

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU:  
THE CASE OF THE SLAUGHTER RENUNCIATION MOVEMENT

by

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A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Human Geography  
Department of Geography

2012

This thesis entitled:  
Alternative Development on the Tibetan Plateau:  
The Case of the Slaughter Renunciation Movement  
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Date: January 11 2012

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB protocol: 0109.44

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Alternative Development on the Tibetan Plateau: The Case of the Slaughter Renunciation Movement

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Emily. T. Yeh.

Since Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in the 1980s, the Chinese state has extended and intensified its economic development agenda, trying to shape its citizens to become rational market actors who prioritize commodity production. In Tibetan pastoral areas, this takes the form of efforts to develop the livestock industry by encouraging herders to increase their off-take rate to intensify production. As a result, Tibetan herders have become involved in selling ever-larger numbers of yaks to Han and Chinese Muslim traders. However, reforms also allowed a measure of religious freedom. Since 2000 many lamas (religious leaders) have become concerned about the mass sale of livestock for slaughter, because the Buddhist principle of cause-and-effect suggests that killing is a serious sin to be avoided. Using their tremendous influence and authority, these lamas have initiated a slaughter renunciation movement, persuading people to take oaths to stop selling livestock for slaughter – precisely the opposite of what the state suggests they must do to become materially “developed.” Many Tibetan herders have participated in these movements, even though their livelihoods depend heavily on the sale of animal products. The thesis explores the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist revival, secular neoliberal economic reforms, and the cultural transformation of Tibetan herders in the market economy since the 1980s. The research used mixed methods, including household surveys, in-depth, semi-structured interviews, analysis of texts and visual media, and participant observation, conducted over a period of 12 months in Tibetan areas of China's Sichuan province.

I argue that the slaughter renunciation movement is an effort by Tibetan khenpos to enact a moral correction of Tibetan herders that works as an intervention to the transformation brought by secular-based economic development. This intervention reflects a process in which Tibetan people are creating a Buddhist-informed neo-liberal development, which produces inequality on the one hand, and which is coded by Tibetan Buddhist norms and meanings on the other hand. With this movement we can also see how a Buddhist form of development departs from the dominant secular-based neo-liberalization process in contemporary China, through a process of contestation, incorporation, and rejection among multiple agents with different cultural agendas.

Thus, the dissertation demonstrates that what most scholars refer to as neo-liberalism in China is, indeed, a process of secularization and deepening of materialism; it is an uneven and culturally constituted process. Tibetan khenpos and their movements do not entirely reject this process, but rather selectively reject and embrace it by imbuing uneven processes with Tibetan Buddhist meanings, forming a Buddhist-informed neo-liberalization process.

## Acknowledgments

It has been a long and hard journey to finish a doctoral degree in a third language. There are many people I need to thank for their assistance and support over my four and a half years of study, particularly during the dissertation writing. The first person that I want to say thank you to is my advisor, Emily T. Yeh. Without her support and encouragement, I would not have been able to finish my studies at CU and my dissertation writing within a short period of time. I will always be indebted to her for what she has done for me. I also want to thank my other committee members, Timothy S. Oakes, Holly Gayley, Terrence McCabe, and Mara Goldman.

Using this opportunity, I also want to extend my gratefulness to the herders from Rakhor Village, my family members, and friends; all of them have been very supportive during my field research and writing process.

The field research for this dissertation was made possible through generous grants from the National Science Foundation - Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants (NSF-DDRI), the Social Science Research Council- International Dissertation Research Fellowship (SSRC-IDRF), and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

Finally, I want to say thank you to James S Glasscock, who works as a writing consultant at CU Services for Non-Native Speakers of English. He helped me a lot with my writings over the course of my studies at CU. Garrett Clark has also been very supportive with the editing of my papers.

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## Introduction

“when I listen to the khenpos’ teachings [in tapes] about negative karma related to slaughtering, I feel that there will be nowhere to go but to hell after I die [because I have sold many livestock to the meat market]; however, when I experience everyday life, I feel there are so much things I need to have. Everyone is competing for something. It seems to me that these are two totally different worlds.”

-- a herder from Hongyuan County, 2010

This herder is rich by local standards. In addition to the income from selling livestock to the meat market, he has been making a good sum of money from his transportation business with his newly bought van. Now he is thinking about buying a house in the county town and going into a bigger business. Seeing many Han Chinese making a lot more money than herders convinced him that Han people have better ideas of making money than do Tibetan herders. At the same time, he is a very religious person. He performs Tibetan Buddhist practices such as chanting, propitiating mountain deities, and going on circumambulations. He also feels deeply sorry for the livestock he has sold to slaughterhouses but he feels he needs to sell them continually, because he feels there are so many things that he needs money to cover. He is not alone in this dilemma.

This dissertation explores Tibetan herders’ moral dilemma about the need to be developed and the need to follow religious moral conducts. In other words, the dissertation is about how herders have been experiencing secular economic development since the 1980s, particularly the “Open up the West” campaign on the one hand, and the Tibetan Buddhist influence through religious teachings and new movements on the other hand. I am particularly interested in analyzing how these different forces compete to bring Tibetan herders into their own cultural and moral realms.



Herders' dilemma reflects an era in which development has dictated the Chinese landscape, the state, and citizens for the last several decades. The dawn of this era was marked by Deng Xiaoping's famous declaration in the early 1980s that "development is the first principle." Since then, development has become a hegemonic goal for all government departments and their officials. This hegemonic goal is clearly reflected in state propaganda commonly found on billboards on the streets and along the roads, as such. The majority of these billboards have something to do with "发展" (development) in one way or another. They involve all aspects of development issues, including the way to be developed, the speed of development, a strategy of development, the priority of development, and the role of development, involving all aspects of society. The most commonly seen propaganda includes "科学发展观" (scientific development view), "跨越式发展" (Great-leap-forward development), "又快又好的发展" (a better and faster development), "健康全面发展" (healthy and all-around development), "城乡统筹一体化发展" (integrated development in urban and rural areas), "绿色发展观" (green development concept), and many others. In short, in contemporary China, things are only imaginable when they are translated into terms of development. This translation turns human beings into market actors and productive forces, resources into commercial production, religion into tourism products, government agents into growth promoters and market protectors, the environment into sustainable development, and so forth. It is in this development world that people are commoditized with the discourse of "quality," or *suzhi* (Anagnost, 2004; Yan, 2003; 2006; 2008), that ranks China's citizens according to their achievement of development and modernity.

Like all local governments under the decentralized fiscal system put in place with China's economic reforms, governments in high-altitude pastoral areas of the eastern Tibetan Plateau, where most of the population are Tibetan herders and where animal husbandry is the primary

form of livelihood, are under tremendous pressure to promote development and generate income. Many governments have sought to develop the livestock industry by setting up economic parks for yak products, inviting outside investors, cultivating local entrepreneurs, promoting the sale of yak meat by branding it as “green,” environmentally-friendly and healthy, and most significant for this study, encouraging herders to increase their off-take rate. These efforts have prioritized the increased circulation of commodities and the cultivation of a “vision of commodity production” among Tibetans, or as one Chinese official working in eastern Tibet put it (in the context of tourism), “Tibetans must learn to turn themselves into commodities!” (Hayes, 2008). As a result of these integrated efforts, Tibetan herders have, over the past two decades, been selling ever-larger numbers of their livestock to Chinese and Hui (Chinese Muslim) middlemen, who transport hundreds of thousands of yaks to urban markets each year.

Economic reforms thus appear to have successfully turned Tibetans into neoliberal, market subjects. However, “opening up and reform” also included political reforms that allowed the return of a measure of religious freedom, producing contradictory effects. The overwhelming majority of Tibetan herders practice Buddhism. According to Buddhist principles, killing is one of the most serious sins that can be committed and should be avoided if at all possible.<sup>1</sup> Among the many social transformations in pastoral areas that Tibetan religious leaders are concerned about, one of particular importance since the early 1990s has been the increasing rate of selling livestock to slaughterhouses. This has become a major problem for Tibetan lamas and khenpos, particularly of the Nyingma sect.<sup>2</sup> Using their tremendous social influence and moral authority,

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<sup>1</sup> Note that in this dissertation I use the terms “sin” and “sinful” for convenience to translate the Tibetan term *sdiḡ pa*, but it does not have the Christian connotations of sin, but rather is related to Buddhist understandings of negative karma and its effects on a being in samsara.

<sup>2</sup> Tibetan lamas or *sprul skus* are reincarnated Buddhist leaders. In Tibetan Buddhism, a lama is a particularly high-ranking spiritual leader, who can choose the manner of his (or her) rebirth. Normally the lama would be reincarnated as a human, and in the most cases, the first one of each lama’s lineage of reincarnations would be a very well known Buddhist scholar. These days, some lamas are well educated while others are not, but they all have

these Tibetan Buddhist elites have initiated a slaughter renunciation movement through their religious teachings, persuading local people to stop selling their yaks for slaughter – exactly the opposite of what the state says herders must do to achieve development. At the same time, Tibetan herders make a living by herding yaks and sheep, and the income from selling livestock to the slaughterhouses is about 50% of their annual income, with the other half derived from selling dairy products, and other sources. Despite the fact that the slaughter renunciation movement would reduce their income for most herders, many herders have responded to the appeals of Tibetan Buddhist leaders by taking oaths to stop selling their yaks for periods of time ranging from three years to the rest of their lives. At the same time, some other Tibetan herders have refused to continue or to take vows of not selling livestock for the meat market. Starting around 2002, the movement spread out from Seda County, in Sichuan province, where the largest Nyingma Institute is located, to many Tibetan pastoral areas on the Tibetan Plateau, covering Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). These include Guoluo and Yushu prefectures in Qinghai; Naqu and Changdu Prefectures in the TAR; and Ganzi and Aba prefectures in Sichuan. It is particularly strong in counties of northern Ganzi prefecture including Seda, Shiqu, Dege, Luhuo, Daofu, and Ganzi counties, as well as in Rangtang and Aba counties in Aba prefecture.<sup>3</sup>

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spiritual authority over people. In contrast to lamas, khenpo and geshe are titles of the highest degrees of Tibetan Buddhist studies, the former in the Nyingma school and the latter one for the Gelug pa. Ordinary monks can get the degrees of khenpo and geshe if they have passed all exams and requirements. In the Nyingma sect, once a monk has received a khenpo degree, his degree of influence is similar to that of lamas, but the way in which they assert that influence is different. The authority of lamas is based on the fact that they are recognized as reincarnations, while that of khenpos and geshe is based on their achievements in learning. However, sometimes, there are cases in which the title of khenpo and lama overlap. For instance, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, who started the slaughter renunciation movement, was a lama as well as a khenpo.

<sup>3</sup> The movement has taken different forms, including voluntary participation by individual herders as well as cases where entire villages and tribes have participated, or where monasteries have enforced the movement upon entire communities.

Considering the simultaneity of the imperative force of secular economic development and variegated religious movements, there are several questions that need be addressed. How should we understand the religious teaching about slaughter renunciation in the current context of China where development dictates everything from government administration, to its citizens, and the landscape? How do the imperative secular economic force and religious forces work together on herders' decisions over their livestock? Why is it the case that many Tibetan herders embraced the slaughter renunciation movement while others did not? How do these religious movements contribute to discussions on the critical studies of development? How do religious forces interact with other forms of power, forming particular conjunctures?

Instead of seeing religious teachings as a separate category from discussions of development, I argue that the slaughter renunciation movement is an effort by Tibetan khenpos to enact a moral correction of Tibetan herders, that works as an intervention to the transformation brought by secular-based economic development. This intervention reflects a process in which Tibetan people are creating a Buddhist-informed neo-liberal development, which produces inequality on the one hand, and which is coded by Tibetan Buddhist norms and meanings on the other hand. In other words, the slaughter renunciation movement works as a window through which we can see the formation of a new form of development informed by both Tibetan Buddhist modernism and the uneven processes of neo-liberal development. With this movement, we can also see how a Buddhist form of development departs from the dominant secular-based neo-liberalization process in contemporary China, through a process of contestation, incorporation, and rejection among multiple agents with different cultural agendas.

Focusing on a case study of a pastoral village in the eastern Tibetan plateau where the slaughter renunciation movement began in 2006, the dissertation demonstrates that what most

scholars refer to as neo-liberalism in China is, indeed, a process of secularization and deepening of materialism; it is uneven process and culturally constituted process. In Tibet, Tibetan khenpos and their movements do not entirely reject this process, but rather selectively reject and embrace it by imbuing uneven economic processes with Tibetan Buddhist meanings, forming a Buddhist-informed neo-liberalization process, that is, a capitalist expansion.

My dissertation makes several theoretical and empirical contributions. By examining the role of Tibetan Buddhism in development, first, it contributes to analyses of the role of religious norms and idioms in the negotiation of development. Particularly, my dissertation contributes to recent studies of the cultural politics of development from the perspective of human geography. Second, it contributes to our understanding of the intersection between globalized neo-liberalism and religious revival in local contexts. In addition, through a focus on ethnographic and other field-based research methods rather than analysis of canonical texts, the project develops a geographical approach to the study of Tibetan Buddhism.

This dissertation is constituted by eight chapters, including this introduction, a literature review (Chapter 1), discussions of the Chinese state and Tibetan pastoralism (Chapter 2), Tibetan Buddhist movements (Chapter 3), competing subject formation (Chapter 4), contested development in Tibet (Chapter 5), Tibetan herders' experience of development and overlapping development (Chapter 6), and Tibetan Buddhist-informed neo-liberalism (conclusion). Here I introduce readers to the overall trend of the slaughter renunciation movement, my main field site of Rakhor Village, and my methods and field experiences.

### **The Slaughter Renunciation Movement and Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok**

Economic liberalization has brought a significant space for religious freedom in Tibet and in other parts of China. Within this space, Tibetan religious leaders including lamas (*sprul sku*), khenpos, and geshe have regained a strong influence over Tibetan people. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok (hereafter, Khenpo Jigphun) was one of the most distinguished Buddhist leaders, who played an outstanding role in revitalizing the teaching of Tibetan Buddhism following the liberalization of religious practice in 1980.<sup>4</sup> In responding to the problems of herders' selling of massive numbers of livestock to slaughterhouses, he began the slaughter renunciation movement in Larung Gar, Kham Tibet (current Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province).

Khenpo Jigphun (1933-2004) was the most influential lama of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in contemporary Tibet. A Tibetan Buddhist meditation master and renowned teacher of the Great Perfection practice (Dzogchen) (Tsultrim Lodroe, *Bsod Dar Rgyas*, and Bstan'Dzen RgyaMtsho, 1990), he established the Seda Buddhist Institute in 1980, known locally as Sertha Gar or Larung Gar, a non-sectarian study center of study. The purpose of the institute was to provide ecumenical training in Tibetan Buddhism and to meet the need for renewal of meditation and scholarship all over Tibet in the wake of China's Cultural Revolution of 1966-76. Despite its remote location, it grew from a handful of disciples gathering in the Khenpo's home to become one of the largest and most influential centers for the study of Tibetan Buddhism in the world, numbering nearly 10,000 monks, nuns, and lay disciples at its peak 2000, mostly from other areas of Tibet, and from inner China. The student body of Larung

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<sup>4</sup> Khenpo Tsullo, who I discuss in detail in this dissertation, was one of the main disciplines of Khenpo Jigphun and drew many of his ideas from him. For detailed studies of Khenpo Jigphun see the work of Germano (1998), Terrone (2002), and Gayley (2011).

Gar (Institute) was made up of monks, nuns, lay “vow-holders” of both Tibetan and Chinese origin, and practitioners of tantric Buddhism (Germano, 1998; Phuntso, 2004).

Khenpo Jigphun made extensive travels across Tibet and China teaching Nyingma traditional Buddhism and rediscovering hidden treasures.<sup>5</sup> In 1989, at the invitation of H.H. Penor Rinpoche, he visited India, where he taught at various monasteries, including the Nyingma Institute in Mysore. At Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama resumed the connections he and Khenpo Jigphun had in their previous lives by receiving teachings from Khenpo for two weeks (Germano, 1998).

Khenpo Jigphun was also invited to tour and teach at Buddhist centers in Europe and North America. But while he may have appreciated the opportunity to do so, he was saddened by what seemed like a commercialization of Buddhist teachings in the West (Phuntso, 2004) In 1993, Khenpo Jigphun expanded his massive following during teaching tours of the United States, Canada, Germany, England, France, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Financial offerings made to him during this tour funded a major building program at Larung Gar. On December 29, 2003, at age 70, Khenpo Jigphun was admitted to the Military Hospital 363 in Chengdu, the capital of China’s Sichuan province, with heart problems, and passed away there on January 7, 2004.

Because Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was a great teacher, he had a great many students dedicated to continuing his work. After he passed away, his students and many other lamas made similar appeals to herders to refrain from selling their livestock for commercial slaughter. Today, the movement that began in Larung Gar in Seda County, has spread across the eastern Tibetan Plateau. Since the early 2000s, more than thirty khenpos from Larung Gar and monks from all

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<sup>5</sup> Treasure revelation is a tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in which Tibetan religious leaders uncover ancient Buddhist texts, objects for ritual, such as statues, or chests that may have been concealed by Padmasambhava or other Buddhist masters. It is a very important tradition of the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

over Tibet who have been studying in Larung Gar have been promoting the movement in their religious teachings. Other than religious teachings by khenpos and monks, the idea of the movement has spread across pastoral areas through various means, including the distribution of posters, videos, audio tapes, popular songs, and so forth. Because Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was such a highly respected lama in the pastoral areas of eastern Tibet, many Tibetan popular singers have sung songs praising him and circulating his message, some of which have been written by monks.

Khenpos I interviewed stated that there are geographical differences in the level of difficulty in persuading herders into the vows. Herders from the pastoral areas that are closer to Larung Gar are more enthusiastic in participating in the movement. Moreover, the collection of caterpillar fungus (Tib. *dbyar rtsa dgun 'bu*), which has become the main and most lucrative source of income for herders in some areas, has also made it easier for khenpos to bring herders into the movement, because the impacts of the movement are slight compared to other areas where there are not such alternatives.

Even though the movement has reached many parts of pastoral areas of Tibet, there are still places where herders have not participated in the movement as of yet. Generally speaking, different Buddhist schools play important roles in the presence or absence of the slaughter renunciation movement. Tibetan herders under Nyingma monasteries are more active in participating in the movement, whereas herders under the monasteries of the Gelug School are less interested in the slaughter renunciation movement. This might be due to the fact that lamas in the tradition of the Gelug School are more interested in academic studies of Tibetan Buddhism than in engaging in religious teachings among ordinary Tibetans.



However, more important than religious sect in explaining why the movement has taken hold in some places than others is the degree of market influence on herders' lives. In areas where the influence of lamas and khenpos, particularly of the Nyingma School, is strong, the slaughter renunciation movement is popular, and resistance is slight or non-existent. At the same time, the slaughter renunciation movement has not taken place in the economically more advanced places (mostly located near major cities) where the influence of the market economy is strong. Some khenpos attempting to initiate the movement in these places have been facing difficulties and resistance. Khenpos I have interviewed said that they found it very difficult to persuade herders in the eastern Tibetan plateau close to Chinese major cities like Xining, Lanzhou, and Chengdu, places where herders also have a higher number of livestock compared to those in the north and west. This includes Hongyuan, the site of my dissertation research, which is close to the capital of Sichuan, Chengdu.

In pastoral areas of Tibet, Tibetan herders both slaughter livestock for their own consumption as well as selling livestock to slaughterhouses. Because the number of livestock sold to slaughterhouses is much higher than the number of livestock slaughtered for self-consumption, in the most cases, khenpos' slaughter renunciation movement is aimed at stopping the selling of livestock to the meat market. This movement differs from the traditional and still-practiced *tshé thar* ritual, in which livestock are ritually liberated from intentional slaughter. This includes a promise not only not to slaughter the yaks themselves but also not to allow others to do so through trade. In the slaughter renunciation pledge, herders promise not to sell their yaks to the meat market for a number of years or for their entire lives, but it is still acceptable to sell calves to other herders, because the buyers do not sell any young yaks to the meat market until they have matured after four to five years. (That is, they may be sold by the buyer after the terms

of the owner's pledge are over.) Traditionally, Tibetan herders normally have only one or two livestock as *tshé thar*, but if a family member falls ill, they may liberate more of their livestock (Bso Dar Rgyas, 1997). In contrast, the slaughter renunciation movement applies to the entire herd.

### **Study Site: Rakhor Village, Hongyuan County**

Sichuan Province's Hongyuan County, to which Rakhor Village currently belongs, is a nomadic county with a population of 40,000 located at the altitude of 3500m. The majority of the population are Tibetan pastoralists who make their living by herding yaks. The average temperature in winter is - 7°C with an average low of -36 °C, and the average temperature in summer is 7 °C with the highest temperature of 26°C. The annual precipitation is 753mm. It has a long winter with a short summer, spring and autumn. Eighty per cent of the annual precipitation occurs from May to October.<sup>6</sup>

Aside from tourism, yaks are the main economic resource for Hongyuan County, therefore, the local government has been particularly enthusiastic about promoting the production of local yak meat sales as a development strategy, including through the Aba (Tib: Rgna ba) Tibetan Plateau Yak Economic Park. Located at the eastern Tibetan plateau, Tibetan herders' interaction with big market cities in western China has been increasing over the past two decades. Particularly with the improvement of roads, in 2011 it took about 6-8 hours by car to reach Hongyuan from Chengdu, the Sichuan provincial capital and the largest city in western China. Half of the population of Hongyuan is under Nyingma monasteries, and many herders under these Nyingma monasteries have been very active in the slaughter renunciation movement.

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<sup>6</sup> 《红原县志》（1992—2005）2011. *Hongyuan County Annals*.

Within Hongyuan, the slaughter renunciation movement began in Rakhor (Tib: Ra skor) in 2006, where I spent one year conducting field research in 2010.

The residents of Rakhor village migrated from Datang pa, Ganzi County, Ganzi Prefecture to its current location in 1942, and it became one sub-tribe of the Mewa tribe (currently under five townships in Hongyuan County) at that time, while maintaining its independent identity before 1959. In 1959, the state established Longrang Township, later renamed Qiongxi (Tib: Khyung mchu) Township, by combining the Rakhor tribe with two other tribes, one of which migrated from Qinghai and another from another place. As of 2010, Rakhor Village had a population of about 950 herders in 185 households. Because the other two villages that were merged to form Qiongxi Township were from Qinghai, Rakhor Village does not have a very strong affiliation with other villages even though they belong administratively to one township. In contrast with their loose ties to their township, Rakhor herders are much more comfortable to be culturally part of the traditional Mewa tribe, which is currently spread across three administrative townships in Hongyuan County.

Rakhor has two main settlements, both of which are located about three kilometers away from Hongyuan County Town. The newer one was built beginning in 2006 on a piece of land they received from the state. The older settlement is located near their monastery, Rakhor Monastery. About 60% of Rakhor villagers have their new houses in the newer settlement while the remaining 40% are located near the monastery. Most of houses in the new settlement were built with state subsidies, mostly from the State Housing Project for Herders since 2009. Despite the implementation of the State Housing Project for Herders, most herders still cannot be settled for the whole year, because they still need to graze their livestock on their pastures. For many households, the newly-built houses are places where they store the possessions that they do not

need while they are away. In 2010, the county government included the Rakhor new settlement as one of Hongyuan County's resettlement tourism sites. These are included among the tourism sites are supposed to attract tourists from inner China, thus generating income for local herders.

Another kind of support that Rakhor herders, like other herders in Hongyuan County, have been receiving from the state is rice (88 kg/person/year) and flour (75 kg/person/year) because the county is the site of a Kashin-Beck disease alleviation program, which started in 2007, and was completed by the end of 2011. Rakhor herders have also been receiving grants from the *Tuimu Huancao* Program. Begun in 2008, *Tuimu Huancao* is an ecological program that aims to restore degraded grassland, using three techniques: banning of grazing on certain pastures for ten years, three month's closing of some pastures annually, and seeding on some heavily degraded pastures. These grants have been distributed by the state to household members who received grassland allocations in 1996. There are also several social welfare programs in place, including a collective health-care system, through which herders get partial reimbursement of their health costs, depending on where they see doctors. The closer and lower the level of the hospital where they go to see the doctors, the larger the reimbursement they get. The Minimum Living Standard Security System (guaranteed subsistence allowances) and Support for Disabled People Program are two other programs that help disadvantaged groups. Another important program is the Nine Years Compulsory Education Program. With state education program, combined with Tibetan religious leaders' support for the state education (discussed in Chapter 6), the school enrollment rate of Rakhor Village has become very high.

Rakhor village have seven teams (natural villages) on seven pastures, and each team has between 10 to 30 households. All pastures were contracted to individual households in 1996. Every household has one allocation for all seasons; that is, their summer pastures, spring

pastures, fall pastures, and winter pastures are located in one place, so pastoralists in Rakhor do not need to move very far unless they rent pastures from other households. This is different from many other areas where winter pastures and summer pastures are located in two separate areas. Some pastures are located next to the Hongyuan County town and others are located as far as thirty kilometers from their new settlement. Recently the state has built many dirt roads that have reached many pastures of Rakhor herders, but there are still some pastures that cannot be accessed by car. While motorcycles have become the main form of transportation for most herders these days, there are some herders who still depend on horses and yaks as their only means of transportation.

Rakhor Monastery, which belongs to the Nyingma School, has about 40 monks, with one head lama who died in the late 2000s. There are also three monks from Rakhor Village who have studied and received khenpo degrees from Larung Gar. Since their head lama died, these khenpos have been managing the monastery. Monks gather in the monastery for most months of the year to chant Buddhist texts and perform religious rituals, to pray for the betterness of community members and for the dead.

As Rakhor Village is a very traditional community, herders are still very active in religious rituals and practice. These practices include making donation to monks and lamas, constructing Buddhist facilities (chanting halls, statues, and stupas, mani prayer wheels, putting up religious flags), doing prostrations, practicing simple meditations, making offering to Buddhist deities and mountain deities, recitation of Buddhist scripts, and others. It is very common to see many elderly people of Rakhor Village practicing circumambulation and prostrations.

## **Methods and Field Experience**

I conducted field research for eleven months, from the end of January to the end of December 2010. Based on the nature of my research, which is related to the state and market, religion, and pastoralism, I conducted interviews with four groups of people: herders from Rakhor village, khenpos and monks, both local and outside of Rakhor village, local livestock traders, and government officials. In addition to the interviews with these different groups, I also collected books and videos about religious teachings and government projects, and observed the daily activities of herders and their interactions with lamas/khenpos, state projects, and Han and Hui livestock traders. The places where I conducted my research included Hongyuan County, Seda County, Chengdu city in Sichuan province; and Yushu prefecture, Dulan County, and Xining City in Qinghai province.

### **Tibetan herders**

2010 was a very busy year for Tibetan herders in Hongyuan County, particularly for Rakhor village. Rakhor villagers, on the one hand, were busy with the State Housing Project for Herders, because many herders had participated in the project. On the other hand, 2010 was the year that they had to decide if they wanted to continue their vows for a second term of slaughter renunciation. In addition to that, they also were planning to invite a very prestigious lama from Guoluo prefecture to perform religious teachings and empowerment to reverse the downtrend of their community.

In Rakhor Village, I used mixed methods, including 185 household surveys, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 45 households, and participant observation of herders' everyday lives and religious rituals. The survey covered general information about villagers and their

livestock, and the slaughter renunciation movement (Table 1). The in-depth semi-structured interview covered a wide range of topics, including their participation in the movement, interaction with state and state projects, participation in the market economy, participation in religious rituals, interaction Buddhist elites, livestock production, and income differentiation, among others. Among the 45 households I interviewed, there were 12 female herders, including 5 above 60 years of age and 7 female herders between 30-55 years old. Among the 33 male herders I interviewed, 4 were over 60 years of age, and 29 were between 30-69 years old. In terms of their economic conditions, among the 45 interviewees, there were 5 very rich herders whose annual household incomes were over 60,000 RMB; 32 households had an annual income between 25,000-35,000 RMB; 5 had no livestock but were working in part-time jobs making roughly 20,000-30,000 RMB a year; and 3 of them had no livestock and whose livelihood depended upon the State Guaranteed Living Allowances Program and other support. In terms of their support for the slaughter renunciation movement, I noted no gender differences, but found that elderly herders were more supportive of the movement than the younger ones.

Table 1 – Income of Households in the Survey, Rakhor Village, 2010

Number of yaks per household	Number of households at this income level	Annual income from selling livestock and dairy products (RMB)
< 15	20	3000
15-50	45	3000-8000
50-150	66	8000-35000
150-280	23	35000-60000
> 280	6	>60000
No yaks at all	25	10000-30000
	185 (total)	

In addition to the interviews, I found participant observation very useful, as it allowed me to understand many things that I could not get answers from interviews, such as herders' relationship with Tibetan religious elites, and the way they have been influenced by religious

forces, state administration, and market forces. Participant observation was much more useful than interviews for understanding how religion plays a role in everyday decisions of herders. I participated in five religious rituals. A religious teaching performed by a highly respected lama from a monastery in Guoluo prefecture, Qinghai province, was one of the most important religious activities for Rakhor village that year. Making offerings to the mountain gods is another very important annual religious ritual for Rakhor village as it is for other Tibetan communities. These were very important gatherings where I was able to get answers that I was not otherwise able to obtain through the interviews.

Rakhor Village is under the same administrative township as the village where I grew up. I had several reasons to choose Rakhor village as my focused research site. First, it was the first site of the slaughter renunciation movement in Hongyuan County. Second, I wanted to choose a site where I had already had some knowledge and general understanding of the community. This was important because of the difficulty of fieldwork access particularly at the time of my research. Third, while I wanted a community that was familiar, I felt it should be one that I was not intimately part of and where I still had a great deal to learn, because the process of learning and exploration is fundamental to research. Rakhor was ideal given that it is, on the one hand, in a township I am familiar with, but on the other hand, a very different village than my own. Historically, Rakhor Village came from the Kham cultural region, whereas, my village migrated before 1959 from the Amdo cultural region. Therefore, the two villages have a very different history. They also belong to different religious schools. My village belongs to Bon School of Tibetan Buddhism whereas Rakhor belongs to the Nyingma School. Because of these differences, the two villages historically do not get along very well. For all of these reasons, I began fieldwork not knowing very much about Rakhor village, particularly individual



households and their way of life. This situation had the advantage of reducing the risk of taking things for granted during my research.

However, when I started my research, I faced a challenge. At the beginning of my research, some herders did not trust me very much. First, politically, it was still very sensitive when I was in the field. Second, they did not trust me because they did not understand why I was doing research in their village instead of my own, because historically, the two villages did not get along well. This problem was resolved with my hiring of two local herders as assistants and as I spent more time with the villagers.

In addition to interviewing herders in Rakhor Village, to understand the variation and general situation of slaughter renunciation movement in other pastoral areas I also found it useful to conduct informal interviews in other pastoral areas. I interviewed herders in Luhuo, Seda, and Shiqu in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan; Zhenqin in Yushu Prefecture, Qinghai, and Gouli in Haixi prefecture, Qinghai. Within Hongyuan County, I also interviewed herders from places where there is no slaughter renunciation movement to see why there is none, how they view the herders who participated in the movement, and how they see themselves.

### Khenpos

In contrast to the herders whom I interviewed, khenpos, lamas, and monks were all very enthusiastic to respond to my questions, because they are better educated and they were very concerned about the slaughter issue and other social phenomena. As the lamas and khenpos were the initiators of the slaughter renunciation movement, I interviewed ten khenpos, two lamas, and more than ten monks from different places during my field research in 2010. This included interviews with five khenpos and one lama in Larung Gar, where the slaughter renunciation movement started. These leading khenpos in Larung Gar, including Khenpo Tsultrim Lodro

(also referred to as Khenpo Tsullo) and Khenpo Bsod Dar Rgyas are experts in teaching Buddhism to herders and in promoting the slaughter renunciation movement in many pastoral areas of Tibet. Most importantly, I interviewed one khenpo and several monks in the monastery of Rakhor village. I also interviewed one lama and one khenpo in Serde Monastery (Hongyuan County), where the terms of the pledge were completed in the summer and restarted by the end of 2010, and two khenpos in Zhenqin Town (Yushu Prefecture, Qinghai), where local khenpos and monks started the slaughter renunciation movement many years ago. I also conducted formal as well informal interviews with monks from different areas, including four from Seda County, five from Rakhor monastery, and some from other monasteries.

I collected books, tape recordings, and videos related to my project. The books were mostly written by Khenpo Jigphun, Khenpo Tsullo, Khenpo Bsod Dar Rgyas, and other khenpos from Larung Gar. Most of the data in my dissertation come from Khenpo Tsullo's works and his religious teachings, but there are also cases in which I have used other khenpos' works. Even though I have not been able to attend khenpos' religious teachings, I have drawn upon many tape recordings and videos of various Buddhist teachings performed by khenpos from Larung Gar, including the religious teachings by Khenpo Tsullo in Rakhor and other places for the last few years. These videos and recordings have become the main sources through which I can see the process of the religious teachings, including the interactions between khenpos and herders, and the ways in which herders took various oaths.

#### Other informants

Tibetan middlemen became a very important group in my field research. I was able to interview six Tibetan middlemen in Hongyuan. The middlemen are a very small and exceptional but important group. Middlemen are those whose main business is to purchase yaks from herders

and then sell them to bigger businessmen or assisting even bigger Han businessman from major Chinese cities. Traditionally, the trade in livestock for slaughter was a business that only Han and Muslims engaged in, so the Tibetan middlemen have become involved in the business only very recently, in the past ten years.

Another new phenomenon related to the slaughter renunciation movement in Hongyuan County is the increasing number of slaughterhouses. In order to understand where yaks have been sold, slaughtered, and consumed, I traced the yak-meat production line, investigating the slaughterhouses and livestock trade centers in Hongyuan County. In Hongyuan County, herders are required to sell their livestock in the livestock trade center, which belongs to the largest slaughterhouse, previously owned by the state but later purchased by the Bang Bang Ji Company in Chengdu. Yaks are sometimes brought there either by the herders themselves or by Han or Hui businessmen with the support of Tibetan assistants (middlemen). After they have gone through a livestock trade center, yaks are either slaughtered in local slaughterhouses or are transported to the larger markets in Dujiangyan, Lanzhou, and Xiahe. In addition to the Bang Bang Ji slaughterhouse, which can handle 700 yaks per day, there are more than ten other privately-owned slaughterhouses in Hongyuan, the largest of which has a capacity of up to 200 yaks per day. Meat products from those slaughterhouses are either transported to markets near cities right way or are stored in cold storage and transported to larger markets when the price is up. Most of these slaughterhouses close in November and reopen in June or July each year.

Regarding information about the state and related projects, in addition to the information that I collected by interviewing herders, official documents and local TV news were the main sources of information that I used. As discussed above, the state has been implementing many

projects that have targeted pastoralists for the last few years, most of which have very popular among Tibetan herders.

## **Chapter One**

### **Theoretical Framework and Structure of Dissertation:**

The slaughter renunciation movement has taken place in contemporary China where the discourse of development defines everything. Yet, there are relatively few academic discussions about development of China from the perspective of development studies in human geography and cultural anthropology. This is particularly true in studying religious movements and Chinese minorities' relationship with the state from the perspective of critical development studies. This is important because the dominant recent Chinese development trend, economic reform that is characterized by neo-liberalism, has had a profound impact on the Tibetan pastoralists on the Tibetan plateau at the same time as religious revival and new religious teachings and movements have emerged in many pastoral areas. This chapter first reviews the recent academic shift in critical studies of development in the fields of human geography and anthropology, laying the academic debates to which the case of the slaughter renunciation movement can contribute. The second part of the chapter reviews recent debates and discussions about neo-liberalism and Chinese economic reform since the 1980s. It discusses how neo-liberalization the western China, with its specific different cultural backgrounds, is informed by Tibetan Buddhism and its religious movements, and how this relationship informs larger discussions of uneven development and religious revival on the global scale.

#### **Development as an entangled “knot” of cultural contestation**

The many mainstream development theories including those drawing upon Adam Smith's notion of the invisible hand of the free market, Keynesianism, modernization theory, and the

recent neo-liberalism are based on the experience of North America and Europe's economic fluctuations since the 1930s. Adam Smith's *invisible hand of the free market*, Keynesianism, and the recent neo-liberalism debate the role of the state vs. free market in economic development, while modernization theory maintained that all countries follow one development path, that of the developed countries in the west. At the same time, many economists from South America theorized economic development based on the experience of Latin American countries' economic development, resulting in the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) approach, dependency theory, and world systems theory, among others. Most of these latter theories argue that the economic backwardness of these countries is associated with the developed Northern countries. Influenced by Marxism, these approaches frame the developed countries as exploitative capitalist agents and the less developed countries as exploited and marginalized (Porter and Sheppard, 1998; Willis, 2005). Studying development from a political-economic perspective, with a focus on labor, capital and the state, Marxist theory suggests a socialist development path as an alternative to capitalist development that has entailed capitalist exploitation of the poor (Marx, 1978).

As a departure from these economic approaches to development studies, post-Development critiques emerged in the 1990s in the fields of anthropology and geography. Drawing on Michel Foucault's work, many scholars have studied development as discourse. Discourse refers to the nexus of knowledge and power through which particular concepts, theories, and practices for social change are created and reproduced (Escobar, 1995). Epistemological premises for this approach are grounded in poststructuralist concepts asserting language and discourse as systematically organizing power through the subjectivity of social

actors and their actions. Among the most prominent studies of development that drew on development as discourse in the 1990s were those of Escobar (1995) and Ferguson (1990).

Arturo Escobar (1995) examines why mainstream development, after numerous failures to deliver what it promised to provide for target groups, maintains its position. He argues that Foucault's analysis of the power of representation and its ultimate creation of social reality can explain how development discourse becomes hegemonic and makes alternative ways unthinkable. He analyzes mainstream development theory as part of a discursive regime of truth that claimed universal expertise and denied its own cultural and historical specificities. Development discourse puts those with scientific and technocratic knowledge of development in a superior position, at the same time constructing the target group as a society full of problems that require development interventions. With the circulation of development discourse, problems such as 'overpopulation', 'poverty' and 'famine' become the essential truths about the Global south. In *Encountering Development*, Escobar's central argument is that there is no linear or universal model of economic and social development that can be objectively applied to the diverse local cultures of the societies that were grouped under the "the Third World." Indeed, Escobar argues passionately that the construct of the Third World is an ethnocentric invention of the post-World War II West, and that development is an equally flawed "regime of representation" crafted by a constellation of ideology, group interests, and the attempt of "the West" to impose its power-driven interests on non-western peoples.

Similarly, James Ferguson (1990), in his *The Anti-Politics Machine*, uses an anthropological approach and Foucault's discourse theory to analyze the nature of "development discourse," revealing how "experts," when they formulate development projects, often demonstrate a startling ignorance of the historical and political realities of the locale they intend

to help. Ferguson noticed that the World Bank has constructed Lesotho as a traditional peasant subsistence society that was a predominantly agricultural economy and portrayed it as static and isolated. However, Ferguson's examination of the political-economic history of the country revealed that farmers have long engaged in commercial trade and that the country had long exported wage laborers to the capitalist economy of South Africa. Therefore, the development experts' conclusion about the need for external intervention to bring roads, markets and credit rest on a representation that ignores the fact that these already existed before the World Bank programs and are not the reasons for the country's poverty. He sees development programs as a means to translate all political and structural problems that cause poverty into technical problems that need interventions from outside, so that the state apparatus is expanded and political problems are untouched.

Though these discursive approaches to development have been successful in deconstructing development and in illustrating the inequality of power between the "First World" and "Third World," they do not tell the whole story about development. A kind of discourse determinism that overemphasizes textual representation has not allowed them to pay much attention to meaningful local resistance that reworks the process of development (Moore, 2000; Pigg, 1992). Responding to this shortcoming, geographers and anthropologists began to focus on treating development as contested cultural practices, going beyond textual analysis to in-depth studies on the ground where development projects are worked out through all sorts of struggles and contestations (Li, 1999; 2007; Moore, 2000; Pigg, 1992; Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal, 2003; Yeh, 2007).

It is Ferguson's (1990) influential formulation of development as an "anti-politics machine" that depoliticizes everything in its way that Moore (2000) critiques. For Moore, instead



of development being an anti-politics machine, it is a site for cultural politics, and he proposes the metaphor of development as a “crucible of cultural politics,” to indicate the ways in which development is debated, contested, and reworked. It is with this conceptualization of crucible of cultural politics that Moore criticizes post-structural accounts of development discourse, including his two pointed critiques of Escobar’s conceptualization of development. First, he argues that Escobar’s overemphasis on the textual analysis of World Bank planners’ and development technocrats’ documents take attention away from other equally important questions of how development confronts not docile bodies but the situated cultural practices and sedimented histories of people and place, and how the development ideas and its implementations are “reproduced, resisted, or reworked through rural livelihood struggles” (Moore, 2000: 658). Second, the treatment of global development institutions as a post World War II project ignores the older historical patterns of these more recent interventions. The lack of attention to previous histories of development and regional political economy obscure the way in which the historical memories of both those who know how others should live and those they target, shape and rework the current development processes.

While seeing the merits of Ferguson’s (1990) argument about the discursive effects of development, Tania Li (1999, 2007) argues that the transformation of failure into more development involves more complex cultural work at the interface between development projects and those they targeted. For Li, the framing of a "development" intervention is a “delicate cultural operation” (1999: 298). She points out that it is necessary to distinguish development as a government control project from how development is accomplished. To understand the latter is to see how development becomes an arena where both compromise and achievement are interwoven. Projects of rule and their compromises are enabled and constrained

by sedimented histories, contemporary social forces, and international resource flows configuring a particular national arena. In *The Will to Improve*, Li (2007) tries to bring Foucault's governmentality, Gramsci's concept of constellation of power, and Marxist political economy into one dialogue to see both the aspects of "conduct of conduct" in development and the conjectural contestation triggered by the development force with other forces. For her, the examination of the impacts of programs in the particular situation is to step beyond the studying of development from documents, maps, and the administrative apparatus. Attending to particular histories, landscapes, memories, and cultural ideas, she uses an ethnographic approach to elucidate conflicts, contestations, and uncertainties that characterize power relations in competitive forces within and around the will to improve (Li, 2007).

While Moore and Li are particularly interested in moving from seeing development as discourse to the examining of it as contested practices, Stacy Pigg (1992) examined development that works to differentiate social categories and localized social meanings in contemporary Nepal. In an effort to modernize the nation-state, the Nepalese government, assisted by international donors' agencies, turned rural landscapes into a new image of villages that become the target of development. The meaning of the current 'villages' are not the same meaning of villages that are usually defined with cities or townships, but rather they become a social category within the national developmental landscape. Using extensive ethnographic observation and textual analysis, Pigg demonstrated how Nepalese internalized the concept of development. The conjuncture of village, development and nation, have reworked western development ideas into social relations and cultural norms within contemporary Nepal. In this way, the encounter of villages and development altered the original meanings of both development and the village. Development has become a reference for social differences through

the creation of village, which goes along with other social categories such as gender, religion, caste, and ethnicity.

The common ground of all of these writings is their emphasis on the confrontation of localized forces with Western-oriented development discourse and the programs of trustees. They either entirely challenge the governmental aspect of development or place it on a more contested ground of development (Li, 1999; 2007; Moore, 2000; Pigg, 1992; 1996). The Western development model itself was a cultural product that was generated from a specific set of processes and historical and social context. It is important to understand how different cultural stakeholders encounter each other in local settings, and how these encounters have reshaped development as a hybrid conjuncture (Moore, 2000). Neither a structural nor discursive analysis of development has been able to illustrate the specific process of development as cultural politics.

Despite the strengths of the ethnographic cultural politics approach, which I adopt, most authors who analyze development as practice have focused their attention on the simplistic and dichotomous relationship between trustees and the target group. They tend to present two opposite positions: those who know how others should live, and the local, the target of development (Li, 2007). A problem arises in that there is a tendency to simplify the local as a united force, labeled as “indigenous,” “village,” “ethnic group,” or “community,” versus trustees that are also presented as singular. Indeed, this war-like conceptualization of the relationship between the local and the trustees also elides or ignores many other forces that often intersect and complicate the encounter of local and the state/trustees. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate, the positions of those encountering forces in development are dynamic and constantly changing in the way that some overlap at one time while others are opposites at other times.

While many scholars, like those discussed above, have been paying attention to post-World War II development interventions, some scholars suggest the necessity of relating development studies to the persistence of capitalism on the global scale. Gillian Hart suggests the necessity to distinguish between “big D Development” from “small d development” (Hart, 2001; 2002; 2004; 2010). The former refers to the post-World War II international project of deliberate interventions that targeted underdeveloped countries, while the latter refers to the uneven process of capitalist expansion. She points out that critiques of “Development,” such as Escobar’s, that lay their hope on alternatives such as civil society, the grassroots, social capital, community development, participatory development, and new social movements will lead to a dead end in their problematic conceptualization of local versus global, in which the former is a passive receiver and only the latter is an active agent. Instead, she suggests it is much more fruitful to focus on the small “d development,” and to explore the constitutive and conjunctural processes of development through ethnographic studies. Drawing on Polanyi’s notion of the “double-movements” in capitalist expansion in which society protects itself from market expansions through counter-movements, Hart’s idea is that these new social movements and alternatives to “Development” should not be seen as completely external to development but rather is part of the small “d development” process (Hart, 2002; 2004; 2010; Hart, 2007; Polanyi, 1957[1944]). In other words, if we stick with only large D “Development”, then we will lose sight of an important point, the process of expansion of capitalism, disguised in economic development or globalization. For Hart, the danger in the study of development is to miss the new forms of capitalism emerging in the new situations when scholars focus too narrowly on tracing authentic or alternative capitalism. At the same time, studies of the cultural politics of development can

tease out the complex conjunctures where capitalism has become invisible in the new discourses such globalization and development.

My dissertation, on the one hand, is built on Hart's suggestion to trace 'small d' development in the contemporary Chinese context, and on the other hand, to address the generalization problem of framing trustees as diametrically opposed to the "local" (Moore 2000; Li 1999). That is, bringing religious forces into dialogue with development debates, my examination of the slaughter renunciation movement is an attempt to build on as well as extend these recent studies of development as practice, by looking at multiple agents and their entangled struggle over the articulation of development in material and symbolic terms. At the same time, I follow Hart's suggestion of the need to pay attention to "how multiple forces come together in practice to produce particular dynamic or trajectories, as well as possible alternatives" (Hart 2004: 91). Therefore, I pay particular attention to how the meanings as well as practices of development are contested and overlap among multiple groups in Tibet; and the process of "small d" development in Tibet, China.

In pastoral areas of Tibet, the multiple agents involved in development include not only the state with its intention to bring both material and ideological transformation to the pastoralists but also Tibetan Buddhist leaders who have more spiritual influence on herder. As I will show, although state and religious authorities are backed by fundamentally different ideology and agendas, their solutions have ironically converged in the end. However, the agents involved in development are in fact even more complex than this notion of state vs. local. Village leaders are the lowest level of the government apparatus to put state projects into practice. They are simultaneously the heads of traditional tribal communities. Tibetan radical secularists are mostly employed as government officials, but they may have different interests

and agendas that do not go along very well with state ideology. Local khenpos and monks presumably are part of the village, but their agendas and ways of thinking are different from those of the herders. Moreover, Tibetan herders' decisions about their livestock and pastures and the debate regarding development issues in pastoral areas are all informed by multiple and dynamic forces, including state projects, the market economy, and khenpos' religious teachings.

More importantly, teasing out the roles of multiple agents in the contestation is not only a matter of adding more numbers, but rather it is to understand their participation in contested development, how their interaction pushes forward a new form of development, and how they are related to each other in this process. The relationship between the trustees and the target group has never been a simple relationship of two. Instead, their relationship is formed by others who also participate in this entangled "knot." That is, the relationship of group A and B is always related to the group C, D, and many more, and furthermore the boundaries between the groups are always fuzzy. Many state projects are embraced by both the Tibetan religious leaders and Tibetan pastoralists, and at the same time, Tibetan religious movements are competing with the state secular based neo-liberalization project in forming Tibetan herders into certain kinds of subjects. In a similar way, Tibetan Buddhist movements, as a historically dominant power force in Tibetan regions, have emerged recently in the space of religious freedom provided by the state since economic reform. At the same time that herders embrace state projects and have strong desires for getting government jobs for their kids, the slaughter renunciation movement has placed them in a dilemma between giving up selling livestock to slaughterhouses and fulfilling their increasing desires for material development by selling livestock to the slaughterhouses. In short, the trustees and the target groups cannot be isolated from other forces, many of which are contested and overlap with one another in the articulation and practices of development.

To capture these dynamic and multiple but mutually constitutive power relations in a meaningful way, I propose the conceptualization of development as a cultural “knot,” which is constituted by entangled multiple power relations. First, this knot is the intersection or linkage of many different agents with different agendas. In the case of slaughter renunciation, those agents include the state through specific projects and the state as the creation of conditions of a free market economy; religious movements; local village leaders; Tibetan radical secularists; Tibetan herder; and so forth. Second, multiple agents’ relations are not always those of exploitation and resistance, but rather other relationships can also be observed, including invisible tensions, cooperation, overlapping practices, and mutually benefitting agendas, among others. Some of their interests are overlapping and compatible. Furthermore, many state projects are embraced by both Tibetan khenpos and Tibetan herders, including education, health care, infrastructure, businesses without sins, and others (see Chapter 6). At the same time, other interests in development are incompatible. The state promotion of the yak meat industry is incompatible with Tibetan Buddhist teachings, which is the point where the slaughter renunciation movement and vegetarian movement took place (see Chapter 1).

In addition, the positions of different agents, or parts of the knot, are not fixed. Some of them may contest each at one time while embracing each other at other times. Li (2007) argues out that a condition for any intervention of development is the differentiation between those who know how others should live and those who become the target of the inventions. It might easy to maintain these boundaries in texts or in a discursive way. In practice, however, these boundaries are fragile. When it comes to the state development, it is more so. In pastoral areas of Tibet, Tibetan religious leaders are not passive receivers of state projects nor are they dominant power holder, but they assert a certain power over the pastoralists through their religious performances,

in a way that cannot be accounted for by the trustee-local model of development. Indeed, these dynamic overlapping or contesting positions and agendas can be seen in Tania Li's *The Will to Improve* (2007), in which she shows that different NGOs have different agendas -- one pro-park and another against the park -- and the current state programs had to be revised due to pressure from international environmental organizations. Despite showing this empirically, however, these are not her main point; rather, she focuses on a framework of the local versus the trustees.

Third, the shape of this entangled cultural "knot" is determined by the dynamic relationship of those agents involved. The form of the "knot" is not static, but rather it is a constantly changing format driven by the changing relationship of agents. For instance, Tibetan village leaders play two roles in the contemporary Tibetan society (see Chapter 4): on the one hand, they work for the state to implement state projects, and on other hand, they represent the interests of traditional tribal communities playing important roles in reinforcing their traditional identity and culture. Tibetan radical secularists agree in some ways with the state on how Tibetan should be developed. Both think Tibetans should get rid of their tradition and totally embrace new cultures and new knowledge. At the same time, Tibetan radical secularists stand on the same ground with Tibetan khenpos in their concern about Tibetan identity and future development.

Fourth, the contestation exists not only between the state and what most scholars call the "local," but in the case of Tibet, contestation exists even among different groups of Tibetans. For instance, Tibetan Buddhist elites and Tibetan radical secularists have been having a fierce debate over the role of Tibetan Buddhist in the development (see Chapter 5). Finally, I maintain that the individual agents that constitute part of the "knot" possess different power so that some have the power to manipulate others while others are in disadvantaged positions. Nevertheless, the real



power in the “knot” of development is the process of persistent moving toward global penetration of capitalism, what Hart called small “d” development (see Chapter 6).

In short, this conceptualization of development as entangled knot will enable us to see development as a complex relationship among different groups in the uneven process of social transformation, the heart of which is capitalist social relationships. This process will lead the society toward a space where disparity is increased and institutionally normalized, and resources are monopolized. But all of those problems are normalized and legitimized by different cultural norms (for instance secular neo-liberal culture or Tibetan Buddhist culture). Indeed, this social transformation is realized through the process of the cultural contestation, interpretation, and collaborations between different groups.

As complex and dynamic as it is, my argument is not that there is nothing to be theorized about the massive and complicated power relations in development. Instead, the concept of the knot helps us to sort out these entangled power relationships in a useful manner, and to avoid reducing them to dichotomous or binary struggles. This ethnographic study of the slaughter renunciation movement works as a window through which these entangled cultural struggles can be teased out and traced along the lines of each linkage, demonstrating how Tibetans as an ethnic group have been trying to promote their own culturally based development, in this entangled “knot” of cultural struggles.

### **Neoliberal governmentality, Chinese market economy and religious forces**

As I will demonstrate, Tibetan khenpos seem to have a contradictory relationship with the neoliberal context of contemporary China. They, on one hand, have been competing with the neo-liberal market forces in their promotion of the renounce-slaughter movement. The abortion

of the second term of the movement in Rakhor village and their frustration in the promotion of the movement in many other parts of eastern Amdo is mostly due to the strong influence of the market economy that formed the Tibetan herders' way of thinking and their ways of life, compared with the counties in northern Ganzi Prefecture where the religious influence has been much stronger than the influence of market economy. At the same, ironically, in their teachings of the renounce-slaughter movement, khenpos have also been making compelling suggestions for Tibetan herders to engage actively in the market economy and state education. Their frustration with neo-liberal market forces and their simultaneous active embrace of it require a new approach for the study of neo-liberalism in China. This dissertation adds to studies of neoliberalism in China by bringing another layer --Tibetan Buddhism and its movements -- into the neoliberal context of contemporary pastoral areas of Tibet, China.

Even though the Chinese state officially denies that China is neoliberal, in both Chinese and Western academic circles, there has been debate over whether or not China is an example of authentic neo-liberalism, or whether or not it has the main features of neo-liberalism. To determine how neo-liberal China is, or how useful neo-liberalism is to understanding contemporary China, first one must define neo-liberalism and explain what kinds of basic values and characteristics neo-liberalism has.

It is not easy to come to a consensus on the definition of neo-liberalism or what a neoliberal state is, due to the reason that this concept has been overused and has been used to mean many different things (Nonini, 2008). One reason for this is that many anthropologists and geographers have examined neo-liberalism from different perspectives, including the mainstream economic perspective that treats neo-liberalism as an economic strategy of a state policy, critical studies of neo-liberalism as a new version of capitalism, and the examination of the governance

aspect of neo-liberalism. In addition to that, different scholars use different definitions when they situate it in different societies with different cultural backgrounds, and for different purposes. Another reason is that neo-liberalism in practice is very different from neo-liberalism as defined in theories (Harvey, 2005).

However, some of the key elements can be summarized. Neo-liberalism is a set of economic policies that have become widespread since the early 1980s. A general characteristic of neo-liberalism is the desire to intensify and expand the market, by increasing the number, frequency, repeatability, and formalization of transactions. A key condition for a functioning neoliberal system is the belief that the free market economy (with none or limited state intervention) is the main way to achieve social and economic development. Property rights and privatization are important components of the free market economy, and autonomous individuals should be protected in their freedom to make their own decisions and are responsible for their own lives. At the heart of the neo-liberal framework is the freedom for competition and individual self-responsibility. Foucault (2008 [1978-79]) suggests, “The society regulated by reference to the market that the neo-liberals are thinking about is a society in which the regulatory should not be so much the exchange of commodities as the mechanism of competition” (147) and, “ I think this multiplication of the “enterprise” within the social body is what is at stake in neo-liberal policy. It is a matter of making the market, competition, and so the enterprise, into what could be called the formative power of society”(148).

It is from this basic understanding of neo-liberalism that many scholars have explored its different aspects in contemporary China. For analytical purposes, I want to distinguish neo-liberalism as an economic development strategy and social-economic structure, and neo-liberalism as a technique of governance. However, I make this distinction noting that in fact both

of them are interrelated and cannot be separated in practice. I first review the recent literature on neo-liberalism as economic strategy in China, followed by a discussion about neo-liberalism as a technique of governance.

### **Political Economic Approaches to Neo-Liberalism**

Geographer David Harvey's *A brief history of Neo-liberalism* has become a target of critiques for his argument about neo-liberalism with Chinese characteristics. When Harvey described contemporary China as part of neoliberal histories, he introduced the phrase neo-liberalism "with Chinese characteristics" (2005: 120-151). The usage of this term suggests that China is not fully neoliberal or there is still something about China that doesn't fit well with the neoliberal model that originated from the West.

Harvey has observed that the domination of neo-liberalism on a global scale created space for China to participate in global financial markets and free trade, which made the achievement of Chinese economic development possible. He saw a range of internal and external changes that were keys for the Chinese state to move towards neo-liberalism since its economic reform of the 1980s. A condition is formed for the competition between township and village enterprises, the dominant state owned firms, and private firms in many sectors in the market, which, in turn, forced the state to reform the state owned enterprises by various methods including privatization of some, the imposing of market oriented management, and the state withdrawing welfare provisions for laid off workers. At the same time, land use rights reform started with agricultural land reform where farmers were allocated arable land through a 'household responsibility system,' followed by urban land reform that allowed urban citizens and real estate companies to transact land use rights in the free market. The establishment of the free labor market led to

massive rural migration to the cities to increase migrants' incomes. The opening of domestic markets to foreign investors and Chinese participation in the international market were enhanced by its entry into the WTO, allowing China to become one of the largest import and export countries.

