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Preface

This English issue of the Tibet Policy Journal is part of the twin annual flagship publication of our institute. It is following close on the heels of its Tibetan language issue, which came out of the press in November 2021.

Almost all the articles in this issue are taken from contributors who had presented during a conference convened virtually in August. The breadth of themes explored during the conference was diverse, and therefore it is difficult to frame this publication under a cohesive thematic title.

This issue's first article deals with the question of sovereignty. Ugyan Choedup, the author of this article asks provocative questions regarding the articulation of sovereignty. He takes two well-known cases in early-modern Tibetan history. By comparing and contrasting these two cases, he problematizes the recasting and imagining of these histories in search of a modern, Tibetan national selfhood.

For Chinese colonial state-making in Tibet and the People's Republic of China's attempt at nation-building, these projects are contingent on erasure, arrest and rewriting of Tibet's histories. Here, Tenzin Lhadon's article is a welcome intervention. In her paper, she first explores literature on China, more specifically on PRC which deals with a historical anomaly, if we were to read Fukuyama's *End of History* crudely. In other words, it is to raise a question -- How has a totalitarian single party-state survive for over seven decades? Her central argument closes in on China's rule over Tibet and proposes that PRC's grip on Tibet is maintained through securitization and a salient discourse on development with Chinese characteristics.

This discourse on development is propagandized in terms of high GDP growth and more recently through China's poverty-alleviation programs. Dolma Tsering's paper unpeels this veneer by conducting an empirical study on PRC-sanctioned periodicals on statistics. The study is focused on truncated Tibet, that had been reorganized as the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region since 1965. Her study concludes that the China's gift of development has transformed the structure of traditional Tibetan economy. Yet this structural change has seen little investment in what she describes as the productive sectors, raising questions about the employment quality in the "TAR."

This Chinese colonial enterprise creates a structure of dominance and Tibetans assume a subaltern position. Ernst Renan's lecture on Nationalism alludes to this community of people having to engage in daily plebiscites to configure the community of people as national. Under an authoritarian regime, referendum on this question of belonging is a distant possibility. Hence this daily plebiscite takes creative forms, often subtly expressed in Tibetan literature. This is explored in Dorji Tsering's paper where he suggests that Tibetans are often learning, adapting and making use of Marxist literary criticism as a tool to express and resist China's rule over Tibet.

Tsewang Rinzin's article revisits the turbulent life and time of the thirteenth Dalai Lama and his attempts at modernizing Tibet. His article begins with Tibet's violent encounter with the empire to its south. The British invasion forced the thirteenth Dalai Lama's first sojourn in exile in Mongolia and thence to Qing imperial capital. The subsequent Qing invasion forced him again into exile in India. The study then surveys numerous modernization projects he initiated after returning to Tibet. The author relies heavily on telling of the accounts by Charles Bell. His accounts on this period remains an important source for this period of Tibet's history. Yet uncritical treatment to his texts without parsing Bell's tellings with other contemporaneous sources risk privileging a one particular account in the craft of writing history.

Tibet's encounter with the West precedes that of Younghusband's invasion in the early twentieth century. Encounters with the West have left an enduring artistic, literary, material and imaginative imprints. These imaginings of Tibet continue to play out in different manifestations. Spurred on by the publication of an influential text by Edward Said, Orientalism's key arguments were hotly debated within the circle of scholars who had chosen Tibet as a field of their studies. Here Tenzing Wangdak's paper rehashes scholarship produced during this period and goes on to make his most original argument by tackling the question, how long-distance nationalism is practiced within the Tibetan diaspora with the advent of digital space?

Trawling through our office hard-drives, we have found an unpublished paper that was presented at a seminar at Synod College in Shillong in 2014. The paper was written by the former Kalon and Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in New Delhi, Tempa Tsering. The paper was presented on his behalf by our institute's former Deputy

Director, Sonam Tenzing. With the approval of the author, the paper on the migration of the Tibetan people, reconstruction in exile and the Tibetan movement is published here.

Anvesh Jain's paper is the re-examination of international covenants and the status of Tibet from a legalist lens. One such crucial international legal document before the establishment of UNO on modern statehood is the Montevideo Convention of 1933. Although the author hasn't articulated it in this fashion, but it must be noted that modern statehood for many countries in global south configured along national lines sedimented during this period of decolonization and the formation of a post-world war global order. After reviewing rigorous scholarship and secondary literature on Tibet's claim to a modern statehood corroborated by prima facie evidence, Anvesh asserts that Tibet undeniably constituted a sovereign and independent nation.

In December 2021, the Blackneck Books, a Dharamsala-based Tibetan collective announced the publication of a novel written by our institute's former Director, Thubten Samphel. The novel's launch was organized at a well-attended affair which saw invited guests reading an excerpt from the novel and further holding forth on art, literature, history and a gamut of other topics. We approached Jamyang Phuntsok, who reviewed the novel at the book launch and requested him to contribute a book review based on his reading. We remain grateful to him for putting together the book review on a very short notice.

I remain grateful to the Assistant Editor of this issue and my colleague Tenzin Lhadon. She managed all the referral process and was involved throughout this project. And also, we are thankful to Palden Sonam for his assistance beyond the call of duty during the editing process. I must also thank Ngawang Choekyi for typesetting the drafts and putting together this issue. To the unnamed reviewers for the papers published here, your comments and feedbacks have greatly elevated the final content of this issue. Thank you all.

Tenzin Desal

December 2021

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Two Ways to be Sovereign

Ugyan Choedup
(Penn State University)

Abstract

The contemporary nationalist discourse among exiled Tibetans imagines the “nation” as a natural and timeless category of belonging that was historically brought to realization through the emergence of the Chinese colonial other. Within this dominant nationalist paradigm, the claim to sovereignty, both in the past and in the future, is imagined to be contingent upon the “proof” of indivisible sovereignty of the nation in the past. How are these “proofs” of independent Tibetan pasts negotiated? What are the criteria of evaluation? Where do these criteria come from? Are there different ways of evaluating our pasts? This article explores two different paradigms, one dominant and the other marginal that differently inform our understanding of the pasts and consequently shapes our vision of the future. By locating the contemporary dominant discourse of sovereignty among exiled Tibetans within the history of the globalizing nationalist paradigm of the modern West, I suggest our contemporary dominant idea of sovereignty has a recent history that has silenced other ways of imagining our pasts.

Keywords: Exile Tibet, Sovereignty, Nationalism, Colonial Modernity, Alternative History

Introduction

Past is, in some sense, an alien terrain—distant, obscured, and in a way dead. It has left some “traces” in the form of manuscripts and documents that historians call “facts of the past” (Carr 2018). These facts of the past, notwithstanding its partial nature, are supposedly the foundation of historian pronouncement of ‘historical truth.’ It is this ‘historical truth’, we are told, must determine our answer to the questions such as whether Tibet¹ was historically a sovereign political entity? This

1. The historical complexities of the nature of Tibetan political landscape and its state system are not discussed in order to reduce the length of this paper. That said, it is to be noted that a singular centralized theocratic state ruled by the Dalai Lamas

is a dominant way of thinking about history and thus appears truism to most if not all.

However, if we were to pay a closer attention, we would see that the above mode of historical reasoning confounds two analytically separate questions into one. That is the question of “what happened in the past?” and “what does it mean in the present?” To the former question, I think, the answer could be relatively straightforward, that is by recounting two events from the past:

1. In the post-Gurkha war in 1792, two of the Tibetan kalons (ministers) were summoned, reprimanded, and dismissed by the Qianlong emperor (Sperling 1998).
2. In the early 20th century, the Lhasa government in Central Tibet invaded *Hor Sogru* (thirty-nine tribes of Hor) and installed their governor (*Hor spyi*). *Hor Sogru* until then was an autonomous political entity under the nominal leadership of the King of all Hor (*Hor spyi khyab rgyal po*), who in turn was under the nominal control of Qing dynasty based in Beijing (Shakya 2015).

However, the latter question of meaning is more complex than we generally tend to assume. For instance, what does the above-mentioned historical event mean today? I suspect, for many modern judges of our past, that includes Tibetans, the fact that Qianlong emperor could unilaterally summon and dismiss ministers of central Tibet signifies nothing but a *prima facie case* of (central) Tibet’s loss of sovereignty. However, given that is true, a question arises if this loss of sovereignty is a legitimate loss of national pedigree or an illegitimate colonial control? What about the Lhasa government’s invasion of *Hor Sogru*?

Our contemporary boundaries of belonging inevitably shape our judgments of the past. Therefore, from the mentalités of the modern Tibetan nationalist, the Qianlong intervention in Tibetan affairs is an illegitimate colonial control, while the Lhasa government’s invasion of the Hor Sogru region is a legitimate national building project—

from the ‘capital’ Lhasa didn’t exist for most part of the Tibetan history.

progressives nationalists might concede and at best express regret over the disproportionate use of violence. The point that I am trying to make here is not about the impossibilities of making these categorical distinctions, which regardless of its utility for those on the receiving end of both the systems, I think, can still be reasonably attempted.² The point is, this differentiation between national and colonial are not subject to some ahistorical transcendental reasoning but are historically specific—something to be understood within the mentalités (cultural/political consciousness) of the period. No “facts” or “truth” can be spoken outside a context of meaning, interpretation, and judgment.

Questioning the Judges of our History

Here, if it is not too late, I want to place firmly a ‘cautionary signboard’ for my readers. Since what I intend to do in this paper is merely an attempt to think through some of the problems that I have come to notice over the years in the ways in which we Tibetan approach the question(s) of ‘sovereignty.’ I understand that this is not a Tibetan-specific problem, however, for the purpose of this paper, I want to position my argument *vis-à-vis* what I consider to be an internalized modern Tibetan selfhood³ that aggressively recast the Tibetan past within its modernist framework of judgment. This internalized modern selfhood, it seems to me is in some ways an enemy within, whose hegemonic modernist frame of judgment denies Tibetans’ past its alternative historical meaning(s) and by affecting alternative future possibilities. Since, regardless of our disdain, especially among certain pedigree of historians, for approaching the past as withholding lessons for future, I believe any reconstructed knowledge of the past has a productive impact on our imagination of the future—that is, what is thinkable, possible and desirable.

Therefore, this paper is not about our usual defendants from the past

2. This is not to say history from god’s eye-view is possible. Our situatedness in the present, invariably shapes, though not mechanistically determines, the choices of our research topics, the questions that we ask, the ways in which we read our sources, and our interpretations of those sources.

3. I understand that this modern national selfhood has an internal variance, one that openly affirms the national selfhood as their primordial timeless identity while the other that is more ‘critical’ of this national subjectivity yet whose critiques, I think, smacks of modernist prejudice. Much of my essay will attempt to engage this later pedigree.

known as ‘historical facts’ but instead is an attempt to question the judges of our history. An attempt to think through questions of how and what informs our historical judgments. In what follows, I will not bring in more evidence from the past to plead for their ‘innocence’ or ‘guilt’ to our modern judges of history, but instead will attempt to inquire into the ideological sources of our judgment and outline the other, but the less dominant, way(s) of approaching our past. Readers looking for more historical evidence of Tibet’s sovereignty in this paper would in all likelihood be disappointed. I understand that this might appear to many as an exercise in theoretical abstraction, I have nothing to say in this regard, for I believe in the possibility of theoretical tyranny over the empirical facts.

Perhaps the first step towards centering and recovering the other ways of approaching our past is to situate our judgment of that past within the history. That is, to recognize the fact that despite all our attempts at unbiased “scientific” analysis of our past, our judgments are inevitably a historical act—shaped by the dominant ideological milieu of the time and space in which we make those judgments.⁴ This is of course not to say there is some mechanistic correlation between the dominant ideology and our subjectivities. Evidently, we all don’t think alike or approach our history in the same manner—yet I think, underneath our individualized differences, there is a loosely organized ideological frame of reference(s) that not only establishes the hegemonic mutual consensus in the given society about ways of thinking, ordering, and organizing themselves but also informs and limits our very act of ideological dissension. All our ideas and desires have a history. In the modern era, the nationalism and nation-state system are such dominant ideology that limits and informs our mode of historical reasoning and future imagination.

First ‘Juridical’ Way to be Sovereign

I think by now we are all familiar with the story of how the modern West, as a self-defined cultural-political entity, established, through military force, a new relation of power with the non-western societies

4. Ideology not as a dogmatic Marxist conception of overt superstructure delimiting our scientific vision of society but as more pervasive force that both limits and produces our vision and actions. In my understanding there is nothing outside ideology, all views are ideological in the broadest sense of the term.

within which the modern European imperial/colonial exploits continued throughout the 19th and 20th century. Perhaps, the lesser-known story is the story of how this new imperial/colonial relation of (hard) power, besides material exploitations, produced colonization of another kind that continued to dominate the non-western societies long after the end of formal colonization by the European powers. This second form of colonization was what Nandy calls the “colonization of mind”—a modern form of colonization that colonized minds in addition to bodies (Nandy 2009). This modern form of colonization over a period of time produced a generalized psychological category of the West that dominates the structure of nationalist thoughts in the colony (ibid). This modern European imperial/colonial domination of the non-western world, through epistemic categories (such as nationalism, nation-state, national sovereignty) developed and honed in the West, altered the traditional order and worldview of the non-western societies. Such colonization of the second-order created a new political dynamic in the non-western world, such as in the Sino-Tibetan political landscape, where the discourse of both the Chinese colonizer (Anand 2011) and the anti-colonial nationalist Tibetan was framed/informed by these historically alien imperial categories of nationalism, nation-state, and national sovereignty. Most of the Chinese and Tibetan national elites at the turn of the 20th century were either educated in the West or westernized academic institutions in Japan, China, and India or were educating themselves in the doctrines of Marxism and International law in China through translated works (Spence 1980; Goldstien, Sherap and Siebenschuh 2006; Thurston and Thondup 2016; McGranahan 2005). This can be seen from the fact that contemporary dominant nationalist categories of organizing state-society such as *Minzu* (ethnicity/nationality), *Zhonguo-minzu* (Chinese nation) and *Shaoshu-minzu* (minority nationality) among Chinese or *Mi rigs* (nation) *Bod rigs* (Tibetan nationality) among Tibetans have their origin in the early 20th century and are derivatives of the modern western idea of the nation.

Therefore, the first way to be sovereign is the ‘juridical’ way. I think this is the dominant way of approaching the question of sovereignty in general and particularly among modern Tibetans. This mode of reasoning approaches the question of ‘sovereignty’ according to the

juridical criteria or what is known as ‘international law.’ This ‘juridical criteria’ despite its particular European historical roots, like any other hegemonic worldviews, pretends/claims to be universally applicable. This otherwise absurd claim to universality has become, through a historically imposed global relation of power and knowledge, a globalized normative framework of judgment. The increasingly homogenizing modern literati elites of the globalizing world, it appears to me, have internalized, though not without some contradictions, this European modern/colonial ideology of nationalism and nation-state. Today, in a way, we live in the global system of ‘nation-states’, where our imaginations, bounded by its systemic structuring, normalizes this otherwise recent ‘ways of being sovereign’. This psychological subservience among the indigenous modern literati elites, it seems, produces new internalized external ways of looking at one’s culture, society, and non-modern communities. This internalized external/colonial gaze reduces one’s own culture and society to something ‘lacking’, and its population to a mere object of the condescending pedagogical exercise—an unending process of teaching the masses to be modern and nationalist. The psychological condition of modern exile Tibetan seems no different to me.

The sovereignty argument among modern Tibetan literati elites would usually take a particular European experience with statehood and sovereignty as an ‘international’ point of reference and then look for and highlight those moments in the Tibetan past that fit those European criteria. Historically, the Montevideo convention of 1933 best expresses this European paradigm of modern statehood based on four criteria (1) a permanent population; (2) a defined territory; (3) government; and (4) capacity to enter into relations with the other states (Praag 1987; Sloane 2002). This particular Euro-American criterion despite its limited signatories and a particular historical basis, is today unproblematically identified as ‘international’ declarative criteria for statehood. The fact that Tibetan state(s) historically operated within a distinctive ideological framework(s) is of no analytical or political value to most modern (exile) Tibetans. For us, all that is required for Tibet to be historically sovereign is that it should historically have—following the ‘great’ European tradition—defined territory, singular ‘national’

government, ‘international treaties’ and best if it had ‘national flag’, ‘national currency’, so on and so forth (Norbu 2010). All evidence of historical deviation from this ‘juridical’ model remains a point of embarrassment. This for me is the first and the dominant way of being sovereign. Being sovereign in other’s terms.

Second ‘traditional’ Way to be Sovereign

The second way to be sovereign—for lack of a better word—is ‘traditional’ one. This mode of reasoning attempts to understand Tibet’s past in its own term. The historical logic being, as I suggested in the introduction, even if we can get the facts of the history correct, its meaning, as in the question of ‘sovereignty,’ lies within the mentalités of that period.⁵ In other words, a particular historically operative meaning could only be a legitimate point of reference for any historicized judgment. The framework proposed here is that of ‘chöd yön.’⁶ I suspect, for many secularized modern Tibetans, this ‘chöd yön’ framework may appear to be an anomaly or another nativist lie. Yet, it seems to me that this framework of analysis has much more to add to our knowledge of the historical inter-states relations in Inner Asia than any un-reflexive mimicry of European ideology. Since, ‘chöd yön’ seems to be one dominant ideological framework that rationalized the otherwise ever-changing relations of power between Tibetan state(s) and dynasties across its border, more particularly with the Qing dynasty in China (Shakabpa 1984; Brook, van Praag and Boltjes 2018). This is not to suggest, as have been by some, that the ‘actual’ nature of the relationship between, say, (central) Tibet and Qing dynasty was that of ‘purely’ religious and no political control existed. I think even a cursory reading of Sino-Tibetan history would suffice to refute such nationalist assertion. Instead, what I want to suggest is that the meaning(s) of these ‘actual’ political control

5. That said, the new problem that would then arise is whether such a project of reconstructing the past mentalité is possible? How do we leave aside our historically sedimented ideological disposition and leap into the alien terrain of the dead past? Project such as this is inevitably marred with epistemological impossibilities, yet an attempt towards it is both analytically and politically necessary.

6. Chöd yon literally means priest patron relation, where Tibetan religious hierarchs on a personal basis provide religious/spiritual benefits to the lay patron powers (historically shifted between Mongols, Manchu, and Chinese) and in return, the lay patron power provided material and temporal support for their religious teachers.

to different actors involved would necessarily be mediated and shaped by the governing ideological disposition of the actors in that particular time. The actors involved may well have shared the meaning of the same events or might possibly have conflicting interpretations of what constitutes the nature of the relationship. Given the nature of loosely organized imperial relations in the pre-modern time, the necessity of resolving the questions of sovereignty into “either-or” doesn’t seem to naturally arise. This subjective interpretation of the meaning of particular forms of relationship, I think, is important to understand since it allows us to approach history from point of view(s) of those in the margins. E.g., ‘Han’-Chinese nationalists might (genuinely) understand their colonial presence in Tibetan regions as a part of the Chinese ‘civilizing mission’ in Tibet, however, any serious readers of the period would be expected to know the views of the colonized. That is, the ways in which the colonized people saw this ‘civilizing mission.’ To search, let alone confidently demand, a singular ‘either-or’ “true” shared meaning of this unfolding relationship would be absurd. The actors involved in an event can and does have different, not necessarily mutually exclusive, structures of meanings. This fact of differing structures of meanings should not be understood as an argument for some extreme relativization of truth, since our historical judgments on questions such as ‘colonization’ must necessarily center the view of the colonized. Once again, this view of the colonized is not just a ‘collection of facts from the past to be interpreted from the present political mentalité but instead contains a distinctive meaning of its own; a meaning that I think is partly lost to our present time.

Historically, the Tibetan side, until the early 20th century interpreted their relation with the Qing empire within the ‘chöd yön’ analytical framework that at times despite the loss of actual political influence to Qing, especially since the 1750s, rationalized its ‘actual’ subservient political position as strategic submission to the external authority that shared or at least projected to share, a rationale of the same ideological framework. The Qing emperor, as Pamela Crossley has argued, reigned over the vast empire with culturally different worlds (i.e. Tibetan, Chinese, Mongols, etc) through ‘simultaneity of rule’ that mobilized a specific cultural and linguistic resources of the group (Crossley 1990; 2000). In other words, Qing’s rule over, say Tibetan regions, was not as

a Confucian emperor but as a Buddhist hierarch, identified by Tibetans as an emanation of Manjushri, the Buddha of wisdom. Tibet in this religious conceptualization was a realm of Avalokitesvara (Kapstein 2000), the Buddha of compassion, definitionally a distinct religio-political entity. I suspect, this ‘religious interpretation’ would appear too farfetched and self-serving to our ‘critical’ modernist, yet I believe that in societies as ours, an approach infused with a neat analytical distinction between category of “religion” and “politic” is, to begin with, a modernist folly.

To be sure, here I am not suggesting that historically Tibetans would have seen all Qing’s political domination as some religious blessing from the Manjushri emperor in China and would not have sensed any loss of actual power. Instead, my point is, despite the fact that this ‘religious’ rationalization would be marked by practical ambivalence on the ground, it nevertheless seems to have served as a powerful ideological force to rationalize—not necessarily consciously—Tibet’s strategic submission to the external powers. The point is, this rationalization within the ‘chöd yön’ ideological framework, seems to have produced a worldview that maintained the externality of the Qing-China, and thus despite Qing’s (varying) de-facto political dominance over Tibetan regions in past, Tibetans continued to identify Qing-China as the other. This can be seen from the early 20th century independence proclamation made by the 13th Dalai Lama, where he says “in the light of recent Chinese hostile attempts to take control of Tibet, the traditional relationship between Tibet and China governed by the historic model of “patron and priest” had “faded like a rainbow in the sky” (Shakabpa 1984, 246-248). Here I would suggest, following Dawa Norbu in spirit that despite the imperial asymmetrical macro-arrangement of power between Qing-China and Tibet, latter’s sense of political sovereignty was nevertheless intact as a result of rationalization within the ideological framework of “chöd yön” (Norbu 1979). The definitional boundary of what constitutes a loss of sovereignty was different from modern ‘juridical’ one. This to me is often forgotten yet a possible second way to be sovereign. Being sovereign in your own term.

Conclusion

This project of recovering the political frameworks of our representation of the past has a double orientation. For me, these two ways to be sovereign are not only historical realities but also has within it, alternative future possibilities. I am certain this line of argument will not satisfy our ‘critical’ modernist, since at the heart of their modernist analysis, I suspect, is the attempt to anthropologize Tibetan history and objectivize the range of subjective historical interpretations. To grant our historical actors, their own interpretational framework may seem too much of a concession. Since diversification of ‘modes of historical of reasoning’ renders the ‘facts of the past’ literally unmanageable. The standard framework of judgment must remain an ahistorical transcendental ‘juridical’ framework.

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In Pursuit of Modernization: The Great Thirteenth Dalai Lama and Tibet at the Dawn of 20th Century

Tsewang Rigzin
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Abstract

The period between 1895-1933 was one of the most significant chapters in the history of modern Tibet. It was during that period that Tibet, under the leadership of His Holiness the great 13th Dalai Lama, made a concerted effort in creating a Tibet that is modern and capable of protecting herself from foreign powers. There is a growing body of literature on spirituality, history, and culture of Tibet. This paper will discuss the social and political reform and modernization that was initiated by the great 13th Dalai Lama in the first three decades of 20th century.

Keywords: Thupten Gyatso, Modernization, Tibet, Qing Empire, British India

Introduction

When the People's Liberation Army of the newly established People's Republic of China (PRC) in October 1950 defeated a small and ill-equipped Tibetan army at the Tibetan town of Chamdo, Chinese military domination in Tibet was accomplished without much difficulty. The captured Tibetan Governor of Chamdo, Ngaboe Ngawang Jigme, was later sent as one of the Tibetan representatives to Beijing that resulted in the contentious agreement of 1951. In May 1951, the representatives of the Tibetan Government arrived in Beijing. On May 23, 1951, they were forced to sign the Seventeen-Point Agreement. This agreement has been challenged by legal scholars to have no legal basis in international laws as it was signed under the threat of use of force.

Subsequently, the People's Liberation Army entered Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. In March 1959, the Tibetan people revolted against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The Chinese suppression resulted in the death of

87,000¹ Tibetans and the flight of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama to India. Over 80,000 Tibetans followed the 14th Dalai Lama into exile in India. On March 26, 1959, the Chinese leader announced that they had dissolved the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet.²

Scholars have argued that before the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950s, Tibet was ruled, for all intents and purposes, as an independent nation by the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet. Michael C. van Walt van Praag, in his article, *The Legal Status of Tibet* stated, “from 1911 to 1950, Tibet successfully avoided undue foreign influence and behaved in every respect as a fully independent state”(Michael Praag 1988).

From the time of the Great 5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617–1682), the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet was ruled both temporally and spiritually by the successive Dalai Lamas. Among them, the great 13th Dalai Lama, Jetsun Ngawang Lobsang Thupten Gyatso (1876-1933), is generally considered to be the most significant.

