

THE HISTORY OF GYALTHANG UNDER CHINESE RULE:
MEMORY, IDENTITY, AND CONTESTED CONTROL
IN A TIBETAN REGION OF NORTHWEST YUNNAN

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History.

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ABSTRACT

Dáša Pejchar Mortensen: The History of Gyalthang Under Chinese Rule:
Memory, Identity, and Contested Control in a Tibetan Region of Northwest Yunnan
(Under the direction of Michael Tsin)

This dissertation analyzes how the Chinese Communist Party attempted to politically, economically, and culturally integrate Gyalthang (Zhongdian/Shangri-la), a predominately ethnically Tibetan county in Yunnan Province, into the People's Republic of China. Drawing from county and prefectural gazetteers, unpublished Party histories of the area, and interviews conducted with Gyalthang residents, this study argues that Tibetans participated in Communist Party campaigns in Gyalthang in the 1950s and 1960s for a variety of ideological, social, and personal reasons. The ways that Tibetans responded to revolutionary activists' calls for political action shed light on the difficult decisions they made under particularly complex and coercive conditions. Political calculations, revolutionary ideology, youthful enthusiasm, fear, and mob mentality all played roles in motivating Tibetan participants in Mao-era campaigns. The diversity of these Tibetan experiences and the extent of local involvement in state-sponsored attacks on religious leaders and institutions in Gyalthang during the Cultural Revolution have been largely left out of the historiographical record. This dissertation claims that, over the past two decades, the Chinese Communist Party's attempts to control historical memory, the government's promotion of ethnic tourism in Gyalthang, and elderly Tibetans' reluctance to discuss their involvement in past atrocities have contributed to the effacement of these diverse Cultural Revolution narratives.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DXZ** Deqin xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 德钦县志编纂委员会 [Deqin County Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed. *Deqin xian zhi* 德钦县志 [*Deqin County Gazetteer*]. Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1997.
- DZWZX1** Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, Yunnan sheng Diqing zangzu zizhizhou weiyuanhui, wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui 中国人民政治协商会议, 云南省迪庆藏族自治州委员会, 文史资料研究委员会 [Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, The Committee of Diqing Prefecture in Yunnan Province, The Literary and Historical Materials Research Committee], ed. *Diqing zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji, di yi ji* 迪庆州文史资料选辑. 第一辑 [*An Anthology of Literary and Historical Materials from Diqing Prefecture, Volume 1.*] Kunming: Yunnan minzu yinshua chang, 1987.
- DZWZX3** Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, Yunnan sheng Diqing zangzu zizhizhou weiyuanhui, wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui 中国人民政治协商会议, 云南省迪庆藏族自治州委员会, 文史资料研究委员会 [Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, The Committee of Diqing Prefecture in Yunnan Province, The Literary and Historical Materials Research Committee], ed. *Diqing zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji, di san ji* 迪庆州文史资料选辑. 第三辑 [*An Anthology of Literary and Historical Materials from Diqing Prefecture, Volume 3.*] Kunming: Xizhan caiyinchang, 1990.
- DZWZX6** Diqing zangzu zizhizhou zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 迪庆藏族自治州政协文史资料委员会 [The Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, The Literary and Historical Materials Committee], ed. *Diqing zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji, di liu ji* 迪庆州文史资料选辑, 第六辑 [*An Anthology of Literary and Historical Materials from Diqing Prefecture, Volume 6.*] Kunming: Xizhan caiyinchang, 1998.
- DZZZ** Diqing zhouzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 迪庆州志编纂委员会 [Diqing Prefecture Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed. *Diqing zangzu zizhizhou zhi* 迪庆藏族自治州志 [*Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Gazetteer*]. 2 vols. Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2003.
- DZZZZ** Diqing zangzu zizhizhou minzu zongjiao shiwu weiyuanhui 迪庆藏族自治州民族宗教事务委员会 [Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Nationalities Religious Affairs Committee], ed. *Diqing zangzu zizhizhou zongjiao zhi* 迪庆藏族自治州宗教志 [*Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Gazetteer of Religion*]. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1994.

- XXJZZZ Zhonggong Jiantang zhen weiyuanhui & Jiantang zhen ren min zhengfu 中共建塘镇委员会、建塘镇人民政府 [The Central Committee of Jiantang town and The Jiantang People's Government]. *Xianggelila xian jiantang zhen zhen zhi (neishen, songshen, zhengqiu yijian gao)* 香格里拉县建塘镇镇志 (内审、送审、征求意见稿) [*The Gazetteer of Xianggelila County Jiantang Town*]. Unpublished internally-circulated draft, July 17, 2009.
- YSDZZZXDZ Zhongdian xian renmin zhengfu, Zhongdian xian diming lingdao xiaozu 中甸县人民政府, 中甸县地名领导小组 [Zhongdian County People's Government, Zhongdian County Place Names Leadership Small Group], ed. *Yunnan sheng Diqing Zangzu zizhizhou Zhongdian xian diming zhi* 云南省迪庆藏族自治州中甸县地名志 [*The Gazetteer of Place Names in Zhongdian County, Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province*]. Chengdu: Xinan minzu yinshua chang, 1984.
- ZFT Yunnan sheng bianji zu 云南省编辑组 [The Editing Division of Yunnan Province], ed. *Zhongyang fangwen tuan di er fentuan Yunnan minzu qingkuang huiji* 中央访问团第二分团云南民族情况汇集 (上) [*The Report of the Second Central Visiting Delegation to Investigate the Conditions of the Ethnic Minorities in Yunnan Province (Vol. 1)*]. Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1986.
- ZXZ Zhongdian xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 中甸县志编纂委员会 [Zhongdian County Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed. *Zhongdian xian zhi* 中甸县志 [*Zhongdian County Gazetteer*]. Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1997.
- ZXZZ Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyim Yunnan sheng Zhongdian xian weiyuanhui 中国人民政治协商会议云南省中甸县委员会 [China Peoples Political Conference of the Yunnan Province Zhongdian County Committee], ed. *Zhongdian xian zhengxie zhi* 中甸县政协志 [*The Gazetteer of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference of Zhongdian County*]. Dali: Yunnan sheng Diqing zhou wenhua xinwen chuban zhunyin zheng, 2003.

INTRODUCTION

From 1966 until 1976, Gyalthang, a predominately ethnically Tibetan area of northwest Yunnan Province, was caught up in the politics of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.¹ While recognizing the extent to which coercion was a reality under Chinese Communist rule, this dissertation contends that Gyalthang Tibetans were both victims and perpetrators of the widespread violence and destruction that took place during the Cultural Revolution. Tibetan, Naxi, and Han residents of Gyalthang burned Buddhist texts, destroyed religious relics, demolished monasteries and temples, and verbally and physically attacked local leaders during the Cultural Revolution. The destruction of Tibetan cultural objects, historical archives, and religious institutions was systematic and widespread.

Given that by the mid-1960s, Gyalthang residents had already been living for a decade under the strains of a radically altered political, ideological and social system, in what ways did Tibetan cadres and farmers react to the sometimes empowering, sometimes terrifying implications of the Cultural Revolution? What were the political, social, and economic reasons why Tibetans in Gyalthang actively participated in a revolution that, at least at the local level, directly targeted Tibetan religion and culture? To what extent were Tibetans' identities during

¹ Gyalthang (*rGyal thang*) is located in the easternmost foothills of the Himalaya Mountains in the northwest corner of present-day Yunnan Province in southern Kham. From 1725 until 2001, this area was referred to as Zhongdian 中甸 in Chinese, but in 2001 Zhongdian County was renamed Shangri-la County (*Xianggelila xian* 香格里拉县). Gyalthang is a remarkably ethnically and linguistically diverse area, home to sizable populations of Tibetan, Naxi, Han, Bai, Yi, Hui, and eleven other ethnic groups that have been officially recognized by the government of the People's Republic of China, as well as many other ethnically distinct populations that remain unrecognized by the state.

the Cultural Revolution shaped more by their diverse political and ideological orientations than by their subject positions as members of a marginalized ethnic minority group? Why, in the post-Cultural Revolution era, have local histories of violence in Gyalthang been effaced from the public record while lingering on in public memory? To what extent has the recent promotion of tourism in Gyalthang played a role in silencing discomforting historical narratives? In addressing these questions, this study attempts to move beyond a simple narrative of Tibetan victimization, which has often occluded Tibetan Studies scholars' understandings of the recent past.

Located at the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains at around 3,300 meters above sea level, the area commonly referred to as Gyalthang by local Tibetan residents roughly corresponds to the contemporary political boundaries of Shangri-la County (*Xianggelila xian* 香格里拉县) within the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Diqing zangzu zizhizhou* 迪庆藏族自治州) in Yunnan Province. The Salween (*nujiang* 怒江), Mekong (*lancangjiang* 澜沧江), and Yangtze (*changjiang* 长江; locally Ch.: *jinshajiang* 金沙江) rivers all descend within seventy-five kilometers of one another through Gyalthang's Hengduan Mountains and conifer forests, en route to the lower climes of eastern China and Southeast Asia. The topographic variation in this area is remarkable. Elevations can change 4,000 meters within a span of ten kilometers. Subtropical ecosystems exist along canyon bottoms, whereas a few hours' hike uphill brings one to temperate, boreal, and arctic-alpine life zones. Along the banks of these rivers and in the nearby mountain valleys grow more than ten thousand different plant species, making this region one of the most biodiverse in the world.

Gyalthang historians disagree on the exact date when the name Gyalthang was originally used to officially designate this area of Northwest Yunnan Province. Gyalthang (alternatively spelled *rGyal thang*) is composed of the individual Tibetan words *rGyal*, meaning "royal," and

thang, meaning “plain.” According to one story, which is widely shared by a number of Tibetan scholars living in Gyalthang, the name “royal plain” commemorates the seventh-century battles that were fought between the armies of the Tibetan king Songtsan Gampo, the kingdom of Dali, and the rulers of ’Jang (*Sathang*), a predominately ethnically Naxi area now known as Lijiang 丽江. There are written records dating back as early as the fifteenth century that indicate that the Chinese name, Zhongdian 中甸, meaning “middle pasture” or “central field,” was used by Chinese government officials in written documents.²

Historically, Gyalthang has been bordered to the southwest by the primarily Lisu, Tibetan, Naxi, and Han people living within what is now the Weixi Lisu Autonomous County (*Weixi Lisuzu zizhi xian* 维西傈僳族自治县), and bordered to the northwest by Dechen County (*Deqin xian* 德钦县) within the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Diqing Zangzu zizhi zhou* 迪庆藏族自治州). The country of Myanmar and the Tibetan Autonomous Region lie not far to the west and northwest, respectively. Just beyond the Daxueshan 大雪山 mountain range (locally: *jiarongya*) and the valley system of Termarong (*Dongwang* 东旺) township, lies the Tibetan area of Ganzi County in Sichuan Province, which marks the northern boundary of Gyalthang. Muli Tibetan Autonomous County (*Muli Zangzu zizhi xian* 木里藏族自治县) in Sichuan Province marks the eastern border of Gyalthang, and the primarily ethnically-Naxi Lijiang Prefectural-level City lies to the south.³

² Åshild Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition: A Place Called Shangrila* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 4-5.

³ Historically, Gyalthang did not include areas west of the Nyishar (*Nixi* 尼西) valley. Thus, Benzilan 奔子栏 and Dechen (*Deqin* 德钦) fell outside of Gyalthang, as did any areas west and southwest of Tacheng. Balagezong 巴拉格宗, just to the west of Kaytshag (*Geza* 格咱) township was not part of Gyalthang, although the village of Nagara

Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture covers an area of 9,189 square miles, making it roughly equal to the size of New Hampshire, and it is one of sixteen prefectures located in Yunnan Province. Diqing faces Sichuan Province to the northeast, the Tibetan Autonomous Region to the northwest, the Lijiang Prefecture-level City to the southeast, and the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture to the southwest. When it was established in 1957, Diqing was designated a “Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.” Although Tibetans still are the largest ethnic group in Diqing, currently they make up only around thirty percent of a total registered prefectural population of 353,500 people.⁴ The remaining population is mostly Han, Lisu, Naxi, Bai, and Yi. Additional ethnic groups, such as the Hui, Pumi, Miao, Nu, and Dulong, each make up less than one percent of the total registered prefectural population.⁵

Gyalthang covers an area of 4,484 square miles and is a remarkably ethnically- and linguistically-diverse area, home to seventeen different officially recognized ethnic groups. In 1964, Tibetans comprised forty-one percent of the 66,532 people living in Gyalthang, or the region that the Chinese government defined as Zhongdian County. The remaining population of Zhongdian County was twenty-five percent Han, seventeen percent Naxi, and seventeen percent

(Tib: *nags rked rag*) was. Gyalthang likely extended to the southwest to Sanba 三坝 township and Baishuitai 白水台 spring, and perhaps to Haba 哈巴, and to the south as far as the land across the river from Shigu town 石鼓镇, as is evidenced by the territorial demarcation inscribed on the town’s famous stone drum from which the town gets its moniker. For more on Gyalthang’s early history, see Peter Schwieger, “On the Jurisdiction in South-East-Tibet after the Rise of the Gandan Phodrang Government,” in Jeannine Bischoff, & Saul Mullard, eds., *Social Regulation: Case Studies from Tibetan History* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

⁴ According to the Chinese government census of 2010, Tibetans made up 32.36%, Lisu 26.72%, Han 18.34%, Naxi 11.6%, and Yi 4.16% of the population of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. See China Statistical Bureau (2013), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.tjcn.org>. Cited in Emily Yeh and Chris Coggins, eds., *Mapping Shangri-la: Contested Landscapes in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 8.

⁵ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 2.

other ethnic minority groups such as Lisu, Yi, Bai, Miao, Hui, Pumi, and Zhuang.⁶ In the 1960s, the Han Chinese population was concentrated largely in the county and prefecture capital, Zhongxin Town (*Zhongxin zhen* 中心镇), whereas the surrounding rural areas were almost exclusively inhabited by Tibetans.⁷

Four decades later, in 2001, Zhongdian County had a registered Tibetan population of thirty-eight percent. Han Chinese made up the next largest ethnic group in the county, comprising twenty-eight percent, while ethnic groups other than the Tibetans and Han – mostly Naxi, Lisu, Nosuo Yi, Bai, Miao, Hui, Pumi, and Zhuang – made up the remaining thirty-four percent of the population.⁸ Just like it was in the 1960s, the ethnic Han population today is predominately concentrated in the towns, and particularly in the current capital of Diqing Prefecture, Zhongxin Town, which has since been renamed Jiantang Town (*Jiantang zhen* 建塘镇).⁹ While the residents of Jiantang Town are predominately recent Han Chinese immigrants,

⁶ [ZXZ]: Zhongdian xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 中甸县志编纂委员会 [Zhongdian County Gazetteer Compilation Committee], ed., *Zhongdian xian zhi* 中甸县志 [*Zhongdian County Gazetteer*] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1997), 132.

⁷ According to the census conducted by the Zhongdian County government in 1964, the population of Zhongxin Town was composed of 48% Han, 27% Tibetan, 16% Naxi, and 9% Bai, Lisu, Hui, and other minorities. On the other hand, the population of Dazhongdian 大中甸, a rural township located just north of Zhongxin Town, was 73% Tibetan, and only 17.7% Han and 5.8% Naxi in 1964. See [XXJZZZ]: Zhonggong Jiantang zhen weiyuanhui, Jiantang zhen renmin zhengfu 中共建塘镇委员会、建塘镇人民政府 [The Central Committee of Jiantang Town and The Jiantang People's Government], ed., *Xianggelila xian jiantang zhen zhen zhi (neishen, songshen, zhengqiu yijian gao)* 香格里拉县建塘镇镇志 (内审、送审、征求意见稿) [The Gazetteer of Jiantang Town in Xianggelila County (Unpublished internally-circulated draft)], July 17, 2009, 113.

⁸ Diqing Nianjian Bianjibu 迪庆年鉴编辑部 [Diqing Yearbook Editorian Department], ed., *Diqing Nianjian 2002* 迪庆年鉴 2002 [*Diqing Yearbook 2002*] (Kunming: Yunnan daxue chubanshe, 2002), 44.

⁹ *Jiantang Zhen* 建塘镇 is now the official name of the capital of Shangri-la County, and official Chinese publications and maps use this name when referring to this town. *Jiantang* is the Chinese transliteration of the original Tibetan name for the town, Gyalthang. However, the majority of local people still refer to the town by its old name of *Zhongdian* 中甸, or its new name of *Xianggelila* 香格里拉 when speaking Chinese. The older section of *Xianggelila* is officially called *Dukezong Gucheng* 独克宗古城 in Chinese publications, while local people

the villagers living in the surrounding countryside, on the other hand, are almost all Tibetan.¹⁰

Over the past two decades, Jiantang has exploded into a burgeoning small city, stretching across the entirety of the valley between the central village of Dukezong and the historically important Geluk monastery Ganden Sumtsenling.¹¹ Tibetan residents of Gyalthang are ostensibly predominately Gelukpa Buddhist, although the ravaging of institutional religion over the past half-century has left the entire region with a precarious sense of its own Buddhist vitality, and there has been a correlative reification of local (arguably non-orthodox Buddhist or pre-Buddhist) religious practices.

Gyalthang is a region that many people—Chinese citizens living in other parts of China, Tibetan scholars living both in and outside of Tibet, and even local Gyalthang residents—have viewed as marginal in many respects. Gyalthang is often considered to be marginal to China because it is sparsely populated and most of its inhabitants are ethnic Tibetans. Indeed, due to its rather remote location in the far northwest of Yunnan Province and its historical lack of easily navigable roads linking it to the rest of the country, many of the political campaigns that were implemented quickly in other parts of China took a few weeks, months, or even years to be

continue to refer to it as Zhongdian Old Town (*Zhongdian gucheng* 中甸古城) in Chinese. The New Town of Xianggelila is officially called Jiantang New Town (*Jiantang xincheng* 建塘新城), however, most locals still refer to it as Zhongdian New Town (*Zhongdian xincheng* 中甸新城) when speaking Chinese. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the Shangri-la County region as “Gyalthang,” to the capital of Xianggelila County as “Shangri-la,” to the old section of the town as the “Gyalthang Old Town,” and to the new section of the town as the “Gyalthang New Town.”

¹⁰ For example, in 1997, ninety-nine percent of the population of the rural township of Da Zhongdian 大中甸乡 was Tibetan. Although this figure has most likely decreased in the twenty-first century, the overwhelming majority of Han Chinese that have moved into Shangri-la County over the past decade have settled in and around Jiantang Town rather than in the rural villages surrounding the town. See ZXZ, 57.

¹¹ Ganden Sumtsenling (*Gadan Songzanlinsi* 噶丹·松赞林寺) is a Gelugpa monastery that was founded in Gyalthang in 1679. The Qing dynasty’s Yongzheng Emperor renamed this monastery Guihuasi 归化寺 in 1724, but it continued to be referred to as Songzanlinsi 松赞林寺 in many Chinese documents written in the Qing, Republican, and Communist periods. DZZZZ, 20; YSDZZZXDZ, 78.

implemented in Gyalthang. The region is also sometimes viewed as marginal to Tibet because most Tibetans living in Gyalthang, known as Gyalthangpa, understand themselves to be Khampas, residents of the southernmost reaches of the historically eastern Tibetan province of Kham, which was historically outside of the area previously administered by the Dalai Lama's government in Lhasa. And, finally, it is often viewed as marginal to Kham because Tibetan inhabitants of Gyalthang speak several local Tibetic languages, which are only distantly related to other Kham dialects of Tibetan.¹² Gyalthang is regularly omitted from maps of Tibet. But despite its triple marginality, Gyalthang in recent decades has come firmly within the orbit of the ethnic tourism that has become a favorite pastime of the Chinese urban middle class.

In the late 1990s, the Chinese Communist Party initiated a national campaign to “Open up the Western Regions” (*xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发), and the central government singled out tourism as an important development strategy for southwest China. Spotting a promising new source of revenue for a government that was heavily dependent on state subsidies, the Yunnan Provincial Government reacted quickly and made substantial investments in the necessary infrastructure to promote tourism in Gyalthang over the next few years. Gyalthang was identified as a particularly promising area for tourism development, due to its scenic beauty, diverse ethnic minority population, and its relatively low prospects for successfully following a more conventional industrial development path.

¹² Hiroyuki Suzuki, “Overview of the Dialects Spoken in rGyal thang from the Historical Perspective.” Conference paper presented at the International Association for Tibetan Studies Conference in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia, on July 26, 2013; Ellen Bartee, “A Grammar of Dongwang Tibetan” (Ph.D. dissertation: University of California Santa Barbara, 2007), 93; Krisadawan Hongladarom, “rGyalthang Tibetan of Yunnan: A Preliminary Report,” *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 19 (2) 1996: 69-92.

On December 17, 2001, after holding a meeting in which some forty-eight academics concluded that the mythical town of Shangri-la featured in James Hilton's 1933 novel, *Lost Horizon*,¹³ was indeed located in Gyalthang, the Chinese central government decreed that this county would henceforth be renamed *Xianggelila* 香格里拉, or Shangri-la in English.¹⁴ Although Hilton never set foot in China, he implied that the inspiration for "Shangri-la," a mythical land of peace and harmony, came from the Austrian-American botanist Joseph Rock's many *National Geographic* articles about southwest China, which were published in the 1920s.¹⁵ After the Yunnan provincial government marshaled Chinese academics to support their claim that Gyalthang was indeed Shangri-la, the decision to change the county name was officially approved by China's top leaders in 2002. Local elites jumped to take advantage of the tourism boom, not only for its enormous monetary benefits, but also in order to encourage local pride in the area's culture and history.¹⁶

¹³ James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (London: Macmillan, 1933).

¹⁴ Ben Hillman, "Paradise under Construction: Minorities, Myths and Modernity in Northwest Yunnan," *Asian Ethnicity* 4 (2) 2003: 175-188.

¹⁵ Joseph Rock, "Banishing the Devil of Disease Among the Nashi: Weird Ceremonies Performed by an Aboriginal Tribe in the Heart of Yunnan Province," *National Geographic* (1924) 46: 473-499; Joseph Rock, "Land of the Yellow Lama: National Geographic Society Explorer Visits the Strange Kingdom of Muli, Beyond the Likiang Snow Range of Yunnan, China," *National Geographic* (1924) 47: 447-491; Joseph Rock, "Experiences of a Lone Geographer: An American Agricultural Explorer Makes His Way through Brigand-Infested Central China En Route to the Amne Machin Range, Tibet," *National Geographic* (1925) 48: 331-347; Joseph Rock, "Through the Great River Trenches of Asia: National Geographic Society Explorer Follows the Yangtze, Mekong, and Salwin Through Mighty Gorges," *National Geographic* (1926) 50: 133-186.

¹⁶ As Tenzin Jinba notes, a similar phenomenon has occurred in Danba County, located in Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Ganzi Zangzu Zizhizhou* 甘孜藏族自治州) in Sichuan Province. Tenzin Jinba, *In the Land of the Eastern Queendom: The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity on the Sino-Tibetan Border* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), x.

The myth of Shangri-la was endorsed by the Chinese national government and aggressively marketed by local government officials, tourist agencies, and cultural brokers.¹⁷ A new image of a harmonious Tibet was embraced by the Shangri-la County government, as well as by officials at the provincial and national levels. Over the past decade, Chinese vacationers have poured into the area, hoping to experience Hilton's magical paradise first-hand. Since 2002, many local Tibetans have continued to call their county by its Tibetan name (*Gyalthang*), or, when speaking Chinese, by its former Chinese name (*Zhongdian*). However, Chinese tourists and government officials alike now refer to the county exclusively by its new name. Many Tibetans working in the tourism industry have also started referring to the county as Shangri-la, either to capitalize off of the romantic image that this name evokes, or simply because they have grown accustomed to the name change.

Cultural Revolution Historiography

In recent years, there has been something of a “Cultural Revolution fever” in the West as an increasing number of historians, political scientists, and literary critics have turned their attention to this topic.¹⁸ However, most of the scholarship that has been written about this period

¹⁷ For more on how this fictitious name, invented for the sake of tourists, reflects the state's approach to developing ethnic minority regions, see Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*; Hillman, “Paradise under Construction;” Sonja Laukkanen, “Being Tibetan in Shangri-la,” *Dálný Východ [Far East]* 4: 1 (2014): 61-73.

¹⁸ Song Yongyi, the editor of the digital *Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* and one of the co-editors of the most comprehensive multi-language bibliography on the Cultural Revolution, claims that more than 7,000 works about the Cultural Revolution were published outside of China in various languages in the twentieth century alone. He notes a particular paradox in the historiography of the Cultural Revolution, maintaining that it is possible to track the phenomenon of the “inexhaustible Cultural Revolution” as it exists outside of mainland China even as one deals with the phenomenon of the “forbidden Cultural Revolution” inside China's borders. This issue has also been referred to as “the Cultural Revolution occurred in China but the Cultural Revolution has been studied abroad” (*wenge zai zhongguo, wengexue zai guowai* 文革在中国，文革学在国外). While scholarly works on the Cultural Revolution have proliferated outside of China, the Cultural Revolution as an overtly historical research subject

of history is relatively limited in terms of its geographic scope, focusing on the political upheavals that took place either within the inner circles of the Communist Party or in large cities predominately populated by Han Chinese.¹⁹

Three distinct waves of research on the Cultural Revolution have emerged in the West over the past four decades. The earliest English-language scholarship on the Cultural Revolution sought to make sense of this mass movement as it was taking place, relying almost entirely on documents available outside of China. One of the first scholars of the Cultural Revolution was Stuart Schram, who analyzed nineteenth-century Chinese debates over the proper relationship between “Chinese essence” and “Western learning” in his quest for the origins of Mao’s motivation in launching this revolution.²⁰ Roderick MacFarquhar, a British scholar known for his analysis of the power dynamics that took place within the Communist Party in the 1950s and 1960s, also traced the factors that gave rise to the Cultural Revolution in a trilogy, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, which was published over the span of three decades. MacFarquhar’s first volume (1974) focused on the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign, his second volume (1983) covered the Great Leap Forward, and his final volume (1997) detailed the events that took place

remains politically taboo within mainland China. Song Yongyi, “Editor’s Preface,” in *Chinese Cultural Revolution Database*, ed. Song Yongyi (2006), accessed December 1, 2010: <http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk>; Yongyi Song, Dajin Sun, and Eugene Wu, eds. *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Bibliography, 1966-1996* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

¹⁹ Studies that analyze how the Cultural Revolution played out within the circle of elite Communist Party leaders, or within major urban centers in the central and eastern areas of the country, include Roderick MacFarquhar and John King Fairbank, eds. *Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution, 1966-1982* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Michael Schoenhals, *China’s Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996); and Elizabeth Perry and Xun Li, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

²⁰ Stuart Schram, ed. *Authority, Participation and Cultural Change in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

during the final dramatic years before the Cultural Revolution.²¹ Yet, glimpses of the world beyond the Communist Party leadership are rare in these monographs. Schram's and MacFarquhar's work includes very little information about how the political campaigns that preceded the Cultural Revolution affected ordinary Chinese citizens.

In the mid-1970s, as the Cultural Revolution was nearing its end, a new generation of graduate students interviewed Chinese refugees in Hong Kong about their experiences in China over the past decade. This body of work, which is sometimes termed the "second wave" of Cultural Revolution scholarship, generally adopted a grass roots approach.²² These scholars were less concerned with Mao's motivations and more focused on the conflicts that took place between those who sought to preserve the status quo and those who attempted to use the movement to rebel against perceived social and economic inequalities in China.

While the second wave of scholarship relied heavily on refugee interviewing and emphasized societal divisions, a third wave of scholarship focused once again on elite politics, with participants at the grass roots serving primarily as agents reacting to initiatives introduced by Communist Party leaders. This elite-centered approach reflected the new availability of memoirs written by Party leaders and scholars' recently acquired ability to conduct interviews

²¹ Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 3 volumes total (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974-1997).

²² This "second wave" of scholarship tended to reveal the underlying divisions in Chinese society, which until then had been obscured by the tight control of information dispensed by the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda apparatus. See Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Susan Shirk, *Competitive Comrades: Career Incentives and Student Strategies in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Jonathan Unger, *Education Under Mao: Class and Competition in Canton Schools, 1960-1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Stanley Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982); Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

with the personal secretaries of Cultural Revolution leaders.²³ This third wave of scholarship, much like MacFarquhar's and Schram's earlier work, included relatively little analysis of grass roots dynamics or state-society relations during the Cultural Revolution.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, scholarship published in the West suggested that the Cultural Revolution was mostly an urban phenomenon, targeting Chinese intellectuals and Party cadres in cities and leaving the countryside largely unscathed. Yet, evidence of extensive political activity in rural areas accumulated quickly after Mao's death, and within a few short years it became clear that the Cultural Revolution was much more widespread than was originally understood. Some of the most startling revelations disclosed in the county gazetteers (*xianzhi* 县志) that were published in the post-Mao era involved violent incidents that took place in rural townships located far from major cities.²⁴ It is now clear that the initial lack of scholarship on the Cultural Revolution in the countryside was far more reflective of urban scholars' isolation from remote rural events than it was of rural isolation from national politics.

Although a wave of recently-published scholarship has begun to rectify some of the urban biases in Cultural Revolution historiography,²⁵ one of the most significant remaining holes

²³ Roderick MacFarquhar's and Michael Schoenhals' recently completed massive study of the Cultural Revolution is a prime example of this "third wave" of scholarship; see Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

²⁴ Su Yang, *Collective Killings in Rural China During the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

²⁵ Jeremy Brown and Matthew Johnson, eds., *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger, eds., *Chen Village under Mao and Deng* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, eds. *Revolution, Resistance, and Reform in Village China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Jingsui He, "The Death of a Landlord: Moral Predicament in Rural China, 1968-1969," in Joseph Esherick, Paul Pickowicz, and Andrew Walder, eds. *China's Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006): 124-152; Paul Pickowicz, "Rural Protest Letters: Local Perspectives on the State's Revolutionary War on Tillers, 1960-1990," in Ching Kwan Lee and Guobin Yang, eds. *Re-envisioning the Chinese*

in the historical scholarship is our understanding of the degree to which the fervor and the ideals of the Cultural Revolution infected China's ethnically diverse southwest frontier.²⁶ With few exceptions, the English-language scholarship that has been published in the post-Mao era assumes that the violence, cultural destruction, and social upheaval that occurred during the Cultural Revolution was carried out by ethnically-Han Chinese youth groups.²⁷ These revolutionary youth groups, known as the Red Guards (*hong weibing* 红卫兵), allegedly traveled from Beijing, Wuhan, Chengdu, and other predominately Han Chinese urban centers to spread the ideological fervor of the Cultural Revolution into ethnically diverse areas of southwest China. Although Chinese Red Guards were very influential in certain Tibetan areas during the Cultural Revolution, in the case of Gyalthang, the Red Guards were composed entirely of local middle school students. To this day, very little has been written about the extent to which members of specific ethnic minority groups participated in the destruction of their own cultural and religious institutions and targeted their own neighbors during this period.²⁸

Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007): 21-49.

²⁶ The limited scholarship that has been published on the Cultural Revolution in China's ethnically diverse borderland areas includes June Dreyer, "China's Minority Nationalities in the Cultural Revolution," *The China Quarterly* 96 (1968): 96-109; Victor Falkenheim, "The Cultural Revolution in Kwangsi, Yunnan and Fukien," *Asian Survey* 9 (1969): 580-597; Michael Schoenhals, "Cultural Revolution on the Border: Yunnan's 'Political Frontier Defence' (1969-1971)," *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 19 (2004): 27-54; Charlene Makley, *The Violence of Liberation: Gender and Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts*; Xian Wang, "Islamic Religiosity, Revolution, and State Violence in Southwest China: The 1975 Shadian Massacre" (MA thesis: University of British Columbia, 2013).

²⁷ For example, Peter Hopkirk titles the only chapter in his book dedicated to Tibet under Chinese rule, "Red Guards in Lhasa." See Peter Hopkirk, *Trepassers on the Roof of the World: The Race for Lhasa* (London: John Murray, 1982), 248.

²⁸ A few studies that analyze ethnic minority participation in the Cultural Revolution, rather than solely focusing on the activities carried out by a purportedly ethnically Han Red Guard, include Erik Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts: Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Melvyn Goldstein, Ben Jiao, and Tanzen Lhundrup, *On the Cultural Revolution in Tibet: The Nyemo Incident of 1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Benno Weiner, "When the Sky Fell to Earth: The Great Proletariat

Official Chinese Narratives of the Cultural Revolution

In the few studies published within mainland China that cover the history of northwest Yunnan Province after 1949, Chinese and Tibetan historians have downplayed the extent of Tibetan involvement in the Cultural Revolution by not mentioning any identifying information about the Red Guards, Party work team members, and local militia members perpetrating the violence.²⁹ Unlike in some accounts of Han regions, the events of the Cultural Revolution are most often skipped in official chronologies (*dashi ji* 大事记) for Tibetan regions. Indeed, many government-sanctioned histories, surveys (*gaikuang* 概况), and collected “literary and historical materials” (*wenshi ziliao* 文史资料) published in Gyalthang omit mentioning the Cultural Revolution entirely.³⁰

Cultural Revolution in the Tibet Autonomous Region, 1966-1971” (M.A. thesis: Columbia University, 2002); David Sneath, “The Impact of the Cultural Revolution in China on the Mongolians of Inner Mongolia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 28: 2 (1994): 409-430; Sandrine Catris, “The Cultural Revolution from the Edge: Violence and Revolutionary Spirit in Xinjiang, 1966-1976” (Ph.D. dissertation: Indiana University, 2015).

²⁹ Scholarship that covers northwest Yunnan Province in the post-1949 era includes Guo Jiaji 郭家骥, ed., *Yunnan minzu guanxi diaocha yanjiu* 云南民族关系调查研究 [Survey of Relations between the Yunnan Nationalities] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2010); Ma Yao 马曜, ed., *Yunnan jianshi* 云南简史 [A Short History of Yunnan] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2010); Wang Xi'en 王希恩, “Xin Zhongguo 50 nian Zhongguo minzu guocheng jianlun 新中国50年中国民族过程简论 [A Brief Theory of 50 Years of China's Nationalities],” in Wang Xi'en 王希恩, ed., *Minzu guocheng yu Zhongguo minzu bianqian yanjiu* 民族过程与中国民族变迁研究 [The Process of Nationalities and Research on the Transformations in China's Nationalities] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2011): 190-204; “Yunnan zangzu diqu de ‘wenhua da geming’ yundong 云南藏族地区的‘文化大革命’运动 [‘The Great Cultural Revolution’ in Tibetan Areas of Yunnan],” in *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi* 当代云南藏族简史 [A Short Contemporary History of Tibetans in Yunnan] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2009): 88-107; Sulang Jiachu 苏朗甲楚, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji* 苏朗甲楚藏学文集 [Collection of Sulang Jiachu's Tibetan Studies Scholarship] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2007); Pei Pei 培培, “Yipian danxin yingchun lai: ji quanguo zangzu nüminbing yingxiong Jiangchu Zhuma 一片丹心迎春来: 记全国藏族女民兵英雄江初竹玛 [One Loyal Heart on New Year's Eve: Remembering the Nation's Tibetan Heroine Jiangchu Zhuma],” *Xianggelila* 香格里拉 [Shangri-la] 1 (2007): 26-31.

³⁰ *Diqing zhou gaikuang bianxie zu* 迪庆州概况编写组 [Editing Division of the Survey of Diqing Prefecture], ed. *Diqing Zangzu Zizhizhou gaikuang* 迪庆藏族自治州概况 [Survey of the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture]

When the Cultural Revolution is mentioned it is strictly limited to an agentless “ten years of chaos” (*shinian dongluan* 十年动乱) between 1966 and 1976, when so-called “leftist errors” were made.³¹ The Gyalthang gazetteers and historical accounts that do include information about the Cultural Revolution concede that destructive acts were carried out in the region, but they avoid mentioning *who* it was that carried out these acts. For instance, Le’an Wangdui 勒安旺堆, a former Tibetan Red Guard and recently-retired government official of Zhongdian County, described Zhongdian as a “major disaster area” (*zhong zai qu* 重灾区) during the Cultural Revolution, but omitted naming the agents who carried out the destruction.³² Similarly, the *Zhongdian County Gazetteer* and the *Diqing Prefecture Gazetteer* reveal a certain amount of local participation in the Cultural Revolution, but do not elaborate on the type or the extent of involvement by particular individuals or groups.³³ The editors of the *Zhongdian County Gazetteer* only devote five pages of their nearly 1,000-page volume to Cultural Revolution

(Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1986); *Diqing zhou gaikuang bianxie zu* 迪庆州概况编写组 [Editing Division of the Survey of Diqing Prefecture], *Diqing Zangzu Zizhizhou gaikuang* 迪庆藏族自治州概况 [Survey of the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2007); Li Shengchun 李盛春, ed. *Zhongxin zhen hongwei xiaoxue liushi zhou nian xiaoqing jinance (1936-1996)* 中心镇红卫小学六十周年校庆纪念册 (1936-1996) [*The Sixty Year Anniversary Yearbook of Zhongxin Town’s Red Guard Elementary School (1936-1996)*] (Zhongdian, Yunnan: Communist Party Internal Documents Press, 1996).

³¹ Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, Yunnan sheng Zhongdian xian weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 中国人民政治协商会议云南省中甸县委员会文史资料委员会 [Chinese People’s Political Consultative Committee, Yunnan Province Zhongdian County Committee, Literary and Historical Materials Committee], ed., *Zhongdian wenshi ziliao xuanji* 中甸文史资料选集 [*An Anthology of Zhongdian Literary and Historical Materials*] (1992); Duan Zhicheng 段志城, *Zhongdian yi zhong zhi (1956-1995)* 中甸一中志, (1956-1995) [*Zhongdian Number One Middle School Gazetteer (1956-1995)*] (Zhongdian: Yunnan sheng ren da ban gongting yinshua chang, 1996).

³² Le’an Wangdui 勒安旺堆, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi* 当代云南藏族简史 [*A Short Recent History of Tibetans in Yunnan*] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2009), 95.

³³ [DZZZ]: *Diqing zhouzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui* 迪庆州志编纂委员会 [Diqing Prefecture Gazetteer Compilation Committee], *Diqing zangzu zizhizhouzhi* 迪庆藏族自治州志 [*Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Gazetteer*], 2 vols.) (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2003); ZXZ.

history, but they nevertheless make it clear that the destruction and violence that took place during this decade was carried out at the hands of the local population.³⁴

Local scholars leave out identifying details about local perpetrators not because they lack sufficient evidence to include such information, but because for political reasons it is still difficult to publish a comprehensive local history of the Cultural Revolution in most areas of China. In the early 1990s the Chinese government issued strict national regulations regarding the publication of material dealing with the Cultural Revolution.³⁵ Although publishing houses in slightly less politically sensitive regions of China managed to duck some of these regulations, publishers dealing with Tibetan history have tended to adhere to these rules.

In 1981, the Chinese Communist Party announced an official narrative of the Cultural Revolution in its “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China,” and anything that did not adhere to this “correct” (*zhengque* 正确) version of history was henceforth made explicitly off limits for discussion.³⁶

³⁴ ZXX, 30-35. The Chinese central government mandated that the local editorial committees responsible for compiling county gazetteers must refrain from describing the Party’s “mistakes” after 1949 in great detail. See Vivian Wagner, “Erinnerungsverwaltung: die politische Instrumentalisierung von Staatsarchiven in der VR China [The Administration of Memories: Political Instrumentalization of the State Archives in the PRC]” (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Heidelberg, 2003), 471.

³⁵ For more on the Chinese government’s policy in the reform era regarding the publication of material on the Cultural Revolution, see CCP Central Propaganda Department and State Press and Publications Administration, “Guanyu chuban ‘wenhua dageming’ tushu wenti de ruogan guiding 关于出版“文化大革命”图书问题的若干规定 [Regulations Governing the Publication of Books about the ‘Great Cultural Revolution’],” reprinted in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianxing xinwen chuban fagui huibian (1949-1990)* 中华人民共和国现行新闻出版法规汇编 (1949-1990年) [*Operative Press and Publishing Laws and Regulations of the People’s Republic of China (1949-1990)*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991): 231-232.

³⁶ *Zhongduo gongchandang di shiyi zhou zhongyang weiyuanhui di liu ci quanti huiyi* 中国共产党第十一届中央委员会第六次全体会议 [Sixth Plenum of the Eleventh Chinese Communist Party Central Committee], “Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi 关于建国以来党的若干历史问题的决议 [Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China],” *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 [*People’s Daily*], July 1, 1981.

Setting the guidelines for future official interpretations of the Cultural Revolution, this document presented the Cultural Revolution as a hysteric blip in Chinese Communist history entirely caused by Leftist aberration. Officially, only the disgraced Communist general Lin Biao and the “Gang of Four” were held responsible for the worst excesses that ensued during the disastrous years of the Cultural Revolution. The “Gang of Four,” a political faction composed of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen, controlled the power organs of the Chinese Communist Party through the latter stages of the Cultural Revolution. Although to this day, it remains unclear which major decisions were made by Mao Zedong and carried out by the Gang of Four, and which were the result of the Gang of Four’s own planning, the Gang, together with the disgraced Communist general Lin Biao, were labeled the two major “counter-revolutionary forces” of the Cultural Revolution.³⁷ The Gang of Four was arrested on October 6, 1976, a mere month after Mao’s death, and subsequently charged with a series of treasonous crimes.³⁸

The subtext of the “Resolution” was that since this muddy period of Chinese history had been officially analyzed, the Chinese public should now move on and sweep any remaining historical memories under the metaphorical rug. For many Chinese young people, this is precisely what has happened. Chen Xiaojing, a former governor of Shanghai (1964-1967) who wrote a carefully hedged account of his experiences as a Communist Party leader during the Cultural Revolution, explains that while many young people in China today know that their

³⁷ Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 454-458.

³⁸ Alexander Cook, *The Cultural Revolution on Trial: Mao and the Gang of Four* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

country was engulfed in a period of turmoil in the 1960s, very few have any real sense of the extreme nature of this revolution. Chen maintains that events that were once “earth shattering have now turned into words with vague and sketchy meanings.”³⁹ In the post-Mao period, Chinese historians were told to avoid analyzing the Cultural Revolution in their scholarship and to write straightforward “histories” instead.⁴⁰ Overnight traumatic events in China’s recent past were effectively silenced at the level of the archives as well as at the level of historical analysis.⁴¹

The abrupt ideological U-turn that took place in China in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent rise of the ethno-tourism industry in Yunnan Province have also contributed to the whitewashing of local history. A complex legacy of local/state collaboration and Tibetans’ reluctance to confront their own thorny pasts have led to new (a)historical understandings of local involvement in the Cultural Revolution. State-led development plans for Shangri-la County, which have relied, and continue to rely, on local Tibetan participation in the commodification of Tibetan religion and culture, have been rapidly implemented over the past ten years. Shangri-la has been showcased by the Yunnan Provincial government as a model for how poor, rural Tibetan counties can successfully tap into a burgeoning ethnic tourism market by branding and marketing their “Tibetan-ness.” In the process, Shangri-la has become a poignant

³⁹ Chen Pixian [pseudonym], *Chen Pixian huiyilu: zai “yi yue feng bao” de zhongxin* 陈丕显回忆录: 在“一月风暴”的中心 [*Chen Pixian’s Memoir: In the Midst of the January Storm*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2005).

⁴⁰ Zheng Haiyan, “Interview with Gao Gao, the Author of *A History of the Decade of China’s Cultural Revolution*,” *Jiushiniandai Yuekan* 九十年代月刊 [*The Nineties Monthly*] 4 (1987): 67.

⁴¹ Susan Weigelin-Schwiedrzik contends that in the aftermath of the publication of the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China,” the field of Chinese history writing has split into two different genres—“official historiography” and “unofficial historiography.” Party historians continue to write narratives that follow the official Party line and, as such, can be considered “official historiography.” However, a growing alternative genre of “unofficial historiography” now consists of documentary literature, memoirs, eyewitness accounts, historical documentaries, oral history compilations, and history books written by people from outside the field of academic historiography. See Susan Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “In Search of a Master Narrative for 20th-Century Chinese History,” *The China Quarterly* 188 (1) 2006: 1074.

symbol for the way in which discomfoting historical narratives are cast aside in the face of market forces. During the course of my oral history research, elderly Tibetans spoke to me about the disconnect that exists between their memories of the Cultural Revolution and the ways in which these memories have been silenced not only by local Han, Naxi, and Tibetan scholars, but also by younger Tibetans' inability to come to terms with far more complex, and far less romantic, representations of local history.

I regard "history" not as an objective story abstracted from the context of its telling, but rather as something that is intricately connected to the politics of memory. Memories are made into stories through contemporary, context-specific selections that foreground particular understandings of the past and repress others. My work draws on Paul Ricoeur's work on memory and history, which regards historical knowledge as a particular kind of "disciplined memory."⁴² Ricoeur maintains that history attempts to discipline memory by setting up standards regarding what should be remembered, how it should be remembered, and who should be given the privilege of doing the remembering. History is, in Ricoeur's view, as much about forgetting as it is about remembering. It is often written in order to hide or deflect attention away from what has taken place in the past.

Although all scholars who study memory confront a wide range of daunting challenges, researching memory in contemporary China is particularly difficult due to the fact that Maoist social engineering during the Cultural Revolution was largely successful at framing the subsequent terms of "remembering" that took place. A crucial component of the Chinese Communist Party's ability to sustain power in the post-Mao period has been the ongoing

⁴² Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

capacity of state officials to tightly control historical memory at several levels.⁴³ At the archival level, such control takes the form of restricting access to historical documents. At the level of mass media and public education, control is exercised through censorship, political propaganda, and the careful writing and rewriting of history textbooks.⁴⁴ Maoist social engineering, which was carried out through carefully orchestrated “speak bitterness” (*suku* 诉苦) meetings, was largely successful at framing the subsequent terms of remembering that took place.⁴⁵ Finally, the enormous shift in values that has taken place in the post-Cultural Revolution era has reshaped Tibetan memories of the Maoist era in subtle, but still quite significant, ways.⁴⁶

Furthermore, given that nearly every Gyalthang resident had not only friends and relatives who were victims, but also neighbors and family members who were perpetrators of violence during the Cultural Revolution, it comes as little surprise that many residents do not wish to remember this history, even within the safe confines of their homes. It is also not in the

⁴³ Defining “official history” as the “engineering of political amnesia,” political philosopher Jiwei Ci maintains that in China “history is the institution for the social regulation of memory.” He contends that by controlling the means of regulating collective memory, the Chinese government has been able to successfully maintain its control over China’s history. Jiwei Ci, “The Death of Utopia: The Socio-Political Psychology of Modern China” (Unpublished essay presented at Stanford University, 1990), 4.

⁴⁴ Research on the Chinese state’s efforts to control social memory has focused predominately on the relationship between China’s intellectuals and the Chinese state; see Merle Goldman, Timothy Cheek, and Carol Mamrin, eds. *China’s Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Jonathan Unger, ed., *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993). It is clear that more work is needed on local reactions to various official manipulations of social memory. Recent works that have attempted to fill this void include Jun Jing, *Temple of Memories: History, Power, and Morality in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Makley, *The Violence of Liberation*; Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China’s Collective Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Sun, *Social Suffering and Political Confession*.

⁴⁵ Sun, *Social Suffering and Political Confession*.

⁴⁶ In his 1996 ethnography, *The Temple of Memories*, Jun Jing explores how the politics of remembrance in post-Mao China involve tragic memories of the Cultural Revolution that cannot be completely acknowledged, not only due to the state’s control over public acts of commemoration, but also due to reform-era shifts in local social, cultural, and political dynamics. Jing’s work also touches upon the complex dynamics of social order, shame, and guilt in rural China, contending that memories of past suffering are often repressed at the local level, lest they open old wounds and threaten the existing order of social relations; Jing, *Temple of Memories*, 1996.

economic interests of local government officials or businesspeople who are benefitting from the tourism industry to dwell on the fact hundreds of local residents destroyed Tibetan religious and cultural objects, struggled against respected elders, and looted and burned the largest Tibetan monastery in the region. The reform-era silencing of historical memory, therefore, is the unfortunate product of local, state, and corporate collaboration in Gyalthang.

The ways in which Cultural Revolution history has been silenced in public forums in Gyalthang stands in contrast to the kind of grievances that have been openly aired by Han Chinese living in other parts of China. One way in which young Han Chinese intellectuals were able to publically give voice to the suffering that they had experienced during the Cultural Revolution was through “Scar Literature” (*shanghen wenxue* 伤痕文学).⁴⁷ In this genre of literature, members of China’s sent-down youth generation tended to describe their years in the countryside as one of personal deprivation and total psychological and physical fatigue. This literary movement was endorsed by the group of Communist Party leaders that rose to power after the Cultural Revolution, since it helped vent widespread resentment of the traumatic experiences of the past while deflecting anger away from the current regime. It presented the Cultural Revolution as a hysteric blip in Chinese Communist history, caused entirely by a supposedly “ultra-leftist” aberration.

