

The Historical Status of China's Tibet

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Chapter XII Achievements in Construction and Development

Since the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, especially since the Democratic Reform in Tibet and the reform and opening-up program introduced throughout China, great progress has taken place in economics and culture. Living standards have been considerably improved and their religious beliefs have been respected and protected. These are facts universally recognized.

However, Xagabba viciously attacks today's Tibet saying: "Tibetans, men and women, old and young, are driven like animals to work sites. They eat pig's and dog's food and work like a donkeys and horses, living a miserable life." Van Praag also says that Tibet remains stagnant under the rule of the Han, and Tibetan can get nothing from such growth (of agricultural production). His words contradict each other. At one hand, he says remains stagnant, and on the other, he says growth, which shows he is not right and self-confident.

Facts are stronger than accusations. We can get a definite answers so long as we compare the old Tibet economy and culture with the these elements in modern Tibet.

(1) Economic Construction

The economy was very backward and social productivity was very low in old Tibet. Ancient methods of cultivation were popular in rural areas. Slash and burn agriculture continued in some areas. Domesticated animals lived off the land, pasturing on the mountainsides. Great numbers of livestock often died as a result of natural disasters. In 1952, grain output was only 80 kg per-mu (15 mu equal one hectare), or 125 kg per person per year. Livestock totaled only 9.74 million, or less than 8 head per person.

In old Tibet, even a sewing needle could not be made, to say nothing of modern industry. Foundations were only loose piles of stones, and no roads could be found in the mountains. It took more than two months for business people to deliver goods from Kangding to Lhasa.

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Heinrich Harrer, a German who visited Tibet, described the serfs in this way: "About 20 coolies were dragging a timber pile, with a hard and rough cattle-hair rope tied around their waists, murmuring a monotonous melody. They were sweating all over, and panting for breath. As there was a headman with angry eyes standing beside them, holding a leather whip, they dared not take a break. Such forced labor was charged as corvee upon ordinary citizens as a tax. When they moved from one village to the next, the coolies were supplemented or replaced." (Snowland Culture, summer 1991, p.35) This was a real scene of Tibetans being driven like animals.

Ngawang Galsang, an old man from Serxing Village 50 km northwest of Lhasa, recalls his miserable life: "I became a servant of a manor owner at 16, herding and milking cows and making buttered oil. I was honest and loyal, and worked as diligently as a donkey and as carefully as a kitten for fear that the masters were not happy. Even so, I was still beaten and scolded, never having enough food to eat or clothes to wear....That life was really meaningless! Whenever I saw someone being celestially buried on the mountain, how I wished I could die early." (Yang Cheng and Lagmo: Story of Five Serxing Villagers, summer 1992, p.12 China's Tibet) That was the life of people hanging by a thread.

After the founding of New China in 1949, the Central People's Government greatly helped all ethnic groups to develop and to achieve common prosperity. Just after the PLA entered Tibet, Chairman Mao Zedong wrote an inscription for a road construction army: "Fear no difficulties and work hard to build roads in order to help brothers of other ethnic groups." The PLA soldiers and Tibetan road construction workers, under very hard conditions, opened 5,000 km of roads and dedicated their lives to it. For example, during the construction of the Xikang-Tibet Highway, over 3,000 people died, an average of one PLA soldier per km. On December 25, 1954, the 2,413-km Xikang-Tibet Highway (now called Sichuan-Tibet Highway) and the 2,122-km Qinghai-Tibet Highway went into service. Soon after, the Yunnan-Tibet, Xinjiang-Tibet and China-Nepal trunk highways, as well as many highways within Tibet, were completed.

A handwritten Chinese inscription in black ink on a light background. The text is written in a cursive style and reads: "为了帮助各民族，不怕困难，努力筑路！" (To help all ethnic groups, no matter how difficult, work hard to build roads!). The signature "毛泽东" (Mao Zedong) is written vertically on the left side.

Inscription by Mao Zedong

Today, Tibet has 15 trunk highways and 315 feeder roads. With the exception of Medog County whose highway needs to be improved to ensure frequently smooth access, highways link all counties and 77 percent of townships. A

highway network has been formed with Lhasa at the center and with the Qinghai-Tibet, Sichuan-Tibet, Yunnan-Tibet and China-Nepal highways as a framework.



PLA soldiers building road by the Nujiang River

Tibet's aviation undertakings, like highway transportation, have grown from nothing. Following the completion of the Damxung Airport in 1956, the Gonggar and Bamda airports were built. The Tibet Civil Aviation boasts scheduled flights from Lhasa to Chengdu, Xi'an, Lanzhou, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as well as to Kathmandu in Nepal. These have made communications and transportation more convenient and have helped push forward Tibet's modernization drive.

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, in particular during the Democratic Reform in 1959, the serf system was replaced by private ownership by farmers and herders, which brought their enthusiasm into full play. Under the leadership and support of the People's Government, they wiped out poverty and achieved prosperity, enabling the rapid development of agriculture and animal husbandry. Proceeding from the actual conditions of Tibet, the CPC has laid down a series of principles and policies to stabilize private ownership, develop the private economy, as well as to allow the liberated farmers and herders rest and build up strength. The considerable support in the fields of finance, materials, science and technology has helped constantly improve their production conditions, and the production level has been obviously raised.



