

# LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE

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**New writing from Tibet**



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

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Like gold that fears no fire: New writing from Tibet” was compiled by Kate Saunders and Kai Mueller of ICT. We are indebted to those Tibetan writers whose work is included in this volume and salute their courage and eloquence. We would particularly like to thank Woesser for her inspiration, and her powerful and moving contribution, and artists Losang Gyatso and Sonam Lhundup; we are grateful to them for allowing us to reproduce their work. We are indebted to highpeakspureearth.com for their work in making public Tibetan writings and the articles published in this collection, and also to China Digital Times. We would also like to thank Lamajabb; Wang Lixiong; Ragged Banner Press ([www.raggedbanner.com](http://www.raggedbanner.com)), publisher of Woesser’s poetry collection, *Tibet’s True Heart*; Susan Chen; Paul Foreman and his production team (for their patience and expertise); Namlo Yak, for his kindness and poetry; Adam Koziel from the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Poland; Kelsang, for bearing witness, Mary Beth Markey and Tsering Jampa from ICT, Dawa Bowie and Jigme Page for assistance with production, edits and translation and Dolma Kyab’s friends. We are indebted to our researchers in the field in India and Nepal for their passion and knowledge, and provision of work for this book as well as their translation work.

The phrase “like gold that fears no fire” comes from a common Chinese expression (zhen jin bu pa huo lian) meaning truth cannot be undermined. In this volume, the writer Woesser uses the phrase to describe Buddhist teachings and doctrines - the Dharma.

The cover image for “Like gold that fears no fire: New writing from Tibet” by the Tibetan artist Losang Gyatso, was inspired by a group of monks who made brave protests in Tibet in 2008. The full work, entitled Signs from Tibet, is featured on p. 52 of this volume and is reproduced with the kind permission of the artist.

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The Culture Owners, by Sonam Lhundup (Samchung) [www.bodpa.com](http://www.bodpa.com)

## INTRODUCTION

On March 10, 2008, several hundred Tibetan monks from Drepung, one of the 'great three' Gelugpa monasteries of Tibet, began an orderly march to Lhasa. The monks, protesting against political campaigns at their monastery that were impeding religious practice, were stopped by armed police. Some wept as they recited long life prayers for the Dalai Lama. On the same day – chosen because it was the symbolic 49th anniversary of Tibet's National Uprising against Chinese rule – monks in smaller, more remote monasteries in eastern Tibet protested too against China's policies and religious repression.

It was the beginning of a wave of overwhelmingly peaceful protests that swept across the Tibetan plateau, to be met by a violent crackdown, unprecedented in its intensity. Over the past 50 years, China has instituted increasingly hard-line policies that undermine Tibetan culture and religion; the Tibetan people have been denied freedom of expression; their language has been downgraded; and their economic resources have been appropriated by the Chinese state, with increasing numbers of Chinese migrants moving to the Tibetan plateau. Tibetans had reached a breaking point.

In risking their lives to make their feelings clear, they propelled Tibet to the top of the international news agenda and forced the international community to view Tibet as a more serious issue than before, resolvable only through political means. Tibetans wanted to convey the message that the Dalai Lama represents their interests, not the Chinese state, and they continue to do so today.

Since the Drepung monks took to the streets on March 10, 2008 the Chinese government has engaged in a comprehensive cover-up of the torture, disappearances and killings that have taken place across Tibet combined with a virulent propaganda offensive against the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama.

New campaigns directed against Tibetan culture and religion mean that almost any expression of Tibetan identity not directly sanctioned by the state can be branded as 'reactionary' or 'splittist' and penalized with a long prison sentence, or worse. Singers, artists and writers have 'disappeared' and faced torture under a new drive against "cultural products" with suspect ideological content – such as songs referring to the Dalai Lama – and in music bars Tibetan performers are no longer allowed to address

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the audience as ‘Tibetan brothers and sisters’ because it is considered ‘subversive’ to the ‘unity of the nationalities’.

And yet, despite the risks, this is the only period when protests have continued despite the severity of Beijing’s response. It is also a time when there has been an unprecedented outpouring of emotion and expression of views, in blogs, articles in literary magazines published by scholar monks or lay poets, or songs and ballads sung in bars or uploaded onto Youtube. This new cultural resurgence is being led in Tibet by a new generation of Tibetans, many of whom have been educated in Chinese as well as Tibetan. Unlike the older generation of Tibetan elites, young intellectuals did not experience the takeover of Tibet by China or the excess of the Cultural Revolution; they are aware of both the political struggle being waged against the Chinese state and a renaissance of Tibetan cultural identity.

In one book that was banned as soon as it was published in Tibet, a writer reflects: “In a year that turned out to be like a raging storm... how could we remain... in fear. [This work is] a sketch of history written in the blood of a generation.”

A Tibetan blogger writes “[Tibetans] are no longer just trying to fit into the Chinese national story; instead they are creating their own. It is a new cultural moment... [young Tibetans] are starting to have the chance to be many things and at the same time still be Tibetan.”

These courageous writers, many of whom are still in Tibet, dare to refute China’s official narrative – representing a more profound challenge to the Beijing authorities than ever before. They find the cause of the protests that convulsed the plateau not in some phantom instigation of the ‘Dalai clique’ but “in the tragic Tibetan history that began in the 1950s and the shortcomings of China’s Tibet policy”, according to one Tibetan scholar in his essay ‘Breaking the Silence’.

‘Like gold that fears no fire’ opens with an original article by the most well-known Tibetan writer Woesser, an accomplished poet and one of the most eloquent and fiercest analysts of Chinese oppression in Tibet. Woesser’s important and powerful article outlines the importance of story-telling for an oppressed people to affirm their history and identity. Woesser argues that the events of 2008 are as significant in contemporary Tibetan history as those of March 1959, when tensions against the Chinese presence in Tibet escalated into an uprising, and led to the Dalai Lama’s escape into exile.

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She writes: “Having been through the events of 2008 that shook the world, Tibet is no longer the Tibet of the past, and the Tibetan people are no longer the Tibetan people of the past – everything has undergone a genuine transformation. If one pretends to be aloof and indifferent and thinks that blood can just be washed away and that the truth can be covered over; or that atrocities will not be condemned and suffering will not be pondered; if one acts as though nothing ever happened and thinks life goes on as before and the sun will rise as ever, this is just self-deception.....Tibetans are breaking through the silence, and there are more and more instances of these voices being bravely raised, encouraging ever more Tibetans.”

‘Like gold that fears no fire’ features stories of imprisonment, interrogation, death and loss, as well as perspectives on a better future that reveal an unquenchable spirit and deeply-felt Tibetan identity. These stories, poems and political writings give readers an insight into the hidden, shared experiences of the Tibetan people. We are proud to share these courageous voices with the outside world for the first time.

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Untitled, by Sonam Lhundup (Samchung) [www.bodpa.com](http://www.bodpa.com)

## US, POST-2008

*By Woesser*

Despite living under almost constant police surveillance in Beijing together with her husband, Chinese writer Wang Lixiong, Woesser continues to be one of the most eloquent and fiercest critics of Chinese oppression in Tibet. Woesser's writings reveal her discovery of her Tibetan Buddhist identity and her country's past after an upbringing in elite Party circles speaking Chinese. They are reflections on life, memory, loss and spiritual faith as well as forbidden subjects such as political imprisonment and injustice.

Woesser was born in Lhasa, but grew up speaking Chinese after her father, who served in the People's Liberation Army, was transferred to a Tibetan area in Sichuan Province. As a member of the privileged elite, she was later admitted to a Chinese literature program for minority nationalities. It was only when she moved back to Lhasa as a young woman, where she worked as an editor for the leading Tibetan literary magazine, that she began to discover the reality of Tibet's past and to learn about Tibetan Buddhism. This coincided with the death of her father, who had been a deputy commander in the army, and the realization that he had secretly been a Buddhist.

While in Lhasa, Woesser (who, like many Tibetans, is known by just one name) began to document the effects of religious repression, massive immigration of Chinese and unbalanced economic development. In 2004, after her book 'Notes on Tibet' was banned, she was informed that all her working hours would be devoted to political re-education. She moved to Beijing, and she later married Wang Lixiong, an author and commentator on Tibet who has been outspoken in his support for human rights and his willingness to take seriously the needs and concerns of Tibetans. Some of Wang Lixiong's work is featured in this collection. In various ground-breaking essays, Wang Lixiong has outlined why he thinks that the Dalai Lama is the key to resolve the question of Tibet, and in March he was a signatory to a letter urging dialogue between Chinese leaders and the Dalai Lama, so as to "eliminate animosity and bring about national reconciliation". ([www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1245](http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1245).)

Woesser has published almost daily updates and comments online since March, when an overwhelmingly peaceful uprising across the Tibetan plateau transformed the political landscape. At the height of the protests, more than 3 million internet users visited Woesser's blog, and her daily updates were

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translated into numerous languages. The personal stories she includes in her writing – the blind monk who committed suicide, the lama who was beaten when he tried to prevent a protest from escalating – bring home to the outside world the reality of the current crackdown in Tibet and its deeper significance.

Professor Tsering Shakya, an expert in contemporary Tibetan writing, compares Woese's situation to that of the late Russian dissident writer, Solzhenitsyn, saying: "It is the duty of courageous writers to speak of the unspeakable and lift the veil from the dark corners where horror is hidden...The events of March 2008 created a new memory and it will be narrated from generation to generation. Today, memory is no longer hidden...but advertised in cyberspace to share with the rest of the world - and in this respect Woese occupies a unique position as chronicler of modern Tibetan memory. Her blog [and writings] have become the voice of Tibet."

'Us, Post-2008' is an original article by Woese written specially for 'Like Gold that Fears no Fire'.

## 1. Status

1959 changed the status of the Tibetan people.

It is now that there appeared in the literary history of the Tibetan people voices expressing themselves in various different languages, something that had never happened before. In this book, for example, there appear Tibetan voices writing in their mother language, and there appear Tibetan voices writing in Chinese and English, voices that speak with such richness and variety and yet with sadness and helplessness.

Every time His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaks to Tibetans in India or in other countries he frequently repeats the words *tsenjol* (exile) and *tsenjolpa* (an exile), and the deep impression left by these two words has become a significant identifier of the Tibetan people post-1959.

And this is indeed our status. No matter whether Tibetans in their numbers write in their mother tongue or use Chinese or English or any other language to write; no matter whether Tibetans live in Dharamsala or live in New York, London or Beijing; and no matter whether Tibetans in their numbers still remain in their home province of Amdo areas of modern Qinghai province, Gansu province and Sichuan province) U-Tsang (the Tibet Autonomous Region) or Kham (areas of the TAR, Sichuan, Qinghai and Yunnan provinces) – all are exiles. In spirit and body, they are all exiles!

A half century of exile not only creates a man-made geographical separation, the Tibetan people themselves have been split into two groups: Tibetans inside and Tibetans outside, with the long national boundary as the divide. Even though there are writers who can speak two or more tongues, the divide created by language is even more apparent than the national boundary.

This separation has left us concerned for each other, but communication and exchange is difficult. It's particularly difficult for Tibetans inside whose greatest fear after half a century of mandatory brainwashing and education is not that the monasteries have all been destroyed, but that their memories have been erased or altered. Our duty now is to search for, recover and then amend our memories, and even to re-produce our history and reality. All things are interdependent and all people are interdependent. When we sink into lies and when even the truths that sit beside us are sheltered, we must issue a clear and powerful voice of conscience, bravery and insight.

## 2. Voice

Voice is an important word. And to issue a voice is a more important act. In Tibet's monasteries, the sound of monks' clapping hands can often be heard as they debate the scriptures. And the voices debating scriptures, among all the voices in Tibet, are but one kind of voice, a symbol of the Great Dharma which like pure gold fears no fire. And aside from this, what other voices are there in this land of Tibet?

One person, or one group of people, they have voices that comes from within, a voice that pours deep sentiments across this land; a voice that coalesces the people's valuable spirit; and a voice that speaks to themselves living outside Tibet and that considers, reflects back upon and expresses historical memory – one that spreads far and wide as soon as it's issued but that's likely to be immediately subjected to various censures in today's Tibet. And among these censures it seems the most righteous one heard is: "You eat what we give you, you use what we give you, and yet you attack us – you are devoid of gratitude."

What does it tell us that Tibetans living in their own land suffer such censure? Why would an ancient people with a long history live debased lives to this day by always relying on the benevolence of others? If this is not how it is, then from what point in time did others – neighbors – become such masters in the home that they have to right to rebuke the original residents in such a way? This "you eat what we give you, you use what we give you" in fact is a lie that cannot pass the test of facts. But such an argument not only deludes the colonizing masses, it also surely lacks a certain power

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of persuasion over the colonized, does it not? As far as every Tibetan who has entered into the interest group is concerned, their lives are lived not only as dependents but also as adjuncts; their lives are even parasitic.

It is not easy to issue a voice from a throat beset by deep depression, and so why do such voices strangely change tone as soon as they're issued? Isn't it more common that there isn't enough time to utter a single syllable and in the face of every kind of stricture and censure it is swallowed in fear and one dares not make a sound?

### 3. Storytelling

Storytelling is extremely important. It not only becomes the means for a colonized people to affirm the existence of their status and history, but when anything happens in their own land, storytelling can also change fearful events in everyday lives into something experienced, bestowing those events with a story form that people can jointly enjoy and remember, as well as forge a people's memory and traditions. And thus, they are no longer stories delivered in monologue by the victors.

And so who are the "storytellers"? Or one should say, the stories told by whom are closer to the "facts" or the "relative facts"? In the specific case of Tibet, is it the colonizers who have the right to tell or is it the Tibetans who have lost the right to tell? To tell, or can't tell? If it is to tell, how many can tell, and how many will not be permitted to tell? And of those permitted to tell, how much is taken for granted and how much will deliberately be revised? As far as I myself am concerned, I was once a newspaper journalist and worked as an editor of a magazine, and I have written "themed reportage". I am very well aware of the principles and hidden principles of storytelling.

Historically in China, intellectuals in their public role cannot be critics, and even less can they be opponents; rather, they are the servants or mouthpiece of government, otherwise their lives are far from easy. For example, if a writer were to tell a true story, the story in the writer's heart – the story that was of that writer – it would be a huge transgression. This is the manifestation of some kind of power within the remit of "storyteller", like a discipline exercised in secret that we can only tacitly accept and obey. If one goes too far, then sorry, the stick wielded by this power will come down on the transgressor's head and the punishments leveled will include ordering silence or imposing silence. If the writer is banned they cannot publish their works and in more serious cases they can even lose their physical freedom. And this too is a kind of warning, a warning to others, that one can only be a "storyteller" within a remit permitted by the power. This of course is the power of the colonizer. It requires and

even demands that the colonized best remain speechless. If one wants to speak up one can only repeat what has already been said – a parrot for the colonizers. And if one wanted to take it a step further and ignore one’s conscience, one could sing the praises of the power and become its cheerleader, which of course leads to grace and favor from the colonizers and brings with it rich reward. It’s like a master throwing a bone to the dog by the door, a bone that still bears a few small scraps of meat.

In the past half century and more, looking at practically all of the stories about Tibet in official discourse, Tibet is either being “introduced” or mis-represented. In this attempt to forever control Tibet by deleting and revising history and reality, the truth is stifled, the terror is hidden, and the Tibetan people remain silent.

#### **4. Structure and situations**

In Tibet, aside from the traditional intelligentsia of the monks, the majority of Tibetans who receive a modern education have basically been absorbed into the system. For many years, the space for Tibetan culture has been almost completely controlled by the system while Tibet’s own cultural market has been extremely small. And therefore, expression by Tibetan intellectuals has been very limited.

In Tibet, there is the following unwritten opinion among officials: the greater the degree of Tibetan-language education and the deeper the religiosity, the more reactionary the thinking. Deliberately or otherwise, this has created a neglect and even a contempt for the study and popularization of the Tibetan language, which has led to ever higher levels of Sinicization among Tibetans; on the one hand, this makes Tibetan intellectuals passively accept the situation in order to protect themselves, and if they do dare raise their voices it’s to ask the authorities to place importance on Tibetan culture, to respect Tibetan culture – those who ask this are narrow nationalists, and those who demand it are ethnic splittists. It is therefore obvious that in Tibet, educated people who write in Chinese compared to educated people who write in Tibetan feel themselves to be under far less pressure. The situation for those who are well-known and those who are not well-known, and the ease or tension one feels when speaking to them is not the same as being within or outside the system. It is only when one is within the system that the controls and restrictions one is under are the same; and even those who because of their fame garner favorable treatment from officialdom, and for whom the temptation of yet more fame and fortune becomes ever greater and ever harder to relinquish, in a manner of speaking, these too are bound by a kind of formless “chain”. For those outside of the system, a certain renown does in fact bring some relative safety. For instance, there were many who thought that

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my writings after I had left the system and the works of monks and nuns who became public intellectuals, would meet a very different outcome from the authorities. However, this safety is not in fact true security, and remains instead within the calculations of those in power. The moment they need to move, such security can be gone in an instant.

With regard to the space needed for publishing works, the Chinese interior is more relaxed compared to Tibetan areas. For instance, the handful of publishing houses, magazines and newspapers in the Tibet Autonomous Region are under the relatively strict supervision of ideology departments, and while the appraisal system for publishing in the Chinese mainland is also very strict, there is occasionally space for a statement of truth in such a vast geographic area and among the countless number of publications. Of course, any manuscript touching upon Tibet has to be submitted to the United Front Work Department for appraisal, and appraisals are very strict. What must be remembered is that the world of the Chinese language is not solely limited to within China's borders, and that there is a large and relatively free cultural market abroad. And so from 2006 onwards I've had a total of seven books published in Taiwan and Hong Kong. However, I still hope to be able to publish books within China because after all, this is where the largest Chinese readership is, and it would be useful through my writing for ever more in the Chinese readership to gain an understanding of Tibet.

### 5. Writing in Chinese

I am a Tibetan writer who writes in Chinese. Just as the Han writer Wang Lixiong said in his essay "Two kinds of imperialism encountered in Tibet":

"A coming together of historical events has created many talented Tibetan writers. There are hundreds of Tibetan authors, poets and poetesses, who are known as Tibet's 'Chinese Writers' Group' [...]"

"There have been different arguments about this phenomenon among Tibetans themselves. Some feel that it is a result of colonialism. Certainly, when the upbringing of these writers is analyzed, the relevance of colonialism becomes very evident. First of all, the majority of them grew up in the so-called 'Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province,' which are one result of China's decision to divide the Tibetan region neighboring to China into the four provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan. The degree of Sinicization in Tibetan areas of Sichuan is high; and the education in Tibetan language has been poor. [...]"

“Being unable to master the Tibetan language is admittedly a common problem among Tibetan intellectuals whose major competence is in Chinese. As a result of colonial education, many of them cannot write or even fluently speak in Tibetan. Woesser’s generation went to school during the period of the Cultural Revolution. At that time, there was almost no Tibetan taught in most of the schools in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province. On the other hand, the pay-off is that their Chinese became good enough for them to choose writing as their profession – Chinese has become their mother language.

“While it is generally accepted that one can only master a single language to the degree of becoming a writer in that language, Chinese is indeed these Tibetan writers’ first language. It is also the reality that when Tashi Dawa, as chairman of the Tibetan Writers’ Association, met with Tibetan exiles overseas, the two sides could only communicate through Chinese, the language that signifies China’s colonialism. No wonder the exiles question how, if a nation’s language is the carrier of its culture, someone who is unable to master the language can grasp the culture and spirit of the nation and even speak for the nation.”<sup>1</sup>

However, I do not agree with what Wang Lixiong says about a mother language. He and I once had an argument about this. Chinese is not my mother language, it is just my second language. In fact I barely spoke any Chinese before the age of four and the first meal I ate when I was born was Tibetan yak butter mixed with my own mother’s milk. I solemnly retorted that my mother language is not Chinese; however, my problem is that over the course of growing up my mother language has been replaced. Yes, that’s it; replaced. Like a treasure you hold dear to your bosom and even though you hold it dear you are too young, you are too weak, you are too innocent, and even as you’re too young and innocent to know the ways of the world a mysterious hand takes away the beautiful treasure you had held to your bosom, and instead gives you another beautiful treasure – and yes, this other treasure is indeed beautiful – but it has almost nothing to do with you, one can say it is not of you, but from that moment on it would never leave you. And what do you do? How can you cut yourself off from it? And so it’s a replacement. One beautiful treasure was exchanged for another beautiful treasure but the differences are that one is of you but has forever taken its leave of you, whereas the other is not of you but will forever be appended to you. It’s as simple as that.

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## 6. Paradox

Wang Lixiong considers that it is only if a nationality's language is fully grasped that the expression of a nationality's consciousness can be limited to "private talks within the nation". He says:

"Instead of whispers within the nation, it is more important to articulate publicly and face the audience of the Han masses, the Chinese authorities, and international opinion. Otherwise the average Han Chinese can only follow the government's propaganda to (mis)understand Tibet. The Chinese authorities themselves can only rely on the colored spectacles of the intelligence agents and the so-called policy study to control Tibet. The reality of Tibet is either distorted or ignored due to it being voiceless. [...]

"The ones who are most likely to bear the responsibility for the public and lasting expression of their nationality's consciousness are still the nation's public intellectuals who are literate in Chinese. There are three reasons for this: Firstly, they are able to directly communicate with the Chinese population and authorities. Secondly, they are able to employ the media to spread their voices. Even when they are banned by censorship, there is still the internet connection for communication. Thirdly, they are able to participate in mainstream society in China, and through it enter the horizon of the international attention towards China. To a certain degree, they are protected by China Watchers in the international society. Therefore, they have more chance than the average citizens to test the bottom line of the autocracy."<sup>2</sup>

The Tibetan scholar Tsering Shakya has discussed the significance of this consciousness even more clearly when he wrote in the foreword to *The Snow-Lion Roaring in the Year of the Mouse*, my record of the 2008 events in Tibet:

"Woeser's writing is particularly offensive to the Communist Party because she not only dares to speak what the Party doesn't want the people to voice, but she writes in the language of the ruler. The Tibetans writing in Chinese have served an important purpose, in the early period of Chinese rule, the Tibetans writing in Chinese were seen as the voice of liberated serfs and extolling their grateful thanks to the Party. There are tales written by Tibetans in Chinese language depicting the cruelty of feudal Tibet, which helped to legitimize the conquest. A good example is the novel Kalsang Metok written by Jampel Gyatso, where conquest was welcomed as liberation. The younger generation of Tibetans writing in Chinese no longer see themselves as agents of the Party and see their writing as writing back in the language of their ruler. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Prospero scolded Caliban by asserting he bestow him the gift of language and civilization, Caliban retorted:

“You taught me language: and my profit on’t  
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,  
For learning me your language!”

“For the Communist Party, Woese’s writing is like Caliban’s curse. She writes defiantly and her knowledge of the language is used to speak back the truth. This is precisely the reason why Woese’s writings are troublesome for the Chinese government. She is the voice of a native, who they look down with and despise as uncivilized. Woese came into prominence through her essays and vignettes of lives of Tibetans. These portraits present the complex lives of the Tibetans, their fears and anxiety and most of all their deep faith in Buddhism and identity. This was not an image the Party wanted, the official images of the Tibetans are supposed to be a happy and singing colorful minority, forever supplicating the Party. She is also an accomplished poet and her poems speak of her own search for the native land and its people. Her poems are about dispossession and longing to her nourishment of her native soil.”<sup>3</sup>

## 7. Bound together by common space

Ever since I became a freelance writer and ever since my writings have become fairly widely read on the Internet, I’ve become acquainted with ever more young Tibetans from Amdo, U-Tsang and Kham. This is a group that I rarely came into contact with in the past, and my communications and exchanges with them give me a confidence I’ve never known before – I’ll never feel alone again. These days, Tibetans under the age of 40 and even younger are playing to their strengths and showing levels of rationalism, sensitivity and confidence that in this era of change and variables is gratifying to see. Not only has their nationality consciousness not been weakened by the Chinese Communist’s brainwashing and education, it has actually become stronger; at the same time they have mastered Chinese and English as a means of expressing nationality consciousness – the future is full of hope. A young Tibetan wrote to me once and said “We are all using different means to issue our inner voice, but our aims are all the same.”

My own personal experiences have led me to a deep understanding of the importance of the Internet. The appearance of the Internet is still a major turning point. The Internet has provided another space for the dissident’s voice, a space that seems it could truly have an impact upon people’s lives. The strength of the Internet is such that no longer can the power-holders draw a veil over heaven with a single hand, and such that a democratic future is no longer a dream.

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Tibet is not mute. Even though many people have been arrested or harmed in the general silence, the Internet will wrest a new space for the existence of those whose voices have been lost. The Internet has already built a bridge of communication and exchange for a Tibet that has long been divided. In sum, the Internet is the most important field of activity in this era. The Internet will change China and it will also change Tibet.

### 8. 2008

Having been through the events of 2008 that shook the world, Tibet is no longer the Tibet of the past, and the Tibetan people are no longer the Tibetan people of the past – everything has undergone a genuine transformative change. If one pretends to be aloof and indifferent and thinks that blood can just be washed away and that the truth can be covered over; or that atrocities will not be condemned and suffering will not be pondered; if one acts as though nothing ever happened and thinks life goes on as before and the sun will rise as ever, this is just self-deception.

The significance that 2008 had for Tibet is in fact the same as the significance that 1959 had for Tibet.

Two years ago, some Tibetan painters in Lhasa called their exhibition “Voicing Happenings”, expressing their wish to use art to record and explain the state of Tibet as well as their wish to use art to issue the voices of modern Tibetans. They themselves were Tibetans living in the twenty-first century; living in turbulent times with the varied and unprecedented complications of globalization and Sinicization weaving together and attacking the Land of Snows on the plateau, that had long ago lost its self-imposed protection and tranquility. I am not saying that these painters were dissidents, but as far as I, a dissident, am concerned, my writing is also for the purpose of “voicing happenings.” I confess that I, here in China, am proud of being a dissident. But it is not enough to simply live by one’s different views. One must speak out.

I, as a Tibetan, use my voice for Tibet. As for me, I write books (I have written 11 books so far; two books published in China have been banned; others have been translated into different languages: three books in Tibetan; one compilation of poetry in English, one book in German, one book in Japanese, one book in French, one book in Spanish, one book in Catalan, and one compilation in English), I write blogs (I started blogging in 2005, but after China closed three of my blogs in rapid succession I had to blog from a server in America, which is occasionally brought down by Chinese hackers; the one I write these days is the fifth I’ve kept), and I issue my voice in the media. This is how I, as a dissident writer, exist.

