

Buried Past and Excavated Hope:

Larung and Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China today

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This article explores the Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China in contemporary period. In contrast to recent studies understanding Buddhist revival in Tibet within the framework of 'China-Tibet' divide, this paper reveals that along with Buddhist revival and the creative strategies that Tibetan monks use to accomplish this revival, the interactions and ties between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist circles have also been reconstructed in China's post-reform context. The author examines how Tibetan monks preach to Han Chinese Buddhists and utilize their financial resources to resist the repressive Chinese state, and argues that it is necessary for Tibetan scholars to develop a more critically trans-regional perspective to understand Buddhist revival in contemporary Tibet.

Over the past three decades, China's economic reform has brought upon different social conditions that allowed for the revival of certain religious practices suppressed during the Maoist years (MacInnis, 1996; Overmyer, 2003; Waldron, 1998). In this circumstance, Buddhism also came to be revitalized in Tibetan areas of China. Both popular beliefs and formal monasteries have been significantly revived in the post-1980s Tibetan society. These attracted the Tibetologists who attempted to shift their interests from classical fields to modern topics, from Tibetan exiles to Tibet itself.¹ Hence, as soon as they were permitted to enter Tibetan areas of China in the late 1980s, Tibetan scholars made vast efforts to engage themselves in the study of Buddhist revival in contemporary Tibet.

Although these efforts have been made for nearly two decades, Scholars interested in Buddhist revival have found themselves kept from most archives and access to Tibetan monasteries and communities due to the restraints imposed by the Chinese government. These difficulties in fieldwork have hampered detailed case studies and made existing works often end up with more generalized descriptions. In explaining the background and dynamics of Buddhist revival, scholars saw the relative retreat of the Chinese state and the released resources in Tibetan society as two major aspects.² This perspective combines the essential 'China-Tibet' divide in Tibetan studies and the 'state-society'

¹ For an interest shift from classical fields to modern aspects, see the introduction of Barnett and Akiner, 1994; for that from Tibetan exiles to Tibet itself, see the introduction of Goldstein and Kapstein, 1998

² For instance, see Goldstein and Kapstein, 1998; Kapstein, 2004; Schwartz, 1994; Barnett and Akiner, 1994

dichotomy that derives from the controversial civil-society paradigm in China studies.³ Such a revived form of Buddhist institution and culture can be considered the reflection of the wider revival of Tibet itself.⁴

In this circumstance, the relationship between Tibetan Buddhists and the Chinese state has become the most important topic in existing research engaging Buddhist revival. Tibetan Buddhists are reported to be involved in various forms of resistance to the Chinese government, which is particularly reflected by intermittent rebellions led by Tibetan monks and monasteries. Although this politicization of religion was once more confirmed by the recent protest in Lhasa in March 2008, whether and to what degree this political resistance involves significance and purpose of Tibetan independence is highly disputed. The complexity of differentiating independence ideology from the politicized anti-state Buddhism was typically reflected in Ronald Schwartz's work, in which he discussed how Lhasa Tibetans used Buddhist rituals to express their political opposition to the Chinese state in 1987-1989 demonstrations. Although he emphasized that for Tibetan Buddhists, ethnic opposition to Han Chinese people is merely a byproduct of their political opposition to the Chinese government,⁵ he still implied that Buddhism has become 'a nationalistic political form' in Tibetan areas of China:

The monasteries represent the reappearance of a Tibetan civil society, outside state control, that had lain submerged for two decades. The [China's] reform opened a space in Tibetan society for the re-creation of the one cohesive institution that Tibetans are able to identify as their own. As such, the monasteries have come to signify Tibetan nationhood and survival, and thus have become the principal battleground for Tibetan resistance to the Chinese state. (Schwartz, 1994: 17)

An effort to combine the 'China-Tibet' and 'state-society' dichotomy was made in above text to examine Buddhism in contemporary Tibet. As the representation of both Tibetan civil society and nationhood, Tibetan monasteries were seen and understood by Schwartz as things that have multifaceted dimensions in religion, politics, and also nationalism. Schwartz argued that it is the

³ From the 1980s, considerable works in China studies in the U.S focused on whether and how the civil-society paradigm can help explain the past and present history of China. For the background and topics of these works and debates, see *Modern China's* special issue in April 1993.

⁴ Vincanne Adams pointed out the existence of a stereotypical image that sees pre-Mao Tibet as universally religious in EuroAmerican culture (1996: 515). Since Buddhism is often deemed as the most important, if not the only, identity of Tibetan people, it is not difficult to make a connection between Buddhist revival and the revival of Tibet. For this Orientalistic conception, see also Bishop, 1989; Lopez, 1998

⁵ I admit that ethnic tension, along with the liberalized policy and Han Chinese immigration to Tibet, has become an increasingly serious issue in Tibetan areas of China, but this is beyond the empirical and theoretical reflections I want to discuss in this paper.

Chinese state's suppression that leads to the politicization of Buddhism, which has reduced Tibetan Buddhism "to its starkest and simplest term" (1994: 69). But several other scholars, based on their observations and fieldwork in different places, have pointed out that apolitical and advanced Buddhism are also practiced in Tibetan areas of China (Goldstein and Kapstein, 1998; Kapstein, 2004). In many monasteries outside Lhasa, monks concentrate on Buddhist affairs and have few interests in political issues. They rebuild their monasteries, cultivate new teachers, and reconstruct the Buddhist inheritances lost in China's Cultural Revolution. Although they take on the cultural leadership of Tibetan communities again by remaking the traditional patron-client relationship with lay Tibetans, many consciously eschew sensitive topics that may land them in political trouble. These evidences challenge Schwartz's observation in Lhasa and the widely held conception that the 'authentic Tibetanness' of religion and spirituality has been destroyed in Tibetan areas of China. Behind these efforts exists a new way to find the religious aspect of Buddhist revival and its relations with China's political repression: Religion in this sense is not existent *for* resistance; its existence that contrasts with the secular state *becomes* a kind of resistance itself.

However, the works that emphasize Tibetan monasteries in post-revival society as 'Buddhist' have the same flaw as those that label them as 'politicized': Both overlook how Buddhist ties and identities are able to spread across national and ethnic boundaries, a characteristic that makes religious group essentially different from modern nationalistic community (Anderson, 1983). In fact, the dissemination of Buddhism across different ethnic groups and polities in Inner and East Asia is often used as evidence to prove the higher status of Buddhist Tibet as religious 'teacher', particularly in respect to the complicated relationship between Tibetan hierarchs and China's rulers.⁶ However, this inter-penetration and inter-dependence between Tibet and China via Buddhism has been entirely neglected in works dealing with post-1959 period, though we term the current religious revival as 'Buddhist'.

Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China accompanied Tibetan nationalism in most of the 20th century. Republican Chinese made substantial efforts to establish Buddhist ties between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist circles (Tuttle, 2004; Welch, 1968), and in the Communist period, some Tibetan monks vigorously preached Buddhism in China until the mid-1960s (Welch, 1972: 19).⁷ Although these

⁶ Based on different background and positions, historians tend to have different attitudes toward the nature of this 'teacher-student' relationship. Scholars in China studies often deal with the relationship within a multi-imperial system that admits the dominant status of Manchu/China in surrounding regions, but Tibetan scholars tend to emphasize that Buddhist Tibet as teacher seized a higher status than the student Manchu/China. It is interesting to compare these differences with James Hevia's discussion on the controversies around the historical records of the meetings between Qing emperors and Tibetan and Mongolian Lamas. Hevia showed how Qing and Tibetan sides ironically read a single set of facts in two opposite ways, see Hevia, 1995, chapter 2

⁷ One useful differentiating technique was to reject the status of these Tibetan monks who served the Chinese government as 'real Buddhists', but Welch has revealed for us how Buddhist compassion was intertwined with the ideas of Communist

Buddhist relations might be interrupted when the Cultural Revolution destroyed both Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist society, particularly given that there were customs that separated the two sides in past convention,⁸ some scholars have pointed out that, in a post-reform context that allows migration and the flow of economic resources, Tibetan Buddhism is becoming remarkably popular in contemporary China (Kapstein, 2004; Birnbaum, 2003; Tuttle, 2004: 221-32).