It was during that period, under the leadership of the 13th Dalai Lama, Tibetans made a concerted effort in modernizing Tibet. Scholarship on this period although have gained considerable attention, yet this paper will explore his project to modernize Tibet.

The Great 13th Dalai Lama, Thupten Gyatso (1876 – 1933)

“The 13th Dalai Lama played a part which, throughout the whole course of world history, none had played before, and – at it seems – none will play again. The first and probably the last. His biography ought to be written.”

Charles Bell (1870 -1945)

1. The official Website of the Tibetan Government in Exile. “History Leading up to March 10, 1959”. Retrieved on December 23, 2018.

2. Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet was the independent Tibetan government that was established by the great 5th Dalai Lama in 1642. Since then, the Dalai Lamas became the temporal and spiritual ruler of Tibet. This tradition of the Dalai Lamas functioning as both the spiritual and temporal head of Tibet was formally ended in Dharamshala when His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama signed the document formally transferring his temporal authority to a democratically elected leader on May 29, 2011.

His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama was born in a peasant family of Langdun village in the Dagpo district of southern Tibet on May 27, 1876.³ At the age of two, he was recognized as the reincarnation of the 12th Dalai Lama. On January 11, 1879, the 8th Panchen Lama, Tenpai Wangchuk, performed the haircutting ceremony (*dbu skra gtsug phud*) and bestowed the name Jetsun Ngawang Lobsang Thupten Gyatso Jikdrel Wangchuk Chokley Namgyel Pelsangpo.

In August of 1879, two years after his recognition, the young 13th Dalai Lama was escorted to Lhasa, and he was formally enthroned (*gser-kebri mnya-gsol*). Tutored by renowned scholars of that time, the early years of the young Dalai Lama revolved around the study of Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan grammar. While he was undergoing his studies, the responsibilities for the governance of Tibet rested upon the Regent (*srid-skyong*) Kundeling Taksak Jedrung Choekyi Gyaltzen and Demo Ngawang Lobzang Trinle Rabgye. By 1895, the 20-year-old Dalai Lama had completed his formal studies and had taken his full ordination vow (*dge slong sdom pa*) from the 3rd Purchok Jampa Gyatso. That year, on September 26, His Holiness the Dalai Lama assumed secular and temporal power over Tibet (Shakabpa 2010, 636).

The political landscape of Asia at the time of the 13th Dalai Lama's assumption of authority over Tibet was chaotic. A few months before his assumption of power, Qing China suffered a humiliating defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (July 1894 – April 1895). The defeat of Qing China resulted in the Japanese Empire replacing the Qing Empire as the dominant regional power of East Asia. Around that time, the intense rivalry between Russian and British Empires over the competition for strategic supremacy in Central Asia, known as the 'Great Game,' was at its peak. Much of South Asia at that period was firmly under the control of European colonizers.

3. Noted Tibetan Historian Shakabpa in the translation of his book "One Hundred Thousand Moon," mentioned May 27, 1876, as the birth date of the great 13th Dalai Lama. However other Tibetologists such as Goldstein and Bell indicate that he was born in June 1876. The Tibetan sources such as *bod kyi lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzh'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs* and *bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim gyu yi phreng ba* mentioned that he was born on the fifth day of the fifth month of the fire-mouse year of the 15th Rabjung Calendrical Cycle.

The First Exile: The British Invasion (1904 – 1908)

The constant harassment at Tibet's border region by the British authority in India was the major concern for the Government of Tibet. The concerned Dalai Lama, through one of his debating partners (*mtshan zhabbs*), Agvan Dorjiev,⁴ (1854-1938) attempted to reach Czar Nicholas II, the then emperor of the Russian Empire, to gain his protection in case of potential danger (Bell 1987 and Shakabpa 2010). Authorities in British India became increasingly uncomfortable with their knowledge of the Dalai Lama's potential association with their rival, the Russian Empire. In 1903, to thwart potential Russian influence in Tibet, Lord Curzon sent British troops to Tibet under Colonel Younghusband (Shakabpa 2010, 657).

The ensuing invasion of Tibet led the 13th Dalai Lama and his entourage to escape to Mongolia on July 30, 1904. After three months of arduous journey, the Dalai Lama reached Mongolia in the winter of 1904. He was warmly received by 8th Jetsun Damba Hutuktu (1869–1924), the ruler of Outer Mongolia. Sir Charles Bell in his book, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama*, wrote, “In November he arrived at the capital, Urga. Over ten thousand citizens went several miles out of the town to meet him and prostrate themselves before him. Pilgrims flocked in from all parts of Mongolia, Siberia, and from the steppes of Astrakhan, to do him homage” (Bell 1987, 76).

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, left Mongolia in 1906. Meanwhile, Chinese General and Governor of Sichuan, Zhao Erfeng, led brutal military campaigns throughout the Kham region (eastern Tibet) and killed many Tibetans and looted their monasteries. At the same time, there was an invitation for the Dalai Lama from the Empress Dowager Cixi of Qing

4. Debating Partner (*mtshan zhabbs*) Agvan Dorjiev was a Russian-born Buryat monk who studied at Drepung monastic college of Tibet and was later appointed as a debating partner to the 13th Dalai Lama. He soon became an influential advisor of the Dalai Lama. British India's official suspect him of being a Russian agent. In an interview with Thomas Liard, the 14th Dalai Lama told that “Obviously, the 13th Dalai Lama had a keen desire to establish relations with Russia, and I also think he was a little skeptical toward England at first. Then there was Dorjiev. To the English, he was a spy, but in reality, he was a good scholar and a sincere Buddhist monk who had a great devotion to the 13th Dalai Lama.”

Dynasty. In the hope of persuading Chinese troops to withdraw from their military campaign in Eastern Tibet, the Dalai Lama decided to pay a short visit to Peking to meet with the Empress Dowager. With this visit to China, the Dalai Lama also wanted to explore a relationship with other foreign countries through their representatives based in Peking (Shakabpa 2010, 690).

On route to Peking, His Holiness the Dalai Lama stopped at Mount Wutai Shan, which is considered as a holy Buddhist site in China. Despite the Qing China's attempt to prevent His Holiness from interacting with foreign diplomats, he was able to meet with many foreign diplomats. William Rockhill, who was then the American Ambassador to China was one such envoy who met with His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama at Mount Wutai Shan. It was the first formal contact between Tibet and the United States. In his report to the President Roosevelt, Ambassador Rockhill described his meeting with the Dalai Lama as "the most unique experience of my life." He further described the Dalai Lama as "a man of undoubted intelligence and ability, quick understanding and force of character. He is broad-minded -- and of great natural dignity" (Rockhill 1910, 91).

His Holiness also met with Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim (1867–1951), a Lieutenant General in the Russian Imperial Army (who later became the President of independent Finland). He met with the Dalai Lama at Mount Wutai Shan and offered His Holiness a Browning revolver. Later, Mannerheim is said to have written in his diary, "The times were such that a revolver might at times be of greater use, even to a holy man like himself, than a praying mill" (Tamm 2011).

His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama was also keen to establish a relationship with the new powerhouse of Asia -- Japan. Sir Charles Bell in his book, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama*, wrote: "his (the Dalai Lama's) thoughts often turn to Japan. He continually asks me for news of Sino-Japanese relations. I can see the pleasure that lights up his face when he hears that Japan has put pressure on China by military measures or otherwise, hoping that this, for some time, at any rate, will prevent China from attacking Tibet" (Bell 1946, 350). He eventually met with a Japanese agent named Enga Termato, who later facilitated His Holiness's meeting

with Japanese Ambassador Gonsuke Hayashi and General Yasumasa Fukushima in Peking (Shakabpa 2010, 691, 694).

On October 14, 1908, His Holiness the Dalai Lama met with the Guangxu Emperor and Empress Dowager Cixi of China in Peking. According to Sir Charles Bell, the primary agenda of the Qing court for inviting His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama to Peking was, “to show that the Dalai Lama of Tibet is subordinate to Dragon Throne (Qing Emperor)” (Bell 1987, 88). However, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan side remained resolute on their stand that the relationship between Qing Empire and Tibet is that of a priest-patron relationship and does not include any subordination of one power to other. This position is reflected in the fact that even after a repeated persuasion by the court of the Qing Empire, His Holiness refused to kowtow to Emperor and Empress of China (Bell 1987, 82).

While at Peking, His Holiness also met with the Ambassadors of Japan, Russia, France, Germany, British, and the United States. The meeting with Japanese Ambassador Hayashi and General Fukushima was particularly interesting. While discussing political matters with him, His Holiness expressed his desire to modernize the Tibetan army and sought Japan’s support. The Japanese agreed and later sent a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War, Yusujiro Yajima, to Tibet to train and modernize the Tibetan army (Shakabpa 2010, 701).

After five years of exile in Mongolia and China, His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama left Peking on December 21, 1908, to return to Tibet. Upon his arrival at Lhasa on November 9, 1909, the government of Tibet presented His Holiness with the new golden seal. The issuance of this new seal symbolically annulled Qing Empire’s nominal rule over Tibet as the previous seal was issued to the Dalai Lama of Tibet by the Emperor of the Qing dynasty. The five years of exile in Mongolia and China and his encounters with foreign diplomats from the US, Britain, Russia, France, and Japan significantly enhanced His Holiness’s understanding of the international politics. His desire to modernize Tibet was thereby deepened.

The Second Exile: The Qing Invasion and the Flight to India (1910 – 1912)

Less than two months after his arrival in Lhasa, about two thousand Qing soldiers under a young military officer named Zhong Ying marched toward Lhasa. In the light of impending danger, the Dalai Lama appointed Gandan Tripa⁵ Ngawang Lobsang Tsemonling as the new Regent of Tibet and once again left Lhasa for his second exile, this time to India. Six ministers, few government officials and a small detachment of soldiers accompanied him. Upon his arrival in India in February 1910, the 35-year-old Dalai Lama was warmly received by Sir Charles Bell, a British political officer in Sikkim. His Holiness and his entourage stayed in India for about two years, mostly in Darjeeling. Meanwhile, a letter was received from the Chinese Amban⁶ in Lhasa asking him to return, for which His Holiness replied, "...At this point, there is absolutely nothing for us to say to China, except through the intermediary of the British government..." (Shakabpa 2010, 732).

On March 14, 1910, His Holiness the Dalai Lama met with British India's Viceroy, Lord Minto at Hasting House, Calcutta, the then capital of British India. His Holiness explained to the Viceroy how the Chinese military invasion had destabilized Tibetan authority and requested British intervention in Tibet's conflict with China (Shakabpa 2010, 724). When Sir Charles Bell officially informed His Holiness that the British would not intervene between China and Tibet, His Holiness appeared to have become disheartened. In the biography of the Dalai Lama, Sir Charles Bell noted, "When I delivered the message to him (that British Government would not intervene between China and Tibet) he was so surprised and distressed that for a minute or two he lost the power of speech" (Bell 1987, 114).

In the meantime, by 1911, China was in chaos. With the Wuchang Uprising of October 10, 1911, anti-Qing sentiment has reached its boiling point. Within a short time after the Wuchang Uprising, the Qing dynasty was ousted. The official abdication of the last Emperor Puyi

5. Ganden Tripa (the throne holder of Ganden) is the title of the spiritual leader of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism.

6. Amban is the representatives of the Qing Emperor at Lhasa. The Amban acted as an intermediary between the Qing court and government of the Dalai Lama.

on February 12, 1912, marked the end of over 2000 years of Imperial China. Observing this chaos in China, Tibetans revolted against the nominal Qing rule in Tibet. His Holiness appointed Tsarong Dasang Dadul, his favorite confidant and a strong proponent of modernization, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan Army and was sent to Tibet to work with the Tibetan Army in Lhasa in their battle with the Chinese troops (Shakabpa 2010, 739).

Return to Lhasa and the Reassertion of Tibet's Independence from China

By the end of 1912, the Tibetan government expelled the remaining Qing troops from Central Tibet. Lhasa, for the first time since the 18th century, became entirely free of Manchu Ambans (nominal officials of the Qing Dynasty in Tibet) and soldiers. On January 17, 1913, His Holiness the Dalai Lama arrived back in Lhasa. The President of the new Republic of China, Yuan Shikai, telegraphed him and apologized for their past behavior and agreed to restore the Dalai Lama to his previous rank. In responding to Yuan Shikai, the Dalai Lama replied that he does not intend to hold any rank from China and that he will exercise his temporal and spiritual authority in Tibet (Bell 1987, 115).

Upon arrival in Lhasa, His Holiness initiated two important activities to strengthen the independence of Tibet: 1) he signed a treaty with Mongolia; and 2) reasserted Tibet's independence through an official proclamation. On January 11, 1913, the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance⁷ was signed between Tibet and Mongolia at Urga (now Ulaanbaatar), the capital of Mongolia. The agreement consisted of nine articles. Articles one and two mutually recognized the independence of the two countries, with the Dalai Lama as ruler of independent Tibet and Jebtsundamba Hutuktu as the sovereign ruler of Mongolia. Article four stated that Mongolia and Tibet were determined "to render help to each other against internal and external threats now and forever." (for a full transcript of the treaty, see Shakabpa 2010, 1112).

7. Treaty of Friendship and Alliance which was signed between Tibet and Mongolia at Urga. On the centennial of the signing of this treaty, Amnye Machen Institute published an edited volume on this treaty.

On February 13, 1913, His Holiness formally declared Tibet's Independence by a proclamation containing five points. In this statement, His Holiness briefly explained how he had to go into exile twice because of foreign aggression against Tibet. His Holiness then urged fellow Tibetans to defend the independence of their nation (for full proclamation, see Shakabpa 2010, 760).

The tripartite Shimla Convention of 1913-1914 was another major treaty that was signed during that period. This treaty concerns the status of Tibet and was signed by the representatives of British India and Tibet, after Chinese representatives refused to agree to the terms of this agreement. This treaty ultimately resulted in the division of Tibet into "Outer Tibet" and "Inner Tibet."

According to Sir Charles Bell, the Dalai Lama was not happy about the fact that the treaty divided Tibet into two parts. The Dalai Lama asked Bell why Tibet was to be divided into two portions, Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet at the Shimla Conference (Bell 1946, 206). The treaty also required the withdrawal of the Chinese Army from "outer" Tibet. Chinese plenipotentiary, Ivan Chen, rejected the proposed terms and withdrew from the accord. Finally, British plenipotentiary, Henry McMahon and the Tibetan plenipotentiary, Lonchen Shetra sealed the accord as a bilateral agreement between British India and Tibet on July 3, 1914. The annexure of the treaty defined the international boundary between Tibet and British India. The McMahon line (as it is known today) is the basis of the current international border between China-occupied Tibet and India.

Reforms and Modernization: An Attempt to Transform Tibet into a Modern Nation State

"Day and night, I had to ponder anxiously over problems of Church and State, in order to decide how each might prosper best. I had to consider the welfare of the peasantry, how best to remove their sorrows; how to open the three doors of promptitude, impartiality, and the removal of injuries".

The 13th Dalai Lama

After six tragic and turbulent years of exile in Mongolia, China and British India and subsequent encounters with foreign dignitaries of different countries, His Holiness the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa with

a new mission for Tibet -- to transform Tibet into a modern nation-state. While his years of exile were difficult ones, this exposure enabled him to have a thorough understanding of the complexity of the politics of international relations. Above all, he understood the fragility of Tibet's position in the world and made determined effort to modernize Tibet. By that time, His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama, who was around 37 years old, had total control over the government of Tibet.

The national development and modernization of Tibet was the most visible theme of the five-point proclamation that His Holiness issued on February 13, 1913. For instance, the third point of the proclamation dealt with issues regarding fair collection of tax, fair governance, stabilizing the price of commodities and the prohibition of disproportionate punishments for criminals. In the final point, His Holiness prohibited government officials, monasteries, and landholders from obstructing landless peasants from cultivating vacant lands and proclaimed that whoever hindered anyone else from cultivating vacant lands are 'enemies of the state.' The Proclamation asserted that such vacant land belongs to cultivators in perpetuity and further relieved them from paying land tax for three years if they are willing to do cultivation of such land (Shakabpa 2010, 760).

From the perspective of redistributive policy and socio-economic reform, such a proclamation, particularly the article on land cultivation and ownership, is revolutionary. In this regard, it is fair to conclude that the five-point proclamation for reform in Tibet and his declaration of independence in February 13, 1913, can be regarded as a starting point for his effort in transforming Tibet into a modern nation state.

Modernization of the Tibetan Army

The 13th Dalai Lama realized that for Tibet to be able to protect herself, she needed a strong and modern army. A part of the 5th article of the Dalai Lama's five-points proclamation stated that "...civil and military officials can enhance our military preparedness, enabling us to protect the stability of our territory." In order to modernize the Tibetan army, he established the Department of Tibetan army (*Bod Jong Mag Chi Khang*) in 1913. Based on the advice of his friend Sir Charles Bell, His Holiness

decided to increase the number of regular Tibetan soldiers from 3,000 (Goldstein 1989, 66) to 17,000 (Bell 1987, 282).

For a largely devout Buddhist population, the task of increasing soldier and modernizing armed force was not an easy one. The powerful and influential monks such as Chamon Depa of Sera monastery were against such initiatives (Bell 1987, 282). The posters demanding the death of Sir Charles Bell (who advised the Dalai Lama to increase Tibetan armed force) were pasted on the walls of Lhasa. Despite the fear that people might revolt, the 13th Dalai Lama after consultation with the cabinet acted on his plan to increase the strength of Tibetan army to 17,000 (Goldstein 1989, 95). Tsarong Dasang Dadul, the Commander-in-Chief of Tibetan army, solicited British India's help in modernizing Tibetan Army by selling arms and ammunition to Tibet. However, British Foreign Secretary initially declined to sell their arms to Tibet (Spence 1991) but somehow after persuasion from Sir Charles Bell, the British Government allowed a moderate import of arms from British India (Bell 1986, 286).

To create a modern and efficient Tibetan army, an assessment of four major military systems was conducted. A Japanese Imperial army officer and a veteran of Russo-Japanese War, Yusujiro Yajima trained a group of newly recruited Tibetan soldiers in the Japanese military system. A Mongolian and a former army officer of Imperial Russia, Ten-pai Gyaltzen trained another regiment of Tibetan army in Russian military system. A third group was trained at Gyantse in the British military system (Shakabpa 2010, 778).

Upon completion of their training, these three groups and one other group that had been previously trained in Chinese military system were invited to Lhasa to demonstrate their military skills. A four-day demonstration was conducted in front of the Dalai Lama, his Cabinet, and other officials. Each system was evaluated based on their distinctive merits. It was finally decided that the Tibetan army will be modeled along the British military system. The new military manual was produced and distributed. A group of officials and soldiers were also sent to army camps in Shillong, India, to study the use of modern weapons, such as artillery and machine guns (Shakabpa 2010, 778).

In order to modernize the Tibetan army, the government needed an additional financial resource. The only viable solution is to impose new tax. However, imposing new taxes meant contribution from big monasteries and wealthy land-owning families. This new tax created a serious challenge. For example, the government at Lhasa ordered the Panchen Lama's Tashi Lhunpo⁸ estate to pay one-fourth of the total expenditure for the upkeep of the Tibetan army. This new demand resulted in conflict between the Ganden Phodrang government and the estate of the Panchen Lama. Consequently, the Panchen Lama fled to Mongolia on December 26, 1923 (Goldstein 1989, 113).

Despite these difficulties, the modernization of the Tibetan army carried on and even proved to be successful to a certain extent. The British political officer in Sikkim, F.W. Williamson in his report to the British government of India mentioned that "outside the regular units of British Indian Armies, I have never seen such smartness and precision" (Goldstein 1989, 155).

Introduction of Secular and Modern Education

Except for a very few private schools in Tibet, the predominant education system in Tibet at the beginning of 20th century was largely traditional and the monasteries served as a significant provider of this education.

To improve access to mass education, the Cabinet under the leadership of the Dalai Lama declared that new schools should be established in various districts (Shakabpa 2010, 779). However, it was not clear whether such declaration was followed with concrete action. Regardless, the number of private schools increased in Lhasa and other places. A study by Alice Travers (2016) shows that, by the early 20th century, there were around 25 private schools in Lhasa alone. Most of these schools were founded by officials of the Tibetan government. The curriculum of these schools was mostly Tibetan grammar, calligraphy, and basic arithmetic. These private schools admitted children from different social backgrounds (Travers 2016).

8. Tashi Lhunpo is the monastic seat of the Panchen Lama.

In 1913, the Great 13th Dalai Lama sent four young Tibetans⁹ to study at Rugby School in Warwickshire, England. They became first Tibetans to study in the West. Tsepon Lungshar Dorje Tsegial, (1880-1938) a close confidant of the 13th Dalai Lama and a strong proponent of modernization, was sent with this group. On June 28, 1913, four students and Tsepon Lungshar had an audience with King George V (1865-1936). The four students studied different fields that are necessary for nation building. Mondrong Khyenrap Kunsang studied mining, Gokkharwa Sonam Gonpo studied military science, Rigzin Dorjee studied electrical engineering, and Kyibukpa Wangdu Norbu studied surveying and telegraph system (Shakabpa 2010, 765).

Upon completion of their training, they returned to Tibet. Rigzin Dorjee, who studied electrical engineering, installed the first hydropower station in Tibet in 1928. He also played a significant role in establishing electricity at the newly established arms factory, the mint, and the printing press (Jangnyoe 1986, 95). Kyibukpa Wangdu Norbu who studied surveying and telegraph systems established the first telegraph line from Lhasa to Gyantse. Gokkharwa Sonam Gonpo, who studied military science was placed in the military camp of the Dalai Lama's bodyguard regiment but died shortly in 1917. Mondrong Khyenrap Kunsang, who studied mining discovered the existence of several types of minerals in Dakpo region of Tibet. However, his efforts of mining were obstructed by the ultra-conservative forces. He later became the chief of the newly established Lhasa Police Department.

To establish the first English model school at Gyantse, the Dalai Lama invited Frank Ludlow, the Inspector of Schools in India to Tibet. He arrived at Gyantse on October 27, 1923, as headmaster for a three-year contract. Despite significant opposition from the monastic community, the school remained functional for three years. Unfortunately, owing to intense opposition from the ultra-conservative faction, the school was forced to close in 1926. The famous street song in Lhasa of that time has a satirical line, "in the holy place; there is this unholy English

9. K. Dhondup in his article titled, 'The Thirteenth Dalai Lama's Experiment in Modern Education' (1984), provides a detailed account of four Tibetan students who studied at Rugby School.

School” (Spence 1991). Frank Ludlow, in his diary of August 28, 1926, lamented, “Tibet plays like a child at new ideas, and like a child get tired of its playthings and casts it aside. They will regret their decision one day when they are Chinese slaves once more, as they assuredly will be. China will recover in time and return.”¹⁰

Public Health Reforms

In 1916, His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama established the College of Medical and Astrological Sciences, known as *Men-Tse-Khang* at Lhasa. Ngozhi Jampa Thupten and Khyenrab Norbu were appointed as the first directors of the institute. The students were gathered from monasteries and different regions of Tibet and taught science and arts of Tibetan medical system. Students who graduated from this college were dispatched to other regions of Tibet to provide medical services. For the first time, mass immunization was introduced in Tibet by importing vaccines from India. Health pamphlets were distributed among masses to improve public health.

Currently, there are two Men-Tse-Khangs. One is at Dharamshala,¹¹ India, which was re-established by Tibetans under the leadership of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. The original *Men-Tse-Khang* is in Lhasa, and its branches spread across different Tibetan towns and villages.

Governance and Institutional Reforms

His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama, introduced a series of institutional reform measures within the Ganden Phodrang Government of Tibet. At one point, His Holiness proposed that there should be people’s (elected) representatives in the national assembly. He even convened a meeting with regional leaders, senior military leaders, and some elders from different regions to discuss his proposal. However, there was opposition from conservative government officials and representatives from monasteries. Thus, his vision of having popularly elected representatives had to be

10. Michael Rank, in his article titled, ‘Frank Ludlow and the English School in Tibet (1923-1926), provides a detailed account of establishment and closure of English school at Gyantse, on the basis of dairy of Frank Ludlow.

11. Dharamshala is the exile headquarter of Tibetan administration in India. Since 2011, it was headed by democratically elected President.

withdrawn (Shakabpa 2010, 779). However, His Holiness was successful in establishing about 22 new government departments and offices to implement some of his governance reformative measures effectively (Shaydra et. al 1991). A brief description of some of the important new offices is below.

The Department of the Tibetan Army (*Boe Jong Mag Chi Khang*) is the new military department started in 1913. Tsarong Dasang Dadul was appointed as the Chief Commander and Tsepon Trimon Norbu Wangyal was appointed as Deputy Chief Commander. To manage the salaries for new soldiers, the Department of Salaries (*shol chi phog khang*) was established in 1919. The Department of the Machine Factory (*ya mon 'phrul so khang*) was established in 1914 to manufacture basic arms and ammunition, including swords, short guns, simple machine guns, and artilleries. This department was also responsible for the production of the currency, which took the form of a copper coin (Ngapoe 1989).

