



1825 Jefferson Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
T +1 202 785 1515  
F +1 202 785 4343  
E [info@savetibet.org](mailto:info@savetibet.org)

[www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)

**ICT-Europe**

Vijzelstraat 77  
1017HG Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
T +31 (0)20 3308265  
F +31 (0)20 3308266  
E [icteurope@savetibet.org](mailto:icteurope@savetibet.org)

**ICT-Deutschland e.V.**

Schönhauser Allee 163  
10435 Berlin  
Germany  
T +49 (0)30 27879086  
F +49 (0)30 27879087  
E [ict-d@savetibet.org](mailto:ict-d@savetibet.org)

**ICT-Brussels**

11, Rue de la Linière  
1060 Brussels  
Belgium  
T +32 (0)2 6094410  
F +32 (0)2 6094432  
E [ict-eu@savetibet.org](mailto:ict-eu@savetibet.org)

The International Campaign for Tibet is a non-profit membership organization that monitors and promotes internationally recognized human rights in Tibet. ICT was founded in 1988 and has offices in Washington, DC, Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels.

**The Communist Party as Living Buddha:**

The crisis facing Tibetan religion under Chinese control

©2007 by the International Campaign for Tibet  
Printed in the USA

Design: William Whitehead Design [www.WmWhiteheadDesign.com](http://www.WmWhiteheadDesign.com)



## THE COMMUNIST PARTY AS LIVING BUDDHA

THE CRISIS FACING TIBETAN RELIGION UNDER CHINESE CONTROL

A report by the International Campaign for Tibet  
Washington, DC | Amsterdam | Berlin | Brussels  
[www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)

Tibet Autonomous Region Party chief Zhang Qingli recently labeled the Chinese Communist Party a 'living Buddha' and a 'parent' to the Tibetan people. (Xinhuanet, March 2, 2007)

Cover: An image of the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, seen in a monastery in eastern Tibet near a photograph of the Dalai Lama. It is relatively rare to see an image of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who was taken into custody at the age of six, in Tibet. This picture is unusual because it portrays him in ceremonial religious robes, which have been superimposed onto the only known image of him as a child to have been made public.

## THE COMMUNIST PARTY AS LIVING BUDDHA



THE CRISIS FACING TIBETAN RELIGION UNDER CHINESE CONTROL



A report by the International Campaign for Tibet  
Washington, DC | Amsterdam | Berlin | Brussels  
[www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)

## CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	3
<b>THE SUN AND THE MOON: The Dalai Lama and The Panchen Lama</b> .....	9
<b>CHINA’S REGULATION OF RELIGION AND ITS IMPACT</b> .....	21
<b>A SONG FROM TIBET ABOUT THE 17TH KARMAPA</b> .....	28
<b>FIRST PERSON: “We always have His Holiness in our hearts”</b> .....	29
<b>THE ‘SENSITIVE MONTH OF MARCH’</b> .....	33
<b>A ‘LIFE OR DEATH STRUGGLE’</b> .....	37
<b>FIRST PERSON: “Every time His Holiness visited a foreign country, the authorities showed up”</b> .....	43
<b>THE BUREAUCRACY OF REPRESSION</b> .....	49
<b>FIRST PERSON: An insight into the ‘Gya Panchen’</b> .....	53
<b>TREASURE-SEEKERS AND VISIONARIES: The future for Tibet’s religious culture</b> ....	57
<b>FIRST PERSON: A Chinese monk’s conversion; a story from the mainland; a Serthar nun’s quest</b> .....	65
<b>FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF MONASTERIES AND TOURISM</b> .....	73
<b>FIRST PERSON: “Monasteries may not promote any learned lamas”</b> .....	75
<b>REPRESSION OF ALL RELIGIONS IN CHINA</b> .....	81
<b>POEMS FOR THE PANCHEN LAMA</b> .....	85
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	87
<b>OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS</b> .....	89
1. TAR Measures for Implementation of the ‘Regulations for Religious Affairs’ ....	89
2. Statements from the Regional United Front Nationalities Work Conference ....	100
3. Rules for Monks .....	104
4. The System of Managing Novice Monks Entering the Monastery .....	105
5. Patriotic Pledge .....	105
6. The Monastery System of Democratic Management .....	106
7. Monastery’s System of Political Study .....	108
8. What is Religion? .....	109
9. Written Responses to a General Survey on the Situation of Training of Professional Teachers and on Education at Kardze Monastery .....	111
10. Reflections on Certain Conditions at the Monastery .....	114
11. Sign at the Karmapa’s Monastery in Tibet .....	117

### NOTE ON GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS

Tibet was traditionally comprised of three main areas: Amdo (north-eastern Tibet), Kham (eastern Tibet) and U-Tsang (central and western Tibet). The Tibet Autonomous Region (Chinese: *Xizang Zizhiqu*) was set up by the Chinese government in 1965 and covers the area of Tibet west of the Yangtse River, including part of Kham, although it is often referred to now as ‘central Tibet’ in English. The rest of Amdo and Kham have been incorporated into Chinese provinces, and where Tibetan communities were said to have ‘compact inhabitancy’ in these provinces they were designated Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties. As a result most of Qinghai and parts of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces are acknowledged by the Chinese authorities to be ‘Tibetan’. The term ‘Tibet’ in this report is used to refer to all these Tibetan areas currently under the jurisdiction of the People’s Republic of China.

# CHAPTER 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**G**EDUN CHOEKYI NYIMA, recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, marked his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and official adulthood on April 25, 2007 following more than a decade in Chinese custody. The Panchen Lama has come to symbolize for many Tibetans the crisis facing the survival of their religious culture in Tibet today.

This report demonstrates how seriously Beijing takes the enduring influence of the Dalai Lama and, therefore, the need to strengthen its position as the ‘official’ arbiter of Tibetan Buddhist culture. Through official documents obtained from Tibet, analysis of regulatory measures on religion, and first person testimony, the report documents a trend of tightening control over religious practice and scholarship in Tibet today.

As Chinese officials and envoys of the Dalai Lama pursue a process of dialogue on core issues related to the future of Tibet, including religious freedom, this report, based in part on nine official documents on religion obtained from Tibet since 2005 and others from public sources, reveals:

- Disturbing precedents on restrictions to religious practice in the Tibet Autonomous Region
- A stepping up of the patriotic education campaign in religious institutions
- A commitment by the government of the People’s Republic of China to strengthen the powers of the Chinese Communist Party’s control mechanisms in religious institutions
- A renewed determination by Chinese authorities to crack down on the influence of the Dalai Lama in Tibet
- The severe undermining of traditional systems of monastic education
- Appropriation by the atheistic Chinese state of authorities necessary for the transmission of teachings and the identification of incarnate lamas



Despite the ongoing political control and patriotic education, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama still inspire Tibetans’ sense of cultural affinity and national identity. Forms of dissent such as the display of photos of the Dalai Lama reflects Tibetans’ unremitting sense of loyalty and hope. This image was taken in a monastery in the Tibetan area of Kham and depicts the Dalai Lama on the left and the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama on the right. Photo: ICT

## INTRODUCTION

Gedun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, is 18 on April 25, 2007, marking his official coming of age following more than a decade in Chinese custody. The disappearance of the Panchen Lama, acknowledged as one of Tibet's most important religious leaders, and the installation of an alternative candidate by Beijing, has come to symbolize for many Tibetans the crisis facing the survival of their religious culture in Tibet today.

Gedun Choekyi Nyima's fate is of profound religious, spiritual and political significance to Tibetans and to Tibet's future. It exemplifies the Chinese authorities' current systematic approach towards undermining both the authority of the Dalai Lama and the core belief system at the heart of Tibetan Buddhism.

As the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism gain in popularity and influence worldwide — including among many Chinese — Beijing has entrenched its position on religion, introducing stringent new regulatory measures in an attempt to curb the Dalai Lama's authority and control religious practice.

The new restrictions on identification and control of reincarnate lamas (tulkus) also reflect an attempt to deal with the Party's failure in ensuring the allegiance of key religious leaders, such as the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, who escaped into exile in 2000 following Beijing's attempts to groom him as a 'patriotic' figure, and Arjia Rinpoche, the then abbot of one of the most important Gelugpa monasteries in eastern Tibet, who defected in 2000 after Beijing sought his endorsement of the Chinese Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu. Both senior religious leaders made strong statements about the lack of religious freedoms in Tibet on arrival in exile.

Implementation of state religious policy has been particularly harsh in Tibet because of the close link between religion and Tibetan identity. Tibetan Buddhism continues to be an integral element of Tibetan identity and Tibetan nationalism, and is therefore perceived as a potential threat to the authority of the state and 'unity' of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese Communist Party, which promotes atheism, requires its citizens to 'love the country' in other words, to respect the authority of the Party, above all would-be competing loyalties. Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Party boss Zhang Qingli even claimed recently that the Chinese Communist Party is the 'real Buddha' for Tibetans (Xinhuanet, March 2, 2007). Political allegiance is an official prerequisite for registration at monastic institutions and to be considered by the state as a 'religious person.' This is an inversion of the priorities

of a Buddhist practitioner, whose focus would naturally be to their spiritual path or religion first.

China attempts to convey an image to the world of government tolerance for religion. In Tibet, it may appear that some monastic institutions are thriving, and that Tibetans are still able to express their devotion through traditional rituals; yet, the reality behind the appearance is quite different. Monasteries that once housed thousands of monks are now reduced to a few hundred whose main responsibility is no longer religious study but tending to the buildings and tourists.

Obtaining a complete religious education in Tibet today remains difficult or impossible, especially in central Tibet. While Beijing has officially promoted the reinvigoration of the traditional 'Geshe' degree, the most advanced level of scholarship possible in the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism (typically requiring 20 years of intense study), in practice, Beijing has taken measures both to undermine the degree's status and accessibility to teachers and the course of study.

As part of the tightening control and regulation of religious practice, 'patriotic education' campaigns in Tibetan monasteries, nunneries and the wider society have been stepped up, and the powers of the Democratic Management Committees (DMC), which have long supplanted the traditional role of the abbots and reincarnate lamas and are responsible to the Party for control of religious institutions, have been strengthened.

The oppressive atmosphere has been underlined by the leadership of Tibet Autonomous Region Party chief Zhang Qingli,<sup>1</sup> who has announced his intention to intensify strict political control over the practice of Buddhism. Using harsh rhetoric against the Dalai Lama reminiscent of Cultural Revolution jargon, Zhang Qingli has referred to a "life or death struggle" against the Dalai Lama and his "clique";<sup>2</sup> and described the Tibetan religious leader as the "biggest obstacle hindering Tibetan Buddhism from establishing normal order".

<sup>1</sup> For background on Zhang Qingli, see the following reports by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 'TAR Party Secretary calls for tighter control of Tibetan monasteries, nunneries', [www.cecc.gov](http://www.cecc.gov), 21 June 2006, and 'Xinjiang Communist Party official Promoted to Acting Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region', the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, November 28, 2006, [www.cecc.gov](http://www.cecc.gov).

<sup>2</sup> Meeting of Party officials on May 16, reported by Xinhua in Chinese on 21 June 2006.

Even so, after nearly 50 years in exile, the Dalai Lama continues to inspire loyalty among his people. Tibetans in Tibet express their devotion and allegiance through songs, poems, and careful subtle acts of dissent. Pop singers write lyrics reflecting pride in their culture and spiritual leaders, while intellectuals discuss the ongoing dialogue between the Dalai Lama's envoys and the Chinese leadership in the new space for debate afforded to those with sufficient skill to access internet chatrooms and blogs. When the Dalai Lama expressed his 'shame' at Tibetans in Tibet wearing wild animal pelts, thus endangering Asia's wild animals, Tibetans all over Tibet held spontaneous burnings of fur coats, hats, and ceremonial robes, often worth thousands of *yuan*. The inspiration for their actions was clear.

This report shows that one of the most ancient and sophisticated religious cultures in the world faces its most serious threat to survival under Chinese control. The most potent symbol of this culture, the Panchen Lama, a religious leader who has traditionally had a unique relationship with the Dalai Lama, is being held in custody somewhere in China and deprived of the teachings essential for his religious tradition to continue. The fate of this boy, no longer a child, is inextricably linked with Tibet's.



Reproducing images of the Dalai Lama in all forms is still forbidden in many areas of Tibet, especially in the TAR. However, faith in their spiritual leader does not diminish as this hidden mural in a private house in Lhasa demonstrates. Photo: ICT

## CHAPTER

## 2

## THE SUN AND THE MOON

## THE DALAI LAMA AND THE PANCHEN LAMA



A shrine in Tibet, featuring an image of the Chinese Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, which was probably enforced by the authorities. Expressions of spiritual devotion in Tibet are complex and subtle, and things are not always as they seem on the surface. Visitors to Tibet may not always be aware of the hidden images of the Dalai Lama, the significance of a tray of offerings under one image but not another, or the danger of a whispered prayer in a place where an otherwise everyday experience of devotion can be regarded as a criminal act. Photo: ICT.

*“Even in the smallest and most remote villages people ask you where is the real Panchen Rinpoche. There is an overwhelming interest in the status of the real Panchen Rinpoche and his well-being. We talk only amongst our trusted friends about the plight of Tashi Lhunpo [the Panchen Lama’s monastic seat in Tibet] and precarious future of Panchen Rinpoche. Except for a few Chinese loyalists, every monk wishes for his safe return.”*

— A monk from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery who is now in exile

Historically, the Panchen Lama has been one of Tibet’s most highly revered religious figures, with a unique relationship to the Dalai Lama. On occasion, Panchen Lamas have played a role in the recognition and subsequent education of Dalai Lamas, and vice versa, which is why control over the institution of the Panchen Lama is considered to be so crucial by Beijing.

Tibetans believe that the Panchen Lama, whose title means ‘Great Scholar’, is an important spiritual teacher who has a disposition to fulfill his lineage. But given that Gedun Choekyi Nyima has been in Chinese custody for more than a decade, it is inevitable that the development of his intellectual capacity for profound logic and debate that his successors were famed for has been severely curtailed.

Lodi Gyaltzen Gyari, Special Envoy of the Dalai Lama, explained: “The system of reincarnation is one of the core beliefs of Tibetan religious tradition. China’s state custody of Gedun Choekyi Nyima and imposition of its own candidate is nothing less than a violation of this core belief system, one of the fundamental tenets of Tibetan religious life. It is a source of deep resentment among Tibetans that an atheist state has claimed the legitimacy to preside over a centuries-old religious practice.”

Buddhist philosophy posits an individual’s rebirth is determined by their actions, or karma, in their current and previous lives and their state of mind at the time of death, and that individuals — such as the Dalai Lama — who have gained a high enough degree of meditative stabilization can control their next rebirth.<sup>3</sup> Although China is attempting to control any future incarnation of the Dalai Lama through holding Gedun Choekyi Nyima in custody, the Dalai Lama has clearly asserted on

numerous occasions that if the present situation regarding Tibet remains the same, he will be born outside Tibet away from the control of the Chinese authorities, saying: “The very purpose of a reincarnation is to continue the unfinished work of the previous incarnation. Thus if the Tibetan situation still remains unsolved it is logical I will be born in exile to continue my unfinished work. Of course the Chinese will still choose their own Dalai Lama and we Tibetans will choose our own according to tradition. It will be similar to the present situation of the Panchen Lama. There is a Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama and there is the Panchen Lama chosen by me. One is paraded to serve its master’s purposes and the other is the Panchen Lama accepted in the hearts of all the Tibetans.”<sup>4</sup>

New regulatory measures adopted in Tibet indicate an aggressive and wide-ranging approach towards controlling the selection, installation and education of reincarnate lamas. The articulation of this policy in such detail also appears to be a reflection of Beijing’s failure to control and co-opt other reincarnate lamas, such as the Karmapa and Arjia Rinpoche, of key importance to the continuance of Tibetan Buddhism.

The dramatic escape from Tibet of the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, Ugyen Trinley Dorje, head of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, in 2000, was a severe setback for the Party leadership. The Karmapa, who was the first reincarnate lama to be recognized by the Dalai Lama as well as being accepted by Beijing, was being groomed as a ‘patriotic’ figurehead by the Party.

---

<sup>3</sup> In Tibet, the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth took on a distinctive form in recognizing chains of successive rebirths of particular lamas, referred to in the West as ‘reincarnate’ and other senior lamas with the respectful title of Rinpoche or ‘precious one’ or sometimes as tulku (Tib: *sprul sku*), literally rendered as manifestation body. While most individuals are “thrown” into their next rebirth without their own control, Tibetan Buddhism asserts that at the time of death certain individuals can direct when and where their next rebirth will take place.

<sup>4</sup> The Dalai Lama has also said that whether the institution of the Dalai Lama remains or not depends entirely on the wishes of the Tibetan people. In a statement featured on his website, [www.dalailama.com](http://www.dalailama.com), His Holiness says: “It is for them [the Tibetan people] to decide. I made this clear as early as in 1969. Even in 1963, after four years in exile, we made a draft constitution for a future Tibet which is based on the democratic system. The constitution clearly mentions that the power of the Dalai Lama can be removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the Assembly. At the present moment, the Dalai Lama’s institution is useful to the Tibetan culture and the Tibetan people. Thus, if I were to die today, I think the Tibetan people would choose to have another Dalai Lama. In the future, if the Dalai Lama’s institution is no longer relevant or useful and our present situation changes, then the Dalai Lama’s institution will cease to exist.”

Similarly, the quiet defection to the United States of the then abbot of Kumbum Monastery, Arjia Rinpoche, in 1998, was humiliating for Beijing. Arjia Rinpoche, who held many political positions at the central and provincial level, was regarded by the Chinese authorities as a ‘patriotic’ figure, and had been given a degree of freedom to promote Tibetan culture and language. But after his arrival in the US, Arjia Rinpoche made it clear that he had left because of Chinese attempts to enforce approval of the Chinese Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu. In a statement to a hearing on religious freedom in China held in the US, Arjia Rinpoche said: “Had I remained in Tibet I would have been forced to denounce the Dalai Lama and my religion and to serve the Chinese government. This meant also participating in government practices that went against my religion and personal beliefs. As Abbot of the Kumbum Monastery, I would have been forced to help the government have its choice of the Panchen Lama accepted by the Tibetan people. This would violate my deepest beliefs. It was at this point that I knew I must leave my country.”<sup>5</sup>

The Chinese government chose not to issue strong statements condemning the departures of both Arjia Rinpoche and the Karmapa even after they both expressed their concerns in exile about the lack of religious freedom in Tibet. Former President and Party Secretary Jiang Zemin even wrote a verse praising Arjia Rinpoche following his departure, and encouraging him to come back. The senior abbot was only removed from his post on the national Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and its Standing Committee two years after his defection.<sup>6</sup>

In response to the Karmapa’s flight, the Chinese official media issued a statement saying that he had simply left in order to collect his ‘black hat’, the symbol of his lineage, from the 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa’s exile seat at Rumtek in Sikkim.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese authorities continued to make discreet efforts to communicate with the Karmapa in exile following his arrival in India, in order to encourage him to return.

The new regulatory measures on reincarnate lamas that came into force in the TAR in January 2007, include no less than four clauses on the recognition of tulkus

---

<sup>5</sup> Statement to a hearing on religious freedom in China organized by the Commission on International Religious Freedom in Los Angeles on March 16, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Arjia Rinpoche belatedly removed from office’, report by the former Tibet Information Network, June 27, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> The black hat is a symbol of the Karmapa’s authority, which his followers believe is woven from the hair of female deities, is in Sikkim, India.



Gyaltsen Norbu, known to many Tibetans as Gya Panchen is received at the Great Hall of the People by China's President and Party Secretary, Hu Jintao, giving the seal of high-level approval on his installation. Hu Jintao appropriates the traditional Tibetan tradition of the presentation of a 'katag' (white scarf).

representing a more consistent approach than before to undermining the traditional authority of the Dalai Lama on reincarnation (see Official Document 1 "TAR Measures for Implementation of the 'Regulations for Religious Affairs'", Articles 36-39, at the end of this report).

While the 1991 regulations on religion stated only that recognizing tulkus could not be used as a means for 'foreign infiltration', the 2007 measures now specify that: "Organizations and individuals may not, without the authorization of the autonomous region religious affairs department, search for or recognize tulkus and soul boys." [Article 36]. In case this is unclear, the same clause states further: "The reincarnation of tulkus in traditional Tibetan Buddhism is handled, at a place of religious activity under the guidance of a religious organization, in accordance with relevant provisions of the state and autonomous region, and in accordance with

religious traditions and historical systems." It should be noted that China defines a 'religious person' and 'religious organization' based upon acceptance of the supremacy of the Communist Party.

The Party also aims to manage the entire education of reincarnate lamas, particularly through a 'school for tulkus' in Beijing, which locates the young lamas away from the Tibetan plateau.

The religious authority of Tibetan lamas, such as the Panchen Lama, is deeply important to the Communist Party in terms of ensuring its control over Tibetan areas. "The Communists may have felt that raising a generation of Tibetans without religion during the Cultural Revolution would put an end to the need to work with and through the religious elite, but the revival of Buddhism in the period of reforms made it clear they were wrong," says Professor Gray Tuttle of Columbia University.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China," Gray Tuttle (Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 230. Gray Tuttle is assistant professor of modern Tibetan studies, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University, New York.

"The Chinese Communists, like the Republic's nationalists before them, have found that Tibet can only be ruled through religion."

Other measures taken by the authorities to control the entire system of reincarnation include the co-opting of Tibetan lamas into the process and a barely-disguised system of 'reward and punishment'. Some lamas have been empowered by the Communist authorities to recognize new tulkus, challenging the legitimate religious system, and with the result of risking division in the religious community. This is implemented in such a way that religious figures who express loyalty to the Dalai Lama are penalized, while those who denounce the Dalai Lama accrue certain privileges, such as increased numbers of monks being allowed to attend the monastery, funding for essential renovations or improvements to monastic institutions, or political appointments.

A first-person account in this report gives an example. Officials visiting the monastery advised the monks to worship Shugden, a controversial deity or spirit which the Dalai Lama has explicitly requested his followers not to worship, at least partially because of the division it causes within Tibetan religious communities. The monk told ICT that officials advised that if they worshipped Shugden, they would allow new admissions to their monastery and grant the monks other benefits. This was not based on any understanding of the worship of protector deities, but on a specific intention to undermine the Dalai Lama. He said: "They say that His Holiness is a separatist and that people should not follow his advice." (See First Person: "Every time His Holiness visited a foreign country, the authorities showed up".)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LINEAGE

Khen Rinpoche Lobsang Tseten, the abbot of the Panchen Lama's monastic seat in exile, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in south India, confirmed that at this stage in his studies, the Panchen Lama should have completed or be near completion of the second of the five major subjects of Tibetan Buddhism known as Madhyamaka (Tib: *dbu-ma*), or the Middle Way, in addition to texts on the Perfection of Wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Khen Rinpoche Lobsang Tseten himself left Tibet in 1960, a year after the March 1959 Uprising which led to the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile, because he was unable to continue his religious studies. He began his monastic life at the age of seven in his native Ladakh, a culturally Tibetan region of northeast India, and when he was 15 he walked almost 800 miles to study at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tibet, most of it barefoot. As he is now abbot of the Panchen Lama's monastery in exile, he is in effect performing the traditional role of the Panchen Lama.



Among the vast array of popular practices performed by any Tibetan monastic or lay devotee prostrations and pilgrimage are the most common. Here a group of monks and lay people measure their way to Lhasa with body-length prostrations as a form of spiritual practice and accumulation of merits. Photo: ICT

The first of the five subjects, Prajnaparamita (Tib: *phar-phyin*), or the Perfection of Wisdom, takes at least five years of study and the second takes around four years. But as he has been held in Chinese custody, he will not have been able to receive the oral transmissions and education that he needs in order to fulfill the lineage that is so critical within Tibetan Buddhism.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, Ugyen Trinley Dorje, head of the Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, has been living in exile close to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, northern India, since his escape in 2000. He told ICT that he was compelled to

escape in order to fulfill his lineage responsibilities: “From my perspective, I am a lineage holder and have a responsibility to continue that lineage. I have inherited a historic and religious responsibility and it is my duty to uphold it. Therefore, as a young monk, I need to receive teachings from older teachers in my lineage in order to fulfill my duty. Specifically, this means that I need to receive the tantric initiation, the oral transmission of texts, and the explanation of meditation techniques. There are specific traditions to follow for each school of Tibetan Buddhism and the lineages within those schools. The reason I fled Tibet was because I was not given the opportunity to fulfill my duty as a lineage holder. I tried for many years to secure invitations for my teachers who reside outside of Tibet. This failed and thus my religious education was failing. Therefore, I was not able to receive the initiations and teachings I needed so I left Tibet.”<sup>10</sup>

When asked about the Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, the Karmapa said: “For the time being, I don’t think we really can look at those questions. Right now, we don’t even know where he and his family are. So for right now, we should be concerned more with his safety and health than to think about any religious role for the young Panchen. I am not optimistic about being able to see him anytime soon.”