⁴⁷ The Scar Literature movement inherited its name from Lu Xinhua’s short story, “Shanghen.” See Lu Xinhua 卢新华, “Shanghen 伤痕 [The Scar],” *Wen hui bao* 文汇报 8 (1978). Public interest in Scar Literature reached its height in the immediate aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and began to wane by the late-1980s. Examples of Scar Literature published in the late 1970s and early 1980s include Liu Xinwu 刘心武, *Banzhuren* 班主任 [*The Class Counselor*] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1979); Zhang Xianliang 张贤亮, *Ling yu rou* 灵与肉 [*Soul and Body*] (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1981); and Ye Xin 叶辛, *Cuotuo suiyue* 蹉跎岁月 [*The Years Drift By*] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1982).

However, unlike Han Chinese individuals and groups who in the 1980s and 1990s participated in writing Scar Literature, as well as in organizing a wide range of public memorializing activities to deal with the trauma of the Cultural Revolution, it has always been particularly dangerous for Tibetans—whose participation in Chinese national history has always been somewhat in doubt—to publically remember the Maoist years. This is not to say that Han Chinese have not also experienced limitations and political ramifications in memorializing the Mao years.⁴⁸ However, since the early 1980s Han citizens have been able to participate in conferences and publish fiction and autobiographical memoirs about the Cultural Revolution in ways that have long been denied to Tibetans.

The Chinese state has tried to sideline attempts among Han Chinese citizens to start public discussions about agency, responsibility, and coercion during the Cultural Revolution, which has made it doubly challenging for Tibetans to initiate analogous discussions in their own communities.⁴⁹ After all, allowing Tibetans to openly air their grievances about past political campaigns could very well lead to expressions of discontent with the current state of affairs in their communities.⁵⁰ Religious repression and political coercion are still very real issues in

⁴⁸ For more on the difficulties involved in publically commemorating the trauma of the Mao era, see Feng Jicai, *Voices from the Whirlwind: An Oral History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1991); Vera Schwarcz, “Cultural Dilemmas and Political Roles of the Intelligentsia—Memory and Commemoration: The Chinese Search for a Livable Past,” in Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Rubie Watson, *Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism* (Stanta Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994).

⁴⁹ In 1986 the Chinese author Ba Jin proposed the building of a state-funded Cultural Revolution museum to educate young people about the atrocities that occurred during the Mao era. See Ba Jin, “A Museum of the Cultural Revolution,” June 15, 1986, accessed January 5, 2011: <http://www.cnd.org/CR/english/articles/bajin.htm>. However, to this day, only a few private museums commemorating the Cultural Revolution have been built, such as the Cultural Revolution Museum in Guangdong Province and the Jianchuan Museum Cluster in Sichuan Province.

⁵⁰ Tibetans have faced particular challenges in openly acknowledging the catastrophic consequences of the Maoist years. See, for instance, Makley, *The Violence of Liberation*; Charlene Makley, “The Politics of Memory: Gender,

Tibetan areas today. Therefore, for Tibetans living in Gyalthang, the unspeakable past continues to be fraught with both emotional and political danger. Chinese state narratives, which dismiss the Cultural Revolution as a period marked by agent-less, senseless violence and ideological extremism, have done little to help Tibetans make sense of their own, much more ambivalent memories of this traumatic decade.

Memory and Oral History Methodology

Using oral history as a critical source requires a consideration of both stories and silences, of memories and forgetting. Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but also what they now think they did—or did not—do.⁵¹ Whereas scholarship on the Cultural Revolution has generally relied upon printed sources, politics in rural areas of southwest China, and particularly in Tibetan areas, is still by and large an undocumented phenomenon. It cannot be fully understood by relying only on inscription, in part because much of what was voiced in interaction between non-elite and non-state agents in rural areas was never written down. The predominance of Party and state voices in written sources contributes to this limited understanding. Outside of what took place in the inner circles of the Chinese Communist Party at the center of political power, scholars still know very little about the Cultural Revolution in general, and far less about history at the margins. One of the main possible sources of that history, the voices of the Tibetans who lived through and remember the Cultural Revolution, is

Autobiography and Maoist Violence in Amdo,” in Fernanda Pirie and Toni Huber, eds., *Conflict and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 115-116.

⁵¹ For more on the particularities and complexities involved in using “oral histories” as historical sources, see Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 45-58, 256.

rapidly becoming inaccessible. How elderly Tibetans tell their life histories and narrate their accounts of the Cultural Revolution casts light on particular aspects of the past, opening doors to new approaches to historical inquiry.

Due to the nature of my project, I feel obliged to regard memory not as a kind of unmediated, authentic portal to the past, but rather as something that is sculpted by life experiences, changing social norms, and shifts in political discourse. I concur with Edward Carr's now classic assertion that both history and memory are engaged in an "unending dialogue between the past and the present."⁵² Fine lines cannot be drawn between dominant, nationalist discourses on the one hand and individual or collective memories on the other, since memory is not just composed of *what* the public thinks about a particular event, but also *how* the public has been trained to think about that event given the memorializing of the event in national history.⁵³

Historians skeptical of human memory are bound to ask: "How reliable are oral narratives?" Oral narratives, as Gail Hershatter points out, "are as contaminated as any other retrievable fragment of the past. It requires cultivating an interest in and respect for that contamination."⁵⁴ Using oral history to counterpose local remembrance against state-sanctioned written accounts of the Cultural Revolution is far less productive than acknowledging that the process by which historians gain access to the past is just as richly problematic as the relationship between memory and the archives.⁵⁵ As Valentina Punzi has written, "working with

⁵² Edward Carr, *What Is History?* (London: Penguin Books, [1961] 1987), 30.

⁵³ Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*, 24.

⁵⁵ My work has been molded by a number of historians that have written about memory and the Cultural Revolution, including Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*; Ralph Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao's*

oral sources entails an orientation toward the meanings, the speculations and the interpretations given by the narrators rather than toward pursuing a precise account or an objective description of events.”⁵⁶ Rather than worry about the nagging inconsistencies that inevitably appear in my oral sources, I have chosen to ask: what can the anachronisms and silences in oral history narratives tell us about how our interviewees experienced history and now view the world? The subjective dimension of oral narratives is valuable in its own right. It seems that we have a great deal to gain by proactively “putting the problems of memory on display,” despite the methodological, practical, and ethical challenges involved in doing so.⁵⁷

The data upon which this dissertation is based was gathered during eight years of archival and ethnographic research in Gyalthang, starting in the summers of 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. I conducted the majority of the interviews for this project from February 2012-July, 2013 and June-August, 2014. The detailed historical evidence that I utilize in this dissertation is drawn primarily from the extensive interviews that I conducted with elderly Tibetan residents of Gyalthang who lived through the Cultural Revolution and experienced it first-hand. The majority of my research was conducted in Jiantang Town (*Jiantang zhen* 建塘镇),

Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Klaus Mühlhahn, “‘Remembering a Bitter Past’: The Trauma of China’s Labor Camps, 1949-1978,” *History and Memory* 16: 2 (2004): 108-139; Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Craig Calhoun, “The Cultural Revolution and the Democracy Movement of 1989: Complexity in Historical Connections,” in Kam-ye Law, ed., *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Reconsidered: Beyond Purge and Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 241-261; and Susan Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “Coping with the Cultural Revolution: Contesting Interpretations,” *Thema: Zeithistorische Debatten in Asien* (2009): 1-44.

⁵⁶ Valentina Punzi, “A Narrator-Centered Approach to History,” *Dissertation Reviews* (April 6, 2016), accessed April 11, 2016: <http://dissertationreviews.org/archives/13746>. Similarly, Alessandro Portelli maintains that memory is to be conceived as a meaning-creating tool and not merely as a passive repository. See Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, [1998] 2003), 63-74.

⁵⁷ Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, 4.

the urban administrative center of Gyalthang. In order to contextualize these oral sources and gain insight into how historical memory has been codified in written texts, I have juxtaposed these oral narratives with the often very different kinds of narratives recorded in local Chinese Communist Party publications. These publications, which contain fragmented data about the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang, include the first county and prefectural gazetteers (*difang zhi* 地方志, *zongjiao zhi* 宗教志, *jinrong zhi* 金融志, *diming zhi* 地名志, *zhengxie zhi* 政协志) and Party newsletters (*dangshi tongxun* 党史通讯) compiled in Zhongdian County and Diqing Prefecture during the Communist eras. They also include local officially-collected “literary and historical materials” (*wenshi ziliao* 文史资料), draft copies of unpublished Party histories of the area, and other local internally-circulated reports. In addition, diaries of Han Chinese who traveled to Gyalthang during the Cultural Revolution and recorded their observations in Chinese are utilized in this study. Other sources include Gyalthang histories penned by Tibetan scholars in exile and travel accounts written by foreign missionaries, researchers, and explorers, who traveled to northwest Yunnan Province in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

While conducting archival and ethnographic research in Gyalthang, I frequently struggled with the following question: Can oral narratives, particularly in the context of lament, be successfully integrated, or studied alongside, a textual history dominated by works composed under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party? Some of the hurdles that make conducting both ethnographic and archival research about the Mao period so challenging include: 1) gaining access to restricted post-1949 archival documents; 2) attempting to maintain analytic distance and avoid unwittingly taking up dominant state categories of space and scale when utilizing these sources; 3) gradually building trust in a community and diversifying one’s circle of interviewees; 4) trying to conduct interviews in ways that minimize or eliminate any negative repercussions for

interviewees; 5) finding ways to put different kinds of sources in dialogue with each other in order to write multi-voiced histories of the margins.

The difficulty of maintaining analytic distance from Chinese state categories of scale and jurisdiction is particularly tricky when we base our historical analysis, at least in part, on the research reports written by state officials who conducted their own analyses of the frontier zone. The challenge, then, is to make use of the very limited written sources that we have at our disposal and to engage in a careful meta-analysis of these official reports, while avoiding simply reproducing their terms.⁵⁸

Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter One, “The Role of Locality, Religion, and Ethnicity in Identity Formation in Gyalthang,” examines the complex power dynamics and identity politics at play prior to Chinese Communist involvement in this frontier region. It demonstrates the limited authority exercised by the government of the Dalai Lama, the Qing court, the Nationalist government, and the early Chinese Communist government in Gyalthang in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Although ethnicity served as a marker of identity in Gyalthang prior to Chinese Communist involvement in the area, entirely new ways of conceptualizing and articulating ethnicity-centered identities emerged as a result of the Communist Party’s Ethnic Classification Project of the early 1950s.

⁵⁸ One way we might get closer to this goal is by utilizing more sources that give us glimpses of non-discursive processes in state-building, such as the more unconsciously experienced, material properties of built environments in villages and inside of homes. Such sources can provide access to key sites of otherwise hidden contestation and ambivalence under the seeming dominance of political campaigns. Jie Li has provided us with one model of how to do this in her beautifully written book on life in Shanghai alleyways in the 1960s. Jie Li, *Shanghai Homes: Palimpsests of Private Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

Chapter Two, “From the Long March to the Socialist Education Movement: The Consolidation of Communist Party Rule in Gyalthang (1936-1965),” uses information gleaned from local county and prefectural gazetteers, interviews with Gyalthang residents, and accounts written by Tibetan historians in Gyalthang to analyze three decades of Tibetan encounters with the Communist Party, starting with the Long March in 1936 and ending on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. In particular, this chapter emphasizes how Tibetan involvement in the Long March, the Land Reform campaign and the subsequent anti-Land Reform rebellions, the Great Leap Forward campaign, the Collectivization policy, the Five Antis Campaign, and the Socialist Education Campaign affected the ways in which Tibetans in Gyalthang responded to the launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. In Gyalthang the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution was immediately preceded by the rapid inversion of long-standing economic and social structures, and this chapter sheds light on some of the still unresolved questions about the first few decades of Communist involvement in Gyalthang. How appropriate or theoretically useful are the terms “collaboration” or “cooperation” in explaining why some religious and secular leaders joined forces with Chinese Communist government in the 1950s in response to mounting social and political pressures? What were the political, social, and economic factors that led Gyalthang residents to actively participate in a series of campaigns that increasingly targeted Tibetan culture, traditions, and religion? And finally, to what extent were Tibetans’ identities in Gyalthang in the 1950s and early 1960s shaped more by their socioeconomic status and ideological orientations than by their identities as members of a marginalized ethnic minority group in China?

Chapter Three, “Revolutionary Enthusiasm or Political Coercion? Tibetan Participation in the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang,” is a detailed examination of the nature and extent of

Tibetan participation in the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang. It explores which monasteries and temples were destroyed, which schools were shut down, which Chinese Communist Party cadres, Buddhist abbots, and local leaders were denounced, and which villagers joined Red Guard units. Information gleaned from local county and prefectural gazetteers, Communist Party internal documents housed in private local collections, secondary sources, and interviews with residents in Gyalthang are utilized in this analysis.

Finally, Chapter Four, “Ethnic Politics, Historical Amnesia, and the Reframing of Gyalthang History in the Twenty-First Century,” discusses the complex historical legacy of the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang. It explores how Cultural Revolution narratives have been reframed in the post-Mao era, positioning Tibetans as unqualified victims rather than participants in this revolution. Close attention is paid to the politics of ethnicity and the ways in which the categorized have attempted to appropriate, internalize, evade, negotiate, or transform the categories that have been imposed upon them. Central to this analysis is the degree to which Tibetans have either challenged or internalized the Chinese state’s essentialist notions of ethnicity in the post-Cultural Revolution period and how this re-framing of “Tibetan-ness” has led to the formation of new—and the effacement of old—Cultural Revolution narratives. This chapter draws on ethnographic research conducted between 2006 and 2014, as well on films, posters, literature, and tour books, and focuses on the rapid social, economic, and demographic transformation that has taken place in Gyalthang over the past three decades. It examines how ethnic tourism in the post-Mao era has led to the commodification of Tibetan religion and culture, on the one hand, and widespread historical amnesia, on the other.

Today, four decades after the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, Tibetan involvement in the Cultural Revolution continues to raise a number of contentious questions about individual

agency, ideological fervor, coercion, and ethnic and religious repression by the Chinese Communist Party. Tibetans living in Gyalthang responded to the Cultural Revolution in a number of ways. Some resisted and often paid with their lives, but many others participated for a variety of political, social, ideological, and personal reasons. This wide range of responses, from suicide and exile to looting and murder, sheds light on the difficult decisions Tibetans made under particularly complex and coercive conditions. Refocusing attention on the agency of individual actors allows us to see the ways in which not just state coercion, but also revolutionary ideology, youthful enthusiasm, and mob mentality played a role in motivating Tibetan participants in the Cultural Revolution. The diversity of these experiences has hitherto been left out of the written record. Contemporary economic and political incentives, coupled with intensely personal and emotionally-driven motives, have led to a community-wide suppression of Cultural Revolution memories in Gyalthang.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ROLE OF LOCALITY, RELIGION, AND ETHNICITY IN IDENTITY FORMATION IN GYALTHANG

Gyalthang's geographic location along the Sino-Tibetan border means that it was historically far from Chinese and Tibetan centers of political power.⁵⁹ Local formations of religious and sociopolitical authority in Gyalthang were nonetheless influenced to a certain degree by the expansions and contractions of these two competing imperial polities. This chapter investigates the role of locality, religion, and ethnicity in identity formation in Gyalthang from the seventeenth century to the mid twentieth century. It also explores how the mid-twentieth-century ethnic classification projects undertaken by the Nationalists and Communists created new ways of thinking about ethnic boundaries and ethnic identity. Prior to class politics taking center stage in Gyalthang under Communist Party rule, Gyalthang residents' lives were greatly influenced by residents' affiliations with particular monastic colleges at Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery, their relationships with wealthy landholding families, and their likelihood of becoming victimized by raiding bandits.

In order to understand how understandings of identity have shifted in Gyalthang over time, it is important to first examine Gyalthang's place within the wider Tibetan world. While today the term "Tibet" (*Xizang* 西藏) commonly calls up the image of the administrative Tibetan Autonomous Region (*Xizang zizhizhou* 西藏自治区) in the People's Republic of China, many

⁵⁹ Gyalthang is located more than 2,000 kilometers southwest of Beijing and nearly 900 kilometers west of Lhasa.

other political, cultural, and ethnic “Tibets” also exist. The contemporary Tibetan Autonomous Region includes the western and central parts of the Tibetan plateau, but it excludes other ethnically Tibetan areas that were placed under the administration of Gansu Province, Qinghai Province, Sichuan Province, and Yunnan Province by the Chinese Communist government in the 1950s. From 1642 until 1951, the central part of the Tibetan plateau and most of its western areas were ruled by the Ganden Phodrang government based in Lhasa. The Ganden Phodrang government had its own army and administration and a long history of effective self-rule over the central Tibetan plateau. It is for this historical reason that Hugh Richardson termed this area “political Tibet,” maintaining that:

In “political” Tibet the Tibetan government has ruled continuously from the earliest times down to 1951. The region beyond that to the north and east [Amdo and Kham]... is its “ethnographic” extension which people of Tibetan race once inhabited exclusively and where they are still in the majority. In that wider area, “political” Tibet exercised jurisdiction only in certain places and at irregular intervals; for the most part, local lay or monastic chiefs were in control of districts of various size. From the 18th century onwards the region was subject to sporadic Chinese infiltration.⁶⁰

Up until the mid-twentieth century, Tibetans who lived in the eastern half of the plateau generally used the Tibetan word for Tibet, *Bod*, to refer only to the central Tibetan area ruled by the Ganden Phodrang government, and some Tibetans still continue this practice today.⁶¹

However, over the past few decades, Tibetan exiles and their supporters have come to formulate a different understanding of “Tibet” that is much closer to Richardson’s conceptualization of “ethnographic Tibet.” This alternative understanding of Tibet refers to all regions inside of China where historically the majority of the population has been Tibetan. During its long-running talks

⁶⁰ Hugh Richardson, *Tibet and Its History* (Boulder: Shambala, 1984), 1-2.

⁶¹ Robert Barnett, “Introduction: A Note on Context and Significance,” in Naktsang Nulo, *My Tibetan Childhood: When Ice Shattered Stone*, Angus Cargill and Sonam Lhamo, trans. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): xvii.

with China, the exile Tibetan leadership has formally requested several times that all ethnographic areas of Tibet should be allowed to have a single Tibetan administration, but Beijing has repeatedly rejected this proposal.⁶² This broader and more controversial usage of the term “Tibet” is not without some historical basis, since from the seventh to ninth centuries and for a period in the mid-seventeenth century as well, much of the plateau had been unified under the rule of Lhasa. But this idea of a single Tibetan polity was remote from the lives of eastern Tibetans in the early twentieth century.⁶³

In recent years the idea of an even broader definition of a diasporic Tibet has begun to be expressed. Substantial Tibetan communities exist not only in five Chinese provinces and regions (Tibetan Autonomous Region, Qinghai Province, Gansu Province, Sichuan Province, and Yunnan Province), but also in parts of India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Tibetan diaspora communities also have a growing presence around the world, most notably in part of Europe, Canada, and the United States. A former government official in the Central Tibetan Administration therefore suggests that in the twenty-first century, “Tibet” might be productively imagined as a global, diasporic community that is no longer tied to any one bounded geographic area inside of China. This kind of radical reimagining, he argues, can free Tibetans from trying to work within a

⁶² Central Tibetan Administration [Tibetan Government in Exile], “Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People,” November 2008, accessed March 3, 2016: <http://tibet.net/important-issues/sino-tibetan-dialogue/memorandum-on-genuine-autonomy-for-the-tibetan-people/>. In the late 1940s Tibetans from eastern Tibet also argued on pragmatic grounds for such an institution to be set up, but at the time it was the central Tibetan government that rejected the proposition. See Chapter Two for more about the Khampas’ efforts to establish an Eastern Tibetan Autonomous Region in the 1940s. See also Wenbin Peng, “Frontier Process, Provincial Politics and Movements for Khampa Autonomy during the Republican Period,” in Lawrence Epstein, ed., *Khams pa Histories: Visions of People, Place and Authority* (Boston: Brill, 2002): 57-84.

⁶³ William Coleman, “The Uprising at Batang: Khams and Its Significance in Chinese and Tibetan History,” in Lawrence Epstein, ed., *Khams pa Histories: Visions of People, Place, and Authority* (Boston: Brill, 2002): 31-56; Wim Van Spengen, “Frontier History of Southern Kham: Banditry and War in the Multi-ethnic Fringe Lands of Chatring, Mili, and Gyethang, 1890-1940,” in Lawrence Epstein, ed., *Khams pa Histories: Visions of People, Place, and Authority* (Boston: Brill, 2002): 7-29.

politically-stifling nation-state framework, and encourage them to focus instead on how they might preserve and promote Tibetan language, culture, religion, and traditions among the constituents of a much broader, geographically dispersed Tibetan nation.⁶⁴ While this chapter acknowledges the historical and ongoing tension that existed and continues to exist between these different conceptions of Tibet,⁶⁵ it is primarily concerned with identity formation in one particular geographic area of eastern Tibet—Gyalthang.

The eastern part of the Tibetan plateau, an area about three times the size of France, consisted until the 1950s of a plethora of localities and microsocieties differentiated by custom and language as much as by distinctive governments. They were sometimes seen as principalities, chiefdoms, or tribal areas and were ruled by semi-independent chiefs, local kings or princes, lamas, occasional Chinese armies, and sometimes Chinese Muslim warlords. These areas were known by local names, and there was no single Tibetan term to describe them as a collectivity. The Chinese language likewise has no term meaning “eastern Tibet” or “eastern Tibetan areas.” British officials in the early twentieth century referred to the eastern area as “Inner Tibet,” but the Tibetans referred to it mainly by local toponyms. Today, the northeastern part of the Tibetan plateau is referred to by Tibetans most frequently as Amdo, while the name Kham is used for the eastern and southeastern areas.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Tenzin Tethong, “A Greater Tibet beyond the PRC,” paper presented at the International Association for Tibetan Studies conference in Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia, on July 23, 2013. See also Tenzin Tethong, “Essay: A Greater Tibet and the Irony of Liberation,” in P. Christiaan Klieger, ed., *Greater Tibet: An Examination of Borders, Ethnic Boundaries, and Cultural Areas* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016): 155.

⁶⁵ For more on contended notions of Tibetan identity see Tsering Shakya, “Whither the Tsampa Eaters?” *Himal* 6.5 (1993): 8-11.

⁶⁶ Eastern Tibetan areas are far from Lhasa but are by no means historically or culturally insignificant. Fifty-five percent of the 6.2 million Tibetans currently residing in China live in the eastern half of the Tibetan plateau. Many of the most famous monasteries, hermitages, and sacred mountains were located in eastern Tibet, and these places produced a succession of leading religious teachers, scholars of Tibetan history, poets, essayists, and filmmakers.

In the seventh century the Tibetan Kingdom (*Tubo* 吐蕃) expanded and Tibetan control extended across the entire Qinghai-Tibet plateau and into Gyalthang.⁶⁷ The Tibetan military post at the Iron Bridge Fort (*Tie qiao zhen* 铁桥镇), located fifty kilometers north of Shigu 石鼓 on the First Bend of the Yangtze River, guarded the Tibetan Kingdom's southeastern flank.⁶⁸ To resist further Tibetan expansion towards Chinese held territory, the Tang Dynasty strengthened their southwest border defenses in 664, but after a major campaign in 703 led by Tsenpo Dusong Mangje, Gyalthang remained firmly in Tibetan hands.⁶⁹ The Tibetan population soon outnumbered the local Naxi 纳西, Lisu 傣傣, and Mosuo 摩梭 populations in Gyalthang. Although the Nanzhao 南诏 kingdom based in Lijiang threatened Tibetan control in the area in the eighth century, local Tibetan nobles retained control of most positions of authority in Gyalthang even after the Tibetan Empire declined in the mid-ninth century.⁷⁰

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mongols established military command over Gyalthang, naming it Dandang 旦当—from which the current Tibetan name of Gyalthang derives—but it appears that there was not much Mongol settlement in the region.⁷¹ Prior to 1640, the dominant political power in southern Kham was the Naxi kingdom, which Tibetan historians

Robert Barnett, "Introduction: A Note on Context and Significance," in Naktsang Nulo, *My Tibetan Childhood: When Ice Shattered Stone*, Angus Cargill and Sonam Lhamo, trans. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): xviii.

⁶⁷ Steven Marshall and Susette Cooke, *Tibet Outside the TAR: Control, Exploitation and Assimilation: Development with Chinese Characteristics* (Washington, D.C.: The Alliance for Research in Tibet, 1997 CD-ROM): 233.

⁶⁸ Wang Hengjie 王恒杰, *Diqing Zangzu shehui shi* 迪庆藏族社会史 [*The History of Tibetan Society in Diqing*] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1995), 38.

⁶⁹ Marshall and Cooke, *Tibet Outside the TAR*, 233-234.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁷¹ Wang, *Diqing Zangzu shehui shi*, 159; Song Lulian 宋漉濂, *Yuan shi: dili zhi* 元史: 地理志 [*History of the Yuan Dynasty: Geographical Records*], 1310-1381.

have commonly called the kingdom of 'Jang.⁷² The Mu family controlled this Naxi kingdom and their conquests extended from Lijiang north to Gyalthang, Muli, and Lithang.⁷³ The Eighth Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554) was the first prominent Karma Kagyu religious leader who was invited to the Naxi kingdom and he traveled through Gyalthang on his way to Lijiang in 1515. Mu Ding 木定 (1477-1526), the reigning Naxi king, promised the Eighth Karmapa that he would not wage war against Tibet for thirteen years and he would establish one hundred monasteries in the area. When the Eighth Karmapa traveled back through Gyalthang after his visit to Lijiang, he founded the region's first Karma Kagyu monastery.⁷⁴ However, due to skirmishes in the seventeenth century between the joint Mongolian and Gelugpa Tibetan forces against the Naxi kingdom, and the eventual defeat of the Mu family, control of Gyalthang passed from the hands of the Mu family to the nominal control of the Ganden Phodrang government in Lhasa. The strongest symbol of the dominance of the Ganden Phodrang forces in the region was the destruction of the region's largest Karma Kagyu monastery in 1674. On the ruins of this razed monastery, construction began in 1679 on a much larger Gelugpa monastery, which the Fifth Dalai Lama named Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery.⁷⁵

⁷² Peter Schwieger, "The Long Arm of the Fifth Dalai Lama: Influence and Power of the Fifth Dalai Lama in Southeast Tibet," in Alex McKay and Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, eds., *Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture. Proceedings of the Golden Jubilee Conference of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 2008, Volume 1: Tibet and the Himalaya* (Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 2011): 239-257.

⁷³ From 1491 until 1559 the genealogical records of the Mu family indicate that villages in Gyalthang were conquered by the king of 'Jang. See Schwieger, "The Long Arm of the Fifth Dalai Lama."

⁷⁴ Schwieger, "The Long Arm of the Fifth Dalai Lama."

⁷⁵ *Zhongdian Zangwen lishi dang'an ziliao huibian* 中甸藏文历史档案资料汇编 [*Zhongdian Tibetan Historical Manuscripts Collection*] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2003), documents no. 12, 13.

Kham was not consistently ruled by Lhasa after about 1700, although in brief periods until the 1930s the Tibetan army was able to regain control of one or other regions within Kham. The Lhasa government had attempted to extend influence over Kham from the seventeenth century, but never succeeded in any consistent manner, aside from converting many important monasteries to the Gelukpa tradition.⁷⁶ In the late seventeenth century, the Lhasa government dispatched governors to Gyalthang and each of her neighbors—Dechen (*Adunzi* 阿墩子 or *Deqin* 德勤) and Balung (*Weixi* 维西)—and in so doing, managed to assert nominal authority over these districts. The desirability of the area meant that border skirmishes between central Tibetans and Chinese government troops in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces were frequent within Kham.⁷⁷

In 1720, the Qing army passed through Gyalthang on its way to Tibet to oust the Dzungar Mongols from Lhasa. Recognizing the strategic importance of the Gyalthang area, the Qing set up a garrisoned post in Gyalthang in 1724 with three hundred soldiers who were returning from fighting the Dzungar Mongols in Lhasa.⁷⁸ They called this garrisoned post the Zhongdian office (*Zhongdian ting* 中甸厅). After successive campaigns in the region by the Qing military, the Qing government succeeded in stationing garrisons not only in Gyalthang, but also in Dechen

⁷⁶ Schwieger, “The Long Arm of the Fifth Dalai Lama”; Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, “Depicting Life in the Twentieth-Century Sino-Tibetan Borderlands: Local Histories and Modernities in the Career and Photography of Zhuang Xueben (1909-1984),” in James Anderson and John Whitmore, eds., *China’s Encounters on the South and Southwest: Reforging the Fiery Frontier over Two Millennia* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 348.

⁷⁷ One such skirmish led to many of the areas of Kham to the east of the Salween River (Tib.: *Gyalmo Ngulchu*, Ch.: *Nujiang* 怒江) being taken under the governance of Sichuan province in 1725, in the third year of the reign of the Qing dynasty’s Yongzheng Emperor. Yudru Tsomu, “Local Aspirations and National Constraints, A Case Study of Nyarong Gonpo Namgyel and His Rise to Power in Kham (1836-1865)” (Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 2006), 34.

⁷⁸ Wang Hengjie 王恒杰, *Diqing Zangzu shehui shi* 迪庆藏族社会史 [*The History of Tibetan Society in Diqing*] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1995), 159.

and Balung, and it formally incorporated these three districts into Yunnan Province.⁷⁹ As the Qing stabilized their presence in Gyalthang, not just soldiers and officials, but also Chinese artisans, farmers, miners, traders, and refugees drifted into the Gyalthang area. Gold and silver mines were opened in Gyalthang, with much of the labor carried out by runaway Qing soldiers and criminals.⁸⁰ Although Han officials were sent by the Qing to serve as county governors (*xianzhang* 县长) in Gyalthang, they didn't actually wield much power and tended to turn to the local Tibetan and Naxi *tusi* 土司 and *tuguan* 土管 to manage local affairs.⁸¹ Thus, even after it came under the nominal jurisdiction of Yunnan Province, Gyalthang remained a contested borderland space well into the mid-twentieth century.⁸²

By the mid-eighteenth century, most western regions of Kham were under the loose control of the Lhasa government, and most of the numerous localities, chiefdoms, and so on within Kham fell under the administration of the western Chinese provinces of Sichuan and

⁷⁹ Wang, *Diqing Zangzu shehui shi*, 108-109, 159, 171.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁸¹ The *tusi* (indigenous leaders/native chiefs) system was a governing strategy utilized by the Qing court when it took over control of parts of Amdo and Eastern Kham in the early eighteenth century. Under the *tusi* system, the hereditary elite of ethnic minority areas were loosely integrated into the imperial system through the granting of court titles. The officials within the *tusi* system were divided into civil and military categories, including native administration (or civil) officials known as *tuguan*, minor native officials known as *tuli*, and native chieftains with military titles called *tusi*, although by the late Qing, each of these officials came to be referred to as *tusi*. In return for being given the right to rule their own people according to their own cultural laws and traditions, these *tusi* were made responsible for various tasks such as the taking of censuses, the collection of taxes, the hosting of outsiders, and the keeping of peace. The idea behind this “loose reign” policy was to exert a certain amount of control over indigenous rulers on the fringe of the Qing Empire, but not to the extent that the rulers would grow intractable and cut off the relationship. In many cases this situation amounted to virtual independence for these ethnic minority areas, since the Manchu tendency was to avoid interfering with local affairs unless developments directly threatened imperial control of the area. Yudru Tsomu, *The Rise of Gönpo Namgyel in Kham: The Blind Warrior of Nyarong* (Lexington Books, 2015), 24-30; Melvyn Goldstein, “Change, Conflict and Continuity among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists: A Case Study from Western Tibet, 1950-1990,” in Robert Barnett, ed. *Resistance and Reform in Tibet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 80.

⁸² Peng Jianquan 彭建全, “Zhongdian xian jiefang qian de zhengzhi, jingji qingkuang 中甸县解放前的政治、经济情况 [The Political and Economic Situation in Zhongdian County Before Liberation],” in DZWZX3, 118.

Yunnan.⁸³ But Qing rule in these Tibetan areas remained largely nominal, and by the early twentieth-century Kham had become an agglomeration of around twenty-five different semi-independent polities.⁸⁴

As one of the most ethnically-diverse and highly-contested borderland regions of Kham, Gyalthang and its complex twentieth-century history is illustrative of what Lawrence Epstein has termed the “discursive process of frontier creation.”⁸⁵ Looking at early twentieth-century Gyalthang, what we find is loose communities that bonded together primarily for the purpose of dealing with external threats and maintaining social cohesion at the local level.⁸⁶ Over the course of the twentieth century, successive Chinese powers attempted to respond to the age-old challenge of dealing with the borderland areas of southern Kham during a period of rapid and volatile change. A series of autonomy movements demanding “Khampa rule for Kham” arose in

⁸³ The Nangchen kingdom was an exception to this rule, as it was under the jurisdiction of the *amban* in Xining, Qinghai Province, in the nineteenth century. See Yudru Tsomu, *The Rise of Gönpö Namgyel in Kham: The Blind Warrior of Nyarong* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 1-2, 5.

⁸⁴ Barnett, “Introduction,” xviii. Scott Relyea maintains that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *tusi* in Kham often pursued strategies of political legitimation that sought to manipulate competing foci of external power. These *tusi* frequently accepted imperial titles and seals from Beijing while also maintaining close ties with Lhasa. See Scott Relyea, “Gazing at the Tibetan Plateau: Sovereignty and Chinese State Expansion in the Early Twentieth Century” (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Chicago, 2010). The work of Charles Patterson Giersch identifies a similar dynamic in Xishuangbanna in Yunnan Province, where leaders of the Tai ethnic group maintained a significant degree of independence by balancing their relationships with the Siamese, Qing, and Burmese governments. See Charles Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁸⁵ Lawrence Epstein, “Introduction,” in Lawrence Epstein, ed., *Khams pa Histories: Visions of People, Place, and Authority - Proceedings of the 9th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2.

⁸⁶ Yudru Tsomu has argued that a similar system of social organization existed in Nyarong in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Tsomu, *The Rise of Gönpö Namgyel in Kham*, xxviii-xxix. Also see Mueggler for interesting parallels amongst the neighboring Lolopo; Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts*.

the 1930s.⁸⁷ Local leaders in Gyalthang displayed a great deal of finesse in mediating between different power holders at the local, regional, and national levels in the mid-twentieth century.

The government of the Ganden Phodrang in Lhasa, the Qing court, the Nationalist government, and the early Chinese Communist government each exercised only limited authority in Gyalthang in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Instead, Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery was the seat of political, economic, and military dominance in Gyalthang. Even when the government of the Ganden Phodrang, based in Lhasa, did not exert direct control over Gyalthang, Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery remained the most influential institution in the region. Due to direct kinship ties between secular and monastic rulers in Gyalthang, the political influence of the monastery was often closely intertwined with the power of the wealthiest landholders.

Historically, Tibetan families in Gyalthang supported Sumtsenling monastery by fulfilling corvée tax obligations, which included constructing new monastic buildings or renovating existing structures, porting water and firewood, farming the monastery's land, and sending one or more of their sons to the monastery. Another vital source of yearly income for Sumtsenling was the leasing of agricultural estates and pastoral areas to local residents and the charging of rent for the use of such land. In addition, monks and reincarnate lamas would perform various types of rituals, ceremonies, and medicinal services, and teach written Tibetan and Buddhist doctrine to lay people in exchange for donations.⁸⁸ Tibetans monks from Gyalthang

⁸⁷ Peng, "Frontier Process"; Rinzin Thargyal, *Nomads of Eastern Tibet: Social Organization and Economy of a Pastoral Estate in the Kingdom of Dege* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 183.

⁸⁸ Zhonggong Diqing zhouwei dangshi zhengji yanjiu shibian 中共迪庆州委党史征集研究室编 [The CCP Diqing Prefecture Committee on Party History Research Group], ed., *Fengjian nongnu zhidu zai diqing de fumie* 封建农奴制度在迪庆的覆灭 [*The Destruction of the Feudal Slave System in Diqing*] (Dali: Dali zhou dianzi yinshuachang, 1993). Many monasteries in other Tibetan areas also capitalized in many of these same ways on human resources and religious services. See Melvyn Goldsetein, "The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery," in Melvyn

traveled to study at many of the most renowned monasteries in Lhasa well into the mid-twentieth century. To a certain extent, therefore, religion was a unifying force that played a role in ideologically integrating the millions of Tibetans that were living in Gyalthang and other politically divided polities within Kham, Amdo, and central Tibet. Aside from the influence of Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery and other competing monastic powers in Gyalthang, there was not really a single political authority that formed the basis of collective identity and governance in the area until the Chinese Communist government solidified control over Gyalthang in the mid-1950s.⁸⁹

Tibetan residents of Gyalthang speak several local Tibetic languages and most Gyalthangpa (Tibetans of Gyalthang) understand themselves to be Khampas, residents of the southernmost reaches of the eastern Tibetan cultural world. However, there are small pockets within this territory where Tibetan inhabitants identify neither as Gyalthangpa nor Khampa. Much can be learned about historical monastic influence and control by researching the doctrinal and political loyalties of the monks residing in different *khangsten* (monastic colleges) within Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery.⁹⁰ This is because families from particular geographic regions in and around Gyalthang sent their sons to be monks at regionally-affiliated *khangtsens* within the monastery. Some of the geographical areas controlled by the eight *khangtsens* in Sumtsenling are

Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein, eds., *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 19.

⁸⁹ Gyalthang was not part of the large area controlled by Gönpo Namgyel of Nyarong during the height of his power in Kham from 1835-1865. Indeed, the areas of Jol (Dechen), the region of Lijiang and the Mu kingdom, Gyalthang, and Mili (Muli, in today's Sichuan), all lay to the south of his control. Tashi Tsering, "Nag-ron Mgon-po Rnam-rgyal: A 19th Century Khams-pa Warrior," in Barbara Nimri Aziz and Matthew Kapstein, eds., *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1985), 196-214; Tsomu, *The Rise of Gönpo Namgyel in Kham*.

⁹⁰ Eric Mortensen, "Prosperity, Identity, Intra-Tibetan Violence, and Harmony in Southeast Tibet: The Case of Gyalthang," in Ben Hillman and Gray Tuttle, eds., *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 206.

not located in the region that locals commonly refer to as “Gyalthang.”⁹¹ Therefore, Gyalthang identity neither can be solely defined by the constellations of monastic power, nor defined by shared linguistic or ethno-national affiliations. So, with no specific historical, political, or religious demarcation of the boundaries of Gyalthang, and with no unified linguistic or ethnic identity, what historically has defined the identity of the Gyalthang people?

The CCP’s Ethnic Classification Project and the Creation of “Tibetan” identity

One influential state policy that altered local understandings of identity in Gyalthang in the early twentieth-century was the Chinese ethnolinguistic classification project. Originally during the Republican era (1911-1949) and then more fully during the first decade of Communist rule, the Chinese state enlisted ethnographers in a campaign to impose cultural legibility on the people living in China’s peripheral regions. Nationalist Party leaders recognized that China was a multi-national/multi-ethnic (*duo minzu* 多民族) country, and Sun Yat-sen even endorsed the design of a new flag to symbolize this multi-nationalism. However, ethnic groups other than the five official nationalities of the Han, the Mongols, the Manchus, the Tibetans, and the Tartars (Turkic Muslims), were not included in Sun’s conceptualization of a multi-ethnic nation state. The Nationalists initially spoke of self-determination and self-government for China’s diverse minority peoples, but eventually assimilation was acknowledged as the ultimate goal.

Some ethnologists in the Republican period, such as Cen Jiawu, attempted to formulate a moderate discourse on *minzu* 民族 (“ethnicity” or “nationality”) that could act as an interface

⁹¹ Bstan-pa-rgyal-mtshan, *Rgyal than yul lun dgon gnas dan bcas pa'i byuñ ba mdo tsam brjod pa blo gsal mgul pa mdzes pa'i rgyan* [A History of the Gyalthang Gompa Monastic Complex and its Environs] (Dharamsala, H.P., India: Rgyal-thañ Bya-'thab, Ñag-dbañ Thabs-mkhas, 1985).

between the multi-*minzu* worldview of the field of Chinese ethnology and the assimilationist ideology of the Nationalists.⁹² In the 1930s, Cen Jiawu attempted to find a place for the *xinan minzu* 西南民族 (the *minzu* of the southwest) within the official Nationalist concept of the “Republic of Five Peoples” (*wuzu gonghe* 五族共和). In addition to being composed of the five main *minzu* outlined in the theory of the Five Peoples’ Republic, Cen argued that the Chinese nation also encompassed the Miao, Yao, Yi, and Luoluo. While Cen’s push for official recognition of ethnic diversity was motivated partially by his own desire for recognition of his discipline, his worldview, and his expertise as an ethnologist, he was also firmly committed to the principle of recognizing and acknowledging ethnic diversity when it could clearly be shown to exist, according to the ethnological practices of the day.

However, the war with Japan, coupled with the Nationalists’ oppositional relationship with the Chinese Communist Party, prompted the Nationalists to redouble their commitment to a homogenous China in the late 1930s. Chiang Kai-shek insisted that the *Zhonghua minzu* 中华民族 (alternatively interpreted to indicate a singular “Chinese nationality” or plural “Chinese nationalities”) must be thought of as singular and indivisible. He maintained that any attempt to divide up the country into minority and majority ethnic groups would harm national unity, which was essential to maintain in the face of the Japanese imperialist threat. Chiang insisted that every citizen of the Republic of China belonged under the single overarching label of *Zhonghua minzu*, regardless of his or her linguistic, religious, or cultural background. As a result, Chinese ethnologists, explorers, travelers, and intellectuals found themselves forced to comprehend the

⁹² Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

diversity and the historical conflicts among the peoples they observed in the southwest and the northwest as “variations within” rather than categorical “differences among.” In the end, ethnologists were never able to integrate their worldview into the Nationalists’ official demographic ideology.

In contrast to the Nationalists, even before the Communists ascended to power in 1949, CCP leaders were firm advocates of the idea of a multi-*minzu* China. The CCP’s acknowledgement and affirmation of ethnic differences amongst the people living in China’s peripheral borderlands was initially strategically designed to solicit the support of these non-Han populations during the Nationalist/Communist civil war. The Communists needed to rely on the support of ethnic groups in southwest China, in particular, while fleeing from the Nationalists during the Long March (1934-1936).

The Chinese Communist Party’s ethnic classification project of the 1950s was central to its efforts to both implement political reform and strengthen national unity amongst an ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse citizenry. The Party came to power in 1949 armed with two ideologies: nationalism and Marxism-Leninism.⁹³ It was determined to use nationalism to unite its ethnic minority populations with its Han majority, and to forge a “unified, multinational state” (*tongyi de duominzu guojia* 统一的多民族国家).⁹⁴ The CCP’s

⁹³ The Communist development project differed from the “civilizing” project of the Qing Empire in its rationale and use of ideological persuasion. During the Qing dynasty, people living in the empire’s borderland areas had been urged to follow the high, literate culture of the “Chinese” gentry because it was considered more culturally advanced, but in the Communist period they were urged to follow the “Han” example because it stood higher on an objective, scientific scale of universal progress. See Stevan Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 28-29.

⁹⁴ The term “unified, multinational state” (*tongyi de duominzu guojia* 统一的多民族国家) underscores a certain ambiguity within the Communist Party’s nation-building project, revealing the degree to which the People’s Republic of China still resembles an empire. James Townsend argues that the Qing empire possessed many characteristics of nationhood, including “a sense of common history, with myths of origin and descent; a distinctive

policy on ethnicity was also influenced by Stalinist ideology, which held that Communist governments everywhere had the responsibility to identify and recognize each distinct nationality (Rus.: *nastia*) within their respective nation-states, so as to better plan political campaigns and developmental strategies to integrate these nationalities into Communist society. The goal of the Communist project, as outlined by Stalinism, was ostensibly not to make “peripheral peoples” more like those of the “center,” but rather to bring them to a universal standard of modernity that would, eventually, exist independent of where the center might be on the historical scale at any given moment.

To convince diverse Chinese ethnic groups to “buy in” to the concept of the nation state, and to Maoist ideology itself, the Party had to provide guarantees that each people’s linguistic, religious, and cultural traits would be recognized. However, this desire to provide reassurances that ethnic differences would be respected was often at odds with the Party’s ideological goal of leading the nation toward socialism, which relied on downplaying cultural and ethnic differences in favor of emphasizing class. To accomplish these sometimes ideologically contradictory goals, the Communist Party sequestered the aid of social scientists in assigning each ethnic group to a specific stage of history, with the understanding that the Party would help liberate each of these groups from its particular “backward” stage of history and usher in a socialist future. As a result,

written language and literary forms associated with it; some common folklore, life rituals and religious practices; and a core political elite, with a common education and orientation toward government service.” See James Townsend, “Chinese Nationalism,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 27 (1992): 125. Stevan Harrell contends that although the Chinese Communist Party fully embraced the political project of “imagining” the People’s Republic of China as a modern nation-state, China continued to act like an empire in one important regard: political power resided almost entirely in the hands of a single ethnic group, which, rather than insisting on cultural assimilation, initially recognized other ethnic groups as culturally distinct and ostensibly worthy of a certain level of political autonomy. See Stevan Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 26.

by the late-1950s, many of China's leading ethnologists had become closely implicated in the twin projects of nation-building and socialist development.⁹⁵

In order to devise and sustain a revolutionary policy that would allow different minority groups to be led fruitfully toward socialism, Chinese ethnologists utilized the Stalinist model of Marxist ethnology to draw up a table of the evolution of societies and peoples that was to serve as the framework for their field studies. Each minority group was placed along this ladder of human evolution. Although the researchers studied the life and customs, spiritual culture, politics and society, and demographic data of each ethnic minority group, they were most interested in researching each group's economic structures—such as the concentration of land ownership, exchange relations, production techniques and work experience, and the ownership of the means of production. The four Stalinist criteria for defining a nationality were “a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up [which was manifested in common features of national culture].”⁹⁶

Apart from Stalin's criteria for identifying nationalities, Chinese social thinkers were also heavily influenced by Friedrich Engels' stage evolutionary theory, which in turn, was shaped by the writings of the nineteenth-century American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan.⁹⁷ In the

⁹⁵ Unlike sociology, largely considered contrary to “scientific” Marxism, ethnology was valued by the Chinese Communist Party because it had inspired Engels to develop his theory about the evolution of societies. The Communist Party regarded ethnology's main function as not an academic but a political one: the role of ethnology was to aid the Chinese state in identifying, controlling, and integrating its ethnic minorities.

⁹⁶ J. V. Stalin, *Works, 1907-1913*, XI, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 349. By the end of the 1980s, these four criteria were still viewed as normative criteria for defining nationalities in socialist China. See Jin Binggao, “The Marxist Definition of Nationality: Its Origin and Influence,” *Central Nationalities Institute Journal* 3 (1984): 67.

⁹⁷ For more on how Friedrich Engels was influenced by Morgan's theories, see Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan* (New York: International Publishers, [1884] 1971).

first chapter of his famous 1878 treatise, *Ancient Society*, Morgan used the term “the ethnical period” to describe the development of human society from a general state of savagery, to barbarism, and finally to civilization.⁹⁸ Upon taking power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party embraced this Morganian project of classifying human history into five stages (the primitive, slave, feudal, capitalist, and socialist modes of production) and used this stage evolutionary theory to formulate national development policies.⁹⁹ Members of different ethnic groups within China were understood to occupy different rungs of this ladder of human progress, with the Han positioned at the top.¹⁰⁰ The Communists formulated a policy of development that urged the “brother nationalities” (*xiongdì minzu* 兄弟民族) to follow the example of the advanced Han and liberate themselves from their current positions as “living fossils” of much more primitive periods of human history.¹⁰¹

In order to plan the type of political campaigns that would raise the civilizational levels of the various *minzu* in China, it first became necessary to determine where each *minzu* fit on a Marxist scale of history. The Chinese Communists maintained that specific ethnic groups, which

⁹⁸ Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985 [1878]), 1-18.

⁹⁹ In his book, *Toward a People's Anthropology*, the well-known Chinese anthropologist Fei Xiaotong acknowledged that, “the situation of nationalities in China shortly after the Liberation provided researchers with a veritable living manual of the history of social development.” Fei praised China’s southwest Yunnan Province as a “cultural laboratory par excellence”—a place where in “the whole process of cultural development—from the primitive headhunters to the sophisticated and individualized city-dwellers—can be seen in concrete form.” Fei Xiaotong, “Ethnic Identification in China,” *Towards a People's Anthropology* (Beijing: New World Press, 1983), 9.