At the same time, Harvey also observed that the strong Chinese state and its political structure remain unchanged. All the economic changes were top-down state led changes, and the market was manipulated significantly by the state. Major sectors such as banking and petroleum continued to be owned by the state. The major driving force of the Chinese economy has been the state sectors even though there were significant increases in contributions from the private sector and foreign investment.

What all these transformations mean to Harvey is that the formation of the market economy coexisted with a strong state, and at the same time it has been creating a new class formation. Inequalities have been increasing while the overall economy has been growing at the rate of 10% annually. Rural farmers were dispossessed from their land by state and real estate companies. Their labor was exploited by the enterprises when they migrated to the cities to work in the factories, while most of the economic development benefits went to the urban residents and government and Party members who have become the new facilitators of the new surging consumer culture in China. Thousands of workers who have become jobless with the reform of the state firms are another labor pool ready for exploitation. At the same time, the increasing inequalities with economic reforms have led to various riots and demonstrations when peasants lost land and workers lost their jobs.

As Harvey summarized, even though the party has tried to prevent the formation of a capitalist class, the marginalization of China's workforce, the dismantling of the 'iron rice bowl,'

the state withdrawal from social welfare provisions and protection, the creation of flexible labor markets, and privatization of formerly commonly owned assets have created a space where capitalist enterprises can emerge and make profits. Thus, within this space, social wealth has been concentrated in upper classes including rich private owners, corrupt government officials, and foreign companies, while the powerless farmers and laid-off workers have been further marginalized. He concludes, “China, we may conclude, has definitely moved towards neoliberalization and the reconstitution of class power, albeit with ‘distinctively Chinese Characteristics’ (Harvey, 2005: 120-151).

We can see from this formulation that for Harvey, neo-liberalism has a preexisting model that originated in the west. He sees many similarities between China and other neoliberal nations, but the strong Chinese state made it difficult for him to conclude that China is an authentic neoliberal state. He therefore used the term ‘distinctively Chinese characteristics’ to avoid excluding China from this category on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has become hard to include China into this category completely because of his preexisting model of neo-liberalism.

While Harvey has an ambiguous attitude toward Chinese neo-liberalism, anthropologist Donald Nonini (2008) made a direct conclusion that China is not in the trajectory of a neoliberalization process. For Nonini (2008), any neo-liberalism has four distinctive features: markets are excellent; state controls over markets are horrible; globalization is best; and the rational self-interested individual market actor is best. Measuring China by these features of the Western model of neo-liberalism (similar with Harvey), Nonini criticized those anthropologists and others who argue that China is dominated by neoliberal ideology and its citizens have become the subjects of neoliberal economic governance.

Nonini suggests that it is more appropriate to analyze contemporary China in terms of the oligarchic Party and *guanxi* (personal relationship). This would lead to a more open and proactive analytic space. He asserts that China has become a certain kind of capitalist system, which he calls 'cadre capitalism.' He implicitly agrees that China has launched a market economy, which he sometimes calls a 'socialist market', or a liberal market economy. He has in common with Harvey the argument that China has become capitalist but he departs from Harvey's assertion that China has neo-liberal features. Instead, he decisively concludes that China is not neo-liberal. He does not explore the relationship between capitalism and neo-liberalism, or socialist market/liberal market economy and neo-liberalism.

For Nonini, neo-liberalism emerged from Anglo American and other western countries, and it could become a dominant ideology in non-western countries only through American's coercive intervention either through international institutions or through military invasion. The Chinese market economy was not imposed by any forces that came from the West, but rather is a top-down project that the Communist Party used to deal with its social economic disaster during Mao's rule of China. Thus, it is not neo-liberal.

Counterarguments to Nonini's position have been made by other scholars who see China's transformation as a process of neo-liberalization. Fulong Wu (2008) argues that neo-liberalization in China is the process in which the state has sought an alternative ravenous accumulation strategy through the establishment of a market oriented society. In order to solve the problem of 'over-accumulation' of the Maoist period and to turn the pool of idle production workers into a productive force, the post-socialist state had to launch an economic reform to establish a market oriented society, within which the internal and external spaces were "created for accumulation" (2008:1094). In this process, Wu has observed a shift between the roles of

market and state. Initially, the market was a strategy adopted by the state to deal with problems including the increasing competition in the international market as a result of globalization and the ‘inevitability’ of market reorientation. The state needed to find a new space for the accumulation of wealth, and thus to legitimize its ruling position. However, with the deepening of the neo-liberalization process, the market became the dominant mechanism for resource allocation and social relations, and the state has become a force by which the market order is protected and the problems accompanying neo-liberalization were dealt with. Here, the state did not vanish with neo-liberalization, but changed its function. The benevolent state has transferred its social welfare responsibilities to the individuals who depended on the state in the previous social system, and now become the guardians of the market social system. In this way, Wu provides a solution to Harvey’s problems of Chinese neo-liberalism that has strong state intervention.

Economist Barry Naughton observed a similar phenomenon to that in Wu’s argument that in the process of neo-liberalization the state has shifted its role from planning to the regulation of elements of the market (Naughton, 1996). He observed a process of an earlier stage of Chinese economic reform that transformed the planned economy into a market oriented economy, distinguishing the Chinese dual-track approach from the “big bang” approach that took place in Poland and Russia in the 1990s. China’s different dual-track approach meant that in the reform process, both the planned economy and a market function for allocation of goods are coexistent in the early stage. The transformation has occurred with several key steps: the central government’s monopoly over industry was relaxed and the protected industrial sectors were opened to newcomers such as new state firms, private enterprises, and foreign investors. The state retreated from its planned and monopoly position and allowed newcomers’ participation in



the industry, creating market conditions where different firms compete for profits, and thus improved the efficiency of state owned enterprises. At the same time, with the gradual deregulation of prices to reflect supply and demand, the production flow between the state and non-state sectors was permitted. To reverse the decrease of state revenues that resulted from the release of state dominated industries to the market, the state has imposed new management systems for state enterprises to promote better performance in the market economy. The success of reform increased household incomes, which in turn increased national savings, and this increased savings has been channeled to other enterprises for further investment through restructured banks. In sum, with the deepening of the reform process, Barry Naughton saw that the plan itself and state sector have become less dominant elements in the economy as a whole. He also observed that reform proceeded in a “series of feedback loops – reform begets further reform” (320). The reduction of state dominance in goods allocation has led to its reduction of revenue, which forced the state to initiate another reform to improve the performance of state owned sectors.

The discontinuity of economic transformation and continuity of political systems give the Chinese neo-liberalism a special character, but Wang Hui (2004) argues that neo-liberalism inherently depends on international and national policies, and without the state/policies neoliberalism as a practice does not have the capability to conceal social problems it brought: unemployment, the decline of social security, and the widening gap between rich and poor. Therefore, the existence of state interference in economic development does not prove the absence of hegemonic neo-liberalism in China. Indeed, it is the other way around: neo-liberalism has gained its dominant position in the process of economic reform through which the state has been able to overcome the crisis (1998 students’ movement in Beijing) of its legitimacy. After

the Tiananmen incident that challenged the Communist Party's legitimacy, the state extended economic reform and globalization to overcome its unstable position.

In sum, some authors like Nonini (2008) and Kipnis (2007) define neo-liberalism with specific criteria that originated from the west. For instance, Nonini uses four features to see if China fits these criteria, while other authors like Harvey, Fulong Wu, and Wang Hui, argue that China is in the process of neoliberal transformation, despite the fact that the Chinese state has been deeply manipulating the economy and state owned enterprise remain dominant in major sectors.

From these observations, I suggest an integrated way to evaluate if China is neoliberal or not and how or if it is useful to use this conceptualization in China. First, I suggest that any neo-liberal project has a core belief that competition between individual entities (either as enterprises or real individuals) in a free market enhances productivities and prosperity. The conditions and other forces to achieve these goals could be varied from place to place based on their historical and cultural background. For instance, privatization is viewed as a very important condition for neo-liberalism in America, whereas in China this may not be the case. This condition could be substituted by other similar functions such as use rights (both agricultural lands and grassland) contract system between the state and ordinary people combined with a small portion of privatization. For instance, the land use rights transaction in China has become one element of neo-liberalism. The competition in the free market to improve efficiency has become a very fundamental strategy for economic development in America as well as in China (Foucault, 2008[1978-79]). Second, and in addition to this basic belief, there is another very important aspect to consider, that is, to see the consequences of this neoliberal belief and its practice in the nation in question. In particular, I agree with Harvey's (2005) argument that neo-liberalism is a

new version of global capitalist development. Neo-liberalism always creates class differentiation if it was absent previously, or reinforces class differentiation if it did exist in previous social condition like during the Maoist China.

My dissertation argues that, according to these main values and functions of neoliberal rule, China is not a derivation of neo-liberalism, but fits well into neo-liberalism, and its process obscures class creation. In China the competitors in the free market have not been exclusively private enterprises, but include state owned enterprises and foreign companies. The general logic behind Chinese economic reform is similar to the one in the west. That is, the competition between enterprises and individuals would enhance production and creativity.

In any major meeting of top Chinese leaders and in documents issued in those meetings, the *Gaige Kaifang* (Opening Up and Reform) and *Yi jingji jianshe wei zhongxin* (economic development is the top priority) have been prominent, and there is no reason to think that the state will change this strategy in the foreseeable future, because the state has recognized that its increasing role on the international stage and being able to maintain its ruling position are inseparable from its achievements in the economic domain. Ideologically, it has become ‘common sense’ (Gramsci, 1999[1971]) for both Chinese leaders and ordinary people that China’s achievements over the last decades have benefited from its promotion of a free market economy, with its open and reformed policies. This ‘common sense’ does not preclude the existence of problems and issues associated with neo-liberal rule, and one can see this from the top leaders’ concern over the gap between rich and poor among individuals and regions and their political implications. The fact that one ideology becomes dominant does not mean that other voices completely disappear.

From a political economic perspective, neo-liberalism is a useful concept to capture the recent political economic changes on the Tibetan Plateau. In the pastoral areas of Tibet, this neo-liberal economic strategy started with livestock privatization and the implementation of the grassland use rights contract system. To further integrate the pastoral regions into larger national economic development, the previous programs were followed by a larger national plan of the “Open up the West” (*Xibu da kaifa*) strategy, which has been translated into many specific projects in pastoral areas of Tibet, including sedentarization of herders, the promotion of the yak industry, tourism industry, and infrastructural projects like roads, electricity, mobile phone service coverage, and so forth. The goals of all of these projects are to transform primitive herders into competitive human capital, and natural resources into commercial products. This will be explored in detail in Chapter Two.

### **Neoliberal governmentality and religious movements**

In contrast to those who examine neo-liberalism as an economic structure, other scholars have studied the governance aspect of neo-liberalism. Most of these ethnographic studies explore the complexity of the social transformation taking place in contemporary China, covering topics of the state, market economy, privatization, globalization, and so forth. Most of these writings, drawing from Foucault’s term governmentality, meaning governmental rationality or more generally “the conduct of conduct” examine how individual acts are informed by the current economic reform, which they conceptualize as a tool for the state to achieve the governing of its citizens.

Conceptualizing neo-liberalism as desire, Lisa Rofel (2007) examines the transformation of China and how Chinese citizens as the subjects of neo-liberalism have emerged from the

social and economic reforms of the 1990s. She observes that neo-liberal subjectivities are created through struggles and debates about appropriate desires of Chinese people, including material, sexual and other desires. The appropriateness of desire is formed and imagined by Chinese people through their engagement with forms of public culture such as soap operas, women's museums, gay bars, newspapers, court cases, and others. All of these took place in the context of Chinese economic reforms and its increasing participation in global dynamics.

In a similar vein, Lisa M. Hoffman (2006) examines young professionals as new subjects who have both neo-liberal elements as well as post-socialist patriotic elements that were formed in the new market and in the new post-socialist employment system manipulated by the state. She points out that the power of government and the formation of subjects has taken place through individual choice in the free job market. This analysis of young professionals echoes Aihwa Ong's (2008) writings about Shanghainese who perform self-fashioning as a cultural translation between foreign companies and state bureaucracies. For Ong, these Shanghainese are governed through neo-liberal techniques of self-ownership that are not free from state political constraints.

Rather than seeing it as a strategy of state economic growth, Aihwa Ong and Li Zhang (2008) argue that the state provision of the individual with ownership of their property and optimizing their abilities in the free market with the various Chinese privatization programs is a set of calculative techniques that governs Chinese citizens. Now, instead of the state taking care of their lives, individuals are responsible for their own lives by governing themselves. Thus, they call this Chinese neo-liberalism, "socialism from afar" (5).

In general, these concepts are powerful contributions to capture the social transformation of China in its process of modernization. However, I argue that all of these neo-liberal

discussions have been framed around the secularized and material concerns of contemporary China. Whether framing neo-liberalism as an economic strategy or as a technique of governance, both are framed as relations between the state and its citizens. However, an equally important topic that is absent in these discussions is the phenomenon of religious resurgence in China that has accompanied neo-liberal economic reform and that has swept across the landscape of China for the last few decades. Religion has been ignored as a factor or force in Chinese neo-liberalization despite the fact that religions have become important aspects of the nation's socioeconomic transformation and plays a significant role in people's everyday lives.

In an attempt to fill the gap in this literature, this dissertation brings Tibetan Buddhism and its movements into dialogue with contemporary neoliberalism in China. I explore how strong neo-liberal penetration is in pastoral areas of Tibet, how Tibetan khenpos engage with this neo-liberal penetration, and how Tibetan herders experience neo-liberal development. In examining the competing powers of neo-liberalism and Buddhism in the formation of subjects through the renounce-slaughter movement, my project contributes to studies of the intersection between neoliberal subjectivity and religion. Specifically, I ask: how do Tibetan Buddhist khenpos and their movements speak to the neo-liberal economy in pastoral areas of Tibet, China? Particularly, how do Tibetan khenpos respond to the uneven process of development that neo-liberal ideology is often in the best position to obscure? And how do they negotiate with the cultural values that come along with secular neo-liberalism?

As I will demonstrate throughout the dissertation, Tibetan khenpos compete with secular neo-liberalism that the state has promoted through their renounce-slaughter movement, but they also embrace neo-liberal elements that are compatible with Tibetan Buddhism, giving them religious meanings. They feel frustrated in their efforts to persuade herders into the renounce-

slaughter movement in some parts of the eastern Tibetan plateau, because, herders in the eastern plateau have been strongly shaped and constrained by the current market economy. But in order to stop sinful activities such as massive slaughter, khenpos have been suggesting herders to engage actively with current neo-liberal activities that are compatible with Tibetan Buddhist norms. These suggestions include accessing state education for the younger generation of herders, engaging with business, and becoming employed in part-time jobs in towns. All of this advice would lead herders into a social relationship in which those with capital can hire others, and those without can sell their labor power. In addition, Tibetan herders tend to interpret their experience of development as lagging behind in both secular and spiritual terms. Tibetan Buddhist norms and idioms have been used to interpret the differences in material development among regions, tribes, and individuals. Khenpos say that positive karma will lead to the prosperity of regions or individuals, whereas negative karma such as accumulated through the massive slaughtering of livestock would bring disaster to the communities and individuals. In order to reverse their condition of lagging behind, Rakhor village has frequently invited spiritual leaders to perform religious teachings and make offering to deities.

Because of khenpos' contradictory interaction with neo-liberalism as process, I want to draw a distinction between two types of neo-liberalism: a state neo-liberalism that is based on secularization backed by science and materialism, and one that is formed through a conjuncture with Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan cultural meanings. Khenpos' suggestions for herders to engage with the current market economy appears to overlap with neo-liberal conditions produced by the state (which is secular and materialist based) that khenpos are now competing with. But I argue that, what khenpos have been doing is to tame the force they are competing with to make it

more compatible with Tibetan Buddhism, transforming many of its original elements and forming a constellation of a new shape, which I call “non-secular neo-liberalism.”

A number of western scholars have made efforts to bring neo-liberal development and religion into one dialogue. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999; 2000) have discussed the neo-liberal experience and religious revival of activities including magic, witchcraft and the killing of accused witches, the resurgence of zombies, pyramid schemes, and the illicit sale of body parts. They argue that the “occult economies” and new religious movements were triggered by the global rise of neo-liberalism, which has been accompanied by structural inequalities, the imagination of endless wealth, and the frequent failure of development to deliver on its promises. In other words, the destruction of structural adjustment and other neo-liberal reforms has engendered various religious movements as a refuge for marginalized groups fooled by the promises of development. At the same time, Comaroff and Comaroff observed a commonality of neo-liberalism as millennial capitalism and its ugly products of the occult economy. That is, both make profit out of nothing and both have been marked by an enchantment with gambling. These religious activities and occult practices have often involved the conjuring of wealth through the deployment of magical means and mysterious techniques. And, they argue, this is astonishingly similar to how modern stock market works, relying on the spiritual belief that the magical force of production and consumerism will lead to prosperity. Yet, the techniques for both involve practices destructive to others and their capability of creating value.

While Comaroff and Comaroff focus on occult phenomenon and their relationship with of neo-liberalism as capitalism from a structural perspective, Meyer studied Pentecostalism in the context of globalization. Meyer (1998) observed that Pentecostalism in Ghana, Africa, emphasizes the risk of globalization and the commodities that come with it, but suggests that the



only way to protect people from dangers attached to the commodities is to perform the ritual of prayer. That is, through prayer, instead of commodities possessing their owners, the owner will possess the commodities. Affirming that the global market is imbued with an invisible satanic force, Pentecostalism presents itself as the only agent that can truly tame the satanic danger of globalization when people access foreign commodities; neither the state nor the former mission churches are believed to be able to achieve this. In order to transform the risk into profit in the increasing globalization, the claim is that a Pentecostal religion is irreplaceable. This is different from the “occult economies” that has become a refuge for the victims in the sense that Pentecostalism positions itself as the protector of people in risky globalization rather than becoming the destructive “occult economies”.

Unlike these studies of occult phenomenon as being in a cause and effect relationship with neo-liberalism, and Pentecostalism, which presents itself as a protector of people from becoming victims of globalization, Daromir Rudnycky (2008; 2009) argues that Islam can have a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship with neoliberal globalization. Challenging the widespread assumptions about Islam’s conflict with modernity, he shows how moderate Muslims in Southeast Asia are reinterpreting Islam not to reject modernity but to create a "spiritual economy" consisting of practices conducive to globalization. Presenting self-styled “spiritual reformers” seeking to enhance the Islamic piety of workers across Southeast Asia and beyond, Rudnycky (2008, 2009) examined a program called Emotional and Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) training that reconfigures Islamic practice and history to make the religion compatible with principles for entrepreneurial success found in Euro-American management texts. The prophet Muhammad and the five pillars of Islam are all incorporated into the training course as guidance for self-discipline, personal responsibility, and achieving "win-win" solutions. Spiritual

economies reveal how capitalism and religion are converging in Indonesia and other parts of the developing and developed world. Rudnyckyj makes a counter-argument to the commonly held view that religious practice serves as a refuge from or means of resistance against modernization and neo-liberal capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 2000).

My project builds on this work by analyzing a case that is captured by neither the “occult economies” nor the Pentecostals’ role of protectors, nor the “spiritual economies” approach. The slaughter renunciation movement is not an “occult economy” that conjures profits from nothing, as a result of neo-liberal structure problems. Nor does it present Buddhism as the protector of people from the threats of globalization. Instead, my research suggests a more complex relationship between religion and development/neo-liberalism, in a framework that allows for the possibility of variation and of selective interpretation, more so than is the case with the “spiritual economy” of Islam that Rudnyckyj presents. That is, through the Tibetan Buddhist movements and religious teachings, Tibetan Buddhism has become an agent that remakes neo-liberal development by giving it religious meanings to make it less culturally destructive, and more consistent with Buddhist norms and moral standards. Tibetan Buddhist movements and religious teachings enabled global capitalist development to work through Tibetan Buddhist norms and moral standards. In the process, some forms of neoliberal practice are advocated by some Tibetan religious elites and herders, as they are useful for the task of spreading Buddhism and encouraging alternatives to herding, while others are rejected as going against the ethics of Buddhist selfhood. Unlike Comaroffs’ analysis of “occult economies,” which is pretty much based on the structural Marxist view, my research is focused on the cultural politics of development in relating neo-liberalism with religious movements. In relating the “spiritual economies”, while Tibetan khenpos suggest herders to improve their living condition

by embracing some neo-liberal practices, they still maintain that it is Tibetan Buddhism that can bring people real happiness and peace. Therefore, Tibetan khenpos' first priority is to encourage Tibetan herders to learn and practice Tibetan Buddhism becoming more religious subjects while they can still enjoy material comfort brought by the science and technology. My argument is based three aspects of Tibetan Buddhism: newly emerged Tibetan Buddhist movements, some leading khenpos' writings, and Tibetan herders' religious rituals and practices, all of which will be discussed in the conclusion of the dissertation.

### **Human Geography Approach to Tibetan Buddhism**

In contrast to an Orientalist approach that treats Buddhism as essentialized and textualized (Hallisey, 1995; King, 1999; Rahula, 1974), in this research, I treat Buddhism not as an unchanging entity, but rather as a value system that is in the process of constant change, which has adapted to new situations and new cultural encounters throughout history. Furthermore, rather than focusing on classical religious texts and large religious institutions, I concentrate more of my attention on the day-to-day decisions and experiences of herders and lamas from a perspective of Tibetan Buddhism while also firmly grounded in attention to political economy. In addition to this, I see Tibetan Buddhism as a discourse with a power to create its own subjectivities and social orders. That is, Tibetan Buddhism as a cultural model (Costello, 2008a; b), a node of political-economic interests, and a powerful discourse has always encountered and competed with other value systems and cultural models such as hybrid neoliberalism. In contemporary China, where development models have been driven by secular market competition, Tibetan Buddhism has been incorporating some new elements from these discourses. Learning science and technology for the improvement of living conditions is seen as

acceptable and encouraged with Buddhist guidance, especially when they can be used to serve both secular interests and the expansion of Buddhism itself. However, according to Tibetan Buddhism, there are still many fundamental principles that must be defended, such as reincarnation, the law of cause-effect, the contentment with one's lot, loyalty to lamas and parents, and the sin (negative karma) of killing and of certain kinds of disturbances to the natural environment.

A social-improvement vision based on those principles will be different from a secular one that is based on science and competition, converging in some places and diverging in others. As discussed above, three particularly important idioms that will be used to explore these convergences and divergences with respect to the slaughter renunciation movement are compassion, karma, and happiness. According to Buddhism, all beings including humans and animals are circulating in samsara. Samsara is the six realms of existence in which all sentient beings suffer through the cycle of rebirth (Rdza Dpal Sprul, 2008). The six classes of beings in samsara are gods, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, and hell beings, and sentient beings can be born in any form of life in these classes based on their collected karma. Heaven, the human realm, and the asura realm contain less suffering than the other three realms - hungry-ghost realm, animal realm, and the hell realm (Rdza Dpal Sprul, 2008; Khenpo Ye Shes Phun Tshogs, 2006). The reincarnation of all beings is so frequent and abundant that there is a great chance that all beings have at another time been one's mother by the law of karma. In this circulation of life, compassion is a very important factor for achieving enlightenment and gaining permanent happiness. The principle of karma also guides Tibetan peoples' decisions and day-to-day lives. It is believed that through the law of karma, the effects of all deeds actively create past, present, and future experiences, thus making one responsible for one's own life, and the pain and joy it

brings to oneself and others. The results or 'fruits' of actions are called karma-phala (Tib: *sngon las or bsod nams*). Karma extends through one's present life and all past and future lives as well (Khenpo Tsullo, 2003a; 2003b). Finally, Tibetan lamas teach the difference between “other-worldly happiness” (Tib. *tshe 'd'i bde skyid*) and “this-worldly happiness” (Tib. *tshe phyi ma'i bde skyid*). What Buddhists call “other-worldly happiness” is the final truth that requires people to refrain from any attachment to worldly things for Buddhist enlightenment, and what they call “this-worldly happiness” is the comfort and happiness people will enjoy in this lifetime. Tibetan khenpos teach herders to have a balance between the two. On the one hand, they should try to collect merit for their future lives and ultimately for enlightenment. On the other hand, they are also encouraged to improve this life without sacrificing their long-term goal (Khenpo Tsullo, 2003a; 2003b).

In conceptualizing and researching Tibetan Buddhism in this way, I attempt to develop a human geographical approach to Tibetan Buddhism. In part because of the textual origins of Tibetan studies as a discipline, as well as the difficulty of fieldwork access, ethnographic study of contemporary Tibet remains limited. The field is distinctly bifurcated between those who study religion, often from a textual perspective, and those who study economic development and politics. To date, very few studies have brought religion and development into a common theoretical framework of study. Exceptions include Yeh's writing about the case of Tibetan farmers' greenhouses and hegemonic state development in Lhasa (2007), Makley's (2006) work on *zhidak* (mountain deity), Holly Gayley's study of a Tibetan religious leader and globalization (Gayley, 2011b), and Costello's (2008a,b) study about cultural models of the “good man” among Tibetans in Amdo.

Through an ethnographic case study of greenhouse vegetable cultivation in the TAR, Yeh (2007) analyzes how Tibetans experience the hegemonic state development project. She argues that the discourse of *indolence* and being *spoiled* cannot be understood merely in economic or political terms, but rather involves culturally constituted notions of time and proper labor, as well as religious expression. The discourse of Tibetan *indolence* is not a fact; she observed during her research that greenhouse work was not been culturally familiar to Tibetan, but that Tibetans work as hard as Chinese when they work in their traditional tasks such as planting barley and other things. But the expression of Tibetans as indolent is everywhere among government officials, Han migrants, and Tibetans themselves. She suggests that Tibetan's expression of being indolent works as both "common sense" and "good sense." The expression of being indolent represents a normalization of Tibetans' marginalization in development and the state discourse about Tibetan laziness, but it is also interpreted in positive ways by Tibetans, for example when Tibetans use it to culturally distinguish Tibetans from Han migrants with their expression of being proud of knowing how to enjoy the life that is impermanent from a Tibetan Buddhist perspective.

Focusing on the ritual of Zhidak worship in one Tibetan area in Qinghai Province, Charlene Makley (2007) examines economic development in western China from the perspective of enchantment and infrastructure, seeing the development process in western China as a cultural politics between spiritual enchantment of and the enchantment of the market economy, arguing that Tibetans are caught up in intensifying conflicts over the local 'tradition' (Ch. *chuantong*) or 'religion' (Ch. *zongjiao*) versus the seemingly objective and universal facts of modernizing 'economic' advance. Holly Gayley (2011) analyzes how Khenpo Jigphun responded to globalization and state development through his active reformulation Buddhism, redefining

Tibetan identity and laying down guidelines for Tibetans in contemporary times. Similarly, Susan E Costello (2008a,b) focuses on two Tibetan herders' values in the model of a good man: Tibetan tribal value and Tibetan religious value, exploring the impact of these values and their relationship to economic development. She claims that the local people (here Tibetan herders) are more active and have their own culture and own idea of developments different from those of the state.

Through an ethnographic study of herders' life and their abstention from livestock slaughter, my research will try to explore the conjuncture of Tibetan Buddhism and development in Tibet, attempting to combine two different fields of Tibet study usually separated in the literature: the study of development, and that of religion. My study will contribute to the development of an analytical approach that does not separate the economic, political, and the religious, but rather brings them together to explore alternative development, modernity and subjectivities created in the encounter between Tibetan Buddhist authorities, state imperatives of development, and the pressures of neoliberalizing market reforms.

### **Structure of Dissertation**

As the state and Tibetan pastoralists are two very important threads in this entangled “knot” of cultural struggle, in Chapter Two, I will discuss the relationship between the Chinese state and Tibetan pastoralists, situating the slaughter renunciation movement in the Chinese political-economic situation. I will discuss the changes in the slaughter rate and livestock production system during three production systems – before 1959, during the commune system, and since the economic reform. In the latter I will focus on the “Open up the West” campaign including the recent housing project and yak-based economic development. I argue that the

“Open up the West” campaign is an extension of secular-based neo-liberalism in western China, that is, a cultural project of secularization and deepening of materialism of western China for economical, political, and ecological purposes.

Chapter Three will discuss the historical changes in Tibetan Buddhists’ interaction with the state, and their current movements in Larung Gar in relation with development and nationalism. The sections include historical changes of Tibetan Buddhist interaction with the state, three related movements (slaughter renunciation movement, fur renunciation, and vegetarian movements), and Tibetan Buddhist elites’ engagement with social activities including the ten-virtuous-rules, purification of Tibetan language, and literacy education. The chapter demonstrates that Tibetan Buddhism, mediated by Buddhist elites, is a force that makes its own cultural landscape by intervening in a constantly changing world. As such, it is inherently adaptable and flexible, rather than a stagnant remnant of the past.

In Chapter Four, I will examine the renunciation movement in Rakhor Village, including herders’ experience in the previous three years’ vows and the reasons why most herders gave up the movement in the second term. I argue that herders’ decisions about their participation in the movement reflect their negotiations between the force of religious power and that of the secular neo-liberal market. The chapter demonstrates how Tibetan Buddhism and secular neo-liberalism act as competing forces in their projects to produce Tibetans as governable subjects. I argue that Ong’s technique of self in the Chinese neo-liberalization process is also a process of the secularization and deepening of materialism in contemporary China. In the slaughter renunciation movement, this governmentality (a secularism and materialism) has also been contested by a religious (Tibetan Buddhism) force, which forms Tibetan herders as religious subjects.



Chapter Five demonstrates that development is not only contested between trustees and local, but also between locals. The debate between Tibetan Buddhist elites and Tibetan radical secularists over the role of Tibetan Buddhism in development exemplifies how the meanings of development are contested among different groups of the “local”. At the same time, it is through the process of contestation and debate that Tibetan Buddhist elites give meanings to new discourse and new cultures, including economic development, science, technology, and so forth.

In Chapter Six, I will demonstrate that Rakhor herders are influenced both by state neoliberal development ideologies as well as Tibetan Buddhist conceptions of development, but that though different, these often converge toward similar recommendations that encourage entrepreneurship as well as closer integration with the Chinese state and Chinese citizenship. Thus, the chapter shows how two very different forms of governmentality can ironically converge and how Tibetan Buddhism has become the cultural form that gives meaning to neoliberal development.

In the conclusion of the dissertation, I argue that what most scholars refer to as neo-liberalism in China is, indeed, a process of secularization and deepening of materialism; it is an uneven and culturally constituted process. In Tibet, Tibetan khenpos and their movements do not entirely reject this process, but rather selectively reject and embrace it by imbuing uneven processes of “small d development” with Tibetan Buddhist meanings, forming a Buddhist-informed neo-liberalization process.

## Chapter Two

### The Chinese State and Tibetan Pastoralism

“Before settling, our life was very simple, and we did not have many thoughts [about making money]. After we settled, our living condition improved, and we now have a higher living standard. Next year, I want to take a loan from a bank to start a “Tibetan herders’ home for the tourists” (藏家乐) so that I can sell yak meat and milk for more money.”

- a herder in Hongyuan who was settled in the state housing project, 2010

The years 2010 and 2011 saw three very important central government forums that were crucial to Tibetan pastoralists and their landscape: the Fifth Work on Work in Tibet, a form on the Open up the West Campaign, and the National Conference on Pastoral Regions. These dealt with political, economic, and ecological issues, respectively. The expression of the herder quoted above is shaped by the state policies and programs that came with those forums.

In January 2010, the Central Government held the Fifth Forum on Work in Tibet, which, for the first time, included not just the TAR but also the other four provinces (Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan) that have a Tibetan population. This highlighted the importance of eastern Tibet in the political stability of the entire region relating to the “3.14” political event of 2008 (that is, the violent protests that took place on March 14, 2008 in Lhasa).

Then, in July of 2010, at the tenth anniversary of its economic development program targeted at the west, the central government held a forum on the “Open up the West” campaign. There, they discussed the great concerns of the state about the continued economic disparity between regions in the east and west, and their intention to extend economic reform in the west. The “Open up the West” campaign has had and will continue to have a profound influence on the Tibetan pastoralists and their landscape.

A year after, in August 2011, the National Conference on Pastoral Regions was held in Hulunbeier, Inner Mongolia. That conference reframed the development strategy in pastoral regions as it relates to the ecological safety of the entire nation. The issues regarding Tibetan pastoral areas are development versus rangeland ecological security, and the ecological results downstream of the major rivers of the Tibetan plateau.

Interestingly, though the problems that those forums attempted to address are separate and distinct ---political stability, economic disparity, and ecological security -- the remedy discussed by those conferences was the same in each case. The solution, it was suggested, could be found in the projection of economic reform deeper into the western regions, as described in the umbrella strategy of the "Open up the West" campaign.

The National Conference on Pastoral Regions highlighted the importance of ecological stability in pastoral areas, but insisted that it should be achieved not by reducing economic development, but rather through the transformation of traditional pastoral production into more intensified livestock industrialization, and by removing herders from pastures with urbanization projects.<sup>7</sup> This would be a change from “extensive” herding to “intensive” market oriented livestock industry. At the same time, the conference suggests restoring the rangeland eco-system by launching a monetary incentive system, which it calls “The Rangeland Ecological Compensation Mechanism.”<sup>8</sup>

At the Fifth Forum on Work in Tibet,<sup>9</sup> one part of President Hu’s speech summarizes the main theme of the gathering:

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<sup>7</sup> 《国务院关于促进牧区又好又快发展的若干意见》（国发〔2011〕17号）Some Suggestions by the State Council on the better and faster development in pastoral areas of China. The State Council [2011] No.17.

<sup>8</sup> 《关于建立西藏草原生态补偿长效机制的调研报告》. (A Report in the pre-feasibility study of Rangeland Ecological Compensation in Tibet Autonomous Region by Committee of Population, Resources and Environment of CPPCC. 2008.)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.shouguang.gov.cn/tzb/show\\_news.asp?id=2183](http://www.shouguang.gov.cn/tzb/show_news.asp?id=2183)

by firmly sticking with the two major tasks of development and stability, they [the local governments in Tibetan populated regions] should promote the leap-forward development to ensure the national safety and stability of Tibet; [to achieve this], economic development is the top priority, national unity is the foundation, and the improvement of people's livelihood is the starting point.”

In a similar way, the “Open up the West” campaign is a piece of rhetorical discourse to push the early economic reforms deeper into the western regions to address issues that the state faces, including the economic disparity between regions, political instabilities, ecological threats, and international market shrinkage. As President Hu states in the Forum of 2010,<sup>10</sup>

The next ten years is the critical time period to build a well-off society, and it is also the critical time to extend the “Open up the West” campaign to a greater depth into the western regions. All the nation-state should be aware of the significance and urgency of the “Open up the West” campaign in the overall national strategy. The “Open up the West” campaign is to reshape the western region into a beautiful landscape where economic prosperity, social progress, social stability, and national unity are ensured, thus allowing a greater contribution to the emergence of a well-off society and to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The message that all of those forums and conferences deliver is that the state made great achievements in its economic reform since the 1980s, particularly since the “Open up the West” campaign was initiated. And, the state will continue to extend the economic reform further into the western region, including the pastoral areas of Tibet. It indicates that economic development is both “the first principle”, and the only solution for all challenges the state faces.

The neoliberal Chinese economic reform process since the 1980's and intensified in 2010 has had a profound impact on Tibetan pastoralists and their landscape. The recent Tibetan pastoralists' increasing slaughter rate and the reaction to this in the slaughter renunciation movement can only be fully understood if we situate them in the larger context of Chinese neo-

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.most.gov.cn/yw/201007/t20100707\\_78324.htm](http://www.most.gov.cn/yw/201007/t20100707_78324.htm)

liberal economic reform since the 1980s. In pastoral areas of the Tibetan plateau, this neo-liberalization process was started with livestock privatization, followed by the grassland use rights contract system. This neo-liberal process was extended by the “Open up the West” campaign, which has translated into many specific projects, including infrastructure improvements that link the pastoral areas with the larger market, housing projects, yak-based economic parks, ecological programs, and others. In short, the economic reform of the 1980s is the fundamental strategy of the state and it has deeply influenced Tibetan pastoralists for the past few decades by changing their nomadic culture in general, including their ways of thinking, their production systems, and their herding practices. To this end, it is fruitful to see the economic reform not as merely economic activities, but also as a tool of governance for controlling the target population.

From the perspective of development as a project of rule (Li 1999, 2007), one useful conceptualization is Aihwa Ong’s treatment of Chinese economic reform as a technology of self-governance of Chinese citizens. Following Nikolas Rose’s (1999) conceptualization of neo-liberalism as a technology of rule that relies on the power of freedom in the market to govern individual activities, Aihwa Ong and Li Zhang (2008) see the various Chinese privatization programs not as pure state economic activities, but rather as a set of calculative techniques that govern Chinese citizens by providing individuals with ownership of their property and optimization of their abilities in the free market. This technique of self-governance has replaced the previous state presence in every aspect of people’s lives. Yet, I want to extend their conceptualization by adding that the giving of freedom in economic activities produces a certain cultural result on the individual level. That is, the Chinese economic reform produces not only market-oriented actors, but it also acts to transform spiritual beings into materialists and

secularists, which is assumed to contribute to the Tibetan herders' national loyalty and regional stability. In making this argument, I want to extend Ong's formulation of neo-liberalism as a technique of self-government by drawing on Lisa Rofel's (2007) conceptualization of Chinese neo-liberalism as a cultivation of appropriate desires. That is, the state neo-liberal arrangement is not only a technique of governance, but it is about the production of culturally governable subjects, who are materialistic and secular. For this point, Rofel examines how the Chinese citizens are cultivated with appropriate desires through the state media and entertainment in the Chinese neo-liberal context. This is useful for analyzing the case of pastoral areas of the Tibetan plateau. In what follows, I will explore the economic reform in pastoral areas by focusing on two aspects: the changes in slaughter rate in Rakhor Village in three distinct periods, and the relationship between the "Open up the West" campaign and neo-liberal subject formation. First, focusing on Rakhor Village, I will address the question of why herders have been selling more and more livestock to market after the 1980s, by situating the historical changes in the slaughter rate in three distinct time periods: before liberation, during the commune system, and after economic reform. Second, I will discuss the "Open up the West" campaign, the academic debate over its rationales, and the formation of the neo-liberal governable subject. By examining three stories of herders in the Housing Projects for Herders and Yak Economic Development, I will argue that the "Open up the West" campaign at its core is a neo-liberal governance technique of the state that is consistent and pervasive on the ground.

### **Slaughter rate changes in three socioeconomic systems**

Why have Tibetan herders been selling more and more livestock to the meat market over the last few decades? To answer this question, I want to trace the historical changes in the

slaughter rate in Rakhor Village, by framing the recent political, economic, and cultural shifts in the Tibetan pastoral areas during three different time periods during the preceding century: these are the pre-commune (1908-1958) time, then the commune system (1958-1983), and the period from 1983 to the present day. These three periods have been distinguished by very different kinds of production, political environments, and economic systems.

While the subsistence economic system and tribe-based social structure are the main characteristics for the years before 1958, the period of 1958-1983 was marked by a top-down planned economy with strong government control and intolerance of religious traditions. The years since 1983 can be characterized by the market economy system and continuing strong government control in the economy, politics, and religion of the region. The differences in the production system and the socio-political structure have reshaped the Tibetan pastoralists' view of their livestock.

### **Slaughter rate pre-1958**

When Rakhor community first moved to its current place in 1942 from Bda' Tang, (currently Datang Ba Township, Ganzi County, Ganzi Prefecture), Rakhor became a sub-tribe of Mewa Tribe which was an autonomous tribal society with eight sub-tribes under its rule. For the few decades before the Chinese liberation of this region, the people of Rakhor made a living by herding yaks. Their foods included milk, butter, cheese, Tibetan barley flour, and yak meat that they slaughtered by themselves. There were a few rich households who had about 200 yaks maximum, and the average for the majority of other households was 20-40 yaks. There were also some who did not have any livestock, who made a living by working for the rich households. Before 1958, Rakhor herders, like other communities in the region of the current Hongyuan

County sold their surplus livestock to the meat market in the nearest agricultural areas.

According to some elderly herders in Rakhor Village, there were three places that herders in Rakhor could trade their excess butter, cheese, and yaks for other goods, which might include barley, tea, clothes, bows, personal ornaments, to name a few. The first was in Shar Khok, the current Songpan County (松潘县) to the east of Hongyuan. Second one was in the current town of Aba (Tib. Rnga ba, 阿坝县) County in the north, and the last at Watse in the current Gannan Prefecture in what is now Gansu province, to the northeast of Hongyuan. Compared with the modern slaughterhouses in Aba and Ganzi Prefectures, these traditional slaughterhouses were very small. Located about two kilometers away from the old Aba Town (the current Aba County Town), the slaughterhouse in Aba was the place where pastoralists near old Aba town brought their livestock, mostly yaks and sheep, to sell. Elderly herders say that there were about 7 Tibetan bachelors who had some very simple shelters and tents where they could store and sell meat. That mechanism worked well when yak meat was mostly consumed by the local Tibetans.

Unlike the current situation in which meat and yaks are transported and consumed by Han or Hui Chinese to big cities near Tibetan pastoral areas, in the old days, Rakhor herders took their yaks to one of those three meat markets located hundreds kilometers away once or twice a year. It was mostly those herders with lots of livestock who sold to those markets. They mostly did trips to this market by taking the livestock to sell and other yaks for transportation. It was usually the case that poor households either asked their relatives to take their small amount of butter and cheese to the markets and to purchase things they needed, or they went with the rich households as their paid helpers.

In those markets, people exchanged various goods like butter and cheese primarily for barley, and they exchanged livestock or meat for the old Chinese silver dollars (银元) to



purchase things they needed in those markets. It is said that some of those rich households would also accumulate silver dollars for savings by selling their yaks or dairy products. Generally speaking, only a few of the wealthier households had extra livestock to sell to those meat markets. Most households just sold dairy products, and accordingly, the selling of livestock to the meat market wasn't nearly as common for most of the herders as it is today. This small scale selling was not a serious issue for Tibetan religious leaders, and it never generated a slaughter renunciation movement. In addition to that, in the old days, Tibetan herders did not have many options to make a living other than herding and selling livestock. That may also have been another reason why Tibetan Buddhist leaders did not ask herders to stop selling their livestock. As Khenpo Tsulpo often states in his religious teachings, "unlike in the old days, now there are ways for herders to make a living if they stop selling their livestock in meat market."

### **Commune system**

In 1959, with the establishment of the collective production system in the pastoral areas of Hongyuan County, a livestock population of around 1,800 yaks and about 500 sheep owned by 350 people of the Rakhor tribe was collected by the state and reallocated as the commune assets. The new system broke the traditional family-based working system and labor units that were within the private social structure, and established in its place a new working system and new labor units in which all the livestock and labor were divided among several groups, based on gender, age and ability. As yaks were the dominant livestock, they were managed by different work teams that worked with different categories of yaks: 1) female adult yaks were divided among several work teams within which Tibetan female herders milked about 25 milking yaks each; 2) the young female yaks were herded by a couple of male herders on different pastures; 3)

another several hundred young male yaks were divided into several groups and managed by male herders; 4) about 200 crossbred milking yaks was worked by another team of men; and 5) 100 – 200 adult male yaks used for transportation were herded as one unit by one or two herders. In Rakhor, as in many other places, there were other jobs called *shor las*, the non-herding-and-milking occupations. Those jobs included the construction of buildings, walls, livestock and grass storage yards, the collection and transportation of firewood, and the shearing of sheep wool, to name a few. It was the village leaders who arranged all of those assignments based on labor availability.

During the commune system, people collected points by working for the commune to make a living. The points were usually translated into cash income at the end of every year, and with the income herders bought food and clothes from the commune and from the very few state-owned stores. In that commune production system, workers were divided into three categories: those under 18 and above 60 who could work were considered as half labor; those between the ages of 18 and 60 were full labor; and school children and very old people who physically could not work were considered as non-labor. One day's work for the full laborers would earn 10 points per person, which was equivalent to 1 RMB in Rakhor Village, and this amount varied among villages based on their livestock numbers and collective annual incomes. The income of each household depended on the available number of laborers, and households with income of over 1000 RMB per year were considered to be rich in Rakhor. All income from livestock products including dairy products, meat products, and others, was collected by the commune first, and then they were redistributed to herders based on their contribution to the commune. The families needed to buy yaks from the commune for their own meat consumption, and they needed to pay for that from the points they collected from their labor. Rakhor herders could slaughter one yak

per four household members. The prices for the livestock in the late commune system were about 60 RMB for a male yak, 40 RMB for a female yak, 25 RMB for a sheep, and 300 RMB for a horse.

With the new political and socioeconomic system, all decisions about labor allocation and livestock disposal were controlled by the state, as livestock was owned by collectives. In terms of livestock off-take rate, the state had the yearly quota for each of the work teams on how much livestock the work teams should sell, and the village leaders decided what type of yaks were to be sold. Generally speaking, productive female yaks, small yaks younger than three years old, and adult male yaks for transportation would not be sold. The livestock that was sold to the meat market were male yaks, and old female yaks from milking teams. Yaks were slaughtered in the local slaughterhouses, and meat was transported to the big cities near the Tibetan plateau. The income from that livestock went to the commune and was redistributed to the community members based on the points they collected with their work.

During the commune time, there was only one slaughterhouse where all yaks for meat products from all townships (then communes) under Hongyuan County were slaughtered. This was different from pre-1958 and from post-1983, when more than half of the yaks for meat products were transported to big cities close to Hongyuan County. The slaughter rate during the commune system was very high. When I was young I observed that the local slaughterhouse had been slaughtering several hundred yaks per day in the fall of every year. However, this high rate of slaughter was not been a problem for Tibetan religious leaders. There are two reasons for this: first, all the decisions over livestock were made by the state; second, Tibetan Buddhist elites were severely repressed, and Tibetan Buddhism was facing an existential crisis. Therefore, the social and political space for the emergence of any slaughter renunciation movement was zero.

### **The early phase of economic reform in pastoral areas on the Tibetan plateau: Livestock privatization and Pasture Contract System**

The stagnant economy caused by the state-planned system during the Mao era became the main cause for the economic reform of the Deng government, which began in the pastoral areas of Tibet in 1983. As it was with the agricultural land privatization in other parts of China, the livestock privatization was the first step for the state to establish the market economy in the pastoral areas of Tibet. The livestock privatization of 1983 in Rakhor ended the commune system, as it did in most other pastoral areas in the Tibetan plateau. All collectively owned livestock, including over 6233 yaks, 2068 sheep, 209 horses, all numbers which increased significantly during the commune system, were distributed to the population of 474 people of Rakhor Village. At that time, herders privately owned livestock and herded them on pastures shared by 10 to 20 households as one group. Herders made their own decisions regarding livestock, their time allocation, production plans, and resources. In short, once again, production units were household-based systems that were private social structures, very similar to the traditional social structure before 1959. With privatization of livestock and with the state's more liberal religious policies, many religious traditions and nomadic traditions were revived. Thus, herders could practice their religion and perform their traditional rituals. However, this apparent return to the herders' traditional society was accompanied by a larger process in which they were increasingly integrated into the larger intensified economic reform.

At the same time, with the privatization of livestock, Tibetan herders became self-responsible, and had to make a living by themselves. With the economic reform, they started to sell their livestock to the meat market, which became a very important income source, separate from the cash income from selling dairy products. They produced butter, cheese, and milk by themselves, but they had to purchase clothes, Tibetan barley, rice, tea, and other foods. In

addition, they also spent lots of their income to go on religious practices and pilgrimages, as well as to buy traditional animal furs, jewelry, and appliances.

In 1996, thirteen years after the livestock decollectivization, the Pasture Contract System was introduced, and winter and summer pastures were allocated to each household. The pastures were distributed based on the number of livestock that each household received in 1983 and on the number of household members in 1995. There were 6233 yaks, 2068 sheep, and 209 horses in 1983, and there were 9800 yaks (no sheep) and 643 people in 1995. The government guaranteed that the allotment as made at that time would remain valid and unchanged for 50 years, and every household would have a grassland use right certificate on which is clearly stated the owner of land use rights, their exclusive right, the size of pastures, and the purpose of land use.

Since then, every household has had all of their seasonal pastures (winter, summer, fall, and spring pastures) in a single parcel, so they do not need to make seasonal movements of their herds and tents as they used to do before 1996. Having all pastures in one place in Rakhor is different phenomenon from the other two villages under Qiongxi Township, and from many other pastoral areas on Tibetan plateau (Yeh and Gaerrang, 2011).

The introduction of the Pasture Contract System made people aware for the first time that they can now only manage and use a certain part of the grasslands, with the idea that the pasture use right can be used as an exclusive private property. Before the policy of the Pasture Contract System was implemented in 1996, nomads generally felt that the grasslands were endless, and that they could have as many animals as they wanted. There was no limit to the possibilities of expansion, because after the livestock decollectivization, grassland had been used commonly by work teams of 10-20 households each. The Pasture Contract System caused people to think of

more efficient ways to manage both the herd and the grassland, forcing them to calculate the capacity of their pastures in order to achieve more sustainable growth of livestock. As they have gained the sense of ownership of pasture, they tend to not allow outsiders on their land any more for activities such as fishing, woodcutting or gathering of medicinal herbs. Before the Pasture Contract System, there was a sense of the grasslands as open access with respect to non-pasture resources, so that fishing, wood cutting etc. occurred whenever one wanted by whoever wanted to. In short, the Pasture Contract System has cultivated the herders' ownership of pastures. Now a sense of individual ownership has made people interested in looking after and protecting valuable resources and using those resources to their best advantage.

Livestock privatization and Pasture Contract System in China has been studied primarily in ecological and economic terms so far (Richard, Yan and Du, 2006; Yan, 2005) and very few studies have been done from the perspective of social and cultural transformation. The privatization of livestock and land use right programs were early state efforts to produce market actors, the most important elements of market economy. There are several neoliberal logics within these efforts. First, the program is a direct response to the inefficiency in production and resource distribution that caused economic recession. By contracting farmland to each household in agricultural areas, and by privatizing the livestock and grassland to individual household in pastoral areas, the program aimed at stimulating individual productivity by providing autonomous decision power to individuals, thus making each individual responsible for themselves (Ong and Zhang, 2008). In a sense, the state goal was to create individuals who are self-responsible, self-managed, competent and efficient in the newly formed market. So the project is a process of the establishment of the market by creating a free individual through withdrawal of state interventions from every individual. At the same time, all of these projects

were never free from the propaganda and education that promoted China as a unified nation in which all minorities belong to one family over which the Chinese Communist Party is the only legitimate and capable ruler. So the outcome of the privatization projects and political promotions is expected to be individual subjects who are efficient in the market for material development with full loyalty to the unified Chinese nation and Communist Party. If we see livestock privatization as a pilot project to create market actors, the most active elements of a market economy, then the Pasture Contract System is an extension of that effort wherein the state regulation of the relationship between the herders and their pastures creates herders' ownership over land that used to belong to everyone.

These two major projects have built a foundation for economic reform in the pastoral areas on Tibetan plateau. Following these two projects, the state has implemented many more projects that have been deeply manipulating the Tibetan pastoralists' way of life. Many of these projects have come under or with the discourse of the “Open up the West” campaign strategy implemented in 2000. In what follows, I will examine the “Open up the West” campaign and subject formation, drawing on the governmental process with a discussion of three state projects as cases.

### **Open up the West Campaign**

With the “Open up the West” campaign strategy and discourse, local governments at both the provincial and prefectural levels have launched many projects and policies that have effectively reshaped the landscape of Tibetan pastoral areas and the people on these lands. Based on its profound impacts on the ground, I argue that the “Open up the West” campaign, in its nature, works to extend the neo-liberal social arrangement in pastoral areas, which was started

with the redistribution of livestock to households in 1980s, and followed by the Pasture Contract System. Next, I will explore the background of “Open up the West” campaign, the debate over the rationales of the launching of “Open up the West” campaign, and the neo-liberal subject formation with this strategy. These examinations will provide a larger picture of how the “Open up the West” campaign was formed and has been operating in western regions for the last few decades.

### **“Open up the West” campaign**

The “Open up the West” campaign (西部大开发) is a policy adopted in 2000 by the People's Republic of China to develop its less-developed western regions. In 1978, the Chinese government led by Deng Xiaoping launched an economic reform and open-door policy. The coastal regions of eastern China benefited greatly from these reforms, and their economies quickly raced ahead. The western half of China, however, lagged far behind. In order to help the western half of China catch up with the eastern half, a Leadership Group for the “Open up the West” campaign (西部地区开发领导小组) was created by the State Council in January 2000, led by then-Premier Zhu Rongji. The policy covers six provinces (Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan), five autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet, and Xinjiang), and one municipality (Chongqing). This region contains 71.4% of China's area, but only 28.8% of its population, as of the end of 2002, and 16.8% of its total economic output, as of 2003. To frame the larger picture in which "Open up the West" campaign emerged, some aspects of Chinese socioeconomic changes need to be highlighted. First of all, the "Open up the West" campaign was launched during the era of economic reform, which was generally characterized by market function as the basic mechanism in which products and resources are



distributed under the state's surveillance. With this economic reform, there were some changes in the relationship between the central government and local governments. The retreating role of the central government in regional economic development was realized with fiscal decentralization and the slow process of adjustment of the institutional structure (Huang, 1996; Naughton, 1996). Under China's highly decentralized fiscal system, sub-national governments began to play a key role in implementing national policies. Local officials were no longer merely servants who obey the commands of the central government, having become distinct political and economic actors who adopt various strategies for maximizing their interests and gaining autonomy within their jurisdictions (Holbig, 2004). This means that local governments have their own way of framing and implementing the "Open up the West" campaign, so that "Open up the West" campaign is interpreted differently in different localities.

This has also been a period during which the Chinese economy has been increasingly integrated into international society, clearly marked by its entry into the WTO (Harvey, 2005; Lai, 2002; 2003). The rate of foreign investment grew rapidly on the eastern coast, and the private sector gained an increasingly important role in the national economic growth (Harvey, 2005). The 2010 Forum on the "Open up the West" campaign coincided with the recent global economic stagnation, particularly in the Western countries that comprise China's vitally important export market and capital resources. As a result of this global economic recession and the concomitant shrinkage of international trade, China finds itself in urgent need to cultivate new consumer markets, especially domestic ones. For all of these issues, the remedy lies in increasing the neo-liberal economic development, which is embodied in the "Open up the West" campaign.

The increasing globalization of the Chinese economy and the recent major floods downstream from Tibet in some major Chinese cities has also brought about a new greening state initiative (Yeh, 2005) that has made a commitment to national environmental protection and ecological reconstruction (Economy, 2005). It may simply be rhetoric that the state has incorporated environmental concerns into the “Open up the West” campaign program, because the effectiveness of these environmental projects in the west is limited and has had unintended consequences (e.g., Tibetan herders impoverished by the *Tuimu Huancao* – Rangeland Restoration Project). These results demonstrate the limitations of the state’s ecological modernization framework, and indicate the need for new research paradigms which include critical political ecology and governmental processes (Yeh, 2009). In responding to the failure of previous ecological projects, the state has extended *Tuimu Huancao* with the more recent Rangeland Ecological Compensation Mechanism.

In sum, "Open up the West" campaign is related to the various uncertainties that the state has faced over several decades. Those have included: the mounting disparity between the rich and the poor; the discontent due to the resulting disproportional wealth of the east and west; the potential unrest of laid-off workers in the west; the rebelliousness of minorities (Tibet and Xinjiang) in the west (Lai, 2003); the increasing competition in the international market with the entrance into the WTO (Harvey, 2005; Lai, 2002); and the threats to the natural resources that are the vital foundation for overall national economic development.

### **“Open up the West” campaign and neo-liberal social arrangement**

The “Open up the West” campaign is commonly understood as an economic strategy of the Chinese state that was designed to narrow the gap between the more developed regions in the

east coast and less-developed regions in the west and central China. However, there are debates in academic circles regarding the original rationales for the initiation of the campaign. In this section I will discuss the most recent theoretical debate among scholars about “Open up the West” campaign and its formation, and its impacts on the ground as a neo-liberal technique of governance. I argue that the “Open up the West” campaign, as an integrated effort of the state, is an intensive neo-liberalization process that works as “socialism from far” (Ong and Zhang, 2008) in the western regions. That is, many projects implemented under the discourse of “Open up the West” campaign have been designed to shape a particular social arrangement that will further affect and change the conduct of people in the western regions. Those specific projects and policies have been framed according to the general discourse of “Open up the West” campaign. In the case of the Tibetan pastoralists, the strategy is designed to create conditions for Tibetan pastoralists to think and act in certain ways by changing their relationship with the land and their livestock. How they make decisions about their pastures and their livestock is reflected in some Tibetans’ engaging in livestock trading businesses, and the resulting increases in the slaughter rate. But first, I want to go over the debates about the formation of “Open up the West” campaign. Among the many complex factors that affected the emergence of the “Open up the West” campaign, the economic and social welfare disparities between west and east have been the primary explicitly expressed reasons for the “Open up the West” campaign. At the same time, other factors have also been considered. These include the increasing globalization of the Chinese economy, nation-building efforts, the concern for social stability in the west where culturally distinctive minorities are located, the changing of the fiscal system, and the decentralization of government control. Other rationales include resolving the interior regions’ discontents, stimulating domestic demand, forging structural reforms for non-state firms, entry

into the World Trade Organization, improving the environment and resource supplies, and securing national security and unity (Lai 2002).