PLA commanders visiting the road construction site: Li Da (front row, third left), Deputy Commande-in-Chief of the PLA Southwest Military Area; Chen Mingyi (front row, second left), Commander and Political Commissar of the Rear Service Division of the 18th Army

After 1980, in order to ensure the further rehabilitation of farmers and herders, the People's Government carried out a series of special economic policies in Tibet that were much more preferential than those applied in the inland areas. Local farmers and herders were allowed to use the land distributed to them and to own the livestock they raised, which shall remain unchanged. The planned state purchase or disguised planned purchase of grain, buttered oil and meat were cancelled, with no unit or individual allowed to demand or ask for any goods from the masses. At the same time, the Central Government continued to provide interest-free loans to agriculture and animal husbandry. The collective loans made for water conservation projects and

for the purchase of machinery prior to 1980 were exempted. Farmers and herders were exempted from taxation, and no tax was collected from individual farmers and herders or from collectives for the sale or exchange of agricultural, animal husbandry, sideline, and handicraft products. These policies have laid a good foundation for development in Tibet.

Grain yields have grown at a surprising speed. Early in 1984, when Cherin Cering Yangzong, daughter of an aristocrat named Charong in old Tibet, came back from abroad, she said emotionally: "There were 13 households of serfs in Cherin Manor. They handed over a total of 500 to 1,000 kg of grain annually to the owner. Now merely one household has a few dozen thousand kg of grain. How great Tibet has become!"(Shibo: Record of Actual Events in Tibet, p.301). By 1996, total grain output in the region had reached 777,000 tons, nearly seven times the figure in 1958. Before liberation, Tibet didn't grow apples or tea, but now the apples produced in Nyingchi and Mainling and the tea in Yi'ong and Zayu have attracted attention at home and abroad because of their good quality. These facts forcefully reply to Van Praag's statement that Tibet remained stagnant after its liberation and Tibetans could not get any benefit from such growth.

After the liberation of Tibet, modern industry grew from nothing and registered an even faster development after the Democratic Reform. By 1965, the region had set up 80 industrial enterprises that are indispensable to people's livelihood. They included power, forestry, leather tanning and borax production. Total industrial output value that year reached 28.83 million yuan.

The Central Government has paid more attention to basic energy construction and made the best use of the local geothermal resources. In 1977, the first state-funded generating unit went into operation in Yangbaijin. By the end of the 1980s, its total installed generating capacity had reached 25,000 kw, becoming the largest geothermal power station in the country. At present, the region has 10 or so modern industries, including electric power, mining, cement, leather tanning, machinery repair, woolen textiles, food processing and printing. In 1994, total industrial output value was 535 million yuan, a 12 percent rise over 1993, and a record year in its history in terms of the growth rate.

Tremendous progress has been made in traditional handicraft industries. Tibet has over 100 handicraft enterprises producing 1,600 varieties of goods, such as carpets, woolen fabrics, aprons, shoes and hats, and gold and silver jewelries. These products have not only met the needs of people in the region, but are also marketed around the world.

Post and telecommunications have made astonishing progress. By early 1994, the region had completed 41 communications satellite receiving stations. Half of the counties had access to direct dial telephone services, which had reached 28,000 lines. Tibetans can make telephone calls to any country or region around the world.

In 1986, the Travel Service of the Tibet Autonomous Region was formally set up, followed by the completion and opening of the Lhasa Holiday Inn, as well as hotels in Xigaze and Gyangze. More than 30,000 tourists were received that year. By 1995, the region had 20 or so hotels with over 3,700 beds in nearly 1,700 rooms, three tourist bus companies and 14 travel services. The income from tourism has thus been increased year by year.

Old Tibet was basically a self-sufficient natural economy. The region's commodity economy was by no means developed. Farmers and herders bought daily necessities of industrial articles and sold their agricultural and livestock products. For the most part this was done through barter trade. At that time, the gap between the prices of agricultural and livestock products and manufactured goods was surprisingly wide. In the small-scale border trade, Tibetans could frequently be seen trading a sheep for something as small but necessary as a box of matches, or a piece of butter for several sewing needles. Farmers and herders were suffering from commercial exploitation.

Since liberation, state-owned trade companies have been set up in each major city and town. In particular, since the Democratic Reform, grass-roots supply and marketing cooperatives have been universally established in all parts of the region. They often provide masses with a great amount of quality daily necessities and the means of production at low prices, and purchase at reasonable prices agricultural, animal husbandry and native products, bringing great convenience to the daily lives of the Tibetans.

Great amount of inland household electrical appliances, daily foodstuffs, clothing, fruit, vegetables and grain are sold in Tibet, while Tibetan wool yarn, woolen blankets, and leather products are often sold to the inland and to foreign countries. Bicycles, radios and watches are common in ordinary Tibetan homes, and the numbers of TV sets, motorcycles and automobiles have increased day by day. These modern conveniences were unimaginable to the serfs living in old Tibet.

The CPC and the People's Government have always paid attention to improving people's lives and have regarded this as their fundamental duty. Deng Xiaoping said: "The key is how to benefit the Tibetan people, how to enable Tibet to get rich and walk in the forefront of China's four modernization drive." (China's Tibet, No.1, 1995, p.9) After more than four decades of efforts, and on the basis of the development of productivity, the living standards of the Tibetans have been improved considerably. The great majority of farmers and herders have basically solved the problems of adequate food and clothing, and some have gained prosperity.

In 1996, the per-capita income of farmers and herders was 960 yuan, twice what it was in 1991. At the end of 1991, the balance of savings deposits in urban areas was 492.4 million yuan, a rise of 500 times the figure in 1959. Farmers and herders possess a considerable amount of the means of production. Per-household fixed assets of production are valued at 6,021 yuan, with 75

head of domesticated animals. For every 100 households there are nine automobiles, six tractors, three threshing machines, and 12 horse-drawn carts.