This paper will examine this new trend that began in the late 1980s and has thrived in the past decade. By illustrating Larung Academy in Sertar County, Sichuan Province, I will discuss how Tibetan monks creatively preach to Chinese Buddhist circles and utilize their social network and financial resources to resist the repressive Chinese state. As an important path connecting Tibet and China in past and present, Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province, particularly Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, are where Tibetan monks most actively develop their relations with Han Chinese people. These observations point not only to the complexity of Buddhist revival in Tibetan areas where cross-cultural factors are involved in and intersect with the “state-society” relationship but also to the many ways of understanding the monks’ creative strategies.

Larung has been known as one of the most renowned Tibetan monasteries that have kept consistent interests among scholarly works (Germano, 1998; Kapstein, 2004). As the largest and most successful monastery in Tibetan areas of China, Larung’s contribution to Buddhism and its resistance to the Chinese state are considered to be an example of the wider revival of Tibetan society and culture, the embodiment of Tibetan agency or “Tibetanness”. Its strategies for revival, such as Rime movement (ecumenical movement) and Ter practice known to excavate the “hidden treasures” that were buried by ancient Lamas in Tibet’s history, are also seen as effective ways of remaking Tibetan identities spatially and temporally. During my fieldwork, however, I discovered that Larung monks also use these so-called “Tibetan” methods to revive Buddhist ties with Han Chinese people. Thus, there exists a challenge regarding how to best develop a more critical trans-regional perspective to understanding Larung and Buddhist revival in contemporary Tibet. I want to argue that in existing Tibetan scholarship on religious revival, there is a lack of engagement with the ways in which Buddhism is able to spread across national and ethnic boundaries. Moreover, unlike the earlier patterns between Tibetan ecclesiastical powers and the Chinese imperial court in the previous centuries, the current Buddhist interactions involve increasing amounts of Tibetan monasteries and Chinese adherents, which leads to the formation of a ‘religious market’ characterized by a competition for Chinese adherents and their financial resources. It is therefore reasonable to ask in what ways this competition will change the

liberation, see Welch, 1972: 267-297.

⁸ See Tuttle, 2004: 26-28.

power relations between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists in what is typically termed as a ‘teacher-student’ or ‘priest-patron’ relationship, and in what ways will such dynamics influence the future of Sino-Tibetan relationships?

Revived Tibetanness: Khenpo Jikphun and his Larung Academy

One of the most impressive phenomena in Buddhist revival in Tibetan areas of China is the sharp contrast between political Tibet (current TAR) and ethnographic Tibet, the region consisting of the Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai and Yunnan Province. Compared with Lhasa and other areas of TAR that are tightly controlled by the Chinese government, Buddhist societies have been rapidly revived in ethnographic Tibet in the past three decades. The monastic population over there has been as five times as that of TAR,⁹ and the most vigorous and populated monasteries are also more concentrated in ethnographic Tibet, despite the hierarchical tradition that monasteries in political Tibet often possessed a higher level of Buddhist pantheon of Tibet.¹⁰ Some Buddhist monasteries in Ganzi, for instance, have achieved a huge scale that only can be found within pre-1959 Tibet, one of which is Larung Academy established by Khenpo Jikphun in Sertar in 1980. After its establishment, Larung took a very few years to grow to the center of the Nyingma Sect in the entire Tibetan world in the mid-1990s. At its peak it had a population of estimated 8000-10000 residents,¹¹ a number that approaches the size of supreme Drepung Monastery in Lhasa before the arrival of Chinese Communists (Goldstein, 1998: 20). This miracle attracted both mass media and professional scholars who are interested in exploring the cultural and social milieus of Buddhist revival in contemporary Tibet and the ways through which such revival has been accomplished. In these works, Khenpo’s charismatic personality and leadership, Larung’s well-designed educational system, and the religious need and fervor released from China’s reform are thought as the rationales for Larung’s success (Germano, 1998). The more lenient religious policies and

⁹ According to Kapstein, there are about 120 thousand clergies in Tibetan areas of China, and 100 thousand of them belong to monasteries outside TAR, see Kapstein, 2004: 263. The U.S. government estimates that the eastern Tibetan areas have over 100000 monks and nuns, quoted from Sautman and Dreyer. 2006: 21

¹⁰ After the centuries of centralization promoted in and around Lhasa, monasteries in political Tibet were much more wealthy and institutionalized than those in Kham, see Samuel, 1993; However, I do not want to cause a misconception that monasteries in TAR are prevented from current revival. For revival in Drepung, for instance, see Goldstein, 1998

¹¹ The accurate number was still uncertain even though it was reported in a range from 8000 to 10000 by western and Japanese media. In some more serious scholarly works, Matthew Kapstein mentioned that there were about 9300 residents in Larung at the time of his visit to Ganzi in July, 2000; see Kapstein, 2004: 251-252. David Germano gave us an earlier observation that there were about 1400 people in summer and 2000 in winter in the early 1990s, with an explosion to more than 10000 people during special events and assemblies, but he mentioned that Raoul Birnbaum thought it impossible; see Germano, 1998: 65, 172. Based on my fieldwork, I tend to agree with Kapstein and Germano’s data, because even after 2001 crackdown and under population control, there are still 4000-5000 residents in Larung today. Sertar’s officials also confirmed to me the number of about 8000-10000 people.

control by the Chinese state in ethnographic Tibet and the relatively relaxed ambiance they create are also seen as important supportive factors (Kapstein, 2004).

Media reports and scholarly works on Larung

As the largest Buddhist community in Tibetan areas of China, Larung is extremely renowned for its contribution to the revival of Buddhist education and monasticism after the 1980s. Many Tibetan monks, nuns and lay people were attracted to come to Larung to make permanent residence. Its rapid growth and gigantic size inevitably caused the distrust from the Chinese government. In the 1990s, the situation was exacerbated after Khenpo made personal visits to the Dalai Lama in India and to western countries for Buddhist communication. As a result, in 2001, when China's religious policies became significantly conservative due to the activities of Falun Gong,¹² Sertar's county government followed the dictations from Beijing, and destroyed thousands of monastic huts in Larung and expelled all the monks and nuns whose registered residence was not in Sertar.¹³ This crackdown was quickly reported and condemned by western media and international human rights campaigns (Liu and Mahakian, 2001; VOA, 2004; TPW, 2004). After this scandal, Larung was known in the international world as not only the leading center of Buddhist revival in contemporary Tibet, but also the site where China's suppression and Tibet's resistance repeatedly occurred.