Lai (2003) suggests that the government is more concerned with ethnic discontent in the vast western regions, and shortages in strategic resources, than it is in the growth in the underdeveloped areas for the sake of overall national growth. That is to say, maintaining political stability and tapping strategic resources in the western region are the government's top priorities, and the achieving of higher economic returns by developing and supporting the central region is subordinate. Lai (2003) argues that the ideas of national security and unity have been very important in the central government's decision to focus on the west rather than the central region, suggesting that the central region enjoys better economic returns on state investments than do the western region, but that the state gave priority to the west out of concern for its instability. The disturbances among Uighurs, Tibetans and other minorities have highlighted the importance of integrating those minorities into the national socioeconomic mainstream. The western region's advantage is both political and strategic, because of its size, concentration of ethnic-minority populations, long international borders, international implications of ethnic tension, and possession of strategic resources (Lai 2003).

While some scholars emphasize the pressure from the discontentment of provincial governments and academic circles in western China with the central government's ignoring of the west region for decades, other scholars focus on the power struggles that have occurred inside the central government during transitions of leadership – in this case from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao. Laying out the way in which the ideology of “Open up the West” campaign was formed and the dynamic interaction between provincial governments and the party-state, Holbig (2004) argues that the “Open up the West” campaign can hardly be described as a coherent

project with specific goals and measurements. Instead, she suggests that is a “soft policy--- a fragmented cluster of diverse agendas” that appeals to different actors. In her analysis of the formation of the policy, she emphasized factors such as the pressures of the government’s lobbying from western China, academic voices, and potential economic challenges associated with entry into the WTO.

Other scholars have focused on very different aspects of the emergence of the “Open up the West” campaign policy. Shih (2004) is skeptical about the bargaining power of the western provinces. Instead, he situates the “Open up the West” campaign in the internal individual power struggles among the top leadership, particularly during the generational transitions. He speculates that the “Open up the West” campaign policy could represent the third generation of Jiang Zeming’s effort to preempt the future leaders of the CCP, Wen Jiabao and Hu Jintao, who have strong connections with the west. He suggests it is Jiang’s effort to maintain a certain degree of power through his followers after he retires. The tradition of usage of policies such as the “Open up the West” campaign to serve personal political interests is a characteristic of Chinese statecraft, with which Shih further differentiates the development of the Chinese state from that of other East Asian states. In a similar vein, Goodman (2004) also examined the underlying themes of equality, nation building, and internal colonization embodied in the “Open up the West” campaign that would appeal to party leaders in support of a generational change of leaders.

I have two points to make concerning these debates and arguments. First, all of them are important in pointing out the different aspects of the "Open up the West" campaign and in showing how the different forces played their role in the "Open up the West" campaign formation. However, I still think that it is more fruitful to look at what the "Open up the West"

campaign does in the real world to impact the individual lives of people on the ground, rather than to see how it came into being or to determine which factor was more important than other in its formation. Secondly, I have a different opinion on two other points made by Holbig and Goodman. As mentioned above, Holbig argues that the “Open up the West” campaign is a “soft policy: a fragmented cluster of diverse agendas” that appeals to different actors (Holbig, 2004: 355). Goodman (2004) argues that the economic success gained by integrating the east coast regions into the global market did not allow China to make such a fundamental shift in its geographical economic strategy, suggesting that "Open up the West" campaign adopted a market-solution approach by channeling foreign and private investment to the west, combining state investment with infrastructure improvement, and mostly local-government investment.

First, I suggest that we should see the “Open up the West” campaign as a discourse or integrated state effort rather than seeing it as a single policy or a state project. Seeing it as discourse, I argue that it is coherent and that all the projects implemented under this discourse are consistent with one another. For this, several aspects of "Open up the West" campaign are very important to note. First, it is assumed by the state that various issues that the nation state faces can be mitigated by economic development in the western regions, and the market economy is the only remedy for all of the issues the state faces; to achieve this goal, the people and the landscape of the west required a fundamental transformation, a deep cultural, economic, and social change. Finally, the discourse of "Open up the West" campaign and the related projects produce a certain type of subject and cultural space in the west, and this subject that is formed is material, market-oriented, and secularized, all of which will give the state more control over the people and material they targeted. In this sense, the state has a real intent and consistent actions in the west. In short, it is discourse that provides condition for the local governments and

market economy to carry out the state agendas. Indeed, viewed as discourse and integrated efforts of the state, the “Open up the West” campaign is a process of reshaping the western regions into a specific cultural landscape, instilling people with certain beliefs, desires, and behaviors, replacing the traditional spiritual culture with the market-oriented, materialized, and secularized culture.

The result of the rhetoric of “Open up the West” campaign in the pastoral areas on the Tibetan plateau is political and ecological stability, with economic process lagging behind. All of these abnormalities are assumed to be solved by intensifying the economic reform that started with livestock privatization and the Pasture Contract System. Indeed, for several decades, the pastoral areas in the eastern Tibetan Plateau have been addressed and deeply influenced by the “Open up the West” campaign strategy through numerous projects. The projects and policies under this umbrella include, among others, infrastructure improvement for the market integrations between pastoral areas and larger cities, education and health care improvements, livestock (yaks) industrialization, ecological construction (*Tuimu Huancao*- converting pastures to grasslands and the recent Rangeland Ecological Compensation Mechanism), and livelihood improvement (Housing Project for Herders and New Life in the New Tent). All of those projects work together as cultural projects to transform Tibetan pastoral areas and the people there into market-oriented social relationships and a materially driven cultural landscape. In the following section, I will discuss two cases of the state projects under "Open up the West" campaign on the ground: 1) the Housing Projects for Herders with an analysis of a state report on this project; and 2) the integration of yaks into the larger market system in which the resulting demand led herders to sell more and more yaks to the meat market. Both of these projects are designed to transform

the traditional culture and production system into the industrialization of livestock production and the commercialization of social relationships.

## **Two Cases of State Projects in Pastoral Areas on Tibetan Plateau**

### Housing Project for Herders

For the last few years, the most spectacular project in pastoral areas of Sichuan Province has been the Housing Project for Herders, an urbanization and livelihood project started by the Sichuan provincial government in 2009. According to the government reports,<sup>11</sup> it is a four-year project from 2009 through 2012, involving 90,000 of the 112,000 area households to improve (and establish, in some cases) a total of 1409 settlement sites under 29 nomadic countries. It is said that the plan will benefit about 480,000 people who do not have houses or who have substandard houses, which amounts to about 88.6% of the total population of 533,112 Tibetan pastoralists in Sichuan Province. The project goal is to make sure that all nomadic households have their own houses, new tents, and the community square upon the completion of the project. Unlike the settlement project in other part of pastoral areas where herders are encouraged or are forced to be settled, in the housing project of Sichuan province, pastoralists have participated voluntarily, and the project deployed dual strategies: the project is an effort to transfer laborers from pastures to secondary and tertiary industries, encouraging herders to be settled in towns and making their living by other means; at the same time, the project encourages the remaining herders to increase their livestock production by modernizing and intensifying the system through grass cultivation, building shelters for livestock and grass storage, constructing roads between the pastures, improving yak breeding, and so forth. The state distributed new tents to

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<sup>11</sup> 《四川藏区牧民定居行动计划总体规划》. (The General Plan of Sichuan Housing Projects for Herders) <http://sc.people.com.cn/news/HTML/2009/2/8/20090208102626.htm>



those who continued their herding practices on their pastures. The cost of houses under the plan included about 20% through state subsidies, 30% from loans, and 50% from the herders themselves. According to the report from a Meeting of The Housing Project for Herders,<sup>12</sup> 68,647 houses were built as of February 2011, which is 69.15% of what was planned. And, 504 of the 915 improved settlement sites have community centers. By the end of 2010, there were about 130 newly built houses in Rakhor Village of Hongyuan County, including 41 houses that had been built through another project in 2007 and 2008, and another 90 built in the housing project in 2009 and 2010. According to a village leader, there were still about 40 remaining houses that would be built in the 2011-2012 cycle. In short, the years of 2009 and 2010 had a vigorous housing construction movement that mobilized all levels of government, the Tibetan herders, and the housing industry in the region. Many communities, just like Rakhor Village, have been renewed with new houses (inside and out), village centers, village offices, tourism centers, clinics, and running water systems. The state expects to have more Tibetan herders living this new landscape.

Now, the question is, what do all of these mean to the Tibetan herders and their life? How does this fit in with the discourse of the “Open up the West” campaign and the formation of the neo-liberal governable subject? In what follows, I explore these questions through a government journalist's online report about the housing project and the actual real world changes brought about by the project. The report is titled, “Three stories of Tibetan herders: a witness of the tremendous changes over two years” (三个红原牧民的故事：见证藏区两年巨变).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 全省藏区牧民定居行动计划工作会议召开). “A meeting on the Sichuan Housing Project for Herders” February 25, 2011. [www.abazhou.gov.cn](http://www.abazhou.gov.cn)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.abazhou.gov.cn> "[www.abazhou.gov.cn](http://www.abazhou.gov.cn). (2011-07-30)

Story one: DkonMchog BkraShis: headed for his “second house” (二套房)<sup>14</sup>

As he was in the first group of herders who participated in the housing project, in Oct, 2009, DkonMchog BkraShis, a herder of Serde Township, has moved into his new house of 70 square meters. Located near Provincial Road 301, the house has changed the entire life of DkonMchog BkraShis. His old plank-shelter collapsed under a heavy snow, and later that winter he and his family were sitting around the warm stove in his new house, and the new house enabled his family to enjoy a comfortable new life. The accident firmly lodged in his memory, and it has changed his way of thinking since then. By December, 2010, with the income from livestock of that year, DkonMchog BkraShis has not only been able to pay up the loan he took for the new house, but he has also bought a new van from the county town,<sup>15</sup> starting a transportation business from his township to the county seat. His settlement brought by the housing project has enabled his family to release the extra labor for other work, so that the plan he has had in mind for a long time has now been put into practice. Now he is much more hopeful about his future life. Beginning in July 2011, regardless of how busy he was in his transportation business, he always managed to work for another several hours on the construction of his second two-storey house during the several months of construction. Looking at his second house that was about to be completed, he could not hide his satisfied smile. In June 2010, he boldly sold most of his 100 yaks and kept only a dozen female yaks and few breeding yaks, so that his wife did not need to stay on their pasture for the whole year. With the income of over three thousand RMB from selling his yaks and from his transportation business, he decided to build another two-storey house of 300 square meters in this yard. His plan with this new house is to run a home-stay hotel, and with the advantage of its location near the provincial road, the future hotel is expected to earn over a hundred thousand RMB a year. “Before we settled, our life was very simple, and we did not have much thoughts [about making money]. After we settled, our living condition has been improved, and we now have a higher living standard. Next year, I want to take a loan from a bank to start a “Tibetan herders’ home for the tourists” (藏家乐) for tourism business, so that I can sell yak meat and milk for more money”. So said DkonMchog BkraShis, giving a brilliant smile on his hard face while his white teeth sparkled in the shining sunlight.

Story Two: BdeSkyid SgrolMa: from a poor household to becoming a boss of a chain store of yak yogurt

“She is the richest ‘poverty-stricken’ household in our village.” The village secretary told this interesting story to the journalist. Five days ago,

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<sup>14</sup> In Chinese, 二套房 refers to the upper-middle class in cities who are rich enough to have a second house.

<sup>15</sup> It is a common to see Tibetan herders running vans for local transportation business, selling yogurt, and running small hotels, and so forth.

a leader from the prefecture government, during his second visit to this village, wanted to see BdeSkyid SgrolMa who was still a ‘poverty-stricken’ household when the leader visited her last time. This time, when the leader saw BdeSkyid SgrolMa and her new house, he thought he went to the wrong place, for what he has seen this time was a totally different view compared with his previous visit: this time, she lives in a fully equipped, very well-furnished house. The leader asked why there was such an astonishing change to her and living condition. The village secretary told the leader that she is not a “poverty-stricken household” any more. What happened was that with support of the government BdeSkyid SgrolMa has not only been able to build her new house through the housing project, but she has also started her yogurt business. Because her yogurt has been very popular in the market, she recently partnered with other people, and expanded her business into another larger tourism site. The growth in her business has led her to a wonderful plan for the future. She wants to start a factory to produce new products of yogurt ice cream and popsicles, leading her fellow-villagers in a drive for a relatively comfortable life (奔小康)。 Story three: Ajam RdorRje: to record this era brick by brick! Returning home after working outside, he encountered the implementation of the housing project. Ajam RdorRje decided to build a house for his family with the skills he learned outside and with money he earned with his part-time work. He told his idea to local government officials who helped him to find construction materials and sent a consultant to him. In October 2009, he finished his house, and the quality and design of the house surprised the quality control officials upon their inspection. Seeing a business opportunity in the housing project, Ajam RdorRje decided against going out for part-time work. Instead, he decided to establish a construction team, for which he has gotten great support from the local township government. As expected, his work has been highly recognized by the local herders whose houses were built by Ajam RdorRje. In this way, he has been able to dig up the first gold in his life in the housing project. Ajam RdorRje, a former part-time worker, has now become a small contractor with a good reputation in his community. Though this is just the start of his career, he set a lofty goal for his future, saying, “I want to record the great change and time we are experiencing, with my brick by brick construction work.”

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The journalist ends the stories by saying:

From mobile nomads to settled herders, it is a Millennium leap-forward: sedentarization has become a driving force for economic development, which is a realistic option. The vast grassland of Hongyuan is reverberating with a new song of a new era.

One thing to note is that these stories are both representational and material, because all of those integrated efforts of the housing project have had and will continue to have material impacts on herders' lives in addition to those changes that have already been taking place. But, at the same time, the stories also become state propaganda about the successful housing projects and new image of Tibetan herders emerging with it. In other words, this is a typical state update piece of news about the State Housing Project for Herders, and the herders in the stories represent an ideal model of herders that the state wants to produce with its projects. Those stories are a window through which we can see how the state projects a scenario for the future Tibetan pastoralists with the housing project, the yak economic strategy, and other efforts. All of these are framed by the larger economic reform, particularly “Open up the West” campaign, an extension of neo-liberal economic structures into western China, and the Tibetan pastoral areas and Tibetan herders are deeply influenced by that reform and its extension. I argue that the three stories of herders relating to the recent state Housing Project show the type of subjects that the state wants to produce with its strategy of “Open up the West” campaign, which is translated into many specific projects at the local government level. What follows is an analysis of three aspects of those stories in the light of neo-liberal techniques of governance.

#### *Housing Projects as a Condition for Change*

The number one message the author wants to deliver with these stories is that the newly settled life has become a condition in which herders have become new people, with new ways of thinking and acting. That is, the new houses, new villages, new tents, and new community centers, have produced new herders who have not only left their old black tents and pastures and

have settled in their new houses happily, but who have also now become more market-oriented actors with many more material desires (Rofel, 2007), and with imaginative minds that the mobile nomads did not have. They are now no longer muddleheaded and primitive herders, but have become open-minded market-oriented actors who can participate meaningfully in the market economy. All of the new ways in which they can make a living, including DkonMchog BkraShis's purchasing of a small van by selling most of his yaks, the Tibetan woman's new business establishing a trans-regional yogurt chain, and the first Tibetan construction contractor, are only possible with the settled life brought by the housing project. DkonMchog BkraShis has become a new model of Tibetan herders in a variety of ways; his desire for a second house, his engaging in the local transportation businesses, his bold sale of most of his yaks for the material comforts and business ventures, and all of his business ideas including that of running hotels and stores in his newly built second building, the home-stay tourist home on his pasture, and the commercialization of his butter and yogurt. All of those new ideas formed as a result of the settled life. Similarly, with the housing project, the other two herders have been able to achieve the transition from their previous lives of herders in poverty, to that of business entrepreneurs who have the ability to lead their community into the splendid future. All of those ideas and changes have come not as a result of the state campaign or educational movements, but by the condition of the settled way of life. It is that condition with which herders have naturally made the changes that the state wants to see. As DkonMchog BkraShis says, "Before we settled, our life was very simple, and we did not think much about making money. After we settled, our living condition has been improved, and we now want to have a higher living standard." That is, the herders' move away from their old tents to new houses does not only represent a more comfortable and happier life. It also means a complete transformation of their lives internally and

externally, a historic transformation of primitive and backward nomads who subsisted on livestock production into market-oriented entrepreneurs or members of the labor force in the towns. And, the state asserts its power over them by cultivating herders as subjects with a new desire for material comforts and the ability to make ventures in market competition in the settled communities. Therefore, the Housing Project for Herders is not simply a project to settle herders in towns, but it is designed to discipline (Ong and Zhang, 2008) the herders' way of thinking and behaviors by creating the condition of settlement life.

Indeed, the local government employed various means to further integrate herders into the market economy. One strategy that the local government took for ensuring the stable settlement of herders was to transform the traditional extensive yak production system into one of modern intensive production. That is accomplished by improving the quality and quantity produced by the process through grass cultivation, upgrading the livestock shelter and grass storage, and the construction of roads which link the small towns with the pastures; other measures include improving yak breeding, encouraging herders to maximize female livestock numbers and the off-take rate of male yaks, and promoting the large-scale commercialization of yaks and related products.

The second strategy is to permanently settle the herders in the towns through the tourist industry and new highland agricultural practices. The local government encourages herders to engage in the service sector by providing support towards their participation in the local culture-based tourist businesses, including accommodation, catering, entertainment, nomadic home-staying, and others. The local government also encourages herders to engage in some highland agricultural practices such as grass plantation, off-season vegetable cultivation, Tibetan herb cultivation, highland potato, highland mushrooms, and other crops that are suitable to the local

ecological conditions. In addition, it is also the state's long-term plan to provide vocational training for herders, aiming to ensure a steady transfer of extra workers from pastures to the urban towns to engage them in the market system.

### *The Cultivation of Loyalty*

This transition from mobile nomads to entrepreneurs is framed by posing the state as the benevolent savior of the simple-minded and culturally retarded Tibetan herders. The bright new image of Tibetan herders as market actors is portrayed in contrast with the darkness of their life in the past, reflected in the collapsed wooden shed, the old tents, and the seasonal movements on their pastures, all characterized by poverty and harshness. The gradual departure from the darkness of the past and the beginning of new life is attributed to the benevolent state and its projects. The local government's support for the first Tibetan construction contractor, the higher official's visit to the former poor lady, and the housing project itself, are all key agents in this transformation, for which Tibetan herders owe great gratitude and loyalty to the state and Party. In other words, the portrait of the happy Tibetan herders in the housing project is the mirror of the state benevolent agenda, which is the legitimate foundation of its ruling position. This political agenda was clearly stated by the Sichuan provincial governor Jiang at the opening ceremony of the Housing Project for Herders when it took place in Tagong township in Ganzi Prefecture in 2009,<sup>16</sup>

The Housing Project for Herders and the Action of New Life in New Tent is an effort to promote the economic development and ensure the long-term stability in Tibetan populated regions. It is a livelihood improvement program related to the immediate interests of the public, and it is a primary project for the overall strategy of development, reform, and stability of Tibetan populated regions.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.sichuandaily.com.cn/2009/02/20/20090220558524771749.htm>

.....the project should highlight the themes of harmony and stability; it should be integrated with the work for the unity of nationalities; through strengthening of propaganda, the project should fully implement the Party's policy towards nationalities and religions to build the foundation for the realization of unity and common prosperity among all the nationalities together.

In similar way, Party Secretary Shijun of Aba Prefecture government emphasized during a meeting on the Housing Project for Herders in 2010,<sup>17</sup>

The Housing Project for Herders & the Action of New Life in New Tent and other provincial livelihood programs are the provincial strategy and basic programs to achieve the leap-forward development and long-term stability in the Tibetan populated regions.

As clearly stated regarding the political investment in specific project implementation by those leaders, The Housing Project for Herders & the Action of New Life in New Tent project has also been accompanied by the campaign of “Gratitude Education” (感恩教育), whereby the recipients are encouraged to show their great gratitude for the state and Party. In mobilizing the county government leaders to integrate the “Gratitude Education” campaign as they deliver new tents to herders, the Party secretary and the governor of Aba prefecture state,<sup>18</sup> “all county government should do well in delivering new tents to herders’ hands, and they should also deliver the love and care that the Party and government have for their people to the *hearts* of Tibetan herders at the same time” (emphasis mine). Therefore, the changes that are targeted by those projects are not only physical, but also psychological and symbolic.

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<sup>17</sup> [www.abazhou.gov.cn](http://www.abazhou.gov.cn)

<sup>18</sup> “阿坝州委 州政府要求切实做好新型帐篷发放和感恩教育”，“the campaign of “Gratitude Education” (感恩教育) with the Housing Project for Herders & the Action of New Life in New Tent project.” [www.abazhou.gov.cn](http://www.abazhou.gov.cn)



*Neo-liberalization as Materialism and Secularization*

In addition to all of these, there is one other point that needs to be highlighted. That is, the state not only wants herders to become market actors, but also would like to see them become very materialist and secular. The assumption is that if herders become materialists and secular, they will be in the same cultural realm of the Chinese nation-state and its mainstream ideology and agendas. This cultural shift is based on the assumption that much of the instability in the region is attributed to cultural and ideological conflicts. In the Tibetan pastoral areas, having appropriate desires is a very important aspect of the “technique of self” necessary for the state to govern people with different cultural backgrounds. For Tibetan herders, some desires are highly encouraged and others are marginalized or discouraged. The desires for worldly comfort/enjoyment and the collection of wealth are highly encouraged, while spiritual interests are labeled as superstitious and dissident, and are discouraged or even criminalized. For instance, the state is irritated when herders don't slaughter their yaks for spiritual reasons. The herders' willingness to sell most of their yaks to improve their living condition and/or for venturing in business is highly valued. With those material-based values it is very common for many government officials, including some Tibetans, to say that Tibetan herders are very irrational for keeping so many yaks on their pastures instead of selling them to improve their living conditions and educate their children. For instance, in Rakhor Village, two permanently settled herders who were previously considered poor have recently been designated models for others because the state officials see them as properly adjusting to the material comforts by decorating their new houses. Because they never had enough yaks to make a good living before the programs, those two herders have recently settled in town and are working part-time in the slaughterhouses. With the income from their part-time jobs, they have been able to build their new houses and decorate

them very well. In the view of other herders who have many yaks, those two herders with well-furnished houses are still considered to be very poor, while the state officials see them as the ones who have learned how to improve their living condition and enjoy material comfort. Using those two as examples, the officials suggest that other herders who have hundreds of yaks but do not live in well-furnished houses lack adequate values and appropriate desires.



Tibetan herders' newly furnished houses

This secularization process is also reflected in the landscape of newly built communities and the way they are designed. Rakhor Village moved to its current location five years ago, and the state has subsidized the construction of over 130 houses in the community. The village is located next to a provincial road that links Rakhor to Hongyuan and other counties. At the very center of the village are the newly built village administrative offices for the village leaders, and the central square where herders are expected to exercise. What doesn't appear are the usual

religious sites such as a temple or mani wheel. I suggest that this pattern of the village is designed to reflect the emphasis on the secularization of the community. That pattern is common across new villages established with the housing project. At the same time, the state has put great emphasis on the local (Tibetan) architecture in the design of those new houses to make the villages attractive for the tourist industry. In one case, a provincial leader asked the township government to reconstruct ongoing projects because Tibetan characteristics were lacking in the design of those buildings.



Tourism center



The village administrative Office and activity center for herders

### Yak economic development

Yaks have been one of the main industries in most pastoral areas of Sichuan province since the economic reform of the 1980s. With the implementation of the “Open up the West” campaign, the local governments have intensified their efforts to promote the yak economy, seeing it as very important economic sector in the region. The Aba Prefectural government, having one of the most productive pastures on Tibetan plateau, has been promoting yak economy as a very important economic strategy for the last thirty years. It established the prefectural Yak Economic Park, which includes the pastoral areas in the five counties of Aba Prefecture, when it issued the Eleventh Five Year Development Plan of 2006-2010,<sup>19</sup> the grand blueprint of economic development in the region. It states in the economic plan of 2006-2010,

The economic development plan establishes the Aba Tibetan Plateau Yak Economic Park to promote the five core demonstration zones of Hongyuan, Ruoergai, Aba, Rangtang, and Songpan County, the five counties with Tibetan herder populations. These efforts are to oversee the animal husbandry industry in Aba Prefecture, and to further facilitate the largest yak-related production area in the region, which will have a considerable impact on the entire Tibetan plateau...to extend the industrial chain by developing products of yak leather, meat, milk, bone, blood and hair....

Both prefecture and county governments have been very active in promotion of the yak economy. The local government in Hongyuan County, like many other local governments under pressure to promote development, is stimulating the yak economy with many specific efforts. For instance, the two largest state-owned factories of yak milk and meat are contracted to companies from the outside. With the government support for cultivating local entrepreneurs, the number of local slaughterhouses has increased to 15, with a capacity of 10 to 200 yaks each. There are also a number of companies that have been producing dried yak meat as “green” product of the Tibetan plateau to sell in the large cities and in well-known tourist sites. Other yak products

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<sup>19</sup> 《阿坝藏族羌族自治州国民经济和社会发展第十一个五年规划纲要》。 [www.abazhou.gov.cn](http://www.abazhou.gov.cn)

include yak milk, yogurt, butter, and yak horn products. In order to integrate the pastoral economy with the markets of larger cities, the roads between those nomadic counties and larger cities have recently been significantly improved. All of these efforts to promote the yak economy have been realized and circulated through the significant improvement in the infrastructure of transportation and communications, including the newly constructed road from Hongyuan to Chengdu, internet, mobile phone service, and so on. The improvement in infrastructure channeled tourists from major cities to the pastoral areas, for many of them are located near some well-known tourist sites like Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong. It has also sped up the integration of pastoral areas into larger market cities. In short, all of those economic promotions and infrastructure improvements have stimulated the yak prices with the increasing demand for yak meat and other products, which has become the incentive for the herders to sell more yaks. At the same time, the government, by issuing policies and regulations (the imposition of carrying capacity) on the number of livestock herders can keep on their pasture, has been encouraging herders to increase their off-take rate for both ecological and economic reasons. All of those policies and market factors have had profound impacts on herders' recent increase in their slaughter rate. In the meantime, the general Chinese market economy promotion has created other social phenomena: domestic institutes and international organizations are doing research on yak breeding, genetics, etc. Such programs are predicated on the idea that trade in yaks will bring great economic benefits. Those activities have been accompanied by the recently established Aba Prefecture Yak Affairs Office in the government administration, the turning of five pastoral counties in Aba Prefecture into a Yak Economic Park, and festivals such as the Hongyuan Yak Festival and yak workshops, etc. As a result of these integrated efforts, Tibetan herders in this region are increasingly selling more and more yaks to Han Chinese and Muslims,

transporting hundreds of thousands of yaks to large markets; the numbers of yaks slaughtered is increasing yearly. One clear indication of this increase is that, nowadays, many Tibetan herders sell male yaks as young as three years old, which was rare during the commune system and right afterwards. The tradition for selling yaks was that herders would wait to sell the male yaks until they were six year old or older, and during the commune time, herders would keep many male yaks in their herds. However, today there are very few herders who keep male adult yaks in their yak herds, for both economic reasons and the shortage of pasture. Now Tibetan herders keep only those male yaks that are *tshé thars* and yaks for transportation. It is estimated that there are about 400,000 yaks in Hongyuan County, and herders are now selling over 20,000 yaks to meat market yearly. In addition to the local market, Han and Hui businessmen have been transporting yaks to the market in the cities like Chengdu, Changdu Prefecture in TAR, Linxia, Lanzhou, and other places.

The belief in the economic potential for yaks is so strong in Aba Prefecture that even the recent national concerns about ecological security in the pastoral areas of Tibetan plateau have no real impact on those economic forces. In northern Sichuan, particularly Aba Prefecture, there is no real change in yak economic development strategy in facing the central government concern about rangeland ecological security, and the local government still sees yaks as a very important industry. Indeed, in the Housing Project for Herders, the yak economy has been one of those support programs<sup>20</sup> for the overall development of those nomadic communities in the pastoral areas of Sichuan province. The general idea of the state is to change the extensive livestock production system into an intensive production system, introducing science and

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<sup>20</sup> Other economic strategies integrated in the Housing Project for Herders include tourism businesses associated with herders' houses and new villages, industrializations of yaks and Tibetan sheep economy, improvement of facilities for local livestock production, and transfer of labor to the secondary and tertiary industries.

technology, bringing corporations into the yak industry, and commercializing the livestock production. There are very specific measures for this, including connecting pastures to the towns by constructing roads, building shelters for livestock and grass storage, grass cultivation, and improving yak breeding skills and technologies. Another effort is the professionalization of Tibetan herders in the yak production system, by encouraging them to establish their own professional cooperatives such yak dairy products professional cooperative, yak breeders associations, and so forth.

This economic structure and the increase in the rate of yak sales for slaughter rate have become a force through which herders' traditional spiritual relationship with yaks has gradually been replaced by a commercial relationship in a market arrangement. That is, their awareness of a karmic relationship with their yaks has increasingly become weaker and weaker, and the religious relationship is in danger of being replaced by market oriented, material, and secular relationships with yaks. In other words, the very process of their increasing selling of yaks makes them feel less fear and care about sins (negative karma) and the related negative results of their misconduct of slaughtering yaks. Now, the Tibetan herders' view of yaks as sentient beings in the realm of samsara is in danger of being replaced by another cultural view of yaks as commercial products and economic resources.

### **Conclusion**

In the pastoral areas of Tibet, the power of the state has extended to all aspect of herders' lives, including their access to resources and their way of thinking. This power extension has manifested differently in different periods of time. During the commune period, it was the top-down approach and political mobilization. But after the economic reform it has manifested as a

kind of economic spirituality, in which their conditions have been manipulated to better arrange the governance of their souls (Foucault, 1991; Ong and Zhang, 2008). The Chinese economic reform was a response to the economic stagnancy resulting from the commune system. For this reason, it was started with an economic strategy per se. In pastoral areas of the Tibetan plateau, it was started with livestock privatization, which was followed by the grassland contract system. These have become a technique of governance through which herders' relationships with the state, with livestock, and with themselves have increasingly become more governable from the government perspective. It is the launching of the "Open up the West" campaign strategy that has sped up the process in which other goals beyond simple economics were included in the program. Now the reform extends deeply into the Western regions to achieve other state agendas, including stimulation of domestic consumption, political stability, ecological security, and overall nation-building itself. The "Open up the West" campaign is a state effort to extend the neo-liberal technology of governance to the depths of the western region, where all political, economic, social problems are addressed through the creation of governable subjects by creating conditions that engender the loyalty and appreciation of the people. It politically and economically integrates the western frontier regions into the larger Chinese economic realm by the 'socialism from afar' technique (Ong and Zhang, 2008).

In the Housing Projects for Herders, by creating the condition of settled life, herders have automatically started to engage in the new ways to make money other than the herding practice. With their experience in this process, herders have become subjects with market-oriented minds with a stronger desire for the worldly material comforts and successes, a definite secularization process. At the same time, the housing project has increased the herders' livestock off-take rate by increasing their expenditures, including their contribution of 70 % of total cost for the new



house, the inside decoration, and furniture. Then there are additional costs, including education, health, vehicles and transportation, communications fees and so on. This increase in off-take rate is another state agenda to reduce the ecological damage resulting from keeping excess livestock on the land, while improving the living condition of the Tibetan herders. And again, the overall economic structure has all channeled yaks into a market circulation, which has become another force in the increasing slaughter rate, a rise in yak prices and more demand for yak-related products. However, this increase in the slaughter rate has become an issue for Tibetan Buddhist culture, and it has attracted the slaughter renunciation movement by Tibetan khenpos in recent years. In short, it is the larger economic structure and specific projects that have produced the new cultural conflicts between different groups, which are reflected in the recent renounce-slaughter movement, and have conjured another new phenomenon. That is the appearance of Tibetan middlemen in the livestock trading business for the slaughter market during recent years, a newly emerged small group now found in the Tibetan pastoral areas, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter four.

In sum, through livestock decollectivization, grassland decollectivization, housing projects, and the "greening" of yak-meat products, the state has taken further steps toward the fullest integration of the herders and their traditional style into the neoliberal market economy, extending administrative forces into the rangeland, and making the herders' lives more manageable in town through a "socialism from afar" technique (Ong and Zhang, 2008). However, this technique of self or the "socialism from afar" conceptualization is not a one-way driving force, but it is contested and compromised by other cultural forces and historical memories. This is my departure from conceptualizing neo-liberalism as governance technique to

a new cultural contestation of “knot”, where the state subject formation is contested by other forces that form their own subjects, all of which will be explored in the following chapters.

### **Chapter Three** **Tibetan Buddhist Teachings in a new social context:** **Tibetan Buddhism and neo-liberal China**

In 1980, in an empty valley in eastern Tibet, a Tibetan lama started a small Tibetan Buddhist study center with a few of his disciples. Today, this religious center has become one of the most influential Tibetan Buddhist institutes in Tibet, educating thousands of monks and nuns from across the Tibetan plateau. Many religious teachings and initiatives started by the leading Tibetan khenpos from the institute have been having profound impacts on Tibetan pastoralists across the Tibetan plateau. These include the slaughter renunciation movement, vegetarian movement, fur renunciation teachings, ten-virtuous-rules, humanitarian killing of livestock, illiteracy eradication, purification of spoken language, and others. Having been carried out by over thirty khenpos from Larung Gar, those religious teachings have become movements that cover many aspects of Tibetans’ livelihood and their daily cultural practices, including diet, costume, language, and religious practices. How should we understand these religious teachings in the current social context and conditions of Tibetan pastoral areas? In other words, how are they informed by the current social transformation brought by secular neo-liberal processes in western China? How are these movements related to one another? Finally, how are these religious movements informed by Tibetan Buddhism as a historical force? This chapter addresses these questions with reference to Buddhism and modern social transformation.

By examining a wide range of popular and scholarly writings produced by Buddhists around the globe, David McMahan (2008) observed that the encounter of Buddhism with modern popular culture has produced a hybrid of Buddhism that is both modernist as well as Buddhist.

The new forms of Buddhism have been constructed by westerners and Asian Buddhist leaders through their experience in modern society. McMahan shows that much of what has been written and said about Buddhism in the modern era can only be understood against the background of dominant western discourses, including Western monotheism, rationalism, scientific naturalism, and romantic expressivism, all of which are embedded in the common sense western ideals of individualism, egalitarianism, liberalism, democratic ideals, and the impulse toward social reform. In other words, by resonating with these popular Western cultural norms, Buddhism has “re-created itself as Buddhist modernism” (2008:16) in the modern world, which is constituted by both “tacit understandings and social practices” and “explicit theories” (2008:15). This re-creation process includes both active adaptations to some discourses (scientific rationality, human rights, individual freedom, social protection, and individual and cultural autonomy), as well as rejection of other forces (economic imperialism, militarism, colonialism, Christian missionization) (McMahan, 2008). In short, McMahan suggests that the popularization of Buddhism in modern society is dependent on its ability to present itself by resonating with the dominant culture through a selective interpretation and presentation, so that Buddhism finds “a niche in the new situation and mold itself to its contours” (2008:16).

Another phenomenon of Buddhists’ encounter with modernization is its social engagement in the various forms of development programs throughout Asia for the last century (Queen and King, 1996). Labeled as “Engaged Buddhism” by Queen and King (1996), those Buddhist activists included Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement of Sri Lanka, Daisaku Ikeda and the Soka Gakkai movement of Japan, among others. The massive social development programs and campaigns initiated by those Buddhist leaders were mostly their responses to the social and

economic justice in their societies, which have been in a clear contrast with the traditional practices of Buddhism. Two important themes emerged in those Buddhist social movements. First and most compelling is their complete reinterpretation of the fundamental teachings. Even though each movement corresponds to a separate country and is the product of unique cultural and historical circumstances, the historical development and institutional forms of engaged Buddhism are considered in light of traditional Buddhist conceptions of morality, interdependence, and liberation. Those Buddhist leaders reinterpreted and re-focused on particular parts of Buddhist doctrine to justify in appealing to Buddhist principles to support of their work. Second, those movements are informed by Western ideas of freedom, human rights, and democracy. In other words, the more socially engaged activities, the more Buddhist they become. They concentrate on issues of social justice and poverty, endorsement of democracy, and some forms of socialism, but they universally reject capitalism as thoroughly inconsistent with Buddhist ethical principles. Those reinterpretations and integration of Buddhist teachings with social concerns include the shift from other-worldly enlightenment to this-worldly social issues, and scaling up the individual enlightenment to the society as a target of liberation (Bond, 1996); reinterpretation of the Buddhist idea of suffering as a social category, in which those in poverty suffer from capitalist corporations and elites, the environment suffers from capitalists' endless consumerist culture, and non-human beings suffer from human beings' self-centered nature (Sivaraksa, 2005); and Ambedkhar's reinterpretation of the four noble truths. In the latter, the first noble truth for the present age was the widespread suffering of injustice and poverty; the second truth was social, political, and cultural institutions of oppression, the third truth was expressed by the European ideal of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and the fourth truth was the

threefold path of Ambedkhar's famous slogan, 'Educate! Agitate! Organize!' (Queen and King, 1996: 62).

In Buddhist modernism, Buddhist intellectuals proactively adapt popular cultural ideals (Western monotheism, rationalism and scientific naturalism, and romantic expressivism) to maintain as well as to promote it in new situation of modern society. Engaged Buddhism in various forms of social movements becomes another way in which Buddhism posits itself in a leading position in modern society, a society that is articulated and framed differently compared with previous societies. What these new phenomenon tell us is that Buddhism has never been a religion that is isolated from society, but rather Buddhism recreates itself in new circumstances. It has been articulated as well as practiced in new conceptualizations and frameworks when it has encountered modern culture and theories (McMahan, 2008).

Drawing on ideas of Buddhist modernism and engaged Buddhism, I argue that recent religious movements in Tibet have been largely triggered by the current secular neo-liberal process of Western China, mediated by the discourse of the “Open up the West” campaign (ironically, the very reform that provided the space for the formation of religious agents). In other words, it is the current social transformation in pastoral Tibet that has engendered these religious movements. Second, the dynamic process and various social aspects that those movements are involved in show a process in which Tibetan Buddhism is reshaped by its adaptation to the social-economic situation by reinforcing its core values and main ideologies, modifying its outdated elements, and incorporating as well as rejecting new popular discourses and mainstream cultures. To this end, I argue that, rather than seeing Tibetan Buddhism as stagnant and a tradition of the past that need to be preserved, I will demonstrate that Tibetan Buddhism is constantly reconstructed by a combination of forces including some of its core

values, popular discourse, and other local and global social and political forces. In this chapter, I demonstrate the modernist aspect of Buddhist movements in Tibet from three perspectives: historical changes in the relationship of Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese authorities, the religious movements as an ethical correction of Tibetan herders, and convergence of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan identity.

In the first section of the chapter, I review the transition, continuity, and changes in the historical relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and authorities in inner China since the Yuan Dynasty, to give a full picture of the historical context of the current political situation. In the second section, I will demonstrate how Tibetan Buddhism has become a social agent, by exploring the encounter of Tibetan Buddhism with the social-cultural transformation in the context of the secular neo-liberal development, and Tibetan Buddhists' adaptation to the new discourses. By introducing three related movements -- the slaughter renunciation, vegetarian, and fur renunciation movements -- in the first subsection, I demonstrate how those movements are triggered by the social transformation brought by the neo-liberalization process of contemporary China, and to show their movements as also related to increasing trans-regional interaction and globalization. In this subsection, I will also discuss how Tibetan Buddhism is an on-going process of giving meanings to the new world it encounters and experiences by introducing the humanitarian killing movement and dynamic interpretation of sins of slaughter (the differentiation of the sins involved with selling, killing, and trading livestock, and eating meat). The last subsection demonstrates an overlap of Tibetan identity with Tibetan Buddhist identity that enables Tibetan Buddhists to readjust themselves to reinforce their leading position in Tibetan society. The incorporation of a discourse of Tibetan identity into Tibetan Buddhism is reflected in Tibetan Buddhists' active engagement in social programs, such as the reactivation of

the ten-virtuous-merits as standards of conduct for Tibetans, education promotion, language purification, and others.

### **Tibetan Buddhism and Authorities of Inner China : Changes and continuity in Chinese religious policies**

#### **From Yuan to Qing Dynasties**

Since Buddhism was officially introduced to Tibet in the eighth century, Tibetan Buddhism has slowly gained a dominant position both spiritually and politically in Tibetan society (Kapstein, 2006)(Dkon Mchog Bstan Pa Rab Rgyas, 1987; KalsangGyal, 2006). For over four hundred years after the collapse of the Tibetan empire that had unified the entire region of the Tibetan plateau, Tibet remained fragmented, ruled by different Tibetan Buddhist schools and local elites without any single authority until the Yuan Dynasty. It was during the Yuan Dynasty that Tibetan religious elites in different schools had started to engage with inner Chinese political powers to compete for a dominant position among the competing religious schools in Tibet (StagTshang RdzongPa 1985; Kun Dga' Rdo Rje 1981). Since then, linkages between Tibetan religious leaders and powers of Chinese emperors have continued, with some changes, to the current Chinese religious policies in which Tibetan Buddhism and its leaders have been embedded since 1958.

During the Mongol Yuan dynasty in the thirteenth century, Tibetan Buddhists' relationship with the rulers in inner China started with the establishment of a patronage relationship between the Sakya School and the Yuan dynasty. Through this relationship, the Sakya School gained a dominant position among other Tibetan Buddhist schools for several hundred years. This tradition of relying on outside powers to empower certain Buddhist schools was continued by the Phamo Drupa Kagyu lineage that overthrew the Sakya Schools' rule over Tibet in the early Ming

Dynasty (GtsugLag PhrengBa, 1986; NgaWang LobsangGyatso, 1957). During the Qing Dynasty in the seventeenth century, facing the threat from the Karma Kagyu School supported by a Mongol military power, the Gelug School, led by the Fifth Dalai Lama, used another Mongolian military to establish its dominant role among the other Tibetan Buddhist schools in Tibet. That leading role, politically before 1958 and spiritually after the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet has continued through contemporary Tibetan society. While the Yuan Dynasty relied on a single school as their representative ruler of Tibet, both Ming and Qing Dynasties used rituals and performances of entitling of religious or political positions to the Tibetan religious leaders to demonstrate their rule over Tibet (Rgyal Mo 'Brug Pa, 2004; Thub Bstan Phun Tshogs, 1996; Dung Dkar Blo bzang 'Phrin Las, 2007) .

The situation in those periods was that the power of the dynastic emperors from inner China did not meaningfully reach Tibetan society on the ground, and Tibet was being ruled by a single religious school or competing religious schools. Therefore, a mutual cooperation between the various dynasty emperors and certain Tibetan Buddhist schools was necessary for both parties in their desire to achieve their own goals. Emperors of dynasties needed Tibetan head lamas to maintain the stability of the frontier areas that sometimes threatened the inland or to maintain a symbolic political affiliation. That is, Tibetan religious elites became an authorized agent, or acted as a lubricant for the Chinese emperors of various dynasties in their dealing with the frontier areas. During these periods, religion had not only been recognized as important for the rulers but also had been a very useful tool to achieve rule and be ruled, at least symbolically. In addition to that, many power holders in inland of China also needed spiritual services from Tibetan lamas. Many of those Mongolian, Han, and Manchu rulers were very religious and some of them had assigned Tibetan religion leaders as their religious teachers, in Chinese called “帝师”



(Emperor Preceptor) (Kun Dga' Rdo Rje, 1981; 石硕, 1994), and as religious ritual performers to enhance and protect the prosperity of the kingdom, which suggests the opposite of the 'separation of the state and Church.' This form of imperial power was different from the modern state, which was based on the modern belief or the very western cultural belief that secularization of the political system is necessary for development, a belief largely embedded in the modern enlightenment in science and technology in the west. Those political entities in inner China were different from the modern nation state in the sense that during those dynasties, the logic of rule were dependent on the will of the emperors whose relationships with the masses of people were different from that found in the modern nation-state. That is, in the latter, the people or public owns the nation-state, and the state should serve the people's well being. In contrast, the early emperors' relationship with the masses were different from those found in the nation-state in the sense that the emperors had the absolute power over their people and in many cases the masses were symbolically owned by the emperors.

The support that Tibetan spiritual leaders gained from the outside enabled them to be the dominant power holders among other competing religious schools in Tibet. In other words, outsiders' intervention in Tibetan society and political affairs was not destructive, but rather it modified power structures in Tibetan regions, by disturbing the balanced power relations among the different religious schools, as was the case during the time period between the Tibetan dynasties and Sakya's rule of Tibet. In other times, it was through these outsiders' military intervention that Tibet was a politically unified region. During those periods of times, Tibetan religious elites who took power positions with the support of outsiders had an absolute political power over their people and over their economic affairs, and the interventions from outside only

consolidated or restructured those power relationship but without any changes in Tibetan culture and identity.

During those periods, for both Tibetan rulers and Chinese dynasties, it wasn't necessary to separate the state from the religion. Instead, Tibetan Buddhism and its figures played an important role in the political ends for both parties, so Tibetan Buddhism was encouraged and supported by both parties. It was matter of emphasizing or recognizing one school over other ones. In the meantime, those Buddhist leaders were more concerned about the survival of their religious school rather than with Tibet as a nationality or political entity. This tradition of relying on outside power by Tibetan Buddhist elites was to serve their school's interests by gaining resources they needed from the inland. At the same time, their active engagement with the authorities from the inland was utilized by the latter to assert their symbolic or actual rule over Tibet.

### **Republican period**

Since 1912, facing internal conflicts and invasion from external forces that absorbed most of the military powers of the state, the Republican (Guomingdang) state did not have the ability to use military force to include Tibet in the Chinese state. Nor did the Republican state use the methods of appointment of positions or performance of diplomatic etiquette for the Tibetan religious leaders to achieve symbolic rule over Tibet as it had during previous dynasties (Tuttle, 2005). This is because those entitlements and ritual performances needed military back up. Instead, based on the ideology of secularization and nationalism that the Republican state was built on, it used a very different approach of dealing with the Tibetan issue than that deployed by the former dynasties. The Chinese Republican state employed several secular strategies one after

another. The racial discourse of “Five Races Harmoniously Joined” (Han, Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, and Muslim) *Wuzu Gonghe*, is the first approach in which five ethnic groups equally constituted the Chinese nation and it was assumed that Tibetans would join the Chinese state voluntarily, rather than joining with force (Tuttle, 2005). However, as this approach was ineffective, the Republican government reinforced this approach by influencing Tibetan elites with Sun Yat-sen’s *Three Principles of the People*. With this principle Tibetans as an ethnic group could be administered as an autonomous region with the Chinese government’s support (石硕 1994). However, this strategy also ended up with failure, because the state did not have ability in terms of military force (Tuttle, 2005).

After the failure of these approaches, another approach deployed by the Republican state was to achieve cultural intimacy between the two regions. This time, the Republican government encouraged Buddhism as a bridge to link Chinese Buddhism with Tibetan Buddhism within the global discourse of Buddhism as world religion. Dai Jitao, then a Nationalist Party leader, strongly advocated this strategy in the belief that the Buddhists’ interaction of both regions was the key to integrate two cultures as an important process of Chinese nation building. These initiatives and interactions of Tibetan Buddhists and Chinese Buddhists included the religious teaching of top Tibetan lamas in China, Chinese Buddhists in Tibet studying Tibetan Buddhism, sponsoring of monasteries in Tibet by the Republican state, sending government officials to Tibet to show their respect to Tibetan Buddhism, distributing cash to monks in monasteries, and so forth (Tuttle, 2005).

During the Republican period, the Chinese government’s attitude toward Tibetan Buddhism was a clear departure from the former dynasties’ approach toward religion. With the ideology of nationalization of the regions and secularization of the state, the Republican state

deployed a tough approach to the religions in inner China, including threatening the religious institutions and confiscating and transforming religious properties into secular programs such as school facilities (Duara, 1991). However, when the state found Buddhism useful to integrate Tibet into inland Chinese culture to further achieve the political goal of unification, the tough approach to religion was reversed to some extent. At that point, Chinese Buddhists found a chance to legitimate their existence in China. At the same time, the situation in Tibet was that much of central Tibet was ruled by the Gelug School, the leader of which, the Dalai Lama, had established a dominant position in Tibetan world. With their increasing interaction with the British and the Republican government of China, the Dalai Lama and his political system were not only struggling with religious schools, but also dealing with added elements of nationalism in the contemporary world (Rgyal Mo 'Brug Pa, 2004; Thub Bstan Phun Tshogs, 1996). Therefore, the linkage between the Republican state and Tibetan Buddhists was different from the former dynasties. With the secularization of the state, the Republican state approach to Tibetan Buddhism was cultural integration rather than political cooperation.

### **Eastern Tibet**

Most of these power relations between Tibetan religious leaders and authorities of inner China focused on central Tibet (today's Tibet Autonomous Region) and its link with inner China. However, the situation in southeastern Tibet was somewhat different. For the past few hundred years, there were many regional kings, and sometimes some of them were independent from both the central Tibetan government and authorities in inner China, but at other times, some of those kings were affiliated to dynasties or the Republican state (Rgyal Mo 'Brug Pa, 2004).

One common thing for those local kingdoms is that most of these rulers were kings but they believed in Tibetan Buddhism. Under those kings, there were many monasteries. Each kingdom could have many tribes and those tribes also had their own monasteries. Many of these monasteries, belonging to different schools, were branches of main monasteries in central Tibet. Generally speaking, the relationship between those kings as well those chiefs of tribes with local Buddhist lamas was that monasteries and lamas were politically and financially subordinate to the local kings' political systems but spiritually head lamas had higher positions than these kings. Therefore, many of those kings worshiped the head lamas of their own kingdoms. In other words, kings were responsible for secular matters within his kingdom and lamas were responsible for things related to monasteries and spiritual things. Theoretically, the kings and lamas had no fundamental conflicts in their interests, because those monasteries were owned by those kings or tribes, and in most cases lamas did not engage in secular matters, so in general, the kings and their lamas would have had good relationships. Yet, the Tibetan Buddhist leaders in southeastern Tibet had a strong influence on Tibetan people through religious performances, which, in many cases, was inseparable from secular concerns. That is, religious teachings and movements have political and economic implications, as is the case with the slaughter renunciation movement, which existed on a small scale in Kham Tibetan areas in the early twentieth century. Another example is the local laws on hunting and environmental protections (Tib. *ri rgya rngon khrim*) in many Tibetan communities.

This situation was different in many ways from that of central Tibet, where the government had been ruled by Buddhist lamas (their schools) and Tibetan noblemen since the thirteenth century. However, one important issue to note is that many of the largest monasteries in eastern Tibet were branches of the largest monasteries in central Tibet. Therefore, spiritually,

Tibetans in the east were ruled by the religious leaders in central Tibet who were struggling for the dominant ruling position among other schools. That is, during the dynastic periods, the Tibetan people in the eastern Tibet were politically and economically localized and autonomous but spiritually were highly integrated with the religious power system of central Tibet.

## **Religion and the Communist state**

### Religion across the PRC

When Deng Xiaoping, a second-generation Chinese Communist leader, took power in the late 1970s, citizens of China regained religious freedom as part of economic reform. Once more, religious sites were reopened and reconstructed, and people were allowed to practice religious rituals in specified sites. Once again, “religions,” unlike during the Maoist period and particularly the Cultural Revolution, has become a natural feature of the Chinese nation and a part of the state administrative system (Ashiwa and Wank, 2009).

Administratively, the highest department of the Communist Party in dealing with religion is the United Front Work Department (统战部), which was established in the early stages of the Communist Party to unify non-party social resources to stand with the Communist Party’s line for revolutionary works and wars, for instance wars with the Kuomintang, but recently its main purpose has turned to unifying non-party members for economic development. Under the State Council, the Religious Affairs Bureau is the institution that actually manages religious affairs at the central government level. There are also other associations (*Xiehui*) that are financed by the state and that represent each officially recognized religion. These associations are supposed to link religion to state power professionally such as through academic work and the development of religion itself. Each of these state offices has their branches at all local government levels.

While the Religious Affairs Bureau is designed to manage the physical aspects (monks, monasteries, and related regulations) of religious affairs in the Chinese administrative system, the state-owned religious associations have two functions: they are designed to deal with the religions professionally from the state perspective, and they also work as a bridge to protect the interests of the specific religious categories, as most of these associations are headed by religious leaders (Ji, 2008).

Since the economic reform in the 1980s, for the Chinese state, religion is no longer something that should be eliminated as was the case during the Cultural Revolution, or something that could be used to mediate the authority (Communist Party) of inner China to maintain its political power over ethnic groups on the frontiers, as was the case during previous dynasties. As is the case in many modern states, the Communist Party maintains the position that the state as well as public affairs should be separated from religious affairs, recognizing the fact that its own ideology is different those religious ideologies. However, the current state sees religion as a reality of the country that needs to be managed properly by the state. That is, religions are a natural part of the Chinese nation-state today, and the state needs to manage them correctly in keeping with the nature of a modern state. At the same time, the state needs to adopt the proper approach proper to these religions, because they could become potential problems for the nation's stability and for the sustainability of the Chinese Communist Party's ruling position. The Party believes that religions and people's beliefs in those religions will exist until the full realization of the Communist society<sup>21</sup> (Dunch, 2008).

There are two themes for this proper management of religions. First, religion is conceptualized as a different category from the non-secular and the non-“superstitious,” with

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<sup>21</sup> 《中共中央关于我国社会主义时期宗教问题的基本观点和基本政策》（1982年3月31日，中共中央19号文件）(Chinese Communist Party's basic viewpoint and policies on religions).

these terms politically defined. Second, the existing religions in current China should be managed with some kind of control, and no new religion is to be tolerated and recognized (Dunch, 2008; Yang, 2008). The differentiation is made by the categorization of what is “religion”, a relatively positive systematic set of beliefs and practices, and what is not a “religion”(宗教), but rather *mixin* (superstition) (迷信) and *xiejiao* (邪教) (evil cult), negative beliefs or practices that would bring harm to people’s life and to society. With these categories, the Chinese state has legalized five officially recognized religions: Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, and Taoism. To believe in these “religions” and to practice these religions are allowed for non-party member citizens, but to believe in *mixin* and to practice *xiejiao* are illegal (Palmer, 2008). *Mixin* is equivalent to “superstition” in English, meaning in Chinese to believe in something without full knowledge or full understanding. *Mixin* and *xiejiao* has connotations of containing harmful aspects and inauthentic parts compared with real religions even though both religion and *mixin* and *xiejiao* are based on faith (Penny, 2008). In most cases, *mixin* is related to fortune telling in accordance with divinatory symbols (e.g. 算命 *suanming* 或打卦 *dagua*). *xiejiao* is an official term that the state used to ban the Falungong (法轮功) in July 1999. Falungong emerged in the late 1990s in China as a new spiritual belief and set of practices. In the term *xiejiao*, *xie* (邪) in Chinese means evil, *jiao* (教) means religious school or sect (Penny, 2008). An implication of both *mixin* and *xiejiao* is that because these categories are not real religions, they would ultimately cheat people and their assets, and therefore, it requires the state to protect people from damage caused by these evil or fake religions.

When religion as a general category is used to bring non-scientific belief system under the umbrella of modernization or under state control, *mixin* and *xiejiao* are sub-categories that



further stagnates the existing religions and prevent new potential belief systems from taking shape. In other words, this is a strategy to limit the emergence of new religions, making religion something stagnant and of the past, denying the possibility of future religion.

In light of the modernization of the nation, the notion is that those real religions would bring positive contributions to the realization of modernization if they are managed properly by the state. One way that the state makes sense of religions in modern times is to integrate the religious into economic development. The commercialization of religions and its related assets in the tourism industry is one of the main approaches toward religion by the state. In recent decades, many religious sites in China have been attracting tourists both domestic and international, which has made a very important contribution to the economic development of the country (Oakes and Sutton, 2010). Temples, monasteries, stupas, and Buddhist statues are a very familiar icon of Chinese tourism sites, and this is particularly true for Tibetan populated regions where monasteries and temples are typical of the cultural landscape of Tibet. Transforming religious sites into tourism assets is a process of materialization as well as secularization of religions and their assets (ibid).

#### Religion policies in Tibetan populated areas

When the Chinese Communist government formally took over the central Tibet government, marked by the Seventeen-point Agreement of 1951, the Chinese government kept Tibetan religious elites in their positions in central Tibet, and Tibetan religious culture was maintained as it had been, until 1959. With the extension of the Communist government's rule over Tibetan society, the contradiction between many Buddhist ideologies and materialism and revolutionary ideals that the Communist Party was embedded in became visible and needed be

resolved for the Communist Party. The Cultural Revolution, which began in May 1966, brought devastating damage to religions including Tibetan Buddhism and its practitioners. Many monasteries and temples were destroyed along with their statues and stupas; religious rituals and practices were banned; and many monks and religious leaders were disrobed by force and others jailed. All visible religious sites and their assets vanished in Tibet as was the case throughout China (Goldstein, 1998).

The Cultural Revolution, as an extreme of this cultural politics, marked a clear discontinuity in all the traditional relationships that had existed between central Tibet and authorities in inner China during the dynasties and Republican government, dislocating the role that Tibetan religious leaders had played in the bridging of Tibetan populated regions with the inland. Opposite to this, during the Cultural Revolution, Buddhist religious leaders and their teachings were treated as an obstacle to the county's socialist development that should be eradicated by the Communist government.