## 9. Blogs, magazines and books

Looking back on 2008, it is as though all of those events happened only yesterday. The shed blood is still flowing and the smoke is yet to clear, and hot tears and burning anger still spring forth from the blood and fire. As far as many of us are concerned the experiences are still very real. In particular, with the events that shook the world already more than a year ago, inhuman and unjust events are still happening across greater Amdo, U-Tsang and Kham, and Tibet's suffering still goes on... To this day, records and critiques written in Tibetan, Chinese and many other languages keep flooding out, and in particular books, magazines, essays and lyrics written in the mother language are emerging. Tibetans living under the Chinese political system are breaking through the silence, and there are more and more instances of these voices being bravely raised, and this is encouraging ever more Tibetans.

And with that, to such mother language writers as Jamyang Kyi, Kunga Tsayang (pen-name Gangnyi), Drokru Tsultrim, Khang Kunchok and Tashi (pen-name Therang), I must offer my deepest respects! Having all lived through events in Tibet in 2008, they were all then detained for bravely raising their voices. Some were released following torture, and some to this day have still not gained their physical freedom. Among those is the young Tashi (pen-name Therang) who in January 2009 self-published a thousand copies of *Written in Blood* in which he exposed the truth about the previous year's March 10 protests in Tibet. Including the foreword, *Written in Blood* consists of 32 essays divided among five chapters: A Message from Hell, Melody of the Soul, My Tibet, Spiritual Devotion, and Truth's Revenge. Not long after *Written in Blood* was published, Tashi was secretly taken away by the authorities. Some Tibetan-language blogs carried information about him at the time and called for greater world attention for his case, and it's thought he has now been released. However, the whereabouts remain unknown of Kunga Tsayang (pen-name Gangnyi), who wrote such essays as "Who is it who is truly conscious?", "Who are the real splittists?", "Lhasa is Lhasa no more," "China must apologize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama," "Tibetans, we must clearly understand the truth about AIDS," and "We Tibetans are the true witnesses."

In addition, the history of the immense changes that have taken place in Tibet since 2008 as well as since the 1950s has been privately published in Tibetan areas in books that include the novel *The Howling Red Wind* by Tsering Dondup, the memoir *The History of the Nagtsang Baby* – also known as *Boyhood Joys and Sorrows in the Nagtsang Family* – by Nagtsang Nulo, *My Hometown and Listening* and *The Imprisoned Tibetans* by Gyung Lhundrup (an upper-middle nationalities school student from Chentsa county in Qinghai province, who on October 18, 2008 committed suicide in protest at the government's Tibet policies), and *Shardungri*, the

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Tibetan-language periodical published by Tibetan university students at the Northwest Nationalities University, the twenty-first issue of which contained nine articles relating to the incidents of March 2008. Even though these books and magazines have already been banned by the authorities, the impact they've had in Tibetan areas is growing by the day.

Of course, the greater impact will come from our voices being rendered into a variety of languages so that throughout the world more and more people will hear us. And that precisely is the far-reaching significance of this most excellent book.

September 15, 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> A full translation of this and other essays by Wang Lixiong is available at: <http://wlx.sowiki.net/?action=show&id=2>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Tsering Shakya's foreword to Woesser's book can be read in full on her blog here: <http://woesser.middle-way.net/2008/12/tsering-shakya.html>

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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Norzin Wangmo, serving five years in prison for speaking on the phone about the situation in Tibet.

## THIRD LETTER TO MY FRIEND NORZIN WANGMO

*By Jamyang Kyi*

Jamyang Kyi is a Tibetan broadcaster, writer and singer whose diary of her own experience of interrogation and imprisonment is featured in this book. Norzin Wangmo, her friend, is currently serving a five-year prison sentence for sending emails and making phone calls abroad after the protests in 2008. Jamyang Kyi wrote this letter to her friend in prison and posted it on her blog on June 6, 2009. It is translated below into English from the original Tibetan by the website [highpeakspurearth.com](http://highpeakspureearth.com)

In the letter, Jamyang Kyi mentions Phuntsog Wangyal, one of the most important figures in modern Tibetan history who, as she points out, spent 18 years in prison starting in 1958. Phuntsog Wangyal's autobiography 'A Tibetan Revolutionary' was originally released in English in 2004 and was translated into Tibetan and published by The Tibet Times in Dharamsala in 2006.

Today I am trying to finish the third letter. I know that you are waiting for the letter which should be written in Chinese since all letters must be checked by the jailors. When I realised that the letter will not be passed on to you by the jailors, I started to think of composing a letter which would reach you eventually and it took me some time to prepare this letter. This is the reason why this letter is late. When I wrote my first letter to you, I really did not know how to begin the letter and wondered how you would understand the letter.

It was a year after your arrest around 3rd April that I wrote my first letter which contained over a hundred words. The letter was filled with my sadness, the reason is that I could not write all the things I wanted to say and discuss with you, whilst writing the letter I was in tears and could only write some words of encouragement in the letter.

A month after sending the letter, I still had not heard any news from you, so I started to think that you may not have received my letter. Then I called your sister to try to find out about your situation. After some days I heard that you had received my letter and we also learned that you are so busy all the time with heavy physical work and you would be punished if you did not finish your work in time. I heard they deprived you of your right to make a phone call to your son Dhondup Dorje once a month. I also heard that in order to regain the right to call your son, now you have been working double time and this has caused you to lose weight.

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The day we learned that you had received our letters, it was delightful news and immediately I wrote the second letter. I went to Karma Mindru Tibetan Restaurant to look for my niece and tell her to post the letter in the morning. She told me that she had finished her letter to you. My niece met you only once and you two do not know each other well. She knows you because I talk about you. She promised to write to you every month. I am so happy to see her doing this.

When I wrote my second letter, I was not as sad as the previous time, yet I was not sure what I should write. It is difficult for me to write something that is artificial in the letter. I know you would not be satisfied if I wrote only a few sentences. At the time I was reading 'A Tibetan Revolutionary', a book about Phuntsog Wangyal and wrote to you about the book. The reason why I mentioned the book to you is that Phuntshog Wangyal spent 18 years in jail and whilst in prison he read many books, as a result he eventually became a famous scholar. You should learn from his courage and perseverance that will bring great benefits for your life in the future.

The punishment given to you by the jailor is an attempt to intimidate you. You should not fall into a deceiving trap and I hope that you will devote yourself to reading books the little time you have. If I were to write a more direct letter, I fear that the jailor would not give you the letter.

It is raining today and the weather brings sadness. I remember one time at the end of the autumn, while all the leaves turned a yellowish colour, you with your son, and three members of my family went hiking, when we reached the forest, a (fire) guard prevented us from going further. The children started to play with stones and built the shape of a house. We three adults played a traditional stone game from Ngapa Khyungchu. Do you remember? I remember telling you that I will write down the rules of the game, recently I have started the project along with a collection of folk music of the Ngapa Kyungchu.

How come we Tibetans are so unfortunate? All the people who love our nation have been wasted one after another. At the beginning of March this year, Sanggya Dundrup passed away. I thought of writing something about him, but I was unable to as it was so painful. When he was alive, Sanggya Dundrup voluntarily taught Tibetan language to a group of children in Xining and he loved his students. He was teaching on the day he passed away, and this demonstrates his affection for his nation and this is also the legacy he left for us to carry forward. His death is a great loss to his family and to all of Tibet.

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Palsa la (dPal bzang lags), the place where we played the stone game is exactly located on the hillside that stands behind our office building. From the window of the restroom on the top of the building you can see the mountain range, and every time I recall our meeting my heart pains like a weight of stone pressing on it. The pain in my heart lingers on as this year there are so many sad incidents. In the meantime, I have not found an answer why I always think of you with such deep sorrow. Therefore, it is impossible for me to find a moment of clear mind resembling the pure sky. Since last year I have been taking sleeping pills to calm down my mind and heart. When people ask me to sing a song, I reply to them that I have no reason to sing songs this year.

I wrote in my last letter that four years is not a long time to console and give strength to you, nonetheless, I am counting the years on my fingers. Dear friend, it has been a year and two months since your arrest. There is not a single day that passes by without my missing you.

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A nomad family in Jyekundo (Chinese: Yushu) prefecture in Qinghai province. Note, the roadsign indicating Darlag county and Gade is in Chinese only.

## A TIBETANNESS THAT IS ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF COOL

*By Therang Buengu*

*"[Tibetans] are no longer just trying to fit into the Chinese national story; instead they are creating their own. It is a new cultural moment, and I am excited about what new possibilities this might offer young Tibetans. They are starting to have the chance to be many things and at same time still be Tibetan."*

**Therang Buengu is a pseudonym for a Tibetan writer with a keen and incisive understanding of contemporary Tibet and Tibetan identity, who writes both in Chinese and English. This blog was posted on August 10, 2009 in English at: [thebrang.blogspot.com](http://thebrang.blogspot.com) The introduction to the blog reads: "I am a Tibetan who has witnessed the turbulence of modern Tibetan history on the plateau. These are my thoughts and reflections in a time of uncertainty." This posting provoked much debate and comment among Tibetans both in Tibet and China and in exile.**

In my life there have been a few rare occasions when I wished I were younger. Such futile sentiments are usually followed by a mixture of nostalgia and regret. Sitting now in a coffee shop, watching the Tibetan pop vocal group Yudruk perform *Milam*, I am struck by these feelings once again. I wish I were experiencing this as a younger man. I wish I had had the chance to be cool *and* be Tibetan when I was a young college student in Beijing.

In those days, I struggled to express who I wanted to be. Looking back, I can see that I was searching for a way to be "cool" and be Tibetan at the same time. Of course, back then, the term *cool* didn't exist, either in Tibetan or Chinese. And whatever it was, "coolness" was the last thing associated with Tibetans in the Chinese imagination. As a young Tibetan who grew up in the Chinese education system, we didn't yet know how to live outside Chinese imagination.

I still vividly remember my first journey into the Chinese heartland. In the barren city of Golmud in the Tsaidam desert, I had a conversation with my fellow Tibetan travelers – all freshmen headed to college – about how to be a Tibetan in this new land where we would spend the next four years. One student had already been to China as a soccer player. He told us that we needed to carry a Tibetan knife and act a little savage. For some reason, there happened to be an abundance of Tibetan knives to buy in the dusty market of Golmud. I think I was the only one who did not rush to buy a knife. I just couldn't picture myself with a big Tibetan knife dangling at my waist, swaggering around the Chinese capital.

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I was dreaming of something else – of finding a way to be both Tibetan and modern.

But soon after we arrived, I found out that in China's national imagination there was no space for me to be both. Who I could be was already predetermined.

From the early days of China's rule in Tibet, a dark and savage image of Tibetans was created and propagated: dark skinned, greasy, barbaric and in need of civilization and liberation. This image became widespread through the mute character Champa in the classic film *Nongnu*. As the story goes, when the People's Liberation Army finally liberated Champa from his slave master, this man who hadn't spoken for years cried out in gratitude, "Long live Chairman Mao!" That caricature not only became ingrained in China's national imagination, it also became an integral part of modern China's national narrative.

In fact, in the mad drama of contemporary China, there were only two sanctioned Tibetan characters scripted by the Party. We had the option of being either the pre-liberation savage or the post-liberation political sycophant, indebted to the Party for rescuing us from ourselves.

Most of us were too smart and too proud to play the post-liberation sycophant. So that left us with the role of savages. Back in Tibet, we tended to be quiet, mild-mannered, even nerdy students. But in China we became street fighters. We brawled in restaurants and beat up other students in school. Everyone pretended to be frightened of us and we pretended we were untamed wild men. We were *Tibetan*.

Meanwhile my dream of becoming a cool, modern Tibetan remained shrouded in the distance.

Nowadays, I understand that Tibetan college students in China have their own set of challenges in being Tibetan. But as the story of China becomes more diverse and complicated, Tibetans are also coming out from the shadow of the liberation narrative. There are now extraordinarily conflicting images of Tibetans settling into the Chinese mind. Now we are rioters, learned Buddhist scholars, corrupt party bosses, smart college kids, the best looking man in China, stubborn religious fanatics – and of course, we are also cool like the four young men of Yudruk.

The Yudruk phenomenon shows not only that Tibetans can be cool, but that it is cool *to be* Tibetan. This is a radical shift. But not only does it show a kind of Tibetanness that is on the cutting edge of cool. It also makes it clear that a Tibetan image can be created and can exist entirely outside of the Chinese imagination. This is a kind of Tibetanness that was made by and for Tibetans.

Last night I had a beautiful dream,  
I dreamed about Bod, the Land of Snow  
Dream about five colors of the flowers bloomed  
Dream about blue dragon land on grand

As I watch these intensely Tibetan and coolly hip young performers, I can see that they have a new audience in mind: other young Tibetans. They are no longer just trying to fit into the Chinese national story; instead they are creating their own.

It is a new cultural moment, and I am excited about what new possibilities this might offer young Tibetans. They are starting to have the chance to be many things and at same time still be Tibetan. Still at the same time, I also feel a tug of sadness for my own lost youth, wandering in the shadow of oppressive stories that I could not control and yet found hard to escape.

Watch Yudruk's Milam :

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nk365rwB3W>

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Untitled painting by Sonam Lhundup. Born in Kham, eastern Tibet in 1976, Sonam Lhundup (Samchung) studied fine art and western history and philosophy before leaving Tibet for India in 2003. More of his work can be seen at [www.bodpa.com](http://www.bodpa.com). Sonam Lhundup lives in Dharamsala, India, base of the Dalai Lama, where he paints and continues his study of Buddhism, Tibetan language and Tibetan art history.

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

*By Lamajabb*

Lamajabb is an independent scholar currently reading for his doctorate in Tibetan literature at Oxford University in the UK. In this essay he presents an overview of Tibetan writers' contributions to the record and perceptions of Tibet's modern history, and how writers are daring to challenge not only official versions of Tibet's history, but also daring to challenge Tibetan cultural and literary conventions. All translations from Tibetan to English featured in this essay were prepared by Lamajabb himself.

Lamajabb particularly focuses on the publication by a group of Amdo writers, Shardungri, or 'Eastern Snow Mountain', the first known collection of writings about the 2008 protests to be published in Tibet, and which were promptly banned. An English translation of an essay in Eastern Snow Mountain is published in this collection.

The wave of protests that rippled across the Tibetan plateau in 2008 is unprecedented in its intensity, geographical reach, demographic diversity and youthful verve. Most remarkable of all, a year on, it refuses to subside into oblivion in spite of the severe crackdown that came in different forms, from brutal military suppression to humiliating political campaigns and perpetual state surveillance.

The outside world observes the sporadic protests that continue to break out across Tibet calling for human rights, religious freedom and the return of the Dalai Lama. But few pay attention to subtler yet equally defiant and potent forms of dissent in the guise of literary publications, popular songs, blogs and poetry. The last issue of *Shardungri* (The Eastern Snow Mountain), an acclaimed Tibetan-language journal of critical literary and social commentary that was banned upon publication, is an example.

Most of the terse, eloquent and critical essays in the June 21, 2008 issue of *Shardungri* – the last edition before it was banned – cover the Chinese government's mishandling of the 2008 protests and the failure of its Tibet policy over the last 50 years. The bloodshed is blamed squarely on the Chinese authorities' inability or unwillingness to resolve the Nationality Question, their attempt to exonerate themselves from serious policy failures and shirk fundamental governing responsibilities. Some articles are stirring, passionate yet reasoned rallying calls for Tibetan solidarity and continued struggle in the face of injustice and repression. Others are level-headed, well-thought

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and dispassionate analytical writings shedding light on the political reality on the ground and the thinking of young Tibetan intellectuals. All of them are characterized by a lucid writing style, a poetic lyricism and a remarkable audacity to speak out frankly on most sensitive political issues.

These writings refute the Chinese official narrative of 2008 Tibet-wide protests, find the cause not in some phantom instigation of the 'Dalai clique' but in the tragic Tibetan history that began in the 1950s and the shortcomings of China's Tibet policy. Writers speak openly about the harrowing decade of the 1950s when the Chinese People's Liberation Army marched into Tibet leaving carnage and destruction in its wake. "Several decades ago," writes Ombar, 'the Burning OM', in a piece entitled *The Streaming Words Beginning with the Letter 'D'*, "A lupine army bearing five stars on their foreheads arrived on this plateau." Through deceptive persuasion and sugared words, he continues, they duped the clergy and power elites, and through the coercive force of guns, cannons and bombs they made bloody sacrificial offerings with the lives of humans and animals. In a rhetorically entitled piece, *How Can We Possess Human Rights over our Bodies?* Nyen, 'Argali or a Fearsome Spirit', sees the smog that filled up the Lhasa sky on March 14, 2008 as the unleashing of the long pent-up anguish and resentment of Tibetans, who had had to endure torture, deception, exploitation, false accusations, discrimination, hypocrisy, favoritism and a multiplicity of lies for five decades. Implying the horrors of the 1950s, he writes that once again it was the Red Army, armed to the teeth, which leaped upon the precious lives of fellow Tibetans thereby flouting the norms of human rights with total impunity.

Until now, there has been a deafening silence about this period of Tibetan history amongst Tibetan writers and intellectuals inside Tibet due to fears of fatal reprisals from the authorities. Horrifying tales of the 1950s had been confined to the private sphere of the family hearth for over five decades because they questioned the victor's history. However, in recent years Tibetans have begun to fashion their own narrative of those dark years with hitherto unimaginable temerity. An autobiography entitled *The Joys and Woes of Naktsang Boy* narrates the shocking experience of an orphaned boy whose tragic private life became enmeshed with the bloody public events unfolding in Tibet during the 1950s. This book, written in eloquent vernacular language has taken the nascent public space in Amdo by storm since its publication in 2007. It serves as an inspiration for other writers. In terms of creative writing, famous novels such as *The Ancestors and the Roaring Red Storm* tackle the initial Tibetan encounter with Chinese military and political power. These fictive narrations closely shadow actual historical occurrences in the 1950s and thus question the Chinese official account. As evident in the above quotations, the historical roots of the current predicament of Tibet are traced back to this period of bloodshed.

All of the essays with political contents in the final issue of *Shardungri* view the 2008 nationwide protests in Tibet through a prism of democratic principles. The words unanimously deployed are: freedom, democracy, equality and human rights. It is argued that China's Tibet policy failed because its national regional autonomy laws are purely nominal. In terms borrowed directly from Chinese Communist rhetoric with inverted meaning, Lunpo Nyigthog, 'A Pen-wielding Fool', reasons in a piece called *The Spreading Wings of Truth – Power in the Sky* reasons that the refusal to implement national autonomy laws by "the local utopians or the reactionary ruling elite was the ferment that provoked the Red-faced Tibetan family to shake heaven and earth", a reference to the 2008 protests. The post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha notes that "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace." From the perspective of the Chinese colonial power here the mimicry is in its most menacing avatar. The silenced and marginalized offer a critique of the colonial center utilizing its own vocabulary. It makes a mockery of the center's failure to live up to its own Marxist rhetoric of guaranteeing nationality and linguistic equality in a socialist society.

In a long, reflective and philosophically well-grounded essay entitled *National Autonomy and National (as in nationality) Survival*, Sursumma, 'The Triangle', argues that an adherence to democracy, openness, legitimacy and a clear conscience of justice would have avoided the bloodbath on the Tibetan plateau in 2008. Like many Tibetan writers he censures the discrepancy between principles enshrined in the Chinese Constitution and the national regional autonomy law, and the grim reality on the ground. Quoting heavily from the Canadian political philosopher Will Kymlicka, Sursumma advocates a minority right to cultural survival that needs to incorporate an understanding of the tension between human rights and minority rights, and which at times undermines the latter. He also contends that the Chinese government should do much more than merely ratifying on paper the right to protect and promote a minority's culture. It should guarantee minority rights such as linguistic freedom through mechanisms of governmental institutions and policies which make their implementation compulsory and unavoidable. Without enforceable institutional and legal guarantees, including limiting migration to the territories of national minorities, the regional ethnic autonomy law only serves as an effective integrationist strategy for the dominant ethnicity, as has been the case till now.

It must be noted that criticism is not solely leveled at the Chinese government and policies – writers in *Shardungri* do not spare the Tibetans themselves either. Indicative of the radical outlook of a new generation of Tibetans inside Tibet, the spirit of *Shardungri* is skeptical of all forms of established authority, be they Chinese or Tibetan. This critical spirit is nowhere more apparent than in the declaration printed on the first page of this journal. This journal of literary and social commentary was

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both famous and infamous for its radicalism and the power to shock well before the banned current issue. The declaration boldly states:

*“As I do not possess anything other than an independent character and an independent thought I could not ingratiate myself with so-called scholars and bow before Great Lamas and Tulkus. I am searching for a philosophy; searching for a philosophy of equality and freedom. I am searching for courage; searching for critical and analytical courage.”*

It should be clear by now that the political pages of this issue abound with “critical and analytical courage” not to mention the acerbic and unconventional literary criticism attacking established Tibetan scholars and classical poetical texts in the first section of the journal.

“Critical courage” finds a target in the perceived collaboration of some senior Buddhist clergy, Tibetan officials, and Tibetologist scholars with the Chinese authorities. Nyen finds the subservient remarks of these public figures are appropriated to construct the official narrative that distorts and paints a negative and false portrayal of the Tibetan protests that ended in death, torture and ongoing intimidation. He warns that these people who betrayed their fellow Tibetans in their hour of need “should not be forgotten by the future generations”.

One should always bear in mind that what Columbia University’s Robert Barnett termed “strategic concealment” might be in operation when these Tibetan figureheads cooperate with the governing mechanisms of Chinese rule in Tibet. Resorting to strategic deceptions, they might be seeking private and collective gains without inviting the deadly suspicions of the Chinese state. Nevertheless, the unsparing remarks above indicate young Tibetans’ resentment against perceived collaboration with the colonial powers and their daring willingness to express it in writing and in public which would incur the wrath of a certain section of Tibetan society as well as of the Chinese government. This is also part of a wider critical trend in contemporary Tibet which casts aspersions on the sycophancy, corruption and incompetence of Tibetan public figures and intelligentsia in forthright, pithy and subversive terminology.

Like many contemporary Tibetan writings inside Tibet on current Tibetan affairs *Shardungri’s* articles are marked by their usage of distilled, compact and expressive Tibetan language. Their terminology combines literary idioms, colloquialisms, ancient proverbs and neologisms with a seamless fluidity. Their writing displays a high level of technical competence and artistic finesse. Poet and literary critic Mathew Arnold once stressed with characteristic Victorian aplomb the importance of poetry by stating

that “poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive and widely effective mode of saying things.” Many contemporary Tibetan writers are well aware of this point and as such, poetic language as an effective and persuasive mode of communication is employed to the full. Ombar’s impassioned prose includes three passages of poetry in free verse form:

1

Physical vitality, life-blood, spirit, the flawless ancestral marrow-bone  
 White Tsampa, dri-butter, glacial waters, the sweet ancestral nourishments  
 Snow-mountains, grasslands, rocky-mountains, the finely enclosed ancestral estate  
 Realization must be gained in the depths of one’s heart and memories must be sought  
 within the mind

2

Deception, cruelty, malice; on whose face burns?  
 Guns, cannons, bombs; upon whose life leaps fearsomely?  
 Words of condemnations, slanders, intimidation; through whose voice issues?  
 The darkness has endowed us with a pair of black eyes and by using them we must  
 search for a skylight for the light.

3

One life, two lives, three lives ... one hundred lives  
 Incessantly lost and are losing  
 Therefore we should lament, we should commemorate  
 Within the crevices of history we should never forget

It is impossible to convey the passion, beauty and anguish expressed in the original Tibetan even through the author’s English rendition. However, it should be evident that a poetic idiom is used effectively in order to reassert Tibetan identity and promote national solidarity by remembering, to paraphrase Ernest Renan, the common suffering of a people.

Indeed it is this sense of a shared suffering that is most evident on the subject of last year’s protests. Numerous poems could be used to illustrate this point but it is suffice to cite a couple of stanzas from a blog poem written in 2008 by a young and established Tibetan poet. (This poem is also translated from the Tibetan by the author.)

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You are a poet  
 A broom moving in the street  
 I too am a poet  
 A windhorse stuck to the ice

I'll not cross the bridge  
 For soldiers guard the bridge  
 I'll not greet the soldiers  
 For soldiers bear guns

This poem is a poignant and powerful expression of a writer's subjective take on Tibetans' collective experience of ongoing repression. The recurrence of phrases and images might give it a deceptively unrefined appearance, but one can sense a strong subversive element and a refusal to accept coercive authority that comes in the form of gun-toting "soldiers", "soldiers" and "soldiers". The use of repetition manages to convey the massive number military personnel that flooded the Tibetan plateau in response to 2008 protests, and who became a ubiquitous feature of Tibetan landscape.

The overwhelming military response further acts as a reminder of a previous military attack on Tibet in the 1950s. These two historical episodes fuse in the Tibetan psyche and becomes an enduring collective suffering which reinforces national consciousness. A popular song sung by a Tibetan nomad captures this sentiment. The singer was detained for a short while, and then released to public adulation. His song became an overnight sensation thanks to mobile phone technology, a dirge mourning the subjugation of a nation and the death of protesters in 2008. However, at the same time it is an implicit celebration of Tibetan political agency and assertion of national identity through the very recent historical experience of a silenced nation. The song is translated from Tibetan into English by the author below:

1958 and 2008

The year 1958  
 The year when the bitter enemy arrived in Tibet  
 The year when venerable Lamas were imprisoned  
 We live in terror of that year

The year 1958  
 The year when the brave were bloodied  
 The year when the innocent were imprisoned  
 We live in terror of that year

The year 2008  
The year when innocent Tibetans were tortured  
The year when the citizens of the earth were killed  
We live in terror of that year

This song is composed of poetic lyrics drawing on folksongs, collective memory and delivered through the popular medium of *dunglen* (a Tibetan guitar or mandolin) and disseminated through the modern multimedia technologies of CDs, the Internet and mobile phones. This ultimately captures contemporary Tibetan cultural creativity where poetry, music and national sentiments fuse. The song begins narrating the persecution of an occupied people and ends by lamenting the deaths of global citizens. Conscious of universal human rights, Tibetan national identity is expressed both locally and globally. This audacious song is a fitting epilogue to the eventful and tragic year that was 2008, in which long-held silences were broken at enormous costs. This passion for expression and the spirit of sacrifice expressed in the afterword of *Shardungri* lives on: "If *Shardungri* were to survive it must survive with vitality, if it were to die it must die in glory!"