Although the widespread interests in mass media were largely related to this political crackdown, the significance and contribution of Khenpo and Larung for Buddhist Tibet have been studied by Tibetan scholars in a professional way. David Germano first conducted his fieldwork in the early 1990s and systematically recounted Larung's development (Germano, 1998). He unfolded his discussion by focusing on Ter practice, which is a traditional Tibetan Buddhist way of claiming anciently orthodox inheritance by masters who have or are believed to have abilities to excavate the 'hidden Treasures (gter ma)' left by Padmasambhava. In Tibet's religious history, Padmasambhava was the primary master who first transmitted tantric Buddhism to Tibetan society in the 8th century. It is believed by Tibetan Buddhists that he foresaw the future persecution against Buddhists by the last emperor Langdarma in the 10th century and buried considerable scriptures, religious objects and relics to sustain the hope of

¹² During my fieldwork, many Chinese monks and local officials mentioned to me that another catalyst for crackdown was a media report, but nobody can explain which article it was and to what degree it influenced the event. Of all the rumors, the most frequently mentioned version is an inner-circulated article written by a Chinese journalist and sent to central government, which warned officials about Larung's gigantic size and extensive influence in Tibetan areas of China.

¹³ In order to increase government control, Chinese Buddhist Association prescribes that any monastery can only accept the monk whose registered residence is in the same province as that of the monastery, unless there is no temple or monastery in the province to which that monk belongs. See Welch, 1972: 120-21; Goldstein discussed the similar problem in Drepung, Lhasa, see Goldstein, 1998: note 32

Buddhism in Tibet. These treasures are considered to have various forms, ranging from objects hidden in secret places such as lakes, earths, caves and forests, to incorporeal wisdom in one's spiritual mind. It is widely known that Padmasambhava's 25 main disciples and their incarnations are commissioned to rediscover these treasures when time becomes matured in the following history. These masters who have abilities and power to unearth hidden treasures are known as 'Terton' in Tibet.¹⁴

Khenpo Jikphun is revered as one of the most outstanding Tertons in contemporary Tibet (Gyatso, 1996: 148). He was born in Sertar in 1933 and is revered by his adherents as the incarnation of Lerab Lingpa, a famous Sertar's Terton who was invited to Lhasa to teach Buddhism for the 13th Dalai Lama in the late 19th century. This relationship legitimates Khenpo's status as a Terton in this life and his endeavors to discover various Ter treasures after he established Larung. Even though these Ter treasures are usually embodied within the forms of statue or text, all other ritual practices, Buddhist assemblies and pilgrimage activities that follow a Ter excavation often help a Terton and his monastery to attract numerous adherents and abundant donations in an effective way.

In his work, Germano examined how the establishment and development of Larung were closely related to Khenpo's Ter excavations in and around Sertar. When the end of China's Cultural Revolution allowed monastery reconstruction in the early 1980s, Khenpo chose Larung Valley as the site for his Buddhist academy, a valley which itself was told to be a Ter treasure according to an old prophetic hymn in Sertar's local doctrines and where Buddhists studying, meditating and practicing are able to maximize their merits. This feature helped Larung get more extensive and extraordinary reputation than other monasteries that were revived and reconstructed in the same period. In the following years, Khenpo dedicated his life to the reconstruction of Buddhist scholarship, the training of new qualified teachers and the purification of the monastic disciplines decayed during the Cultural Revolution. His endeavor was fervidly supported when the Chinese Communists had put all these religious enterprises and moral pursuits in an urgent demand. He also utilized the ideas and rhetoric of Rime movement to enlarge his influence in surrounding regions, which was a traditional ecumenical movement to unify the different Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug Sects (along with the native Bön religion) and to exclude any non-Tibetan elements. This Rime movement was previously used by monasteries in Eastern Tibet to resist the theocratic centralization of Gelug sect in Lhasa in the mid-19th century (Samuel, 1993:256-63), but now it has been invoked in a new form to resist the authoritarian Chinese state. Khenpo shared his excavated treasures with all the major Buddhist sects and monasteries in nearby regions.¹⁵ These

¹⁴ For discussion of Ter and Terton, see Thondup, 1986; Gyatso, 1996.

¹⁵ Roughly 65 percent of the residents were Nyingma, 20 percent Kagyu, 10 percent Sakya, 5 percent Gelug, with a few from the Bon and Jonang lineages. See Germano, 1998: 65

Tibetan strategies helped him establish his charismatic leadership in Buddhist revival in Tibet.

Germano attempted to discuss and understand Larung's strategies in the historical depth of Buddhist Tibet, particularly in the thoughts and practices of the Nyingma Sect. The Nyingma was founded on the first batch of translation of Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit to the Tibetan language in the 8th century. During the next three centuries of dark period, Nyingma monks as well as other Buddhist sects suffered from the harsh persecution by the King Langdarma and the political chaos following Tibetan Dynasty's demise. This predicament was lasted until the 11th century when the improvement of the conditions allowed Buddhist revival in Tibet. At that time, however, Nyingma monks began to be labeled as 'old school' because they held fast to the anterior translated works, while the other sects chose to import and legitimate a new turn of Indic scriptures. The way through which Nyingma monks reconstructed their destroyed lineages was Ter practice. It thus can be seen as a religious reaction to the interruption and discontinuity of Buddhism within the context of political repression and violence.

For Tibetan Buddhists who believe in reincarnation and the circle of life, it is not difficult to connect historical events with the political violence and social transformation in the Maoist era. The suppression by the Chinese state can be logically perceived as the latest reoccurrence of Langdarma's persecution. It therefore provides a background for Larung to promote realistic agenda through religious vision which harmonizes the historical and cosmological concepts shared by most monastic and lay Tibetans, and to activate the strongest repercussion among Tibetan communities. However, Khenpo never goes too far to confine his ambition and influence to pure religious affairs. He demands his disciples to ensure a peaceful environment for Buddhist education responsibly and not to be involved in political troubles. At least before 2001, the religious prosperity in Larung sharply contrasted with the volatile situation in Lhasa where religion was always saturated with political claims and suppressed by the Chinese state (Schwartz, 1994). In this way, Germano thought that Khenpo has contributed to another way of discovering Tibet's subjectivity and Tibetanness as well as an ideal of religious resistance to political violence, which is different from the politicization of Buddhism in Lhasa and political Tibet.

Thus, the contribution and significance of Larung are firmly understood within Tibetan's own history, culture and religion. This is also the way through which Tibetan scholars examine Ter practice, Rime movement and the wider revival of Buddhist Tibet. Although the presence of Chinese monks in Larung was noticed by Germano, he only paid his attention to the ethnic segregation between Tibetan and Chinese monks and saw the Chinese arrival as insignificant evidence that proves Khenpo's extensive reputation. This perspective that neglects the cultural relations between Tibet and China was typically reflected in his analysis on Khenpo's pilgrimage to Chinese Sacred Buddhist Mountains in 1987. In this trip, Khenpo excavated some Ter treasures and hid his own at Mountain Wutai, the main Pure Land of

the bodhisattva Manjusri, which reflected the history of Sino-Tibetan Buddhist communication. These Ter excavation and concealment on the Chinese side by a Tibetan lama was deemed by Germano as a symbolic counteraction to China's invasion and their discourses disparaging Tibetans as an uncivilized minority. Although he admitted and suggested that Khenpo's visit to Chinese Buddhist circles would help make 'a shared physical and symbolic space of resistance to government ideologies and practices crossing, at least intersecting, ethnic boundaries' (1998: 86), all the evidences showed that Germano did not think along with this way more deeply.