In old Tibet, over 90 percent of the Tibetan families did not own their own home. Today, with the exception of the pastoral areas where a small number of herders still live in tents, each family in Tibet has a house. In 1991, the per-capita housing area for urban residents averaged 13.7 square meters. Housing conditions in rural and pastoral areas are even better. In Gyangze County, for example, per-capita housing area reaches 40 square meters. Over 80 percent of the residents of the county have moved into new houses. In the pastoral areas in northern Tibet, where herders used to live in thatched tents, they began to build houses at the end of the 1960s. At present, a great majority of herders have moved into new houses, thus, transforming their former nomadic life into a modern settled herding lifestyle. This is a fundamental change in their life in terms of living conditions since the primitive society.

The development of Tibet owes a great deal to the concern shown by the Central Government and the support of the people nationwide. From 1951 to the end of 1996, the Central Government invested more than 40 billion yuan in Tibet. In recent years, related Central Government departments and fraternal provinces, municipalities directly under the Central Government, and autonomous regions invested several billion yuan to undertake 62 projects that are vital to the life of the Tibetans and will benefit 700 or so townships in 74 counties. As an elderly Tibetan put it: "Each of the 62 projects has boundless benefit."

In 1996, the GNP of the Tibet Autonomous Region reached 6.453 billion yuan, a record high and 10 percent greater than the previous year. The economic growth rate exceeded the national average for the first time, taking the first historic step.

In short, under the leadership of the Central Government, and the support of the whole people, people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have worked together and overcome the extreme difficulties of natural conditions and a weak economic basis. A prosperous new Tibet is accelerating its speed of construction. A farmer named Geleg from the western outskirts of Lhasa said: "Our family, our neighbors and our Donggar people all welcome and support the good system and policies. The capable people are living a well-off life, while the incapable people also have enough food and clothes. Some people get rich fast, some slow, but all of them are working toward a good life, thanks to the policy and the government. We can get support if we have difficulties. We have a place to appeal if we are wronged. They are concerned if we feel cold or hot. The village will send us to the hospital if we are ill. Was there such a life in old days? I have never heard of it, nor my father. Perhaps it is a story." (Liao Dongfan and Bendo: *Geleg's Ups and Downs*, summer 1992, p.19 *China's Tibet*) In December 1992, some members of the U.S. Senate also said, after visiting Tibet, that the economic construction had indeed achieved remarkable results. Tibet is now truly open.

Therefore, the ridiculous theories of Xagabba and Van Praag can only temporarily cheat those who haven't been to Tibet or don't know anything about it.

(2) Cultural Construction

In his book, Van Praag accuses China of curbing the traditional and unique Tibetan culture. He bolsters his view by saying that the severe and cruel Chinese policies followed in Tibet obviously are aimed at defeating this political entity and its culture, religion and racial characteristics.

How does Tibet's unique culture fare in New China? Over four decades of history have given a very definite answer to this question.

The unique Tibetan culture is a treasure of the Chinese nation. The Tibetan ethnic group possesses a complete written language system and has preserved great amounts of Tibetan documents, the number of which is next to that of the Chinese. The inscriptions on ancient bronze and stone tablets, handwritten manuscripts and inscribed bamboo and wooden slips from the Tubo period are priceless world classics. The Tibetan classics include philosophy, culture and art, linguistics, logic, astronomy and calendar sciences, medicine, arts and crafts, and architect. The Tripitaka is a tangible example. The King Gesar constitutes the world's longest epic. The books entitled *Biography of Milha Raba* and *Intelligent Banquet* written by Tibetan scholars have had great influence. The *Mottoes of Sagya* and the *Love Songs of Cayang Gyamco* are very popular among the masses.

Tibetan songs and dances boast unique styles and great varieties. Traditional Tibetan operas and thought-provoking folk arts possess strong ethnic flavor and local characteristics. Tibetan people have created their own special time counting method, and later, following the example of the Han calendar, have adopted the method of heavenly stems and earthly branches. Tibetan medicine has scored great achievements in theoretical research and dissemination, and has unique methods to tackle difficult and complicated cases, which considerably enriched and developed China's and even the world's medicine resources. Tibetan architecture is also well-known around the world, and the magnificent Potala Palace has been listed as a world cultural and historical heritage.

However, in old Tibet under the feudal serf system, the vast majority of the serfs and slaves struggled for existence on the verge of death, and they had no right to education. Prior to 1951, education was generally at the stage of temple education and primarily reserved for nobles. There were no modern schools. About 2,000 monks and noble children studied at the old-style officially run or private schools. There were many illiterates among the ordinary monks and

masses. In 1949, about 80 percent of the thousands of monks in the Zhaibung Monastery were unlettered. At Dagze Manor, owned by the noble Jamlejam, 550 of the 581 people did not know how to read and write. Most of the literates were serf owners, agents of serf owners and their children, as well as leading monks.

Prior to 1959, folk artists were at a low status in society, and they lived miserable lives. The ethnic culture and arts at that time were basically presented to entertain high officials and noble lords. Old Tibet had no modern opera and dancing opera, to say nothing of theater and films. Traditional ethnic culture could not be well popularized and developed, to say nothing of spreading advanced modern culture.

It has been only under the leadership of the CPC and the People's Government that the excellent traditional Tibetan culture has been newly developed. Fundamental changes have taken place in the region's cultural situation over the past four decades. The People's Government pays great attention to the development of the written language and school education. Primary schools have been set up one after another in Qamdo, Lhasa, Gyangze, Xigaza, and other places. In September 1956, the first modern middle school was founded in Lhasa, and various kinds of training courses, teachers training and middle school courses were opened in the region and began to switch into the orbit of modern education.