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<sup>1</sup> A dri is a female yak.

<sup>2</sup> Windhorses are prayers printed on small slips of paper or on prayer flags and are considered to be religious offerings as well as tokens of good luck.

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The cover of an issue of *Shardungri* magazine, an outspoken Tibetan-language publication which was banned soon after publishing a series of articles commenting on the 2008 protests.

## **'A SKETCH OF HISTORY WRITTEN IN THE BLOOD OF A GENERATION' BANNED WRITINGS FROM AMDO**

*"Whoever tries to cover up the loss of the precious lives of our people, lay and monastic, men and women, it cannot be hidden from history"*

*by 'Nyen' (the 'Wild One'), in the 'Eastern Snow Mountain'*

The magazine *Shardungri*, or Eastern Snow Mountain, is among the only known material in Tibetan on the 2008 protests to have been published in the PRC. The magazine was quickly banned, but not before copies had circulated in areas of Qinghai and Gansu provinces and beyond.

In their afterword, the publishers say that they knew the risks of publishing such outspoken criticism of the Chinese authorities' handling and representations of the protests, but felt they had no choice but to do so: "The magazine staff and associates did not commit to the foolishness of smashing this egg against a rock and knowingly leaping into an abyss out of rashness or for the sake of reputation. We did so out of the pain of separation from the tens of thousands of souls caught up in this deplorable violence, and the tormenting thirst for freedom, democracy and equality for those who should have them but do not."

The writings give personal and deeply moving accounts of loss and bereavement in the crackdown following the protests, including the story of a man beaten to death, two young monks who were driven to suicide, and the chilling consequences of a student protest in Sichuan on March 17, 2008, written just a few days later. (English translations are published in the International Campaign for Tibet report, *A Great Mountain Burned by Fire: China's Crackdown in Tibet*, [www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)).

All of the essays were originally written in the Amdo dialect of Tibetan, which is renowned in Tibet for its lyricism and eloquent turns of phrase. In this collection, the poetic language is matched by the substance and analytical nature of the prose, grounded in an understanding of the political framework of Chinese policies and law as well as knowledge about both Chinese and Tibetan culture. The 'Eastern Snow Mountain' writers frequently frame their arguments with compassionate insights into the sufferings of ordinary Chinese people and their own struggles against the state.

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Although the writers are largely anonymous in this collection, many of them are likely to be educated in Chinese as well as in the Tibetan language, and representative of a new generation of bilingual and bicultural Tibetans. Unlike the older generation of Tibetan elites, young intellectuals did not experience the trauma of Tibet's takeover by China or the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. They were brought up in a Chinese-ruled Tibet, with many educated in Chinese cities from middle school onward, and are aware of both the political struggle being waged and of something of a renaissance of Tibetan cultural identity.

A sense of urgency and a need for political change infuses many of the essays by these writers, who are all from the Tibetan area of Amdo. A common theme is the solidarity of Tibetans across the plateau and a pride in their unique cultural and religious identity. In nearly every aspect of social, political, and economic life, the various Tibetan autonomous areas of the PRC share far more in common with each other than with the Chinese provinces to which they have been assigned.

An essay from Eastern Snow Mountain, translated into English by ICT, follows below.

### **What human rights do we have over our bodies?**

*"Now that the minds of our people, monastics and laypeople, men and women, are like snowflakes in the wind, in the face of gun-barrels and horsewhips, will we not call on the truthful eyes of the world to look our way for a moment?"*

*by Nyen, 'the wild one' (Sichuan)*

1. Have you ever heard that our land does not have the benefit of human rights? Because our human rights over our own bodies is dead. Even this year, who does not know that our monks and laypeople, men and women, each lost their precious lives? Northern land of snows, long accustomed to swallowing tears of grief, fellow countrymen of the three provinces, surviving patiently in the confines of a straitjacket, filled with terror, fear and anguish, on whom is their humble gaze fixed? The great snow mountain thirsting for freedom, democracy and equality is once more streaked red with blood. The long binding rope of non-fulfillment of the perennial aspirations for livelihood and prosperity has again pulled each of them back into the lap of mother earth. Is this the 'fierce red wind' that we have not yet been able to forget, starting to howl once more? Is this the gloom of the 'darkness' which has not yet vanished from the inner recesses of our minds, starting to gather once more? If you have eyes, do you not see that many, many of our fellow countrymen went forth with the dream of

our nation in their minds? How is it that in this land we have absolutely no ground to plead even for the dear lives of our countrymen? This darkness and cruelty, occupation and oppression will surely spill every drop of blood in our homeland down to the last dewdrop on a blade of grass. Likewise, now that the minds of our people, monastics and laypeople, men and women, are like snowflakes in the wind, in the face of gun-barrels and horsewhips, will we not call on the truthful eyes of the world to look our way for a moment?

2. The smoke that filled the sky over Lhasa on March 14 was the smoke from 50 years of patient endurance. It was the smoke that the fraternal inhabitants had persistently held inside for 50 years. If that smoke is held inside for exactly 50 years, isn't it bound to be let out? Our homeland is saddled with a burden of sorrow. There is definitely a relation between myself and those fellow countrymen and women I have never met. There is definitely a firm relation between myself and those fellow countrymen of the three provinces of Tibet. Have the many, many years of bullying and abuse in every town and village, examples of which are endless, the spiteful games, visible and invisible, of "pretending to kiss someone then smearing snot on them," the many, many years of resentment of the systematic brutality meted out using the law as a pretext, within a system ostensibly governed by law, the many, many years of "digging the earth and upturning rocks" and "cutting, chopping and whittling," blurring distinctions between public and private, constantly revolving on the spear-tip of false accusations, eloquent trickery, bias and face-saving, falsehood propping up falsehood, blaming the innocent and alternating rough with smooth, has all this incited rage in the Tibetan people? The Tibetan people, without refuge or protector, without forces or allies, have risen up out of desperation, for the cause of human rights, without even thinking of bringing Communist rule to an end. They are undeniably 'rebels' against the system of a government blind to Karmic cause and effect, unwilling and unable to spare the lives of those at its mercy.

Those who trampled on the precious lives of my countrymen for all to see were again well-armed Red Army soldiers, the fearsome "men dispatched and arrow fired" by the central government, playing with human rights before discarding them, although investigation of guilt and liability finds none. On closer consideration, even if this current disturbance can be quelled with armed force, the wounds thereby inflicted and stench of the blood spilled have filled the minds of the coming generation. A government that responds only with shows of armed force does not have even a sesame seed's-worth of prestige in the minds of ordinary people. One might say that the prospect of a government that uses displays of armed force to intimidate the people is a great tragedy for humankind.

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3. Swift to cover up an incident, skilled in 'spinning' an incident, ready to cover up and dress up the protruding backside of falsity, habituated to shifting the blame for one's own faults onto others, practiced at talking crooked and acting crooked in full knowledge, fond of reversing the order of things, with eyes open to lying and fakery, trickery and deception, committing wholesale slaughter at the scene of an incident, but making it look as if not a single drop of blood was shed afterwards. The widespread contagion of blaming any and all incidents on the meek is a special game played by those in power, but those with eyes, like sheep that will not graze in the presence of a wolf, surely see. In a society where ideals like freedom, democracy and equality are never even heard of, confronting arms directly before one's eyes is a choice-less choice. The greatest mental suffering of Tibetans is not that there is no place to complain about their sufferings but that they are not allowed to complain. To the extent that this mental suffering can be suppressed inside, there will be compliance with Communist ideology.

4. The present contradiction between Chinese and Tibetans in their respective territories is directly related to the Communist state. Not only have the delayed consequences of the state's failure to resolve 'old issues' become the principal cause of instability in Tibetan society generally, an unthinkable calamity has been inflicted on the precious lives of ordinary people on both sides. The so-called unity of nationalities constantly proclaimed by the state has now reached the point of a 'you die, I live'. The attitude of the Red faction, which values individual lives in the case of the big nationality but crushes under heel the valuation of the lives and rights of others, is always going to provoke opposition, and the incredibly violent suppression, beating and killing of the fellow countrymen of a nationality swallowing back tears of grief is an episode that can never be forgotten. A society habituated to strangling the voices of the humble is one constantly filled with terror, fear and anguish. However, urged on by the prospect that by striving for human rights and freedom like a thirsty person seeking water, an unintimidated survivor may emerge in the wake of death, we fellow countrymen and women, sharing each others' joys and sorrows, with the trauma of a first-hand encounter with hell in our minds, must apply ourselves to all the tasks before us as the responsibility has fallen unavoidably on our shoulders.

5. After Lhasa, the beating and killing was carried out perfectly through Kham and up to the nomads of Amdo – so grateful! – and once the sorrowful lips of the people of the snow mountain realm were sealed, not one word of truth was allowed to reach the rest of the planet. We must also not forget to be grateful to the spiritual teachers and incarnate lamas of we ordinary folk who have been appointed to nominal positions in Tibet and who collectively bear on their shoulders the large and weighty responsibility for leadership and research into Tibetan studies, and who on behalf of the Tibetan people on TV and in the newspapers, distinguishing black from white and bearing

witness to the truth, rubbed salt into the wounds of their fellow countrymen.

At the same time, it seems to me that they should be recalled here, as recorded on the Xinhua news website:

“On the afternoon of March 21, the officials responsible for Tibetan Buddhist affairs in Kanlho [Chinese: Gannan] prefecture assembled for a meeting in Sangchu [Chinese: Xiahe] county. In his speech, member of the National People’s Congress (NPC) standing committee, vice-chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, principal of the China Tibetan Buddhist higher studies college, vice-chair of the standing committee of the provincial people’s congress and chairman of the provincial Buddhist Association, the current incarnation of Jamyang Zhepa stated ‘We are aware in all respects that the current wave of violence is a direct conspiracy by the Dalai clique. In actual fact, nationality and religion is the flag they fly to deceive people, to destroy stability and progress inside Tibet, and to wreck discipline within Tibet’s monasteries, and the present situation proves that this is their real objective.’” (Xinhuanet, March 22, 2008.)

On March 23, vice chairman of the national CPPCC Ngabo Ngawang Jigme spoke about the recent disturbances in Lhasa in an interview with a Xinhua journalist, saying “It is a necessity for the concerned departments to deal with the situation in a timely and appropriate manner using legal means.” (Xinhuanet, March 23, 2008.)

Director of the China Tibetology Research Centre Lhakpa Phuntsog said that: “It is really excellent how after the outbreak of the March 14 incident the government responded immediately to bring the situation under control.” (Xinhuanet, March 24, 2008.)

TAR CPPCC member, head of the research unit at the Tibet Academy of Social Science and famous Tibetologist Drongbu Tsering Dorje said that “Having just arrived in Lhasa from Beijing, being in the street and taking in the shops, vehicles and public facilities smashed and burned by the criminals, a barely expressible rage grew in my mind.” (Xinhuanet, March 26, 2008.)

Doesn’t looking back at these short speeches and writings explain everything? Those short speeches and writings are now excellent tools. They are the ones who defend the fundamental interests of the people. They are the ones who go on TV and in the newspapers as representatives of the Tibetan people to give the “correct view.” They are actually speaking out “with growing rage” on many things in tune with the sentiments of our fellow countrymen. When the going gets rough, those who will speak truthfully about the dear lives and welfare of their fellow countrymen are rare as stars in daylight, but now our leaders, Lamas and incarnates, and Tibetologists are speaking the “undistorted truth.”

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Listening to these speeches makes me think of the 10th Panchen Lama, whom the central government commended for “loving the nation and loving religion.” It makes me think of something he said. In the conclusion of the “70,000 character petition,” he wrote: “I vow not to leave any legacy in my personal career which will tarnish even slightly the good name of the brave and dedicated Tibetan people.” And it makes me think of the loyal sons of the Tibetan nation in recent history, those who, at a consultative meeting of high Lamas called in Beijing before the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama, raised their hands in front of the concerned departments of the central government in defense of our rights and viewpoint, including the likes of Alak Gungtang-tsang, Baba Phuntsok Wangyal, who suffered 18 years of hardship in prison, and the iron-willed Yidam Tsering, who has never allowed anyone to tread on his neck. What they loved was the land under our feet. Our country may be a barren desert, but they loved it. What they loved dearly was our spoken and written language.

How deplorable are the “correct words and correct views” of today’s high Lamas, senior leaders and great scholars, yes-men eager for personal gain, power and reputation? They who “bang the gong while their fathers are put to death” should not be forgotten by future generations. Those who defile our image can be considered guilty of historic crimes. These well-fed ‘tools’ have made the charge that “Destruction is now their real objective,” and “Dealing with them appropriately in a timely way is essential.” What is so essential? Was it essential for ordinary religious and laypeople, men and women, to lose their lives? Or was it essential to beat and kill them? The scholar said “It was really excellent that measures were taken immediately to bring the situation under control.” Do you actually know what “measures were taken” immediately? Do you mean coming in with tanks and guns, or do you mean that surrounding and shooting into crowds of civilians with guns was “excellent”? It is extraordinary that Drongbu Tsering Dorje, an exponent of Buddhist philosophy could be made so “angry.” Getting into “an inexpressible rage” because a few shops got burned down while shrugging off the intimidation of masses of your fellow countrymen by armed forces, is that the reaction of a great mind? These betrayers of those who stand for the common cause, ready to hang their own mother out to dry, these avid sellers of their own souls who value nothing higher than their own positions, has the time not come to unmask these opportunists? Finally, what I want to say is simple: the connection between the consciousness of a people and the consciousness of individuals is a firm one.

6. Whoever tries to cover up the loss of the precious lives of our people, lay and monastic, men and women, it cannot be hidden from history. Why is it that the Tibetans must undergo such unthinkable bullying, abuse, misery and torture on the soil of their ancestral land? The many households and couples who have been separated will ultimately not be excluded from the reckoning of our people’s suffering,

and those who gave their lives for the land trodden by their ancestors, religious and lay, men and women, should not be forgotten. Everyone cherishes their own life and values nothing higher, so in which eventuality have they been obliged to go so far as to renounce it? Is it not the misery of being unable to bear seeing the excessive cruelty of those in power? If those who trample on human lives always disregard people's rights, that is a crisis bound to affect us. When the sweet lives of monks, students and ordinary people are dragged from this world into darkness, when those sweet lives which have prayed so hard for the swift fulfillment of their aspirations are confiscated by the state, I for one cannot remain silent, and the connection between their sad fates and my pen is a profound one.

Shikalo, a man in his forties from Charo Xiang in Ngaba county, was beaten to death on false charges. His precious life has fizzled out. This father and cornerstone of his household leaves behind him a widow and three orphans, weeping inside. This life-demeaning disaster has ruined life for one household. To say that someone has been beaten to death, isn't this something that should never have to be said in this day and age? To say that someone has been beaten to death is something that recalls the terror of the "Democratic Reform" era (of the late 1950s and early 1960s). Generally speaking, no one enjoys "vengeance" or continuing "old feuds." But for the young generation, the murderer of their father leaves an impression that cannot be forgotten as long as they live. That is the certain outcome of repression, beating and killing. We have no wish for 'revenge' or 'feuds.' We call for reaching a time in which the younger generation will have no "revenge" to seek or 'feuds' to settle. The young generation has not come into this world for revenge or to settle feuds, but to see the spectacle of a brighter tomorrow, to seek refuge in a place enjoying the bright spring of freedom, democracy and equality.

Then there was the story of two monks from Kirti monastery in Ngaba, Toesam and Jinpa, who were driven by the present desperate situation to take their own lives in prison. Why should we have to witness such a depressing event? When one thinks carefully, they are not at all to blame. Who would not be traumatized? Who would not be traumatized by the unimaginable pain of torture not grounded in humanity?

Unable to bear the pain and terror of torture, that unthinkable Karmic fruition, those two monks came to the point of ending their own young lives while still wishing to live. Those two monks as living human beings found themselves compelled to take their own lives. For a person to find the determination to take his own life is by no means easily done, yet in the face of incredible suffering, it must have seemed the only option. Who could put up with the kind of physical threat to life suffered by these Tibetans? Who are the ones who would invite the darkness of such suffering on the humble minds of a defenseless people?

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May the young men and women of the future become smart enough not to be misled by others into accepting defeat and contempt. I am confident that having recalled and reflected on the wounds and sorrows of the present, those men and women will find another 'open road.'

7. If one just sat watching the official TV news, it would scrub your brain clean. That news channel sullied our image so much that Tibetans watching it would be depressed by its oblivious attitude. That is precisely its power and its effect. Those displays of falsehood propping up falsehood are confident of presenting that "distortion of history" as truth. Saying "The actual nature of the incident was this," they are seeing whether they can establish that perception in your mind, easily or by force of repetition, and through the intoxicating effect of these broadcasts, end up with us wearing the most unthinkable of hats. One or two violent incidents occurring in the course of a popular uprising are normal events in such disturbances in any other country. Like the Tibetan proverb "Getting angry with the Yak but whipping the horse," although it was by no means a contradiction between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples, opposition to the state soon became a fight between the two peoples. In any case, those who came to know about the incidents from the TV and newspapers and those who witnessed them at first hand differ in many respects. The TV, newspapers and so on have just become tools for the power-holders to defend themselves, and anyone who thinks that they tell the truth or distinguish black from white must be out of their mind. That the media can produce a big effect in a short time through supporting in endless ways the leveling of all the accusations and labels one can think of goes without saying. (The attribution of virtue to the state is done in the same way.) Relying on the power and influence of these broadcasts to perpetrate an unimaginable defamation of the reputation of this nationality is something we absolutely cannot accept. If stability is to be restored to Tibetan society through force alone, that means a society stabilized by the same oppression, exploitation and contempt, and it means that we will not see the real light of day.

8. Human rights apply to the political, economic, social and cultural spheres; their essential characteristic is freedom and equality, and their basic nature and concern is human life and progress. Since people cannot live or progress as humans without freedom and equality, it is hardly worth saying that this is even more true of human rights. The present situation in our society is that people are hiding indoors with pain in their hearts. Our pleas for freedom, equality and a happy life are considered illegal and criminal. Those who strive for freedom, equality and happiness are in for so much physical degradation and trauma. What is our real reason for living? Isn't this place where we live the place where the ancestors turned the cosmic wheel of joy and

sorrow? And even in the present time, it seems to me that the desperate thirst of our beloved people, monastic and lay, men and women, for a brighter future, supported by an extraordinary “consciousness,” is indeed a premonition of the future realization of our hopes. We should recognize not only that human rights always and in all aspects are something we ourselves strive for, but that this struggle is for the benefit of tomorrow’s generation, and that it is ensuring that tomorrow’s generation can live a life dignified with human rights, freedom, equality and happiness that gives meaning to our present lives. If they can live a life without oppression, exploitation and brutalization, they will be free of the hardship and dictatorial control of the present, they will enjoy vitalized human rights.

From this point of view too, what human rights do we presently have over our bodies?

Responsibility for this article lies solely with the author, and not the editorial office of the ‘Eastern Snow Mountain’ (*Shardungri*) or any individual editor (although it is in keeping with the magazine’s long-standing aims). May the ‘Eastern Snow Mountain’ be more popular than ever before! (July 2008).

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Monks at a monastery in Amdo, northern Tibet, raising the banned Tibetan flag during protests in March 2008.

## THE STORY OF JAKPALO'S DEATH AFTER TORTURE

*"Shikalo [Jakpalo] a man in his forties from Charo Xiang in Ngaba county, was beaten to death on false charges. His precious life has fizzled out. This father and cornerstone of his household leaves behind him a widow and [five] orphans, weeping inside. This life-demeaning disaster has ruined life for one household."*

*Extract from The Eastern Snow Mountain (Shardungri),  
a collection of writings from the Tibetan area of Amdo*

On May 26, 2008, two local township leaders in Charo township, Ngaba (Chinese: Aba), Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Amdo) came to tell the family of 45-year old nomad Paltsal Kyab, also known as Jakpalo, that he was dead. Although officials said that he had died "of natural causes" while being held in custody following a protest in the area on March 17, 2008, when the body was released to the family there were clear signs of torture and brutal beatings.

Paltsal Kyab's younger brother, Kalsang, who now lives in exile, said that according to witnesses who saw his body, "The whole front of his body was completely bruised blue and covered with blisters from burns. His whole back was also covered in bruises, and there was not even a tiny spot of natural skin tone on his back and front torso. His arms were also severely bruised with clumps of hardened blood."

Paltsal Kyab, who was married with five children, was taken into custody following a peaceful demonstration that occurred in Charo on March 17, 2008. According to anecdotal accounts from the area given to Paltsal Kyab's brother, around 100 young Tibetans held a protest on the main street "because they believed that the United Nations and foreign media chose not to listen to and see the truth in Tibet." The Tibetans began to talk about burning a building down. According to his brother, Paltsal Kyab told the Tibetans that it was important not to take this action, saying: "We Tibetans must follow His Holiness the Dalai Lama's non-violent path. Our only weapon is our truth. The building belongs to the government, but several Tibetan and Chinese families are living in there." At least three people in a building nearby testified to police that Paltsal Kyab had persuaded the Tibetans not to be violent, according to Kalsang.

After the incident, according to his friends, Paltsal talked about going to the police station to tell officers that he had not committed any violation such as destroying

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buildings or cars, or harming anyone. But he heard from his friends that his name was already on the wanted list, and that individuals who were detained were being badly beaten. Paltsal went to see a relative who was ill out of town.

On April 9 last year, at around midnight, 11 police raided Paltsal's home, while a truckload of armed soldiers waited outside. According to reports from the family, one police officer pointed a gun at the head of Paltsal's 14 year old son and asked him where his father was. His son replied that his father had gone to see his relative who was ill. Paltsal's wife was then dragged out of her room and asked the same question. She gave the same answer as her son, but gave a different name of the relative. Because they had given different names, the police claimed that they were lying, and Paltsal's son was taken into custody. On arrival at the police station the teenager was slapped, kicked and punched for hours during interrogation. He was released the next day.

When Paltsal was told about his son, he came home immediately. Kalsang said: "Our family had heard that the Chinese government says that people involved in protest must surrender voluntarily and that people who did so would be treated leniently, as opposed to people who are seized by police. Paltsal's relatives told him that he was a father of five children so that it wouldn't be possible for him to hide from police throughout his life. Paltsal also knew that his son had been beaten and interrogated. So he decided to surrender voluntarily."

On April 17 or 18, 2008, Paltsal went to the local police station and gave himself up. He was held there for two weeks and then transferred to a detention center in Ngaba on April 27, 2008. The family heard nothing about his condition or whereabouts until May 26, 2008, when two local township leaders came to Paltsal's home to inform his wife and children of his death.

Paltsal's family members were allowed to collect his body from the detention center. Kalsang says: "Upon arrival, the relatives were told by the Ngaba police that the cause of his death was sickness, not torture. They also allegedly claimed that they had taken him to a hospital twice because of his kidney and stomach problems. But his relatives said that when Paltsal went to the police station to surrender he was a normal healthy man with no history of any major health problems. The police officers never acknowledged the cause of death as torture but they immediately started to offer money to the family. The family was not allowed to take photos of his body or tell anyone anything about what had happened."

Kalsang said that he was later informed by various sources that his elder brother had been very badly tortured in custody. Family members asked for permission to take

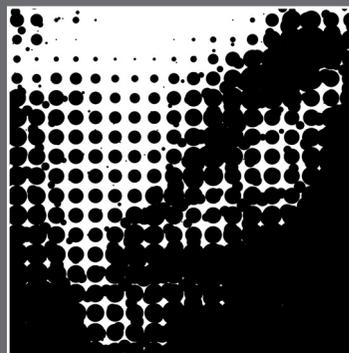
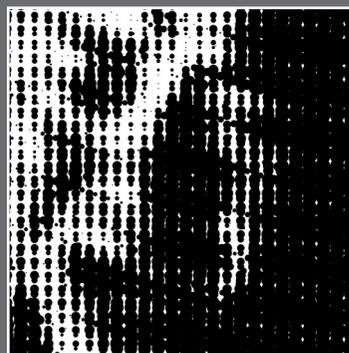
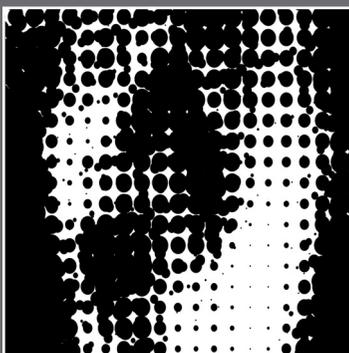
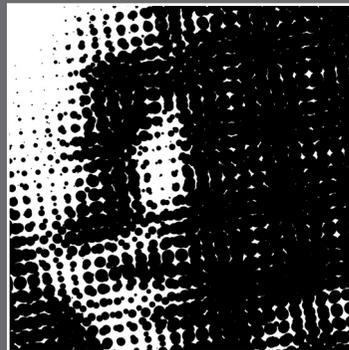
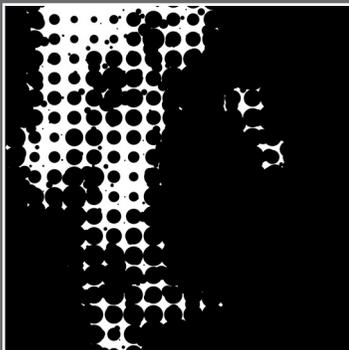
his body to Kirti monastery in Ngaba. It is important in Tibetan culture for prayers to be said for a person immediately after his death in order to help ensure a peaceful transition. But the army refused permission. Kalsang said: "They even could not take Paltsal's body to Kirti monastery to pray for Paltsal's soul."

Paltsal was given a traditional sky burial, with police officers present, including two senior Tibetan police officers. Kalsang said: "It was obvious from the condition of Paltsal's body that he had suffered an agonizing and painful death due to severe torture, not of natural causes." Those preparing his body for burial, which involves dismemberment, told the family that there was severe damage to his internal organs, including his small intestines, gall-bladder and kidneys.

A Tibetan writer from Ngaba, the Tibetan area of Amdo, wrote anonymously about Paltsal's death in a collection of writings called *Shardungri, or Eastern Snow Mountain*. The article, entitled, 'What human rights do we have over our bodies?' was written by a writer who calls himself Nyen, 'The Wild One', from Sichuan. He writes: "To say that someone has been beaten to death, isn't this something that should never have to be said in this day and age? To say that someone has been beaten to death is something that recalls the terror of the 'Democratic Reform' era [of the late '50s/ early '60s]. Generally speaking, no-one enjoys 'vengeance' or continuing 'old feuds'. But for the young generation, the murder of their father leaves an impression that cannot be forgotten as long as they live. That is the certain outcome of repression, beating and killing. We have no wish for 'revenge' or 'feuds'. We call for reaching a time in which the younger generation will have no 'revenge' to seek or 'feuds' to settle. The young generation has not come into this world for revenge or to settle feuds, but to see the spectacle of a brighter tomorrow, to seek refuge in a place enjoying the bright spring of freedom, democracy and equality." (Translated into English by ICT. The full article is published in the report 'A Great Mountain Burned by Fire: China's Crackdown in Tibet', <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-press-releases/a-great-mountain...>).

