmen, including Epeli Hau‘ofa, Tarcisius Edna Tait, and Mali Voi. Most eloquent-