¹⁰⁰ As if to underline the continued dominance of this theory about the superiority of the Han, Fei Xiaotong presented a lecture in Hong Kong in 1988, entitled “Plurality and Unity in the Configuration of the Chinese Nationality,” which was later published in the *Beijing University Journal*. The technical superiority of the Han, Fei argued, had led to the gradual assimilation of the non-Han peoples. Fei maintained that this sociological phenomena verified the theoretical soundness of the Chinese Communist Party’s policy of national unification (*minzu tuanjie* 民族团结 or *ronghe* 溶合). Cited in Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 73-74.

¹⁰¹ See Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, 49-50.

were judged to be in the late-feudal stage of the landlord economy (which is where most of the Han peasantry was judged to be), were to undergo the violent class struggles of Land Reform. On the other hand, those that were still at the slave stage, or even showed vestiges of the primitive commune stage, were subjected to a much milder process, termed “Democratic Reform” (*minzhu gaige* 民主改革), which involved the cooptation of local leaders into the state project. Nine months after the formation of the People’s Republic of China, the CCP dispatched Nationalities Visitation Teams (*minzu fangwentuan* 民族访问团) to border regions throughout the country. At the time, it was understood that once the process of defining the various *minzu* was finished, the CCP would be able to go full steam ahead in “civilizing” these groups.

Chinese ethnologists involved in the Chinese Communist Party’s ethnic classification project of the 1950s assigned an ethnic label to each Chinese citizen, utilizing Marx’s “materialist conception of history” to determine each ethnic group’s location on the Marxist-Leninist ladder of economic and social development.¹⁰² In the end, they largely succeeded in making the public internalize these ethnic labels. One of the major differences between the ethnographic research conducted by ethnologists in the pre-Communist period and that which took place after 1949, was that the Communist Party’s modern nation-building project meant that ethnologists working in the Communist period had to secure the consent of the categorized. “Persuasion work” (*shuofu gongzuo* 说服工作), which involved ethnologists transforming the worldviews of their informants in the process of researching, labeling, and mobilizing them for

¹⁰² For a more detailed explanation of the Marxist concept of historical materialism, see Karl Marx, “Preface,” in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, [1859] 1977).

the socialist project, was based on techniques that the Communist Party devised during their mobilization of the urban working class in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰³

However, after the initial Nationalities Visitation Teams, which were dispatched in 1950, returned with a much more complicated report about the ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of the Chinese population than the Chinese Communist Party had originally anticipated, the Party decided to endorse a much more “scientific” project with the aim of establishing “objective” criteria for ethnic identification.¹⁰⁴ The 1953 Election Law stipulated that at least one representative seat in the National People’s Congress must be awarded to each minority, regardless of population size. The issue that then arose was *how* to find out who these minorities were. The political need to establish clear criteria for ethnic minority identification led the Chinese Communist Party to carry out its first census in 1953-1954.

In designing the census, the Communist authorities decided to pose the question of ethnonational identity as an open-ended, fill-in-the-blank inquiry, which, in retrospect, might well be viewed as a radically liberal experiment with self-categorization. Yet, this attempt at uncovering Chinese citizens’ understanding of their own ethnic identity led to a political crisis, since the 2.5 million census takers returned back to Beijing with roughly 400 *minzu* categories, some with a registered population size of just one person.¹⁰⁵ In order to avoid derailing the

¹⁰³ The emphasis that the Communist Party placed on transforming the worldviews of Chinese workers in the 1930s was similar to the importance they placed on creating and strengthening the “ethnic consciousness” of various *minzu* living in China’s borderland areas. For more on working class consciousness and worker mobilization in early twentieth-century Shanghai, see Elizabeth Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁴ Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People’s Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16-17.

¹⁰⁵ Fei Xiaotong, “Ethnic Identification in China,” in Fei Xiaotong, ed., *Toward a People’s Anthropology* (Beijing: New World Press, 1981), 60.

formation of the People's Congress, the Chinese Communist Party immediately initiated the 1954 Ethnic Classification Project (*minzu shibie* 民族识别). A small group of Beijing scholars, many of whom had trained in foreign universities, was enlisted to identify and categorize all of the ethnic minority groups that should be recognized by the national government.¹⁰⁶ These ethnologists and linguists tended to rely on the ethnotaxonomic frameworks devised by the British colonial officer Henry Rudolph Davies (1865-1950). The Chinese Communist Party's Ethnic Classification Project, therefore, was not really that different from many other European colonial projects designed to classify "native subjects."¹⁰⁷

One of the most important factors in the assessment of the ethnic potential of a proposed *minzu* category was to estimate whether it would elicit support or resistance, particularly from the local elites who would play an integral role in all subsequent phases of Chinese Communist minority work. As a result, Chinese social scientists realized in the 1950s that for the first time ever, their clean-cut, objectivist models of identity would need to come into direct contact with the subjectivities of their informants if they were to understand the level of local support for their classification project. This was a profoundly complicated interaction that, in the end, necessitated an adjustment in their previously primordialist classificatory praxis.

¹⁰⁶ In 1956 an even more ambitious project was placed under the direction of the Central Institute for Minorities and the Committee for Nationalities of the People's National Assembly, and research was carried out with an eye toward publishing a general history of every ethnic minority group. The Chinese specialists involved in the Ethnic Classification Project aimed to design a set of plausible, "imaginable" *minzu* categories that would serve as a blueprint for the kind of ethnic map that could exist in the future with the help of state intervention. The boundaries of this ethnic map have required continual policing in the five decades since they were first invented. Mullaney demonstrates how ethnicity in the People's Republic of China has always been closely tied to the government's efforts at "nationality work." Indeed, ethnicity in China today remains a challenging and constantly evolving "work-in-progress." Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Chinese ethnologists ended up relying heavily upon Communist methods of assessing and molding the political consciousness of various communities, in order to complete their goal of securing the consent of the categorized. Mullaney describes the interview processes involved in persuading different minorities in Yunnan that they actually belonged to the same *minzu*.¹⁰⁸ Just as the Chinese Communist Party had turned to ethnologists for their assistance—a process that opened the door to social scientific approaches to Communist ethnopolitics—in the fieldwork phase of the project, Chinese ethnologists came to heavily rely upon Communist methods of assessing and molding the political consciousness of communities at the local level. Since the researchers had helped the state see the Chinese people categorically, the state was now willing to help the researchers secure the consent of the categorized.¹⁰⁹

After ethnologists had determined where minority populations in various regions stood on the scale of human development, local Communist Party organizers had to tackle the problem of social transformation. Although between 1947 and 1952 land reform was carried out in almost every rural area of China, land reform was only implemented in minority regions where it was determined that the social system had already evolved to the last stage of “feudalism,” characterized by a landlord economy. In regions deemed to have “early feudal societies,” such

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ The minority nationality identification campaigns largely came to a close in the late 1950s, and the 1964 census registered 53 nationalities, with the Han *minzu* recognized as the majority nationality with 91 percent of the population. The Jinno were recognized as an official nationality as late as 1979, and by 1982, the national census allowed for a total of 56 Chinese nationalities to be reported. However, since 1982, more than fifteen ethnic groups have applied to the State Commission for Nationality Affairs for official recognition, and by 1990 there were still 749,341 individuals of “unidentified ethnicity” reportedly waiting to be recognized. See Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 66. For more on the 1990 census, see “*Guanyu 1990 nian renkou pucha zhuyao shuju de gongbao* 关于1990年人口普查数据的公报 [Announcement Regarding the Most Important Statistics of the 1990 Population Census],” *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 [*People's Daily*] November 14, 1990: 3.

as in Tibet, or in areas where social evolution was “retarded” at the stage of “slave society,” such as along the Yi corridor on the Sichuan/Yunnan Provincial border, land reform was not initially carried out. Indeed, in many of these regions, native authorities, who formally had been recognized by imperial governments as *tusi* 土司 or *tuguan* 土管, were allowed to remain in place and rule alongside the new Party-led administration. This delay in social reform lasted until 1956 in most areas of southwest China. Rather than inducing local villagers to struggle against and overthrow their own leaders, Party officials introduced so-called “Democratic Reforms” to attempt to co-opt as many local leaders as possible into the new administration. These local leaders often cooperated with the Chinese Communist Party, since doing so guaranteed them a certain measure of prestige, calling into question the degree to which life for villagers in the early Communist period was all that different from life in imperial times.

Defining numerous linguistically and culturally diverse groups of Tibetic peoples as *Zangzu* (Tibetan) in the CCP’s 1950s ethnic classification project was an important part of efforts to understand, delineate, and control particular groups of peoples along China’s ethnic borderland areas. But this process resulted in certain unforeseen consequences—certain translocal ethnic solidarities resulted from this new classification scheme that were not necessarily in line with CCP interests.¹¹⁰ The label *Zangzu* recognized the cultural, linguistic, and historical links among peoples scattered across a wide territory, even as they were divided among five separate provinces and various “autonomous” districts and counties. Yet, historically in regions like Gyalthang, understandings of place and identity were generally much more locally grounded and the broader notion of “Tibetanness” did not carry much meaning for local

¹¹⁰ Makley, *The Violence of Liberation*, 80; Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People’s Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

residents. Thus, as Charlene Makley argues, CCP recognition of the *Zangzu* as a cohesive group of people lent “state administrative weight to a reified translocal identity that had arguably never existed among Tibetans.”¹¹¹ The Chinese state’s heavy-handed approach to defining, creating, solidifying, and controlling ethnic boundaries within the PRC resulted in the emergence of new forms of ethnic consciousness in the 1950s. Certain forms of ethnic identity, artificial as they may have been at the point of creation, took on lives of their own in the years following the ethnic classification project.¹¹²

In the case of Gyalthang, the project of PRC state incorporation generated new understandings of ethnic identity and heightened local Tibetans’ interest in budding pan-Khampa movements.¹¹³ The CCP’s decision to enforce land reform in Kham in the late 1950s seems to have led to the opposite of its intended effect: facing dispossession, many Khampas reverted to a probably half-forgotten or perhaps half-invented memory of Tibetan political unity. In 1956, soon after Khampa rebels formed an army in order to counter the Chinese military’s attacks on their monasteries, the Khampa army moved westward to join forces with Tibetans in Lhasa and to defend the Dalai Lama. It was largely the flood of Khampa refugees into Lhasa as they fled from conflict with the Chinese forces in the eastern areas that led to the famous uprising of March 1959 in the Tibetan capital. The failure of that rebellion led the Dalai Lama and nearly eighty thousand of his followers to seek refuge in India, where they remain today.

¹¹¹ Makley, *The Violence of Liberation*, 80.

¹¹² To understand how the Ethnic Classification Project ended up fueling certain kinds of ethnonationalist sentiments among the Zhuang people of Southwest China, see Katherine Kaup, *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

¹¹³ For more on the Khampa Rebellions of 1956-1957, see Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM THE LONG MARCH TO THE SOCIALIST EDUCATION MOVEMENT: THE CONSOLIDATION OF COMMUNIST PARTY RULE IN GYALTHANG (1936-1965)

In official Chinese histories, the period immediately following the Communist “liberation” of China in 1949 is sometimes termed the “Golden Age” or the “Honeymoon Period” of Chinese Communist rule, particularly when compared with the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution just over a decade later.¹¹⁴ In contrast, a few other scholars have claimed that the first decade of Maoism was one of the worst tyrannies in the history of the twentieth century.¹¹⁵ It is now clear that China’s diverse regions did not undergo political transformation in the same way or at the same rate. Chinese society during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s was not monolithic, nor was the Chinese state singular. It is impossible to understand how Communist political campaigns and ideological work affected people’s lives in different regions of China, without closely taking a more local or “grassroots” approach to examining this period of history.¹¹⁶ Villagers living in rural ethnic minority areas, like Gyalthang, experienced a very different kind

¹¹⁴ See, for example, *Tianjin jingji gaikuang* 天津经济概况 [Survey of Tianjin’s Economy] (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1984), 19.

¹¹⁵ Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-1957* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), xiii; Yang Jiasheng 杨继绳, *Mubei: Zhongguo liushi niandai da jihuang jishi* 墓碑: 中国六十年代大饥荒纪实 [Tombstone: A Report on China’s Great Famine of the 1960s] (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu youxian gongsi, 2008).

¹¹⁶ Jeremy Brown and Matthew Johnson, “Introduction,” in Jeremy Brown and Matthew Johnson, eds., *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China’s Era of High Socialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 4-5.

of political trajectory than Han Chinese residents living in urban areas in the 1940s and 1950s. By departing from what Gail Hershatter calls “campaign time” and looking more closely at how particular events affected Gyalthang residents in different ways and at different times than residents living in other parts of China, this chapter aims to examine politics through the eyes of the Tibetan students, monks, farmers, and village leaders who experienced it first-hand, rather than through elite policy-makers and propagandists.¹¹⁷

This chapter uses information gleaned from local county and prefectural gazetteers, oral history interviews with Gyalthang residents, and accounts written by Tibetan historians in Gyalthang to shed light on some of the crucial questions that remain unanswered about the first three decades of Tibetan encounters with the Communist Party in Gyalthang, starting with the Long March in 1936 and ending on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. How did Tibetan religious and secular leaders in Gyalthang respond to the Red Army’s desperate request for help during the Long March? How appropriate or theoretically useful is the term “collaboration” in explaining why some religious and secular leaders joined forces with Chinese Communist government in the 1950s in response to mounting social and political pressures? What were the political, social, and economic factors that led Gyalthang residents to actively participate in a series of campaigns that increasingly targeted Tibetan culture, traditions, and religion? To what extent were Tibetans’ identities in Gyalthang in the 1950s shaped more by their socioeconomic status and ideological orientations than by their identities as members of a marginalized ethnic minority group in China? In Gyalthang the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution was immediately preceded by the rapid inversion of long-standing economic and social structures.

¹¹⁷ Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*.

Gyalthang Tibetans' involvement in the Chinese Communist Party campaigns of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s greatly influenced how local residents later responded to the launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

The Long March

The Chinese Communist Party's efforts to win over the elite power holders in Gyalthang began during the Long March (*chang zheng* 长征). As Communist armies in the south of China attempted to evade being captured by Guomindang troops, different divisions of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (*Zhongguo gongnong hong jun* 中国工农红军) took part in a series of marches that later came to be known collectively as the Long March. A few divisions of the Red Army intended to move northward from Guizhou Province to Shanxi Province in the spring of 1935, but Guomindang troops blocked the way. The Red Army was forced to detour through northern Yunnan Province, enter areas inhabited by Tibetans, Naxi, Yi, and other ethnic minority populations, and cross over numerous snow mountains on the Yunnan-Sichuan border.¹¹⁸ Between April 25 and May 7, 1936, Commanders He Long 贺龙, Xiao Ke 肖克, Ren Bishi 任弼时, Wang Zhen 王震, and Guan Xiangying 关向应 led 18,000 troops in the Second and Sixth divisions of the Red Army through Gyalthang.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Union Research Institute, "Appendix 1," in *Tibet: 1950-1967* (Hong Kong: Union Press Limited, 1968), 760.

¹¹⁹ As an important landmark in the history of the Communist Party, the Long March is currently commemorated in the Diqing Red Army Long March Museum (*Diqing hongjun changzheng bowuguan* 香格里拉红军长征博物馆) in Gyalthang, as well as at other former sites along the Red Army's route. One of the main streets that runs from north to south in Zhongxin Town was named Long March Road (*chang zheng lu* 长征路) in 1982. YSDZZXZDZ, 18; DZZZ, 22; Qi Yaozu 七耀祖 and Xiluo Jiachu 西洛嘉初, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe 中甸嘎丹松赞林 (归化寺) 志略 [Historical Synopsis of Zhongdian's Ganden Sumtsenling (Guihua) Monastery]," in DZWZX3, 37.

The Second Division of the Red Army forged the Yangtze River on small wooden rowboats and began to transport their supplies northward into Gyalthang on April 25, 1936. Five days later, the Red Army set up their command center in Zanggong Hall (*Zanggong tang* 藏公堂), an ancestral hall and the administrative center for Chinese residents in Gyalthang.¹²⁰ On his first evening in town, Commander He Long raised the Communist Party's red flag on the roof of Zanggong Hall and urged his troops to respect Tibetan religion and culture and to do their utmost to win over the wealthy and powerful elite in Gyalthang.¹²¹ He also required his weary soldiers to first secure the consent of the male head of the household before staying overnight in a Tibetan home. Since it was customary for young and middle-aged Gyalthang men to travel along trade routes to Dali 大理, Bathang 巴塘, and Dartsedo (*Tachienlu* 打箭炉 or *Kangding* 康定), during the spring and summer, most of the household heads in Gyalthang were away from home. As a Han Chinese commander with very little knowledge of local Tibetan customs, Commander He not only had to deal with an immediate and severe shortage of food and housing, he also faced significant linguistic and cultural barriers that prevented him from immediately resolving this pressing problem.¹²²

In order to win over the local Tibetan elite and garner their support, the Red Army troops staged musical performances and the troop leaders gave lengthy speeches, which were translated by local sympathetic Tibetans proficient in Chinese.¹²³ They assured the Tibetan power holders

¹²⁰ The Diqing Red Army Long March Museum was built in 1982 and it now surrounds the much older Zanggong Hall on three sides.

¹²¹ ZXZ, 14; Qi and Xiluo, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe," 37-38.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 37.

in Gyalthang that the Red Army would not threaten their way of life. The troop leaders erected a large banner in front of Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery forbidding their soldiers from entering the main assembly hall. Desperate for provisions to feed his hungry soldiers, He inquired into purchasing grain from Sumtsenling Monastery, since the monastery controlled most of grain reserves in the Gyalthang valley. Sumtsenling's monastic leaders sent Sonam Phuntsok (Sunnuo Pinchu 孙诺品楚), the monastery's representative, to meet with He in Zanggong Hall.¹²⁴

Commander He explained the CCP's religious and ethnic minority policies to Sonam and wrote a letter to the eight leaders of Sumtsenling Monastery assuring them of his army's goodwill and his desire to protect their monastery from any harm.¹²⁵ On a large red silk banner Commander He wrote in bold black brushstrokes, "The Red Army is a friend of the Tibetan people" (*Hongjun shi fanmin de hao pengyou* 红军是番民的好朋友), and presented the banner to Sonam.¹²⁶ In return, Sonam assured He that he would figure out a way to procure grain for the Red Army.¹²⁷

Commander He knew his army would be unable to push onwards without purchasing new

¹²³ Sun Bintaο 孙彬涛, "Diqing difang dang shi zhuyao licheng 迪庆地方党史主要历程 [The Principal Course of Party History in Diqing]," *Xianggelila wang*, June 21, 2011, accessed May 2, 2014: http://www.shangri-lanews.com/xwzx/2011-06/21/content_51608_3.htm.

¹²⁴ Sonam Phuntsok, who is often referred to in CCP documents as Xiana Guwa 夏那古娃 (1893-1957), was from Xiana Village 夏那村 in Namsal Township (*Nuoxi xiang* 诺西乡) in Da Zhongdian District (*Da Zhongdian qu* 大中甸区). He later became the Vice Governor of Da Zhongdian District and a member of the Diqing Prefectural Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Qi and Xiluo, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe," 37.

¹²⁵ ZXZ, 14-15.

¹²⁶ Qi and Xiluo, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe," 37. The term *fanmin* 番民 here refers to "Tibetans." A similar term, *fanzu* 番族, meaning "barbarians," was commonly used by Chinese to refer to the Tibetan people during the Qing and Republican periods. See Uradyn Bulag, "Seeing Like a Minority: Political Tourism and the Struggle for Recognition in China," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 41:4 (2012): 140.

¹²⁷ Qi and Xiluo, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe," 37.

provisions in town, so he was in urgent need of any help that the monastic establishment could provide.

A lengthy meeting between Commander He and the representatives of each of the eight monastic colleges of Sumtsenling Monastery took place on May 2.¹²⁸ Commander He used this formal occasion to present the monastery with a pair of Qing dynasty porcelain vases and a red silk banner, upon which he had written the following good tidings: “May the Tibetans Prosper” (*xingsheng fanzu* 兴盛蕃族).¹²⁹ In return, the monastic leaders agreed to open the monastery’s grain storage doors the following morning and provide the Red Army with salt, brown sugar, and 60,000 *jin* of grain.¹³⁰ The monastery also asked the Tibetan villagers living within the jurisdiction of the monastery to sell an additional 10,000 *jin* of barley to the Red Army. Zangbum Dorje (*Songmou Angwang Luosang Danzeng Jiacao* 松谋·昂汪洛桑丹增嘉措) (1899-1967), the seventeenth reincarnation of the Zangbum Lama of Sumtsenling Monastery, instructed the leaders of Sumtsenling Monastery’s eight monastic colleges to meet with the Chinese troops and present them with *khatas*.¹³¹ He also wrote a letter to the abbot of Dondrupling Gompa (*Gadan Dongzhulinsi* 噶丹·东竹林寺), a Gelugpa monastery in nearby Trirangkar (*Benzilan* 奔子栏), asking him to protect the Red army and ensure the safety of his troops as they passed through Trirangkar.¹³² After they were well re-provisioned, the Red Army

¹²⁸ A sign commemorating this meeting between Commander He and the monastic leaders of Sumtsenling still hangs above the door of the Dukhang, the oldest temple in Sumtsenling. Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 48.

¹²⁹ This banner is currently now on display at the Diqing Red Army Long March Museum.

¹³⁰ One *jin* 斤 is equal to 500 grams.

¹³¹ DZZZ, 22.

left Gyalthang on May 4, 1936, and set out for Chatreng (*Xiangcheng* 乡城), continuing on their northern push into central Sichuan.¹³³

Although the Red Army was treated with respect by the monastic leaders of Sumtsenling, one hundred and sixty officers and soldiers were either killed or died of malnutrition and hypothermia during the seventeen days (April 29-May 15, 1936) that the Red Army spent passing over the mountains or gathering supplies in Gyalthang.¹³⁴ This death toll included seven Gyalthang residents who joined the Red Army as translators when the troops came through town, but then died due to the harsh conditions in the high mountains or during later skirmishes with Tibetan troops led by warlords in Termarong and Chatreng.¹³⁵ Many soldiers in the advanced guard of the Red Army that came through Gyalthang also died after being attacked by the formidable Tibetan warlord, Wangchuk Tempa (*Wang Xueding* 汪学鼎). Born into a powerful family in Gyalthang, Wangchuk received monastic training in Lhasa, but later left the monastic life to become the political and military ruler of Yangthang (*Xiao Zhongdian* 小中甸). In the 1930s he built a well-armed militia and successfully recruited local residents to join him in protecting Gyalthang from roaming Tibetan bandits and outside military incursions.¹³⁶

¹³² Sulang Jiachu 苏朗甲楚, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji* 苏朗甲楚藏学文集 [*An Anthology of Sulang Jiachu's Tibetan Studies Scholarship*] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2007), 342.

¹³³ Qi and Xiluo, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe," 38-39.

¹³⁴ According to a CCP account published online, the names of these Gyalthang translators were Lu Yunhong 陆云鹤, Miao Sanyuan 苗三元, Gesu 格苏, Latuo 腊拖, Chen Yougui 陈友贵, Liu Wenxiu 刘文秀, and Tang Zhongyu 唐重余. Sun, "The Principal Course of Party History in Diqing."

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Sulang Jiachu 苏朗甲楚, "Wang Xueding Zhuanji 汪学鼎传记 [A Biography of Wang Xueding]," in DZWZX3, 108.

While many Gyalthang residents joined Wangchuk's militia and fought against the Red Army, others appear to have been at least partially won over by the Red Army soldiers' actions, speeches, and musical performances in town. There are accounts of pregnant Tibetan slaves, who were so impressed by the Red Army commanders' speeches about the need to do away with social inequality in Gyalthang, that they named their newborn children "Communist" (*gongchan* 共产).¹³⁷

The Growth of the Underground Communist Party in Northwest Yunnan

A growing underground Communist Party (*di xia dang zuzhi* 地下党组织) gained support among young Tibetan and Naxi residents in Gyalthang during the fourteen years between the Red Army's departure from Gyalthang in 1936 and the People's Liberation Army's arrival in 1950.¹³⁸ In the autumn of 1941, Yang Zhanying 杨湛英, the Yunnan Provincial representative of the Second Communist Party Congress, traveled to Gyalthang and nearby Deqin and Weixi to gather support for an underground Communist Party in ethnic minority areas of northwest Yunnan Province.¹³⁹ In the 1930s and 1940s Tibetan intellectuals began to discuss the various ways through which Tibet might achieve political, economic, and social "modernity," and in these rarefied circles some were attracted to the ideals of the Communist Party.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Le'an Wangdui 勒安旺堆, *Maoniu suiyue* 牦牛岁月 [*The Yak Years*] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2003), 84.

¹³⁸ For more on Naxi support for the underground Communist movement in Lijiang in the 1940s, see Sydney White, "Town and Village Naxi Identities in the Lijiang Basin," in Susan Blum and Lionel Jensen, eds., *China off Center: Mapping the Margins of the Middle Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 134.

¹³⁹ The only information I was able to find about this event comes from the historical chronology of Diqing Prefecture that the Shangri-la County Government posted online in 2011. See Sun, "The Principal Course of Party History in Diqing."

A small group of Tibetan Communist activists proposed to use Deqin County as their base of operations from 1945-1946, since there were not any permanently stationed Guomintang troops in Deqin at that time. Moreover, the *de facto* governor of the area was Gompo Tsering 恭布泽仁 (Hai Zhengtao 海正涛), a Tibetan Communist Party sympathizer who had been part of the short-lived Tibetan Government (Tib.: *bod pa srid gzhung*) set up by the Red Army in neighboring Ganzi in Sichuan Province, when they crossed through Kham during the Long March.¹⁴¹ During World War II, the Guomintang sent Gompo Tsering to Deqin with a supply of three hundred guns and a mandate to establish a local Tibetan guerilla force that would help protect against the Japanese, who were in control of nearby Burma. Gompo Tsering soon became the commander of the militia force and the governor of Deqin County. Han Chinese living in the area in the 1940s called him “Commander Hai” (*Hai siling* 海司令).¹⁴²

In September, 1946, Gompo Tsering from Deqin, Phüntso Wangye 平措汪阶 (*Min Zhicheng* 闵志成) from Bathang, Ngawang Kesang 昂旺格桑 (*Liu Shaoyu* 刘绍禹) from

¹⁴⁰ The biographies of Tashi Tsering and Bapa Phüntso Wangye provide useful insights into Tibetan involvement in the Communist Party during this early period, particularly since Bapa Phüntso Wangye later became the highest-ranking Tibetan in the Communist Party in the 1950s. Despite their socialist ideals, however, both men were imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution. See Melvyn Goldstein, William Siebenschuh, and Tashi Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet: The Autobiography of Tashi Tsering* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997); Melvyn Goldstein, Dawei Sherap, and William Siebenschuh, *A Tibetan Revolutionary: The Political Life and Times of Bapa Phüntso Wangye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁴¹ Goldstein, et al., *A Tibetan Revolutionary*, 94. In the 1940s, Khampa areas east of the Upper Yangtze River were under direct Chinese rule. The Chinese province of Xikang was officially created in 1938 and was dissolved and merged into Sichuan Province in 1955. Its initial capital was Dartsedo, but this shifted to Ya’an 雅安 in the early 1950s. The region of Kham located west of the Upper Yangtze River was under the control of the central Tibetan government in the 1940s. A senior official from Lhasa, who was given the title *domey jiggyab* (governor) and stationed in the town of Chamdo (now in the Tibetan Autonomous Region), administered this western part of Kham. Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2: The Calm before the Storm, 1951-1955* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28, n. 25 and 41, n. 1.

¹⁴² DXZ, 343.

Xikang, and He Qichang 何其昌 from Gyalthang secretly established the “Eastern Tibetan People’s Autonomous Alliance” (Tib.: *bod shar rgyud mi dmangs rang skyong mna’ mthun*; Ch.: *dong zang renmin zizhi hui* 东藏人民自治会) in Yunniang Village 酝酿村, located in Shengping Town 升平镇 in Deqin County.¹⁴³ He Qichang 何其昌 was a Tibetan merchant who came from a powerful and wealthy family in Gyalthang. His father, He Rongguang 何荣光, served as the Police Chief of Zhongdian County and the *qianzong* 千总 of Kaytshag (*Geza* 格咱) during the Republican period until he was assassinated by the monk warlord Ajian 阿坚 from Termarong (*Dongwang* 东旺) in 1930.¹⁴⁴

The “Charter of the Eastern Tibetan People’s Autonomous Alliance” (Tib.: *bod shar rgyud mi dmangs rang skyong mna’ mthun*; Ch.: *dong zang renmin zizhi tongmeng jianzhang* 东藏人民自治同盟简章) cited Sun Yatsen’s *Three Principles of the People* as its guiding philosophy and declared that Tibetans should turn to Chinese Communist-style guerrilla warfare tactics in order to overthrow local Guomintang-backed warlords.¹⁴⁵ The leaders of this alliance intended to recruit Deqin Middle School students to join their organization and to finance their expanding organization by taking control of the Guomintang tax office in Deqin. Their goals were to establish a democratically elected, autonomous government in Eastern Tibet, abolish the *corvée* (Tib.: *ulag*) tax system, and improve the livelihoods of Eastern Tibetans by utilizing local resources, building roads, and improving farming techniques. Although they were prepared to

¹⁴³ Sun, “The Principal Course of Party History in Diqing.”

¹⁴⁴ Feng, *Feng Ruzhang wenji*, 151.

¹⁴⁵ For an introduction to this charter, see Goldstein, et. al., *A Tibetan Revolutionary*, 99-100; for a full English-translation of the document, see *Ibid.*, 319-324.

engage in armed rebellion against the Guomindang government in Xikang and Yunnan, their plan was foiled when the Guomindang preemptively discovered their intentions and killed Gompo Tsering.¹⁴⁶ Phüntso Wangye subsequently fled and spent the next few months in hiding.¹⁴⁷

Apart from He Qichang, a few other young Tibetans who came from wealthy families in Gyalthang joined the underground Communist Party in Lijiang 丽江 in the late 1940s. One such student was Liu Hanxun 刘汉勋 (1918-1972), the second son of Liu En 刘恩 (1888-1967), a powerful *tusi* in Gyalthang. As a young man, Liu Hanxun traveled to Lijiang to take the entrance exam for high school. Upon failing the exam, he became a horse caravan leader and merchant (*mabang* 马帮) on the Tea Horse Road (*cha ma gu dao* 茶马古道) that ran from southern Yunnan, through Gyalthang, and west to Lhasa.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Gonpo Tsering was posthumously made a member of the CCP. DXZ, 6; Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 17.

¹⁴⁷ Phüntso Wangye later joined the CCP in Jianchuan 剑川, a town located south of Gyalthang near Dali 大理 in Yunnan Province, and ended up becoming one of the most influential and controversial Tibetan leaders in the CCP. See Goldstein, et. al., *A Tibetan Revolutionary*.

¹⁴⁸ There were two major routes of the Tea Horse Road. The route that passed through Gyalthang originated in present-day Xishuangbanna Prefecture 西双版纳傣族自治州 and Pu'er City 普洱市 in southern Yunnan, where Pu'er tea was produced, and passed through Dali 大理, Lijiang 丽江, Gyalthang 中甸, and Deqin 德勤, before traversing through a series of towns in the present-day Tibetan Autonomous Region, such as Markham (*Mangkang* 芒康), Zoega (*Zuogong* 左贡), Pangtak (*Bangda* 邦达), Chamdo (*Changdu* 昌都), Lhorong (*Luolong* 洛隆), Kongpo'gyamda (*Gongbujiangda* 工布江达), and Lhasa (*Lasa* 拉萨). From Lhasa it headed south through Gyantse (*Jiangze* 江孜), Phari (*Pali* 帕里), and Dromo (*Yadong* 亚东) in Tibet and on to Nepal, and India. The name of the road points to its importance in the trade of tea and horses, but the route was also used for transporting sugar and salt from Yunnan and Sichuan into Tibet and for bringing warhorses from Tibetan areas into Yunnan and Sichuan. The road also served as a significant corridor for migration and a bridge for cultural and economic exchange between China and India. Yang Fuquan, "The Ancient Tea and Horse Caravan Road: The 'Silk Road' of Southwest China," *The Silk Road Foundation Newsletter*, accessed March 1, 2013: <http://www.silk-road.com/newsletter/2004vol2num1/tea.htm>. Nyishar potters who had become famous for their unusual black clay pottery and leatherworkers in Gyalthang also used the Tea Horse Road trade network to sell their commissioned wares to Tibetan patrons in Lhasa. Interview with a potter, who represents the ninth generation in eleven generations of male potters in his family, in his studio in Nyishar on April 26, 2013.

Two of the most successful traders in the region were Li Liesan 李烈三, a wealthy merchant from Lijiang who controlled much of the horse caravan trade in Gyalthang in the 1940s, and the Heqing merchant Bao Pinliang 鲍品良. Li and Bao joined together in 1947 to form a very successful trade insurance association (*baoshangdui* 保商队), called the Snow Mountain Society (*Xueshanshe* 雪山社), which expanded its membership base to over 40,000 merchants across Kham and into southern Yunnan Province by the late 1940s.¹⁴⁹ Liu Hanxun and He Qichang worked directly under the command of Li Liesan and engaged in a thriving horse trade caravan business in the 1940s.

In October, 1948, He Qichang introduced Bao Pinliang to He Wanguo 和万国, a Professor in the Chinese Department at Kunming Normal University (*Kunming shifan xueyuan* 昆明师范学院), who had been engaged in underground Communist organizing for a few years in Kunming.¹⁵⁰ He Wanguo insisted that if the Snow Mountain Association was willing to follow the leadership of the Communist Party, then he would help He Qichang and Bao Pinliang to purchase guns and ammunition and transport their supplies north to Baoshan.¹⁵¹ In the coming months, numerous Tibetan and Naxi traders in Lijiang and Gyalthang were persuaded to work with the Communist Party to fight against the local Guomindang warlord, Luo Ying 罗瑛. Pamphlets were printed and circulated along the Tea Horse Caravan Route in Lijiang and Gyalthang, declaring “Defeat Luo Ying, Protect our Home Town!” (*Dadao Luo Ying, baowei*

¹⁴⁹ Feng Ruzhang 冯如璋, *Feng Ruzhang wenji* 冯如璋文集 [An Anthology of Feng Ruzhang's Scholarship] (Beijing: Zhongguo minzu sheying yishu chubanshe, 2013), 119.

¹⁵⁰ Feng, *Feng Ruzhang wenji*, 120.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

jiaxiang 打倒罗瑛，保卫家乡), and “If We Don’t Protect Lijiang, We Won’t Be Able to Do Business!” (*Bao bu zhu Lijiang cheng, shengyi zuo bu cheng* 保不住丽江城，生意做不成).¹⁵²

On May 20, 1949, Liu Hanxun and He Qichang secretly joined the Communist Party organization in Lijiang and the following month they returned home to lay the groundwork for the establishment of the CCP in Gyalthang. After being persuaded to do so by his son, Liu En pretended not to notice that underground Communist organizing was taking place in Gyalthang, and he protected the Communist organizers by naming a newly-created Communist organization the “Native Place Protection” association (*baowei sangzi* 保卫桑梓).¹⁵³ This organization later merged with the Voluntary City Defense Militia (*chengfang yiwu dadui* 成方义务大队) that the young Tibetan trader, Zhao Baohe 赵宝鹤, organized in 1948 in order to defend Gyalthang against bandit attacks from neighboring Termarong and Chatreng.¹⁵⁴

By late May, 1949, the Voluntary City Defense Militia had grown to include sixteen men who had access to more than 200 weapons and who took turns patrolling Gyalthang’s city walls. Young Tibetan Communist activists, including Qi Yaozu 七耀祖 and Qi Shichang 齐世昌, later joined this organization, and their political and ideological discussions with their relatives and neighbors helped create more favorable conditions for the arrival of the advance guard of the People’s Liberation Army in early 1950.¹⁵⁵ One of the popular grassroots organizational

¹⁵² Ibid., 123.

¹⁵³ ZXZZ, 144-147.

¹⁵⁴ Zhao Baohe joined the Communist Party in Lijiang in the summer of 1949. In gratitude for his contributions to the Communist cause, Zhao was appointed the Vice Governor of Diqing Prefecture (*Diqing zhou fu zhou zhang* 迪庆州副州长) in 1957.

¹⁵⁵ Le’an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 17; ZXZ, 406.

techniques used by local Tibetan members of the underground Communist Party in Gyalthang involved organizing night schools for town residents. Residents of *Jinlongjie* 金龙街, *Cangfangjie* 仓房街, and *Beimenjie* 北门街—the three main residential alleys in Gyalthang’s town center—were invited to attend night classes where teachers explained the ideals of the Chinese Communist Party and taught basic Chinese literacy using the classical text, *Sanzi Jing* 三字经.¹⁵⁶ Because the night school teachers concluded every evening’s class with rousing renditions of Chinese folk songs that had been translated into Tibetan, the classes became very popular and attendance grew rapidly.¹⁵⁷

In August 1949, after a discussion with the Chinese Communist Western Sichuan Work Committee, Phüntso Wangye and a few other Tibetan underground Communists established the “C.C.P. Kham-Tibet Frontier Work Committee,” which later became known informally as the “Bathang Underground Party,” since it was headquartered in Bathang. Thousands of Tibetan intellectuals and Party members in Kham, including many in Gyalthang, became deeply involved in politics and many joined the “Eastern Tibet Democratic Youth Alliance” (*Dongzang minzhu qingnian tuan* 东藏民主青年团)—often abbreviated as *minqing* 民青—an organization that became the basis for the Communist Party’s early administration in Kham.¹⁵⁸ On August 28, 1949, the first underground Communist Party branch was established inside the town limits of

¹⁵⁶ Feng, *Feng Ruzhang wenji*, 138.

¹⁵⁷ Tibetan underground Communist Party members in Gyalthang translated the following Chinese folksongs into Tibetan for the purposes of these group sing alongs at the Gyalthang night school: “*Shan naban ya hao difang* 山那边好地方,” “*Jinshajiang ya Jinshajiang* 金沙江呀金沙江,” “*Aluola* 阿罗拉,” and “*Xianqi ni de gaitou lai* 掀起你的盖头来.” Feng, *Feng Ruzhang wenji*, 138.

¹⁵⁸ Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal, *Witness to Tibet’s History*, Tenzin Losel, trans. (New Delhi: Paljor Publications, 2007), 10-11; Feng, *Feng Ruzhang wenji*, 139.

Zhongdian.¹⁵⁹ By the time the PLA arrived in Gyalthang in 1950, more than thirty young Tibetan, Naxi, Bai, and Han residents of Gyalthang had joined the Communist Party or the Youth League.¹⁶⁰

Due to the PLA's military successes in eastern China in the fall of 1949, by early 1950, local Tibetan youth who had been won over by Communist Party ideology, including many members of the local Youth League, were no longer fearful of publically aligning themselves with the Communist Party. They began to focus their energy on publicizing the goals and tenets of this new Communist Party. Local Youth League members translated Chinese revolutionary song lyrics into Tibetan, organized concerts, staged political plays, and gave public speeches in villages in the Gyalthang valley in order to persuade Tibetan farmers that a bright future lay ahead under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.¹⁶¹ Feng Ruzhang 冯如璋, the local Tibetan leader of the Chinese Communist Youth League and a well-regarded classical painter, was given the assignment of painting an enormous portrait of Chairman Mao. The PLA Commander, General Liao Yunzhou 廖运周师长, who had come to Gyalthang ahead of his troops, requested that this painting be prepared in time to greet the rest of the PLA troops upon their arrival in town and he assigned Liu Hanxun to work as Feng's assistant. Feng used the large curtain hanging in front of the entrance to the Tibetan Meeting Hall *Zangjing tang* 藏经堂 as his

¹⁵⁹ Sun, "The Principal Course of Party History in Diqing." For a more detailed history of the Communist "liberation" of Gyalthang in 1949-1950, see [ZFT]: Yunnan sheng bianji zu 云南省编辑组 [The Editing Division of Yunnan Province], ed., *Zhongyang fangwen tuan di er fentuan Yunnan minzu qingkuang huiji* 中央访问团第二分团云南民族情况汇集 (上) [*The Report of the Second Central Visiting Delegation to Investigate the Conditions of the Ethnic Minorities in Yunnan Province (Vol. 1)*] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 1986), 105-106.

¹⁶⁰ Feng, *Feng Ruzhang wenji*, 138.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

canvas and he diligently painted for three days straight. He wrote the following slogan in large Chinese characters under his painting of the Chairman: “Mao Zedong [is] the Great Leader of People of All Ethnicities.”¹⁶²

When the forty-two leaders of the 125th division of the People’s Liberation Army arrived in Zhongxin Town on May 10, 1950, Gyalthang residents assembled on both sides of the road leading from the town’s South Gate to watch the procession. To celebrate the “liberation” of Gyalthang, the new Communist leadership erected a five star Communist flag above Big Turtle Mountain (*da gui shan* 大龟山).¹⁶³ Eight days later, Chinese Communist Party leaders in Gyalthang declared the establishment of the new Zhongdian County government under Communist Party leadership.¹⁶⁴

Many Tibetans were rewarded for their loyalty to the CCP once the Communists took over control of Tibetan areas in Yunnan Province. In May, 1950, Liu En was appointed the Vice Chair of the Zhongdian County Committee of the State Administrative Council (*Zhongdian xian zhengwu weiyuanhui fu zhuren* 中甸县政务委员会副主任). A few months later, in September, 1950, as a symbol of appreciation for his aid to the Communists, Liu En’s son, Liu Hanxun, was invited to travel to Beijing to participate in the National Independence Day celebration. Just a few months after that, Liu En was selected to become the Vice Governor of Zhongdian County (*Zhongdian xian fu xianzhang* 中甸县委副书记), a post which he held for fourteen years until he

¹⁶² According to Feng, photographs of this painting were printed in the *Yunnan Huabao* 云南画报 in 1951; Interview with Feng Ruzhang at his house in Gyalthang on July 2, 2014; Feng, *Feng Ruzhang wenji*, 101.

¹⁶³ Sun, “The Principal Course of Party History in Diqing.”

¹⁶⁴ ZFT, 106.

was made a target of struggle sessions during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁶⁵ In assessing this period of Kham history, Gray Tuttle, a historian of Tibetan-Chinese relations, claims that

the Tibetan Communist cadres displayed the most surprising ignorance in their idealistic and naïve acceptance of Chinese propaganda even in the face of [an] obvious Chinese superiority complex.... Just as the Tibetan elite believed the Chinese Communists' promises to preserve Tibetan traditions, the Tibetan Communists believed the promises of nationality equality, until it was too late.¹⁶⁶

While a number of young Tibetans in Gyalthang were intrigued and inspired by the Communist activists they met, many others remained unconvinced by the ideological viewpoints espoused by the underground Communist Party members, and they fiercely resisted the People's Liberation Army's encroachment on their territory. During interviews that Jamyang Norbu, a Tibetan historian and former resistance fighter, conducted with Tibetan refugees in exile, Gyalthang Tibetans insisted that they had resisted the PLA when it first advanced into their territory in 1949. Norbu maintains that:

their claims are to some extent confirmed by the accounts of Peter Goullart, a White Russian employee of the Kuomintang Government, who served in the late 1940s as an agricultural expert of sorts in the Nakhi [*Naxi* 纳西] town of Lijiang in Yunnan Province.¹⁶⁷

Goullart claimed that in 1949, after the fall of Kunming and the PLA's push toward the west, Khampas from Gyalthang came to Lijiang at the request of the Naxi. Together with Naxi resisters, these Khampa fighters managed to inflict an initial defeat on an advance guard of the

¹⁶⁵ ZXZZ, 145.

¹⁶⁶ Gray Tuttle, "Ethnic Repression: Review of *A Tibetan Revolutionary: The Political Life and Times of Bapa Phuntso Wangye* by Melvyn Goldstein, Dawei Sherap, and William Siebenschuh," *The Review of Politics* 67 (4) 2005: 798. Here Tuttle is referring to the Tibetan Communist activists profiled in Goldstein, et. al., *A Tibetan Revolutionary*, 156, 170, 172, 194, 209, 230.

¹⁶⁷ Jamyang Norbu, "The Tibetan Resistance Movement and the Role of the C.I.A.," in Robert Barnett, ed. *Resistance and Reform in Tibet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 190; Peter Goullart, *Forgotten Kingdom: Eight Years in Likiang* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1955 [2002]), 199-213.

PLA. Later, according to Goullart, the Communists infiltrated agents among the Naxi, which led to the Communist takeover of Lijiang.¹⁶⁸ Goullart maintained that the Naxi generally viewed Gyalthag Tibetans as formidable fighters who strongly resisted the encroaching Communist army.

Wangchuk Tempa

Indeed, while a number of young Gyalthag residents were intrigued by the ideological and political rhetoric espoused by underground Communist Party members, many local leaders remained uninterested in joining the early CCP administration in Gyalthag. Some went into hiding, fled to evade capture, or engaged in sustained and well-planned attacks on Party work units and PLA base camps. Wangchuk Tempa, a Tibetan monk who was born into a powerful family in Gyalthag, was one such leader.¹⁶⁹ After learning of the Communist Party's military successes in Sichuan in 1948, Wangchuk announced that he would defend Gyalthag from Communist aggression. Concerned about the growing influence of the Communist Party in Yunnan, Wangchuk sent his nephew, Wang Qupi 汪曲批, to meet with underground Communist Party officials in Lijiang in July, 1949. Wang requested that the underground Communist Party

¹⁶⁸ In contrast to Goullart's account, Sydney White maintains that as many as ninety percent of Naxi residents in Lijiang participated in the underground Communist Party just before Liberation in 1949, in "an implicitly acknowledged strategic move to jump on the Communist bandwagon." White, "Town and Village Naxi Identities in the Lijiang Basin," 134.

¹⁶⁹ Jamyang Norbu asserts that Tibetans from areas outside of Gyalthag called Wang Xueding by his Tibetan name, Wangchuk Tempa, while Gyalthag residents tended to call him by his Tibetan nickname, Aku Lemar, meaning "Uncle Hairless," since he was bald. However, none of the Gyalthag residents that I interviewed who knew Wangchuk Tempa had ever heard of this nickname. Jamyang Norbu, "March Winds," accessed March 3, 2014: <http://www.jamyangnorbu.com/blog/2009/03/06/march-winds/>. For more on Wangchuk Tempa see Sulang Jiachu, "Wang Xueding Zhuanji," 105-114.

dispatch an official to travel to Gyalthang and negotiate with Wangchuk about the future of Communist Party rule in Gyalthang.¹⁷⁰

The Communist Party sent the Western Yunnan Work Group to meet with Wangchuk and discuss the current political situation in Kham and the Party's policies involving ethnic minority groups. The meeting went well and the Party representatives were prepared to write a very glowing report about the progress the Party had made in Tibetan areas of Yunnan, when they were blindsided. On September 3, 1949, the Western Yunnan Work Group left Gyalthang and passed through Jingkou 菁口 when Wangchuk's army launched a surprise attack, killing six members of the work group, including Li Liesan 李烈三 and He Chengzong 和承宗, and injuring four others.¹⁷¹

On October 20, 1949, Wangchuk assembled the *tusi* from Gyalthang, Deqin, and Weixi, and the monastic leaders of Sumtsenling and the surrounding monasteries to discuss the region's future. At the meeting, Zangbum Dorje and Zhao Baohe 赵宝鹤, the commander of Gyalthang's City Defense Volunteer Militia (*chengfang yiwu dadui* 城防义务大队) and a relatively new member of the Communist Party, tried to convince Wangchuk that the PLA was too powerful and that he should try to negotiate rather than fight a losing battle.¹⁷² Wangchuk ignored this advice and organized a number of local militias to engage in a well-coordinated attack on the PLA on October 29, 1949. The attack was successful and Wangchuk's coalition militia killed many PLA soldiers and work team members (*gongzuo dui yuan* 工作队员), burned houses in the

¹⁷⁰ Sun, "The Principal Course of Party History in Diqing."

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 18.

area, and stole valuable PLA property. The battles continued over the next two months until December 25, 1949.¹⁷³

The extent of local resistance to the People's Liberation Army's advances is still on display today in Gyalthang's Memorial Park, where numerous PLA soldiers who were killed during the "liberation" of Gyalthang have been buried. Located at the entrance to the Old Town at the southern end of Long March Road, Memorial Park has recently been remodeled. It now boasts an impressive bronze statue of a PLA soldier, a colorful mural with inscriptions observing the event in both Tibetan and Chinese, and newly planted flowers and trees near the tombs of the fallen soldiers. Every year on Tomb Sweeping Day (*Qing Ming Jie* 清明节), teachers bring their pupils to the Memorial Park cemetery to sweep the tombs of the soldiers, insisting that the students show respect for the sacrifices that the PLA soldiers made.¹⁷⁴

According to Communist Party historiography, Gyalthang was officially "peacefully liberated" (*heping jiefang* 和平解放) on May 10, 1950, by the PLA, however, Wangchuk continued to fight against Communist rule in the area for the next two years. Wangchuk organized armed rebellions against PLA troops and Communist leaders in Bulugu 布鲁谷 and Jingkou 菁口 in late May, 1950, leading to the deaths of many PLA soldiers, work-team members, and self-defense forces (*ziwei duiyuan* 自卫队员).¹⁷⁵ Out of gratitude, the Guomindang government gave him a medal of honor in the spring of 1950. In May, 1951,

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 48-49.