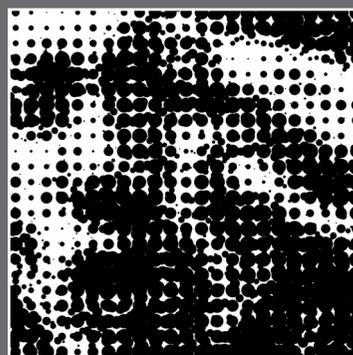
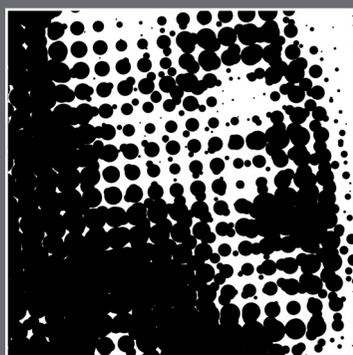
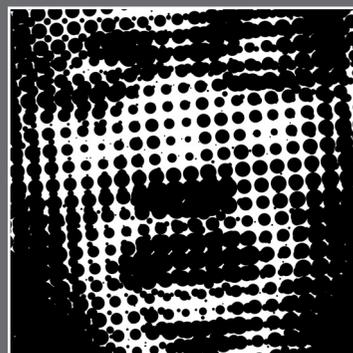
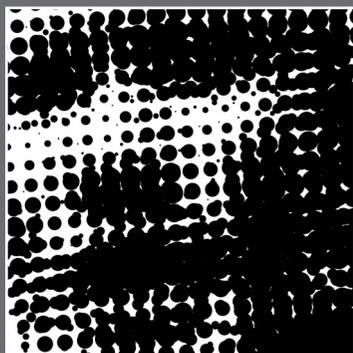
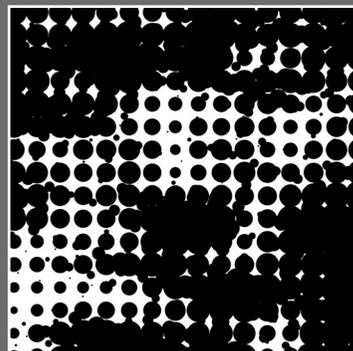
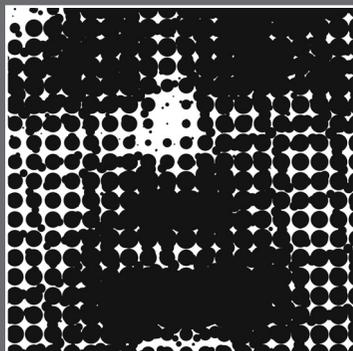
LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

## SIGNS FROM TIBET



Signs from Tibet - a series of images by the artist Lobsang Gyatso based on the faces of monks who protested in front of visiting western journalists at the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa and at Labrang monastery in Amdo. More of Lobsang Gyatso's work can be seen at [www.gyatsostudio.com](http://www.gyatsostudio.com). Gyatso was born in Tibet and is a founder of the Mechak School of Contemporary Art ([http://www.mechak.org/main\\_page.html](http://www.mechak.org/main_page.html)). Gyatso was inspired to create Signs from Tibet after a group of monks boldly spoke out to journalists on a tightly controlled media trip to the Jokhang Temple in central Lhasa on March 28, 2008. Images of the young monks gathering around press and calling for Tibetan freedom and in support of the Dalai Lama, with one monk breaking down in tears, were broadcast all over the world on international networks. The monks' peaceful protest shattered the authorities' plans to convey an image that the situation in Lhasa was under

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control after recent demonstrations and rioting, which Beijing says was instigated by the Dalai Lama. Just over a week later, on April 9, 2008, a group of monks from Labrang Monastery (Chinese: Xiahe) in Gansu province staged a protest in front of a state-organized media tour for foreign and Chinese journalists. A group of 15 monks burst into the courtyard where around 20 Chinese and foreign journalists were assembled and spoke about having no human rights, and about the Dalai Lama returning to Tibet. Several of the monks carried large paper Tibetan flags. The monks were very emotional, and one of them was crying. They said that they were not asking for Tibetan independence, but for human rights, and that they had no human rights now. Several of the monks managed to escape into exile but others were beaten and tortured.

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## WHAT IS THIS? LET THAT MOMENT BECOME ETERNAL!

### New Works by the Tibetan Artist Losang Gyatso

by Woenser

Inspired by a set of images by leading Tibetan artist Losang Gyatso, Woenser wrote the following article about two bold protests by monks from the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, and Labrang monastery in Amdo. These two groups of monks spoke out about the repression in Tibet to Western journalists on official tours, puncturing Party propaganda and the authorities' attempts to convey an impression of normalcy in Tibet to the outside world. Woenser writes movingly of Gyatso's response to the daring protests and the fate of the monks in the following article, which was published originally in Chinese in Beijing Spring (December 2008) and is translated into English below by Susan Chen. Gyatso's work, entitled *Signs from Tibet*, is reproduced in this volume by kind permission of the artist.

Likely they had known that that moment would appear not only on televisions in many countries but also through the omnipresent internet connections. Let alone other venues, the first 10 pages of a YouTube search for "Jokhang" can lead to at least a score of videos from the footage recorded at that moment. They must have known it. They must have been told in advance that reporters from the foreign media (a couple dozen of them) would arrive at the Jokhang that morning – for the first time in 17 days since the temple was closed on March 10. Everyone was ready. Authorities had assigned some of the most obedient Tibetans to cooperate. Yet, "Those worshippers, they are all cadres in disguise; it's a cheat..." they, those monks at the Jokhang, told the truth at that moment. Apparently, they had been preparing to speak out. Nevertheless, it is impossible that they had not thought of the unpredictable price they would have to pay by doing so. As a result, their participation disclosed the episode which was orchestrated to give the impression that Tibetans are fortunate and free. While rushing out to surround reporters, they desperately yelled: "No, we don't have freedom! The Dalai Lama is innocent..." The reporters who had been invited to tour the tightly controlled Lhasa finally witnessed an act which had a most shocking journalistic effect; in a matter of minutes, the authorities were left with nowhere to hide their intentions behind the show they had wanted to stage. Those shocking moments were said to have lasted about fifteen minutes. I remember clearly the indescribable pain I felt that evening when watching a short segment of those moments on the Internet. I was reminded of this line by Anna Akhmatova – "The heart gives up its blood."

*"I can almost hear their voiceless cries piercing through the Internet; my ears hurt."*

Nevertheless, most likely they did not know that months later, those moments would be recreated by an artist. Although art should be unfettered by boundaries of nation and artists are often not tied to their native place – as deities are not confined by their sex – I would still rather refer to this artist in a more restrictive and somehow assertive manner. He, Losang Gyatso (la – according to the formality of our tradition) is a Tibetan artist. The point here is “Tibet.” Although he now lives Washington, DC, although he has not returned to his native place in the Land of Snows for the past 49 (and soon to be 50) years, he is the Tibetan artist who through his work of art has transformed that moment into six images. He also created another six images to record another moment at Labrang monastery in Amdo, which was as crucial as the one in the Jokhang. These 12 images are all modeled after monks who are recognizably Tibetan and native, and they are a great deal similar to each other. Yet, they are also apparently different. One image overwhelms the beholder more so than the others. I can almost hear their voiceless cries piercing through the Internet; my ears hurt.

Once, during the years of the Yezhov Terror in the Soviet Union, Akhmatova was waiting in a queue to see her son in prison. Another woman who was also in the queue for the same reason whispered in her ear: “Can you describe this?” “Yes, I can,” Akhmatova said. A sad hope crossed her face, and the woman smiled. Later on, Akhmatova had these lines to start the Requiem:

No, not under a foreign heavenly-scope, and  
 Not canopied by foreign wings –  
 I was with my people in those hours  
 There where, unhappily, my people were.

The Soviet era of terror which Akhmatova wrote about is remote to a reader like me. Yet, I have to say that the pain and sorrow there and back then survives because of her poem. Similarly, having exiled myself from my beloved Land of Snows, I want to say that the pain and sorrow there and back then is remembered because of the 12 Tibetan images created / restored by Losang Gyatso.

According to the introduction to the series posted on Losang Gyatso's website, all of the 12 images are adapted from digital videos, manipulated on the computer screen, and then silk screened onto aluminum sheets. Each of them is 18 by 18 inches in size. Aluminum sheets? Would that be a metal which, according to my Google search, is somehow heavy, bright, and sturdy but also soft and malleable? I called an artist in Beijing to ask his opinion. He said that some artists do like to use materials of this sort, mentioning an exhibition he invited me to see last year. In that exhibition, black-and-white photos taken during the 1937 Nanjing Massacre are silk screened on the surface

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of bright stainless steel. Alright, that material is perhaps not the most important element; the artist could have used other materials to express what he had in mind. Nevertheless, I also felt that Losang Gyatso must have thoughtfully decided on using silk screen and aluminum sheets to represent those 12 Tibetan images.

I was not sure whether I had thought too much. After all, I do not know how Losang Gyatso usually goes about his artistic work. Perhaps the artist was used to working on aluminum sheets – just like other artists use canvas for oil painting, cotton cloth for *thangka*, and rice paper for ink painting. Yet, on his website are also his earlier works. They are so colorful and even brighter than mural paintings in monasteries. Because of them, I recall these lines from a poem I wrote a long time ago – “what a beauty, what a beauty, / unspeakable beauty, / beauty beyond imagination, / my past, / our past, / useless beauty, beautiful, beautiful, it’s truly beautiful, / what do I have to give to reclaim that beauty?” To me, these lines explain why I cannot cease loving Losang Gyatso’s paintings – simply because I see in his paintings the disappearing Tibet which he treasures and the Tibet which he describes as having been in his DNA. That Tibet is undoubtedly pleasant to Losang Gyatso’s audience. Yet, to a viewer like me, I feel the same loss which I once tried to capture through those lines of my poem.

*“These images are not comforting to one’s eyes.”*

While first encountering this new Jokhang-Labrang series by Losang Gyatso on his website, I had no idea about when he had started it. The moments in the Jokhang happened on March 27, and what occurred in Labrang took place on April 9. In which case this new series of 12 images, entitled Signs from Tibet, must have been Losang Gyatso’s most recent works. I am surprised by how different these works look to all of his earlier pieces posted on various websites. The new images are so different and abrupt that they look as though they were made by someone else. I have to say, at first glance and when I returned to them later, staring at these images has by no means been a pleasant experience. To put it bluntly, I actually feel very uncomfortable with their visual effect. They are sharp, making one feel dizzy... Moreover, the dense dots that constitute these images are seemingly roaming; the blank and huge black space appears able to engulf you, to drag you down together with it! On the other hand, one only needs a single glimpse to realize the origins of each of these images, let alone that they are all numbered from Jokhang No. 1 to Jokhang No. 6 and then from Labrang No. 1 to Labrang No. 6. The repeated titles are simple and straightforward. I should make it clear that not only I but also many other Tibetans recognize what is in these images. As for others, whether they can see what we see in these images is difficult to decide. I do not mean to be judgmental. It is simply a reality that, without a shared cultural background and particularly without feeling that we have been on the same boat since this March, people can be completely irrelevant to each other.

These images are not comforting to one's eyes. I had to first download them before viewing them in different sizes on my computer screen. I kept shrinking these images. Such a process turned out to be a very overwhelming experience. The scattered dots on the screen would gradually condense into a human face – so passionate and sincere, as if still demanding for attention, your hearing, your respect, and your action to cease suppression. That moment is brought back to life. But when I accidentally keyed in an extra zero, the image in size 100% suddenly became 10 times larger on the screen. I was stunned by this unexpected enlargement, unable to do anything besides stare at the screen saturated with disordered dots and chunks of disturbing black and white. Nothing was left or remained intelligible. Where is that moment? Where is each of those human figures?

Between the reduction and enlargement, between the restored and lost realities, as Yeats said: "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born." And as Yeats also wrote: "For all that is done and said / We know their dream..."

I have to let it be known how much of an affinity I feel with the six Jokhang images. That night while sitting in front of my computer to watch again the short video of that moment, I could not stop weeping. Inside the Jokhang everything was familiar – the mural paintings restored after the Cultural Revolution, paint-cracked doors and windows covered with the smoke of butter lamps and, moreover, the faces of those monks. Nearly every one of them I had met, and I had even had conversations with some of them – although I cannot remember what we had talked about. I had visited the dorm rooms of some of them. Flowers blossomed in front of the window of those rooms, and inside the rooms there were televisions and computers. As a matter of fact, monks in the Jokhang tend to live in good material conditions. They are young; many of them have grown up in the monastery – residing with the older monks who are usually their relatives. Once reaching the age permitted by the government, these young monks start to dress in monastic robes. Some of the young monks who participated in the incident on March 27 were novices from recent years. As I remember, the quota allowed by the government has been about 120 monks at any given time for the Jokhang. Those who escape into exile or decide to withdraw from the monastery are replaced by others on the waiting list for recruitment. Having been so close to them, I was shocked and touched by the action they took on that day, and I later discovered that I had not been alone. Others were similarly moved by them. After all, the Jokhang is like a brand name. Being a monk in the Jokhang is not the same as for other monasteries. The quota guarantees their livelihood from within the state system. Therefore, these monks must have been driven by their courage and belief to come forward; it also suggests the way in which they must have felt to have had no options left to them.

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*“Heavily armed police and soldiers were everywhere on the streets – walking and standing around to ensure they were intimidating and in total control.”*

In August, when Beijing showed off its imperial prosperity through the Olympic Games, I returned to Lhasa via Amdo. The third day when I was there was a Wednesday, the most precious day of the week. Others might not know, but Tibetans all say that Gyalwa Rinpoche (His Holiness the Dalai Lama) was born on Wednesday. What has passed on orally has become custom. Every Wednesday as a form of offering, the smoke from burning juniper leaves is particularly dense in the city, and prayers are more intense. Yet, I had not imagined that after March 14 there would still be many Tibetans coming out on Wednesdays to light the offerings for the One they deeply miss. Heavily armed police and soldiers were everywhere on the streets – walking and standing around to ensure they were intimidating and in total control. Passing through soldiers and their guns, I entered the Jokhang in a rush. I could not recall how many times in these years I had stepped inside the Jokhang as a traveler hurries home. This time, while in a hurry again, I also wanted to know what had happened to those monks after they told the truth to the reporters from the foreign media on March 27.

Next to the gate on the right, several monks whose job is to sell tickets to tourists were sitting around as they usually did in the past. As it happened, they were all the Jokhang’s residential monks who I have known for years. I knew the names of each of them. Surprise was on their face when they saw me, and I had to keep my own emotions at bay. We could only say *“Depo yinpey (Are you all right?)”* to each other and were unable to go on one of our endless chats like we could do in the old days. I was crying and barely remembered what else happened afterwards on that day. Impressions of blood and fire since March came back to me; they made it harder for me to stop crying... Towards Jo Rinpoche, whose face looked heavy and serious, I bowed down deeply three times. I could hear the dull sound of my own forehead touching the hard and cold floor. I was shoulder to shoulder with the crowded pilgrims. I was pushed left, I was pushed right, getting so close that my forehead was reaching the body of Jo Rinpoche in his lotus position: Oh, Jo Rinpoche, dressed with precious stones, wrapped in golden silk, exhaling the fragrance of burning incense, in front of him were mounds of khatas and coins, and also mounds of our tears. And it was right there that I ran into one of the monks who had tearfully shouted in the faces of those foreign reporters, and who is also among the images in Losang Gyatso’s Jokhang series. I knew that he was not a *ku-nyenla* in charge of the butter lamps and burning incense in the main shrine. He emerged all of a sudden, standing next to the *ku-nyenla*, and with his hands folded as if he was offering a prayer to Jo Rinpoche. But... but he was staring at me. I was in shock, staring back at him. I recognized him, but what could I say to him? Surveillance cameras were everywhere and, in the crowd, were also pilgrim-disguised *sopa* (spies). We were watched, high alert

could not help! With tears in his eyes, he stared at me and apparently wanted to say something. But what could we possibly say? We were so close to each other; I could not walk away without asking: “*Depo yinpey?*” He nodded with tears. “*Thukje-chey, thukje-chey* (Thanks, thanks),” I blurted out, and my own face was covered with tears. I could only walk away with my head hanging low. Nevertheless, it is a relief to realize that he remained at the Jokhang. Another monk who I have known for years came to me, at a risk, reminding me: “Aja (Sister), don’t ask anything here, and don’t say anything...” On the second floor in the Jokhang, I ran into another monk. He was another one of those who spoke out during the visit of the foreign reporters that day and he is also among the images of Losang Gyatso la’s Lhasa series. He was with several other young monks. They must also have been there at that moment. He gave me a weak smile – the kind of smile conveyed with a tremble of fear, and the kind of smile one would rather not see. I was unable to utter a word, and I walked away crying. Where were the surveillance cameras? Where were the *sopa*? After all, I saw them in the Jokhang. That was enough.

*“I knew the names of each of them. Surprise was on their face when they saw me, and I had to keep my own emotions at bay. We could only say ‘Depo yinpey’ (Are you all right)?”*

Incidents always involve various parties who, for good or bad, mutually influence each other. In turn, it is the interactions of a given incident’s different participants who keep the incident evolving. Of course, there are also those who are absent from it; and even among those who are at the scene, there are still absentees. And there are also those who, while having not been around physically, are by no means absent. They are the “I” whom Akhmatova describes in “I was with my people in those hours / There where, unhappily, my people were.”

There are different ways to refuse absence. I recall the words from some reading I had before: You assume the existence of darkness in the world. Yet, darkness does not exist. It is up to you to describe the degrees of brightness: twilight, dim light, tender light, sharp light, lightening... Only when you lose light in the spectrum is there nothing left but the absence of light, the darkness.

*“The moment restored in an artistic manner is a renewed representation and an unprecedented interpretation.”*

Interaction is therefore important. It has been such a process of interaction through which I was shocked by the 12 Tibetan images that Losang Gyatso created / restored – as by those crucial moments in the Jokhang and Labrang. Immediately, I downloaded the images from the artist’s website and reposted them on my blog. Concerned at the chance that

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readers of my blog might not understand them or had forgotten those moments, I added reports from foreign media and posted 10 press photos I had downloaded during that intense time. Time has gone by, but those 10 press images are still powerful. The human figures in them are real, locations are real, and what has happened is real. Nevertheless, despite the realism and immediacy of press photography, time changes, circumstances do too, and people tend to forget. In spite of being preserved in the memory of those who were deeply involved, what has happened can swiftly disappear from the horizon. This includes foreign reporters. At the moment when the world was paying attention, they worked hard to seek out any bit of information on current events in Tibet. But their attention has shifted since then. Of course, their presence at those moments remains important. It is because of their presence that those moments actually took place. Otherwise, more such moments could have sunk under the darkness, unknown to the outside world. Fortunately, art is different. The moment restored in an artistic manner is a renewed representation and an unprecedented interpretation. While gaining for those moments the likelihood of eternity, it at least renders it more difficult to forget them.

Upon reposting the 12 Tibetan images by Losang Gyatso on my blog, I found a problem: Jokhang No. 4 and Jokhang No. 5 were nearly identical. I repeatedly compared them, wondering whether the artist might have posted the same image twice. I tried to pass on my concerns. Losang Gyatso quickly responded, saying that it was indeed a mistake but he had already corrected it. I returned to his website to download the new Jokhang No. 4, which looks to have been derived from someone's profile among those press images. I used it to correct the posting in my blog. Surprisingly, three days later on October 9, Losang Gyatso informed me in a message that, based upon one of those news photos in my blog, he had come up with a new piece to replace Jokhang No. 4. I rushed to his website. Yes, the model after whom the newest Jokhang No. 4 is made is exactly the same monk who speechlessly stared at me with his teary eyes (and I stared at him with mine)... Once more, I changed the posting in my blog.

Being able to participate in such an interaction comforts me, particularly because it was not so long before I had written:

"This is my first trip to be back in Lhasa after March 14. More than five months after March 14, once more I see the mountains that surround Lhasa, unique in their Lhasa shape; smell the air which belongs to Lhasa; and hear the accent which has its unique Lhasa rhythm... Oh, I love Lhasa so much. On each of the trips to be back, every aspect of the city touches not only my skin, my flesh, but also deeply my soul! Nevertheless, Lhasa has gradually changed; it has become harder to talk about it. As if I had a toothache, I could not open my mouth because of the ache. I worry that the ache might one day become so severe that I would become completely speechless.

“Oh, please do let me speak; let me pronounce my love for Lhasa. Lhasa is becoming imperfect everyday, Lhasa is being defeated everyday, Lhasa is deteriorating everyday! Let me tell all of this to the world, to my people, to my family, and to myself. But, this is after March 14 when I am finally back in Lhasa; with the pain crushing my heart and my spine, I realize that I had not been here since September last year, I had been absent at the most crucial time. Because I was not here, I have become an ‘other’. Because of my absence, I can only rely on the memory and testimony of those who were in the city back then. While I trust them, while their words are revelatory of covered-up realities, I still feel shameful and that something has been missing. Too much of the entangled feeling and emotion is with me when I am finally back in Lhasa.”

As trivial as my participation in the interaction with Losang Gyatso and his new series is, it matters so much to me, who has until now felt very unsettled. Not being absent is a fortune, a comfort to one’s conscience. It must be the way Losang Gyatso feels to, I ponder. Before, his paintings were so beautiful that I could never absorb them all. Afterwards, these 12 shocking black-and-white images are so different. They are two kinds of participation: one which is in the past and the other in the present. From this perspective, the artist is the lucky one in both the past and the present.

*“Oh, please do let me speak; let me pronounce my love for Lhasa.”*

While I was drafting this article, the interaction continued because my good friend Susan volunteered herself to translate it into English. Susan lives in America and has for years observed and studied contemporary Tibetan culture and society. She met with Losang Gyatso a few days ago, asking why he had decided to call those twelve images Signs from Tibet. Losang Gyatso explained that “signs” in the title of the new series can be just like road signs or those at the intersections to mark turns and dangers which might otherwise be neglected. As for these 12 images, they are derived from a specific time – March 2008 and onwards; when the spring air remained chilly; and in a context which was not constrained to Lhasa but inclusive of Amdo, the rest of U-Tsang, and Kham. The uprising throughout Tibet in its entirety was unprecedented since 1959; while shocking, it also sends a warning sign to the world.

Losang Gyatso further explained his intention behind the new series:

“In forcing the image-making process to be divorced from the emotional and narrative content of the events from which the images are derived, I hope to isolate the power and universality of the images while eliminating the two aspects of the video medium which tend to separate the subject and the viewer: its tendency to confine and distance its images through specificity of time and space, and its quality of not being able to

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separate the subject from its surroundings within the frame, thus diffusing the story with ambiguities and aesthetic concerns.”

*“It has only been a little bit longer than six months since the protest on March 27 but the official in charge of all the monasteries in the TAR has already begun to deny that moment.”*

Yes, the conversion of images produced for their journalistic purpose into artistic expression is arguably a process to deflect the restraints of media. Nevertheless, since these artistic images are, through the way in which they are titled, made to be associated with the Jokhang and Labrang, they bring me back to not only the most recent moment but also many other heroic yet sad events in the past. There is something extra in these two location names. If the artist had left the individual pieces of the new series to be numbered without them, would his artistic expression remain some form of voiceless silence? On the contrary, because of the location names of the Jokhang and Labrang, the artist’s identity, passion, and position is revealed, and they rouse me to write down the words you are reading...

An interesting report appeared in *The Guardian* on October 1. It regards the interview which its reporter did in Lhasa with Changchup Tsewang, the chief of the Religious Affairs Bureau in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). The newspaper reporter asked the whereabouts of those monks who had interrupted the foreign reporters’ organized tour in March to protest their lack of religious freedom. The incident was a headline in many newspapers around the world. Yet, Mr. Changchup Tsewang promptly denied the incident, insisting that he had never heard of anything like that happening in the Jokhang. Rather, in his words, “Monks in the monastery are very content; they are very appreciative of the policy and the benefits from the government.”

Ah, it has only been a little bit longer than six months since the protest on March 27 but the official in charge of all the monasteries in the TAR has already begun to deny that moment. No doubt that he was lying. But, his lie is so stupid! I cannot but be amazed – “Such a director who holds onto his piggy satisfaction, piggy appreciation! All he wants is the right of a pig to survive.”

On the other hand, lying repeatedly to forge reality is the tactic they are best at. They already arranged a “regretful” monk to give a counter remark to another group of reporters invited from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan on June 3. The reporters were told that the monk’s name is Logya, which, as I remember, is the name of one of the monks who protested at that crucial moment in the Jokhang on March 27. According to the reports filed after the June 3 visit, Logya said that he had been misled by rumors

which he later regretfully realized as untrue. Those reports also mention that the monk once became very emotional, keeping his head down during the interview. Upon reading such descriptions, I feel a knife cutting through my heart. [...]

It's too late, and suppression remains. Were they – I mean the bureau director and other big and small officials with different interests and ethnic affiliations – a different kind of participant in the entire incident in 2008? Isn't it the most barbaric violence that they helped to generate? Shouldn't they also be documented for future reference? Shouldn't they and their lies be screen printed on aluminum sheets for the world to see? Yet, what use is there in ridiculing them? After all, their images would be too much like those of sidekicks – the kind who are absolutely shameless.