During my fieldwork¹⁶, however, I discovered that this pilgrimage to Chinese Buddhist Mountains reflects an emerging trend and strategy that has been broadly maneuvered by Larung and other Tibetan monasteries in ethnographic Tibet. Although Larung's Chinese monks might be negligible in quantity and influence at the time when Germano did his fieldwork, the following years have witnessed their far-reaching significance and the Buddhist interactions between Larung and Chinese Buddhist circles. In this paper, I will examine how Khenpo's visit to Chinese Buddhist Mountains commenced a series of strategies to assimilate Chinese adherents and their financial resources, and how the resources have been used as an indispensable prop to help Larung monks resist the repressive Chinese state. Chinese donations provide sufficient funds for Tibetan Buddhists to solve the economic difficulty in developing a new type of scholarship-oriented 'mass monasticism', which is significant for current revival in the political environment in Tibetan areas of China. In this sense, the 'genuine Tibetanness' reflected from Khenpo's approach is not only embodied by the gigantic monastery size or the heroic resistance to the Chinese state of Larung. If there is really a sense of 'Tibetanness', it also includes a series of preaching strategies that strives for placing Buddhist Tibet in a wider geographical and social context.

Buddhist ties between Larung and China

Preaching Buddhism to China by Ter treasure

Although Ter practice is often considered by scholars as an effective way for Tibetan monks to revive and remake their ties with Tibetan history, in 1994, an important Ter treasure uncovered by Khenpo was ironically proclaimed to prepare for Chinese Buddhist circles. This treasure, known as Vajrasattva Treasure Ritual, was excavated from a lake in Qinghai Province. It was announced by Khenpo to his

¹⁶ During my fieldwork in the summers of 2004, 2005 and 2008, I collected many Chinese language materials issued by Larung, which form the original materials of this paper. Although it will be interesting to compare these materials with those in Tibetan language, I believe that these Chinese language materials can still help scholars enlarge their views on Larung.

Tibetan adherents that this treasure, according to the prophecy of Padmasambhava, ‘has special benefits for the sentient beings of China’. Later, the ritual was quickly disseminated to Chinese cities and helped Larung gain its fame in Chinese Buddhist circles. In 1997, another Ter treasure called “Precious as-you-will pearl of Vajrasattva practice” and excavated from Khenpo’s wisdom was told to be suitable for both Tibetan esoteric and Chinese exoteric Buddhists. After this excavation, Khenpo ordered his Chinese adherents to donate a crystal-made Vajrasattva figure and a recitation hall that matches the figure. When the architecture was accomplished on December 19th, 1997, a new requirement was put forward by Khenpo that Chinese adherents should subscribe an annual Vajrasattva Prayer Assembly for rewarding the patronage of the Vajrasattva in the future.¹⁷

Despite the formal requirement being argued to the Vajrasattva Prayer Assembly, the other three main annual assemblies in Larung are similarly successful in attracting Chinese offerings.¹⁸ Ultimate Bliss Prayer Assembly is designed for praying Amitābha to take rebirth in Western Pure Land, which is a tenet of the popular Pure Land Sect in Chinese Buddhist circles. Some publications in Larung prove that the similarities between tantric Buddhism and the Pure Land Sect are consciously inculcated by Khenpo and other Tibetan teachers. They invoke a millenarian vision to persuade Chinese adherents that all Khenpo’s disciples will be successfully reborn as long as adherents chant sufficient Amitābha mantras and receive Khenpo’s empowerment. Another annual assembly, Ksitigarbha Prayer Assembly, is also used to satisfy Han Chinese people, because Ksitigarbha, whose seat is Jiuhua Mountain, Anhui Province, is often worshipped as a deity taking charge of wealth in Chinese folk religion.¹⁹

Monthly rituals and activities have the same functions as those big and crowded annual assemblies. They attract Chinese pilgrims and adherents as well as hundreds of Chinese monks who would like to make long-term residence in Larung, regardless of cruel material conditions and the harassment from local government.²⁰ These permanent residents make use of their secular skills in medicine, accounting and techniques prior to conversion, and take charge of various working positions in Larung. Their specialties and management experience support other Tibetan monks, which is helpful for developing

¹⁷ See JGSDXFRYBZYGJJ, 1999; see also Södargye, 2001

¹⁸ In Larung, the annual ritual assemblies in accordance of the four major Buddhist festivals include: Dharani Prayer Assembly on 15th of the first lunar month, Vajrasattva Prayer Assembly on 15th of the fourth lunar month, Ksitigarbha (Earth Treasury Bodhisattva) Prayer Assembly on 4th of the sixth lunar month and Ultimate Bliss Prayer Assembly on 22nd of the ninth lunar month.

¹⁹ It was explained by a Tibetan monk in interview when I asked him why Chinese like Ksitigarbha Prayer Assembly. In addition, a Chinese scholar, Liang Yongjia, reports that Ksitigarbha in China is called ‘Di Zang Wang (Earth Treasury Bodhisattva)’ and usually misread as ‘Ji Zhang Wang’, which means ‘king of account’. Liang thinks it evidence to suggest a relation between Ksitigarbha and money. See Liang, 2005.

²⁰ After 2001 crackdown, county government constructed a Chinese-style cement-made architecture and settled down a work team in Larung. Every year about thirty cadres were chosen from different government sections to become team’s members. Although the most important task for them is to control Larung’s population and to destroy any unapproved construction, they also take charge of registering and regulating Chinese pilgrims from large Chinese cities.

Larung into a modern Buddhist academy rather than a traditional monastery.²¹

Among all the distinctions, it is its completely scholarly orientation that makes Larung different from old Tibetan's 'mass monasticism'. In traditional Tibet, the conventional idea of mass monasticism made a huge population of Tibetan males turn to Sangha, but there were only a small number of them actively engaging themselves in Buddhist studies, while the rest majority merely participated in moneymaking activities. This was the contradiction of Tibetan's mass monasticism that 'emphasized size than quality' but was extremely restrained by financial difficulty (Goldstein, 1998), which has been aggravated in Tibetan areas of China in contemporary period. On the one hand, under the regulation and repression by the Chinese government, Buddhist practitioners in contemporary Tibet are required to concentrate on Buddhist studies and prevent themselves from any full-time economic activities; on the other hand, the enlargement of Sangha remains to be a potential demand and momentum for remaking Buddhist Tibet. Thus, cultivating and supporting a bulk of scholarly monks who exclusively focus on Buddhist studies seems to be a possible solution to this dilemma, which is just consistent with Khenpo's pursuit in restoring Buddhist education, cultivating teacher pools, and mitigating official's plague by emphasizing education rather than monasticism. This solution, however, possibly encounters financial difficulties, even though the economic situation of Tibetan people and families has been improved since the 1980s. According to Goldstein (1998), for example, economic anemia had constrained the full-time scholarly orientation of Drepung Monastery for a long history, and it was not solved until the population of residential monks shriveled to about 437 in the 1980s from a pre-1959 level of 10000 monks, due to the new quota policy imposed by the Chinese government.²² Considering Drepung Monastery has supreme status, receives more donations from lay Tibetans, and possesses significant collective property as well as a portion of incomes from tourism. Its tough experience in accomplishing full-time scholarly orientation can substantiate other monasteries' difficulties as well. Consequently, given that Larung is located in a remote and impoverished pastoral town and took a extremely short period to fulfill this miracle, it is reasonable to ask in what ways Larung has solved its financial resources to raise as many

²¹ Several Chinese monks have taken on very important positions in Larung. The chief accountant and the dean of hospital, for example, are both Han Chinese. Additionally, according to a two-volume book documenting the stories of the earliest batch of converts who arrived in the 1990s, Chinese monks were helpful in dealing with secular affairs such as maintaining generator or establishing broadcasting system during the development of Larung.

