

Tibet in the Canton of Wallis

It is an invisible thread that unites these two places, just as, according to Buddhist thought, karma connects beings. A guiding thread that takes the form of a road.

"The simple breath of the pilgrim is Tibet" wrote Maurice Chappaz, two decades ago, in *Valais-Tibet, an icon of mountain farmers*, who in the 1970s went to the Roof of the World.

The Valaisan writer had studied at the college of the Abbey of Saint Maurice in the second half of the 1930s, an institution where another famous figure from our canton, Blessed Maurice Tornay, leader of the Valaisan mission in Tibet, had just preceded him.

Indeed, the route was first taken by our missionaries of the Great St. Bernard, embarking in Marseille, from there to Tonkin, then further into the continent to take over from the Christian missions established on the margins of Tibet, north of present-day Yunnan, the southernmost tip of Tibetan Kham (eastern Tibet).

It was then in this same region of Kham that the first motorable road in Tibet leading to Lhasa was built during the Chinese penetration, and its realization will be documented during this day by a rare documentary film from the 1950s found in the film archives of the Czech Republic.

A road that branches out beyond borders when it becomes the road of exile, a trajectory that Tenzin Wangmo's parents experienced, as did Gazom Lhamo more recently when she had to flee her native country for having paid tribute to the Dalai Lama. The first through a traditional folk tale, the second through her songs, both will bear witness to the living oral traditions of their respective regions, the Ü-Tsang and the Kham.

The beginning of this programme will also take us along a path, that of the "Vigne à Farinet", a grape stock passed on from Abbé Pierre to the Dalai Lama in 1999, an opportunity to remember those who work for peace by giving the floor to the Swiss-Tibetan Friendship Society and to our national councillor Benjamin Roduit, member of the parliamentary group for Tibet.

Then, from one place to another, in the old town of Saillon, this day will be, like a pilgrimage, one of discoveries, encounters and surprises that we hope will be numerous.