In order to develop local educational undertakings, the state has invested a total of over 1.1 billion yuan over the past 40 years and has implemented a series of preferential policies. For example, all the expenses of the poor students from primary schools to college graduates are paid by the government. Preferential policies including free meals, free room and free clothing (inland areas have never enjoyed such treatment) have been offered to some primary and middle school students. Boarding has also been practiced in most schools in agricultural and herding areas. Related departments have implemented the principle of "favoring the local ethnic groups in terms of enrollment." Priority is given to ethnic Tibetans in university or secondary technical school enrollment. Due attention has been paid to the Tibetan language, medical sciences, art and history, and other subjects.

In 1984, the Central Government decided to "run schools in the inland to train Tibetan personnel." More than 20 provinces and municipalities under the direct leadership of the Central Government, including Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing, set up Tibetan middle schools or offered Tibetan classes. Every year, over 1,300 Tibetans and other ethnic minorities who have graduated from primary school are enrolled in inland middle schools. They enjoy free education and are the universal concern of the society. Many graduates have gone on to universities or secondary technical schools.

Today, a modern educational system with local flavor and ethnic characteristics has been established. The vast majority of the masses have obtained the right to an education, which could

not be imagined in old Tibet. In 1991, Tibet had four modern universities the Tibet University, the Institute for Nationalities, the Tibet College of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and the College of Tibetan Medicine. There were 15 secondary vocational schools involved in the study of post and telecommunications, art, physical education, teaching, agriculture and animal husbandry, public health, Tibetan medicine, finance and economics. In addition, there were 63 middle and 2,474 primary schools, with the number of students reaching 196,000, most of whom are ethnic Tibetans. The number of teachers and staff reached 16,000 people, two-thirds of whom are ethnic Tibetans.

Of course, many difficulties and problems in the development of educational undertakings still exist. The foundation upon which the government has built was very poor. The farmers and herders are scattered across the region. However, when compared with the situation in old Tibet, there is a world of difference.

The People's Government has always paid attention to and respect traditional Tibetan culture. Tangible results have been achieved in protecting and developing the traditional culture. Tibet is implementing the principle of "attaching equal importance to the use of the Tibetan and Chinese languages, with priority being given to the former." Government organs are issuing statutes in both Tibetan and Chinese. The radio and TV programs are bilingual. Books printed in Tibetan account for 70 percent of the total published in Tibet. Among 50 or so newspapers and magazines, Tibetan editions account for over half. Either Tibetan or Chinese can be used in applying for the civil service, factories or schools, with priority being given to Tibetan natives. All public gatherings are held in Tibetan. Bilingual notices are required in the region for all roads, streets and buildings. The Tibetan language tops the curriculum in all schools.

There are more than 50 organs involved in Tibetan studies in Tibet and other parts of China. In 1986, the China National Tibetology Center was founded in Beijing. There are about 2,000 Tibetan study personnel, constituting a strong contingent composed of Tibetan and Han scholars. They have collated and published a great number of documents and materials, compiled a large number of academic papers and monographs, thus, achieving fruitful results. Dozens of publications in Tibetan, Chinese and English have been established, such as China Tibetology, Tibetan Studies, Religion and Nationalities in Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, and Research on Tibetan Society and Development. Academic exchanges have been extensively conducted among Tibetan studies circles both at home and abroad. Hundreds of scholars and overseas Tibetans from over 20 countries and regions have visited Tibet to conduct academic surveys and explore possibilities for cooperation in scientific research. Tibetan and Chinese scholars have also been invited to go abroad for lecture and academic meetings.

The Tibet Autonomous Region and the related Tibetan studies organs have conducted the overall and systematic survey, collection, study, collation and publication of the Tibetan cultural

heritage. Great numbers of rare and valuable Tibetan classics and historical records, which were sealed for years and unknown to all, have been published. In the spring of 1995, the first part of the collated China Tripitaka: Dangyur (in Tibetan) was published by the China Tibetology Press. It is of far-reaching historical significance and has important impact on spreading traditional Tibetan culture and raising the international status of China Tibetology circles.

Abundant Tibetan cultural relics are protected by the People's Government. The Potala Palace and the Jokhang Monastery and other temples have been listed as key units under state or regional protection. The state has allocated huge funds to renovate and protect them. On October 25, 1988, the State Council pointed out: "The Potala Palace is a splendid treasure of China's historical legacy" "It is of great significance to well repair the Potala Palace for the protection of cultural relics and the development of ethnic culture and tourism." (China's Tibet, No.4, 1994, p.11) The state earmarked 53 million yuan to renovate the Potala Palace. The repair was successfully completed in August 1994. It is highly praised by people at home and abroad, especially by people from all walks of life in Tibet.

After liberation, traditional Tibetan culture and art came out of the small sphere of only serving high officials and noble lords and stepped onto the vast stage of serving the people, even the world. Among professional cultural workers in Tibet, 90 percent are ethnic Tibetans. Professional and part-time cultural workers have achieved remarkable results in inheriting and developing the traditional culture. They created many excellent literary and art works and performances that possess the strong ethnic flavor of the times. Many have won national awards and some have won international prizes. The work entitled the Old Temple in Spring by photographer Wangdo, for example, won the gold medal from the 3rd International Photo Art Exhibition.