²² Goldstein noted that when monastic Tibet was revived in the 1980s, Drepung 'had difficulty supporting even a small number of monks, and the new political and social climate opposed allowing monasteries to fill up with monks who neither studied nor worked, or worse, became private businessmen as was typical of pre-1959 Tibet.' This situation made Drepung shift their emphasis from quantity to quality to cultivate scholar monks. Moreover, Goldstein pointed out that before 1959, an attempt to make reform to increase the number of scholar monks failed, because Drepung could not provide financial support for more monks engaged in full-time theological studies. At that time, 'only 100 to 200 of Gomang Collage's over 4000 monks were engaged in active study'. Consequently, it is worthy to explore in what way Larung can support more than 8000 scholar monks at its peak and still 3000-4000 people today.

as thousands of full-time scholarly monks, and in what ways is it able to establish a sort of ‘mass scholarship-oriented monasticism’ in contemporary Tibet?

Although traditional Tibetan custom to support at least one male child in monastery can be seen as a supporting factor, this alone cannot explain Larung’s success. This custom broadly existed in Tibet’s history and remains to be practiced in the other areas of contemporary Tibet, but no place than Larung can complete the unique mass scholarship-oriented monasticism. In addition, family support cannot explain the financial origins of nuns, who conventionally receive little economic support from family but have composed almost a half of the scholarly population in Larung. Moreover, Larung was both far from historically institutionalized Gelugpa monasteries in political Tibet and famous Nyingma monasteries in Ganzi.²³ Although this geographic solitude is effective for Tibetan Buddhists to reduce the surveillance from Chinese authority, this often leads to the formation of small-and-middle-sized monasteries in contemporary Tibet (Kapstein, 2002). But Larung is a Buddhist society whose size is as large as nearby Sertar’s county seat. For such a gigantic academy, the mechanics and approaches that survive it should be differentiated from the ways it was shaped. There should be some institutionalized factors supporting the operation of Larung. One can see that, after Khenpo’s death in January 2004, lacking charismatic power did not influence Larung’s development.

I want to point out that Chinese Buddhists and their financial resources play an important role in this process. Khenpo’s pilgrimage to Chinese Sacred Buddhist Mountain inspired him a prospective vision to preach to Chinese Buddhist circles. After he came back from the trip, he immediately promoted and ordered two excellent bilingual monks, Tshultrim Lodrö and Södargye, to translate his teachings and other tantric Buddhist materials into Chinese language. When these publications were disseminated in large Chinese cities in the early 1990s, a few Han Chinese monks were attracted to visit Larung and revere Khenpo as their Guru (spiritual master).²⁴ The Han’s Buddhist curriculums were instructed by Södargye, a former collage student unwontedly granted the highest Nyingma degree after a nine-month study of professional Buddhist curriculum as a monk.²⁵ Södargye’s success was largely because he was the most trustworthy and indispensable interpreter when Khenpo needed to communicate with Chinese

²³ According to a Nationalistic document, nomadic tribes in Sertar were called ‘*yefan* (primitives)’ in imperial era due to the isolated geography, see Fu, 1932: 42-44; In addition, after the Chinese Communists arrived in Sertar in August, 1952, they left precious archives about the situation and landscape of traditional Sertar by ‘doing social investigation’. These archives show that most Sertar’s monasteries were not economically comparable to those in nearby Ganzi and Luhuo County, see two documents (including 184 letters), named ‘the thinking trends of upper elites 1-2’, preserved in the Historical Archives of Sertar’s Working Committee, Vol. 1-3; and Historical Archives of Sertar’s People Committee, Vol. 1-2.

²⁴ There were 30 to 40 Chinese people in Larung in 1991. see Germano, 1998: 68

²⁵ This highest degree, called ‘khenpo’, is usually awarded after a period of 9 to 15 years of intensive study. Germano reported that the top students in Larung could get it in five years, because the pressing need for qualified teaching scholars made Khenpo relax the traditionally strict requirement. See Germano, 1998: 66

people. His promotion with Tshultrim Lodrö, another Tibetan monk conversant in Mandarin speaking and writing, reflected Khenpo's emerging plan to enlarge his influence in Chinese Buddhist circles.

In the mid-1990s, when a project to construct an assembly hall for Chinese residents was discussed, Khenpo insisted on building an unnecessarily big hall for the mere dozens of Chinese monks residing in Larung at the time of discussion, rejecting his lieutenants' more realistic and reasonable suggestion to build a smaller one. The architecture was finally established as spaciouly as for more than 700 hundred people,²⁶ which reflected Khenpo's different attitude toward Chinese immigration. In fact, according to county archives, most Sertar elites in the 1950s were fearful of Chinese influx and sensitive to the construction of Chinese dwelling.²⁷ The haggling over the total floor space of county committee's office, the first Chinese-style cement-made architecture on Sertar grassland, evidenced the anxiety and dissatisfaction historically. Despite being recruited as new cadres, Sertar elites opposed the construction, fought for reducing floor space, and ultimately besieged the office for three times in 1956-1959 military rebellion.²⁸ Therefore, the different attitudes that old elites and Khenpo have toward Chinese dwelling and the permanent residence of Han Chinese people imply the change between two different periods. In contemporary Sertar when Kkenpo lives, the immigration of Chinese Communists has been replaced by the arrival of Buddhist adherents as the result of China's economic reform.

Lerab Lingpa and Mandala: a new view for Rime movement

In Larung, prophecies are often used as sacred evidences to support and legitimatize real changes in local history, as the arrival of Chinese Buddhists is told to be revealed in the esoteric hagiography of Lerab Lingpa, the previous incarnation of Khenpo (see above). In Tibetan Buddhism and particularly in Ter cult, prophecy is not simply understood as the prediction of future, but as "words of truth" of an

²⁶ See Chen, 1998: 38

²⁷ These elites included secular chieftains in pastoral tribes and religious leaders such as Living Buddhas and abbots in monasteries. Although several encounters between Sertar and Chinese governments occurred in pre-1950 history, Sertar was never involved in any forms of administrative structure of China. In 1911, impacted by the policy of *Gai Tu Gui Liu* (replacing local with posted [officials]), nomadic tribes in Sertar, out of *tusi* governance at that time, were required to meet imperial bureaucrats for twice, Fu Songlin in May and Yang Zonghan in July. But they petitioned Chinese officials not to settle and garrison Sertar. In Nationalist period, Sertar nominally belonged to the Province of Western Kham, but no corporeal government office was established. The only encounter between Sertar and the Chinese Communists occurred in 1936, when Red Army troops in the Lang March passed Sertar and appropriated the wealth of *Donga* Monastery, the most important monastery in traditional Sertar. This experience made most Sertar elites disfavor the arrival of CCP's work team in August, 1952 and worry about their independence in the new regime. For above information, see Fu, 1932: 42-44; SDXZ, 1997: 2-3, 38-41; see also note 24 in this paper.