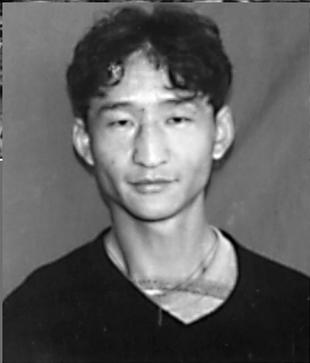
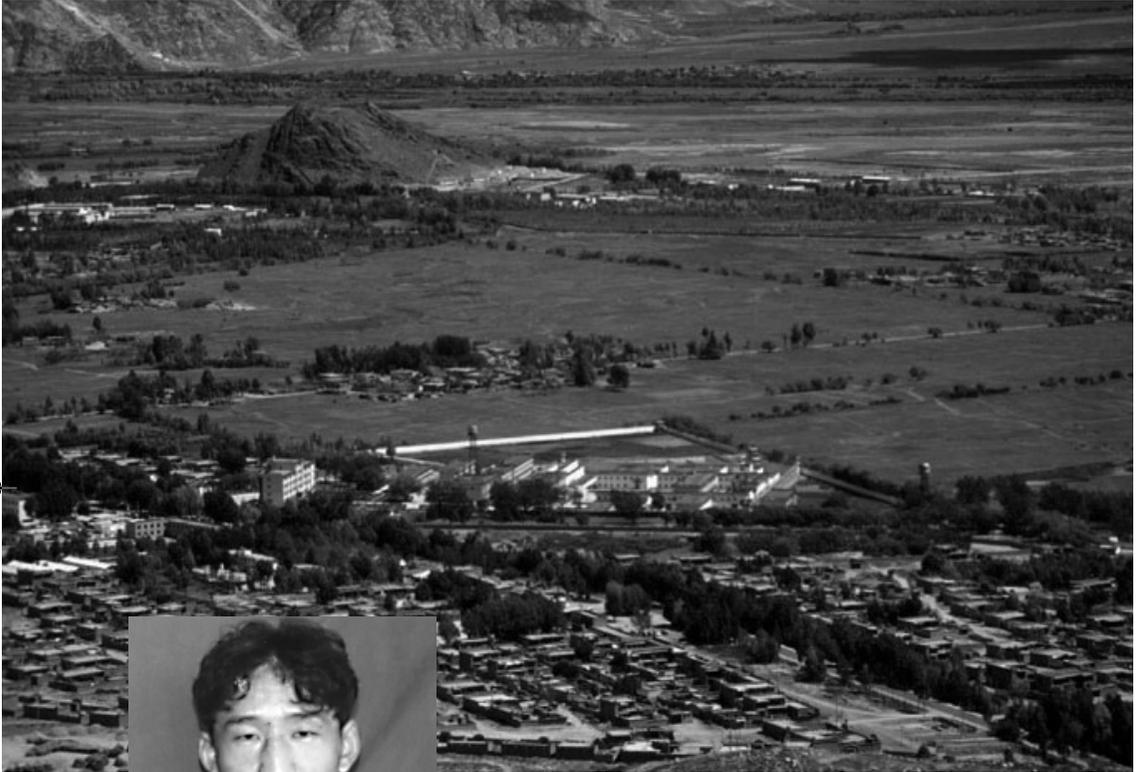
I wish to deny all of what has happened. Yet, no matter how much I want to deny, nothing is going to be the same, because “all changed, changed utterly: / a terrible beauty is born [...] for all that is done and said / We know their dream....” The “they” here have to be both the monks in the Jokhang and Labrang and, modeled after them, the 12 Tibetan images that Losang Gyatso has recreated; it is the dream of these monks which is also ours.

The news of a surprising gift came when I was about to finish this writing: Losang Gyatso decided to send me a signed piece of the Jokhang No. 4! What a precious gift! I am moved and overjoyed, pondering how amazing such a performance art it is that Jokhang No. 4 is going to be forwarded through modern transportation from America, the remote *Rawang Lhungpa* (Land of Freedom) to Tibetans, to my guest dwelling in Beijing, the capital of the seemingly immense empire and the place of my exile! Moreover, I hope that I will in the near future be able to return to Lhasa again with Jokhang No. 4. Returning to the Jokhang in the karmic cycle and the Jokhang as a part of impermanence... Oh, what does all of this mean! What do I have to give to reclaim its beauty?

October 3 to November 4, 2008 in Beijing

Translator's note: Woesser cites lines from a Chinese translation of Anna Akhmatova's Requiem. The English quotations herein are all from Anna Akhmatova Selected Poems translated by D. M. Thomas (New York: Penguin Books, 1976). Woesser also cites from a Chinese translation of Easter, 1916 by William B. Yeats. The English quotation used here can be found at <http://www.online-literature.com/yeats/779>.

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Chushur (Chinese: Qushui) prison, surrounded by the wall in the center of this image. Chushur prison southwest of Lhasa holds many known Tibetan political prisoners, including the writer Dolma Kyab, pictured, detained in 2005 and sentenced to 10½ years in prison.

## **DOLMA KYAB: AUTHOR SENTENCED TO TEN AND A HALF YEARS IN PRISON**

*"It is only when we understand ourselves that we then have the power to understand this land that belongs to us."*

Young Tibetan writer Dolma Kyab is serving ten and a half years in prison after writing a book, 'The Restless Himalayas', expressing his views on Tibetan culture, the future for young Tibetans, and the environment.

Dolma Kyab, who is in his early thirties and worked as a teacher, was arrested in March 2005 and is believed to be held in Qushui high-security prison just outside Lhasa, Tibet. In a letter smuggled out of prison that reached friends in exile, Dolma Kyab said that the reason for his conviction was his unpublished book, in which he writes about Tibetan geography, history and religion. He writes: "They [Chinese] think that what I wrote about nature and geography was also connected to Tibetan independence...this is the main reason of my conviction, but according to Chinese law, the book alone would not justify such a sentence. So they announced that I am guilty of the crime of espionage."

Dolma Kyab, who is from the eastern Tibetan area of Amdo (Haibei, Qinghai) is a highly educated intellectual with a Masters degree who felt more comfortable writing in Chinese than Tibetan, and also knew Japanese, according to friends. He studied history and geography at Qinghai Normal University and graduated in 1999, doing postgraduate studies at Beijing University until 2002. The manuscript of his book, which was obtained by ICT, is mostly written by hand in neat Chinese characters.

Dolma Kyab writes in philosophical terms about the concept of Tibetan identity and sovereignty, and the Tibetan people's wish for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. He explores the relationship between Chinese and Tibetans, saying that the reason for the 'political burden' suffered by Tibetans, is the way in which the Chinese "impose their way of thinking onto Tibetans", thus "destroying the concept the Tibetans have of themselves".

The manuscript also refers to Chinese and Tibetan friends who are dear to him – his friends say that he had strong friendships with young Chinese intellectuals as well as Tibetans. Seven leading Chinese and Tibetan writers, both in China and in exile, distributed a letter to humanitarian organizations worldwide

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expressing their concern and calling for Dolma Kyab's immediate release.

A young Tibetan man who served a term in the same prison as Dolma Kyab, Qushui (Chushur), south-west of Lhasa, said that they met and talked in late 2007, one night in a prison cell, after the Tibetan recognised him. The Tibetan source told ICT: "We talked about why he was arrested and he said that he was arrested for publishing a book. He said that he left the book with someone from his hometown in Lhasa thinking that it was not safe to keep the book with him. But later after he was arrested and in the interrogation room, when the police was asking about his book, he did not admit it, but was shocked when the police showed him a copy of his own book ...that was how he was arrested. He kept on saying that he never thought that he did anything that goes against the law of the government and he would never admit all the allegations against him."

When asked about his health, the former Tibetan prisoner said: "He was very thin, and he could not eat much, he could only eat small Tingmo [Tibetan steamed dumplings] every day - he said that he would have stomach pains if he ate rice. Mentally he is still very strong, but his memory has become very bad, he could not remember things well. He would forget things all the time." After about two days in the same cell, the two Tibetan prisoners were separated because guards were concerned about their conversation. At Qushui Prison, which has a strict and rigorous regime, there are surveillance cameras in every cell.

Just over a week after protests broke out in Lhasa on March 10, and violent rioting on March 14, armed police with anti-riot shields arrived at Qushui. The same Tibetan former prisoner said that at one point on this day, March 20, Dolma Kyab seems to have been taken away, and he did not see him again. It is not known if Dolma Kyab was transferred to another prison or is still in Qushui in a different cell-block.

The following extracts from Dolma Kyab's manuscript, *The Restless Himalayas*, are published below for the first time in English. In these extracts, Dolma Kyab writes almost prophetically about the difficulties that the Chinese government will face in controlling Tibet due to the strength of Tibetan identity and of a new generation of young Tibetans (the protests since March 2008 involved many schoolchildren and teenagers, with some even initiating and leading protests themselves). Dolma Kyab writes about the importance of non-violence and dialogue as tools to resolve the Tibetan situation and also the importance of unity of the Tibetan people from the traditional "three regions" of Tibet, U-Tsang (approximating today's Tibet Autonomous Region), Kham and Amdo, now absorbed into the Chinese areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and Gansu.

## The Restless Himalayas

It should be known that understanding the realm and range of Tibet and understanding that Tibet was formerly a viable independent nation before being colonized by China is of great benefit to all Tibetan people in understanding ourselves. In the world famous epic (Tibetan poem) *King Gesar* there is the famous axiom "If I know not myself, how can I know this land?" Therefore, it is only when we understand ourselves that we then have the power to understand this land that belongs to us. In fact, such an understanding is a great unifying force behind a spirit of rejuvenation. It pushes us a step further towards understanding ourselves, and initiates an understanding of the world. And as such our hopes will no more be dreams.

I remember when China's Mr. Deng Xiaoping said to a western leader "There are people who want to split Tibet from China, to take Tibet away, but I don't think they are able." We were so simple in those days, and we too firmly believed that there was no one to take Tibet away. But today, my generation of Tibetans who have grown up in a colony firmly believe in another truth, that Tibet will always belong to Tibetans; and if China believes an 'ability' is needed to take Tibet away then our generation of Tibetans has that ability and then our next generation will have that ability too. Tibetans believe that there are no tigers in this world that cannot be slain, only people who dare not slay them.

We Tibetans are rallying our strength with every passing generation, and even with their guns the Chinese government won't be able to deal with us. It is the wish of we Tibetans that both parties will wisely choose dialogue, and that too is the wish of the Chinese government and people. The key to this beautiful peaceful wish lies with the Chinese government, and not with us, the children of this colony.

Within the concept of the Tibetan realm of which we speak, the existence of any concepts of Tibet's history and geography and concepts of plans for future undertakings on Tibet must be expressed in such a way as to completely satisfy doubting Tibetans as well as Chinese people who accept nothing about Tibet. This is our duty as Tibetans, while the supporters of mass actions are responsible for an unattainable burden of proof. In particular, a spirit of unity – an attitude of being able to conquer everything that ails us – does not help if we are passive. A far more welcome and greater undertaking is being able to see more clearly a correct strategy.

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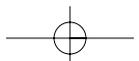
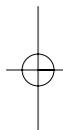
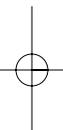
The importance of unity [therefore] outweighs all other current duties and decides our future missions. No matter whether U-Tsangpas of Tibet [central Tibet], roughly approximate to the Tibet Autonomous Region, or Khampas or Amdowans of Tibet [the eastern Tibetan areas of Kham and Amdo – Tibetan areas are now recognised by the authorities as ‘Tibetan autonomous’ and incorporated into Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan and Gansu provinces], a far-sighted strategic view is needed to staunch the disunity between us. [Traditionally there have been divisions and conflict between Tibetans of the three regions]. With resolve and bravery, and even with principles of steel, it must be understood why unity is so essential. Cohesion is unity, and unity is success! This is such a self-evident truth!

But Tibetans must remember, this truth was not created by means of self-pity or mutual sympathy. If Tibetans became a people of self-pity and mutual sympathy, our unity would never be enough to get started and the trend would once again be towards disunity. And therefore our unity must have iron discipline, and it must be the most fundamental guarantee of our conviction. Going from strength to strength is the outcome of unity upon unity, which is an outlook that no one in their right mind could oppose. In order to affirm the correctness of this outlook, we again shall note that if a married couple is lacking harmony, but if one sympathizes with the other or has pity for a child, and therefore decides to become more harmonious and to strengthen the unity of their lives together, it would be pointless. The couple would be unable to live together and the family would eventually fall apart.

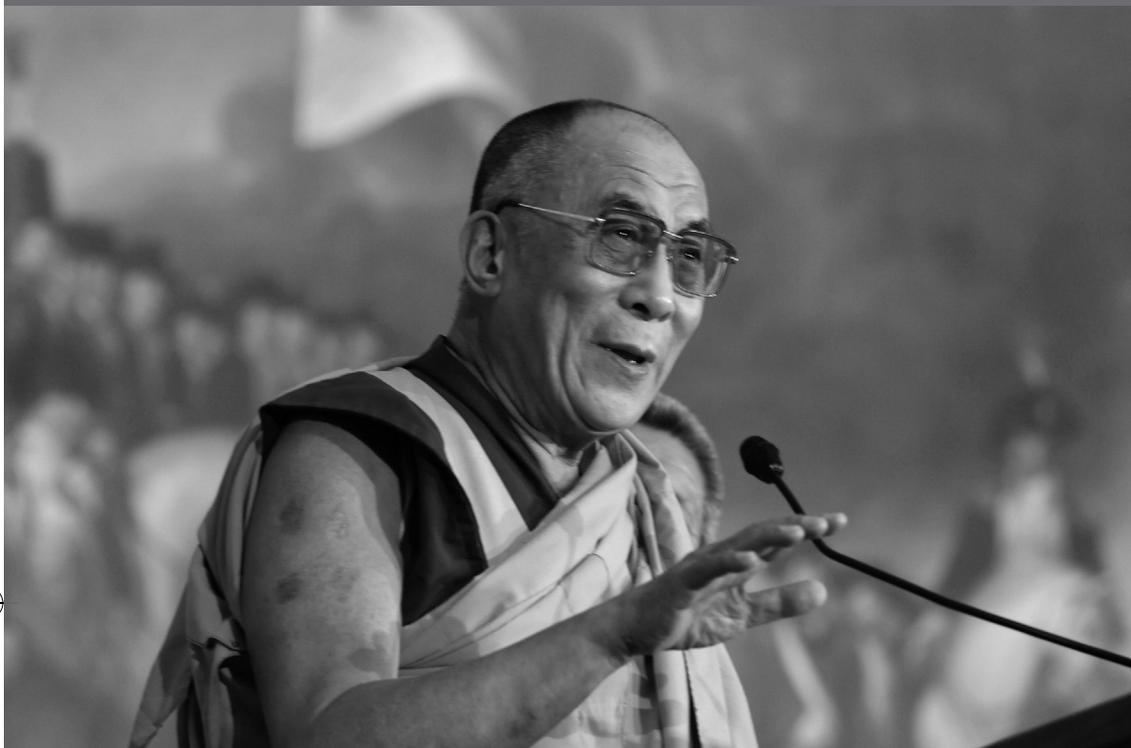
But if a couple jointly realize what the reasons are for disharmony in the family then it can be a moral lesson to limit the losses and failings caused to the other party. Both sides will continually improve on their shortcomings, and the family will inevitably become more harmonious and prosperous. Although this is only a minor example, it nevertheless closely approximates an indispensable faith in the family within human society, or an important constituent part of society. There are those who think that problems of division within a family can only be resolved through mutual love and understanding. But I can tell you, a family that relies solely on that method still wouldn't be stable. At the very least you need the understanding of love and principles of iron, otherwise I believe that the understanding of love exists everywhere, and people could casually choose their love from anywhere and our family will be very short-lived. To put it another way, duty without love is not a healthy family.



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET



LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET



The Dalai Lama speaking at the US Capitol Rotunda, where he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the United States' highest civilian honor, on October 17, 2007. (Photo: Sonam Zoksang/ICT)



Wang Lixiong

## AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE DALAI LAMA

*By Wang Lixiong*

Wang Lixiong is a prolific and outspoken Chinese political commentator with a particular interest in the history and culture of non-Han peoples within the People's Republic of China. Married to the writer Woese, Wang has written extensively on Tibet and the Uyghur people of Xinjiang, and he was instrumental in drafting and then disseminating a petition in March 2008 among Chinese intellectual circles calling for restraint and sensitivity in the official response to protests across Tibet. The petition "Twelve Suggestions for Dealing with the Tibetan Situation" was signed by several hundred of China's most prominent intellectuals and dissidents.

Similarly, he also drafted and disseminated a petition calling for the release of a Uyghur scholar, Ilham Tohti, who was detained in the immediate wake of protests and riots in Urumchi, the regional capital of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in July 2009.

In this piece written for Radio Free Asia (RFA) and translated by ICT from Chinese, Wang Lixiong recounts a conversation he had with the Dalai Lama during a visit to the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala in July, 2009.

On June 25, 2009, I met the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. During the course of his talks he once again stressed that he is not looking for independence, explaining it like this: "Frankly speaking, I'm not actually seeking independence. It's not that I'm against it, or that there's no way of expressing its acceptability, but from the point of view of benefits to Tibet, non-independence is beneficial to Tibet. Spiritually, Tibet is very rich but it is relatively lacking materially. Staying within China would I think be beneficial to raising the levels of Tibet's material construction and the material lives of the Tibetan people. I have expressed this point before."

From another aspect, it can be seen that many countries were originally not independent then later became independent, but conditions in the country did not change and there were no changes in people's lives. Conversely, if it brings ever more conflict and disaster, what does independence such as that mean?

Some countries that have split into different countries have paid a price of blood, and thereby become enemies. They put great amounts of wealth into their military to

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defend themselves against each other and even go to war. And what good is that to the people of both countries? Some small independent countries face many many problems which they must rely on themselves alone to resolve. In my opinion, it would be better to be in a big family with mutual help and working as one. This is much better for one's own people.

The problem is that it should truly be a big family. China's help for Tibet at the moment is only external – it is merely building a home, but one cannot rely solely on a roof and enough to eat to satisfy one's internal world. Most importantly for Tibetan people's hearts is their religious faith, but if you look at the fate of Tenzin Delek [Rinpoche, a lama who is serving life imprisonment on trumped-up charges] then you will see the kind of repression that religion in Tibet is under. A doctor who works in Tibet came to see me, and he has a high income and a not bad material life, but every time he thinks about the fate of the Tibetan people and the repression of their hearts, he'd look at me and cry. If the inner world of people's hearts is not satisfied, problems will never be solved.

A few days ago, a Chinese scholar came to see me and said that the seeds of the incidents that happened in Tibetan areas last year were planted in 1959. Another elder who had come from Amdo explained that the incident last year was an explosion of dissatisfaction that had build up within several generations of Tibetans. The "Gongmeng report" by Chinese civic personages said that the main reason for the incidents happening last year was that China's internal policies are not rational. And it's said that several Chinese officials are thinking along these same lines.

I sometimes joke that the Tibet question was not created by us, but by uninvited guests. But if that guest's home were to become democratic, then the guest would accordingly become reasonable and no longer treat us high-handedly, and would instead help us, and we would no longer be unwilling to receive them. And even though they had not been invited, we could still jointly create a big family.

July 2009, Dharamsala.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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Fortunate Events. The cover of one of Jamyang Kyi's recent CDs.

## A SUCCESSION OF TORTURES: THE DETENTION DIARY OF JAMYANG KYI

*“They constantly tried to use various methods to make me betray others... Each interrogation session aroused a different kind of fear in me. One day in the middle of an interrogation, I thought instead of enduring this, it would be better to be killed by a single bullet.”*

Jamyang Kyi, a Tibetan writer, singer and broadcaster, was detained by the Public Security Bureau in Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai, on April 1, 2008, and accused of sending text messages about the protests in Tibet to friends. Jamyang Kyi, who is in her early forties and worked for worked for 22 years as a news presenter and journalist at the Tibetan-language section of the Qinghai province television station, is one of the best-known and most influential figures to be detained in the aftermath of the protests from March 2008. The website High Peaks Pure Earth reported: “Since the 1990s, Jamyang Kyi devoted more time to her true passion – music. She became a popular singer and produced a CD entitled Prayer and two VCDs, Distant Lover, Karma and her latest VCD, Fortunate Events. Even during her incarceration one of the interrogators confessed to liking her music.” Jamyang Kyi was released after payment of a large fine, and began to post accounts of her experience on her blog. The following extracts from a powerful account of her experience under interrogation are translated from the original Tibetan by ICT and the website High Peaks Pure Earth.

One

I was still lying in bed looking at a book on women’s rights when the leader Sonam Dorje called telling me to hurry to the office because something was up. I got straight out of bed, put on my dark red skirt and reddish padded jacket, washed my face and brushed my teeth and was about to leave without taking breakfast when my niece told me that the tea was ready. I told her to prepare vegetables for a stew at midday and slipped off to the office. On the way, I wondered what it could be about, was it the unfinished sections of the series being produced? It was a little before 10.30 on the morning of April 1, 2008.

In the courtyard of the four storey office building I met the section chief Pendrup. He told me that my colleague Tsechuk Tar had the key to my locker, and then went

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outside. When I got to the leader's office there were three men and a woman, and on seeing me, one of the men asked me if I was Jamyang Kyi, and showed himself to be the leader. He got up and said: "We are from the west city branch police team. There is a matter we are investigating. You must come with us."

None of them wore police uniforms. Not knowing what it was about, I asked them what they thought I had done, and picked up a paper bearing a red stamp from the desk. I looked at it, but I was too panicked to see what it said. The leader said nothing. At that point, I realised that this matter did not augur well.

Once my colleague confirmed that he had my keys, I went straight to the production office, and while getting my keys called my husband. He immediately asked which police department it was. At that moment, two of the police hurried over saying that phone calls were not allowed. "You can come back when the questioning is over", they said. "I need to tell my husband to pick up our daughter from the nursery", I said, staying on the phone, but before I could say three words or take three steps they took me down in the lift and out into the courtyard. There was a man sitting in a car. I think he must be the 'gatekeeper' for our office. The fat policeman, the main one with me, asked him how he was doing, and then the two men, the woman and myself got into an ordinary Santana with no police markings, and drove straight to the west city police office. In the car, they chatted and asked me about myself and my family.

They took me up by lift and stairs into a big 39-storey office building, the offices of the State Security department. They sat me down in one of a pair of padded chairs. [...]

The questioning started at 11 o'clock that day. They said first of all that the order to detain me had come from Beijing, and the main point was that I had informed others by telephone of the Lhasa incident, the protest by the Northwest Nationalities University students, and the chaotic incidents in Tibet. All of this is illegal, they said. Those incidents were half a month back, and I could not exactly remember what I had said on the telephone, so there was no way I could admit to this. Three or four police continued to question me about it, and finally went off by early afternoon. [...]

[The fat policeman] asked me what I thought about the beating, smashing, looting and burning incident in Lhasa. I said he should ask those who were involved. I wasn't there, so it's hard for me to say. It's like if two people hit each other. If I was not there, it would be hard to know who was to blame.

"Haven't you seen the TV pictures of Tibetans committing acts of violence?"

“In general, I do not like violence at all, but this is the disposition of most Tibetans. When I see them engaging in violence, I wonder if it is because they have inexpressible grievances,” I explained in trepidation. “Moreover, I have worked in TV for many years and know a bit about TV editing. Some of the pictures from the Lhasa incident are accurate, but the TV doesn’t say anything about the causes or the nature of the dispute, it just shows images of beating, smashing, looting and burning.”

Ignoring what I had said, they insisted: “Under the special policy of the government, Tibet has undergone transformational development, and the construction goes on with massive infusions of funding every year. Official salaries are much higher than in other provinces. How can they be so ungrateful?”

“I can only speak for myself, not for all Tibetans, but it is a hard question to answer. Anyway, I found the incident saddening, because as a Tibetan, I cannot bear to see other Tibetans losing their lives in such a way. Like throwing an egg at a rock, it is the Tibetans themselves who will be the ultimate losers.”

“One of my big worries now is that the exclusive focus by the official media channels on beating, smashing, looting and burning in their coverage of the Lhasa events will create a serious antagonism between ordinary Chinese and Tibetan people,” I told them. “In my own case, while I may have critical views about the operation of the system and the government, I have no such views about ordinary Chinese people. I think most Tibetans feel the same. I have worked in Xining for 20 years, and I have never had any arguments with Chinese people over small things. I don’t know the objective of endlessly presenting the event in that way, and it is hard to say yet what the outcome will be.”

The elder policeman taking notes said “We think you and your husband translated writings from foreign websites into Tibetan, distributed them, and their dissemination had a bad influence.”

I replied “In the first place, my husband and I have no time to do translation. Tibetans abroad have access to much better, real news. For the ordinary people, they would not know whether such writings were something to eat or something to drink. Around here, those who want to read them can read them, and if I were to pass them on to those who don’t want to read them, I could get myself handed in. So I think your suspicion is excessive.” [...]

That night two policewomen minded me. I said that my husband didn’t know I was being kept there and would be worried. The younger one told me: “This is the perfect

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opportunity to test your husband.” I had no mind to listen to their prattle, but I said: “My husband is not the kind of man you think.”

“Nine men out of ten like other women, and for the one who doesn’t, it’s only because of lack of opportunity,” she said, advising that no man in this world is to be trusted. I don’t find that view justified. That night she slept in the inner room and I slept on the sofa. The younger woman slept on another sofa and watched TV half the night, leaving the light on, so I didn’t sleep well.

When the sun rose on the sixth day, two more policewomen came saying they had brought breakfast. By that time I had stopped taking meals. Having nothing else to do, I watched TV all morning. They were showing a South Korean TV love story drama. I was feeling sad and cried a lot. The woman who had softly urged me to eat the previous night saw this and told me: “You have such a sensitive mind. You can cry just from seeing a TV show?” In fact, no one knew it, but during those days my eyes were never dry. That policewoman had graduated from the Qinghai Nationalities Institute, and two of her close girlfriends were Tibetan. She told me that Tibetans were honest and moral and would do anything to help a friend. I found these words even more gratifying: to speak in such terms at a time when Tibetans were being seen as demons, and in an environment like that was unexpected.

A little before midday, six or seven policeman came and the room became busy. Family-name Wang had the policewomen gather up my scattered belongings. “Put your shoes on and get ready,” he told me. As soon as I had put on my shoes, he put a black hood over my head and pulled it down. I couldn’t see a thing, and he got two policewomen to guide me on either side. I walked with them, taking slow steps, and went down in the lift. I walked to the rhythm of their unequal steps and the pounding of my heart. After we came out of the gateway I felt them put me into a vehicle used to transport prisoners, and it started moving. With my face covered, it was difficult to breathe. I pressed my hands together tight, my palms were sweating. I wondered where they were taking me. In foreign films, they put black blindfolds on criminals before they are to be executed, and at that terrifying prospect I involuntarily shuddered. After some time like that, the vehicle stopped and they took me out of the vehicle. We went through two doorways and into a room. Two women lifted me on each side into a chair. Someone took off my hood and tossed it on top of a tall dresser. With a yellow padlock he locked me into the chair, put the key in his pocket, and went out, leaving me staring wide eyed at the chair, raven-black.