Since the introduction of reforms and the opening policy, more than 10 art groups have been invited to perform abroad. In recent years, the Tibetan Song and Dance Troupe and the Tibetan Opera Troupe have been to Belgium, Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain and other countries. The director of the organizing committee of the Brussel's Art Festival in Belgium said: "The exquisite program and superb artistry of the performers surprised the audiences. We have appreciated the Tibetan dance and music and enjoyed the ancient but excellent Oriental culture." (China's Tibet, spring 1992, p.16) Several Tibetans residing in Britain said emotionally: "You have shown real Tibetan traditional songs and dances." (China's Tibet, spring 1992, p.17) Cultural activities are more brisk during traditional festivals and holidays. The performances made by amateur song and dance teams in rural and pastoral areas have become an indispensable part of the spiritual life of farmers and herders.

While cultural activities are unprecedentedly popular and energetically spreading, modern cultural facilities have taken hold in Tibet, thus, filling the gaps in this aspect. In 1992,

Tibet had 82 film projection company and 553 teams showing nearly 200 new films annually. They offered free films in rural and pastoral areas. The region had 137 TV stations and relay stations, 297 satellite ground receiving stations and 26 radio relay and launching stations. It is common for urban residents to receive and watch TV programs. In today's Tibet, recreational facilities such as Karaoke halls, teahouses and billiard rooms have spread dramatically, enriching the cultural and recreational lives of the locals.

No traditional culture in the world has ever been able to remain totally isolated, not absorbing some elements of other cultures. The traditional Tibetan culture has grown after constantly absorbing the cream from the excellent cultures of other ethnic groups. Geleg, New China's first anthropologist, is also the first Tibetan to win Ph.D. in cultural anthropology. He believes, after a great amount of research and examination, that the culture of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau features a native culture, which has also absorbed and mingled the northern nomadic Hu Culture, the Qiang Culture in the farming areas of the Yellow River valley, the Baiyue Culture in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River and southeastern coastal areas. It has the multiple and complex cultural characteristics of Tibet itself. Songtsan Gambo, King of the Tubo Kingdom, was an outstanding figure in the history of Tibet, and also a hero in the history of Chinese civilization because he paid a due attention to relationships and exchanges between neighboring groups and to the study and absorption of the advanced elements of other cultures that could promote progress in Tibet.

In New China where all nationalities are equal, united and friendly, it is especially convenient for them to conduct free cultural exchanges. Also, it is a normal and reasonable phenomenon that nationality absorbs elements of other cultures, just as the Tibetans have absorbed elements of the Han and other cultures, and vice versa. This symbolizes the principle of national autonomy that each ethnic group freely absorbs another's excellent cultural elements under the conditions of ethnic equality and of having a right to maintain their own culture.

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, the Tibetan cadres and masses decided for their own to absorb the advanced culture from many other ethnic groups in the country while inheriting and developing their own traditional culture. At the same time, they also introduced advanced science and technology and applied these to the local conditions, thus, playing an important role in development and progress.

Over the past four decades, Tibet, on the basis of inheriting its own excellent culture, has developed and created a prosperous new culture. This is a gratifying achievement, which must be encouraged and praised instead of being curbed or attracting blame. There are two means of inheriting culture: absorbing essence and rejecting the dross and then developing the new by weeding through the old and making ancient things serve the present. We should inherit in a scientific attitude and develop while creating. Only in this way can we create a splendid and

excellent culture. To merely keep the tradition and learn nothing from others will not only curb the development and creation, but will also result in a cultural depression, which is not conducive to the overall development.

Van Praag cannot deny the fact that traditional Tibetan culture has been protected and inherited since liberation, nor can he deny the continuous development of the new Tibetan cultural undertakings on the basis of inheritance.

When we talk about the great achievements made in Tibetan construction and development under the leadership of the CPC, we do not deny certain mistakes and shortcomings have existed in our work.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the CPC and Chairman Mao Zedong achieved great progress in leading the country's revolution and construction. However, some mistakes were made, mainly under the impact of serious leftist ideology that began in the late 1950s and finally resulting in the "cultural revolution" (1966-76). These mistakes inevitably brought some losses to the Tibetans. But Tibet and inland underwent different situations. We cannot say that Tibet made all the same mistakes as the inland areas. The mistakes of "Great Leap Forward" for example, did not occur in Tibet. Of course, Tibet could not escape from the losses and disaster caused by the "cultural revolution". During that period, the effective ethnic group, religious and united front policies formulated by the Central Government for the work in Tibet were sabotaged. Many cadres, intellectuals and top patriotic personnel were criticized and persecuted, resulting in many unjust, false and erroneous cases. Economic construction was also seriously influenced. The total industrial and agricultural output value declined by over 3.95 percent in 1969. Many Tibetan cultural legacies and valuable materials were also seriously undermined. The leftist mistakes in the work of urban, agricultural and pastoral areas frustrated the enthusiasm of the masses and influenced the development of agriculture, animal husbandry, industry and commerce.

In his book, Van Praag makes a fuss over this and wantonly exaggerates the situation in Tibet, attempting to deny the great achievements of the region's construction and development obtained under the leadership of the CPC. But these attempts have been futile.

There has never been a people or a political party that has been flawless and never made a mistake. But what are more important, past mistakes or lasting achievements? How about their property? The situation is different. The masses of people can clearly see all historical merits and wrongs, and they are fair critics. The merits and achievements made by Chairman Mao Zedong to the Chinese revolution are far greater than his mistakes. Chairman Mao Zedong established everlasting merits for the founding of the People's Republic of China and the development of the country's socialist cause, making great contributions to the liberation of the world's oppressed nations and to the progress of mankind. Therefore, the Tibetan people still greatly respect

Chairman Mao Zedong. Similarly, the splendid merits of the CPC in Tibet's construction and development are always indelible, while mistakes are only secondary. Moreover, the mistakes have been conscientiously corrected in our efforts of rectifying the Leftist mistakes, dealing with unjust cases and false charges, shifting the work focus to economic construction and implementing various policies since the Third Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee.