Khen Rinpoche Lobsang Tseten, who in essence is now performing the Panchen Lama’s role as the abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in exile, said: “The Panchen Lama is crucial to the continuation of Tibetan Buddhism in the world. The Tashi Lhunpo Monastery is like an orphan without [Gedun Choekyi Nyima], we just want him to be able to leave [China], and to have an education.”

Gedun Choekyi Nyima’s predecessor was known as an outspoken advocate for the preservation of Tibet’s unique cultural heritage, language and religion. The 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama’s 70,000 character petition remains the most extensive internal criticism of Chinese Communist policies ever submitted to the leadership.<sup>11</sup> Mao Zedong reacted by denouncing the report as a “poisoned arrow shot at the Party”, and its author as a “reactionary feudal overlord”. Two years later, the Panchen Lama was condemned without trial as an enemy of the people, and spent most of the following 14 years in prison or under house arrest before his death in 1989.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Interview in 2002, two years after his arrival in exile.

<sup>11</sup> ‘A Poisoned Arrow: The Secret Report of the 10th Panchen Lama’, published by the (now closed) Tibet Information Network, London, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Also see ICT’s report, ‘When the Sky fell to Earth: The New Crackdown on Buddhism in Tibet’, 2004, available as a pdf at [www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org).

## THE REINCARNATION SYSTEM

Tibetans speak of the eldest of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama as the ‘spiritual father’ of the younger. In the Gelugpa tradition, the symbiosis of the spiritual ‘father’ and ‘son’ is often referred to as the sun of the Dalai Lama, and the moon of the Panchen Lama, and their spiritual relationship is said to stretch beyond lifetimes.

The Panchen Lama reincarnation identification team has traditionally been made up of senior lamas from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. As with other reincarnate lamas, their methodology involves visions that prophetically direct their search to the true reincarnation. Following these mystical signs, the lamas test the best candidates by asking them to identify personal objects owned by the previous Panchen Lama. Oracles are then consulted and divinations performed to reconfirm the final candidate. Traditionally, the Dalai Lama has himself carried out these final steps on occasion. During the search for the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, the search party compiled a list of numerous young boys who were potential successors to the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama. The abbot of Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Tibet, Chadrel Rinpoche, head of the search team, was allowed by the Chinese authorities to convey a message to the Dalai Lama about the recognition process. After numerous divinations, on May 14 1995, the Dalai Lama proclaimed six-year old Gedun Choekyi Nyima to be the 11<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. Three days later, the little boy and his parents were ‘disappeared’.

Denouncing the Dalai Lama’s choice as ‘illegal and invalid’, Chinese officials soon named Gyaltzen Norbu, who had also been considered as a candidate by the Dalai Lama during the search, as the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama. In an attempt to legitimize their selection, Chinese officials staged a “lot-drawing from a golden urn according to the established religious rituals and historical conventions of Tibetan Buddhism.”<sup>13</sup> The whereabouts of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, and his parents Dechen Choedron and Konchog Phuntsok, remain unknown. Foreign delegations have been denied access to him, despite repeated requests.

Pictures of the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama can sometimes be seen in Tibetan homes, despite their politically sensitive nature, but photos of Gyaltzen Norbu are often noticeably absent, as he is commonly referred to as the ‘Chinese Panchen’ (Gya Panchen). Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Khen Rinpoche said: “I don’t have any hopes [for Gyaltzen Norbu]. It’s good that he’s Tibetan, but he’s not the Panchen Lama.”

<sup>13</sup> [www.tibet.cn/tibetzt/panchen/banchan.html](http://www.tibet.cn/tibetzt/panchen/banchan.html)

The 1995 dispute over the Panchen Lama’s recognition gave impetus to the authorities to intensify restrictions on religion and the monitoring of leading religious figures, following the wide-ranging changes implemented at the Third National Work Forum on Tibet in July 1994, which emphasized increased restrictions on the spread of Buddhism and a campaign to destroy the religious as well as the political standing of the Dalai Lama.

Beijing’s campaign from 2005 onwards to challenge the Dalai Lama’s role as the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists by increasing the prominence of Gyaltzen Norbu raised the stakes still further. An official Chinese report on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gyaltzen Norbu’s installation referred to him as “the highest ranking figure in Tibetan Buddhism” and “the leader of Tibetan Buddhism”.<sup>14</sup> These official reports contradict previous official statements about the relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama; a 1992 Chinese White Paper described the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama as the “co-leader of Tibetan Buddhism with the Dalai Lama”.<sup>15</sup> Li Ruihuan, then a senior Politburo member, described the late 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama as “a prominent leader of China’s Tibetan Buddhism”.<sup>16</sup>

Gyaltzen Norbu’s first major public appearance internationally came at the World Buddhist Forum in 2006, the first major international Buddhist gathering hosted by the atheist Chinese government. The Dalai Lama, the world’s best-known Buddhist who is respected globally for his moral and religious authority, was not invited to the Forum (Chinese officials said that they felt he could “pose a disharmonious element if he attend[ed]”).<sup>17</sup> A teenage Gyaltzen Norbu, looking rather uncomfortable, was promoted as the main figure of the conference, where his speech “dwelt on Buddhism’s responsibility to foster patriotism and national unity.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> ‘Tibet marks Panchen Lama’s enthronement anniversary’, December 8, 2005, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-12/08/content\\_3895383.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-12/08/content_3895383.htm)

<sup>15</sup> State Council Information Office, “Tibet — Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation,” People’s Daily (Online), September 1992. See: [www.news.xinhuanet.com](http://www.news.xinhuanet.com)

<sup>16</sup> “‘Excerpts’ of Li Ruihuan’s Speech at the Third Meeting of the Leading Group for Locating the Panchen Lama’s Child Reincarnation in Beijing on 10 November,” Xinhua, 12 November 1995 (Open Source Center, 12 November 1995). Also see report by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China.

<sup>17</sup> Qi Xiaofei, vice-director of the state administration for religious affairs, was quoted as saying that the “Dalai Lama is not only a religious figure, but also a long-time stubborn secessionist who has tried to split his Chinese motherland and break the unity among different ethnic groups.”

The China Tibet Information Center, a source of news and information under the control of China's State Council, maintains an English-language website dedicated to Gyaltzen Norbu. While outdated, the site contains stories, photos and background information reflecting official propaganda on the selection of Gyaltzen Norbu, and criticizes the Dalai Lama for “meddling and creating chaos so as to sabotage the work” of choosing the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen.

The site reinforces Chinese propaganda and inaccurate ‘historical’ precedents, such as the belief that “according to historical conventions, the candidates for the potential reincarnated child must be reported to the central government [Beijing] for approval; after drawing lots from the golden urn and the reincarnated child was confirmed, the final choice should then be forwarded to the central government once more for approval.”

While the information provided does not make explicit reference to Gedun Choekyi Nyima by name, it does attempt to discredit claims that he is the true Panchen Lama. For instance, the false rumor is spread that “the parents of the Dalai Lama’s so-called reincarnated boy of the Panchen Lama withheld the truth and lied about their son’s real age. Their son was born before the death of the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama but they falsely claimed that the boy was born at the end of April 1989 in order to jibe [*sic*] with the birth date of the potential reincarnated child.”

#### A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PANCHEN LAMA

Numerous governments and non-governmental organizations throughout the world have attempted to persuade the Chinese authorities to be granted access to Gedun Choekyi Nyima in order to confirm that he is healthy and that his disappearance is the result of a choice by him and his family to shun the publicity that surrounded him — as claimed by the Chinese authorities.

Requests for access have been made through diplomatic channels, such as part of bilateral human rights dialogues, while other requests were based on instruments in

international human rights law such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the PRC in April 1992. The Chinese authorities, however, have dismissed all approaches to gain independent access by insisting in effect that his and his family’s right to privacy outweighs the rights of people to know of his status.

Gedun Choekyi Nyima will accrue very few tangible civil and political rights under Chinese law at the age of 18, and apparently none that would entitle him, his family or anyone entrusted by him to make known in public his personal views and wishes regarding his religious lineage. The Chinese Constitution only grants him “the right to vote and stand for election” — in a system where no meaningful democratic elections are held. Under the rest of the canon of Chinese law, legally he has the same rights and responsibilities as anyone else living under Chinese law.

It could be safely assumed that if he does want to independently make his personal views on his lineage publicly known — and if those views were not what the Chinese authorities would endorse — he would be likely to be subjected to a concentrated form of harassment, detention and other arbitrary controls inflicted on many religious and political dissidents living under Chinese rule. Even if he were to attempt to exercise the right to freedom of speech as defined in the Chinese Constitution, there are other provisions which allow for that and other rights to be negated to ‘protect’ the Chinese state — a point noted later in this report.

Neither does international law have much to offer Gedun Choekyi Nyima with regard to being permitted to freely discuss his views now he is an adult: he is possibly in an even weaker position under international human rights law having now lost the right to any special protections and considerations that should have been recognized when he was still a child. He will ostensibly gain internationally recognized rights to freedom of religious belief and freedom of expression as contained in instruments signed or ratified by the PRC including the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights or the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (although without state approval, he will not be an officially recognized ‘religious person’). However, these instruments have never been cited in a Chinese court of law and only scant progress has been made by the Chinese legislature to ensure that their provisions are reflected in the Chinese legal code — a major requirement of ratification.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Beth Markey, Vice-President of ICT, was quoted in press reports as saying: “This ‘religious forum’ looks more like a session of the Party Congress except that the participants standing in perfect formation are wearing maroon and saffron robes. And it’s shameful that Beijing has scripted Gyaltzen Norbu, already considered by Tibetans as the ‘fake Panchen’, with statements that are clearly untrue about religious freedom in China.” [www.iht.com/articles/2006/04/13/news/web.0413budd.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/04/13/news/web.0413budd.php).

## CHAPTER 3 CHINA'S REGULATION OF RELIGION AND ITS IMPACT



Next to religious services and rituals, one of the communal practices reserved to monastics is that of cham dances. This photo shows a group of performers during a pause at a cham dance at the Gonchen monastery of Derge in Kham. Photo: ICT

*“We must fully expose and bring into play the positive aspects in all religions which are beneficial to social harmony. We must diligently explain the demands on a religious creed of adapting to social progress, more broadly excavating and praising doctrinal thinking, behavior and discipline which is beneficial to harmony, at the same time as eliminating those aspects which are not beneficial to harmony.”*

— ‘Jia Qinglin and persons responsible at national religious organizations hold a forum to welcome the Spring’,  
Xinhuanet, February 12, 2007<sup>19</sup>

**B**EIJING’S TIGHT CONTROL over religious practice and teachings in Tibetan areas is based upon maintaining the supremacy and authority of the Chinese Communist Party. Although China’s constitution states that citizens of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have ‘freedom of religious belief’, the Party defines what is ‘acceptable’ religious behavior and religion is only tolerated as long as it does not interfere with or challenge the legitimacy and status of the Party. If the authorities regard the exercise of religious freedom as detrimental to the broader political concerns of the state, it will duly be suppressed. It remains impossible to challenge or question the Constitution in a court of law in China.

Over the past decade, the authorities have developed administrative and legal mechanisms that enable them to clamp down on any religious activities viewed as a threat to social stability and national unity, while claiming they are operating according to a ‘rule of law’.

A set of new regulatory measures that came into force in January 2007 is evidence of a tightening of control over religion that many Tibetans believe is stifling religious expression and practice. The ‘TAR Measures for Implementing the Regulations on Religious Affairs — the TAR version of the 2005 national Regulations on Religious Affairs, which are enclosed as a translation by ICT at the end of this report — form the main regulatory tool for administering religion in Tibet.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> In Chinese: ‘Jia Qinglin yu quanguo xing zongjiao tuanti fuzeren juxing yingchun zuotan’.

When it first announced the 2005 Regulations on Religious Affairs, the Chinese government stated that “the promulgation and implementation of these regulations will be beneficial to the protection of Chinese citizens’ freedom and rights of religious belief according to law, and to the respect and safeguarding of human rights as well.”<sup>21</sup> The regulations had been long anticipated — the consultation and drafting process had taken six years according to official accounts — and there were hopes among religious believers in the PRC that the regulations would indeed protect the right to freedom of religious belief.

But it became clear that the main purpose of the regulations both in the TAR and at the national level is undoubtedly to clarify and strengthen the CCP and government’s mechanisms of control over all aspects of religious activity. Crucially, the new regulations have not addressed a perennial concern with legislation on religion in the PRC — indeed, with all legislation covering civil and political rights in the PRC: opaque language which allows for arbitrary interpretation and implementation of the law.

The emphasis of the language in the January 2007 TAR regulations is towards favoring patriotism and political allegiance to the Communist Party over and above religious practice or principles.

The measures are much more explicit than before, with more clauses articulating the control of the Chinese state, which promotes atheism, over every aspect of Tibetan

---

<sup>20</sup> The 2005 Regulations on Religious Affairs are the main regulatory tool for administering all religions throughout the PRC, except for the five autonomous regions including the TAR. This is a standard legislative process in the PRC authorized by the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, which provides the legal framework for autonomous regions to adapt state laws “in the light of existing local conditions”. The national ‘Regulations for Regulations for Religious Affairs’ issued in March 2005 by China’s State Council — the highest legislative body in the PRC — were the first comprehensive measures for administering religion in the PRC, and were regarded by some observers at the time as an attempt to instill clarity and simplicity into the PRC’s otherwise complex and often conflicting legislation on religion. It was also suggested that the regulations reflected the Chinese government’s acceptance that religion could play a positive role in the state’s broader social and economic development plans. However, it was also noted that the regulations still did not carry the full weight of an actual law — a crucial difference in the PRC’s legislative framework — and this was regarded as evidence of uncertainty or disagreement among China’s senior leadership over how much legitimacy to afford religion in Chinese society. Indeed, in 1993, the Chinese President Jiang Zemin said that religion should be “guided to adapt to socialism”, a tenet which still features heavily in regulations on religion at all levels in the PRC.

<sup>21</sup> “Rules safeguard religious freedom in China”, *China Daily*, December 12, 2004.

religious life. In these new measures, even repairs to the structure of an existing monastery are under the state’s control.

Although he is not named explicitly in the regulations, the official language emerges from an acute awareness of the Dalai Lama’s continued influence in Tibet areas, given that the Party’s key aim is to undermine his authority. Article 34 of the regulations states that “professional religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures or other materials which harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security”, and “religious citizens may not request professional religious personnel to recite from banned religious texts.” Books by or about the Dalai Lama would fall into this category; monks, nuns and laypeople have been punished by prison sentences for distributing such material.

The new measures also allow the state to control the activities of Tibetan religious teachers who return to Tibet from exile, again with the intention of limiting the influence of the Dalai Lama. Article 45 states that: “Overseas Tibetan compatriots may participate in religious activities at places of religious activity in our region, but may not preside over religious activities, or engage in such activities as initiations into monkhood or nunhood, consecrations, expounding Buddhist sutras, proselytizing, or cultivating followers.” While policy and implementation vary considerably from area to area, this at least in theory effectively constrains learned lamas returning to Tibet to do little except turn a prayer wheel or make offerings.

The Chinese government also attempts to undermine the Dalai Lama by attempting to co-opt lamas into roles that undermine the Tibetan religious leader’s authority over such issues as reincarnation. Religious leaders and figures of influence in the community, as well as ordinary Tibetans, are also singled out for punishment if they demonstrate loyalty to the Dalai Lama. In October, 1999, a religious teacher in his forties, Geshe Sonam Phuntsok, was tortured and imprisoned for six years after he held a long life prayer ceremony for the Dalai Lama. The late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the founder of the important Larung Gar (Serthar) religious institute in Sichuan province (the Tibetan area of Kham), had also encouraged Tibetans to pray for the long life of His Holiness and his actions were noted by the authorities. The demolitions of nuns’ and monks’ homes and expulsions of Tibetan nuns and monks in 2001 documented later in this report, were linked to political concern over Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok’s strong influence in the Tibetan community and his perceived loyalty to the Dalai Lama, even though the Khenpo had managed to sustain good relations with local officials over many years.

Institutions or communities with specific associations to the Dalai Lama can be deprived of particular rights — in Nyarong County (Ch: *Xinlong*) in eastern Tibet, there are difficulties for many monks in obtaining travel documents, and also for Tibetans seeking to visit the area from outside, which is thought to be linked to the association of the region with the Dalai Lama's Special Envoy, Lodi Gyari, who was born in Nyarong as an important reincarnate lama and now lives in exile.

Some aspects of the national regulations are visible in the TAR regulations with little or no modification, such as the requirement to have approval from multiple tiers of government if a “place of religious activity” is to be built. But other areas of the TAR measures are certain to be extremely damaging to the practice and particularly the study of Buddhism in the TAR. For instance, in the 1991 regulations on religion in the TAR — which were superseded by the 2007 TAR measures — there was a single article regulating monks and nuns traveling for the purposes of study or for attending religious festivals, and the article was applicable only to travel between provincial-level administrations. Under the 1991 regulations, if a monk wanted to travel from the monastery in Qinghai where he was registered in order to study at another institution in the TAR for example, he would need to get permission and approval from both provincial-level religious affairs management departments in the TAR and in Qinghai. Travel into the TAR for the purposes of study was therefore made bureaucratic and cumbersome, and monks and nuns wishing to travel to the TAR to pursue their studies were regularly turned down. In Tibet, mobility is a crucial aspect of religious education for monks and nuns who travel to a specialized teacher to receive additional instruction. Strictly controlling or forbidding travel by monks and nuns is a considerable obstacle for the continuation and development of traditional patterns of education and religious practice.

In the case of the Gelugpa tradition, this was particularly damaging: monks from all over Tibet — not just in the TAR — need to study at the main monasteries in the Gelugpa tradition if they are to further their education to any meaningful level, and those monasteries — Sera, Ganden and Drepung — are all in Lhasa, in addition to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse (Ch: *Rigaze*). The provision in the 1991 regulations that monks needed permission to travel to the TAR — permission which was regularly denied — has meant that a whole generation of monks has been refused access to their chosen seats of learning.

The 2007 TAR measures are even stricter in their limitations on travel for the purpose of religious study: monks and nuns are now unable to travel even between counties in the TAR without permission, in this case from county-level religious affairs management departments.

Monks and nuns who have reached India continue to tell ICT that their main reason for choosing to leave Tibet, even temporarily, is so that they can continue their studies, as well as to obtain a blessing from the Dalai Lama. For many, it is the simple restriction on movement between monasteries and regions which led to their decision. And for some, the reason was that the host institution was not permitted to take in any more monks than the very low numbers set by the local religious affairs departments — which is a branch of the CCP as opposed to being a branch of government. A monk in his twenties from eastern Tibet who escaped into exile told ICT recently, “I came to India in order to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama and in order to be able to freely express my faith in him and to pursue my monastic education.”

Limitations on numbers of monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries is often cited by monks and nuns who escape into exile as the reason for their departure, because it was impossible for them to obtain a religious education in their area, and equally impossible to be admitted into a religious establishment further afield. Approximately a third of monks who escaped into exile in 2006 said that they had received no religious education at all; and less than 20% had received 10 years or more of education. It is worth noting that a monk or nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition takes their monastic vows for a lifetime, and thus religious education in their life is something that is then deepened in later years through contemplation and meditation.

Chinese government policies of control over religion extend not only to the regulation of monasteries, nunneries and religious practice, but also to more nuanced forms of cultural expression, including the incorporation of Tibetan religious figures onto official committees in China, and involving both Chinese and Tibetan scholars in attempts to promote the government's supposed tolerance and encouragement of religious activity.

#### **A RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL: BLOCKING THE ATTAINMENT OF THE GESHE DEGREE**

China continues to promote its role in reinvigorating the highest academic attainment in the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Geshe degree, a doctorate of Buddhist philosophy. In practice, however, Beijing has taken strong measures to undermine its status and block religious personnel from obtaining this qualification, which is critical for the continuation of Tibetan religious scholarship.

Traditionally Geshe degrees were conferred only after a monk had passed an arduous course of scriptural study and been examined on other disciplines.<sup>22</sup> The Chinese authorities stopped the conferral of the Geshe degree initially in 1966, at the start of the Cultural Revolution, and after its brief resumption in the years of relative liberalization afterwards, blocked its practice again in the wake of large-scale demonstrations by monks and nuns in the streets of Lhasa in the late 1980s. This meant that for two decades the highest degree in Tibetan Buddhism was no longer available in Tibet and candidates had to go into exile in India if they hoped to study for and be awarded the degree.

The Chinese authorities have since re-instituted the degree in Tibetan areas and in Beijing,<sup>23</sup> and in June 2006, the Geshe pre-exams were held at the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa. While this was initially regarded as a positive sign, according to Tibetan sources, restrictions on religious practice and the poor quality of teachings and traditional instruction mean that in many areas, it is either impossible to obtain or lacks legitimacy. Monks would traditionally have to travel to the major three monasteries in the TAR, Sera, Drepung and Ganden, for conferral, a practice that is not possible for many under the new regulations. Standards of the Geshe degree have also been affected by the politicized and highly regulated climate. A Western Buddhist practitioner who has interviewed monks in the TAR said: “Monks studying for the Geshe degree in Tibet often acknowledge the standards are much lower than before, at least in the TAR.<sup>24</sup> This is a reason for many to escape into exile in order to study at the exile Buddhist monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden in south India.”

A Tibetan scholar and writer based in exile told ICT: “I understand that there’s still content on [the five major texts] in the Geshe examinations in Lhasa, but that the content is much simpler than before. What’s even more regrettable and ridiculous is that the examinations are not set by high monks, but by officials working at the Buddhist Association and these officials are actually lay people.<sup>25</sup> And candidates for the Geshe have to be selected before the exam not on the basis of achievements in Buddhist studies but on the basis of their political studies. So they first have to sit an exam on politics arranged by the work committee at their monastery, and it’s only if they pass can they then go and take the Geshe exam. Also, the traditional Buddhist high-level scriptural debates and examinations on reciting scriptures held in Beijing all have political content, including the requirement to ‘love the country, love religion’ — content which is heavily emphasized.”

A full translation of the TAR Measures for Implementing the Regulations on Religious Affairs is included in the section of Official Documents.



Communal recitations of religious texts at the Assembly Hall of a monastery in Tibet. Photo: ICT

<sup>22</sup> The Dalai Lama began his monastic education at the age of six. At 23 he sat for his final examination in the Jokhang Temple, Lhasa, during the annual Monlam (prayer) Festival in 1959. He passed with honours and was awarded the Lharampa degree, the highest level Geshe degree.

<sup>23</sup> There appear to be moves to attempt to centralize the process in Beijing.

<sup>24</sup> This does not only apply to the senior levels of scholarship. A recent and frequent visitor to several major monasteries in Lhasa told ICT that monks appeared to be debating very elementary subjects for their age.

<sup>25</sup> The TAR has recently established a Geshe Degree Examination and Appraisal Committee comprised of 16 people including people from traditional Tibetan Buddhism circles such as high tulkus and scholars, all under the supervision of lay people and government offices.

## A SONG FROM TIBET ABOUT THE 17<sup>TH</sup> KARMAPA

The following song was written by a young Tibetan pop singer in eastern Tibet about the escape of the Karmapa, and his continued influence on young people in Tibet despite his exile. The song is featured on the popular video website [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

### POTALA'S ROOF (RED PALACE'S ROOF)

Oh, marvelous Karmapa  
Your unwavering strength,  
leaves the enemy shivering.  
In this luminous world,  
you have left an inerasable footprint.