They call that chair the “interrogation chair.” I was 40 years old, but I had never even heard of the government using special lockdown chairs. Later someone told me that

prisoners call it the “wild tiger chair.” I guess it was called that by someone with experience. Seeing it for the first time on the afternoon of April 5 in the Xihu hotel, I confronted an inexpressible sense of fear. Thinking that I might not get to see it again, to memorise the name of that chair I asked the gentle policewoman about it twice, and she, seeing that I might be worried about being locked into it, indicated that it was not intended for me. For my part, I thought that it should not be for anyone but a hardened criminal, and it never occurred to me that I would be locked in there for 13 days (on and off).

The chair was higher and bulkier than a normal chair, and made of metal. The usual name was “interrogation chair”, but it was actually both a chair and a table, combining two functions in one. The table had two levels, a wooden surface on top, and underneath a long steel tube, the length of the whole table. On both ends of that steel tube were two raised smaller steel tubes affixed to the two inner edges of the table. A person seated in the chair could see that the inner edge of the table on the left side is fitted to the front of the left side of the chair with hinges. On those hinges, the table top can open like a door from right to left, and from left to right. Being made in such a way it is a table, but also the bar for locking the chair. And once the bar is in place it can be locked closed with a padlock through a metal loop on the right. When a person is seated in the chair, the lower steel tube is aligned exactly with the belt of one’s trousers. Once when I tried to get up from that chair, both thighs hit the steel tube and I was quite unable. There are handcuffs on the left and right sides of the tabletop, and ankle cuffs in place for the feet, under the table. These cuffs tighten when pressed, squeezing the wrists and ankles. I myself was locked into the chair, but not cuffed.

Looking around, the room was small and dingy. It was west of the door to that room. At the base of the wall by the inner door was a wooden platform two feet high with three steps. The two beds to either side faced the window, and in between were two bedside tables. The interrogation chair was placed between the right-hand bed and the dresser, facing north. In front of it were two carefully positioned green armchairs. [Sentence missing.] Above the door was written “Room no. 3”.

After entering the room, two policewomen were left to guard me while the men went into another room. The softly-spoken woman’s son was doing his university exams, so she was complaining about the way her office organized things. That day, she didn’t take her evening meal either. In fact, those two didn’t know why they were there either, but nevertheless when I heard that my companions in that miserable room were two policewomen I was somewhat relieved. The soft-spoken one told me that if I had done nothing wrong, they had no business treating me like this. She said several times “If you have been wrongly accused, you should speak out,” but thinking that this

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was not within my rights, I did not. "If you have no other way to deal with them, you can go to court," she told me. I made a motion of agreeing with her, but inside I thought to myself that if there was rule of law in this country, would so many Tibetans have to suffer such abuse? Because of the situation with her son, she stopped coming to work after a couple of days.

Later when I went out to the toilet, I saw that facing onto the end of the corridor was a room with several beds. There were five or six rooms along one side of the corridor, and windows along the other side. Through the windows, one could only see the brick wall of a tall, deserted building, and between the two buildings stood a solitary willow tree with no leaves.

Around midday, leaving two guards with me, the others went out to eat. After a long time they came back with bought food for me and the guards but I had no appetite. That afternoon there were policemen coming and going from the interrogation room, and at one point I could hear the movement of several people outside. When it seemed that they were talking about something the policewomen closed the door and did whatever they could to stop me hearing what was being said. Once, the Tibetan policeman came in and sat on the bed. "I have brought enough to stay two weeks, glass, wash-bag, tea, cigarettes," he said. "Nothing more seems needed. The glass is in the car, so you can drink from this paper cup in the meantime," and as soon as I heard that, I wondered in hope and fear if I would be released or not.

I stayed like that, locked into the interrogation chair. The sun had gone down. When I had back pain I thought of lying down on the bed to rest, and asked one of the women to request this. Soon after, the six policemen conducting that interrogation session came in.

The one in charge was a Manchu with the family name Zhang. The deputy was the one with the family-name Wang who had put the black hood over my head, who was also said to be a senior policeman. There was another called Zhen, one named Lan, a fat one called Li who had questioned me before, and a Tibetan from Labrang called Tsultrim Gyatso. He told me he was Tibetan near the end of the session, but his colleagues called him by a Chinese name, which I forget. They seemed to be from Xining city public security. They didn't make such things clear to me, and I didn't feel like asking. Later I came to know that those six were permanently on duty there, and the six women did shifts of two at a time. The others sat on the two beds while the main interrogators, Zhang and Wang, sat in the padded chairs. The interrogation started. First of all, they put a small recorder in front of me. Zhang said: "You are from the TV department, so you must know what this is." I told them truthfully that it was the first time I had seen such a small recorder, the size of a thumb. With the six policemen

staring at me, the electric light glaring in my eyes, and their words flying at me like arrows, I felt an indescribable fear. But since the start of my detention they had always told me “Now that you are here, whatever you do, you cannot avoid our interrogation,” so there was nothing to do but face it.

The Manchu began by enumerating in a loud voice the greatness and goodness of the government’s policies, and ended by saying that Tibetans like me had no such tradition or custom. I guessed that this was their working routine, and was directed also at the recorder. Then came the actual interrogation. “Tibetans are holding on to the empty notion of self rule. If you went it alone, do you think you could manage to run an independent state? I am a Manchu. Over 200 years ago we had our own country. But during the time of Empress Cixi, mainly because of her, the government became corrupt and went into decline. I have no regrets about that, because when a country goes into decline, it cannot be managed by one or two individuals. These days, China is developing greatly. Our salaries and benefits are increasing. The Communist Party has given me a lot of money. I love the Communist Party. You have opposed the Party while taking its money. In the time of Chairman Mao they would have cut off your head for this. What will come of doing so? If Tibet becomes independent, will you be queen?”

I was seething with anger inside, but I replied merely that I had never opposed the Party, and had never spoken or acted in favor of independence. This was the first time I had seen a Manchu getting so upset about Tibet, and I would have thought that since we share the same fate we could sympathize with each other, but seeing his lack of concern over the decline of his own people and fearing that this was the result of being assimilated by another culture, thinking of my eldest daughter I let out a curse.

Six

Family-name Wang started by asking me whether I was a religious believer. This was not an idle question, and I suspected it was because they had not found a single Lama photo when they searched my house, and were wondering why. I replied that for me personally, I could not say that I had no religious faith because I was born into a devoutly religious household, but unlike my parents I was more interested in my people than in religion. He went on that Buddhism preaches love and compassion, but the Tibetans who participated in the Lhasa incident had gone against Buddhism, and said that the Dalai Lama spoke in one way but acted in another. I made no answer because to mention His precious name to these policemen was useless, their hearts were no different than wool. The ideas circulated by the domestic media were all they knew. To try to explain things to them would be like teaching the Dharma to a wolf,

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so it was better to remain silent. When I gave provocative answers to some questions, to pass the time, they told me “We have many other people to question, not only you. Trying to be clever won’t do you any good.”

Family-name Zhen asked “Jamyang Kyi, have you not seen on TV how in the time of the Tibetan feudal system there were such terrible punishments as gouging out eyes, cutting off noses and breaking limbs?”

“No,” I replied, “When I was little, we didn’t have TV where I come from.”

“Who will take that for an answer! Aren’t such programs being aired even now?”

“Even if you had your own country, you would go straight back to the feudal system,” he said. “In ’59, when the Dalai didn’t get his own way he fled abroad. Now, with the support of foreign countries, he wants to come back and fulfill those wishes.”

I replied that in the present times and conditions, who could believe in a return to feudalism? I didn’t answer the other questions. Automatons like them would accept lies much more easily than the truth. (I had already told the State Security interrogators that they were like automatons.)

When one of them was asking questions, others would interrupt as they pleased before I had finished my answer. I guess that was their way of disorientating the person being questioned. If I strayed slightly from the terms of the question, they would tell me not to be irrelevant. During those days, they did not write down what I said. That night it was very late, and they finally allowed me to sleep. From then on, although they allowed me to sleep at night, they cuffed one of my hands to the bed, and left the light on for all but two nights. Because of not being used to handcuffs, and because I did not wake up during the night, the metal cut into my skin as I moved in my sleep, and when I woke up in the morning my left wrist was slightly swollen.

When the sun rose, my two guards took it in turns to go to the toilet, washed their faces, fetched water and boiled it for drinking and cleaned the room. After breakfast, the two on the next shift arrived, and they went home. Since the extension of my detention at the Xihu hotel on April 5, I stopped taking meals, only milk and fruit, and this went on for more than 13 days. They immediately asked me about it, and seeing that I had stopped eating accused me of going on hunger strike. I replied that since the charges against me were false, I had no appetite for food.

Wang threatened me “You are not the first to stop eating. We’ve seen it before. If you stop eating for four or five days you won’t come to any harm. If it’s for longer, there are things we can do. And if it comes to it, we will do them.”

Since arriving there, they controlled my movements and sleep very strictly. It was not usually permitted for me to set foot outside the room, nor even to look out of the window at the willow tree. Still, before leaving that place, pacing up and down in that room on the pretext of taking exercise, I managed to look out of the window at a scene of falling sleet. The solitary willow tree was covered in snow, its branches slightly drooping under the weight. The sleet moistened my heart for an instant and seeped into me.

### **‘They’**

*The following further account by Jamyang Kyi was translated and published on [www.highpeakspureearth.com](http://www.highpeakspureearth.com).*

They constantly tried to use various methods to make me betray others. During that time, one scene from *The Lives of Others* occurred to me from time to time. The woman in the film, after endlessly suffering unimaginable degrees of intimidation and atrocity, loses herself and turns her back on her beloved man. When the man stares at her with a sense of disbelief, unable to bear her feelings, she runs out into the road in front of an oncoming vehicle. There, she ends her blooming beauty and precious life. Though it has been over two years since I saw the film, I cannot forget the depth of frustration in the man’s stare and the aggrieved look on the woman’s face. Today, these images from the film appear even more real in my mind.

My heart cracked like a dried out riverbank with feelings of sadness, hopelessness, frustration and anger. And I longed for the moisture of light rain. One evening when I was locked into that chair again, I heard the sound of melancholic religious songs. I realized that this was the first time I was hearing the sound of a living being. This was soothing medicine for my bleeding heart. Since then, I began paying attention to this prayer-tune and awaiting it with hope each day. At that mosque, the devout practitioner prayed four to five times every day. Normally that prayer-tune could have been perceived as being unpleasant but during those days, it became the best medicine to revive my spirit. For that, I’m deeply grateful to the mosque and practitioner. If ever a day came for me to get out, I swore to myself that I would pay a visit to the mosque. Even today, that wish hasn’t disappeared from my heart.

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In a magazine there is an oil painting of a landscape that I have looked at countless times. In the painting there is a lone European-style cottage that stands by the lake. That was the only home in the wide hilly grassland. It afforded me a sense of tranquility and peace. Imagining that house to be my own family home, I began to visualize my two daughters playing chase in the grassy meadow near the house; my husband cutting grass beside the lake and I myself, busily cooking dinner awaiting the return of the cattle. That, too, became a means to console and revive my shattered spirit.

One day, as soon as the protests first began, my husband said with a sigh, "Those who have died are already gone. But those who have been arrested are certain to be cast into the 18 realms of hell and bound to suffer immeasurably." On the other hand, empathizing with those who had died and their bereaved and loved ones, I was deeply touched and moved to endless tears of sympathy. And at the time, I could not fully comprehend the implications of the incident in which three Tibetans had leapt to their deaths from the top of a house.

Each interrogation session aroused a different kind of fear in me. One day in the middle of an interrogation, I thought instead of enduring this, it would be better to be killed by a single bullet. My family and relatives would grieve but as for me, but I would have to suffer the pain only once. One day when I was in the washroom, out of nowhere, I found myself thinking about the means or methods of taking my own life. Those days I remembered the small knife that was confiscated at Zhihu Hotel. They hadn't seen another small knife that was in my handbag during the search. When the chief interrogator asked why I kept a small knife, I replied that it was for eating fruit. But on the other hand there is a small story about this small knife.

Ever since the Chinese-Tibetan conflict had flared up, and as a result of the government's deliberate propaganda, the Chinese would stare at Tibetans with hatred, whether it be in a bus, the market place or on any public road. Once, when I was walking down the road with my daughter who was wearing the traditional chuba that my friend Walza Norzin Wangmo had bought her as a gift, a Chinese kid of about six or seven years old came yelling in front of my daughter and stood blocking her way. This kind of Chinese attitude wasn't an isolated incident that we experienced but rather the common experience of other Tibetans too. So, for self-defense I had bought another small knife. Later, on reflection, I felt relief that I hadn't had the chance to get hold of those two knives. Otherwise, during an interrogation session, under unbearable torture, I frantically searched my pouch and then stared at the blue veins of my left wrist. Were I to get hold of the knife then, I would surely have cut the veins of my wrist.

During those days, Wang Lixiong's essay on the stages of suicide came to mind from time to time. And it was a completely different feeling from when I had first read it. I realized for the first time how difficult and harsh it is to betray and deceive someone. I felt that I could understand him now that I could understand it myself.

During those days when I was thrown in front of the six gates of hell, the person I thought of most was my kind and dear mother. Although it has been nearly three years since she passed away, she is very much alive in my heart. What is comforting is the realization that my dear mother has already left me. Otherwise, if she were alive and to witness my incarceration in prison, I know she would go insane.

At the height of unbearable torture, usually I invoked the name of my mother and Goddess Tara for protection. One afternoon when I was tied to a stool, everyone left for lunch except for one female secret police officer. For many days, I had suppressed my tears of suffering silently. But at that moment of weakness, I could not bear it any longer and cried out "Mother, Mother." The longing for my mother grew more intense and the suffering worsened, and I sobbed. As I was sobbing with pain, all my limbs went numb. At that time the fat man came and said, "You're crying intentionally because you know I'm here." Pressing his finger to my forehead, he warned, "If you continue to wail, I will stop this interrogation."

Shouting in a loud voice, "Are you this stubborn because you think we are making a false accusations?" he left the room. Although it was not something that I was doing, being aware of his presence there, I still couldn't stop crying. At the time, the nerves in both my hands turned stiff and I could unclench my fist when I tried to force them open. A long time passed sobbing, with my entire body drenched in sweat...

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<sup>1</sup> The Lives of Others (German: Das Leben der Anderen) is a 2006 German film, involving the monitoring of the cultural scene of East Berlin by agents of the Stasi, the GDR's secret police.

<sup>2</sup> There is a large population of ethnic Chinese Hui Muslims in Xining, where Jamyang Kyi was being held.

<sup>3</sup> Norzin Wangmu, a personal friend of Jamyang Kyi, was sentenced to five years imprisonment on November 3, 2008 on charges thought to relate to sending information abroad. Jamyang Kyi here uses a term 'Walza' meaning 'courageous' to describe her friend. Norzin Wangmo, who is also described by a Tibetan friend as 'Walza', meaning 'courageous', underwent torture following her detention in April.

<sup>4</sup> Wang Lixiong is Woesser's husband and a prolific and controversial writer on a number of topics, including the plight of Tibetans and Uyghurs in the PRC. Examples of his writing appear elsewhere in this volume.

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Many believe that Tibetan nomads epitomize the spirit of Tibet. For centuries, Tibetan nomadic herders have made a sustainable living uniquely adapted to the harsh conditions of the Tibetan plateau - it is one of the last examples in the world of sustainable pastoralism. An estimated 2.25 million Tibetan nomads live with their herds on the plateau, migrating with their herds yak, sheep and goats according to the seasons of the year, and producing wool, butter, cheese, yogurt and meat. But the implementation of Chinese policies to settle Tibetan nomads, and to resettle Tibetans in towns and villages, threatens the survival of a way of life that is integral to the Tibetan identity as well as the livelihoods of Tibetans nomads. See ICT's report: *Tracking the Steel Dragon*, [www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org). Photo: Matthew Pistono

## **YOUR WHITE HAIR AND THE ETERNAL SNOWS: POEMS BY NAMLO YAK**

Namlo Yak is a Tibetan writer in his thirties who has lived in exile since escaping from Tibet in 1999.

After a university education in Qinghai (incorporating the traditional Tibetan area of Amdo), he was a county-level cadre for the Department of Education. Like many Tibetans working for the Chinese government, he maintained private loyalties to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause. With his friends, Namlo Yak discussed issues such as Chinese immigration into Tibetan areas, birth control policies imposed by the authorities, the exploitation of natural resources and human rights abuses. In 1993, he was arrested together with two other Tibetans, Lukhar Jam and Tsegon Gyal, and charged with espionage and “founding a counter-revolutionary organization.” Evidence submitted against Namlo Yak for stealing “state secrets” included volumes of statistics on education and the economy that were already available and published.

Namlo Yak, who was released in November 1997 (the other two Tibetans were released too), was held in four different prisons during his sentence. He remembers: “We were kept in leg shackles and often had our hands bound. We were not allowed to see the sun for an entire year. The food was worse than what we would feed to pigs.”

For Namlo Yak, a writer, one of the most difficult elements of his captivity was the deprivation of reading and writing materials. So he asked a friend to smuggle in some cigarette paper and the inside of a biro pen, and he began to write about his prison experiences, his feelings and his inner life. Once he had finished each poem on scraps of cigarette paper, friends would smuggle them out of prison. Two poems by Namlo Yak are translated into English below – one written on the eve of his first trial in Tibet, the second a reflection from exile.

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**Because Of That Wish**

*by Namlo Yak*

Written on the eve of the first trial  
28 July 1994, Terlinkha City Prison, Qinghai

Drenched with sunlight  
My poem shines in the distance  
And the welling language of my heart  
Is hidden deep in clouds.  
The sun goes down and as it slowly rises,  
Why can I not recall my childhood years?  
That ruin is a Snow Mountain scoured by wind and rain.  
The snows are still great; the winds still fierce.

Since searching for myself and my own sacrifice  
A blue sky the size of my palm  
Sometimes floats before my eyes.  
My body and heart are maybe not separated  
On the path to sacrifice.  
Sometimes hidden, sometimes hiding,  
Hanging in space the Moon peeps out,  
Like she who put the full stop to my love-letter.

This age! The King of Hell rides on the back of Time.  
Faith and resolution have already ridden  
To surf the Milky Way and enjoy that flawless poem.

## **Adoptive Mother**

*by Namlo Yak*

*A few days ago my adoptive mother (the maternal aunt who raised me) sent a snapshot to me from my hometown, along with a few hundred RMB. That inspired this poem...*

Your photo made my day:  
It cracked the husk of my mood.

Time, which marches on without a pause—  
Bearing your kindliness upon its back, my callow youth in tow—  
Has pressed into a squint the eyes of a mother yearning for her son.

Holding the renminbi you'd sent me  
I felt a rending detonation deep inside,  
Because you've never looked to be repaid for anything.  
You were just thinking of your boy, how he'd be clothed and fed.  
Far from your sight, now, I stand on foreign soil.  
With little to show, I've made a vow:  
I'll give my all for the day I stand before your face!

At this hour you're grazing the flock, or doing chores  
That cycle through the seasons of the year:  
You'll wear yourself out, a shepherdess to the last.  
But I can't do anything,  
Couldn't even stay out of trouble as you hoped I would...  
I'm still a beggar, drifting down the mountainside.

Perhaps in the knapsack of things I've cadged  
There's naught but your white hair and the eternal snows.  
But I must, I shall press on,  
To reach that day when I can stand before your face.

September 16, 2005

Dharamsala, Northern India

*Note: 'Renminbi' is Chinese currency*

Transl. A. E. Clark



## MY LIFE, MY PAIN

*By Gartse Jigme*

Monk Gartse Jigme [from Gartse monastery in Qinghai] tells the story of the ordeal endured by his family in the Amdo region of Tibet following the Chinese invasion. Maoist 'reforms', meaning economic expropriation and the liquidation of traditional elites, were resisted by local people as best they could, resulting in a devastating military assault on the civilian population by the People's Liberation Army. Gartse Jigme, writing in the lyrical and sometimes melodramatic style typical of Amdowa intellectuals, assesses present injustices and the outbreak of protests across Tibet since March 2008 in the light of the brutal history of the occupation, making connections between young protestors today and religious and secular leaders over the past 50 years.

This article was published in Tibetan in a magazine published independently in September 2008, a copy of which has now reached Tibetans in exile. The magazine included articles about the political situation in Tibet since the 1959 uprising and the protests over the past year. As a result of this article, there are concerns for the safety of Gartse Jigme.

As a Tibetan, I will never give up the struggle for the rights of my people  
As a religious person, I will never criticize the leader of my religion  
As a writer, I am committed to the power of truth and actuality  
This is the pledge I make to my fellow Tibetans with my own life

### ONE

This year, innumerable Tibetan areas from central Tibet to Amdo Ngaba [Chinese: Aba, in Sichuan province] were swept by political protest, in the course of which so many people lost their invaluable and precious lives, were sentenced to life or to many years in prison, or were beaten or tortured before our eyes. This is well known to Tibetans who care for truth and actuality, and all other fair-minded observers. The central government's TV channels claimed that [the protests were] organized by a small number of people as part of a plot by the Dalai Lama's forces, but people all over the world were saying that the oppression of the Tibetan people by a corrupt government that denied them their freedom had gone too far, and that Tibetans were for once giving voice to the pain they felt inside. As a Tibetan, with a responsibility to look into the living conditions and psychology of my fellow Tibetans, I am going to speak honestly about this, whatever may happen to me.

## LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

## TWO

First of all, I will give a very brief account of my life experience in terms of my upbringing. I was born into a nomad family and I grew up following yaks and sheep around. When I was small, my mother recounted so many times what she had suffered, and my father spoke a little about his sufferings [under Chinese rule] too. My mother was one of nine brothers and sisters. She was the sixth. When she was small, she was given away to another household with no children, and she grew up not knowing her real parents. Since her foster parents had no other children, they loved her very dearly, more than her real parents.

Both families were ordinary families of the grasslands, and she grew up like other ordinary nomad children. When she was 11 or 12, the first '*Gya Kongtse*' [this was how the nomads in that area referred to government officials at that time] appeared around their settlement. At first they stayed in cotton tents. They had sweets for sale, so she used to go with wool, butter and cheese to exchange for sweets. They talked so kindly and smiled so much that the locals used to say that there was no one nicer than the *Gya Kongtse*.

Then, one day when she was 15, some *Gya Kongtse* took her foster-mother away. My mother pleaded with them in tears: "Please uncle *Gya Kongtse*, don't take my Ama away!" but one of the Chinese hit her on the head with the butt of his rifle, and she fell unconscious. Not long after, some children from the settlement gathered around her, and all she could say amidst sobs was: "Ama has gone, I don't know where." So many of the parents of the children from neighboring households had been taken away together that the locality was filled with the crying of children.

In the evening, when her father came driving the sheep home [...] Apa also had tears in his eyes, but to console her, he said: "Don't cry now. She will be back in a few days." After he said that, she stopped crying. But her mother did not come home, and a few days later the *Gya Kongtse* came to confiscate all their food and property, leaving father and her with nothing to eat. [This was a few years after the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1958, the year when resistance to the Chinese government's 'democratic reforms' in the nomad areas of Amdo led to almost all-out war against the Tibetan population, with tens of thousands of deaths and the imprisonment of a large proportion of the population, especially adult males. It was also the beginning of the famine induced by the 'Great Leap Forward', which led to many more deaths. Many Chinese prisoners were also interred in the Qinghai labor camp system at this time.]

Father stole bits of food here and there, and gave them to her, and so he died of hunger

a few months later. She managed to get her father's corpse up to a cliff top, and then cried until she passed out. When my mother told this story to my brothers and sisters, there was hardly a day she didn't burst into tears. She didn't know that these horrors, like the lord of death's punishment ground, were not being visited only on her parent's native village but were taking place all over Tibet. So after a few days, she of course returned to the house of her real parents, but both parents and her four elder brothers had already been taken away, and there was no-one left but the wife of one of her elder brothers and her nine- and 11-year old younger brothers. Another sister and brother had gone elsewhere, and their situation was not known. In the early 1960s one of her brothers was released from prison, but her foster-mother, real parents and three brothers never came home again. According to her brother, they all died of beatings and starvation in prison. Then, when she was 18, my mother came to live here.

*"The bodies of adults and children who died of hunger seemed to be thicker on the ground than dung in a cattle-pen."*

My father also came from an ordinary nomad household, he was the eldest son and had five brothers and sisters. He too was 15 when a man from their community told my father he had to attend a meeting held by the *Kongtse* and took him away. That evening he heard that his father had been arrested. Next day, their thousand sheep, 200 Yaks, many horses and even the tent they lived in were confiscated by the *Gya Kongtse*. His father's mother was not arrested, however, and was put with the farmers. He and his sister were sent to a land reclamation work site, and the younger brothers and sisters were sent to a children's home. At that time, the bodies of adults and children who died of hunger seemed to be thicker on the ground than dung in a cattle pen.

Both of my parents went through similar sufferings in the events of '58. Then, during the Cultural Revolution, my father was imprisoned on account of a *thangka* painting and a book of scripture they found in our house, he was beaten, made to wear a 'hat', subjected to 'struggle', and so forth. Nothing like that actually happened to my mother, but she suffered greatly from the anxiety of her husband being imprisoned, as everyone knows.

With the development of a society with Tibetan characteristics from the early 1980s, such terrible things did not happen anymore. [The writer is referring to the period of relative liberalization in Tibet and China following the excesses of the Cultural Revolution in 1966-76.] I am a child of the late 1970s, so I have no direct experience of these things, but one time around new year in 1989, my parents were eating dinner one evening when they suddenly started crying. I asked Apa what had happened, and he said that Panchen Rinpoche had died [the 10th Panchen Lama was revered by many

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Tibetans for his support for Tibetan language, culture and religion; his '70,000 Character Petition' to Mao Zedong is still the most wide-ranging internal critique of the Communist Party known, and he served 14 years in prison as a result. He died in 1989.]

Our household did not celebrate New Year [Tibetan New Year, Losar] that year, nor did any household in our community. Now we have come to know that almost no Tibetans did.

One day, Apa suddenly threw our radio into the fire. Ama quickly pulled it out again before it was badly damaged. Apa was so angry that I did not dare to ask him why, and when I asked Ama she said sadly that he had heard them cursing the Dalai Lama. Of course I didn't understand what it was about at the time, but I have never forgotten how my parents reacted that day. Such incidents were not restricted to my parents but were happening all over Tibet. My parents were religious believers, and like all Tibetans, they had firm faith in Gyalwa Rinpoche [a Tibetan name for the Dalai Lama] and Panchen Lama. When they dedicated the merit of reciting even a single syllable of the 'mani mantra' [*Om Mani Padme Hum*, a well known Tibetan mantra or prayer], they were sure to pray for the long life of Gyalwa Rinpoche. They lived in constant hope of seeing Him once. So like them, I too had a firm faith in the Dalai and Panchen Lamas from a young age.