In addition, we admit that a few places in Tibet are relatively poor and backward, and some of the masses haven't solved the underlying problems of adequate food and clothing. There are also certain shortcomings existing in Party organizations and the local people's governments. These problems, like the situations in other parts of the country, are small ones appearing on the road of prosperous development. They absolutely can be and are being solved, without any impact on the great achievements. Therefore, Tibetans still trust and support the CPC.

(3) Freedom of Religious Belief

There are three religions currently practiced in Tibet, namely Tibetan Buddhism, Islam and Catholicism. Tibetan Buddhism boasts the longest history and the greatest number of believers, exerting a great impact on the social life of Tibet. However, the most important means for the anti-China forces abroad to support the Dalai clique as it engages in actions to foster "Tibetan independence" is to resort to religious issues, saying: "The atheist CPC and the religious Tibetans are not compatible." Van Praag says the Chinese wanted to defeat Tibet---the political entity---and its culture, religion and racial characteristics. Is this reality? The answer is "no."

It is correct that CPC members are atheists. But the CPC respects the masses, represents the interests of people, and meets the needs of masses and their urgent demands. When many members of the society hold religious beliefs and demand the right to practice their religion, the CPC respects their belief and satisfies their needs. Similarly, when people no longer want to practice former religious beliefs, the CPC also respects their choice.

The CPC has led millions of people to build a nation and to conduct international exchanges. Its policies must proceed from the reality, must conform to the interests and wishes of the vast majority, and must be conducive to the promotion of extensive unity among all people both domestically and internationally. The masses include both religious and secular people, as well as people from different sects within the established religions. Their fundamental interests are the same. The difference in ideology is less important. Therefore, the practice of freedom of religious belief is the only correct principle conforming to the interests of the masses. This is our long-term policy. Only in this way can we resolve problems between our religious and secular elements in our society, as well as between different religions and sects in China.

Respecting and protecting the freedom of religious belief is a fundamental policy of the CPC and the Chinese Government. This basic policy means: every Chinese citizen has the freedom to believe or not to believe in religion; and enjoys the freedom to believe in the established religion of their choice; and within a religion enjoys the freedom to follow the sect of their choice; and has the freedom to change religious beliefs, adopting beliefs not formerly held or abandoning former beliefs. The essence of this basic policy is to give every Chinese citizen the freedom to choose his or her own faith in regard to religious beliefs and to make religious belief a private matter of each citizen. The Central Government has implemented this policy in Tibet.

Since the founding of the Preparatory Committee for the Founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region, special organs have been set up to implement the policy of freedom of religious belief, to unite personnel in religious circles, and to improve the work of religious affairs. Not long after, the Tibetan Branch of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) was established to help the Preparatory Committee with publicity and the implementation of the religious policy. It safeguards the legitimate rights and interests of Buddhists and organizes normal religious activities. The 14th Dalai Lama at that time clearly pointed out: "In recent years, as the PLA and working personnel who have entered Tibet have strictly observed the policy of freedom of religious belief, they have conscientiously protected monasteries and respected Tibetan people's religious beliefs. At the same time, they issue donations every year to vast Buddhist believers. These actions have greatly eliminated the suspicions of the vast majority, especially the lamas, caused by imperialist spies who spread rumors and provoke unrest."(People's Daily, April 25, 1956)

It must be pointed out that under the feudal serf system, it was impossible for the Tibetan people to enjoy the right to freedom of religious belief. This mainly embodies in the following



Central Government Representative Zhang Jingwu (right) visiting Gandain Chha Tubdain Gunge

four aspects: (A) Some serfs were forced by hereditary nobles to send one of their children to serve lamas in a monastery. (B) When some serf owners built a new monastery, they forced ordinary people to send children to serve as monks in the new monastery. This was fairly common in the medium or smaller monasteries that required a certain number of monks. (C) Some poverty-stricken serfs were forced to send their daughters to convents or their sons to serve as monks. These impoverished young monks and nuns, after entering the monasteries or nunneries, performed the hard labor and menial tasks,

suffering untold misery. Beaten and abused, they became monastic slaves. Actually, they had no

time to take part in real religious activities. Therefore, among the vast numbers of monks and nuns in old Tibet, some were answering a spiritual call, some were forced into the monasteries, and some were seeking a way out of poverty. (D) The rulers of old Tibet often favored one sect over another, even relying on one or another sect to act against opposition sects. This caused many religious believers to feel depressed both ideologically and politically. They lack a sense of safety and freedom. So, many monks and nuns (in particular the poorer ones) were in the state of being bullied and oppressed. They simply did not enjoy the freedom of religious belief. The so-called "heyday of religion" in Tibet was based on the sufferings of the vast majority, the oppressed and exploited poor farmers and herders, as well as the poorer monks and nuns.