Oh, marvelous Karmapa  
You left without any hesitation,  
The position created for you in deception.  
And with magnificent stride,  
You have crossed the Himalayan Range.

Oh, my guru,  
Guru of my mind [repeat]

Oh, marvelous Karmapa  
Your heroic glory  
Make us, the children of the snow, proud  
My savior, the smile on your magnificent face,  
Illuminates the world with white rays.

Oh, marvelous Karmapa  
Your loyalty so pure and sincere,  
It restored life to the snow mountain.  
Your incomparable competence  
Had surpassed the five continents.

Oh, my guru,  
Guru of my mind



Ugyen Trinley Dorje, the then 14-year old 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, in disguise in jeans and baseball cap making his daring escape from Tibet. He was the first Buddhist reincarnated monk to be recognised by the Dalai Lama and also accepted by Beijing, which attempted to groom him as a patriotic leader. Photo: Dargye

## CHAPTER 4 FIRST PERSON

“WE ALWAYS HAVE HIS HOLINESS IN OUR HEARTS”

A TIBETAN MONK from the Kham region of eastern Tibet (now incorporated into Sichuan province), whose monastic institution is frequently visited by patriotic education work teams, gave ICT the following account of his fears for the future of religious education and practice as a result of ‘two different cultures’ in Tibet.

“I think the main reason they [the Chinese authorities] advocate the destruction and control of us [monks and nuns] is that there is such deep dedication to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In fact, we always have His Holiness in our hearts. It doesn’t matter where we go or how many houses they destroy, we have him in our hearts and there is nothing the Chinese can do about that. The Chinese work teams, who are actually mostly Tibetan cadres, when they come here they tell us we shouldn’t have any devotion at all to His Holiness, and they say that we have to say this ourselves and say it out loud. For me, this is not possible. I won’t say it. You have to say it, they tell us. They demand that we have to say, ‘I have no faith in or devotion to the Dalai.’ This will not come from me. They keep a ledger book with the names of those who say it and those who will not say it. They want us to sign this book, but many do not.

“During the political education classes they conduct in the assembly halls, they tell us if we refrain from creating turmoil, and if we support the unity of Tibet and the motherland, then we will not be bothered by the authorities. Basically they tell us two things: we should not carry out any separatist activities and secondly that we should not support the well-being or pray for His Holiness the Dalai Lama or for the Tibetan government in India. They are always saying that we should not think of, pray for, or perform religious ceremonies for the well-being of His Holiness. I wonder sometimes if they think that by us doing rituals for His Holiness it somehow works — but they probably don’t think that. Maybe the Tibetan officials believe that.

“We always have our own ideas, we have our own minds, and we have our own deep sense of pride in our hearts. But the Chinese have the power.

“Young children [in Tibet] want to go to school so they have to go to Chinese schools. There are very few schools that aren’t Chinese schools in this area. So at Chinese schools children cannot study religion and so our culture and religion is slowly

degenerating into a strange kind of Chinese culture that the Chinese don't accept anyway. Our culture is endangered by the Chinese culture. They are two different cultures — this is clear. Chinese teachers in schools tell the students about how bad the Dalai Lama is, they tell the youngsters that they should not visit and especially should not stay at a monastery, and tell them not to study religion. Their reasoning is that religion is not good for the mind, and that it will stop children becoming part of China's prosperous future and economic progress. They even give sponsorship to families for sending their kids to Chinese schools in my area. The Chinese are happy to see Tibetans going to Chinese schools, not Tibetan schools; and even happier to see them succeeding in Chinese schools. Success for Tibetan children in school, as far as the Chinese are concerned means that they know nothing of the Dharma and that they are certainly not supportive of the Dalai Lama.

“Our education is being damaged. Our children are not being given the basic elements of our culture which are undeniably based on the Buddhist teachings. I know I am a monk so one would expect me to say such things. But it doesn't take a monk or a scholar to realize that our culture is a Buddhist one — Tibetan culture is based on Buddhism, and there is no Tibetan culture without Buddhism. And one need not look too far to see how much devotion to the Dalai Lama there is among Tibetan people, both historically and today. How can they just take out such integral elements of our culture and then say they are allowing us to be Tibetan? Unfortunately, what the Chinese are doing is working. Children now believe that the only thing that's going to bring them happiness is working for money to buy Chinese goods. And all the while our culture is disappearing.”



Cham dances are usually performed on the occasion of important religious festivals and anniversaries. The image depicts one of the deities during the Sungma Düchen or 'Buddhist Protectors' Festival' at Gonchen Monastery in Derge, Kham. Photo: ICT



Tibetan landscape with prayer flags. Photo: ICT

A NEW AND DISTURBING PRECEDENT was set in the month before Gedun Choekyi Nyima’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, when an order was issued to all residents of Lhasa not to visit monasteries or temples, perform circumambulations or make incense offerings. This highly unusual order was issued at meetings of neighborhood committees on around March 10 2007, and is thought to have been linked to an instruction issued by the cabinet (Kashag) of the Tibetan government in exile in India to make offerings for the long life of the Dalai Lama on March 14 — possibly in an attempt to prevent large gatherings. This instruction was issued by the Tibetan government in exile as 2007 is known as a year of potential spiritual ‘obstacles,’<sup>26</sup> according to traditional Tibetan astrological calculations.

According to a source in Tibet, “When news of the ceremony [for long life prayers] reached into Tibet, Tibetans there prepared to mark the occasion, but there was a particularly strong reaction against this by the Chinese government. On March 12, emergency meetings were convened at all levels of government in the TAR as well as in companies and enterprises and in residential committees. An order was issued forbidding any kind of religious activity at this time, and anyone who violated the order would be punished with being dismissed from their job and even detained.” A comment on one website by a Tibetan stated that it was becoming known as the ‘sensitive month of March’.

Security and surveillance were stepped up in Lhasa, and according to Tibetan sources, these increased measures included plain-clothes police patrols, or uniformed police, and even fire and army trucks patrolling the city to try to prevent Tibetans from carrying out religious rituals, or even simply making offerings.

Tibetan residents of Lhasa, however, were not discouraged and apparently continued their religious activities, quietly circumambulating the temples, burning incense and making offerings.

<sup>26</sup> The Kashag included a note in its annual March 10 statement, commemorating the anniversary of the 1959 Uprising in Tibet, asking for people to say special prayers for His Holiness “on the 25th day of the first Tibetan lunar month”, ie March 14. The statement continued: “The Kashag, therefore, requests all the Tibetans and friends of Tibet in their respective places to engage in meritorious activities and pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the fulfillment of all his wishes.”

There is no known precedent for stopping public religious practice for all Lhasa residents, even for such a short time. Even during sensitive festivals or anniversaries, generally only officials or students are forbidden from marking the occasion, and not all citizens of the city. Celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday is banned every year.

The order that stepped up security was preceded by a ban on Tibetan government workers, retired staff and cadres, students and Party members from commemorating an important Buddhist anniversary in December 2006, according to an official notice published in a Lhasa newspaper. The announcement, published on December 12, 2006 in the Lhasa Evening News [*Lasa wanbao*] stated that it had become necessary for the government and Party to "strengthen and tighten up the education, guidance and management of the broad masses of cadres and staff", and as a result it was not permitted to "participate in or observe celebrations of the Gaden Ngachoe Festival", which marks the passing of the important 14<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist teacher Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Again, this apparently indicates an ominous tightening of restrictions on religious practice. While such instructions have been conveyed before, they are usually pasted up temporarily, or given verbally during work unit or neighborhood committee meetings. A written statement in a newspaper may be unprecedented.<sup>27</sup>

The latter half of 2006 was also marked by increased expressions of hostility towards the Dalai Lama from Tibetan leaders as well as the TAR Party chief, and the requirement of some Tibetan government workers in Lhasa and other areas to make long, handwritten denunciations of their religious leader, causing considerable despair.

The intensification of patriotic education has led to several incidents of unrest and resistance in Lhasa's three major monasteries over the past two years.

At least 18 monks were expelled from Sera Monastery in the three months from May to July 2005. Jangchub Gyaltzen, a monk at Sera Monastery disappeared in July 2005 and was thought to have been expelled from the monastery and placed under a form of police supervision having recited a prayer that included a reference to the Dalai Lama.

In November 2005, at least five monks were expelled from Drepung Monastery when a group of monks refused to comply with demands to denounce the Dalai Lama and pledge allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party. Several monks, including the senior lama thought to have led the protest, were detained by members of the People's Armed Police. Monks gathered in the courtyard in a rare silent protest against the treatment of the monks who were detained, which in turn led to the monastery being closed for at least two days.

The incidents at Drepung Monastery in November 2005 are thought to have been spurred at least in part by the death of a young monk called Ngawang Jangchub in October, the day after he had argued with the patriotic education instructors about denouncing the Dalai Lama. The exact circumstances of his death are not publicly known, although it is likely that he committed suicide.

More than 40 nuns were expelled from Gyabdrag Nunnery in Lhundrub County in Lhasa Municipality in June 2005 by officials conducting patriotic education, and additional uncorroborated reports claimed that 13 nuns were expelled from Shugsib Nunnery in Chushul County also in Lhasa Municipality for refusing to denounce the Dalai Lama.

<sup>27</sup> See ICT report, Tibetans banned from marking traditional Buddhist anniversary, January 9, 2007, at [www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1077](http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1077)



Public security bureau officers visit influential religious personalities and monasteries regularly. Their presence is particularly visible during political and patriotic campaigns as in this photo taken at a monastery in Sichuan province (a gun holster is visible on the belt of one of the security officials). Photo: ICT

THE MAIN AIM of the patriotic education campaign in Tibetan areas, which reaches even the most remote monasteries and nunneries, is to tighten Party control over religion and undermine the influence of the Dalai Lama in society and religious institutions. It is known in Tibetan as *rgayl khces ring lugs bsam blo'I slob gso*, literally meaning 'love your country, love religion'. This underlines the basic message of the campaign — that loyalty to the state is a pre-requisite to being a good monk or nun. The message is reinforced by posters hanging in prominent positions around monastic institutions listing the various political and ideological qualities expected of monastics — translations of several examples of these posters can be seen in the Official Documents section at the end of this report.

Patriotic education in monasteries and nunneries is devised and implemented by democratic management committees (DMCs) composed of monks and nuns who have ostensibly been elected by other members of the monastic community. However, their appointment needs to be approved by local government officials. This entire system undermines and supplants the traditional hierarchical layers of authority in Tibetan religious institutions. DMCs are expected to serve the interests of the government and not those of the monastery or nunnery's population. As Zhang Qingli told a Lhasa conference on 'anti-splittist' work in May 2006: "Ensure that leadership powers at monasteries are in the hands of religious personages who love the country and love religion."<sup>28</sup> As this report has shown, the message conveyed by putting love of the country, that is, the Chinese 'motherland' before love of religion is unambiguous in Chinese political discourse.

Soon before he was formally installed as TAR Party Secretary, Zhang Qingli indicated his intention to intensify strict political control over the practice of Buddhism in the TAR. During the same speech in mid-May 2006 cited above on implementing "anti-splittist work", he called on government workers and Party members in the TAR to "treat monasteries as a basic social unit, treat DMCs as a basic-level [government] organization, treat DMC members as non-Party basic-level cadres with responsibility for a special mission, and treat the broad masses of patriotic monks and nuns

<sup>28</sup> See: 'Zhang Qingli: Ensure Tibet's leap over-style development and long term order and security' (*Zhang Qingli: Quebao Xizang kuayueshi fazhan he changzhi jiu'an*), May 18, 2006, Xinhua.

as normal citizens.”<sup>29</sup> Zhang Qingli’s reference to a “special mission” is a further indication of the ideological verve of the current TAR Party Secretary, a hardliner who was known for his robust stance against ‘splittism’ in his previous post as head of an important industrial and paramilitary unit in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (East Turkestan).<sup>30</sup> In this context, the “special mission” is undoubtedly the DMCs’ role in formulating and implementing patriotic education in monasteries and nunneries, one of the most contentious and intrusive aspects of the Chinese authorities’ administration of Buddhist institutions throughout all of Tibet.

In August 2006, Zhang Qingli outlined his ideological position in an unusual interview with the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, saying: “Every nation on earth teaches its people to love their motherland. [...] Those who do not love their country are not qualified to be human beings. This is a matter of common sense.”<sup>31</sup> Zhang was also quoted by *Der Spiegel* as saying, “We are organizing patriotic education everywhere, not just in the monasteries.”

An article carried on the website of the main CCP office for handling religious affairs in the TAR, the TAR United Work Front, reported that: “[Zhang Qingli] emphasized that patriotic education is essential work for any sovereign state to carry out amongst the entire population, and China similarly places a great deal of importance on this work. Chinese citizens, whether they believe in religion or they don’t believe in religion, have the right and the duty to receive and develop patriotic education. There is no contradiction in carrying out patriotic education in monasteries and freedom of religious belief.”<sup>32</sup>

A monk from one of the main monasteries in Lhasa, Drepung, who is now in exile, told ICT: “[The work team] distributed a total of five different patriotic education books that the monks have to study. The main aim of the patriotic education campaign is for monks to oppose His Holiness the Dalai Lama and denounce him. They would bring a particular form that the monks had to fill in and the whole form was

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Zhang Qingli was formally appointed as TAR Party Secretary on May 26, 2006 from a senior post overseeing the immigration of Chinese into ethnic Uyghur areas in Xinjiang (East Turkestan), where he served as Commander of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, also known as the Bingtuan.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Dalai Lama “Deceived his Motherland”’, *Der Spiegel* (English edition), August 16, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> “There is no contradiction in carrying out patriotic education in monasteries and freedom of religious belief”, August 2006, Xinhua, available (in Chinese) as <http://zt.tibet.cn>.

about opposing and denouncing His Holiness. The monks have to put their names on the top of the form as well as their fingerprint.”

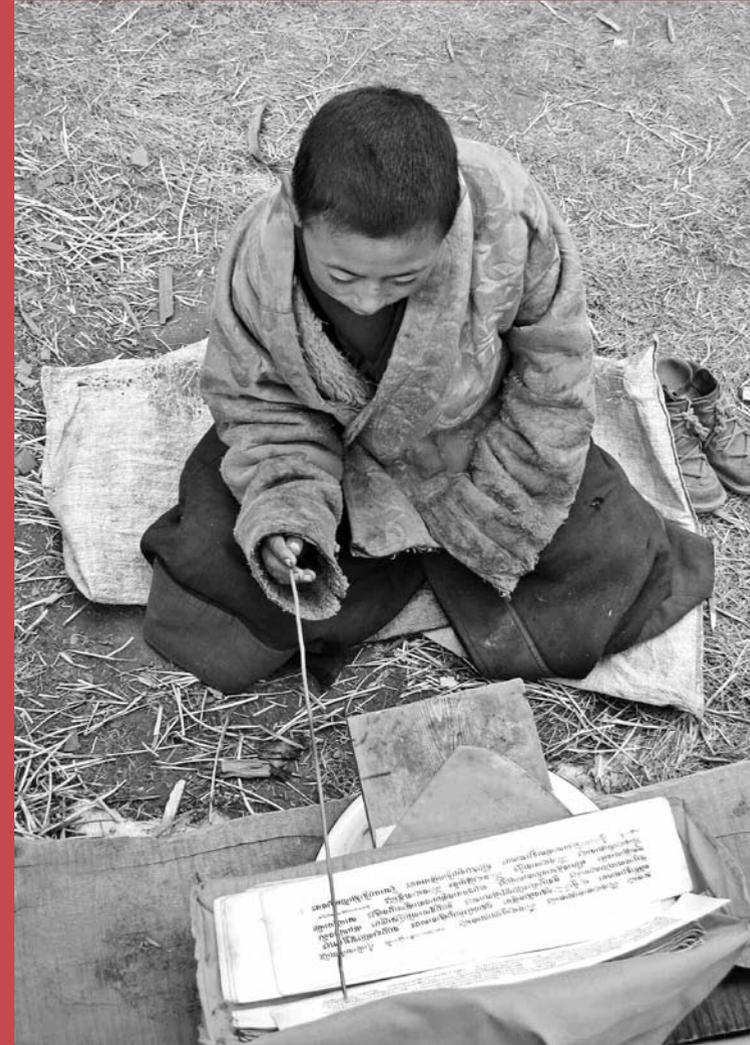
The main functions of the DMCs are outlined in the following poster, seen on the wall of a monastery in eastern Tibet:

- a) Uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, love the county and love religion, and progress in unity;
- b) Relations of subordination between monasteries may not be revived; feudal privileges and systems oppressive exploitation which have been abolished may not be revived;
- c) No activities may be carried out under the direction of forces outside the country;
- d) Respect the masses’ right to freedom of religious belief, and do not discriminate against or attack the non-religious masses;
- e) The monastery should accept the administrative management of local village-level organizations, and accept the leadership of the Buddhist association.

The same poster also listed the DMC’s ‘professional responsibilities’:

- a) To collectively educate the monastery’s monks and religious believers to abide by the country’s constitution, laws and all policies, to ensure the normal progression of religious activities, to protect the monastery’s legal rights and interests, to resolutely oppose splittist activities, and to protect the unification of the motherland;
- b) To assist the government thoroughly implement policies of freedom of religious belief;
- c) To organize, arrange and handle the monastery’s daily affairs;
- d) To establish a comprehensive system of monastery rules, to practice democratic financial accounting and to strengthen the management of financial affairs;
- e) To organize for all monks at the monastery the study of current affairs and politics, Buddhist knowledge, and to raise the quality of the monks;
- f) To collect and organize traditional Buddhist resources and carry out academic research;

- g) To protect the monastery's cultural artifacts and financial assets, to tend to the surrounding gardens and forests and to keep the monastery in good repair;
- h) To lead the monastery's monks in developing all kinds of production, service industry undertakings and socially beneficial undertakings, gradually realizing self-sufficiency for the monastery;
- i) To convene regular meetings for reporting to the monastery's monks the work undertaken and to discuss how to handle the monastery's major affairs;
- j) To regularly and irregularly report on work to the local township Party committee and government, the county religious affairs department and the county Buddhist Association; and to present timely reports to the county religious affairs bureau of important affairs at the monastery and important problems that touch on policy;
- k) To organize monks to develop "compete to be first, create the best" activities, and to actively create a "civilized monastery".



Despite strict rules on enrollment which forbid minors from entering into monastic life, many monasteries secretly accept young students who are often under pressure from their families to join. Here a young boy reads a Buddhist text aloud to practice memorization, a skill he will need to learn Buddhist texts. Photo: ICT

“EVERY TIME HIS HOLINESS VISITED A FOREIGN COUNTRY,  
THE AUTHORITIES SHOWED UP”



Tibetan monks gather around an Indian mime artist performing as Gandhi, hero of non-violent resistance, during a major Tibetan Buddhist empowerment, the Kalachakra initiation conferred by the Dalai Lama, in January 2006. Thousands of Tibetans, including some 7,000 Tibetans holding Chinese passports, transited through Nepal to go to this important Buddhist ceremony in Amaravati in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Photo: ICT

A MONK IN HIS LATE TWENTIES from Nyingtri (Ch: *Linzhi*) Prefecture in the TAR gave ICT the following account of his experience of patriotic education, and of the authorities blocking *cham* (ritual monastic) dance festivals in Tibet. He reveals that whenever the Dalai Lama went on an important foreign visit, a work team would visit the monastery to question monks. He also reports on the strategies of officials in questioning monks in order to weed out dissent and loyalty to the Dalai Lama, with the result that many monks felt no alternative but to escape into exile.

“The Chinese authorities used to send people [patriotic education work groups] every two to three days, and distribute four books on patriotic education. It’s basically to denounce His Holiness. I think it started at my monastery five or six years ago. Just before that the authorities wanted to evict many monks on the basis of their age [too young]. At every meeting the authorities would encourage monks to leave the monastery to become a farmer because being a monk, they said, is a pure waste of time. The Chinese authorities would hold meetings usually in the afternoon for two, three hours, and they would pressure us into denouncing His Holiness. They say that they are there to test the thinking, understanding and the experiences of monks. At these meetings, since monks are expected to show patriotic fervor, they would try to get away with just saying things like they would cultivate a good friendship with the general public, work to serve socialist ideology, and conform to government policies on religious matters. But that would not satisfy the Chinese authorities, whose main mission is to make monks denounce His Holiness. Because the authorities pushed monks to denounce His Holiness, many felt it was easier just to leave the monastery. Those who could not denounce His Holiness either got expelled or left voluntarily. Once they left our monastery they were not allowed to join any other monasteries, or to wear monks’ robes. They basically had to become laypeople and sever any links to their past life as a monk. For those monks who had left, if they were caught wearing robes or practicing religion, punishment could be severe. Local people complained once about robbers from Kham, which the authorities ignored; but then the authorities said that expelled monks are political criminals.

“Our monastery used to keep a picture of His Holiness but now the issue is under intense scrutiny. They say that His Holiness is the stirrer who works to ruin the relationship between Tibetans and Chinese and that he is not our spiritual leader. If we want to carry out any religious activities, monks must ask permission from the state. ‘You must understand that the Communist regime liberated you, not His Holiness,’ they say. These and much more menacing words are included in the four books that they use to test us. One of the books is on separatism, another on law. It is mandatory for the monks to study these four books and report back to the work teams. They point out important sections of the books which we have to memorize. At any given time, monks must be able to recite these sections. If you failed to pass the test, the authorities would stay at the monastery for days, stubbornly making them memorize sections they deemed vital.

“The authorities visited my monastery about once a month. The monasteries have to play host to the authorities, providing rooms for them and giving them lavish food since they would not eat the usual monastery food. Every time His Holiness visited a foreign country, the authorities showed up. And when His Holiness was giving the Kalachakra initiations or other teachings [in exile], monks were not allowed to travel out of the monastery. I used to believe it when they said that statues and monastery possessions might get stolen if monks left, but now I understand that the Chinese authorities were trying to dissuade monks from escaping into exile.

“Since our monastery is one of the most important ones in our area, the restrictions are greater. I believe there was an incident where someone put up ‘free-Tibet’ posters in the area, and the authorities suspected monks from our monastery. There is so much suspicion surrounding our monastery and listening to radio programs from the U.S. [the Tibetan language broadcasts for Radio Free Asia and Voice of America] is strictly prohibited. We have to go through so much patriotic education as compared to two monasteries in the area that worship Shugden.<sup>33</sup> Officials have even advised us to worship Shugden, and that if we do they will allow new admissions to the monastery and grant us other benefits. They say that His Holiness is a separatist and that people should not follow his advice. The head Rinpoche at our monastery was personally approached by the authorities regarding Shugden, but he never accepted or acted upon the advice to worship Shugden. Monks are uneasy upon hearing

---

<sup>33</sup> Shugden is a controversial deity in Tibetan Buddhism which the Dalai Lama has requested Tibetans not to worship. The authorities in Tibet sometimes encourage Tibetans to worship him in order to cause divisions among Tibetans and undermine loyalty to the Dalai Lama. See also p. 7 above.

Shugden’s name. We reasoned with the authorities that we haven’t worshiped Shugden in the past so it doesn’t make sense for us to worship it now.

“Historically our monastery performs cham dance and for about two years after I joined, the monastery performed cham dance without any permission. Now the monastery has to get permission for the cham dance. It is not an easy process. Sometimes permission is not granted and the authorities give various reasons ranging from the SARS epidemic [severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS is a respiratory disease; an epidemic swept China in 2002 and beyond] to something His Holiness said in exile on Shugden. There is supposed to be religious freedom but monks are not allowed to carry out even minor religious activities. And even if a cham dance was allowed, sometimes officials would travel around telling people that it had been cancelled.

“Our monks in general are exceptionally devoted to religion and His Holiness; when inspectors come to the monastery, they would look through everything including the religious texts trying to find pictures of His Holiness. No picture has been found so far. Many monks would keep His Holiness’ picture in a locked box and make offerings in there. Quilts would be piled on top of the box making it appear like a pile of blankets. We are forced to take such measures in order to worship His Holiness.