With the liberalization of religious practices in Tibet in the early 1980s, Tibetan Buddhism started to revive. Many jailed lamas and monks were released from prisons, and most importantly, the Tibetan traditional social relationship of lamas and laypersons was reestablished. All non-Party Tibetans were allowed to practice their religion and to worship their lamas, and lamas regained freedom to activate their monasteries and to give teaching to believers. With the improvement in the economic condition of the Tibetan people, particularly with the increasing interaction of Tibetan lamas with Han Chinese disciples, monasteries and temples have been renewed and expanded. Indeed, this religious resurgence in Tibet took place within the context of the state regulation of religion in Tibet, including limitations on monk population in monasteries, age requirement of monk recruitment, and so on (Cabezón, 2008; Goldstein, 1998).

However, there is a difference in the state emphasis on regulations between Han populated regions and Tibetan populated regions. In Tibetan populated regions, it is not so much about *mixin* and *xiejiao* as it is in southeastern China. In Tibetan populated regions, the sensitivity in religious issues is more about Tibetan separatists related to the international Tibetan independence movement. On the one hand, that majority of Tibetans are Buddhists and Tibetan Buddhists leaders still have a strong influence over Tibetan people, and this could be a potential challenge for the state. On the other hand, the Tibetan exile government, assumed to be the driving force of the Tibetan independence movement, was headed by the Dalai Lama, who is the head lama of the Gelug pa, the dominant religious school of Tibetan Buddhism, and who has also become an icon of Tibetan Buddhism internationally. For those reasons, in Tibetan populated regions, the Buddhist leaders' religious activities, performed in the space of religious freedom, always runs the risk of being treated as a political problem by the authorities. The lamas/khenpos and monks have to be very careful in any of their religious and social activities, otherwise, their activities could be potential or real political problems. Therefore, it is the state's responsibility to lead lamas, monks, and laypeople along the right track of loving their country and their religion, cultivating their loyalty for the Communist Party and the state and leading them to a positive contribution to state development projects.

Those positive contributions include commercialization of religion in the tourism industry, mobilization of people to participate in state agendas, reconstruction of monasteries with lamas/khenpos' contribution, and so forth. For instance, many khenpos in Larung Gar have many rich donors, and with those donations khenpos can construct not only monasteries, but also the schools and clinic for their communities. Indeed, it has been for the recent two decades that many Tibetan lamas and monks who speak Chinese have been giving religious teachings in

Chinese cities, recruiting many donors including rich businessmen, movie stars, popular singers, and others (Yu, 2012).

Tibetan lamas have also been useful in mobilizing Tibetans to participate in state projects, for instance, recruiting students to enroll in state schools. There are also cases in which lamas have been able to resolve conflicts between groups of people who had disputes over their pastures (Yeh, 2003). Culturally lamas are in a better position than the state to resolve these disputes. Another case in which lamas and monasteries have been used by the state is to eradicate the thieves who have been stealing livestock in pastoral areas in the southeastern Tibetan plateau. In this case, several local governments (counties) have organized trans-regional monasteries and lamas to mobilize people under these monasteries to take oaths of not stealing livestock of their neighbors. The cooperation of the local government and religious figures has been very effective in term of stopping the stealing livestock phenomenon.

The emperors of former dynasties and the Republican government did not have full control over Tibetan society and their spiritual leaders, but they used Tibetan Buddhist leaders to assert political affiliation. The Communist state, which has full control of Tibet and a tight regulation on religions, has utilized Tibetan Buddhist elites to achieve its own goal, delineating religion from separatists. A total departure from this approach was during the commune system time, when the state was completely anti-religious. During the dynasties, religions were integrated into the political system without intention to separate religions from the state political system, but the Republican government and the Communist state have made great efforts to distinguish religion as a separate category from state and public affairs, based on the idea of secularization of the state and public, and the differentiation of real religions from *mixin*, *xiejiao*, and fake religions.

### Larung Gar

Many of the state religious policies in Tibet are reflected in the case of Larung Gar, where the slaughter renunciation movement started. Larung Gar, called Lnga Ring Slob Gleng (五明学院), was established in 1980 by the Khenpo Jigphun with the state's approval, and now is home to many who want to study the Tibetan Buddhism of different Tibetan Buddhist schools. The institute was once populated by over ten thousand nuns, monks, and lay vow-takers from all over the Tibetan plateau, which was the maximum number that the state allowed the institute to reside. The institute has produced many khenpos with outstanding achievement in Buddhist study, and with those khenpos, now the institute has become a center for the promotion of Tibetan culture and Tibetan Buddhism. Many khenpos have been giving religious teachings not only in many areas of the Tibetan plateau, but also in southeastern Chinese cities. There are thousands of Han Chinese monks studying Tibetan Buddhism in the institute. Khenpos have been gaining increasing social influence not only in Tibetan populated areas, but also in cities in southeastern China. However, khenpos and monks/nuns must be prudent in what they do in terms of politics. Their religious practices and teachings should not go against the state and its agendas. Particularly for their political positions, they have to keep a distance from those that might be considered Tibetan separatists and the Tibetan independence movement abroad. Moreover, khenpos' social influence should not exceed the limit past which the Chinese state thinks it will bring a challenge to the authority's power.

It is within this political context that the slaughter renunciation teaching and other religious initiatives took places and spread out most of pastoral areas of the Tibetan plateau. In other words, khenpos and Tibetan lamas have been performing their religious practices in an interwoven space. The general religious freedom provides Tibetan religious elites with the space

perform as active agents in the current society. That is, within the space of religious freedom, for the last few decades, khenpos/lamas have not only regained freedom but also have retaken the spiritual leading position in Tibet as they had before the 1950s. More importantly, this liberal space has enabled Tibetan religious elites to access many new cultures and discourses such as globalization of Tibetan Buddhism and the identity of Tibetans as a nationality, all of which have reshaped these spiritual leaders and their way of thinking. This reshaping process led them to deploy new strategies and discourses to reach and to lead their people in a context in which economic development has been penetrating into every part of herders' life and their way of thinking.

It is important, here, to note the dialectical relationship between Tibetan religious leaders and mainstream discourses in the modern world. At the macro level, these discourses such as nationalism, development, and science, have shaped khenpos' and lamas' narratives and their ways of thinking, but at the same time, it is equally important to see at the micro level how khenpos/lamas actively engage with those new ideas by imposing religious meaning to those new cultures. The process of giving meaning includes the incorporation of new ideas and total rejection or compromise with other ideas, which will be explored in Chapter Five. At the same time, they also have to perform religious practices with space that is highly regulated by the state policies, particularly in the case of Tibet, where political issues make Tibetan Buddhist leaders politically sensitive. Khenpos' religious teachings about slaughter renunciation and other movements took place in this interwoven space of Chinese religious policies.

## **Religious movements from Larung Gar**

### **Slaughter Renunciation Movement**

#### **First religious teaching on the slaughter renunciation movement**

In the 1990s, Khenpo Jigphun saw an increasing slaughter rate of livestock from Tibetan households and the suffering of livestock in transportation to markets in China. One of his religious teachings held in Larung Gar in 2000, marked the start of the slaughter renunciation movement, and began an appeal to traditional Tibetan yak herders to refrain from commercial sale of their livestock for spiritual and cultural reasons that grew into the Slaughter renunciation movement. The religious teaching took place in the Larung Gar. The following discussion is based on an analysis of a video of this teaching.

During the religious teaching, Khenpos Jigphun sat on his throne that was located on the relatively higher part of a slope that faced toward the east, and was giving his teaching about the slaughter renunciation movement through microphone and speaker, while thousands of lay people from nearby places were seated on the ground covered with light snowfall on a slope facing toward the west, and many more monks were seated on ground that was below the khenpo's throne.

He promoted the slaughter renunciation movement from two perspectives: one from a religious perspective and another from a this-worldly perspective. What he was concerned about most was about how livestock have been suffering during transportation, in the slaughterhouses, and at the time of the actual slaughtering process. He began his teaching, stating that it was very cruel for herders to be selling more and more livestock to the meat market in an extremely cruel manner, causing a great deal of suffering for livestock. Using his terrifying and vivid words, he

described the suffering of livestock during transportation, in the slaughterhouses, and at the moment of killing. Here I present three excerpts from Khenpo Jigphun's speech:

During the transportation of animals to some cities (such as Chengdu and Lanzhou) neighboring the pastoral areas of the eastern Tibetan plateau, the animals have suffered as much as if they were killed many times over. For instance, after many days on trucks without being able to drink a drop of water, the deathly thirsty animals jumped out of running trucks without any hesitation when they saw a river near the road, resulting in whole legs being broken when they landed on the ground... many other animals lost their hooves, because they used all of their energy on their feet for such a long period of time, because they were so terrified by the bumpy truck.... Others were so hungry that they had been eating each other's fur... in other cases, in order to prevent loss in the weight of animals, the Han or Hui livestock traders sealed their mouths with long nails, or penetrated their tongues through their jowls to prevent them from ruminating.

After many days of waiting for the last torture, the killing, finally, the animals were brought to the place where their throats were cut with butchers' knives. To tie animals' feet on the ground, the butcher slices the throat of the animal, the hot blood from the heart ejecting out of its throat, pouring blood everywhere; and still the blood and breath come together from the throat while the animals struggle in a hop to stand up, but a foot of a butcher holds the head of the animal down on the ground; the animal was suffering in this way for a long period of time before it completely died....

Inside of some local slaughter buildings the scene is similar to what we imagine as the town of death, full of terrifying noises including the sound of machines used to process meat, the sound from sliced throats, the sound of running blood, and moos of livestock in a deadly panic. Some yaks were too frightened to go inside the building, so butchers have to pull their eyes out so that they would become easier to move into the building...once they are in the building, a machine with lifting hook would bring a hind leg of the yaks into the air; when a butcher slices the throat of yaks, hot blood and cud eject out of the throat while the yaks are struggling with no hope of survival, but before they are totally dead, their skins are striped off and the innards removed.

Drawing from the Buddhist philosophy of karma, the law of cause of effect, Khenpo Jigphun taught that "killing involves the most serious sin (negative karma) among other sinful activities. The action of slaughtering (killing), first, causes a person to go to hell for a long term suffering; and even when they take rebirth after suffering in hell, the killer (as well as the seller) will have a shortened life for many reincarnations. Killing will also lead sentient being to be born in miserable places such as deserted and poor places. He emphasized that all sentient beings are



the same insofar as all beings desire to live and are afraid of being killed, and because of this, human beings should not kill other beings for their own needs.

Using another Buddhist notion that all sentient beings take so many reincarnations for trillions and trillions of years that all sentient beings have the chance to become the mothers of all others in some lifetime, he states that what we are killing now were and will be our gratitude-deserving mothers in other reincarnations. He asked how one could have the heart to kill one's own mothers. He particularly emphasized that one's merit would have become invalid if the acts of karma collection such as chanting mani prayers,<sup>22</sup> turning mani prayer wheels, and building stupas or statues, was accompanied by actions of hurting others' life. From the religious perspective, Khenpo Jigphun stressed that killing is the most serious sin among others.

He teaches, "from a this-worldly perspective, the business involved with killing will never bring economic improvement. I personally have never seen any middlemen, who do the livestock trading business between Tibetan pastoral areas and nearby Chinese cities, make money from their sinful business. I saw many slaughterhouses in Tibet that have slaughtered millions of livestock for many years go bankrupt one after another." He summarized that these sinful activities have never brought any economic prosperity in Tibet. Referring to a previous extensive deforestation in Tibet that has caused environmental problems, he suggested that the increase in the slaughter rate of livestock will ultimately lead to a drastic decrease in the yak and sheep population, which will further lead to a situation in which herders will not have enough livestock to make a living. So Khenpo Jigphun requested that Tibetan herders reduce, or completely halt, their sale of livestock to commercial markets.

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<sup>22</sup> Tibetan mantra "Om! Mane Padme Hum!" ("Hail! Jewel in the Lotus!")

### Secular neo-liberal social transformation and the slaughter renunciation movement

For Khenpo Jigphun, the recent increase in the livestock slaughter rate in Tibet has not brought any economic development, but rather has changed the landscape of Tibet, considered to be a holy place where Buddhism prospers, into a place much like a town of demons full of hurting or killing. It is clear that Khenpo's teaching about the slaughter renunciation movement is about Buddhist ethical issues, specifically compassion for the livestock that have suffered and been killed, and a correction of Tibetan herders' misconducts of killing and selling livestock. The questions to be pursued in this light are how to understand his teaching in the current social economic context, how his teachings are related to development, and how the religious movement is inserted into social and cultural changes brought by development in Tibet.

To answer these questions, one needs to situate his teachings in the current socioeconomic transformation. Specifically, it is the extension of secular neo-liberal economic development discussed in Chapter Two, which has increasingly integrated Tibetan society into larger Chinese market economy since 1980s, that has provided the broad context for the emergence of religious movements such as the slaughter renunciation movement. As discussed in Chapter Two, the starting of secular neo-liberal economic forces in pastoral areas was marked with livestock privatization and intensified by the recent "Open up the West" campaign, which translated into improvement in infrastructure, increasing demand for yak meat, stimulation of consumption of herders, industrialization of the yak economy, and so forth. This is a simultaneous process of crippling herders' spiritual needs and changing their non-modern characters, dislocating their attention from other-worldly needs to this-worldly material needs, a product of secular market economic development. As one herder states, herders now have to earn more in order to buy more things around them. Herders are competing with each other for cars, houses, and interior

decoration. The costs of education and health care are very high. He said “the current society is like a magic force that leads us to buy more and sell more.” Michael Taussig (1983) observes that peasants in South America express that the belief about capitalism that some people can magically make more money coming back to them regardless of how much they spent, whereas Tibetan herders express the power of secular neo-liberal development as a magical entity that forces them into selling more and buying more.

Situating the slaughter renunciation movement in the neo-liberalization process of China, I argue that the slaughter renunciation movement is precisely a product of an encounter between Tibetan Buddhism and secular neo-liberal development. That is, the widespread and unprecedentedly high slaughter rate in the market economy reflects the force of the secular market economy in transforming Tibetan culture, and the slaughter renunciation movement works as a moral correction to reverse the social and cultural changes brought by the secular economic development in pastoral areas of Tibet. This is the khenpos’ effort to prevent unacceptable elements of neo-liberal process with their religious teachings. The change in the meaning of yaks in the slaughter renunciation movement can demonstrate this aspect clearly. At stake is the question of whether yaks should be seen as commercial products or sentient beings, which sheds light on larger questions of what development is, how one should realize development, and how development as a powerful discourse is contested by different people with different cultural backgrounds.

Secular economic development, based on secular neo-liberal thinking, has come not as neutral as is assumed, but rather with its own value system and worldview that compete with other cultural values and worldviews. The transformation of people’s worldview and the value system of neo-liberal economic development will be reflected in a change in people’s social

relationship and their relationship with the environment in which live in. In this sense, development is another kind of moral cultivation (Pandian, 2008) that produces certain kinds of moral standards, some of which are not consistent with Buddhist norms.

In the case of the slaughter renunciation movement, the transformation of cultural values and the contradiction between those values are reflected in changes in herders' relationship with livestock. For Tibetan herders, yaks were not only the livestock to which they owe gratitude for providing them with things that they needed to make a living, but also one kind of sentient being just like human beings, which should not be killed, tortured, and disposed of. Livestock have the same right to live as human beings have according to the law of karma and reincarnations. However, the intensification of the market economy has brought a significant impact on the traditional herders' relationship with their livestock, the meaning of having livestock for herders, and their ways of dealing with their livestock. With economic development, herders are increasingly becoming less sensitive about selling their livestock to meat market and less aware about their sinful activities. This change has taken place in herders' daily participation in an integrated process of exchange, price bargaining, and production, investment, and competition.

In the market economic realm, slaughtering a yak or sheep for the meat market is no more than a process of production, a transformation from one form of material to another form. Slaughtering is a way that employees or investors transform livestock as raw material into meat as a product, so for them livestock are not things with life but primary material without life. For Han or Hui middlemen, livestock are only a profitable capital and disposable commercial products that can be exchanged, tortured, and killed without any other consideration other than price and quality.

It is this kind of cultural change and contestation that khenpos have been trying to intervene in, to restore or reinforce some core Buddhist worldviews and values based on Tibetan Buddhism. Using the Buddhist philosophy of karma and the world of samsara, Khenpo Jigphun promotes a Buddhist idea of human's relation with other beings, a relationship that will last forever in samsara (Tib. *gro ba Rings drings*) until one is enlightened. If a herder sold yaks, the herder has to pay back what he has done to the yaks in other reincarnations, and gain other consequences for involvement with the sin of selling yaks for slaughter. This permanent relationship does not exist in the case of secular neoliberal economic development, in which herders' relationship with yaks is ended once the exchange is done between Han or Hui middlemen and Tibetan herders. Furthermore, for Tibetan Buddhism, yaks have the same kind of lives as human beings have, and all sentient beings are equal in terms of their desire to live. In addition, supported by the notion of compassion that humans should have for all other beings, the motherhood relationship between human and other beings is a permanent interaction and relationship. For khenpos, livestock is not capital that can be invested or products that can be exchanged or disposed of, so there is no fundamental difference between killing a human being and killing a livestock. To the extreme, khenpos have made an argument that just as it is the case that humans should not sell, kill, torture, and sell the meat of other human beings, human beings should also not sell, torture, and kill other beings including livestock that they raise. These differences project two different developments that are based on two different cultural values. The state neo-liberal development is based in a secular and materially driven culture, which is concerned only with this-worldly issues. The cultural issue of development that is based on Tibetan Buddhism is extended beyond this-worldly concerns to well-being in many reincarnated lives in samsara. That is, in Tibetan Buddhism based development, human beings are related to

all other sentient beings through the law of cause-effect. Yaks are not commercial products, but one type of sentient being, and the way human beings treat them will have results in their future lives.

More fundamentally, khenpos are challenging the dualistic relationship of human beings and other beings. In the ideals of the Western Enlightenment, human beings are at the center and other beings are treated as “resources” or primary materials that are ready for human’s exploitation and modification. In western modernity’s concept of humans and resources, humans are proactive and centered, and the resource is a passive or subject to being conquered and transformed by human beings. At the macro level of a neoliberal development context, yaks are just resources or primary material for the state to translate into regional and national economic improvement. This dualistic relationship between human and things around them is clearly in contrast with a Buddhist worldview that is based on karma and reincarnation, in which life and spirit is permanent through its rebirth in the world of samsara. In the Tibetan Buddhist cultural system, being able to obtain the human body is very important for enlightenment, because human beings have the agency to be enlightened. Other than that, human beings are the same as other beings because the spirit transfers from one form of life to another according to their karmic accumulations. Therefore, human beings are not born to conquer the world and to transform its resources, but to live with them harmoniously and escape from the bitterness of samsara.

In sum, Khenpo Jigphun’s teaching about the slaughter renunciation movement is an ethical correction or ethical reform for Tibetan herders in the current sociocultural transformation. It is an intervention or making sense of development by guiding Tibetan herders living in a development world, and reinforces their relation with other beings from a Buddhist perspective. It shows a path for herders to achieve the best material and spiritual conditions both

for this and future lifetimes. Through the establishment of ethical guidance for Tibetan herders, khenpos are making development more reasonable from a Buddhist perspective, by reshaping it with the Buddhist ethic and its interpretations, as will be discussed more detail in the next chapter.

#### Slaughter renunciation and sin distribution

The encounter of religious force with social transformation has brought many unanswered questions for Tibetan Buddhism and its elites. One question aroused among Tibetans is the different amount of sin involved in the conducts of selling, killing, and trading livestock. That is, herders' selling of livestock to slaughterhouses before 1958 had not been an issue for Tibetan religious leaders in most pastoral areas, perhaps because the number of livestock sold to the slaughterhouses was not as high as after livestock decollectivization in 1982. During the commune system, the state established many slaughterhouses and slaughtered massive numbers of livestock, but during that period of time, there wasn't any space for the Tibetan religious leaders to intervene, due to religious repression. The number of livestock sold to the meat market since 1980s, after livestock decollectivization and particularly in the last two decades after grassland use rights privatization, is unprecedented. This widespread and unprecedented slaughter rate brought by the secular neo-liberal economy, which accompanied religious freedom, has been new to both herders as well as to Tibetan religious elites, and this new phenomena of a high rate slaughter has brought many unanswered questions for Tibetan religious leaders regarding yak slaughter from the perspective of Tibetan Buddhism.

Recently, there have been competing opinions on how sinful it is to become a middleman for livestock trading for slaughtering. Some Tibetan herders said that it should not be as sinful as

it is to kill to animals and to decide to sell animals, but others think that being a middleman should have the same sin as the man who takes the action of actual killing.

Indeed, the sins of slaughtering involve many stakeholders including the actual killer, seller, middlemen, the ones who eat meat, and others who process the meat product, and even any others who make a profit by trading the meat as commercial products. There are some Buddhist literature related to these questions, but these literatures do not provide the answers for these detailed questions. Most of the literature discusses the different sins of eating meat and killing animals. One such writing is *Rmad Byung Sprul Pa' Glegs* (2004) by Rje Zhabs Dkar Tshogs Drug Rang Drol (1781-1851), which cites many of Buddha's teachings about eating animal meat. Many of Buddha's teachings state that eating meat that is killed intentionally for one's own purpose is as sinful as the killing of animals. However, there are several types of meat that are less sinful to consume compared to the meat from animals that are intentionally killed. One is the meat of animals that die naturally. Another relatively less sinful meat is *mtha' gsum yongs su dag pa*, which means meat that one is not involved in killing, have not asked others to kill, and have not seen being killed (2004). A section of *Thugs Rje Chen Po 'Khor Ba Dong Sbrug* (Tantra) quoted by Rje Zhabs Dkar quantifies differentiations in sins of eating animal meats that result from different modes of death. It states "meat and blood are the main causes of the degeneration of three realms (heaven, earth, netherworld). The more owners the meat went through, the less negative karma is attached to it. For instance, if a person eats meat that went through one hundred owners, the person would go to hell after one hundred rebirths. Similarly, if a piece of meat went through ten owners, the one who eats that meat would go to hell after ten rebirths. The eating of meat of an animal that is slaughtered for food carries twice the negative karma attachment of eating of meat of an animal that has died of natural processes. The eating of



meat of an animal that is slaughtered by oneself attaches one hundred times the negative karma that is involved with eating meat of animal slaughtered by others [but without one's awareness of the animal being killed]; and the eating of meat of an animal that is slaughtered by others at one's request carries ten times the negative karma of eating meat of an animal which one has slaughtered oneself" (29). It is clear that the most sinful meat is the meat of an animal that has been killed by others according to one's own desires. This is followed by the meat of an animal that one slaughters oneself. The least sinful meat is from an animal that died naturally. The degree of negative karma is also dependent on the number of owners the meat went through – the more owners the meat went through, the less negative karma is attached. Many of these writings have focused on the intentionality, awareness of killing, and motivations of killing and eating. However, this literature does not provide clear articulations about sinful conducts in the modern market economic context. In other words, this literature does not cover negative karma related to the middlemen, seller (herders), entrepreneurs (slaughterhouses), and meat processors. To answer those questions, I conducted interviews with the current leading khenpos in Larung Gar.

Khenpo Tsullo, now the leading khenpo in Larung Gar, said that among those who are associated with slaughter meat products, the one who actually carries out the action of killing has the most serious sin. Secondly, people who sell livestock for slaughterhouses, those who purchase them for commercial slaughtering, and others who make profits as middlemen should have the same degree of sin. Though in some of Buddhist literature, it is said that people who eat meat have the most serious sins, Khenpo Tsullo thinks that to eat meat is sinful but not as serious as the killing, selling, and purchasing of livestock for slaughter. He added that it is hard to make precise statements about these variations that are based upon the complex working of the law of cause and effect, but generally speaking, it should be something like this.

Another highly respected khenpo from Larung Gar had a slight different statement. He said that the one who sells the livestock to the slaughterhouses and the one who kills the livestock are the same in terms of associated sin. The *Spyor Dngos Rjes Gsum*, the three elements of an action (the motivation, actual practice, and the accomplishment), is important in this variation. If the seller has all three elements when he/she sells livestock, the level of sin for the selling is same as that of the killing. The reason that people who sell livestock have very serious sin is that the seller knows the animals will be killed or he/she sells them for the purpose of slaughtering. Of course, the one who slaughters animals also have very serious sin. The more he thought about it, the more this khenpo was convinced that the ones who sell animals may have more sin than the ones who kill the livestock. This is because their motivation to make money by selling livestock to the slaughterhouse is a very bad one. Secondly, their decision to sell livestock leads to another sinful action, the actual killing, so that is an additional sin they gain. Therefore, they should be ranked at number one in terms of sin, and their sins are worse than the ones of those who kill the livestock. He stated that Tibetans don't really understand what Buddha taught about sin and karma. For instance, if a lady decided to eat the meat of a yak and asked her husband to kill the yak, most people think that the husband should have more sin, and the lady should have less. But actually, the lady would gain more sin than the husband, because she is the one who made the final decision about which yak should be slaughtered, and when it should be killed, and so on. In other words, if it weren't for the lady's decision, the yak would not be killed. The middlemen and one who eat meat gain sin but their sin is not as heavy as the ones who sell and ones who kill.

Khenpo Bsod Dar Rgyas, who has many Chinese disciples, thinks that sins for selling livestock for slaughterhouses, middlemen who trade in livestock for slaughter, and actual

slaughtering livestock should be the same, because Buddha said one who decided, or lead to, or forced others to kill have the same sin. Therefore the three of them should be the same. Eating meat should have sin but it should be less sin than selling, buying, and killing.

Along with the different opinions that khenpos have in sin allocation, herders have their own judgments. Traditionally, herders thought that the actual killing of livestock had the most serious sin, so herders who took the oath of not killing animals paid other people to slaughter livestock for them in a belief that the herders would not gain sin if others slaughtered for them. However, in many religious teachings, khenpos pointed out this is very wrong understanding of Buddhism and the herders for whom the livestock were slaughtered have the same sin as the actual killers.

With khenpos' religious teachings on the slaughter renunciation movement in pastoral areas, there is a new phenomenon, which is different from this tradition. The herders in Zhenqin Township, Yushu Prefecture, Qinghai Province, slaughter their livestock by themselves first and then sell the meat in market, thinking that this will reduce the suffering that livestock experience during transportation, so herders will gain less sin than if they sell directly to Han or Hui middlemen.

It is the state promotion of animal husbandry as a strategy of economic development in Tibetan pastoral areas that has brought these new questions about sins related to slaughter, which Tibetan herders and khenpos answer in different ways. Indeed, I argue that to answer those unanswered questions is the way that Tibetan Buddhism incorporates, rejects, and compromises in negotiation with the changing world, by giving meaning to new phenomena like the unprecedentedly high slaughter rates that have accompanied the secular neo-liberal market economy. It is secular neo-liberal social forces that have inspired religions to take new shapes by

coding those new phenomena with religious meanings. Tibetan Buddhist leaders have become the agents who mediate this process in contemporary society. In this sense, religion has never been completed, but rather is a process of constant making by competing and negotiating with other ideas from within and outside.

### **Three Related Movements: Fur Renunciation, Vegetarianism, and Humanitarian Killing**

The slaughter renunciation movement is not the only movement that Tibetan lamas and khenpos in Larung Gar have started since Chinese economic development. Many other movements have been initiated by khenpos, including the vegetarian movement, fur renunciation movement, ten-virtuous-rules, humanitarian killing of livestock, and illiteracy eradication, purification of spoken language, and others. Some of them are directly related to the slaughter renunciation movement while others are not. However, all of these initiatives were started by the khenpos in the Larung Gar, established by Khenpo Jigphun in the 1990s, and all of them took place in a context of modernization of Tibet in China. In the following two sections, I will discuss three movements that are related to the slaughter renunciation movement: vegetarian movement, humanitarian killing movement, the fur renunciation movement, and their relationships.

#### Vegetarian movement and humanitarian killing movement

One movement that goes hand in hand with the slaughter renunciation movement is the vegetarian movement, in which khenpos and lamas have been trying to persuade herders as well as monks to stop eating meat. Meat has long been a major part of the diet of lay Tibetans and for the majority of monks. Traditionally, barley flour, wheat flour, butter, cheese, and meat were the

main foods, and meat in particular provided a great deal of energy for Tibetans who live on the Tibetan plateau with an average altitude of 4000 meters and very cold temperatures. Recently other foods such as vegetables, fruits, and rice have become available in many Tibetan populated regions and Tibetan people have become accustomed to eating these new foods. With the increase in food diversity, Tibetan khenpos can plausibly ask Tibetans to stop eating meat for both religious reasons and health benefits (Tsullo, 2003 a.b; Bso Dar Rgyas, 2001).

One of the prominent religious figures who has been promoting vegetarianism is Khenpo Tsullo, who is the best-known student of Khenpo Jigphun and who speaks very good Chinese. Drawing on extensive Chinese literature on scientific studies on diet and health, he has been encouraging Tibetan people to become vegetarian. He encourages Tibetans to be vegetarians from two perspectives. The first one is related to health. With the support of much scientific research on health and diet, he relates eating meat with diseases including cancer, diabetes, heart and blood diseases, and psychological problems. He thinks that the causal relationship between eating meat and those diseases is grounded on two aspects. First, the biological structure of the human body is born to eat vegetables rather than meat. Second, many meat products in the current market contain antibiotics and hormones that are very harmful to human bodies. He also boycotts eating meat for ethical reasons. Eating meat leads lots of other sentient beings to be slaughtered, which is very cruel and unfair.

He is particularly concerned about the new phenomenon in which people in inner China eat live small animals in very cruel and brutal ways, including eating monkeys' brains while they are still alive, cooking living fish in hot water, frying living chickens in hot containers, and stripping off the skin of frogs. In Tibet, Khenpo Tsullo has been making efforts to prevent herders from being involved in these brutal ways of eating animals (Gayley, 2011a). At the same

time, his motivation for this vegetarian movement is similar to those of the slaughter renunciation movement in that eating meat is considered very sinful or an action that collects negative karma, because eating meat will ultimately lead more livestock to be slaughtered.

In addition to books he has written about vegetarianism and the negative karma collected from eating meat, he has also used his religious teachings to ask herders and monks to stop eating meat. He asks elderly herders to take oath for their rest of lives, and for youth and other herders to take oaths for certain periods of time from three years to five years or for religiously important days such as the date on which Buddha was born or on the day Buddha gave important religious teachings. Many Tibetans have responded positively to Khenpos Tsullo's call for vegetarianism. In Rakhor Village, Khenpo Tsullo told herders that, according to the Buddha's teachings, eating meat has a similar sin as killing animals, because eating meat is the fundamental cause of the killing of livestock in the meat market. In this sense, Khenpo Tsullo's promotion of vegetarianism is also an alternative way to reduce the negative karma and suffering of livestock in commercial slaughter, which is the goal of the slaughter renunciation movement. As a Tibetan businessman points out, the slaughter renunciation movement is not the best way to stop the commercial slaughter or reduce the slaughter rate. If there is demand for meat in the market, there will always be livestock to be sold and to be killed.

Tibetan lamas/khenpos have not only been asking herders to refrain from selling livestock for the meat market but they also encourage them to avoid to slaughter livestock for herders' own consumption. Indeed, the vegetarianism movement in the pastoral areas of Tibet has been another way in which khenpos try to stop herders from slaughtering livestock for self-consumption. In terms of these two different types of slaughter (one for market and another for self-consumption), khenpos' first priority lie in stopping slaughter in the slaughterhouses for the

meat market, because the number of livestock slaughtered in slaughterhouses is greater than the numbers that are slaughtered for herders' self-consumption. It would be about 1-3 yaks or 4-6 sheep a year for self-consumption in eastern Tibet, whereas slaughterhouses could kill up to a maximum of be 60-100 per household per year.

Seeing the fact that meat is one of the mainstays of Tibetan herders' diet, and to change the tradition of eating meat right way will be very difficult, Khenpo Tsullo has also been asking herders to slaughter livestock in a way that livestock suffer less when they are being slaughtered if herders have to kill livestock anyway. This requires herders to change their traditional way of slaughtering livestock for their own meat, which is suffocation, a different way of slaughtering livestock from the Muslims' way of slaughtering livestock, which is to cut the throat of livestock. In Khenpo Tsullo's *Lugs Gnyis Me long*<sup>23</sup>(2003), he states:

These days, there are several ways to kill livestock, including suffocation by tying animals' mouths, cutting the throat, bludgeoning the head of livestock with an axe, and cutting the veins of live animals by opening a hole in their stomachs. Even though all of these methods are very cruel, suffocation is the most common method used in many pastoral areas and it is the worst one in that it makes livestock suffer the most when they die. For some livestock, it takes about nine minutes to die, and for others, as long as fifteen minutes. This is fearsome and of great suffering (*Rnam Smen Can*). If we put ourselves in their situation as we are suffocating, we know how hard it is to hold one's breath for a minute...(70)...we ought to find a less miserable way to let livestock die. However, this being said, it is not that less cruel ways of killing have no sin. Any kind of killing has serious sin. In any case, se should change this tradition by adopting some other means of killing livestock, that entail less suffering, that exist in some places. (71)

Similar suggestions are found in Khenpo Jigphun's teachings. However, neither specified what this less cruel way of killing is, perhaps because they are religious leaders who are not in a position to teach people how to kill their livestock, and can only give more general suggestions. Again, khenpos are not suggesting to slaughter but rather that herders adopt means that will let

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<sup>23</sup> The full name of the book is *Dus su Bab Pa' Gtam Lugs Gnyis Gsal Ba' Me Long (Timely Advice: a Mirror That Clarifies the Two Systems)*

animals suffer less when they are slaughtered. This suggestion is for Tibetans to change their traditional ways of slaughtering their livestock the self-consumption.

#### Fur renunciation movement

It has long been traditional for Tibetan people to use animal skin or fur to make clothes or decorate their clothes. They use sheep and yak skin to make clothes, to use fox pelts to make hats, and to the skins of tiger, leopard, and otters to decorate their clothes by sewing them on the trim of their clothes. Tibetans wear those clothes during special days including weddings, religious gatherings, Tibetan New Year, and so forth. When a new couple is married, they are given clothes with fur and pelts, coral, and other jewelries.

It is said by some Tibetan scholars that this tradition came from a military reward and penalty system of the Tibetan army in the distant past. In this military award system, good fighters in wars were awarded with or had marked on their clothes some symbolic pelts of tiger or leopard, and those who did not do well during the wars were marked by the fur of fox symbolizing cowardice. This tradition has slowly turned into today's clothes, which represent wealth, identity, and social position of an individual. During the commune system and the days before that, only rich households had the ability to wear large size furs, particularly those of tiger and leopard. It was after economic reform that many households began to have the financial abilities to purchase them, and competition has been aroused among households in terms of the size and quality of fur and pelts on each Tibetan robe. Traditionally, these fur-lined clothes was not only a fashion but also one form of savings for Tibetan people, because the prices of those clothes were very stable and so they could be sold for the urgent needs of a household. The quality and the amount of fur and pelt of households were the indication of households' wealth,



and those furs and pelts were passed down many generations. With the increase in demand since the economic development, the wild animal furs come not only from Tibet, but also from other countries such as Pakistan and those in Africa.

Internationally, wearing of wild animal pelts has increasingly been seen as unethical for most people in the west, as a result of environment and wildlife conservation movements on the global scale. Environment and wildlife protection, embedded in the western worldview of nature as static, has become such a powerful ethical force that Tibetans have had to revalue their dress culture, as it goes against this trend. Tibetan inconsistency with this global trend would have a negative impact on the image of Tibetan people who live peacefully and in harmony with their environment and wildlife in western minds. So the fur wearing tradition did not fit the stereotypical image of Tibetans as people with compassion in westerners' minds.

The widespread fur wearing in Tibet has increasingly become a problem for Tibetan lamas. Eventually, the peak of fur renunciation in Tibet was marked by an unhistorical pelt burning campaign across Tibetan plateau in 2006, which result in a sudden cessation of the wearing of wild animal fur by Tibetan people. However, as early as 2003, Khenpo Tsullo from Larung Gar has already started the fur renunciation movement in the pastoral areas of Tibetan plateau, in which he urged people to stop wearing clothes made out of or decorated with animal fur.

In his book *Lugs Gnyis Me long* (2003), Khenpo Tsullo used three rationales to encourage Tibetans to stop wearing fur. First, as with the slaughter renunciation movement, drawing upon the Buddhist norms of cause and effects, compassion, and reincarnation, he was concerned about the killings of animals, a direct result of wearing clothes made out of pelt and fur. He stated that because of increasing demand for wild animal fur in Tibet, these days, not only are domestic animals killed, but so too are wild animals from Pakistan and Africa. Tibetan people have the

major sin or negative karma, because their wearing of these furs leads to the killing of these animals. Second, he made an economic cost and benefit analysis for the fur wearing. He calculated how much a fur trim for clothes would cost and how many days or years' labor is needed to earn the cost. However, with these high prices, the fur does not bring any material benefit such food to prevent hunger or clothes that protect people from cold. Lastly, he also showed how in the west the popularity of wearing animal furs has been challenged by environmental movements, a process in which the wearing of fur has become unethical. He says that when wearing animal furs has become unethical in the west, it is a shameful thing for Tibetans to wear clothes with animal furs.

In short, Tibetans' traditional clothes with furs mediated multiple cultural meanings and economic purposes. It was a symbol of wealth for households because when people wear them, they show the economic condition of the household with the size of furs on clothes; it was an important option of investments and savings, because Tibetans could trade their clothes when they needed cash for other purposes; and it also represents the conception of beauty of Tibetan people. Most importantly, in their status as family heirlooms they represent Tibetan people's attachment to history as well as a significant contrast to the form of value that characterizes capitalist mass production.

The fur renunciation movement has had effect on all of these aspects of Tibetan traditions. It has changed their perception of what is beauty and what is not. It has also changed their way of saving and the value of assets (Yeh, in press). More significantly, it has changed Tibetan people's concept of consumption. That is, when Tibetan people traditionally purchased clothes with furs, they usually would use them for their entire lives, and sometimes parents would pass them to their next generations, with special meanings for the households. This has changed their

decision-making about how and in what to invest, eliminating a space of investment in a household's assets on bodily adornment, channeling their strategies into other kinds of commodities. That is, Tibetans must now either find other substitute that can replace all of these cultural meanings and economic purposes, or they have to change all of their traditions by wearing "instant" modern clothes that do not involve lots of meanings and economic values.

#### Interrelations among the three movements

The slaughter renunciation movement, vegetarian movement, and fur renunciation movement, all promoted by Khenpo Jigphun and Khenpo Tsullo, are clearly rhetorically distinctive from each other, but they are also interrelated. All three movements are concerned with Buddhist norms of compassion, the law of cause-effect, and reincarnations, khenpos have also deployed other rationales that are more modern and progressive in all cases. For instance, in both the slaughter renunciation movement and fur renunciation movement, khenpos have deployed economic considerations in light of herders' involvement in these activities. They made arguments that neither slaughter nor wearing fur makes sense in terms of economic benefits. In the vegetarian movement, Khenpo Tsullo has drawn on extensive literature on the benefit of being vegetarian and the negative health effects of eating meat. Khenpo Tsullo has related his fur renunciation movement with the endangered wild animal protection movements, which is a very significant transnational movement.

Generally speaking, economic development in pastoral Tibet has provided a condition for these religious movements to take place. An increase in the slaughter rate lead to increased cash income for Tibetan herders, which allowed ordinary herders to purchase pelts. The recent incorporation of the pastoral economy into the Chinese inland economy provided alternative

foods options such as vegetables and fruits for Tibetans, which made the vegetarian movement possible. The combination of all of these trends has forced Tibetan khenpos/lamas to promote these three movements.

All three movements are concerned with the ethical issue of killing animals from a Buddhist perspective, relating to the norms of compassion, the collection of positive or negative karma, and the reincarnations of life. However, I also argue that all three movements as ethical corrections are Tibetan religious leaders' efforts to reshape Tibetan pastoralists and their societies in order to make them fit well with the stereotyped image of Tibetans in the western mind (Dodin and Rather, 2001; Huber, 1997; 2001). In other words, the khenpos' remaking of Tibetans is their response to the globalized Tibet as well a response to the transformation of economic development driven by the discourse of the "Open up the West" campaign.

With the globalization of Tibetans and their society, in the west, there has been a trend to unify Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan people, making Tibetan Buddhism an icon of Tibet and its people (Lopez, 1998). That is Tibet is the home Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetans must be Tibetan Buddhists. The stereotyped Western idea of Tibetan-ness is that Tibetans as a group of people are very spiritual, humble, full of compassion (Dodin and Rather, 2001) assumed to be a vegetarians, and living harmonistically with their environment and other living beings (Dodin and Rather, 2001; Huber 1997, 2001). The fact is that Tibetans slaughter livestock, eat meat as their main food, and wear the furs of wild animal that are considered to be nearly extinct. These facts do not fit or go against this typical picture of Tibetans in the western mind. These religious movements by khenpos are in some ways a response to international trends, and it is their efforts to protect and reproduce the Tibetan image according with the western idea of Tibetan-ness. For instance, Khenpo Tsullo states in his book *Lugs Gnyis Me long* (2003), "we think that wearing

clothes with animal furs is beautiful, but it looks not only very ugly in the eyes of other people, but it is considered to be very cruel” (5) and, “recently Tibetans have been increasingly wearing more and more animal furs and many of their images have gone abroad through media. And people abroad will surely think that Tibetans are malicious, disgusting, and ignorant” (10). This contradiction between the actual situation and the image of Tibetans held in the western mind has been repeatedly mentioned in many cases of religious teachings of khenpos. In this sense, these movements are a few examples of how Tibetan people and its society have been shaped by the stereotype of Tibetan images in the western mind.

The reshaping of Tibetans and their society has taken place by fundamentally discontinuing some other elements of Tibetan pastoral traditions: the way they generate income and make a living, the things they eat, and their dress and aesthetic view. The traditions that those movements aimed to change were deeply embedded in the herders’ everyday lives in one way or other. While the slaughter renunciation movement has a significant impact on income generation of Tibetan herders that is related to all aspects of herders’ lives, the promotion of vegetarianism has had impact on food traditions, herders’ diet, nutrition, and their health. The fur renunciation movement has an effect on their dress culture, their way of saving, aesthetic views, the symbolic manifestation of social classification, and their valuation of assets.

Indeed, all these movements reflect a cultural politics of development that is constituted by both localized material economic development and globalized images of Tibetanness, combined with the continuation of Tibetan historical memories such as Tibetan Buddhism. The combination of these forces has reshuffled Tibetan societies and reshaped the Tibetan people. With these negotiations and struggling, some traditions have been magnified while others are discontinued. And, to this, some new elements were added, forming a new shape of Tibetans and

their society. Buddhist aspects in everyday lives of herders are highlighted and emphasized, and the traditions of slaughtering, consumption of meat, and wearing fur-clothes has become the target of discontinuation. Vegetarianism and engagement in business are encouraged and promoted. Wearing Tibetan clothes is encouraged, but the furs on them are discarded. Tibetan lamas and khenpos have become a key agent to bring these changes in Tibetan social structures, mediating global and local dynamics. On the one hand, Buddhism has been shaped by new social phenomena and cultural discourses, but on the other hand, Buddhism also makes sense of and gives meaning to these new phenomena from a Buddhist perspective.

### **Convergence of Tibetan Buddhism with Tibetan Identity, and Khenpos' Social Engagements**

With the increasing globalization of Tibet and its people, the idea of Tibetans as an ethnic group has become a very popular and powerful discourse in contemporary Tibetan society. In today's society, where the differentiations of different ethnic groups and nation states are very important, there is a historical shift in Tibetan Buddhist leaders' emphasis in their religious teachings and in their strategies to engage in social activities. It is a shift from an emphasis on the differentiation between Buddhism and non-Buddhism, and sectarian differentiation within Buddhism, to a stress on the differentiation of nations, ethnicities, and globalization (*'dzam gling, mi rigs, rgyal khabs*). This change took place as the awareness of Tibetans as an ethnic group that shares religion, language, and custom has increased and has become common sense among Tibetan people when Tibetans are increasingly exposed to the outside world at trans-regional or global scales. That is, they articulate Buddhism as a "Tibetan" Buddhism in terms of Tibetan identity. In many cases, they articulate Tibetan Buddhism as a future path for Tibetan people,

highlighting Tibetan people's ownership of Tibetan Buddhism. In other words, a transition took place from sectarian competition to an ethnicity-based religious revival.

Therefore, I further argue that the articulation of Tibetans as one group is a modern discourse with which Tibetan Buddhist leaders have been able to adjust to reinforce their leading position in Tibetan society. The incorporation of discourse of modern nationalism into Tibetan Buddhism is reflected in Tibetan khenpos' active engagement in social programs and their encouragement of monks to devote their life in preserving Tibetan culture and serving Tibetan communities. This section discusses the reactivation of the Ten-virtuous-rules as standards of conduct for Tibetans, education promotion, and language purification. It is through such social initiatives that Tibetan religious elites position themselves at the forefront of Tibetan people.

#### Ten-virtuous-rules

In many places the slaughter renunciation movement is one of what khenpos and herders call the Ten-virtuous-rules. It is important to give a brief introduction to these locally initiated rules that are very popular in many pastoral areas of the Tibetan plateau. In some pastoral areas in Kham, it was a tradition to have these kinds of rules before 1958. However, with the religious revival in Larung Gar, and particularly with the expansion of influence of khenpos from the institute to these areas, the last one and a half decade saw a widespread proliferation of the Ten-virtuous-rules in most Kham pastoral areas. The Ten-virtuous-rules that Larung Gar have established include: no livestock trading for the purpose of slaughtering, no stealing and plundering, no carrying of harmful weapons on one's body, no use of prostitutes, no drugs or firearms dealings, no cigarette smoking and drug taking, no alcohol, no gambling, no hunting, and no wearing of animal furs ('Phrin Las, 2010). Through khenpos' teachings, distribution of

DVDs, videos, recorded tapes, and posters in many small Tibetan towns, Larung Gar has disseminated these rules into many pastoral areas of the Tibetan plateau.

Among the different tribes, most of the contents of the Ten-virtuous-rules are the same, but there are slight variations. While the banning of livestock trading for slaughter, stealing, gambling, and alcohol are the same, because these are the main social problems in many pastoral areas, others vary. For instance, some tribes ban internal fighting while other tribes do not have it on their rules. While the initiations of Ten-virtuous-rules in many areas have been influenced by khenpos' teachings about the slaughter renunciation movement and other movements, other Tibetan Buddhist teachers have also started similar things in other places. For instance, a village in Seda County has started Ten-virtuous-rules, including slaughter renunciation movement, without any direct relationship with the movement begun by Larung Gar. In the late 1990s, the village started its slaughter renunciation movement when one of their lamas was sick. In the hope that they could save their lama's life the herders wanted to buy lots of fish from the market to release into the water as *tshe thar*. However, the lama did not want them to do so. Instead, he asked them to promise to refrain from slaughtering their livestock for as long as they could. In response to the lama's call, most of the herders gave up commercial slaughter for three years, and others took vows for longer times.

Even though most of my interviewees were very supportive of what they call "Ten-virtuous-rules," which in many places also include no-smoking, drinking, or gambling, doing no harm, telling the truth to all beings, abstention from theft and from avarice, they also expressed their concern about the way these moral rules are implemented. Larung Gar does not use any sort of force to implement these rules, they mostly just encourage Tibetan herders to put these rules into everyday practice voluntarily. However, in most of the pastoral areas these rules have been



implemented by a collaboration of local monastery and local village leaders by establishing very restrict regulations. With these regulations, anyone who violates the rules may be faced with monetary sanctions or exclusion from the social relations in the village or from the monastery's services. Many of the interviewees have criticized these strict regulations, stating that obedience to these rules should be voluntary.

There were similar moral rules in Tibetan history. In the seventh century, the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sGam po, 617-650 AD) established two types of moral rules for Tibetan people on the Tibetan plateau (Ogyan GlingPa, 1986). It is important to explore how khenpos refer their current rules to historical rules established by Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo to articulate Tibetans as ethnic group by drawing on historical events, but also how the rules differ from those of the past, reflecting different social contexts. There were two rules during Songtsen Gampo's time: one was for religious people, called the Buddhist Ten-virtuous-rules for clergy (*Lha chos dge ba bcu' khrims*), and another one was for lay Tibetans, called the Sixteen rules for public conduct (*Mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*).

The Buddhist Ten-virtuous-rules (*Lha chos Dge ba bcu' khrims*) are to refrain from the following behaviors, speech and thoughts:

- harming or killing
- stealing
- sexual misconduct
- lying
- divisive or slanderous speech
- cursing or using harsh words
- gossip or idle speech
- being or having covetous thoughts
- malicious thoughts
- bigoted thoughts or heretical views

The sixteen rules for public conduct (*Mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*) are:

1. Developing devotion for the Three Jewels<sup>24</sup> (*lha dkon mchog gsum la mos gus bskyed pa*)
2. Seeking out and practicing the sacred Dharma (*dam pa'i chos btsal zhing bsgrub pa*)
3. Repaying the kindness of one's parents (*pha ma la drin lan 'jal ba*)
4. Showing respect to the learned (*yon tan can la zhe mthong yod pa*)
5. Being respectful to those of high status and one's elders (*rigs mtho ba dang rgan par bkur sti che ba*)
6. Being benevolent to your neighbors (*yul mi khyim mtshes la phan gdags pa*)
7. Being honest (*bka' drang zhing sems chung ba*)
8. Being loyal to close friends (*nye du mdza' bshes la gzhung ring ba*)
9. Emulating those who are polite and decent (*ya rabs kyi rjes bsnyeg cing phyi thag ring ba*)
10. Having moderate food and wealth (*zas nor la tshod 'dzin pa*)
11. Repaying those who have previously shown kindness (*sngar drin can gyi mi rtsad gcad pa*)
12. Being honest with regard to weights and measures (*bu lon dus su 'jal zhing pre srang la g.yo med pa*)
13. Having little jealousy (*kun la phrag dog chung ba*)
14. Not being influenced by evil companions (*ngan pa'i gros la mi nyan zhing rang tshugs 'dzin pa*)
15. Speaking moderately and in a gentle way (*ngag 'jam zhing smra ba nyung ba*)
16. Being patient and farsighted and enduring hardship (*theg pa che zhing blo khog yangs pa*)

King Songtsen Gampo united dispersed Tibet subkingdoms into one larger one and was very active in interacting with neighboring kingdoms such as the Tang dynasty and Nepal, importing the then most advanced technologies and cultures through his marriage relationships with those neighboring kingdoms (Kun Dga' Rdo Rje, 1981). Along with agricultural and architectural skills from the Tang dynasty, he had also imported Buddhism from India, placing it in a very important position in Tibet (NgaWang LobsangGyatso, 1957). Today, King Songtsen Gampo has become the figure of whom Tibetans are most proud, not only for his military forces that threatened the then most civilized Tang dynasty (GtsugLag PhrengBa, 1986) and for other economic and technological achievements. More importantly, Tibetans, particularly Buddhist

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<sup>24</sup> the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha

spiritual leaders are proud of the fact that the king was the first emperor who combined Buddhism with secular politics, a system they call *Rgyal srid chos bzhin skyong ba*.

The Ten-virtuous-rules during King Songtsen Gampo's time were directly adopted from the Ten Misconducts by the Buddha, and thus it is clear that Buddhism played an important role in the political system since the seventh century. It is for this reason that King Songtsen Gampo and his time have become now a cultural icon for Tibetan people of what a ruler and his kingdom should look like. In his *Advice to Tibetans of the 21st Century*,<sup>25</sup> Khenpo Jigphun advises Tibetans to follow the Buddhist Ten-virtuous-rules for clergy (*Lha chos dge ba bcu' khrims*) and Sixteen rules for public conduct (*Mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*) established by King Songtsen Gampo, and he has linked today's Tibetan society and people to the cultural icons of the past. Khenpo Tsullo did not want to explicitly take the position that the two Ten-virtuous-rules in different time periods are directly related. However, I argue that even as we can see that there are difference in the contents, the latter is a Tibetan memory of the past, which provides an example of an ideal social condition that contemporary Tibetans should follow in social transformation. It reflects a unification of Tibetan identity with the Ten-virtuous-rules of the past, which was adapted by King Songtsen from Buddhism and which has been reactivated by khenpos in contemporary society. The reactivation of this tradition is used as remedy by khenpos to deal with what they perceived as moral degradation of Tibetans in a changing society.

That is, the two different rules reflect different social spaces in which people face different social issues. The first one took place in a society in which Buddhism was increasingly taking dominant social space, and Buddha's teachings were incorporated into a political system so as to consolidate the power of Buddhists. The latter reflects or deals with social problems in a social transformation of modernizing Tibet, and the new elements such as the ban on gambling, internal

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<sup>25</sup> “*Dus Rabs nyer gcig pa' gangs can pa rnams la phul ba' snying gtam sbrin gyi rol mo*”

conflicts, murdering with guns, stealing of livestock, and taking prostitutes are responses to the symptoms of the modernization process, which has been seen by khenpos as moral degradation of Tibetan herders.

In the case of gambling, many herders fall into Chinese Mahjong and poker. People can hear many stories about how herders lost their herds, family members, and were trampled by debts. Other things such as internal conflicts, killing with guns, stealing of livestock, and taking prostitutes, have become major social problems in many pastoral areas as well. Like the increase in the slaughter rate in recent decades, there is a coincidence between the emerging of herders' taking part in these 'unethical' or 'criminal' things that the Ten-virtuous-rules were initiated for, and the intensification of the neo-liberal market economy. It is also at the same time that the state withdrew from direct planning of every aspect of herders' lives, introducing the market economy as a way to govern its citizens.

Neo-liberal development always produces two abilities: to produce disparity in economic development, and the ability to make those social problems (caused by disparity) invisible, turning them into moral issues or individual faults (Dixon, 2008; Yan, 2006). It hides the unbalanced power distribution among stakeholders and the inclusion or exclusion from access to resources, forcing marginalized group to associate with some 'illegal' or 'unethical' things to compete with legalized beneficiaries. When social inequality forces more marginalized people into disadvantaged situations or exclude them from accessing lucrative resources, while they are lured by the benefit gained by others from development, they venture to take immoral actions to make a living, which is a way for them to make sense of or benefit from development.

For instance, in Hongyuan County, there is a phenomenon of what I call "the exclusion of inclusion" in neo-liberal economic development. The market economic development has

increasingly manipulated all aspects of Tibetan herders' lives and forced them to participate in the market economy. New social structures have instilled new needs for herders, such as education fee for their children, health care, transportation, communication fee, housing, housing decoration, and other necessities. They also need to participate in market exchange to sell dairy and other products. However, for the majority of herders, the income from their herds is far less than what they need to cover all these costs, so they have to find other sources or take loans from their relatives or others. At the same time, the current market economy and the state have excluded Tibetan herders. Most relatively scarce and lucrative resources and sectors are dominated by state owned companies or outside private investors. For instance, the state has contracted the exclusive right over sand and quarries in the entire county and the few tourism sites are contracted to the people with capital or with *guanxi* in the state bureaucracy. The only two large factories – a yak milk powder factory and the state owned milk factory -- have also been sold to outside investors.

In addition to the lack of capital, Tibetan herders do not have the skill or cultural background of doing businesses. More importantly, their language barrier (the majority of Tibetan herders do not speak and read Chinese) prevents them from communicating efficiently with the state and Chinese tourists, making it impossible for them to participate on an equal footing in market competition. Herders are not allowed to buy land or build houses, a relatively stable investment alternative to herding, in Hongyuan town. Recently, the government has also been regulating Tibetan herders' tents for tourism. Many businesses in the town require Chinese language and certain other skills that herders lack, so that few business options left for herders are running Tibetan restaurants, selling material for Tibetan clothes, being middlemen to collect yak skin and furs, and livestock trading. For the last few decades, there have been many pastoral

households who have tried to settle down in town by engaging in these limited businesses. Because the competition has been very intense and very few herders have experience in business, most households who tried have given up the businesses and went back to their pastures. Even the temporary part-time job towns have been difficult for herders to find employment in, due to their relative lack of training and language barriers.

In sum, government regulation for these lucrative sectors and lack of capital and necessary skills for business have excluded many active herders from the benefits of the market economy. When this new social structure has become advantageous for some, it has also become a disadvantage for others, forcing some of them to venture into 'immoral' and 'criminal' actions such as gambling, stealing, and so forth.

When neo-liberal development brings prosperity and guarantees for one group in society, it triggers poverty and conflicts for others. Yet, in most cases, the poverty and related conflicts are easily treated as a social disorder by the state, which launches further regulations on those unstable marginalized groups. Similarly, the symptoms of poverty and marginalization are also seen as moral degradation by Tibetan lamas that need to be corrected through their religious teachings and establishing moral rules, like Ten-virtuous-rules.

In the pastoral areas of the Tibetan plateau, the transformation brought by neo-liberal development is interpreted as well as responded to by the khenpos in ethical terms. And, all of these movements are the ethical reformations that reflect as well as confront the transformations in Tibetan culture. There are other aspects through which we can see the overlap part of Tibetan Buddhism with Tibetan identity. Among khenpos' active engagement with social programs, illiteracy eradication and Tibetan language purification are two examples of many others that include schooling and establishing health clinics.