After liberation, the CPC and PLA served the Tibetan people wholeheartedly. This formed a sharp contrast with the serf owners who oppressed and exploited the ordinary people. This cooperation also exerted a positive impact on many monks and nuns, in particular the poverty-stricken ones, who began to consider leaving the monasteries to take part in revolutionary work or to take up studies. Among the monk officials in the Tibetan local government, some yearned for revolution and resumed a secular life to take part in revolutionary work. Others joined the CPC, becoming very good leading officials. They include Soikang Tubdain Nyima who once served as member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League, vice-secretary of the Communist Youth League Tibet Work Committee, vice-chairman of the people's government of the Tibet Autonomous Region, and deputy director of the regional people's congress; and Jingzhong Gyaincain Puncog who once acted as director of the Department of Commerce of the Tibet Autonomous Region, and now vice-chairman of the CPPCC Tibet Committee. These show that only in new Tibet could people be able to truly enjoy a freedom of religious beliefs, including the right not to believe.

Poverty stricken monks and nuns, who had lived a miserable life under the feudal privileges and exploitation system, were liberated along with the laboring masses. The Party's policy of freedom of religious belief has been further implemented. Buddhist believers and the masses completely enjoy the freedom of religious belief that they had long yearned for. During the Democratic Reform, monasteries in all parts of the region were well protected and came under democratic management.

During this period, the number of monasteries and Buddhist devotees was greatly reduced. This mainly stemmed from the fact that during the Democratic Reform in monasteries, many poor monks and nuns saw the real faces of the lamas engaged in rebellion under the name of religion. Particularly, after understanding that it was the sweat of the lower classes that fed the 14th Dalai Lama, and not the 14th Dalai Lama who protected the lower classes, many younger monks and nuns returned home to take part in production. This was a normal reaction. If we forced these who no longer believed in religion or those who believed but did not want to continue in a religious life to remain in the monasteries, then we would have been guilty of

violating their freedom of religious belief. Instead, the CPC and Central Government supported their choices to remain in or leave the monasteries.

As for the monks and nuns who remained in the monasteries after the Democratic Reform, the CPC and People's Government not only continuously respect their religious beliefs, but also adopted various measures to give them financial and material support. Religious activities have been continuously protected since the Democratic Reform. The People's Government, based on the desires of the masses and the needs of religious devotees, has maintained several monasteries. For example, the famous Shouling Monastery in Luhuo County of the Garze Tibetan Nationality Autonomous Prefecture, hometown of one of the authors of this book, was not damaged during the Democratic Reform and remains intact. The famous Zhaibung and Sera monasteries were designated after the Democratic Reform as cultural relics under state or regional protection.

During the “cultural revolution” (1966-76), the policy of freedom for religious belief in Tibet, like other places in the country, was subjected to serious sabotage. The 10th Panchen Erdeni said when answering an American reporter's question about his feelings after seeing many Tibetan temples and monasteries ruined: “As a pious Buddhist believer, I feel very sad when I see these. However, judging from the history, this is nothing new. Similar ruins appeared in ancient Rome, Greece and India. The sabotage by the 'cultural revolution' not only took place in Tibet, but was a nationwide disaster. To some extent, the inland suffered even greater losses than Tibet.” (Peng Jianqun: Talking with the Panchen Lama (II), No. 6, 1988, p.29 National Unity) “We cannot say that the sabotage of the cultural revolution) was directed at the Tibetan ethnic group or at Tibet, nor can we say that the Han wanted to eliminate the Tibetan culture.” He pointed out: “These statements are made under the ulterior motive of creating sensational public opinion by distorting history and even exaggerating a national disaster as genocide.” (Tibet Daily, January 26, 1989)

After the “cultural revolution” ended, the CPC and the People's Government rectified past wrongs and again began to carry out a policy of religious freedom. Over the last decade, the Central Government and the Tibet Autonomous Region earmarked over 200 million yuan to the implementation of this policy. The funds were used to repair and renovate monasteries, meditation rooms on mountains and other places for religious activities. For instance, the 6.7 million yuan, 111 kg of gold, 2,000 kg of silver and large quantity of jewels allocated by the Central Government in 1984 were used in building and recovering the memorial hall and the holy stupa, which houses the remains of the fifth through ninth Panchen Erdeni in the Tashilhunpo Monastery. After the 10th Panchen Erdeni passed away in January 1989, the Central Government again allocated 10 million yuan to protect his remains and to conduct a search for his reincarnated soul boy. In 1990, the Central Government earmarked another 66.2 million yuan and 650 kg of gold to build the stupa and memorial hall for the 10th Panchen Erdeni. Now, more than 1,700 monasteries and religious places in Tibet have been repaired and

decorated, and they look new and fresh. Practicing democratic management, these monasteries have implemented the principle of keeping the monasteries by itself, creating a new way to support themselves in accordance with their respective conditions and features. In addition, they have taken the road of self-reliance, and thus, having normal religious activities and sound production.

The People's Government renovates and opens monasteries with a view to meeting the needs of Buddhist believers in their normal religious life and respecting their desire to develop Buddhist doctrines. The monasteries are not repaired and opened as showpieces for the public, nor do they merely resume all the old Tibetan styles. The 10th Panchen Erdeni said: "The strengths of monasteries do not lie in their number, but in whether or not they can become the place to inherit and develop Buddhist doctrines, and the place for people to abandon evil and learn to do good, and self-restraint according to Buddhist doctrines. The strengths of monks do not lie in their number, but lie in whether or not their quality is pure, whether or not they can strictly abide by Buddhist doctrines and principles, practice Buddhism and study the exoteric and esoteric teachings, and inherit the Buddhist doctrines truly in accordance with the instruction of our Buddhist ancestors Sakyamuni and Zongkapa." (Tibet Daily, January 26, 1989)

Suppose we make the monasteries in Tibet to have as many monks or nuns as in old Tibet, this would undoubtedly return to a system in which many would be forced into a religious life they did not desire and the local farmers and herders would again become slaves to the monasteries. That simply won't do. According to historical records, during the 200 or so years from the reigns of Emperors Yongzheng and Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty until 1951, the population in Tibet dropped by 100,000. One of the most important reasons was the large proportion of monks. If this case had continued, this large number of men serving as monks instead marrying and becoming engaged in production, the current prosperity of Tibet would not have been realized. Allowing the situation to continue unabated would have been a violation of the human rights of the Tibetans, and was simply not considered an option by the CPC and the Central Government.