²⁸ Sertar elites demanded that the future office 'must be small, or the Han people coming to Sertar will be increased', and that 'the office must contain less than 20 Chinese cadres', see SDXZ, 1997: 47, 514.

enlightened figure that has the intrinsic power to affect social realities by bringing events into being.²⁹ This perspective can help explain why the meeting between Khenpo and the Dalai Lama in 1990 was so important for Sertar's Tibetans: It substantiated the repetition of past into present, because Lerab Lingpa was ever the teacher of the 13th Dalai Lama in the late 19th century. Although this relationship between Lerab Lingpa and the Dalai Lama was regarded by Germano as evidence of the nationalistic aspect of Khenpo's strategies (1998: 58), in the Chinese language version of Khenpo's biography, it is pointed out by Södargye that, according to Lerab Lingpa's esoteric hagiography, he also had a mystical encounter with Han Chinese people:

Although there were numerous brilliant stories in the 360 pages esoteric hagiography of master (Lerab Lingpa), I just collect some of them to satisfy readers:

Once, a Ter excavation by master in Qinghai Province aggravated local protection gods and earth gods. They used magic to evoke strong hail to undermine the excavation, but it did not hurt master and only incurred his punishment to expropriate all of their wealth other than the Ter treasure he needed. Feeling regretful and extremely ashamed, these gods bowed to master and repented very much.

In the same year, demonic troops swarmed to Tibet to destroy Buddhism for the ninth time. When [Tibet's] official army could not sustain the violent attack from the enemy, flustered monks requested master to subdue the demon... Master inserted a vajra (diamond scepter) into the stone in which the soul of the demonic leader had been possessed, and blood splashed down immediately. At that time, demonic troops enclosed the Potala Palace and would intrude upon the Jokhang Temple, but their commander suddenly fell down onto earth and bled from his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Tibet was thus exempted from a catastrophe.

Again, in Sertar, more than one thousand Dakinis performed Vajra Dance for master and integrated into him one after another. There were sixteen Dakinis finally left and wearing the costumes of Khampas, Amdowa and Han Chinese people. Then, two Chinese Dakinis spoke to master the sixteen prophecies of the rise and fall [xingshuai] of Tibetan Buddhism in the future. (Södargye, 2001: 8-10)

The first two paragraphs of the text reveal the use of ecumenical movement to resist the Chinese state. The obstructions by local gods insinuate a sort of factionalism among different sects in Tibetan areas,

²⁹ See Germano, 1998: 61; Thondup, 1986: 68

and the expropriation of their wealth by Lerab Lingpa represents Khenpo's ability to unite all different sects through his personal charisma. This description is identical with and confirmed by the rumors that Khenpo's ecumenical movement and outstanding reputation has provoked jealousy from other Tibetan monasteries (Germano, 1998: 92). In the second paragraph, that Lerab Lingpa subdued demonic troops and rescued Tibet from crisis confirms Khenpo's leadership in Tibetan's resistance and revival. The enclosed Potala Palace symbolizes the paralysis of Tibetan government in Tibet's political center, at which point Lerab Lingpa/Khenpo is depicted as the only person who will be reliable to save the failure of Buddhist Tibet. The demonic troops, given the life span of Lerab Lingpa (1856-1926), possibly referred to the imperial Chinese troop led by Zhao Erfeng, who conquered Lhasa and led to the 13th Dalai Lama's exile in 1910.³⁰ This imaginative connection between demonic and Chinese troops was similarly discovered in the late-1980s demonstrations in Lhasa (Schwartz, 1994: 129). One can find that the text attempts to invoke the scene of Chinese intrusion upon Jokhang Temple in 1987-89, the most traumatic memory shared by all Tibetans of current generations who witnessed the Chinese violence on their religious and nationalistic symbol (Barnett, 1994). This hagiography montages some significant scenes intersecting history and memory, event and myth, and creates a sacred space in which Tibetan Buddhists will believe in the realization of prophecy when Lerab Lingpa is reincarnated to Khenpo. It is based on this point that we decipher the last paragraph of the hagiography. It tells that: 1) Lerab Lingpa/Khenpo's adherents (Dakinis) come from Amdo, Kham and Han Chinese regions,³¹ and that 2) two categories of Han Chinese (two Chinese Dakinis) speak to Khenpo the "rise and fall of Tibetan Buddhism". Here we had better interpret the sentence quite literally: one for the 'fall (*shuai*)' of Tibetan Buddhism, and the other for the 'rise (*xing*)'.

In the ending part of the text, 'Han Chinese people' are rhetorically differentiated into two separate parts in respect to their different relationships with Tibetan Buddhism, which respectively refers to the Chinese Communists and Buddhists coming to Sertar. The Chinese Communists in the 1950s destroyed Buddhist institutions, society and culture, while the new Chinese converts contribute to the revival of Tibetan Buddhism. In a significant way this differentiation differs from the widely-accepted concept that views contemporary China as the opposite of Buddhist Tibet. It demonstrates that when China's economic reform has released vast economic resources that can flow across geographical and social boundaries without political constraint, Tibetan agents will hold on this historical moment and shape

³⁰ For this event and its aftermath, See Goldstein, 1989

³¹ Tibetan areas were traditionally divided into three parts, Amdo, Kham and Western Tibet. There are multifarious differences including language, custom, political system and religious tradition. Because of the Amdo dialect, nearly all the Tibetan monks in Larung are from 'Kham' and 'Amdo' and few adherents are from Western Tibet. Larung's influence also mainly covers the areas surrounding Qinghai-Sichuan border, which include some parts of today's Ganzi Tibetan Autonomy Prefecture and Yushu Guoluo Autonomy Prefecture.

their diverse attitudes and identities with Han Chinese people.

Nothing can reflect this point better than the strategy to merge new Chinese factors into traditional Tibetan's ecumenism that has been used to resist the Chinese state. In 1999, a well-designed Mandala architecture, named 'the Mahamaya Mandala to See for Salvation', was constructed as the landmark of Larung, through which we can discover Khenpo's unique understanding about ecumenical movement. At the bottom of the Mandala, there are 23 luxuriously decorated Buddhist shrines in eight directions, 21 evenly distributed in seven directions and the rest two in one direction. Within these shrines seat the numerous figures of the Gurus, Yidams (tutelary deities) and protectors of all the major Buddhist schools in Tibetan areas, known as the Eight Chariots of the Practice Lineages of Tibetan Buddhism that formed the traditional boundary of Tibetan ecumenism.³² There is also a Han Buddhist shrine on Larung's Mandala nevertheless. This Han shrine's façade is painted with the auspicious Chinese dragons and phoenix pattern. Three popular figures - Hsüan-tsang, Laughing Buddha (Maitreya) and Chai Gong (Mad Monk) - are worshiped in the shrine as well as the three-roots in Tibetan Buddhism.

These figures jointly materialize Larung's ambition to unite both Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists to resist the secular state and strive for Dharma's victory. Hsüan-tsang, for instance, was the monk who brought orthodox doctrines back to China from India in the Tang Dynasty. His image in Chinese novel *Journey to the West* as a transmitter of Dharma from West to East through a tough journey represents Larung's Chinese monks today. Chai Gong, on the other hand, is considered by Tibetan monks to best reflect the image of Tibetan Buddhism that looks like a denigrate form of Buddhism and historically called 'Lamaism' by Chinese Sangha, but that actually has a higher level of spiritual and magical power as well as understanding about Buddhist discipline.³³ There is also a statuette of Emperor Guan (God of War) beside this Chai Gong figure, which signifies loyalty and righteousness in Chinese popular culture and is revered as Sangharama Bodhisattvawhich, a Dharma guardian in Chinese Buddhism. This suggests a current role of Chinese adherents as the protector of Tibetan Buddhism. Finally, the center of the shrine seats Laughing Buddha, known as Maitreya or Future Buddha. It is recognized that Maitreya will lead Buddhist forces to conquer the secular state when the current Buddhisms are not taught and completely forgotten. If we further notice that there is Khenpo's portrait being nailed next to the Maitreya figure, such juxtaposition obviously implies that Larung will lead Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist circles to resist the Chinese state in the context of political violence and religious devastation, and will win the Buddhist triumph in the end.