Now I will just say a little about my own life. Because of what my parents told me about what had happened in 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution, I told them so many times that when I grew up I would kill the *Gya Kongtse*, and with a wooden sword given me by an old man, one of our neighbors, I used to stab mounds of earth and pellets of dung, shouting "*Gya Kongtse!* You cannot escape!" lashing out at the earth and the sky, until I really felt that I had killed the *Gya Kongtse*. When I went to school I refused to learn Chinese. This was not because I didn't study – in mathematics and Tibetan I sometimes got the highest marks, not just in my class but in the whole school – it was just because the letters on the cover of the textbook were 'Chinese'.

When I was 16 I became a monk at Gartse monastery. After that, my outlook changed somewhat. This was because I came to feel that it was not the Chinese people who had made Tibetans like my parents suffer so, it was the corrupt officials of an evil regime, and through the Middle Way approach of the Dalai Lama, seeking to benefit both Chinese and Tibetans and bring peace, the Buddhist emphasis on benefiting others and the philosophical view of emptiness, I came to feel that hatred and conflict can do nothing but harm to oneself and others. From that time, my mental agony gradually lessened. Just occasionally, when I heard the official media cursing the "Dalai" [a disrespectful way to refer to the Dalai Lama], the old pain might well up again, as it did when I thought about the inequalities between Tibetans and other nationalities in terms of language use, economic opportunities, civil rights and so on.

## THREE

The reasons for the 2008 protests

When I think about these things, it seems to me that the political protests in many places in central Tibet, Kham and Amdo this year were not organized by the Dalai Lama but were the inevitable expression of the pain stored up for so long in the minds of Tibetans young and old. The reasons for this are:

1. In today's world, and especially in the advanced countries, there is a consensus of opinion on the need for equality between nations, between peoples, and between individuals, the need for equal opportunity in language use, economic opportunity and political rights, and this is something manifestly evident to all. Just so, the quest for equal rights is preoccupying the minds of educated young Tibetans, as can be seen from the fact that most participants in this year's protests were young people.
2. Since the reforms of the late 1970s, there has been freedom of religious belief (in China), and the freedom to recite prayers and make sacred images is something tangible. Ninety-nine percent of Tibetans do not believe the 'fake incarnation' installed in place of the imprisoned Panchen Lama recognized by the Dalai Lama. They have pure faith and hope in the imprisoned incarnation, which is a source of unbearable mental anguish. [This is a response to Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who was recognized in 1995 by the Dalai Lama as the 11th incarnation of the Panchen Lama, but was immediately taken into Chinese custody. More than a decade later, his whereabouts are still unknown.]
3. During the protests by thousands from the three regions of Tibet [the eastern Tibetan areas of Kham and Amdo and central Tibet, or U-Tsang], there were occurrences of improper behavior by some people with a lower level of education. [Protests across the plateau since March 2008 were overwhelmingly non-violent, but in a small minority of protests, violence was used against Chinese police, civilians or property.] Ninety-eight percent of protestors behaved legitimately, but the government responded by imprisoning and beating them indiscriminately. This is no way for a legitimate government to behave.
4. For instance: during the second legitimate protest in Rebgong [in Qinghai, the Tibetan area of Amdo], the police and army beat people indiscriminately, so that even the 80-year old Alak [an honorific title, meaning 'Lama'] Khaso, who was trying to mediate, was seriously injured. [The beating of a respected lama who was trying to calm the situation aroused great anger and resentment against the authorities in

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Rebgong.] Subsequently, the government apologized because he was a lama, but it is absolutely evident that many ordinary people were beaten up for no reason and injured without restraint, and many lost their lives for sure, but there was no apology or compensation for that. Humble Tibetans have watched their spiritual leader being cursed for years and remained silent, keeping their tears inside. Today's young people, looking at the outside world, cannot swallow their tears and hold their suffering inside.

## The Dalai Lama: sacrifices by the Tibetan people

5. As a figurehead of our Buddhist religion, the Dalai Lama must have an understanding like the sun and moon. No serious religious practitioner would renounce faith and devotion to such a figure, even at the cost of his or her life. When we see and hear government officials on state media constantly cursing the "Dalai bandits" and "wolf in monk's clothing", it causes us absolutely intolerable mental pain, and any government that is not prepared to ride roughshod over the situation must realize this. For example, could a serious Chinese Communist Party member bear to see and hear Chairman Mao being condemned as a wolf in any kind of clothing? Could a serious Marxist bear to see and hear Marx and Lenin being cursed in such a way? Could Christians or Muslims bear to see and hear their religious leaders being cursed? We Tibetan Buddhists are no different. If you think about it in this way, it is obvious. But humble Tibetans have watched their spiritual leader being cursed for years and remained silent, keeping their tears inside. Today's young people, looking at the outside world, cannot swallow their tears and hold their suffering inside. They know and can see that no such thing is happening in the rest of the world.
6. Inequality of rights and economic opportunity: for instance, our Qinghai province has a population of over 5.1 million, of whom 1.1 million are Tibetan. [...] The economic pursuits dominated by our Tibetan compatriots are thieving, begging and prostitution. It's because of this situation that the higher levels of government pay endless lip-service for special support to backward or minority nationalities, but in reality, it seems to me that far from adopting the principle of economic and political equality, this just shows that they favor the system of corruption.
7. When HH the Dalai Lama accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, He declared Himself a citizen of the People's Republic of China, while the central government maligns Him as a separatist, and from this, it is clear to independent observers who is at fault, and who is the one wounding the feelings of the people.

8. This year when heroic Tibetan men and women in all three provinces put their lives in the balance and went out to demonstrate, His Holiness said on numerous occasions: "You have the right to struggle for your rights, but it is never right to harm other nationalities", and broadcast this message on TV, but the central government loudly proclaimed that this was a plot by the "Dalai Bandits", with no evidence to show for it, and if independent experts and observers look into this, they can clearly see who is at fault and who has the truth on their side.
9. When state TV proclaimed that this was a plot by the "Dalai Bandits" carried out by a small number of people, His Holiness repeatedly proposed that whether or not He had organized the protests and whether they involved only a small number of people could be established by allowing the world's free press into Tibet to investigate. Why did the central government then not allow the free press into Tibet, and monitor permitted journalists so closely as to deny them the slightest freedom to work?
10. The central government speaks thousands of times over about 'opening up the west' and giving 'special support' to the western provinces. When blizzards struck nationwide this year, the official media announced billions in assistance funds, but when people on the Tibetan plateau were facing extreme hardship, when their food had to be given to the cattle, until both people and animals were in danger of perishing, why did the government provide nothing more than two or three bales of fodder per household? There were many households that didn't receive even this.
11. The government claims that anyone with a petition is free to present it. Why then, when people in my native Gonshul held a demonstration calling for their rights, without any smashing or burning whatsoever, did hundreds of armed soldiers come to intimidate these innocent and unarmed nomads at gunpoint, arrest them and beat them up? And why did this happen in innumerable other cases across the three provinces of Tibet?

The official media talks over and again about 'harmony', but in reality there is no practical application, and the term seems to have no meaning at all.

12. Because the government concealed the fact that armed soldiers killed many Tibetan demonstrators, and beat and tortured thousands more, and then put up a lot of exaggerated talk about how a few Chinese got killed, and this was widely announced in the official media, so a big divide has now been created between the Chinese and Tibetan peoples. I have directly seen and heard how the Chinese in Lanzhou show a very hostile attitude to any Tibetans, especially monks. In my view, this is the design of a sinister regime. To speak about 'harmony' while in

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practice stirring up divisions like this is the doing of a corrupt government, a sinister government, an incompetent government. [...]

13. I have heard many times that those imprisoned for this year's protests in Lhasa were deprived of food and drink to the point that they were even forced to drink their own urine. Is this how a 21st century superpower behaves? It is the behavior of a barbaric government, a corrupt circle of criminals. Even the Japanese imperialists of the last century did not reduce prisoners to drinking their own urine, as far as I know. Yet the Japanese imperialists were tried under international law. Who will prosecute this barbaric regime, this criminal clique? They tortured our fathers by stopping them from urinating or defecating [possibly a reference to starvation during the famine of the 1950s], they are torturing our brothers and sisters by making them drink urine, and who knows how they will torture our children. Really, one cannot remain passive in the knowledge of such abuses.
14. The massacre of so many Chinese by Japanese imperialists in the last century was something that left a deep scar on the psyche of the Chinese people, an unforgettable experience, so that dramas are still made about it and shown on TV. Who can make a drama about the massacre of 100,000 Tibetans around the sources of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers in 1958? The government talks this way and that about a 'peaceful liberation', but who can erase the actual history of mass murder? It has been recorded, for example, in the 70,000 character petition of the 10th Panchen Lama, who followed the path of a religious patriot ["patriot" in the official Communist sense of working with the regime rather than going into exile]. [...]
15. The central government is always telling us how much aid it gives out. To speak in real terms, as far as I remember, from the beginning of the 1980s my household alone had to give 100 head of cattle to the state in tax. The other year we were given a solar battery, but otherwise we have never received a cent in aid. If one considers these facts, one might wonder who has been kinder to whom. In the case of my Gartse monastery, the state has given not even 50,000 *yuan* in assistance up to now, and yet the value of the sacred objects, statues, books, stupas and so on, confiscated by the state in 1958, leaving aside the temples and statues desecrated at that time, would amount to millions in today's money. Judicious experts should consider who has really been more generous.
16. In order to pacify hatred and conflict between Chinese and Tibetans, HH the Dalai Lama has proposed a "Middle Way" of benefit to both, but the Chinese government responds by constantly claiming that "The Dalai wants to re-establish feudalism." It is not at all so. In reality, He is fulfilling the hopes of 99% of Tibetans. He is seeking

rights and freedom for His people. If He were someone who loves power, wouldn't it be better to be a government vice-chairman in a nation of 1.3 billion people than the leader of a mere five or six million Tibetans? Wouldn't it be more meaningful to be a figurehead of world peace than the petty leader of such a humble, poor and backward people as us? When He says, as He has repeatedly, that once Tibetans have secured the meaningful right to autonomy He has no wish to hold any leadership position, why does the central government ignore this?

17. The justification for the central government's claim that it has achieved the well-being of the Tibetan people is that by comparison with Lhasa before 1958, living standards and development are much higher in present day Lhasa than the living standards of Tibetans have been in the past. This argument is not accepted by Tibetans at all, because they know that the brave and industrious Tibetan people would not have spent the last 50 years in idleness without developing their country themselves. I think they are right: why is it that there has been such a big difference between the development of Tibet and in mainland China over the past 50 years? Why has government support for construction been so completely dissimilar? Was the difference embezzled by corrupt officials? Was there no support at the highest levels of government? Now the Tibetan people have advanced in education, but if instead of speaking honestly they just try to confuse and deceive each other, and who will believe them?
18. They talk about democracy, but one witness to the real absence of democracy is that senior Tibetan leaders, chiefly Chadrel Rinpoche [head of the search team for the 11th incarnation of the Panchen Lama, who was imprisoned in 1995 after the Dalai Lama recognised Gendun Choekyi Nyima] and Alak Gungtang Rinpoche, advised the government that they could not endorse any candidate for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama other than the one chosen by the Dalai Lama, who had the support of 99 percent of the Tibetan people, and yet that candidate was put in prison, and the candidate regarded by 99 percent of the Tibetan people as false was installed in his place. [...]
19. Instead of discussing how many times our fellow Tibetan seekers of rights and freedom lost consciousness from beatings in prison this year, they question whether or not they were really beaten. Is this consistent with the workings of a 21st century superpower? A democratic state? A state that prides itself on respect for human rights? Listen, senior leaders, think carefully! It's time to put a stop to corrupt officials. We Tibetans were not born to be your slaves.

LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

20. To describe the bloody events of our history as a 'peaceful liberation' will never be acceptable to the young generation of the 21st century. This refusal is another reason for this year's events. Unless this situation is resolved peacefully, I believe such events will continue to happen. Are we to go on hating and cursing each other like this?
21. In days gone by, when the Red Army faced hard times, our Tibetan people provided them with food and clothes and helped them out, and this is made clear in the army's official history. However, since the founding of the state in 1949, the Red Army [...] in the name of 'peaceful liberation' massacred tens and hundreds of thousands of Tibetans, but the trauma of this history cannot be made 'peaceful' just by calling it so. Just saying: "Let there be harmony" in no way creates that harmony.
22. If the mental anguish of hundreds of thousands of Tibetans who, like my parents, saw their parents arrested and killed, suffered the torments of dispossession, and that of their children, has not been resolved, and will not be satisfactorily resolved, the trauma cannot be healed. For example, China and Japan are now separate countries, and top Japanese leaders have profusely apologized to the Chinese people, yet many Chinese are unable to forget the history of invasion.
23. In the case of my native place, Gonshul, before 1958 there was a population of over 3000, but when a count was made in the 1960s there were no more than 1500 – so I heard directly from one of the surveyors. Our community offered no resistance at all, we were defeated, yet half of the population still died in the course of mass imprisonment and starvation in those years. Was this a 'peaceful liberation'? Taking the whole of Tibet into account, some Tibetan elders say that around two million Tibetans died in the struggle, and this seems plausible.
24. Thinking about how humble, unarmed protestors calling for their rights and freedom were fired upon and slaughtered this year makes it hard to sleep at night. My beloved forefathers, beloved brothers and sisters, beloved nephews and nieces, must their precious lives come under the heel of government repression? In any case, nothing comes of retelling the story of killing but tears and pain, so I will leave it at that for now.

## FOUR

*"An outpouring of the grievances nursed by the Tibetan people over the past 50 years"*

The above considerations bear witness to the fact that the great uprising joined by thousands this year from Lhasa to Amdo Ngaba was a single outpouring of the grievances nursed by the Tibetan people over the past 50 years.

[Tibetans] were not demonstrating because of a lack of food or clothing, but shouting that "We have no freedom, we demand equal treatment! Let HH Dalai Lama and Karmapa swiftly return to Tibet! [The 17th Karmapa escaped from Tibet in 2000, and claimed he was unable to practice his religion freely]. Release the Panchen Lama! Tibetans at home and in exile must be reunited!" Instead of giving the slightest consideration to the justification for these longstanding grievances, however, why did the government have to launch a drastic crackdown, killing, imprisoning, starving and beating without restraint?

Are Tibetans human? If they are human, do they have human rights? If they have human rights, what has happened to their right to expression? To express their pain and their suffering? The government says that they have the right to expression but that they indulged in smashing and burning, but as I mentioned already, in my native Gonshul, where there was no smashing or burning whatsoever, why did armed soldiers have to come and arrest protestors at gunpoint? Why are people not allowed to display photos of the Dalai Lama? Why was the Panchen Lama imprisoned? Why are people living in an 'autonomous region' not using their own language? [The Chinese government recognizes ethnic minority areas as 'autonomous' and claims that they have powers of local 'autonomy']. Then, if the pain inflicted on Tibetans historically is called 'peaceful liberation', will that bring peace? If they call for 'harmony', will it make things harmonious, or is that impossible? Isn't that why this year's events took place? If this situation continues, such events will continue to take place. [...]

In my view, instead of talking about 'peaceful liberation', it would be better to look for a peaceful strategy. Instead of propagandizing the 'harmonious society' in the media, it would be better to find the causes and conditions for harmony. Otherwise, is harmony going to come from condemnation and intimidation backed by the gun? Will it come from starving and beating people? From making them drink their own urine? For these reasons, those who protested this year cannot be called 'bandits' but can be praised as heroes and heroines standing up for their rights. Because among 80 percent of Tibetans, there is not one who does not complain about the government in private, but these heroes and heroines managed to express this openly.

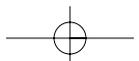
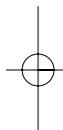
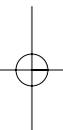
## LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

We the Tibetan people are also human, and need human rights, and if we don't have them, we must fight for them. Fellow Tibetans! We have the right to self-rule. We have the right to have faith in the Lamas we choose to have faith in. We have the right to fight against corruption, for equal political rights, for freedom of expression, to maintain our own language and culture, and for equal economic opportunity.

We have the right to protect our own resources, not to always acquiesce to the government's bidding, to make political demands on the state, to struggle for our distinct identity as Tibetans. These are the human rights of our age, to which we are entitled and for which we must struggle. We must not allow our heads to be pushed down, but must hold them up in equality. As the descendants of the great emperors, we should have their courage.

The heroes and heroines who lost their lives or were imprisoned this year are just like Panchen Rinpoche, Gungtang Tenpe Wangchuk [the third incarnation of the abbot of Labrang monastery], Khenchen Jigme Puntsok [a Tibetan religious leader who pioneered the revitalization of Tibetan Buddhist culture and founded the monastery of Larung Gar, Serthar], Chadrel Rinpoche, the poet Yidam Tsering, Kushap Rangdrol and the former leader of Tsolho prefecture, Dondrup Gyal. If we remain subdued we will never have human rights. If we sit mumbling our criticism of the government into our sleeves, we will never have human rights. If we keep our mental anguish pent up inside, we will never have peace and harmony. If we keep our hatred pent up inside, we can never live a happy life. That is why we must declare our legitimate sufferings and resentments openly and peacefully, in the struggle for our rights, showing the nature of our pain and suffering openly. If we struggle for our rights without harming anyone, peacefully, people who have eyes to see will support us. People who understand the situation will support us. Governments and leaders with eyes to see will support us. Governments and leaders who understand the situation will support us. The time will come when we will join the community of peoples who enjoy human rights.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET



LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET



A collection of some of the Tibetan language books published in Tibet since the protests, published on Woesser's website. The titles, from left to right and top to bottom, are as follows:

- 1) "The Holy Treasure of the Snowlands of Tibet"; 2) "Inner Peace"
- 1) "The Power of Mercy"; 2) "The Times of Me", 3) "The Times of Me" 4) "Our Nationality and Our Ideology"
- 1) "My Home and Listening"; 2) "Introducing Buddhism"; 3) "Forbidden Tibetans" - poems by the late senior high school student Lhundrub (Chinese transliteration: Yong Lengzhi) from the Nationality Middle School in Jianzha [Chentsa] county in Qinghai, who committed suicide on October 18, 2008 in protest against the authorities' policies in Tibet.

## Monk editor of banned magazine detained

Drokru Tsultrim was detained on April 2, 2009 in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) county in Sichuan province reportedly as a direct consequence of his "reactionary" writings.



Lobsang Kirti, 27, from Kirti monastery in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetans Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, was detained on January 15 at a printing house in Ngaba county. It is believed that the local authorities accused him of printing and distributing leaflets opposing Monlam and Losar celebrations this year in memory of those who have died or been detained since demonstrations swept across Tibet beginning last March. Lobsang Kirti is a student at the Buddhist Dialectics Institute for Youth at Kirti monastery, where he has previously published newspaper and magazine articles. He is also an editor for Khangtse Metok, a magazine published annually by the monastery.



LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET



A portrait of the Dalai Lama hanging in Kirti monastery which was defaced by police during a raid in the wake of large scale protests in and around the monastery in March 2008.

## WHO ARE THE REAL SEPARATISTS?

*By Kunga Tsayang*

Twenty-year old Kunga Tsayang (Chinese transliteration: Gengga Cangyang), who writes under the pen-name Gangnyi meaning Sun of Snowland is a popular writer, blogger and photographer who is passionate about the environment. He was taken from Labrang monastery in Gansu province on March 17, 2009, by police and his whereabouts remain unknown. Kunga Tsayang, who is a monk, was born in Chikdril (Chinese: Jiuzhi) county in Golog (Chinese: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), Qinghai province, and educated at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics at Labrang monastery and in Beijing. He is thought to have been detained as a result of his essays on a website named "Jottings" or "Rough Notes" (Tibetan: Zin-driss).

Kunga wrote essays including: "Who are the true separatists?", "Who is supporting us?" "Lhasa is Lhasa no more", "China must apologize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama", "Tibetan people, we must clearly understand the truth about AIDS", and "We, Tibetans, are the real witnesses". Kunga Tsayang is also a photographer for Golok Nianbao Yuze Association of Environmental Protection. (<http://www.khabdha.org/>, [www.highpeakspurearth.com/2009/04/remembering-honourable-gangnyi-la.html](http://www.highpeakspurearth.com/2009/04/remembering-honourable-gangnyi-la.html)).

The following article, 'Who are the Real Separatists', was translated from Tibetan into English by the exile poet and writer, Bhuchung D Sonam, and published on the exile Tibetan website, [Tibetwrites.org](http://Tibetwrites.org)

Information dissemination is the most important tool in carrying out any kind of action or campaign. However, if one's ways of spreading information crosses the standard norms then that campaign is bound to become a meaningless stammer of a drunken man.

This year the peaceful Tibetan protesters were infiltrated and were misled to a wrong path. The China Television, Lhasa TV and others, while ignoring the truth, have excessively branded all Tibetans as separatists. This has caused an incurable communal injury between the Chinese brothers and sisters, and Tibetans leading to Chinese disliking the Tibetans and Tibetans holding animosity towards the Chinese. I, as a person, am forced to accept the fact that this was the biggest factor caused split among the nationalities.

## LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

Tibetans are driven to a desperate position because of them being accused of doing things, which they never did, and small incidents were exaggerated and paraded before the world. Even Tibetans who worked for the party for over two to three decades were accused and the Chinese news media, the experts that they are in fabricating lies, went to schools and universities where there are only a handful of Tibetan students to accuse them and to witch hunt them. Such excessive misinformation and wrongful acts have caused a huge chasm and disturbance in the minds of Tibetan officials and students who have absolute love for Chinese brothers and sisters and liking for the Communist Party of China. This has left a feeling of 'racial hatred' in their minds. This is the negative consequence of their incompetent reporting.

Under these circumstances our freedom of movements are restricted by roadblocks, checkpoints and ever-present military personals with guns pointed at us. I must strongly assert that confiscating the photographs of our beloved leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama, by burning them, and stamping them under the soldiers' boots are the real causes of splitting the people. Detention of Tibetans for possessing His Holiness the Dalai Lama's photographs, disparaging them for putting His Holiness' pictures on their altars are the real causes of split amongst the nationalities. Unless you [the Chinese Government] are able to break our love and respect in our hearts, all your fruitless campaigns and activities will only strengthen our unity and love for one Tibetan brother to another.

I have always believed that soldiers are heroes protecting national security, building harmony amongst people and helping economic developments. However, this year all these proved wrong because of their biased actions, killing of innocent people, their plundering and ransacking of properties and shops, their expertise in suppressing dissents and their lawless marauding style. I state this based on facts and the actual events as it happened in Ngaba regions of Amdo and Kanlho regions [in Eastern Tibet.] If these things happened because of a few military officers and officials in local administration, then I can strongly say that you are the real agents splitting the nationalities.

Moreover, people at the local Public Security Bureaus, military and regional Communist Party cadres piled a large amount of fabricated, negative information and petitions in front of the Central Government in order to obtain huge sums of money to fund their so-called victories against protests and to continue their suppressive actions. How are these actions not meant to split the nationalities? A series of large-scale policy mistakes were made because the local level cadres were busy trying to please their bosses in the higher levels.

## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Why is the Communist Party of China silent like a man with one eye closed and ears gone deaf in face of such unlimited actions carried out to harm the unity of the nation and stability of the country? Lamas may make mistakes, leaders may make mistakes and the government too can make mistakes. But the time has come for those people responsible for causing harms and disunity be paraded before the public and be made answerable for their mistakes. If this can be done, we will still have some faith in improving our relationship with other nationalities and to build a harmonious society.

An image is built in the minds of both the Chinese people and Tibetan brothers and sisters of the other side as someone who is to be scared of and to have hatred towards each other. We ask: Why must they beat and torture our brothers and sisters this way? And by lying and fabricating wrong views, we have come to a state where even a Tibetan truck driver is scorned. The general impression being created is that of Tibetans as people who are not even worth to look at.

When we talk in more general terms, Tibetan and Chinese people have a long tradition of helping each other and have deep mutual respect and admiration. However, the portrayal of Tibetans in Chinese official media this year has left an image of Tibetans as enemies. Has this become a factor that would improve harmony or has it become a cause for its destruction? This is an issue that the leaders must think about; this is an issue that is worth thinking about because the harmony of the nation will be build on this foundation by taking positives actions on it. This is something that is never too late to pursue.

LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET



A monk identified as Tapey from Kirti monastery set himself on fire in February 2009 following official moves to stop the monastery from observing one of the most important prayer festivals in the Tibetan calendar. Police only extinguished the flames after shooting Tapey. His current condition and whereabouts are unknown.

## TIBETAN MONK MAKES VIDEO APPEAL FOR RETURN OF DALAI LAMA AND END TO REPRESSION IN TIBET

A Tibetan monk, Kelsang Tsultrim from Labrang monastery in the Amdo area of eastern Tibet, recorded a video at great risk about his fears for the survival of Tibetan religion and culture, the crackdown over the past year, and calling for the return to Tibet of the Dalai Lama.

Kelsang Tsultrim identifies himself on the video as 'Gyitsang Takmik,' the township in Sangchu county in Ganlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu province, where he is from. Kelsang Tsultrim is well known locally for his writings and published a book in 2008 called "Miyul la phulway Jamba," or "Love dedicated to the human realm." Part of the video was broadcast on Voice of America's Tibetan service and can be viewed online at: <http://www.voanews.com/tibetan/2009-08-28-voa10.cfm>

This is the second video made by a Labrang monk speaking out about the situation in Tibet following the demonstrations that began in the spring of 2008. Since then, the Chinese authorities have implemented across Tibet pervasive security and control measures and new campaigns directed against Tibetan culture and religion. Many Tibetans, undaunted by the risk of a harsh Chinese response, are finding ways to reach the outside world with accounts of repression in Tibet, and personal experiences of imprisonment and loss.

Jigme Guri (or Gyatso), a senior monk at Labrang monastery, was the first to speak out against the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Chinese authorities and give his full identity on video. In the video, which was first broadcast on Voice of America in September 2008, Jigme Guri described his imprisonment and torture during a 42-day period from March 22, 2008. The video received international attention when it was uploaded on Youtube, and Jigme Guri was again taken into custody in November 2008 and detained in Lanzhou. He was released in May 2009 after two Chinese lawyers sought to defend his case: <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/labrang-jigme-monk-who-gave-torture-testimony-returns-home>.