¹⁷⁵ For more on the organizational work that the Communist Party did in Gyalthang to support these predominately Tibetan self-defense forces, which locally were referred to as the "*Huludui* 护路队," and later became part of the broader national coalition army known as the "people's militia" (*minbing* 民兵), see ZXZ, 409.

Wangchuk supported the Sanba 三坝 rebellion by sending troops, weapons, and supplies, but the rebellion was suppressed by the PLA. His nephew, Wang Qupi, started another uprising in March, 1952, when he killed six businessmen from Zhongxin Town who were traveling through Xiao Zhongdian under the protection of the local PLA Commander, General Liao.¹⁷⁶ This marked the beginning of what CCP historians later termed the “Second Rebellion,” which lasted until Wangchuk’s troops bore the brunt of a particularly lengthy and devastating exchange of fire in Bulugu 布鲁谷.¹⁷⁷ Injured and frightened, Wangchuk fled with sixty of his surviving militia members to a mountain cave in Termarong.

In order to persuade Wangchuk to come out of the mountains, surrender, and join the new CCP government, General Liao asked two people to travel to Termarong and explain the Party’s religious policy to Wangchuk. A Tibetan monk, who was Wangchuk’s former body guard in Bigu Village 碧古村 in Yangthang, along with Zhi Zhu from Nagara, joined the PLA commander on his trip to visit Wangchuk. General Liao was finally able to win over Wangchuk after sending even more Tibetan representatives to negotiate with him, including Liu En 刘恩 and Qi Yaozu 七耀祖, two former *tusi* who had already begun working for the Communist government. These former *tusi* promised Wangchuk that if he surrendered to the Communists, he would not be harmed or prosecuted, but instead made a member of the United Governing

¹⁷⁶ Sulang Jiachu, “Wang Xueding Zhuanji,” 112.

¹⁷⁷ A Tibetan-language source confirms that revolts took place in Gyalthang in 1952, making Gyalthang one of the earliest placed in Kham to engage in revolts against the PLA. Kargyal Thondup, *Mdo khams cha phreng kyi lo rgyus gser gyi snye ma* [*The Golden Grain of Dokham Chatreng’s History*] (Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1992). Citation found in Carole McGranahan, *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 67.

Committee of the Lijiang Special District (*Lijiang zhuanqu lianhe zhengfu weiyuan* 丽江专区联合政府委员).

In the end, Wangchuk capitulated and, accompanied by his four most loyal bodyguards, traveled to Zhongxin Town to meet General Liao. Upon Wangchuk's arrival in town, Liao ordered local officials to take him to Lijiang. Wangchuk proceeded south, accompanied by his own bodyguards and flanked by PLA troops. As the caravan traveled through the Axi Pass 阿喜渡口, one of Wangchuk's bodyguards reached over and grabbed a PLA soldier riding near him. Without a word, he began to strangle the soldier, and a few minutes later the pair fell off of their horses and tumbled over the cliff and into the raging river below. The two men drowned in the icy river in a matter of minutes. Wangchuk remained quiet throughout this incident and refused to say a word for the remainder of the trip to Lijiang. Upon arriving in Lijiang, Wangchuk stayed by himself in the house of an underground central commander of the PLA. All of the other soldiers and Communist Party representatives who accompanied him stayed in a grain storage facility.

Wangchuk was initially very wary of the Party's policies and skeptical that the Communists had the Tibetans' best interests in mind. However, after many days of listening to United Front workers lecture about the Party's ethnic minority policies, Wangchuk agreed to go on a trip to Chengdu. Travel and sightseeing, or what the historian Uradyn Bulag has termed "political tourism," played an important role in the Chinese Communist Party's attempt to win over and transform ethnic minority leaders.¹⁷⁸ In Chengdu, Wangchuk encountered Commander He Long for the first time since they last met on the battlefield in 1936 during the Second Red

¹⁷⁸ Bulag, "Seeing Like a Minority," 147-148.

Army's Long March through Yunnan. Much to Wangchuk's surprise, Commander He expressed little animosity toward Wangchuk for his past actions, including his violent attack on Commander He's own caravan in 1936. Instead, Commander He assured Wangchuk that the Party would not prosecute him for his past crimes against the Red Army or the PLA. Commander He declared that he and Wangchuk were actually on the same side, since they both wanted what was best for the people of Gyalthang. After a lengthy conversation and many cups of tea, He made arrangements for Wangchuk to attend Party education classes in Chengdu for the duration of the week.

The next week a different battalion commander accompanied Wangchuk to Beijing to attend additional Party classes. In Beijing he was welcomed by representatives of the United Front Department and the Nationalities Affairs Committee (*minzu shiwu weiyuanhui* 民族事务委员会). Over the course of the next few years, Wangchuk joined United Front Department cadres and other ethnic minority leaders on official tours to schools, factories, and farms in Beijing, Hunnan, and Kunming. The purpose of these tours was to show the former elite class the progress that the country was making under a new socialist system.

The rationale for these political tours originated in a proposal that Ren Naiqiang 任乃强, a Chinese ethnologist specializing in southwestern frontier issues, made to Liu Wenhui, a Sichuanese warlord, in 1934. Ren suggested that sightseeing (*guanguang* 观光) would be one of the most effective ways to promote the assimilation of Tibetans into a newly constituted Chinese nation. He maintained that ethnic minority leaders that had been to China proper and had had long-term dealings with the Chinese were politically submissive to China, whereas those who had little knowledge of China were arrogant to the extreme. Ren alleged that, living in isolation, the frontier people were "like frogs in a well," convinced that the small circle of sky visible

above them was actually the entire heavens. When ethnic minority leaders were “told about the great size of China and the large population of the Han Chinese people by outsiders who had visited Nanjing and Shanghai,” Ren explained, “they roared with laughter, dismissing it as a lie.”¹⁷⁹ Although the Guomindang did not implement Ren’s proposal since they were distracted by an entirely different set of policy concerns during the Sino-Japanese War, CCP leaders later found Ren’s rationale for proposing minority sightseeing compelling. By Ren’s reasoning, the frontier people’s resistance to integration was not so much a political request for maintaining a separate polity for themselves, but purely the result of their ignorance of China. Their alleged belligerence was attributed to geographical isolation, and the only way out of it was for the frontier people to see with their own eyes what China looked like.

As a result, after the CCP came to power, CCP leaders made a concerted effort to invite so-called “representative figures of the upper echelon”—ethnic minority members of the traditionally elite strata who had not joined the Communist Party—to participate in political tourism. The most important quality for selection as an invitee was the person’s “radiating power” (*fushe li* 辐射力), which was measured by the number of people that this person could directly or indirectly influence.¹⁸⁰ Although the delegates’ attitudes toward the Communist Party were investigated ahead of time, hostile attitudes did not necessarily exclude elites from being invited to participate in political tourism. In fact, the more powerful or hostile they were, the greater the chances of being invited to Beijing. Certain elites, like Wangchuk Tempa, were even permitted to bring their bodyguards.

¹⁷⁹ Ren Naiqiang 任乃强, *Xikang tujing: minsu pian* 西康图经: 民俗篇 [Illustrated Record of Xikang: Volume of Folklore] (Nanjing: Xin yaxiya xuehui, 1934), 232.

¹⁸⁰ Bulag, “Seeing Like a Minority,” 143.

The ideological goal of political tourism was to shape and script minority leaders' impressions of China. Bulag writes that:

Prior to each visit, minority leaders would be fed with particular lines of information, and after the visit, they would be organized to have a seminar discussion, not to explore issues from different angles, but to achieve a unified understanding or consensus of what they had seen. Should one of them have a different, or rather 'wrong' opinion, he or she would be 'helped' to understand why they were in the wrong. At the end of the tour, minutes would be drafted, which would then be sent to the provincial or prefectural party committee for approval. The minutes were usually filled with lines of how elite visitors were impressed by Chinese hospitality, how advanced Chinese regions were, and most importantly how powerful the Chinese were..... The minority visitors would each be given a copy of the minutes and then charged with going back to their villages to make oral reports on what they had seen.¹⁸¹

Party documents suggest that Wangchuk's tour of inland China may have helped convince him of the power of the Communist government or the futility of fighting against it. A few months after returning back to Gyalthang in 1953, Wangchuk expressed his willingness to work with the leadership of the Communist Party, and later that same year, he was appointed Vice Governor of Zhongdian County (*Zhongdian xian fu xianzhang* 中甸县委副书记).

Recruiting the Local Elite

After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949 and the PLA subsequently "liberated" northwest Yunnan, the CCP attempted to avoid direct confrontations with Tibetan and Naxi elites in the area. Keenly aware of the tenuous nature of their position in ethnic minority areas along China's borders, the CCP dispatched Nationalities Visitation Teams (*minzu fangwentuan* 民族访问团) in 1950 to help fill in gaps in the Party's knowledge about existing conditions in the border regions. It was understood that once the process of investigating the

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 145-146.

various *minzu* was finished, the CCP would be able to proceed with “civilizing” these groups and integrating the *minzu* leaders into the Party-state apparatus.¹⁸² Between July 1950 and the end of 1952, the central government sent four missions to ethnic minority regions in the Southwest, the Northwest, the Center-south, and the Northeast, in order to investigate each region’s social, economic, and political conditions and explain the Party’s programs and policies to its future beneficiaries.

From August 29, 1950 until May, 1951 a central delegation of anthropologists, linguists, and party workers was dispatched to investigate the conditions of the ethnic minorities living in Yunnan. The first stage of their research covered the districts of Guishan, Lijiang, Baoshan, Dali, Wuding, and Chuxiong, and was carried out from August 29, 1950-January 31, 1951.¹⁸³ Gyalthang was included in this first stage, since Zhongdian district (*Zhongdian qu* 中甸区) was under the jurisdiction of Lijiang until 1954.

Led by high-ranking ethnic minority cadres and pro-communist scholars, these missions relayed greetings from Mao and the Central People’s Government to the minorities, apologized to them for the past wrongs wrought on them by previous Han Chinese regimes, and propagated the CCP’s new minority nationality policy. The delegates held numerous meetings with local ethnic minority leaders and they distributed gift items that were locally difficult to come by, including salt and medicine, with the aim of securing local leaders’ confidence in the new state.

¹⁸² For more about the work done by the Nationalities Visitation Teams, see Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 8. On the “civilizing process,” which the CCP generally referred to as “nationalities work” (*minzu gongzuo* 民族工作), and which entailed the creation of autonomous regions and the implementation of educational and development plans, see Harrell, *Cultural Encounters*, 24.

¹⁸³ The second stage of the Nationalities Visitation Team’s research covered the districts of Mengzi, Pu’er, and Wenshan, and was carried out from February-May, 1951.

During their time in Gyalthang, the delegation staged concerts, dances, and theatrical performances for Tibetan villagers and paid courtesy visits to the Gyalthang elite to assure them that the Party was interested in working with local monastic and lay leaders.¹⁸⁴ The delegation showed films about the birth of “New China” (*Xin Zhongguo* 新中国) and distributed portraits of Mao Zedong to assist Gyalthang residents in identifying with the leader of their new nation.¹⁸⁵ The delegation, therefore, served both a fact-finding and propagandistic function. The task of the delegation was defined as:

interviewing minority nationalities on behalf of the Communist Party Government and Chairman Mao, transmitting the deep concern of Chairman Mao and of the Communist Party Government for the minority nationalities, publicizing the nationalities policy of the Common Program and, when possible, gaining an understanding of basic conditions and demands of the fraternal nationalities.¹⁸⁶

Since the Communists’ long-term goal was to incorporate Tibetans into this new multi-ethnic Chinese nation-state in a seamless manner, the delegation focused its efforts on first winning over the aristocratic and religious elites in Gyalthang. Under the banner of “New Democracy,” the Chinese government proclaimed a united front of cooperation with the patriotic members of the ethnic minority elite. Wang Lianfang 王连芳 led the division of the Southwest Delegation that visited Gyalthang for twelve days and he assured the *tusi* and monastic leaders that the CCP

¹⁸⁴ Wang Lianfang 王连芳, “Zhongyang fangwentuan dao Zhongdian fangwen de nanwang huiyi 中央访问团到中甸访问的难忘回忆 [The Unforgettable Memory of the Central Visitation Team’s Visit to Zhongdian],” in DZWZX1, 23.

¹⁸⁵ Other Nationalities Visitation Teams employed similar ideological strategies elsewhere in the country. See, for instance, Bulag, “Seeing Like a Minority,” 137.

¹⁸⁶ Shen Chün-ju, “Report to the Ninety-sixth Meeting of the GAC” (Jan. 26, 1951), in *Current Background* (109): 5. Cited in June Dreyer, *China’s Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People’s Republic of China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 99.

was not interested in pushing through land reform in Gyalthang without the full consent of the Tibetan elite.¹⁸⁷

On November 7, 1950, the delegation visited Sumtsenling Monastery and met with the eight monastic leaders of the *khangstens*. The monks staged a music and dance performance in honor of the visiting delegation. A large meeting, attended by reincarnate lamas, more than four hundred monks, and two hundred lay people of different ethnicities, was held in the courtyard of Sumtsenling Monastery.¹⁸⁸ Wang, General Liao, and Sun Zhihe 孙致和, the governor of Zhongdian County, spoke at the meeting. That evening, Zangbum Dorje, the abbot of Sumtsenling, presided over the funerary rites for a highly esteemed monk who had recently passed away in Gyalthang. Wang later revealed that he believed that the visiting delegation's presence at this ceremony helped the CCP gain the trust of local Tibetans.¹⁸⁹ On November 11, 1950, General Liao and Delegation Leader Zang (*Zang tuanzhang* 臧团长) held a meeting for more than three hundred secular and religious leaders in the area, including *tusi* from Deqin and reincarnate lamas from Weixi. During the meeting, they attempted to settle a long-lasting dispute between Ji *tusi* 吉土司 and Zhao *huotou* 赵伙头 of Weixi, encouraged Chatreng and Gyalthang representatives to pledge that their people would refrain from attacking and robbing each another, and tried to ease the worries of the upper social strata in Gyalthang.¹⁹⁰ Finally, the leaders of the visiting delegation joined local political and religious leaders in meeting with more than 3,000

¹⁸⁷ Wang, "Zhongyang fangwentuan dao Zhongdian fangwen," 19-20.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 22.

Gyalthang residents. During this meeting, Gyalthang villagers were encouraged to express their opinions of the new Communist system of government.¹⁹¹

The CCP leaders understood that winning the trust and loyalty of the Gyalthang elites would entail more than just holding meetings and giving propaganda speeches; it would require correct behavior on the part of the PLA and the slow and gradual development of a cooperative relationship between the CCP cadres and the Tibetans. However, many ethnic minority elites in Gyalthang remained terrified of CCP rule, having learned early on that landlords in neighboring Jiangbian 江边 had been subjected to violent struggle sessions, tortured, and killed. Tibetan elites feared that if land reform was implemented in Gyalthang, they would also be struggled against and perhaps killed. They knew very well that they were the targets of the so-called “Democratic Reforms”—the version of land reform deemed appropriate for ethnic minority areas—despite the fact that the CCP leadership had insisted land reform would be introduced only after consultation with local power holders.

In order to assuage the local elites’ grave concerns, the CCP introduced social and political reforms very gradually in Gyalthang. While there were obvious risks in allowing the secular and religious elites to retain real power in the short term, the long-term benefits of winning over the Tibetan population were so significant that the CCP was willing to make extraordinary concessions. It was a shrewd strategy that traded short-term setbacks (permitting local religious leaders to retain power and the manorial estate system to continue) for the achievement of longer-term national interests (Tibetans’ gradual acceptance of political and economic reforms under Chinese rule).

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

One such member of the Gyalthang elite was Liu En, one of the three remaining *tusi* in Gyalthang in the 1940s. In 1906 Liu inherited the position of the *bazong* 把总 of Yangthang, which meant that he became a low-level officer of the Qing army. In 1912, when the Yunnan Republican army came through Gyalthang on its westward march, Liu was given the responsibility of provisioning the Republican army with grain. According to Zhongdian County records, Liu carried out his official duties honorably and he was awarded a medal of distinction by the Republican government. In 1913 he was appointed to be the *tuqianzong* 土千总 of Nyishar (*Nixi* 尼西). In 1932 he successfully organized a local Gyalthang militia to defend the town from Chatreng bandit attacks and in acknowledgement of his success, the Guomindang government subsequently appointed Liu to be the Governor of Zhongdian County. He supposedly agreed to cooperate with the CCP in the early 1950s because past experience had taught him that it was best not to defy the central Chinese government. He initially assumed that the Communist Party would treat the Gyalthang elite similarly to how they had been treated by the Republican government in the 1940s. Liu was appointed to be the Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference in 1950 and in 1951 the CCP gave Liu the position of Vice Governor of Zhongdian County. While the CCP was strategically strengthening its relationship with the local Tibetan elite, the PLA expanded its presence in Gyalthang, which greatly diminished the CCP's risk of losing Gyalthang in a revolt.¹⁹²

In the spring and summer of 1950, the Southwest Bureau began to build roads into central Tibet from the areas that it already held in Eastern Kham. Contracts worth millions of silver dollars (Tib.: *dayan*; Ch.: *dayang* 大洋) were awarded to aristocrats and Khampa trading

¹⁹² This was the same United Front policy that was pursued in the Tibetan Autonomous Region in the early 1950s. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2*, 38-39.

families in order to procure grain and transport enormous quantities of supplies on yak caravans into central Tibet. Tibetans were recruited by the Southwest Bureau to provide yaks and horses and many members of the Tibetan elite made their fortunes transporting supplies for the Chinese troops between 1950 and 1952. Phünwang, who was responsible for organizing transport in one part of Kham, recalled it was not difficult to convince Tibetan herders to loan the Southwest Bureau their yaks. He maintained that, “everyone was happy to do this because the PLA was paying in silver dollars. Many Tibetans made a lot of money from this.”¹⁹³ A song composed in Kham points to the alacrity with which Tibetan traders and aristocrats in Kham took to helping the Chinese:

The Chinese Communists are our parents to whom we are grateful.
Dayan coins are coming down like rain.¹⁹⁴

According to one elderly Khampa from Chamdo who is now living in exile, cooperation and coexistence with the Chinese Communists seemed very plausible during the early years of Communist rule, due to the Communists’ willingness to generously compensate the Khampas for their labor and the use of their pack animals.¹⁹⁵

Based on the recommendations relayed back to the Central Government in the Visitation Team’s report, a United Front policy, which drew on a traditional Chinese military strategy of “turning enemies into friends” (*hua di wei you* 化敌为友), was implemented in northwest

¹⁹³ Quoted in Goldstein, et. al., *A Tibetan Revolutionary*, 138.

¹⁹⁴ Tib.: *gya kungdren drinjen phamare / ngü dayan sayu rdoyu re*. According to Goldstein, this street song also was sung in Lhasa in 1951-1952; Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 2*, 263. See also Carole McGranahan, *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 67, n. 2.

¹⁹⁵ McGranahan, *Arrested Histories*, 67.

Yunnan.¹⁹⁶ It held that local leaders should be given new titles and large salaries and permitted to maintain their authority until CCP authority in the area could be firmly established. The CCP's United Front Work Department was responsible for building a broad consensus among non-Party members and ethnic minorities for Party-supported programs and goals and to co-opt local elites through a variety of different tactics. One such tactic was "political persuasion work" (*zhengzhi shuofu gongzuo* 政治说服工作), which entailed lengthy meetings between recalcitrant Tibetan leaders and other local elites who had already been won over by the Communists. Another tactic was political tourism, in which elites were taken on tours to areas of the country that had already undergone land reform and were firmly under Communist control. Treaties were signed and ceremonies were held to mark the success of winning over particular elites. Rather than deposing these elites from power, or simply killing them off, they were wooed and enticed to join the Party and to be part of the new Communist government's efforts to govern Gyalthang.

One might wonder why the PLA didn't simply move in and conquer Gyalthang, given their overwhelming military superiority in the area. The CCP wished to differentiate its policies from that of the Guomindang's more forceful rule in the area. In doing so, it hoped to minimize the possibility of resistance in ethnic minority areas where Party control was weak and its ignorance of local customs was potentially dangerous. The CCP's policy of cooperation with the "patriotic upper strata" may also be seen as an effort to close an expertise gap. The traditional

¹⁹⁶ The Visitation Team published their results in July, 1951 in a document titled *The Report of Sub-group Two of the Central Visiting Delegation to Investigate the Conditions of the Ethnic Minorities in Yunnan Province*. In 1986 the Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House reprinted this document for general circulation; see ZFT. For more on the United Front policy, see Warren Smith, "The Nationalities Policy of the Chinese Communist Party and the Socialist Transformation of Tibet," in Robert Barnett, ed., *Resistance and Reform in Tibet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 55; Uradyn Bulag, *Collaborative Nationalism: The Politics of Friendship on China's Mongolian Frontier* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield: 2010), 17.

minority elite were simply co-opted into the Communist Party regional governmental hierarchy after reassuring the Communists that they would cooperate. These local elites served as guarantors of the population and tried to smooth relations between the Party and the populace. The local village (local Tib.: *shuka*; standard Tib.: *tsho khag*) elites of Gyalthang, Termarong, and Kaytshag that were in power in the 1930s and 1940s either remained in power or passed their positions of power onto their sons in the 1950s and early 1960s, until many of them were killed during struggle sessions at the height of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁹⁷ Through carefully coordinated “nationality work” and “political persuasion work,” so-called liberation allowed the CCP to achieve what conquest could not.¹⁹⁸

Although the Communists believed that the policy of compromise was the most efficient way to establish good relations with the local elites, they nevertheless remained suspicious of the political loyalties of these traditional elites.¹⁹⁹ With rare exceptions, local elites generally did not become party members. Instead, they were given low-level government positions that corresponded with the Party’s assessment of their potential future value. The CCP’s intent was to maintain traditional symbols of power while gradually changing the content that they symbolized. The Party’s policy of compromise was never intended to be permanent; it was only meant to be implemented until the party’s position had been consolidated in Gyalthang. As the Party gained support, as local Gyalthang residents gained expertise as cadres, and as Chinese cadres became

¹⁹⁷ One such local Tibetan leader was He Qichang 何其昌, whose father, He Rongguang 何荣光, served as the Police Chief of Zhongdian County Police Chief and was the *qianzong* 千总 of Kaytshag for many years until he was assassinated by the monk warlord Ajian 阿坚 from Termarong in 1930. Another example is Liu Hanxun 刘汉勋 (1918-1972), the second son of Liu En 刘恩 (1888-1967), who was a powerful *tusi* in Gyalthang.

¹⁹⁸ Bulag, “Seeing Like a Minority,” 147-148.

¹⁹⁹ For more on the Communist Party Central Visitation Team’s concerns about the political loyalties of the former *tusi* leaders in Gyalthang, see Wang, “Zhongyang fangwentuan dao Zhongdian fangwen,” 19.

familiar with the situation in Gyalthang, the Party envisioned having more room to maneuver against the will of the local elites. Members of the traditional elite would then be forced to go along with the party's policies or risk being subjected to struggle sessions.²⁰⁰

From 1950 to 1953, China carried out land reform in most areas of the country and redistributed land confiscated from landlords to landless peasants, but land reform did not occur in Tibetan areas until much later. In other areas of the country, landlords became the objects of CCP-orchestrated popular justice during the early years of land reform. They were denounced, dispossessed, and in many cases executed. Some accounts claim that as many as five million landlords were killed in China during this period.²⁰¹ This number includes those landlords who were struggled against and either committed suicide or were executed in Jinjiang 金江 (also known as Jiangbian 江边), a swath of land along the banks of the Yangtze River. Although it falls within the jurisdiction of Zhongdian County, Jinjiang is inhabited predominately by ethnically Bai and Han villagers. Young Bai and Han students from Jinjiang started the underground Communist Party in Zhongdian County in the 1930s and the Communists had a strong base of support there. Therefore, they possibly felt that the political conditions were ripe in Jinjiang to successfully carry out land reform in the early 1950s. In contrast, land reform in Tibetan and Yi areas of Zhongdian County was delayed until 1957.

In the early 1950s, special ethnic minority policies were put in place in particularly sensitive areas of China's western regions to delay the implementation of land reform and allegedly protected the autonomous rights of the minority peoples the CCP claimed to represent.

²⁰⁰ Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions*, 104.

²⁰¹ Bulag, "Seeing Like a Minority," 143.

Given their control over the local population and their location along borders that were difficult for Chinese troops to access and challenging for past Chinese administrations to control, Tibetan elites' loyalty to the new regime was understandably consequential to the political stability of the frontier.²⁰² As a result, these special ethnic minority policies, which were a vital part of the United Front policy to win over the former governing elites in China's frontier areas, remained in place in Gyalthang until rebellions in the area were firmly suppressed.

One of the initial ways that the CCP attempted to win over the local elites after the PLA arrived in Gyalthang in May 1950 was through appeasing the religious leaders at Sumtsenling Monastery. The newly elected governor of Zhongdian County, Sun Zhihe 孙致和, personally undertook the work of recruiting the top secular and religious leaders in Gyalthang to support the government's work. Some of the stipulations Sun outlined were that the Communist government would respect Sumtsenling's religious ceremonies, give the monastery necessary support, respect the people's daily customs, and provide local residents with adequate food and clothing.²⁰³ The CCP also encouraged religious leaders to join the committees responsible for reorganizing the local administrative and political power structure. Although certain local leaders, like Wangchuk Tempa, were initially adamantly opposed to the CCP taking over control of Gyalthang, believing that the locals could handle things best if left to do so on their own, Zangbum Dorje, the abbot of Sumtsenling Monastery, was much more ambivalent. In order to reach clarity about the complex political decision facing him and his monastery, Zangbum Dorje left Sumtsenling and retreated

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Qi and Xiluo, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe," 42-43.

to a meditation hut in Gyaxing Village (*Jiren cun* 吉仁村) in Nyishar Township in the summer of 1950.²⁰⁴

Zangbum was very suspicious about the sincerity of the Communist Party, yet after being considerably wooed by Party officials, he consented to being appointed the Vice Chairman of the United Government of the Lijiang Special District (*Lijiang zhuanqu lianhe zhengfu fu zhuxi* 丽江专区联合政府副主席) in October, 1950. In February, 1951 he was appointed the Assistant Director of the Lijiang Special District (*Lijiang zhuanqu fu zhuanyuan* 丽江专区副专员), and in late 1951 he was appointed leader of the Southwest Ethnic Minorities Tour Group and embarked on his own year-long political tour around the country. On January 1, 1952, this tour group met Chairman Mao Zedong and celebrated the New Year in Beijing. When the Preparatory Committee for the founding of Diqing Autonomous District was established in 1954, Zangbum Dorje was encouraged to chair the committee. He was also given the task of naming this newly organized “Tibetan Autonomous District” (*Zangzu zizhiqu* 藏族自治区), and he chose the Tibetan name *bde chen* (*Diqing* 迪庆), meaning “great fortune.”²⁰⁵

Land Reform

Even after the PLA secured control over Tibetan areas Northwest Yunnan, the provincial government was under strict orders to delay the implementation of radical social reforms, such as

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 43. It is possible that this source misprinted the location of Gyaxing Village and Zangbum Dorje actually went on retreat in Wujing District (*Wujing qu* 五境区), given that there is no evidence indicating that Gyaxing Village was ever part of Nyishar Township. See YSDZZXZDZ, 110.

²⁰⁵ The same Tibetan name was also given to the most northern of the three counties in the prefecture, although the Chinese name for this county is different (*Deqin* 德钦). Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 42.

land redistribution and class struggle. This reticence was a carefully considered strategy of gradualism insisted on by Mao and the Party leadership. Tibetans in Gyalthang had been informed repeatedly that reforms in minority areas would not be rushed and would not be implemented by force, as had been done in the Han areas of China in the early 1950s. Rather, implementation would occur primarily through the elite at a time when conditions were deemed appropriate, which in theory meant when most of the elite agreed to the reforms. Most of the Gyalthang elite were not very troubled by having become part of the PRC in 1950, since most people remained fairly unaffected by the political changeover in Gyalthang. After the establishment of Communist control over Gyalthang in 1950, the Tibetan religious and secular elites in Gyalthang had settled into a new routine that allowed them to have a certain amount of influence in the new government while still remaining wedded to the old socioeconomic power structure. This cozy arrangement, however, changed abruptly in late 1955 and early 1956 when talk of implementing “Democratic Reforms” surfaced, forcing the Khampa secular and religious elites to reassess their prospects for maintaining their current level of comfort and security in the future.²⁰⁶

From the earliest days of the CCP there had been a fierce debate within its ranks about how long to wait before enacting radical reforms in ethnic minority areas. Leftists argued that, since reactionaries and the elite are rarely won over anyway, there was no point in delaying radical reforms such as land redistribution and class struggle. Yunnan’s leaders found themselves under increasing pressure to evaluate when local conditions would be appropriate for launching land reforms in Gyalthang. Since the Central Committee had not laid out operationally detailed procedures for determining when conditions were ripe for reforms, local leaders had great

²⁰⁶ Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3*, 118.

latitude to interpret Mao's instructions as they wished.²⁰⁷ One technique that the Party cadres used to secure evidence that the masses were requesting reforms was to hold a number of public education sessions. During these education sessions, poor Tibetan farmers were introduced to the Communist concepts of "exploitation" and "class struggle," and they were informed that they could, in fact, rise up and overturn this system of oppression.²⁰⁸

In late 1955 Mao proclaimed that ethnic minority groups were now ready for reforms and he lambasted Party cadres who suggested otherwise, accusing them of demonstrating a form of ethnocentrism that he termed "Han Chauvinism" (*Da Hanzu zhuyi* 大汉族主义). Mao ended the gradualist approach and started a nationwide push for partial collectivization known as the "High Tide in Socialist Transformation."²⁰⁹ The Chinese authorities insisted that their initial agreement not to impose reforms on Tibet applied only to Tibetans living within the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Thus, the Chinese claimed, they were not breaching any agreement when they started the process of imposing land distribution and "religious system reform" in certain parts of Kham in 1955.²¹⁰ However, efforts to demonstrate that the Tibetan elite were willing to accept these reforms proved to be problematic. Mao's basic strategy was to persuade the elite to accept reforms in exchange for maintaining their current standard of living and social status. This was referred to as "peaceful democratic reforms" (*heping minzhu gaige* 和平民主改革), to

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 93.

²⁰⁸ One Khampa who was opposed to land reform recounted attending these meetings in neighboring Lithang in 1954-1955. See Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3: The Storm Clouds Descend, 1955-1957* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 91.

²⁰⁹ Robert Barnett, "Introduction: A Note on Context and Significance," in Naktsang Nulo, *My Tibetan Childhood: When Ice Shattered Stone*, Angus Cargill and Sonam Lhamo, trans. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): xxx.

²¹⁰ Ibid., xxviii.

distinguish it from the harsh methods used in other regions in China, where landlords and wealthy peasants were subjected to public struggle sessions and their land and possessions were confiscated.²¹¹ Goldstein explains some of the main differences between peaceful democratic reforms and the kinds of land reform carried out in other areas of China:

The salient difference was that [peaceful democratic reforms] were to be done *without* the humiliation, physical beatings, demeaning tasks, and expropriation of wealth and property that characterized reforms done in inland China—that is, without the elite suffering material impoverishment, social degradation, and political isolation. With peaceful reforms, the former elite who did not oppose reforms would have the status of full citizens, and the state would provide them a standard of living equal to what they had before. Moreover, in many cases, they would be given leadership positions in government. The key leverage when pressuring the Tibetan elite to accept reforms, therefore, was that there would be no struggle sessions and that their standard of living would not decline after reforms were implemented.²¹²

The Chinese Communist Party announced its new policy of “adjusting land ownership, renegotiating rent and liberating the serfs” (*tiaotian yizu, jiefang nuli* 调田议租, 解放奴隶) in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous District in late 1955.²¹³ This policy fell in line with the general Communist Party directive to move toward the total collectivization of land throughout all regions of the country. There was a general sense that reforms should begin to be implemented in December 1955, so that the Communist leaders would have enough time to carry out reforms and be able to report their concrete achievements at the next national meeting of the People’s Congress in Beijing in March-April 1957.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3*, 91.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 91-92.

²¹³ ZXZ, 302.

²¹⁴ Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3*, 102.

The first stage of reform entailed categorizing the local population according to the Chinese Communist Party's class categories. Local leaders and officials were ordered to collect the necessary information for categorizing all households in the area and then given the difficult task of assign each household one of the following class labels: chieftain (*tusi* 土司), slave owner (*nuli zhu* 奴隶主), serf owner (*nongnu zhu* 农奴主), land owner (*dizhu* 地主), wealthy farmer (*funong* 富农), middle-class farmer (*zhong nong* 中农), poor farmer (*pin nong* 贫农), serf (*nongnu* 农奴), or slave (*nuli* 奴隶).²¹⁵ In Gyalthang, as in other parts of eastern Tibet, Tibetan society was far less strictly divided than in Central Tibet. Unlike in Lhasa, there were not any aristocratic families in Gyalthang, and neither were there “unclean” (Tib.: *drib*) outcast families, such as blacksmiths and corpse cutters. However, there were wealthy landowners, some of whom held hereditary servants, known locally as *shenyog* (Tib.: *bran gyog*). These servants were slaves in the sense that they could be bought and sold. However, not all house servants were “slaves,” and the term *nang'zin* was used most often as a more general term for servant.²¹⁶ A great deal of controversy remains regarding the extent of “slavery” in Kham, and particularly in Gyalthang, prior to the Chinese Communist Party's involvement in the area. One ninety-three-year-old

²¹⁵ The *Zhongdian County Gazetteer* provides statistics on several of the class categories introduced by the Chinese Communist Party officials during this period. It also provides information about the amount of farmland that was transferred from wealthy landowners to the government or poor peasants. Nearly eighty percent of Zhongdian County's households were affected by the land reform campaigns. ZXZ, 304. According to Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, a Tibetan nomad from Lithang who led the Khampas in the Tibetan Resistance Movement, these reforms may actually have been implemented earlier than the Chinese sources indicate. In his autobiography, written in exile and published in 1973, Andrugtsang claims that in 1953, “in the area of Gyalthang Anthena Kham...the local population was divided into five strata and a terror campaign of selective arrests launched by the Chinese. People belonging to the first three strata were either publically humiliated or condemned to the firing squad.” Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers, Six Ranges: Reminiscences of the Resistance Movement in Tibet* (Dharamsala, India: Information and Publicity Office of H.H. The Dalai Lama, 1973), 38.

²¹⁶ The Tibetan term *shen* was often translated as “slave” (*nuli* 奴隶), while *yog* was taken to mean “servant.” Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 42.

Tibetan resident of Nyishar claims that she spent the first thirty years of her life as a slave working for a wealthy family in a village near Feilai Temple (*Feiliasi* 飞来寺) in Deqin County. She maintains that after the Communist “liberation” of northern Yunnan Province, she and seven of her siblings were given a document proclaiming them to be free.²¹⁷ In contrast, a few Tibetan scholars argue that poor Tibetan farmers in Kham often exaggerated their accounts of slavery in the early 1950s order to receive land allocated to former slaves by the Chinese Communist Party government.

In 1955 it was announced that land that belonged to chieftains, owners of slaves or serfs, landowners, and wealthy farmers would be confiscated and either kept as government-controlled communal lands or redistributed to poor peasants.²¹⁸ This announcement led to armed conflicts between the PLA and wealthy Tibetan farmers, landowners, and monks.

The Khampa Rebellions of 1956-1957

In 1954 the first National People’s Congress took place in Beijing. Representatives from the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau were sent, including cadres from southern Kham. On his return trip to Tibet after attending the National People’s Congress in Beijing, the fourteenth Dalai Lama’s junior tutor, Trijiang Rinpoche (*Chijiang hufo* 赤江活佛), stopped home to visit his extended family in Chatreng (*Xiangcheng* 乡城) in Sichuan Province. Trijiang Rinpoche was the head lama of Chatreng Sampheling Monastery, one of the largest monasteries in Kham.

²¹⁷ Interview with Droma in Hala Village in Nyishar on April 21, 2013. Droma and the names of many other individuals mentioned in this dissertation are pseudonyms. Their names have been changed to protect their identities.

²¹⁸ ZXZ, 302-306.

Chinese Communist cadres accompanied by PLA escorts had entered Tibetan villages in the Chatreng area in February 1954, in order to introduce land reforms. However, according to a monk from Chatreng Sampheling monastery, most people in the villages refused to cooperate with the cadres, and in a few cases, they attacked the cadres and PLA troops.²¹⁹ Tibetan villagers later managed to block the Chinese cadres and PLA troops' access to a brook for fifteen days, cutting off the Chinese camp's sole source of water.²²⁰ After months of fighting in the surrounding areas, by February 1956, thousands of villagers had taken refuge in Chatreng Sampheling Monastery, living alongside the nearly 3,000 resident monks. The PLA sent airplanes overhead that dropped leaflets, urging the monks and people to surrender. However, after months of intense standoff, the PLA ordered a single airforce plane to bomb Chatreng Sampheling Monastery. The monastery was ruined and the Tibetans who survived the attack either surrendered to the PLA or fled overland to Lhasa.²²¹

Meanwhile, in 1955, the abbot of Ba Chödelling Monastery (*Zhuwasi* 竹瓦寺) in neighboring Bathang sent a letter to Zangbum Dorje at Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang, asking him to send troops to support this revolt aimed at protecting Tibetan religion in Kham. The abbot of Ba Chödelling Monastery also sent messengers to monastic officials in Lithang and Chatreng requesting all Khampas to unite against the Chinese. The letter carried by the Bathang messengers stated:

Lingkha shi of Ba is already engaged in fighting against the Chinese. No matter what the Chinese Communists say, their aim is to occupy Tibet in the name of Ngabo's Seventeen-

²¹⁹ Interview that Tsering Shakya conducted with Chatrimpa Tenzin Tsultrim. Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 140.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

Point Agreement. Therefore every Tibetan must unite and fight until even if there are no men left, women will have to take up weapons. If we let China do whatever it wants, Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan race will become extinct. Our property will be confiscated. Evil people will be the leaders and good people will be the servants. It is clear that things will happen which have never before happened in this world. Therefore, we must not be deluded by the Chinese deceit, and we must rise up in unison. We must completely forget personal and collected resentments that exist between our different areas, and confront together the enemy of our region.²²²

The letter asked that Tibetan rebels coming through Gyalthang be given necessary supplies. According to Sulang Jiachu, a Tibetan historian of Gyalthang, the letter also stated that Bathang rebels threatened to burn the homes of villagers in Gyalthang who refused to aid the rebels.²²³ When this letter arrived in Gyalthang, Zangbum Dorje was meeting with Tibetan abbots and Chinese government representatives in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Before Zangbum Dorje left Gyalthang to take part in this meeting, he supposedly told his assistant at Sumtsenling Monastery: “We are located along the Han-Tibetan border and we are different from other Tibetan districts. We must be prudent and refrain from participating in the southern Kham rebellion.”²²⁴ As a result, lamas in high positions of authority at Sumtsenling Monastery did not initially participate in the southern Kham rebellion.

Nine days after fighting broke out in Bathang, it began in neighboring Lithang (*Litang* 理塘). During the Tibetan New Year of 1956, the Chinese military used airstrikes and ground troops to lay siege to Lithang monastery, killing many of the monks and laypeople who had

²²² Lobsang Gyaltzen, *Ba' kyi lo rgyus [History of Kham Ba-pa]* (Dehra Dun: Nyingmapa Lamah Press, 1971), 134. Cited in Carole McGranahan, *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 87. For the full text of the “Seventeen-Point Agreement” that Tibetan and Chinese government representatives signed on May 23, 1951, see Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 449-452.

²²³ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 276.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 277. The 1955-1956 uprising in Eastern Tibet is often called the “Southern Kham Rebellion” (*kangan lianhe panluan* 康南联合叛乱) by Gyalthang-based historians writing in Chinese. Chinese scholars based elsewhere in China have termed this rebellion the “Kangding Rebellion,” since Kangding was the headquarters of Eastern Tibet.

barricaded themselves inside.²²⁵ Yunru Pon Sonam Wangyal, the young and charismatic nomad chief of the Lithang resistance, sent messengers throughout Kham calling for coordinated attacks on Chinese positions on the eighteenth day of the first Tibetan month of 1956. Monasteries and village leaders in Nyarong, Kanze, Bathang, Drango, and Linkashiba responded to this call to action.

A particular mythic aura surrounds the battle that took place at the Lithang Monastery during the revolt of 1956. According to former-resistance-fighter-turned-historian Jamyang Norbu, the death of Yunru Pon Sonam Wangyal was legendary. Yunru Pon and other chiefs defended the Lithang Monastery for days against numerous Chinese infantry assaults and endured extended aerial bombing by Chinese aircraft sent from the airforce base in Chengdu. When his ammunition ran out, Yunru Pon pretended to surrender and, raising a white flag above his head, he approached the PLA troop commander. However, instead of allowing himself to be arrested, Yunru Pon waited until he was less than five feet from the PLA commander and then shot the commander at point blank range with a pistol concealed beneath his robe. The entire division of PLA soldiers then reportedly gunned him down. One eyewitness, Loto Phuntsok,

²²⁵ Accounts of the PLA's siege of Lithang Monastery and the circumstances surrounding the Chinese Air Force's decision to bomb the monastery remain highly contested to this day. The following histories and memoirs present different narratives of the Tibetan resistance movement in Lithang in 1956: Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers, Six Ranges: Reminiscences of the Resistance Movement in Tibet* (Dharamsala, India: Information and Publicity Office of H.H. The Dalai Lama, 1973); Kunga Samten Dewatshang, *Flight at the Cuckoo's Behest: The Life and Times of a Tibetan Freedom Fighter (as told to his son Dorjee Wangdi Dewatshang)* (New Delhi: Paljor Publications, 1997); Lhamo Tsering Tsongkha, *Gyon ru dpon* (Yuru Pon) (Dharamsala: Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, 1997); Ngawang Ratuk, *Mdo khams spon 'bor sgang gi sa 'I char 'khod p'i Li thang dgon yul gnyis kyis btsan 'dzul pa la zhum med ngo rgol gyis rang sa srung skyob byas p'i skor: Li thang lo rgyus yig tshang phyogs sgrig, deb gnyis pa* [*Lithang Historical Records. Volume 2: A Brief Account of the Defense of Lithang by Monasteries and Tribes During China's Invasion, 1936-1959*], Tashi Tsering, ed. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 2006); Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 141; Roger McCarthy, *Tears of the Lotus: Accounts of Tibetan Resistance to the Chinese Invasion, 1950-1962* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997), 105; and Smith, *Tibetan Nation*, 410. Goldstein summarizes a number of these contested historical accounts in Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3*, 225-240. See, in particular, 236, note 26.

later testified to the International Commission of Jurists in 1959, that more than 500 Chinese soldiers fired on Yunru Pon in response to his assassination of their commander.²²⁶

On the tenth day of the second Tibetan month of 1956, after the rebellion had spread to Lithang and a message had been sent to the surrounding monasteries requesting them to unite in the fight against the Chinese, around 2,500 Bathang Tibetan men between the ages of eighteen and sixty joined the monks in rebelling. The fighting began at night and continued until the Chinese troops were driven into the building that had formerly housed Tibetan government representatives. The Bathang Tibetans surrounded the building, cutting off the PLA troops' water supply. From inside the building, the PLA soldiers radioed for help, and two days later two planes appeared overhead. They bombed Bathang for twelve days straight, dropping a total of seventy-three bombs and destroying Bo Chödelling Monastery and private homes. By late 1956, around 10,000 refugees had streamed into Lhasa from Kham.²²⁷

Although there were long-standing animosities between Tibetan residents of Bathang, Lithang, and Gyalthang—as there were in many neighboring areas of Kham—at the end of the year leaders from each of these three Khampa regions signed a twenty-two-point agreement in which they agreed to unite to fight against the Chinese. The men who stayed behind in Bathang continued to fight through 1958, until they too finally had to flee, burning their houses as they left. From there, some groups from Bathang fought throughout southwestern Kham and others headed to Lhasa, where they joined in forming the united Tibetan resistance army, known as the

²²⁶ Norbu, “The Tibetan Resistance Movement,” 192; Norbu, “March Winds.” A Tibetan monk living in exile reportedly told a different version of this story to Goldstein in 1992. See Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3*, 235-236.

²²⁷ Andrugtsang, *Four Rivers, Six Ranges*, 48.

“Four Rivers, Six Ranges” (Tib.: *Chushi Gangdruk*; Ch.: *si shui liu gang* 四水六岗), an old name for Eastern Tibet.²²⁸

The Khampa uprisings of 1956 were not isolated events. Rather, they involved many districts, regions and tribes in a surprisingly well-coordinated fashion. Norbu claims that,

according to one source twenty-three major chiefs of Lithang, Chatreng, Batang, Lingkashi, Nyarong, Gyalthang, Gyalrong, Horko, Gaba and other areas, communicated with each other, responded to Yuru Pon’s call to revolt, and arranged a common day to launch the uprising. This was the eighteenth day of the Tibetan New Year of 1956.²²⁹

Old Khampa trade networks between Kalimpong, Lhasa, and Kham initially facilitated political and military organizing across Kham, and later across Amdo and central Tibet. Wealthy traders such as Andrug Gompo Tashi, the leader of the Chushi Gangdruk Army, were invaluable to this pan-Tibetan effort, for they were some of the very few members of Tibetan society who could interact with people at all socioeconomic levels.²³⁰ Most of these twenty-three leaders were Khampa merchants who had made their fortunes after the Communist takeover in 1949, as China poured silver dollars into Kham to pay for temporary use of yaks to transport PLA supplies into central Tibet. However, instead of retreating safely to India with their fortunes in the early 1950s, these Khampa leaders spent their Chinese fortunes purchasing arms and ammunition in preparation for an upcoming revolt.²³¹ They called their loose-knit alliance “The Volunteer Army

²²⁸ The “Four Rivers” refer to the Salween, Mekong, Yangtze, and Yellow Rivers, while the “Six Ranges” refer to the six mountain ranges and plateaus that span out across Kham and Amdo. The resistance fighters picked this name because the vast majority of the leaders involved in the resistance movement were members of upper class families living in Kham and Amdo. McGranahan, *Arrested Histories*, 87-88.

²²⁹ Norbu, “March Winds.” I have not come across any sources that indicate which Tibetan leader from Gyalthang met with other Kham leaders on the eighteenth day of the Tibetan New Year of 1956.

²³⁰ McGranahan, *Arrested Histories*, 94-95.

²³¹ Norbu, “The Tibetan Resistance Movement,” 194.

to Defend Buddhism (Tib.: *Tensung Dhanglang Magar*).”²³² But despite their best efforts, the leaders and members of this resistance movement were ultimately unable to transcend their much more local loyalties and alliances. Norbu claims, therefore, that the resistance movement never really took on a fully national and dynamic character.²³³

After many years as a political tourist traveling around China, Zangbum Dorje returned to Gyalthang in 1956 and discovered that Kham was in turmoil. Tibetan leaders from other areas of Kham encouraged him to leave Gyalthang and go to India to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha’s birthday, but he declined since he was afraid to abandon his monastery again during this time of great socioeconomic upheaval. When a revolt broke out in Gyalthang and the rebels asked Zangbum Dorje to join them in their cause, he refused. Instead, he asked the Lijiang branch of the PLA to send soldiers to Gyalthang to pacify the situation.²³⁴ According to Chinese government sources, Zangbum Dorje’s greatest worry was that the monks belonging to the various *khangtsens* at Sumtsenling would turn against one another.²³⁵

In Zangbum Dorje’s absence, farmers in Gyalthang, including Da Zhongdian, Yangthang, and Kaytshag, had joined the Communist Party-organized peasants’ self defense group (*nongmin*

²³² The Tibetan historian Dawa Norbu maintains that the Khampa uprising was in defense of Tibetan Buddhist values, and of the political and sacred institutions founded upon such values. Dawa Norbu, “The 1959 Tibetan Rebellion: An Interpretation,” *The China Quarterly* 77 (1979): 74-93. In contrast, the CCP continuously denied that Tibetan nationalist sentiment and religious beliefs were components of the Khampas’ resistance to “democratic reforms.” When it came to the Lithang revolt, the Chinese officials claimed that this revolt was not even located in Tibet at all, but instead it was a town in “Western Sichuan, in the Ganzi Autonomous District, on the border of Tibet.” “Liu Ke-ping Denies Rumored Tibet Rebellion,” *Xinhua* 新华 [New China News Agency], August 7, 1956.