³² These Eight Chariots include: Nyingma, Kadampa, Sakya, Marpa Kagyü, Shangpa Kagyü, Jodruk and Nyendrub Lineage.

³³ It is reported that *Södargye* compared Chai Gong with Tibetan Yogi in his teaching. See NMDHH, 1998: 249

The influence of Chinese resources

Either the hagiography or Mandala as the specific form of prophecy legitimates and takes forward the preachment to Chinese adherents. In the recent decade, a vast and stable religious economy has been established between Larung and Chinese Buddhist circles. Although economic control was extremely effective in suppressing religion in the collectivization period, local government has found that it is increasingly impossible to repress Larung's development by cutting off its financial origins, for the access to free resources in post-reform China becomes almost uncontrollable. Every month Chinese donations are collected from coastal cities to support Larung's regular prayer assemblies and Buddhist activities, and unusual occurrences such as SARS or the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan might bring with additional collections. These donations effectively amplify the funds allocated to each monk in prayer chanting sessions, which improves individual proceeds and makes it available to support a large population of scholarly monks who are able to spend much more time in Buddhist studies or even full-time studies.³⁴ Chinese donations also make Larung's monastic property achieve an extraordinary level that has been far beyond a 'Tibetan' standard. The District of Vajra, for instance, one of the nine districts of Larung, had a bank deposit of about 12 million RMB in May 2008.³⁵ In the Ksitigarbha Prayer Assembly of 1999, under the subject matter of expressing gratitude to Södargye, more than 6 million dollars were reported to be used throughout China for releasing life, either by remitting to Larung or completed by adherents themselves.³⁶ The enlargement of monastic property provide financial base for a series of infrastructure construction, including road, traffic, architecture, power generation and distribution, communication system, as well as for the improvement of the living standard and food supply of monks.

Chinese supports contribute to the balance between Larung and the Chinese government, though the current balance is actually based on the already reduced monastery size impacted by 2001 crackdown. The improvement of living conditions shatters the official's plot to use harsh environment to overawe both Tibetan and Chinese pilgrims. It also precludes the possibilities of using sanitation and security factors as excuse for political intervention. Nowadays, there are about 2000-3000 residents, including

³⁴ There is a difference between Tibetan and Chinese monks in getting financial supports in Larung. Both Tibetan and Chinese monks can get alms by attending prayer chanting sessions, but only Chinese monks have a fixed subsidy every month. In addition, Chinese monks who are financially needy are often supported by other kinds of economic assistance, such as free accommodation or part-time jobs.

³⁵ This is known based on a financial statement collected at September 14th, 2008. The nine districts in Larung include five districts for monks, the District of the Wheel of Dharma, the District of Diamond, the District of Sword, the District of Mani Pearl and the District of Vajra, and four Districts for nuns, the District of Truth Body, the District of Reward Body, the District of Transformation Body and the District of Lotus.

³⁶ It was recorded in a form that covered 47 cities of 20 provinces in China, named 'the statistical form of life release on June, 4th of Tibetan calendar', collected at August 9th, 2005

300-400 Chinese monks in Larung. Although Chinese officials still enact strict policies to control the residential population, the latest news shows that Larung has established a preaching system that has numerous hierarchical sub-branches in Chinese cities to disseminate its teaching and practice, through which any information from Larung is first transferred to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, and then distributes to other cities in China. Chinese Buddhists now are able to get video records of courses instructed by Södargye and other Tibetan teachers in less than one week. In this way, they are no longer necessary to make residence in Larung for long-term Buddhist study; therefore the pressures to meet official's regulation have become much less than before.³⁷

It seems that the Chinese government can accept the current situation as well. No open and harsh repression has been launched since 2001 crackdown, and even in the past tumultuous Olympic summer, the relationship between Larung and local government remained very peaceful.³⁸ The balance between the alliance of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists and the Chinese state is well materialized in a tripartite layout of Larung: Among numerous Tibetan wooden huts, there is a Chinese-styled cement office for government cadres at the center of the academy; another similar architecture as the guest house for Chinese pilgrims takes on the top of Larung valley, next to which is ecumenical Mandala. These two Chinese-styled architectures thus possess the two most important positions in the level and vertical axis of Larung, representing the political surveillance and economic patronage from Chinese people. In this way Lerab Lingpa's hagiography is well embodied in local space: Han Chinese people have been really differentiated into two different parts in post-reform context, one of which suppress Tibetan Buddhism in past and present, and the other of which contribute to Buddhist revival instead.

The story of Larung provides us an opportunity and challenge to understand religious revivalism in contemporary Tibet, in which both Tibetan Buddhism and the Buddhist ties between Tibet and China have been revitalized and reconstructed after the 1980s. Given that Chinese authority is sensitive to any forms of religious congregation in Tibetan areas of China, one important choice for Tibetan people to secure a large Buddhist society is to develop an educational academy instead of a monastery. Thus, Tibetan Buddhists have to find all possible solutions to financial difficulties in supporting such a scholarship-oriented mass community, unless they give up their traditional mass monasticism or accept

³⁷ It doesn't mean that Tibetan Buddhists don't need to settle down either. According to an official, nearly every morning they can find new huts constructed secretly in the past night, so their task is to find and destroy them to maintain the official quota. There is an interesting phenomenon that county government does not control the 'population' but the 'size' of Larung, so Tibetan people often build an extra floor or a basement on existent huts to contain more people or share a hut with more roommates. We can see that the struggle for symbolic space remains to be performed in contemporary Sertar.

³⁸ After the protest on March 14th in Lhasa, some demonstrations erupted in Sertar. A band of herdsmen attacked the office of Niqu Town and sabotaged the traffic, announcing independence for eight days. Some sporadic demonstrations such as throwing stones at the county office also occurred. Although there were two monks brandishing independent flag in demonstration, as Södargye and other abbots ordered, nobody in Larung was involved in such activities.

the current pattern of ‘Small is beautiful’ that is mainly for avoiding political repression (Kapstein, 2004: 255). In his work on present Kham (2004), Kapstein suggested that the return visit of Tibetan exiles would have potential to provide financial supports for Buddhist revival in contemporary Tibet. As this paper has pointed out, another alternative used by Tibetan agents is to preach to Chinese Buddhist circles, a strategy that was used by many generations of Tibetan Buddhists in history to shape and understand their relationships with other polities in the Pan-Asian context. Consequently, current scholars should not overlook the Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China due to the shadow of ‘China-Tibet’ divide. It is actually through the use of Chinese resources to resist the Chinese state that Tibetan agents are making efforts to fulfill their resistance and revival in contemporary period.

Epilogue: a new solution to Sino-Tibetan relationship?