The living Buddha reincarnation system? a unique tradition of Tibetan Buddhism has also been highly regarded by the Central Government. The 17th Living Buddha Garmaba of the Curpu Monastery is the first to win Central Government approval and confirmation since the founding of New China. Under the concern of the Central Government and common efforts of Tibetans in all circles, the reincarnated soul boy of the late 10th Panchen Erdeni was finally approved on November 29, 1995 in accordance with Tibetan Buddhist rituals and historical precedence through the method of drawing lot from the golden urn. On December 8, 1995, the enthronement ceremony of the 11th Panchen Erdeni Qoigyai Gyaibo was held in the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Xigaze. State Councilor Li Tieying personally presented him with the golden seal of authority and the golden certificate of appointment issued by the Central

Government. Both the 17th Living Buddha Garmaba and the 11th Panchen Erdeni are growing healthily on the road of loving the country and loving Buddhism.

Tibet has more than 46,000 lamas and nuns, accounting for over 2 percent of the region's total population. They study and debate scriptures, receive abhiseca, and are initiated into the religious life. Their activities, such as chanting scriptures, praying for happiness, removing ill fortune, granting blessing touch to forehead, and praying souls from purgatory, are all protected by the Chinese Constitution. About 600 lamas hold posts in various departments under the People's Government or serve as representatives to the people's congresses and people's political consultative conferences at all levels. They offer advice on national and local construction and are thus admired and respected by the people and the government. The CPC maintains good relations with the local officials. This fully embodies the fact that the Communist Party is absolutely compatible and co-exists harmoniously with religion. These officials include the late 10th Panchen Erdeni; Gandain Chiba Tubdain Gunge, president of the BAC Tibetan Branch; Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, vice-chairman of the NPC Standing Committee and vice-chairman of the BAC; Bome Qamba Lhozhog, president of the BAC Tibetan Branch; Tibet's only female Living Buddha Doje Pagmo Deqen Quzin, vice-chairperson of the People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region and vice-chairperson of the CPPCC Tibet Committee.

Many Mani stone mounds piled up and sutra streamers hung by devout Tibetan Buddhists can be seen across Tibet. Tibetans are free to worship monasteries, holy lakes and holy mountains, turn prayer wheels, offer sacrifices to statues of Buddha, and give alms to lamas, and burn holy plants for auspicious smoke. Improvements in communications, the growth of economic construction, and the rising living standard have provided the Buddhist believers with unprecedented convenience for their religious activities. The number of people going on pilgrimage to Lhasa by bus or even by plane now outnumbers those travelling on foot. Many ordinary farmers and herders or urban residents have built a sutra hall or small niche to house tangka paintings of the Buddha or Buddhist statues. Farmer Cering Panzong in Nyangrain Township, Lhasa, served as a corvee laborer in the Sera Monastery before liberation. She painstakingly worked for the monastery every year but was unable to build a decent niche. Today, however, she has a new sutra hall in her home. She said emotionally: "Now I have enough money to take part in religious activities or go on pilgrimage in the Zhaibung, Gandan, Sera and other monasteries by means of convenient transport tools." (Norbu Cering: *Religious Life in Ordinary Families*, No.1, 1993, p.33 *China's Tibet*) Her words reflect the hearts of the Buddhist believers in Tibet today. Millions make pilgrimages or offer incense in Lhasa every year.

In New China, citizens enjoy the freedom of religious belief stipulated in the Chinese Constitution and state laws, and also bear duties laid down by the Constitution and laws. The Constitution clearly stipulates that no one shall use religion to sabotage social order, damage the physical and mentally health of its citizens, curb the state educational system and interfere in the

administration of justice. The abolished feudal religious privilege or the systems of oppression and exploitation will not be allowed to recover, nor will any sabotage of state unification and national unity be permitted. Religious people who use religion to engage in illegal or criminal activities and those who hold no religious belief but have committed crimes will all be punished according to the law. From 1987 to 1989, a handful of separatists incited riots in Lhasa. Among these were lamas and nuns, as well as the common masses. They were indiscriminately beating, smashing, looting, burning and killing, which severely sabotaged the social order and threatened the lives and property of citizens. They attempted to overthrow the state's political power. This is not a religious or ethnic issue, nor an issue of human rights, but simply criminal activity. No government in any country would allow this behavior to go on unchecked, whether the instigators were secular or religious. It was the responsibility of the government that these criminals be brought to justice. After liberation, religious believers who were punished by the government are those who had committed crimes, such as joining the armed rebellion, inciting riots, looting, arson, killing, using religion to defraud others of money and property, harming the health of others and raping women. None of those were punished because of their religious beliefs. They were all punished under the law for their criminal behavior.

The overall implementation of the policy of freedom of religious belief in Tibet has gained sincere support from the people of religious circles, and equally from those who do not believe in any religion. The truth has once again smashed the arguments of Van Praag and Xagabba. Their attempts to find a support for their lies that “the CPC has demolished religion” and for “Tibetan independence” are bound to fail time and time again.