²³³ Norbu, “The Tibetan Resistance Movement,” 194.

²³⁴ Qi and Xiluo, “Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe,” 44.

²³⁵ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 276-277.

ziwei wuzhuang 农民自卫武装), which they initially named the *Huludui* 护路队.²³⁶ By March 1957, the Communist Party had trained and equipped 660 members of this self-defense force. By the end of the year, it had grown to include more than 1,100 members. This stage marked the launch of a local militia that would later become known as the People's Militia (*minbing* 民兵).²³⁷

These farmers intended to engage in an armed uprising, if necessary, to overcome the power of the monastery and help support the Communist government's land reform policy. The state's re-division of society according to class background offered unheard-of opportunities to those from more lowly origins, whilst former members of the religious and secular elite, who now were deemed to have "bad" class backgrounds, suddenly had to find ways to curry favor with the new Communist leaders. As one scholar has commented about this period, "the line between coercion and collaboration was often fine indeed."²³⁸

Wangchuk Tempa received letters from monastic leaders and local warlords from Lithang, Bathang, and Chatreng, asking him to lend his support to the Kham rebellion against Chinese rule and land reform. According to a former Communist Party official in charge of

²³⁶ Yangthang is a rural and predominately Tibetan township in Gyalthang located forty kilometers south of the region's administrative center, Zhongxin Town (*Zhongxin zhen* 中心镇).

²³⁷ These people's militias expanded rapidly and by 1959, Gyalthang had 12,117 people's militia members, comprising nearly 39% of the entire labor force in the region. For more on how the People's Militia grew in Gyalthang between 1958 and the end of the Cultural Revolution, see ZXZ, 409-410.

²³⁸ Jill Sudbury, "Apparitions of Red Horses: Narratives of Destruction in Bodongpa Monasteries in Central Tibet," in Fernanda Pirie and Toni Huber, eds. *Conflict and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 197. Feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye's theory of coercion is helpful in grasping the difficult choices that Tibetans living in Gyalthang faced in the mid-1950s. Frye writes that in coercive environments, the coercer manipulates the options to persuade the coerced to select the least unattractive option available, which is precisely the option that the coercer wants the coerced to select. See Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983), 52-61.

implementing land reform in Gyalthang, Wangchuk responded that he had learned a lesson from his failed rebellions of the past and that he thought it best for the monastic leaders in Kham to compromise and submit to Communist rule in the area.²³⁹ When the monks at Sumtsenling Monastery decided to rebel against land reform and the Communist Party's religious policies, Wangchuk refused to participate in the rebellion. Instead, he held meetings with village leaders in an attempt to convince villagers that the Communist Party had their interests at heart. He claimed that the CCP had treated him fairly, considering all of the grief he had caused the Party in the past. The Party never forced him to write a self-criticism or engage in a *suku* session, and he was never made the target of a class struggle session. The Party had a track record of treating cooperative members of the Gyalthang upper-class well, Wangchuk declared, and he assured the village heads and the monastery representatives that they had nothing to fear.

It is possible that Wangchuk felt pressured to support land reform after accepting a position as Vice Governor of Zhongdian County under CCP rule in 1953.²⁴⁰ Wangchuk's decision to "maintain a neutral stance" on land reform may also have been influenced by the fact that he understood that the Chinese Communist government was capable of easily suppressing any rebellion with armed force, if necessary. By 1956, the CCP had provided guns, ammunition, and basic weapon training to more than 2,000 villagers in Gyalthang, including local members of the police force, work team members, a self-defense troop (*ziweidui* 自卫队), and the locally-formed *Huludui*, with the goal of creating a strong local security force to suppress uprisings.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Huang He 黄河, "Zhongdian xian de minzhu gaige 中甸县的民主改革 [Democratic Reforms in Zhongdian County]," in DZWZX6, 37.

²⁴⁰ Sulang Jiachu, "Wang Xueding Zhuanji," 113.

²⁴¹ Huang, "Zhongdian xian de minzhu gaige," 37.

Using the name “Deka 德卡,” which had been used in the past to refer to the county’s main administrative unit, wealthy landowners and monks set up their headquarters at Sumtsenling Monastery and staged a rebellion against land reform in November, 1956. Residents of Village Seventeen sent their leaders to Sumtsenling to take part in what later came to be known as the “Bula Meeting” (*Bula huiyi* 布拉会议).²⁴² Zhao Baohe and He Qichang, two Tibetan cadres in Gyalthang who had risen quickly through the ranks of the Diqing Prefectural government, and who understood that the Bula Meeting was about to take place, met with Zhongdian County’s monastery work group and propaganda work group to devise a strategy to prevent villagers from participating in this meeting.²⁴³ Once the Bula Meeting got underway, Zhao was sent by the Lijiang prefectural and Zhongdian county work groups to meet with the organizers. He succeeded in convincing a few monks who had participated in the meeting to meet with Guo Qingji 郭庆基, the Lijiang Prefectural Party Secretary, at the Zhongdian County government headquarters. Guo tried to persuade the monks to accept land reform, but they insisted that the amount of food allotted to them was insufficient under the new leadership and thus they would not support the reforms. After returning back to the monastery, these monks issued the public decree “Oppose the Peaceful Negotiation of Land Reform and Maintain the *Tuguan* System, Protect People’s Rights and Their Freedom to Practice Religion.”²⁴⁴ In the wake

²⁴² The Bula Meeting was named after the main square in the monastery that was traditionally used for religious dances and gatherings, which is where the meeting took place. ZZZ, 23.

²⁴³ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 277.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

of this proclamation, Sumtsenling monks protested on the streets of Gyalthang, carrying banners proclaiming: “Protect the People, Protect Religion” (*baozu, baojiao* 保族、保教).²⁴⁵

The Diqing Prefectural work group reported on what they called the “Guihua Temple Incident” in a document submitted to the Yunnan Provincial authorities in January 1957. They wrote that:

In the fighting at Sicun Ruoyimu 四村若依母 in December 1956, we shot dead seven bandit rebels and displayed their corpses on a side street (near the Monastery), inciting family members to claim the bodies. More than 200 rebel families arrived, and an armed conflict took place. One staff member was lost at the scene, and we also shot dead one lama. At the sound of gunfire, troops immediately rushed to the scene, and they were fired on.²⁴⁶

After the Bula Meeting, the CCP consolidated the religious administration at the monastery and disseminated information to the monks about the Peaceful Negotiation of Land Reform and the Party’s policies on religion. They tried to drum up support for the Communist Party amongst the monks and they sent local Party officials, including Liu Yingguan and Song Qianzong, to the monastery to negotiate in order to ensure that the monks did not join the broader Kham rebellion.

Maintaining this balancing act between appeasing the minority elites in Tibetan areas while simultaneously moving steadily toward land reform became very challenging in 1957. As the socialist frenzy of the Great Leap Forward spread throughout China, the Party cadres in northwest Yunnan felt increasing pressure to carry out land reform and initiate the

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ According to Yang Jiesheng, this document about the “Guihua Temple Incident” has been archived in the Yunnan provincial archives, category 2, catalogue 1, file no. 3331. Cited in Yang, *Mubei*, 463. The village referred to here as Sicun Ruoyimu 四村若依母 currently goes by the name Hongpi Village (*Hongpi cun* 红皮村).

communization of farmland.²⁴⁷ Faced with escalating tensions in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and armed rebellion in many areas of Kham, the CCP gradually abandoned the strategy of the nationalities policy in favor of coercion.²⁴⁸ In order to carry out “Democratic Reforms” in Gyalthang, the CCP organized peasant self-defense forces that would be responsible for taking control of the guns and ammunition taken from the landlords and rich peasants in Gyalthang. On March 3, 1957, one day after the start of the Tibetan New Year, the Diqing Party Committee announced that land redistribution would commence in Gyalthang.

In a last ditch to avert a rebellion, Zhao Baohe visited Zangbum Dorje and pleaded with him to discourage the monks from rebelling. Zangbum Dorje allegedly declared that he could do little to stop the rebellion from taking place, but he “showed his utmost benevolence in attempting to disseminate information urging the monks not to rebel.”²⁴⁹ Three days later, the rebellion commenced.

The leaders of Zhaya 扎雅 *khangtsen* and Dokhar (*Duken* 独肯) *khangtsen*, along with village leaders and wealthy farmers in Village Three and Village Four in Da Zhongdian organized the rebellion.²⁵⁰ Farmers in Village Three stole weapons from the local self-defense force and residents of Village Four shot to death five Tianshengqiao Fuji brigade workers,

²⁴⁷ For more on how the Great Leap Forward policies were implemented in Yunnan Province see Zhou Xun, *Forgotten Voices of Mao's Great Famine, 1958-1962: An Oral History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962* (New York: Walker & Company, 2010); Yang, *Mubei*.

²⁴⁸ Smith, “The Nationalities Policy,” 67.

²⁴⁹ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 278.

²⁵⁰ The name “Dokhar” comes from the name of the hill-top fortress (Tib.: *rDo mkhar rdzong*, Ch.: *Daguishan* 大龟山) that served as the old administrative center of Gyalthang. In the early fifteenth century, this administrative name for the fortress was extended to encompass the surrounding village. The current Chinese name for the old part of Zhongxin Town is Dukezong 独克宗 or Dukenzong 独肯宗, a direct transcription of the older Tibetan name, *rDo mkhar rdzong*. Schwieger, “The Long Arm of the Fifth Dalai Lama,” 240.

including Zhao Chaolun 赵超伦 and Pu Jianzhong. They staged a surprise attack on the PLA stationed in Gyalthang, and in Termarong they laid siege to the CCP headquarters. Rebels killed the leader of the Termarong work group, Yang Niancai 杨念才, and cut off the nose and ears of two female workers. A total of 1,525 people participated in this initial stage of the rebellion. 1,161 of the participants were household militia members (*menhubing* 门户兵) and 364 were monks.²⁵¹

After the rebellion commenced, the Central Party Working Group of Zhongdian County held a large meeting during which Guo Qingji gave a speech about the need to suppress revolts and carry out the Party's policies in minority areas, the importance of not harming the feelings of local power holders, and the Party's decision to gradually implement new policies in minority areas. Guo emphasized that it was crucial for the Party to utilize political persuasion in minority areas and that the army should be used to enforce the Party's power only in extenuating circumstances.

The Lijiang Prefectural Party Committee consequently sent Zangbum Dorje, Zhao Baohe, and Wangchuk Tempa to speak with the rebels in Village Four of Da Zhongdian Township. Wangchuk, Zhao, and Zangbum Dorje asked the rebels to hand over their weapons and horses and to meet with government officials. But the rebels not only refused to meet, they also insulted Wangchuk and Zhao and accused Zangbum Dorje of "selling out." They also swore loudly at the Tibetan cadres who accompanied the three leaders. According to one Chinese eye-witness of this encounter, the rebels used the term "traitor" (Gyalthang Tib.: *jia ga* 嘉嘎) to insult these three

²⁵¹ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 278.

Tibetan leaders who had agreed to represent the Chinese government in this important dispute.²⁵² Any attempt at reconciliation between the CCP and the residents of Village Four ceased at this point.²⁵³

Over the course of the next few days, the rebels moved their headquarters to Sumtsenling Monastery. The CCP warned the villagers to call their family members home from the monastery before the PLA attacked the monastery, but the villagers refused.²⁵⁴ The rebels were about to hold a meeting in Jiya *khangtsen* when Lapu, the head monk at Sumtsenling who served on the Party's monastery committee, warned them of an imminent PLA attack. The Party surrounded the monastery with army vehicles belonging to the Lijiang Prefectural Division of the PLA and the rebels were encouraged to preemptively turn over their leaders in order to avoid having the army forcefully enter the monastery. The government sent Wangchuk Tempa to protect the other *khangtsens* inside of Sumtsenling as the army attacked Dokhar *khangtsen*. While monks in the other *khangtsens* remained in hiding, a terrible battle took place inside of Dokhar *khangtsen*. Sunnuo Zhaxi, a Tibetan work unit member, and Kelie Gegan, the rebel leader, were killed. Luosang Nongbu, another Tibetan worker, was injured. The PLA captured hundreds of rebels, including Kangsi Diwa, Guzhang Guoruo, Jiangsi Gejundun, Sigei Nianwa, Napa Xujue, and Canba Genong.²⁵⁵

After the battle, the Party stationed Tibetan cadres at the monastery to serve as translators for the PLA soldiers and help them guard the monastery's valuables. These cadres were also

²⁵² Huang, "Zhongdian xian de minzhu gaige," 35.

²⁵³ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 279.

²⁵⁴ Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 83.

²⁵⁵ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 279.

responsible for confiscating all of the weapons in the monastery, which included twenty-three long armed muskets found inside of Rongba *khangtsen*. More than a hundred weapons were confiscated in the end.²⁵⁶ The next day, a large public meeting was held in the large square near the well in front of the monastery, in order to reassure the worried villagers.

This rebellion was not the only one that took place in Tibetan areas within Yunnan in response to the announcement of the imminent implementation of land reform. On June 5, 1957, the Diqing Chinese Communist Party work group reported to the provincial party committee that it was still in the process of suppressing rebellions in each of the three counties in Diqing Prefecture. The report explained that a rebellion in Deqin, which had commenced in June, 1956, had since been reduced to a few stragglers, while the March, 1957 Gyalthang rebellion still had some “stubborn pockets of resistance.” The report also made it clear that the sixth district of Weixi Lisu Autonomous County had experienced some localized rioting, including an ambush in which eighty people snatched six packloads of foodstuffs and, in the process, killed five police escorts and wounded two others.²⁵⁷

In mid-June, 1957, the reforms in Eastern Tibet were extended to include Chamdo in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, an area that Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai had promised would be excluded from all reforms. Well aware that a Chinese policy proclaimed just six months previously exempted them from land reform, Tibetans in Chamdo vehemently resisted. The government tried to convince or coerce Tibetan villagers to request that the reforms be

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ *Dangdai Yunnan bianxie zu* 当代云南编写组 [Contemporary Yunnan Editorial Committee], *Dangdai Yunnan da shi ji yao* 当代云南大事记要 [Summary of Major Events in Contemporary Yunnan] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe 当代中国出版社, 1996), 168. Citation found in Yang Jiasheng, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962*, Stacy Mosher and Guo Jian, trans. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012), 466.

implemented, and in this way to circumvent the restrictions of the no-reform policy. However, this initiative failed, and organized resistance continued in Kham.²⁵⁸

By early autumn, 1957, resistance to land reform in Gyalthang had been fully suppressed and the CCP's political rhetoric shifted from emphasizing that Tibetan areas were an inalienable part of China, to asserting that the development of Tibetan regions was unattainable without the Chinese presence.²⁵⁹ In many respects, these policies heralded a marked decline in the autonomy of the region, an irony that was compounded by the establishment of the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in September 1957. Out of consideration for their decisions not to support the anti-land reform revolts earlier in the year, Zangbum Dorje was appointed Governor and Wangchuk Tempa was appointed Vice Governor of Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

In October, 1957, in order to crack down on the power of Sumtsenling Monastery and to make sure that the monks could not join with villagers to yet again stir up "social unrest," forty-six monks at Sumtsenling were arrested. Land deeds that were stored inside of the monastery were destroyed, additional weapons were confiscated, and a significant number of the remaining monks were sent back to their villages or fled to the mountains. The number of resident monks living at Sumtsenling decreased from 1,329 to 1,078 as a result of the crackdown on this rebellion.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Smith, "The Nationalities Policy," 67.

²⁵⁹ Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 246.

²⁶⁰ Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 83. Upon arriving in exile, many Tibetan refugees testified about the extent of the casualties involved in the fighting that took place during the Kham rebellions. Jamyang Norbu maintains that the scale of demographic dislocation in Eastern and Northeastern Tibet, "provides sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim of many refugees as to the massive extent of the fighting and casualties in these areas." Norbu writes that "one of the standard corroborations of this provided by refugees is that, subsequent to the crushing of the uprisings, all or most of the ploughing in their villages or districts was being done by women (unthinkable in the past) as there were no men left in the area. Chinese figures taken from their 1982 census, fifteen to twenty years after the revolt had been crushed, indicate a much larger ratio of women to men in Eastern and

The Great Leap Forward and the Socialist Education Movement

By August, 1958, land redistribution had been completed in Gyalthang and the old *shuka* and *tusi* administrative systems had been dismantled.²⁶¹ Areas formerly known as *shuka* were turned into townships, and villages within each township were renamed using a numerical system. Land reform paved the way for the setting up of communes and by the end of 1958, eight people's communes had been established in Zhongdian County.²⁶² The "CCP Central Committee Resolution Regarding the Establishment of People's Communes in the Countryside" was passed on August 29, 1958, and it announced that communes would lead peasants to achieve socialism ahead of schedule and hasten the transition to communism. By the end of October 1958, nearly the entire countryside in China was organized into communes with China's 27 provinces and autonomous regions being organized into 26,576 people's communes incorporating 99.1% of all rural households in the country.²⁶³ Every household in Gyalthang was organized into a village-

Northeastern Tibet, even though a lengthy period of time has passed since then. Such disparate sex-ratio figures do not appear at all in other parts of Tibet or even China, although vast numbers of people died in these places too, for other reasons such as the 1960-1963 famine...which affected both sexes equally." See Norbu, "The Tibetan Resistance Movement," 189.

²⁶¹ The timeframe for land reform in Gyalthang closely followed that of Lithang, Bathang, and Chatreng in the neighboring Ganzi Autonomous District of Sichuan Province. In Ganzi, reforms for agricultural areas were initially propagandized in January 1956 and by September, 1958, 95% of the population was reported to have been collectivized. "Plant Red Flags in Every Corner of the Tibetan and Yi Regions of Szechuan," *Tibet 1950-1967*, 322. Cited in Smith, "The Nationalities Policy," 64-65.

²⁶² Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 309. For more on the *shuka* system, see Qi Jiguang 祁继光, "Diqing tuisi shihua 迪庆土司史话 [The History of *Tusi* in Diqing]," in Zhonggong Diqing zhouwei dangshi zhengji yanjiu shibian 中共迪庆州委党史征集研究室编 [The CCP Diqing Prefecture Committee on Party History Research Group], ed., *Fengjian nongnu zhidu zai diqing de fumie 封建农奴制度在迪庆的覆灭 [The Destruction of the Feudal Slave System in Diqing]* (Dali: Dali zhou dianzi yinshuachang, 1993), 198.

²⁶³ Yang, *Tombstone*, 166.

level production team and, apart from a cow and pig allowed for each household, all of the farm animals were collectivized and herded together.²⁶⁴

Many of the communes in Gyalthang put people to work growing enormous quantities of barley, but the new agricultural techniques employed did not result in a greater harvest. In fact, many people spent a significant portion of each day searching for wild vegetables in the forests and hunting for wild animals to kill for meat. Famine and malnutrition was rampant in Gyalthang between 1959 and 1961.²⁶⁵ Gyalthang residents recalled gathering and eating large quantities of a particular kind of bitter herb, locally called *huitiao*, which grew wild along the roads and the edges of fields.²⁶⁶ Eating too much *huitiao* was known to cause one's neck and face to swell painfully (*zhongbing* 肿病) and those who did not quickly supplement their diet with additional food often died from this swelling.²⁶⁷ Interestingly, the annals of the Zhongdian Number One Middle School indicate that there were no incidents of famine or swelling caused by malnutrition amongst the teachers and middle school students living on the school campus.²⁶⁸ Apparently the

²⁶⁴ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 43-44.

²⁶⁵ Interview with elderly resident in Gyalthang on October 24, 2012.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Dawa Phuntsok in Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang on July 24, 2014.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Droma Tsering in Gyalthang on July 2, 2014. Droma was born in Gyalthang in 1959 and has suffered from lifelong illnesses, which she claims resulted from being extremely malnourished for the first few years of her life. Droma's mother died in 1966, after suffering for seven years of severe intestinal illnesses that arose from being malnourished while pregnant and nursing Droma.

²⁶⁸ The Zhongdian Number One Middle School (*Zhongdian Yi Zhongxue* 中甸一中学), the first middle school in the Diqing Tibetan District (*Diqing Zangqu* 迪庆藏区), was established in September, 1956 with sixty students and two teachers. However, due to the political unrest in town caused by the uprising at Sumtsenling Monastery, students were unable to attend school regularly for a full year. Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 85; Duan Zhicheng 段志城, *Zhongdian yi zhong zhi (1956-1995)* 中甸一中志, (1956-1995) [*The Gazetteer of Zhongdian Number One Middle School (1956-1995)*] (Zhongdian: Yunnan sheng ren da ban gongting yinshua chang, 1996), 1, 8.

few students and teachers living on campus were able to cultivate enough of their own food on the school grounds to support themselves through the harsh winters of 1959 and 1960.²⁶⁹

During the Great Leap Forward campaign of 1958-1959, collectives were amalgamated into communes. Mao's vision of full socialist transformation required mobilization of rural residents on a scale transcending the traditional village. To accomplish this, the Party essentially implemented military methods of organization. During the Great Leap, basic-level government administration was shifted from villages to the communes, which were then placed under direct Party control. The communes were the first level of collectivization in Tibetan areas that transcended traditional village organization. The collectivized peasants were organized into People's Militia, which facilitated their mobilization for large-scale land reclamation and water-works projects.

Since Tibetan areas were precipitously communized in August 1958, without any regard to the previous level of reforms or socialist transformation, areas that had not even completed basic land reform were now communized overnight. Party and state control were combined at the commune level, eliminating all vestiges of traditional leadership. Restrictions on private enterprise and mobility affected traditional means of livelihood.²⁷⁰ The coincidence of communization and the Anti-Rightist movement of 1958 led to an equation of "local nationalism" (*difang minzu zhuyi* 地方民族主义) with anti-Party, anti-socialist opposition.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Duan, *Zhongdian yi zhong zhi*, 208.

²⁷⁰ Smith, "The Nationalities Policy," 61.

²⁷¹ In 1957, Deng Xiaoping filed a report attacking "reactionary" ethnic minority cadres who used their concerns about the need for special policies in ethnic minority areas as a way to attack socialism in general. He wrote: "social education and anti-Rightist struggles among the minorities have the same content as in the Chinese areas, but stress should also be laid on opposition to tendencies of local nationalism. It should be clearly recognized that all those who make use of local nationalist sentiments and the estrangement between nationalities left over from the past in

The Anti-Rightist campaign that followed the Hundred Flowers campaign ushered in a much more hardline nationality policy that added a new level of ideological and physical coercion to communization.²⁷² Thus, in the end, what was supposed to be true “consultation” with the local Tibetan elite before the implementation of land reform, ended up being a kind of coercion followed by token consent.²⁷³

While coercing the traditional elite into supporting land reform through the use of intimidation and political persuasion work, the CCP simultaneously attempted to cultivate a sense of revolutionary consciousness among ordinary Tibetan residents of Gyalthang. Patient “thought work” was a crucial component of the Communists’ efforts to create a sense of the voluntary and natural participation of the people in the revolution, land reform, and in the lead up to the Cultural Revolution.²⁷⁴ In Tibetan areas, this process of “socialist education” (*shehui zhuyi jiaoyu* 社会主义教育), which was grounded in a narrative plot of socialist advance, began with obligatory meetings in which locals were asked to recall past hardships through “speak bitterness” meetings.²⁷⁵ At these group meetings, Tibetans were required to produce and listen to testimonials ascertaining their consciousness of class-based oppression in the “Old Society” (*jiu*

order to divide national unity and undermine the unification of the motherland act contrary to China’s Constitution and jeopardize the socialist cause of our country. They are all anti-socialist Rightists.” Deng Xiaoping, “On Minorities,” in *Report on the Rectification Campaign* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1957), 41. For more about the Communist Party’s attack on “local nationalism” during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, see Smith, “The Nationalities Policy,” 60.

²⁷² Benno Weiner, “A Last Hurrah for the United Front: Pastoral Collectivization, Retrenchment and Rebellion on the Amdo (Qinghai) Grasslands, 1956-1958,” Paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies Conference, Chicago, IL, March 28, 2015; Smith, “The Nationalities Policy,” 59.

²⁷³ Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3*, 105.

²⁷⁴ Jonathan Unger, “Introduction,” In Jonathan Unger, ed., *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 1-8.

²⁷⁵ Sun, *Social Suffering and Political Confession*.

shehui 久社会) and their present “liberation” (*jiefang* 解放) in the “New Society” (*xin shehui* 新社会). As many scholars have pointed out, these first-person testimonials of the rural masses’ experiences of feudal exploitation and then liberation from class oppression were the narrative backbone of the Chinese Communist revolution.²⁷⁶

“Speak bitterness” testimonials from young, female Tibetan villagers, in particular, were very effective weapons that enabled state cadres to directly attack Gyalthang’s Tibetan Buddhist monastic order. These testimonials were public performances designed to radically upend local kin-based gender hierarchies, which had traditionally mandated respect for elder Tibetan men and lamas. Writing about the way in which these compulsory group meetings were implemented and performed in the Labrang region of Gansu Province in 1958, Charlene Makley maintains that Tibetans performing “speak bitterness” testimonials represented “a truly ‘modern’ PRC subject, one who was liberated from the obligations of local kin ties and thus empowered to publically accuse Tibetan superiors of exploitation on behalf of the state.”²⁷⁷ The “speak bitterness” meetings therefore served to not only transform the structure of society, but also to fundamentally alter the minds of Chinese citizens and create a new, socialist consciousness.

Monks who participated in the 1956-1957 Gyalthang rebellion were also ordered to take part in these “speak bitterness” sessions in late 1958. Some willingly admitted that the pre-liberation era was one of bitterness while others, who refused to speak ill of the pre-land reform era, were sent away to join production brigades in the villages. Eighty-five percent of the 711 monks who remained affiliated with the monastery after 1958 were very young monks. Only 367

²⁷⁶ Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation and Power in China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*; Sun, *Social Suffering and Political Confession*.

²⁷⁷ Makley, “The Politics of Memory,” 118.

monks actually continued to live at the monastery after 1958, and they were required to work on a collectivized production brigade and to elect one representative from each *khangtsen* to serve on a new monastery democratic organizing committee during the Great Leap Forward.²⁷⁸ Under a new Communist Party policy titled “Let the Monastery Take Care of Itself” (*yi si yang si* 以寺养寺) these remaining monks were ordered to prepare uncultivated land for farming, maintain fertile fields year-round, and become entirely self-supporting. They were required to do all of the agricultural work in the fields themselves and supply their own food, water, and fuel.²⁷⁹

Land reform in Gyalthang did not only redistribute the land, it also made obsolete previously hegemonic cultural orderings of the local social landscape, since it entirely eliminated the political and economic power of the monks and the other elite members of Gyalthang society.²⁸⁰ Party documents from the reform period present the Land Reform Campaign as the final blow to the *tusi* system, the system of monastic power, and the authority of local leaders. Since the implementation of land reform in Gyalthang overlapped with the national Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957-1958, Wangchuk Tempa and other senior local officials and formerly wealthy landlords in Gyalthang were taken to Kunming to participate in struggle sessions and undergo “Rectification.” After one particular struggle session during the Rectification Campaign (1958-1959), Wangchuk expressed his regret for all of the “anti-Party acts” that he had engaged in as a trader, bandit, and warlord in Gyalthang in the past.

²⁷⁸ Qi and Xiluo, “Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe,” 47.

²⁷⁹ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 43.

²⁸⁰ According to the Tibetan historian Tsering Shakya, “the dissolution of the economic power base of the monasteries was the most significant social and political event in the history of Tibet since the introduction of Buddhism.” Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 254.

Wangchuk was permitted to return to Gyalthang once the Rectification Campaign ended and on June 30, 1961, he fell ill and passed away at the age of seventy-six. On July 2, a religious ceremony and a political ceremony were both held in his honor. The Diqing Prefectural Party branch and government, Zhongdian County Party branch and government, the military, and the local schools all participated in the funeral ceremony.²⁸¹ Moreover, the Yunnan Provincial government publically displayed their respect for Wangchuk by placing his official funeral announcement in the Yunnan Daily Newspaper on July 9, 1961.²⁸²

After the Socialist Education Movement (1961-1963) had taken place, there was very little room left for the former Gyalthang elite to engage in meaningful governing. Many of the monks and upper class citizens, such as Zangbum Dorje and Liu En, who might have originally voiced strong opposition to the Cultural Revolution, had been co-opted into the Communist government structure and they found themselves in the position of defending the Communist Party right up until they were made targets of the Cultural Revolution. Other monks, who might have stood up and resisted additional political campaigns, had been effectively silenced once they were either co-opted into joining the Communist power structure in the aftermath of land reform, or deported to labor camps to engage in “thought reform through labor.”

²⁸¹ Qi and Xiluo, “Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe,” 45.

²⁸² “Sheng minwei fuzhuren Wang Xueding xiansheng bingshi 省民委副主任汪学鼎先生病逝 [Wang Xueding, Vice Chair of the Provincial People’s Committee, Dies from Illness],” *Yunnan Ribao* 云南日报 [*Yunnan Daily*], July 9, 1961.

The Four Cleanups Campaign

During the Chinese Communist Party's 10th Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee, which was held in Beijing in the fall of 1962, the CCP stepped up its campaign to oppose revisionism within the Party ranks. The communiqué of the 10th plenum recognized that the behavior of lower-level leading cadres had alienated the masses and added that the CCP should “endeavor to change this state of affairs and improve the work of those units without delay.”²⁸³

In January, 1963, the *People's Daily* complained that:

A number of production teams are not well run...The work styles of the cadres in these teams are not pure...The cadres themselves lack socialist consciousness, and they even manifest spontaneous capitalist tendencies...Such cadres lack all awareness serving the people...They do not actively participate in labor, and they are always thinking about eating more and owning more. They not only fail to listen to the opinions of the masses, but they also force their demands upon the masses.²⁸⁴

In response, the Communist Party leadership in Beijing launched the “Four Cleanups” campaign in many rural areas around the country in 1963 in order to crack down on what was perceived to be widespread corruption in party organizations, bolster the farmers’ morale after the catastrophes of the Great Leap, and improve the rural economy. The four targets to be “cleaned” were the government, the economy, the organization, and the ideology of the Party. Although the “Big Four Cleanups Campaign” (*da siqing yundong* 大四清运动) had ended in most areas of the country by early 1965, only in late 1965 did this campaign really get underway in Gyalthang, and thus it was still in its early stages when its far more ambitious successor, the Cultural Revolution, commenced eight months later. Indeed, it was the “Four Cleanups”

²⁸³ “Communiqué of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.” *Peking Review* 5: 39 (September 28, 1962): 6.

²⁸⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, January 11, 1963; quoted in Richard Baum, *Prelude to Revolution: Mao, the Party and the Peasant Question, 1962-1966* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 17-18.

campaign workgroups who would issue the first directives launching the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang in 1966.²⁸⁵

As a first step in the “Small Four Cleanups” campaign, which preceded the “Big Cleanups Campaign” by just over one year, in November, 1963, the Lijiang Prefectural Committee sent a seventy-four person work team to Da Zhongdian district to “clean up” and stamp out signs of corruption among Zhongdian cadres.²⁸⁶ Once the Lijiang Prefectural Committee work teams arrived in Zhongdian, their major assignment was to “strike roots and link up” with local poor and lower-middle peasants in order to gather information on the attitudes and behavior of local cadres.

These work team members were expected to eat, live, and labor together (dubbed the “three togethers”) with ordinary commune members. The goal was for them to serve as personal models for carrying out proper production and leadership work. Taking up residence in the homes of carefully selected poor farming families in Gyalthang villages, the work team members commenced their political work. Meetings were called with Gyalthang cadres at the commune and production headquarters and the cadres were told that the work teams had been sent down from Lijiang to investigate, expose, and rectify the economic and administrative malpractices of basic-level cadres and “other bad elements.” The cadres were told that those who cooperated in the investigations by freely and voluntarily “dumping their burdens” and “taking a warm bath” (*xizao* 洗澡)—conscientiously admitting their errors and making financial restitution—would be

²⁸⁵ ZXZ, 308. On the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee’s announcement of the Four Cleanups drive, see Baum, *Prelude to Revolution*, 23-28.

²⁸⁶ ZXZ, 308.

treated leniently, while those who tried to cover up their own misdeeds, or the misdeeds of their friends and relatives, would be treated more severely.

Having spent a number of weeks “striking roots” in surrounding villages, the work team members gradually began soliciting the candid opinions of local residents regarding the mistakes made by local cadres. By July, 1964, the work team had split into four divisions to better cover the entirety of Zhongdian County, and they began to re-classify poor and lower-middle class peasants (*pinxia zhongnong* 贫下中农) and initiated struggle sessions against four types of class enemies, namely the landlords, wealthy peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and the bad elements (*huai fenzi* 坏分子).²⁸⁷ Within the first few months of the launch of the Small Four Cleanups campaign in Gyalthang, one cadre had been arrested, two cadres had been placed under surveillance, and twenty-nine cadres were forced to take part in public struggle sessions. By the end of that autumn, 708 out of a total of 755 agricultural cooperatives had taken part in this campaign. During the fall of 1964, 937 rural cadres and 2,687 hired herdsmen, small business owners, and other commune members were forced to “take showers” due to alleged corruption and misappropriation of work points and food rations.²⁸⁸

As the “Four Cleanups” campaign continued into 1965, the work groups increasingly attacked larger percentages of basic level cadres in townships and villages. This new kind of class struggle, initiated during the Four Cleanups campaign, ended up being the flint that sparked the fire of the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang.

²⁸⁷ ZXZ, 308.

²⁸⁸ Le’an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 103.

CHAPTER THREE

REVOLUTIONARY ENTHUSIASM OR POLITICAL COERCION? TIBETAN PARTICIPATION IN THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN GYALTHANG

As the sun rose over the frost-covered hills early in the morning on September 9, 1966, Dawa Phuntsok awoke to the sound of someone knocking on his door. The visitor commanded Phuntsok to attend a meeting on the village's pastureland. Phuntsok, a thirty-year-old Tibetan monk who had lived in Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery prior to the land reform movement of 1957, quickly got dressed and joined his siblings and neighbors on the grassland. The leader of the village announced that volunteers were needed to defend the region against a formidable enemy and asked, "Who is willing to go to battle?" Given the volatility of the political climate at the time, no one in the village, in Phuntsok's memory, dared to refrain from raising a hand. The "volunteers" were quickly assembled and asked to walk en masse to Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery, where they were told they would receive further instructions about this impending battle. Upon arriving at the monastery, Phuntsok was surprised to discover that the so-called enemy was none other than Tibetan Buddhism itself. He joined a group of farmers, students, cadres, monks, and nuns from the surrounding villages as they surged through the front gate, ascended the long staircase to the monastery courtyard, and entered the main hall. Around him people were tearing down thangka paintings, removing Buddhist statues from their wooden alcoves, and piling up Tibetan manuscripts in the courtyard in preparation for a bonfire, which was to be lit later that day. Phuntsok swallowed hard, picked up a wooden mallet, and joined other villagers in pounding away at the monastery's rammed-earth walls.²⁸⁹

The ransacking of Sumtsenling Monastery was not an isolated event in Gyalthang. As the Cultural Revolution swept through the region, local residents became entangled in the excitement and terror of the times. Tibetan villagers demolished the earthen walls of twenty-nine temples and monasteries in the area, set their wooden-shingled roofs alight, smashed Buddhist

²⁸⁹ Interview with Dawa Phuntsok in Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang on July 24, 2014.

ritual implements, and burned hundreds of religious manuscripts.²⁹⁰ Villagers pilfered or defaced anything of religious or cultural value and verbally and physically attacked religious and political leaders in town. The destruction of Tibetan cultural objects, historical archives, and religious institutions in Gyalthang was systematic and widespread.²⁹¹

In late spring, 1966, Mao unleashed the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to eliminate his enemies and reshape relations within the party. This revolution began as an attempt by Mao to overcome revisionism and bureaucratism in the Chinese Communist Party by reviving collectivism. Unlike the past Chinese Communist Party purges that took place entirely within the rarefied air of the Party itself, this time around the driving forces of the cleanup—Red Guards and revolutionary workers—were outside of the Party. Mao sought to mobilize the masses to discover and attack what he called bourgeois and capitalist elements who had insinuated themselves into the Party and, in his view, were trying to subvert the revolution. In order to pave

²⁹⁰ In Zhongdian County, Guishan Dafo Temple 龟山大佛寺, Baiji Temple 百鸡寺, Hapi Temple 哈匹寺, Dabao Temple 大宝寺, and Yundeng Temple 云登寺 were destroyed. In neighboring Deqin County 德钦县, Dondrupling Gompa (Gadan Dongzhulinsi 噶丹·东竹林寺), Deqinlin Temple 德钦林寺, Hongpoyang Bajing Temple 红坡羊八景寺, Shusong Nunnery 书松尼姑寺, Yunxian Temple 云仙寺, and Yugong Temple 禹公寺 were destroyed. In nearby Weixi County 维西县, Damozushidong 达摩祖师洞 and Taiping Temple 太平寺, along with twenty other temples and ten sacred Buddhist sites, were looted and burned. Le'an Wangdui 勒安旺堆, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi* 当代云南藏族简史 [*A Concise Contemporary History of Tibetans in Yunnan*] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2009), 93.

²⁹¹ By the end of the Cultural Revolution, ruins of monasteries and temples littered the landscape across all Tibetan areas in China. According to the figures given by the Vice Chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in 1987, eighty percent of central Tibet's 2,700 monasteries were destroyed by 1965. Apart from thirteen, the rest were burned down during the first few years of the Cultural Revolution. Buddhist manuscripts housed in these monasteries were burned, and countless cultural objects were plundered. Cited in Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 322, footnote 24. The official website for the Tibetan government-in-exile claims that out of a total of 6,259 monasteries and nunneries that had existed in Tibetan areas of China in 1959, only eight remained unscathed by 1976. The vast majority of these monasteries and nunneries were destroyed prior to the start of the Cultural Revolution. Tibetan Government in Exile, *Tibet: Proving Truth from Facts* (July 7, 1993 White Paper), accessed September 4, 2015: <http://tibet.net/1996/01/tibet-proving-truth-from-facts-1996/>, 37.

the way for Chinese socialism to be “written on a blank slate,” Mao announced the need to first destroy the old, and then create the new.²⁹²

What were the political, social, and economic reasons why villagers actively participated in a revolution that sought to annihilate Buddhism and radically transform Tibetan culture?²⁹³ Who took part in these destructive campaigns and why did they feel compelled to do so? To what degree did Tibetans believe in the idealistic yet powerful revolutionary ideology that spread so quickly across the country during the first few months of the Cultural Revolution? To a certain extent, mass participation liberated people during the Cultural Revolution from their everyday roles and enabled them to take part in a kind of revolutionary carnival. Whether people joined in revolutionary singing or performed loyalty dances, whether they wrote big character posters or denounced a class enemy at a struggle session, the Cultural Revolution gave them an unprecedented opportunity to express themselves and to showcase their voices, their dreams, their jealousies, and their grievances.²⁹⁴ In pushing back against the allure in Tibetan studies of a conscious focus on victimization, which often comes at the expense of more complicated understandings of the past, this chapter will explore the various ways in which Tibetans experienced the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang.

Although very little has been written about the Cultural Revolution in Tibetan areas, some of the earliest historical accounts written by foreign scholars in the 1990s suggested that

²⁹² Smith 1996, 541.

²⁹³ For a thought-provoking debate between a Chinese historian with an interest in Tibet and a Tibetan historian living in exile, see Wang Lixiong and Tsering Shakya, *The Struggle for Tibet* (London: Verso, 2009). For a different perspective on this issue, see Jill Sudbury, “Apparitions of Red Horses: Narratives of Destruction in Bodongpa Monasteries in Central Tibet,” in Fernanda Pirie and Toni Huber, eds., *Conflict and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 193-215.

²⁹⁴ Li, *Shanghai Homes*, 113.

young Chinese revolutionaries were mostly to blame for the brutality of the Cultural Revolution campaigns in Tibet.²⁹⁵ These scholars maintained that ethnically-Han Chinese Red Guards traveled from predominately Chinese urban centers to coerce local Tibetans into spreading the ideological fervor of the Cultural Revolution into rural areas. Although Red Guards from central China did play an important role during the Cultural Revolution in many areas of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, in the case of Gyalthang, the Red Guards were composed entirely of local middle school students.²⁹⁶ Chinese Red Guards never traveled to Gyalthang from other parts of China to desecrate monasteries and organize humiliating and brutal struggle sessions against the local Tibetan population. Rather, these violent acts were carried out by local residents, including farmers, people's militia members, and a small number of local Red Guards.

“Destroy the Old!” Historical Erasure by Means of Annihilation

The most direct and widely publicized attack on Gyalthang's past took place during the first few years of the Cultural Revolution when local residents followed government orders to demolish their own monasteries and publically criticize religious and secular leaders. In a written

²⁹⁵ See, for example: Warren Smith, *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations* (Boulder: Westview, 1996), 541-548; Mary Craig, *Tears of Blood: A Cry for Tibet* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999), 166-195.

²⁹⁶ In the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) the Red Guard movement was also initially composed entirely of local Tibetan students. In August 24, 1966, the Lhasa Middle School and Tibet Teacher Training College established the first Red Guard unit in the TAR. It was only in mid-November, 1966 that Red Guards arrived from central China to join local Tibetan Red Guard groups. Shakya suggests that the local Communist Party in Lhasa may have fomented the “home-grown” Red Guard movement in the TAR in a deliberate attempt to counteract the foreseen intrusion of Red Guards from China and divert their attention away from the Party and towards a general attack on Tibetan society. The Communist Party leaders in Lhasa were generally successful in carrying out their goals, for the Cultural Revolution campaign in Tibet largely remained a movement against feudalism and the “Four Olds” rather than a movement against the Party leaders themselves. In Gyalthang the Party was less successful in diverting Red Guard attention away from the Party leadership and both Tibetan religious leaders and Party leaders were targeted. Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 320-326. See also *Survey of China Mainland Press* (216) 1968: 29.

proclamation posted in town on July 28, 1966, the Xiao Zhongdian section of the Diqing Prefectural “Four Cleanups Campaign” (*si qing yundong* 四清运动) Work Group ordered villagers to destroy all Buddhist statues, paintings, and icons and to rid themselves of the remnants of “feudal superstition.”²⁹⁷

In August, 1966, announcements in Chinese national newspapers urged young people, workers, and cadres to “Destroy the Four Olds” (*po si jiu* 破四旧), defined as the exploiting class’ old ways of thinking, old culture, old customs and traditions, and old habits.²⁹⁸ According to Zhongdian County Party documents, the position of the Four Cleanups work groups operating in Gyalthang was strengthened on August 23, 1966, when the *People’s Daily* printed Mao’s call to intensify the “Destroy the Four Olds” campaign.²⁹⁹ However, the Destroy the Four Olds campaign also shifted the work groups’ attention away from identifying corruption amongst lower-level cadres and toward a new target—the vestiges of traditional markers of religious, ethnic, and cultural identity.

Buddhism became an early target of this campaign in Tibetan regions in China, and prefectural work groups in Gyalthang quickly drew up plans to destroy temples, monasteries, religious icons, and sacred texts, and to carry out struggle sessions against religious and political

²⁹⁷ The Party documents that I have been able to access do not reveal any information about the members of this “Four Cleanups” work group, but elderly Tibetan residents of Gyalthang recall that the work group was composed of local low-ranking Communist Party cadres (*dangdi de jicing ganbu* 当地的基层干部). Interviews with Gyalthang residents on October 4, 2012, July 3, 2014, and August 2, 2014.

²⁹⁸ XXJZZZ, 395-396.

²⁹⁹ ZXX, 309. For the announcement of Mao’s endorsement of the “Destroy the Four Olds” campaign, see “Wuchan jieji wenhua da geming langchao xijuan shoudu jiedao 无产阶级文化大革命浪潮席卷首都街道 [The Tidal Wave of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Engulfs the Streets of the Capital],” *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 [*People’s Daily*], August 23, 1966.

leaders.³⁰⁰ The work groups also asked young people to assemble at Gyalthang's only middle school, the Zhongdian County Number One Middle School, where they encouraged students to set up a Cultural Revolution committee on their campus and a Cultural Revolution Small Group for each grade level. After the central CCP's decision on June 13, 1966 to temporarily suspend all classes and have students devote themselves full-time to the Cultural Revolution, formal studying came to a halt in elementary and middle schools in Gyalthang. In interviews conducted in 2010 and 2014, former students recounted spending the summer reading Mao's political speeches and wishing they could demonstrate their revolutionary consciousness more actively.³⁰¹

The Zhongdian County Number One Middle School students joined together to form a small but vocal Red Guard troop (*hong weibing* 红卫兵) in September, 1966. They were inspired by Chairman Mao's call to emulate the Tsinghua Middle School Red Guards in Beijing.³⁰² In Gyalthang, local youth—including many enthusiastic revolutionaries who were not permitted to join the Red Guards due to their unfavorable class backgrounds—started pasting up big character posters (*da zi bao* 大字报) and marching through the streets.³⁰³

The Red Guard movement in Gyalthang may be labeled “local” to the extent that Red Guards from outside of the area never came to Gyalthang to take part in revolutionary activities.

³⁰⁰ Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 89.

³⁰¹ Interview with two former middle school students in Gyalthang on July 3, 2014; interview with a former elementary school student in Gyalthang on August 2, 2010.

³⁰² In early August, 1966, Mao gave the Tsinghua Middle School students, who had formed one of the very first Red Guard units in Beijing, his “ardent support,” and the *People's Daily* quoted the Chairman as having told them to “concern yourselves with the affairs of the state, and carry the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution through to the end.” Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 106.

³⁰³ ZXZ, 309-310.

However, between August 8 and November 25, 1966, Red Guards from Gyalthang were sent on revolutionary trips to link up with Chinese Red Guards and travel to Beijing for mass rallies. Availing themselves of the opportunity provided by the now extended summer vacation, middle school students began to travel, often for the first time, outside of their hometowns. Mao encouraged students to ride buses and trains across the country to “ignite the fires of revolution,” declaring that, “we must support the great exchange of revolutionary experience by the masses.”³⁰⁴ By early September, all relevant authorities had been informed by the State Council that Red Guards engaged in such exchanges were to enjoy free travel, board, and accommodation. An autumn and winter of revolutionary tourism commenced as young people embarked on the journey of a lifetime. Twenty Red Guards from Gyalthang eventually made it to Tiananmen Square in Beijing to greet Chairman Mao.³⁰⁵

Qilin Wangdu, a Tibetan middle school student and the grandson of the Vice Governor of Zhongdian, joined Red Guard friends in the autumn of 1966, to participate in the “great link-up” and travel to Lijiang, Kunming, Chengdu, Chongqing, and Xi’an. Although during his first few weeks on the road he enjoyed the chance to travel by bus and train and exchange revolutionary ideas with youth from other parts of China, his enthusiasm quickly dampened once he received word that both his father and paternal grandfather had become targets of intense struggle sessions in Gyalthang. Growing disillusioned with the Red Guard movement, Qilin returned back to

³⁰⁴ *Mao Zedong sixiang wan sui* (Long Live Mao Zedong Thought). (Shanghai? 1968?), 278. Cited in Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 110.

³⁰⁵ Le’an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 89; Zhonggong Xianggelila xian wei dang shi yanjiu shi 中共香格里拉县委党史研究室 [Research Office on Central Party History of Xianggelila County], *Zhongguo gongchandang Xianggelila xian lishi da shiji (1936.4-2007.12)* 中国共产党香格里拉县历史大事记 (1936.4-2007.12) [*Major Events in the History of the Chinese Communist Party in Xianggelila County* (April, 1936-December, 2007)] (Kunming: Kunming meijia meiyinwu sheji youxian gongsi, 2009), 80.

Gyalthang in November 1966 to find that his class status had been relabeled and his family's political situation was now extremely dire.³⁰⁶

There is insufficient data to ascertain the percentage of Tibetans who joined the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, but given the small percentage of Tibetan students enrolled in middle school in Gyalthang in the 1960, it is likely that the number of Tibetan middle school aged Red Guards there was very low. Of the 289 enrolled students at Zhongdian Middle School in 1960, 50.2% were Han, 39.4% were Naxi, 4.8% were Bai, 2.8% were Lisu, and only 2% were Tibetan.³⁰⁷ There were no Tibetan teachers working at the school in 1960.³⁰⁸ However, despite the small number of Tibetan Red Guards in Gyalthang, it appears that many Tibetans still participated in the Cultural Revolution. According to two Tibetan residents of Gyalthang who became Red Guards in 1967, the Red Guards were influential revolutionary activists, but unlike in some other parts of the country, they were not responsible for the majority of the destruction that occurred in Gyalthang during the Cultural Revolution.³⁰⁹ In addition to the Red Guards, thousands of villagers and people's militia members were involved in ransacking the monasteries, burning Tibetan books and manuscripts, and holding struggle sessions to criticize local leaders.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ Interview with Qilin Wangdu in Gyalthang on October 24, 2012.