Along with the Tibetan Army, the new police department was established at Lhasa in 1923. The penal system was revised and made uniform throughout Tibet. Extreme and disproportionate dispensation of justice were abolished and conditions in jails were also improved. The special officials were designated to implement these judiciary reform measures.

Office of Agriculture (*So Nam Ley Khung*) – was established in 1913. It was one of the most important new offices that were started by the 13th Dalai Lama during his quest for modernization. The primary task of this office was fair and effective implementation of land reform measures that His Holiness has stated in his fifth point of his five-point proclamation that he made on February 13, 1913. This office was also tasked with the responsibility to make sure that no illegal construction was done on vacant land. Office of inspector of agricultural production and land (*Bab zhi Ley Khung*) which was established in 1920 was partly responsible for implementation of the land reform measures.

Office of Gold Mint (*Ser Tram Ley Khung*) –was established in 1913. This office produces standard gold and silver coins, which were earlier produced manually. Later, the electrically operated mill was introduced into this office for the manufacture of woolen clothes.

The Office of the Governor of Rgyal Tse Trade (*Rgyal Tse Tsong Chi*) was established in 1915. The primary responsibilities of this office were to administer trade between British India and Tibet. In addition to that duty, the office was also responsible for managing the newly built telegraph system and the English model school at Rgyal Tse.

The Post Office (*Sbrag Tar Las Khung*) was established in 1918, replacing the old Chinese-style postal system. Tibetan postage stamps were also introduced in Tibet. The primary responsibility of this office was the construction of the postal offices in different regions of Tibet. This office administered the telegraph line, which was also first introduced during that period.

The Office of Foreign Relations (*Chyi Rgyal Las Khung*) was established in 1921. The primary responsibility of this office was managing Tibet's relations with other countries. With a few exceptions, this office was granted substantial authority in the domain of foreign affairs. Dza sak Gyaltzen Phuntsok and Khey may Rinchen Wangyal were appointed to lead this office.

The Office of Power and Electricity (*Glog Dbon Khang*) was established in 1924. Its primary responsibility was building the first-ever hydropower plant in Tibet. After four years of construction, the first hydropower plant station was opened in Tibet in 1928. This department was also responsible for lighting the Palace of the Dalai Lama and the city of Lhasa. Rigzin Dorjee, who studied electrical engineering in England took charge of this department (Shaydra et. al 1991).

The Office of Electrical Machines at Dra Shi (*Dra Shi Lok-Trul Ley Khung*) was created in 1931 with the primary responsibility to print paper currency (which became the first paper currency of Tibet), producing silver and gold coins, manufacturing modern weapons, manufacturing other steel products, and constructing utility poles for Lhasa City. Three other offices, i.e., Machinery Production House (1914) (*Ya Mon Trul So Khang*), the Office of Mint (1918) (*Lor Khang Ley Khung*) and the Office of Gold Minting (1914) (*Ser Tram Ley Khung*) were incorporated into this new department (Thangmey 1985).

Office of Construction (*Ar Poe Las Khung*)– During the 13th Dalai Lama's leadership of Tibet, Lhasa witness the constructions of many new government offices. During this period, most of the temples and monasteries around Lhasa underwent a series of renovation. The primary responsibility of this office was to oversee such construction and renovation projects.

Other new offices that were established around this period were many Provincial Governor's offices that are responsible for the administration of Tibet's border regions. These are: Governor's office of Mdo-Mey (*Mdo-Mey Spikyab*) 1913, Governor's office of Sder-Gey (*Sder-Gey Spikyab*) 1914, Governor's office of Hor (*Hor-Chi*) 1916, Governor's office of Dro-Mo (*Dro-Chi*) 1917, Office of Sog Phog (*Sog Phog Khang*) 1916, Governor's office of Gzhi tse (*gzhi tse spyi rzhong*) 1915, Governor's office of Glho-kha (*Glho-kha -Spikyab*) 1917 (Shaydra et. al 1991).

The Last Political Testament and the Death of His Holiness the Great 13th Dalai Lama

In 1932, following a request from the Cabinet (Kashag) and a government official for his long life, the 13th Dalai Lama issued a lengthy and prophetic statement. In a nutshell, the statement of His Holiness talks about his potential demise from worldly existence and warned Tibet of the impending danger from communist China. He advised the government to maintain a strong troop and keep a good diplomatic relationship with powerful neighbors.

The part of this testament read:

...You must develop a good diplomatic relationship with our powerful neighbors: India and China. Efficient and well-equipped troops must be stationed even on the minor frontiers bordering hostile forces. Such an army must be well trained in warfare as a sure deterrent against any adversaries. ...In the future, this [communist] system will certainly be forced on this land that cherishes the joint spiritual and temporal system, either from within or without. If in such an event, we fail to defend our land, our political system, originated by the three ancient kings,

will be reduced to an empty name; officials will be deprived of their patrimony and property and will be subjugated like slaves by the enemy; and the public, subjected to fear and miseries, will be unable to endure day or night. Such an era could certainly come!” (for full statement, see Shakabpa 2010, 829).

At the age of 58, the great 13th Dalai Lama passed away suddenly on December 17, 1933. The political legacy left by the 13th Dalai Lama was best summarized by Sir Charles Bell in his biography of the great 13th Dalai Lama, where he concluded:

On the whole, it must certainly be said that he increased the spirituality of Tibetan Buddhism. On the secular side, he improved law and order, increased his own contact with his people, introduced more merciful standards into the administration of justice and lessened priestly domination in secular affairs. In the hope of preventing Chinese invasions, he built up an army in the face of priestly opposition. In view of the extreme stringency of Tibetan finance, the intense opposition of the powerful priesthood, and other difficulties, he could have gone no farther than he did (Bell 1987,444).

Modernization Drive After the Death of the 13th Dalai Lama

While the death of the great 13th Dalai Lama significantly waned the pace of Tibet’s modernization initiatives, it did not halt the modernization process completely. Some of his close confidants and supporters continued with the modernization process for some time. The three most powerful leaders who attempted to advance the modernization initiatives of the 13th Dalai Lama were -- Tsepon Lungshar Dorje Tsegyal (1880–1938), former Commander-in-Chief of Tibetan Army; Tsarong Dasang Dadul (1888–1959), the Dalai Lama’s personal favorite; and 29-year-old Thupten Kunphel (1905-1963). Thupten Kunphel was later accused of foul play in the death of the Dalai Lama and expelled from Lhasa. He fled to India in 1937. While in India, he met with Pandatsang Rabga, (a member of the wealthiest trading family in Kham region of Tibet) and became one of the co-founders for the ‘The West Tibet Improvement Party’¹² (*nub-bod-legs-bcos-skyid-sdug*).

12. According to Goldstein, Pandatsang Rabga took financial and other support

Tsepon Lungshar Dorje Tsegayal's (1880–1938) continued efforts toward modernization after the 13th Dalai Lama was one of the most significant. Tsepon Lungshar, the man who accompanied four Tibetan youth to Rugby School in England, is one of the rare senior government officials who was well exposed to development outside Tibet (Lhalu 1983, 249-293). He firmly believed that Tibet needed significant political reform. Tsepon Lungshar, in collaboration with the like-minded influential monk leader called Temba Jayang, started to build a coalition of reform-minded monks and lay officials. In 1934, a year after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama, he started a secret group of a government officials and young aristocrats and named it '*Kyichok Kunthun*,' which in Tibetan language means 'all who are united on the side of happiness.' The key political agenda of this coalition included: replacing the lifelong term of Cabinet ministers with four-year term; and making Cabinet members accountable to the Tibetan National Assembly. Tsepon Lungshar envisioned a secular government for Tibet, which would be administered by lay officials rather than by monks (Liard 2016, 259).

For the members of the Cabinet and Tibetan National Assembly, where the influence of ultra-conservative traditionalists is dominant, the reform agenda of Lungshar and his team was no less than an act of treason. Tsepon Lunshar was later charged with attempting to murder Minister Trimon Norbhu Wangyal and plotting to overthrow the government (Goldstein 1989, 204). In prison, his eyes were gouged out to prevent any further political opposition from his side. In 1938, few years after his release from the prison, Tsepon Lungshar died. The death of Tsepon Lungshar marked the end of the era of the great 13th Dalai Lama's modernization effort.

Conclusion

From the time of His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama's return from India in 1913, to his sudden death in 1933, the Dalai Lama, with the support of his close confidants, made a concerted effort to make Tibet a modern nation-state that is capable of defending herself from the aggression of neighboring powers. Despite intense opposition and obstruction

from the Republic of China (1912-1949) for 'The West Tibet Improvement Party' and aspired to create the Republic of Tibet under the overall control of the Republic of China. (Goldstein, 1989, p. 450).

from the powerful ultra-conservative factions, the Dalai Lama was able to institute a series of reform measures and improve the governance of Tibet. Sir Charles Bell, in his biography of the 13th Dalai Lama, concluded that:

The general administration in Tibet is more orderly than the administration in China; the Tibetan standard of living is higher than the standard in China or India, and the status of women in Tibet is higher than their status in either of those two large countries (Bell 1946).

Despite the serious attempts by the 13th Dalai Lama and his team of reformers, these reform measures, unfortunately, failed in building a modern Tibet that is capable of protecting herself. The factors that were responsible for the failure of these reform measures are internal as well as external. The frequent challenges and deceptive diplomatic maneuver in Tibet by her powerful neighbors, i.e., China and British colonial power in India, were significant external impediments toward the Dalai Lama's nation-building project.

The internal challenges were many. The lack of mass education in general and awareness of international politics in particular among Tibetan people of that period proved to be significant challenges. Because of this reality, the Dalai Lama and his team of reformers were not able to mobilize the masses, which is an essential component to bring a significant change in Tibetan society. The intense opposition from the ultra-conservative faction was another major internal challenge. At the same time, the inadequate treasury of the Tibetan Government could not sustain the cost of modernization. Nevertheless, as concluded by Sir Charles Bell in his biography of the great 13th Dalai Lama, "the 13th Dalai Lama and his team of reformers did everything that possibly could be done in that particular environment and at that particular period."

As prophesized by the 13th Dalai Lama in his last political testament in 1932, the cost of failure to modernize Tibet in early 20th century proved to be fatal. By the late 1950s, Communist China had brutally occupied Tibet. This occupation marked the end of the independent Tibet. In retrospect, had the great 13th Dalai Lama's modernization effort

succeeded, the tragedy of Tibet losing her independence to China could have been avoided. As of today, the struggle for the freedom and the dignity of the Tibetan people still continues.

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Imagining 'Tibet': The West and the 'Other'

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Abstract

This paper attempts to discuss these images of Tibet and Tibetans as constructed by Western academicians and Imperial powers during the first half of the 20th century. It has endured and added multiple narratives on Tibet as envisioned by the present Tibetan exilic polity as well as the West. Furthermore, the paper will draw out these lines of connection between the images of Tibet, the past and the present, to historicize the development of these images that are selectively appropriated by the Tibetan exile polity as it seeks to imagine a Tibetan nation in exile and the subsequent rejection of these images by the Chinese nation–state building (but which plays an important role nonetheless in its framework).

Keywords: Tibet, PRC, West's Imaginings, Nationalism, Digital Diaspora

Introduction

It was the spring of 2018, when I sat down with Tenzin Chemey, outside of International House in New York City, that functions as a residential complex for students and professionals from all over the world. Both of us at that time were graduate students at New York University and had boarded the plane together from India along with six other Tibetan students as part of the Tibetan Scholarship Program. Chemey has never been to Tibet and was born in India where she worked for the Tibetan Government-in-Exile before coming to the United States for her education. During our conversations which touched upon a variety of issues, her observations on Tibet that for many Tibetans in exile is an imagined construct. This is due to the absence of lived experience and is a construction of fragmented and diverse relationships between 'home' and 'country' which is characteristic of most diaspora communities.

Whenever I think of Tibet, I don't think of it as my home.
That might sound strange to you but my association to Tibet

is through my grandmother. I always think of Tibet as my grandmother's home and when I imagine Tibet, I imagine it through her stories, the way she describes the pastureland, the way she describes her tents, the entire landscape of Nagcukha (Northern Tibetan city). When you talk about Tibet being my country, I say it is my country, but I don't feel the attachment to the place as my home.

The central disconnectedness apparent in Chemey's association with Tibet as imagined through her grandmother's stories, which remains a land that is her country but not her home. This is part of a larger historical and cultural imagination of Tibet contrary to Western imagination that has gone through various iterations over the past 250 years. These imaginings have become one of the central nodes of contention among Tibetans in exile, the People's Republic of China and the Western imagining of Tibet. This paper will attempt to discuss these images of Tibet and Tibetans as constructed by Western academicians and Imperial powers during the first half of the 20th century. It has endured and added multiple narratives on Tibet as envisioned by the present Tibetan exilic polity as well as the West. Furthermore, the paper will draw out these lines of connection between the images of Tibet, the past and the present, to historicize the development of these images that are selectively appropriated by the Tibetan exile polity as it seeks to imagine a Tibetan nation in exile and the subsequent rejection of these images by the Chinese nation-state building (but which plays an important role nonetheless in its framework).

Tibet as the 'Other': Imagination of the West

In Arthur Conan Doyle's the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, the story of *The Empty House*, is one where Sherlock Holmes returns to Baker Street, after disappearing from the public view at the culmination of his epic battle against James Moriarty. When a startled Dr Watson questions him on his whereabouts for the past two years, Sherlock explains that he had been in Tibet disguised as a Norwegian explorer and even met the Dalai Lama. The story was published in 1905 and is a reminder of the fascination that Tibet held in the eyes of the western public, when the Younghusband military expedition of the British into Tibet would further add to the mysticism.

Donald Lopez argues that the reason why Tibet was mystified by those outside of it to such a large extent was because it was never colonized prior to the Chinese invasion in the 1950s, that there were political forces that were an important factor towards creating the image of Tibet as a forbidden 'Shangri-La.' Lopez argues:

Unlike most of Asia's Buddhist societies, Tibet neither came under direct European control nor did it make any real attempts to 'modernize' (despite certain failed attempts by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama) by establishing European style universities, importing European technologies or sending elites to Europe for education ... until the 20th Century, further relations with Tibet were conducted from the borderlands. During the 19th Century, Tibet became a cherished prize in the Great Game played by British and Russia ... it was during this period that Tibet came to be constantly portrayed as isolated and 'closed' characterizations that meant little except in contrast with China which had been forcibly 'opened' to British trade after the Opium War of 1839. Tibet was thus an object of imperial desire and the failure of the European powers to dominate it politically only increased European longing and fed the fantasy about the lands beyond the Snowy Range (Lopez 1998, 5-6)

Therefore, following Lopez, the Western fascination with Tibet and its various imaginations of Tibet were mired within the imperial and political struggles between the Tibetan elite and the British ambitions. Therefore, to understand the construction of Tibet, it would be imperative to discuss its contact with the West, specifically the British, with Tibet particularly during the early 20th century, which was sparked off by the British invasion of Lhasa under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Francis Younghusband in 1903-1904.

Tibet meets the West 'Other'

The Portuguese Jesuit Antonio De Andrade was probably the first European who was able to visit Tibet in 1624 (Kaschewsky 2001). His book *The New Discoveries of the Great Cathay or of the Tibetan Kingdom*, published in Portuguese in 1626, comprised of his journal recordings

during his time in Tibet, and laid out the imaginative framework that would be representative of the Western fascination decades later. In the text, he maintains his admiration of the spiritual and religious piety of the Tibetan monks, noting their vows of celibacy, discipline, and devotion to their faith.

They discharge the largest part of the day with prayer, which they do at least two hours in the morning and just as long in the evening ... The lamas (which is a reference to the monks) seem to me a very gentle people. One scarcely hears a rude word even from a layman ... In Tsabrang, we saw the depiction of a female deity sitting with folded hands and it was said that she was the mother of God (Kaschewsky 2001, 5-12).

What is of note in this sensationalized depiction of the Tibetan people is the characterization of them as 'gentle' which has been a trope of the narrative of Tibetans as essentially a non-violent community, socially and politically. This is a depiction by the West that was eventually selectively appropriated by the Tibetan exilic elite. The knowledge production on Tibet that got amplified in the West since the Younghusband invasion of Lhasa, it left an enduring imprint on the Western imagining of Tibet. As Per Kvaerne observes:

The aspect of Tibetan culture that most impressed Europeans was the highly visible role of Buddhism and the innumerable monasteries to be found in Tibet ... Clearly a society possessing a theocratic system of governance could not easily be categorized in terms of elementary and primitive stages of human evolution but in 19th and 20th century literature, one rarely finds a positive evaluation of Tibetan monasticism or indeed any aspect of Tibetan Buddhism (Kvaerne 2001, 48).

This supposed disillusionment with Tibet was drawn from Western rationalism which argued that Tibetan Buddhism was regarded as a 'fall' from the original doctrine of the Buddha, which Kvaerne attributes to the declining power of the clerical faith in Western Europe (*ibid.*). In an early text published in 1904, Fernand Grenard's depiction of the Tibetan people and their faith is representative of this cynical image of Tibet:

The Tibetans built thousands of temples, make tens of thousands of statues, prostrate themselves, mutter endless prayers ... make offerings and give banquets to all the gods and all the devils ... drink down without compunction the divine nectar composed of ten impurities, such a human flesh, and worse; practice exorcism, witchcraft and magic ... thus is Tibet made to spin distractedly, without rest or truce, in religion's mad round (Grenard 1904, 310-311)

A more significant cause for this depiction of Tibet as the primitive 'Other' stems from the political and ideological battle that ensued during the Younghusband campaign into Tibet in 1903 – 1904. The campaign was essentially conducted to allay British fears of Russian influence in Lhasa, turning the plateau into the theatre that became to be known as the 'Great Game.' The campaign resulted in the Lhasa Government losing the short-lived battle and the establishment of a permanent British presence in Tibet through its trade agencies. McKay argues that the Younghusband mission was conducted to 'open' Tibet to the outside world to ascertain the flow of information from the trade agencies to British India, creating a British sphere of influence, which would also secure British interests along the Himalayan borders of Nepal, India and Bhutan. As Tibet was 'opened,' the allure of the 'forbidden' land allowed for the publication of several books about the Younghusband mission, which were written mostly by officers or journalists who accompanied Younghusband and sought to justify the mission (McKay 2001). Therefore, the Tibetan Government and the practices of the Tibetan people were presented as primitive, which justified the presence of the British and its use of its forces against the 'savages.' McKay further goes on to describe the construction of this image, quoting the *London Times* depiction of Tibetans as "stunted and dirty little people" and the frontier officials reports on Tibetans as "untruthful and faithless, deceitful and insincere" (McKay 2001).

However, after the Younghusband campaign, post 1910, these images underwent another dramatic shift, as the British interaction with the Tibetan ruling elite allowed for an uneasy alliance, leading to a shift in perception which will be discussed in the next section. However, what is

important to note is that Tibet has not always been imagined as a *Shangri-La* or the abode of the Gods nor as a 'primitive land' bereft of rationality and civilization. Its images, as Edward Said noted about the construction of the Orient, were "not a free subject of thought and action" but rather externally influenced by political and social motives (Said 1995).

Imperial British and Tibet

The Younghusband campaign brought Tibet into its sphere of geopolitical interests, in an attempt to create a 'buffer state' in order to protect its northern frontiers, an argument that the Tibetan Government would later reiterate in its appeals to the British and independent India in order to garner support against the Chinese Communist Party's military expansion in Tibet. Both while it was in power and later in exile. To maintain the British presence in Tibet, primarily through its relations with the Tibetan Government, British officials were stationed in the country where, as Younghusband put it, a British officer could "practically run the whole show" (McKay 2001). The officials were stationed at Gyantse in Central Tibet, Yatung in Southern Tibet and later in Lhasa itself in 1936. Alex McKay terms those officers who were influential in Anglo-Tibetan relationship as 'Tibet cadres', a number that reached only twenty (McKay 2001).

These cadres were responsible for the construction of two types of images of Tibet, a 'historical' image and a 'mystical image.' The 'historical' image alluded to the cadres claims that Tibet was an independent country that was on the modernist line of developing into a nation state while the 'mystical' images retained the earlier Western fantasy of Tibet as the land of the paranormal and supernatural. Both images were highly functional in presenting Tibet as distinct from China. Although the mystical image of Tibet had existed since the days of Antonio Andrade in the 17th century, the cadres used this image which had a wider audience, to maintain Tibet's distinctiveness while, as McKay argues, "the mystical image was not a political issue in the sense that neither the Chinese nor the Russians sought to profit politically by emphasizing Tibet's mystical aura. The mystical image was and is indeed a weapon against which the China has had no effective response" (McKay 2001, 83). The construction of the "historical image" is discussed below as

well as its relationship to present day narratives of Tibet constructed by the Tibetan exilic elite and the West.

As discussed above, the impact of the Younghusband mission back in Britain was the public's clamor for information on Tibet, a land long considered a forbidden *Shangri-La*. The search for 'Truth' about the 'Other' was part of the civilizing mission of the British colonial empire and the British cadres in Tibet were an integral part of this mission.

Although the cadre officers generally sought to present a true picture of Tibet, their own inherent perceptions naturally affected their reports ... Virtually all of them came from families with a tradition of imperial service ... the political officers generally chose the trade agents personally and they selected successors in their own likeness. The process was deliberately designed to ... produce a collective mentality – a group of individuals with a very similar perspective on Tibetan matters ... This process meant that while cadres gained a great understanding of Tibet, they never forgot that their first duty was to the Government of India (McKay 2001, 73-74).

The perceptions of the British cadres, that later made their way into their reports and then to the larger general British public, were deeply influenced by the political interests of the British imperial agenda and shaped as such. Due to the close nature of these British cadres with the ruling class of Lhasa, the voices of the common people of Tibet were almost never heard in these reports. The conditions of the peasantry were attributed to the misrule of the Chinese before 1911 while the rule of the Dalai Lama was praised as being benevolent, a far cry from the images constructed during and before the Younghusband campaign (McKay 2001, 74). Charles Bell, one of the most influential of these cadres and a close advisor to the 13th Dalai Lama, described the 'contentment' of the peasantry as highly indicative of these narratives, as he notes that the peasants who "unwashed though may be ... are always smiling" and the "slavery was of a very mild type" (Bell 1928, 93).

In 1906, after the Younghusband campaign, a convention was signed between the British and Qing China where the former accepted that Tibet

was a part of China while in return, the Qing court agreed not to allow any foreign interference or annexation of the territory of Tibet. Therefore, the British position on this matter fundamentally differed from the cadres' understanding of Tibet, which later led to a series of narratives that has continued to affect the images of Tibet through the past century until the present moment. The cadres believed that an independent Tibet would be beneficial to British interests, but they could not outright oppose their government's policies. Therefore, they worked towards developing Tibet into an independent state until the point where its independence would emerge as a *fait accompli* (McKay 2001), attempting to develop it on the lines of a modern nation-state, which was problematic since 'religious' Tibet until this point did not fit the 'secular' Westphalian nation-state model. This imagination of Tibet as developing into a nation-state along western lines but retaining its religious/Buddhist nature would later reinvent itself in exile, with the exile polity developing its discourse on Tibetan modernity as a counter to China's colonial enterprise in Tibet that was built along materialistic, 'rational' and Marxist lines (Bridge 2011).

Charles Bell in his book, he asserts that upon him suggesting to the 13th Dalai Lama to strive towards transforming his country into a unified modern state. From 1913 to 1923, the 13th Dalai Lama undertook reform measures in Tibet and began to adopt practices of an independent modern state (Bell 1928).

Travelers to Tibet such as Giuseppe Tucci during this period were in fact encouraged by the British cadres to write about Tibet and its close relationship to Indian culture and its distinctiveness from Chinese. Tucci was one of the most influential scholars on Tibet in the past century, particularly during the first half of the 20th century. In his now often cited text, *To Lhasa and Beyond*, Tucci notes that:

The Tibetans are not far different from us: only they were long ensnared by a religious and magic outlook on life, in which the boundaries between the realms of reality and possibility, of truth and imagination, were not clear-cut ones. The Intellect in them had not yet reached such a degree of freedom as to stamp out the dreams of the soul (Tucci 1956, 98).

He goes on to conclude that:

the medieval aura still enshrouding Tibet ... still allowed man a greater mastery than western ways of life ... In Tibet the State was a few people you could get personally and humanly in touch with and not the shapeless red tape tying up and squeezing everything and threatening to shatter civilization ... Give me a personal master anytime rather than an abstraction named State and democracy” (Tucci 1956, 101).

