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## The SOAS University

Prior to researching this subject I had never heard of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and yet it seems to feature regularly in articles about the Dalai Lama's ban on Dorje Shugden.

Established in 1916 it is a constituent college of the University of London and it humbly describes itself as the "world's leading institution for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East". As such it specialises in humanities, languages and social sciences relating to Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

For some reason this seems to be the "go to" college for quotes about the Dorje Shugden issue, in particular one of the linguistics professors, Dr Nathan Hill appears to be the resident expert journalists are directed to for a qualified explanation of the subject.

During the Oslo demonstrations in May 2014 Dr Nathan Hill was being promoted to journalists as a reputable source for clarification of the issue of human rights. He was interviewed on the subject and had no hesitation about giving his professional opinion as to the validity of the claims of human rights breaches.

In my own research I have already established that Dr Hill has no formal qualifications or experience in Human Rights law ([click here for more details](#)). He is a linguistics professor and has conducted such research as, "A rule based tagger for Classical Tibetan", which is a far cry from anything to do with human rights or political science.

When I contacted Dr Hill and questioned his views I was shocked when he admitted to me, "To be totally honest I don't believe in human rights either."

At this point I was alarmed that Dr Hill, a linguistics professor, was being promoted to journalists as an expert on the Dorje Shugden issue, capable of giving a professional opinion on the political and human rights aspects of the conflict. Something was starting to feel very wrong about this situation.

## Links to the Tibetan Government

On 31st July 2014 the SOAS University awarded an Honorary Fellowship to the head of the Tibet Foundation, Phuntsog Wangyal (pictured right with the President of the SOAS) for his, "significant contribution towards education, health-care and economic and spiritual

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### 90 Second Summary

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### What is Racism?

Race can be defined as:

*"A classification system used to categorise humans into distinct populations or groups by anatomical, cultural, ethnic, genetic, geographical, historical, linguistic, religious, and/or social affiliation."*

Racism can be defined as:

*"The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish*



*development amongst Tibetan communities".*

The introductory speech for the award was given by Dr Nathan Hill who presented Mr Wangyal to the President of the SOAS to receive his Honorary Fellowship stating, *"Mr Wangyal has a remarkable biography, during the entire course of which he has served his country and its people with tirelessly perspicacity."*

In 1981 Phuntsog Wangyal was appointed as the Dalai Lama's official representative for the UK and established the Office of Tibet, the Tibetan government's de facto UK embassy.

He left the Tibetan government in 1985 to establish the Tibet Foundation, a supposedly non-political and non-governmental organisation. However considering that the Dalai Lama is the patron of the Tibet Foundation its non-political status is rather dubious.

It maintains strong links to the Tibetan government, which it refers to as its *"partner organisation"*, in particular the Departments of Religion, Education, and Health. It made an 8-part documentary series entitled, *"Call of the Snow Lion"*, which focussed on the Tibetan exile community calling for more International support – both materially and politically.

In 2008 the Tibet Foundation received £101,325 followed by £76,015 (2009), £92,662 (2010), £84,642 (2011), £99,647 (2012), and £68,062 (2013) for distribution to the Tibetan exile community in India and Nepal through its partner organisations, the main one being the Tibetan government.

In addition the Tibet Foundation regularly organises lectures at the SOAS University given by visiting Tibetan lamas such as Arjia Rinpoche of Kumbum Monastery and renowned Tibetan doctor, Dr Pema Dorjee.

## An Independent Expert?

When considering the close ties between the Tibet Foundation and the SOAS University, particularly the close bond between its Chairman Mr Wangyal and Dr Nathan Hill, Dr Hill's credentials as an independent expert weaken considerably. (Dr Hill is pictured right alongside Mr Wangyal)

Mr Wangyal who although an ex-member of the government still works closely with its various departments as a "partner organisation" and therefore cannot be considered to be free from the influence of the Tibetan leadership.



It is therefore understandable why the Tibetan government would promote Dr Hill to journalists as a reliable, reputable and independent expert on the subject, as they could be confident that his views would coincide with their own.

Quite why Dr Hill is prepared to go along with such a deception however is another matter entirely. He is acutely aware that he has no professional standing to speak publicly on the subject having no professional experience in human rights or political science and yet continues to speak with "authority" on such matters.

Someone who is prepared to make bold statements denouncing the validity of claims of human rights violations whilst at the same time viewing human rights as unbelievable is disingenuous to say the least.

*it as inferior or superior to another race or races."*

When a group of people are labelled according to a certain religious belief or affiliation and their access to public services, jobs, livelihoods and social freedoms are denied or restricted on the basis of this belief or affiliation this is racism.

## Press Releases

[An Open Letter to Robert Thurman](#)

[An Open Letter to the Dalai Lama](#)

Unfortunately for Dr Hill by allowing himself to be complicit with such false representations to the media he not only damages his own reputation but also tarnishes that of the University.

[Click here to read a genuinely independent view on human rights in relation to the ban](#)

## Update:

Since publishing this article we have been contacted by Dr Hill who wished to voice his objections to it. We offered him the opportunity to submit a further statement of his views on the Dorje Shugden controversy but he declined this offer and instead threatened us with legal action.

In particular Dr Hill objected to the way we had presented his views on human rights and his connections with the Tibetan government. He also objected to our use of photographs which were publicly published on the SOAS Facebook page.

The SOAS has since deleted them from its page. Likewise all references to Mr Wangyal's award ceremony and his connection to Dr Hill have been removed from the SOAS Facebook page.

In trying to clarify his relationship with the Tibetan government we asked Dr Hill, "So to confirm are you saying that you have no connection whatsoever with the Tibetan government?"

In responding to this question Dr Hill refused to deny his involvement with the Tibetan government and its members. However he did state that he had never, *"received funds or any other material benefits from the government in exile."*

We have yet to receive any notice of legal proceedings.

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