³⁰⁷ I was unable to access any data on the composition of the Zhongdian Middle School student body in 1966. Although the demographics of the Zhongdian Middle School may well have shifted between 1960 and the launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, it seems unlikely that a significantly higher percentage of Tibetan students enrolled in middle school during those six years. Duan Zhicheng 段志城, *Zhongdian yi zhong zhi (1956-1995)* 中甸一中志, (1956-1995) [*The Gazetteer of Zhongdian Number One Middle School (1956-1995)*] (Zhongdian: Yunnan sheng renda bangongting yinshua chang, 1996), 33.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁰⁹ Interview with former Tibetan Red Guards in Gyalthang on October 15, 2012.

³¹⁰ ZXZ, 409-410.

The “people’s militia” in Gyalthang was composed of local residents who had been given basic military training by People’s Liberation Army officers, ostensibly to prepare them for armed resistance in the event of a foreign invasion. In 1959 Mao Zedong ordered local leaders around the country to expand the people’s militia and the Zhongdian County government responded by organizing 38% of the adult residents of the county (around 12,000 people) into a collective people’s militia. Ideological indoctrination was one of the most important goals of militia training, and in the 1960s people’s militia members were urged to get involved in class struggle. People’s militia members were also expected to study the lives of various model soldiers held up for emulation, such as Qilin Wangdan 七林旺丹, a local Tibetan farmer who helped the PLA suppress anti-Communist government rebellions in Gyalthang in the 1950s.³¹¹ By late 1967, many middle-aged villagers and people’s militia members had started to emulate the Red Guards’ dress code, including attaching red armbands to their left shirtsleeves.³¹²

In late August, 1966, the Diqing Prefectural government issued the order to “Use the Four Cleanups Campaign as a Launching Pad for the Cultural Revolution” (*si qing wei zhongxin zhuanru wenhua da geming* 四清为中心转入文化大革命).³¹³ Over the next few months, the work teams in Zhongdian County were withdrawn from the county seat and ordered to relocate to the villages to educate rural residents about the Cultural Revolution. The work teams’ goal

³¹¹ Qilin Wangdan 七林旺丹, *Yingzhe jin taiyang feixiang: Qilin Wangdan huiyilu* 迎着金太阳飞翔: 七林旺丹回忆录 [*Flying to Greet the Golden Sun: A Memoir by Qilin Wangdan*] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2006).

³¹² Interview with elderly Tibetan residents in Gyalthang on June 3, 2013 and July 20, 2014; Le’an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 92-98.

³¹³ ZXZ, 309-310; XXJZZZ, 395-396.

was to get impoverished farmers to recognize that poor living conditions were the result of centuries of exploitation by the former Tibetan monastic and ruling classes.

Since the seventeenth century, Sumtsenling Monastery had been the most influential of all religious and political institutions in Gyalthang. Although the Zhongdian County government had seized the monastery's farmland and had ordered the monks to disrobe, grow their hair, and return home to work in agricultural cooperatives in 1957, the monastery remained standing and its many statues, books, and paintings remained largely undisturbed. Even after land reform, Sumtsenling Monastery remained a powerful symbol of the region's pre-Communist past. It therefore became one of the first targets of the Cultural Revolution.³¹⁴

On September 7, 1966, the Da Zhongdian 大中甸 “Four Cleanups” work group committee issued a proclamation entitled “The Plan to Mobilize the Masses to Destroy Sumtsenling Monastery.”³¹⁵ The following afternoon, an advance party of 120 people was formed, including the Red Guards from Zhongdian County Number One Middle School, residents of Zhongxin Town, and farmers from Namsal township (*Nuoxi xiang* 诺西乡) and

³¹⁴ Tsering Shakyia claims that the Communist Party viewed the monastic institutions as one of the three “evils” of “old” Tibetan society. Thus, monasteries became an early target of the nascent Communist government's attention. The other two “evils” were the aristocratic estate-holders and the Tibetan Government. Shakyia, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 248. To a certain extent, Tibetan monastic institutions, particularly in Kham, were also singled out for being at the heart of rebellions that had been costly to the Chinese Communist efforts to institute land reform in Tibetan areas. See Jill Sudbury, “Apparitions of Red Horses: Narratives of Destruction in Bodongpa Monasteries in Central Tibet,” in Fernanda Pirie and Toni Huber, eds., *Conflict and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 194.

³¹⁵ Ch.: *Guanyu fadong qunzhong daohui guihuasi de jihua* 关于发动群众捣毁归化寺的计划. See Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 93. Party records indicate that Vice Secretary Zhang, referred to in documents as “Vice Secretary Zhang of the Da Zhongdian ‘Four Cleanups’ Work Group” (*Da Zhongdian ‘si qing’ gongzuo zong tuan dang wei fu shuji Zhang XX* 大中甸‘四清’工作总团党委副书记张XX), called Da Zhongdian cadres to a meeting on September 7, 1966, where the work group made plans to mobilize villagers to destroy Sumtsenling Monastery. Party documents do not reveal any other information about the identity of Vice Secretary Zhang, including his ethnicity. Many ethnic minority residents of Gyalthang have adopted Chinese names, so Vice Secretary Zhang's surname does not necessarily indicate that he was Han Chinese. XXJZZZ, 396; ZXZ, 308-310.

Jiefang township 解放乡, two predominantly Tibetan townships close to Sumtsenling.³¹⁶ They assembled at the monastery and made plans to enter it the following day. On the morning of September 9, 1966, government officials affiliated with various Diqing Prefectural and Zhongdian County bureaus, along with thousands of workers, farmers, and monks from nearby villages, entered Sumtsenling and burned sacred texts, thangkas, and Buddhist statues.³¹⁷ This was the event in which Dawa Phuntsok took part.

Nyima Chodon, a fifty-four year-old English teacher with a multi-ethnic background (Tibetan, Naxi, and Bai), recalled how his neighbor, a forestry worker and woodcarver, had participated in the destruction of Sumtsenling Monastery. This forestry worker, Tsering Norbu, was harvesting trees in an old growth forest in Kaytshag village on the morning of September 9, 1966, when he received an order to return to town and proceed immediately to Sumtsenling Monastery. After reporting to the gates of Sumtsenling a few hours later, the Xiao Zhongdian work team leader informed Tsering Norbu that his task for the next few days was to cut down all of the large wooden pillars in the main hall of Sumtsenling monastery so that they could be sawed into small logs and burned as fuel in wood stoves. When Sumtsenling was originally built and consecrated in 1679, silver coins had been placed ritualistically underneath each of the main pillars of the monastery. According to Nyima Chodon, Tsering reported that after he cut down the main pillar in the largest hall of the monastery, he came across five tarnished silver coins that

³¹⁶ In 1984, Namsal township was 97% Tibetan and Jiefang township was 99% Tibetan. Although I was unable to access any pre-1984 demographic information about these two townships, given the general population trends in the area, it is likely that the number of Tibetan residents in these townships was even higher during the Cultural Revolution. YSDZZXDZ, 76, 79.

³¹⁷ Chinese party records indicate that as many as 10,000 villagers, Red Guards, monks and nuns, and work group members from Gyalthang may have participated in ransacking, looting, and burning valuable religious and cultural artifacts at Sumtsenling Monastery on September 9, 1966. XXJZZZ, 396; Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 93.

had been placed underneath the base of the pillar three centuries earlier. He quickly pocketed them before anyone around him noticed. That evening when he returned to town, he told the children living on his street to line up in a row, and he gave one silver coin to each child. Nyima Chodon carefully hid this silver coin amongst his own personal possessions for the next twenty-two years.³¹⁸

During the days following the desecration of Sumtsenling Monastery, local residents took furniture, pots, utensils, and large wooden beams back to their villages to make use of them in their own homes. The monks' living quarters, the kitchen, and the main prayer halls of the monastery were torn down and a large quantity of reusable building materials was trucked into town in army vehicles. Some Gyalthagpa today claim that many of the large Tibetan houses built in the late 1960s on Gyalam Street (*Jinlongjie* 金龙街) and Cangfang Street 仓房街 utilized wooden beams and chiseled stones taken from Sumtsenling. Although some Tibetan residents were reportedly hesitant to prominently display objects that had been taken from the monastery, such as ornately carved window screens, they were willing to use the stones and wood from the monks' quarters to rebuild or expand their own homes.³¹⁹ This was less of a concern among Naxi and Han residents living in houses that were built along Beimen Street 北门街 and Pijiang Alley 皮匠破 in Gyalthag in the late 1960s, where wooden screens and ornately carved wooden dragon heads from Sumtsenling Monastery were openly displayed.

³¹⁸ Interview with Nyima Chodon in Gyalthag on June 20, 2013.

³¹⁹ Interview with the director of the Diqing Red Army Long March Museum (*Diqing Hongjun Changzheng bowuguan* 迪庆红军长征博物馆) in Gyalthag on July 29, 2014.

During an interview in March 2013, a Naxi resident of Beimenjie confirmed that many items taken from Sumtsenling were incorporated into refurbished houses in town in the late 1960s. He proudly showed off his family's two homes on Beimenjie, both of which were built in the architectural style typical of Naxi homes in the area. These homes showcased beautifully carved wooden roof beams that had been taken from the main prayer hall at Sumtsenling. He recalled how exciting it had been as a five-year-old child to be part of the political fervor surrounding the burning and looting of Sumtsenling. On September 9, 1966, his uncle had lifted him onto his shoulders and walked the four kilometers from the center of town to the monastery so that he could witness the destruction firsthand. When I asked him precisely who in the community was involved in looting and burning the monastery, this informant replied that everyone in the area participated.³²⁰ For eight straight days villagers looted and burned Sumtsenling and for the next two weeks the surrounding villages were enveloped in acrid smoke from the slow-smoldering roof beams. By the end of the month, all that remained of Sumtsenling was the ruins of some tamped down earth walls.³²¹

The fervor of the “Destroy the Four Olds” campaign intensified in the fall and winter of 1966 and by the end of the year, two major warring factions had formed in Gyalthang—the “Turn Rivers into Oceans with Mao Zedong Thought” (*Fan jiang dao hai Mao Zedong sixiang zhan dou dui* 翻江倒海毛泽东思想战斗队) faction, based in Zhongxin Town, and the “Peasant

³²⁰ Interview conducted with a Naxi landlord in Gyalthang old town on March 15, 2013.

³²¹ XXJZZZ, 396. A photograph of the ruins of Sumtsenling Monastery is printed in Ma Wenlong 马文龙, ed. *Lixiang jia yuan – Xianggelila* 理想家园 – 香格里拉 [*An Ideal Home: Shangri-la*] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2009), 55. Although the caption accompanying this photograph states that it was taken in 1968, a former Tibetan official in the Zhongdian County Propaganda Department insists that he took this photograph in late September 1966, and that the editor, Ma Wenlong, simply misprinted the date while compiling this book. Interview with former Zhongdian County Propaganda Department official in Gyalthang on June 5, 2013.

Revolutionary Rebel 6721 General Headquarters” (*Nongmin geming zaofan 6721 zongsi lingbu zhan dou dui* 农民革命造反6721总司令部 战斗队) faction, predominately based in Namsal township, a predominantly Tibetan township near Sumtsenling. Villagers had also formed twenty other smaller rebel groups (*zhan dou dui* 战斗队) in the region.³²² However unlike in many other parts of the country, in Gyalthang rebel groups never engaged in large-scale armed conflict during the Cultural Revolution, since they did not have access to large quantities of ammunition. The People’s Liberation Army stored their ammunition in the meeting rooms adjacent to Zanggong Hall (also called *Zangjing tang* 藏经堂), at the base of Gyalthang’s hill-top fortress (Tib.: *rDo mkhar rdzong*, Ch.: *Daguishan* 大龟山). Because the army base was located right next to this Ancestral Hall and the army maintained control of its facilities during the Cultural Revolution, the rebels were unable to break into the storage rooms to obtain ammunition.³²³

In November the Diqing Prefectural government called back the “Four Cleanups” work group and established the “Cultural Revolution Small Group” in its place. Zhongdian County’s elementary school teachers were assembled and transported to Lijiang, where they engaged in manual labor by day and studied the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee’s “May 16th Notice” and Mao Zedong’s “August 18th Proclamation” by night.³²⁴ On January 1, 1967 the People’s Daily and the Red Flag magazine ran the article “Carry out the Cultural Revolution to the End,” and two weeks later Mao ordered the army to set up stations in rural areas in order to

³²² XXJZZZ, 396.

³²³ Interview with the director of the Shangri-la Red Army Long March Museum (*Xianggelila hongjun changzheng bowuguan* 香格里拉红军长征博物馆) in Gyalthang on July 29, 2014.

³²⁴ Le’an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 104.

support the revolutionary fervor of the farmers and rural workers. On January 27, 1967, a former “Four Cleanups” work group member posted the first big character poster targeting the Communist Party in Gyalthang. It urged Gyalthang residents to “Blow up the Prefectural Party Committee,” and it sparked a frenzy of big character poster creation in town. Students met together for hours to copy excerpts of Mao’s speeches onto big character posters. In order to assist with the vast quantity of big character posters being posted in town, the prefectural working group erected large bulletin boards in Gyalthang’s main square and business district.

In addition to demolishing Tibetan temples and monasteries in Gyalthang, Cultural Revolution activists also targeted local religious rituals and cultural traditions. Families were urged to burn or smash all religious objects in their homes. Prayer flags were removed from roofs and *mani* stones and *stupas* were ground into pebbles and used to pave roads. Tibetan proverbs and folk songs were forbidden; in their place came unfamiliar Chinese slogans and revolutionary Tibetan songs modeled on Chairman Mao’s quotations.³²⁵ Tibetans were ordered to discard their Tibetan-style clothing in favor of blue Mao suits and caps,³²⁶ cut their long hair short in the Chinese style, and replace traditional Tibetan religious holidays and secular festivals with Chinese revolutionary holidays.³²⁷ Lamas, *sprul sku* (reincarnate lamas), diviners, Naxi *dto-*

³²⁵ A few of these new Tibetan revolutionary songs were compiled and translated into Chinese in 1977 by Sun Zhicheng, a member of a Kunming-based Song and Dance Troupe. This Song and Dance Troupe traveled to rural towns and villages in Yunnan predominately populated by ethnic minority groups to stage revolutionary performances for villagers. Interview with Sun Zhicheng in Kunming on July 31, 2011; *Sun Zhicheng’s Diary* (September 20, 1977), 10, 12, 27. For more on how song and dance troupes in Tibetan areas substituted revolutionary lyrics for Tibetan folk lyrics and wove elements of Tibetan folk music into new Chinese melodies, see “Interview with Artists of the Tibetan [*sic.*] Song and Dance [*sic.*] Troupe,” *Peking Review* 33 (21) August 18, 1978: 20-24.

³²⁶ Interestingly, many Tibetan women living in Kaytshag (*Geza xiang* 格咱乡), a rural Tibetan township located to the northwest of Sumtensing, continue to wear green Mao caps today, while Naxi and Bai women in Gyalthang and Lijiang often wear blue Mao caps, something that is not as common anymore in other areas of the country.

³²⁷ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 45.

mba, and other religious figures came under renewed attack.³²⁸ Every night at political meetings, work group activists and local Red Guards ordered villagers to denounce religious leaders. According to a Tibetan monk who participated in similar meetings in Lhasa, at these gatherings participants were urged to call out:

The gods, lamas, religion and monasteries are the tools of exploitation; the three serf-owners made Tibetans poor; the Chinese Communist Party liberated us and gave us food, clothes, houses, and land; the Chinese Communist Party is more kind than our own parents. May the Chinese Communist Party live for ten thousand years! May Mao Tse-tung live for ten thousand years! The crimes of the three serf-owners who at the flesh and drank the blood of the people are bigger than the mountains and cannot even fit in the skies; from this day forward we will destroy them.³²⁹

Monks were forced to wear dunce's caps, paraded through the streets by young activists, and coerced into participating in "reform through labor" (*laodong gaizao* 劳动改造), which often involved digging latrines and carrying heavy baskets full of human excrement to fertilize the land.³³⁰ Instead of presenting monks with *khatas* (white ceremonial silk scarves) as a sign of respect, villagers brought their muddy, patched trousers to struggle sessions and hung them around the monks' necks to show their disgust for this "exploitative religious class."³³¹ Many

³²⁸ Emily Chao, "Hegemony, Agency, and Re-presenting the Past: The Invention of Dongba Culture among the Naxi of Southwest China," in Melissa Brown, ed., *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 208-239.

³²⁹ Dhondub Choedon, *Life in the Red Flag People's Commune* (Dharamsala: The Information Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1978), 60-61.

³³⁰ Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 93. Of course, the degree to which the young activists were also coerced into participating in the ideological campaigns of the Cultural Revolution is a question worth asking. For more about the degree to which Tibetan activists willingly destroyed their own heritage during the Cultural Revolution, see Sam van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 245; Makley, *The Violence of Liberation*, 122-123.

³³¹ Interview with Dawa Phuntsok at Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang on July 24, 2014.

monks ultimately committed suicide or died from the severe injuries they sustained during these public beatings.³³²

Zangbum Dorje is perhaps the best-known victim of the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang. As a young child, he had been recognized as the seventeenth reincarnation of the Zangbum Lama of Sumtsenling Monastery. He traveled to Lhasa in 1912 for an education in Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan medicine, returning to Gyalthang in 1921 to teach and preside over Sumtsenling Monastery's 1,300 monks.³³³ Zangbum Dorje appointed Chair of the Preparatory Committee for the founding of the Diqing Tibetan Autonomous District and then given the largely ceremonial title of the Governor of Diqing Prefecture, a position he was the first to hold, and which he retained until 1966.³³⁴

Despite his attempts to persuade wealthy landlords in Gyalthang to submit to Chinese rule in the early 1950s and his continual cooperation with Yunnan Provincial leaders in the early 1960s, in 1967 Zangbum Dorje was forcefully brought back from upper-level cadre meetings in Kunming to be the target of struggle sessions in Gyalthang. For five months in the spring and summer of that year, Red Guards paraded him up and down the streets of Gyalthang and led him out to villages to be struggled against in successive townships. His personal possessions were confiscated, and he was criticized and beaten. A monk who was thirty-one years old at the time recalled riding on the back of a tractor to a struggle session in Kaytshag (*Geza* 格咱), a rural

³³² XXJZZZ, 39-40, 396. The *Diqing Prefectural Gazetteer* states that a total of 616 people in Diqing Prefecture died after being struggled against during the Cultural Revolution, but it does not indicate how many of those who died were monks; DZZZ, 553.

³³³ Sulang Jiachu, *Sulang Jiachu zangxue wenji*, 342.

³³⁴ Qi and Xiluo, "Zhongdian Gadan Songzanlin (Guihuasi) Zhilüe," 42-43.

Tibetan township located to the northeast of Sumtsenling.³³⁵ He was instructed to watch as a young Tibetan woman from Kaytshag loudly denounced Zangbum Dorje, waved her fist in his face, and then sat on his back and rode him like a horse across the stage.

The geographer Emily Yeh maintains that Tibetan women's roles were viewed as critical to the success of the Chinese state's ideological campaigns in Tibet and Tibetan women were often "mobilized to break male monastic as well as secular authority."³³⁶ Likewise, Charlene Makley writes that:

The unprecedented visibility of the few Tibetan and Han women who took centre stage to scream their bitterness at Tibetan incarnate lamas would have been particularly significant for locals. Indeed, Tibetans' accounts of this process throughout the frontier zone suggest that in singling out Han and Tibetan women identified as activists or former serfs to publically humiliate lamas, cadres sought to utilize the gender status of such women to desecrate Tibetan divine masculine authority and to assert instead the modern superiority of rational and ordinary biological sex difference. In speaking bitterness narratives, the figure of the Tibetan woman revolutionary agent was particularly suited for the ritualized exposure of monks and lamas' 'legitimate claims' to Tibetans' patrifilial loyalty, and for demonstrating the legitimate ascendance of state-empowered cadres in their stead—she embodied the culmination of national incorporation as emasculation.³³⁷

³³⁵ Interview with monk in Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang on July 24, 2014.

³³⁶ Emily Yeh, *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 84. It is interesting to note that Yeh employs the passive voice—i.e. "Tibetan women were mobilized"—in describing how gender played a role in the Cultural Revolution. Most of my informants in Gyalthang also spoke in the passive voice when describing their participation in the Cultural Revolution—i.e. "We were told to...", "I was made to...", etc.. Likewise, most Chinese-language accounts of the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang make use of the passive voice. A number of other foreign scholars have also employed the passive voice in describing the destruction that took place during the Cultural Revolution. See, for instance, Antonio Terrone's comments: "Revolutionary fervor and violence resulted in the destruction of thousands of religious sites and buildings as well as bringing on physical and psychological harassment to thousands of 'politically labeled' individuals including the aristocratic and monastic elite." Antonio Terrone, "Householders and Monks: A Study of Treasure Revealers and their Role in Religious Revival in Contemporary Eastern Tibet," in Sarah Jacoby and Antonio Terrone, eds., *Buddhism Beyond the Monastery: Tantric Practices and their Performers in Tibet and the Himalayas* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 79. By employing the passive voice, narrators are able to describe the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution without assigning responsibility to particular subjects.

³³⁷ Makley, "The Politics of Memory," 119-120. For a more lengthy account of the gender dynamics in Tibet during the Chinese political campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s, see Makley, *The Violence of Liberation*, particularly 90-93, 116.

As a result of severe beatings inflicted during lengthy struggle sessions, Zangbum Dorje died in June, 1967. He was not alone in meeting this fate. One of the great-nephews of Zangbum Dorje remarked that it was, of course, “quite normal” (*hen zhengchang* 很正常) that Zangbum Dorje died at the hands of locals in 1967. Taken aback at my expression of astonishment, this great-nephew, who was a former revolutionary activist during the Cultural Revolution, explained that nearly all of the major religious figures and power holders in town were denounced and ultimately died of their injuries or committed suicide in 1967. This former activist’s own father, one of the first Tibetan underground Communist Party members, was subjected to repeated struggle sessions during the Cultural Revolution and eventually died in 1972 of injuries sustained during these struggle sessions. Similarly, his grandfather, who was a powerful Tibetan political leader and later became the Vice Chairman of the Diqing Prefectural Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, died in 1967 from internal injuries sustained during struggle sessions.³³⁸ Between 1967 and 1970, hundreds of religious leaders, prominent landowners, and Communist Party cadres—including many of the cadres who had helped “liberate” Gyalthang in 1950—were struggled against. Heavy wooden placards announcing their crimes were hung around their necks and they were forced to wear tall dunce hats as they were paraded through the streets. An unknown number were persecuted to death.

Apart from destroying monasteries and attacking local leaders who symbolized Gyalthang’s former secular and religious power structure, revolutionary activists also engaged in a process of renaming as an attempt to re-narrate the past. During the Cultural Revolution there was a feverish effort to remove all “superstitious and feudal” Tibetan names and to replace street

³³⁸ Interview with the great-nephew of Zangbum Dorje in Gyalthang on October 15, 2012.

names and village names with new revolutionary Chinese names. Many of the traces of this renaming frenzy are still visible in the town today. The first government-run school in Gyalthang, the “Zhongdian Elementary School of Yunnan Province” (*Yunnan shengli Zhongdian xiaoxuexiao* 云南省立中甸小学校), which was founded in 1936, was renamed the “Red Guard Elementary School” (*Hong wei xiaoxue* 红卫小学) in 1967.³³⁹ The school still goes by this name today. One of the main East-West boulevards in Gyalthang was also renamed “Red Flag Road” (*Hong qi lu* 红旗路) at the height of the Cultural Revolution, and many Gyalthang parents gave their newborn children revolutionary-sounding Chinese names during the Cultural Revolution to demonstrate their ideological vigor.

This frenzy of naming followed on the heels of an earlier round of renaming, which occurred after violent rebellions against land reform were suppressed in Gyalthang in 1957-1958. To celebrate Gyalthang’s so-called “peaceful negotiation of land reform” (*heping xieshang tudi gaige* 和平协商土地改革) a number of villages in the Gyalthang area were renamed, including “Happiness Township” (*Xingfu xiang* 幸福乡) and “New Sun Township” (*Xinyang xiang* 新阳乡) located in Nyishar Township, and “Liberation Village” (*Jiefang cun* 解放村), which is just to the east of Sumtsenling Monastery.³⁴⁰ In the Yangthang district three rural townships that had been hot spots of resistance during the land reform campaign were renamed “Linking-up Township” (*Lianhe xiang* 联合乡), “Unity Township” (*Tuanjie xiang* 团结乡), and “Peace

³³⁹ Li Shengchun 李盛春, ed, *Zhongxin zhen Hongwei xiaoxue liushi zhou nian xiaoqing jinance (1936-1996)* 中心镇红卫小学六十周年校庆纪念册 (1936-1996) [*The Sixty Year Anniversary Yearbook of Zhongxin Town’s Red Guard Elementary School (1936-1996)*] (Zhongdian, Yunnan: Communist Party Internal Documents Press, 1996), 41.

³⁴⁰ YSDZZXDZ, 53-54, 76.

Township” (*Heping xiang* 和平乡).³⁴¹ Two additional Tibetan townships in the Termarong (local Tib.: Tongwa; Ch.: *Dongwang* 东旺) district located around one hundred kilometers north of Zhongxin Town that had fiercely resisted falling under Chinese Communist control in the 1950s were renamed “Victory Township” (*Shengli xiang* 胜利乡) and “New Alliance Village” (*Xinlian cun* 新联村) in 1958 once their leader, Wangchuk Tempa, had been defeated.³⁴² To this day, each of these places has retained the name imposed on it by the Chinese government during the Mao era.

In December 1967 two warring Red Guard factions in town asked the People’s Liberation Army to intervene and impose strict security measures in town. Re-education classes organized by the army gradually led to a more orderly state of affairs in town, and by late 1967 the army had effectively quashed the power of the Red Guard factions and taken full control of the government at the prefectural level.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 94, 99, 103.

³⁴² Wangchuk Tempa (*Wang Xueding* 汪学鼎) was born into a powerful family in Gyalthang and briefly underwent monastic training in Lhasa from 1947-1948 before returning to Gyalthang to organize armed rebellions against the People’s Liberation Army and the Communist government in the 1950s. For more on Wangchuk Tempa see Bstan-pa-rgyal-mtshan, *Rgyal than yul luñ dgon gnas dañ bcas pa’i byuñ ba mdo tsam brjod pa blo gsal mgul pa mdzes pa’i rgyan* [*A History of the Gyalthang Gompa Monastic Complex and its Environs*] (Dharamsala, H.P., India: Rgyal-than Bya-’thab, Ñag-dbañ Thabs-mkhas, 1985), 144-150; Sulang Jiachu 苏朗甲楚, “Wang Xueding Zhuanji 汪学鼎传记 [A Biography of Wang Xueding],” in DZWZX3, 105-114; Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, Yunnan sheng Diqing zangzu zizhizhou weiyuanhui, wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui 中国人民政治协商会议, 云南省迪庆藏族自治州委员会, 文史资料研究委员会 [Chinese People’s Political Consultative Committee, Committee of Diqing Prefecture in Yunnan Province, Literary and Historical Materials Research Committee], *Diqing zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji, di qi ji* 迪庆州文史资料选辑, 第七辑 [*An Anthology of Literary and Historical Materials from Diqing Prefecture, Volume 7*] (Kunming: Yunnan yafeng san he yinwu jingmao you xian gongsi, 2005), 8-16.

Covering up the Past: Official Assessments of the Cultural Revolution

Attempts at the management of the public's memory of the Cultural Revolution began soon after the end of the Mao era. The new government under Deng Xiaoping introduced far-reaching economic reforms, including the return of landholdings to individual households, as well as new policies on ethnic minority cultural and religious practices, which permitted certain innocuous expressions of Tibetan culture. This economic and cultural liberalization was expected to “rectify the ‘leftist’ mistakes” (*jiuzheng ‘zuo’ de cuowu* 纠正‘左’的错误) of the Cultural Revolution and defuse any remnants of local discontent with Communist Party rule. While implementing these new reform-era policies, the Zhongdian county government urged local residents to look forward rather than dwell on painful memories concerning the recent past.

Although the editors of *Zhongdian County Gazetteer* blame Lin Biao, the Gang of Four, and other so-called “Leftist Extremists” for the excesses of this period, thereby adhering to the central Party's official historical assessment of the Cultural Revolution, and they only devote five pages of this nearly 1,000-page volume to Cultural Revolution history, they nevertheless make it clear that the destruction and violence that took place during this decade was carried out at the hands of the local population.³⁴³ Interviews conducted with Tibetan residents of Gyalthang support this assessment. Many of the Gyalthang residents with whom I spoke explained that at the height of the Cultural Revolution, Gyalthang villagers did not think of this movement as a campaign that had been imposed by the Han Chinese. Rather they regarded it as yet another in an ongoing series of national political campaigns in which they had taken part since the mid-1950s.

The extent of Tibetans' participation in Mao-era political campaigns raises a number of questions about coercion, responsibility, and agency. What kinds of choices were available to

³⁴³ ZXZ, 309-313.

Tibetans when they deliberated how best to respond in the face of enormous social and political pressures?³⁴⁴ Coercion certainly was, and continues to be, a reality for Tibetans living under Chinese Communist rule. Yet, individuals still made decisions when faced with a particular set of dire options at any given time, and those choices have continued to haunt residents of Gyalthang to this day.

³⁴⁴ Here I hope to complicate the notion of what constitutes “the Chinese state” in rural ethnic minority areas. Recently a number of studies about the role of the state have drawn valuable attention to local complicity in the enactment of state policies in multi-ethnic contexts. Erik Mueggler vividly portrays the challenges that Luoluopo villagers living in Yunnan Province faced in distributing responsibility for past violence over the troubled gulf between the “distant shore” of the imagined state and the “near shore” of their own intimate, lived community. Mueggler maintains that responsibility for the trauma caused by the Cultural Revolution could be tracked down “across the nation’s breadth to a distance source,” yet the immediate agents of violence in most rural communities regrettably had been neighbors, family members, and friends. Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts*, 252. For more on how ethnic minority populations in China have regarded the Chinese state as imaginatively distant only to witness eager members of their own community representing the state at the local level, see Stevan Harrell, “L’état, c’est nous, or We Have Met the Oppressor and He is Us: The Predicament of Minority Cadres in the PRC,” in Diana Lary, ed. *The Chinese State at the Borders* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 221-239.

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNIC POLITICS, HISTORICAL AMNESIA, AND THE REFRAMING OF GYALTHANG HISTORY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Instead of destroying the past, a new version of Gyalthang's past began to be created in its place during the post-Mao reform era, but this fabrication was done as much for economic reasons as ideological reasons. In the early 1980s and then again in the 2000s the practice of replacing place names was renewed. In 1982, the names of four main boulevards in Gyalthang were changed to reflect the town's relatively new Communist history. One road, running from north to south, was renamed "Peace Road" (*Heping lu* 和平路), ostensibly to reflect the importance of peace in building a strong socialist society while implementing the "Four Modernizations."³⁴⁵ The other main boulevard in town was renamed "Long March Avenue" (*Changzheng dadao* 长征大道) in 1982, as a public reminder that the Second Division of the Red Army had come through Gyalthang in 1936 during the Long March. An additional road running from East to West through town was renamed "Unity Road" (*Tuanjie jie* 团结街) in 1982 to celebrate the state's promotion of harmony and unity amongst all ethnic minority groups.

However, the most dramatic example of reinvention through re-naming occurred two decades later. In the late 1990s, the Chinese Communist Party initiated a national campaign to

³⁴⁵ YSDZZXDZ, 18. The Four Modernizations refer to Deng Xiaoping's goals to "strengthen the fields of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology" in China. These goals were first set forth by Zhou Enlai in 1963 and later endorsed by Deng Xiaoping in 1978.

“Open up the Western Regions” (*xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发), and the central government singled out tourism as an important development strategy for southwest China. Regarding tourism as a promising new source of revenue for a government that was heavily dependent on state subsidies, the Yunnan Provincial Government reacted quickly and made substantial investments in the necessary infrastructure to promote tourism in the region over the next nine years. Gyalthang was identified as a particularly suitable area for tourism development, due to its scenic beauty, diverse ethnic minority population, and its relatively low prospects for successfully following a more conventional industrial development path.

Government officials on the county, prefectural, and provincial levels in China have long celebrated the development of tourism as a painless road that will bring economic development to non-industrialized areas of Southwest China. The development discourse in contemporary China holds that tourism is a promising way to allow previously ‘backward’ areas to catch up with the more ‘developed’ regions in China. Tourism was designated as a strategic growth point for the national economy and in regions of the country mainly inhabited by ethnic minority populations, it was promoted as the number one tertiary industry in the 1990s. In 1999 the central government issued a regulation to increase the length of China’s two most important national holidays, the Spring Festival holiday and the May 1st holiday. As a result of these extended holidays, an increasingly affluent middle class was able to take time away from work and engage in domestic tourism. By the end of 2000, national annual earnings from domestic tourism had reached 317 billion RMB and domestic tourism accounted for more than 90% of all tourist trips taken within China.³⁴⁶ Compared to cities and coastal areas, the more rural areas in Southwest

³⁴⁶ World Tourism Organization, *Tourism Market Trends: East Asia and the Pacific* (Madrid: World Tourism Organization, 2000), 58-59.

China have not received as large of a share of tourists or of the national revenue generated from domestic tourism. However, since many of these rural areas lack other significant means of income generation, tourism plays a critical role in the health of these local economies.

Up until the late 1990s, logging was the largest revenue-generating industry in Northwest Yunnan province. Large-scale logging began in the late 1960s in Diqing Prefecture, and from the 1960s through the 1990s, timber provided the main source of revenue for local governments at the provincial, county, and township levels.³⁴⁷ In the 1990s, eighty-four mostly township-owned mills produced timber worth more than 366 million RMB annually.³⁴⁸ Ineffective forestry management as well as a general reliance on timber as the main source of prefectural revenue resulted in massive deforestation throughout the prefecture, and particularly on the mountainsides closest to the more densely inhabited areas.

In the summer of 1998, disastrous flooding left 4,100 dead and displaced an additional 230 million people in Hubei, Anhui, and Jiangsu Provinces.³⁴⁹ Although initially heavy rains caused by El Nino and that year's unusually abundant winter snowmelt in Tibet and Qinghai provinces was blamed for the flooding, a few months later government officials declared that the floods were actually caused by the extensive deforestation that had taken place along the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. As a result, in August 1998, the central government announced an unconditional ban on all logging in the mostly Tibetan areas of the upper Yangtze, including

³⁴⁷ Hillman, "Paradise under Construction," 175.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. These figures come from the Prefectural Forestry Bureau and were provided to Ben Hillman during his research in 2002.

³⁴⁹ Ralph Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature': Perspectives from North-west Yunnan," *The China Quarterly* (178) 2004: 495.

parts of Sichuan Province and northwestern areas of Yunnan Province.³⁵⁰ All of the timber markets in these areas were closed down in September of that same year, leaving local governments to search for way to make up more than eighty percent of their annual revenue without resorting to illegal logging.³⁵¹

As home to twenty-five of China's fifty-six officially designated ethnic nationalities, by far the largest number of any province or autonomous region, Yunnan province had pursued ethnic tourism as its "dragon head" of development since the early 1980s.³⁵² However, it was only after the financial reality of the logging ban hit that local officials began to re-double their efforts to draw tourists to the region. Tourism had been promoted in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture ever since the region was opened to foreigners in 1992, and from 1993 to 1995 the prefecture saw an influx of 185,000 tourists. In 1995, tourism revenue in Yunnan reached thirteen percent of the local GDP, providing a huge boost to an otherwise very localized and somewhat stagnant economy.³⁵³ Local governments immediately began to search for ways to

³⁵⁰ Even though national forestry management laws were designed to regulate a quota system by which annual forest growth was supposed to outnumber annual timber harvests, in reality, ever since the 1950s, forests on the Tibetan plateau have been under intense pressure from state-run enterprises engaged in unsustainable timber harvesting practices. One study indicates that during a forty-year period from the 1950s until the 1990s, the over-harvesting of timber and the conversion of forested land to agricultural land directly resulted in the loss of 85% of the old-growth forest cover along the upper reaches of the Yangtze river. "Ecosystem Profile: Mountains of Southwest China" on the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund website (<http://www.cepf.org>). Cited in Litzinger, "The Mobilization of Nature," 495.

³⁵¹ Hillman, "Paradise under Construction," 175-176.

³⁵² Betty Weiler and Colin Hall defined ethnic tourism as "travel motivated primarily by the search for the first hand, authentic, and sometimes intimate contact with people whose ethnic and/or cultural background is different from the tourists." See Betty Weiler and Colin Hall, *Special Interest Tourism* (London: Belhaven, 1992), 84. For more on the difference between ethnic and cultural tourism, see Robert Wood, "Ethnic Tourism, the State and Cultural Change in Southeast Asia," *Annals of Tourism Research* 11 (3) 1984: 361.

³⁵³ Krishna Ghimire and Zhou Li, "The Economic Role of National Tourism in China," in Krishna Ghimire, ed., *The Native Tourist: Mass Tourism within Developing Countries* (London: Earthscan Publications, 2001), 102.

market Diqing Prefecture as an even more attractive tourist destination. In 1998, officials in the Diqing prefectural government formulated a five-point plan aimed to revive Tibetan culture. Tibetan culture was designated as an exploitable resource and Tibetan folk songs and dances were singled out as cultural products that could be made available for tourist consumption.³⁵⁴

At first the biggest obstacles to expanding the tourist industry in Diqing prefecture was the lack of road access and adequate tourist facilities. Most of the roads in the region were built for military purposes or to access timber and export timber south to Lijiang and Dali, and thus for decades at a time just a few roads were considered adequate to meet local traffic needs. During the 1990s road construction took place at an unprecedented rate, but the hundreds of kilometers of roads that were built by the prefectural forestry bureau were constructed solely for the purpose of logging, leading straight out of the towns and into the forests.

In 1999 the Shangri-La Regional Airport was completed to link Gyalthang with Lijiang, one of Yunnan's premier tourist sites located just over one hundred miles away to the southeast. In that same year, the Diqing Prefecture Tourism Bureau invested over 7 million RMB in Gyalthang's Sumtsenling Monastery in order to build a new parking lot and re-guild the golden rooftop.³⁵⁵ The county also provided funds to build a new main street, known as "Long March Avenue" (*Changzheng dadao* 长征大道) to house the county government. They ordered that all hotel, restaurant, and shop signs that faced Long March Avenue must be written in Tibetan script in addition to Chinese.

³⁵⁴ Kolás, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture*, 50.

³⁵⁵ Hillman, "Paradise under Construction," 176.

In the following year, more than one million tourists visited Diqing Prefecture, which was an increase of more than 150% from before the logging ban took place in 1998. Ninety-four percent of these tourists were domestic Chinese tourists.³⁵⁶ By September of 2001, total visitors to the area had reached 1.2 million, of which only 65,000 held foreign passports.³⁵⁷ In 2001 local government revenues from the tourism industry were reported to have surpassed their revenues at the peak of the logging era by more than 10 million RMB, now bringing in a total of 68 million RMB annually. Tourism continued to skyrocket, and in 2002, more than 1.5 million tourists visited Diqing prefecture.³⁵⁸ Road development continued at a rapid pace, not just in Shangri-la, but in rural areas all over China. Between 2003 and 2005, the Chinese government paved more rural roads than it had during the entire previous half-century of Communist rule.³⁵⁹ However, it was really the State Council's approval of Zhongdian's name change, which took place on December 17, 2001, that caused Zhongdian to stand out from other areas in Yunnan Province and tout itself as the "authentic" Himalayan paradise.

The Politics of Naming and the Myth of Shangri-la

Place names are often at the heart of identity politics, and thus the very choice of a name can be fraught with political implications. The Chinese name "Xianggelila" is a transliteration of the name "Shangri-la," which is neither Chinese nor Tibetan but rather entirely English in its

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ This figure comes from The Nature Conservancy, "Tourism Market Assessment," Unpublished report, 2001. Cited in Litzinger, "The Mobilization of 'Nature,'" 489.

³⁵⁸ Aaron Cavin, "Ecotourism in Northwest Yunnan," *Tourism and Development in Yunnan*, Sam Mitchell, ed. (Kunming: Yunnan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2003), p. 285.

³⁵⁹ Peter Hessler, "The Wonder Years: Boom Times in a Chinese Village," *The New Yorker* (March 31, 2008): 70.

linguistic origins. This English loan word was first used by the British author James Hilton when he published his best-selling book *Lost Horizon* in 1933. Hilton's book was an immediate hit in Britain and America and was made into a film by the Hollywood director Frank Capra in 1937.³⁶⁰ In the story, a group of four Westerners, including an American and a British diplomat, board an airplane in India in order to flee a revolution. They crash in a remote part of the Himalayas and find themselves in a beautiful and spiritual land, which Hilton describes as "touched with the mystery that lies at the core of all loveliness."³⁶¹ Buddhist and Christian monks rescue the Westerners and take them to a Tibetan monastery called Shangri-la. The monastery is hidden in a peaceful and scenic valley known as the Valley of the Blue Moon. Ironically, the "High Lama" that presides over the day-to-day operations of this supposedly Tibetan monastery is actually an elderly Capuchin monk from Luxembourg. Thus, while the valley's inhabitants are Tibetans, the keepers of the civilization that is preserved and developed in this valley are European. Shangri-la serves as a kind of museum to isolate and preserve Western civilization from the economic and cultural uncertainty that was so prevalent in Europe in the early 1930s.

Mary Cingcade reminds us that it was years later, in post-war Europe, that the image of Shangri-la took on a different sort of "Orientalized fantasy," and the concept of a "peaceful, harmonious land untouched by the evils that plagued developed civilizations" became directly associated with Tibet.³⁶² Tibet remained one of the most inaccessible regions in the world up

³⁶⁰ Incidentally, the U.S. presidential retreat where Franklin Roosevelt once met with Winston Churchill to discuss extending aid to Britain during World War II was named Shangri-la. Roosevelt chose this resort, located in northern Maryland, in 1942, and the retreat kept its romantic name until President Dwight Eisenhower renamed it Camp David in 1953.

³⁶¹ Hilton, *Lost Horizon*.

until the 1980s. As a result, in post-World War II Europe and North America, “the popular image of Shangri-la became the romantic fantasy of a harmonious, peaceful and secluded society.”³⁶³

As Donald Lopez argues, mystery and romance became the defining features of the Western tourist agenda in Tibet:

Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism have long been objects of Western fantasy. Since the earliest encounters of Venetian travelers and Catholic missionaries with Tibetan monks at the Mongol court, tales of the mysteries of their mountain homeland and the magic of their strange – yet strangely familiar – religion have had a peculiar hold on the Western imagination.³⁶⁴

Indeed, Shangri-la is a distillation of a borrowed piece of Tibetan mythology, overlaid with a Western dream of sanctuary and refuge.³⁶⁵ It is likely that James Hilton misrendered the Sanskrit word “Shambhala,” which describes a mythical northern paradise, into his own Anglicized name “Shangri-la.”³⁶⁶

Orville Schell asserts that the “sanctuary of Shangri-la” represents “the resolution of the dreams of hundreds of frustrated explorers and adventurers and millions of curious and emotionally needy ordinary people back home in Europe and America.”³⁶⁷ The First World War administered a profound shock to Westerners’ confidence in their own civilization and many

³⁶² Mary Cingcade, “Tourism and the Many Tibets: The Manufacture of Tibetan ‘Tradition,’” *China Information* 13 (1) 1998: 5.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Donald Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3.

³⁶⁵ Orville Schell, *Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 244.

³⁶⁶ The Tibetan concept of “Shambhala” designates a secret idealized utopian city promulgated as a privileged blissful refuge for initiate practitioners of Kalachakra yoga tantra. The Tibetan popular imagination of Shambhala holds that Shambhala only has a spiritual reality on earth. See Alexander Berzin, *Taking the Kalachakra Initiation* (Ithica: Snow Lion Publications, 1997), 43-47.

³⁶⁷ Schell, *Virtual Tibet*, 244.

Europeans entered into a period of doubt and self-reflection about their own social and cultural values. As their disillusionment with their own culture grew, a number of European and British citizens became obsessed with the idea of an unchanging and “traditional” Tibet.³⁶⁸ *Lost Horizon* brilliantly encapsulated and popularized this symbolic cultural drama. The main character in the novel, Hugh Conway, is disillusioned by the post-war situation in Britain and alienated from his own materialistic and spiritually shallow culture. He finds hope in the hidden wilderness of Shangri-la—the land of “limitless horizons and immense empty spaces.”³⁶⁹

Yet, as this fantasy of a land without contamination from the outside world, and with air that had a “dream-like texture, matching the porcelain-blue of the sky” became threatened by European explorers and adventurers, as well as by the increasing strength of the post-1949 Communist Chinese government, the popular fantasy of Shangri-la could no longer risk being anchored to something as vulnerable as a real geographic location.³⁷⁰ Peter Bishop writes that “the myth of Tibet could no longer be trusted to Tibet, to the geographical place; instead it had to be transferred on to what was truly timeless and formless. That place alone could never be threatened.”³⁷¹ As Western ambivalence and social angst increased, the myth and the allure of Shangri-la became even more enticing, ephemeral, and geographically unspecific.

While James Hilton’s novel played a major role in popularizing the myth of “Shangri-la” in the Western world, during the 1950s and 1960s a very different view of Tibet was being

³⁶⁸ Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 209-210.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 214.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

circulated within the People's Republic of China. The film "Serf" (*Nongnu* 农奴), directed by Li Gun in 1963, was broadcast in movie theaters across China throughout the 1960s and was responsible for shaping the views of an entire generation of Chinese concerning the Tibetan "feudal system."³⁷² The poster for this film, which was pasted on buildings and printed in newspapers throughout China, displayed a photograph of a Tibetan aristocrat crushing the back of a hunched-over slave with his boot. These stereotypical images of Tibet gradually transformed as radically different views of Tibet were introduced into the Chinese mindset over the next few decades—specifically, images of an ethereal, other-worldly land of Shangri-la.

While translating the myth of Shangri-la into Chinese, Chinese intellectuals appropriated the Western image of a natural sanctuary, removed from the complications and spiritual pollutants surrounding modern-day life. However, the Chinese interpretation of Shangri-la drew predominately on Chinese rather than Western frames of reference.³⁷³ The idiom "*shiwai taoyuan* 世外桃源" (other-worldly peach garden), which is often used by tour guides today to convey the concept of Shangri-la to Chinese visitors, is a term drawn from Chinese classical literature. More than sixteen centuries ago, the Chinese author Tao Yuanming (365-427 AD) wrote a compilation of poetry and prose known as "The Peach Blossom Source" (*Taohua Yuan* 桃花源).³⁷⁴ This piece describes the adventures of a fisherman who wanders through a tunnel at the source of a stream and discovers a community of people completely cut off from the rest of society. The villagers treat the fisherman well but request that he does not tell anyone living in

³⁷² Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 104.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁷⁴ R. Fang, ed., *Tao Yuanming shi wen xuan yi* [*Gleanings from Tao Yuan-ming: Prose and Poetry*] (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1980).

the outside world about them. The fisherman returns to his home and, unable to forget his experiences in the peach garden, tries years later to find his way back to this oasis. He is unsuccessful and finally ends his life while pining away for the mystical land that he has left behind.³⁷⁵

Most Chinese first encountered the term Shangri-la not by reading *Lost Horizon*, which was only translated into Chinese in 1991, but by watching a film bearing the same English name, which was dubbed in Chinese and shown in major Chinese cities throughout World War II.³⁷⁶ The Chinese title of the film was “The Romance of the Peach Blossom Village” (*Taohuayuan yanji* 桃花源言记). There are enough contemporary cross-references between Tao Yuanming’s literary concept of an “other wordly peach garden” and James Hilton’s myth of “Shangri-la” to suggest that Chinese intellectuals continue to draw parallels between these two images and to localize the Western concept of Shangri-la for their Chinese readership.³⁷⁷

Just over fifty years after the film “Lost Horizon” was first shown in China, the concept of “Shangri-la” was picked up by international tour operators to market Tibetan areas to Western tourists. By the mid-1990s, the image of Shangri-la had caught on in the Chinese domestic tourism market as well, and as the economic importance of tourism to Tibetan areas grew, the value of the name Shangri-la became increasingly evident to local tourism planners. Despite

³⁷⁵ Archibald Barnes, *Chinese through Poetry: An Introduction to the Language and Imagery of Traditional Verse* (London: Writers Printshop, 2007).