### Illiteracy-eradication Movement

The Illiteracy-eradication Movement is a recently initiated effort by khenpos from Larung Gar to educate Tibetans in reading and writing by sending educated monks from Larung Gar to other parts of Tibet. With this movement, a local NGO was organized by several monks, aimed at teaching Tibetan language and Buddhism anywhere they are invited to do so in eastern Tibet. The NGO has about 20 members, most of whom have experience in teaching written Tibetan or Buddhism in Tibetan primary schools, middle schools, and to Tibetan herders who neither write nor read. They do this mostly through their connection with the local schools and monasteries.

This new movement was also started by Khenpo Tsullo. His idea is that monks should not be gathering in the monastery all the time. Those monks who have the interest and the ability to practice their meditations and Buddhist studies should devote their efforts to their careers continually. Those who do not should go back to their communities to provide service by teaching or doing whatever else they can. According to some monks from Larung Gar, Khenpo Tsullo says “the monks who can do neither of them and are hesitant to become lay persons or even afraid to do so, should do so anyway at an early age. If this is the case, the earlier the better, since at a young age, you have much better brains for working and thinking.” In response to the call from Khenpo Tsullo (in addition to the formation of the relatively formal organization mentioned earlier), there are also lots of monks who went back to their communities to teach what they learned from Khenpo Gar, mostly writing Tibetan and basic Buddhist study. Most of these trainings are short periods of time ranging from one month to three months.

Two aspects of this movement are important: enhancing lay understandings of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan community development. Khenpo Tsullo’s advice for different monks on

their career directions is one of his efforts to reform Tibetan Buddhism to improve the quality of Tibetan Buddhist teachings and monks, and to assign the social responsibility to Tibetan monks. There are several intentions for Khenpo Tsulpo's advice. First, keeping the khenpos and monks with the highest Buddhist knowledge is intended to ensure the quality of Buddhist teachings and practices in the Buddhist institute. Second, his suggestions for ordinary monks to teach written Tibetan and to give introductions to basic Buddhism to Tibetans in their communities is linked to the community development of Tibetan populated regions, in which the role of education for Tibetans and their future is ranked as the highest priority by Khenpo Tsulpo and others. The teaching of basic Buddhist knowledge to Tibetans is a part of Khenpo Tsulpo's argument that even though Tibetans think that they are Buddhists, they don't know basic Buddhist knowledge and the proper way of practicing Buddhism. Here, one important aspect of the illiteracy eradication movement is that this movement as a part of community development is not secular or pure illiteracy eradication, but rather is a combination of Tibetan Buddhist teachings and the improvement of capacity of Tibetan people for development. In this sense, development and Buddhism are integrated in khenpos' social engagement with Tibetan communities.

Khenpo Tsulpo's advice for some monks to resume secular life can be described as unprecedented, because resuming secular life is considered to be very sinful and a failure for a monk in Tibet. Then, how should we understand his advice? Khenpo Tsulpo has not only been guiding Tibetan lay people in the right direction, but he also intends to clean up some elements of Tibetan Buddhism and correct misconducts of Tibetan Buddhists. His suggestion for some monks to become lay people is to encourage those whose bodies are monk but whose minds are not in Buddhist institutes or monasteries to do what they really intend to do. His consideration also lies in the sustainability of Larung Gar politically. The overpopulation in the institute is



politically sensitive for the government, and it was the large number of monks and nuns gathered in the institute that once led the government to control the number of monks and nun in the monastery, forcing some nuns to go back to their hometowns.

### Purification of Tibetan spoken language

As many Tibetans see Tibetan language as the cornerstone for keeping Tibetan identity, Tibetan khenpos presents themselves as gatekeepers for the sustainability of Tibetan language in order to preserve Tibetan culture and Tibetan identity. Again, the effort to purify Tibetan language is an effort of khenpos that reflects their adaptation of the popular discourse. What this indicates is the Tibetan Buddhists' emphasis on the differentiation of ethnic groups rather than of between Buddhists and non-Buddhists or sectarian differences. The purification of Tibetan language highlights the importance of sustaining Tibetan as one ethnic group among the competing ethnic groups in the cultural politics of modernization.

With the development of Tibetan populated regions by the state, new things and new technologies have come to Tibetan regions as a flood, but the utilization of Tibetan terms for these modern things has been falling behind, and many Tibetans have been using Chinese terms for these new things. It is very common for many Tibetans to speak mixed language using Tibetan grammar and many Chinese terms. Not only khenpos but also many educated Tibetans see this as way to pollute Tibetan language and as a sign of language degradation, which is further linked to the danger of losing Tibetan identity and of Tibetan ethnicity itself. Thus, khenpos have been encouraging Tibetans to speak authentic Tibetan that does not mix Chinese terms in Tibetan grammar.

An editing of a trilingual pictorial dictionary (Tibetan, Chinese, and English) 《汉藏英常用新词语图解词典》 for modern terms is one effort by khenpos as a part of this movement. The dictionary is produced by a collective effort of many Tibetan scholars from universities and monasteries organized by Khenpo Tsullo in 2007. Khenpo Tsullo has also published a handbook, which has pictures of many modern things with Tibetan terms. In addition to the publications and teachings, posters that have the names for many vegetables, have been distributed to many restaurants in Tibetan populated regions.

Khenpos' efforts of purification of Tibetan spoken language have been followed by many Tibetan popular singers and crosstalk performers who perform humorous cross-talk skits with code switching between Chinese and Tibetan. In many places in the Kham region, particularly monasteries near Larung Gar, purification of language is moralized as a result of all these integrated efforts. The sense of the necessity to speak pure Tibetan language is very strong among ordinary people. In some areas, it has become very hard for those who used to speak mixed language to communicate with owners of the stores or restaurants, because if a Tibetan speaks mixed language, the owners of stores or restaurants would either ignore, or laugh at, or even impose a fine on these customers.

Khenpo Tsullo and other khenpos are not only Buddhist leaders and monks, but also ethnically Tibetans. It is this overlapping identity that determines their mixed initiatives that work as both Tibetan Buddhist teachings as well as social programs. More importantly, it is their active engagement with the discourse of Tibetan identity that enables them to gain more support among Tibetans than they would gain through their religious teaching itself.

## **Conclusion**

This is an era in which Tibetan Buddhism has been penetrating many aspects of Tibetan people's life in a new stance after the Cultural Revolution, just as economic development has been manipulating herders' lives. However, this new form of religious penetration to Tibetans people's lives is part of larger process of the constant reconstruction of Tibetan Buddhism through its adaptation to new socioeconomic situations. If the slaughter renunciation movement is an example of an effort to reinforce Tibetan Buddhist core values and main ideologies by competing with other values, then the vegetarian and fur renunciation movement reflect a reformation of Buddhism by modify its outdated elements for modern times. The teaching program in Tibetan writing and basic Buddhism, language purification, and Ten-virtuous-rules demonstrate a way that Tibetan Buddhist elites incorporate new popular discourses and mainstream cultural elements such as nationalism and development to reinforce its leading position in Tibetan society.

Indeed, for the last two centuries, Buddhism in other parts of Asia has experienced similar transformations through its encounter with modernization and globalizing forces. In those encounters, a number of Buddhist leaders such as Anagārika Dharmapala, Ariyaratne, and D.T. Suzuki, have presented Buddhism as a modern religion based on their own experiences of multiple forces, including domestic political and economic situations, the force of globalization and improvements in science and technology (McMahan, 2008; Swearer, 1996). With their new interpretations of Buddhism, many new Buddhist movements have emerged and socially engaged Buddhism has become a very popular theme. These Buddhist movements share both similarities with and differences from those of Larung Gar. For instance, in Sri Lanka, as the earliest Buddhist modernist, Dharmapala, in his reaction to Westerners and Christians' critique

of Buddhism for its overemphasis on the otherworldly re-presented Buddhism as a this-worldly focused religion. His main idea was that Buddhism should be more about ethical conduct and provision of this-worldly service to society as whole as a path to realize one's liberation. With this idea of this-worldly focused Buddhism, Anagarika Dharmapala supported many charitable institutions, maintaining hospitals, schools and foundations for spreading Buddhism and helping all in need. All of his new reinterpretations of Buddhism were mostly meant to revitalize Buddhism in Ceylon and contribute to the nationalist movement in a colonial political and social context (McMahan, 2008).

Influenced by Dharmapala and Gandhi, A.T. Ariyaratne initiated the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka as a lay Buddhist movement in 1958. The movement was a response to the decay in Buddhist practices and identity in Sri Lanka during the colonial and post-colonial social contexts. Based on Ariyaratne's reinterpretation of Buddhist norms that the individual liberation should be achieved through the liberation of the whole of society (Bond, 1996), the movement has launched massive community development programs in the villages of Sri Lanka. However, the mundane awakening in individual and social reform has never become the supreme goals for the movement. Rather, the movement has just added a new and important step in the long gradual path of enlightenment (Bond, 1996).

The similarity between the movements in Sri Lanka and the movements from Larung Gar, Tibet, is that all of these movements are reactions to dangers brought by outside forces. In the case of Sri Lanka, it was the colonial administration and missionaries. In the case of Tibet, it is more about the encroachment of the secular and material economic forces that has threatened Tibetan identity and Tibetan Buddhism. The Buddhist movements in Sri Lanka were promoted by reinterpreting some aspects of Buddhism by scaling up individual liberation to social

liberation. In similar way, Tibetan khenpos have also been making some visible reinterpretations of Tibetan Buddhism by putting great emphasis on the importance of Tibetan monks being engaged more actively in serving their communities by providing them with education and religious teachings. At the same time, Khenpo Tsullo has been urging Tibetan monasteries and their leaders to focus their dedication to the learning of Tibetan Buddhism rather than to practice rituals of Buddhism, and to promote Buddhist teachings among the laity. For this, Khenpo Tsullo thinks that it is a big issue that many Tibetans believe in Tibetan Buddhism, but they do not understand real Buddhism. It is clear from these points that Khenpo Tsullo himself and the movements he has promoted are very modern and reformative.

It is clear that what Tibetan khenpos have been doing is not preserving traditional culture and Tibetan Buddhism in a stagnant way, but rather incorporates new elements, new strategies, new methods, and new ways of thinking. It is the combination of forces of globalization of the Tibetan image and Tibetan Buddhism and trans-regional developments that conjured these new elements with some old traditions, and it is this new conjuncture that have enabled Tibetan Buddhism and its leaders to maneuver in the modern world. Now, khenpos have new ideas of what should be standards of conduct standards for Tibetan people, how Tibetan people should behave in the modern world, who should do what in terms of monks' social and religious responsibilities, what should be the proper way of practicing Tibetan Buddhism, and so forth.

The slaughter renunciation movement and other movements are not the kinds of passive actions of Tibetan religious leaders in preserving traditional Tibetan culture that one might assume. Rather they are Tibetan Buddhist elites' response to and active intervention in the social transformation brought by globalization, the neo-liberal market economy, and the state, in order to make these transformations more compatible with Tibetan Buddhist norms and culture. In this

way, Tibetan Buddhism shapes development in Tibet, giving it meanings, and incorporating development into Buddhist philosophy and world. At the same time, the process of remaking development is the process of reshaping Tibetan Buddhism itself, by making itself more acceptable to mainstream culture when it posits itself in a leading position. In short, these movements are combinations of the past with the contemporary, traditional with modern discourses, and religion with national identity. All of these movements demonstrate that Tibetan Buddhism and its elites are presenting themselves as historical agents that makes history and their own cultural space.

**Chapter Four**  
**The slaughter renunciation movement and neoliberal economic force:  
Competing subject formation in a Tibetan village**

In 2010, using the opportunity of a lama's visit to Rakhor Village, the local khenpos tried very hard to lead herders into another vow of refraining from selling their yaks to meat markets, but they did not gain the support of the villager leaders and lay herders. For this failure, the khenpos were upset and disappointed about the herders' disregard of their own sinful actions.

Showing his great frustration, one highly respected local khenpo told me, "because the village does not have a powerful lama, herders don't listen to the local khenpos." He said they could do nothing about the situation. But what he was really unhappy about was that he heard rumors that some herders had been complaining about the local khenpos and monks, claiming that monks had plenty of food and clothing, so they did not care about or understand the real lives of herders. What the herders really do not understand, he believes, is that what the khenpos have been trying to do is all for the benefit of the herders and their future lives and not of the khenpos themselves.

The slaughter renunciation movement in Rakhor Village, which started in 2006 and ended in 2009, did not achieve its desired goal as did the same kind of movements in many Kham Tibetan areas. That is, even though the local khenpos and monks have made efforts to bring herders into another term, most Rakhor villagers were not willing to continue their vows for a second term, and only a few herders have continued their vows. This chapter explores why herders participated in the first slaughter renunciation movement and why most of them were not willing to renew their vows while some households did renew them.

Based on the fact that the income from selling yak meat is about 30-50 percent of herders' annual income and participating in the movement means the loss of a portion of this income, one would assume that economic reasons by themselves could explain why herders did not continue their vow the second time. However, identical economic conditions cut across both groups of households who did and who did not continue their vows (there are both rich and poor households in both groups), so the economic reasoning alone is insufficient to understand herders' decisions and to explain why households with identical economic conditions made different choices. I argue that these questions can only be fully understood in terms of competing processes of subject formation. That is, economic rationales play a stronger or more compelling role in decisions for certain kinds of subjects than for others. The competing forces of subject formation operate at multiple scales, including the region, trans-local kinship networks, and the individual. Indeed, the failure of renewal of the movement illustrates the particular struggles that play out between different forces in the current social transformation in Tibetan pastoral areas. Among these forces is the recent Chinese market economy, which many scholars label neo-liberalism in China, but which I call secular neo-liberalism, distinguishing it analytically from religiously informed neo-liberalism.

Neo-liberal governance has been discussed by Michel Foucault, who like Marx and Gramsci critiques modern capitalist and liberal society as a society of mass consumption. Unlike Marx whose main concern was class struggle and Gramsci who attributed the failure of communist revolution to the hegemonic culture, Foucault is more concerned about how the modern form of governance emerged by tracing the history of the state and government techniques (Foucault, 1991) and how neo-liberal economic strategies have become a way of governing people with the market logic of individual entrepreneurship and competition between enterprises



(Foucault, 2008). His argument is that the capitalist social relationship is infused into a new arrangement that incites the creation of multiple enterprises. Unlike Marx's seeing of individual as labor power to be exchanged and exploited, in this social arrangement, individuals are expected to behave as entrepreneurs and they are entirely responsible for administering their economic, health and other risks involved in individual existence. Compared with classic liberal policy, which emphasized the strong state that regulates the market, neo-liberal strategy sees the market as a fundamental power that contains the state within it. Foucault frames governmentality as the "the conduct of conduct," which includes "governing the self" and "governing others".

Drawing on Foucault's logic of governmentality, Ong and Zhang (2008) treat the Chinese free-market economy as a technology of self-governance of Chinese citizens. They argue that many Chinese initiatives in economic reform work to create conditions in which citizens govern themselves by permitting ownership of property and optimizing their prospects in the free market. This approach to self-governance is in contrast with the previous intense state surveillance of every aspect of people's lives during the commune system. They call this neo-liberalism "socialism from afar" (5). While for Foucault, the state itself is part of neo-liberalism as governmentality, Ong and Zhang, in their writing, conceptualize the state as manipulator and the market economy as tool for the state to accomplish rule. Instead of treating Ong and Lizhang's governmentality as a misreading or misinterpretation of Foucault's, I think that both Ong and Zhang's new revised governmentality and Foucault's governmentality are useful in explaining the different but interconnected development processes in contemporary China. For this, I suggest naming Foucault's governmentality as "big governmentality" and Ong and Zhang's new version of governmentality as "small governmentality." That is, while Foucault's governmentality captures a larger picture of the expansion of capitalism in which the state itself

has become part of this transformation (the state has become governmentalized), I suggest that Ong and Zhang's governmentality is more useful for analyzing the smaller scale of cultural contestation between different groups over the meanings and practices of larger transformations. In other words, "big governmentality" is realized through the contestation of small governmentalities. For instance, the state promotion of the market as a neo-liberal technique of "socialism from afar" and the Tibetan Buddhist production of religious governable subjects converge into one to push pastoralists into certain kinds of social relationships (see Chapter 6). In this sense, the struggles between "small governmentalities, which are cultural struggles over interpretation and meaning, produce "big governmentality," which, for Foucault, is capitalist expansion. It is on small governmentality that I want to draw to examine the competition between the secular neo-liberal force and religious force in case of the slaughter renunciation movement in Rakhor Village.

Doing this, there are two other points that need to be highlighted. Building on Foucault's governmentality, Ong and Zhang conceptualize neo-liberal governmentality only from the perspective of the state's relationship with the market economic development, but they do not address other forces like religion, which are also very important in contemporary society. Therefore, I argue that religious forces also produce religious subjects that are not always the same as those produced by the state. Secondly, rather than seeing the secular neo-liberal force as complete, I also want to argue that because secular neo-liberal and religious forces are competing at the individual level (in my case Tibetan herders), their achievements are also partial and fragmented. This fragmented achievement is demonstrated in recent critical studies of development that see development as cultural politics. Those scholars maintain that rather than treating development as a completed project that determines the conduct of target groups,

development is always contested and reshaped by the target groups with their historical memories. By combining these two arguments, I argue that secular based neo-liberal techniques in pastoral areas of Tibet also work not in any completed or totalizing way, but that its accomplishment is instead fragmented and partial. This partiality is due also to the fact that religious forces also produce subjects in a fragmented way as well. Because the forces are competing in subject-formation, variations in their achievement are inevitable. If we see the secular-based, neo-liberal technique as a contested governance tool with fragmented achievements, then we can understand why most of the herders in Rakhor have not continued their vows for the second term of pledge even though the khenpos have made great efforts to get them to extend the vows. Only a few herders did take oaths for the second or longer terms, presenting an example of a fragmented achievement of religious force.

In short, here I want to make three points. First, I suggest distinguishing two different types of governmentalities: big governmentality and small governmentality. Second, I argue that Ong and Zhang's neo-liberal governmentality in China is about small governmentality, and that we need to think about this small neo-liberal governmentality in terms of multiple power holders in forming their own subjects rather than seeing it as merely a relationship of the state, market, and society. Third, it is also important to recognize that their achievements are fragmented and partial.

In this chapter, I begin with an exploration of the slaughter renunciation movement in Rakhor Village, including an introduction to Khenpo Tsullo as he has become increasingly popular in Tibet. This discussion will also cover his teachings in Rakhor Village, the process in which the movement took place, the contents of the teaching, and its impacts on herders' lives and herders' interpretations of those impacts. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the

failure of the slaughter renunciation movement in the second term in Rakhor and the emergence of Tibetan middlemen as a controversial group among Tibetans. The latter illustrates competing forces in the subject formation of Tibetan herders, namely the secular neo-liberal force and religious force, highlighting the achievements of the former.

### **The Slaughter Renunciation Movement in Rakhor Village**

#### **Khenpo Tsullo (Khenpo Tsultrim Lodroe)**

Khenpo Tsullo (Tib. Mkhan po tshul khriims blo gros) was born in 1962 in Luhuo (Tb: Brag 'go) County, Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province. When Khenpo Tsullo was a small child, it is said that his fellow villagers found him very different and special, for he always showed his natural characteristics of intelligence, compassion, and noble conduct. Later, as it was a compulsory education policy during the commune system, Khenpo Tsullo attended a state-funded primary school, and it is said that his achievement in school was very distinctive.

In 1983, he became a monk in Larung Gar, and later received the khenpo degree. Through his studies in Larung Gar, he became a close disciple of Khenpo Jigphun. When Khenpo Jigphun was still alive, Khenpo Tsullo worked as an attendant to his master when he visited Wutai Shan, Beijing, Lhasa, and Labrang monastery. Khenpo Tsullo was also assigned by Khenpo Jigphun to Malaysia and Singapore to teach Tibetan Buddhism.

Becoming one of the best students of Khenpo Jigphun, Khenpo Tsullo continued Khenpo Jigphun's meritorious deeds after his master passed away, including the promotion of the Ten-virtuous-rules among Tibetan communities, the slaughter renunciation and fur renunciation movement, and some others. However, Khenpo Tsullo has also started new initiatives for Tibetan people and monks and nuns, including vegetarianism, illiteracy eradication, Tibetan

language purification, school programs, opposition to Rgya lamas (Tibetan monks who pretend to be lamas to collect donations from Han Chinese), eradication of Tibetan beggars in Chinese cities, etc.

Among those religious and social programs, Khenpo Tsullo has highly stressed the slaughter renunciation (戒杀) and *tshe thar* movements (放生). Starting in the late 2000s, he has been spending one hundred days every fall in Chengdu, the largest city in Western China, to release livestock and other sentient beings from the slaughterhouses and markets. He has been releasing those animals by using donations he received from his disciples and donors from Han-populated inner China.

Unlike Khenpo Jigphun, who had never attended any formal school, Khenpo Tsullo was educated in the state system in his earlier years. This education enabled him to be one of very few distinguished khenpos in Larung Gar who speak fluent Chinese. For the past few years, he has been giving religious teachings and lectures in Chinese at some top universities like Beijing University. Using a blog, he has recently been teaching Tibetan Buddhism to Chinese disciples. In addition, he has also published many Buddhist books in both Tibetan and Chinese. In this sense, he is not one of the many ordinary khenpos who speak only Tibetan, which limits their influence in modern times.

With the recent rise in his reputation in Tibetan society, it is said that many monasteries have invited him to be their reincarnated lama, but Khenpo Tsullo has refused those invitations, saying that if one has real understanding of Buddhism and has the intention to do something for universal salvation, one does not need such titles. Even though Khenpo Tsullo does not have the official title of "Lama", his influence, far greater than that of most lamas, is cross-regional and cross-religious sects in Tibet, which is greatly benefited by his mastering of Tibetan Buddhism

and his wider understanding of the modern world. Having achieved the same kind of religious influence that his master had achieved over Tibetans and Chinese disciples and donors, now Khenpo Tsullo and a few other khenpos have been leading Larung Gar into a new era.

### **The First Slaughter Renunciation Movement in Hongyuan County**

The process of negotiation in which the religious teaching took place in Rakhor Village can demonstrate the process by which the slaughter renunciation movement has reached other pastoral areas, and the way it has been carried out on the ground. It also demonstrates that the seemingly monolithic “local” is constituted by multiple agents with inconsistent interests and that the slaughter renunciation movement took place in a process of negotiation among these agents. Indeed, this process was one in which religious forces negotiated with secular neo-liberal forces, which are penetrating every aspect of herders’ lives in the eastern Tibetan Plateau.

Some local lamas in Hongyuan County had begun to teach as early as 2003 about the sinfulness of mass-slaughtering for the meat market. The movement gained significant momentum at the end of 2006, when Khenpo Tsullo, visited Rakhor village and held a religious teaching for herders and monks. After the teaching, a number of traditional communities in Hongyuan County began to participate in the movement.

It is very common in Larung Gar that when a khenpo goes to teach Buddhism or perform a religious ritual, khenpos are invited by those local khenpos who had studied or have been studying in Larung Gar. In many cases, before visiting a place for religious teaching, khenpos of Larung Gar want to make sure that their visit would make some changes in the slaughter rate and vegetarianism. Therefore, the real force for the promotion of the slaughter renunciation movement in Rakhor is these khenpos of Rakhor Monastery who have studied in Larung Gar and

have been strongly influenced by well-known khenpos in Larung Gar. Initiated by the local khenpos in Rakhor village, Khenpo Tsullo was invited by Rakhor village with the support of another *sprul skus* (lama) named Tsewang Rigdzen, from another township in Hongyuan, who asked Khenpo Tsullo to give teachings in Rakhor.

It is said that before his visit to Rakhor, there was an agreement between village leaders and khenpos from Rakhor and Khenpo Tsullo to the effect that, if he visited the village, leaders and khenpos in Rakhor Monastery would be able to persuade herders to join the movement. Most villagers in Rakhor had been supportive of the agreement, because it was the chance of a lifetime to receive religious teaching from such an outstanding khenpo, but there were others who had different opinions about taking vows to stop selling livestock to the meat market, which would lead to a reduction in their income. Because the village leaders and the monastery made the decision, later all of the herders from Rakhor village swore oaths to refrain from selling livestock to the meat market. In addition, and somewhat less difficulty, they also took oaths to refrain from other practices such as smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling, and cheating.

One might wonder where the power of the village leaders and khenpos in the local monastery came from and how they could make decisions on the villagers' behalf. In the current political system, the team of village leaders is part of a government administrative system that is organized to carry out the state's agenda and to serve people as representatives of the government in the development of a village. But village leaders also play very critical roles in the traditional social unit of the tribe, which in Tibetan is called "*Sde pa*" or "*Yul Tso*", meaning a tribe or (administrative) village. This is because there is an overlap of new government administration and traditional tribal groups. For instance, a village or township in the current system is also a tribe or a sub-tribe in the traditional social sense (Yeh, 2003). The current village administration

is led by the Party secretary (村委书记) who is elected by village Party members, and village leaders (村长) are elected by the villagers. The powerful assembly of current village leader works on one hand as an instrument of the government to carry out the state agenda on the ground, but, on the other hand, also represent the traditional communities that share “*Skyid Sdug*,” meaning sharing the same fortune and suffering, in a traditional social structure that is a holdover from the past. In some places a village or township is still a traditional community or tribe, while in other places many villages or several townships, in some cases crossing the boundaries of counties, constitute a single tribe or traditional community. Therefore, village leaders are the ones who protect and serve the traditional communities or tribes in the current system, by translating resources and power from the state to the benefit of the community in its traditional sense. Rakhor was one community that shared “*Skyid Sdug*” before 1958, but it is also a single village in the current administrative system.

During the commune system, village leaders were still very powerful in their villages, because they arranged for the distribution of all the resources in the planned economic system, although after the end of the commune system the power of village leaders was diminished. However, with the implementation of the “Open up the West” campaign, the state has launched many projects, and with those projects village leaders have regained their power as they have become the key implementers of those projects. In the process of implementation of projects village leaders have the power to allocate resources and benefits of the projects among the herders. So the village leaders have the right to exclude or include the villagers from the projects. In this power structure, it is the fact that the village leaders, working as traditional tribal chiefs, represent the benefit of the traditional community that made village leaders support the slaughter renunciation movement as they have seen it as an important for the villagers. The support of



village leaders for the slaughter renunciation movement is not a part of the state's agenda but rather derives from the role they play in the traditional social structure. So, in this process, the social function of the traditional community operates through village leaders, who bear responsibility for both the state's agenda and the development of the community in which traditional cultural meanings are inherent. With the powers they gained from the state, village leaders played a critical role in determining the first three-year term of the pledge in Rakhor village.

The power of village leaders is combined with that of khenpos/monks in the local monastery, whose power comes from their authority either to include or to exclude villagers from the religious services that they provide. Tibetan herders are Buddhists and need religious services from the monastery. With support from the village leaders, monks/khenpos could exclude those herders who have not participated in the pledge. It is this power structure that has channeled villagers into the slaughter renunciation movement. It is on these grounds that both village leaders and khenpos in Rakhor Monastery made the decision on behalf of all herders that every household should participate in the movement for at least three years.

This is also a case in which religious power is translated into secular state power. The power of khenpos from both the local area and Larung Gar is realized through the village leaders whose actions represent the state's agenda in current administrative structure. In current state law, religious figures are not to interfere with people's secular life, so only village leaders have the legal power to decide what the village should and should not do. This is reflected in the negotiations when the village decided if they wanted to continue into a second term of the pledge. Because village leaders did not support a second term, the efforts of local khenpos resulted in failure.

### **Religious teaching in Rakhor Village**

It is said that Khenpo Tsullo arrived at Rakhor in his own car with his own driver, so there were no grand welcoming or seeing-off ceremonies for him; this is very different from the kind of treatment received by other important lamas, who are usually welcomed and seen off with solemn ceremonies. In earlier days, when a very important lama visited, villagers usually rode their horses and later motorcycles and cars from five to ten kilometers away from their homes to receive him and from the same distance when he left. Khenpo Tsullo did not like this traditional reception ritual, so he has never allowed villagers to receive him in such a way.

In Rakhor village, Khenpo Tsullo offered two days of religious teachings, in which he gave herders Tibetan Buddhist empowerments and told them about the impact of the sin of killing, *dam pa gsum* or *sbyor dngos rjes gsum* (the three stages of actions - preparation, main part and conclusion), the empowerment of *Skyabs 'dro* (the three refuges of Tibetan Buddhism), the empowerment of *Dge Bsnyen kyi Sdom pa* (Buddhist vow for layman), and the teaching of *'od dpog med kyi rgyud bzhi bo 'i* (four practices to be born into the sukhavati paradise of the Amitabha Buddha). All of these are very basic Buddhist teachings and practices for lay people.

Though he was supposed to give religious teachings and empowerments, he spent most of the two days highlighting his concerns about the increase in the slaughter rate, urging herders to stop their sinful actions. He did this by teaching herders how sinful it is to take another's life, and how sinful actions would lead to bad results not only after their death, but also in serious misfortune in their current lives.

His teachings display an ambiguous attitude toward Tibetan herders. On the one hand, he thinks that the moral standards of the herders have been seriously degraded, and that the herders

in this region look more like Han Chinese than Tibetan *drokpa* (herders), who had a very good reputation in the past. On the other hand, he attributes the moral degradation of herders to the failures of Tibetan religious elites, who have not been able to teach herders in this region very much.

In his lectures he has also emphasized the collection of karma, the law of cause and effect, and this-worldly versus other-worldly happiness, highlighting the inevitability of death for everyone, from which Buddhism is the only refuge. He states that everyone needs to leave this world one day and go on to the next life, then asks, “Who can really help you? What is your real refuge? It is not your relatives, not your wealth, not the state, and there is nothing that can help you but Buddhism. It is all about what you are doing now and have done in the past.”

Integrating them with these Buddhist teachings and empowerments, he covered various topics, some directly related to development issues in Rakhor Village or even in all of the Tibetan regions. He placed great emphasis on the importance of Buddhism for Tibetan people and the proper ways of practicing it. At the same time he maintained that Tibetan people need development, but the correct way to achieve development is not the mass-slaughter of livestock for the meat market. He thinks that the future path for Tibetan herders lies not in herding livestock but in accessing education and active engagement with the market economy in non-sinful ways. For alternative ways of making a living, he gave very specific guidance, even suggesting how herders should spend the money they earn.

In addition, he repeated the teaching of the cause-and-effect law to highlight how herders’ current massive slaughter will cause serious misfortune not only in their next lives, but for their current lives in terms of the prosperity of both individuals and communities. He told herders that he is not a fortuneteller, but according to the Buddha’s teaching, they will definitely go to hell

after they die, because they have sold so many livestock to the meat market for the last two decades. He is also very sure that they will not be able to make a living (survive) if they continue to sell livestock to the meat market as they have been doing in recent years. Some of his opening statements and parts of his speech reflect the main tone of his lecture in Rakhor Village:

In the past, if lamas or khenpos came to the Mewa tribe, they came here most likely asking for donations such as butter, cheese, and livestock, which in the end they sold to slaughterhouses, a practice more like that of *Mi Rtag Pa' Chos* (non-Buddhists). I don't know if you have anything to donate, but I do not want even the least thing from you. I come here not asking for donations to give to the Buddhist authorities, but to introduce you to some basic Buddhist practices.

I know herders in these areas very well; I have been rescuing yaks from the slaughterhouse in Chengdu for the past half decade, so I have met some of you. Herders in Mewa have been selling large quantities of livestock to the meat market and using that money to build stupas and Buddhist statues, believing that they are making good karma, which is very wrong. This is a big mistake. I have never heard that killing is good karma in any way. Buddha never taught such a thing in any of his commands.

I come here to teach you real Buddhism, because you have chopped [sold or slaughtered] much of your livestock for the meat market for the last decade in the belief that you have been practicing Buddhism. If you want to practice Buddhism, the first thing that you should know is that killing and hurting others' lives is one of the most serious sins one could commit, and the first thing you should do in order to practice true Buddhism is to stop selling livestock to slaughterhouses. This is not the way to gain good karma. You need to know what kinds of action constitute good merit, and what kinds constitute negative karma.

I have traveled many times in these areas, but I was very upset to see that herders' belief in Buddhism has become increasingly weak. If you think carefully, it does not have to be this way; all of you are Tibetans, in particular Tibetan *drokpa*, who in the past were believed to be true Buddhists and very honest people. These days, let alone Tibetans, you can see many Han Chinese, particularly of this generation, practicing Buddhism.

It must sound as though I am scolding you and am angry with you -- I am not, but I need to point out your mistakes. I am supposed to come to give you Buddhist teachings, and I don't know why I slip into the topic of slaughter. I cannot help but talk about it, as we have a saying, "Where you have pain, there you touch." It is far less important to know how to practice Buddhism than to know what Buddhism is not.

On the afternoon of the second day of his teaching, he asked herders to raise their hands to take oaths for various commitments. As part of a layman's vow, a majority of the herders took oaths to refrain from drinking alcohol, killing human beings, cheating, including making money with superstitious practices, stealing, and committing sexually immoral acts that include working as prostitutes, having sex with prostitutes, and having relationships with other people's spouses. Many of the herder took vows not to smoke or gamble, which are not parts of the Buddhist layman's vow. As a part of the teaching of *'od dpog med kyi rgyud bzhi bo'i* (Four practices to be born in the Sukhavati paradise of the Amitabha Buddha), many herders promised to commit to a seven days' meditation of *'od dpog med kyi rgyud bzhi bo'i* every year for their entire lives. In addition, all monks, some elderly people and some young women, took vows not to eat meat for three years or longer, and many herders vowed not to eat meat on the most holy days of the year and two days every month. The most difficult vow for the entire village was the vow not to sell their yaks to the meat market for three years, and some herders even took an oath not to slaughter livestock for their own consumption. The majority of households in the village were able to keep their oaths for the initial three-year period, and most of households have been listening the tapes of Khenpo Tsullo's teachings in their village to reinforce their memory and to gain a better understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. Indeed it has become popular for Tibetans to listen to Khenpo Tsullo's teachings in many Kham and Amdo areas.

### **Impacts and Interpretations: The Failure of the Second Term of the Pledge**

The first term of the pledge for all Rakhor villagers began in late 2006, when Khenpo Tsullo visited the village, and ended in late 2009. After the term ended, even though the local khenpos in Rakhor monastery had made many efforts to encourage herders to make another

three-year or longer-term pledge, only a few households (accounting for about 10% of the total households) continued their vows for the second term, while most households did not swear oaths for the second time.

Many herders expressed that the material impacts of the first term of the movement had been significant, the most prominent of which were the reduction of cash income and an increased intensity of grazing in the pastures. Many herders who did not participate in the second term gave these two reasons as their main reasons for giving up the movement. However, my argument is that income reduction and overstocking in and of themselves cannot serve as full explanations for the failure of the movement, but rather that the herders' subjectivity is a prior ground upon which income reduction and overstocking either matter enough for herders to overcome their religious ideals, or not. I make this argument because among the households who participated in the second term were rich, medium, and poor households, who faced the same economic and ecological pressures as those households who chose not to participate. Explaining their participation entails a recognition that other forces beyond economic rationality and ecological considerations also play a role in decision-making. In particular, I argue that it is the outcome of the competing cultural forces of the secular neo-liberal market economy and new Tibetan Buddhist movements, operating at various scales, that produces a range of subjectivities, some of which are more strongly attuned to material needs and economic calculation, and others of which are more strongly governed by considerations of karma and other Buddhist norms. Before turning more specifically to these multi-scalar processes of subject formation, I want first to go over how herders articulate their experience of the movement and their rationales for continuing or giving up the second term.

Income reduction: better off or worse?

Yaks are the main source of income for most herders in Hongyuan. All herders in Rakhor Village herd yaks and no sheep. Among the 185 households of the village, 30 are rich, owning from 150 yaks to up to a maximum of 500 yaks; 70 households with 50-150 yaks are considered to be medium-wealthy. There are over 45 households with 15-50 yaks, while over 30 with fewer than 10 or none at all are seen as extremely poor, most of whom have settled in the towns. However, there are also about 10 households that have settled in town without any livestock but have been doing well economically with their businesses or part-time work.

Generally speaking, in the yak production system, the numbers of female yaks determines the differences of wealth between households in a community. This is because female yaks produce not only calves to extend or maintain the herd's size but also milk, which herders make into butter and cheese or sell directly to companies that produce milk-powder products. Female yaks are pregnant every other year, and on average each can produce 1.25 kilograms of milk per day for about four months in the summer (they do not produce very much of milk at other times). The purchasing price at the powdered-milk factory in 2006, the year in which Rakhor villagers took their oaths, was about 1.1 RMB per half kilogram and 1.7 RMB per half kilogram in 2011, which was the highest for the past few decades. Most households own about 25 – 40 female yaks, which bear calves every other year. Mortality for calves is about 35% on average. If a household has 30 female yaks, the household could earn about 9,900 RMB a year by selling milk or butter and cheese, and the household would have at least 4 adult (male) yaks weighing 200 kilograms, which would earn 8,000 RMB (2000 RMB per yak in 2006, and about 2500 RMB per yak with 125 kilograms in 2011; the weight of the largest yak, worth 6600 RMB in 2011, is about 400 kilograms) to sell to the meat market. Therefore, theoretically most households lost

45% of their income by refraining from selling yaks to the meat market. However, different groups interpret this reduction differently and the levels of impact vary according to livestock numbers owned by each household.

*Households that took vows for the second term*

Those households that have taken oaths for a second term include those from all economic categories: very rich households, economically middle ones, and very poor households. Some of them have expressed that they feel there is no difference between selling and not selling the yaks for slaughter in terms of their income and livelihood, saying that their effort of collecting positive karma made them feel no different in terms of quality of life. Other herders explicitly state that the income reduction is significant, but interpreted the reduced income as spiritual gain. They explained that when they sold many yaks, they made lots of money but always felt guilty and fearful about the associated sin. However, when they did not sell yaks, they felt much relief from guilt and assumed they were making good karma for their current and next lives, which they claimed is much more important to them than accumulating money. They also argued that there are many ways to make money. In addition to selling dairy products, which is another source of income for herders, many have been selling livestock, mostly female and young yaks, to other herders who promise to use those yaks for non-slaughter purposes, for instance, transportation and milking. Other income sources include doing small business, collecting herbs, working part-time jobs in towns, and so on. Some herders have further claimed that the money they earned from yak sales was spent very quickly, but that the lower income they earn now from activities such as selling milk and collecting herbs is better-quality income that lasts longer. In other words, they claimed that monetary income from sinful activities is less useful and runs out more quickly than income from other activities.



Herders state that the movement has also had impact on their way of spending. A herder said that when they sold livestock to market in the past, they sometimes faced serious shortage of cash in the spring, because livestock do not produce milk or they are too weak to sell during this time period. But after they took the oath of not selling their livestock to the meat market, they have not been any worse off in terms of cash shortage during the later winter or springtime, as might be expected. He explained that when they sell livestock to the meat market, they have more money, but they spend more, particularly on things like gambling, alcohol, eating at restaurants or going to teahouses, or on other forms of entertainment like cell phones and TV sets. Khenpo Tsullo was greatly concerned about this, saying that Tibetan herders have been spending most of their money on unnecessary things, including gambling, purchasing coral and animal pelts, and making donations to monasteries. However, when they took their oaths, herders cut these unnecessary expenditures, which Tibetans call “*brlag*” or “waste.” Furthermore, they have been more careful in spending their money with better planning.

Herders have also deployed an alternative strategy for selling their yaks to reduce income reduction. That is, the slaughter renunciation movement changed how herders dispose of their yaks. During the first term of the oath, some households sold their yaks not for meat but for other purposes, a new phenomenon. For instance, they sold female yaks, which most herders do not sell to the meat market until they are very old; they also sold two- or three-year-old yaks to wealthier families, who used the opportunity to expand their herd size, or a few adult male yaks to those who promised not to sell them to the slaughterhouses at least for the period of the first term. During the three-year pledge, the rule established by the monastery was that if anyone wanted to sell their livestock, they had to come to the monastery to register the livestock and make sure that the buyer took an oath not to sell the livestock to the meat market for at least three

years. However, the income that the herders generated from these methods is not as good as they can earn from selling yaks to the meat market, because, first, many herders did not want to sell their female yaks considering the sustainability of their herd's size and milk production. The prices of male and small yaks sold on the condition of not slaughtering for the three-year term were as low as half of the original prices, or even lower. Therefore, there is still an impact on the income of the herders, but the level of impact varies from household to household.

They said that even though reduction in income is for every household whose members took vows, its impacts are different. For instance, if a household of five members had around forty female yaks among a hundred, the household would not need to look for other income sources if they had taken vows, because the dairy products the household got from the female yaks would bring in enough cash to make ends meet. However, a household of five family members owning fewer than twenty female yaks would have to look for other supplemental income, because the dairy products from twenty yaks would not be sufficient to support a five-person household.

After they stopped selling yaks for the promised period, herders who owned only a small number of livestock have had to look for other ways of making a living, such as collecting herbs, operating small businesses, and finding temporary jobs. However, those alternative income resources have been very limited for herders, because many of them do not read or write Chinese, which is very important in China for obtaining a job or successfully doing business.

In addition to those interpretations of impacts, it is very common for villagers to attribute their positive experience in the slaughter renunciation movement to the "*dkon mchog gsum*," which means refuge in the Buddhist three jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. They think

that it is their positive karma collection through slaughter renunciation that has helped them to enjoy a good life even though they are losing some of their income.

The most unaffected group is those who do not have any or many yaks, most of whom took oaths for the second period of pledge, because they did not have much livestock to sell anyway. There are about 40 households settled down either in Hongyuan County town or in Rakhor Village. Some of them have been working in businesses, while others work as part-time laborers on seasonal construction projects, meat processing in the slaughterhouses in summer, cleaning, and other jobs.

*Households whose members did not take vows for the second term*

Many herders at the medium economic level stated that Khenpo Tsullo's teaching has enhanced their understanding of the proper way of practicing Buddhism and increased their awareness of their sinful deeds of selling their animals to the meat market. Many expressed their great worry and regret for having sold so many livestock in the past. However, at the same time, they stated that participating in the movement had already had a significant impact on their income, so they did not continue their vows for the second term.

They said that the primary reason for their non-participation in the second term is that a majority of them had participated in the Housing Project for Herders (牧民定居工程), which the state designed to settle down herders in small towns, transforming "backward herders" into modern, settled herders by encouraging them to live in more comfortable houses rather than tents. With the settlement project of 2010, to build a house, herders needed to invest over 60,000 RMB, including loans of 30,000 RMB from the state bank and 20,000 RMB in cash, in addition to the state's contribution of about 16,000 RMB. Thus, herders stated that they needed to sell

their yaks to earn cash in order to build the house through the settlement project.<sup>26</sup> The Housing Project for Herders started in 2008, and has covered most of the townships in Hongyuan County. By the end of 2010, about 130 households among 180 in Rakhor Village had built their new houses with the help of the state housing project. The incentives for herders to participate in the project include the subsidy, a five-year, interest-free loan from the state, and permission to build houses in their current locations. The cost for their new house adds to other costs including education for the children, medical care for family members, funerals, transportation, communication, and other costs. In addition to that, many herders want to buy cars and want to decorate their new houses, which requires a greater amount of money compared to in the past.

#### Pressure on pastures: unintended impact of the movement

The other reason that some herders have expressed their unwillingness to participate in the second term is the discrepancy between the carrying capacity of their pastures and the needs of their livestock. The long-term impact of the slaughter renunciation movement on the pastures is reflected in the accumulation of livestock as a result of the ban on selling livestock for slaughter.

Yaks live for around fifteen years and females produce calves every other year. It takes five to six years for female yaks to produce calves and milk, which is a very important source of income and sustenance for many Tibetan pastoralists. Herders generally keep female yaks to expand their herds and do not sell them to the slaughterhouses except in two circumstances: a herder needs cash urgently but does not have male yaks to sell; or, the female yaks become too old, and herders sell them before they die naturally in winter or spring when they are relatively

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<sup>26</sup> Note, however, that there were also households who participated in the Housing Project for Herders who also participated in the second term of the movement.

weak and malnourished.<sup>27</sup> Most female yaks are pregnant every other year and the survival rate of calves is about 50-80%. If a herder has 40 female yaks, which is the average number most households have, each year half of 40 female yaks will produce about 15 calves. Thus, for the three-year term of the slaughter renunciation movement, the number of livestock for the household was increased by 45 yaks, which is a one-third to one-half increase in the total number of livestock owned by an ordinary household.

Before motorcycles and cars became widely available two to three decades ago, some yaks were trained as pack animals by their owners, but this tradition has faded away from many of the pastoral areas in Hongyuan in recent years. With the state infrastructure projects, dirt roads were extended into many of the pastures that are close to the towns, so herders in those areas have shifted their transportation from yaks and horses to motorcycles and cars. Only in those pastures located in very remote areas which have yet to be reached by roads have herders continued to use the traditional means of transportation -- yaks for carrying freight and horses for riding.

Therefore, with these changes, almost all male yaks become meat products. Thirty years ago, or during the era of the commune system, yaks were not to be sold until the males had reached the age of at least six years. This has changed in recent years. Male yaks have lately been sold as early as when they are three years old. Many herders like to expand their numbers of female yaks and sell most of the males, on the one hand, to reduce pressure on their pastures, and, on the other hand, to recoup their increasing expenses.

The recent increasing slaughter rate is also associated with state grassland policies. In Hongyuan County, the winter pastures were allocated to individual households in 1996, and since then each household has a limited pasture on which to graze their livestock (Banks, 2003;

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<sup>27</sup> The best time to sell yaks is from late through early winter, when they are in their best condition, while later winter and early spring are the worst times in terms of prices, because yaks are very weak and many die due to heavy snows and other natural hazards.

Bauer, 2005; Richard et al., 2006; Yan, 2005). In addition, for the past decade, the numbers of livestock owned by most households have reached the maximum that their winter pastures could sustain, and the wealthier households have had to sell their livestock every year to keep a balance between their herd size and pasture capacity while there are ever fewer pastures for rent. However, whether for the short or long term, the slaughter renunciation movement has become an attempt to reverse the increasing slaughter rate of recent years.

The contradiction between the desire to expand herds and the shortage of pasture has been an especially serious issue for those households that own more livestock than their pasture can sustain. They usually rent additional pasture in order to accommodate the increased grazing intensity brought about by the movement. These pastures are generally rented from herders who own no livestock or fewer livestock than the maximum that their pastures can sustain.

For many wealthy households, the economic reason is not their first reason for giving up the second term of the vow. Many of them have savings in banks or private loans, thus, financial limitations are not the main reason for them to give up the second term of the pledge. In addition, without selling livestock to the meat market, the income from dairy products should be sufficient for them to cover their annual expenditure. The main reason for them is the pressure on their pastures, because most of them have more yaks than their pastures can sustain, so they have been renting pastures from others. The slaughter renunciation movement has intensified the demands on pasture. One herder, who is the richest in the village and a previous village leader, stated that he had to sell lots of livestock that he had not been willing to sell for the past three years. He said that the three-year period of refraining from slaughter could only extend the lives of those animals for a couple of years, that he is very sorry that he had to start selling them again, and did so only because he did not have enough pasture to sustain so many male yaks, which become

useless if they are not sold for meat. He said he has had enough money in the bank to build a house, but he does not have enough pasture to sustain the increasing herd size.

During the previous three-year pledge, in order to ease the pressure on their pastures and increase their income some herders had also sold dozens of female yaks (*'bri*) and less productive, young yaks to others who promised to keep them for at least three years; they also entrusted adult male yaks to others for at least three years. However, giving (as opposed to selling) livestock happened only rarely. Since the end of the first term, many of those rich households have sold many of the male yaks that they had been holding, easing some of the pressure on their pastures. However, for those households who took oaths for the second term, the pressure on their pastures is even greater, and their approaches to deal with this challenge are also different. For instance herder Gonlo, who pledged for the second term, had 120-130 yaks in July 2011, among which about 45 were females producing milk. Another 35 yaks were males between seven and twelve years old, many of which would have been sold to the meat market if the owner had not renewed his oath. Seven of those male yaks are *tshe thars*, life-released yaks that will not ever be slaughtered for the entire life of the yak, which is different from the slaughter renunciation movement (see introduction). During the first term, Gonlo did sell four yaks for the price of 1,000 RMB each. Because Gonlo sold those yaks only for transportation, but not for the meat market, this price was as low as only one fourth of the price that he could have earned if he had sold them to the meat market (and had not taken the oath). The herder who bought Gonlo's yaks lives in another township, and promised that he was buying those yaks not for slaughter but for transportation. Since selling the yaks, Gonlo has been checking to determine whether the herders have sold any of his yaks to the meat market. He has said he wanted to sell more, and there are many people who have said they want to buy his yaks, but it has been

increasingly difficult to find reliable people to whom to sell his yaks as *tshe thar*. He said that there were many stories about how buyers have cheated sellers and broken their promises.

There are also many rumors that some herders have sold yaks to people from other places who have not participated in the slaughter renunciation movement, and that these people have in turn sold them on the market. On one occasion, a man from another area came to Rakhor village and bought many yaks, saying he was buying them for the purpose of milk production. But after a while some villagers found out that the man had sold all the yaks to Chinese merchants. Concerned about the situation, the villagers contacted Khenpo Tsullo, who sent money, bought all of those animals back and released them as *tshe thar*.

Gonlo had also sold another pair of two-year-old yaks to a herder who said he would use them for breeding (种子牛). He sold them for 1,000 RMB each, which was half of the price he would have asked if he had sold them to the slaughterhouses. Whenever he sells yaks to other herders, there is always a guarantor (担保人) who guarantees that the buyer will not sell them to the meat market.

Among those who took oaths, Raga is a very rich herder who took the oath for his entire life. He is considered wealthy in the village, owning about 220 yaks in 2011, including about 70 productive females, but only 2 adult males. The reason he has only two is that since his taking of oath, he has been selling his male yaks when they were two years old so that they would not be sold for at least three years, because they are too young to sell for meat. Those young male yaks brought 700 RMB to 1,000 RMB each. The yaks he currently owns are mostly female and 犏牛 (a type of cross-breed of yaks and cattle). Those yaks produce milk, so it is not necessary to sell them to the meat market. He has also given some other male adult yaks to other herders without charging them any money. Another strategy to make a profit from yaks other than from their



milk is to sell female and cross-bred yaks to other herders, because of the probability that those yaks will be slaughtered for the meat market is small.

Serwa and Soko have taken similar approaches. Serwa had about 220 yaks in 2010 with about 70 productive female yaks and about 40 adult males. Soko had 150 yaks including 40 productive females and 30 adult males. Both of them have their males out in their pastures. In 2010, both were able to give 20 yaks (12 owned by Serwa and 8 by Soko, which could have been worth as much as 100,000 RMB if sold in the meat market) to Khenpo Tsullo, who gave them all as *tshe thar* to his relatives in Luhuo County in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan. To make this possible another lama paid for the truck that carried the yaks to their new homes.

To give male yaks to lamas is the best way to reduce the numbers of male yaks in the pastures, but there are fewer lamas who are willing to take *tshe thar* yaks because they also have found it difficult to find places to take care of them. Those households which had made their yaks *tshe thar* did not want to give them to other herders, very few of whom still use yaks for transportation, because they do not trust other herders to keep the yaks as, even many herders have said they would.

Another reason those households did not want to give their yaks to others was that, if they did, those herders would keep the yaks they had just received but would then sell their own yaks to the meat market instead, because they would have received new yaks that could be used for transportation or other purposes. This is a problem for khenpos as well. Rabga and his brothers have been told by their khenpos that giving their yaks to other herders is not a good way to ease the pressure on the pastures. Even if the yaks they gave away were safe in the keeping of a new household, the yaks owned originally by the household might be slaughtered, because now the household would have new yaks to replace their own. This is problem, because while some yaks

are saved, others are killed instead. The religious implication for this is that those herders who took the oath would gain the same sins in the “causal chain” of killing. That is, in the law of cause and effect, killing caused by one's indirect actions commits equal sin as though he/she did the killing insofar as herders are aware that their giving away of their yaks will cause other yaks to be sold for slaughter.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, to give male adult yaks to lamas is the safest way to handle those useless yaks, because lamas would not slaughter them, but now the problem is that lamas are not taking many of those yaks.

Serwa did not sell any of his male adult yaks, while Soko sold two as *tshé thar*, which earned only one fourth of the meat-market price. When I asked what they were going to do with all those useless yaks to avoid overuse of pasture, they said they will keep them until they die naturally or happen to be killed by wolves. Another way they release the pressure on the pastures is to rent pasture from their neighbors who have more pasture than their livestock need (Yeh and Gaerrang, 2011).

I also asked if it is acceptable to release those yaks into the mountains on their summer pastures, which are shared among a group of households, and let the animals go wherever they will, so that they do not need to graze those yaks on their own winter pastures. This is also not acceptable from a religious perspective, because herders have to make their best effort to prevent those yaks from being stolen by thieves who would sell them for slaughter.

The Slaughter renunciation movement has forced herders to hold those useless male yaks on pastures, with two negative impacts. First, these unproductive yaks consume a significant amount of grass that otherwise can be grazed by female yaks, which will contribute to income generation. Second, the accumulation of male yaks has become a burden for the pasture that does not bring any benefit for the herders. The state and many Chinese ecological scientists propose

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<sup>28</sup> This is the herders' interpretations as well as that of the local khenpos.

that grassland degradation is severe and the overstocking is the main cause for it (Harris, 2009; Wang et al., 2005; Zhao and Zhou, 2005).<sup>29</sup> If that is the case, then the slaughter renunciation movement has increased the stocking rate by accumulating more livestock on the pastures. Whatever the case may be, one fact is that herders have been facing difficulty in handling these male yaks. The slaughter renunciation movement is creating a new quandary for Tibetans in terms of whether to follow the lamas or what they know to be best for their grassland.

The problem of tension between the pasture and livestock increase is a commonly expressed concern by many herders. In responding to this issue, Khenpo Tsullo suggests herding breeding yaks and female yaks separately, so that the number of yaks does not increase to the level that pastures cannot sustain any more. He states, “Birth control is a common measure in dealing with over population of human beings, why couldn’t it be used for the livestock population control? It is much better to prevent livestock from coming into being than to kill them as living beings.” However, this measure goes against another interest of herders. That is, herders want to have more female livestock, which they do not need to sell to the meat market, but from which they can benefit from dairy products, which is encouraged by khenpos.

On the one hand, herders feel guilty about selling livestock to the meat market, believing that it will result in negative impacts in their current lives and on other lives to come. Such worries are instilled by cultural tradition and reinforced by religious leaders. On the other hand, the current secular neo-liberal social structure, including grassland privatization (Fernandez-Gimenez, 2001; Williams, 1996; Yan et al., 2005), housing projects, infrastructure, and other,

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<sup>29</sup> A. Some Suggestions by the State Council on the better and faster development in pastoral areas of China. The State Council[2011] No.17.

B. A Report in the pre-feasibility study of Rangeland Ecological Compensation in Tibet Autonomous Region by Committee of Population, Resources and Environment of CPPCC. 2008.

C: Some Suggestions by the State Council on the protection and construction of grassland of China. The State Council [2002] No.19.

D: The National Plan for the Conservation of Grasslands by Ministry of Agriculture. [2007] No.17

has become another imperative to force them to sell more yaks to the meat market. Tibetan herders have been making decisions about their livestock within those competing forces.

### **Competing Forces of Subject Formation Operating at Different Scales**

The reduction in income and the increased pressures on pastures were important reasons for herders who decided not to take a second vow. However, these rationales on their own cannot answer questions such as: Why are there some herders who have continued their vows for a second term (or for even longer) given that they knew the impacts of the movement on their incomes as well as on their pastures? And why do khenpos from Larung Gar so frequently express frustration about trying to persuade herders in eastern pastoral areas of the Tibetan Plateau compared to herders from other areas? To answer these questions, we must turn to processes of subject formation that work at different scales.

During my field research, I observed that there are geographical differences in the relative strength of the secular based neo-liberal force and the influence of Tibetan Buddhist elites. If one considers the larger geographical location of Rakhor, then it makes sense that many herders in Rakhor Village did not continue their oaths for the second term. Rakhor is in the Amdo region, where khenpos from Larung Gar have found it very difficult to bring herders into the slaughter renunciation movement compared to many parts of Kham. First, this is because herders in these areas own larger numbers of livestock than herders in other parts of the Plateau. Second, these regions have been more tightly economically integrated into the larger market of major cities in the western China. South-eastern Amdo is much closer to major Chinese cities (Chengdu, Lanzhou, and Xining). Furthermore, they are further from the center of this movement, Larung Gar, where the religious atmosphere is extremely strong. Thus, herders in Hongyuan feel

stronger pressure from economic expansion, but they have less pressure or influence from religious forces than do herders in the Kham region.

In the Kham area, religious influence on herders is much stronger than pastoral areas in Amdo, because big religious institutes of Nyingma School like Larung Gar are located centrally in pastoral areas, and herders have been exposed to many more religious teachings and rituals than the herders in southeast Amdo. Herders in the Kham region are relatively less integrated into larger Chinese markets than southeastern Amdo, because of their greater distance from the major cities. This is why khenpos from Larung Gar frequently expressed frustration in their attempts to promote the movement in most of the Amdo region. What this indicates is that geographically the secular neo-liberal technique in south-eastern Amdo has had a stronger impact than the religious impact. In other words, Rakhor is an area where one can see the extent to which the competing forces have been playing critical roles in the progress of the movement that reflects competing subject formation.