“Some inspectors came into our living quarters; they would come as if they have come to inspect the living conditions of the monks, not to inspect who and what the monks worship. Some would even pretend that they are friends, and casually pick up a book and ask what the book is about as though they are interested in their livelihood, when in fact they wanted to know if the monk is keeping His Holiness’ picture in the book. They would come as if they are on a casual visit. Some would come in plain clothes and say stuff like we are all Tibetans and we have faith in His Holiness. They would further ask whether we do long life prayers for His Holiness and keep his picture and assure us that it’s absolutely fine for you to tell them. They asked me these questions but we’d heard about this tactic from other monks so we knew not to fall into their trap. They would also ask whether His Holiness is good or bad. We’d say that His Holiness is a religious leader — we do not have any picture of him. And we don’t know whether His Holiness is good or bad. Upon hearing this they couldn’t do anything so they would just leave. If we believed in their statement and answered truthfully than we would fall into their trap. They would also ask many questions, such as: what is your view on Communism? Do you feel and understand the wisdom of Communist ideology?

“After His Holiness announced the new Panchen Rinpoche, many officers came to interrogate monks at our monastery. They asked whether any monks listen to radio broadcasts from the U.S., and to tell them what was in the news and to tell them what the monks think about the reincarnation of Panchen Rinpoche. They added that the one recognized by His Holiness is wrong because the recognition of reincarnations is carried out by the Golden Urn process, started by some Chinese emperor, and His Holiness’ sole purpose is separatism. We weren’t given instructions to display pictures of the Chinese Panchen, but in our village, the authorities distributed pictures of Mao Zedong, [former President] Jiang Zemin and [current President] Hu Jintao, and said that each family must display these images.

“I came to study in India because of the pressures on my monastery. My teacher gave me a letter of support and advised me to attend Drepung Monastery.”



Cham dances, like many other forms of Tibetan traditional religious culture are under threat of disappearing in Tibet due to the lack of experienced masters. The image depicts a moment of a two-day cham dance performance at the Gonchen Monastery during the Buddhist Protectors Festival. Photo: ICT



The Dalai Lama is at the heart of Tibet's sense of cohesion and religious identity. Although any image of the Dalai Lama is prohibited many personal shrines in monasteries and private houses display photos and posters of him. Photo: ICT

AS THIS REPORT HAS SHOWN, inspection and monitoring of monasteries and religious institutions has been stepped up in recent years in Tibet. Since July 2004, when the Standing Committee of the State Council passed the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” (Ch: *Zongjiao shiwu tiaoli*) monasteries and nunneries have been required to register with the government, and are subject to increasingly cumbersome regulation from the state.<sup>34</sup>

In Tibet the local authorities have distributed a booklet containing the new TAR 2007 measures to major religious institutions such as monasteries and nunneries — mostly in Tibetan, but often in Chinese too. Since then local religious affairs bureaus across Tibet have enforced the display of posters of rules and regulations for both monastics and laity concerning the practice of religion in the registered monasteries.

The posters include requirements for patriotic commitment, regulations for the management of places of religious activities, systems of regulation for monastic religious activities, the systems of financial management at monasteries, management of health and the environment, the management of religious activities by foreigners, the management of religious professionals, and political indoctrinations.

Many monasteries and other religious institutions feel under pressure to adhere to these regulations and requirements as a necessary step in the preservation of their activities, maintenance of their teaching's lineage, and the very existence of their institutions. Although the registration required by the government allows the existence of the monastic institution, the registration itself allows for more political scrutiny.

Teams from a monastic institution's local administration, such as the public security bureau and the patriotic education groups or work teams (Ch: *Aiguo jiaoyu xiaozu*) visit monasteries and nunneries in their respective areas giving lectures, visiting monastic quarters, and distributing printed material. Work teams often distribute materials and documents in various formats to the abbots (Tib: *mkhan po*), monas-

<sup>34</sup> The January 2007 measures emerge from these regulations, which reflect past policies already launched between 1980s and 1990s that came into effect in the PRC on March 1, 2005

tic disciplinarians (Tib: *sges skos*), and other monks or nuns responsible for education and discipline in the monastic institution.

DMCs are frequently required to report on the situation at the monastery during a given year in terms of presence of resident monastics, education, teaching, and various religious activities. The ‘reports’, which are usually ‘confidential’, also aim at addressing possible subversive activities among the monastic population, such as support for Tibetan independence (Ch: *Zangdu*). One document featured in this report, Official Document 10, “Reflections on certain conditions at the Monastery”, in Kardze (Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture) warns that “A great deal of coming and going on the part of monks at the monastery, in particularly young people” created “considerable difficulties for the monastery’s management”. Additionally, there was “an extremely small number of monks who having been poisoned with ‘Tibetan Independence’ by splittist elements, such illegal activities as the distribution of handbills and the pasting of reactionary posters occurred, for which a total of nine people were caught and sanctioned by the law.”

Further acknowledgement of ‘problems of disunity’ came during a recent United Front conference on “minorities work” in Lhasa in January 2007. The conference also referred to the need to step up action against “rigid thinking and obsolete ideas”. Extracts from a statement on proceedings of the conference are included in the Official Documents section of this report. The “problems” referred to are likely to be oblique references to continued loyalty to the Dalai Lama and the unrest and despair caused by the implementation of intensified patriotic education in the main Lhasa monasteries over the past two years.

The United Front is a CCP organization with branches at various levels of government throughout the PRC. At the national level, the United Front Work Department of the CCP Central Committee manages contacts between the Chinese government and foreign governments in the area of human rights dialogues for example, and its materials are aimed at ensuring that Beijing presents a consistent position based on prevailing government policies and Party ideology.

The Lhasa office of the United Front went on to state that in the coming year of 2007, it would work to “isolate and attack to the greatest possible degree the extremely small minority of splittists, and unify to the greatest possible degree the broad masses of patriotic monks, nuns and religious masses.” The statement issued by the meeting also refers to the “deepening” of the patriotic education campaign.

The conference in Lhasa focused on developing plans for continued control of monastic life as well as the production of propaganda materials on patriotism and anti-splittism in monasteries and nunneries, as well as working to broaden Tibetan involvement in the Chinese economy. In terms of its language and tone, the statements from this important Party office are more reminiscent of the ideological language of the Cultural Revolution than the bureaucracy of a confident 21<sup>st</sup> century world power.

Shigatse [Ch: *Rigaze*] Prefecture United Front, for example, claimed to have “Ruthlessly grasped [*henzhua*] construction of monasteries’ DMCs, established a comprehensive system of regulation for the monasteries and implemented it firmly; and relentlessly strengthened the political education and thinking of monks and nuns.” Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, is located in Shigatse Prefecture, and it is likely that the Chinese government’s choice of Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, is being referenced when the United Front states that it “Strengthened the education and training of living Buddhas and by means of intimate heart-to-heart communication understood the conditions of their lives and study, resolved their difficulties and problems and protected normal religious order.”<sup>35</sup>

At the local level, the United Front ensures that the CCP’s influence and ‘guidance’ remains prominent in the implementation of policies and ideological propaganda also on politically sensitive issues, including the CCP’s policies on religion and minorities. As one of the main tools for ensuring that the CCP’s message and influence is heard in the PRC and elsewhere in the world, the United Front Work Department has been called “a magic weapon for the success of China’s revolution” in China’s official media.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Statements from the Regional United Front Nationalities Work Conference (Extracts)’ (in Chinese: *Quanqu zongzhan minzu gongzuo huiyi fayan (zhaideng)*), Xinhua, January 20, 2007, available at <http://zt.tibet.cn>.

## CHAPTER

## 9 FIRST PERSON

AN INSIGHT INTO THE 'GYA PANCHEN'



Thousands of Tibetans traveled to Kumbum Monastery in Qinghai Province in July 2006, after false rumors spread that the Dalai Lama was making a secret visit. Holding out hope that the news would prove to be true, some Tibetans remained for many days, simply waiting.

A YOUNG MONK from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tibet, the seat of the Panchen Lama, gives an insight into the 'Gya Panchen', Gyaltsen Norbu, and religious and political life at the monastery in Shigatse. 'Gya Panchen' is a common way of referring to the Chinese government's choice of Panchen Lama in Tibet, where 'Gya' comes from the Tibetan word for Chinese, 'Gyame'.

"My parents, especially my mother, used to encourage me [to become a monk] saying that if I did, I would always be a happy person and in my next life I would be born in a higher realm or to good parents. Also if became a monk and attended a monastery, I could have an education from the monastery and wouldn't have to work as hard as farmers do. Then later on I realized what my parents had told me was true and a monk's life is the easiest and happiest life, so I took the decision to become a monk.

"There is a monastery in our place, but it's not possible for anyone to join. Earlier, before Tibet was occupied, the monastery was big. But now there are only five monks staying in the monastery and you are not allowed to join.

"I became a monk in the 1990s at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, Tibet. In order to join, firstly, you are asked whether or not your family had been involved in any political activities and then secondly you have to write an application to the monastery's democratic management committee (DMC), saying that you won't cause any trouble or problems for the monastery and and that you will respect the monastery's regulations. Recently, monks applying to Tashi Lhunpo have had to take a politically related exam on such things as national law. This wasn't the case when Chadrel Rinpoche was in charge and political education was not as strict then either. [Chadrel Rinpoche is the former abbot of Tashi Lhunpo who led the search team for the Panchen Lama. After serving a prison sentence, Chadrel Rinpoche is still held under virtual house arrest].

"Since Zhang Qingli became TAR Party Secretary, he has ruled that Party cadres should not visit any monastery with a religious intention. Not long ago it was said that all Party cadres are not allowed to do any religious practice and they can't even go to a monastery to do holy circumambulation.

“The main intention of the patriotic education campaign, I think, is to reduce the number of monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries in Tibet because political demonstrations are mostly led by monks and nuns.

“Every time the work team comes, they first summon all the monks and hold a public meeting. Often we have to study speeches and lectures by leaders such as Zhang Qingli. There are many monks who face problems because of the patriotic education campaign. For example, sometimes the work team asks you to read a paragraph from a patriotic education campaign book. So if there is a sentence denouncing His Holiness the Dalai Lama, if the monk doesn’t read it and moves onto the next sentence then the work team either force him to read it or he is expelled or interrogated.

“Since Gyaltzen Norbu was chosen as the Gya Panchen Lama, the majority of monks have lost their trust in the monastery, as well as lacking loyalty to the Chinese choice. When Gyaltzen Norbu [visits our monastery], you are not allowed to leave for two days before and after his visit, or it will be considered to be a political act. Usually young monks don’t display his photos in our rooms but elderly monks, for example my teacher, they always tell us to display it but they say, ‘Don’t worry. Just do whatever they say. If you don’t accept him from your heart then it doesn’t make any difference whether you display his photo or not.’

“Before, all the monks would call him ‘Yangsi’ [meaning ‘reincarnation’] but then that was banned and we were told that the monks are not allowed to call him ‘Yangsi’. Then it was said that the monks have to call him ‘Panchen Lama’s Yangsi’ instead. So now some monks call him Olo [baby]. But some monks still call him Yangsi even though this way of referring to him has been banned.

“Gyaltzen Norbu gives audiences to monks but we only go out of duty. Normally they are only attended by government officials and Party cadres. There has been a change recently though. Earlier, when Gyaltzen Norbu gave speeches or public talks, it seemed as though he was told to say this and that rather than speak his own words. But recently, perhaps because he has grown up, if he gives a lecture or speech he seems to use his own words and I think, he is seriously interested in religion because he strongly advises us to be good monks. Of course, he always says certain things like we have to listen to the government and we shouldn’t do anything political, but that is because he himself is under a lot of pressure from the government. I have heard that Gyaltzen Norbu is a smart boy who recognizes his Tibetan identity and responsibility. He has to study all different subjects ranging from tra-

ditional religious studies to modern subjects like science and mathematics. He doesn’t seem to have any time to rest as his schedule is fully packed. Gyaltzen seems to show loyalty and concern for Tibet. The authorities boast about his intelligence and scholarship considering his young age and say that he should rise in official positions, so it is fitting that monks at Tashi Lhunpo respect and hold him in high regard.

“Every shrine in the monastery must put up a picture of the Gya Panchen. Pictures were also distributed to individual monks who were ordered to put the picture on their altar. But I haven’t seen his picture on anyone’s altar.

“Even in the smallest and most remote villages people ask you where is the real Panchen Rinpoche. There is an overwhelming interest in the status of the real Panchen Rinpoche and his well-being. We talk only amongst our trusted friends about the plight of Tashi Lhunpo and the precarious future of Panchen Rinpoche. Except for a few Chinese loyalists, every monk wishes for his safe return. Most believe that he is alive as the Chinese understand the importance of keeping him well and alive.

“There are monks who keep pictures of His Holiness and the real Panchen Rinpoche’s picture behind other pictures — they are all waiting for a day when they can freely put them up where they are supposed to be. Everybody in the monastery knows the date of his birthday very well and many proffer special prayers that day in secret.”

# CHAPTER 10

## TREASURE-SEEKERS AND VISIONARIES

### THE FUTURE FOR TIBET'S RELIGIOUS CULTURE



A row of newly made clay statues wait to be painted in a corridor at a small monastery in Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Photo: ICT

ONCE THE MAIN and indisputable centers of education, economic power, and religious authority — the fulcrum of Tibetan Buddhist civilization — Tibetan monasteries today risk losing their central role in popular and monastic religious practice.

This report has shown that a complete religious education is either difficult or impossible in Tibet due to factors including continued political surveillance, patriotic education campaigns, restrictions on numbers of monks, the lack of highly educated teachers and spiritual leaders, and the presence in monasteries of a mainly adult population due to restrictions on admitting minors. Additionally, most of the time, religious institutions and senior lamas are not able or allowed to provide the traditional pattern of instruction methodology fundamental for the dissemination of Buddhist education and instruction in Tibet.

The vital triad system of initiation (Tib: *dbang*), authorization (Tib: *lung*), and explanation (Tib: *khrid*) is becoming less and less available within the official monastic compounds of Tibet. It is still, however, accessible in those religious institutions which operate outside the confines of the increasingly regulated formal monastic system — monastic hermitages and religious encampments, mainly found in eastern Tibet, outside the TAR.

The emergence of monastic encampments in eastern Tibet, known as *chögars* in Tibetan, has created a new space for Tibetans to practice Buddhism in a climate of increasing religious repression. These monastic centers in the eastern Tibetan areas of Amdo and Kham are an increasingly important means of ensuring the continuity of Tibetan Buddhist lineage and activities, and for strengthening cultural identity for many Tibetans.

*Chögars* today are avant-garde monastic institutes for the study, practice, and promotion of Buddhist teachings otherwise difficult to access or non-existent in regular monasteries and nunneries. These difficulties are the persistent pressures imposed on monasteries and other formal religious institutes by government policies that undermine their authority and prominent role in religious affairs.

Teachings at the *chögars*, which first appeared in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Tibet, have revitalized Tibetan Buddhist contemplation and scholarship in recent years. The high standard of religious education and traditional Buddhist instruction offered by qualified teachers is attracting more and more monks, nuns and laypeople from both Tibetan areas and from China itself, reflecting an increasing Chinese interest in Tibetan Buddhism. Among the most popular *chögars* are Yachen Gar, led by the Acho Khenpo, and Larung Gar, previously led by the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, and continued by his disciples.<sup>36</sup>

Predominantly established within the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, today these communities are led by charismatic masters and their visionary activities, ‘treasure’ (Tib: *gter ma*) discovery (‘finding’ tantric teachings that had been hidden centuries before) and ascetic virtuosity. They are now places for traditional instruction and contemplation rather than temporary facilities set up for special occasions. Most monks and nuns move to these religious encampments from their home monasteries, some temporarily, and others permanently, to gain access to specific Buddhist instructions emerging from the spiritual attainments of their teachers. Traditional study curricula, given in an ecumenical and non-sectarian environment, which include philosophy, logic-epistemology, and debate, are offered at almost all *chögars*.

In many of these religious encampments, there is little or no restriction on enrollment and less centralized control or management of the complexes than in formally established monasteries, allowing for the influx of many monastics and lay practitioners alike from different regions and schools of Tibetan Buddhism. A recent phenomenon is also the presence among the *chögars* of large groups of Chinese (both from the mainland and Taiwan), and non-Chinese (such as Malaysian and Singaporean) who go there to study and in many cases, to take ordination and become monks or nuns in Tibet.<sup>37</sup>

Religious activity at the Serthar and Yachen encampments attracted increasing attention from the authorities from the mid-1990s onwards, culminating in the authorities moving in to order the demolitions of thousands of nuns’ and monks’

homes, and the expulsion of religious practitioners in 2001.<sup>38</sup> The first students to be expelled from Serthar were Chinese, indicating a possible concern on the part of the authorities over the influence of Tibetan Buddhist communities over mainland Chinese practitioners. The authorities were also known to have been concerned over the loyalties of the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, who had visited the Dalai Lama in India. Like many senior religious figures in Tibet, his religious allegiance led to political suspicion and the undermining of his authority. The demolitions were linked directly to new laws and regulations associated with the management of religion that have been introduced in Sichuan Province since the late 1980s. Implementation of these laws has directly resulted in the suppression or control of civil, political and religious freedoms.

### A UNIQUE CULTURAL LEGACY

The following account about the aftermath of the demolitions at Serthar, and the presence of Chinese monastics, was provided by a Western scholar of Buddhism who is a frequent traveler in eastern Tibet:

“Since the 2001 demolition of more than 1,000 monastic quarters and the eviction of nuns and monks, today Larung Gar, one of the largest Buddhist encampments of Tibet, still carries the scars. Today the same areas once covered with cells and huts housing thousands of pious monks and nuns are empty and quiet, as silent evidence of Tibetans’ struggle for the maintenance of their identity and continuation of their religious practice. After the passing away of the charismatic leader of the encampment, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok in 2003, Larung Gar has seen a slow but persistent continuation of religious activity.

“A high degree of monitoring and control of daily activities and practices has been established by the local authorities, who in the past few years have forbidden access to foreign groups or individual travelers. It is impossible to have exact figures of the resident monastic population at the *chögar*. However estimates suggest that the number of monks is about 4,000 and of nuns around 2,000 for a total of approximately 6,000 people. An additional number of at least 1,000 lay people should be considered.

<sup>36</sup> For an obituary of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok see ICT report, Charismatic Tibetan Buddhist Leader Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Passes Away, January 7, 2004, at [www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=566](http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=566)

<sup>37</sup> Increasing numbers of Chinese pilgrims are also making pilgrimages to the Jokhang and Potala in Lhasa, and Mount Kailash.

<sup>38</sup> The demolitions and expulsions were well-documented by both ICT and the former Tibet Information Network, for instance see ICT report, Destruction of Monasteries Spreads in Tibet November 14, 2001, at [www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=100](http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=100)

“Monks and nuns can gather in their assembly halls for daily recitation practices and communal meals, while khenpos (seminary teachers) are permitted to continue Buddhist instruction according to their teaching routines. But the regulations in terms of restrictions on the number of monastics who can live at the religious encampment, their minimum age, rules on the construction or restoration of monastic cells and religious buildings, or permission for lay people to visit and reside at the *chögar* and for celebrations of festivals and religious events, are all indisputably strict. According to rumors in 2005, a group of nuns secretly tried to build two small cells in the middle of the nuns’ residential area in the hope of completing construction overnight. Very early in the morning of the next day however, local authorities discovered the almost finished house and the nuns still working on it. The nuns were asked to demolish the building and an unconfirmed number among them were ordered to be evicted. Apparently something similar happened in 2004. The nuns were ordered to leave the religious compound and return immediately to their home nunneries.

“Tibetan pilgrims and devotees are permitted daily visits to the encampment and to the main spiritual leaders, and can stay at the centers for a limited period of time according to their permits. These permits are provided or discussed with local public security bureau which has three major offices: two at the main entrance area of the *chögar* and one inside the compound itself. Hundreds of pilgrims and devotees perform their popular practices of ritual circumambulation of and prostration to

the major sacred site of the area, the Gyutrul Lakhang, the Temple of Manifestations, which towers over the residential area of the religious encampment.

“There are some Chinese devotees and monastics who either live at the *chögar* or travel from mainland China. Before 2001 a large community of Chinese monastics, both nuns and monks, lived at the religious encampment benefiting from various facilities including publication of study material and prayer books, as well as a simultaneous translation whenever the late Khenpo Jigphun gave teachings to the entire community. Nowadays it is not clear how many Chinese live at the *chögar*.

“The local publishing house is still allowed to print study material such as manuals of prayers and practice, ‘dzogchen’ material [teachings central to the Nyima tradition of Tibetan Buddhism], commentarial volumes, and reproduction of texts and hagiographical literature. For instance, in 2005 a new edition of the ‘Biography of Lerab Lingpa’ was published. Lerab Lingpa was a great Buddhist master and ‘treasure revealer’ who lived in the nineteenth century. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was believed to be a reincarnation of Lerab Lingpa and therefore the publication of such a text is important for the lineage represented by the late Khenpo.

“Many of the Chinese monks I spoke to in Tibet were college students, and a large number seem to have quit relatively important jobs and come from fairly educated middle class families from the most prosperous areas of China on the east coast.



Work teams demolish a nun’s home at Larung Gar religious institute in Serthar, Sichuan province, in 2001. More than a thousand homes of monastics at this major religious encampment were destroyed and hundreds of nuns, monks, and Chinese students expelled by the authorities. Since then, some nuns have returned and teachings have resumed at the religious institute, although it is now more strictly regulated than before, with a permanent security presence.

Larung Gar religious institute, Serthar, Sichuan province, two years after the destruction of hundreds of nuns’ and monks’ homes and the expulsion of religious practitioners. While religious practice continues at the settlement, it is more strictly regulated than before, and nuns and monks have not been allowed to build homes again on the site where they were destroyed, which can be seen on the image as an expanse of bare hillside, beyond the wooden homes.



Most of the Chinese monks told me they decided to take monastic vows after meeting with and receiving teachings from Tibetan lamas who had visited China. A few nuns confided to me that although they always wanted to take the vows and become nuns, their choice to embrace Tibetan Buddhism over Chinese Buddhism was motivated by the fact that they liked the Tibetan monastic outfit better! They said that the Tibetan monastic robes are closer to the ones used by the Buddha than the Chinese ones. Some nuns said that their families were either displeased by but tolerant of their child's choice to become a nun and move to Tibet, although others said their families were upset or annoyed. Some families don't want to have anything to do with their child/ nun anymore. Therefore, some Chinese monastics receive financial support from their family, but many others do not. These rely almost exclusively on what little help their teacher can give which ranges between 60 and 100 RMB (\$7.75 – \$13.00) per month, or donations by Chinese devotees who visit them. Most of the Chinese monks and nuns speak little or no Tibetan at all and find communication with local Tibetans very difficult. This makes their lives in Tibet very challenging. Some nuns said they want to live in Tibet and study the scriptures for a period of a few years, usually three to five years and then return to their home monastery in mainland China.

“It seems that in many areas, particularly in eastern Tibet (although less so in central areas), more Tibetans are enjoying some form of religious freedom concerning popular forms of Buddhist practice such as pilgrimages, circumambulation, prostrations, erecting house altars, visits to monasteries and high religious personalities, and local tantric practice. Pilgrimage to sacred sites such as the important holy journey to Lhasa is becoming very popular and regaining its centrality among Tibetans all over the land. However, not the same positive comments can so easily be made when it comes to the situation of monasteries and other institutionalized religious entities. While reconstruction and restoration of monasteries together with some degree of education has indeed been allowed by central and local authorities in the last decade, this must not be confused with religious freedom or freedom of religious practice. Although the re-opening and the restoration of monastic and religious buildings is itself a positive sign from the authorities in terms of tolerance, these are but secondary aspects of Buddhist life and practice in Tibet. The core of Buddhist religious practice is instruction and education and the only chance that Tibetans have to disseminate their unique cultural legacy is the maintenance of such a precious treasure.”



Yachen Gar today is one of the largest religious encampments in eastern Tibet. Here is a bird's-eye view of the nuns' quarters that alone occupies one-third of the entire surface of the complex. Photo: ICT

## CHAPTER

## 11

## FIRST PERSON

A CHINESE MONK'S CONVERSION;  
A STORY FROM THE MAINLAND; A SERTHAR NUN'S QUEST



Religious life for many Tibetans means daily practice of circumambulations around sacred sites, prostrations, and spinning mani-prayer wheels. Jyekundo, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai. Photo: ICT

**A** CHINESE MONK whose teacher is a Tibetan lama gave ICT the following account of his conversion to Buddhism. Some details have been omitted in order to protect his identity.