Both the quoted passages hold importance in the sense that the first one placed Tibet on the road to modernization, as a developing country striving to catch up to the western nation-states, which, while steeped in its ‘irrational’ ideologies and beliefs, could be ‘civilized’ and ‘developed’ through the assistance of the British empire. The second passage is representative of the British cadre’s moral justification to keep Tibet away from the other powers, that was primarily Russia and China, as deserving protection and independence due to its distinctive nature and way of life, which could greatly benefit the European individual and society. Peter Bishop further elucidates this mystical and distinctive nature of Tibet and its people, when he writes:

It (Tibet) was imagined as a land outside the grid of regulated space and time ... Entering Tibet was imagined as an initiation, as going through a threshold into another world, as going back in time. Tibet was imagined by many as a dream or fairy tale land outside of history ...to be an eternal sanctuary ... where spiritual values could be protected. Tibet seemed to offer wisdom, guidance, order and archaic continuity to an increasingly disillusioned West, particularly in the aftermath of the First world war (Bishop 2001, 208).

Tibet in International Relations: Images for the West

Such constructions have pervaded the exilic narratives of today, both within the Tibetan diaspora as well as western representations of Tibet as a counter to the colonial project of China in Tibet, which is seen as antithetical to Tibet’s unique culture. Robert Barnett notes that:

the Dalai Lama's speeches in the late 1980s focused on the uniqueness and violation of Tibet ... the violation is seen as a result of advancing modernity or commercialization in general ... this violation is identified as acts of violence, desecration or intolerance that have been carried out by the Chinese authorities. In many cases this idea of violation seems to be linked to a perception of the place or the people as previously unimpaired and now desecrated, as if for the first time" (Barnett 2001, 275).

Similar languages can also be found in resolutions debated in various parliaments of the worlds such as Russia, Belgium, Germany, India, the United States, and others. Similarly, the British and the West have remained Tibet's primary source of support, albeit not explicitly on the issue of independence, from the days of the British cadre to the current western support for Tibet on issues of human rights and environment. Barnett argues that the Tibetan exilic elite, due to this historical nexus as well as realization that the presentation of Tibet as a "violated specialness" was the pragmatic way to garner support due to the decline in support of its claims to an independent Tibet, appealed for support from former colonizers rather than to the formerly colonized (Barnett 2001).

Therefore, the question that needs to be asked at this point is how has the construction of these images of Tibet, built upon the political and cultural influences of West, affected the imagination of Tibetans themselves in the eyes of the West? Notions of Tibet as a "violated specialness" that draws its roots right back to the 17th century and continues today "tends to disempower its subjects by implying that they are either victims who are incapable of standing alone ... it carries within it a pervasive implication of Tibetan innocence and victimhood, suggesting that Tibetans are incapable of effective action or decision making" (Barnett 2001, 276). As discussed above, the western imagination of Tibet as a site of mysticism and as irrational foil to Western modernity as well as an spiritual alternative to the same, depending on the historical period, was appropriated by the British imperial officers and writers to both justify its presence in the region as well as construct the idea that Tibet and its 'special' people need to be 'saved' by the West against the designs

of its rivals in the region, an idea that continues to survive in today's Western countries and researcher's engagement with Tibet, whether it be human rights or the environment.

Although there is no doubt that the current and past trends in constructing images of Tibet, its history and culture as well as its people is highly influenced by the West's fascination with the country, yet Tibetans have not been the passive "victims" as most would think but instead have on multiple occasions, appropriated these images on their own terms and for their own benefit. Bishop, in his elucidation of the representation of Tibet in literature in the 20th century, argues that Tibetans have themselves not only contested the various Western images of Tibet but have also actively participated in their construction. Since 1985, the Tibetan narrative has been constructed based on presenting Tibet as a unique arena, in terms of culture, history and physical territory but in threat of erasure from the Chinese state. This narrative has been the product of the historical images produced in the early 20th century and by the Tibetan exile polity along with the Western nations. Barnett notes that the decision to present Tibet as this zone of "violated specialness" stemmed from a series of meetings of the Tibetan leadership in 1985–1987, where they then advised the Dalai Lama to give political speeches abroad based on such topics and images, reverting to "a policy of the 1940s, before the Chinese annexation, where a similar appeal had been made to the West" (Barnett 2001, 273). During the negotiations between the British cadres and the Tibetan ruling elite, during the first half of the 20th century, the British recognized that the Tibetans were not mere puppets but rather shrewd diplomats, who, in the classic diplomatic maneuver of a small state between large empires, tried to play one power off the other (McKay 2001).

The image of Tibet as a zone of spiritual harmony and peaceful people, as seen in the accounts of travelers such as Antonio De Andrade, has been appropriated by the Tibetan diasporic community, personified by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama in 1989. This has allowed the Tibetan exilic leadership and activist groups to push forward the agenda of Tibet based on human rights and environmental protection, both of which have been built on notions on protection of the 'unique' culture, religion, and language of Tibetans as well as

the spiritual landscape of the region that is under threat from Chinese colonial enterprise.

Conclusion: A Digitized Tibet?

At the International House, where Tenzin Chemey and I, among numerous other international students, spent two eventful years, in many ways represented a more structured everyday life in urban New York City. A medley of voices that is balanced steeply between downright cacophony and an unsettled harmony. As a city, it is constantly being imagined and reimagined in the minds of its residents as well as those outside of it. Today this process of reimagination in the realms of what Appadurai terms as mediascapes and technoscapes (Appadurai 1996), have made the city a visible personification of American capitalism, entrepreneurship, inequality, race relations, politics and certainly one of the most prevalent symbols of the ‘American Dream’.

Tibetans have consumed, engaged, and reproduced similar images in conversations with their own positionalities as they seek to reach the shores of the United States, either as asylum seekers, professionals, through kinship ties, etc. A mass movement since 1991 that is framed by a media driven production of visuals, stories, and narratives of ‘becoming’ a Tibetan(s). On the other side of the ocean, Tibetans in India have engaged digital mediascapes in their own unique ways, with explorations of their own desires and narratives of belongingness to an identity that is being challenged and renegotiated at every turn. Whether it be the uncertainty of their legal status under Indian Law, the strains of regionalism and exile politics, the struggles of employment or the balancing act of integration versus assimilation, among others, the spaces of digital media platforms are populated by the images, voices and perspectives representative of these divergent concerns and narratives.

The images of Tibet that have been discussed until this point have been mostly produced, engaged with, and reimagined within the echelons of foreign policies, literary works, religious discourses and academic scholarship. Benedict Anderson credits the rise of print capitalism and its appropriation by the rising bourgeoisie class towards the construction of a shared imaginary that is the nation, where people who have never met

each other nor even share kinship ties could imagine themselves as being part of the same citizenry, which then moves towards the production of narratives of belonging that pushes understandings of history, culture and identity towards a linear, uniform development (Anderson 1983).

However, media today is no longer mediated only through newspaper printing houses or radio stations. With the rapid spread and influence of digital media technology in the lives and conversations of people across the world, multiple imaginaries of multiple worlds beyond the borders of the nation-state have been constructed in virtual spaces through Facebook, Instagram, Websites, Blogs, WhatsApp, WeChat, Games, etc. In relation to these formations, Tibetans from Tibet and from the diaspora have moved towards not just being recipients of the images that have their roots in the nation-building projects of the exile polity and the Chinese state or Western discourses but rather as active producers and consumers of varied representations that have certainly moved beyond the 'historical' and 'mystical' images of the British cadres.

This argument certainly warrants a separate full-fledged engagement that is beyond the scope of this paper but however, existing scholarship on diasporas and digital media spaces certainly indicate the possibility of there being a Tibetan digital diaspora, that can serve as public spaces in a Habermasian sense of public spheres. Furthermore, it would lend credence to Julia Meredith Hess' observation for the need to understand 'Tibet' and 'diaspora' as not separate entities altogether but rather within an interconnected framework (Hess 2018). Narratives of identity is a constant process of 'becoming', that entails individual and collective struggles to come to terms with events and intolerable conditions and to attempt to be free of those conditions (Deleuze 1997). It is not the end product of the process of 'becoming' that intrigues me (if there even can be an end at all) but rather the natures of these processes which are being increasingly mediated through digital mediascapes. Arjun Appadurai, describes mediascapes as:

Mediascapes refer both to the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information ... and to the images of the worlds created by these media (Appadurai 1996, 35)

Therefore, it could be a Tibetan family in their living room in Jackson Heights, New York watching YouTube vlogs on McLeod Ganj or another family in Darjeeling enjoying a *Gorshe* performance by Tibetans in Canada. Both scenarios elicit desires of movement and transborder connection, whether it be nostalgia of return to 'home' in the case of Tibetans who moved to the US from India or the desire to move to the West for a better life. On the other hand, the focus could be a heated political debate on a Facebook post by Phayul on the removal of the Tibetan Supreme Justices by the Tibetan Parliament which is interspersed by voices from India, Nepal, US, Canada, and even from Tibet, all sharing a virtual temporal and spatial space, transcending the borders, distance and visa constraints of nation-states. In all of these scenarios, Tibetans are constantly engaging with different mediascapes across the world, producing and re-imagining their understanding of 'becoming' a Tibetan that is no longer solely defined by the images from Fr. Andrade's journal. How Tibetans engage with the 'Other' now, when the latter has drastically shifted inwards (regional and generational differences, politics of origin i.e. between those born in Tibet and in exile, etc) as well as outwards (hyphenation of exile Tibetan identity, Tibetan-Americans for example, politics of race and gender, etc), will fundamentally alter the 'new' images of Tibet and Tibetans that will be produced at the intersection of these engagements as well as the potential of transnational digital public spaces where the origin of these images are not always external to their subjects.

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China and Tibet: A Crisis of Legitimacy

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Abstract

China has fought tooth and nail in the past few decades to solidify its position on the world stage, aggressively pushing back against any perceived slight. However, Beijing's insistence on being seen as a viable alternative to the US is a desire of legitimacy; within its own borders, particularly in Tibet, the concern is about the imposition of security to accrue legitimacy. While scholars have discussed and written extensively on the increasing prominence of China and its regime as well as its methods to sustain its legitimacy, this paper is an attempt to understand the Chinese communist regime's 'survival strategy' in maintaining its legitimacy in Tibet and how in the process, that goal has been challenged by a crisis of legitimacy that stems from its inability to fully incorporate Tibet and the Tibetan people within its nation building project.

Keywords: Tibet, People's Republic of China, Legitimacy, Survival Strategy, Securitization

Introduction

On July 1, 2021 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) indulged in a frenzy of celebrations in order to commemorate founding of the CCP. It outlived the Soviet Union, survived the Cold War and has governed China making it an economic super power. In the opinions of many, China is poised to achieve the ambitious goal to end US global position, one that its predecessor in the Kremlin was unable to achieve. So inevitably, a video that was leaked from Tibet received almost no mention in any of the news channels or in the flamboyant proeses of foreign policy experts who were fixated on Beijing, not Tibet. However, in the video that was shot by a Tibetan woman in Lhasa, the viewers could hear her along with a companion sobbing as they looked up at the Potala Palace, drenched in the bright red light of a projected image which displayed the Chinese flag on its facade (Free Tibet 2021). Through their tears, they uttered in Tibetan "Look at the Potala Kundun

palace. It's outrageous. It's like being in China, the streets are flooded with Chinese." While a sea of presumably Chinese tourists, oblivious to the tears of a native of the land they were in, took pictures, carried their children on their shoulders, and pointed in awe at the display of a 72-year-old PRC flag on a structure which is for Tibetans is an edifice of their collective identity.

This paper is, in many respects, personified by this scene of a crying Tibetan woman who is barely able to recognize her own homeland and feels disconnected with the symbol of the country that claims her citizenry. Externally, China has fought tooth and nail in the past few decades to solidify its position on the world stage, aggressively pushing back against any perceived slight. However, Beijing's insistence on being seen as a viable alternative to the US is a desire of legitimacy; within its own borders, particularly in Tibet, the concern is about the limits of legitimacy. While scholars have discussed and written extensively on the increasing prominence of China and its regime as well as its methods to sustain its legitimacy, this paper is an attempt to understand the Chinese communist regime's 'survival strategy' in maintaining its legitimacy in Tibet and how in the process, that goal has been challenged by a crisis of legitimacy that stems from its inability to fully incorporate Tibet and the Tibetan people within its nation-building project.

Historical, Ideological and Performance Legitimacy

Legitimacy is a multifaceted concept, the components of legitimacy can be retained in multiple ways and the degree of a regime's legitimacy may also change as it may be strengthened or weakened or the regime may lose all semblance of legitimacy (Zhu 2011, 124). Authoritarian, single party regimes are seemingly much more susceptible to these risks and the Chinese government is a prime example. The CCP has strived to strengthen its presence not only institutionally but also ideologically within the very social and historical fabric of nation that it governs. Besides the usual state-driven actions of physical force to guarantee compliance, it is also involved in legitimizing a particular narrative of history, then drawing legitimacy from that narrative through the 'knowledge' produced by the Party. This form of ideological legitimacy that was the bedrock of the Mao-led era, has been supplemented to

a large degree by performance legitimacy since the opening-up period under Deng Xiaoping (Chen 1997, 429). The rhetoric that is employed in official Chinese documents, in the ritualistic publication of its White Paper series, should be understood in terms of the regime's attempt to create a favorable discourse around its legitimacy of power and control over knowledge and history. Besides physical coercion to, national history is especially important in not just creating knowledge, but it has a direct relation with proving the 'authenticity' of the sovereignty and unity of the "Motherland".

Drawing from the Confucian ideals of legitimate governance, the Communist Party of China's official discourse on the legitimacy from Deng Xiaoping's era laid out the "Mandate of Heaven" through three ideological claims: the doctrine of truth, benevolence and glory (Shue 2004). The Doctrine of Truth under Deng's famous quote, 'seeking truth from facts' laid the foundation of the CCP's new doctrine of truth where the CCP claims to Truth were based on an unwavering acceptance of the primacy of scientific knowledge and technology leading to modernization and economic prosperity for the country. The doctrine of benevolence concerns with government led relief during time of disasters and acts of patronage for the poor. The doctrine of glory laid out the resilience against the humiliation suffered under Western colonial powers, rise of China and subsequently parading economic success with rising military sophistication and international presence, all done with an aim to highlight nation's glory which is seen as a viable legitimation tool for the regime.

The Doctrine of Truth, Knowledge and Benevolence maintains that the state is the only authority on what is deemed as true knowledge and is the ultimate benefactor of its citizenry. As a result of this basing its legitimacy on this discourse, China today claims Tibet as its own, drawing a connection of 'subservience and integration' stretching back to the Yuan Dynasty in the 13th century. Subsequent arguments over the Golden Urn, the loyalty of the Dalai Lamas to Chinese Emperors and the modern narrative of it being part of the great Motherland, liberated by the Chinese Communist Party, all draws legitimacy for this Doctrine. In fact, Beijing has denied the very existence of a 'Tibet issue',

a continued and aggressive measure to deny Tibetans any agency to assert any alternative histories and identity as well as aggressively push back against any signs of dissent within and abroad. In the process of legitimizing their historical narratives, the control over faith and belief in Tibet is not only a denial of religious freedom but a calculated measure to regulate Tibet's religious institutions and monasteries which have served for centuries as their own centers of truth, knowledge and benevolence. Chinese policies such as the "patriotic re-education" which was previously known as "patriotic education" was launched in Tibet in 1996 that required monks and nuns to accept pledges against any instance of separatism and swearing fealty to the unity of Tibet with China, recognition of the Chinese appointed Panchen Lama, and accepting that the Dalai Lama is destroying the unity of the Motherland and the outright denial that Tibet was or should be independent (Upendran 2013). Tibetan monks and nuns are continued to be evaluated for their "patriotism", evident by the orders to raise the Chinese national flags in monasteries to strengthen ideological control in the region (Agence France-Pressé 2015). The Chinese authorities distributed political manuals for patriotic education campaign in monasteries in 2002 which bore the title 'Propaganda Books on Patriotic Education for National Monasteries' and includes the following sections: 'An Educational Manual on Tibetan History', 'A Handbook of Religious Policy Education', 'A Handbook on Contemporary Political Education' and 'A Handbook on Ethics for the Masses' (ICT, 2005). These policies and propaganda actions were carried out because monasteries are the traditional centers of power in Tibet, the idea of which is anathema to the state-run monopoly on any forms of power and that is where the intent draws from when Chinese leaders call for Buddhism to be managed according to Chinese socialist characteristics.

The growing unrest in Tibet that is compounded by the increasing number of protests and the swift passing of the new "ethnic unity law" as a reaction to these events are signs that the authority of the CCP is being questioned and that it is fearful for its legitimacy respectively. These crises have influenced Chinese policies significantly, and pushed the government to employ a more assimilatory, utilitarian strategy of gaining 'performance legitimacy'. Performance legitimacy is defined as

a state strategy to achieve concrete goals, such as economic growth, social stability, and national unity (Zhu 2011, 124). The performance-based regime aims to enhance its legitimacy more effectively, securing its citizen's loyalty, maintain social harmony and prolong the regime's grip over the country. Performance legitimacy became the foundation of the new approach towards sustaining legitimacy by the CCP after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, and prior to which saw widespread protests in Tibet in 1987 and 1988, leading to the imposition of Martial Law in the region for the first time in PRC's history. In fact, the period from 1987-1992 saw as many as 140 pro-independence demonstrations, that was all stamped out with a combination of state coercion and economic reform (Norbu 2001, 386). Although Beijing succeeded in curbing popular protest with martial law, it nevertheless continued its aggressive development in Tibet with an intent to solidify its rule over the region. The infrastructure development in Tibet, Xi Jinping's widely publicized poverty-alleviation programs, and connecting Tibet to China through transportation networks are not only an economic project as China claims, but is equally significant in both political and strategic terms. The infrastructure projects in Tibet facilitate a greater integration of Tibet with China, which means the government can better assert its authority over Tibet.

Drawing upon the policies implemented in Tibet and peddled in the White Paper in particular, along with economic performance, ideological and historical assertions are also considered equally important sources of regime legitimacy that the Chinese party-state draws upon, which also indicates that Chinese government rule will run into a serious legitimacy crisis if there is a downfall in economic growth, questioning of ideological dogmas or acceptance of different historical narratives. Ideological legitimacy, historical legitimacy and performance legitimacy have all been used by the Chinese state since the time of Mao to justify their authority over Tibet and other regions. Today, the Chinese government's legitimacy is increasingly based on the concepts of development and assertion of Chinese nationalism rather than Maoist ideology. Despite popular assumptions, China's legitimacy remains fragile (Chu 2013, 3).

Legitimacy and Securitization

The relationship between the ‘minority’ nationalities in the People’s Republic of China and the contested ruling regime, the Chinese Communist Party in the context of the politics of national unity, (*minzu tuanjie*) invite speculation concerning direct challenges to the communist regime and how in the process of maintaining stability in the minority regions, the former has attracted global attention as well as pursued harsh policies of repression. Uradyn Bulag believes that *minzu tuanjie* is a ubiquitous and dominant discourse in twentieth-century China that aims to regulate ethnic relations in the attempt to create a seamless Chinese Nation (*Zhonghua Minzu*) within the territorial and moral confines of China -- a cultural and racial identity constantly in flux-in opposition to non-Chinese (Bulag 2002). Modern nationalism and the idea of national unity in China has taken a strong security view, where most of its ethnic minorities not only live on the ‘frontiers’ of its borders but has close cultural and historical affinities with their neighbours. The “three evil forces” in China i.e. terrorism, separatism and religious extremism that threaten China’s territorial integrity, unity and stability gain much traction within Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia where protests against the government often erupts. As observed by Tsering Topgyal, “security concerns or perceived threats shape China’s nationality policy more than anything else” (Topgyal 2016, 17). He opines that rampant corruption in China, institutional deficiencies and the lack of legitimacy of the regime in the post-Mao era points towards what he calls, ‘China as strong power, weak state’ demonstrating that the protest in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia in 2008, 2009 and 2011 respectively indicates a source of domestic vulnerability, which is an underdeveloped ‘national identity’. The challenges posed by the minority region of China not only threaten China’s territorial integrity but through their wide international campaign and uprisings inside Tibet, calls for constant international scrutiny that puts the legitimacy of China’s rule and policies in minority regions under great peril. Therefore, China often highlights the importance of national unity and social stability which are featured prominently in its series of White Papers on Tibet.

National unity and social stability have become interrelated concepts that have become two of the most important and often featured terms in the documents of China on Tibet. The Chinese government regularly asserts that national unity and social stability will lead to harmony and prosperity, while separatism will hinder the pace of “national development” (The State Council 2021). China strongly believes that without “national unity” there is no “social stability” and in Tibet’s case, without “ethnic unity” there is no stability. Without social stability, China would not only have a difficult time maintaining its absolute control over Tibetan society but is also at risk of losing its perceived legitimacy of its rule over Tibet. Therefore, China often underscores the importance of peace and stability in Tibet, emphasizing “harmony” and “order” and thereby ensuring a “happy life” for Tibetans. In the process of achieving this objective, China takes all measures to manage and control events, even at an individual level, that are deemed to be jeopardizing the government’s perception of peace, unity and stability in Tibet.

However, the fact remains that China’s insecurity over its lack of legitimacy is evident in the actions of the Tibetan people and of the government itself. Its obsession over maintaining ‘stability’ and ‘harmony’ reveals the uncertainty of its legitimacy to rule. Antonio Gramsci, perhaps the most influential Marxist scholar of the last century, argues that the legitimacy to rule is attained through the ability to manufacture consent to be ruled (Gramsci 1971). The use of force by a state to garner any form of control reveals uncertainty over its legitimacy to demand such control, as consent is not gained but rather forced upon. Therefore, in the case of China’s 70 year since the invasion of Tibet, the former’s precarious hold over the latter plays into the formulation of its various policies with regards to the Tibetan people and is motivated by the singular desire for control and ‘stability’. Noting that legitimacy is a relational concept in the sense that Chinese government’s legitimacy is derived from the willing cooperation of the citizens to be ruled by it without the threat of coercion, the evidence of challenges towards China’s rule over Tibet reveal that issues of legitimacy and insecurity are the driving forces behind the policies implemented in Tibet.

The State and its Survival in China

Authors such as Bruce J Dickson, Mingming Shen and Jie Yan have argued that the survival strategies of authoritarian regimes like China typically rely on three elements: repression, legitimation, and cooptation (Dickson et.al. 2017, 5). As they noted, the first is concerned with repressing threats or anything that is deemed as a threat to the regime's hold on power. The other two are concerned with building support for the regime in various ways. A widely held belief is that the legitimacy of the CCP is based on a combination of prosperity, nationalism, and the fear of instability. This has been the framework under which the CCP has ruled China and Tibet for decades, yet it continues to face legitimacy crisis and with frequent protests and acts of defiance. The crisis is multifaceted and is not limited to Tibet but recently Beijing has seen numerous outbursts of dissent from the Ugyurs population to Hong Kong to workers' rights, etc.

However, within China, the state's presence is pervasive at all levels of society. According to Philip Abrams, the state is "an ideological thing; a device in terms of which subjection is legitimated; it presents politically institutionalized power to us in a form at once integrated and isolated; it creates an acceptable basis for acquiescence" (Abrams 1988, 68). Creating acquiescence is therefore a fundamental objective of China's survival strategies since legitimacy is seen as a zero-sum game. Towards that purpose, the Party is symbolized through national flags, the anthem, processions and cheerful videos of party leaders waving to the crowd. Cooptation and legitimation are also pushed through the firm control of the Party on the news media channels within the country and outside while fixing firm on the idea that "China's leaders in the past have taken it as an article of faith that they understand the needs of the population better than the citizens themselves" (Lieberthal 2004, 203).

However, the modernizing agenda has done little for China's minorities, instead increasing their experience of inequality and relative poverty. Xi Jinping has marked the anti-poverty drive as the pillar to his domestic policy, just as anti-corruption was in his previous term. It would not be amiss to argue that just like corruption within the Party hierarchy was a causal link for the Tiananmen Square protests, the rising inequality within China over the past few decades has been seen as a significant

hurdle to the Party's efforts of strengthening its reign. The Western Development Initiative, launched in 1999 to address such concerns, treats the problems of these areas as those of underdevelopment, but despite massive state investment and apparent economic growth, this has failed to quell 'separatist' sentiment in either Tibet or Xinjiang (Shih 2004). The ideals of truth, benevolence and glory which influenced the imperial ideology of Chinese empires, drew roots within the very foundation of the Party's legitimacy. However, as will be argued in the following sections, the existence of alternative centers of these ideals have continued to be a thorn at the side of the Party. As a result, despite the ideals of truth, benevolence, and glory, state sovereignty is evidently exercised through authoritative and dominating force.