The fragmented achievement of neo-liberal force is reflected not only at the larger geographic scale but also at the scale of the translocal and village-level kinship networks. For example, three related households who took oaths for the second term had three brothers who are religious figures in their local monastery. One of the brothers is a respected local khenpo who has studied at Larung Gar and has been very active in promoting the slaughter renunciation movement. Another is held to be a reincarnation of a lama and the third one is a monk. All of these monk brothers have very high reputations in the village and households, and their relatives are very proud of their connection to three respected religious figures. Another household is home to the head khenpo of Rakhor Monastery. These households who took oaths for the second

term were strongly influenced by khenpos who are family members. The kinship relationship in these cases strengthened the force of Buddhist subject formation in these cases.

The other families who took oaths are those who asked for religious services from Larung Gar. For the last few years, it has become popular for many herders in Hongyuan to ask Larung Gar to perform funerals for their departed ones. If a household asks for a funeral service from Larung Gar, its members need to take the vow not to slaughter livestock for at least three years. Most of those who did not have livestock took vows anyway. The provision of services and the authority of monks and khenpos from Larung Gar are all components of the religious force that works to constitute Tibetan Buddhist subjects.

Therefore, the larger geographic differences in the influences of two different forces (secular neo-liberal force and religious force) together with the differences at the household and kinship level help explain why the numbers of households who took vows the second time are very small, not exceeding 10% of all households of the village, but not non-existent. Considering the fact that most households have not taken vows for the second term, I argue that to some extent the secular neo-liberal technique in pastoral areas in the eastern plateau has had a decisive influence over the herders' decisions. It is also clear that provision of religious services and teachings has been the main leverage for khenpos from Larung Gar to carry out their own agenda. However, from the herders' perspective this is not a direct quid pro quo but rather a process of becoming subject to Larung Gar's religious influence and force.

At the individual scale, among those who chose to take the second term vow, it is clear that religious forces became more dominant in subject formation than secular neo-liberalism. Among those who chose not to take the second vow, however, the results were more mixed. Although economic calculation dominated over religious concerns in the decision about the

slaughter renunciation movement, these herders are still to varying extents also religious subjects. The struggle between forces of subject formation is not a zero sum game but rather one that produces a hybrid spectrum of subjectivities in which secular market and Buddhist norms have a greater or lesser force.

This contestation between secular neo-liberal force and religious force is also reflected in the everyday conversation of herders. Many in Rakhor expressed the belief that since Khenpo Tsullo's teaching they have seen lots of change in herders' adherence to Buddhist tenets, because now herders have become more aware and more sensitive when they sell their livestock. One herder said, "Now we know better about our religion. In the past, herders have never hesitated to sell their livestock, and now even though we sell them, but we have become more sensitive and we have to think about it. The fundamental change in persuading herders to renounce selling livestock to meat market will take a longer time and more effort." This represents an enhancement of religious influence on herders' lives, and recalls Khenpo Tsullo's diagnosis of current conditions in Rakhor Village:

I don't understand why herders in this community have become the way you are now, drawing no distinction between right and wrong. The more I think about it, you shouldn't be the only ones to be blamed; we [lamas, khenpos, and monks] should also be blamed, because we have not done well our job of teaching you Buddhism and the proper ways of practicing it.

Three or four years ago, when I came across some young Tibetans in Longri Ba Township of Hongyuan, I observed that they had already lost their Tibetan-ness. Yet, from one perspective, you lay people should not be blamed. There have been many lamas who had performed religious performances, given religious empowerment, and collecting religious donations from you, but very few lamas have given you decent religious teachings that introduce you to the real understanding of Buddhism through face-to-face education and communication. So it is no wonder that you don't understand Buddhism; but, in the future, if you want to believe in and practice Buddhism, you have to understand it. As I said you Mewa people are Tibetans, particularly you are decent *drokpas* [herders], and you are not Han Chinese.

For Khenpo Tsullo, his religious teachings are efforts to more strongly assert khenpos' religious influence over Tibetan herders so that Tibetan herders act according with the Tibetan Buddhist norms. With his religious teachings, Tibetan herders in this region will not sell as much as they do now.

However, another herder said, "when you read and listen to khenpos' religious teachings, you know how serious a mistake you are making in selling livestock to the meat market; but when you see the changes around you and the things you need to catch up, you have to sell as much as possible. It is totally two worlds for me." A monk told me that the reason for the failure of the second round of pledge is that herders have been exposed too much to the outside world, and there are so many things they want and they have to buy these days. Needs today are not limited to livestock, but also expenditures for education, healthcare, house-building, and competition over cars, jewelry and pelts.

All of these articulations and struggles over the slaughter renunciation movement show a cultural politics of subject formation by different forces. More importantly, they demonstrate not only that the achievement of secular neo-liberal development is fragmented but also that the achievement of religious force is fragmented. They are successful in some cases and fail in others. Many herders expressed the view that the slaughter renunciation movement has had a significant impact on herders' religious belief by reinforcing it or deepening their understanding of Buddhism. Many households have tapes of Khenpo Tsullo's teachings of 2006 in Rakhor Village. Many said they have been listening to the tapes once in while. Indeed, listening to Khenpo Tsullo's teachings is very common, even in those places where there is no slaughter renunciation movement. In Rakhor, herders have been able to keep other vows they made during



the religious teaching even those who gave up the vows on the slaughter renunciation movement for the second term.

It is in this contested subject-formation process that the herders made decisions about their participation in the slaughter renunciation movement. In other words, this is how religious force and secular based neo-liberal economic force competed to bring herders into their own value systems. A more important aspect is that this decision making process is also one in which herders become the subjects of those different forces, becoming a certain type of people who are guided by a certain value system or who are going back and forth between two competing systems.

### **Tibetan Middlemen**

Another newly-emerged group, middlemen, can further demonstrate how those two forces are competing in their formation of herders as certain subjects. As a very small and exceptional but important group emerging in recent years, middlemen are those whose main business is to purchase yaks from herders and then sell them to bigger businessmen or assist even bigger Han businessman from major Chinese cities. In the Buddhist tradition the trade in livestock for slaughter is considered to be a very sinful deed, so it was a business that only Han and Muslims engaged in. Only in the last two decades have Tibetan middlemen become involved in the business, which has become very controversial among Tibetan herders in Rakhor.

There are about 10 Tibetan herders working as middlemen in Hongyuan County Town. Most of them are from two villages that traditionally belong to one tribe and which are currently under the same administrative township as Rakhor Village. It is significant that none of those middlemen are from Rakhor Village. The two villages have more government-employed workers

and have more Tibetan middlemen, but they have received less religious influences from khenpos and lamas.

A majority of the middlemen were relatively poor before they began participating in the business. Most of them expressed that they have been doing this business because life forced them to do so. They were either poor or they had too many debts that need to be paid. When we had conversations about how much money they were making compared with the money they made before, they showed great pride, but when we talked about the sins related to this business, they felt very uncomfortable. Most of them said they were about to leave the business once they had enough money to pay their debts or meet expenditures, but the fact is that many of them have been doing it for many years with occasional breaks from the market.

The most successful Tibetan middleman refused to be interviewed, because he was very uncomfortable about what he has been doing. Other middlemen agreed to be interviewed, but most expressed guilt about their sinful deeds. Some of them showed true ambiguity. One herder said he saw that there are lots of Han and Hui people who have become very rich by running slaughterhouses, but he did not see anything bad happen to them even when they slaughter livestock everyday. But he said he felt there is something wrong with his family, because his wife has been unable to conceive a child for many years, and this may have something to do with the business he has engaged in. Another herder left the business for about two years in seeking other business opportunities such as yak skin and fur trading, which is less sinful, but he found out that the money he made from yak skins and furs is far less than from livestock trading, so he came back to his old business, even though it is very sinful. He said he would be stopping in the coming year. One elderly herder left the business a few years ago, because the lama of the tribe had forced him to. In a similar way, seeing the business as very sinful, many said their relatives

and parents had been putting great pressure on them to leave it. However, all of them were excited about how their material conditions improved since engaging in the business. One fact is that they have been making more money than most other herders, and their income is as high as 100,000 RMB per year, three times a herder's normal annual income.

Many Tibetan middlemen appreciate Chinese businessmen have become very rich through livestock trading in the meat market, but very few of them want to be as fully engaged as the Chinese businessmen are, claiming that if they had other income sources, they would stop doing the business they do now. Like the overwhelming majority of Tibetans living in the PRC today, these middlemen consider themselves to be Buddhists (*nangpa*) and do the same practice that others do, and as a result of some lamas' teachings, some have stopped participating in the livestock business. However, with the changes in their material conditions and their constant exposure to the slaughterhouses and the meat market, one common impression for me during the interviews is that all of middlemen I interviewed had become less sensitive to the sins, merit, slaughter, and livestock trade compared with other herders that I have interviewed. While many herders see herding sheep as very sinful (because sheep multiply quickly and thus more must be slaughtered), one Tibetan middleman was even thinking about stable breeding of Tibetan sheep, in contrast to the less efficient (in his view) free-range herding.

The middlemen have become a controversial subject among Tibetans, Han Chinese, and government officials. Other Tibetan herders see them very negatively while Han Chinese and many government officials see them very positively, showcasing them as the first Tibetans who have been able to free themselves from old ideas, superstitions, and traditional constraints. Some people see them as the most capable persons, who know how to make money and improve their condition, but others see them as the most sinful persons, who do not care about the next life,

disrespect lamas and flout Buddhist norms. Many herders think that this would be the last option for making a living, even if they can make more money than they can earn from herding. They know that livestock trading for slaughter and herding sheep can bring them more money, but they do not want to do so because they believe that these businesses involve too much sin.

In Tibetan society, I found that the middlemen are evaluated by two different standards: secular neo-liberalism represented by the state and many non-Buddhist Chinese citizens, and Tibetan Buddhist value system. For the former, yaks are raw materials for their commercial product, meat, that can be exchanged in the meat market, and they value yaks in the cash income, weight and quality of meat, and other market oriented values. For the latter, yaks are sentient beings that are no different from human beings in samsara. And, human deeds, whether killing or taking care of yaks with compassion, will have ramifications for their relationships in many reincarnated lives to come. Tibetan middlemen have been venturing between these two value systems. Tibetan middlemen's contradictory articulation, ambiguity about their business, and double evaluation about their work, all suggest a situation in which they have been caught up in the competing cultural forces that work when they make their uneasy decisions about their businesses.

At the core of the articulation between the two value systems is a debate about capitalism and neo-liberalism: can the logic of the market expand into every sphere of life (as neo-liberalism suggests) or should it be severely limited, and why? Polanyi (1944) argued that the expansion of the market logic, for example into the "fictitious commodities" of land and labor would inevitably lead to the destruction of society without checks. Here the Tibetan khenpos are making a different argument, based on ethics, but one that is also about a resistance to commodification of everything. Grounded on different value systems, Tibetan middlemen are a

group of people that Tibetan khenpos do not want to see but they are something that secular neo-liberal force wants Tibetan herders to become. But because there has not been any slaughter renunciation movement in the tribe where most middlemen come from, so far, no religious interventions have occurred for Tibetan middlemen to stop their business. Thus, these middlemen, though very few in number compared to the majority of Tibetan herders who do not engage livestock trading for slaughter, are a critical site where struggles between the values of market competition and self-entrepreneurship and Buddhist ethics of selfhood are particularly clear.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, I argue that Tibetan middlemen and Tibetan herders' decisions about their participation in the second term of the slaughter renunciation movement demonstrates how the forces of secular neo-liberalism and Tibetan Buddhism shape Tibetan herders into certain kinds of subjects. Thinking about governmentality and contestations, the case of the slaughter renunciation movements in Rakhor and Tibetan middlemen shows that contestation exists not only in the various social movements and resistance in political realms, but it also exists among different cultural forces in the creation of what Ong and Zhang call governmentality, which, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, is a "small governmentality." The small governmentality can be applied equally to other forces like religion that also have the ability to shape the condition in which its followers act in the ways they are supposed to act. Just as neo-liberal forces create market oriented subjects, religion makes people think, act, speak spiritually and religiously in a way that establishes a relationship in which one is in the position of leading

and giving meanings to new cultures (chapter Five) and others are the ones that should be led by and receive their guidance passively.

In the Tibetan Buddhist case, Buddhist teachings, rituals, chanting, performances, movements, and all religious facilities (e.g. stupas, monasteries, etc.) all work together to create conditions in which people act and think in certain ways, so that religious leaders assert power over people they spiritually rule. Indeed, the religious power of the slaughter renunciation movement has permeated people's minds with the flow of the fragmented but persistent religious power translated from many discursive practices and articulations. They include the actual religious teachings, empowerments, the various vows villagers took during the teachings and their follow-up, the religious spaces (monastery), the processes in which the religious teaching are prepared, organized, and actually take place, the way khenpos, monks, and herders interact, religious gatherings, and even the herders' discursive conversations in their everyday lives about the teachings and movement. Yet, the achievement of this power infusion is fragmented, partial, but persistent when it competes with other forces. That is, even though most herders in Rakhor did not participate in the second term, the slaughter renunciation movement has had a significant impact on their lives by reinforcing their awareness of Buddhist concepts and sensitivity about the sin of certain deeds, bringing herders into other vows and religious practices, and being able to bring small numbers of households into the second term of the movement.

Indeed, the process of cultural contestation between secular neo-liberalism and Tibetan religious force is exactly the process of the achievement of Foucault's governmentality, which includes the state and the arrangement of neo-liberal social economic conditions that shape the acts of people it governs, and which I prefer to call "big governmentality." In pastoral Tibet, this transformation, which pushes Tibetan herders into the capitalist social relationship, has

engendered an overlap between state development projects and khenpos' recommendations for Tibetan herders. I will explore this in Chapter Six and the Conclusion. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate that development is not only contested between the state secular neo-liberal force and Tibetan Buddhist' religious teachings, but also between different groups of Tibetans.

## Chapter Five

### Contested development: Buddhism and development in Tibet

To make a living is to make development, and development is mostly understood as material improvement...what else do many of our old cultural beliefs do for us other than hindering the development of Tibetan society? Those old traditions deeply hurt our material development, the development of human nature, and human rights. (52-53)

-- ZhogsDung in his book *dpyod shes rgyang 'bod* (The Call of Rationality) (2008)

Traditional culture -- or Tibetan Buddhism -- can eradicate most of our suffering and bring peace and happiness to people's lives, so it is indispensable to our lives, let alone its benefit of providing us with happiness and fulfillment in the next life. However, some people see the traditions handed down by our ancestors, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, as an obstacle or danger to the Tibetan people. Their views show no more than their ignorance of global trends and their lack of understanding of the longer history of Tibet, and their words are no more than the repetition of biased opinions (124).

The recent argument that practicing Buddhism will hinder the economic development of Tibet is a false argument that is based on a mistaken understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. Buddha has forbidden ten misdeeds for lay people, but he has never forbidden lay people from improving their economy and culture (332).

-- Khenpo Tsullo (2003) in his book *Yang Dag Lam Gyi 'jug Sgo Blo Gsar Yid Kyi Dga' Ston* (*A Gate to the Right Path: A feast for the novice*) (hereafter, *Lam Gyi 'Jug Sgo*)

For the last half-century, development as the most powerful discourse in modern times (Crush, 1995; Gupta, 1998; Shrestha, 1995; Yeh, 2007), has been fiercely debated among Tibetans around issues like the role of Tibetan Buddhism in development, the relationship between the need to change and the need for preservation, what constitutes Tibetan culture, and so forth. Both Khenpo Tsullo, one of the most influential khenpos, and ZhogsDung, the most radical writer, are concerned about the development issue in Tibet, but they have very different positions regarding the future development of Tibet. How should we understand their debate



over the Buddhist role in development in light of development as cultural contestation that is often framed as a contestation between trustees versus locals? And, how has Khenpo Tsulpo been engaging with modern discourses of development, science, and technology?

In the critique studies of development, on the one hand, development can be understood in the dual sense of both "little d" development as a name for expanding capitalist relations, and big D development as intentional projects of improvement (Hart, 2001). On the other hand, recent studies examine development as a specific cultural and historical project that is contested materially and symbolically by locals (Moore, 2000; Li, 1999, 2007), and most of them situate development in a dichotomous relationship between the trustees as visitors or outsiders and the local as home for the transformation. This chapter demonstrates that development has not only become a cultural contestation between the trustees and the target group, but it is also contested among different groups that most scholars call the "local." Situating development in Tibetan society, this chapter demonstrates that development is not only contested meaning making between trustees like the state and local communities, but it has also become a fiercely debated topic among different groups within Tibetan society. That is, while many Tibetan radical secularists and the state discourse see Tibetan Buddhism as an obstacle for Tibetans to be developed, preventing Tibetans from becoming competitive and innovative in modern society, Tibetans khenpos and herders have been using Tibetan Buddhism as a spiritual strategy to achieve "true development" for the current life and for many coming lives. In short, I want to see the local as the home for all agents in their contestation over the meanings and practices of development, and indeed, it is their interactions that have pushed forward the uneven development in Tibetan communities.

I argue that the Amdo writer ZhogsDung represents a model of cultural overlap. On the one hand, he shares a similar concern with khenpos regarding the development issues of Tibet and Tibetan people's future well being, but they have different views on the meaning of development and the way to be developed. On the other hand, ZhogsDung holds a similar cultural position with the state, which promotes a very secular culture in Tibet with its strategy of the "Open up the West" campaign. In this sense, I argue that ZhogsDung represents the subjects formed by the secularization process in China for the last few decades, mediated by the recent "Open up the West" campaign.

For Tibetan khenpos, the debate is a process in which they give Tibetan Buddhist meanings to those new discourses and mainstream culture through debates over development. We will see this from Khenpo Tsullo's articulation of Tibetan Buddhist relationship with development, science, and technology in his writings. His ways of giving cultural meaning to modern discourses include his suggestion of development as all sentient beings' relationship in samsara, his argument of karma as main regulative force in development, and his suggestion of compassion as a strategy to overcome to shortcomings of the achievement of science and technology.

This chapter first overviews the term development in Tibet, which includes original Tibetan terms, translated terms, and other cultural idioms. In the second part, I explore the debate between Tibetan radical secularists and Tibetan Buddhist elites regarding the issues of development, Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and the slaughter renunciation movement.

### **Development as Terminology and Expression**

As the discourse of development has become very powerful among Tibetan people, the actual expressions of development are varied according to their context. In addition to the usual translations of the word "development" into the Tibetan language, there are many other ways in which the Tibetan people express the idea of development in everyday life. Some of those are related to their historical memories, while others are related to their religion and cultural practices, while others reflect forces of modernization. This range of interpretation shows how development as experience of transformation is related to forms and forces of other cultures, and the ways in which people express development reflect their experiences of development that is situated in specific social, political, and cultural contexts that are informed by Tibetans' traditional culture, globalizing forces, the power of the state, and secular, neo-liberal influence.

### **Indigenous terms**

In traditional Tibetan literature and spoken language, there are several terms that have meaning equivalent to "development" or "improvement." These terms include *dar ba*, *rgyas pa*, and *'phel ba*, which are traditionally used as verbs. *Dar ba*, the opposite of *rgud pa*, and *rgyas pa*, the opposite of *nyams pa*, have the meaning of becoming prosperous or prevalent. *'phel ba*, the opposite of *bri ba*, means an increase in the numbers or amount of something. For instance, *Sangs rgyis kyi bstan pa dar pa*, or *Sangs rgyis kyi bstan pa rgyis pa*, means that Buddhism becomes popular or Buddhism is prevalent; *rgyu dar pa* and *'byor ba rgyas pa* mean to become prosperous, and *mi dar pa* means to increase in population. All those expressions carry the idea of improvement in material assets or increase in wealth.

### Translated new terms and other expressions

In the 1970s, Tibetan scholars, organized by the Communist state to translate the works of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (马克思、列宁和毛泽东等著作), created many new terms in their translations (Shakya, 1994). Among the many newly created terms, *fazhan* (发展), which is a direct translation of “development” in English, was the one that appeared most frequently, and based on the basic terms of *dar ba*, *rgyas pa*, and *'phel ba*, those Tibetan scholars created new terms as direct translations of *fazhan* into Tibetan. In the Tibetan version of *Materialism and Empiricism* by Lenin (1974), *fazhan* was translated into Tibetan as *'phel rgyas*. For instance, it says, “*rgyal khab de'i 'phel rgyas 'gro tshul*” (the way of a country being developed) (1974:1227). A translation of Mao Zedong's Works stated, “*dpal 'byor 'dzugs skrun 'phel rgyas sngar las mgyags pa*” (the economic development is faster than in the past) (1977:402). Since then, the most commonly used translations of “development” include *'phel rgyas*, *yar rgyas*, *yar rgyas gong 'phel*, *dar rgyas*, and *dar sbel*. Those terms could be used as *'phel rgyas byong*, *yar rgyas su song*, *yar rgyas gong 'phel du phyin*, *dar rgyas su song*, and *dar sbel byas*. In most cases, these terms reflect the linear progress of modern development or economic development and improvement in prosperity.

Just like the widely used term *fazhan* (发展) in Chinese (equivalent to “development”), promoted as a universal goal by the state and internalized as a truth by government officials and citizens, the formal translations of “development” into Tibetan are used mostly by religious elites and educated lay people when they express the idea of development, and herders do not use them often. For instance, Khenpo Tsullo frequently uses the terms, *yar rgyas* and *'phel rgyas*, in his religious teachings.

### **Cultural idioms of development**

In addition to these direct translations of the term “development,” in many cases Tibetans also use other expressions that reflect their different experiences and understandings of development. For instance, herders generally do not use the official terms *'phel rgyas*, *yar rgyas*, *yar rgyas gong 'phel*, *dar rgyas*, and *dar sbel* in their everyday lives. Instead, to describe their conditions, they use other expressions such as *rjes lus*, which means “backwardness” or “lagging behind” and other terms. Even khenpos and educated lay people sometimes use those related terms to express the meanings of development and underdevelopment (Cowen and Shenton, 1994; Gupta, 1998; Pandian, 2008; Shrestha, 1995). Some of these expressions are related to the gathering of wealth, others to religious norms, and some to memories of past events. Even though those terms are not direct translations of “development,” because people use them frequently in political and social-economic contexts, the traditional terms related to current development issues are included in this discussion of development as alternative expressions of the development experience, which reflect the specific cultural context in which the idea of development is formed and reshaped by local forces.

Among others, the expression most widely used by all Tibetans, including khenpos, lamas, lay educated, and herders, is their expression of *rjes lus* (backwardness or lagging behind), usually expressing the idea that Tibetans are falling behind other nationalities in many respects, particularly economically and educationally (Tib. *rig gnas*). This indicates their common desire to make collective progress or change engendered by their common experience of development in the current social and economic transformation. Khenpo Tsullo has used the expression frequently in his books and religious teachings. For instance, he said during his recent teachings, “Tibetan herders are lagging behind economically, and there is space where we can make

improvement”, and “if you [herders] continue the misconduct of slaughtering and gambling, we are not only lagging behind economically and in modern knowledge (*rig gnas*), but also culturally, because we have been increasingly losing our essential Tibetan-ness, the people’s belief in Tibetan Buddhism.” In addition, the common expression for lagging behind raises many debates and arguments regarding how to make change and how to catch up around the issues of the role of traditional culture, particularly Buddhism, in development, the dilemma between change and preservation of language and everyday cultural practices, the attitude toward new *rig gnas* such as science and technology, and so forth.

Another very common expression is the *kha gso rgyu dang rgyab ’geb rgyu* (working for foods and clothes), which is an old expression meaning to be able to make a living, or be able to survive. This expression reflects past conditions in which herders have had to make a living while affected by unexpected natural hazards. This idea is being used today by herders as well as in khenpos’ religious teachings. Khenpo Tsullo has frequently used the term. For instance, he often says that unlike the traditional society, in which Tibetan herders faced many difficulties to *kha gso* (make a living), these days there are lots of *kha gso thabs* (ways to make a living), so Tibetan herders should not slaughter their livestock for the meat market, and should change their ways of *kha gso thabs*. But he does not understand why herders in the current society, where every one has enough food and clothing, have been carrying out such sinful activities even though they do not have to face threats to their survival as they once did. In a similar way, many herders in the slaughter renunciation movement have said that they did not notice any serious impact on their *kha gso rgyu*. Similar to *kha gso rgyu*, *skyid sdug*, meaning a group of people sharing the same happiness and suffering or the same prosperity and poverty, is another term that herders use to express their collective linkage. Related terms include *sde mi skyid sdug gcig pa*

(community members share the same prosperity and sufferings) and *bod skyid sdug gcig pa* (Tibetan people share the same fate).

At the community level, villagers see religious practices as a strategy for improving their current collective condition and keeping themselves from falling behind. Those practices include Buddhist teachings by khenpos, collective religious chanting by monks on regular days in the monastery, and other religious rituals like making offerings to the mountain gods. Related to these religious practices, they use the expression of *bya pa lam ma 'gro rgyu* (*lam 'gro byung Rgyu*), which means good fortune in business, and *sde ba yar la 'gro rgyu or dar rgyu*, which mean to make progress in their community. Progress involves the projects, community collective wealth, education access, health care, and narrowing the gap between themselves and other, more highly developed traditional tribes.

Many herders in pastoral areas interpret the state development projects in two ways. Some see them as *'dzugs skrun*, a translation of "construction" in Chinese (建设), which is a cultural sediment of the commune system in which the state was the only agent pushing the country to realize socialist modernization. Even after economic reform, herders and even some Chinese people refer to state development projects as the construction of hometowns or the building of the nation state. The other interpretation of state development by herders is *rogs skyor*, meaning help, support or subsidies from the state to the locals, implying that insiders receive help from a distant state the locus of which is the far away cities of eastern China.

Another group of terms that are related to the idea of development consists of those that have something to do with wealth, fortune, and material prosperity, including *rgyu nor*, *longs sbyod*, *'byor ba*, *rgyu 'byor pa* (*rgyu 'byor*), *dpal yon*, *phyugs pa*, *sdobs 'byor*, and *'byor phyugs*. Most of those terms are traditional, and Tibetans still use them in both writing and speaking. For

instance, Khenpo Tsullo has used the terms *rgyu nor*, *longs sbyod*, and *'byor ba* when recommending that Tibetan people need material wealth in the present era, but that material wealth alone does not bring sustainable happiness, so people need Buddhism in order to achieve permanent happiness. For others ideas, terms are used such as *sde ba phyungs pa*, (the tribe is rich); *rgyal khab stobs 'byor ldan pa* or *rgyas pa* (the nation is strong economically); and *sa cha 'byor phyung dang ldan pa* (a place with prosperity).

In addition, there are also some religious expressions and practices that need to be explained, because they have mediated people's experience of development. The most frequently used expressions in khenpos' teachings and practices among herders include: the norm of karma or the law of cause-effect, reincarnation, compassion, the *bde ba dang skyid pa*<sup>30</sup>, *tshogs bsags*<sup>31</sup>, *bsod nams*,<sup>32</sup> *lab rstse*<sup>33</sup> rituals, and the *g.yang 'gug* ritual.<sup>34</sup> Tibetan people, both khenpos and herders, use these religious norms and practices to make sense of the world and of their situation in the developmental social context. Because Buddhism is so much a part of their lives, herders' negotiations in the current social transformation brought about by economic development can not be understood fully unless we bring Buddhism and development together in a single dialogue.

It is hard to make the argument that all of those terms indicate an idea of linear progress. However, it is, indeed, through those different articulations by Tibetans that we can understand how development has interacted with other ways of life and of thinking. This will also allow us to see the complexity of the process, in which contestation coexists with embrace, resistance takes place in the overlap, and the actual experiences of people in development have never been on a single trajectory.

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<sup>30</sup> peace and happiness

<sup>31</sup> the collection of positive karma

<sup>32</sup> With positive karma

<sup>33</sup> Offering to mountain deities

<sup>34</sup> A ritual for summoning the forces of prosperity



### **Development as Contested Discourse in Modern Tibet**

Among the many expressions related to the issue of development, an especially important one is their common sense feeling of being *rjes lus*, “lagging behind” compared with other peoples and the urgent feeling of “the need to make change” to catch up. The expression *rjes lus* as applied to the notion of development has taken shape hand in hand with the very modern formation of Tibetans as one nationality among fifty-six ethnic groups in China. The presence of both *rjes lus* discourse and Tibetan identity as one nationality among others in the same state are informed by Tibetan people’s increasing trans-regional interaction and global connections, which have become possible with the state’s neo-liberal economic development. This increase in Tibetans’ interaction with the outside world has, on one hand, reinforced Tibet as a nationality: Tibetans share the same culture and live in the same time and space. On the other hand, their increasing interaction with the outside has led them to realize that they also share the same *skyid sdug*,<sup>35</sup> which is reflected in their common expression, *rjes lus*. Most often Tibetans use *rjes lus* to express their lagging behind the other nationalities in economic growth, science, and technology in the linear progress of modernization. However, this common expression has become contested terrain for many Tibetans, particularly educated ones, in regard to issues such as what development is for, how to achieve it, and who needs it. Young, educated lay people, khenpos, and herders all have their own interpretations of development based on their social and cultural experience, suggesting that the meaning of development is not articulated in any universal way, but rather is contested by different groups.

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<sup>35</sup> A group of people who share the same happiness and grief/sadness/misery, or share wealth and poverty.

**Radical Secularists: Development as escape from Buddhism (Buddhism as an enemy of development)**

For many young, educated Tibetans, development means getting rid of the past as well as some old traditions in order to realize a new era and condition. This view is quite similar to the state's development discourse about Tibet and Tibetan people. Many propose to separate religion from the secular development, while others go to the extreme that Buddhism has become an obstacle to the progress of Tibetan society.

Among the many discussions about lagging behind, one serious debate is focused on the role that Buddhism plays in economic development. Just as Chinese officials criticize religious belief as old and backward, hindering the economic and cultural development of Tibet, many educated lay Tibetans have been questioning the idea that Buddhism can play a positive role in economic development, suspecting that it represents a culture that cannot lead to progress in linear development. The strongest expressions of this concern comes from some younger Tibetans, who argue that the main reason for Tibetans' "backwardness" is that Buddhism as the dominant ideology prevents them from becoming competitive and innovative in modern society (Tomalin, 2006).

Many such arguments are based on the notion of authentic Buddhism. Many of the criticisms start with enlightenment, the ultimate object of practicing Buddhism, and its related practices. They think that there is a basic inconsistency between material development and Tibetan Buddhism (*Thek pa chen po*, Mahayana). The most fundamental contradiction is the idea that the main source of suffering is the attachment of oneself to things around oneself, and being free from these attachments is the way for one to become enlightened and escape the suffering of the world. So the monastic education of Tibetan Buddhism places great emphasis on detachment

from the material world and demonstration of the impermanence and the meaninglessness of worldly happiness. It further implies that because everything is impermanent, it would be meaningless to struggle to improve one's living conditions, because when one dies, there is nothing that really belongs to oneself (Yeh, 2007). A similar notion exists in regard to the accumulation of wealth, which is considered to be one of the most unstable things for a person to have. The critics believe that all of these fundamental ideas of Tibetan Buddhism go against the current culture of economic development that requires people to have an endless desire for material possessions, to be competitive, and to accumulate wealth to one's best capacity. Therefore, the idea that material progress or development is considered the first principle flies in the face of authentic Tibetan Buddhism.

One typical example for this is ZhogsDung, a Tibetan working for the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House in Xining city, who has written several books regarding Tibetan Buddhism and development issues. Since his books have been published, he has become an icon of the younger generation of Tibetans in Amdo, who question the positive role that Tibetan Buddhism might play in development. He is one of the most controversial writers in contemporary Tibet, and his observations about traditions, in particular Buddhism, and the modernization of Tibet have generated fierce debate among the religious elite and educated lay people in regard to the role of Buddhism. ZhogsDung is very critical of some traditions in the modern context. For instance, in one article "*bag chang dong sprug*" (2008) (Shaking off of the outdated conventional beliefs) he states:

The world that is constituted by the vessel-like external worlds and their inner contents of sentient beings is abundant and excellent, and the way that human beings make a living is very beautiful and wonderful!

The world offers a powerful lure to us to survive and to live...the instinct to live has become stronger and stronger...In order to live continually in the world that is a

combination of both happiness and suffering, we have to launch wars against the most destructive enemies -- old ideas and beliefs -- uncovering their faults and evil natures.

Those old ideas and beliefs have stopped us from making progress for a long time, and it is time to eradicate those old ideas!

He summarizes four major beliefs that have been keeping Tibetan people from making progress in their material lives: *ya thog lha 'dre bag chags*,<sup>36</sup> *ya thog shes rig bag chags*<sup>37</sup> (the practice of ancient cults and rituals), Buddhist *bag chags*, and *dpe lugs goms srol bag chags* (old customs and habits). He stresses the idea that Buddhism is an enemy that Tibetans should eliminate from their lives. In order to do this, his main argument is that Tibetan people should separate secular life from spiritual, that is, those people who want to devote themselves to spiritual improvement should invest themselves fully into that sort of career, and lay people should engage fully in their secular lives by learning things they need to understand to succeed in secular life. He conceptualizes two distinctive knowledge systems: one secular knowledge/culture (*mi chos rig gnas*),<sup>38</sup> which enables secular people to make progress in this worldly life, and the other the spiritual knowledge/culture (*lha chos rig gnas*) for people in pursuit of spiritual achievement. He (2008) writes in "To answer some questions":

I think that many people who asked questions during my lecture at Qinghai Nationality College and others who have read my written works have misread my writings and do not understand very well my intentions in regard to *bag chang dong sprug* (shaking off outdated conventional beliefs) and others. Many people ask, if I destroyed all of the old things, then, what is the new thing that would replace them? They read my article as similar to things that happened to Tibetan culture during the Cultural Revolution, but that is a total misreading. I myself have very strong *lha chos rig gnas kyi bag chags* [spiritual knowledge/culture] as I was raised in this cultural environment, and I have the same attachment to this culture as you do. Indeed, it is because I love our nationality so much that I had to write those articles (in another text he writes, "My writings have become controversial and have caused debate and

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<sup>36</sup> the tradition of worshiping different gods and goddesses.

<sup>37</sup> Cult rituals including fortune telling, casting a horoscope, practice of divination, spirit possession, and so forth.

<sup>38</sup> His examples of secular knowledge/culture include modern natural and social sciences and technologies that he feels are needed to achieve material improvement.

discussion among Tibetan students, which is a good sign that I want to see"). People who read my writings should know that I don't have any intention of wiping out the very culture that shaped my personality and way of thinking, and that, even if I wanted it, it is impossible... What I am talking about is *'tsho gnas*.<sup>39</sup> From the perspective of our current *'tsho gnas*, there is no one who does not agree that we are backward or lagging behind. I am talking about the challenge to our *'tsho gnas*<sup>40</sup> that we have never seen in our history before. Then where does this challenge come from? It is the fault of our *Lha chos rig gnas* (spiritual knowledge/culture). It is the fault of our culture of worshiping gods/Buddha and trying to defeat demons.

Who can deny that what people have called a "splendid" culture including the ancient rituals of gods and demons, the ancient civilizations, and Buddhism all are spiritual knowledge/culture?... All of that knowledge is about spiritual improvement, but it is not specialized for progress in this world. Therefore, what I call secular knowledge/culture (*mi chos rig gnas*) is all about the way to make a living and the way to be developed. (47-49)

ZhogsDung thinks that Switzerland, Austria, Australia, and New Zealand have physical and environmental conditions similar to those of Tibet, but are better developed; on the other hand, China and India have very favorable conditions and easy access to the outside world, but they are relatively backward compared with the western nations. He thinks that the fundamental problem is people's outdated beliefs and the culture they live in. Therefore, to change the backward condition, people have to get rid of their old culture that hinders progress. Interestingly, he does not refer to any power relationships connected with resource allocation and decision-making regarding development issues. He also thinks that it is vain and impossible to try to improve or modify the traditional culture so that it can better serve or at least coexist with modern development.

ZhogsDung sees development as merely material improvement and Buddhism as not part of that process. More importantly he sees it as an obstacle to development, in striking contrast to the khenpos' understanding of development in which religion is inevitable and necessary for

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<sup>39</sup> *'tsho gnas* is an abbreviation of *'tsho zhing gnas pa*, which means to live and to be existent, or a sustainable life, or the condition of life.

<sup>40</sup> "the challenge to our *'tsho gnas*" is the challenge of the ability to be developed.

Tibetans and their development. He states in his book *dpyod shes rgyang 'bod* (2008) (The Call of Rationality):

Since every one agrees that Tibetans do need to improve their living condition and need development, then, why should we not think seriously about the way to be developed? To make a living is to develop, and to develop is mostly understood as material improvement. From the perspective of material improvement, what else do many of our old cultural beliefs do other than hinder the development of Tibetan society? Those old traditions include believing in karma and *bsod nams* (fortune), Buddhist philosophies of egolessness and shunyata (emptiness), the tradition of making offerings to gods and demons, and other negative and inadvisable customs, traditions, aesthetics, and values ...

...It is not hard to see specific examples of this: is the conflict over making offerings to the Shugs Ldan deity in Tibet caused by the *lha 'dre bag chags*? Is the idea that whether one wins or loses depends on offerings to deities caused by *lha 'dre bag chags*? Is interpretation of one's success and failure in karma related to the Buddhist *bag chags*? Are the shortsighted decisions about the improvement of material living conditions and the trembling from fear of accepting new things caused by old ideas? (52-53)

In his essay in the same collection, "*hol rgyug thod rgal*" (a rushed scamper or careless movement), he states that in the history of Tibet, Buddhism has never done any good for the people:

*Lha chos rig gnas* is the traditional culture or pre-civilization of human beings before we achieved self-awareness. Because it is the heritage of human wisdom, it will and should continue forever. However, our *Lha chos rig gnas* [spiritual knowledge/culture] did not make any contribution to our social development and Tibetan people's moving forward as other *Lha chos rig gnas* did in other places. To a certain degree, our *Lha chos rig gnas* has prevented our society from making progress. The contradictory goals of our *Lha chos rig gnas* and *mi chos rig gnas* [knowledge needed for well-being in this world] was manifested in the painful lessons that we have learned from the system of religion and politics united. (2008:83)

Here ZhogsDung, like many other educated lay people, recalls the moments in Tibetan history in which religious-sectarian struggles have sacrificed the interest of Tibetans as a nationality when they faced internal religious conflicts and sought the military support of

outsiders (StagTshang RdzongPa, 1985; Rgyal Mo 'Brug Pa, 2004; Dung Dkar Blo bzang 'Phrin Las, 2007), a historical failure to unify and to develop Tibet as a distinct nation.

ZhogsDung's writings represent the views of many educated Tibetans who concern themselves with development issues. In a similar vein, one highly educated Tibetan who is a government official and has studied abroad said that he was "not surprised that business in Lhasa has been dominated by Han Chinese people when he saw that the majority of Tibetans were going on a circumambulation of the Jokhang at five in the morning while many Han Chinese in Lhasa were working at their business at the same hour." He said he is not saying that one way of life is better than another, but the phenomenon of Han people's domination of businesses in Lhasa has something to do with the people's beliefs and cultural values, and the related decisions such as time allocation and the willingness to make sacrifices of time and energy for the sake of making money. In other words, when Han Chinese devote all of their time to doing business, Tibetans have invested large amounts of their time in their spiritual practices. They could put that time into doing business if they did not have such religious beliefs. He also thinks that Buddhism makes people too easily satisfied with their material condition (Yeh, 2007). He said, "The majority of Tibetans think that if they have enough money to use, then that is good enough," suggesting that Tibetan Buddhism has weakened their desire for the sort of material accumulation that Han people are engaged in now.

It is mostly radical secularists who criticize the khenpos' religious movements. Seeing the impacts on herders' lives and nomadic culture in general, many educated Tibetans, including government officials, entrepreneurs, and even young monks, have been criticizing the khenpos' slaughter renunciation movement for various reasons, including the movement itself and the way in which it has been conducted.

A government-employed teacher said, “I personally don’t agree with what khenpos have been doing about bringing herders into the vow of not slaughtering their yaks. They should think about the real lives of herders. The income from selling yaks for the meat market is very important not only for their livelihood but also for their kids' access to education; in addition, herders need to work to improve their living conditions, since they are not monks.” Similarly, a Tibetan businessman said, “The slaughter renunciation movement is not the best way to address the problem that the movement is trying to solve. What the khenpos need to do is to promote an anti-meat movement. If no one eats meat, then no livestock will be slaughtered. As far as there is demand, livestock will be slaughtered anyway.”

An extreme view for the critics is a statement by a monk in his 40s who said, “These days, there are two forces that are destroying Tibetan culture, and one of them is Khenpo Tsullo, who has been transforming herders’ way of life through his various religious movements.” To pass his concerns on to Khenpo Tsullo, the monk said he had written to him, but had not received any response. It is not very common for monks to criticize khenpos or their religious work, but this shows the extent to which the khenpos and their movement have become controversial among Tibetans in regard to the issues of economic development and the preservation of traditional culture. Some consider the religious movement as a way of reinforcing Tibetan culture, mostly Buddhist teachings and practices, while others see it as a way to destroy some other aspects of Tibetan culture -- nomadism, traditional dress, diet, and so forth.

There are also online debates about khenpos and religious movements from Larung Gar. On Baidu, one of largest search engines in China, where people from the same town can share messages on their home message board, there is a discussion by people from Seda County about Tibetan religious elites and their religious movements. Most of them seem to be Tibetans, but



they communicate in Chinese. Some are very critical of the khenpos and their movement; others defend their efforts. The debate started with the first quote below:

I think we don't need lamas any more in the current society, particularly those fake lamas; what they have done for our society? What is the benefit of having them? I say nothing. We give them too much respect, and they impose what they call the "Ten-virtuous-rules" upon the lay people, putting great pressure on them. Lay people can't handle that much responsibility. Staying in their high position, they have never thought about the real lives of lay people. We may need to reduce the numbers of those fake lamas or we may not need them at all. What does everyone else think about this issue?

Those fake lamas often say that "to release lives and to build monasteries" they need money... The fact is that there isn't a single outstanding building that they have built. I saw another phenomenon in which they have been competing with fancy cars, houses, and so forth. It is more for what they call "空行母", (mkha' 'gro ma, meaning "she who traverses the sky" or "she who moves in space"). Wearing Buddhist cowls, those fake lamas defraud the lay people and impose what they called "Ten-virtuous-rules." They are the scum of the Tibetan people. These days, many lay people have expressed their great stress under those rules. The majority of people in the world have to follow only one constitution, but we need to follow two: the government's regulations and the laws that religious elites have established.

Dear friends, I think that Buddhism "exists when one believes in it, but does not when one does not." It is hard to have this realization when our people have indulged so much in the belief. They do not have any desires other than praying for happier lives in the sense that Buddhism has deeply embedded in their hearts. However, now Buddhism has been interfering with both development and independent life of herders, and many of them have been loaded down with burdens. Seeing this situation, how could one not be sad about it? (Baidu, 2009-2010)<sup>41</sup>

The contributors seem to be Tibetans, because they use the first person instead of third, and it is clear from their skill in Chinese writing that they must have been educated in state schools where Chinese is the only language used in teaching. Those critics represent very common sentiments in Tibet, mostly those of Tibetans who are not educated in traditional culture or Buddhism. However, many educated Tibetans who are bilingual (Tibetan and Chinese) make similar arguments about Buddhism and religious movements.

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<sup>41</sup> <http://tieba.baidu.com/p/669286120>

This group represents a generation produced by the state education system and by the increasing transnational interaction following neo-liberal economic reform that has reinforced Tibetan identity. They have a strong awareness of themselves as Tibetans, but act and think differently from the khenpos and herders. In many cases, they promote the idea of the necessity to separate religious matters from the business of the state, from economic development, and from secular affairs. They advocate promoting modern education, science, and technology. They emphasize worldly, material development rather than otherworldly betterment. In short, they are the subjects of modernization and neo-liberal economic reform, but they also have strong Tibetan identity, that is embedded in secular values and modernization. They often believe that they are the ones who will carry out the historic modernization of Tibet, a belief that resonates with the position of young, educated Han Chinese.

While some young Tibetans totally reject the religious movement, others are concerned about the way in which it is being carried out. One common comment is that the slaughter renunciation movement is good in reinforcing Tibetan culture and identity, but it reduces the income of herders who do not have alternative income sources. So interviewees suggested the need to provide some supplementation for these herders whose livelihoods have depended on selling their livestock, and who do not have any other sources of income. For the herders who participated in the movement but are located in the pastoral areas such as parts of Dege County, Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan, where collection of caterpillar fungus (*dbyar rtsa dgun 'bu*) has been the main and most lucrative source of income, the movement has not had any impact on their lives. But for other herders in whose grasslands caterpillar fungus does not grow, the movement has a huge impact. Many interviewees, including some monks, stated that given that herders

cannot be fully engaged in Buddhist practice, they need to improve their livelihoods; so, their material condition should be considered when the movement is being carried out.

Interviewees also expressed concern about the way in which the moral rules are implemented. Larung Gar has not been using any sort of force and has usually just urged herders to participate voluntarily in the practice of not selling their yaks. However, many pastoral areas have localized these moral rules (some of them are earlier than the movement from Larung Gar), so there are variations in the content of the rules. Moreover, in some pastoral areas these rules have been implemented by collaboration between local monks and village leaders who have established very strict regulations; anyone who violates the rules is faced with monetary sanction or exclusion from the village moral structure or from the monastery's services. Most of interviewees have criticized these strict regulations, asserting that obedience to them should be voluntary.

In response to critics of the slaughter renunciation movements, Khenpo Tsullo has recently been highlighting his great concern about the serious impact of the reduction of livestock, which, in turn, will force herders to give up their nomadic culture and subsistence livelihood entirely. He said, "In the past, there were over 700,000 yaks in Chumarleb (Qumalai County, Yushu Prefecture, Qinghai), but three years ago, there were only 270,000. Many herders do not have yaks to herd, so they have to move to towns to look for other jobs.<sup>42</sup>...If herders keep up the current scale of mass-slaughter, one day there will be no more yaks left on the Tibetan plateau."

In responding to other critics, he said that because people use the term *khirms* (law) in *dge bcu'i khirms* (ten virtuous rules), some others think that the khenpos are imposing some type of regulation on herders, but it is a misunderstanding. The Ten Virtuous Rules are not rules or

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<sup>42</sup> My understanding is that he is expressing a concern about the decrease in the yak population as a result of integrated forces, including increasing slaughter rate, grassland degradation, and state ecological resettlement projects.

regulations; rather they are a tradition for Tibetans that has been passed down from their ancestors. He said moreover that they are not forcing any one into these traditions, but it is up to the majority of herders. It is something that should be decided by a majority of the people through democratic decision-making. He said, “In short, we are just trying to give herders some advice about making a living in a way that is consistent with their tradition and that does not bring negative karma for their next life. We are doing this for their sakes, not for the monks and khenpos. We gain nothing from this.”

**Tibetan Khenpos: Development for Infinite life (Buddhism as a solution to development)**

Tibetan religious elites, like lay educated Tibetans, also maintain that Tibetan people are lagging behind other nationalities and areas. However, their use of the expression, “lagging behind,” has meanings different from what many lay people have been suggesting. For them, the lagging behind means the need to improve the material condition of Tibetan people in accordance with Buddhist norms; it means to continue Tibetan culture, particularly Buddhism, in such a way as to reinforce Tibetan identity. It also means to integrate Buddhism with modern development to make them more compatible and to code modern discourse and mainstream cultures with Buddhist norms and ideologies. As a leading khenpo in contemporary Tibet, in his teachings and books, Khenpo Tsullo makes compelling arguments that Tibetan Buddhism is not only compatible with modern development, but more importantly the only solution to the lack of material development in the modern era. His argument can be explored in three aspects: Buddhism and economic development, including Tibetan culture and identity; development and the law of cause-effect; and Buddhism and modern science and technology.

### Tibetan Buddhism and Economic Development

In response to those who see Buddhism as an obstacle to and incompatible with development, Khenpo Tsulpo argues that, far from hindering development, Buddhism is the real solution to the lack of material development and can bring real, sustainable happiness to people. Rather than being irreconcilably contradictory, he maintains that Buddhism will guide development in the right direction so that it is beneficial not only to the Tibetan people but to the entire modern society that is ruled by secular and material forces.

He first of all maintains that the Tibetan people need development. In many religious teachings and in his books he highlights the claim that Tibetan people are lagging behind others in material conditions, and there is room for progress. However, he has different understandings of how to develop and how to understand material improvement based on the larger, Buddhist framework of reincarnation and the law of cause-effect. As he advised Rakhor herders in 2006, “We are not saying that Tibetans don’t need development. Yes, Tibetans need development, but the misconducts such as mass-slaughtering of yaks and stealing will not bring development.”

He stresses two very important aspects that Tibetans, even all human beings, should be aware of. He advises that material development should not be seen as the ultimate goal of people’s lives or the core meaning of development, because material development does not bring sustainable happiness, and moreover, it has never been the solution for the suffering of human beings. He says in many of his teachings that people with less money or no money may think that money and wealth bring real happiness and comfort, but if one has lots of money, one will realize that wealth is not really related to sustainable happiness and satisfaction.

In his essay<sup>43</sup> “Shar Nub Kyi Bde Skyid” (2003b) a discussion of the different understandings of happiness (Tib. *bde ba*) in eastern and western cultures, Khenpo Tsullo argues that Buddhism cultivates the knowledge/culture that brings real, sustainable happiness to people and peace to society, demonstrating many shortcomings and negative aspects of modern development that is based on purely secularism and materialism. He cited many Buddhist teachings to highlight the importance of maintaining the balance between the need to make material improvement to have enough and not becoming too attached (contentment). In the essay, he uses the phrase *mtha' gnyis su ma lhung ba* in Tibetan Buddhist teachings, which means that people should avoid the two extremes, being too poor or having too much wealth, both of which are harmful and not desirable. He said it is not desirable to be very poor economically, but it is also harmful and destructive to indulge too much in material wealth accumulation because the achievement in material improvement does not satisfy people's ongoing search for happiness and peace.

The themes in Khenpo Tsullo's essay have been supported extensively in many studies by many western social scientists. He argues that many social problems in the developed countries are related to the fact that too many people have become excessively materialistic. Those social problems include environmental degradation, conflicts and wars over resources, the creation of weapons of mass destruction, the exploitation of the poor by the rich, mass-butcherings of animals for food, increasing rates of suicide, and increases in drug use and crime. He states that many trends including the higher rates of suicide in the developed countries, the loss of intimacy in relationships, the absence of real correlation between economic growth and increase in people's feeling of happiness and satisfaction, and the fact that people have become increasingly selfish

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<sup>43</sup> “Dzam Gling Shar Nub Kyi Bde Skyid Bsgrub Tshul La Dpyad Pa” (“Thought on the Seeking Happiness in Global East and West”)

and greedy in highly developed countries all clearly demonstrate that material improvement itself does not bring real happiness. Indeed, he said all of those problems are the result of people's fundamental misunderstanding that material improvement can bring happiness and peace to society, and of their ignorance of the importance of understanding human beings' nature and mind, for which Buddhism is in the best position to provide the remedies. He states in *Lam Gyi 'Jug Sgo*,

The egocentric and materialist culture is like a flash flood widely spreading all over the world, forcing people to follow its norms. This culture has enhanced material conditions, but at the same time it has engendered many undesirable behaviors and ideologies. This is just like a man pretending to be rich by consuming all of his food within a month that is supposed to last for the whole year. Therefore, it is hard to tell if this is progress or degeneration. (2003b: 121)

For Khenpo Tsullo an ideal social condition should be based on a combination of Buddhism and modern knowledge/culture, because Buddhism is the part of the culture that provides people with real happiness and peace. In other words, Buddhism can bring permanent happiness and peace while material prosperity (*rgyu nor longs sbyod*) is only a short-term comfort in this life, so Buddhism is what everyone should learn and practice in the modern day. As he summarizes in his essay:

If people want to have happiness in life, they should make adequate improvement in their material condition with the support of science and technology. At the same time, popularizing the traditional worldviews and value systems, they should also practice good behavior with compassion in order to achieve higher rebirths and liberation with the support of both worldly morality and Buddhist norms and teachings. It is only in this way that we can accomplish development and enjoy a happy and comfortable life that is peaceful, just, and compassionate. Otherwise, the one-sided pursuit is always like an attempt to walk with one leg or to fly with one wing. (2003b: 121)

In short, he thinks that, with only materially driven development, the more people struggle to obtain happiness and peace, the farther out of reach happiness and peace become. Buddhism

examines the real nature of human beings and shows the roots of their desires and suffering. It is only with Buddhism that all human beings can find real happiness and enjoy freely the material improvement they have achieved by the improvement of science and technology. Therefore, for Khenpo Tsullo, development is not about the accumulation of material wealth through expanding greed, but more about satisfaction, contentment, comfort, peace, love and compassion, the things on which a community or society should be built. This is in contrast to the logic of capitalist economic development, which demands constant growth.

In regard to Tibetans and their future path, Khenpo Tsullo thinks that Buddhism has significant meaning for Tibetan people, and therefore it is the main aspect of their traditional culture. However, he has recently seen a very worrying trend. For one, he thinks that Tibetans' devotion to Buddhism has become weaker with market economic penetration, and there are more and more Tibetans who even criticize Buddhism when they are frustrated with development. He is more concerned about his trend than with the material development of Tibet. As he said in one religious teaching in Dartang Monastery in Guoluo Prefecture,

Tibetan people need to improve their living conditions, because we are still economically lagging behind. However, it is not such a big issue, because the whole world is getting better, and there is no way that we will always stay behind others. Unlike Sub-Saharan Africa, which is like a realm of hungry ghosts with lots of deserts, drought, and disease, we are rich in resources and have a healthy environment. Therefore, our economic condition will improve gradually in the future, so this is not something we should worry about. What we really do need to worry about is the danger of losing our worldview, our [proper] behavior...If we lose our worldview and morally adequate behavior, even if one day we have the wealth that Americans currently have, it will be very hard to have a happy life, even hard to find a place to live.

Similarly, he stated in Rakhor

Instead of learning *rig gnas* [knowledge], you are selling great numbers of livestock to slaughterhouses in order to do meaningless things such as gambling. You



have to get serious. This is not an issue for a village or a household, but for the Tibetan people as a nation. Things will be getting worse for all of us if you continue what you have been doing these past few years. You have been making no effort to learn Buddhism and *rig gnas*, nor to behave in accordance with the law of cause-effect. What you are good at is stealing, fighting with villagers, and murdering. If you continue what you have been doing, we will be not only economically backward in the world, but backward in our virtue.

Khenpo Tsulpo's concern about Tibetans' lagging behind economically is not as great as his concern for the loss of Tibetan character that is embedded in their unique culture. For instance, he informed Rakhor villagers that in China and in western countries there are more and more people who have begun to practice Buddhism, including scientists, political leaders, movie stars, and others, so there is no reason for Tibetans to give up this treasure in their seeking of material development. He said during his teachings in Rakhor that "Buddhism is the only asset that Tibetan people have now. If they give up this tradition, then they will become 'backward' not only economically, but also culturally." He emphasized during his teachings in Dartang Monastery in Guoluo, "It is certain that the farther the society goes forward, the more valuable Buddhism will become...Therefore, Tibetan people should not only learn new knowledge, but they should also keep up their tradition of Buddhism." He claims that "real development in Tibet is constituted by both material and spiritual improvement that bring happiness to people in their current lives and in many lives to come," and "the chance to achieve the material and spiritual development of Tibetan communities is very small if young Tibetans are not educated."

Therefore, he encourages Tibetan students:

Tibetan kids should not only learn useful new knowledge and techniques from schools which will help to improve our material living condition, but they also need to learn how to improve our traditional knowledge/culture (*rig gnas*), so that Tibetan people can enjoy material prosperity while at the same they do not lose their traditions and cultural identity. (35)

For him, Buddhism is the most important aspect of Tibetan tradition and identity. He argues that the farther the society moves forward, the more important Buddhism will become, throughout the world. The loss of Buddhism would mean a total collapse of Tibetan culture and identity. In his book, *Lam Gyi 'Jug Sgo*, he stresses the need for Tibetans to help their children become educated:

As far as you are Tibetans, you should learn and improve your traditional culture and knowledge; in addition to that you have to study and use the beneficial aspects of other nationalities' culture and knowledge, which will help us to improve our material living conditions. In this way, we will not lose our Tibetan character while we can enjoy material prosperity...

We should be aware that Buddhism is the foundation of our culture...A life without Buddhism should be considered only half of a life. It is a very sad situation that people have only material comfort but no other enjoyment... Therefore, it is our desire to develop Tibetan society (*bod kyi sbyi tshogs yar rgyas yong ba*). What everyone should be aware of is that it is very important to have a balanced inner and outer development. (2003b: 190-191)

Here, Khenpo Tsullo emphasizes the importance of continuity of tradition along with adequate change in the material condition of Tibetan people. The inner development is to keep tradition and to follow and improve Buddhism as part of everyday life. The outer development is to improve their living conditions by gaining new knowledge, technology, and new skills.

To maintain a balance between economic development and spiritual improvement, Khenpo Tsullo has very specific suggestions for herders as to how they should spend their money. He suggests that, if herders have money, the first thing they should spend it on is improvement of their living conditions to make sure they have enough food, clothing and housing. Second, herders should spend money on their children's education. Finally, if they have more money, they should spend it for the accumulation of positive karma. There are two other ways in which Khenpo Tsullo wants herders to change their traditional ways of spending money. He urges them not to spend their money on gambling and purchasing jewelry made of silver, gold, coral, and

turquoise. Second, he emphasizes that the way to accrue good karma is not necessarily to spend money on building monasteries, Buddhist statues, and stupas, but to help others and to behave in everyday life in accordance with Buddhist teachings. In this way, he shows that Buddhism is to be practiced not only in the monastery, but also in how people spend money, how they behave, and how they relate to each other.