“While I was finishing my degree at university in Beijing, I began reading books [about Buddhism] in Chinese. At this time, I met a Tibetan Nyingma lama. As I developed an interest in Buddhism, I began thinking about the selflessness that my mother had showed to me. I thought about this so much, what she had done for me, and at the same time I was thinking about really trying to help my mother and others just as my mother had done for so many years for me. This feeling was so strong and it would not leave me — and all the while I was supposed to be doing my ordinary job.

“I decided to travel a bit and went to Xiahe in Gansu Province and then to Labrang Monastery, and it was there that I really decided to express my desire to study Buddhism. I was with my teacher from Beijing and he encouraged me to take vows of a novice monk. So everything of course changed immediately thereafter, as I did not want to go back to my previous life in Beijing. From there I went to [name withheld] to begin studying in a Buddhist college — studying the sutras and tantras. I had so much help along the way in a short amount of time from Tibetans and Chinese alike in these areas. Everything fell into place, and I have been studying now for five years, and speak Tibetan.

“Many Chinese choose to study under the great [Tibetan] masters at Serthar and Yachen. But this would be difficult for me. It is difficult for all the Chinese who are involved with those two places, so hard. So I went elsewhere where I could be free.

“In China, Buddhism is extremely beautiful on the outside but I have realized that it has had so much cut away from it after the difficult period in our country in the last decades. So while it is beautiful on the outside, it is empty on the inside. The teachings are not there as they are in the Tibetan tradition. Tibetan Buddhism is rough and dirty on the outside but inside it is profound and developed. So I have chosen this path. A path that my parents did not and still do not accept, and they would not see me for a few years. Now when I go back to Beijing, at least they will see me. I don't wear the Tibetan monastic robes as that will make them feel even more uneasy.

“After I became a monk, I started to develop a kind of mind that doesn’t really see a whole lot of differences in people in terms of what they are going through. We all are going through different flavors of the same feast of suffering. But it is the same feast, so I need not really look at the different ways to make the different dishes in the feast on suffering. You see? Everyone I have met I see their hardships. And in myself too. We all are kind of going around in the same circus of hardships — so in many ways, there is no need to discriminate if someone is rich and suffering, or poor and suffering, or American and suffering, or Chinese and suffering, or a Buddhist who is suffering or a non-Buddhist who is suffering — it is the suffering that is the problem. So long as we don’t look to our mind as the root of the suffering, rich, poor, American, Chinese, Buddhist, non-Buddhist, the entire lot who search in vain outside their mind for happiness will all have the same result — suffering. I see that in myself and others, this is the kind of non-discriminating that I’m talking about. It motivates me so much that I need to alleviate this suffering; it is so clear to me that that is what I should be doing right now in my life.

“This is my way of paying back my mother for what she showed me; her selflessness. She was so kind to me that I want to give back to her, and to others. It is so important that one goes about growing one’s heart, one’s feeling for others. This is what I want to do.”



Drepung was one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in Tibet with a monastic population of thousands of monks. During the Cultural Revolution, parts of Drepung were destroyed and the ruins are still visible today. Photo: ICT

A CHINESE MONK talked to ICT about his views on the so-called ‘liberalization’ of religion in the 1980s in China, and how he sees it to have been more of an international public relations ploy rather than any genuine liberalization.

“It is commonly said that control over religion in China loosened in the early 1980s under Deng Xiaoping. Often they say this was part of the economic liberalization at the time; a side effect of the market liberalization. For sure at the time, religion was once again allowed to be practiced; that is temples were re-opened, monks donned the traditional habit and devotees would go to temples to offer incense and prayers — all of which had been so strongly banned during Mao’s Cultural Revolution excesses.

“So why was this really? Was it because Deng has some penchant for religion? Did CCP leaders in the 1980s believe the Marxist ideology that religion would run its natural course unto death after the masses saw the benefits of socialism? Actually, it wasn’t any of these, nor was it part of the market liberalization — it was about public relations. Strictly public relations. But their public relations maneuvering in fact stimulated a revival in Chinese Buddhist belief, as well as in Daoist and Confucian beliefs to some extent, and to extents that the authorities did not expect. Three significant events happened which support what I’m telling you.

“I will tell you first though about my uncle. In 1966, the year the Cultural Revolution started, he was sent back to his home. He could not wear his monks’ robes any longer, instead having to wear grey Mao suits. He had been the abbot of his monastery and a monk since the 1930s. When he was sent back to his village they made him tend pigs. He didn’t mind actually. He would teach the pigs how to take refuge [in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha], every day he gave them a bit of instruction. He was able to teach all the pigs in the village at the same time because the village was part of a cooperative, and everyone would bring their pigs to him in the morning when they went to do communal farming in the fields. So they would drop their pigs off in the morning and pick them up in the evening. My uncle would tend to them, teaching them. He was a monk remember, and monks are not suppose to farm — this is why the village gave him the job of tending pigs. He maintained his vegetarianism his entire monastic life. I remember when he would come to visit my family in his later years, my mother would always cook vegetarian food separately for him. He would tell us stories of old wandering monks and other legends.

“In 1973, the president of France came to visit China, we called him Pompoe [President Pompidou] but I don’t know what his name was. I think he was the first Western

leader to visit China. So during this time, my uncle, the pig tender, was summoned back from his village. The Party leaders wanted the President to see a Chinese temple — or maybe the French President wanted to see some Buddhists, who really knows. But the Party leaders wanted to have a few monks around for this visit, which I think was the first of any western leader to China. So they had to fix up some temples that had been left to ruin and they had to have a few monks around. My uncle was one of the first to be called back. He was called back to his monastery.

“He was the only monk there when the President arrived, and he wore his monk’s robes that he had to make before the visit. After my uncle reopened the temple, he persuaded the authorities to allow him to stay there. So thereafter, my uncle was allowed to stay on at the temple and be the gardener — and very quickly, people began returning to ask him about Pure Land practices and to pray in front of the Buddha statues. He was able to stay at the temple from 1972 until his death; he did his Pure Land practices all his life, and he died a happy monk.

“The second and third example of the CCP’s religious public relations strategy concerns our Asian neighbors. They established their initial relationship with other Asian countries through the façade of religious freedom.

“Around 1975, the Sri Lankan president was to visit China and expressed an interest in visiting a Buddhist temple. So again, the government fixed the three temples of Guang Ji — which is now the headquarters for the Buddhist Association of Beijing. They did this only to please the Sri Lankan president, but of course, there were so many Chinese who wanted to visit the temple after it was re-opened. It surprised officials but they allowed people to visit it thereafter.

“Finally, in 1980, there was a huge Japanese delegation which was to visit various places in China — and one place they were going was Yangzhou in southern China, the home town of [former Chinese President] Jiang Zemin. You see, in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, a Japanese patriarch had strong connections with people in Yangzhou. So in the 1980s, this delegation wanted to go back there and visit. The Chinese were keen to hide from this very religiously inclined delegation that they don’t allow religion, so they fixed up over a hundred of the temples that had been neglected. The delegation visited many of them, and thereafter the government did allow some of the caretakers to remain as monks in these temples.”

## QUEST FOR A RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A NUN’S STORY

**A** NUN FROM EASTERN TIBET in her early thirties, who once studied at the Larung Gar encampment in Sichuan province under Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, told ICT of the reasons for her eventual escape into exile:

“My family is a nomad family and none of us ever went to school. When I was 17 years old my father passed away and one year after my father’s death I became a nun. Because the reputation of Khenpo Jigphun is known everywhere in Tibet I went to Serthar to study in the late 1990s. At that time there were around 4000 to 5000 nuns at Serthar, and joining was straightforward. Nuns could also buy cells as a room and build there. If you had no parents and were poor then Khenpo would support you so you could stay in Serthar.

“In 2001, the Chinese destroyed the nuns’ rooms. Before this happened, all of us had been summoned and held meetings and warned about what would happen. At the beginning we couldn’t believe it would happen because Khenpo was one of the highest lamas and he was so powerful too, but it did happen.

“All the work teams were Chinese and they didn’t have any machines [vehicles/ bull-dozer] for destroying the rooms but they brought tools including pickaxes, iron sticks and hammers with one side having claws in order to pull out nails, because all the nuns’ rooms were wooden houses. They told us that if we wanted to destroy the rooms by ourselves then we could, and many nuns took the wood from their homes, and many of them got terrible wounds on their shoulders from carrying planks of wood. I think they continued destroying the rooms for around two months and it really hurt when we looked down from the mountain behind the monastery because we could see all the ruins of the rooms and the dust in the air.

“Because the Chinese destroyed my room as well as a lot of other nuns’ rooms, something happened to my mind. It was as if I lost my memory. Khenpo called all the nuns and monks at a meeting and said that it would be better for us to stay calm rather than holding a protest, so we did as he said.

“So everyday at that time more than 30 to 40 houses were being destroyed and a total of around 4,000 nuns’ rooms were destroyed and around 100 monks’ rooms were also destroyed. Nuns of all ages who were Serthar residents were allowed to stay, but there were not many of them. Then there was more destruction in 2002, and many nuns had to leave. Lots of nuns didn’t have a place to stay, such as nunneries,

or their families were far away from the monastery, and there were many nuns who hid in the forest behind the monastery. I went to a relative's house.

“The Chinese always claim that the Tibetan people have full freedom of religious belief but in fact they keep destroying monasteries and they make it so that only certain numbers of monks and nuns can stay in monasteries and therefore a lot of monks and nuns don't have monasteries and nunneries in Tibet.

“Then I went to Samye Chimphu and did retreat [Chimphu is a sacred mountain area in the Lhokha — Ch: *Shannan* — area of the TAR with huts and caves where monks and nuns carry out religious retreats]. There were around 50 nuns there, but I was not allowed to stay. After about a week the local authorities came and told me I had to leave. So I then went to Lhodrag [another sacred site in the Lhokha area] and I was not also allowed to stay there either. So I went to try to do my practice in another place in the area, the caves of Chagsam Chor and I was able to stay for only a week. So, I had nowhere to do my retreat and Buddhist study. So I came to India in order to stay in a nunnery in exile.”



Many monks and nuns today, as in the past, live a very simple life practicing in retreat and residing in cells with only basic possessions. Photo: ICT

## CHAPTER

## 12 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF MONASTERIES AND TOURISM



The largest Gelugpa monastery outside the TAR, Kumbum is also one of the major Tibetan Buddhist sites most affected by the impact of the Chinese tourist industry. Once one of the major areas for debate practice in the monastery, this debating court has been recently appropriated to entertain tourists with Chinese-run souvenir photo stands. Photo: ICT

PRIOR TO 1959, monasteries and the monastic tradition formed the cornerstone of Tibetan society, providing a forum or context for almost all social, cultural, religious and economic activities. In a symbiotic relationship which developed over centuries and which is still seen in other parts of Asia, the lay community provided financial and other material support to the monastery or nunnery in return for spiritual guidance.

However, the CCP's materialistic ideology basically regards such a relationship as exploitative on the part of the monasteries, and tends to regard lay-people's donations of money and goods as a drain on the economy and society. Members of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) who traveled to the TAR in August 2005 report being told by local officials that "fervent religious practice" is "an impediment to economic modernization."<sup>39</sup>

Monasteries and nunneries are increasingly being encouraged to "lessen the burden on the masses" as much as possible with the eventual goal of making them self-sufficient, and local governments have made attempts to discourage people from giving alms to monasteries and nunneries.

Many of Tibet's larger and more famous religious institutions and those close to urban centers can make significant amounts of money by selling tickets and souvenirs to tourists. For instance, Kardze Monastery in modern-day Sichuan Province has generated more than 2m yuan (\$259,000) "in recent years", an achievement praised as "tending the monastery for the sake of the monastery" in an official document prepared by the monastery's DMC dated April 2005 seen and translated by ICT (Official Document 10, "Reflections on certain conditions at the Monastery.") However, according to another related document — a questionnaire on general conditions at Kardze Monastery also completed by the monastery's DMC (Official Document 9, "Written Responses to a General Survey on the Situation of Training of Professional Teachers and on Education at Kardze Monastery") — the monastery's income is actually half that estimated by the official document. (Both documents appear in

<sup>39</sup> USCIRF Policy Focus China, August 2005, p. 6. [www.uscirf.gov](http://www.uscirf.gov).

## CHAPTER 13 FIRST PERSON

“MONASTERIES MAY NOT PROMOTE ANY LEARNED LAMAS”

the Official Documents section at the end of this report.) The completed July 2004 questionnaire notes: “Under current economic circumstances we can only break even, and we ask upper level departments whether taxes can be reduced.”

There are generally very few avenues open to monasteries and nunneries for generating sufficient income for their physical upkeep, not to mention maintaining their functions as places of religious learning and providing a source of spiritual guidance to local communities.

Article 18 of the TAR Measures for Implementation of the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” (Experimental) — also reproduced in full in the Official Documents section of this report — clearly point towards the aim of utilizing Tibetan Buddhist culture for tourism, which has led to many monasteries and nunneries in Tibetan areas being more similar to museums than to thriving centers of cultural and religious development.

Tourism is making a significant impact on some of Tibetan Buddhism’s most important monasteries and temples, including Kumbum in Qinghai. Kumbum, which is not far from Xining, is on the edge of traditional cultural Tibet where it meets with Chinese, Mongolian, Salar and Muslim Hui cultures, and is regarded as a ‘gateway’ to Tibet.

Monastic life at Kumbum Monastery today is now deeply affected by tourism, as the monastery is visited by large numbers of Chinese tourists. A newly built settlement outside the gates of the compound houses a large number of Chinese traders who make their living selling souvenirs to the busloads of tourists who arrive on a regular basis. Trade outside the monastery appears to be unregulated and doesn’t appear to provide any obvious benefit to the monastery itself. Most of the items on sale have very little to do with Buddhism — such as electronic gadgets and toys — or if they are related to Buddhism they are from Chinese Buddhist traditions.

In a monastery courtyard that used to be the scene of scriptural debates, photographers have set up stands to take pictures of tourists in gaudy replicas of traditional Tibetan costumes. “The bustle of tourist activity has almost destroyed the religious atmosphere at the monastery,” one observer said after several visits to Kumbum over a number of years. The monastery’s tour guides are all Chinese, speaking Chinese to the overwhelmingly Chinese tourists, but they wear replicas of traditional Tibetan costumes.

**A** MONK IN HIS TWENTIES from Drepung Monastery in Lhasa gave the following account of his educational background and how he became a monk. He gives a detailed insight into the control and running of one of the three major monasteries in Lhasa, Drepung, recounting how local officials even prevented the distribution of Buddhist blessing pills to local people after one ceremony. The monk left Tibet to practice his religion in exile. He told ICT: “Denunciation [of the Dalai Lama] is psychologically devastating and makes you unhappy and disrupts the concentration one needs for studying.”

“I come from a family of farmers, and attended school until 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade. A high school qualification is pretty useless so I didn’t finish. We paid about 800 *yuan* (\$100) per semester [four months] and this included lodging, food and books. But there was never enough food and I remember being hungry all the time. After high school you can go to colleges in China where most students are Chinese from poor working families. Even in high school most students were Chinese. The main subjects taught were Chinese and science. Tibetan was taught but it was not considered an important subject. The only history taught was Chinese history. No one pays attention to Tibetan. Teachers themselves do not consider Tibetan language important, so students do not show any interest in learning Tibetan. Besides, except for Tibetan classes, all other subjects were taught in Chinese. There was a little over 100 teachers and over 1000 students and most teachers were Chinese. There was definitely a huge gap since it is much easier for the Chinese students to understand their own language where as for us Tibetans learning everything in Chinese is much harder.

“I returned home after school and soon after I was sent away to the monastery. My parents decided that attending school would not lead to a job and therefore they deemed that it was better for me to join a monastery. College fees are also very expensive, especially since my parents are farmers and do not have a lot of income. I believe college costs about 10,000 *yuan* (\$1,295) a year. There are places in China like Beijing University and Qinghua University but no Tibetan student could make it into these prestigious schools. It seems that Tibetan students are restricted from attending top schools. I also showed interest in being a monk.

“It was such a difficult procedure to get into the monastery. At first we had to register at the local police station and Lhasa City religious affairs department (Tib: *Chos Don Jus*). We had to get permission to stay in Lhasa from that office. If we didn’t have that, the authorities that routinely came to do the rounds at night in the monastery would throw you out. Getting this permission is really hard for many monks. Inside the monastery, there is a police station and a Security Management Committee (Tib: *Do Dam uyon lhen khang*). Up until last year the personnel all wore police uniform, but now they don’t wear their uniforms. They are from Lhasa public security bureau (Ch: *Gongan ju*) and all the personnel at the Security Management Committee (SMC) are sent from the Lhasa City religious affairs department and are both Tibetan and Chinese. The SMC oversees the entire operation of the monastery. They control the alms-giving at the prayer sessions and make decisions as to how much alms each monk should get. Nothing gets done without the permission of this office. The process is that monks report to the monastery’s DMC, which in turn approaches the SMC for permission. There are about 10 people in the SMC and there are about 30 policemen.

“The DMC at Drepung has a slightly different set of duties. They are supposed to be looking over everything at the monastery, like new construction and so on. Anything that needs to be done must be taken up by the DMC and sent to the SMC for permission. Once permission is granted, the DMC announces it. Right now there are 11 monks in the DMC — they are all monks on the committee. In the early 1990s, the committee was elected by the monks, but there was an intensification of the patriotic education campaign, and at that time the head of the patriotic education work group (Tib: *Ls don tsog chung*) established the DMC at the monastery and DMC appointed the SMC members.

“The SMC seems to be the real power in the monastery. DMC members are selected by SMC without any involvement from general monks.

“It took a year for me to get my monk’s certificate, and I was allowed to stay at the monastery for that time. Those who are real monks have to abide by the monastery’s rules and regulations, and can participate in religious activities. Those who don’t have a certificate are not bound by monastic rules and cannot attend religious activities.

“Patriotic education is intensive in the monastery. In 2005, a team of educators were sent in by the work group and they are still there at the monastery. They were from different offices in Lhasa, including the police. Sometimes there are 20 of them, but it’s hard to know the exact number because authorities switch the

members from time to time. They have been living in the monastery. Monks are divided into different groups, with about 30 monks in each group at first, and then the number is reduced because they think it is more efficient to work with a smaller number. During patriotic education, monks are told to denounce His Holiness and be against separatism.

“They issue five thick red books on patriotic education, which monks have to study. After studying these five books they will pass around statements they have written about patriotic education which we have to read out loud and we have to print our name and mark our fingerprints on the statements. Then we have to copy these statements onto a blank piece of paper. There were so many incidents where monks refused to cooperate. When five teacher monks were purged last year, monks became even more agitated and went against the authorities. That led to a reduction in the intensity of the education at the time. Afterwards, officials were going to monks’ living quarters to interrogate them. About three officials came and would go to different rooms and ask questions. When they came to my room, they told me to love religion and the state. They said that if we fail in being a patriotic monk and denouncing His Holiness, then we have no right to stay in the monastery and we will be sent to home. They threatened us by saying we could be reported back to our Shang [county government] where we will be kept under strict watch.

“The patriotic education session was much more intensive this year [2006] compared to the one in 2003. Denouncing His Holiness was the central focus. They also instructed us to follow the ideology of the Party and the state. They did not say anything about the Chinese-appointed Panchen. Patriotic education occupies so much time and distracts monks from normal religious practices and studies.

“These days, there is no really high lama in Lhasa who stands out. In Drepung, it’s Gen Choephel Namgyal who is about 70 years old. There is no one like Gen Lamrim anymore.<sup>40</sup> Monasteries may not promote any learned lamas or increased restrictions will be imposed. High reincarnate lamas can only practice their religion quietly at the own compound.

“No one is allowed to give teaching in the monastery. Aside from Ngachen Rinpoche from Shigatse, no one has given any religious teachings in Lhasa since the passing away of Gen Lamrim.

---

<sup>40</sup> Gen Lamrim Ngawang Phuntsok, who taught at Drepung and died in 1997 after a long illness, was widely regarded as one of the greatest teachers in the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism.

“Last year, Drepung organized a religious ritual that used to be held once a year. For that sacred purpose, monks at Drepung prayed for a month — older monks prayed during days while younger monks prayed at night — and prepared many pills [pellets of barley-flour dough]. After all the prayers were done, we started giving these pills out to the public. The next morning, when TAR officials got word of the distribution, they stopped it. *Lobum* is a precious pill and Drepung used to make it even before the Chinese occupation. People had to leave empty-handed. There were so many people that day, so we lied to the public stating concern over safety.

“Before there was no SMC or other committees in the monastery, but now these two offices [the SMC and the police] are permanently situated in the monastery. When monks go to perform prayers at people’s houses as it was traditionally done, they have to get permission from SMC or the police station (Ch: *Paichu suo*). It’s very difficult, though a little easier if it’s only one or two monks.

“We are only allowed to leave [the monastery] on Sunday. It is better if we go to Lhasa not wearing monks’ robes. We are not even allowed to say His Holiness’ name, let alone celebrate on his birthday. For other religious occasions we are allowed to pray in the monastery, but nothing special is allowed.

“There are so many monks who have left the monastery, and many who were expelled. Last year when the Chinese Panchen Lama visited Tashi Lhunpo on his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, two monks from Drepung were invited to go. Since refusal would have been deemed to be politically motivated, two monks had to attend the ceremony. Monks don’t like him and call him ‘Gya Panchen’ [Chinese Panchen] in private since it is so restricted. Monks are not allowed to listen to radio programs from the U.S [the Tibetan language services of Radio Free Asia and Voice of America].

“I came into exile because I hope to have a chance to study religious texts. It is very difficult to do so in Tibet because of [political] programs like patriotic education. Denunciation of the Dalai Lama is psychologically devastating and makes you unhappy and disrupts the concentration one needs for studying. By coming to India, I can have an audience with His Holiness and have the opportunity to study religious texts.”



Displacement and resettlement of nomadic families into newly built camps in the outskirts of villages and towns in various areas of Tibet is seriously threatening pastoralism, the core of Tibetan traditional lifestyle and economy. This old nomad lady pays her homage and respect to a lama beginning a teaching session in the nomad camp of Darlag (Ch: Dari) in Qinghai. Photo: ICT

# CHAPTER 14

## REPRESSION OF ALL RELIGIONS IN CHINA

*“There is nothing wrong with building up a harmonious society [a reference to Chinese President Hu Jintao’s recent stated priority]. The only concern is the method and process to achieve this goal. I personally think that the most important thing is education. I strongly believe that compassion is the foundation of a harmonious society, and we need to provide a proper education to our young generation, especially the knowledge of compassion. Through studying Buddhism, people can generate a compassion nature, and avoid human beings’ negative emotion. Therefore, we must advocate studying the core of Buddhism — compassion — then it will be possible for us to build a genuinely harmonious society.”*

— The Khalkha Jetsun Dhampa, head of the Jonang tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and the spiritual head of Buddhism in Mongolia, in an interview with ICT (March, 2007)

**T**HE RESTRICTIONS being placed on the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet are similar in many ways to those placed on the practice of other faiths and religions in the PRC.

From 1951 onwards, the Chinese Communist Party started demanding patriotism — loyalty to the Party and its leaders first and foremost — from individual religious believers and the congregations and institutions which drew them together. This involved cutting all ties with foreign institutions, or at the very least submitting to government demands that all communications be conducted in strict accordance with Chinese Communist Party guidelines.

In addition to these international restrictions on religious exchanges, tight controls have been put in place on how religious knowledge in all faiths can be passed from person to person and from generation to generation. This has been particularly damaging in the case of Tibetan Buddhism which is founded on the study of religious texts, and oral transmission of the teachings.