That brings us to the final characteristic of China's survival strategy, that is "repression". Sovereign power, by their account, is "made real and reproduced through ritualized, everyday confirmations of . . . violence"; it is not based on forging consent, but on securing subjection, order, and obedience through the performance of paramount power and the suppression of competing entities" (Hansen 2005, 7). Repression remains the Party's most effective yet also the most maligned of all its tactics to establish legitimacy. For example, in an effort to assimilate ethnic minorities, the Chinese government has implemented restrictions on teaching Tibetan in schools in Tibet, and detained anyone protesting against these rules. Tashi Wangchuk, for instance was sentenced to five years in prison for advocating for Tibetan language education and its preservation (Buckley 2021). Tashi Wangchuk's campaign for Tibetan language was deemed a "separatist" act and the Chinese government is often seen accusing members of ethnic minorities on the same ground and pronouncing similar sentences on them. Chris Buckley of The New York Times reported that between 1998 and 2016, Chinese courts tried 11,810 people on charges of separatism or inciting separatism, and only 15 were acquitted, according to official statistics analyzed by the Dui Hua Foundation, a group based in San Francisco that monitors human rights situation in China. This is a clear indication of Chinese government's efforts to tighten control over Tibet and intensification of its assimilationist policy, all carried out in the name of unity and stability, to retain the Party's legitimacy over Tibet and other minority regions.

Conclusion

One of the most pervasive features of the processes of state formation is the importance of a collective identity. The construction of a nation as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983), bounded by a territorial border, has been and remains a central resource for state legitimacy. One of the key aspects of the necessity for such a construction remains in the subsequent or concurrent collective identity that is central to the making of a politically united people around a common acceptance of a state and their mutual recognition as citizens despite their differences, whether it be histories, cultures, languages, etc.

The crisis of legitimacy that the Communist Party of China faces in Tibet, along with the regions of ‘Xinjiang’, Hong Kong, Southern Mongolia, and Taiwan stems from the fact that the native people of these territories to a large degree do not identify with this collective identity or citizenry decreed by the state nor are they invested in the narratives of history, memory and loyalty that goes into the making of the imagined community, i.e. the Chinese nation. On the other hand, the legitimacy, and the very survival of the Chinese Communist Party as a governing entity depends on the populace’s acceptance of such narratives, all of which hails the Party as the only legitimate and viable political power. President Xi Jinping expressed this belief during his speech on the celebrations of the 100th year anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, it is certain that with the firm leadership of the Party and the great unity of the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, we will achieve the goal of building a great modern socialist country in all respects and fulfill the “Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation” (Xinhua 2021).

The much vaunted “Chinese dream of national rejuvenation” thereby credits the Party for pulling the Chinese nation and its people from their “100 years of humiliation” at the hands of the imperial power of Europe and Japan. Anniversaries such as the founding of the Party, the founding of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and etc. are supremely significant for the Party since, lacking the popular mandate that democracies bestow on their governments, they signify the historical position of the Party in the development of China as a nation, rendering it political legitimacy. As

anywhere else in the world but particularly in China, historical narratives are not a mere rendition of the past from the hindsight of the present but rather a significant political tool of immersing the people and Party together under one shared dream that benefits the former and is led by the latter.

So lies China's insecurity with regards to its 'ethnic minorities' where less than 9% of the population are native to or occupy more than 50% of the total territory claimed by China but, except for the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, every other region that has a minority demographic is dominated by the larger Chinese population. The crisis of legitimacy is not just a severely misbalanced demographic to land ratio but rather the fact that the histories and identities of these populations run counter to the position of benevolence, truth, and rejuvenation that the Party has wrought for itself. For Tibetans, Uyghurs and Mongolians, the Party represents colonialism while for Hong Kongers, an authoritarian regime that runs counter to the fabric of their society. The Party is seen as an external entity, one that is foreign to their narratives of historical development until its founding in 1921, which was followed by a forceful submission.

As a result, it is vital to understand the actions of Beijing, whether it be the national security law, the ethnic unity law, the internment camps, political detention or statements such as "managing Buddhism according to Chinese socialist characteristics", not just as political repressions but as consequences of the legitimacy crisis that pulls at the heart of the Party's survival as well as measures adopted by it in order to maintain its predominant position. Antonio Gramsci famously describes the state as one where "...the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (Gramsci 1971). As the Party celebrates its 100th year anniversary, the question is whether, despite all its accolades and vision for the future, 'active consent' is an impossibility under its current iteration? How will the relationship between the Party and the People change as the crisis of legitimacy deepens? History is rife with the struggles of states and empires to gain legitimacy, yet few have survived the toll of maintaining it. The 'Chinese Dream' may be no different.

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Structural Transformation and Employment Quality in Tibet: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

The structural transformation is an integral part and outcome of a developmental process. Soon after the invasion of Tibet, the People's Republic of China made a massive investment in infrastructural development that eventually changed the traditional economic system of Tibet. Traditional Tibetan economy was based largely on agro-pastoral economy. The construction sector and the tertiary sector served as the engines of the regional structural transformation process and the rapid GDP growth. Comparing it with other regions of China, Tibet enjoyed one of the fastest growing economies in China recording high GDP growth in the last few decades. However, there are few anomalies in such rapid structural transformation and GDP growth. This study explores these anomalies with a special focus on employment quality in the region. This study finds that the rapid GDP growth and structural transformation fail to contribute to the growth of quality and organised employment. Instead, Tibet witnessed a shift in employment share from the unorganised sectors. The study aims to examine the transformation trajectory of the TAR economy with a special focus on employment quality. With employment as the central focus of the paper, the study also aims to reflect upon the growth quality of the region. This study relies on statistics collated and published by the Chinese government. These are data published by the National Bureau of Statics, China and Tibet Statistical Year Books published by China Statistical Press.

Keywords: Tibet, China, Structural Transformation, GDP, Employment Share

Introduction

Tibet¹, as administered by the People's Republic of China in this study refers particularly the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). This region observed a unique development pattern. The region's economy is observed to have recorded higher GDP growth than the national average. In 2020, the TAR recorded 7.8 percent GDP growth compared with the national growth rate of 2.3 percent (Statista 2021). However, at the same time, it is also considered as one of the least developed regions in China (Statista 2021). Such dynamics and contrasting development pattern raise an important question about the economic transformation of the region and its implications, particularly on employment quality.

The structural transformation is the defining characteristic of the development process that is both the cause and the effect of the economic growth (Behera and Tiwari 2011). It is defined as a process that is characterised by the change in national output and employment in economic sectors. It refers to a shift in labour and output share from predominated agriculture activities to manufacturing activities and later to the service sectors. This is a pattern of structural transformation observed widely, including China. Tibet, however recorded a distinct pattern compared with the general observed pattern discussed above. Consequently, it had a different impact on change in employment share and quality. In contrast to the generally observed pattern, the TAR witnessed a structural transformation process that is led by the rapid growth of the construction sector and the tertiary sector. The leading role of the industrial and manufacturing sectors in the structural transformation process is absent in the TAR's case. One of the major failures of the TAR structural transformation process is the slow change in the employment share from the agriculture to the non-agriculture sector. The primary sector continues to maintain the highest labour share irrespective of the massive decline in the GDP share.

1. Tibet in this paper have only considered the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) that has only half of the Tibetan population. Traditionally, Tibet is divided into three regions -- U-tsang, Kham and Amdo. For solely analytical convenience, in this paper the TAR and Tibet is used interchangeably.

In the late 1990s, there was an increase in employment share in the tertiary sector and the construction sector. This has seen an increase in the employment share of the non-agriculture sectors, however its contribution to the employment quality is marginal. With this background of the TAR's economy and its structural transformation pattern, the study aims to examine the transformation trajectory of the TAR economy with a special focus on employment quality. With employment as the central focus of the paper, the study also aims to reflect upon the growth quality of the region.

This study is based on the data published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China including the annual statistical yearbooks. The study is aware of the limitation of the approach; therefore, the paper will also discuss interferences of various policies in changing patterns of the employment structure of the region.

Structural Transformation of the TAR Economy

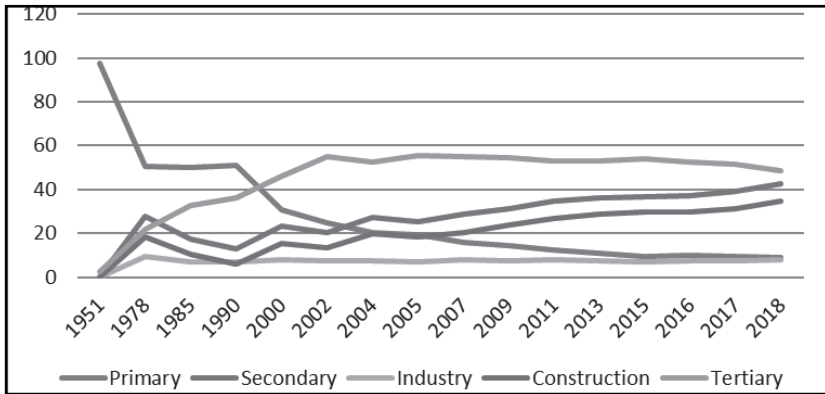
Tibet's economy underwent a radical change after the Chinese occupation. In 1959, Tibet's economy was dominated by agro-pastoral economy with marginal presence of the trade. The data on GDP share of the region (figure 1) reveals that in 1959, the primary sector accounted for 97.6 percent of the region's total, followed by the tertiary sector with 13.8 percent and finally the secondary sector with 12.6 percent (Tibet Statistical Year Book 2019, 22). The labour share also holds a similar picture as there was only about six percent of the total population engaged in the non-agriculture sector activities (Rong 1998, 169). Over the past sixty years, the TAR has seen a structural transformation that is faster than the China's national economy. For instance, figure 1 below shows that the GDP share of the primary sector declined from 97.9 percent to 50.7 percent during the Mao Zedong period (1951-1978) and it further declined to 45 percent by the end of the Deng Xiaoping period (1989) (TSYB 2019, 22). There was a slow decline from 1990 to 1997 as it declined from 50.9 percent to 41.7 percent. After 1997, the GDP share of the primary sector underwent a more rapid decline from 30.9 percent in 2000 to 19.3 in 2005 and by the end of 2018, it constitutes only about 8.8 percent (TSYB 2018, 32).

The GDP share of the secondary sector especially the construction sector increased from a mere 4.0 percent to 34 percent from 1951 to 2018. The growth of industry and mining amounted to only about 7 percent in 2018. There is the absence of industrial share that served as the engine of the national economy.

The massive boom in the tertiary sector contributed to the rapid growth and the structural transformation of the TAR's economy. That share increased from 13.8 percent to 36 percent in 1959-1990, it further increased to 46.2 percent in 2000 to surpass 50 percent in 2016 and declined slightly to 48 percent in 2018 (TSYB 2019, 22). Since 1997, the tertiary sector emerged as the leading and the dominant sector of the TAR's economy.

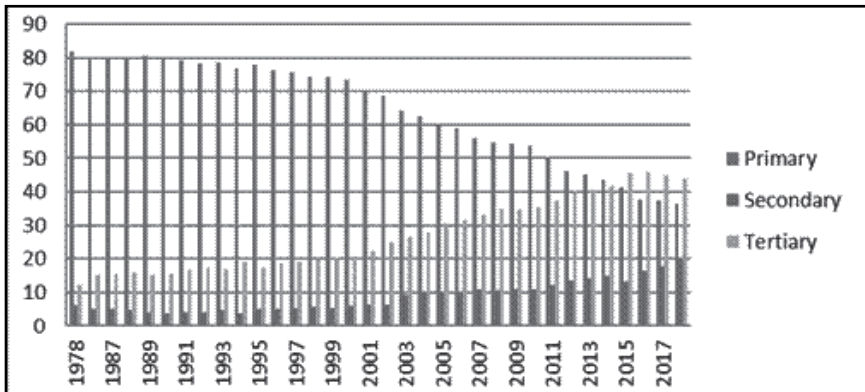
Based on the data presented in figure 1, there are three unique features of the structural transformation experience of the TAR. First, the structural transformation of the national economy entered the predominance of services in the economies after going through a phase of industrialisation, however, it was absent in the TAR's case, skipped industrialisation and saw a rise in the service sector. Second, the TAR witnessed an unusual massive growth in the construction sector during the structural transformation process. In the case of China, that share of the construction sector accounted for only about 7 percent in 2018 (National Bureau of Statics China 2021). Furthermore, the TAR is the only province in China, where the GDP share of the construction sector is larger than the mining and industry (Fischer 2007, 132). The third is the unprecedented decline of the agriculture sector. Therefore, the shift in the GDP structure has occurred less towards productive sectors like agriculture and industry, but more towards the construction sector and tertiary sector.

Figure 1: Changing GDP Structure of the Region in Percentage



Source: Tibet Statistical Year Book(2019) published by Beijing: China Statistics Press

There had been a radical transformation in terms of GDP share, but a change in the employment quality in the TAR has to be taken into consideration. For instance, figure 2 below shows that the employment share of the primary sector constituted more than 90 percent and it declined to 82 percent by the end of the Mao Zedong period (1978) (TSY 2018, 31). From 1978-2001, it declined from 79.9 percent to 73.3 percent, accounting for about a 5 percent decline in two decades. The share began to fall sharply only after the year 2000, when the government implemented the Western Development Strategy (WDS) policy to accelerate the growth of the assumed western regions of China. In other words, there was little change in the first fifty years regardless of a major shift in the GDP structure. The share declined to 68.8 percent in 2002, by the end of 2018; the total employment share of the primary sector was 37.7 percent. In short, the labour transition of the primary sector started late and fell faster from 2000 onwards. It witnessed about 35 percent decline in 18 years compared with a 26 percent decline in China. The primary sector employment share of the national economy declined from 50 to 26 percent in 2000-2018 (China Statistical Year Book 2009, table 4-2).

Figure 2: Employment share of three main sectors in percentage

Source: Tibet Statistical Year Book (2019) published by State Statistics Press, Beijing.

With the sharp decline of employment share in the primary sector, the construction sector and the tertiary sector witness a gradual growth of employment share. In 2015, the tertiary sector emerged as the dominant sector in terms of employment share. The increased shift of labour from agriculture to the non-agriculture sector was driven by the growth of employment share in the tertiary sector and the construction sector. In short, unlike the change in the GDP structure, the TAR labour transition out of the agriculture sector started late but was the fastest transition from 2000 onwards (Fischer 2011, 67).

Change in Employment Structure in TAR and its Implications

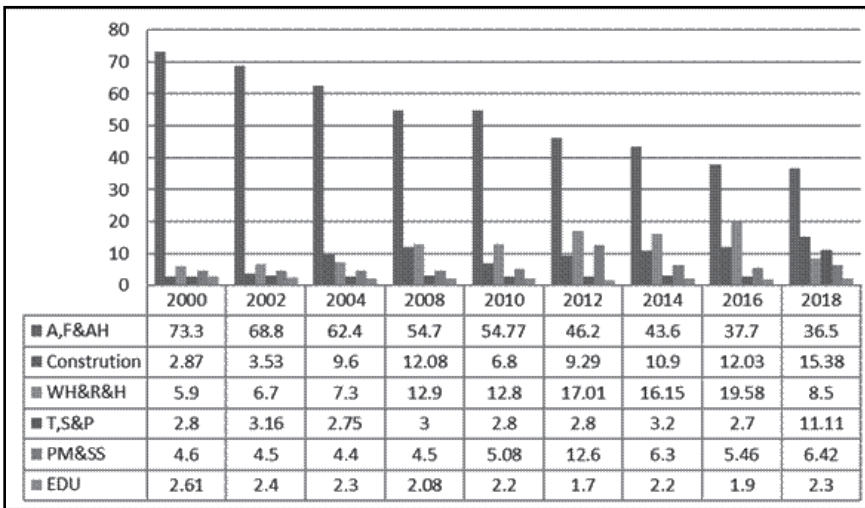
There are different methods to assess the quality and employment condition in the TAR. This paper takes into account following aspects to examine the employment structure in the region.

1. Sectoral distribution of employment, this section highlights which sector is the dominant sector in terms of employment share, also about employment share in agriculture versus non-agriculture sector.
2. Average wage of persons employed in the urban unit. The paper takes the average wage in different sectors within the urban unit to get a perspective about wages and salary of the sectors that have the largest employment share.

Sectoral Distribution of Employed Persons

The above section finds a major decline in the employment share in the primary sector and increase in the secondary and the tertiary sectors' employment share. The secondary sector is categorised into three which include industry, mining and construction. The tertiary sector comprises of finance, wholesale and retail, hotel services, education, health, culture, transport, public management and party organisation, research, electricity and water distribution. Instead of examining the employment distribution in each of these sectors, the study will focus only on the sector with larger employment share that includes the construction sector, wholesale and retail, hotel services and public management and party organisation.

Figure 3: Number of Employed Persons in Different Sectors of the Region in Percentage



Source: Tibet Statistical Year Book, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018 published by State Statistics Press, Beijing.

Note: 1: A, F and AH: Agriculture, Forestry and Animal husbandry, 2: WH&R&H: Wholesale and Retail and Hotel Services 3: T, S,&P: Transport, Storage and Postal, 4: PM&SS: Public Management and Social Organisation 5: EDU: Education.

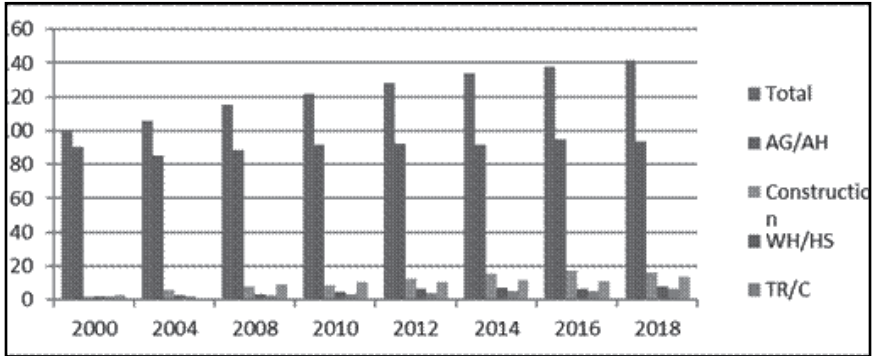
The primary sector (agriculture and animal husbandry), although experienced a drastic decline in the employment share since 2000, still has the largest share of about 37 percent of the regional total, one of the highest in China. Next to the primary sector is the wholesale and

retail sector plus the hotel and catering sector. The employment share in this sector increased from about 5.9 percent in 2000 to 12 percent in 2008. It further increased to 19.58 percent in 2017 as shown in figure 3. There were three periods, where the sector experienced major growth; that is from 2004-2008, 2010-12 and 2014-16. Such dynamics could be related to the implementation of the rural resettlement and development project under the 10th and 11th Five-Year Plan, which aims to boost non-farming economic opportunities (Childs et. al 2010). Furthermore, the increase of employment share within these two sectors was largely contributed by growth in the wholesale and retail sectors. For instance, the total number of employed persons in the wholesale and retail sector increased from 77,933 persons (2004) to 154,740 (2012), further increased to 339,397 in 2017 (TSYB 2005, 44; 2013, 31; 2018, 32). The hotel service share increased from 2.4 percent (33,886 persons in 2004) to 4.5 percent (92,685 in 2012), further to 5.9 percent (156,617 in 2016) (ibid). In twelve years, there was only about 3.5 percent increase in the employment share. Therefore, the growth of hotel and catering was rather slow, albeit it is considered as one of the pillar industries in the region (China Tibetology Research Centre 2009). This raises a pertinent question of the massive boom in the tourism industry and its impacts on job creation.

The construction sector is another major sector concerning employment contribution. The sector's employment share increased from 2.4 percent to 6.4 percent in 2000-2004, this further increased to 10.7 percent in 2014 and reached 15.1 percent in 2018. The total number of people employed in the sector increased from 35,600 to 83,064 in 2000-2004, this further increased to 233,371 to 349,717 in 2014 to 2017 (TSYB 2018, 32). It is interesting to observe that about half of the construction sector share was concentrated in the rural area, see figure 4 below. In 2017, about 167,445 persons (45%) engaged in the construction sector was in the rural area. Before 2000, the rural area share constitutes about 53 percent, share increased from 2000. From 2000 to 2017, the majority (over on average 66 percent) of the construction sector employment share was concentrated in the rural areas (TSYB2001-2018, 32,42). The emphasis on rural areas in development policy since Western Development Strategy (WDS) and especially since 2006 under the Eleventh Five-Year

Plan played a crucial role to boost off-farm employment in construction and small-scale production especially in the rural area (Childs et. al 2008, 2011; Fischer 2011,74). The growth of the employment share of the construction sector has taken place in the rural area.

Figure 4: Employment share of the rural area in 10,000 persons



Source: Tibet Statistical Year Books, published by State Statistics Press, Beijing

Note: AG/AH: Agriculture and Animal husbandry, WH/HS: Wholesale and Retail and Hotel and Catering, TR/C: Transport and Communication

If we dissect these three sectors, wholesale and retail, hotel and catering and construction sector, the construction sector emerges as the second-largest sector followed by the wholesale and retail and then the hotel and catering services. The unusual development that emerged in the TAR case is the emergence of the construction sector as an important sector both regarding the GDP and employment contribution.

In the TAR's case, the bulk of the decline in the labour share of the primary sectors had been absorbed within the construction sector and the wholesale and retail sector. The shift in labour from agriculture to the non-agriculture sector has been taking place towards the construction and wholesale and less toward hotel services. Furthermore, most of the employment opportunities within these sectors are unorganised and informal (Childs et. al 2008, 2010, 10 (b)). Professor Wang Shiyong from Qinghai Normal University (2014), argued that most businesses in these wholesale and retail confine to selling groceries, clothing, and artefacts related to Buddhism and restaurants. Statistical yearbooks also

confirm that the vast majority of the enterprises in the TAR are small in size and the business income from wholesale and retail of private enterprises constitutes only about 21.4 percent of regional total trade in 2016 (TSYB 2018, 218). In short, the growth of employment share within the wholesale, trade and construction sector was confined to small enterprises.

In addition to the above mentioned sectors, there is “other” category that shares 26.6 percent of regional total employment share. Major sector within other category includes public management and party organisation, education and culture. The public management and party organisation that mainly constitute administrative and security apparatus share 10 percent of the regional total, followed by education with 2.3 percent and lastly culture with less than 2 percent.

The sectoral employment distribution of the national economy was quite opposite of the TAR. It had the largest employment share with the manufacturing sector (26.27 %) followed by construction (14.9%), education (9.8%), public management and party organisation (9.1%) and health (5%) (China Statistical Year Book 2018). The proportional distribution of employment share especially in the education and health sector is, unfortunately, missing in the TAR. The TAR again lacks the shift of employment towards productive sectors like education, health and trade. These sectors are the major source of regular jobs also.

Average Wage of Persons Employed in the Urban Unit

Another interesting dynamic to ascertain the quality of structural change especially the employment is the data on the average wage of employed persons. This would give us an estimate regarding wage distribution in various sectors, particularly of sectors with largest employment share and employment quality. Table 1, below shows that sectors that had more than 70 percent of regional employment contribution and ranked according to average wage.

Table 1: Average wage of employed persons in urban units (Yuan)

	2019	2018	2017
Average Wage	1,18,118	1,16,015	1,08,817
Agriculture and Animal Husbandry	61,270	34,205	41,370
Mining	1,05,201	1,14,535	96,785
Manufacturing	91,137	90,011	77,209
Electricity Distribution	1,04,040	99,753	82,800
Construction	63,748	56,975	53,611
Transport	1,08,836	1,04,261	84,798
Information Transmission	1,30,430	1,23,604	98,423
Whole Sale and Retail	88,566	81,731	80,354
Hotel &Catering	66,964	64,902	61,095
Financial	2,11,502	2,18,141	1,86,085
Scientific Research	1,34,475	1,26,104	1,16,031
Education	1,41,847	1,38,809	1,25,624
Health &Social Securities	1,27,751	1,24,550	1,08,099
Culture, Sports, Entertainment	1,13,757	1,08,799	1,12,333
Public Management &Social organisation	1,33,347	1,18,812	1,17,030

Source: Provincial Data, Annual, National Data, National Bureau of Statics, China, available at <https://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=E0103>

Agriculture and animal husbandry ranked the lowest with 61,270 yuan in 2019, followed by the construction sector 63,738 yuan, followed by hotel and catering 66, 000 yuan and finally wholesale and retail with 88,566 yuan. The data also reflects the wage gap between those employed in public sectors and private sectors. The highest waged sectors are public management and social organisation, health, education and finance. These sectors are the public sector and directly come under the state-owned unit (TSYB 2018, 32). The construction sector that had a major contribution both in employment and GDP ranked lowest in terms of the average wage of employed persons in urban units.

Data in Perspective: Structural Transformation and Employment Quality

The study finds some unique features of the TAR structural transformation process and also some major challenges related to change in employment structure and quality. Firstly, the structural transformation process of the TAR's GDP share is distinct from the national process. There has been radical economic restructuring, excluding productive sectors like agriculture and industry. The rapid transformation has driven the growth of construction and the tertiary sector. Again, as discussed in a study (Fischer 2007) and the Chinese government documents (CTRC 2009), the growth of these two sectors is not the result of a market accumulated and allocated funds, but due to massive state investment in development projects in the region. Change in the GDP contribution of the region, in essence, was resulted from the growth of the construction sector and the tertiary sector. These two sectors are the engines of TAR's rapid growth and transformation.