³⁷⁶ Gang Yue, “From Shambhala to Shangri-La: A Traveling Sign in the Era of Global Tourism,” in Dongfeng Tao and Yuanpu Jin, eds., *Cultural Studies in China* (London: Marshall Cavendish, 2005), 170.

³⁷⁷ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 111. One of the very first articles published in the *China Daily* that mentioned Diqing Prefecture’s claim to the title of “Shangri-la,” equated this mythical term with the Chinese concept of the “Peach Blossom Garden.” Publishing their article in 1997, the authors profess that “Shangri-La shall nevertheless, like Tao Yuanming’s ‘Peach Blossom Spring,’ continue to symbolize the longing of human beings for a perfect and peaceful world.” See Liu Jun and Li Xun, “Hilton’s Mythic Shangri-La Alive and Well in Diqing,” *China Daily*, November 1, 1997: 9.

recognizing that the name originated in a work of fiction, tourism developers across the Tibetan plateau were soon engaged in various attempts to find the “true location” of James Hilton’s Shangri-la.³⁷⁸ In late 1996 Diqing prefectural government officials put together a research party composed of more than forty academics in the fields of literature, ethnology, religion, linguistics, geography, and Tibetology, to search for evidence that Shangri-la was indeed located in Diqing Prefecture. After months of investigation, these experts concluded that Khawa Karpo Mountain (*Meili Xueshan* 梅里雪山) in northern Diqing Prefecture was the same mountain as the “Mount Karakal” mentioned in James Hilton’s novel, and that the surrounding area was quite similar to the book’s description of the mythical “Valley of the Blue Moon.” Moreover, Hilton wrote that three rivers crossed through the Valley of the Blue Moon, and, the experts argued, the current boundaries of Diqing Prefecture encompass three rivers: the Nujiang 怒江, the Lancangjiang 澜沧江, and the Jinshajiang 金沙江. Lastly, researchers discovered that an American transport plane did indeed crash in Gyalthang during World War II, and despite the fact that this was years after Hilton’s novel was written, they still felt that this evidence substantiated their claim that Hilton had modeled his story of Shangri-la on Diqing Prefecture.³⁷⁹

The local government stamped its approval of this investigation in September 1997 during the Khampa Arts Festival, when the Vice Governor of Yunnan Province publicly

³⁷⁸ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 6.

³⁷⁹ One Chinese website goes so far as to claim that Hilton’s novel was based on true events—namely the adventures of a group of Americans who arrived in Zhongdian after their airplane crashed in Diqing Prefecture in 1944. See http://www.sinohost.com/yunnan_travel/deqen/shangri-la.html. While conducting research in Zhongdian in 2002, Ben Hillman met a Tibetan village head who asserted that his grandfather had given him a piece of the airplane fuselage that had been found more than six decades ago in Zhongdian; Hillman, “Paradise Under Construction,” 177. Although there is a certain amount of evidence indicating that an American airplane did crash in Zhongdian during World War II, given that James Hilton’s novel was published in 1933, it would take more than a stretch of the imagination to believe that Hilton’s inspiration for his novel could have come from British news reports of this event.

pronounced Diqing Prefecture to be the “true Shangri-la.” On November 1, 1997 the *China Daily* printed a portion of the speech that the Vice Governor gave praising the peace and tranquility of Diqing prefecture:

On this peaceful and fertile land, unadorned people worship their gods in splendid lamaseries. There is complete harmony between man and nature, and man and man. More than 60 years ago, three English pilots caught glimpses of this utopia, and Hilton painted a sketch of it. Soon the world can see with their own eyes what this world is like. Shangri-la shall nonetheless...continue to symbolize the longing of human beings for a perfect and peaceful world.³⁸⁰

During the next four years, Zhongdian County competed heavily with other Tibetan areas, including Daocheng County in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, and Muli Tibetan Autonomous County in Sichuan Province, for recognition as “Shangri-la.”³⁸¹ In addition, directly to the south of Zhongdian County, Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County, which had seen an enormous increase in tourism after it had been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, put up a tough battle for the title of “Shangri-la.” The Austrian-American botanist Joseph Rock had lived in the Lijiang area on and off between 1922 and 1949, and during this time he made several trips to Diqing Prefecture as well as to other Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu Provinces. In the 1920s and 1930s he published descriptions and photographs of many of the places that he visited in a series of articles in *National Geographic* magazine. Many supporters of Lijiang’s claim to the Shangri-la believe that it was Rock’s descriptions of the area that gave Hilton the necessary geographic knowledge to write his novel. The greatest disadvantage that Lijiang faced in the battle for the

³⁸⁰ Liu and Li, “Hilton’s Mythic Shangri-La,” 9.

³⁸¹ For a more detailed analysis of the various townships and counties that laid claim to the name Shangri-la in the 1990s, see Michael Woods, “Where is the Real Shangri-la? Several Locals in China Fit the Description, Make the Claim, Court the Tourists,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 15, 2001: A6.

title of Shangri-la was that Hilton claimed the residents who lived in his mythic Shangri-la were Tibetans. Lijiang was officially designated as a “Naxi Autonomous County” in 1961 and thus faced difficulties in maintaining its status as a Naxi autonomous region while trying to claim that it was Tibetan enough to be Hilton’s Shangri-la.

Local officials in Zhongdian wisely drew upon a number of political arguments to make their case that Zhongdian was uniquely ripe for a name change. They asserted that Tibetans have always made up the majority in this area of Yunnan and therefore for the sake of social stability it would be politically savvy to change the name of the county to one that could better reflect the sentiment of the local people.³⁸² These officials claimed that the origin of the Chinese name Zhongdian implied suppression of the Tibetan people since it was originally created to remind people of the necessity of loyalty (*zhong* 忠) to the Naxi feudal lord (*dian* 滇) who had ruled over the Tibetans in this area during the Ming Dynasty.³⁸³ These same officials concluded that the Tibetan people have long considered this name discriminatory and have rejected it, and as a result, for decades this name has been used only by government officials and not by the local

³⁸² This argument was crafted in such a way as to meld seamlessly with Deng Xiaoping’s ideology of political reforms. The reform policy promised greater tolerance for China’s ethnic minorities and their “special characteristics,” which had been ruthlessly suppressed during decades of ideological fanaticism in the mid-twentieth century. These reforms aimed to wash away the excesses of the Mao years, which had alienated many ethnic minorities and damaged the party’s reputation. Through more lenient “minority friendly policies,” the central government hoped to restore its authority and legitimacy and lay the foundation for future social stability. Susan McCarthy describes the state’s attempt to revive, promote, and control Hui religious practices during this period of reforms. See Susan McCarthy, “If Allah Wills It: Integration, Isolation, and Muslim Authenticity in Yunnan Province in China,” *Religion, State & Society* 33 (2) 2005: 121-136.

³⁸³ *Zhongdian Xian Gengming Wei Xianggelilia Xian de Zhuanjia Zhulun Yijian [Opinion of the Group of Experts on the Name Change from Zhongdian County to Xianggelila County]*, Zhongdian County Government Document, 1997. In reality, the two Chinese characters that have been used to refer to Zhongdian ever since an imperial post was established there in 1724 are “中甸,” which simply mean “middle district” or “central pasture.” These characters were most likely selected to transliterate the Tibetan name of rgyal thang, meaning “royal plain,” and they do not carry any derogative connotations. ZXX, 46-49.

people.³⁸⁴ They maintained that to leave the name unaltered could result in great confusion and would most likely harm the socio-economic development of the area. The officials cited the Chinese Communist principle of “naming by the people” (*min cong zhu ren*) and contended that to promote social stability it would be best if the name were changed to a more local name “that rightfully belonged to the Tibetan people.”³⁸⁵

The academics that were commissioned by Deqing Prefecture to write a report about Zhongdian County claimed that “*Xiang ge*” means “inside the heart” in the Gyalthang Tibetan language, while “*li*” and “*la*” mean “sun” and “moon” respectively. The name “*Xianggelila*” would therefore mean “to have the sun and the moon in your heart” in the local language. This daring attempt at philology took the three syllables from the English-language word, “Shangrila,” which was made up by a British author in 1933, and turned them into four distinct words of “local Tibetan origin.” The research team maintained that Shangri-la is derivative of the Tibetan words “*sems-gi nyin zla*,” which, literally translated into English, means “heart (or mind) of sun moon.” In Gyalthang Tibetan, this name might be pronounced something like “*zemgi nyinda*.” The researchers argued that “*zemgi nyinda*” was the origin of the name *Xianggelila*, despite the fact that most local Tibetans never heard of this name before learning about the county government’s push for a name change.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ While traveling, living, and conducting research in Gyalthang between 1998 and 2014, I never met anyone who felt that the name Zhongdian was discriminatory. Although Tibetans still call the region by its Tibetan name, *Gyalthang*, when speaking in Tibetan, the name Zhongdian is widely used by local Tibetans when referring to the name of their county in Chinese. Other researchers support these observations as well; see Hillman, “Paradise under Construction,” 178.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. Hillman asserts that although he consulted with many linguists, language teachers, and ordinary citizens across the county, he could not find any words in the local dialects of Tibetan that came close to meaning “to have the sun and the moon in your heart.”

The county officials' final argument was that the name change would demonstrate the Communist Party's concern for the development of the area and would also show their commitment to supporting the "civilizing process" (*wenming* 文明) of the Tibetan nationality. This argument, as well as the researchers' other arguments, were politically well-timed and creatively worded and on December 17, 2001 the Civil Administration Department of China formally agreed to change the county name to *Xianggelila* 香格里拉 (Shangri-la). The State Council ratified their decision and a new image of a harmonious, romantic, and accessible Tibet was endorsed and aggressively marketed by local government officials, tourist agencies, and local cultural brokers. Over the past decade, Chinese and foreign vacationers have poured into the area, hoping to experience Hilton's magical paradise first-hand.

Many locations around the world have become tourist destinations predominately due to the myths that have been ascribed to them. Nelson Graburn describes Japanese tourism to rural areas such as spas and heritage sites as symbolic quests for nostalgic rejuvenation in the face of rising levels of urban angst.³⁸⁷ Koichi Iwabuchi takes the argument that modern, urban Japanese desire to nostalgically relive the past even further when he claims that contemporary Japanese society has gone so far as to appropriate images from other cultures in order to evoke memories of a simpler, less industrialized lifestyle. Iwabuchi maintains that, "the politics of transnational

³⁸⁷ In Japan, the "home village" (*furusato* 故郷) campaign of the 1980s and 1990s promoted a nostalgic, romanticized image of the countryside. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) first used the term *furusato* in the 1970s to draw national attention to the loss of "traditional kinship relations" and "home town values" in a rapidly urbanizing society. *Furusato* later became the cornerstone of the LDP's cultural policy, enabling the party to address difficult political, social, and environmental issues under a single rubric. *Furusato* was appropriated by the media, and by both city and village planners in the 1980s and 1990s. These bureaucrats aimed to channel the public's discontent with urban life into a new rural tourism industry that promised to soothe harried urbanites while revitalizing economically impoverished rural areas. See Nelson Graburn, "The Past in the Present in Japan: Nostalgia and Neotraditionalism in Contemporary Japanese Domestic Tourism," in Richard Butler and Douglas Pearce, eds., *Change in Tourism: People, Places, Processes* (London: Routledge, 1995), 47-70.

evocation of nostalgia is highlighted when it is employed to confirm a frozen temporal lag between two cultures, when ‘our’ past and memory are found in ‘their’ present.”³⁸⁸ Other scholars have argued that modernity fosters a “culture of nostalgic melancholia” which is expressed through fantasies of escape, “whereby the past is exoticized in a distant and often highly sexualized place and culture.”³⁸⁹

In many ways, the nostalgia and romanticism surrounding Shangri-la serves this same function, for it is the dream of a harmonious rural lifestyle that attracts so many urban Chinese to Gyalthang.³⁹⁰ Xuan Ke 宣科, a Naxi musician who lives in Lijiang and who was one of the very first people to promote Diqing Prefecture as the “authentic” Shangri-la, explains how modern, urban Chinese residents desire to experience rural life:

[Shangri-la] is not for tourists. It is for real people looking for a real place where there is harmony. There are blue skies, not like in Beijing. People are searching for a new world. No money, no power, no politics. This is the place that people have dreamed of, from the book and the movie.³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 174.

³⁸⁹ Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 34, 45.

³⁹⁰ Writing about tourism in Jiuzhaigou, an ethnically Tibetan area in northern Sichuan Province, Wenbin Peng describes how tourists tend to view their experiences in Tibetan areas as journeys away from modernity. He writes: “A tourist’s experience in Jiuzhaigou can be fruitfully viewed as that of a tourist-pilgrim. The tourist-pilgrim goes on a journey in search of a place isolated in time and space. The journey to the area is as journey back in time, a return to Nature.” See Wenbin Peng, “Tibetan Pilgrimage in the Process of Social Change: The Case of Jiuzhaigou,” *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, Alex McKay, ed. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 195.

³⁹¹ Tom Korsi, “Could This Be Utopia?,” *South China Morning Post Review*, November 29, 1997: 1. The image of the countryside as a vast, wholesome antidote to the corruptive elements in urban life is evident in a great deal of imagery employed not just by Chinese intellectuals, but also by the Chinese government, throughout the twentieth-century. Mao Zedong’s written work indicates that he may have viewed the countryside as an enormous washing machine—an ocean-like realm that could purify those that had been corrupted by life in the cities. From the sent-down youth of the Cultural Revolution, to the political enemies exiled to the countryside or sentenced to “re-education through labor” during the various political campaigns from the 1950s-1970s, there was a sense that with enough time in the countryside, these political impurities would get wiped clean, and these former class enemies would turn into blank slates themselves.

What is so startling about this utopic image of the region is how the current promotion of a harmonious Shangri-la differs so dramatically from the Communist state's portrayal of Tibet up until the last decade.³⁹² Although for more than four decades, the Chinese government had portrayed Tibetan areas as primitive and backward, suddenly it began to promote these areas as harmonious, romantic, and exotic locales. The contemporary pure and idealized image of Shangri-la can easily be juxtaposed with the images of Yunnan that were circulated in the Chinese media during the Maoist and Dengist periods. During the first eight decades of the twentieth century, Yunnan was seen as a province occupied by backwards, dirty, lazy, and distinctly unmodern minority populations. However, when Zhongdian County's name changed to Shangri-la County, the vast majority of the negative images of Tibet changed overnight into positive images of a mystical land of Shangri-la.

Dru Gladney argues that the people described as peripheral by Harrell are, in another sense and at the same time, central to Chinese Communist ideology because it is only through the construction of a less developed minority group that a contrasting, more developed, or civilized majority group such as the Han can be constructed.³⁹³ In contemporary China, Marxist evolutionism has been coupled with another "civilizing project" that some scholars have

³⁹² According to the Chinese Communist Party's version of history, Tibet was a slave state controlled by a Buddhist feudal clergy prior to its "liberation" by the Communist People's Liberation Army. The *China Daily* once claimed that Tibet was "a serfdom more brutal than that of medieval Europe." In light of these political claims, it is astonishing to witness the Chinese government's assertions that this Tibetan area of Yunnan Province was actually the earthly utopia that inspired Hilton's 1933 novel, given that the People's Liberation Army first occupied Zhongdian County in 1951. See Korski, "Could This Be Utopia?," 1.

³⁹³ Dru Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (1) 1994: 92-123.

described as “the modernizing project.”³⁹⁴ In Chinese school textbooks as well as in the media, the “primitivity” of the ethnic minority groups in China is often contrasted with to the “modernity” of the Han Chinese majority. Under Chinese Communist leadership, the more “advanced” and “civilized” Han nationality is considered to bear the burden of helping their less fortunate compatriots to “develop” (*fazhan* 发展).³⁹⁵

Harrell argues that the process of determining where each ethnic minority group belonged on the scale of evolutionary history was important “in order to plan the political struggles and development campaigns that would raise the civilizational levels of the various *minzu*.”³⁹⁶ In government documents and public speeches, government officials often point out that a shortage of human resources is the main obstacle blocking economic and social development in minority areas of the country. A national discourse revolves around the need to “raise the cultural level” (*tigao wenhua chengdu* 提高文化程度) of rural villagers living in southwest China.³⁹⁷

Regardless of whether they exhibit contempt or nostalgia for the countryside, many urban Chinese tend to conceive of the city and the countryside as distinct, non-overlapping spatial entities. Urban residents who travel to the countryside deny the rural residents who live there

³⁹⁴ Åshild Kolås, *Ethnic Tourism in Shangrila: Representations of Place and Tibetan Identity* (Ph.D. dissertation: Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, 2004), 180; Ann Anagnost, “The Politics of Ritual Displacement,” in C. F. Keyes, et al., eds., *Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 224-225.

³⁹⁵ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 47.

³⁹⁶ Harrell, *Cultural Encounters*, 24.

³⁹⁷ Susan Blum’s research on Han views of ethnic minorities living in Kunming challenges the assumption that the Han tend to automatically link images of ethnic minorities with negative traits such as primitiveness or backwardness. Indeed, these stereotypes tend to be more closely associated with the inhabitants of specific geographic regions of China, such as the more rural and mountainous regions, regardless of their ethnicity. Blum points out that many of her informants regarded urban Bai to be more “advanced” and “civilized” than Han peasants. See Susan Blum, *Portraits of Primitives: Ordering Human Kinds in the Chinese Nation* (Baltimore: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

temporal equivalence with those living in the cities.³⁹⁸ Some urban Chinese tourists travel to ethnic minority areas in order to discover a “traditional China” that has been forgotten, and which the ethnic minority groups in China are presumed to embody.³⁹⁹ China’s ethnic minorities, once objects of pity and disparagement, started to become “objects of desire” after China began searching for its national soul in the early 1990s.⁴⁰⁰

In the mid- to late-1980s, a new, nostalgic literary movement became known as “root-seeking literature” (*xungen wenxue* 寻根文学), due to the fact that it advocated a return to nature and a rediscovery of Chinese language and culture. Root-seeking authors believed that the nation needed to look inward and backward, before it could come to grips with what it means to be “Chinese” in a new and rapidly changing environment. This movement explored the roots of Chinese culture by eulogizing the primitive and the ancient. For Chinese citizens living in the crowded and quickly modernizing coastal regions of the country, the “root-seeking” process entailed an attempt to rediscover parts of China’s cultural heritage and ethnic diversity that had been denounced as feudal and backward during the past three decades of Communist rule. As “reservoirs of still-extant authenticity,” China’s ethnic minorities were given a great deal of

³⁹⁸ Here I am referring to Johannes Fabian’s concept of the “denial of coevalness.” By denying that others occupy the same temporal realm, it becomes easier to marginalize these Others. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

³⁹⁹ Almaz Khan, “Who Are the Mongols? State, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Representation in the PRC,” in Melissa Brown, ed., *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 125-160.

⁴⁰⁰ The Chinese search for a national soul arose out of the “ideological vacuum” of the 1990s. This vacuum is often attributed to Chinese citizens’ disillusionment with the high level of corruption that accompanied China’s spectacular but unequal growth in the 1980s. Widespread disillusionment led to the Tiananmen Square democracy protests, which took place in the spring of 1989 and ended with a brutal military crackdown on June 4, 1989. In the months and years that followed, Chinese intellectuals engaged in a great deal of soul searching about the direction in which China was heading in the era of reform. This led to such movements as the “root-seeking” literary movement and to the production of a number of popular television series, such as *Heshang* 河殇 (*River Elegy*) and *Beijing ren zai Niuyue* 北京人在纽约 (*A Beijinger in New York*).

attention in this literary movement.⁴⁰¹ Around this same time ethnic tourism began to be marketed as a way for Han Chinese to get back in touch with what it means to be Chinese. The level of nostalgia that is such a prevalent part of domestic Chinese tourism may be interpreted as a sense of longing, not just for the past, but also for a time when people experienced a lifestyle that was more in tune with the natural environment. These types of dreams are reflected clearly in the promotion of Shangri-la as a place where “simple people live in harmony with nature.”⁴⁰²

A great deal of state investment in Tibetan monasteries in western China took place in the 1980s and 1990s in order to compensate for the numerous monasteries and relics that were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁰³ The reconstruction of Sumtsenling Monastery commenced in 1983 with funding provided by the local population and the Zhongdian County government, and nearly six hundred monks joined the monastery during the next ten years.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ Louisa Schein, “Gender and Internal Orientalism in China,” *Modern China* 23 (1) 1997: 72, 94. Writing in the mid-1990s, Dru Gladney describes the growing interest amongst Chinese intellectuals and urban Chinese towards “things ethnic.” He states: “There is a shifting interest in China toward things ethnic and obscure, often contributing to the exoticization and eroticization of minorities in China’s public culture. The extraordinary abundance of ethnic minority restaurants, boutiques, and even theme parks (in Beijing, Shenzhen, and Kunming) have contributed to a kind of “ethnic chic” that makes China’s pop culture increasingly diverse and multi-cultural.” See Gladney, 1996. For more about the role that “ethnic chic” plays in China’s contemporary pop culture scene, see Zha Jianying, *China Pop* (New York: The Free Press, 1995). Erik Mueggler maintains that minority intellectuals who were educated in the 1950s began to take a renewed interest in ethnology in the early 1980s as the political fanaticism of the Anti-Rightist campaign and the Cultural Revolution came to an end. During this second wave of ethnological production, new ethnological institutes were established and a number of new ethnic studies (*minzu xue* 民族学) journals were published for the first time. See Erik Mueggler, “Dancing Fools: Politics of Culture and Place in a ‘Traditional Nationality Festival,’” *Modern China* 28 (1) 2002: 8.

⁴⁰² Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 107.

⁴⁰³ State investment in Tibetan Buddhist institutions also appears to be part of a strategic policy geared toward promoting a Tibetan-Chinese identity intended to make Tibetans feel more like an integrated part of China and less interested in pursuing a Tibetan national identity. See Hillman, “Paradise under Construction,” 181.

⁴⁰⁴ DZZZZ, 21; ZXZ, 235. It seems likely that this number, despite being printed in many officially sanctioned publications in Gyalthang, is overinflated. Many of these monks might have formerly registered with the government in order to be affiliated with Sumtsenling Monastery, but it is doubtful that so many monks resided at Sumtsenling in the 1990s.

Although Sumtsenling was again able to recruit novice monks in the reform era, its numbers were restricted by a quota and it was impossible for the monastery to function as a center of learning as it had done in the past. Since an entire generation of learned monks had left the monastic order, escaped into exile, or passed away during the Cultural Revolution, very few qualified monks were now available to teach these young novices, who could neither read or write Tibetan. Moreover, because religion was still considered a grave threat to the Chinese state, the few Buddhist teachers who had taken up residency again at Sumtsenling after the Cultural Revolution were explicitly prohibited from giving any tantric initiations.⁴⁰⁵ As a result, young monks entering the monastery in the post-Mao era had little hope of accomplishing the twenty years of study considered necessary for the completion of a Geshe degree in Buddhist philosophy. The rebuilding of Sumtsenling went ahead in the 1990s, with much of the labour carried out by the monks themselves, but the monastery soon became a center of Buddhist teaching in name only.

It is likely that the main drive behind the county government's heavy investment in Sumtsenling Monastery was that county officials viewed the Sumtsenling as a means to draw thousands more visitors to Shangri-la every year. The monastery was, therefore, offered up as one more piece of bait to attract tourist revenue.⁴⁰⁶ Today Sumtsenling Monastery is the most visited monastic tourist site in Gyalthang.

⁴⁰⁵ One locally highly respected lama, who had fled to India in 1959, was allowed to return to Sumtsenling Monastery in 2006 after he signed a document promising the Chinese government that he would refrain from giving tantric initiations in Gyalthang. Interview with this lama at Dokhar *khangtsen* in Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang, July 24, 2014.

⁴⁰⁶ Åshild Kolås explains that, in 2002, when she discussed the possible paths that the Shangri-la County government might take to promote the development of the tourism industry, the government officials she spoke with explained that there was a need to “develop” monasteries as tourist sites. They intended to “revive” ritual life in the monasteries and encourage more frequent public performances, such as the performance of *cham*. *Cham* are

Sumtsenling Monastery originally adhered to Gelugpa Tibetan Buddhist monastic practices that prohibited charging admission fees to pilgrims and visitors. Donations left on alters were managed by the monastery and were spent on basic food and clothing supplies for the monks. However, as the monastery started receiving increasing numbers of visitors, the local government instructed the monastery to charge entrance fees to tourists. The Monastery Management Committee (*Siguanhui* 寺管会), which was set up by the Religious and Minority Affairs Bureau in 1984, first started charging a token entrance fee of two *jiao* (US 3¢) in the late 1980s.⁴⁰⁷ By 1996, the county government began to realize the monastery's earning potential and they pressured the Monastery Management Committee to increase the ticket price tenfold to two RMB (US 30¢). In 1998 a ticket office was set up through the County Finance Department and the entrance fee was raised again to ten RMB (US \$1.50) for all non-Buddhist visitors.

Locals were exempt from paying this fee, since it was assumed that most local residents were Buddhist. The ticket office was charged with the responsibility of "helping the monastery manage its funds," a system which one county official claimed was "very good for the monastery, because the monks are not used to dealing with economic management and now they can focus on their studies."⁴⁰⁸ Despite the protests of the monks and the monastic administrators, who claimed that they did not have any need for such financial guidance from the government since monks have historically handled the financial affairs of their own monastery, the ticket office remained open and visitors continued to be charged admission fees.

ritualistic dances performed by masked Tibetan monks. They usually take place in the courtyards of monasteries. Kolås, *Ethnic Tourism in Shangrila*, 51.

⁴⁰⁷ Ben Hillman, "Monastic Politics and the Local State in China: Authority and Autonomy in an Ethnically Tibetan Prefecture," *The China Journal* (54) 2005: 35.

⁴⁰⁸ Cited in Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 14.

From 1998 to 2006, the monastery received 1.47 RMB from every admission ticket of 10 RMB. This money was supposed to be divided up evenly and given to the monks as a monthly allowance. One monk I spoke with in the summer of 2007 told me that each monk's monthly allowance between 2002 and 2005 was around 80 RMB.⁴⁰⁹ The county government set aside an additional 4 RMB from every admission ticket to invest in the restoration and expansion of the monastery. The remainder of each ticket (4.53 RMB) went directly into the county government's coffers to cover tax and administration costs. In 2006, these entrance fees provided the county government with annual revenue of more than five million RMB.⁴¹⁰

In 2006 the county government decided to raise the admission price from ten RMB to thirty RMB, in late 2008 it was raised again to one hundred RMB, and by 2013 it had reached 115 RMB. The monks I spoke with at Sumtsenling Monastery in July, 2007, explained that the county and prefectural governments invested a great deal of money in restoring the monastery between 1984 and 2007 and they were therefore hoping to regain some of this money through higher admission prices. However, the monks, on average, were unhappy about the increases in the admission prices for both financial and cultural reasons.

In 2007, the monks were most worried about the fact that increased admission prices would have a financially detrimental effect on their own livelihood. Up until 2006, donations that were left behind by pilgrims and tourists visiting the monastery constituted more than half of the monks' monthly allowance.⁴¹¹ However, these monks were convinced that with higher admission

⁴⁰⁹ During this period, the monks' monthly income was also heavily subsidized by donations that pilgrims and tourists left at the monastery.

⁴¹⁰ Cited in Hillman, "Paradise under Construction," 180.

⁴¹¹ According to the monks I spoke with in the summer of 2007, most monks at Sumtsenling earned an allowance of around 250 to 330 RMB per month in 2007. This income was high enough to allow them to eat a well-balanced diet

prices, very few visitors would be willing to drop additional money in the donation boxes inside of the monastery. As a result, the county government would profit from the increased ticket prices at the expense of the monks' livelihood. Some monks also opposed the increase in admission price because they were concerned that with such a high price, tourists would expect to get something in return. The monks were worried that the county government would pressure them into performing for the tourists. Indeed, in the winter of 2005, the monks began to perform daily debates in the monastery's main courtyard for the benefit of curious tourists. Moreover, for profit-making reasons tour guides and their tour groups are now admitted to the monastery from early morning to late evening, regardless of the rituals scheduled to be performed. Although it is obvious that the presence of tourists wandering around the premises must be disturbing to the monks involved in serious study, the monks are no longer in a position to oppose the onslaught of tourism.

This raises issues about the potentially secularizing or "de-sacralizing" effects of tourism, which are often heightened by tensions that are created when religious or sacred sites become tourist destinations.⁴¹² The treatment of local culture as a tourist attraction often alters or destroys the very meaning of specific rituals or activities that were once sacred to local people. Hosts often perform their own culture in a way that is designed to appear "authentic" in order to satisfy

and to purchase a variety of items for individual consumption. However, one monk pointed out that although the monks have a very decent life at the monastery, they are still extremely poor compared to the lay people and the merchants that profit off of the monastery by selling trinkets and various services to tourists just outside the monastery gates.

⁴¹² For more about sacred sites as tourist destinations, see Jeremy Boissevain, "Introduction," in Jeremy Boissevain, ed., *Coping with Tourists: European Reactions to Mass Tourism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1996), 1-26; Michael Murray and Brian Graham, "Exploring the Dialectics of Route-Based Tourism: The Camino de Santiago," *Tourism Management* 18 (8) 1997: 513-524; Justine Digance, "Pilgrimage at Contested Sites," *Annals of Tourism Research* 30 (1): 2003: 143-159; and Myra Shackley, "Managing the Cultural Impacts of Religious Tourism in the Himalayas, Tibet and Nepal," in Mike Robinson and Priscilla Boniface, eds., *Tourism and Cultural Conflicts* (New York: CABI Publishing, 1999), 95-111.

tourists' desire for authenticity. These performances destroy real cultural meanings for both locals and tourists, and cultural authenticity is subsequently replaced by "staged authenticity."⁴¹³

Indeed, tourism has the potential to be a culturally destructive force that can cause the collapse of cultural meanings in heavily touristed areas, as commodification ushers in a kind of cultural flatness.⁴¹⁴ Along the way, all depth of appreciation, understanding, meaning, and belonging is replaced by superficial glitter.⁴¹⁵ According to the abbot of a Tibetan monastery in Jiuzhaigou, an ethnically Tibetan area of Sichuan Province, this process arguably took place at his monastery in the mid-1990s. While Jiuzhaigou government officials argued that tourism had helped local people develop a "clear sense of the market economy," this abbot complained in 1998 that the massive influx of tourists accelerated the erosion of traditional Tibetan values.⁴¹⁶

Tourism and profit margins now largely define the kind of historical narratives that are produced and disseminated by the Shangri-la County government's bureaus and tourism agencies. Starting in 2002, the newly renamed Shangri-la County government invested increasingly larger annual sums of money in gilding the roofs of Sumtsenling's three main halls, commissioning elaborate thangkas to be hung in each hall, and expanding the parking lot in front of the monastery to accommodate tour buses.⁴¹⁷ Tibetan monks now sell cold drinks and cheap trinkets to tourists at concession stands set up inside the monastery.

⁴¹³ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

⁴¹⁴ Davydd Greenwood, "Culture by the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditization," in Valene Smith, ed., *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 171-186.

⁴¹⁵ Stephen Britton, "Tourism, Capital, and Place: Towards a Critical Geography of Tourism," *Society and Space* 9 (1991): 465-466.

⁴¹⁶ Peng, "Tibetan Pilgrimage in the Process of Social Change," 195.

⁴¹⁷ Hillman, "Monastic Politics."

Visitors are also provided with a very particular account of the illustrious history of this supposedly seventeenth-century Tibetan monastery. According to the historical narrative printed on the admission ticket, Sumtsenling was built in 1674 after the Fifth Dalai Lama asked the Qing Kangxi Emperor for permission to construct a monastery, which he was subsequently granted.⁴¹⁸ No mention is made of the fact that Sumtsenling was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution at the hands of locals and rebuilt only very recently with tourism-driven government subsidies. The plight of Sumtsenling monastery illuminates the degree to which the maximization of profit has become the standard of governance in Gyalthang in the post-Cultural Revolution era. Concerns about how cultural commodification, coupled with officially endorsed historical amnesia, has effaced local histories of violence in Gyalthang remain unaddressed in public.

The “Shangrila-ification” of Tibet took place at a remarkable rate in the late 1990s, as mainstream Chinese film directors produced romanticized feature films for their urban Chinese audiences and Tibetan singers with music videos showcasing travel brochure imagery broke into the popular music industry.⁴¹⁹ In-flight magazines on China Eastern Airlines began to showcase glossy photographs of lush Tibetan landscapes and extravagantly dressed Tibetan nomads in order to promote Tibetan areas in China as exciting and romantic places to visit.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ For a detailed account of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s decision to construct Sumtsenling Monastery in 1674 and the relationship between the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Qing Kangxi Emperor, and the Chinese military general Wu Sangui 吴三桂, see Schwieger, “The Long Arm of the Fifth Dalai Lama.”

⁴¹⁹ Matthew Kapstein, “A Thorn in the Dragon’s Side: Tibetan Buddhist Culture in China,” *Governing China’s Ethnic Frontiers*, Mororis Rosabi, ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 257.

⁴²⁰ Ibid. Matthew Kapstein argued in 2004 that, “if the ‘shangrilafication’ of Tibet is a cultural phenomenon that is sufficiently advanced in the West as to have drawn deconstructive criticism, it is a phenomenon just now beginning in China.”

The desire to travel away from “modernity” appears to be one of the main factors that still drives young, urban Chinese tourists to visit Shangri-la.⁴²¹ The past two decades of rapid modernization has given rise to new levels of anxiety, ambivalence, and disorientation in Chinese society. The growing contradiction between the central government’s push for modernization and society’s desire to maintain a sense of continuity with the past have led the tourist industry to capitalize off of the fantasy of traveling into the past.⁴²² A trip to Tibet has become a rite of passage for the newly wealthy Chinese living in Shanghai, and those urban residents who visit Tibet often describe it as a place of spirituality and freedom, “far from the competitive striving and commercialism of contemporary urban life.”⁴²³

While tourism has long been heralded as a way to bring economic progress to less developed areas, some scholars have also argued that ethnic or cultural tourism may in fact strengthen the process of reflecting upon, conserving, reforming, and recreating certain cultural traditions.⁴²⁴ It is impossible to tell which residents of Shangri-la are taking part in business

⁴²¹ Writing on Sami encounters with ethnic tourism, Arvid Viken points out that ethnic tourism tends to involve travel away from modernity and into the past. See Arvid Viken, “Ethnic Tourism: Which Ethnicity,” in M. E. Johnston, et al, eds., *Shaping Tomorrow's North: The Role of Tourism and Recreation* (Ontario: Lakehead University, 1998), 37.

⁴²² Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 107. See also Marilyn Ivy for more about Japanese notions of loss and the Japanese “nostalgic appeal to premodernity.” Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁴²³ Ben Hillman and Lee-Anne Henfry, “Macho Minority: Masculinity and Ethnicity on the Edge of Tibet,” *Modern China* (32) 2006: 257. A number of Tibetan writers, such as Tashi Dawa and Alai, who were educated in Chinese schools, began to write in Chinese for a Han Chinese audience in the 1980s. Interestingly, their work has also been criticized for sustaining a mystical view of Tibet and thereby contributing to the “Shangrila-ification” of the region. Pema Tsering, “A Deceitful Erected Stone Pillar and the Beginnings of Modern Tibetan Literature,” Riika Virtanen, trans., *The Tibet Journal* 24 (2) 1999: 115. Tashi Dawa is best known for his magical realist style, which is similar to that employed by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. For a detailed analysis of Tashi Dawa’s use of magical realism, see Patricia Schiaffini, “Tashi Dawa: Magical Realism and Contested Identity in Modern Tibet” (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 2002).

opportunities to make money and which are doing it to make a statement about their Tibetan identity or their cultural values.⁴²⁵ There is a fine line between the presentation of culture to tourists and the invention of new cultural traditions in the interest of economic profit. Will certain religious ceremonies, dance performances, festivals, or traditional foods ultimately become components of, in Philip McKean's words, a "hypocritical fake culture, created by the secularizing tendencies of tourism," which turns everything, including culture, into a pure economic entity?⁴²⁶ How do local people construct or maintain their idea of place in a town that is being overrun by tourism? When Tibetan landlords buy houses on the outskirts of town in order to rent out their supposedly more Tibetan-looking homes in the Old Town to Han Chinese shop owners, how does this transform local understandings of what it means to be a Gyalthang resident?

The enormous interest that outsiders have shown in investing and developing the tourist market in Shangri-la over the past two decades has caused many people to question who, in the end, is actually benefiting from this new wave of tourism. Some anthropologists have proposed that tourism may boost traditional representations of place when tourists follow in the path of pilgrims and make sacred sites their primary travel destinations.⁴²⁷ Hosts may be able to subvert state-sactioned hegemonic interpretations of these sacred areas by using tourism as a means to

⁴²⁴ See, for instance, Philip McKean's work on religious celebrations in Bali. Philip McKean, "Towards a Theoretical Analysis of Tourism: Economic Dualism and Cultural Involution in Bali," in Valene Smith, ed., *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 119-138.

⁴²⁵ Robert Barnett, "Beyond the Collaborator-Martyr Model: Strategies of Compliance, Opportunism, and Opposition within Tibet," in Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer, eds., *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development, and Society in a Disputed Region* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 45-47.

⁴²⁶ McKean, "Towards a Theoretical Analysis of Tourism," 128.

⁴²⁷ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 53.

reclaim older traditions and to revitalize their sense of ethnic and cultural pride.⁴²⁸ Those who are visited by tourists may begin to “see their own culture with new eyes” as ethnic and cultural differences become marketable and profitable commodities.⁴²⁹ By marketing their culture to outsiders, some anthropologists argue, people often rediscover their own history and their own sense of tradition and begin to realize their own worth as a culturally vibrant community.⁴³⁰

Over the past decade, a few anthropology graduate students from Gyalthang have supported the central government’s claims that ethnic tourism may not only help develop economically stagnating areas of the country, but may also help encourage locals to take greater pride in their local culture.⁴³¹ This argument fits in nicely with the contemporary Chinese discourse on tourism and modernity, which suggests that tourism may provide the best means to “develop and civilize” ethnic minority areas of the country that have not been privy to the same level of economic development as other areas of the country over the past twenty years.

Ralph Litzinger maintains that, starting in the 1980s the Chinese Communist Party encouraged ethnic minority intellectuals to promote popular rituals, traditional practices of medicine, and other so-called traditional modes of social morality in their home villages, in order

⁴²⁸ Writing about the impact of tourism on pilgrimage sites in eastern Tibet, Wenbin Peng explains how Tibetans have benefited from, but also have been harmed by, the tourist boom. He states: “On the one hand [tourism] may offer a space for Tibetans to reaffirm their cultural differences from the dominant group, thus reconstructing their ethnic identity. On the other hand, it can lead to an erosion of some traditional values, introducing new strains and conflicts into local Tibetan communities.” See Peng, “Tibetan Pilgrimage in the Process of Social Change,” 185.

⁴²⁹ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 28.

⁴³⁰ Boissevain, “Introduction.”

⁴³¹ Tsering Yangzom, “*Cong ‘Zhongdian’ Dao ‘Xianggelila’* 从‘中甸’到‘香格里拉’ [From ‘Zhongdian’ to ‘Shangrila’]” (Unpublished Paper: Zhongyang Minzu Daxue 中央民族大学 [Central University of Nationalities], 2007); Ciren Zhuoma, “Horse Racing Gala and Its Ceremony in Wufeng Mountain, rGyal-thang” (Paper presented at the International Association for Tibetan Studies Conference in Bergen, Norway, June 21, 2016).

to “assist in the project of bringing development to minorities.”⁴³² Litzinger writes: “ironically, these indigenous practices, once marked for destruction for their ties to the feudal past the revolution had struggled so long to overthrow, were now being championed as locally productive technologies of social order.”⁴³³ The state’s neoliberal vision of a modernized, developed area of Southwest China hinged on a strategy of using tourism to connect remote villages to broader markets across the country.⁴³⁴ While some local officials were interested in raising the standard of living for the people living within their jurisdiction, others were interested in economically developing the area for the sake of generating higher revenue for the county, prefectural, and provincial governments.

Litzinger argues that the Chinese state often involves itself in cultural and religious affairs of minority peoples, such as the Yao, in an effort to define tradition and identity in ways that support its own agenda. To a large extent the state’s tourism promotional efforts can be chalked up to its interest in expanding tax revenues. The commoditizing of minority culture, religion, and history is a long-term development strategy, a legitimizing strategy, and a strategy to maintain political stability. Timothy Oakes maintains that “the prosperity of ethnic groups *per se* was not the core of the modernization agenda as much as attracting external capital

⁴³² Ralph Litzinger, “Theorizing Postsocialism: Reflections on the Politics of Marginality in Contemporary China,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (1) 2002: 48.

⁴³³ Ibid. MacCarthy supports Litzinger’s claim, suggesting that “in its quest to promote economic and social modernization the Chinese state has thus become something of a champion of tradition—or rather, certain definitions of tradition.” Susan McCarthy, “If Allah Wills It: Integration, Isolation, and Muslim Authenticity in Yunnan Province in China,” *Religion, State & Society* 33 (2) 2005: 122.

⁴³⁴ Indeed, official state-sanctioned histories of Shangri-la celebrate the development of tourism as a major contributor to the county’s economic development. In these texts, tourism is presented as a promising means by which the local economy will be able to “link up” with the mainstream Chinese national economy, which will allow this area to begin to catch up with the “more developed” regions of China. Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 173.

investments for large-scale projects that would benefit the economy overall. The role of ethnic tourism, then, was best summed up by *enticement*.⁴³⁵ Local minority officials often tried to mobilize state resources to achieve their own locally oriented goals.⁴³⁶ Cultural performances by minority groups would be “served up as bait” for profit-hungry outsiders who were interested in investing their money and signing lucrative business contracts to exploit this rapidly expanding sector of the economy. Erik Mueggler contends that:

Peoples formerly marginalized as “backward” are inserted into the post-Mao national landscape—but at the price of finding their cultural resources reduced to readily manufactured “objects” and their cultural identities to possessors of these objects, which may be sold and consumed globally as signs of the new national ecumene.⁴³⁷

The way in which different Chinese ethnic minority populations began to be appraised as valuable citizens of the People’s Republic of China and the way in which their culture began to be freshly evaluated was through neoliberal lenses that were focused on the profit-making potential of each group’s inherent cultural resources.

It seems probable that the state’s efforts to support the revitalization of ethnic minority culture in the reform era is more due to the government’s desire to maintain political stability than their inherent interest in preserving and promoting ethnic cultures and folk religions. Susan McCarthy maintains that the Chinese state has been largely successful at engaging in

⁴³⁵ Timothy Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 10.

⁴³⁶ Ralph Litzinger, *Other Chinas: The Yao and the Politics of National Belonging* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

⁴³⁷ Erik Mueggler, “Spectral Chains: Remembering the Great Leap Famine in an Yi Community,” in Ching-Kwan Lee and Guobin Yang, eds., *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 6.

developmentalist policies that promote a distinct form of “ethnic resurgence.”⁴³⁸ She argues that the official party-state involvement in this resurgence is rather counterintuitive given that after decades spent suppressing anything that hinted of tradition, government units in China now play the role of patron, curator, and consumer of minority culture and cultural institutions. The state now encourages minorities to develop their own ostensibly unique cultural identities and codifies these in policy, education, history, and the arts. The socialist market economy is increasingly viewed as the Chinese Communist Party’s answer to what they have long viewed as “minority backwardness,” and, ironically, also as the means of furthering national integration. Some Chinese officials today believe that the market is capable of achieving what the Maoist socialist project tried but failed to achieve: the construction of a unified, integrated, modernized, multinational nation (*tongyi de duo minzu guojia* 统一的多民族国家).⁴³⁹

In Gyalthang, many local people are quite savvy about tourism. Although they do view the development of the tourism industry as an opportunity to earn some extra cash, they certainly do not expect that they will be the ones benefiting the most off of tourism.⁴⁴⁰ A local joke plays

⁴³⁸ Susan McCarthy, *Communist Multiculturalism: Ethnic Revival in Southwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

⁴³⁹ According to McCarthy, Chinese official and academic publications in the 1990s frequently described how the market was breaking down local barriers and regional differences and linking minority groups in a web of commodities exchange, thereby enhancing the interdependence and the mutual reliance of the Chinese people.

⁴⁴⁰ John Donaldson argues that from 1990 to 2004, despite the fact that the tourism industry in Yunnan Province contributed to rapid economic growth, it did little to contribute to poverty reduction in rural areas. During the Chinese government’s Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-1990), tourism was lauded as a development tool to raise rural incomes in poverty-stricken areas. However, over the next two decades, as tourism ushered in a new age of prosperity to local governments in Yunnan Province, it also exacerbated economic inequalities within rural areas by excluding the participation of poor rural residents. Tourism facilities in certain regions of Yunnan became more and more elaborate, including star-rated hotels, airports and major highways, and “Hollywoodized” performances of local dances. In the mid-1990s Yunnan’s tourism board adopted the principle of “whoever invests, whoever develops, is the one to profit” and thus the vast majority of the profits gained from the development of the tourism industry went directly to the Kunming-based, coastal, and overseas investors. Over the past two decades, the tourism industry in Yunnan Province has grown in size and sophistication, but as it has done so, it has required the labor and know-how of more highly skilled and educated workers. As a result, poorly educated rural residents have been

off of the Tibetan nickname for Shangri-la. Instead of “*Semkyinyinda*,” meaning “the sun and the moon of the heart,” which is the new Tibetan name that has been given to the town of Shangri-la, local people have started calling the town “*Shanggyinyinda*,” which means “the sun and moon of the wolves.” They wryly explain that “wolves” from all over China have moved into the area in order to take advantage of the tourist boom.⁴⁴¹

Aside from tourists who hope that their travels will enable them to experience authentic cultural experiences and from investors who hope to profit off of the local tourist industry, host communities also play an active role in marketing indigenous cultural resources. The host-guest relationship is sometimes described as a form of cultural imperialism since the tourist, or “guest,” is often seen as *the* critical determinant in most studies about tourism. Ethnic tourism, in particular, is often viewed as an imperialist activity in that it transforms ethnic or racial difference as an object to be commodified, marketed, and consumed. It is because ethnic and racial differences are reified during the process of ethnic tourism, Dean MacCannell argues, that “ethnic tourism is the mirror image of racism.”⁴⁴² Domestic ethnic tourism often reproduces and disseminates ethnic images and stereotypes of indigenous groups that may already be in circulation. It also serves as a channel through which the uneven power structures that exist among different ethnic groups are reinforced.⁴⁴³

increasingly excluded from accessing the jobs created by this expanding economy. Donaldson contrasts the tourism development methods that were adopted by the Yunnan provincial government with those that were adopted by the Guizhou provincial government. From 1990 to 2004, Guizhou Province’s much smaller-scale tourism industry did little to contribute to the overall development of the province (in terms of vast increases in local GDP or the expansion of the province’s infrastructure), but it significantly reduced poverty by encouraging the participation of local poor residents. See John Donaldson, “Tourism, Development and Poverty Reduction in Guizhou and Yunnan,” *The China Quarterly* 2007: 333-351.

⁴⁴¹ Kolås, *Ethnic Tourism in Shangri-la*, 173.

⁴⁴² Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (London: Routledge, 1992), 170.

And yet, Kolas argues, ethnic stereotypes are continuously reworked in the complex interactions between the visited, the visitors, and the mediators of the visits—whether these are state agents or private entrepreneurs. The local culture that is marketed to tourists is subject to continuous reinterpretation and negotiation. It is for this reason, she argues, that ethnic tourism does not merely mirror or reproduce ethnic or racial stereotypes.⁴⁴⁴ The gaze of ethnic tourism tends to reflect “the social experience of the majority encountering itself while consuming images of the ethnic.”⁴⁴⁵ Since the “reform and opening up” policies of the late 1970s, ethnic tourism has fit comfortably with Chinese state policies that have defined and categorized ethnic minorities and their place in the national social hierarchy.

Robert Wood used the image of a billard game to criticize early methodological approaches to tourism, which viewed “local culture” as passive and stagnant. Tourism, he claims, does not act like a moving ball in a billiard game while local culture acts as an inert ball waiting to be knocked asunder. The impact that tourism has on local culture, Wood argues, is “always played out in an already dynamic and changing cultural context.”⁴⁴⁶ Indeed, residents of even highly touristed areas tend to not be mere passive recipients of tourism, but rather variously “encourage, resist, or participate in the development process.”⁴⁴⁷ My research in Gyalthang

⁴⁴³ Jing Li. “Molding Dai-ness on China’s Periphery: Ethnic Tourism and the Politics of Identity Construction in Contemporary Xishuang Banna” (Ph.D. dissertation: Department of Folklore and Folklife, University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 42.

⁴⁴⁴ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 30.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁴⁶ Robert Wood, “Tourism, Culture and the Sociology of Development,” in Michael Hitchcock et al, eds., *Tourism in South East Asia* (London: Routledge, 1993): 67-68.