In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) to the north of Tibet — a vast region accounting for fully one sixth of the entire land area of the PRC — the Chinese



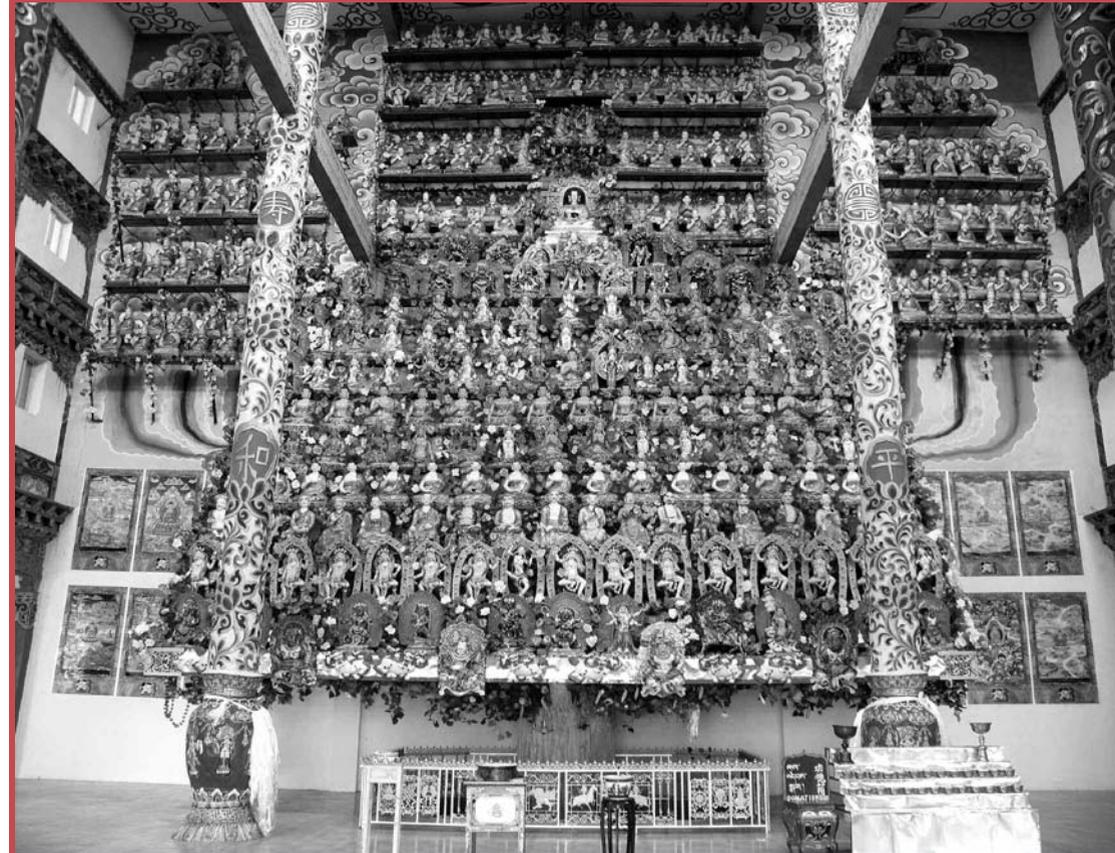
Together with Tibetan Buddhism, Islam is under particularly tight control by the Chinese authorities. As the largest segment of the religious population in Xining (Qinghai) Muslim leaders are continually under pressure by Beijing’s regulations on religious practice and education. The Dongguang Mosque, in the photo, is the largest place of worship of the Muslim population of the city. Photo: ICT

authorities strictly control which version of the Koran can be used by the large Muslim Uyghur population, and as with texts central to the faithful practice of traditional Tibetan Buddhism, basic Islamic texts such as *Hadith* are restricted to officially approved versions only.

While people under 18 cannot become a Buddhist monk or nun — although there are numerous under-age monastics throughout all of Tibet who declared a fake identity or age — no one under the age of 18 in the XUAR may even enter a mosque. (Official Document 4, “The System of Managing Novice Monks Entering the Monastery” details this and other requirements for young monks entering monasteries.) In East Turkestan, the ban on religious education even extends to a prohibition on teaching scriptures to children in the family home.

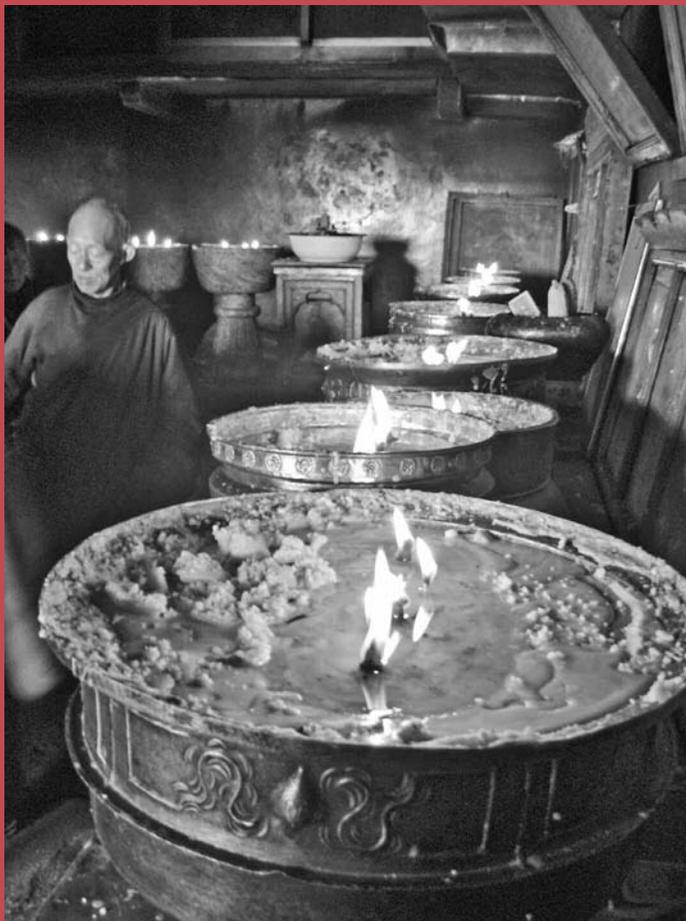
The ban on Chinese Communist Party members and government workers from expressing — or even having — a faith applies equally to Uyghur Muslims and Catholics as it does to Tibetan Buddhists. Female Uyghur government workers are forbidden from wearing head-scarves, while males who work for the government are banned from growing a beard or showing any other outward sign of their faith, much as Tibetan government employees and Chinese Communist Party members are forbidden from wearing religious amulets or talismans, even if they are hidden under the wearer’s clothes.

The Islamic, Catholic and Tibetan Buddhist clergy are required to declare loyalty to the atheist Chinese state above and beyond their loyalty to their faith, and for Catholic and Tibetan Buddhist clergy there is the additional demand to denounce the Vatican or the Dalai Lama as ‘splittist’ forces intent on destroying the ‘motherland’. For Uyghur Muslim imams, as much as a third of their study and training is political and most often based on Marxist philosophies which predict the ultimate demise and extinction of religion from society.



Thanks to donations and financial support from both foreign and Tibetan devotees, many monasteries have been able to restore their buildings and repair the damage caused in the past. This image depicts a wooden sculpture of the ‘lineage tree’ at Kardze Monastery. Photo: ICT

# CHAPTER 15 POEMS ON THE PANCHEN LAMA



Lighting butter lamps in front of statues in monasteries and temples is a very popular practice among Tibetan devotees. Such a religious practice, like other popular ritual performances, increases personal merit and purifies one's karmic propensities. Photo: ICT

THE FOLLOWING TWO POEMS about the Panchen Lama were written by a Tibetan writer and found on a Chinese language website.

## PANCHEN LAMA

If time could obliterate lies  
 Could ten years be enough or not?  
 A child grows into an intelligent youth  
 Like a parrot just mutters rote words.  
 Those are words imploring the Lord for favor!

The other child, where is he?  
 On his wrist the scar derived from the birth,  
 His previous incarnation, from an earlier decade,  
 In some sunless Beijing prison  
 Tightly locked by a pair of handcuffs.  
 Today this uninformed child  
 Is he also cut and bruised?

If the darkness has nine levels  
 At which level are he and he mired?  
 And if the light has nine levels,  
 Which level will his and his souls be rapt?  
 Perhaps he is there in every level of light and dark  
 He is stuck there, he is rapt there...

Konchogsum!<sup>41</sup> In this inverted world  
 What impermanent sufferings  
 Have cyclically returned to the Panchen Lama!

October 12 2005, Beijing.

<sup>41</sup> 'Konchogsum' is the three jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha.

# CHAPTER 16 RECOMMENDATIONS

## DECEMBER

1

Listen, a foul lie is choking the sky  
 Two birds settle in the forest  
 He says: Tibet, Tibet is happy  
 The furious girl refuses to fast  
 Monks' robes strewn over the ground change color  
 They say: it is to protect this life  
 But that one!  
 Boiling blood, boiling blood  
 Who in the life to come is crying aloud?

2

Black clouds! Collapse!  
 This is what I imagined at this moment  
 I also know this moment of silence  
 Will last for eternity  
 A million saddened faces,  
 Please open the doors to your hearts  
 That person of deepest maroon in color  
 Has been sacrificed  
 Because the tree of life is evergreen  
 A soul, it is a soul

3

An even greater setback  
 Uncountable trees have never withered like this before  
 And the people stay silent in fear  
 Hands closed thus in prayer  
 And severed by rebirth after rebirth  
 To fill the stomachs of vultures and dogs  
 Oh a string of shapeless rosary beads  
 Who is qualified to pick them up  
 In this dirty mortal world?

Lhasa, December 1995.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

1. Release the Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, from state custody and allow him to pursue the religious education necessary for assuming his legitimate position as a religious leader.
2. End the official policy of State intervention in the identification and training of Tibetan reincarnate lamas.
3. Disband the Democratic Management Committees at religious institutions.
4. End those practices targeted at Tibetan Buddhist institutions which threaten to erode the Tibetan religious culture, such as:
  - the ban on religious construction without government permission;
  - the strengthening of Party dominance through Democratic Management Committees;
  - limits on the number of monks and nuns per monastery;
  - the screening for admission of monks and nuns on the basis of their political views;
  - government restrictions on travel between counties, prefectures and provinces, for the purpose of religion study; and
  - 'patriotic education' which includes the denunciation of the Dalai Lama.
5. Allow Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns to interact freely with their co-religionists abroad.
5. Repeal laws, regulations, and other provisions that violate the right to freedom of religion, in accordance with international standards that protect the right to freedom of religion.
6. Protect in law, the right of all children to obtain religious education, with the consent of their parents or legal guardians, and to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
8. Release all Tibetan prisoners who have been detained for religious beliefs or practices but have been charged with political offenses.
9. Allow monks and nuns who have been imprisoned on political charges to return to their religious institutions upon completion of their sentences.
10. Ratify immediately the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and ensure that its protections are extended to Tibetans, including the right to profess and practice their own religion.

# CHAPTER 17 OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNITED NATIONS

1. The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief should include travel to Tibet when making a fact-finding visit to China.
2. As recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to the government of the People's Republic of China, an independent expert should be allowed to meet with the Panchen Lama, and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief must now make it a priority to engage the Chinese authorities on this recommendation by seeking a visit with the Panchen Lama as soon as possible.
3. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief is urged to reflect the situation of religious freedom in Tibet in reports on China to the UN Human Rights Council.
4. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief should work with other thematic mandates of the UN Human Rights Council, including the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance, to gain access to the Panchen Lama.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

1. Hold the government of the People's Republic of China accountable for breaching several Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in its abduction and prolonged detention of the Panchen Lama, and press that he be released from state custody and restored his rights to a religious education so that he can assume his legitimate position as a religious leader.
2. Foster the development of freedom of religion in China by encouraging the government of the People's Republic of China to recognize that this freedom includes the right of Tibetan Buddhists to freely express their religious devotion to the Dalai Lama.

1. TAR Measures for Implementation of the 'Regulations for Religious Affairs' (Experimental)
2. Statements from the Regional United Front Nationalities Work Conference
3. Rules for Monks
4. The System of Managing Novice Monks Entering the Monastery
5. Patriotic Pledge
6. The Monastery System of Democratic Management
7. Monastery's System of Political Study
8. What is religion?
9. Written Responses to a General Survey on the Situation of Training of Professional Teachers and on Education at Kardze Monastery
10. Reflections on Certain Conditions at the Monastery
11. Sign at the Karmapa's Monastery in Tibet

### OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 1

*The following regulations have been referred to extensively throughout the course of this report and they are reproduced here in their entirety. This translation by ICT is of the original Chinese version available at [www.chinatibetnews.com](http://www.chinatibetnews.com) accessed on March 22 2007. ICT made reference to and took guidance from a translation published by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China ([www.cecc.gov](http://www.cecc.gov)) on April 5 2007.*

TAR Measures for Implementation of the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" (Experimental)

TAR People's Government Order No. 73

The 'TAR Measures for Implementing the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" (Experimental)' was passed by the 11<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee of TAR People's Government. The measures are hereby published and will be promulgated on January 1 2007.

September 19 2006, Jampa Phuntsok, TAR Chairman.

#### Section 1, General principles

**Article 1:** These regulations have been drafted in accordance with The Constitution, the State Council's "Regulations on Religious Affairs" and other relevant legislation as well as in accordance with actual conditions in the autonomous region in order to protect citizens' freedom of religious belief, to uphold social harmony and concord between religions, and to regulate the management of religious affairs.

**Article 2:** Citizens have freedom of religious belief.

No organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; they may not compel citizens to believe in one religion and not another; they may not discriminate against citizens who believe in any religion (hereinafter referred to as religious citizens) or citizens who do not believe in any religion (hereinafter referred to as non-religious citizens).

There shall be mutual respect and harmonious co-existence between religious citizens and non-religious citizens, between citizens who believe in different religions and those who believe in different sects of the same religion.

**Article 3:** Normal religious activities and the rights and interests of religious organizations, places of religious activity, professional religious personnel and religious citizens are protected by law.

Religious organizations, places of religious activity, professional religious personnel and religious citizens should respect laws, rules and regulations when carrying out or participating in religious activities, and protect the unity of the nation, the unity of the nationalities and social stability.

Religious organizations, places of religious activity and professional religious personnel may not use religion to endanger state security or public security, to obstruct the order of social management, infringe upon citizens' individual and democratic rights, or to expropriate public or private property.

**Article 4:** All religions shall maintain the principle of independence and self-administration. Religious organizations, places of religious activity and religious affairs will not be subject to the domination of foreign [waiguo] forces or extra-territorial [jingwai] forces.

**Article 5:** Every level of people's government shall actively guide religious organizations, places of religious activity and professional religious personnel to love the country and love religion, in protecting the country and benefiting the people, in uniting and moving forward, and in guiding the mutual adaptation of religion and socialism.

**Article 6:** Places of religious activity may not reinstate or covertly reinstate previously abolished religious feudal privileges and repressive exploitative systems, nor may they reinstate or covertly reinstate the tulku labrang system and subordinate relationships between monasteries.

**Article 7:** People's government religious affairs departments at the county level or above in accordance with the principles of delegated responsibility and territorial jurisdictions and in accordance with law, shall supervise, inspect and guide conditions regarding the adherence to laws, regulations, and rules by religious organizations, places of religious activity, and religious personnel; they shall establish and administer on-site management systems, register modifications and changes to projects, and conduct supervision and guidance of all religious activities.

People's government departments at the county level or above such as public security, civil affairs, health, education, cultural objects, and news publication departments are responsible for administrative management work within the remit of their responsibilities and in accordance with the law.

The people's government of a township (town) and neighborhood affairs offices shall according to their respective responsibilities assist the religious affairs department in handling religious

affairs work. Village (neighborhood) committees should coordinate with all levels of people's government to properly carry out relevant work.

## Section 2, Religious organizations and places of religious activity

**Article 8:** The establishment, change in status or demise of religious organizations should be registered in accordance with the "Regulations on the Management of the Registration of Social Organizations" and "Implementing Measures on the Management of the Registration of Religious Social Organizations." The establishment, change in status or demise of prefectural (city) religious organization must be reported for the record to the autonomous region's people's government religious affairs department.

Religious organizations shall be subject to the supervision and management of local people's government religious affairs departments and civil affairs departments in accordance with the law.

**Article 9:** Religious organizations are responsible for drafting "Rules for the Democratic Management of Places of Religious Activity", and organizing and implementing a system of assessment and promotion for religious ranks.

**Article 10:** Religious organizations and places of religious activity may, in accordance with the national "Measures on the Management of Internal Reference Publications", compile and print internal religious reference publications. The publishing for public distribution of religious publications and audio and visual materials shall be handled in accordance with the national "Regulations on Publication Administration", the "Regulations on Audio and Visual Materials Administration", and the TAR's "Temporary Provisions on Improving the Management of the Religious Publishing Market".

Publications and audio and visual materials with content touching on religion should comply with the national "Regulations on Publication Administration" and "Regulations on Audio and Visual Materials Administration," and may not include the following content:

- 1) anything which harms the concord between religious and non-religious citizens;
- 2) anything which harms the concord between different religions and within a religion;
- 3) anything which discriminates against or insults religious or non-religious citizens;
- 4) anything which broadcasts or glamorizes ethnic splittism, religious extremism or terrorism;
- 5) anything which violates the principle of independence and self-governance;
- 6) anything which violates laws and regulations as they are decreed.

**Article 11:** Religious organizations and places of religious activity which establish a printing house for scriptures must obtain approval from the autonomous region's people's government religious affairs department and the news publication department.

**Article 12:** Religious organizations and places of religious activity may receive donations from religious citizens for use in that organization and for designated religious activities in accordance with their religious traditions. However, donations may not be extorted or apportioned.

Religious organizations and places of religious activity which receive religious donations from abroad shall handle those donations in accordance with the "Autonomous Region Measures on the Management of Overseas Contributions by NGOs and Individuals for Aid Projects".

Non-religious organizations and places which are not registered as places of religious activity may not organize or hold religious activities, and may not receive donations of a religious nature.

**Article 13:** Religious organizations or places of religious activity that plan to build a religious structure such as an outdoor religious statue, stupa, or *mani lhakhang*<sup>42</sup> outside a place of religious activity should petition the autonomous region's people's government religious affairs department for examination and approval upon receiving agreement from the prefectural (city) administrative office (people's government) religious affairs department where the place of religious activity is located. The autonomous region people's government religious affairs department should give a decision on whether or not approval is granted within 30 days of receipt of the application.

Religious organizations and places of religious activity which plan to build large-scale, outdoor religious statues outside a place of religious activity should proceed in accordance with stipulations in the State Council's "Regulation on Religious Affairs".

Organizations and individuals not belonging to religious organizations or places of religious activity may not erect or construct large-scale outdoor religious statues or *mani lhakhang*.

**Article 14:** Religious citizens' collective religious activities should generally be held at a venue registered as a place of religious activity or a place designated as such by a people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above. They should be conducted by professional religious personnel or by personnel who conform to the stipulated conditions of the religion.

**Article 15:** Plans to establish a place of religious activity shall be examined and approved in accordance with the procedures stipulated by the state and the autonomous region.

Places of religious activity shall handle registration formalities in accordance with the relevant provisions of the state and the autonomous region.

Places of religious activity that merge, divide, cease operations or otherwise change their scope of registration should approach the office that originally handled their registration to register those changes.

**Article 16:** Agreement for the renovation, refurbishment or rebuilding of places of religious activity must be obtained from the local county-level people's government religious affairs department, and then applications must be made to and approval given by the religious affairs department in the prefectural (city) administration (people's government). The prefectural (city) administration (people's government) religious affairs department should give a decision on whether or not approval is granted within 30 days of receipt of the application.

The renovation, refurbishment or rebuilding of places of religious activity belonging to culturally protected units must be approved by cultural artifact management departments in accordance with laws and regulations for the protection of cultural artifacts.

**Article 17:** Places of religious activity shall establish management organizations and practice democratic management. Members of a place of religious activity's management organization are

<sup>42</sup> A *mani lhakang* is a small temple used for housing large, mounted prayer wheels.

elected through democratic consultation, implement a system for terms of office, and report this for examination to the management office that oversees the registration of the place of religious activity.

**Article 18:** Management organizations at places of religious activity should establish comprehensive systems for the management of personnel, finances, auditing, public order, fire prevention, study, the preservation of cultural artifacts, health and epidemiology, religious activities, and production and commerce, and be subject to the supervision, inspection and guidance of relevant local people's government departments.

Management organizations at places of religious activity should establish a responsibility system for the preservation of cultural artifacts, clearly defining responsibilities for fire prevention and safety in accordance with relevant state and autonomous region regulations.

**Article 19:** Places of religious activity shall enroll professional religious personnel in accordance with those places' ability to sustain themselves [*ziyang nengli*], their management abilities, and the ability of local religious citizens to shoulder financial responsibility as well as in accordance with the state and autonomous region's relevant regulations on professional religious personnel; places of religious activity will handle formalities of confirmation and entering enrollments onto the record.

**Article 20:** Places of religious activity which hold classes for the study of scriptures should conform to the following conditions:

- 1) venues should have a history of holding classes for the study of scriptures;
- 2) there should be a relatively high number of teaching personnel with a definite knowledge of religion;
- 3) the aim of holding studies should be proper and correct, and the content of the training should be legal;
- 4) the number of students should not exceed the regulated capacity of the place of religious activity;
- 5) there should be relatively complete implementation of student management.

**Article 21:** Places of religious activity which hold classes for the study of scriptures should obtain agreement from the religious affairs department in their local prefectural (city) administration (people's government), and then apply for approval from the autonomous region religious affairs department. The autonomous region religious affairs department should give a decision on whether or not approval is granted within 30 days of receipt of the application.

**Article 22:** Religious articles, items of religious art and religious publications may be sold within places of religious activity.

**Article 23:** In accordance with relevant state and autonomous region regulations, places of religious activity may for the purposes of self-sufficiency offer services and other socially beneficial operations such as commerce and tourism. All gains and income obtained shall be channeled into financial and accounting management.

**Article 24:** Such facilities as roads, drinking water, street lighting, and radio and television installations at places of religious activity should be included within the overall planning of local urban construction.

**Article 25:** Places of religious activity at major tourist attractions may retain a certain amount of funds from economic income resulting from ticket prices to be used for the maintenance of the place of religious activity, the protection of cultural artifacts, improvements to tourism facilities and for the maintenance of the surrounding natural environment.

**Article 26:** Places of religious activity should guard against accidents on their premises and against incidents damaging the unity of the nationalities or effecting social stability.

When accidents or incidents occur, the management organization at the place of religious activity should immediately report to the local county people's government religious affairs department, and assist relevant departments handle the situation according to law.

**Article 27:** Large-scale religious activities which are inter-regional and whose content exceeds that covered by regulations at a place of religious activity, or large-scale religious activities which take place outside the place of religious activity, should conform to the following conditions:

- 1) the activity should conform with the religion's creed and doctrine and religious tradition;
- 2) a precise description of the activity must be submitted prior to the event and include such information as time, place, routes, the type of personnel, the main ceremonies, and emergency preparedness.

**Article 28:** Applications for large-scale inter-jurisdictional religious activities of the following criteria need to be made to the relevant religious affairs departments and approved 30 days before the day of the event:

- 1) applications for inter-township activities should be made to the local county-level people's government religious affairs department;
- 2) applications for inter-county (city, district) religious activities should be made to the local prefecture government religious affairs department;
- 3) applications for inter-prefectural (city) religious activities should be made to the autonomous region religious affairs department.

Religious affairs departments should give a decision on whether or not approval is granted within 20 days of receipt of the application and notify the relevant departments in a timely manner.

Large-scale religious activities which go beyond the limits set for the autonomous region should be handled in accordance with the State Council's "Regulations on Religious Affairs".

Religious affairs departments, police and traffic departments in the township people's governments, neighborhood committees and county-level governments and above where large-scale religious activities are to take place, should implement management in accordance with their responsibilities to guarantee that the large-scale religious activity is carried out in a safe and orderly way.

### Section 3, Professional religious personnel

**Article 29:** Professional religious personnel are confirmed by their religious organization. Once they have been registered and put on file at the religious affairs department above the level of county people's government, they may engage in religious activities.

The method for confirming the status of professional religious personnel shall be the responsibility of autonomous region religious organizations.

**Article 30:** Religious personnel are protected by law in presiding over religious activities, holding religious ceremonies and religious succession ceremonies, engaging in the arrangement of religious texts, and carrying out the study of religious culture and appraisals of scripture studies as well as activities including research into religious culture and exchanges.

**Article 31:** In accordance with the requests of religious citizens, religious personnel may conduct simple religious ceremonies at sky-burial sites and in the homes of religious citizens.