Secondly, the occupation transformation of the TAR has been much slower than the change in the GDP share. It was only in 2015 when the tertiary sector emerged as the leading sector concerning employment contribution. Furthermore, even in 2018, if we dissect it sector-wise, the agriculture sector still has the largest employment contribution of about 35 percent. As mentioned earlier, the shift of labour away from agriculture was rather slow but started to rapidly rise from 2000 onward. The share declined from 73 to 35 percent from 2000-2018, declining about 38 percent within eighteen years. The impact of the WDS and rural resettlement project during the 10th and 11th FYP can be seen in the transformation of labour share. This particular development raises an important question against the massive investment made from 1959-2000 and its impact on creating non-farming employment opportunities. It also raises questions about China's larger development strategy in Tibet.

Thirdly, data on the shift in employment structure reveals lack of investment in high productivity sectors. Instead, the shift is seen in non-agriculture sectors with low productivity, wage and unorganised sector. The decline of the agriculture sector is generally considered as a positive

sign as it indicates diversification of resources from agriculture to non-agriculture sectors. However, if it fails to generate well paying jobs, then there should be a larger question about that structural transformation process. For instance, the two major sectors with the largest non-agriculture sector employment share were the construction sectors and the wholesale and retail sectors. With the construction sector, until 2017, the majority about 70 percent of the employment share was concentrated in the rural areas. In the rural areas, it is largely limited to manual labour, truck driver, and manufacturing bricks (Childs et. al 2008, 2010). Income of non-farming sources had helped raise the living standard as income was higher than in agriculture activities. But these jobs are unorganised and informal, and this indicates inferior job quality. This is marked by irregular work, unstable income and lower earnings than regular wage labour. This makes them one of the most vulnerable segments of the working population. This is also seen in the case with the wholesale and retail sectors. In contrast to the construction sector, the majority of the wholesale and retail sale employment share is concentrated at the urban private enterprises and are largely self-employed. The urban private enterprises of the TAR cannot be compared with the national standard as discussed above. In the future employment share of the sector is likely to grow as the Chinese government aims to complete the rural resettlement by 2022.

Furthermore, data on average wage shows that the average wage of the employed person in the construction and wholesale and retail sector rank lowest therefore shift of labour is taken towards the sector with the lowest average wage. Moreover, the GDP share of wholesale and trade also ranks lowest.

Lastly, there is a lack of shift of employment towards productive sectors like industry, education, health as can be seen in the national economy. By the end of 2018, the majority of about 70 percent of labour share are concentrated in agriculture, wholesale, retail, hotel services and the construction sector.

Conclusion

To summarise, the study observes that the structural transformation process in the TAR seemed to have begun after 2000. The transformation is led by the growth of construction and service sector employment. And they are not driven by the growth in industry. With the larger policy guideline like the poverty alleviation program and the completion of a rural resettlement project, the employment share of the primary sector might witness a major decline in the next few years.

The biggest challenge of the structural transformation is that it is significantly skewed towards agriculture and unorganized non-agricultural sectors. There is a negative movement towards the organized sector. The structural transformation process that emphasises the shift of labour from low productivity sector to high productivity sector is absent in the TAR's case. Therefore, it raises an important question about the employment quality of the region. The lack of investment in the productive sector like education and trade, that can be seen in the national economy is lacking in the TAR. This could be a major reason for the lack of quality growth. Probably because of the lack of growth within the productive sector, regardless of high GDP growth, Tibet is still ranked one of the poorest regions in China.

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Exploring the Nexus Between Marxist Literary Approach and Modern Tibetan Resistance Literature

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Abstract

The change in literary form and content of a given community is largely dependent on its social, political and ideological transformations that would influence it at different historical junctures. A drastic and sudden change of literary iterations is often a reaction to or a result of new social and political transformation. The emergence of capitalism in the West led to the post-industrial revolution critique of capitalism, exemplified by Marxism and Marxist Literary Criticism subsequently. The advent of this literary approach has driven literature even closer to the lives of ordinary people with a revolutionary purpose. Thus, both Marxism and Marxist Literary Criticism played a pivotal role in the context of revolutionary and decolonizing movements around the world in the twentieth century.

Marxist Literary Criticism in general and particularly Russian Socialist Realism (a more stringent and politicized form of Marxist critical approach) have found a fertile breeding ground in China. The ravaged nation then was struggling against foreign imperialism and its own decadent and degenerated (as they assumed) culture. Writers like Lu Xun had been a vanguard of revolutionary literature in China. Since then, up till late 1970s, a considerable part of Chinese literature took an active social and political overtone, especially after the victory of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949.

After the occupation of Tibet by CCP-led China, Marxist ideology and revolutionary literature were propagated amongst the Tibetan intellectuals and the general public. Writers like Lu Xun and other revolutionary writers were heralded as a model for future writers. Lu Xun's works have found considerable audiences amongst the Tibetan intelligentsia. Under such a highly unprecedented political and cultural atmosphere, modern Tibetan literature -- characterized by realism and

revolutionary elements emerged. Many scholars attribute the emergence of such modern Tibetan literature to social changes and Tibetan writers' exposure to foreign literatures. This paper attempts to associate the development of modern Tibetan literature specifically with Marxism and revolutionary literature around the world in general and in China in particular. Subversion of the literary practice of the colonizer has been a popular practice in the postcolonial context. Thus, this paper also analyses modern Tibetan literature within the framework of abrogation and appropriation of the colonizer's literary practices.

Keywords: Modern Tibetan literature, Socialist transformation, Marxist literary criticism, Chinese literature

Introduction

Available studies and literature on modern Tibetan literary production till date have been approached through different perspectives. Factors for the emergence of modern Tibetan literature have attracted considerable attention in the critical reading of the change in Tibetan literary landscape. It is a widely accepted notion amongst scholars that modern Tibetan literature emerged after the Chinese occupation of Tibet. However, with regard to historical and ideological impetus, there are divergent views. Interestingly, some of the ideas are not just different but stand in opposition to each other. Lhakpa Choephel, in *Bod kyi deng rtsom spyi bshad* (A general discourse on contemporary Tibetan literature) opines that modern Tibetan literature emerged due to Tibetans' acceptance of and adherence to Marxist ideology (Lhakpa Choephel 2017, 4). In stark contrast to this, Pema Bhum maintains that the Marxist ideology is "associated in the minds of all Tibetans with destruction, torture, poverty, and famine. A doctrine which provokes fear cannot possibly help to remove the suffering of the mind" (Pema Bhum 2008, 115). Pema Bhum sees the violent historical transformation and ideological shift in Tibet after the Chinese occupation as a major spiritual and psychological disorientation, and modern Tibetan literature emerged as a response to these challenges. Not many research works associate modern Tibetan literature with Marxism, and those few that do, often look at it from a radical dimension. Thus, an impartial approach to modern Tibetan literature and its nexus with Marxism is very rare in the existing critical

discourses. This paper is a modest attempt towards filling this void in the discussion of modern Tibetan literature.

Classical Literature and its Distance from Social Reality

A striking commonality shared by the western classical literature and its Tibetan counterpart is to underplay the specificity of the historical and material reality. In the context of the West, the classical parameter for the greatness of a literary work is its ability to reflect universal themes. The much-used maxim ‘transcending time and space’ encapsulates this quality. Since the time of ancient Greek, to up till eighteenth century, this concept of greatness had been the touchstone based on which the value of a literary work was measured. This apparently pompous idea about literature makes it a vehicle for representing far-fetched social ideals rather than social reality. The advent of realism in the literary history of West was a watershed moment. Representation of society as it is, was given prominence over instructive and universally related theme. This new approach to literature has made immense contribution in bringing literature closer to social reality during the nineteenth century. How closer realism might have brought literature to society, the potency of literature in transforming or revolutionizing society is not discussed under this rubric.

Like the classical western literature, classical Tibetan literature is far removed from social reality. The translation of Dandin’s Kavya into Tibetan during thirteenth century set a rigid literary rule that is to be followed by the Tibetans till the late twentieth century. Numerous Tibetan scholars have written commentaries on the original Kavya translation and these works have contributed immensely in the formalization of the poetic rules, which obviously led to its propagation. Many of these classical scholars were monks. Thus, tethering of Buddhist perspectives to worldly things is quite possible. Most of the Tibetan commentaries on Kavya poetic tradition advocate the scholars in achieving holistic learning, which is the study of all five sciences¹ in general and Buddhist inner science in particular. Poetry is a subcategory of ‘grammar,’ one of the five sciences. Buddha, in his sutra, for the gathering of disciples,

1. Classical Tibetan fields of learning are divided into five, i.e., logic, medicine, visual arts, grammar and inner science.

he identifies four important factors.² ‘Pleasing speech’ is one of them. Here pleasing speech is more of a means rather than the content. Thus, the importance of artistic expression is highlighted. In both teaching and learning of Buddhist inner science, poetry becomes a prerequisite. Sakya Pandita (Sapen), one of the foremost scholars in composing commentaries on the Tibetan translated Kavya, in the invocation of his text on Kavya poetry, he pronounces poetry as proper means of propagating Buddha’s teaching. Therefore, in the traditional literary context of Tibet, the conceptualization of the purpose and usage of poetry for the teaching and learning of Buddhism was prevalent. This critical view is reflected in most of the classical Tibetan texts. Hardly any classical literary works in Tibetan can be disassociated from Buddhist theme. It is speculated that; *Bya sprel gtam rgyud* (The story of monkey and bird), was written by the Tibetan aristocrat Doring Tenzin Paljor. The fable is also rumored to reflect the political atmosphere of Gurkha-Tibet war in the late 18th century. Despite the text’s major subject being that of a territorial dispute, it is inextricably associated with Buddhist notion of karmic effect and compassion. This seemingly pure political subject can’t stand independent without being interfered by Buddhist ideas. The nature of both western and Tibetan classical literatures is that apart from instructing what life should be, they seldom represent and reflect social reality.

Marxist Literary Criticism and Socialist Realism in Russia and China

Karl Marx is primarily known for his economic and revolutionary theory. However, “[a]rt and literature were part of the very air Marx breathed” (Eagleton 2017, 2). He was a voracious reader of literary works. There are also some poems, fragments of verse-drama and an unfinished novel credited to him. With reference to ‘the economic structure of society’ and the ideological apparatus in legitimizing such structure, Marx has come up with the idea of ‘base’³ and ‘superstructure.’⁴ Literature comes

2. Generosity, pleasing speech, meaning conduct and accordant meaning

3. Base, here refers to the particular economic system that the society practice and the consequent relations between men, e.g., serf and lord during feudalism and industrialist and labour in the capitalist social setup.

4. It refers to certain forms of law and government that legitimize power of upper classes that own the means of production. It is also a reference to the more subtle forms of ideological control such as education, religion, ethic etc.

under superstructure that he has propounded as a more benign form of controlling apparatus. Thus, in order to transform society, new and revolutionary literature that challenges the dominant ideology is suggested. In the history of western literature, Marxist criticism⁵ became an influential theoretical framework that discusses the resistance and social transforming potentiality of literature. The Marxist ideology as a whole and the theoretical approach to literature developed from it, made a lasting impact on the postcolonial intellectuals of the twentieth century. The need to challenge the dominant ideology through discourses and the intersection of knowledge and power as a result of that, are the core ideas based on which postcolonial theory operates. This connection between Marxism and postcolonialism, John Mcleod highlights:

[Robert J. C.] Young foregrounds the growth of colonized resistance movements that took their inspiration from the thought of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and considers the various freedom struggles which were waged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries across what is termed the ‘tricontinent’: the lands of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Mcleod 2010, 31).

Postcolonial literature emerged in the twentieth century is an epoch-making event in the history of world literatures. The emergence of such literature in great number has led to the development of postcolonial critical approach. The relevance of both postcolonial literature and postcolonial criticism transcends time and space. As society changes, new forms of oppression emerge, and the role of literature in resistance becomes even more necessary. The discussion of such literature within the framework of postcolonialism not only brings new critical insight but also promotes literature that seeks to change society by considering historical and material realities.

Marx’s idea of revolution has brought tremor to the political landscape in European society. Russia was the first country, where the old social system was toppled through revolution, and a communist state was

5. It is important to note that Marx’s comments on literature are fragmentary and scattered. The comprehensive idea of and approach to literature, we call ‘Marxist criticism’ today, is developed due to the successive efforts of several Marxist intellectuals.

established instead. With the establishment of Proletkult,⁶ post Russian revolution literature was premised on class-consciousness. Another change under Stalin with regard to literature was the adoption of a form of artistic expressions known as ‘socialist realism.’ The creation of a series of policies in respect to literature and forceful imposition of it had adversely affected the artistic freedom of the writers. Literature under Soviet Russia became a party mouthpiece. It was stringently dictated then that literature should serve the interest of the party. Russian formalist, a literary critic circle formed in the early twentieth century, gave primacy to aesthetical or artistic aspects of literature over its content. As a result, many members of the formalist school of thought were punished for deviating from the party’s lines. Both the Russian Revolution and the literature it inspired and advocated had a great influence on communist revolution and literature in China.

China in the early twentieth century was going through a period of tumultuous transition. Retelling of ‘Carving of China like a melon’ by the foreign imperialists and their own sense of diffidence in their culture had culminated in the emergence of many intellectuals who took great efforts to revolutionize China. Russia around that time was eyeing for opportunities to influence politics around the world in favor of Moscow. The predicament of China was seen as a fertile ground to foment revolution. The confluence of these inner and outer factors has led to an radical transformation of China. In the matters of both politics and literature, Russia had been primary source of inspiration to China during those days. Lu Xun, highlights this connection in his article *China’s Debt to Russian Literature*:

... [S]ome of our young people were already conscious of being oppressed and in pain. They wanted to struggle, not to be scratched on the back, and were seeking for genuine guidance.

That was when they discovered Russian literature. That was when they learned that Russian literature was our guide and friend (Lu Xun 1964, 181).

6. It literally means ‘Proletarian culture.’ It was an organization established in the Soviet Union in 1917 to provide the foundations for a truly proletarian art

Many Chinese intellectuals then, including Lu Xun himself involved in the translation of several Russian revolutionary literary works. Lu Xun's involvement in revolutionizing China was more cultural than political. The Confucian culture was seen as degenerated and believed that it has "led China (and his family) into disaster" (Lu Xun 2009, xv). As famously said, Lu Xun perceived that the decadent Chinese culture and mentality were in need of a spiritual physician. He has hoped that the cure for this problem lies in literature. Therefore, he has resorted to writing. His *Diary of a Madman*, a collective illustration of China's moral bankruptcy, and *Ab-Q*, extended denunciation of Chinese indolence are some of the iconic Chinese revolutionary literary works. The revolutionary theme of Lu Xun's works complement the ideal of Marxism. Thus, Lu Xun and his works were appropriated for political objectives of the CCP. The author has declined an invitation by the communist party to write a revolutionary novel. Many of Lu Xun's closest friends and disciples were purged after 1949. "Mao himself is said to have admitted, in one of his flashes of honesty, that Lu Xun would 'either have gone silent, or gone to prison' if he had lived on through the political violence ... unleashed from the 1950s onwards" (ibid, xxxv). With Mao's talk on Yanan Forum on Literature and Art in 1942, the direction for literary and artistic expression in China reached an inflection point. The talk mainly focused on enriching and propagating revolutionary art with the objective of serving the party and its political interests.

Both Soviet Russia and communist China have grossly exploited Marxist idea of literature. Marxism definitely recognizes the ideological significance of literature and its impact on the way we understand and see society. Revolutionary literature was called for to challenge the dominant ideology in an attempt to achieve a more just and balanced society. However, Marx himself never have advocated literature to become "a cog and a screw" (Eagleton 2017, 38) of a party "machine" (ibid 38). On the subject of freedom of press, Marx even penned an article expressing disagreement with the "utilitarian views of literature as a means to an end" (ibid 42). As Soviet Russia and communist China have appropriated Marx's political ideology in creating totalitarian regimes, and also exploited Marxist idea of literature in advocating a purely propagandist literature of the party. This blatant oversimplification of

art and commandeering of it for political purpose is vividly captured in Bruce Beresford directed movie *Mao's Last Dancer*.

Marxism and Marxist Literary Approach in Tibet

Tibet was occupied by China in the 1950s. Colonization is not just about usurping the political power from the colonized people; the imposition of colonizer's values and ways upon the colonized people is a fundamental and lasting form of colonization. The latter involves transformation of the episteme of the colonized. It is about colonization of mind. Thus, in the early 1950s the main effort had been introducing Marxist ideology in the predominantly Buddhist Tibetan society. Traditional scholars were employed to translate Marxist terms into Tibetan. The translation of political dogmas of communist China into Tibetan had begun from the earliest. Most of the lay Tibetans then were illiterate, despite this impediment, people were divided into communes and memorization of political slogans compressed into short axioms was a part of the daily routine. Pema Bhum recounts the severity of this enforced political indoctrination in his book *Drantbor do ring ma* (Pillar of Memory). In order to accelerate the revolutionizing and colonizing process, Mao, at Yan'an forum formally advocated the employment of vernacular and folk culture by the writers. Generally, the period of 1950s is characterized by low literary output, the handful of poems written in Tibetan during that time are for 'praising the Communist Party, its leaders and its policy' (Hartley 2008, 14). Geshe Sherap Gyatso was one of the earliest Tibetan scholars to write such poems of adulation for Communism and Communist party. One of his best-known poems *Bslab bya rang byung lha' rngabo* (Drum of spontaneous advice), exemplifies the poetry of that period:

With compassion, unable to bear the sight of the country's people
Facing tens of thousands of sufferings, it has taken up the weapons
Of fearless heroes and first defeated the enemy—
The Communist Party

Though they have no religion and don't accept it,
They don't stop others [and great] religious freedom.
Politically, though, the way the party must be followed.
This is a fundamental tenet of the Communist Party... (in
Hartley 2008, 15).

The few Tibetan poems in the 1950s have segwayed from traditional Tibetan literature in two significant ways. Firstly, these poems have shunned the classical elevated language of poetry for a language that is closer to ordinary speech of the people. Secondly, these poems dealt with subject that is contemporaneous and secular. It can be surmised that Tibetan literature of that time is a radical departure from the traditional literature that carried themes hugely influenced by Buddhist worldview. Tibetans understood the potency of this form of literary expression, and a new generation of Tibetan writers began to instrumentalize the same tool to resist Chinese domination since early 1980s.

Apart from the traditional Tibetan scholars who were exposed to Marxist ideology in the early 1950s, there were a new generation of Tibetans in the 1960s and 1970s, who formally studied in Chinese established schools in Tibet and went on to do further studies in China. This generation of bilingual young Tibetans, who were exposed to foreign political ideologies and literary styles made a huge impact on the literary landscape of Tibet. This generation also has the first-hand experience and witnessed from close quarters the Cultural Revolution of China that spilled over into Tibet. China has forcefully entered Tibet under the guise of liberating Tibetans from feudalism and foreign imperialism. But in reality, as recalled by Bapa Phuntso Wangye, in his biography, *A Tibetan Revolutionary: The Political Life and Times of Bapa Phuntso Wangye*, he highlighted the gap between what Chinese authorities preach and what they did to the Tibetans in practice. In an attempt to wipe out the Tibetans of its cultural identity, they were barred from studying their language and participating in any form of cultural activities. It is said that even for telling a folk story, one has to wait for the night to fall and clandestinely gather at home. Tibetan culture and people have been turned into an object of “derision” (McLeod 2010, 25) and made to be seen as an “aberration” (ibid 25). This othering of native people in colonialism, often in a binary-oppositional and hierarchical perspectives would have psychological repercussion on them. The shattering experience of the native in the phase of colonizer’s derogation is captured in Fanon’s seminal work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, with clinical precision:

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the others, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together (Fanon 2008, 85).

Tibetans, for centuries have seen huge intellectual and material investment in Buddhism. It is not like CCP adopting Marx's philosophy to achieve a political objective in Tibet. Buddhism has been the philosophical lens through which Tibetans comprehend this and after life. After the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Tibetans saw a direct assault on this belief system. For instance, the Buddhist statues that Tibetans have been putting on their head were trampled upon by the Chinese and crumbled into pieces. The spiritual gurus that Tibetans have been prostrating to were made to crawl on their four limbs and revolutionary women rode on their necks. Those things, in the Tibetan context is (to use a poststructuralist term) "decentering" of their world.

Apart from the social and political chaos that engulfed the lives of Tibetans during that time, they were confronted with philosophical clash that has kept them unsettled spiritually. Buddhism that they have inherited from their forefathers is a philosophy of material immateriality, while Marxism that they have newly learned is a philosophy of material centrality. Thus, for the first time, there began a rigorous contestation between tradition and modernity, and it is resonated in Tibetan literature since early 1980s to this day. The young Tibetans who grew up and have studied during the first three decades of Chinese occupation have faced the political, cultural and philosophical disorientation. Given the political circumstance of that time, there was no means for these severely traumatized young Tibetans to vent their inner struggle. With the death of Mao and the emergence of Deng Xiaoping as a new leader, unprecedented reforms were introduced in China. The period was marked by relative intellectual freedom and expression of

minority cultural identity. The Tibetan intellectuals instantly grasped this opportunity. The result was mushrooming of literary magazines in Tibet in early 1980s. With the emergence of these magazines, modern Tibetan literature was born.

The relative leniency that Tibetan intellectuals entertained in the aftermath of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1978 should not be misconstrued for complete freedom. In 1979, at the fourth conference of the representatives of China's writers, the newly emerged leader Deng Xiaoping, instigated the writers to condemn the elimination-of-four olds policy implemented by the 'Gang of Four.' However, Deng also has asked the writers to shoulder the responsibility of striving against old ideas and habits that would hinder the 'Four Modernizations'. This seemingly ambiguous condition created for the writers put them into a precarious situation. Additionally, the bitter memory of historical tragedy like 'Hundred Flowers Campaign'⁷ has not been relegated to amnesia. These multiple contextual limitations have to be dexterously navigated by the Tibetan writers. To test the water, the first short stories published in *Tibetan Art and Literature*, strictly adhere to the style and theme favored by the party. There were no novels published or circulated during that time. It is believed that Tibetans then were not certain about the degree of permissibility (Shakya 2008, 66). This, however, does not mean an absence of Tibetan resistance to Chinese domination including in the sphere of art and literature.

Tibetan's Resistance Through Literature

No matter how powerful a colonizer appears to be, colonization had never been smooth and its power has never been left unchallenged. The colonized people "explore many of the different strategies with which the authority of colonialism and colonial discourses has been combated" (McLeod 2010, 56). China's occupation of Tibet was never welcomed.

7. Refers to the ushering of intellectual freedom in 1956, to criticize party policies. It was motivated by the relaxation of strict communist controls in the Soviet Union. The Chinese Communist leader Mao invited criticism of party policy. Though response was slow initially, but more and more criticism came pouring. People, even non-communist started spreading pamphlets denouncing the party. This was construed as crossing the limit and many critics were purged or sent to the labor camps.

Right from the beginning, in the eastern Tibet, the Chinese expansion into Tibet was met with series of resistance. The 1959 Tibetan Uprising was a clear manifestation of the vehement rejection of Chinese occupation by the people of Tibet. For any Tibetan, after having witnessed and experienced the unprecedented and inexplicable violence during the first few decades of Chinese rule in Tibet, resistance to Chinese occupation was natural. Thus, apart from the popular street protests, other forms of resistance also emerged in Tibet during those years in the form of cultural resistance, which are not only significant but can also be more enduring.

Dhondup Gyal, an iconoclast and the northern star of modern Tibetan literature, was considered as the main voice. Born in 1953, he grew up during the most turbulent decades of 1960s and 70s. It was also a period during which Tibetan culture almost reached to a near-death situation and young Tibetans were brainwashed with new political doctrines.

Marxism being the official ideology of the Chinese state, the Chinese Communist Party propagated it extensively through education and other channels to general public including school children. This means that Tibetan students have also direct exposure to Marxist ideas. Marxist philosophy had been an effective weapon around the world for those who sought to revolutionize in their respective societies, especially, amongst the third world nations. In Tibet's context, even before the establishment of PRC, there was a nascent Marxism inspired revolutionary attempt led by Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal.

Though, many of Marxist revolutions around the world, especially during the twentieth century were met with strong disillusionment eventually, the relevance of Marxism today as an intellectual framework in conceptualizing the apparatus of oppression and forming counter ideological narrative is vibrant in the academic. Literature plays a crucial role in forming counter ideological narratives. Thus, for a young mind, filled with ideals and expectations for the future in the reality of a problematic present, it is quite likely to get easily attracted towards Marxism and Marxist literary perspective. Like many young Tibetans, who have studied in Chinese established school, Dhondup Gyal has been exposed to Marxism and Marxist literary perspective.