While ZhogsDung portrays Tibetans as potentially failing in the process of modernization, for Khenpo Tsullo, the real failure is not Tibetans' inability to embrace modern development but the danger presented by the loss of the core of their culture and tradition. Opposite to ZhogsDung, who sees Buddhism as the chief obstacle to development, Khenpo Tsullo sees it as the best long-term path for the Tibetan people, even for all human beings. In Khenpo Tsullo's framework of development, ZhogsDung is a victim of the "flash flood" of egocentrism and material culture who is struggling for the short-term, shortsighted worldly benefit. However, in ZhogsDung's worldview, Buddhism is nothing more than an outdated old idea and a very minor part of his larger scenario of the linear progress of human beings. In some sense, they are proposing two development paths for the Tibetan people, Khenpo Tsullo suggesting that people in the "developed" countries follow the Tibetan model, where inner development is much more important than outer, and ZhogsDung calling on Tibetans to follow the model of "developed" countries. The common ground of the two is that both see the Tibetan people as an agent who can make their history with their own efforts. In short, Khenpo Tsullo wants to keep a balance between materialism and renunciation of material comforts; at the same time, he stresses the idea that economic development should not be seen as the only or first principle, nor should it require the sacrifice of well-being in future lifetimes, which constitute his main conceptualization of development.

By responding to those who assume that there is a fundamental contradiction between Buddhism and development, Khenpo Tsulpo has taught herders that Buddhism and material development do not oppose each other if people have a clear understanding of Buddhist principles. There are many ways of making a living without hurting or killing other beings. He has said that it is perfectly fine to be rich if the ways of making money do not involve intentional killing, robbing, cheating, or hurting others. This is true even for monks and lamas and khenpos, who may enjoy material comfort if they do not become attached to it and do not waste time and resources to gain that comfort. He said during one of his teachings performed near Qinghai Lake,

...then, do accumulations of positive karma and material improvements in this world go against each other? They are not contradictory. In secular moral standards, it is important not to use morally inadequate means, including stealing, cheating, robbing, and killing, to achieve economic development. Indeed, those sorts of misconduct are what Buddhism tries to stop... Therefore, the collection of positive karma and material improvement do not go against each other in practice.

He argues that material improvement is necessary, but the accumulation of wealth should be consistent with the accumulation of religious merit. If people do not adhere to the law of cause-effect, believe in death and rebirth, and refuge in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and the Sangha), then they will do whatever they can do, including stealing, slaughtering, cheating, and fighting, and all of those cause social disorder. In “‘Dzam Gling Shar Nub’”<sup>44</sup> (2003b), he says that Buddha has never asked people to give up their dedication to working for a better life, but what Buddha has asked is to refrain from exclusive dedication to material gain without any consideration of future lives. He said that even though devotion to the comforts of this life is considered to be the smallest achievement among three devotions, including to happiness in the next life and to be liberated from the suffering of samsara, if people have good motivations, their

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<sup>44</sup> “‘Dzam Gling Shar Nub Kyi Gna’ Deng Rig P’i Rnam Gzhag Mdo Tsam Brjod Pa Blo Gsar Yid Kyi Bdud Rtsi” (“A Brief Presentation of the Ancient and Modern Knowledge/culture of Global East and West”)

dedication to earning comforts in this life could work to accumulate positive merit. That said, motivations and intentions determine if a conduct is positive karma collection or negative karma collection. A good motivation brings positive karma, while a bad motivation results in negative karma, and a selfish motivation has no merit. As all Tibetans believe in karma and refuge in the Three Jewels, he urges them to work hard to make improvements in their material condition in ways that are consistent with Tibetan Buddhism norms that contribute to positive karma accumulation.

Specifically, Khenpo Tsulpo thinks that there are many ways for lay people to make a living without having to engage in sinful conducts. The most important thing to keeping in minds is to make sure that one does not hurt others and intentionally kill others. In “Dzam Gling Shar Nub” (2003b), he says,

Farming, herding, industrial work, and trading business do not go against Tibetan Buddhist norms. It is said in Buddhist teachings that if a farmer kills small insects when he or she plows the fields without being aware of it, the sin of that killing is small, and the sins can be erased with confession of misdeeds. In a similar way, it is not very sinful if herders make a living by collecting milk and furs from their livestock without slaughtering, torturing, or beating the animals, and treat them with great appreciation. Factories produce products that people need, so they do not violate Buddhist norms. Manufacturing or handicrafts are not mentioned in traditional Buddhist teaching, but if a factory produces commercial products that benefit people, it should not be seen as sinful conduct, though, if it produces harmful weapons and other things that hurt others, then it involves sin.

Trading business is fine unless it is deceptive. In the Vinaya,<sup>45</sup> doing business for the sake of Sangha (Buddhist practitioners) is approved, and a monk is allowed to do business if he is doing so to be able to pay a debt. Therefore, if doing business is not considered to be sinful even for monks, it should be fine for lay people to make a living with it. A similar logic applies to other conducts not mentioned in Buddhist teachings. Therefore, it is no more than a misunderstanding of Buddhism to say that lay people should not practice Buddhism, because practicing Buddhism requires people to live in isolated areas in order to achieve detachment from worldly things. (331)

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<sup>45</sup> The Vinaya (a word in Pāli as well as in Sanskrit) is the regulatory framework for the Buddhist monastic community, based in the canonical texts called Vinaya Pitaka. The teachings of the Buddha, or Buddhadharma can be divided into two broad categories: 'Dharma' or doctrine, and 'Vinaya', or discipline. At the heart of the Vinaya is a set of rules known as Patimokkha (Pāli), or Pratimoksha (Sanskrit). The Vinaya was orally passed down from the Buddha to his disciples.

Here, emphasizing the importance of motivation in practice and conducts, Khenpo Tsullo reinforces the idea that Buddhism will never go against lay people's desire for a better life. He argues that to say that Buddhism hinders the development of Tibet or to say that Buddhism is incompatible with modern society is an indication of not understanding real Tibetan Buddhism.

In contrast to ZhogsDung's zero-sum game idea of inevitable contradiction between Buddhism as an old idea and development as a new condition, Khenpo Tsullo suggests that there is no fundamental contradiction between the two. Moreover, his teachings and suggestions for the herders suggest a dynamic and reflective kind of Buddhism that is always ready for new circumstances. Khenpo Tsullo states in his book, *Lam Gyi 'Jug Sgo*, that many secular practices, including herding, industry, commerce, and others, are *lung ma bstan pa*, which means that they are not mentioned in Buddhist teachings, but he imputes karmic meanings to those secular practices by referring to them as "other conduct" (*lung bstan pa*) as defined by Buddhist teachings. In this way, those practices are now coded within Buddhist norms and can work well within the Buddhist concept of development. In this way, new culture and new practices have been "baptized" by religious meanings, which further regulate people's conduct and ways of thinking about religious subjects. Finally, there is another difference between the positions of these two figures. Khenpo Tsullo has been trying to make Buddhism an everyday practice of Tibetan people by giving religious meaning to their daily activities, whereas ZhogsDung suggests that Buddhism should be limited to religious sites and practiced by only monks and lamas, a position that is in line with modern states' relationship with religions.

### Karma as Regulative Force in Development

Khenpo Tsulpo discusses development not in terms of secular materialism and linear progress, but in reference to the Buddhist norms of karma, reincarnation, and compassion in the framework of samsara. His articulation of development with the law of cause-effect is an effort to bring modern discourses of the differentiation of nationalities associated with development/underdevelopment into dialogue with the religious concept of the six realms of existence. The modern narrative of nationalism is one of relationships between groups of people in this world that are marked by social and political meanings including "lagging behind," cultural preservation, marginalization, and globalization, all of which carry connotations of power relationships among the different groups -- a sort of "foreground" story. Samsara is a religious narrative that embraces all sentient beings, in which the life of each being transits from one to another category (gods<sup>46</sup>, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, hell beings) in accordance with its collection of karma -- more of a "background" story. Khenpo Tsulpo's interpretation of development, which is intended to bring these two conceptions together, has changed the meaning of secular, material development. In other words, he discusses development within the larger framework of samsara that is constituted by eternal lives and regulated by the law of cause-effect. In that sense development is for all forms of life in the samsara, in which human beings are just one form.

Khenpo Tsulpo has emphasized the importance of learning new knowledge/culture (*rig gnas gsar ba*) for the sake of material improvement, but the achievement of development is not totally determined by the "new knowledge/culture" itself, but by the combination of the law of cause-effect on both individual and collective levels (community, regional, national, and global) and proximate causes, say new knowledge and skills. Moreover, "sustainable development" is

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<sup>46</sup> Gods are different from that of western religions.

informed not only by the generational concerns regarding limitations of material resources but also by the continuity of the eternal lives of all sentient beings that are related to one another in producing specific outcomes in the cycle of existence. Regarding the law of cause-effect, Khenpos Tsullo states,

All of the experiences of comforts or sufferings we see now are the results of two causes: remote causes (*ring ba'i rgyu*) and proximate causes (*nye ba'i rgyu*). The remote causes are the negative or positive karma that one collected in previous lives, and the proximate causes are those we can see in the present life. Ordinary people only see the proximate but not the remote causes, and so assume that all of these comforts and sufferings are results of the interaction of current material and events, and believing that there are no other causes. (2003b: 380)

To illustrate this idea, he offers an example of Tibetan herders to demonstrate human misunderstandings. He says that people who are ignorant of or non-believing in karma are just like the herder who, seeing lights in the houses in the towns, bought a light bulb and hung it up with a yak-fur rope in his tent, where there was no electricity, waiting for the light without understanding why his new light bulb did not produce light as they did in town. He says that just as the herder sees only the light bulb and wires but does not understand other causes that produce the actual lighting, we do not see the remote causes in the previous lives, but only the current causes. The implication of development is that all of those sinful conducts bring only misfortunes and miseries to people and their communities, and vice versa. As in many other religious teachings about the slaughter renunciation movement, during his teachings in Rakhor Village, Khenpo Tsullo told the villagers, “The mass-slaughter of yaks for the meat market is not the way to be developed... You will never gain any benefit by slaughtering your livestock, and there definitely will come a time when you will have to pay for what you are doing now; if it is not in this life time, then you will have to pay them back in your other rebirths.” He also said,



with the logic of more selling meaning more money, now you should have a better life and more savings, because you have sold so many of your livestock for the past few decades; but as far as I can see, you are not any better off compared with those who have not sold any livestock for slaughter. The reason that you have never become better off by slaughtering is that the sinful killing will never bring fortune to people or community. If you continue the slaughtering, you will become worse and worse.

He thinks that because all Tibetan people are Buddhists, and believe in karma and reincarnation, it is very important that they make sure that they do not damage their next lives when they make improvements in their current living conditions. He states that it is very important to think about both material development in this life and spiritual development in the next life, pointing out that meaningful development is a combination of learning to live by Buddhist principles and adequate improvement of living conditions. He argues in *Lugs Gnyis Me Long*, "It is not that there are no other ways of making a living other than those that disregard the law of cause-effect. Being honest and following the law of cause-effect will allow one to avoid suffering for this lifetime as well as for future lifetimes."

Therefore, Khenpo Tsullo, first, sees the law of cause-effect as an invisible force that regulates people's gains and losses according to their accumulation of positive and negative karma. Second, with the articulation of the law of cause-effect, Khenpo Tsullo has extended the meaning of development beyond this-worldly material improvement to the betterment of many reincarnations of people's lives. In a religion in which death represents not the end but the beginning of another life, the idea of development must be related not only to things in this world but also to seeking improvement for the entire cycle of eternal life.

The response<sup>47</sup> of another prominent khenpo in Larung Gar, Khenpo Bso Dar Rgyas, to a question asked by an entrepreneur about the frequent occurrence of natural disasters on the

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.zhibeidy.com/2011/0407/2840.php>

global scale, represents a common interpretation of the undesirable events associated with the law of cause-effect. The student asked, “My question is: the natural disasters have been very frequent these years, particularly for the last two years, including earthquake, drought, and floods. What has caused all of them?”

Khenpo Bso Dar Rgyas responded,

Many people are concerned about this. The number of disasters since 2001 has been more than twice the total for the ten years before 2001. Regarding the causes, religious people have different interpretations from those of scientists. However, generally speaking, all agree that the past few decades have seen massive damage to nature, including the mining of sacred mountains, deforestation, and the slaughtering of many animals with the use of technology. All of those misconducts result in outrageous disasters. In addition, the compounding of people’s increasing worries about the outside environment could also cause those disasters. In short, the collective accumulation of negative karma by our people has caused all of the disasters that we are experiencing.

Khenpo Bso Dar Rgyas is highlighting the regulative force of collective karma in modern development. It is his view that all of natural disasters are related to the misconduct of human beings who are driven by their excessive material desire in disregard of the law of cause-effect. Indeed, the khenpos’ conceptualization of development in the framework of samsara is woven into the complex fabric of the everyday life of Tibetan herders. Yet, it is the connection of this-worldly and other-worldly as a conceptualization and a reality that ZhogsDung and government officials try to break or at least ignore. Those religious norms are superstitions in the eyes of those like ZhogsDung. However, the concept of “superstition” could equally apply to other rationales of modernization. For many khenpos, modern people’s excessive devotion to materialism, science, and technology is another type of superstition or empty promise that drives people to move forward in certain directions. In a similar way, the khenpos’ suggestion that Tibetans follow the law of cause-effect could be argued as a rationale for real happiness.

### Tibetan Buddhism and modern science/technology

For ZhogsDung, science and technology, as part of secular knowledge/culture, are the absolute solution to the problems that Tibetan people face. In a similar way, khenpos have also suggested that Tibetans learn science and technology, as proximate causes of the economic development of Tibet, to improve their living conditions. However, khenpos do not see science and technology as a universal remedy for the problems that human beings face, or as means of bringing people everything they need. Khenpo Tsullo states in his suggestions about food consumption and hygiene,

It seems that science and technology have improved our living conditions, but our physical bodies, minds, and behavior have increasingly been degraded. Let alone the threat from wars and destructive weapons, the food we eat -- our most basic need -- has become harmful to our health. When one think about such matters, it is hard to judge whether we are improving or jumping off a cliff. (2003b:170)<sup>48</sup>

Khenpo Tsullo thinks that what science does is to provide solutions for material problems, but it cannot eliminate the suffering of sickness, aging, and death. It is Buddhism that can address those fundamental sufferings. In addition, khenpos insist that new kinds of knowledge require Buddhist guidance if they are to bring material prosperity and not have negative impacts on people and on their environment. In *Lugs Gnyis Me long* (2003a), Khenpo Tsullo articulates the relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and science, pointing out the shortcomings of science:

New knowledge or science has both advantages and disadvantages...for the disadvantages, science is used by those who do not have faith in the law of cause-effect to create extremely destructive weapons, including nuclear and chemical weapons, and many people have started to suffer from the creation of those weapons. The pollution in the soil, in the oceans, and in the air, magnified by the improvement of science and

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<sup>48</sup> “Deng Rabs Kyi Bza’ Btung Ge ’Phrod Bsten Bya Tshul Mdor Bsdus” (“Modern Diet and Hygiene”) in *Lam Gyi ’Jug Sgo. 2003.Hongkong.*

technology, has made it hard for people to live on their own planet. The improvement in outer material conditions brought about by science and technology has multiplied anger, laziness, and indulgence. All of those changes in people's hearts have become the roots of the degeneration of clear moral standards. (36-37)

...Tibetan Buddhism can provide great support and guidance to science; without Buddhist support, science can bring damage to human beings in both the short term and the long run (44)...Therefore, without compassion or belief in the law of cause-effect, science and technology do not follow the right track, and they will hurt people. (46)

Khenpo Tsulpo suggests that Tibetan people should take a selective approach to new knowledge, adopting the learning of the real benefits that science and technology can bring to their lives and keeping a safe distance from the harmful ones.

In responding to some people's estimation that with the achievement in science and technological development Tibetan Buddhism will become less important than it is now for Tibetan people, Khenpo Tsulpo argues that they may distract people from practicing Buddhism, but other than that they do not bring any harm to it. As a result they will never be able to prove or disprove the very secret parts of Tibetan Buddhism including the law of cause-effect, the remarkable ways in which the human mind works, and the path of enlightenment. The improvements afforded by science and technology will only make Tibetan Buddhism more clear and consolidated. He maintains that in most respects science and Buddhism do not conflict with each other, and it is evident from the past findings of science that the two do not have tensions, mainly because Tibetan Buddhism is not based on faith (*dad pa la bsten pa*) but on reason (*rig pa la bsten pa*) (Khenpo Tsulpo, 2003a:40). Moreover, Khenpo Tsulpo (2003b) states that even though there are cases in which they are not consistent with each other or do not agree, in those cases, people should not regard science as the only source of truth:

In general, there is no need for all religions to be consistent with science, and it is not a problem that religions are not consistent with science. All of those beliefs,

including that science is the truth (Tib. *rigs pa yang dag* – correct reasoning), that truth is determined by science, and other truths are to be denied if they are outside of the scientific way of knowing, and the assumption that all the knowable things should be known through science, are of a bias -- "scientism." Recently scientists have overthrown some of the findings of the great scientist, Isaac Newton, all of whose findings were what most scientists believed to be truths for over two hundred years. No one can guarantee that there will be no similar cases among more recent scientific findings. (Khenpo Tsullo, 2003b: 395-396)

Religious beliefs should be based on the truth, otherwise they will lead people in the wrong direction. However, it is unreasonable to think that all religious truths should be approved by science...I don't agree that Buddhism is science, because they are different knowledge systems. (Khenpo Tsullo, 2003b: 399)

If people say that the improvement of science is good enough for everything, so that we do not need traditions, particularly Buddhism, their words show their ignorance of both worldly knowledge and Buddhism. Regardless of how advanced science has become, it will never be able to replace Buddhism, because the two systems have different functions and achievements...Not only can science not eradicate human beings' suffering of birth, aging, illness, and death, it also cannot provide them real peace in this life...that is why there are many scientists practicing religion. (Khenpo Tsullo, 2003a: 45).

Unlike many Buddhist modernists, including Dharmapala, Olcott, Carus, and the Dalai Lama, who embrace thoroughly modern science in presenting Buddhism to Westerners (McMahan, 2008), Khenpo Tsullo does not take the position that anything about Tibetan Buddhism needs to be proven by science or that they should be consistent, but argues rather that they are two different knowledge systems, and that therefore, science cannot prove Buddhism. He does believe that Buddhism fills gaps left by the shortcomings of science.

In sum, Khenpo Tsullo and ZhogsDung are both concerned about the lagging behind of the Tibetan people and about the future path of Tibet. However, their understandings of lagging behind and the way to catch up are different. While ZhogsDung talks about lagging behind in terms of economic and secular social development of Tibet, Khenpo Tsullo refers to lagging behind more as the danger of losing Tibetan culture (Tibetan Buddhism) that comes with the

improvement of the economy. Khenpo Tsullo articulates the idea of development as inner and outer development; at the same time, he proposes a combination of material and spiritual development that is beneficial for this life and the next. ZhogsDung seeks the development of Tibetan people only for this lifetime through secular and materially based culture. However, this is a huge shortcoming of modernization that Khenpo Tsullo suggests Tibetan Buddhism as the best and only solution for. More importantly, Khenpo Tsullo's articulation of development emphasizes the continuity of traditional Tibetan culture with the adequate embrace of new culture, which is a serious problem for ZhogsDung, who suggests development of Tibetan people as a radical departure from their past requiring the wholesale giving up of traditions from the life of lay Tibetan people.

For Tibetan khenpos, Tibetan Buddhism is the better method forward in that it can provide real happiness and peace that modern development and science have failed to provide, and it also balances many negative aspects of modernity and development. Therefore, the khenpos' articulations of development do not sacrifice Buddhism for the sake of development or development for Buddhism; rather they present them as mutually constitutive, or at least potentially compatible. More importantly, they have placed great emphasis on the role that Buddhist cause-effect law plays in development, suggesting that development is not achievable if people disregard Buddhist norms of karma, the law of cause-effect, and compassion. Khenpo Tsullo points out that the real failure of modern development, with its excessive emphasis on outer material development and secularism, is its failure to pay enough attention to people's inner development, the study of human minds and the nature of inner happiness.

## **Conclusion**

Development is contested not only between trustees and their target groups, but also fiercely among different groups in the targeted zone. In Tibet, Buddhist leaders and radical secularists have very different understandings of what development means and how to go about it. On the one hand, the very process in which development is contested and negotiated among Tibetans is a simultaneous process in which Tibetans try to remake their culture and reinforce their identity in contemporary society. That is, with the articulation of and debate over development, Tibetan people reflect upon their culture and current situation by relating to the outside world. With this reflection, many have realized not only that they share the same language and culture, but also that they are collectively facing another common challenge, the common sense of lagging behind in economic development, science and technology, and other aspects of mainstream culture. Their articulations of falling behind, the expression of the need to improve, and the debate over the means and direction of development have all worked to demarcate Tibet spatially and enhance its cultural unity (Pigg, 1992).

On the other hand, this contestation over the meaning of development has not only shaped the current and future culture, but has also been reshaping history. ZhogsDung's critical overview of some historical events represents a recent trend, in which secular Tibetans, who see themselves as lagging behind and in a disadvantaged situation, have been rethinking events that shaped their present situation. Like many contemporary secular Tibetans, ZhogsDung has different views of parts of Tibetan history, including the constitution of the political system by both secular and religious power, the role of King Glang Dar Ma and that of the monk who killed him. The last Tibetan king, Glang Dar Ma (838 to 841 CE), has often been portrayed as a king of the demons, who attempted to destroy Buddhism, and the monk who killed the king is presented

as a hero in histories written by Tibetan Buddhist elites ('GosLo GzhoNu Dpal, 1982; StagTshang RdzongPa, 1985). But recently many educated Tibetans, mostly secularists, reevaluate this story about the king and his death, suggesting that the king was making an effort to reform social and economic conditions then dominated so much by the Buddhist hierarchy. In contrast to conventional Tibetan history, they portray the monk, called Lhalung Paldor, as a criminal who both killed a reformer-king and brought an end to the united Tibetan kingdom. As ZhogsDung affirms, "I have said that Lhalung Paldor was a criminal in Tibetan history, and many people agree on that." Because ZhogsDung is critical of Tibetan Buddhism in relation to the development issue, there are many monks who say that ZhogsDung has been doing the same thing as both King Glang Dar Ma and the Cultural Revolution did to Tibetan Buddhism. ZhogsDung and many other Tibetans have been rereading history from the pro-development angle. Here development has become a force that leads to re-interpretation of historical events and figures in the modern/development context.

Considering all of the debate over the meaning of development, the role of Buddhism in development, and the issues of Tibetan tradition and new culture, one may wonder how Tibetan herders in their specific locations have been experiencing the forces of development and religion, how they negotiate their needs among those forces, and how they make sense of contemporary social and economic transformation. In the next chapter, I will explore the Rakhor herders' experiences of secular state development and Tibetan Buddhist movements.



**Chapter Six**  
**Secular Development and Religious Force**  
**in a Tibetan Community**

“We want our kids to be government officials.”

“It is *bsod nams can* (blessed with good fortune) to become a government officials.”

- many herders’ dream jobs for their children.

A herder from Rakhor Village said, “My son is going to the county town primary school [where all subjects are being taught in Chinese], and my daughter is going to County Tibetan Middle School. We hope at least one of them gets a government job; if this does not happen, we hope they will, at least, not follow our [the herders’] footsteps. We are just like the yaks we herd, knowing nothing.” He also said, “There are many lifelong benefits that can only be gained by gaining access to education.” This is almost the universal expression of herders when they talk about their children’s access to education.

The herder who made this statement is one of the very few who has participated in the second term of the slaughter renunciation movement and his wife became a vegetarian when Khenpo Tsullo visited Rakhor. He travels five kilometers between his pasture and the school by motorcycle about six times each day so that his son can attend the best school in Hongyuan County. His embrace of education represents a radical change in most herders’ attitudes toward education over the last few decades. He thinks that one of the best things his children can do is to become fluent in Chinese and obtain other skills through education. There is a serious deficiency of these skills among Tibetan herders, which puts them at a disadvantage in the current society.

Considering the political issues of Tibet in China, it may seem ironic to western people that a government job has become the dream career for Tibetan herders, but this has become a reality

in pastoral areas of Tibet. Even though there are many possible interpretations for this phenomenon, we should not ignore this reality in searching for a deeper truth concerning their desires. Indeed, I argue that their desires for education and for employment in government administration are the result of the Tibetan herders' experience of neo-liberal economic development, state power, and new religious forces. In other words, this radical change in Tibetan herders' attitude toward state education and the state paid jobs reflects both Tibetan herders' experience of the secular neo-liberal development as well the recent religious movements, which recommend education as the best alternative to the sinful (negative karma) and harsh herding practices.

In addressing the problems associated with the discrepancy between the Western model of neo-liberalism, which is claimed to be universal, and the neoliberal phenomenon in Russia and China, Hoffman, Dehart and Collier (2006) suggest a new way of conceptualizing it: neo-liberalism as conjuncture and contingency in the process of social transformation. They suggest that a good start would be to deconstruct neo-liberalism and trace its elements in their multiple configurations in the West, so that one can see how neo-liberalism is rooted in different cultural and historical contexts. This would help anthropologists reframe important questions such as “the future of welfare state, de-statization of government activities, and the emergence of new forms of personhood and political agency” (Hoffman, Dehart and Collier, 2006: 10). The patriotic nationalism and bureaucratic culture in China, the emphasis on individual freedom and egalitarianism in the West (Harvey, 2005) and belief in karma and enlightenment in Tibet are all cultural forces that have shaped development and neo-liberalism in different cultural spaces. Just as the cultural values of individual freedom and egalitarianism were foundations for the neo-liberal ideology becoming the dominant political and economic strategy in American history, the

combination of relative individual freedom in economic activities and the authoritarian state embedded in patriotic nationalism and bureaucratic culture has formed a nest for neo-liberalism in China. In a similar way, Tibetan Buddhism has become the agent giving cultural meaning to neo-liberalism in pastoral areas of Tibet. In Rakhor Village, Tibetan herders have been deeply influenced by the forces of a strong state power, intensified neo-liberal economic development, and reinforcement of Tibetan Buddhist practices and new movements, forming their own ways of community development in the current neo-liberal social arrangements manipulated by the strong state.

By discussing Rakhor herders' expressions of lagging behind, their embrace of state education and government jobs, and their mixed strategies for improving the well-being of the community, I will demonstrate that they are influenced both by state neoliberal development ideologies as well as Tibetan Buddhist conceptions of development. Though they are different, these expressions and strategies often converge toward similar recommendations that encourage free market development as well as closer integration with Chinese state and Chinese citizenship. In particular, I will demonstrate how both secular neoliberal development projects and Tibetan Buddhist khenpos' recommendations encourage Tibetans to go into labor markets and become entrepreneurs (in certain areas of the economy) and that they reshape Tibetan herders to desire Chinese education and employment in Chinese government administration. Why do the state projects and khenpos' recommendations overlap in many areas? I argue that the process of cultural contestation between state development and Tibetan religious elites, indeed, is the process of moving toward uneven development in pastoral areas, despite the fact that they are pushing the process with different cultural agendas. In other words, both of them are engendering the same social arrangement in pastoral areas of Tibet, but with different motivations and

codings of cultural meaning. Thus, the chapter concludes the dissertation by showing how two very different forms of “small” governmentality can ironically converge and how they work together in moving toward the “big” governmentality.

In the following three sections, I want, first, to discuss how the changes in Rakhor herders’ attitude toward education are informed by the Tibetan religious leaders’ teachings, which are embedded in both secular and religious rationales. Second, I want to discuss their embrace of education and state paid jobs in light of Rakhor herders’ feelings of lagging behind, informing their experience with the state projects and neo-liberal social arrangements, and their spiritual interpretations and measures for community wellbeing. In the last section I will discuss how these two forces deployed exactly same the strategy in their different agendas, leading Tibetan pastoralists into a new, uneven social relationship.

### **A radical shift from resisting to embracing state education**

Since the economic reforms of the 1980s, the Chinese state has implemented many neo-liberal oriented projects in the pastoral areas of the Tibetan Plateau, among them, education. For the past few decades, with the notion of “发展经济，教育先行” (For economic development, education should be first), the state, by investing billions of Yuan, has made education the most important component of the development strategy in many pastoral areas of Tibet. In the pastoral areas of Sichuan Province, for instance, in order to implement the *Liangji Gongjian* (两基攻坚) 2004-2007 program to promote nine-year compulsory education and to eradicate illiteracy among the young and middle-aged Tibetans, the Sichuan government initiated the "Ten-years Action Plan" (2000-2010) (十年行动计划) to improve infrastructure of primary schools. With those projects, many schools have been refurnished and expanded, and in many county towns,

new boarding schools have been built to accommodate the children of herders. The number of teachers in schools has been increased and the enrollment of school-aged children is reaching new highs.

One online report in 2008 demonstrates this achievement of the program to some extent. A vice director of the Sichuan Provincial Education Department told a journalist in 2008,<sup>49</sup> “The Sichuan provincial government planned in 2000 to invest three hundred million yuan over the following 10 years to implement the “*Liangji Gongjian*.” And the journalist added, “with this provincial education program, all tent schools, schools with tamped-earth houses, and unsafe buildings have disappeared, and new teaching buildings and dormitories have been built in many schools, achieving significant improvement in the school conditions.” Furthermore, “in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, the enrollment rate in pastoral areas was 47.89% in 2003, but it has increased to 90% by this year (2008). In addition, the students in these areas do not need to pay school fees. The state provides free books, 2 RMB daily subsidies to each student, and free use of laundry facilities on a weekly basis.”

There are many other stories about the success of the state education program in pastoral areas. For instance, in Hongyuan County, there is a township school called the “5+7” school, meaning that once upon a time there were only 5 students and 7 teachers in the school, but it now accommodate about 700 students and over 27 teachers with the state education programs. These stories reflect a real change in education in pastoral areas of Sichuan province. However, they do not show the process by which these achievements took place, a process that is also enforced by the Tibetan religious movements that have made great contributions to this change in herders’ attitudes toward education in recent years.

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<sup>49</sup> “10年30亿 川助推民族地区完成“两基”任务”, “Spending a Three Billion Yuan for the next Ten years, Sichuan Government promote the ‘*Liangji Gongjian*’ Program in Sichuan Minority Areas”, <http://bbs.sjtu.edu.cn/bbstcon?board=sichuan&reid=1209995839>

At the early stage, many Tibetan herders were disinterested in, and even resistant to, the state education programs for several reasons. These included their need for assistance from their children for herding and help with collecting herbs, and their low opinion of the quality of the school education. There were many pastoral areas where herders did not want to send their kids to schools in the early phase of the program. There were also many scandals in the implementation of the compulsory education among herders. For instance, in some places, the herders were trading their quota for their school-aged children to circumvent the state requirement that each household can keep one child at home to assist their parents on their pasture but must send the rest of them to the schools. Some rich households who did not want to send their kids to schools were paying the poor households for sending their children to schools on the behalf of the rich ones, and some poor households with many children were making money out of this. There were also many cases in which students escaped from their boarding school at night, and the teachers were chasing them to their parents who were said to have hidden the fugitive children on their pastures. In another pastoral area, the herders resisted the state compulsory education so much that the local government arrested some of the leading herders for a short time to scare the other herders, and demonstrate their determination to carry out the program. However, the situation has changed radically over the last few years. Now, many herders in Rakhor Village not only want their kids to be educated, but they want to send their kids to the best schools. This change is correspondent with recent religious movements like the slaughter renunciation movement, in which education has been of highest priority.

Seeing herders' negative attitude toward the state education programs as a serious issue, for the last ten years, many Tibetan religious elites have made efforts, similar to those of the state, to encourage herders to send their kids to schools. In the slaughter renunciation movement,

the importance of education has become the number one message that khenpos wanted to deliver to Tibetan herders during their teachings. There are several aspects for the promotion of education by Tibetan religious leaders that are important to highlight. First, as the state education programs are embedded in Chinese nationalism, khenpos' vision for education (Tib. *slob gso* or *rig gnas sbyong pa*) is also embedded in the future wellbeing of the Tibetan pastoralists, proposing that education is the only path for the Tibetan herders. For Khenpo Tsullo, on the one hand, education has become critical to Tibetan herders as a means of obtaining new knowledge that can improve their material living conditions (see Chapter 5). More importantly, on the other hand, khenpos see accessing education as the best way in which development and Tibetan Buddhism converge to further avoid the contradictory situation in the current livestock slaughtering process.

As Khenpo Tsullo put it, “education is Tibetan Buddhism” and “a change that must be made in the Tibetan herder’s means of making a living.” He sees education as the only possible future for Tibetans herders, and says that herding of livestock is the worst way to make a living in the pastoral areas for two main reasons. First, herding livestock is very hard work and second, it involves lots of serious negative karma with the slaughtering of the animals. To this end, he particularly uses the state education program as a way for the younger generation of Tibetan herders to leave their traditional way of life (Tib. *kha gso thabs*). With education, young Tibetan herders will have wider options to obtain non-sinful careers, which, according to Khenpo Tsullo, are consistent with Tibetan Buddhism. His suggestions for Tibetan herders in his book *Lugs Gnyis Me long* represent most of his advice in many of his religious teachings in the past:

...Tibetan herders need to stop selling their livestock to the meat market, and instead, send their kids to schools...

...The Tibetan children are the future owners of Tibetan Buddhism (*Chos*) and this-worldly development (*'jig rten*). The future destiny of Tibet

depends on the young generation. If they become ignorant like the livestock they herd, the chance of material and religious (Buddhist) development and continuity of Tibetans as one nationality is very small... Therefore, the forcing of Tibetan kids to become herders of sheep and goats is to destroy their bright future. Many parents do not want to send kids to school because they feel sorry for their kids, who are becoming homesick in the schools. Indeed, the real pity that the parents should feel is about excluding their kids from a human life and letting them live among their livestock for their entire lives in an isolated valley, knowing nothing about material improvement and Buddhist practices, while spending their entire lives without having one day's enjoyment of material comforts-but full of serious negative karma [by selling their livestock to the meat market]." (32-33)

Education, even the state education program, has become a strategy for khenpos to reverse the current situation in pastoral areas where Tibetan Buddhist norms and this-worldly development go against one another in the case of the herders' increasing slaughter rate. With education, young Tibetan herders will leave behind cultural practices including herding practice, life in their isolated valleys, and sinful livestock trading. The khenpos see education as the turning point for the young Tibetan herders and see it as a future path for all Tibetans. Thus, in many of his religious teachings, Khenpo Tsullo often highlights the importance of education among herders.

Even though Khenpo Tsullo has great concerns about the quality of the state schools, he thinks that it is better than nothing. Therefore, he sees the current state education program as one very important space where Tibetan Buddhism and the means of material improvement in Tibet are not contradictory, in contrast to livestock slaughtering within the herding tradition. As he states, "it is time to make changes of how Tibetan herders make a living," and the opportunities for the younger generation of Tibetan herders are contained in the state education programs. For Tibetan khenpos, the state education has become a place where Tibetan herders make progress in a way such that that secular improvement is consistent with Tibetan Buddhist norms.



In addition, unlike the state education that is designed for only this-worldly improvement, Khenpo Tsullo sees education not merely as a matter of this-worldly material improvement, but also as a way for people to make both spiritual and material progress. By accessing state education, young Tibetan herders, at least, do not need to engage with sinful conduct of slaughtering, which is negative karma accumulation and will bring them miseries in the future. With education, the young generation of Tibetan herders would be employed in new careers that would be beneficial for both this life and for their next lives.

During the religious teachings in Rakhor Village, Khenpo Tsullo states, “We are not saying Tibetans don’t need development. Yes, Tibetans need development, but the massive slaughtering of their yaks to the meat market is not the way to be developed...you will never win by slaughtering your livestock, and there definitively will be a time when you will have to pay for what you are doing now; if it is not in this lifetime, then you will have to pay in your future rebirths.”

Khenpos think that people should be aware that death is not the end, but it is a starting of another life. So the proper conduct in this life, including believing in the Buddhist Three Jewels, is to act in accord with the law of cause and effect, and to have compassion in one's heart. These are the critical ways to make this life beneficial for many other lifetimes. Therefore, the effects of herders’ slaughtering transcend this world in the many rebirths of people. To attend state schools is to avoid the misconduct of massive slaughtering that brings misfortunes and miseries in many lives of Tibetan herders. Therefore, khenpos’ suggestion of education for Tibetan herders is not only a matter of this-worldly development, but it is also related to the infinite life of human beings. In this sense, I argue that the embrace of the state education by Tibetan

khenpos and herders is towards a religious practice to gain spiritual benefits that go beyond the state intent of education that is designed for worldly profit.

In this way, khenpos' and lamas' teachings on education have been very pervasive and effective in persuading herders to send their kids to schools, because these religious elites have very strong influence over Tibetan herders who are Tibetan Buddhists. This is clear from what some herders say about why they are sending their kids to school now in a much more active way. For instance, it is very common for herders to express that they are sending their kids to school because khenpos and lamas have asked them to send kids to the state schools. Others say that by letting their kids be educated, they do not need to engage in the sinful practice of livestock slaughtering, because with education, they will have options to work on less sinful occupations even if they could not become government officials.

Tibetan religious leaders' influence over Tibetan herders' attitude toward education is reflected in the change in the enrollment and quality of the Serde township school. This school went from being the worst to the best township school in Hongyuan County. The major change took place when a new school leader invited an influential lama as the honorary head of the school and the lama gave religious teachings about education to Tibetan herders when the state leader was facing difficulties in improving enrollment and in gaining support from parents for the school. The strategy of school head has been very effective. Within two to three years, the school has become the best among other township schools. A teacher from that school said that the promotion of education among Tibetan herders through those influential lamas and khenpos has been very effective, and the Tibetan religious role in the success of this school is very significant.

Therefore, even though based on both secular as well as spiritual reasons, khenpos' and the local lamas' efforts in the promotion of education are critical for the change in herders' motivation for education. Of course, recognizing the importance of this religious movement in the change of herders' attitude toward education does not deny the importance of the role played by the state education program itself and the herders' experience of the current state power and economic development. I turn next to a demonstration of how herders' embrace of education is also influenced by the state power system, projects, and market economy, by examining Rakhor herders' expression of lagging behind and their embrace of state education as well as state employment.

**Lagging behind, state projects and education:**  
**Herders' awareness of Education as result of experience of secular development**

During my field research, I frequently encountered villagers saying that their village has increasingly been falling far behind in comparison with other villages or traditional tribes. The puzzle is why they are lagging behind given their favorable location in Hongyuan County. The village is located about three kilometers away from Hongyuan County Town, and this location allows them to have frequent access to the largest market town, the county administrative town, in Hongyuan County. This is an advantage by which many people would assume that Rakhor should be more highly integrated into modern society than other villages located further away from the County Seat. But the fact is that Rakhor Village is far less integrated into modern society than many other traditional tribes like Zangkar, Tsoshi, and Amchok, which are located much further away from Hongyuan County Town. Then the questions are: Why has Rakhor Village remained so traditional or lagging behind even though it is located next to the County Seat? How do they interpret their current situation? And, what do they try to do about it? In

what follows, I will explore, with these questions, how herders in Rakhor experience development and how their experiences have influenced their attitude toward education and employment in the government administration.

### **The expression of lagging behind**

When Rakhor people express their lagging behind, they often compare themselves with other traditional communities in terms of the number of people employed as state officials and in the numbers of people who received a higher level of education. First, herders of Rakhor Village say that they do not have *rigs gnas can*,<sup>50</sup> meaning people with knowledge. Even though in Rakhor there have been fundamental changes in the herders' awareness of the importance of education and even though the enrollment rate in the primary school has reached about 99 % for the last few years, there are very few villagers with a higher level of education and there aren't many government officials from Rakhor in government administrations. Herders see this as a very serious problem for the overall development of the village.<sup>51</sup>

Other communities that Rakhor herders often compare theirs with include the two other villages under Qiongxi Township and another traditional tribe in Hongyuan County called Zangkar (currently under two townships). Zangkar tribe, located about 100 kilometers away from Hongyuan County Town, has the highest number of government paid workers, and Rakhor is among those communities which have the least number of government paid workers or officials. A herder from Rakhor told me that one retired teacher made a comparison among three places on how many students who have graduated from the Tibetan middle school have gone on to become

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<sup>50</sup> People who possess knowledge or people with higher levels (college level or higher) of secular education experience.

<sup>51</sup> In the village of Rakhor, as in other pastoral areas, herders had to send their kids to school during the commune system time, but they all took their kids back from school soon after the livestock decollectivization, and they did not want to send their children to schools when the state restarted the compulsory education program.

government paid workers over the 20 years that he been teaching in the Tibetan middle school of Hongyuan County. Sixty-three students from Longri Township, one township of the Zangkar tribe, have become government paid workers, seventeen students from Village Two in Qiongxi Township have become government paid workers, and only one student from Rakhor Village in the last twenty years has become a government employee. This comparison indicates serious situation for Rakhor villagers. The numbers of people with higher education and employed in the government administrations are very important indications for the overall well-being of a community in the Hongyuan County. The difference in these numbers has both material and symbolic implications for these different communities.

### **Interpretations and measures**

Of importance to note here is that Tibetan herders do not use the term *slob gso* (教育) to refer to modern education. Herders instead use the terms *rig gnas pa* or *rig gnas can*, meaning people who possess knowledge and who have a higher level of secular education. This refers to specific people such as government officials with a higher degree of school education, or monks and lamas with higher levels of monastic education. By combining officials, students with higher levels of secular education, khenpos, and monks into one category, herders categorize themselves as a group that does not possess *rig gnas*, meaning knowledge. It also reflects the fact that herders are mostly illiterate. They have no school or monastic education, and they don't read or write. When they contemplate their disadvantage in the current social process, they primarily attribute their lack of *rig gnas* to their failure in careers other than herding. They think that people with the *rig gnas* have a better chance to be successful, and most importantly, have a better chance to be employed in the government offices.

Rakhor Villagers frequently express that they do not have government officials, and they consider this a very serious issue with regards to the wellbeing of their community. On an individual level, employment in the government-paid job positions means more stability and much higher salaries than can be obtained by herding yaks. On the community level, the more people who work in government, the higher the probability that some of them will obtain key positions in the government power system so that they can allocate more state projects to their own communities.<sup>52</sup> Rakhor people often complain that members of other communities are employed in key government positions, allowing them to obtain more benefits from the state, and because the people of Rakhor lack these key positions, they also lack the benefits that come with the positions. As a result of their lack of these key positions, the people of Rakhor have been marginalized or put at a disadvantage in many respects, including the allocation of the state projects, access to high quality of education, their children's employment, and so forth. Moreover, having more workers in the government would provide a better understanding of the state policies and accessing information from the state, which could be used to their own ends. The formation of an informal network among government officials from the same community does not only help the officials within that network, but also the overall wellbeing of the community they come from. Therefore, the level of access to state education and the state power system/resources indicates the level of development a community has achieved. Because of these disadvantages, herders in Rakhor Village often feel they are marginalized and at a disadvantage in terms of many benefits from the state, particularly in state projects allocation.

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<sup>52</sup> The idea that government officials can bring benefit to their own communities is considered to be a conduct of corruption by the state and it is not encouraged as the state sees it as nepotism. This social arrangement is embedded in the relationship of the state as the neutral and public manager and the citizen as the target of governance. However, nepotism is not considered as corruption but as a praiseworthy conduct in the traditional kinship social relationship, in which those capable ones are encouraged to help their fellows. In some sense, this is a space where the new social arrangement and the old social relationship overlap, forming a new form of social arrangement, in which the common understanding of corruption in the modern state is reinterpreted and reworked.

Rakhor herders attribute their situation to historical and cultural factors. Many villagers maintain that the reason Rakhor has relatively few government officials is that during the commune system time, Rakhor was a very rich village in terms of livestock production. After livestock decollectivization, herders in Rakhor received much more livestock than other villages, which was one thing they were very proud about in the past. Because they had more yaks, they needed more family members to work for the livestock production, and as a result, they neglected the benefit of education that could have aided their current condition. With the collapse of the commune system, most herders in Rakhor Village withdrew their kids from schools, believing that traditional livestock production was the only way that herders could make a living. At that time, they were also very proud of their identity as being Tibetan herders, “*brog pa*”, which has been their main culture for thousands of years. One herder said “We had too much attachment to the life of being herders, and we were too late in awakening to such things as the importance of education, doing business, and other new things.”

By contrast, historically, the Zangkar tribe had more government officials during the commune system and some of them had become very high government officials. In fact, many of their relatives have since been educated and have gone on to become government officials as well. All of these have become an example, to other herders in the tribe, of how herders can benefit by accessing education and by becoming government workers. At the same time, during the livestock decollectivization, the households of the Zangkar tribe had received a relatively low number of livestock in comparison with that of other villages such as Rakhor Village. Therefore, livestock production had become less attractive to herders of the Zangkar tribe, and many of them did not withdraw their kids from school as other herders had after the livestock decollectivization. This increased the probability that the children of other herders in the

Zangkar tribe would end up employed as government officials. All of these facts have become forces for the current phenomenon that herders from the Zangkar tribe have obtained better awareness of the importance of education and that their tribe has the highest numbers of government officials and leaders.

Due to influences such as the example set by the Zangkar tribe, government jobs have become the jobs herders in Rakhor want most for their children, as is the case in many other pastoral areas. Therefore, among those job opportunities requiring higher education, all of my interviewees see the government paid jobs as their first and best choice. When I asked herders to rank potential jobs with their preference, government paid jobs were always the first priority, followed by jobs requiring business skills and other vocational skills. As herders said, “To become a government worker is the best. If they are employed as government officials or salaried employees, they do not have to be herders, which entails very sinful and hard work. They (government officials) have very comfortable and stable circumstances. It is *bsod nams can*<sup>53</sup> to become government officials.” They think that becoming government officials, particularly in important positions, not only allows one to have a comfortable life, but also helps one’s relatives and communities, which they associate with “*sems can la phan thogs pa*”, which means, “to be helpful to others.”

When I asked why they think education is important and how education is a benefit to their children, the most common answers were along the lines of, “even if they cannot become government workers (Tib. *las byed pa*), they can do lots of things by being educated. Becoming educated will benefit them for their entire lives.” Thus, herders see education as very useful in dealing with the state, accessing the market, and public services such as medical care and

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<sup>53</sup> *Bsod nams can* means in Tibetan “to be blessed with having fortune”, or to be someone with positive karma accumulation.



education. Many herders say that becoming a government official is too difficult of a goal for their children to achieve. Herders don't want their kids to become like themselves, who know nothing but yaks. One herder said, "At least, my children will become more independent when they go to the hospitals and markets in the towns and cities. If we (the older generation of herders) go to the big towns or cities, we can hardly even find a toilet." Expressions such as this one indicate that the herders have been awakening to the importance of education over the past few years. This awakening is directly influenced by the Rakhor herders' experiences of the government power system and its project/resource distributions.

In addition to their severe deficiency in government officials, Rakhor villagers also think that the economic situation of the community has been getting worse over the last few years. There is an increasing trend of a widening gap between rich and poor households in the community, which is reflected in the fact that there are more and more herders who do not have enough livestock to make a living.<sup>54</sup> One herder told me that there were only about 10 households who did not have any livestock 20 years ago, but now there are about 50 households who either do not have any livestock or don't have enough livestock to make a living,<sup>55</sup> whereas some rich households have more than 500 yaks and an income as high as about 100,000 RMB a year, which is high by local living standards. The increasing number of economically poor households is one contribution to the sense of lagging behind.

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<sup>54</sup> Their interpretations of this disparity are various but they can be categorized as follows. Some households did not have labor or did not have good herding skills or strategies, so they have slowly lost their livestock after livestock decollectivization. Other herders were not interested in herding so they sold or slaughtered their livestock, left their pasture, and settled in town and worked part time or started small businesses. Most of them do not have enough grassland allocations, because many of them were married after grassland decollectivization, and others have alternatives to herding by which they can make a living. Some have lost their entire livestock herds by gambling, or through theft. Moreover, additional factors -- including the occurrence of snow disasters, livestock diseases, medical expenses due to serious health problems of family members, and education costs for those with many children attending school at the same time -- are all major causes for a drastic reduction in their livestock numbers over a short period of time.

<sup>55</sup> Most households need at least 10 female yaks to make a living.

Another reason for their feeling of lagging behind is the villagers' increasing awareness of the huge differences between their income as herders and the income of government officials and Han businessmen. The richest herder in Rakhor, who has the highest number of livestock, told me that the wealth he has is tiny in comparison to that of some of government leaders and Han businessmen. He has been having a very difficult situation surrounding the investments of his savings. Though his savings are considerable when compared to the savings of other herders, inflation increases more rapidly than his savings accumulate. As a result, the value of his savings decreases. He cannot invest his savings in the expansion of his herds, as is generally a good way for herders to invest if they have the means to do so, because the capacities of his pasture and labor are at their limits. Because he feels that he lacks the knowledge and education necessary to invest in other ways or to start a business of some sort, he keeps his savings in the bank where it continues to diminish in value. This scenario resonates with the expressions of many other herders who feel that the main reason the village does not have any businessmen (only one or two very small businessmen) is that they lack the education necessary to engage in new areas of business.

With this general awareness of education, many herders express that when sending their kids to school, they don't have ambitious expectations that their kids will get government jobs once they finish school, but they do believe that by gaining an education, their children will have more options than they would if they were to stay home to become herders, which they consider to be the worst option for their children. As one herder said, "whatever people want to do nowadays, they need *rig gnas* (the knowledge), even for starting a business."

Many herders express that the consequences of lacking education have been the hardest lesson they have had to learn. They hope to pass this lesson on to their children so that they, at

least, can be spared learning this lesson the hard way (through their own experience). The lack of education has put them in many disadvantaged situations in the government power system and in the economic development of community and individual households. With their observations and the feelings of differences, over the last several decades, there has been a radical change in their awareness of education and their embrace of the state power system, and they have been very supportive of the state education programs by sending their kids to schools. With this awakening, some herders have even given up their herds and their pastures entirely in order to send their kids to the best primary school in Hongyuan County Town. In these instances, the parents find themselves, out of necessity, working part-time jobs and renting houses to take care of their kids while they are going to school. This idea is reflected in the herder mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, who travels five kilometers between his pasture and the school by motorcycle about six times each day so that his son can attend the best school in Hongyuan County.

In short, education is one of the most important components of state development over the last decades; at the same time it is also strongly emphasized by khenpos in their religious teachings. Influenced both by state education policies and khenpos' teachings, herders' attitudes toward state education, state paid jobs, and government officials have changed radically in recent years. This change also reflects their experience in the market economy and state development. In other words, the herders' embrace of education and state employment has been influenced by the state and its neo-liberal economic force as well as Tibetan religious forces. They are shaped by both forces. Though these forces may have different agendas, the recommendations they yield lead to the same social relationship for Tibetan herders.

**Traditional religious rituals and community well-being:  
Reversal of Collective Karma as development strategy**

In terms of Tibetan Buddhist elites' influence over the Tibetan community, other than their advocating education for herders, there is another aspect with which we can see the religious force in shaping the articulation of community development. That is, when Rakhor herders express their situation of falling behind, other than the secular reasons, they also use religious norms and rituals in their interpretations of their situation and take religious measures to improve the condition of the community.

For the last few years in Rakhor Village, there has been a strong atmosphere among villagers and monks that something has not been working well spiritually for their community. There are several indications for this. Economically, they see that the number of poor households has been increasing recently; they did not see any change in the number of their people employed in the government administrations while the number of people employed in government offices has been increasing in other tribal communities. In addition there are more and more people in Rakhor who engage in misconducts such gambling, stealing, and internal conflicts. All of these downward trends in the community have become worse with the events of the two most important lamas of Rakhor Village dying a few years ago. As a result, for the last few years there has no lama, only khenpos, to spiritually lead the village. This incident has hit hard for the villagers. The combination of all of these factors contributed to the common sense of herders that there is something that has not been going well with the community.

Community members were not sure what it was. It might have something to do with their collective misdeeds, for instance, slaughtering, gambling, and stealing during their current lives, or it may be because of their collective karma has not been so positive in their past reincarnations,

or because they have not done enough offerings for their mountain gods so that mountain gods had not been working hard to protect them from misfortune and to bring the prosperity. To correct those spiritual failures, they have launched a number of religious measures. Those religious measures include inviting khenpos and lamas to perform Buddhist teachings, empowerments, and offering to mountain deities; and the performance of monthly religious practices and rituals by local monks in the monastery.

Because these religious practices are the traditions of many Tibetan communities, one may ask: how can they be treated as development or related to development? It is true that many of those rituals and religious practices are the traditions of many traditional tribes, but I want to argue that we cannot separate them from the current socioeconomic context, a context in which the communities are situated and that community members make sense of through their traditional practices. That is, when community members express their concern over their situation of falling behind economically and the need to make changes, those traditions, indeed, are added new social meanings. Those religious practices and rituals are related to their desires and wishes including letting their kids be enrolled in the schools with a better teaching quality and to be employed in very important key government offices, having their village members be employed and promoted in government administration, preventing villagers from engaging in gambling and stealing, success in their wealth generation, and the overall improvement in the economic condition of the community. All of their concerns, desires, and those traditions are situated in the current socioeconomic context that is informed by the state apparatus, neo-liberal market economy, and Tibetan people's own imagination of development that is related to their traditions and new religious movements.

At the same time, Rakhor herders' religious practices and rituals inform another form of development suggested by Khenpo Tsullo (Chapter 5), an articulation of development including both this lifetime as well as the future lifetimes. Many of these religious practices and rituals are, on the one hand, the investment into their next lives by accumulating positive karma, and on the other hand, they are ways in which Tibetan herders can gain real happiness and peace in their current lifetimes. This is what Khenpo Tsullo called "the balance of one's inner and outer development" (2003b:190-191).

In the case of Khenpo Tsullo's visit, even though most herders in Rakhor have not renewed their vows of stopping the selling of massive numbers of yaks to the meat market, which was said to have serious negative impacts on the individual and community well-being, they deployed education as a strategy in which herders strive to let their children avoid sinful slaughter. Many herders expressed that Khenpo Tsullo's religious teaching have increased Tibetan herders' awareness and understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. Many herders have been keeping the religious practices that Khenpo Tsullo asked for and the vows they took during his teachings. In short, Khenpo Tsullo's and other lamas' teachings have reinforced Tibetan herders' religious belief and understanding, which, according to Khenpo Tsullo, is very important for herders to gain real happiness and peace for their current life as well as for the next life, which is also part of the larger framework of development that Khenpo Tsullo articulated. As Khenpo Tsullo suggests, Tibetan herders are trying to keep a balance between spiritual investment and secular material improvement in their everyday lives.

However, the spiritual development and the secular development are not separated but are related through the law of cause-effect, which works through both remote causes (Tib. *ring ba'i rgyu*) and proximate causes (Tib. *Nye ba'i rgyu*). That is, with karma or the law of cause-effect

(Tib. *las* or *las rgyu 'bras*), the level of collective development (a village, tribe, a region, a nationality, and so forth) (Tib. *sems can sbyi mthun gyi las dbang*) and the success of individuals in collecting wealth, having a good reputation, and the feeling of contentment and happiness are determined by the condition of karma accumulation. The amount of positive karma determines the level of fortune and happiness that an individual or collective (a group of people) can enjoy; the amount of negative karma determines the level of suffering that the individual and collective people will experience (Tsullo, 2003a, 2003b; Rdza Dba' Sbul, 2008; Khenpo Ye Shes Phun Tshogs, 2006). According to the Buddhist teachings, Rakhor people's collective feeling of lagging behind and the individuals' poverty and illness are the results their negative karma accumulation. However, it is important note, as Khenpo Tsullo taught during my interview, that Buddhists believe that some past negative karma is relatively light and can be mitigated in the current conditions with one's works of *tshogs bsags sgrub sbyong*,<sup>56</sup> meaning religious rituals and practices. Further, the collective development and the well being of individuals for the future can be improved through merit accumulation with virtuous conduct and religious practices. It is from this religious norm that Rakhor people interpret and took spiritual measures for the improvement of their collective development and individual well-being.

From the material perspective, even though Khenpos Tsullo was not primarily invited to solve the village's problems, during the two days' of religious teachings, other than the specific religious teachings, empowerments, and the taking of vows on slaughter renunciation, Rakhor village leaders and local khenpos also asked Khenpo Tsullo to address some material issues that Rakhor people were concerned most. Those issues included the importance of education, the proper way to improve living conditions, internal conflicts, the negative results of gambling and

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<sup>56</sup> *tshogs bsags pa* - accumulation of positive karma; the virtuous practices of perfecting the 'two accumulations' of merit and wisdom.

stealing, and others. In this sense, many of those religious movements initiated from Larung Gar are the collaborative result of khenpos from Larung Gar and local communities. They are a mix of Tibetan Buddhist interests and local communities' interests when they dealing with social and economic challenges in development. In other words, Khenpos Tsullo's teaching in Rakhor worked as guidance for the community to go forward. As Khenpos Tsullo told herders, "what I have been doing for these two days, including Buddhist teachings, empowerments, making suggestions, pointing out your mistakes, and even my hard attitude toward you, are all about you and your future; you will benefit from those teachings for this life and for many other lives. I am doing all of these for your own sake." As a spiritual leader, Khenpo Tsullo's teaching, correcting the collective misdeeds of community such as massive slaughter, works as an effort to make positive change for the community. In this sense, his teaching was about the well being of community as a group of people in this lifetime and their betterness in other lifetimes. Therefore, this was about Tibetan Buddhism as well as about the development of the community, which are inseparable from the perspective of Tibetan people.