**Article 32:** In accordance with relevant state and autonomous region regulations, professional religious personnel may enjoy relevant social security benefits.

**Article 33:** Aside from the stipulations in Article 31 of these measures, religious personnel who have not received approval from the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above may not engage in religious activities outside their place of religious activity such as initiations into monkhood or nunhood, consecrations, expounding Buddhist sutras, proselytizing, or cultivating followers.

**Article 34:** Professional religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures or other materials which harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security. Religious citizens may not request professional religious personnel to recite from banned religious texts.

**Article 35:** Personnel who have been expelled from a monastery or who do not hold a "Religious Personnel Certificate" may not engage in religious activities in the name of professional religious personnel.

**Article 36:** The reincarnation of Tulkus in traditional Tibetan Buddhism is handled, at a place of religious activity under the guidance of a religious organization, in accordance with relevant provisions of the state and autonomous region, and in accordance with religious traditions and historical systems.

Organizations and individuals may not, without the authorization of the autonomous region religious affairs department, search for or recognize Tulkus and soul boys.

**Article 37:** For those looking for or confirming soul boys outside of our region, our regional religious organization shall consult with the relevant provincial (region, city) religious organization, and report it for the record to our region's people's government religious affairs department.

For those coming from other provinces (regions, cities) to our region looking for or confirming soul boys, the outside provincial (region, or city) religious organization shall consult with our regional religious organization, and report it for the record to our region's people's government religious affairs department.

**Article 38:** The religious organization and democratic management organization at a place of religious activity shall arrange and implement Buddhist activities such as enthronement ceremonies, initiation into monkhood, and the academic promotion of soul boys in accordance with relevant provisions. The religious affairs department shall dispatch staff to supervise and guide the activities.

**Article 39:** Places of religious activity should draft formulate robust and practicable measures for strengthening the development, education, and management of Tulkus. Tulkus must be subject to the management of the place of religious activity's management organization where they are resident.

The designation of a religious instructor or cultural teacher for Tulkus shall be reported for the record to the local people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above, after the management organization of the place of religious activity where the Tulku is resident has submitted its opinions and the local religious organization agrees.

**Article 40:** Other than financial assets donated as alms for religious activities conducted or presided over by a Tulku at a place of religious activity, financial assets such as those presented to a Tulku by a place of religious activity and the religious accoutrements and paraphernalia in a Tulku's sleeping quarters at a place of religious activity are all the property of the place of religious activity, but are for the use and management of the Tulku.

**Article 41:** Professional religious personnel who leave their place of religious activity to go on pilgrimage either within or outside the area of jurisdiction where their place of religious activity is located must carry proof of identity from the local people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above and a "Professional Religious Personnel Certificate" and report for the record to the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above in the location where they go on pilgrimage. Once a professional religious personnel's period of pilgrimage has concluded, they should promptly return to their original place of religious activity.

**Article 42:** Professional religious personnel from our region who receive an invitation to go outside the autonomous region to engage in religious activities must take their letter of invitation to the prefecture (city) administrative office (people's government) religious affairs department in the religious personnel's locality to submit an application, and then report for examination and approval to the autonomous region's people's government religious affairs department. Once the report from the prefecture's (city's) administrative office (people's government) religious affairs department has been received, the autonomous region's people's government religious affairs department shall consult with the people's government religious affairs department of the other province (region, city), and give a decision on whether or not approval will be granted within 30 days of receipt of the report.

For invitations to non-autonomous region professional religious personnel to come to the autonomous region to participate in religious activities, an application to the autonomous region religious affairs department should be made by the autonomous region religious organization. Once the autonomous region religious affairs department has received the application, it should consult with the [other] provincial (regional, city) government's religious affairs department and give a decision on whether or not approval is granted within 30 days of receipt of the application.

**Article 43:** Autonomous region professional religious personnel who travel to different prefectures (cities) to study scriptures should obtain approval from the from the religious affairs department in their local administration (people's government), and report for the record to the autonomous region's people's government religious affairs department.

Autonomous region professional religious personnel who travel to other provinces (regions, metropolises) to study scriptures, and professional religious personnel who come to the autonomous region from other provinces (regions, cities) to study scriptures should obtain the consent of both provincial [-level] government's religious affairs departments.

While studying scripture, religious personnel shall abide by the rules system of the place of religious activity and be subject to the management of the people's government religious affairs department and the management organization at the place of religious activity in the area where they are located.

**Article 44:** For invitations to foreign professional religious personnel to come to the autonomous region for visiting and for religious study and exchange, applications to the autonomous region people's government religious affairs department should be made by the autonomous region religious organization. The autonomous region people's government religious affairs department should in conjunction with the autonomous region external affairs department and within 20 days of receipt of the application then present the application for consideration with suggestions to the autonomous region people's government. The autonomous region people's government should give a decision on whether or not approval is granted within 20 days. Foreign professional religious personnel who come to the autonomous region with approval should subject themselves to the management of the local government religious affairs department and the external affairs department.

**Article 45:** Overseas Tibetan compatriots may participate in religious activities at places of religious activity in our region, but may not preside over religious activities, or engage in such activities as initiations into monkhood or nunhood, consecrations, expounding Buddhist sutras, proselytizing, or cultivating followers.

#### Section 4, Legal liability

**Article 46:** When religious organizations, places of religious activity and religious personnel are in violation of the provisions of Article 3, Clause 3 in these measures by using religion to endanger state security or public security, to obstruct the order of social management, infringe upon citizens' individual and democratic rights, or to expropriate public of private property, cases shall be handled by administrative sanction issued by the relevant management organization when the circumstances are minor and do not constitute a crime; when the circumstances are serious and constitute a crime, criminal responsibility shall be investigated according to law.

**Article 47:** When a religious organization or place of religious activity is in violation of the provisions in Article 12, Clause 2 of these measures by accepting without authorization foreign contributions, the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above shall confiscate the contributions. When the circumstances are serious, the office that administered the organization's or place's registration shall order that the person directly responsible at the religious organization or place of religious activity be removed from their position.

**Article 48:** When a religious structure such as an outdoor religious statue, stupa or mani lhakhang is built without authorization outside of a place of religious activity in violation of Article 13 of these measures, the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above shall order redress, suspension of construction, and demolition within a specified time limit, in accordance with relevant laws and regulations.

**Article 49:** When a place of religious activity is rebuilt, expanded or repaired without authorization and in violation of Article 16 of these measures, the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above shall order the suspension of construction and demolition within a specified time limit.

**Article 50:** Places of religious activity which hold classes for the study of scriptures without authorization and in violation of Article 21 of these measures will be ordered by the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above to amend the situation and any illegal financial gains shall be confiscated. When there is a violation of public security management provisions, the public security office shall impose a public security management sanctions according to law.

**Article 51:** Those who violate Article 28 of these measures by holding large-scale inter-prefectural religious activities without authorization from religious affairs departments shall be ordered by the religious affairs department to halt those activities; any illegal financial gains shall be confiscated and a fine of more than twice the sum but less than three times the sum may be levied; additionally, the religious organization or place of religious activity that holds unauthorized religious activities may be ordered by the registering organization to remove the person directly responsible at the place of religious activity from their position.

**Article 52:** Professional religious personnel who violate Article 33 of these measures by engaging in religious activities such as initiation into monkhood or nunhood, consecrations, expounding Buddhist sutras, proselytizing, or cultivating followers outside of a place of religious activity without authorization, shall be ordered by the religious affairs department above the level of county people's government to rectify the situation; when the circumstances are serious, the religious affairs department above the level of county people's government shall recommend that the religious organization revoke the professional religious personnel's professional status.

**Article 53:** Professional religious personnel who violate Articles 41, 42, 43, and 44 of these measures by crossing jurisdictions for religious activities without approval or putting such activities on record, the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above shall order amends. Where the circumstances are serious, the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above shall recommend that the relevant religious organization revoke the professional religious personnel's professional status.

**Article 54:** Where overseas Tibetan compatriots, in violation of the provisions in Article 45 of these measures, preside over religious activities, or engage in such activities as initiations into monkhood or nunhood, consecrations, expounding Buddhist sutras, proselytizing, or cultivating followers, the people's government religious affairs department at the county level or above shall order amends. Where the circumstances are serious, public security offices shall handle the matter according to entry-exit management laws and regulations.

**Article 55:** Behavior which violates the State Council's "Regulations on Religious Affairs" and which violates other stipulations within these measures and which already have sanctions defined in the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" and other laws, then those regulations should be followed.

### Section 5, Supplementary provisions

**Article 56:** These measures are in effect from January 1 2007 onwards. At the same time, the "TAR Temporary Measures for the Management of Religious Affairs" promulgated by the TAR People's Government on 20 December 1991 are rescinded.

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 2

The following document is a statement which was published by the CCP organization the United Front following a conference in Lhasa in January 2007 where prefectural level United Front offices each reported on "nationalities' work" in their own prefecture.

Extracts from the document are reproduced below in a translation prepared by ICT. The document was published in Chinese on the TAR United Front website (<http://zt.tibet.cn>) on 20 January 2007. The original document was much longer than the one reproduced below which has been heavily edited to highlight the various prefectural-level United Front office's statements on religion, although other United Front priorities are still visible in this edited version. The comments are generally presented as work achieved in the previous year, followed by plans for the coming year.

### Statements from the Regional United Front Nationalities Work Conference

#### Lhasa City Communist Party Committee

**One:** Successes in religious work; strengthening the management of places of religious activity.

First, the government smoothly managed the monasteries according to law. In accordance with the principle of managing jurisdictions, management systems were straightened out and a system of contact between monasteries was established; second, patriotic education and propaganda on the legal system for the broad masses of monks and nuns was broadened; third, hard strikes were made against an extremely small minority of stubborn elements; fourth, a system was established for ensuring monks can receive all rules and regulations and for religious work to proceed in a regulated way.

[...]

The construction of monasteries' democratic management committees has been strengthened. In accordance with the masses' demands for political reliability, religious attainment and moral standing, democratic management committees have been enriched and strengthened, and problems of DMCs not playing a strong role and problems of disunity in DMCs have been resolved a step further; there were still prominent problems of aging, rigid thinking and obsolete ideas.

**Two:** The next plans

[...]

Persist in maintaining the guide for religious work of "protect respect for the law, stop any breaking of the law, resist infiltration and strike hard against crime"; establish the political principle and work requirement of "clarify the two realms, take one responsibility"; grasp the "two bottom lines"; isolate and attack to the greatest possible degree the extremely small minority of splittists, and unify to the greatest possible degree the broad masses of patriotic monks, nuns and religious masses.

Thoroughly implement the "Regulations on Religious Affairs" and the "TAR Measures for Implementing the 'Regulations for Religious Affairs' — (Experimental)", strengthen management according to law, protect the regular order of religion and ensure the masses' freedom of religious belief.

[...]

Deepen a step further patriotic education in the monasteries, extend the scope of training, earnestly create a corps of professional religious personnel which is politically reliable, with religious attainments and with moral standards, and ensure that leadership powers at monasteries are in the hands of people in religious circles who love the county and abide by laws.

#### **Rigaze Prefecture Communist Party Committee [Tib: *Shigatse*]**

**One:** the methods and successes of united front nationalities' work

[...] Second, further extended the scope of United Front work in the realm of religion. Ruthlessly grasped [*henzhua*] construction of monasteries' democratic management committees, established a comprehensive system of regulation for the monasteries, and implemented it firmly. Relentlessly strengthened the political education and thinking of monks and nuns. Strengthened the education and training of living Buddhas and by means of intimate heart-to-heart communication understood the conditions of their lives and study, resolved their difficulties and problems and protected normal religious order.

[...]

**Two:** the next stage in work and thought

[...] Fourth, strengthen construction of the United Front corps, carry out a step better the work with Tibetan compatriots abroad, and in unity struggle for yet more Tibetan compatriots abroad to favor the Motherland.

#### **Shannan Prefecture Communist Party Committee [Tib: *Lhoka*]**

**One:** main methods and achievements

First, fully implemented the Party's religious policies, actively guided religion to adapt to socialism, carried out patriotic education in the monasteries and the democratic management committees and strengthened a step further understanding amongst monks and nuns of loving the country and loving religion. Prominently grasped the anti-splittist struggle as the main focus of constructing thought and politics among the masses and among the cadres, relentlessly strengthened education in Marxism's "Four Viewpoints" and "Two Theories", and strengthened thought education on "The Three Inseparables", and in "Unity and Stability Bring Prosperity, Splittism and Chaos Bring Disaster", and made the broad masses of people and cadres maintain political clarity and resolve. Second, broadened the scope of training for non-Party people and promoted cooperation between Party and non-Party people. Third, conscientiously carried out well the work of receiving and managing overseas Tibetan compatriots. [...]

[...]

**One:** main methods

[...] Third, kept maintaining stability as the main duty of the United Front's work, and united all people in the United Front towards contributing to the construction of a harmonious Nagu. Deepened and developed patriotic education in the monasteries, and struck hard against illegal behavior which used religion to engage in splittist behavior.

[...]

#### **Linshi Prefecture Communist Party Committee [Tib: *Kongpo*]**

Worked around the central task of economic development, struggled for people's hearts and concentrated efforts to make the United Front into a service for economic development.

[...]

With regard to nationalities work: first, positively implemented "Happy Border, Prosperous Minorities Activities". Second, kept ruling the prefecture according to law, and comprehensively implemented the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law. Third, strengthened the base and pressed ahead with undertakings for promoting unity of the nationalities. Fourth, continued the tradition of blazing new trails, promoting undertakings which develop nationalities' culture, and comprehensively promoted every kind of social undertaking.

With regard to religious work: first, perfected the county, township and village religious affairs management network, established a system of contact between leaders and cadres at important monasteries, issued the Linshi Prefecture "Monasteries democratic management committee work system", "The system of management for monasteries' land", "The system of management for religious activities", "The system of management for monasteries' cultural items", and strengthened the management of religious activities according to law. Second, deepened and developed patriotic education in the monasteries, and by using multiple methods and channels, deepened and made more permanent those activities for exposing and criticizing the Dalai clique. Three, continued to take care of the lives and concerns of patriotic religious personages. Fourth, promoted monasteries' self-sufficiency, supporting the beneficial involvement in social undertakings by religious circles, and actively guided religion to adapt to socialism.

[...]

#### **Ali Prefecture Communist Party Committee [Tib: *Ngari*]**

**One:** main methods

Eternally held high the "two-sided banner" of patriotism and socialism, united all forces that could be united, and earnestly created a situation of all nationalities working together for reform, development and stability.

First, convened conferences each year of non-Party representatives, conferences of Tibetan compatriots based overseas, and conferences of people in the non-public economic sectors. Second, correctly handled relations among the nationalities, deepened and developed creative activities for promoting the unity of the nationalities, honored the spirit of nationalities with patriotism at its core, and made the thinking of "The Three Inseparables" enter deep into people's hearts. Third, correctly handled the relationship between social development and the influence of religion, actively guided religion to adapt to socialism, realized the harmonious co-existence of religion and society, and the harmonious coexistence between the religious masses and the non-religious masses, and between the masses who believe in different religions. Fourth, strengthened the management of religious affairs.

[...]

Changdu Prefecture Communist Party Committee [Tib: *Chamdo*]

**One:** the situation of work in recent years

[...] Second, actively carried out good work on religion. Chamdo Prefecture both deepened patriotic education in the monasteries as well as grasped the guidance of education for the masses thereby setting a strong and thorough foundation for the anti-splittist struggle, and for strengthening legal discipline and respect for the law among representatives from legal circles and knowledge of loving the country and loving religion.

[...]



Today Buddhist devotees explore new trends to express their faith, including pop music. Often supporting their home monastery, some monastics and laypeople turn to music as a form of devotion and financial support. The poster heading reads “Loving and Kind Tibetans.” Golog (Ch: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai. Photo: ICT

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 3

*This is the first in a series of posters which were seen by ICT hanging in monasteries and nunneries throughout Eastern Tibet in modern-day Sichuan Province. Similar posters are mentioned in the Kongpo Prefecture section of the United Front report directly above — Kongpo Prefecture is in the TAR — and it would appear likely therefore that the posters are a common feature of monastic institutions throughout all Tibetan areas of the PRC.*

*ICT has removed details from the translations which identify which monasteries the posters were seen and photographed.*

*The first poster from a monastery in Lithang [Ch: Litang] gives a good impression of how pervasive the political atmosphere can be for monks in Tibet.*

## Rules for Monks

- 1) Monks may not receive or propagate instructions from religious organizations outside the country, or receive financial donations in the name of religion but for the purpose of infiltration, or fees for reciting scriptures.
- 2) Monks may not recite scriptures, proselytize or seek alms outside the religious venue, and may not in any way indulge in extortion or blackmail.
- 3) Monks may not without authorization extend invitations to religious organizations and religious personages outside the country for a visit.
- 4) Monks may not use religion to interfere with the administration and laws of the state, or to interfere with schools or social public education, or to interfere in people's free marriage, or to create religious disputes, and must oppose all activities of backwardness and returning to the past.
- 5) Monks may not coerce citizens to believe in religion or infringe upon citizens' personal and property rights, or harm citizens' physical and psychological health.
- 6) Monks may not use religion to illegally establish societies, organizations, to rally, demonstrate or engage in other illegal criminal activities.
- 7) Monks may not distribute religious proselytizing material such as religious books and video materials which have not been approved by those government departments in charge.
- 8) Monks may not fight, brawl, steal or gamble, and they may not participate in any recreational activity that is not suitable for a monk.
- 9) Revere your teacher, love your apprentices; be solemn in practice of ceremonies and observance of festivals, wear clean and well-kept robes, be free of desire, love hard labor.

No monk may forge, transfer or lend their Professional Religious Personnel Certificate; monks must conscientiously uphold and respect the monastery's system of regulations, and be subject to the management of the monastery management committee.

**OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 4**

*This poster is an example of similar posters seen in monasteries throughout all of Tibet, outlining regulations governing the entry of young monks into the monastery. This particular poster was seen by ICT in Lithang.*

**The System of Managing Novice Monks Entering the Monastery**

- 1) Novice monks entering the monastery must be 18 years old, love the country and love religion, respect and abide by the law, be pure of faith; voluntarily respect monastery rules, and strictly abide by religious doctrine.
- 2) Novice monks entering the monastery must do so voluntarily, they must apply in person, have their family's consent, have obtained the consent of the monastery management committee, have reported to the township people's government for examination, and be approved by the county religious affairs department.
- 3) Tulkus recognized abroad or dispatched from abroad without exception may not enter the monastery.
- 4) The monastery's enrolment of monks may not and without exception exceed the personnel quotas approved by the people's government.
- 5) Personnel not from this county who enter the monastery to study scriptures must have identification and a document of introduction from the county religious affairs department; and must report to the prefecture religious affairs department to apply for approval.

**OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 5**

*This 'Patriotic Pledge' was hanging as a poster in a monastery in Dartsedo in Kham, and is similar to many others seen in monasteries throughout the region. The 'Patriotic Pledge' is listed as an item of political study in a poster below — official doc 7 — and as such this poster would be the subject of intense compulsory study for monks, including having to learn it by heart.*

**Patriotic Pledge**

- 1) Strengthen monks' ardent love of the motherland, utilize the leadership of the Communist Party, persist along the road of socialist education, gradually guide the mutual adaptation of religion and the socialist society, create in the monastery a custom of love of the country, love of religion, unity of the ethnic groups and progress.
- 2) Strengthen monks' political thought and education, focusing on and training a new generation of people in religious circles who love the country and who love education.
- 3) Strengthen monks' education in the "Four Upholds", requiring the broad masses of monks to uphold respect for the law, to uphold benefits for the people, to uphold the togetherness of the ethnic peoples, and to uphold the unity of the motherland.
- 4) Defend the honor of the nation and the monastery's maintenance of the principle of "inde-

pendence and self-administration", resolutely oppose the destructive infiltration activities of hostile foreign forces, and all Buddhist activities shall not be interfered with or support by any external religious force.

- 5) The monastery must assist the [County] Party committee and government in the complete and thorough implementation of the Party's religious policies, and in strengthening the management of religious affairs according to law.
- 6) Notification must be given to both the county- and township level governments for large-scale or inter-regional Buddhist activities at the monastery. The monastery can proceed following approval.
- 7) The recognizing of tulkus must follow relevant regulations and permission must be obtained from the government before the enthronement ceremony can proceed.
- 8) The monastery should persist along the road of "supporting the monastery by means of the monastery, and placing equal weight on farming and prayer"; gradually reducing or eliminating the burden put upon the masses.
- 9) On the precept of respecting religious rules and teachings, the monastery shall carry out a system of democratic management, and the democratic management committee is the highest organ in the monastery. All matters of education activities must be carried out under the unified arrangements and leadership of the democratic management committee, and individuals are not permitted to wield authority. The democratic management committee must exercise extreme discipline with the monastery's finances and establish a complete regulatory system. Monks should wear monks' attire, correctly perform ceremonies, and strictly adhere to religious rules and the monastery's system of rules.
- 10) Monks should strengthen their own education and training, and do good work on creating unity between monks, between monasteries and between Buddhist schools. There shall be no mutual interference or discrimination, but truly striving instead for a successful conclusion.
- 11) Protect the buildings, cultural artifacts and public installations at the monastery, and carry out "Four Defends" work well. Make the environment greener, and truly make the monastery a clean and peaceful place of Buddhist spirituality.
- 12) All of the monastery's systems of rules and regulations must be beneficial to construction of the "Three Civilizations", and beneficial to promoting the mutual adaptation of religion and the socialist society.

Monastery Democratic Management Committee.  
January 2005.

**OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 6**

*This poster, referred to and excerpted in the text of this report above, details the structure, duties and responsibilities of Democratic Management Committees in Tibet. This particular poster was seen at a monastery in Kardze but the system it describes is typical of all Tibet.*

The Monastery System of Democratic Management

- 1) The monastery is under the administrative leadership of the county government religious affairs department and the township Party committee and government, and practices a system of democratic management. Establishing a monastery management committee (group) according to law is in line with the principles of collectivized leadership, the division of work and responsibility, and the democratic management of monastery affairs. Members of the monastery management committee (group) are democratically elected by all monks at this monastery and approved by the county ethnic and religious bureaus. Each elected term is for three years, incumbencies can be consecutive, and monks have the right to suggest adjustments when monastery management committee (group) members prove to be not competent in their post.
- 2) The monastery practices democratic management and adheres to the following fundamental principles:
  - a) Uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, love the county and love religion, and progress in unity;
  - b) Relations of subordination between monasteries may not be revived; feudal privileges and systems oppressive exploitation which have been abolished may not be revived;
  - c) No activities may be carried out under the direction of forces outside the country;
  - d) Respect the masses' right to freedom of religious belief, and do not discriminate against or attack the non-religious masses;
  - e) The monastery should accept the administrative management of local village-level organizations, and accept the leadership of the Buddhist association.
- 3) The monastery management committee's (group's) professional responsibilities:
  - a) To collectively educate the monastery's monks and religious believers to abide by the country's constitution, laws and all policies, to ensure the normal progression of religious activities, to protect the monastery's legal rights and interests, to resolutely oppose splittist activities, and to protect the unification of the motherland;
  - b) To assist the government thoroughly implement policies of freedom of religious belief;
  - c) To organize, arrange and handle the monastery's daily affairs;
  - d) To establish a comprehensive system of monastery rules, to practice democratic financial accounting and to strengthen the management of financial affairs;
  - e) To organize for all monks at the monastery the study of current affairs and politics, Buddhist knowledge, and to raise the quality of the monks;
  - f) To collect and organize traditional Buddhist resources and carry out academic research;
  - g) To protect the monastery's cultural artifacts and financial assets, to tend to the surrounding gardens and forests and to keep the monastery in good repair;
  - h) To lead the monastery's monks in developing all kinds of production, service industry undertakings and socially beneficial undertakings, gradually realizing self-sufficiency for the monastery;
  - i) To convene regular meetings for reporting to the monastery's monks the work undertaken and to discuss how to handle the monastery's major affairs;
  - j) To regularly and irregularly report on work to the local township Party committee and government, the county religious affairs department and the county Buddhist Association; and to present timely reports to the county religious affairs bureau of important affairs at the monastery and important problems touch on policy;
  - k) To organize monks to develop "compete to be first, create the best" activities, and to actively create a "civilized monastery".