As a result, the revolutionary zeal is palpable in most of his writings. Moreover, Chinese revolutionary writers like Lu Xun and others were very popular amongst the young Tibetans of his time. His works seemed to have the resemblance of “working within unmistakably Lu Xun-ian paradigms” (Peacock nd). Thus, it suffices to surmise that Dhondup Gyal’s recognition of revolutionary potency of literature and the urgency of bringing it closer to social reality is the result of Marxism and Marxist literary tradition brought to Tibet by China. New social and political context and new ideology are always a fertile ground for the breeding of new literary form and theme. This phenomenon, Leon Trotsky underlines in his notable work *Literature and Revolution*, “[t]he relationship between form and content is determined by the fact that the new form is discovered, proclaimed and evolved under the pressure of an inner need, of collective psychological demand which, like everything else... has its social roots” (Eagleton 2017, 23). The change in social and political realities in Tibet, though extremely violent and disruptive, had brought about the rise of a new literature – different in style and substance.

The main difference between modern Tibetan literature and classical literary tradition is the emergence of wide range of new literary forms with themes calling for drastic social and cultural transformation in modern Tibetan literature.

In the study of resistance literature from diverse political and cultural context, giving consideration to the contextual specificity would allow us to grasp the nuances of resistance literature of a particular community. This kind of approach would prevent us from homogenizing literary diversity that has often plagued the study of postcolonial literatures. Thus, a close study of modern Tibetan literature, by considering the contextual limitations, allows us to see the persistently subtle resistance elements that have become hallmark of many modern Tibetan literary works. Here, the resistance elements in Dhondup Gyal’s works would be briefly discussed as a representative of the general theme of resistance that has become an integral part of modern Tibetan literature.

The act of ‘writing back to the center’ that Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin discuss in their path-breaking work *The Empire Writes*

Back, in many respects, resonates in several works of Dhondup Gyal. Despite having a good command over Chinese and the prospect of securing a better career option by choosing Chinese as a functional or creative language, Dhondup Gyal has not abandoned Tibetan language. All his works, that he has written during a relatively short-lived life, whose collected works is available to us in six volumes were written exclusively in Tibetan language. This deliberate act of eschewing Chinese language reminds us of the Kenyan novelist Ngugiwa Thiong’o. Thiong’o in the later part of his life began to hold a hostile attitude towards English. The novelist, as child spoke Gikuyu and received his primary education in the same language. However, later English was imposed in schools and children found speaking Gikuyu were punished. Thiong’o perceived silencing of Gikuyu as a “violent and destructive act of colonialism. To dismiss a language is to dismiss a whole culture” (McLeod 2010, 92).

For a community, its language is the repository of its knowledge, values and views, which is innately connected to its identity. The discontinuity and deterioration of the language situates the existence of the community as a distinct cultural entity at risk. Like Thiong’o’s resistance to the domination of colonizer’s language, Dhondup Gyal shares a similar concern with respect to Tibetan language. It is said that, during an observatory tour to schools, when he found Tibetan students speaking Chinese, he disapprovingly called them ‘*Ra ma lug*’ (neither goat, nor sheep). A vociferous objection to Tibetans’ prioritization of Chinese over Tibetan language is expressed in his Kha shags⁸, *Bod yig slob pa* (Teaching Tibetan). The two characters in the work are not given any names except identifying them with Tibetan alphabetic letter Ka and Kha. The two characters are involved in a heated argument due to their difference in views with regard to the significance of Tibetan language. Ka calls Tibetan language *Yig kyog* (crooked letter), a pejorative reference in the local vernacular. The low esteem that he has for Tibetan language is due to its inability in providing employment

8. Kha shags(མ་གཤམ་), is a form of literary expression, often in the form of a dialogue between two or more characters. It is a light form of joke that satirizes social follies. Though, this form of creative expression is common in other parts of Tibet, however, the usage of the term Kha shags in reference to such works is restricted only to the eastern part of Tibet.

and position of power. However, Kha looks at Tibetan language from a totally different perspective. He thinks that Tibetan language is the only means through which, a Tibetan can have access to the cultural heritage of his forefathers. Kha eventually, succeeds in convincing Ka the importance of Tibetan language. What Kha does allegorically reflects the author in reality.

Apart from his literary works, Dhondup Gyal's remaining works deal with exploration and understanding of the Tibetan culture. The subjects of his works range from Tibetan folk culture, Buddhism, history, and literature, to name but a few. Dorjee Tsering, alias Jangbu, a contemporary of Dhondup Gyal, illustrates in one of the interviews that after completing his higher education in China, he came back to Tibet. He felt alienated from Tibetan culture. It has made him realize that there is so much to explore and learn about his own culture. Thus, he has embarked on a personal journey of discovering Tibet that is hidden from him. Considering the similar formative environment that these two young men have shared, it was likely that Dhondup Gyal too was struck by this crisis. Thus, his works could be an attempt to fill this cultural void within himself and that of his generation of Tibetans.

btsanpo'i bang sor myulba'i gtam rgyud (Tale of wandering the graves of kings), is another interesting novella that the author has written but left incomplete. The author has employed a surrealist technique in the narrative style. Apart from the supernatural characters that the narrator meets, the story has only two characters: the narrator, whose identity is kept anonymous throughout the story and his friend Tashi. Tashi is fervently involved in literature but he had a prejudiced outlook on other field of studies. However, from the narrator's perspective, this prejudice (negligence) is seen as a major drawback on part of Tashi. The narrator is passionately engaged in studying Tibetan history, which are mostly discovered as hidden treasures.⁹ He implores Tashi to embrace the cultural roots holistically rather than approaching it in a unilateral way.

9. Terma (གཏེར་མ་) in Tibetan refers to books, articles, ritual objects, relics and natural objects belonging to earlier generations that are discovered as hidden treasure by the posterity. The one who discovers such things is known as tertön (གཏེར་སྟོན་). There are many Tibetan texts on religious teachings and history, which are discovered as terma.

For the illustration of the importance of the comprehensive approach, the narrator says to Tashi:

Yes, the biography of Milarepa by Tsangnyon is a good book. Yet, Tibet still has five major sciences and five minor sciences. How all these could be incorporated in Milarepa's biography? If one doesn't know a little history, then he may not know the state of earlier literary works. There is a saying that 'if you don't speak old axioms, then you don't know the contemporary maxims' (Gyel 1997, 354).¹⁰

Considering the fascination shared by the two characters in literature and in history respectively, it could be posited that they reflect the two phases of the author's life. Apart from making an indelible mark on the literary landscape of Tibetan literature, his intensive involvement in Tibet's past, both in history and culture are manifested in his non-literary works. The journey that the narrator takes in his dream in order to discover the hidden treasures of his ancestors can, from a Freudian perspective, be understood as a symbolic representation of a deeply embedded desire for something that is lacking. In the context of Dhondup Gyel, it could be reclaiming and reasserting his cultural identity.

Promotion and preservation of language and cultural tradition is vital in constructing "deep, horizontal comradeship" (McLeod 2010, 143) amongst the members of a community. This subsequently engenders collective feeling and sense of oneness, which is one of the emotive foundations for nation, nationalism and national consciousness. Invoking nationalism based on commonness of cultural heritage had been a powerful strategy during the height of decolonization around the world in the early and mid-twentieth century. The hostility reflected through policies towards Tibetan cultural identity in general by the Chinese and the systematic assault that it underwent during the Cultural Revolution would invariably raise a sense of concern amongst the Tibetans. The act of preservation and promotion of their culture is a response to these situations and it is also an act of resistance. So long as the cultural

10. The English translation of the text in Tibetan extracted from his collected works is mine.

and linguistic uniqueness of a community remains intact, the myth and imagination of the nation will remain alive. The emphasis that Dhondup Gyal is making in his writings, as shown earlier, pertaining to Tibetan culture and language can be approached from the perspectives of resistance and retaining the notion of a nation. The subject of national and racial allegiance and loyalty have attained a heightened discussion in the 1980s amongst the Tibetans, and Dhondup Gyal's works are credited for this renewed nationalism and national consciousness by many Tibetans.

It is important to understand that Dhondup Gyal's effort to reclaim and reiterate the cultural identity of Tibetan people is not akin to going back to the past and embrace the antiquity. He was someone who has always advocated cultural flexibility in response to the historical and material demand. In a Fanonian¹¹ perspective, Dhondup Gyal was an intellectual in his own right; who had made a great contribution to Tibetan culture and knowledge that can serve Tibetans in their struggle amidst great adversity. Considering Dhondup Gyal's early exposure to Marxism and literary criticism as well as writers like Lu Xun, it is not inappropriate to postulate that Dhondup Gyal's idea of contemporizing culture in response to demand of his time as basically inspired by Marx's idea. The need for cultural transformation and making it relevant to a collective struggle is a perennial theme in most of his literary works. He is the first Tibetan writer who has persistently questioned the relevance of many aspects of Tibetan cultural tradition. This has incurred the wrath of many conservatives of his time in the form of death threats and social ostracization. Dhondup Gyal's idea of cultural transformation was not an outright rejection of culture; instead it was more of a reformative. There isn't any tone of derogation and hostility in his writings towards cultural tradition of Tibet. However, while accepting the invaluable contributions that the cultural tradition has made for the Tibetans of preceding generations, the author parallels it with "salty water" and "lifeless body" in his much-acclaimed poem *Water Fall of Youth*. In one

11. Franz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* assumes that native intellectuals involved in struggle against the colonization would pass through three distinct phases. The third phase is that intellectuals would play an important role in transforming national culture and making it relevant to the struggle of the people.

of his less discussed poems, *Custom, Listen to the Words of My Heart*, the author personifies the cultural tradition of Tibet as a previously beautiful girl. However, her arrogance and pride prevent herself from accepting the reality of her fading beauty.

At this time

*The poisonous wine of bias has turned you into insanity
and grotesque wrinkles have invaded your countenance.*

By declaring the supremacy of your beauty over others'

You fool yourself

You console yourself

You are devoid of principle

*and loyalty to your own people*¹²

The obstinate refusal of the girl to recognize her changed appearance, her partiality and excessively deluded state of mind are only helping write epithet for the conservatism of Tibetans. The second stanza indicates the girl's lack of orientation and loyalty towards her people, symbolically foregrounds the disconnectedness of cultural tradition with the people's sentiments, aspiration and struggle. Thus, to sum up the engagement of Dhondup Gyal's writings in Tibetan resistance to Chinese colonialism, firstly, it acknowledges the existence of a uniquely Tibetan culture that is antithesis to the Chinese one. This first and foremost, constructs a sense of 'otherness' in relation to Chinese while bringing forth 'oneness' of a shared culture amongst the Tibetan people. These are the foundational ground for nationalism and national consciousness. Secondly, while acknowledging the cultural tradition as a source of nationalism, the author also emphasizes the need for transformation of it to make it relevant to the demand and struggle of the time.

Conclusion

There are several limitations in the study of the nexus between Marxist literary criticism and modern Tibetan literature. A critically unrestrained study of it, specifically by underlining how modern Tibetan writers have abrogated and appropriated it within Tibet is contextually difficult. The exile community has been primarily engrossed in preserving and

12. The translation is mine.

promoting Tibetan cultural tradition. Thus, anything connected to Marxism is looked at with antagonism and suspicion. This paper, in its own right, critically looks at the connection between Marxist literary criticism and modern Tibetan literature from a hitherto unexplored perspective. Apart from the hypothetical assumptions based on the political circumstances and the revolutionary elements reflected in Dhondup Gyal's writings, the author of this paper has not come across concrete evidences of Dhondup Gyal's connection with Marxist ideology, Marxist literary criticism and the literary works of Lu Xun. The incorporation of such evidences will definitely strengthen the credibility of the argument.

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འོད་ལྷོངས་སློབ་ཚེན་རིག་གཞུང་སློབ་མྱིང་འོད་ཀྱི་ཚཱ་རིག་ཚན་ཁག་གིས་བསྐྱེད་གསུམ། ༡༠༡༦ འོད་ཀྱི་
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ཤེས་རིག་དཔར་ཁང་།

Determining the Status of Tibet Under the Covenants of International Law

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Abstract

Tibet has been likened to an “open-air prison” where dramatic crackdowns on dissent, freedom of religion and belief, and freedom of expression have become the norm, leading to over 155 known instances of self-immolation cases in Tibet since 2009 (Tibet.net 2017; Finney 2020). In light of these genocidal developments, another examination of Tibet’s status under the covenants and juridical principles of international law are also warranted. The 1933 Montevideo Convention famously establishes that qualifications of statehood are to be assessed along four major parameters, those being (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) the capacity to enter into relations with other states (University of Oslo Faculty of Law Library 1933). Rigorous scholarship from the international academic community, coupled with *prima facie* evidence, has facilitated a wide consensus that Tibet has traditionally satisfied the above criteria for a qualified statehood. In any case, Tibet undeniably constituted a sovereign and independent nation between the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 to the time of the 1950 communist invasion, and has not relinquished that status despite seven decades of continuous military occupation by the Chinese regime. Regrettably, modern world politics since 1950 has failed to reflect these truths.

Keywords: Tibet, Statehood, People Republic of China, Sovereignty, International Law

Introduction

In recent times, much attention has been (rightfully) paid to the horrific genocide occurring in Xinjiang region under the purview of the Chinese Communist Party, as recognized in motions passed by both the Canadian and Dutch Parliaments, and by the former Trump administration in the

United States (DutchNews.nl 2021). Human rights violation against the Muslim Uyghur population in Xinjiang have occurred hand-in-hand with the intensification of state repression in neighbouring Tibet as well, following on historical patterns of Chinese interaction and rule since the latter's 1950 military annexation of the former.

Under President Xi Jinping's tenure, Tibet has been likened to an "open-air prison" where dramatic crackdowns on dissent, freedom of religion and belief, and freedom of expression have become the norm, leading to over 155 known instances of self-immolation cases in Tibet since 2009 (Tibet.net 2017; Finney 2020). In light of these genocidal developments, another examination of Tibet's status under the covenants and juridical principles of international law are well warranted. The 1933 Montevideo Convention famously establishes that qualifications of statehood are to be assessed along four major parameters, those being (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) the capacity to enter into relations with other states (University of Oslo Faculty of Law Library 1933). Rigorous scholarship from the international academic community, coupled with *prima facie* evidence, has facilitated a wide consensus that Tibet has traditionally satisfied the above criteria for qualified statehood. In any case, Tibet undeniably constituted a sovereign and independent nation between the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 to the time of the 1950 communist invasion, and has not relinquished that status despite seven decades of continuous military occupation by the Chinese regime. Regrettably, modern world politics since 1950 has failed to reflect these truths.

Historical Attributes of Tibetan Statehood

To comprehend Tibet's perilous present and to chart potential hopes for its future, it is necessary to review the Tibetan state as it existed in historical perspective. The origins of Tibet as a unified polity can be traced back to its imperial rise under three "Dharma Kings" in the 7th, 8th, and 9th century. The first of them, named Songsten Gampo, is credited with consolidating the various kingdoms of the Tibetan plateau and introducing the Vajrayāna school of Buddhist philosophy to his people (Singh 1965, 58). His achievements were later expanded upon by the second Dharma King, Trisong Detsen, who defeated the Chinese

emperor in battle and compelled the Tang throne to pay annual tribute to Tibet. It was under King Trisong Detsen that the Tibetan Empire reached its territorial zenith, and up to the end of the 12th century (Singh 1965, 58).

With Kublai Khan's rapid rise in the 13th century, both China and Tibet fell to Mongolian influence by 1270 (Singh 1965, 58). Tibetan Buddhism proved an attractive spiritual proposition for the Mongol rulers, who converted to Buddhism and thus initiated a unique priest-patron relationship known as "cho-yon" (Singh 1965, 58). It is critical to note that the Sakya Lama was recognized as the legitimate ruler of Tibet by Kublai Khan. "The relationship [involved] a reciprocal legitimation of authority" (Dulaney et. al 2013, 7) where Tibet was granted protection by Buddhist Mongol emperors in return for spiritual guidance from the lamas. Despite China's claims to the contrary, the "cho-yon" concept cannot be interpreted using modern syntax. It did not abrogate or subordinate Tibet's sovereignty, and in any case, China could not have asserted legal control over Tibet during this period as it too was dominated by the third-party Mongols.

By 1655, the Dalai Lama had become the institutional figurehead of Tibet, which had in the intervening centuries existed as a secular and separate state during the Ming period (Singh 1965, 59). At this point in time, the Manchu (Qing) line sought to restore the "cho-yon" relationship with the spiritual authorities of Tibet, as they rose to become the last imperial dynasty before the fall of Qing empire. Wishing to secure an alliance, records suggest that the Qing court treated the Fifth Dalai Lama "with all the ceremony which could have been accorded to any independent sovereign, and nothing could be found in Chinese works to indicate that he was looked upon in any other light" (Singh 1965, 59). As scholar Michael van Walt van Praag notes, the priest-patron dyad, "which the Dalai Lama also maintained with numerous Mongol Khans and Tibetan nobles, was the only formal tie that existed between the Tibetans and Manchus during the Qing dynasty" (Michael van Walt van Praag 1988). Though Manchu influence over Tibet waxed and waned into the 20th century, Tibet was not incorporated into China in any legal or constitutional sense.

Suzerainty, Sovereignty, and Status

The late 19th and early 20th centuries presented complications for Tibet's strategic position, as great power competition between the British, Russian, and Qing Empires engulfed Central Asia. The 1904 Lhasa Convention concluded between Great Britain and Tibet allowed for the entry of British trade into Tibet, while stipulating that "no [foreign] power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs" (Alexandrowicz-Alexander 1954, 269). The language of the convention did not clarify if the Qing throne constituted a "foreign power," and was kept purposefully ambiguous in order to maintain British leverage in future disputes. After the signing of Lhasa Convention, in the intervening years, Colonel Francis Younghusband expressed that the British "fully recognize the continued suzerainty of the Chinese Government in Tibet" [emphasis added] (Rubin 1968, 114). This concept of 'suzerainty' will prove foundational in constructing later discourses surrounding Tibet's recognized position in the community of nation-states.

The phrase 'suzerainty' has been latched on to by 20th and 21st century Chinese nationalists as specious proof of Tibet's historically subordinate position. The term itself is, however, a colonial diplomatic anachronism, and as Professor Eckart Klein explains, while "Tibet was [at times] more or less strongly dependent on China – which international practice at the time described via the concept of 'suzerainty' – Tibet never forfeited its sovereignty... suzerainty refers to a specific situation of dependency between two nations under international law, i.e. precisely not a national/constitutional law relationship" (Klein). In any case, by the time of the 1911 revolution, it is generally considered that any allegiance on behalf of the Dalai Lama towards the Manchu Emperor came to an end, as exemplified by the decree of the 1913 Proclamation of Independence and the full return of Tibetan authority over all internal and external governmental affairs (Samten 2009).

From 1913 to the communist invasion in 1950, Tibet enjoyed a complete and total preeminence across the Tibetan plateau. During this period, Tibet enjoyed a *de facto* and *de jure* independence without any interference from any foreign powers and was ruled by the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thupten Gyatso. In this period, the Tibetans concluded a treaty with

Mongolia in which they each specifically acknowledged the sovereign status of the other (Singh 1965, 64). Tibetan trade and diplomatic missions to India, Europe, and the United States were objected by the Chinese, and there is evidence of Tibetan representatives travelling as a national delegation to visit foreign states using Tibetan passports and travel documents, which were accepted as sufficient proof of Tibet's legal status as a sovereign state by the host governments (Rubin 1968, 135). Bearing these and other historical facts in mind, the International Commission of Jurists felt sufficiently confident to declare in a 1960 report that Tibet had, in fact, "demonstrated from 1913 to 1950 the conditions of statehood as generally accepted under international law" (International Commission of Jurists 1960).

A comprehensive study of Tibet's sovereign history leads to the inevitable conclusion that at the time of the Chinese invasion in 1950, and in the decades since then, Tibet's legal status is that of an occupied nation, that has not ceded its independence on freewill. PRC authorities claim that the "Seventeen-Point Agreement" signed in 1951 establishes the constitutional basis for Chinese administration over the "Tibet Autonomous Region" today (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva 2011). This notion is, however, has no legal bases on several fronts. Primarily, this so-called "agreement" was signed while Chinese troops occupied Lhasa at gunpoint, and the representatives who signed it did not have the capacity to do so as they were given no time to consult with the Kashag (Tibetan Cabinet) or the Dalai Lama, who had been forced to take sanctuary in another part of Tibet (Bruce 2009, 142). According to Article 52 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), "a treaty is void if its conclusion has been procured by the threat or use of force in violation of the principles of law embodied in the Charter of the United Nations" (United Nations 1969).

Moreover, even if such an "agreement" had been legitimately procured, it was meant to grant "autonomy" to Tibet (Article 3) while providing that the "central authorities will not alter the existing political system in Tibet," nor will they "alter the established status, function, and powers of the Dalai Lama" (Article 4) (Singh 1965, 68). By 1959, it was clear

that these guarantees had not been upheld by the Chinese authorities, and with tens of thousands of Tibetans imprisoned or killed in the 1959 uprisings, the Dalai Lama was reluctantly made to flee the country and reestablish the Government-in-Exile in Dharamshala, India (Szczepanski 2019). As China failed to uphold the terms of the “agreement,” and the legal personality of Tibet had in any case not been extinguished by it, the government of His Holiness the Dalai Lama was in their right to declare it void. In that case, the status of Tibet rightfully reverts to its condition at the time of the unilateral Chinese invasion: independent, sovereign, and free.

The Chinese Communist Party will maintain that the 1950 military aggression was a justified maneuver designed to restore an “older, traditionally accepted [form of] government” (Rubin 1968, 140). The available evidence does not bear out this claim. The 1950 imposition of Chinese rule over Tibet was in itself “radically foreign,” violating any previous historical understanding that had existed between Tibet and China at any point in their past (Rubin 1968, 140). Critics may raise the lack of official diplomatic recognition extended by other states to the Tibetan government in 1950, though “there is a strong school of legal thought which holds that recognition is declaratory, and not constitutive of statehood” (Rubin 1968, 141). If the “effectiveness of control by an organised government with no constitutional superior over a defined territory and populace is the only legal criterion of the existence of a state,” as posited by scholar Alfred P. Rubin, then Tibet was in 1950, and continues to be presently, a sovereign state (Rubin 1968, 141).

Challenges to Restoring Tibetan Statehood

International law is not a perfect or automatic system. When confronted with the mechanical realities of international politics, the drawbacks of a ‘permissive’ international legal system become quickly apparent. Even if Tibetan sovereignty can be recognized in principle, the authoritarian military occupation of Tibet and China’s increasing economic clout in world affairs have rendered the topic a non-starter in the halls of high office.

Though Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention “prohibits any occupying power [from] deporting or transferring parts of its own

civilian population into the territory it occupies,” Tibetans fear that through long-term demographic engineering they will be slowly displaced by Chinese migration into their native lands (Bruce 2009, 153). Following on from the introduction of a series of paradigm shifting ‘Ethnic Unity Laws’ in Tibet, local Chinese officials have even begun offering prizes for Tibetan-Chinese inter-ethnic marriages (Radio Free Asia 2020). Tibetans are right to ask if the international legal regime possesses the capacity to affect restorative justice before the PRC moves to implement their own regional vision on decidedly more extractive terms.

That governments from around the world have diplomatically shunned the Tibetans fearing Chinese political or economic reprisal, this has only complicated Tibet’s legal prospects. Article 38 of the International Court of Justice forms the most basic doctrine of sources for making and adjudicating international law, and it upholds “international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law” (United Nations 1946). Given the near-universal recognition extended to the People’s Republic of China under the “One-China” policy, which encompasses Chinese territorial claims over Tibet and Taiwan, the continuing *de facto* acknowledgement of China’s administration of Tibet may begin affecting Tibet’s *de jure* status as time wears on.

Nations that have been materially or morally amenable to the Tibetan cause have not done enough to articulate their support verbally and officially, even though such statements could play a key role in swaying international legal opinion in the future. Canada’s position on the matter over the years can serve as one such example of this contrived diplomatic morass. In 1950, Canada’s Minister of External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson sent a confidential memo to his Ambassador in Washington, stating “it appears that during the past 40 years Tibet has controlled its own internal and external affairs... I am of the opinion that Tibet is, from the point of view of international law, qualified for recognition as an independent state” (Canada Tibet Committee). Contrast this straightforward observation with Canada’s official position in 1988, eighteen years after extending recognition to the PRC: “...the Canadian Government’s view is that Tibet’s legal status is that of an autonomous region of the People’s Republic of China, as set out in the Chinese

constitution” (Canada Tibet Committee). By 2013, the position was further watered down to its current supposition that “Canada recognizes the People’s Republic of China as the sole, legitimate government of China and does not recognize the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Canada recognizes the Dalai Lama as an important spiritual leader who earned the Nobel Peace Prize and is an honorary Canadian citizen” (Canada Tibet Committee).

It is unfortunate that nations that have historically prided themselves on their role in maintaining a rules-based international order have instead chosen to shy away from their international legal responsibilities to the Tibetan people when confronted with the brutish power politics in the changing world order. The likelihood of any state appealing to the International Court of Justice for contentious proceedings or even an advisory opinion on the legal status of Tibet is exceedingly low, and the probability of the PRC accepting the Court’s jurisdiction over such a case remains even lower.