In the summer of 2010, Rakhor Village also invited another highly prestigious lama, Kalzang Nyima, from Guoluo Prefecture, Qinghai Province. This has been another very important measure villagers have taken to reverse the downtrend in their collective fortune. According to some informants, the main reason for Rakhor to invite this lama to give religious teaching and empowerments is a response to some events that took place in Rakhor in the preceding few years, including the loss of the head lama of Rakhor Monastery, the sudden death of their outstanding khenpo, the conflicts and fighting between villagers, and the recent increase in the cases of stealing and gambling. More generally, the lama was invited in the hope that his religious teachings, empowerment, and fortune telling would bring prosperity and luckiness to



the community. As a herder told me, that they invited Lama Kalzang Nyima because they wanted to reverse the recent downtrend of their village and to have their community *lam la 'gro rgyu* or *yar la 'gro rgyu*, meaning to be successful in making progress or to make sure things go smoothly. Another reason that Rakhor wanted to invite him is that the monastery where the lama came from is the headquarter monastery<sup>57</sup> of Rakhor monastery, so this is way to reinforce traditional social connections and monastery networks.

As the lama's visit was a very important event for the village, the local khenpos and village leaders made many efforts for the preparation of the religious teachings a month ahead, holding numerous meetings, during which the main agenda was to encourage herders to take a second oath of refraining from massive slaughtering, to persuade herders to contribute as much donations as possible for the visiting lamas (the minimum was 100 RMB per household), and to discuss the arrangement for the welcome ceremony. Because there were very few herders who have cars, village leaders asked herders to borrow fancy cars from others for the welcome ceremony. Traditionally horse riding was the only way to receive important lamas; this was replaced by motorcycle a few years ago, but now is gradually being replaced by cars.

*In August 18, 2010, Kalzang Nyima, the lama from Payel Monastery arrived at the monastery of Rakhor village in his Landcruiser. The lama was welcomed by cars from about 30 kilometers away from the monastery, and by horse riding within one kilometer away, and by the khenpos and monks two hundred meters away from monastery. He stayed three days in Rakhor Village, with two and a half days' Buddhist teachings and empowerments with occasional lectures to herders. Because this was a very special day*

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<sup>57</sup> Headquarter monastery is a monastery that has several branch monasteries, which are established by the lamas from the headquarter monastery.

*for the herders, all herders, male and female, gathered to that religious event, giving up herding for those days. In addition to herders, there were also many Tibetan government officials both currently in position and retired ones, and their family members who came to receive the empowerment of the lama and his teachings.*

*During the religious teaching for lay herders, the lama was sitting on a throne inside of a room in the second floor of the hall of the monastery. The lay herders were sitting outside on the ground where they could see the lama through the windows. The sound of the lama's speech was delivered to the lay herder through a very good microphone and well-equipped audio system. The site of the religious teaching was surrounded by cars, which is different from a decade ago, when there were only horse and motorcycles available for herders. On the first day (August 19, 2010), the lama gave religious teachings only to local khenpos and monks in the monastery. For the second day and the afternoon of the third day, the lama gave lay people various Buddhist teachings and empowerments.*

As lamas and khenpos are different (see the footnote in the Introduction), unlike Khenpo Tsullo's style of giving lots of lectures and religious teachings that is more a way to educate herders on both secular and religious issues, Lama Kalzang Nyima did not give long lectures. Instead, he spent most of his time on religious empowerments and chanting, with a few short speeches. Though one is a lama and another a khenpo, Lama Kalzang Nyima showed great respect to Khenpo Tsullo; in several cases during his teaching, Lama Kalzang Nyima referred to Khenpo Tsullo's teachings in his emphasis on the necessity of refraining from slaughtering and eating meat. Showing his support for Khenpo Tsullo, Lama Kalzang Nyima also suggested

herders to stop the larger scale of slaughtering, eating meat, gambling, stealing, internal conflicts, and others, but he did not force herders into the vows, but asked them to participate in those vows voluntarily. Though using the opportunity of the lama's present, local khenpos had tried very hard to bring herders into the vows of not slaughtering, but they did not gain support from the villager leaders and lay people. By the end, there weren't many herders who took vows of not slaughtering for the meat market; yet, there were some villagers who took vows of refraining from eating meat, drinking alcohol, smoking, and gambling as those conducts are considered to be sinful and are destructive for the community.

Another very important ritual performed by the lama with the community members was the offering to their mountain deity. On the morning of the third day of the lama's stay in Rakhor, the lama led villagers to offer *lab rtse*, that is to make an offering to the mountain deity, located at a site on the top of a hill near the monastery. Khenpos, monks, and male herders were gathered on the hill, and with the lama's attendance and chanting, villagers renewed the core flags of the *lab rtse* and made the offering to the deities. This offering to the mountain deities with the lama's attendance has a special meaning. The lama's lead in the offering means that the deities will work harder in the task of protecting the village and in bringing fortune to the community in the future. The lama's presence at the site of offering has a symbolic meaning of strengthening the relationship between deities and the community. In other words, with the lama's authority, now Rakhor people and the mountain gods have a better connection with villagers and a new start for the overall improvement of the community.

Therefore, in Rakhor, the performance of the *lab rtse* ritual and religious teachings together have become a spiritual strategy for the community members to make positive changes for the well being of their community, and the lama's attendance has become a very important

mediation in this spiritual enhancement. The potential changes expected by villagers with this religious ritual may include many things, but to name a few, they include more students being able to go to a higher level of education or becoming government officials, less sinful deeds such as stealing and gambling, increase in livestock population, and other forms of prosperity for Rakhor Village. If any positive changes take place in Rakhor after the lama's visit, it would be very possible that the villagers would make a causal connection between the lama's visit and these changes, as is very common in Tibetan society. For instance, it was the case in another village of Qiongxi Township that when villagers saw three government officials from their village receive promotions in government offices, they connected those promotions with their previous religious rituals. As a government employee who is from that village said, "after our village had moved one *lab rtse* to the new location, three officials from our tribe have been promoted to a very high level in the county government," and very recently another three officials from that village have gotten promotions as well. This has been interpreted as a result of their visiting a lama; as one herder put it, "after we visited a reincarnated lama, our village had three government officials promoted." Through their link to the wellbeing of community members, these spiritual efforts are situated in the current social and economic arrangement. Other than religious rituals and teachings performed by lamas, local monks and khenpos in Rakhor monastery, like many other Tibetan community monasteries, have been doing monthly chanting and rituals, such the *sde ba' rim 'gro* and *sbyi srong* to pray for the well-being of their community and its members.

The herders' recent embrace of state education marks a radical change in their relationship with the education programs and the state apparatus. This change, on the one hand, is informed by the Tibetan Buddhists' religious movements; and, on the other hand, it is associated with the

Tibetan herders' experience of the state and neo-liberal development. More importantly, this is a simultaneous process in which the herders are making their own sense of development by integrating the secular interpretations and spiritual interpretations with corresponding measures. The community economic wellbeing, the engagement with the state and its projects, and accessing modern education, are not separable from their religious practices and rituals; instead, the religious practices and rituals are highly compatible with their sense of development. In other words, development is infused into their religious traditions and beliefs in their articulations and everyday practices. The conjuncture of development with religious norms and practices is informed by their experience of the forces of recent religious movements, the state apparatus, development projects, and their religious tradition in contemporary social-cultural transformation brought by the secular, neo-liberal project of "Open up the West" campaign.

In short, Tibetan herders have continued their sedimented cultural memory of the past (Moore, 1996), one aspect of which is tribal nomadic culture, and another aspect of which is Tibetan Buddhism that is recently reinforced by Tibetan religious elites with their various movements. At the same time, they are also embedded in the secular neo-liberal social structure that works as "socialism from far" (Ong and Zhang, 2008). Yet, their negotiation is situated in a social context in which development has become a decisive yet controversial topic for different agents that encounter each other in development: development is the only logic for the state while khenpos articulate their own way of development, and herders experience development within these forces.

**Overlapping forces of state development and the slaughter renunciation movement  
- Pushing toward a neo-liberal social relationship**

As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, the different forces of secular neoliberal development and religious elites' interpretations of and teachings for Buddhism in the contemporary world produce competing subjects among Tibetan herders, but these competing forces are not totally opposite. It is not the case that they never speak to each other. Rather I observed lots of overlapping parts between these forces while they can still be distinguished in forming different kinds of subjects. In this sense, development is not only a matter of contestation and resistance that many political activists and scholars have conceptualized, nor is it the single harmonious voice that the state has portrayed. Instead it is much more complex process of contestation that exists simultaneously with a process of mutual constitution and a relation of embracing one another. This section explores a phenomenon in which the state neo-liberal development strategy and religious teachings have overlapped to the extent that they all have been bringing a similar transformation to Tibetan pastoralists. The efforts made by both khenpos and the state to achieve that transformation include the provision of modern education to the younger generation of herders, encouragement of adult herders to participate in the market economy by doing business or being employed in part time wage labor, and the promotion of sedentarization of herders. In the process, all of these moves have had a significant impact on the Tibetan nomadic culture and the traditional production system, which has further triggered a debate about what constitutes Tibetan culture: Tibetan Buddhism or Tibetan nomadic culture. Yet, all of those moves, in the long run, turn Tibetan herders from a moral economy based on kinship social relationship into the neoliberal social relationship, which is at the core of the uneven process of development.

If one asks what herders should be doing if they should not sell livestock for the meat market, given that it is a very important income source, Khenpo Tsullo has generationally specific suggestions for the alternatives. Many of those suggestions are the same in many of his religious teachings in different pastoral areas, but others are location-specific. Four common suggestions cut across many of his teachings. His first message for herders in many places is to urge herders to send their kids to the state schools, suggesting that learning knowledge both traditional and new is the only path for Tibetan herders. Second, he encourages adult herders to make a living by working in wage labor in towns including construction work, the service industry, and other work that is not related to killing and hurting. Third, if possible, herders are also encouraged to learn different skills or arts. Fourth, Khenpo Tsullo encourages herders, if they can, to making money by engaging in business with one's honesty and without involving killing and hurting. For instance, during his teaching near Qinghai Lake, he was very supportive of herders who have been making a living with tourism business instead of herding livestock. In another teaching in Guoluo Prefecture, his first suggestion for herders was to make a living by collecting caterpillar fungus and other herbs, because these regions are rich in caterpillar fungus and other medical herbs. Other than these new suggestions, selling dairy products and livestock wool while treating livestock well, is always encouraged.

These suggestions represent a common expression of many khenpos in the promotion of the slaughter renunciation movement. However, ironically, their suggestions and efforts have been exactly the same as what the state has been promoting in the pastoral areas of Tibetan plateau for the past several decades. The overlap is in their similar efforts to integrate herders into the market economy by transferring herders from their traditional livestock production to the settled life in the towns. Khenpos' recommendations for educating young Tibetan herders in

modern education system, encouraging adult herders to be employed in part-time labor in towns, and cultivating herders into entrepreneurs by encouraging them to engage in business, and making a living in other ways such as collecting or cultivating herbs, has become a force that reinforces the recent state strategy of integrating herders into Chinese neo-liberalization process intensified by the recent “Open up the West” campaign (see Chapter 2). This overlap is well demonstrated by comparing a religious teaching of Khenpo Tsullo with a statement of the Party Secretary of Sichuan Province.

Khenpo Tsullo stated in Rakhor Village:

...Economically, Tibetans are lagging behind, and Tibetans need more economic development, but slaughtering yaks and gambling will never bring prosperity to herders...

...If we continue what we are doing now, after ten to fifteen years, the future scenario of Tibetan people will be that some Tibetan herders will be living on the top of mountains herding yaks and another few will be doing farming in some valleys. In the towns and cities, there will be no Tibetans, but there will be other nationalities like Han people and Hui people. Then, why is it that there will be no Tibetans in towns? Because Tibetans do not have knowledge and skills to live in the towns, and without knowledge, people cannot live in the towns. ...

The Party Secretary of Sichuan Province, Liu Qibao, stated during his visit to the sites of the Housing Project for Herders in 2010:

By providing herders with public infrastructure and service facilities, [the housing project] is to help Tibetan herders to improve their living conditions and to be fully integrated into modern civilization, ensuring that modern concepts are integrated into the entire project of houses for herders.

The permanent houses for herders in the settlement sites should be supported by the industrialization to make sure that herders are settled and have jobs. With a strategy that is long term, better prepared, and localized, the local government should help those settled herders develop their economic industry and to make sure that they are employed. With the housing project, local government should guide herders to gain market awareness and commodity consciousness to commercialize traditional livestock production... in order to realize the transfer of labor from pastures, the local government should enhance the vocational training



programs to improve the *suzhi* of herders to further help herders working in the secondary industry and service sector.

Both suggest that herders need to be settled in town by adopting more market-oriented practices. What all of these suggestions do are alter the traditional livestock production system and the related nomadic culture. That is, as herding has been the main means of subsistence for Tibetan herders for over a thousand years, continuing during the commune system, this production system has produced a rich nomadic culture, constituting a very important aspect of Tibetan culture. Most Tibetan herders make a living with the livestock production of mostly yaks and sheep, and most of them consider themselves as drokpa, Tibetan herders. However, this production system and its cultural practices have become problematic for both the state/neo-liberal economy and Tibetan religious elites in their articulation of development.

For the state, its rationales for getting rid of traditional herding are that the way Tibetans herd livestock has been economically inefficient and ecologically destructive. A common discourse of the state about Tibetan herders and their way of life is that herders' lives are harsh, their way of thinking is backwards, and the traditional production system is economically inefficient. All of these should be changed with many of state measures through many policies and projects, including the housing project, compulsory education promotion, vocational skill training, the current attempt to establish cooperatives among herders, and other economic policies.

The housing program is provided with the rationales that herders can be settled so that they can benefit from modern services such as school education, health care, and others provided by the state, and that they can therefore better participate in the market economy (Chapter 1). The state wants herders to become competitive market actors, a status that is supposed to be achieved through state education programs including Nine-years' Compulsory Education Program, "9+3"

Vocational Program (nine year compulsory education plus three years of vocational training, a Sichuan provincial program that is designed for Tibetans), and “Ten Years’ Action on Education Construction Program” (provincial program). With these education programs, the *suzhi* of the younger generation of herders will be improved in a way they can become future human capital in the market economy that can be exchanged in the labor market. It is also strongly encouraged for herders to participate in the market economy. The state has highly stressed the importance of increasing the off-take rate for herders and to run their pastures and livestock through an entrepreneurial logic. Other recent state efforts include those to reduce the number of herders relying on pastoralism in order to eliminate the “overgrazing” problems that has been considered to be the critical cause of grassland degradation in pastoral Tibet. The programs of Rangeland Ecological Compensation Mechanism and the establishments of cooperatives among herders are also being introduced to many pastoral areas, with which herders are trained to become entrepreneurs. The overall goal of those programs is to remove most of the herders from their pastures and settle them in towns working as hired labor in the businesses started with the establishment of cooperatives and in other sectors.

In a similar way, Tibetan religious movement like the slaughter renunciation movement have put another layer of pressure on traditional livestock production and the nomadic way of life. With the slaughter renunciation movement, grounded in both religious and secular reasons, khenpos have not only been encouraging herders to give up income from slaughtering yaks, they have also been suggesting alternative ways for Tibetan herders to make a living, which will have a similar outcome as that promoted by the state agenda. In other words, khenpos’ alternative suggestions for Tibetan herders take place in a larger socioeconomic context in which Tibetan herders have been facing social-cultural transformation through the state development program

designed for the economic integration of marginalized region into eastern economic zone (“Open up the West” campaign), and the larger cultural integration of different ethnic groups into one cultural assembly which will contribute to the stabilization of western regions. In the process, to some extent, khenpos advice for herders reinforces the state neo-liberal policies to transform the moral economy and the nomadic cultural identity into a neo-liberal uneven social relationship. Therefore, khenpos’ suggestions, overlapping with state efforts, have two significant impacts on Tibetan pastoralists: cultural transformation of the nomadic way of life, and pushing toward new social relationship formed in the process of uneven development. Khenpos’ suggestions are specific, generational, and gendered, but they will have a profound impact on nomadic culture and moral economy in pastoral areas of Tibet.

### **Education for younger generation of herders**

Education is one of the most important components of khenpos’ teachings. Most of the khenpos suggest that education (that best be consistent with Tibetan Buddhism) or becoming persons with knowledge is the best way for Tibetan herders to get rid of their sinful and harsh livestock herding practices, and it is also suggested as the only future path for the Tibetan people. Khenpos Tsullo taught herders during Rakhor Village:

...herders should work hard to let their children be educated. There are some herders like those in Seda County who spent lots of money in order to avoid sending kids to schools and becoming educated. You should not do that. That is paying money to cause harm to yourself...if your kids are well educated in school, then they will not need to do what you are doing now...

... We should not continue what we have been doing recently. Otherwise, we will be going further downward...

... if you do not let your kids be educated, your children will follow your footsteps to make a living by slaughtering yaks and gambling. There will be no place for the next young Tibetans to live in towns if they are not well educated. Even if they live in the towns, without being educated, they will become the underworld in the towns...

As suggested by khenpos, with an integrated effort of state education policies, khenpos' and lamas' teachings, and herders' own marginalized experiences, for the last few decades, herders have increasingly embraced the state education program. From the religious perspective, the idea is that with education, at the individual level, young herders will have wider options of making a living that are not very sinful. As the state education system is designed to produce Tibetan herders as competitive market actors by improving their *suzhi* (quality) in the job market and business industries, by accessing modern education, khenpos want Tibetan herders to be better equipped and with better skills and knowledge for the employment in non-sinful positions in the job market. This will benefit their material improvement in the current life, and it is also good for their future lives. However, khenpos' recommendation of education for herders is very similar to the state education programs in the sense that, for both the state and khenpos, the advocacy of modern education is a generational project with which the next generation of Tibetan herders will be relocated from their pastoral production and their culture. Education for both the state and khenpos is the project with which the next generation of herders will be settled in towns and fully integrated into neo-liberal social arrangement.

This future will can be seen from some current trends. First, this can be seen from herders' embrace of modern education in their effort to catch up to the more developed ones. For instance, in order to let his daughter be educated in the Hongyuan County Primary School, the best school where the entire curriculums is in Chinese, a herder from Rakhor recently left his pasture and settled in the county town working as a doorkeeper for a hotel. While he is in town with this daughter, his wife has been taking careful of their 40 yaks on their pasture. He thinks that this is in the best interest of his daughter for her future as she will learn very good Chinese

language and many other new things. Many herders express that they do not want their kids to be herders because of both the sin involved in slaughtering and the hard and harsh work related to traditional herding practices.

Secondly, we can see this transitional trend by looking at the current situation. Even though the numbers of young herders who have gotten government jobs or stable jobs are small compared to those who remained unemployed, one trend in Tibetan pastoral areas is that those educated and unemployed young herders do not want to go back to the pastures they come from, and they rather prefer to stay in towns working in part-time jobs. Because young herders usually leave their pasture when they are young and get used to the life in the towns or cities, it is very hard for them to return back to their pastures herding livestock. Elderly herders sometimes complain that those young Tibetans did not learn enough to get stable jobs on the one hand, but, on the other hand, they lost the skills and experiences needed for working as herders and they cannot get used to the hard work required for livestock production, so they are wandering around on the streets like “street boys.” An observation of this current trend suggests that the promotion of education for the young generation means that there will be fewer and fewer young Tibetan herders going back to their pastures. Considering the facts that the positions in the state apparatus has its limit to absorb the unemployed and that herding is encouraged by neither khenpos nor by the state, the future option for the most of those young herders is either to become entrepreneurs who own their own business or to be employed by those with capital and resources in the towns and cities, leaving their hometown in searching for the jobs.

For the state, with education, there will be fewer and fewer primitive and backward herders who live outside of neo-liberal social realms. This has significance for the state, including social stability, cultural integration, economic development, and ecological security

related to overgrazing. For Tibetan khenpos, with the transition from uneducated herders to educated Tibetans, these Tibetans will have gain better ways of life that are consistent with Tibetan Buddhist norms and that will be positive karma collection for their future lives, conceptualized in a broader framework of development, related to samsara.

### **Working part-time jobs in towns**

It is the main strategy of the state to settle the herders down and let them work as part-time laborers or to start their own businesses becoming entrepreneurs. This is very clear from the housing projects for herders as well from recent rangeland ecological projects such as the Rangeland Ecological Compensation Mechanism. All of these projects encourage herders to leave their pastures and to make a living by means other than herding. Similarly, Khenpo Tsullo's main suggestion for adult herders is to make a living by working in part time labor such as construction works and the service sector in towns. Compared with making a living by slaughtering yaks, these physical forms of labor are *las rgyu 'bras las ka red*, which means that they are work consistent with the law of cause-effects and the money they earned from these forms of work are clean. He states in his book *Lam Gyi 'jug Sgo*,

Herders should keep small numbers of yaks and sheep to use them without harming them; this is to keep herders' pastures. Male herders should go to their own towns or other towns to look for income sources. Most herders are illiterate, they cannot collect wealth with their knowledge, but they can make a living by working with manual labor. To make a living by engaging in physical work should be encourage and praised, because it is an honest and fair way of making a living. One does not need to feel guilt about making a living with physical work for this lifetime and for the next lifetimes, so herders should work hard to do this. (2003b:201)

He encourages herders to change their old attitude toward these new jobs. During his religious teachings in Rakhor, he said:

...for the older ones, it is too late to learn new things, but they should at least try to make a living by engaging in physical work. It doesn't really matter whether one works in construction jobs or even shoe shining in the streets. Some people may say they feel shame to engage in such dirty works like shoe shining. However, this is wrong. There is nothing to be ashamed of in shining shoes. What you really should be ashamed of is to make money by slaughtering a dozen livestock in slaughterhouses, and to see it as an admirable thing....

As suggested by khenpos and encouraged by the state, there has been a trend recently in which more and more herders have left their pastures and work in the daily or hourly wage labor jobs in towns in many pastoral areas of Tibet. These part-time jobs include construction, street cleaning, doorkeeper, and working as daily or hourly paid labors for mushroom cultivation bases and meat processing in slaughterhouses. With these jobs, settled herders do not earn as much as those herding livestock who sell dairy products and livestock as their main income sources. For instance, herders who work in construction earn 60-80 RMB per day in Hongyuan County and this is only available for the five months of summer time. People usually see these forms of physical work as “fair work and clean earnings” without serious sin involved. As a herder said, “you will earn what you worked for, and it is not sinful.” However, many Tibetans who work in meat processing in the slaughterhouses have become controversial for their work, because their work is related to slaughtering. Similar issues exist for the truck drivers who transport livestock in the meat market. Moreover, those part-time jobs have not been highly valued by many herders who have sufficient livestock to make a living, who see those forms of work as the last option for “those who do not have sufficient livestock to make a living” as herders put it.

### **Venturing into the business world**

Even though Khenpo Tsullo does not recommend excessive attachment to material wealth or to believe that material development is the only source to gain real happiness and peace, he

has been putting great emphasis on doing business as an alternative to the income from selling livestock to the meat market. The three stories about herders who have become entrepreneurs with the Housing Project for Herders that I introduced in Chapter Two, the recent state encouragement of herders to establish their own cooperatives for their dairy products, the establishment of the ranch model of livestock production, and the yak economic park, are all designed to generate competitive entrepreneurs out of previous herders. Those state efforts share much similarity with the Khenpo's recommendation of business for herders as an alternative income source. During his visit to Rakhor, he said:

Do you know how many restaurants and shops there are in Mewa (Hongyuan) County Town? How much money are those restaurants and shops making? Where does the money come from? Who is making and taking the money away? ... How many Tibetans are there making the money? There are not Tibetans making money. Most of them are Han Chinese or *Shar Rgya* people (small minorities between Han Chinese and Tibetans). For instance, the most lucrative herb, caterpillar fungus: Tibetan people collect them on their own land, but Tibetan people do not know how to do make money out of it, but other people are making far greater more out it. A similar case is with the butter and cheese that Tibetan herders collected from their yaks, but Tibetans do not know how to run business with them. In those cases, Tibetans are doing the hardest works, and making the smallest profit. Do all of you know that?

Herders' engaging in business that does involve very sinful conducts like hurting or killing is highly encouraged by Khenpo Tsullo, who in contrast to the traditional view of business as dishonest, does not consider doing business as being sinful conduct. He said in the religious teaching near the Qinghai Lake, "If people become super rich with their hard work and honesty, it is not a problems with respect to Buddhist norms."

For the last two decades, in Hongyuan County town, there have been many herders who have attempted to engage in doing businesses in the towns, including running small stores, restaurants, and small hotels; making money by driving trucks and vans for transportation; being



middlemen for dairy products, yak furs, and medicinal herbs, and others. Many of them have failed in their adventuring in business but others have survived and become successful in their new careers. During my field research, in many pastoral areas of Tibet I encountered many herders who expressed their strong desire to do business, but many of them shared similar concerns, including their lack of experience, skills, and capital to start businesses. In addition, in China, to achieve high performance in business requires not only general business skills, but also fluency in Chinese language, which makes a huge difference in one's success. However, most of herders do not have this skill. Even faced with many challenges, some herders have been trying repeatedly after failures. There is certainly enthusiasm about doing business among Tibetan herders. There are herders in Hongyuan and other places who have started their own small businesses including brickyards, dairy processing factories, clothing factories, furniture factories, hotels, tourism sites, and so forth. Successful former herders have become models for other herders to "jump into the sea," where some have survived and many have drowned.

One scenario in Hongyuan County Town represents an ideal model for khenpos for Tibetan herders to make a living in the future. An exceptionally successful Tibetan businessman from Mewa tribe who left his pasture more than ten years ago and ventured into doing business selling materials for Tibetan clothes, has recently started to run a hotel in the buildings he built recently. He hired a herder from Rakhor village, who had recently moved to town working as a doorkeeper for the hotel in order to take care of his daughter in the county primary school.

The Tibetan businessman does not need to make a living by herding livestock and selling his yaks, and his running of a hotel is considered to be clean earnings. He is also a Buddhist and has been hiring young Tibetans in his hotel. The herder from Rakhor village has also been making an effort to change the life of his daughter by providing her with a modern education.

The important aspect of this scenario is that both the businessman and the herders are Tibetan Buddhists who are making a living ways that do not involve serious sins. This scenario is simultaneously that which Khenpo Tsullo wants to see, and at the same time, what the state wants to see insofar as all are participating in the market economy each playing their own roles: one with capital and another with labor power to sell.

### **Collecting Herbs**

Another alternative income for Tibetan herders is collecting herbs, including yartsa gunbu (Caterpillar fungus), beimu (*Fritillaria*), qianghuo (*Notopterygium incisum*), and other medicinal plants. The most lucrative one is yartsa (Caterpillar fungus), but the level of yield has geographical variation. It is abundant in some areas in the eastern TAR, northern Sichuan, and western Qinghai Province, where herders mostly do not sell yaks to slaughterhouses because the income from yartsa is high enough. However, many pastoral areas do not produce enough yartsa for herders to make a living from it. Other herbs also have geographic differentiations in their production. In Hongyuan County, the last few decades have seen more and more herders collecting herbs. In Hongyuan, yartsa is not very abundant; the income from it is not as lucrative as it is in other pastoral areas in western Naqu and Changdu Prefectures, TAR, and in Guoluo and Yushu Prefectures, Qinghai, and Ganzi Prefecture in Sichuan.<sup>58</sup> In Hongyuan, yartsa could earn herders about 1,000 – 2,000 RMB for a year, which is tiny compared with some other pastoral areas in Naqu and Guoluo Prefectures where some households can make more than 200,000 RMB per year. In a village in Naqu Prefecture in the TAR, for example, the sixteen households surveyed earned 24,866 RMB on average, ranging from 12,000 RMB to 54,000 RMB per family from harvesting in 2009; these households do not sell their yaks to the meat

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<sup>58</sup> [http://www.danielwinkler.com/caterpillar\\_fungus\\_in\\_tibet.htm](http://www.danielwinkler.com/caterpillar_fungus_in_tibet.htm)

market (Yonten, 2012). In Hongyuan, herders harvest Beimu as a very important income source in addition to dairy and meat products.

Tibetan religious elites have different opinions about the collection of herbs regarding the question of whether it is a sinful deed or not. One highly respected lama in Mewa tribe in Hongyuan County suggested that collecting herbs is sinful because it entails the killing of many insects, and it also causes damage to the surface of the ground. But Khenpo Tsullo maintains that collecting herbs is not that sinful or it is not as sinful as is slaughtering. Ironically when Khenpo Tsullo met this lama a few years ago to discuss the urgent need to stop the massive slaughter in the tribe headed by this lama who is also of the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the lama did not force his people into the slaughter renunciation movement as Khenpo Tsullo expected, but had been making lots of efforts to stop herders from harvesting herbs.

The potential for herders to make a living with herb harvesting is unclear, because many companies from outside have been making great efforts in research on artificial cultivation of those herbs, particularly yartsa. For instance, the artificial cultivation of beimu has been successful in northern Sichuan Province, which will have a huge impact on market. These home-based herb cultivation bases have become a new industry that the state encourages, in particular encouraging herders to start their own plantation bases or to be employed in these new companies.

All of these suggestions and trends in herders' changing livelihoods represent a radical break from the pastoral lifestyle. As an alternative to the practice of herding, khenpos' suggestions indicate a new direction in which a gradual transition of pastoralist population from their pastures to the towns will take place, suggesting the necessity of social-cultural transformation in pastoral areas in the near future. This transformation will have significant

impacts on nomadic culture, which is a unique and very distinctive culture and production system of Tibet on the Tibetan plateau. However, this production system and cultural practices have become problematic for both the state/neo-liberal economy and Tibetan religious elites in their articulation of development. For the former, their rationale is that the way Tibetans herd livestock has been economically inefficient and ecologically destructive. For the latter, it is new articulations of Buddhist norms that are pushing herders to new directions. Therefore, ethical reforms, such as ten-merit-rules, slaughter renunciation, fur renunciation movement, vegetarianism, disassociation from knives and weapons, and others, have increasingly become a real agent of social change in Tibetan areas that participate in the slaughter renunciation movement, and many of them have ironically overlapped with state efforts.

Even though both Khenpo Jigphun and Khenpo Tsullo had the intentions to ask herders to make a living on dairy products, but Tibetan herders in the eastern Tibetan plateau are under pressure of needing more cash to cope with their increasing expenditure generated by the neo-liberal market economy, and the pressure of overstocking problems on herders' pasture that is associated with the slaughter renunciation movements. Therefore, to achieve an ideal condition where Tibetan Buddhism and traditional cultural practices can happily co-exist seems to be difficult in the current socioeconomic structure. That is, in Tibet, Buddhist ethical norms and Tibetan cultural practices have always existed in tension around issues like slaughtering animals and consuming meat. The slaughter renunciation movement has exacerbated these tensions by asking nomads to give up their traditional lifestyle in order to adhere to a Buddhist precept, which has involved a negotiation of giving up one part of Tibetan tradition, the nomadic culture, for the sake of preserving and improving another part of Tibetan culture, Tibetan Buddhism.

One potential change coming from these new suggestions and trends is that herders will increasingly depart from self-sufficient livestock production and be integrated into a more cash based market economy. Those settled herders now need to buy butter, cheese, and meat from the market with their cash income, which is different from other herders who have their own livestock with which they can produce those products by themselves. A shift in social relations taking place with these changes is that the settled herders are no long independent household production units, but rather they have new social relationships with others in which they are either the ones with capital who can hire others or the ones without capital but who have labor power and time to sell to others. Khenpos' religious movements and the state secular neo-liberal force have been working together to engender a similar social relation constituted by the exploiters and the exploited (Marx, 1978) among those settled herders.

Yet, this unevenness is normalized by the neo-liberal free market norms on the state side and is masked by the religious norms such as karma and *tshogs bsags bsod nams* on the religious side. In the secular neo-liberal norms, the economic differences among regions and among people are masked by the notion of self-responsibility and self-entrepreneurship and the seemingly fair and free competition (Foucault, 2008). With those notions, if people feel they are falling behind and marginalized, the causes for those differences are not structure and power relationships in resource access and distribution, but rather are searched for in the individual factors such as capabilities, hard work, adequate attitude, and others. Within the Buddhist norms, the economic differences between collectives and individuals are interpreted as well as masked with the norms of karma accumulation. That is, the condition of lagging behind of a group of people (for instance Rakhor Village) and the poverty of individual households (for instance, those poor households who left their pastures and work in part-time labor in towns) are

spiritually attributed to their negative karma accumulation. At the same time, those in better conditions, including better developed communities, lamas and religious leaders, state officials in powerful positions, successful businessmen, and very rich herders, are labeled as *bsod nams can*, which means person with good merit or fortune, that are attributed to their previous positive karma accumulations. With Buddhist-informed neo-liberalism, outcomes are not attributed to the structural inequality of power relationships and resource access, but rather to karma collection and morally adequate behavior. According to Buddhist norms of remote causes (Tib. *ring ba'i rgyu*) and proximate causes (Tib. *Nye ba'i rgyu*) (Khenpo Tsullo, 2003b:p.380), what those poor people need to do is to accumulate merit and work hard for their future fortune. The expression of *tshogs bsags bsod nams* was common in the old days before 1959, but those expressions were considered as superstitious and they had become a forbidden expression during the commune time by the Communist state, which believed that poverty was caused by rich people and people with power. But these expressions have become common again with economic reform and liberalization of religious freedom in Tibet since the 1980s. Yet, one thing that should be noted is that to recognize these common expressions in the development context does not deny the fact that there is debate over the extent of the role that karma and *bsod nams* play in one's success and how what role personal effort and larger structure play in people's different conditions.

While all of these forces including state ecological policies, khenpos' religious movements, and the lures of the market economy, are channeling herders into settled market based social relationships, there are structural inequalities that prevent them from being fully engaged in market competition. First, with the coexistence of the neoliberal market economy and the strong state in China (Yeh and Gaerrang, 2011), many lucrative resources and sectors are controlled by the state and big corporations. In Hongyuan, at the same time, many small

businesses including cultured mushroom bases, motor repair, greenhouses, Beimu cultivation bases, high-end restaurant and hotels, and home-run tourism services, have also been mostly dominated by outsiders. There are many obstacles for local herders to compete in these sectors, including a lack of capital, experience and cultural knowledge, language barrier, and so forth. With this structural arrangement, the only option for most resettled pastoralists is to be employed in low wage part-time labor.

### **Conclusion**

The overlap of the state's development goals and those of religious leaders has occurred in the attempts at state settlement projects, the establishment of the Professional Cooperative among herders, and in the khenpos' promotion of the slaughter renunciation movement. One of the main goals of the state's projects is to settle herders in permanent housing, moving them into cities or towns to become profit-driven market actors. These goals are achieved coincidentally through the slaughter renunciation movement. Khenpos as well as herders have described the hardness and sinfulness of the animal husbandry that they engage in, and encouraged herders to find other sources of income. Businesses that do not involve killing or lying have been suggested by most khenpos as alternatives to herding. In a similar way, khenpos have also stressed the importance of education for herders to be able to make a living in ways other than herding. The neoliberal idea of entrepreneurship, the state's attempt to make market actors of herders, and the khenpos' encouragement of herders to do business have all been leading in the same direction, but have different motivations and goals supported by different ideologies. Khenpos want the herders to engage in business mainly for religious and cultural reasons, but the neoliberalization of herders has become a tool used by the state to integrate Tibetan herders into the larger market

economy, and thus for the unification of the nation. In other words, the state has been using the neoliberalization of herders to further economic development and to strengthen its governance of people with different cultural histories.

Relating to the governmentality issue, it can be argued that the overlap of state projects and khenpos' recommendations for herders can be seen as Foucault's governmentality, which is the force of global capitalist expansion that has enveloped all, including the Chinese state, Tibetan Buddhist force, and Tibetan herders. Both the Chinese state and Tibetan religious teachings are trying to selectively give cultural meanings for this larger transformation, but through both of them Tibetan herders have been moving toward the large transformation, which I call "big governmentality." And, big governmentality as global capitalist expansion is realized through all forms of cultural contestations between multiple agents with different cultural backgrounds. To me the real forces embedded in this transformation are those modern discourses that most of us take for granted in our everyday lives. These discourses include science, education, the notion of nature and environmental protection, nationalism, and, of course, development and modernization. To understand the process of this expansion, we need to relook at these discourses and cultures and tease out what they do in carrying out the task of the larger transformation, global capitalist expansion.

At the same time, it is important to examine small governmentality as cultural contestation, through which the big transformation takes place with or without the awareness of the people in the cultural contestation. Tibetan khenpos see the larger process of transformation as both a challenge as well as an opportunity just as the state does. For Tibetan Buddhism, the transformation brings new cultural practices (increasing slaughtering rate and excessive materialism) that go against Tibetan Buddhist norms. At the same time, it has become an



opportunity for Tibetan Buddhist to revise some old cultural practices (for instance, slaughtering, wearing animal furs, and eating meat) that have been inconsistent with Tibetan Buddhist norms. In addition, the new job opportunities, new science and technologies have become useful for Tibetan Buddhism to expand its influence and to improve its competitiveness in this transformation.

## Conclusion

### Development and spirituality

Secularization and materialism dominates the world we live in and the manmade separation of spirituality from reality has become a “fact” for many people living in modern society. However, recently, some scholars have made meaningful efforts to bring spirituality and neo-liberal capitalism into one dialogue. Among others, Comaroff and Comaroff (1999, 2000) argue that the failure of development to deliver on its promises, in the face of spectacular inequalities and speculative wealth, has caused “occult economies” and new religious movements, founded on the effort to conjure wealth through enchanted means, to accompany the global rise of neo-liberalism. Pentecostalism in Ghana, for example, emphasizes the dangers of globalization, but also presents itself as the only way in which people can handle it, rather than becoming its victim (Meyer, 1998; Nyamnjoh, 2001; Smith, 2001; 2005). On the basis of a study of a “spiritual reform” program in Indonesia, Rudnyckyj (2008, 2009) argues that a supplement is needed to understand the processes conjoining neo-liberalism and religious revival that are not captured in the Comaroffs’ “occult economies” approach. He proposes “spiritual economy,” a new assemblage of Islamic and capitalist ethics in which being a pious Muslim becomes equivalent to “inculcating the ethical dispositions deemed conducive to market success” (2009:130). In other words, both religion and neo-liberalism enlist subjects in their own self-government, redefining work as a form of spiritual practice and personal responsibility for both this and other-worldly salvation (cf. Pazderic, 2004).

In the case of my study, I argue that Tibetan Buddhism works as a tool for Tibetan people to domesticate neo-liberal development. In other words, my main argument is that, through those

Tibetan Buddhist movements and religious teachings, Tibetan Buddhism has become an agent in localizing neo-liberal development to make it less culturally destructive, and to make it consistent with Buddhist norms and moral standards. This transformation is a selective process in which Tibetan Buddhist elites and herders embrace some elements by giving meaning to them, and making corrections of others, both traditional and new phenomenon, and totally rejecting some others. This argument is my discussion in this dissertation about Buddhist movements, Khenpo Tsullo's articulation of Tibetan Buddhism and its relationship with modern science and materialism, and Rakhor villagers' experience as well their religious practice in their experience of lagging behind.

### **Correcting Neo-liberal development**

The religious movements in Chapter Three are about corrections to and adaptation of Tibetan identity. One aspect of those social movements by Tibetan khenpos is the moral corrections of Tibetan people, particularly those misconducts that are either brought by or related to neo-liberal development. Some of these are corrections of their traditions while other problems are news. Slaughtering livestock, eating meat, and wearing animal furs, and the specific ways of slaughtering animals, are all traditions of Tibetan pastoralists. But with the process of localizing the uneven neo-liberalization, these traditions have become immoral and need to be changed with the neo-liberal development that is coded by Tibetan Buddhism.

The slaughtering of livestock has become a problem, because the neo-liberal social condition made it possible for this tradition to become seen as an ethical problem by Tibetan religious leaders. As Khenpo Tsullo has said on many occasions, Tibetan herders now have many other options to make a living without selling livestock, emphasizing that today is different

from times past in which it would have been impossible for slaughter to become religious or moral problem. During the time before 1959, slaughtering livestock for the meat market was not widespread among Tibetan herders. It was also impossible for Tibetan religious leaders to ask people to stop slaughtering livestock, because at that time there were not many options for Tibetan herders to make a living other than herding livestock. It would have been impossible during the commune system because the state made decisions about everything and religious elites did not have power to assert their influence over Tibetans. It is the neo-liberal market economy that has made all of these movements possible. In other words, Tibetan khenpos' alternative job suggestions for Tibetan herders with the slaughter renunciation movement are those that have been made possible through conditions brought by state economic development, including urbanization, infrastructure improvement, and other various state projects. And, in terms of the vegetarianism movement, it is the availability of vegetable and other foods in Tibet brought by the economic integration of the state that have made it possible. The other part of ethical corrections are the new issues, including purifying spoken language, banning gambling, stealing, prostitution and having relationships with prostitutes, and accessing drugs. All of these issues are directly brought up by the neo-liberal social arrangement or they are related to it. Tibetan khenpos are trying to stop these newly emerged phenomenon through their religious influence. They are the ethical corrections of these newly emergent social problems that translate structural problems into moral problem. Therefore, the ethical correction involved both traditions and new misconducts, but both of them are informed by the neo-liberal development process.

The reinforcement of Tibetan identity and the Tibetan people's feeling of the need to be developed came hand in hand. The people who speak the same language and share the same culture across the Tibetan plateau also face another common challenge, which is the feeling of

lagging behind and needing to be developed. Khenpos, as very modernist Buddhists, actively engage in the Tibetan society that is very different from monastic tradition, in which Buddhist monks and leaders were encouraged to stay in the monasteries focusing on their Buddhist practices. The movements of illiteracy eradication and purification of spoken language are the ways in which Tibetan khenpos and monks are actively involving themselves in society, to solve social problems that are both religious as well as related to development issues. For instance, illiteracy eradication is aimed at improving Tibetan lay people's understanding of Tibetan Buddhism and at building the capacity of Tibetan lay people in the development of their living condition and their communities, so it has both a religious purpose as well as a development agenda that reinforces Tibetan identity. In short, the people's desire for development reinforced their identity, and the reinforcement of identity has led to more desire for development, which is highly contested among Tibetans. Thus, I argue that the ethical corrections and adaptation of Tibetan identity by Tibetan khenpos are the results of the encounter of Tibetan Buddhist modernization and uneven development, and this encounter has led some traditions to be transformed and other new misconducts to be corrected with Buddhist norms.

### **Coding material development with Tibetan Buddhist norms**

In Chapter Five, I discussed how Khenpo Tsulpo relates Tibetan Buddhism with materialism, science and technology, and the role of karma in development. In terms of material improvement, while he sees the necessity of economic development for Tibetan herders through all kinds of means that do not accrue negative karma, but he maintains that economic development and material improvement itself is not the solution to bring people happiness and peace of mind. In his writings, Khenpo Tsulpo maintains that material development is not the

ultimate meaning of life and it does not bring real happiness and peace. This suggests that material improvement and secular-based development do not fulfill their promises. Instead, he suggests that Tibetan herders, even all human beings, need to learn and practice Tibetan Buddhism which will bring about stable happiness and peace through an understanding of the nature of our life, and it is only with Tibetan Buddhism that people can enjoy the material improvement they have gained through scientific and technological improvement. In a similar vein, Khenpo Tsulpo suggests that science and technology also need to be guided by Tibetan Buddhist norms such as compassion and the law of cause-effect. Khenpo Tsulpo thinks that Tibetan herders should learn both traditional Tibetan Buddhism at the same they should learn new science and technology to improve their lives. He calls this inner development by Tibetan Buddhism and outer development by new knowledge. As a result, I argue that Tibetan khenpos are giving meanings to new discourses and cultures through Tibetan Buddhist norms, so that they are less destructive and more beneficial. That is, for Tibetan elites, material development should be guided by Tibetan Buddhism, so that it brings that which people need from them.

### **Collective karma collection and well being**

Another Buddhist idiom that Tibetan khenpos articulate with the discourse of development is the force of karma that is a regulative force among all sentient beings in samsara. That is, development is not merely a matter concerning human beings, but it also related to other beings that are no different from human beings in the realm of samsara. In Tibetan Buddhism, it is believed that in samsara, spirit is permanent but it appears in one form of life in one time and in another form of life at another time, and that rebirth of life in different forms is regulated with the law of cause-effect, which is ultimately determined by the balance of positive karma and

negative karma accumulation. For this reason, for Tibetan khenpos and herders, development is not merely a matter of this-worldly life and people in the current life, but it also related to people's lives in the past and in the future.

Taking an individual example, it is very common to believe in Tibetan society that a person with a good amount of positive karma would be in a better situation for success whereas a person with negative karma may have a hard time to achieve success regardless of his or her efforts. Some khenpos state that the level of previous karma accumulation will determine his or her fortune in the current life. However, as important as previous karma accumulation may be, khenpos also think that efforts in the current life are critical to make significant changes in one's karma collection for the future. As Khenpo Tsullo explained, if they are not very serious, some past negative karma can be easily mitigated with positive merit collection and religious rituals in the current life, while other serious negative karma is hard to change with the efforts in one lifetime. The implication for development is that the past is not really the past, but it is related to one's current and future lives, and that these must be considered in the issue of development.

Moreover, karma is also applied to the collective well being. Some khenpos have frequently used collective karma to interpret the larger historical patterns in the rise and fall of nations in different regions of world to demonstrate the importance of karma in development. Khenpo Bso Dar Rgyas used western history as an example to interpret collective karma. Western history from the peak of the Roman empire has seen the rise of finance, followed by the British and American empires; these are being followed by the rise of China and India, and they in turn will be replaced by other regions in the future. This is a similar history to the history of inner Asia, Tibet, Tang dynasty, the Mongolian dynasty, and the current state led by the Chinese

Communist Party. All of these broad historical trajectories of the rise and fall of powerful empires and countries are governed through the logic of collective karma.

The most important aspect of this development is ultimately not determined by secular measures such as better development programs and calculations based on scientific research carried out by the state or trustees, but rather by another energy flow, the law of cause-and-effect. It is the cause-and-effect that determines all of these elements that contribute to the final outcome. That is, development is not only a matter of material transformation through demand and supply calculation, capital investment, exchange, profit making, and so on, but also has something to do with investment in merit and mitigating sinful deeds supported by the idea of karma and reincarnations. With this articulation of development with Tibetan Buddhist idioms and Tibetan herders' experience in development, Tibetans insert the success of economic development into a larger system that couples the law of cause-effects with human beings' active efforts for improvement in the current life.

As Tibetan khenpos and herders see karma as a regulative force in development, in order to reverse the downward trend in their situation, in addition to secular measures, Rakhor herders have deployed many religious measures, including inviting lamas to give empowerments and religious teachings, recitations of Buddhist texts, and offerings to mountain deities. All of their spiritual efforts work to correct their collective karma, which is negative. Religious teachings and rituals performed by lamas in Rakhor Village work to erase of their negative karma in the way of their collection of positive karma. In Rakhor Village, the Tibetan Buddhist rituals and practices have become a critical strategy for Tibetan herders to become developed. Tibetan herders see the religious strategy as one very important factor that contributes to better performance in development, among many others, including diligent, thoughtful plans, capital,



resources, and better understanding of the system in which they live. Therefore, it is important for villagers to have a proper management of their karma and to maintain an adequate relationship with those who mediate these relationships.

At the same time, the development that herders want to achieve through their various efforts including religious rituals and practices, and their secular measures including education, is not only for this worldly material improvement, but also related to rebirth and karma collection. Khenpos suggest that the adequate way of making a living and activities that are motivated by positive intentions are also ways to collect positive karma for their future life. That is, herders' proper ways of making a living or being developed is also a way to be better-off or to be developed in their long term development in samsara.

In short, Tibetan khenpos do not see “small d development” as a power relationship or class-based social relationship, but rather see it as an inevitable social process, but which is compatible with Tibetan Buddhism. Rather than becoming a refuge for exploited ones and making profits with magic rituals in “occult economies,” or presenting it as the only agent to handle the dangers of globalization through its prayer rituals in Pentecostalism, or converging it with disciplines of corporate success in the neo-liberal world as is the case of Islam in Indonesia, Tibetan Buddhism through various movements, religious teachings, and ritual practice, works to modify as well to code neo-liberal development with Tibetan Buddhist culture so that neo-liberal development proceeds smoothly in Tibet, where Tibetan Buddhism constitutes the core value system and main culture.

What the slaughter renunciation movement demonstrates is that religious rituals and idioms are not far away from the modern discourse of development, as educated lay Tibetans and the modern states suggest, but rather are interwoven and rearticulated with each other in the

cultural politics of Tibetan society. However, these spiritual measures for the improvement of community or the khenpos' karmic interpretation of development are considered be superstitious and irrational by the modern state rhetoric. Religious intervention to the state agenda such as development is not acceptable, nor is it beneficial to development in this modern logic. In the modern Chinese case, development is achievable only through the path of "socialism with Chinese characteristic," which is the free market plus the strong state intervention. However, another layer is added to this development articulation in the Tibetan cultural context.

### **Overlaps and contestations: Tibetan Buddhism and Neo-liberal development**

As it is conceptualized as discourse, development is not a one-way driving force from the west, nor it is warlike relationship between trustees' will to change and resistance from the local. Indeed, development works through a complicated relationship among multiple agents with their own cultural agendas. These agents contest both the meanings and practices of development in a way to reshape one another; many parts of their agenda also overlap and sometimes embrace each other. In the case of the slaughter renunciation movement in pastoral areas of Tibet, the state, Tibetan religious elites, Tibetan radical secularists, and Tibetan herders have entangled with each other in the contested concept and practices of development, which I framed as an entangled "knot" of cultural contestations.

The state, on the one hand, has promoted many projects in pastoral areas of Tibetan based on their own cultural agenda, forming neo-liberal social arrangements. On the other hand, the state has also provided a space for Tibetan religious elites to perform their agency that some times contests and overlap with state agendas.

At the same time, Tibetan Buddhist leaders have been promoting many similar initiatives that the state has been promoting, including compulsory education, illiteracy eradication, and encouraging herders to participate in the market economy. However, the state and religious elites contest development in the formation of Tibetan herders into certain subjects: one working toward the transformation of Tibetan herders into secular market oriented actors while the other is struggling to make them more religious subjects.

In the eastern Tibetan plateau, Tibetan herders' livelihood and their experience of development is informed by both the secular-neoliberal social arrangement and the religious forces as traditional practices as well as new religious movement. Tibetan herders want their kids to be educated, to be employed in the state administration, and to be successful in wealth collection. However, at the same time, they want to be very spiritual and want to keep their Buddhist traditions. Their negotiation between these forces has formed new kinds of community development that are coded by Tibetan Buddhist norms.

Their relations are complicated with another group, Tibetan radical secularists. Tibetan radical secularists, share with the state views on modernization and secularization. Both the state and Tibetan radical secularists maintain that secularization and improvement in new knowledge including science and technological innovation are the key to make changes in material improvement, which they believe is fundamental in bringing people happiness. However, they may not share similar agendas in terms of Tibetan identity and Tibetan people's future path in the Chinese nation state. At the same time, Tibetan secularists share a similar agenda with Tibetan religious leaders in their concerns about Tibetan people's lagging behind and their path and identity. Even though they do not agree on how to achieve development, they share the same concern. That is Tibetan people are lagging behind and they need to be developed.

It is in these contested articulations and practices of development that Tibetan khenpos push Tibetan herders toward a neo-liberal social arrangement informed by Tibetan Buddhist norms, many parts of which overlap with the state neo-liberalization process. That is, in their promotion of the slaughter renunciation movement, khenpos feel frustrated by challenges from secular neo-liberal economic forces. In facing these challenges, instead of total rejection of neo-liberal development, khenpos have selectively embraced many of these neo-liberal practices with their religious interpretations. As an alternative to the herding, for which massive slaughter is an important part of this production system, many khenpos have been suggesting herders to participate in neo-liberal practices by educating their children, working part-time in towns, being engaged in businesses becoming entrepreneurs, and being settled in towns. Even though many of these practices overlap with the state's efforts in pushing pastoral Tibet toward "small d development," I argue that Tibetan khenpos are making a Tibetan Buddhist-informed neo-liberal social arrangement by making Tibetan herders more religious subjects. With the khenpos' religious interpretations and engagement with new cultures, all elements of neo-liberal social arrangement are coded by Buddhist norms and meanings. The formation of Tibetan Buddhist neo-liberalization took place with competition with secular neo-liberalization promoted by the state agenda and Tibetan radical secularists. This is clear in the case of Tibetan middlemen and Tibetan businessmen.

Tibetan middlemen are not the type of subjects that Tibetan khenpos want herders to become, because they disregard the Tibetan Buddhist norms of karma and reincarnation, and only believe in secularly driven material improvement, which khenpos think do not bring real happiness and peace. In other words, the Tibetan middlemen can be seen as the achievement of secular-based neo-liberal development, mediated by the "Open up the West" campaign. Taking

another example, if a herder has become very rich through a conduct that is consistent with Tibetan Buddhism and they believe in Tibetan Buddhism and behave in accordance with Buddhist norms, this is encouraged by Tibetan khenpos. On the other hand, if a herder has become super rich, but he loses his belief in Tibetan Buddhism, then he is not the type of subject that Tibetan khenpos want to see, but rather one that the secular neo-liberal arrangement is designed to produce among Tibetan herders.

At the same time, it is in this contested and overlapping process that inequality and unbalanced social relationships have been deepened. In the pastoral areas of Tibet, those inequalities include the increasing disparity between rich and poor, the uneven development among different communities, and the social disorders engendered by the transformations. However, the neo-liberalization process normalizes all of these social issues. In the secular-based neo-liberalization, this works through norms of competition among individuals and enterprises, self-responsibility, the free market, and so forth. In the Buddhist-informed neo-liberalism, those inequalities and power relationships related to these inequalities are interrelated and normalized by the religious norms and idioms such as collective karma collection, reincarnation, *bsod nams*, *kha las rlung rta*,<sup>59</sup> and others. New social disorders (internal conflicts, engaging in gambling, stealing, and others) that are brought about by social and economic transformations are explained and corrected in these moral terms.

Moreover, it is in this contested process that some cultures have become dominant and are reinforced while other cultures are marginalized or become the target of erasure. Tibetan nomadic culture is one such culture that has become the target of transformation for both the state and Tibetan religious elites. Traditional diet and dress cultures have been in the process of transformation with khenpos' religious movements. In this sense, the Buddhist-informed neo-

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<sup>59</sup> Good luck

liberalization can also be seen as a process of “small d development” as a name for expanding global capitalist relations, which is related to big “Development” as intentional projects of improvement (Hart, 2001).

In sum, the slaughter renunciation movement works as a window through which we can see a complex intersection that reflects many aspects of contemporary Tibetan society including religious force, pastoralists, state projects, and market economic development. The dimension of development promoting by Tibetan khenpos is extended beyond the framework of secular and material development that the “Open up the West” campaign is designed to achieve in western China. Khenpos’ conceptualization of development encapsulates both this-worldly and other-worldly well being, based on the logic of the law of cause-effect, reincarnation, and compassion in samsara. This extension is an effort to integrate the modern concept of development as a social, economic, and power relationship, with the religious concept of samsara, which is the relationship of all sentient beings and their death and rebirth in different life forms. This integration makes the meanings of neo-liberalization in Tibet different from secular-based neo-liberalism, and this difference is reflected well in the debate about whether or not Tibetan herders should sell their livestock to the meat market, the main question of the slaughter renunciation movement.

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### Glossary of Terms

<p>'brog pa (drokpa) bsod nams</p>	<p>Tibetan herders “to be blessed with having fortune”, or to be someone with positive karma accumulation.</p>
<p>karma</p>	<p>the law of cause and effect (law of cause-effect)</p>
<p>khenpo</p>	<p>the title of the highest degrees of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism</p>
<p>las or las rgyu 'bras Nyingma</p>	<p>the law of cause and effect the Nyingma tradition is the oldest of the six major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.</p>
<p>rig gnas</p>	<p>knowledge or culture</p>
<p>rjes lus</p>	<p>lagging behind</p>
<p>samsara</p>	<p>the six realms of existence in which all sentient beings suffer through the cycle of rebirth. The six classes of beings in samsara are gods, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, and hell beings.</p>
<p>Larung Gar Skyid Sdug</p>	<p>Seda Buddhist Institute a group of people sharing the same happiness and suffering or the same prosperity and poverty</p>
<p>Three Jewels</p>	<p>the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha</p>
<p>tshes thar</p>	<p>livestock that are ritually liberated from intentional slaughter</p>
<p>tshogs bsags</p>	<p>collection of positive karma</p>
<p>Tuimu Huancao</p>	<p>an ecological program that aims to restore degraded grassland, using three techniques: banning of grazing on certain pastures for ten years, three months' closing of some pastures annually, and seeding on some heavily degraded pastures</p>