⁴⁴⁷ Geoffrey Wall and Veronica Long, “Balinese Homestays: an Indigenous Response to Tourism Opportunities,” in Richard Butler and Thomas Hinch, eds., *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (London: International Thomson Business Press, 1996): 27-28.

supports this conclusion, suggesting that in actuality the relationship between tourists and locals might not fit the “oppressor/oppressed” model quite so well.

State-led market development in China has ushered in a new era of ubiquitous commodification, and although scholars continue to debate the applicability of the term “neoliberal” to the current Chinese political, social, and economic system, there is little doubt that the state plays a decisive role in the extensive marketization of Chinese society.⁴⁴⁸ The spread of neoliberal ideology has led to the marketing of ethnic identity in China, and ethnic minority groups’ enthusiasm for the commercialization of their own culture has led to new forms of collaboration. What happens when minorities are no longer seen as simply reacting to or resisting the Chinese state but rather as central agents in the creation of new collaborative ethnic projects between the state and the people? What might the anthropology of post-Mao nationalism look like if it refuses to find in the ethnic subject the perfected example of authenticity or resistance? It seems that we now need to move beyond tropes of subjugation, assimilation, and resistance—to which past scholarship has easily reduced Han majority/minority relations—and instead come to see the latest state-sponsored revival of minority ethnicity as reinforcing local/state collaboration in an era of global capitalism.

Chinese tour companies have aggressively marketed Shangri-la as a place where exotic Tibetans live in communal harmony in a beautiful and unsullied natural environment. As more and more tourists travel to areas like Shangri-la in order to nostalgically experience a sense of long-lost community again, the nature of the town has transformed, ironically affecting the very

⁴⁴⁸ Wang Hui, “The Year 1989 and the Historical Roots of Neoliberalism in China,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 12 (1) 2004: 7-70; Andrew Kipnis, “Neoliberalism Reified: *Suzhi* Discourse and Tropes of Neoliberalism in the People’s Republic of China,” *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007): 383-400; Donald Nonini, “Is China Becoming Neoliberal?” *Critique of Anthropology* 28 (2) 2008: 145-176.

relationships between local people that the tourists have come to witness first-hand. When a community has been purposefully “developed” with tourism in mind, can this community still provide a sense of identity to the people inhabiting it? When a place name has been reinvented for the sake of tourism, what does this do to local residents’ notions of place?

When I first traveled to Gyalthang in 1998, what later came to be termed the “Old Town” (*gucheng* 古城) was a rather unassuming assembly of one and two-story Tibetan-style wooden and mud houses lined up along a few unpaved dirt roads. There were very few businesses in the Old Town and, with the exception of one large hotel on the outskirts of town, none of the businesses were set up to cater to tourists. The “New Town” was made up of a single main street lined with unimaginative concrete block buildings. By 2002, the town was gearing up to market itself as a tourist attraction and much had changed. The streets of the Old Town were paved with cobblestones to resemble the Old Town of neighboring Lijiang, which was seen as a model for tourism developers, and buildings that adhered to Naxi architectural standards were being remodeled and repainted to look “more Tibetan” before they were turned into quaint little guesthouses and cafés. All of the buildings lining the main street of the New Town were repainted with bright colors in supposedly Tibetan designs and elaborately decorated streetlamps were erected. One journalist who visited Shangri-la at this time described this transformation as the creation of a “Tibetan toy town.”⁴⁴⁹

Moreover, in preparation for the Shangri-la Arts Festival, which was scheduled to take place in May 2002, the prefectural government mandated that all of the store signs in town be replaced with new signs printed in both Chinese and Tibetan. This bilingual sign project was

⁴⁴⁹ Cited in Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 3.

undertaken with such haste that much of the Tibetan script that appeared on these signs ended up being mere transliterations of their corresponding Chinese names. This resulted in some very tortured Tibetan language printed on hilarious and confusing signs.⁴⁵⁰ Although the Tibetan words written on these signs are virtually incomprehensible to literate Tibetans, because the majority of the Tibetans living in Gyalthang have not received any formal training in literary Tibetan and local Han, Naxi, Bai, and Yi residents tend to be literate only in Chinese, these Tibetan-language signs have not posed much of a problem for local residents. In fact, most of the people living in Gyalthang remain completely unaware of the misspellings printed on their storefront signs. The signs were not created for the benefit of the local people, but purely to enhance the “Tibetan” look of the town and to attract the attention of the tourists.⁴⁵¹

The malleability of Tibetan identity was on display in the main square of Shangri-la Old Town one evening in July 2007:

A large group of people had gathered together and were expectantly gazing at the make-shift stage that had been set up on the second-floor balcony of a building facing the square. The large red and gold banner that hung above the balcony announced that Tashi Dundrup (*Zhaxi Dunzhu* 扎西顿珠), a Tibetan pop singer, would be performing tonight on stage. Just a few months earlier he had participated in the nationally televised male talent show, known as “Good Boys” (*Hao nan'er* 好男儿), and had come in sixth place—the most prestigious finish that any Tibetan had achieved in the short history of the show.⁴⁵² Although he was born to Tibetan parents in Shangri-la County, from an early age he lived with his grandmother and attended elementary school in Kunming. As a

⁴⁵⁰ Hillman reports that one skin beauty treatment clinic in Shangri-la misspelled “beauty” in Tibetan on their sign and unknowingly advertised treatment for “leprosy” instead; Hillman, “Paradise under Construction,” 179.

⁴⁵¹ Other efforts to enhance Shangri-la’s “Tibetan” look include the creation of a new symbol that was based on the government’s official interpretation of the meaning of Shangri-la. This symbol is similar to the motif often used to represent Islam and consists of a crescent moon curving around the sun. However, the Shangri-la symbol is reversed, with the sun located to the left of the moon and with an arrow piercing both. The arrow is presumably meant to symbolize that both the sun and the moon reside in the heart of the Tibetans living in Shangri-la. In 2005 metal gates marked with this symbol were erected above the road at both the northern and southern entrances to the county seat.

⁴⁵² “Good Boys,” is a televised talent show that involves audience participation and judgment, similar to the American television show, “American Idol.”

young adult he moved to Shanghai and received formal music training at the Shanghai Music Institute. As a result, despite speaking only a few words of the Gyalthang Tibetan language, he was considered a local hero and his performance in the Old Town square was heralded as a major event of the year. As Tashi Dundrup finished his performance for the evening, one young Tibetan woman turned to me with a look of adoration on her face and claimed: “Just as Shangri-la is an international trademark [*guoji pinpai* 国际品牌] that represents the land of Tibet, so too has Tashi Dundrup become an international trademark representing us Tibetans. I am overjoyed that Tashi Dundrup has returned home to perform for us this evening.”⁴⁵³

This young Tibetan woman viewed Tashi Dundrup’s fame as a symbolic step indicating that the Tibetan people had made it, at long last, in the Han world of popular music. She expressed her pride not only in her hometown’s “international trademark,” but also in the trademark of Tibetan ethnicity that Tashi Dundrup had come to represent.

Addressing the audience in standard Mandarin, Tashi Dundrup encouraged the young Tibetans in the crowd to take a more active interest in Tibetan music and support Tibetan pop singers that are struggling to make it in the domestic Chinese music scene. He urged his fans to resist becoming fully acculturated into Han Chinese society and advised them to learn to speak, read, and write Tibetan. Upon finishing this impassioned speech, Tashi Dundrup broke into his most popular song, which had won him great acclaim on national television, and which he sung entirely in *putonghua*. Tashi Dundrup admitted on the stage that evening that, having left Gyalthang at a very young age to attend schools in Kunming and Shanghai, he was unable to speak more than a few words of what he termed his “mother tongue.”

The young woman, who expressed such strong support for Tashi Dundrup, represents what some Tibetans have derisively termed the “acculturated” population of young Gyalthangpa, who have been raised linguistically, socially, religiously, and politically in a Han world. The fact

⁴⁵³ Field notes, July 12, 2007.

that Tashi Dundrup's well-marketed Tibetan identity may actually be carefully staged—not unlike the myth of Shangri-la—did not seem to bother her. The local government's promotion of ethnic tourism set the stage for this woman and others like her to express their ethnic pride in ways that would have been far more risky in previous domestic political climates.⁴⁵⁴

Moreover, as this area has economically prospered, Tibetan monks, businesspeople, and tour guides living in India or in other Tibetan areas within the PRC have moved to Shangri-la to try their hand at a new way of life. The types of exchanges that have taken place between these Tibetan 'outsiders' and local Tibetan residents have also contributed to an awareness of a growing pan-Tibetan identity.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, although Shangri-la originally was envisioned as a way to increase local government revenues by playing off of the exotic appeal of a rural utopia, the effects that this project have had on local identity have not been entirely under the control of the state.

Discomforting Memories of Past Suffering

Despite the fact that many young and middle-aged Tibetans have embraced Shangri-la's tourism boom, a number of elderly Gyalthagpa have begun to privately voice their discontent with the rampant commercialism in town. They have also quietly asserted the importance of recounting Gyalthag's troubled past. Public commemorations of the tragedies of the Cultural Revolution are still prohibited, but many elderly Tibetans have begun to voice their unease about

⁴⁵⁴ Hillman overheard similar expressions of Tibetan ethnic pride while researching the Shangri-la Arts Festival in May 2002. An ethnically Tibetan senior officer in the county's Public Security Bureau asserted that the Tibetans are a one of the greatest nationalities in China, and, he argued, the only reason China did not win the 2002 World Cup was because China's national team did not have any Tibetan players. Hillman, "Paradise under Construction," 187.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

the disconnect that exists between the Chinese state's official narrative and their own private memories of past events. Some of this unease can be seen in the forms of memory practice found today in accounts of the Cultural Revolution given in private interviews. These often focus on collective tragedies that are still remembered within the Tibetan community, presumably handed down by word of mouth. One such collective tragedy occurred during the “Cleanse the Class Ranks” campaign in September 1968, when the slogan “struggle, criticize, and reform” was widely promulgated and tens of thousands of people in Gyalthang were accused of wrong-doing. Hundreds of people died what later came to be termed “unnatural deaths” (*fei zhengchang siwang* 非正常死亡).⁴⁵⁶

A number of elderly cadres and loyal Communist Party members hanged themselves or swallowed pesticide in order to finally put an end to what must have seemed to them to be the certainty of endless psychological and physical torture. During an interview in his home in Nyishar Township, a Tibetan potter recalled a tragic story involving one high-ranking cadre in Gyalthang. This cadre, who had been subjected to multiple struggle sessions in the winter of 1967 and was likely under enormous psychological pressure, asked his father and son to join him in walking for two days to the banks of the Yangtze River.⁴⁵⁷ Upon reaching the river, these men, who represented three different generations within one family, committed suicide together by jumping into the raging waters. It is said that they called out “Long live the Communist Party!” as they fell.⁴⁵⁸ The grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and three children of another

⁴⁵⁶ Le'an Wangdui, *Dangdai Yunnan zangzu jianshi*, 94.

⁴⁵⁷ In the northwestern part of Yunnan Province, local people refer to the Yangtze River in Chinese as the *Jinsha jiang* 金沙江 (Golden Sand River).

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with resident of Tangtö Village (*Tangdui cun* 汤堆村) in Nyishar Township on April 26, 2013.

Tibetan family living in Nyishar used a thick rope to tie themselves together at the waist. They then jumped into the Naizi River, a small river that flows through Gyalthang not far from Sumtsenling Monastery, preferring to drown rather than live among people who had destroyed their own local monastery.⁴⁵⁹

Not all Tibetans participated in violent or destructive acts during the Cultural Revolution. Although there was little or nothing that residents could do to stop the destruction of Sumtsenling at the time, a small number of monks and nuns resisted the order to smash its walls and burn the thangkas housed there. Perhaps the most famous of these resisters was Tsering, a monk from Nyishar who is now viewed as a hero by a number of monks currently residing in the Dokhar *khangtsen* at Sumtsenling. In September 1966, upon hearing that nearby villagers and monks had been ordered to destroy the monastery, Tsering fled into the forests on the outskirts of town in order to avoid having to participate in the destruction. By late autumn the nights were getting very cold and his food supplies were running low, so he returned to his house in Nyishar to visit his family and restock his supplies. The evening after he arrived back in his village, Tsering's young nephew stabbed him to death with a knife to prove his own revolutionary consciousness. The nephew then declared that he had "drawn a clear line" (*hua yitiao xian* 划一条线) between himself and his "reactionary" uncle.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ Interview conducted with Dawa Phuntsok on July 24, 2014 in Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang. The Naizi River (*Naizi he* 奶子河) is often referred to in English as the "Milk River." Tibetans in Gyalthang either use Chinese or Gyalthang Tibetan to refer to local place names. Gyalthang Tibetan is unintelligible to speakers of Tibetan from Lhasa. Moreover, most Gyalthangpa are unable to read, write, or speak standard (Lhasa) Tibetan, making transcribing local Gyalthang names for particular villages, rivers, mountains, or grasslands into standard Tibetan very difficult. For more on the particular challenges involved in transcribing place names from Gyalthang Tibetan into standard Tibetan, see Bartee, "A Grammar of Dongwang Tibetan," 93; Krisadawan Hongladarom, "rGyalthang Tibetan of Yunnan: A Preliminary Report," *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 19 (2) 1996: 69-92.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview conducted with monks at Dokhar *khangtsen* in Sumtsenling Monastery in Gyalthang on July 24, 2014.

In some cases, it was clear from interviews that individuals retained memories of painful events, but it seemed that these had rarely, if ever, been told to others, much less written down. Nyima Chodon, a fifty-four year-old English teacher with a multi-ethnic background (Tibetan, Naxi, and Bai), recalled how rarely he saw his parents after his father, a Communist Party member in Gyalthang, was demoted during the Four Cleanups campaign. Because his grandparents owned a small amount of farmland along the banks of the Yangtze River, his father had been labeled a “small-scale landlord” in 1964 and forced to work on a collective farm in a village outside of town. During the Cultural Revolution, the villagers on this farm turned against all of the “sent-down” cadres who had recently arrived, and Nyima Chodon’s father was denounced and struggled against. He committed suicide by hanging himself from a tall tree in the forest on the outskirts of the village. His widow was not permitted to retrieve his body, but was forced to publically denounce her husband and move back to town with her son.

Nyima Chodon explained how frightening it was for him, as a six-year-old child, when he was left alone at home for five days in the middle of winter while his mother secretly returned on foot to where his father had hanged himself. Stumbling around at night under the cover of darkness, she managed to dig a shallow grave in the hard, snow-covered ground and bury her husband’s body there. While his mother was away in the forest, Nyima Chodon joined other elementary school students in attending “Little Red Guard” (*xiao weibing* 小卫兵) meetings in Gyalthang’s town square, reciting slogans from Mao’s little red book, and practicing the “loyalty dance” (*zhongzi wu* 忠字舞) to demonstrate his allegiance to the Communist Party.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶¹ The “loyalty dance” was viewed as a means to inculcate young Chinese children with patriotic values and loyalty to Chairman Mao. Children performed it across the country during the first few years of the Cultural Revolution.

Victim narratives like the ones recounted above are prevalent within the individual oral histories of those who lived through the events. While it is certainly true that thousands of Gyalthang residents were victimized by the Cultural Revolution, the hegemonic trope of victimhood leaves little space for participants to recall other forms of activity that took place during the Cultural Revolution. Tibetans living in Gyalthang responded to the Cultural Revolution in a number of ways—some resisted and often paid with their lives, but many others participated in the violence for a variety of political, social, ideological, and personal reasons. This range of responses, from suicide and exile to looting and murder, sheds light on the difficult decisions Tibetans made under particularly complex and coercive conditions. Yet the diversity of these experiences is not conveyed in most oral narratives.

While many Gyalthang residents vividly recalled observing the fervent demolition of Sumtsenling Monastery in September 1966, very few people admitted that they had personally been involved in the destruction. In one interview, an elderly Tibetan villager from Nyishar Township recounted how he walked with his friends and neighbors to Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery on the morning of September 9, 1966, in order to satisfy his curiosity about the newly announced “Destroy the Four Olds” campaign. He watched as his friends, neighbors, and fellow villagers burned *thangkas* and smashed Buddhist statues in the monastery’s courtyard. He insisted, however, that he did not personally participate in the destruction.⁴⁶² In the months following this interview, I spoke with other Gyalthang residents who vividly recalled observing

While rehearsing this dance, children moved in a prescribed manner across the floor to trace over the Chinese character *zhong* 忠, meaning “loyalty.” Interview with Nyima Chodon in Gyalthang on July 24, 2011.

⁴⁶² Interview with elderly Tibetan villager in his home in Nyishar Township on April 25, 2013.

thousands of other people demolish the walls and roof of the monastery, yet only one interviewee admitted that he had done more than just passively watch.

The documentary filmmaker Xu Xing 徐星 reported similar findings after interviewing hundreds of people who participated in the Cultural Revolution. Xu explained that one of the most disappointing aspects of making his 2007 film, “A Chronicle of My Cultural Revolution” (*Wo de Wenge Biannianshi* 我的文革编年史), was that although he interviewed hundreds of people who insisted that they were eye-witnesses to horrible acts of violence and destruction during the Cultural Revolution, not one person was willing to admit that he/she had personally taken part in the violence.⁴⁶³

How did the Chinese state win the complicity of Tibetans in carrying out violent political campaigns? When one elderly Tibetan man recounted to the journalist Patrick French that he joined other Red Guards in desecrating the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa in 1966, he used the following metaphor: “it was the Chinese who killed the sheep, but we were the ones who skinned and gutted it.”⁴⁶⁴ Yet, such a frank acknowledgement of participation in the Cultural Revolution and culpability for the destruction that occurred is relatively rare. Many Tibetans are unwilling or feel unable to discuss their involvement in the Cultural Revolution, since such acts raise contentious questions not only about the past, but also about the present. Although government officials in Gyalthang never explicitly stated this during our conversations, it seems plausible that local officials do not want Gyalthang residents to openly deal with their town’s thorny past because the present continues to resemble the past in too many ways. Religious repression,

⁴⁶³ Interview with Xu Xing in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on October 26, 2015.

⁴⁶⁴ Patrick French, *Tibet, Tibet: Dreams and Memories of a Lost Land* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), 200.

economic and political coercion, and local/state collaboration are still very real issues in Gyalthang today. The Chinese state has tried to sideline attempts among Han Chinese citizens to start public discussions about agency, responsibility, coercion, and collusion during the Cultural Revolution, which has made it doubly challenging for Tibetans to initiate analogous discussions in their own communities.⁴⁶⁵ The government may very well fear that allowing Tibetans to openly air their grievances about past political campaigns could lead to expressions of discontent with the current state of affairs. For Tibetans living in Gyalthang, therefore, the unspeakable past continues to be fraught with both political and emotional danger.⁴⁶⁶

Whilst the traumas of the period are rarely spoken of, they are certainly not forgotten, especially as the perpetrators and their families are often still living within the same communities. Lest they open old wounds and threaten the existing order of social relations, recollections of ideological enthusiasm and personal participation in brutal political campaigns continue to be repressed in casual conversations amongst friends and neighbors in Gyalthang. The unspeakable among the Gyalthangpa is not just the product of state repression, it is also a marker of locals' struggles with the nature of their own and other Tibetans' agency in (and responsibility for) the unprecedented shape and scope of state violence during the Mao era. This unease is certainly not unique to Tibetans in Gyalthang; similar sentiments have been observed

⁴⁶⁵ In 1986 the Chinese author Ba Jin proposed the building of a state-funded Cultural Revolution museum to educate young people about the atrocities that occurred during the Mao era. See Ba Jin, "A Museum of the Cultural Revolution," June 15, 1986, accessed January 5, 2011: <http://www.cnd.org/CR/english/articles/bajin.htm>. However, to this day, only a few private museums commemorating the Cultural Revolution have been built, such as the Cultural Revolution Museum in Guangdong Province and the Jianchuan Museum Cluster in Sichuan Province.

⁴⁶⁶ For a similar account of the challenges an anthropologist faced while interviewing Tibetan elders in Gansu Province about their experiences in the early Mao period, see Makley, "The Politics of Memory," 115-116.

by scholars working in other close-knit communities in China that were also deeply shaken by the trauma of Mao-era campaigns.⁴⁶⁷

During the course of my oral history research, elderly Gyalthagpa spoke to me about their reluctance to recall their experiences during the Cultural Revolution, particularly when speaking with younger members of their household. Many of these elders lamented that young Gyalthagpa are not interested in or seem unable to comprehend such a complex and rather unflattering narrative of their home town's recent past, perhaps because they are not being educated about Mao-era history in school.⁴⁶⁸ These elders complain that young people are only interested in landing decent-paying jobs, purchasing material goods, and socializing with their friends. They claim that Tibetan teenagers have very little interest in listening to their parents and grandparents recount the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution. There is a general sense among elders in this Tibetan community that the politically safer and psychologically less painful option is to remain silent and to let traumatic memories of the past be covered up by the day-to-day concerns of the present. While some elder Gyalthagpa said that they felt some responsibility to pass lessons that they learned from the Cultural Revolution down to the next generation, they also admitted that they had not yet made any concerted effort to do so. Many felt that the

⁴⁶⁷ In his ethnography on the politics of memory in Dachuan Village in Gansu Province, Jun Jing explores how tragic memories of the Cultural Revolution could not be completely acknowledged at the local level, since many victims and perpetrators of Cultural Revolution-era violence continued to live as neighbors in the post-Mao period. Jing, *Temple of Memories*.

⁴⁶⁸ Chen Xiaojing, the former governor of Shanghai (1964-1967) who recently wrote a carefully hedged account of his experiences as a Communist Party leader during the Cultural Revolution, explains that while many young people in China today know that their country was engulfed in a period of turmoil in the 1960s, very few have any real sense of the extreme nature of this revolution. He maintains that because the Cultural Revolution is no longer discussed in homes or classrooms, events that were once "earth shattering have now turned into words with vague and sketchy meanings." See Chen Pixian [pseudonym], *Chen Pixian huiyilu: zai "yi yue feng bao" de zhongxin* 陈丕显回忆录: 在"一月风暴"的中心 [Chen Pixian's Memoir: In the Midst of the January Storm] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2005).

emotional hurdles were too high and the political risks too great for them to justify spending much effort trying to educate the younger generations about the past.

Resisting Historical Erasure

Despite the fact that traumatic stories of the Cultural Revolution were rarely shared amongst family members and neighbours in the reform era, a new social practice began to emerge in the 1980s and 1990s. This involved the ritual of returning material objects to their original location. It served, in some ways, as a form of rewriting the past.⁴⁶⁹ Tibetan villagers slowly started returning the wooden beams, carvings, statues, furniture, silver coins, and copper utensils that they had stolen from Ganden Sumtsenling Monastery during the Cultural Revolution, apparently out of the belief that holding onto these items would lead to bad karmic consequences.⁴⁷⁰ It was common knowledge that households that had not returned pilfered items after the end of the Cultural Revolution had been afflicted with illness or other tragedies.⁴⁷¹

One older Tibetan cadre in the Zhongdian County government confessed that for many years he owned a large segment of a wooden pillar that had been taken from Sumtsenling in

⁴⁶⁹ In her ethnography on tourism and development in Shangri-la, Åshild Kolås reports that a Tibetan woman who witnessed the destruction of Sumtsenling Monastery in 1966 confessed in an interview that, in the reform era, locals had started feeling increasingly uneasy about possessing religious objects that had been stolen during the Cultural Revolution. Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 44.

⁴⁷⁰ According to the *Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Gazetteer of Religion*, the prefectural government also returned more than 258,700 RMB in cash and 9,000 confiscated ritual implements, Buddhist statues, and thangkas to Gyalthang monasteries and temples between 1983 and 1993. For more on the Diqing Prefectural Committee's 1983 decision to "Return Misappropriated Funds and Religious Implements to the Buddhist Temples" (*Qingtui tuipei siyuan caichan faqi de gongzuo* 清退退赔寺院财产法器的工作), see DZZZZ, 114.

⁴⁷¹ Kolås, *Tourism and Tibetan Culture in Transition*, 44. In a similar vein, in the 1990s, Khenpo Jikme Phuntsok in Sertar prescribed purifying rituals to Buddhist practitioners who had broken their monastic and tantric vows or engaged in other transgressions during the Cultural Revolution. David Germano, "Remembering the Dismembered Body of Tibet: Contemporary Tibetan Visionary Movements in the People's Republic of China," in Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein, ed. *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 70.

September 1966. His family used this chunk of wood as a table, positioning it near their wood stove in order to place dishes on it while preparing meals. One cold November evening in 1988 it caught fire. The fire spread quickly and nearly destroyed their entire house. Early the next morning, believing that the house fire had been caused by their involvement in the desecration of Sumtsenling twenty years earlier, his family followed the example of other Tibetan residents in town and secretly returned this stolen wooden pillar back to the monastery under the cover of darkness, even though it was charred and entirely useless to the young monks then in residence.⁴⁷²

Some of the wooden window screens, statues, and furniture that had been taken from Sumtsenling in 1966 remained in people's homes until a devastating fire burned down nearly two-thirds of the buildings in Gyalthang's old town on January 11, 2014.⁴⁷³ One Gyalthangpa asserted that it was inevitable that a fire of this scale would take place, as it served to cleanse the town of all the wooden carvings and furniture that had been stolen from the monastery in 1966.⁴⁷⁴ Other residents insisted that what had been "cleansed" during this fire was not the town's karmic debt to Sumtsenling Monastery, but rather its last two decades of rampant commercialization.⁴⁷⁵ Most of the buildings that burned in this fire were Tibetan and Naxi houses that had been leased to business owners and then converted into bars, stores, and

⁴⁷² Interview with former Tibetan cadre in the Zhongdian County government, June 9, 2013.

⁴⁷³ Chris Buckley, "Fire Ravages China District Said to Inspire Shangri-la," *New York Times*, January 11, 2014, accessed January 20, 2015: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/12/world/asia/fire-destroys-hundreds-of-homes-in-ancient-tibetan-town.html?_r=0.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with elderly Gyalthang resident, August 2, 2014.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with a business owner whose guesthouse burned in the fire. Interview conducted while standing on a rubble pile marking the former entrance to his guesthouse, Gyalthang, June 10, 2014.

guesthouses catering to tourists. A few months after the fire, the Shangri-la County government drew up a three-year plan to carefully reconstruct the “old” town of Gyalthang, complete with cobblestoned streets lined with cafes, shops, and discos. New plumbing, electrical wiring, and broadband cables have now been installed underneath the town’s meandering streets and building supplies have been trucked in to construct high-end hotels and restaurants.⁴⁷⁶

It is not in the economic interest of local government officials or of local residents who hope to benefit from the tourism industry to dwell on the fact that thousands of local residents destroyed Tibetan religious and cultural artifacts, struggled against respected elders, and demolished nearly all Tibetan temples in the region during the Cultural Revolution. To a certain extent, therefore, the silencing of historical memory is the product of local, state, and corporate collaboration. Responsibility for the trauma caused by the Cultural Revolution remains complex: the perpetrators of violence were arguably also victims of the coercive environment of the time. Many residents have therefore chosen to remain silent about their participation in the Cultural Revolution, and sustained religious and political repression in the reform era has made it difficult for elderly Tibetans to collectively come to terms with their involvement in past atrocities. Nearly four decades after the end of the Cultural Revolution, politically, economically, and emotionally driven historical amnesia continues to live on in Gyalthang.

⁴⁷⁶ Ben Hillman, “Shangri-La: Rebuilding a Myth,” *The China Story Journal* (November 16, 2015), accessed April 5, 2016: <https://www.thechinastory.org/2015/11/shangri-la-%E0%BD%9E%E0%BD%84%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%A2%E0%BD%B2%E0%BC%8B%E0%BD%A3%E0%BC%8B-rebuilding-a-myth/>.

CONCLUSION

Scholarship written in the post-Mao era that focuses on Communist campaigns in Tibetan areas has frequently employed ethnicity as a mode of historical analysis.⁴⁷⁷ Yet, as this case study of Gyalthang demonstrates, conflicts in some Tibetan areas in the 1950s and 1960s were not necessarily viewed and articulated by local residents as *ethnic* conflicts in quite the same way that they are today. Viewing Communist political campaigns in Tibetan areas through predominately ethnic lenses, without also taking into account the similarities between campaigns in Tibetan, Han, and other areas, may result in ahistorical understandings of how local notions of identity transformed during the Mao and post-Mao eras. Melvyn Goldstein maintains that during the Cultural Revolution,

Tibetans were forced to abandon deeply held values and customs. Although this policy was implemented all over China, because Tibetans' national and cultural identity was so closely associated with Buddhism, the attacks on these struck squarely at Tibetans' core ethnic identity in a way that the destruction of Chinese Buddhism or Christianity did not do for Han Chinese.⁴⁷⁸

The collectivization of monastic land during land reform, coupled with the physical destruction of Tibetan monasteries and temples prior to or during the Cultural Revolution, profoundly influenced the religio-cultural identities of Tibetans who grew up during the Mao era. However,

⁴⁷⁷ Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*; Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, Vol. 1-3*; John Avedon, *In Exile from the Land of Snows: The Dalai Lama and Tibet since the Chinese Conquest* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1997).

⁴⁷⁸ Melvyn Goldstein, "Introduction," in Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein, eds., *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 10.

studies of other communities in China, where Han Chinese residents similarly participated in destroying their own religious institutions and targeting their own community leaders, indicate that the fabric of these communities was also torn apart by the trauma of these campaigns.⁴⁷⁹ During the reform era, many Han Chinese communities also began to restore their Buddhist monasteries, Confucian and Daoist temples, and Catholic churches, and revive or rearticulate very local religious practices.⁴⁸⁰ It seems logical, then, to question how—or even if—the experiences of Gyalthang residents were all that different from those of rural residents living anywhere else in China during the socialist and post-socialist periods.

Pursuing this question by reframing this study as a comparative one (between Gyalthang and other communities in China) might reveal new patterns or insights about the Cultural Revolution in Han and non-Han areas. However, this approach also has its methodological limits. Recent scholarship on the Cultural Revolution has begun to paint an even more detailed and nuanced picture of the extent to which people’s experiences of the Cultural Revolution differed widely. Students at particular middle schools, residents of different cities, farmers in different parts of the country, and workers of diverse class backgrounds experienced the Cultural Revolution in distinct ways.⁴⁸¹ Class status, gender, age, location, ethnicity, occupation, friendship group, personality, kinship relationships, educational background, and ideological

⁴⁷⁹ See, for instance, Jing, *Temple of Memories*; Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 204; Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 167; Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸⁰ Tim Oakes and Donald Sutton, eds., *Faiths on Display: Religion, Tourism, and the Chinese State* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).

⁴⁸¹ Andrew Walder, Yiching Wu, Joel Andreas, Jonathan Unger, and Felix Wemheuer, participants, “Grassroots Factionalism in China’s Cultural Revolution: Rethinking the Paradigms,” Roundtable at the *Association for Asian Studies Conference*, Seattle: March 31, 2016.

orientation all greatly influenced how people were affected by—and became involved with—Mao era campaigns. Therefore, it seems rather unproductive to generalize about the ways that Gyalthang residents experienced the Cultural Revolution and to compare these experiences with those of Han Chinese living elsewhere in China.⁴⁸² I have taken a different approach in this study, which is to examine how ethnicity *along with other factors* played a role in shaping the experiences of Gyalthang residents during the Mao era.⁴⁸³

The current amount of local interest in ethnic identity and ethnic difference in Gyalthang seems to be a relatively new phenomenon. The attention paid to ethnicity in the reform era has been shaped by 1) the Chinese state's initial loosening of certain restrictions on religious and cultural practices in the reform era, 2) the Yunnan Provincial government's focus on ethnic tourism as a development strategy in the twenty-first century, and 3) the emergence of a new form of pan-Tibetan identity and sentiment in the aftermath of the 2008 protests.⁴⁸⁴ However, although it seems as though ethnic identity was not emphasized or articulated in quite the same way in Gyalthang in the 1950s and 1960s as it is today, a strong sense of local identity still existed. The construction and negotiation of ethno-political identity in Gyalthang was as much informed by inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relationships and perceptions as it was by local

⁴⁸² This seems particularly important given the recent publication of scholarship focused on deconstructing “Han” identity. See Thomas Mullaney, James Leibold, Stéphane Gros, and Eric Vanden Bussche, eds., *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China's Majority* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

⁴⁸³ A few scholars are currently taking this micro history approach and compiling very local histories of the Cultural Revolution. See, for instance, Felix Wemheuer's and Yiching Wu's work, especially in the “Conference on the 50th Anniversary of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: New Perspectives on Provincial and Local Histories,” Cologne: University of Cologne, April 22-24, 2016.

⁴⁸⁴ For more on the strands of pan-Tibetan nationalism that have spread through parts of Kham, Amdo, and Central Tibet in the aftermath of the 2008 protests, see Ben Hillman and Gray Tuttle, eds., *Ethnic Conflict and Protest in Tibet and Xinjiang: Unrest in China's West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

residents' relationships with the Chinese state. In other words, the tensions, concerns, conflicts, and everyday grievances at the forefront of the minds of Gyalthang Tibetans were as much shaped by their relationships with other local ethnic groups (such as the Naxi, Yi, Bai, and Hui) and non-local Tibetans as they were by their relationships with the Han Chinese or state.⁴⁸⁵ In Gyalthang, as in much of the rest of China, local understandings of ethnic identity, authority, and the state cannot really be separated from very local conceptions of place, family, religion, and power.

Gyalthang is an area that represents, in many ways, the interface of the Tibetan world with many other ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse worlds in southwest China. This part of the Tibetan plateau is truly multi-ethnic, linguistically complicated, and anything but culturally homogenous. Historically the Naxi controlled large regions of Northwest Yunnan and throughout the twentieth century, the southernmost regions of Gyalthang were predominately populated by Naxi residents. Naxi merchants, *dongba* ritual practitioners, and landowners played important roles in Gyalthang society in the twentieth century and many Naxi business people and cadres remain in positions of authority in Gyalthang today. During the late 1940s, the underground Communist Party gained support among young Naxi residents of Lijiang, and some of these educated Naxi youth introduced Tibetan and Bai merchants in Lijiang to Communist ideology.⁴⁸⁶ It seems probable, therefore, that early Communist activists in Gyalthang, many of whom were Tibetan, Naxi, and Bai, were not met with the same degree of mistrust as they might have been in other areas of the Tibetan plateau.

⁴⁸⁵ Charles McKhann, "Naxi, Rerkua, Moso, Meng: Kinship, Politics and Ritual on the Yunnan-Sichuan Frontier," in Michael Oppitz and Elizabeth Hsu, eds., *Naxi and Moso Ethnography: Kin, Rites, Pictographs* (Zürich: Völkerkundemuseum Zürich, 1998), 23-46.

⁴⁸⁶ White, "Town and Village Naxi Identities in the Lijiang Basin," 134.

Furthermore, as the first two chapters of this study illustrate, given the geographic location of Gyalthang—and the local elite’s complicated relationships with representatives of the Qing and Republican governments—the Gyalthang elite did not necessarily initially view Chinese Communist leaders’ efforts to gain control over Gyalthang with a great deal of suspicion. Unlike in certain other parts of the Tibetan plateau, the need to alternatively negotiate with or creatively resist Chinese governments’ encroachments into Gyalthang territory was not a foreign one for Gyalthang religious and secular leaders. In Central Tibet, Amdo, and possibly other parts of Kham, where Communist campaigns were often imposed by Han cadres who could not communicate with local Tibetan residents, ethnic differences and notions of a Tibetan “us” versus a Chinese Communist “them” may have been more stark.⁴⁸⁷ As a result, due to Gyalthang’s ethnic and cultural heterogeneity and its location along the Sino-Tibetan frontier, local support for particular Mao-era campaigns may have been more extensive in Gyalthang than in other Tibetan areas. However, fragmented evidence from other Tibetan regions also suggests that Tibetan participation in the Cultural Revolution may have been far more widespread than many scholars originally assumed.⁴⁸⁸

The abrupt ideological U-turn and that took place on a national level in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution was augmented at the local level by religious and secular leaders’ efforts

⁴⁸⁷ For an examination of how one Amdo Tibetan community experienced the early years of collectivization, see Benno Weiner, *The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier: State Building, National Integration and Socialist Transformation, Zeku (Tsékhok) County, 1953-1958* (Ph.D. dissertation: Columbia University, 2012). Melvyn Goldstein presents a different perspective on Tibetan nomads’ experiences in Western Tibet. See Melvyn Goldstein, “Change, Conflict and Continuity among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists: A Case Study from Western Tibet, 1950-1990,” in Robert Barnett, ed., *Resistance and Reform in Tibet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 76-111.

⁴⁸⁸ Jan Wong, “Tibet: Life at the Top of the World,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto) December 10, 1994; Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 320-323; Goldstein, et. al., *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*.

to condemn the violence and destruction of the Mao-era. By the early 1980s, the Red Guard movement had been officially denounced—and, for the most part, publically accepted—as a source of social chaos. Fear of social instability explains why the occasional memoir penned by a former Red Guard that offers a less condemnatory account of the Cultural Revolution has not been well received by the Chinese government.⁴⁸⁹ In many areas of the country, including Gyalthang, it seems to have been generally accepted that the only acceptable way to view the Cultural Revolution was to regard it as a grave mistake.⁴⁹⁰ In the early 1980s county governments and local residents in many parts of China publically condemned the recent destruction of their own local religious and cultural institutions, but very few people publically proclaimed their own responsibility for these past mistakes. It was much more common that

⁴⁸⁹ These memoirs often do not emphasize the bitterness of the so-called “ten years of turmoil” (*shinian dongluan* 十年动乱), and occasionally go so far as to valorize the Red Guards’ actions during the Cultural Revolution. The identity of the Red Guards—as opposed to the sent-down youth, even though these two groups overlapped greatly—has gained negative connotations in the political discourse of contemporary China. In contrast to the images of social unrest and adolescent violence that the term “Red Guards” evokes, the hardship that the sent-down youth experienced in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution gives the rustification experience a tint of glory. See Peter Zarrow, “Meanings of China’s Cultural Revolution: Memoirs of Exile,” *Positions* 7: 1 (1999): 184; Mobo Gao, *The Battle for China’s Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pluto, 2008); Guobin Yang, “China’s Zhiqing Generation: Nostalgia, Identity, and Cultural Revolution in the 1990s,” *Modern China* 29 (3) 2003: 289.

⁴⁹⁰ An incident that took place in 1985 in Xianyang, Shaanxi Province highlights the post-Mao government’s attempts to suppress public awareness of some of the more positive aspects of the Cultural Revolution. In 1985 a poster was put up on a wall on Northwest Cotton Factory Number One that proclaimed “*Wenhua da geming hao* 文化大革命好” (The Cultural Revolution Was Good). The authors of this poster listed what they considered to be the merits of the Cultural Revolution, such as the fact that hybrid rice crops were invented, people became politically energized, and large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Nanjing Bridge were built. The poster alarmed local and national Communist Party officials and an investigative team from Beijing was dispatched to Xianyang to research the incident. A young worker was quickly found guilty and sentenced to ten years in jail. See Wu Zhenrong 武振荣 and Deng Wenbi 邓韞璧, “*Yiyi renshi yu minyun renshi yitong bian* 异议人士与民运人士异同辨 [On the Differences and Similarities between Dissidents and Democrats],” *Da cankao* 大参考 [*Big News*], April 3, 2004, accessed March 4, 2010: <http://www.bignews.org/20040403.txt>.

people who had formerly taken pride in being revolutionary activists, now took measures to cover up their past activities.⁴⁹¹

As I argue in Chapter Three, the written sources and oral narratives that I have been able to access indicate that Tibetan participation in the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang was widespread. The extent of Tibetan participation raises a number a number of questions about agency, choice, resistance, responsibility, and lament in Gyalthang. To what extent did coercion play a role in Tibetan complicity in the dismantling of Sumtsenling Monastery, as well as in the other actions that villagers took during the Cultural Revolution? During interviews that I conducted in 2012 and 2013, some Gyalthang residents described the Cultural Revolution as a campaign that had been imposed by the Han Chinese, but others recounted viewing the “Destroy the Four Olds” campaign as yet another in an ongoing series of national political campaigns in which they had taken part since the mid-1950s. How appropriate or theoretically useful is the concept of “collaboration” when it comes to explaining why some religious and secular leaders joined forces with representatives of the Chinese Communist state in the 1950s in response to mounting social and political pressures? Can and should the collaboration/resistance paradigm be applied to the choices, adjustments, and compromises that Tibetans made under Chinese Communist rule?⁴⁹² Why hasn’t this paradigm been applied to Han villagers in other parts of

⁴⁹¹ One anthropologist recounted conversations he had in 2012 with a number of middle-aged Uighurs who had relocated from Kashgar to Aksu in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. These men and women claimed that they had joined the entirely Uighur Red Guard movement in Kashgar and had attempted to destroy the Id Kah Mosque during the Cultural Revolution. In the early 1980s their families were forced to leave Kashgar and move to Aksu in order to find them suitable Uighur marriage partners, since many Uighur families in Kashgar refused to let their sons and daughters marry former Red Guards. Personal communication with Rune Steenberg Reyhe at the *Association for Asian Studies Conference* in Seattle on April 2, 2016.

⁴⁹² Robbie Barnett argues that certain members of the Tibetan exile community and some of their sympathizers in the West have unfairly—and, according to him, inaccurately—applied what he terms the “collaborator-martyr” model to Tibetan leaders who have worked with representatives of the Chinese Communist Party. See Barnett, “Beyond the Collaborator-Martyr Model.”

China who similarly had to make difficult choices under coercive conditions during the Mao era?⁴⁹³ How might we begin to answer these thorny questions?

Attempting to navigate a binary between resistance and collaboration may not be the most fruitful way forward when it comes to exploring what actually occurred in Gyalthang during the 1950s and 1960s. As Timothy Brook points out in his scholarship on Chinese wartime collaboration under Japanese occupation in the 1930s, the terms collaboration and resistance are too stark when it comes to understanding how people handle daily decision making in a particularly complex and coercive environment.⁴⁹⁴ Collaboration often takes place when individual people are pressured into dealing with each other and they end up making compromises in order to go on with their lives.

When underground Communist Party agents first started negotiating with the Tibetan elite in Gyalthang in the late 1940s, it is unlikely that many Tibetans suspected that these negotiations would turn into a very lengthy Chinese occupation of eastern Tibet. After all, Gyalthang residents had become accustomed to being ruled by whichever warlord, village head, *tusi*, or Republican government representative held power in the area at any given time. The day-to-day struggles that villagers faced were roughly the same regardless of who held the reins of power, so people often got on with their lives, even when doing so meant adjusting to the demands of external powers. This made the fact that they were being governed by their Tibetan village heads who reported to the Chinese Communists as plausible as the fact that they used to

⁴⁹³ Apart from historians of Taiwan or of the Chinese civil war (1937-1949), very few historians have used the term “occupation” to describe how the Chinese Communist Party gained control over Han Chinese rural areas in the 1940s and 1950s.

⁴⁹⁴ Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 26-30.

be governed by the same elite group of Tibetan leaders who reported back to the Nationalists, and prior to that, the Qing. Gyalthang's Tibetan leaders could not have foreseen in the late 1940s how complicated things would quickly become in the decades ahead.

In the first few years of the Chinese Communist Party's administration in Gyalthang, local Tibetan, Naxi, Bai, and Han leaders were co-opted into the government and offered high administrative posts. Apart from cultivating the elite to take part in the new Communist government, the Communist Party also worked hard to cultivate a sense of revolutionary consciousness among ordinary Tibetan residents of Gyalthang. Patient "thought work" was a crucial component of the Communists efforts to create a sense of the voluntary and natural participation of the people in the revolution, land reform, and in the lead up to the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁹⁵ In Tibetan areas, this process of "socialist education" (*shehui zhuyi jiaoyu* 社会主义教育), which was grounded in a narrative plot of socialist advance, began with obligatory meetings in which locals were asked to recall past hardships through "speak bitterness" meetings.⁴⁹⁶ At compulsory group meetings, Tibetans were required to produce and listen to testimonials ascertaining their consciousness of class-based oppression in the so-called "Old Society" and their recent "liberation" under communism.

Many of the Tibetan religious and secular leaders who might have originally voiced strong opposition to the Cultural Revolution had either been forced into labor camps during the anti-rightist campaign of 1957-1958, or, like Wangchuk Tempa, found that they did not have the power to resist new political campaigns after they had been co-opted into the Communist Party's

⁴⁹⁵ Jonathan Unger, "Introduction," In Jonathan Unger, ed., *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 1-8.

⁴⁹⁶ Sun, *Social Suffering and Political Confession*.

governing structure. Certain Tibetan leaders, such as Liu En and Zangbum Dorje, were in the unenviable position of justifying and implementing land reform and other campaigns right up until they became the targets of brutal struggle sessions during the Cultural Revolution. Does the “collaboration/resistance” model make sense in places like Gyalthang where the local authorities, policy implementers, and sometimes even policymakers, are themselves Tibetan?

In “L’état, c’est nous, or We Have Met the Oppressor and He Is Us: The Predicament of Minority Cadres in the PRC,” Stevan Harrell explores how China’s basic level cadres (*jiceng ganbu* 基层干部) have been called upon to play a dual role that involves representing the state to the community and representing the community to the state. This dual role has placed them in the kind of double-bind situation common to people who find themselves in the position of being state-community intermediaries. Throughout the history of the People’s Republic of China, the ability of basic-level cadres to negotiate state-community relations has been seen as crucial to the success of policy implementation. Harrell argues that if state-minority relations, or state-community relations in minority areas, were simply Han-minority relations, there would be very little to write about—it would be a situation of clear and direct colonial rule. However, as he points out, the Chinese state, although it is Han Chinese in its policy-making leadership and in its intellectual and policy directions, is not entirely Han in its personnel. An important part of the minority policy and state administration in minority areas is to bring minority people into the state as cadres at various levels—not only at the brigade or village level, but also as salaried government cadres at the township, county, prefectural, and provincial levels of the administration. Indeed, one of the most strategic moves in the Chinese Communist Party’s approach to ethnic minority policies has been the inclusion of ethnic subjects in the research and management process itself.

Given the extent to which community relationships, local religious authority, and the Chinese state were interconnected in Gyalthang by the late 1950s, to what extent did Tibetans have agency, in the wider coercive sense of the word agency, in the 1960s? Studying agency has long been a matter of great concern for scholars interested in the varied social histories and politics of the Maoist era.⁴⁹⁷ This concern with Mao-era agency stems from a wider theoretical concern with recognizing the importance of peoples long considered marginal to the construction and shaping of political policies. The sharp delineation between state and society that occurs in many of these studies that attempt to locate and explain agency, often obscures the complicated sets of politics that exist in local communities. This effort to locate agency often loses traction exactly at the points where state and society begin to blur—that is where the source, intention and consequences of agency become unclear.⁴⁹⁸ Kimberley Manning posits that state language and state policies significantly influence how people come to recognize themselves as social and political beings. She argues that state discourses generate, certify and validate certain subjectivities while invalidating others. The state does not just provide the tools for “peasants” or “workers” to exercise their agency, but also the vocabulary and the motivation necessary to understand and internalize that agency in the first place. This further complicates questions of agency, since the process of becoming a “peasant” or a “worker” transpires, in part, “through the state’s normalisation and naturalisation of new social categories.”⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Vivienne Shue, *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*; Kimberley Manning, “Communes, Canteens, and Crèches: The Gendered Politics of Remembering the Great Leap Forward” in Ching Kwan Lee and Guobin Yang, eds., *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 93-118.

⁴⁹⁸ Manning, “Communes, Canteens, and Crèches,” 576.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

Since very little scholarship on the Cultural Revolution in China's ethnic minority areas has been conducted to date, it is hard to determine the degree to which revolutionary fervor was geographically widespread in China. It seems likely that a complex and very local mixture of coercion, class-based ideology, youthful enthusiasm, and communal or personal resentments led to different dynamics and different kinds of participation in the Cultural Revolution in Tibetan and other ethnic minority areas. Unfortunately, the nature of the currently available written sources limits our ability to come to more definite conclusions about many of these issues. We simply do not yet have access to all of the pieces of this very complicated puzzle.

Due to these missing pieces, when it comes to determining *why* events occurred as they did during the Cultural Revolution, one is often left with only educated assumptions. A few questions about the Cultural Revolution in Gyalthang that remain unanswered in this study include: precisely which social forces led Tibetans in Gyalthang to get involved in the Cultural Revolution? Who, specifically, held the reins of power in Gyalthang at any given moment in the years leading up to and during the Cultural Revolution? Why did those who had a certain amount of power act in the ways that they did? During the course of my archival, ethnographic, and oral history research in Gyalthang, I often felt that my sources raised more questions than they answered. Ironically, this may be their most important contribution to our understanding of the Cultural Revolution in Tibetan areas and in China as a whole.

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