In his excellent work (2004), Gray Tuttle examined the active interactions between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist circles in the early 20th century. He described how the Chinese Republic, after the failure of racial and nationalistic rhetoric, attempted to use Buddhism as a new rhetoric to incorporate Tibet in an emerging imagination of modern Chinese nation-state. From the 1920s to 1940s, the Nationalist government embraced the schools dedicated to Tibetan Buddhist education, sent Chinese monks to Tibetan areas and notified Tibetan elites that the new government would support their religion. Monastic and lay Chinese also revered Tibetan teachers and emphasized that they share a common base with Tibetan people. Tibetan Buddhists, on the other hand, needed and made efforts to look for new patrons after the end of the Qing Empire. The nation-formation and centralization of power promoted by the 13th Dalai Lama in Lhasa also made some prominent Tibetan Lamas exile in China to develop relationship with Han Chinese adherents. Chinese people’s popular supports for Tibetan Buddhism and their fervor of Tibetan teachings and rituals were crucial for developing cultural connection between Tibet and China. It even made some nobles and monastic elites in Tibet suggest the young 14th Dalai Lama to cooperate with Chinese Communists in the 1950s, because they believed that Han Chinese people were also ‘Buddhist’. As Tuttle suggested, the Buddhist interactions driven by different interests and motivations in the first half of the 20th century finally led to an ‘unintended consequence’, a result of the incorporation of Tibet into the imagination and making of modern Chinese nation-state.

In what ways can we connect this historical experience with the events occurring in Larung? Will the revitalization of Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China in contemporary period make effects on Sino-Tibetan relationship as they did in the Republican past? In the last few years, Larung’s strategies to preach to Chinese Buddhist circles have been well extended in Ganzi Region. Several of the most

outstanding disciples of Khenpo left Larung for other counties to establish their own monasteries and duplicated Larung's mode to assimilate Han Chinese Buddhists. A few of the first batch of Chinese converts that returned back to China have taken on monastery abbots or official positions in local Buddhist associations, so the Buddhist interactions have been enlarged by these social network. Additionally, in Larung, the segregation between Tibetan and Chinese residents has been significantly improved. Young Tibetan monks now are interested in studying Chinese language. If condition allows, they often follow Chinese monks and laymen to visit Chinese cities to improve their language skill and cultivate relations with Han Chinese patrons. All suggest that if Tibetan Buddhism becomes sufficiently popular in China — as what Holmes Welch heard from Tibetan government-in-exile in the 1960s when he asked them how to treat the lamas living and teaching in China — the Buddhist ties will be able to 'create an influential body of opinion opposed to any invasion of Tibet' (Welch, 1968: 178). But the real future will be much more complicated than this forecast.

One of the factors that may put shadow on the future of the Buddhist interactions is the uncertain attitude of the Chinese government. Compared with the Nationalist government who saw the positive aspects of the enlargement of Buddhist interactions for governance, current officials firmly believe that Larung cannot become so threatening without the financial supports of Chinese adherents that the safest way for them is to put the interactions under strict surveillance. Indeed, although Buddhists often enjoy more relaxed policies than other religious adherents in China, the Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China have been cautiously controlled by Chinese authority to a narrow extent consisting of official activities held by Buddhist associations and religious bureaus. No signal suggests that the Chinese government will further loosen its control in the field, despite the existence of uncontrollable space and resources released by China's economic reform. At least until now, Han's pilgrimages are carefully regulated and discouraged by local government in Larung. Nobody knows whether or not the further development of the Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China must depend on the wide accomplishment of China's democracy agenda, or it will be specially treated in the aim for solving the problems in Sino-Tibetan relationship, as what had been done by the Chinese Nationalists.

In addition, whether and to what degree the Han Chinese Buddhists will consciously and voluntarily participate in creating a political co-resistance beyond ethnic boundaries is uncertain. Although they have financially engaged themselves in Tibetans' Buddhist revivalism to resist the repressive Chinese state, their reasons and motivations for doing so are completely 'religious'. These Chinese monks and adherents concentrate on Buddhist affairs and understand their roles and goals as studying tantric Buddhism or supporting and offering Tibetan Buddhists to accumulate merits. Indeed, many of them carefully keep from political issues because they do not want to remember those miserable sufferings

afflicted by the political campaigns and violence in China and that led them to Buddhist conversion. In this way, it is unlikely for these Chinese Buddhists to be actively engaged in political resistance to the Chinese state as well as in an effort to improve Sino-Tibetan relationship.

In addition to political indifference with which Han Chinese adherents deal with their relationship with Tibetan monasteries, their religious pursuits in merit making and Buddhist salvation made gloomy the future of the Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China in a more fundamental way. During my fieldwork, I found that the ‘expedient means’ in tantric Buddhism are extremely attractive for Chinese Buddhists, because they believe that these tantric means are the most convenient methods for merit accumulation and ultimate salvation. This calculation or religious rationalization is actually one of the main motivations for which Chinese adherents would like to believe in Tibetan Buddhism instead of Chinese Buddhism. However, these expedient means make it difficult for Larung and any other Tibetan monastery to exclusively and enduringly control Chinese people’s financial donations, as the religious rationalization will make Chinese adherents feel compulsive to know as many Tibetan masters and monasteries as they can to maximize merits. Consequently, the way that is used to assimilate Chinese adherents and their financial resources ironically constitutes the dynamics that disperses the adherents and resources, which creates the essential tension between Tibetan monasteries and Chinese adherents. Thus, unlike the earlier patterns between Tibetan ecclesiastical powers and the Chinese imperial court, the current interactions will involve increasing amounts of Tibetan monasteries and Chinese adherents, which leads to the formation a ‘religious market’ characterized by a competition for Chinese resources. It is therefore reasonable to ask in what ways this competition will change the power relations between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists in the future.

As the most successful monastery of those that have preached to Chinese Buddhist circles, Larung has felt competition and challenge from other Tibetan monasteries. In 2005 summer, for instance, a self-criticism campaign was launched by Södargye among Chinese adherents for rebuking overactive quests for Tibetan masters belonging to other monasteries. It reflected a contradiction between Larung’s ecumenical pursuits and requirement of consolidating its own advantage. Of all the monasteries that have emulated Larung to preach to Chinese adherents, Yachen Academy in Baiyu (Palyul) County, a monastery that transplanted Larung’s mode in the mid-1990s and has had a size as gigantic as Larung, constitutes the biggest challenge. It emphasizes more on tantric practice than Buddhist learning and meditation, the things that are underscored by Larung. This characteristic which satisfies Han’s special need in merit making and immediate salvation drives many Chinese adherents to move from Larung to Yachen to make permanent residence or short-term pilgrimages. As a result, in 2008, Södargye had to proclaim that Larung would teach Chinese students tantric practice as well. But tantric Buddhism is in

no sense the field in which Larung monks have more advantages than other Tibetan monasteries. This modification betrays from Khenpo's preliminary idea of taking priority in the reconstruction of basic Buddhist education, which is the most necessary and urgent agenda for reviving Buddhist Tibet that experienced the decades of destruction by the Communist China.

Developmental trajectories such as these reflect the complexities of Buddhist revival in present Tibet as well as the ambiguous future of the Buddhist interactions between Tibet and China. Whether and to what degree these interactions will lead to any political significance will be not only determined by the Chinese government, but also influenced by the choices and identities of both Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist circles. On one side, as long as different interest-groups are negotiated to form a competition over Chinese adherents and resources, Tibetan agents seem to encounter a dilemma that their agency to strive for a wider geographic, economic, social and cultural space might put their own independence into a very dubious situation, as the 'unintended consequences' occurring in the first half of the 20th century and discussed by Gray Tuttle. On the other side, although almost all the Chinese converts to Tibetan Buddhism focus exclusively on religious affairs and had little intent to the political conflicts in Tibetan areas of China, these people are actually being involved in a historical probability for making effects on the future of Sino-Tibetan relationship, one of the most important political issues in global world. In this way, the story of Larung reveals a common fate shared by Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists in contemporary era as well as the situation of religion in the face of politics and modernity more generally.

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