Conclusion

As the Indo-Pacific is only set to gain in geopolitical prominence, the paramount strategic position of Tibet will ensure that the region and its status under the conventions of international law will remain an ongoing subject of reflection and debate. Growing discourse around human rights violations and genocide in Xinjiang can further shine a light on the historical tensions of the Chinese encounter with Tibet, as well as other peripheral zones such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Inner Mongolia. Known as the “Third Pole,” Tibet’s mountains and melting glaciers form the source of ten of the world’s largest rivers, having major consequences for the livelihoods of billions throughout Asia (Vince 2019). The changing climate and disputes over the future of water allocation undergird existing geopolitical fault lines, as seen in last year’s eight-month standoff between India and China at the Line of Actual Control along the boundaries of Western Tibet (Pant and Joshi 2021). A more thorough reckoning of Tibet’s international legal status is therefore needed so that global policymakers can refine their decision-making calculus towards the numerous environmental and strategic challenges posed in the Indo-Pacific zone.

Tibet is very much a 'live' issue, in spite of the severe repression and aggressive assimilationist agenda of the PRC. There have been other successful examples of nations reclaiming their rightful place in world history through the sheer resilience of their people and the combined force of their will. In November 1918, having suffered through great power partitions and a concerted campaign of cultural annihilation, Poland made its way back on to European maps after an absence of 123 years (Niepodległa). Tibetans must persist in their advocacy efforts and aim to pursue due justice utilizing the substance of international law.

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Migration of Tibetan People, Reconstruction in Exile & the Dalai Lama's Leadership¹

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Abstract

In this paper I would like to talk about: (a)Genesis of the issue of Tibet (b)Relocation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his followers to India (c)Reconstruction of the Tibetan refugee community in India, Nepal and Bhutan, and (d)Central Tibetan Administration's international efforts, including outreach to the Chinese government and community. However, before I talk about these issues, few words about Tibet's Buddhist civilization deserves mentioning. Tibet was for more than a thousand years a composite civilization that stretched over an enormous landmass. The Tibetan Buddhist civilization influenced and transformed the way of life and thinking of people from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. Tibetan Buddhism deeply influenced Mongolia, and the people of Kalmykia, Tuva, and Buryatia in Russia. For them Tibet served as a centre of learning. Students and scholars trekked to Tibet from all over this vast region to study Tibetan language, Tibetan Buddhism and medicine. Through the centuries this transmission of Tibetan Buddhism to areas within Tibet and beyond made Tibet's Buddhist civilization vibrant and continuously refreshed.

Keywords: Tibet, Migration, Exile, Reconstruction, Central Tibetan Administration

Invasion of Tibet by China

But this story of the continuous growth and development of Tibetan civilization came to an abrupt and tragic end when in 1949-1950 the People's Republic of China invaded Tibet. This invasion, which is termed as a 'peaceful liberation' by Beijing, was strongly resisted by

1. This paper is read on his behalf by Sonam Tenzing, former Deputy Director of Tibet Policy Institute, for an International Seminar on *Human Migration in South Asia: Dynamics and Implications*, held at Synod College in Shillong on October 9, 2014.

Tibet. But Tibet's resistance was no match for communist China which overwhelmed Tibet by its military hardware and the sheer scale of manpower.

Eventually in 1951, Tibet was forced to sign the 17-Point Agreement. The 17-Point Agreement promised that the 'central authorities' will not alter the existing political system in Tibet. It also stated that, China will not alter the established status, functions, and the powers of the Dalai Lama. Tibetan officials of various ranks will continue to hold office as usual'. With this promise, Buddhist Tibet coexisted with communist China for eight long years from 1951-1959.

People's Migration

However, the promises made to Tibet in the 17-Point Agreement were never kept. The Chinese authorities in Tibet constantly undermined the authority of both the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government. In the Tibetan provinces of Kham and Amdo, forcible land reforms were introduced and the authority of both the spiritual leaders and the tribal chieftains were undermined by the People's Liberation Army's intrusive interference. Because of this the Tibetans of Kham and Amdo rose up in armed resistance which spread to Lhasa and it culminated in the National Uprising of 1959. The Dalai Lama followed by an estimated 87,000 Tibetans fled to India, Nepal and Bhutan. The Lhasa Uprising was violently suppressed by the People's Liberation Army.

Challenges for Reconstruction

Once established in Dharamsala in 1960 after a brief stay in Mussoorie, the main challenges the Dalai Lama and his administration faced was the rehabilitation of his people, giving a decent education to new generations of Tibetan refugees and the reconstruction and reestablishment of Tibetan culture in exile. The government of India at the centre and the state level were very generous in providing vast tracks of land to Tibetan refugees to cultivate and settle themselves. These Tibetan refugee settlements, scattered all over India but mainly concentrated in Karnataka in south India, this along with other Tibetan settlements serve as the foundation of the Tibetan community in exile. These settlements are administered by the Central Tibetan Administration

based in Dharamsala, the headquarters of the Dalai Lama. According to *2009 Demographic Survey* conducted by the Planning Commission, CTA, Tibetan population in India is: 94203, Nepal: 13514, Bhutan: 1298; North America: 11,112, Europe: 5633, and Australasia: 1120. Total: 126880.

It took 20 years (1959-1979) for the Dalai Lama and his administration to reconstruct the Tibetan refugee community. Today, the Tibetan exile community functions as a productive and cohesive community. Observers and media say that this refugee rehabilitation effort is the most successful anywhere in the world.

Giving a decent education to the Tibetan refugee children has been one of the dreams of the Dalai Lama. With the active support and generous financial assistance of the government of India, Central Schools for Tibetans were set up in the early 1960s. These schools taught Tibetan students all modern subjects along with lessons in Tibetan language, Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan history.

The other remarkable accomplishment of the Tibetan community in exile is the successful revival of Tibetan culture and religion in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Out of the estimated 6000 monasteries and other centers of learning in Tibet, only 13 remained intact after the devastation and turmoil that engulfed China and Tibet during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The rest of the estimated 6000 monasteries, temples and institutions of higher learning were all razed to the ground during the Cultural Revolution and before.

What was destroyed in Tibet by the Chinese authorities were rebuilt in India and Nepal but on a much smaller scale. But more than the scale or the student population of the new monasteries in exile, what was important is that under the guidance and leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan spiritual leaders and masters, the Tibetan refugee community was able to reconstruct and maintain the monastic education system and the transmission of the teachings of the Buddha from generation to generation. This rebuilding of old Tibet's monastic education system in exile has greatly revitalized Tibet's Buddhist civilization outside of Tibet.

Because of the very success of the Tibetan refugees in reestablishing their culture in exile, scholars and students who once flocked to Tibet now come to India to study Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan language and Tibetan medicine.

Enhancing CTA's International Efforts

After the successful reestablishment of both the Tibetan community and Tibetan culture in exile, the Central Tibetan Administration under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama increased its international efforts to bring global spotlight on the tragic conditions of the people of Tibet. More than fifty years earlier, global attention was riveted on Tibet when His Holiness the Dalai Lama fled his country. In 1959, 1961 and 1965, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed three separate resolutions on the issue of Tibet. These resolutions called on China to respect the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people, including their right to self-determination. Since then, the world body became silent on the issue of Tibet. This was amplified because of the strategic alliance, the United States developed with the People's Republic of China in order to counter the Soviet Union. As one of the prices for the alliance the United States helped China to secure a seat in the United Nations. Taiwan which earlier represented China in the United Nations was kicked out of the world body and its place was taken over by the People's Republic of China with a permanent seat in the Security Council. With its veto power, China was able to squash any uncomfortable discussion on the issue of Tibet.

We can say that it was in 1979 during His Holiness the Dalai Lama's first visit to the United States that the seed of an idea to highlight the issue of Tibet again on the global stage grew within the leadership of the Central Tibetan Administration. Central Tibetan Administration's decision to go global on the international stage was prompted by and coincided with several promising factors.

One of the factors which shaped Western mind on the political issue of Tibet was the growing interest in the West on Tibetan culture and Buddhism. The Buddha's message of compassion, non-violence, and inner transformation as articulated by countless Tibetan Buddhist

masters was positively received in the West ravaged by the two World Wars and living nervously in an atmosphere of mutual distrust created by the Cold War.¹ The Buddha's message of inner transformation and individual's ability to change his own fortune came as a breath of fresh air and was seen as overwhelmingly empowering. Hundreds and thousands of people in Europe and North America, as a result, were attracted to the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism. Many in increasing numbers became practicing Buddhist. The spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the West and its sustained reach drew many people in the West to support the political cause of Tibet, creating a fertile ground for the subsequent growth of the worldwide Tibet movement.

The second factor responsible for the Central Tibetan Administration to project the issue of Tibet on the international stage was the Tibet story itself. Tibet, remote and isolated, was for many centuries the focus of Western fascination. It was around this time that one book which reignited western fascination to the political cause of Tibet is John Avedon's classic retelling of Tibet's story, *In Exile from the Land of Snows: The Definitive Account of the Dalai Lama and Tibet Since the Chinese Conquest*. This book started the trend of western authors and media to reexamine the Tibet story.

Tibetans were helped in telling their story to the world by the actions of the Chinese leadership. Deng Xiaoping, who assumed paramount power in China after the death of Mao in 1976, met the Dalai Lama's elder brother, Gyalo Thondup, in late 1978 and early 1979. Deng Xiaoping told the Dalai Lama's emissary that 'anything except Tibetan independence' could be discussed between the representatives of the Tibetan leader and their Chinese counterparts. This willingness on the part of the Chinese leadership to reengage with the Dalai Lama in a common quest for a solution of the issue of Tibet paved way for what the international media termed as 'the delegation diplomacy'. From 1979 to 1985, Dharamsala sent four fact-finding missions to Tibet. These delegations travelled all over Tibet. Reception the Tibetan people accorded to the representatives of the Dalai Lama was beyond the wildest nightmare of the Chinese leaders.

When one Chinese official observed the joy and happiness with which the Tibetan people across all works of life met the first fact-finding mission in 1979, he said, ‘twenty years of propaganda has been undone in one day’ or words to that effect. At the same time exploratory delegations visited Beijing to tackle the real business of finding a solution to the issue of Tibet in 1982 and 1984.

Since his first visit to the United States in 1979, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has travelled around the globe, articulating both the demands of the Tibetan people and his message of peace, compassion and non-violence. The political cause he so tirelessly advocated and his message of peace, compassion and non-violence were received with sympathy and understanding by people everywhere he went. In this way, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was able to create a large and growing international support for the political cause of Tibetan people and millions of followers of Tibetan Buddhism.

In 1987 before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus of the United States Congress, His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced his Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet. He said that he was willing to let Tibet function in association with the People’s Republic of China. Before doing, this China must restore the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people, stop the population transfer of Chinese settlers to Tibet, make Tibet into a zone of ahimsa and non-violence and a sanctuary for environmental protection and start in earnest, the negotiation with his representatives to define the future status of Tibet that satisfy the aspiration of the Tibetan people. In 1988 before the European Parliament in Strasbourg, His Holiness the Dalai Lama formally announced that he was not seeking independence for Tibet but rather seeking genuine autonomy for Tibetan people. China on its part rejected both proposals, claiming them to be ‘independence in disguised form’.

The rejection of the modest proposals to resolve the issue of Tibet coincided with the hardliners within the Chinese leadership resuming power in Beijing. Moderate leaders, like Hu Yaobang, under whose watch a short-lived period of liberalization was introduced in Tibet in the 1980s, was removed from power in 1987. Shortly after, he died.

In 1989, the anniversary of Hu Yaobang's death prompted thousands of students in Beijing and across China to demand an end to official corruption and for freedom, democracy and rule of law.

The mass student protest and demonstration divided the central Chinese leadership. Zhao Ziyang, the Party Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, wanted to go half way in meeting the demands of the students. He was opposed in this by Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng, the Prime Minister, and vast majority of other hardliners. In the end, Zhao Ziyang was purged from power and put under house arrest. On 4 June, 1989 the People's Liberation Army moved in to squash the growing demonstration. Observers say hundreds, if not thousands, of students were massacred.

The purging of moderate Chinese leaders and resumption of power by hardliners made it impossible for the representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resume and conduct meaningful discussions with the Chinese leadership. In fact, in 1993, Beijing cut off all contacts with Dharamsala.

At the same time, a turmoil erupted in Tibet. To show support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan and the Strasbourg Proposal, starting from 1987, Tibetans in Lhasa staged a series of peaceful street protests against China's rule over Tibet. These protests, always violently crushed, culminated in a massive and sustained protest in 1989. Hu Jintao, the former President of China, who was then the Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, crushed this protest and imposed martial law in Lhasa, the first in the history of the People's Republic of China. These protests also had an impact in strengthening the hands of the hardliners in the Chinese leadership.

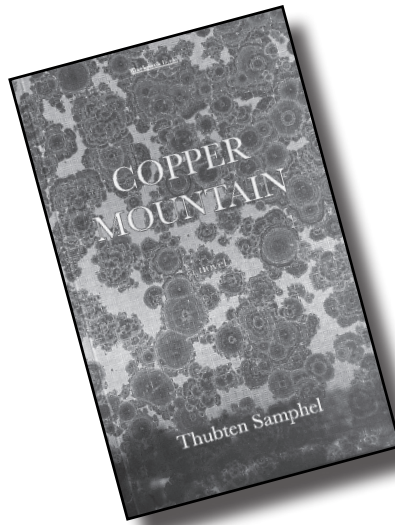
All these meant that Dharamsala had no formal contacts with Beijing from 1993 to 2002. In 2002, Beijing accepted to receive the two envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and their assistants to discuss the issue of Tibet. Since then, Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen and their assistants conducted a series of talks with Chinese officials till 2010. In one of these talks the two envoys handed to the Chinese counterparts a copy of the Memorandum on the Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People. In

this memorandum the Central Tibetan Administration demanded that the whole of Tibet be merged into a single administration that enjoyed genuine autonomy. All the demands made in this memorandum are based on the rights of the minorities as enshrined in the constitution of the People's Republic of China. Even this latest proposal of the Central Tibetan Administration was rejected by Beijing. Since 2010 there has been no contact between Dharamsala and Beijing.

However, although officially China continues to reject the just demands of the Tibetan people, still the ordinary Chinese, scholars, and students, writers, human rights activists, lawyers, and environmental advocates are embracing the Middle-Way Approach as enunciated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his message of non-violence, peace and mutual respect. In 2008 when peaceful protests erupted throughout Tibet and were violently suppressed by the Chinese authorities, more than 300 Chinese scholars, writers and human rights activists wrote an open letter to the Chinese government. In their letter they said they supported the peace initiatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and appealed to the Chinese government to refrain from the use of propaganda that inflamed ethnic animosity between the Tibetans and the Chinese.

Today there is a growing trend of young Chinese embracing Tibetan Buddhism. At the same time, Chinese intellectuals who work within the government and party establishments, express their opinion that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the key to a speedy and just resolution of the issue of Tibet. I believe that this trend will compel the Chinese government to resolve the issue of Tibet in a manner that satisfies the just aspirations of the Tibetan people.

Book Review



Copper Mountain: A Novel Thubten Samphel.

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Ascent of Faith

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In his book *The Division of Heaven and Earth*, Shokdung narrates an anecdote from the time of the 5th Dalai Lama:

In oral tradition, it is said that long ago in Tibet, moments of joy and sorrow once occurred three times in the same day. It was during the time of the Great 5th Dalai Lama. One day, the bad news came that he had passed away, and the people were struck with sorrow; immediately after this came a report that his reincarnation had been found, at which they were elated; and at the announcement of his

enthronement later that day, all were overjoyed.

The readers of Thubten Samphel's second novel *Copper Mountain* might undergo a similar three-phase experience. For a Tibetan reader, the novel's title is likely to evoke the image of the mythical 'glorious copper-coloured mountain' associated with Guru Rinpoche. They will soon realise that the titular copper mountain is actually the Mount Kailash, that most famous of mountains in the Tibetan Buddhist world. And that the novel's plot revolves around a Tibetan rinpoche's attempt to save that mountain from the evil designs of a Chinese mining company. *So, this is a novel about the (Tibet's) environment and the destruction (Chinese) humans are wroughting upon it*, the reader may think. In the final assessment, however, they will find that the novel's underlying theme actually is far more transcendental and ambitious.

Samphel's first novel *Falling Through the Roof* came out in 2008. If that book was part autobiographical and nostalgic, his second can be said to reflect the preoccupation of the exile Tibetan polity in the intervening decades as to how the Sino-Tibetan issue could be eventually resolved. In that sense, the novel is deeply aspirational. However, Samphel doesn't directly tackle the question of China's colonial occupation of Tibet. His Tibetan characters aren't plotting to overthrow the Chinese rule in Tibet but to save Mount Kailash from a mining enterprise, China Copper. The adversary here is the mining company, not the Party. The Tibetan protagonist's concern has narrowed down to a mountain but it would be equally true to say that it hasn't, that it has always remained the same, that it is not Tibet but Tibetan Buddhism, that it has actually widened, not narrowed. It is to not only save Tibet from China but also China from itself! This, in essence, is the author's moral conviction driving the novel.

To make his case, in the first two-thirds of the book, Samphel uses two narrative threads. The first thread presents a problem that is very modern and real -- China's colonial occupation of Tibet and a threat of environmental catastrophe on the Tibetan plateau as a result. However, the other thread, the resolution, is anything but modern. Harking back to a bygone era, it is straight out of the world of *Lost Horizon* and Lobsang

T. Rampa, complete with portals to hidden valleys, time travel, and inevitably, the opening of the Third Eye. It is a curious juxtaposition of the rational and the suprarational. Yet, the latter is no mere flight of fancy on the author's part because he uses that as a narrative device to highlight, at various points in the novel, the age-old spiritual and cultural ties shared by Tibet and China. Beneath the shell of the supernatural elements in the story, Samphel is presenting a kernel of great political import. And perhaps because of this very reason, he is able to create Chinese characters who are not only sympathetic and complex but downright heroic (Zhou Fatang, the director of China Copper; Dusum Khenpa, the Chinese disciple) at times.

On the Tibetan side, there is Chiu Rinpoche, a tragic hero, whose mission is simple enough - to stop China Copper from mining the holiest mountain in Tibet. But how does a Tibetan lama, now a mid-level functionary in the Chinese Communist Party take on a powerful company which has support from the highest echelons of the regime? Rinpoche's solution to this mountain of a problem is to call upon Tibet's rich spiritual resources which include not only Buddhism but occult and black magic as well. To flesh out this idea in his story, Samphel relies on a sort of religious *son et lumière* show by a cast of extraordinary meditation masters who are the exponents of the ancient science of time travel, tracing their lineage all the way back to Milarepa and Guru Rinpoche. They have been lying low all these centuries and decide now to intervene only because their launch-pad to Shambala, the mythical Buddhist kingdom, is under threat.

All these references to time travel and Shambala might be redolent of a particular kind of literature from the early 20th century but a more sober English novel from that period also comes to mind. In *A Passage to India*, E.M. Forster explores the ways in which a relationship between the colonisers and the colonised may become arrested and eventually fall apart. In Forster's diagnosis, a decent human relationship between the two parties is simply not possible. In the novel, he uses the Marabar Caves as a site to crystallise the breakdown of that relationship. Samphel's novel also features caves but for him, they are a site for the spiritual apotheosis of a Chinese student of Tibetan Buddhism. The cave, instead of being a

site of miscommunication or misunderstanding, is a hidden locale where Tibetan Buddhism finally wins over even the godless Communists!

Just like hidden portals that invert the very concept of time, Tibetan Buddhism is a magic lens by which the coloniser-colonised relationship is transformed into a master-disciple connection in one swoop. The Tibetans from being the hapless victims of Chinese oppression, from being trodden under their boots suddenly find themselves transported to a higher pedestal (a *vajra* throne, presumably) than their erstwhile oppressors. One consequence of this is the dominance of the clergy when it comes to Tibetan characters in the novel, consisting mainly of Rinpoches, their students and attendants. This is actually a perennial problem besetting Tibetans way beyond the realm of literary fiction. There is a brief mention of the nomads living around Mount Kailash who stay away from the denunciation ceremony. Suffice to say, they stay away from the novel as well. On the other hand, the Chinese characters are drawn from a wider spectrum of life. In fact:

. And [Chiu Rinpoche] was curious, curious at how a mountain in Tibet could draw such unlikely allies. It was a revelation to him to see the battle-lines were now drawn between industrial China and Chinese civil society, China's environment protection agency and the tourism department of Tibet.

Unfortunately, there is no sign of a Tibetan civil society in the novel. And the irony of seeing two sides, both Chinese, fighting over a mountain in western Tibet is not at all lost on a Tibetan reader.

The highlight of the story is certainly the aforementioned denunciation ceremony, aimed to rid Mount Kailash of its 'foreign gods' that have long 'colonised' it. It is a passage filled with ironic humour and told with great relish. Chiu Rinpoche's purported use of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist arguments to subject a mountain to a struggle session demonstrates that, beside occult and black magic, the Tibetans can use more universal and less esoteric weapons to fight oppression with satire and humour. Also, interspersed throughout the novel are the third-person narrator's running commentary about various aspects of China's rule in Tibet. Describing the increasing Chinese presence in Lhasa, Samphel writes:

But whether tourists, settlers or fortune-seekers, the Chinese crowd were welcomed in Lhasa. They were the foot soldiers of the empire, the eager colonisers of a sparsely populated colony, the demographic glue that would bind the new frontier to the mother country. They were empire-builders. They were empire-keepers. In Tibet all Chinese were in the service of the Party and empire. The more of them in Tibet, the better it was for imperial stability. A stable empire kept the Party on the throne in Beijing.

And Jokhang is described thus:

But now this holiest of all the temples in Tibet was turned into a surveillance centre. Fire-extinguishers were located in every corner, handy tools to extinguish any natural or human fire. Watching over the milling crowd in the temple's enormous courtyard were both hi-tech surveillance cameras and boot-on-the-ground informers equipped with mobile devices that recorded the audio and video of words and deeds of the faithful. Cameras peeked from every wall, rooftop and corner.

There is no doubt that this is a Tibet of Chinese migration, mass surveillance and Tibetan self-immolations. This leads one to what would be perhaps the most difficult aspect of the novel. That is, its philosophical and moral implications. Samphel's Tibet is one where superhuman meditators and time-travellers sitting on their Diamond Seats, one who can intervene to save a mountain and yet at that same time, ordinary Tibetans are setting themselves on fire as a last resort to protest against China's rule:

Even on such minor issues as language rights and open pit mines that poison their land and water, Tibetans were desperate enough to protest by setting themselves on fire. Already Tibetans were burning themselves to demand that China allow the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet.

It is very difficult, if not downright impossible, to reconcile these two Tibets. Perhaps this contradiction shows up in this work of fiction

because it is there in real life. Elsewhere, we see another description, soon after the Chinese in Tibet are described as ‘the foot soldiers of the empire’, another description:

These young Chinese, the head of the Lama Temple explained, considered Tibetan Buddhism to be a national treasure, a world heritage, that needed to be protected, not destroyed. They would undo the great damage done to Tibet’s Buddhist culture. They were the carriers of the Buddha’s message of non-violence, compassion and self-cultivation to the larger Chinese world. They were the merchants, travellers, students, pilgrims and monks who carried the goods and ideas along China’s new Silk Road. They were the foot soldiers of Tibet’s spiritual realm filtering into the recesses of the psyche of rapidly-industrialising China.

So, are the Chinese foot soldiers of the empire and the Party or are they potential followers of the Buddha dharma and Tibet’s spiritual army-in-waiting? Perhaps, both.

In the story, the premature death of the protagonist, Chiu Rinpoche, alerts the reader that Samphel still has a few narrative cards up his sleeve. The problem is that he has to pack them all in the last act. The late twists in the story leave the reader craving for further elaboration. One particularly engrossing twist features a dastardly plot to rule Tibet by ‘stealth warlordism’ which could have easily served as the main plot of the novel, instead it is just presented through a straightforward exposition. But for the denouement in the final chapter, we are back in the cave again where a startling revelation unfolds! Were there any danger in the preceding subplots of the reader deviating from the book’s central theme, the last chapter lays to rest any such worries.

Since the book begins with an epigraph from *Skanda Purana*, it is perhaps fitting to end this review with an anecdote from another Hindu text, the great epic of *Mahabharata*. Many years after the Kurukshetra war, the Pandavas and their wife Draupadi finally leave the city of Hastinapur and walk towards the Himalayas. One by one, first Draupadi and then the brothers fall on the way till only Yudhishtira and his dog are left and they

finally reach Mount Sumeru. The dog is revealed to be the god *Dharma* himself, Yudhisthira being his son and earthly embodiment. In *Copper Mountain*, when the storm over Mount Kailash has finally settled, when other lesser narrative themes have fallen on the way, we find another *dharma* standing alone - the Buddha dharma and its transcendental and transformative powers.