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 7

*This poster gives a good impression of the nature of compulsory political study for monks at a monastery. The 'Patriotic Pledge' referred to in this poster is translated as official document 5 above.*

### Monastery's System of Political Study

In accordance with the spirit of documents from higher levels of government and integrating it with the reality of the situation at this monastery, the following system of political study has been specifically devised.

#### **One:** Study organization and form.

The monastery democratic management committee must arrange for the broad masses of monks to engage in political study.

#### **Two:** Study times.

The monastery shall arrange study once a month in accordance with the prevailing circumstances.

#### **Three:** Study content.

- 1: The monastery shall make use of subscriptions to Tibetan-language periodicals when organizing study.
- 2: The monastery shall organize the broad masses of monks in the earnest study of Deng Xiaoping



Today, the collection and sale of caterpillar fungus (Tib: Yartsa Gunbu) is a lucrative business in many areas of Tibet. Although often looked down upon, such a business can be appealing for monastics, like those in the image. Golog (Ch: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai. Photo: ICT

- Theory and General Secretary Jiang [Zemin]'s General Strategy for National Rule in the New Era.
- 3: The monastery shall organize the broad masses of monks in the earnest study of such laws and regulations as The Constitution, The Regulations on Religious Affairs and the Patriotic Pledge.
  - 4: Integrating the reality of the situation at this monastery, there will be study of political current affairs, and relevant [political] lines, principles and policies.
  - 5: A record of study should be earnestly kept clearly noting the duration of study and the exact content.

Monastery Democratic Management Committee.  
January 2005.

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 8

*This next poster was seen hanging at Serthar, the large monastic encampment in Kham. It presents the official Marxist dialectic view of religion, informing the monks and nuns at the institution that, for example, religion is "a reflection of imaginary external forces acting upon people's minds and determining their everyday lives", and that "In a socialist society such as our own, the Marxist religious viewpoint is the theory and guide for how to understand and handle religion and questions of religion."*

### 1. What is religion?

In our daily lives we can regularly see all kinds of sacrificial activities and the reading of scriptures. Some are extremely grand with complex ceremonies and procedures; some are so simple that all that's needed is to burn incense and kow-tow. When we see such things we can generally sum them up as "religious phenomena". However, just what is religion? Let us examine this question together, look at just what is the true meaning and nature of religion, and what are its constituent parts.

Religion is a reflection of imaginary external forces acting upon people's minds and determining their everyday lives; it is people's awareness and feelings towards supernatural and mysterious realms and forces; it is a complex social system of activities and behavior reflecting expressions of belief in — and worship of — these imaginary mysterious realms and forces. With regard to its nature, it is the reflection of imaginary external forces acting upon people's minds and determining their everyday lives, and a form of social consciousness. That is to say, all objects of religious belief and worship in the world — whether in heaven or hell, whether Christian or Buddhist — are the product of people's imagination and do not exist in the reality of practical life. However, it is worth noting that such religious imaginings did not come from nowhere, and that they are intimately connected to people's objective and physical world. We can therefore say that religion is not entirely a subjective concept, it is also an objective reality of society. At the same time, these imaginary forces — including natural forces — which are reflected in religion, also include social forces. They determine people's lives and people have no way of recognizing or controlling them and these forces then take on supernatural and mysterious qualities in people's minds. It can therefore be said that those people who are able to recognize these determining forces are not likely to be the object of religious reflection, and spiritual forces will not be formed in such people's minds.

Religion is a form of social consciousness and it is a system of social behavior. It has four main constituent parts: the first is religious thoughts and concepts, that is, religious consciousness; the second is religious sentiment and experience; the third is religious activities; and the fourth is religious organizations and systems. Out of these four parts, religious thoughts and concepts is a

particular kind of social ideology where there is belief in a supernatural and spiritual realm and mystical forces existing beyond the physical world, which invoke feelings of reverence, obeisance and dependence. Religious activities are people's vocal and physical expressions of their own religious concepts and sentiments, including the performance of such religious ceremonies as ancestor worship, making religious offerings, prostrations and circumambulations.

The structures and groupings within which people conduct their religious activities, such as churches and monasteries, are called religious organizations. Every religious organization has its own certain systems. Religious systems are a way of guiding religious activities, an amalgam of all manner of regulations, religious doctrines, organizational systems, customs and traditions as a means of conducting religious activities in accordance with certain procedures. What must be made clear is that within these factors, religious believers (that is, those who believe in religion and participate in religious activities) play an extremely important role, one that effects all other factors. It is the reason for the production and the existence of religion; if there were no people there would be no religion; it is only when there are people that religion can be created.

### 2. What is a religious viewpoint?

A religious viewpoint is one's basic understanding and opinion of religion. It includes one's basic viewpoints and awareness of what religion is, what is its role, what is its product, and what will be its development and its demise. Whatever is one's religious point of view, then that is one's attitude and policy towards religion. We can therefore say that it is only when one has a scientific viewpoint on religion that one can have a correct attitude towards religion, which then formulates correct religious policies. In the course of mankind's social development many different viewpoints on religion have been formed. However, up until now, the most scientific religious viewpoint is the Marxist religious viewpoint.

### 3. What is the Marxist religious viewpoint?

The Marxist religious viewpoint is a basic viewpoint and attitude towards religion arrived at by means of dialectic materialism and historical materialism's world view and methodology. It is an amalgam of theories and policies on how to correctly understand and handle religion and questions of religion. In a socialist society such as our own, the Marxist religious viewpoint is the theory and guide for how to understand and handle religion and questions of religion.

The Marxist religious viewpoint includes a great deal of rich content which can be summarized within two aspects: the first aspect is the objective law describing the nature of religion, its social role and product, and its development and demise; the second is the basic principle describing how the proletariat, Party and government's attitude towards — and measures for — handling the question of religion.

With regard to the first aspect, there are five main points: first, referring to the nature of religion, states that religion is the reflection of imaginary external forces acting upon people's minds and determining their everyday lives. Under such influences, interpersonal forces become 'superhuman' forces. The second point refers to the fact that the deepest sources for the production and existence of religion are also the sources of society; and that the contradiction between productive forces and productive relations on the one hand and the hardships created by manifestations of class exploitation and repression in a class society on the other, are the deepest sources of religion. The third point is that in a class society, the main role of religion is manifested in the benefits it derives by means of exploitation which then become its main tool for self-preservation. However, under certain conditions, religion can play a positive role in the struggle of the oppressed. The fourth point



Once the institutional heart of Tibet, today Buddhist monasteries struggle to retain their authority in Tibetan religious life. Often containing hundreds of scriptures and collections of major works, many monasteries are functioning libraries. Here a section of the collection of the Kanjur in a prominent monastery in Dege, Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan. Photo: ICT

refers to the course of religion's product, development and change, relying ultimately on material change. The fifth point refers to the inevitable demise of religion, but a demise which cannot be man-made and in addition, the demise of religion will be a long-term historical process.

With regard to the second aspect, it is important to describe six principles: first, emphasizing that religion and scientific socialism are two opposing world views, and that religious thinking cannot be allowed to enter and corrode the fabric of the workers, the proletariat, the Party and the government. The second principle is that using administrative orders or police actions to forbid or attack religion, or to loudly declare war against religion cannot solve any problems of religion. The third is that as far as the state is concerned, religion is a personal matter, but it is not a personal matter for workers, the proletariat, the Party and the government. Fourth, engaging in struggle against religion is an overall duty of engaging in proletarian revolution. The fifth principle is the complete separation of church and state, the separation of the People's State Education Bureaus from religion, and the true realization of freedom of religious belief. The sixth principle is to unswervingly carry out scientific and atheist education for the masses and for Communist Party members.

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 9

*The following document is a questionnaire completed for an investigative outline of education and training for teaching and administrative staff at a Kardze Monastery in Kham. The questionnaire was completed by the monastery's democratic management committee for the local government and Party's offices and gives a good impression of how official supervision and control impacts upon monastic life.*

Written Responses to a General Survey on the Situation of Training of Professional Teachers and on Education at Ganzi Monastery

1. The current situation regarding professional teachers of traditional Tibetan Buddhism.

i) The number and proportion of professional teachers of traditional Tibetan Buddhism.

The monks at Ganzi Monastery come from Rongcha, Chengbei and Chengnan in Ganzi County Town; from Sexidi, Xiala, Nanduo and Keze in Yalong District; and Tuoba, Si'e and Tingka Townships in Tuoba District. There are close to 20,000 believers and 380 monks amounting to 2% of the population in these 10 places.

ii) Basic situation of classes, their structure and number at the monastery's Buddhist academy.

There are 10 grades within the monastery, with 150 students in courtyards and classrooms.

iii) What is the current state of the monks' basic education and their understanding of Buddhism? What is the overall structure of the monks' levels of education in the whole monastery?

Currently, 20 of the monks have attained upper-school [dazhuan], or upper-school levels in Tibetan; 80 have attained upper-middle school or upper-middle school levels in Tibetan; 270 have lower-middle school Tibetan, and 10 have upper-elementary school levels. There are advanced, intermediate and beginner levels for the study of the 'Five Classics'.

iv) Is there anyone who understands both languages or who has other technical abilities, and if so, how many people? How advanced are these skills?

There are approximately 10 people who understand both languages (Tibetan, Chinese); there are 4 Thangka painters, 5 sculptors, 1 electrician, 1 carpenter and 3 drivers; all are of average technical ability.

2. In the course of training and educating traditional Tibetan Buddhist personnel, how are successes and new situations explored and assessed?

People must first of all have a relatively high degree to undertake teaching. At the same time they must have a strict system of management and an extremely strong sense of responsibility before they can train students of Buddhism.

i) What do you consider to be the main focus when training monks now and what aspects of training monks will there be in the future?

With regard to the degree of value placed on the training of talented monks, our monastery has always paid great attention to raising the levels of education and understanding of Buddhist theory in novice monks. In light of this, the monastery established a Teaching Management Small Group, and this small group regularly takes on the responsibility of arranging activities for expanding and researching teaching by formulating teaching plans and educational content. Each semester, everyone's grades are inspected and compared against one and other with a system of rewards for hard work and punishments for poor work — a system which mainly manifests itself in the students' wages. Future methods of training monks will be: as of 2004 onwards, students who have taken the [initial stages of the] Geshe degree at this monastery and attained outstanding marks will be employed under the title of Geshe and become core members of the monastery. The first two people were employed by the monastery this year. If the state establishes [a system of] comparing the grades of big monasteries, we intend to send the students who have already passed the Geshe here to go and compete with the best and struggle to be state-recognized Geshe scholars.

- ii) What work has the monastery done to improve the qualities of the monks, as well as progressing their studies of politics, culture and Buddhism? What successes have been achieved?

The monastery has improved the quality of the monks by expanding the study of such aspects as politics, culture and Buddhism. Study time for politics is two days in every month, mainly studying the Ganzi News, the Party's nationality and religion policies, and relevant government policies, and then there are two classes for studying culture using Thirty Tibetan Songs, Tibetan Verbs, Studies in Tibetan Rhetoric and Studies in Tibetan Poetry; Buddhist studies are every day debating, reciting and listening to content from the 'Five Major Texts'. Compared to monks in the past there has been a relatively big change in overall levels, and illiteracy has basically been wiped out.

- iii) What work has been done by relevant government departments for training teaching personnel and on the aspect of education? What experiences have been gained?

The aspect of relevant government departments towards training teaching personnel and education. Relevant government departments regularly come to the monastery to carry out social conformity on the teaching personnel in patriotism, and religion and socialism; they propagandize freedom of religious belief and have had quite good results, and they will continue to be supported in future.

- iv) What study activities have been undertaken to raise the monks' levels of higher study and their ethical qualities? What were the results? What are the available conditions for monks' study?

As previously explained, elements of the Five Major Texts are used as the coursework for the monks' higher studies, using methods such as debating, lectures and listening. The target, that is, the target of 'higher' studies, has been attained by a rich style of study and the raising of knowledge of Buddhism, and 90% of the monks' ethics are relatively complete. And then this year, a meditation hall specifically for the practice of meditation by the monks is being renovated.

- v) How positive are the monks towards the higher studies?

By means of formulating a system of monastery rules and regulations and as a result of persuasive education, there is good positivity.

### 3. Difficulties and problems encountered in the course of training monks.

There are 380 monks living at our monastery, and in order to reduce the burden on the masses the monastery practices 'tend the monastery for the sake of the monastery', and conducts many kinds of business. Eighty facades in the town have been renovated, and [the monastery owns] three guest houses, restaurants and hot spring baths. There is also transportation, receiving alms, and the total income can reach more than 1m *yuan* per year. However, there are very many monks at the monastery earning different wages each month, with the most being 300 *yuan* and the lowest 80-90 *yuan*. The average wage is around 150 *yuan* added to which is three meals a day, and there is a lot of building or renovation work that has to be done each year. Furthermore, there are other added costs, and so the monastery's difficulties can be quite great. Under current economic circumstances we can only break even, and we ask upper level departments whether taxes can be reduced.

- i) Have there been instances of legally undisciplined activities, where the law was regarded as

less than the law, or where monks were not worthy of their monks' robes? Has there been any phenomenon of undisciplined or loose behavior, or non-attendance of classes?

None. And there has been very little of the law being regarded as less than the law, or where monks were not worthy of their monks' robes, undisciplined or loose behavior, or non-attendance of classes.

- ii) Has there been people who have crossed the border because of [financial] difficulties in their studies? How many?

There have been 365 people who crossed the border because of [financial] difficulties in their studies (including those who acquired a passport to leave the country).

- iii) Has there ever been instances of waning faith, not taking classes, not reciting scriptures, not understanding religious policies, not abiding by the monastery's regulations, coming and going rumor-mongering about some "living Buddha", or doing "Buddhist work" here and there? Explain with examples.

285 people have left the monastery for the reasons of waning faith, not taking classes, not reciting scriptures, not understanding religious policies, not abiding by the monastery's regulations, etc., amongst whom 267 left voluntarily and 18 were expelled.

- iv) What concrete suggestions and ideas do teaching staff and the believing masses have with regard to the aspect of the training of traditional Tibetan Buddhist teaching personnel and towards education?

Because of the problem of financial difficulties of students, and refusing to allow students to study abroad, it is hoped that the conditions will exist within the Prefecture for several large monasteries to co-operate and carry out short-term training, and that once competitive examination results have been compared, and finally the name of the Geshe degree could be awarded to those who qualify. It is requested that then a Geshe certificate could be issued in the State's name.

Monastery Democratic Management Committee

Date of survey: July 1, 2004.

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 10

*This document, also from Kardze Monastery, was prepared as part of a regular annual process of reporting by monasteries to local Party and government offices. As pointed out in the text of this report, this document which was prepared a year after the one above but nevertheless has significant discrepancies in financial figures in particular. Although the documents were prepared for different purposes, their tone is strikingly different.*

### Reflections on certain conditions at the Monastery.

After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress, Ganzi Monastery became the first monastery in the country to receive approval from the higher leadership to open up in 1980. With support from the state in the form of a one-off set-aside payment of 457,000 *yuan* specifically for renovating the monastery, and following many years of construction and improvements,

the monastery is now completely back to normal. In accordance with state regulations, the monastery is authorized to have 648 monks, and there are currently 360 monks. In recent years under the correct leadership of the county Party, government and United Front religious department, Ganzi Monastery has thoroughly and completely implemented the policies on freedom of religious belief, and positively guided religion to adapt to socialism; the management of religious affairs has been strengthened in accordance with the law and work has been expanded in accordance with the principles of a 'self-established, self-managing and self-administered' religious institution; and good results have been achieved in the construction and management of the monastery. In accordance with state regulations the monastery has grasped the following several aspects of work and the following reflections on current conditions are subsequently reported.

#### 1. Relevant conditions of expanding the work

##### a) Strictly control the number of monks entering the monastery

First, they must love the country and love religion. On the basis of being over 18 years of age, their level of written Tibetan must have reached a level of first year middle-school or above; and second, they must have the freedom to come and go. In the last 20 years or so the monks have come and gone with around 180 of the older monks having passed away, 294 having returned to a secular life and 365 having gone abroad for advanced studies, currently leaving 360 monks at the monastery.

##### b) Earnestly carry out "tend the monastery for the sake of the monastery" work

In order to lessen the burden on the masses the monastery has taken a variety of routes towards economic construction. In recent years the monastery's annual income has been in excess of 2m yuan amongst which alms amounted to 30% and other income amounted to 70%, an earnest carrying out of "tend the monastery for the sake of the monastery" work. Firstly, groups of monks are especially dispatched from the monastery to solve the domestic prayer and scriptural needs of the masses, and once the donated funds are all submitted, one half is returned to the monks and every other monk in the monastery is given a monthly 100 yuan assistance payment; and as such each monk receives around 400 yuan each month. Secondly, a group of monks study at the monastery and their salary averages around 300 yuan each per month, and whose salaries are in reality are set by 7 considerations, namely: discipline, debating the 5 major texts, rules of composition and rhetoric [wenfa], composition, memorizing scriptures, the ability to learn quickly, with wage structures calibrated in accordance with results. For example, in 2005, each point was fixed at 50 yuan and the highest score was 100 points, and so if a score of 100 points was attained the annual salary would be 5000 yuan, which is a monthly salary of 416 yuan; teachers and other responsible persons' salaries are 450 to 500 yuan per month; people over 60 years of age or people who are ill have a monthly salary of 300 yuan; odd-job personnel have a salary of 300 yuan per month; new monks earn 50 yuan per month from the month they enter the monastery and the following year their salaries are calculated according to their exam results; and all of the monks in the monastery are given three free meals every day. The reality is that the salary expenses for the monastery are more than 1m yuan per year, living expenses are 500,000 yuan; annual total costs are therefore 1,500,000 yuan.

##### c) Formulating strict rules and regulations

Firstly, monks within the monastery aside from taking a day of rest each week also arrange

for rest periods throughout the entire day; but they must request leave if they are to be absent from a class. If they do not request leave, they are docked 5 to 10 yuan; if it is discovered that they do not return to their quarters at night they are docked 50 to 100 yuan; at the same time, the responsible teacher is fined a proportion of the money docked. Secondly, if people want to thoroughly withdraw from the monastery they must return all previously enjoyed benefits and monies to the monastery; thirdly, monks in the monastery must strictly abide by the monastery's rules and regulations. If any transgressions are discovered, small matters shall be dealt with by education and docking points whereas people who seriously transgress the rules and regulations shall be ejected from the monastery such as when there is illegal behavior which means the perpetrator is not permitted to stay at the monastery.

##### d) The study of Buddhist theory and knowledge

On the basis of studying the five classics, monks at the monastery must also engage in multi-faceted studies which includes the study of debating [xuebian], the study of composition [xiu], the study of writing [xie], study of the rules of composition and rhetoric [wenfa], and the study of calligraphy. At the same time, monks at the monastery must also study relevant laws and regulations as well as participating in a certain amount of compulsory labor.

##### e) Basic construction

Since the opening up of the monastery until today, there has been large- and small-scale basic construction works at Ganzi Monastery every year, such as the renovation and decoration of the monastery's main hall, a general purpose building, a closed centre, a Garden of the Sorcerer's Dance, a surrounding wall, a stone staircase, a courtyard bulwark, a kitchen and the cultivation of plants and trees. In addition, more 10,000 square meters of shops, guest-houses and a monastery for Han people has been completed outside of the monastery.

#### 2. Remaining problems

Firstly, there is a great deal of coming and going on the part of monks at the monastery, in particular young people, creating considerable difficulties for the monastery's management; secondly, prior to 2002 there was an extremely small number of monks who having been poisoned with "Tibetan Independence" by splittist elements, such illegal activities as the distribution of handbills and the pasting of reactionary posters occurred, for which a total of 9 people were caught and sanctioned by the law. Five of those people have now completed their sentences and been released, while 4 people are still serving their sentences. Upon reviewing and expanding the monastery's patriotic education, the monastery and the monastery's democratic management committee decided monks guilty of breaking the law should never be allowed to return to the monastery; the monastery and the monastery's democratic management committee will resolutely struggle against and resist any kind of behavior which damages ethnic unity or which is harmful to the reputation of the monastery. Thirdly, in recent years there has been a relatively high number of people who have secretly left the monastery for abroad — the majority of whom have gone abroad for further study — but there are others who have used the excuse of going abroad for further study to just leave the country and travel around causing trouble. Fourthly, the monastery needs to further strengthen study structures, in particular the study of laws and regulations as well as expanding upon the regular study of patriotic education.

Ganzi Monastery Democratic Management Committee  
April 12, 2005

## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT 11

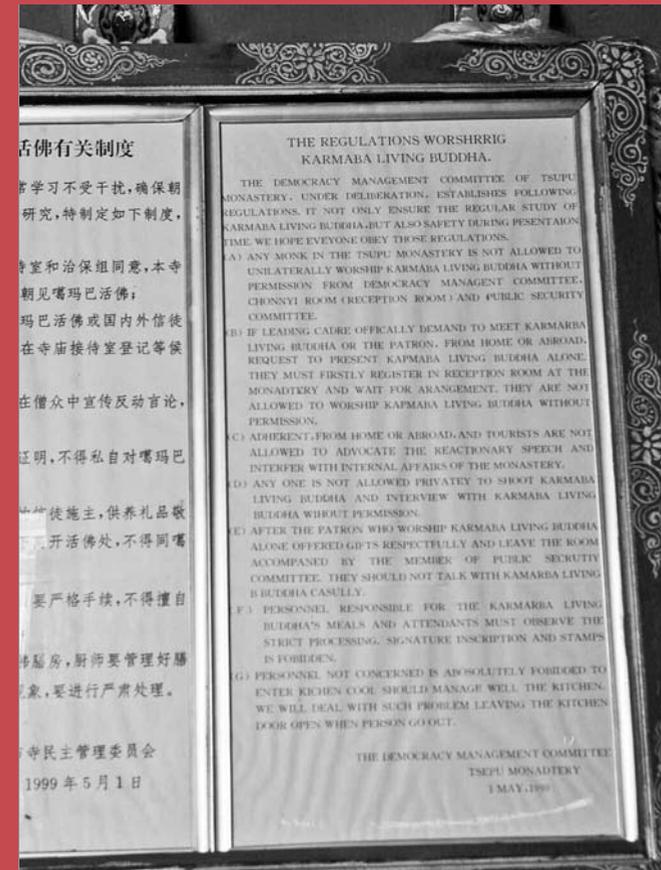
The following sign (with spellings unchanged in the text below) was photographed at the Karmapa's seat, Tsurphu, in Tibet. Although the Karmapa had escaped into exile two years before, the sign still hung in a hallway of the monastery.

## THE REGULATIONS WORSHRRIG KARMABA LIVING BUDDHA

The democracy management committee of Tsepu Monastery, under deliberation, establishes following regulations. It not only ensure the regular study of Karmaba living Buddha, but also safety during pesentaion time. We hope everyone obey those regulations.

- (A) Any monk in the Tsepu Monastery in not allowed to unilaterally worship Karmaba Living Buddha without permission from democracy managment committee, Chonnyi room (reception room) and Public Security Committee.
- (B) If leading cadre officially demand to meet Karmarba Living Buddha of the patron, from home or abroad, request to present Kapmaba Living Buddha alone. They must firstly register reception room at the monadtery and wait for arangement, they are not allowed to worship Kapmaba Living Buddha without permission.
- (C) Adherent, from home or abroad, and tourists are not allowed to advocate the reactionary speech and interfer with internal affairs of the monastery.
- (D) Any one is not allowed privately to shoot Karmaba Living Buddha and interview Karmaba living Buddha without permission.
- (E) After the patron who worship Karmaba Living Buddha alone offered gifts respectfully and leave the room accompanied by the member of public securtiy committee. They should not talk with Karmaba Living B Buddha casully.
- (F) Personnel responsible for the Karmarba Living Buddha's meals and attendants must observe the strict processing. Signature inscription and stamps if fobidden.
- (G) Personnel not concerned is absoolutely fobidden to enter kichen cool should manage well the kitchen. We will deal with such problem leaving the kitchen door open when person go out.

The Democracy Management Committee  
Tsepu Monastery  
May 1, 1999.



Billboard hanging up in the Karmapa's monastery, Tsurphu, in Tibet.  
Photo: ICT