In the Kelsang Tsultrim video, 'Gyitsang Takmik' speaks to a handheld camera against the backdrop of a room in his monastery, saying: "The responsibility of our new generation is to protect our Tibetan identity, despite the repression and threats from the government. I am here today to speak the truth. Everyone has the right to speak the truth. The pain that I have in my heart is shared by all Tibetans, but we have no chance to express it living under Communist Party rule."

## LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

Kelsang Tsultrim speaks with great emotion about the importance of the Dalai Lama returning home, saying: "His Holiness the Dalai Lama is very famous in the world today, everyone respects and honors him. But he is 74 years old now. He must miss his homeland very much because, when people become old, they miss home just as when birds get old, they want to return to their nests. Every Tibetan is hoping for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet and negotiate with the Chinese leadership in peace. That is the only wish of every Tibetan."

An extract from 'Gyitsang Takmik's' testimony, translated into English from the original Tibetan by ICT, follows below.

Freedom to preserve our Tibetan culture and religion has been completely restricted for 50 years, and these violations of our rights are rapidly accelerating, as there is no respect paid to the laws in China's Constitution on autonomy for nationalities. A Tibetan who loves Tibet should never let these restrictions define them. As is written in an article: "When we laugh, we laugh together, and when we mourn, we mourn together. It is time now to speak up for truth, justice, and the pain caused by the distorted propaganda and education that is getting more severe."

So a Tibetan like Lobsang Tashi (Tapey), who set himself on fire because he was unable to bear all of the suffering [the Kirti monk who set himself on fire in February after the local authorities banned a prayer ceremony, his whereabouts is currently unknown]; like the monk from Ragya monastery [in Qinghai], who jumped into the river; like Jinpa and Thysum from Mayur who committed suicide after being tortured in prison; like Thupten Ngodup, a Tibetan in exile who committed suicide by setting himself on fire due to his desire for human rights; and like those Tibetans who have been killed and detained since last year's protest: those Tibetans have sacrificed their lives for the Tibetan people's cultural, traditional and economic rights. Even though Tibetans are terrified to speak up against those sufferings due to the heavy-handed policies and crackdowns on dissent, the resentment and grievances are always there deep down in the heart of every Tibetan.

Sometimes it is believed that a few people speaking up will not make a difference, but given the crisis we face in terms of the survival of our culture and identity, we must stand up. While the Tibetan people are living in constant fear and under such severe repression, it is unavoidably an obligation of the international community, including the UN, to pay attention to this. We should not be engaged in our own internal conflicts, but rather, we should be aware of the outside factors that threaten us. Our parents were killed, our sisters and brothers were killed, they all died for Tibet.

## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

We are a new generation and we work for truth and justice despite the Chinese government that is willing to take the lives of more and more Tibetans. We are very committed to protecting truth and justice. I am standing in front of the camera here today [as evidence of this]. In the same way, many domestic publications in Tibet, including *Shardungri* (The Eastern Mountain), *Tsen po Nyiangtob* (Dedication of Tsenbo), *Nga shon sarba* (New Generation), *Nge phayul dang shevi Jangdrol* (My Homeland and Peaceful Liberation) as well as other publications outside Tibet, all contain that strong expression of the pain of Tibet and her people under Communist rule. [These are literary publications with Tibetan views about the protests and their consequences, and experiences of imprisonment and loss].

Many Tibetan intellectuals and educated people already understand what those books have expressed and revealed, but due to the threats of the Communist government's rule very few people dare to pass on real information concerning the people inside Tibet. So many nomads and people living in rural areas simply don't know about the Tibetan issue. Today I am here, facing danger, hoping that that my voice will reach those uneducated people inside Tibet and also the people around the world whose positive research approaches the reality on the ground inside Tibet. Therefore everyone, both Tibetans and people of the world, have the responsibility to make clear the distinction between right and wrong, and let people around the world see who was wrong and who made mistakes.

LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET



A performer in a traditional monastic cham dance ceremony in eastern Tibet being watched by people from communities around the monastery. Cham dances, like many other forms of Tibetan traditional religious culture are under threat of disappearing in Tibet due to the lack of experienced masters. The image depicts a moment of a two-day cham dance performance at the Gonchen monastery during the Buddhist Protectors Festival. (Photo: ICT)

## SERVES YOU RIGHT!

*By Woesser*

The blades, we know, surround us like a forest,  
But see, there drips from each knife-edge the sweetest honey.<sup>1</sup>  
Can't help sticking out our tongue to lick...  
Mmm, such sweet honey!  
Take another lick, and another lick, and another lick...  
Oh, my tongue! What happened to our tongues?  
How'd they get cut off?

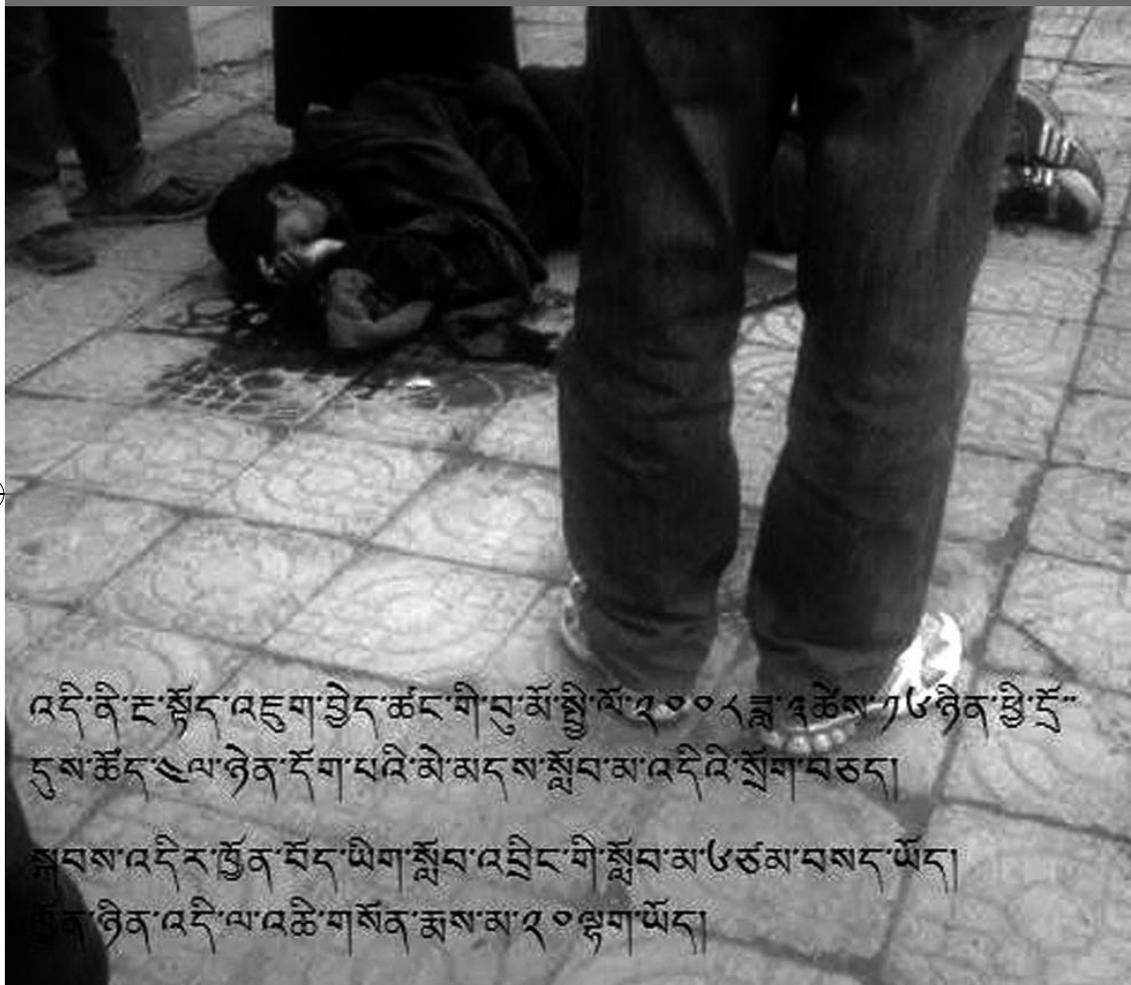
October 3, 2007  
Beijing

From *Tibet's True Heart*, transl. A. E. Clark

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<sup>1</sup> The image of "honey on a razor's edge" comes from Chapter 7 of the eighth-century Bodhisattvacharyavatara, by Shantideva, where it represents sensual pleasures whose pursuit brings pain. Woesser's emphasis on the loss of the tongue suggests a sociopolitical application in which the enjoyment of material or pecuniary rewards must be weighed against the loss of freedom of expression.

LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET



A Tibetan school girl, 16-year old Lhundup Tso, was killed when police opened fire on unarmed protestors in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) on March 16, 2008. Sources from the area have identified the body pictured as Lhundup Tso. The protest began when monks at Kirti monastery in Ngaba (the Tibetan area of Amdo) began a spontaneous protest following a morning prayer ceremony, and were joined by monks from other monasteries, laypeople and schoolchildren.

## VAPOR OF THE POISONOUS SNAKE: SONG BY IMPRISONED MONKS

In April 2008, hundreds of armed police raided Lhasa's three main monasteries, Sera, Drepung and Ganden, already under lockdown and with a high security presence following the beginning of the protests in March. The raids took place in the early hours of the morning over several nights, and according to various reports, hundreds of monks were taken away from the monasteries.

According to one report, at least 600 monks were taken from Drepung at dawn on April 25, with black hoods over some of their heads. Many of them were taken to Golmud (Chinese: Ge'ermu) in Qinghai by train and held in a military prison. Tibetan teachers from Tibet University and the Tibetan Medicine Academy were reportedly also transferred to Qinghai to carry out 'rule of law education' classes. Monks from Sera and Drepung were also transferred to the camp. Many of the monks were originally from Qinghai, while others were from Tibetan areas of Sichuan province.

Three months later, monks from different parts of Qinghai were returned to their home towns by cadres and police, but first had to continue with their 'rule of law education' in installations surrounded by uniformed PAP and wait until the Olympics were over before they could return to their families.

A Drepung monk held in custody at Golmud at this time composed the following song, based on a folk song popular in Amdo, eastern Tibet. The song was learnt by many monks being held in detention. The lyrics appeared on several blogs in Chinese and English, and are translated from the original Tibetan on the website [www.highpeakspureearth.com](http://www.highpeakspureearth.com). In her description of how the song was written and disseminated by monks in detention, the writer Wooser says, "During the monks' time in detention, a 22-year-old monk called Jigme Phuntsog who had fallen ill and been seriously misdiagnosed by the military hospital deteriorated suddenly after 20 days and died without being treated. Another monk of around 30 years old simply couldn't bear it any longer. He started banging his head against the wall and then jumped from the window when he was taken to hospital. He broke several bones and is deaf in one ear."

LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

The three seats of Sera, Drepung and Ganden,  
Are struck by the vapor of the poisonous snake,  
Because of this sea of adverse circumstance,  
There's no right to diligently study the scriptural texts.

O Triple Gem!<sup>1</sup> Kindly guide and protect us!  
O Triple Gem! Come forth with speed.

Since the chance for the Mandala of the trichilocosmic Sun,<sup>2</sup>  
Shining through the windows of the prison cell,  
Is well-nigh impossible,  
The weary gloom of anguish has set in.

O Sun! Come forth with speed!  
O Sun! We cannot wait much longer!

My karmic destiny shaped in past lives,  
Has rendered this youth a victim of circumstance.  
In the Three Seats of Learning of the U-Tsang region,<sup>3</sup>  
There's no freedom of movement.

O Karmic Destiny!  
Grant us good fortune!

Highlighting the well known state of affairs,  
We await freedom of movement!

Written in May 2008 in Golmud Military Prison, Qinghai

## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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- <sup>1</sup> 'The Triple Gem' refers to the three things in which Buddhists take refuge: the Buddha ('Awakened One'); the Dharma (the teachings) and the Sangha (community).
- <sup>2</sup> The following definition of Trichiliocosm (Tib. tong sum; Wyl. stong gsum) is given by the Buddhist organization Rigpa (<http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Trichiliocosm>). Following ancient Indian cosmology, the Buddhist Abhidharma literature explains that there is an infinite number of worlds. Each world has at its center a Mount Meru surrounded by seven oceans and seven rings of golden mountains separating them. Outside are the four continents and eight subcontinents (two out at sea, left and right of each of the continents). We humans live on the southern continent called "Jambudvipa." This entire world is then surrounded by the outer iron mountains. One thousand of such worlds constitute a thousand fold world system. A thousand of these makes up a second-order thousand fold world system. Then, when multiplied a thousand times further, this makes a third-order world system or 'trichiliocosm,' a universe of a billion worlds.
- <sup>3</sup> A reference to the three great monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden, in Lhasa, ancient centers of learning and Tibetan culture. 'U-Tsang' is the Tibetan name for the area of central Tibet that roughly equates to the Chinese-imposed Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET



The Potala Palace (above), former home of the Dalai Lama, is rapidly losing its once central religious and physical prominence in Lhasa as Chinese urban development continues apace. (Below) Monks, nuns and laypeople including children take to the streets in peaceful protest in Labrang (Chinese: Xiahe) county town in March 2008, pictured below.



## **'THE GONGMENG REPORT': RARE ANALYSIS OF THE TIBET CRISIS FROM INSIDE CHINA**

In May 2009, a group of Chinese legal scholars published a lengthy report based on field research in parts of Tibet that sought to investigate factors leading to the outbreak of the protests across Tibet in March 2008. While being careful to couch their conclusions in language resonant of official pronouncements on Tibet, the scholars nevertheless boldly contradicted the official version of events, asserting that blaming the protests on the "Dalai clique" and describing the protests as mere criminal behavior "lacks political wisdom."

The first line in the comprehensive list of recommendations to the central government at the end of the report reads "Earnestly listen to the voices of ordinary Tibetans", and urges Beijing to address the key policy failings identified and analyzed in detail in the main body of the report, including poor education and employment opportunities for Tibetans as well as concerns about poverty among Tibetans.

Soon after publication of the report, entitled: "An investigative report into the social and economic causes of the 3.14 incident in Tibetan areas", the umbrella organization under which the scholars wrote the report, Gongmeng (the Open Constitution Initiative) was closed down on apparently spurious charges of tax evasion, and the founder of the organization Xu Yongzhi was then arrested in late July apparently in connection with the accusations of tax evasion. The closure of Gongmeng coincided with several dozen other prominent lawyers known for tackling cases involving civil and political rights, including Tibetan cases, being refused permission to renew their permits, effectively disbarring them from practicing.

The following section of the Gongmeng report criticizes the government's immediate response to the protests in the media and in Tibet itself. ICT's translation of the full report can be read at [www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/bold-report-beijing-scholars-reveals-breakdown-china%E2%80%99s-tibet-policy](http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/bold-report-beijing-scholars-reveals-breakdown-china%E2%80%99s-tibet-policy)

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#### **IV: The government's errors in handling the follow-up to the 3.14 incident**

The research panel discovered that the 3.14 incident was caused by the confluence of many factors, including psychological loss created by development, discontent among economic classes, the question of migrants, influences from abroad, religious sentiment, and on-scene "mass reactions," which cannot be simply reduced to "splittist violence." We advocate that the handling of the aftermath of the 3.14 [March 14] incident should have been to quickly pacify the incident, to decisively resolve contradictions, actively appease the masses, handle officials' dereliction of duty, and actively promote the roles of stronger inter-ethnic unity and harmony. But looking at the handling in the current situation, there are some quite major errors in government policy. The government's forceful propaganda and incautious handling have in fact driven outcomes in the opposite direction.

IV, a) The ensuing over-propagandizing of "violence" was used to make the 3.14 incident ever larger, which created certain oppositional ethnic sentiments. Depictions of the violence in Lhasa and Gannan [Tibetan: Kanlho, a Tibetan prefecture in Gansu province] were seen barely 10 hours later on television and the internet and seen all over the country and even the entire world, with an intensive depiction of violent acts by some Tibetans. And the sole cause given for the protests was simply "foreign forces," which made Han citizens, who lack any practical understanding of Tibetan areas, form feelings of racist sentiment toward the Tibetan masses as a result. Such propaganda actions are in the long run detrimental to ethnic unity. The fascination that Han citizens have expressed toward Tibetan culture changed to fear and hatred of the Tibetan masses, and Tibetans were rendered as a people incapable of gratitude. After the incident, the research panel discovered many Internet discussion forums were filled with fanatical abuse by Chinese and Tibetan Internet users, which only deepened the misunderstandings. Mr Nongbu [Tib: Norbu] told the research panel that when his Han friends saw the pictures they almost cut all communication with him, which was extremely difficult for him to take. (Interviewee, Nongbu, international NGO worker and Khampa Tibetan.) It can be seen therefore that the government's press releases went out quickly, intuitively and effectively, but their potential negative effects cannot be underestimated. When handling matters in such a way, the Tibetan people's support for unity is damaged, and relations between the Han and Tibetans are harmed.

*"The excessive response of governments all over Tibet was to regard every tree and blade of grass as a potential enemy soldier"*

IV, b) Defining the 3.14 incident as “beating, smashing, looting and burning by Tibetan splittists” lacks political wisdom. The armed insurrection in Tibetan areas toward the end of the ‘50s has been defined as class struggle, and has not risen to being racial confrontation. The main thrust of policies was to “strike hard against a few arch culprits and appease the broad masses of farmers and nomads.” The policies were adjusted, and reform of ownership systems became means for resolving problems at the time, and contradictions were quickly resolved. But today, when faced with “beating, smashing, looting and burning,” and “the Dalai clique’s organized, premeditated and meticulously planned” splittist activities, the excessive response of governments all over Tibet was to regard every tree and blade of grass as a potential enemy soldier. Local policy turned to strict monitoring where everyone was suspect, “everyone has to pass a political test,” which was bound to lead to even more Tibetans becoming discontented, and created discord and dissension far and wide. Even more dangerous was that this suspicion and exclusion of Tibetans slowly spread to many places in the interior and there was some very unfair treatment. During the course of the panel’s interviews, many Tibetan elites said that they had been heavily searched at airports and hotels, and that their sense of patriotism had suffered.

IV, c) The poor understanding of the Tibetan people’s religious sentiment led to errors in the way monks and monasteries were treated in the wake of the 3.14 incident. Monks are the clergy in Tibetan areas who not only offer people spiritual guidance, they are also Tibet’s traditional intelligentsia, and Tibetan astronomy, the calendar, medicine and law were all produced by this grouping. In Tibetan areas where there is widespread faith, monks have extremely high social prestige. Therefore, the government’s serious handling of relations with monks and monasteries and positive interactions would in the long-term be extremely beneficial to Tibet’s stability. Furthermore, when handling matters post-3.14, many high status monasteries were ordered to be investigated, and for a short time closed for rectification; itinerant monks with household registrations elsewhere were driven out and traveling stopped; and all monasteries had to carry out “socialist and patriotic education.” In reality, such actions were a form of interference for the monks who wanted nothing to do with politics and were concentrated on their practice, and the outcome may not be positive.

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This old nomad lady pays her homage and respect to a lama beginning a teaching session in the nomad camp of Darlag (Chinese: Dari) in Qinghai. Photo: ICT

## ON THE ROAD<sup>r</sup>

*By Woenser*

On the road with edgy mind,  
I'll flee the chaos of this floating world,  
Pick a place to settle,  
Find choice words  
To tell this passing turn of the Wheel.

On the road one meets by chance  
Men and women of immense dignity;  
One's natural pride is humbled.  
The ruins that overspread Tibet with shadows dark as night  
Have a nobility not found in ordinary men.

Among those encounters:  
One dear to me, long-lost,  
Brilliant, uncompromising,  
Neglected.  
I, too, am pure and honest;  
Mine, too, a sincere and gentle heart;  
I wish as seasons change I could change with them.  
No need for gifts to one another;  
We are the gifts.

On the road, an elder of my people says:  
"Golden flowers bloomed on golden mountain;  
While golden flowers bloomed, he did not come;  
And when he came, the flowers had died.  
Silver flowers bloomed on silver mountain;  
While silver flowers bloomed, he did not come;  
And when he came, the flowers had died."

On the road, walking alone.  
An old book without a map,  
A pen, not much to eat,  
Ballads from a foreign land:

LIKE GOLD THAT FEARS NO FIRE: NEW WRITING FROM TIBET

These will suffice. On the road,  
I see a black horse  
Who does not bow his head to graze but shakes his hooves,  
Vexed that he can't run free.  
Yet also, deep in meditation caves among the vast mountains,  
The hidden forms of men.  
What sort of heart will honor and revere them?

On the road, a pious mudra's not complex,  
But it ill suits a tainted brow.  
A string of special mantras is not hard,  
But they're jarring, from lips stained with lies.

On the road,  
I clutch a flower not of this world,  
Hurrying before it dies, searching in all directions,  
That I may present it to an old man in a deep red robe.  
A wish-fulfilling jewel,  
A wisp of a smile:  
These bind the generations tight.

May 1995  
Lhasa

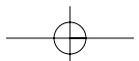
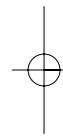
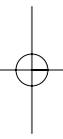
From *Tibet's True Heart*, transl. A. E. Clark

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<sup>1</sup> Woeseer has reworked this poem a few times. The translation is based on the earliest and longest version.

<sup>2</sup> *A wish-fulfilling jewel* This legendary object appears frequently in both Hindu and Buddhist folklore and iconography. The term is also an honorific title for the Dalai Lama.

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Armed police official stationed in the streets of Lhasa in late 2008. The city remains under martial law in all but name following the protests that began in March 2008; an intense climate of fear prevails. Photo: Ryan Gauvin, [www.ryangauvin.com](http://www.ryangauvin.com).

## THE OLYMPICS DIARY OF A TIBETAN

*By Tashi Bod*

This diary, written by a Tibetan under the pseudonym ‘Tashi Bod’ (‘Bod’ means ‘Tibet’ in classical Tibetan), was posted online in Chinese, translated into English and published on September 7, 2008 on the website [Chinadigitaltimes.net](http://Chinadigitaltimes.net) and on [highpeakspureearth.com](http://highpeakspureearth.com). The piece evokes the atmosphere in Tibetan areas prior to the Olympics, including a vivid description of a military exercise intended to replicate the treatment of Tibetan protestors after March 14, 2008, in Lhasa.

*August 1, 2008, Friday The Holiday*

Today is Army Day. The local government organized an art performance entitled “Welcoming the Olympics and celebrating August 1<sup>st</sup>.” The main performers are the officers and soldiers who began to be stationed in the region after the “March 14 Incident” and the art troupe formed by retired cadres.

There were many policemen on duty near the site of the performance, and all the leaders of the county came to watch the performance. The soldiers and militias were watching the performance, and many common people also came to join the fun.

The first program was the song “the daughters of one mother” sang in chorus by the art troupe. Next they performed a few other programs with either singing or dancing. The content of their performances was simply either praising the motherland or the Communist Party. These people have worked within the system of the Communist Party for their whole life, but they are not resting after their retirement, and they are still contributing to “the communist cause.” As a member of the group who has benefited from the system, they have enough time and energy to rehearse these programs to be performed specifically for the leaders, and they do not need to busy themselves for their living like most of the Tibetan people. As people who have benefited after the Communist Party entered Tibet, they certainly have ample reason and fervour to praise the party who brought new life for them.

The host of the show called the troops stationed in the area after “March 14 Incident” [the rioting in Lhasa on March 14, 2008] with “the troops stationed and patrolling the area.” But their performance was completely another style that I do not think of as performance, but it is a kind of intimidation, which makes people feel horrified and disgusted. They “performed” the Chinese martial arts, various fistfights, using the

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various parts of one's body to break sticks, putting a few bricks on their bodies and smashing them with hammers and other various ways to subdue "bad guys" with shiny daggers... Their performances like these made the common people who came to watch them excited and scared as well. Every time when they performed an action which showed that their bodies were suffering, the spectators off the platform began to scream, and they were all worrying whether their bodies would be hurt or injured by the sticks. An old woman next to me prayed repeatedly and said, "Do not do this, why bother to do these things? It must hurt a lot. The Three Jewels bless these poor children." After the performance was over, the common people repeatedly wondered at the skills of these soldiers, and they, to some degree, held these soldiers in awe.

Ah, my compatriots, I am wondering whether you know that the cruel actions they performed on the stage today were specially "prepared" for us. My kind-hearted compatriots, when others were wantonly displaying the various means to torture us in our land, we not only did not feel it was intimidation or provocation; on the contrary, we worry about them, and appreciated it as an outstanding performance. My compatriots, the people who are really pitiful are ourselves.

Throughout the entire performance, those leaders were smiling. I do not know whether they did so to pose before the video cameras so as to serve as a foil to the ardent festival atmosphere or they were really satisfied with the performance today. They should be satisfied that their performance achieved the effect that they were hoping for.

When I carefully pondered over such a program which would be performed in every place in Tibetan areas and every holiday, and was a very common and very normal activity in Tibetan areas, I found that it reflected such a truth: On the big stage of Tibetan areas, most Tibetans who should be the main characters have passively become bystanders, but the directors and the main characters are a minority of Tibetans who represent the interest group who have benefited from the current system and the army and the government who represented the strong ruler from outside. The design of the stage, the arrangement of the content of the programs, the timing of the programs and the choice of the place are determined by these people. These two groups of people co-ordinated so well on the stage, and they praised and flattered each other. It seems that their relations are perfect, and they truly consider themselves to be main characters!

But, how about most of our Tibetan compatriots? Though we are not able to speak with our own voice in the main home field, we are marginalized in our land, we have become bystanders on the stage which should belong to us, and we have become a

powerless group in our own home, yet most of our people still do not feel anything at all, and are still muddleheaded. Even if some of them are aware of something, they are not willing to ponder the issue. Under the circumstances, don't they feel that they have no ability to save the desperate situation? Do they think it is better to feel the pleasant sensation when they are raped rather than resisting? Is it possible that they even fell in love with the rapist after being raped several times? Or isn't it that we have not plunged to the most pitiful situation yet? Or is it possible that our kind-hearted and compassionate hearts deceived our ability to think rationally?

During the entire performance, I have not heard anybody saying one Tibetan line on the stage, including the host, the actors and actresses.

I saw the Tibetans onstage in Tibetan robes decorated with tiger skins singing the so-called Tibetan songs in Chinese.

The performers were trying their best, the audience was having a great time, the leaders were satisfied with the performance, thus, everybody was happy.

I looked at them, then looked at myself. At that moment I wanted to cry.

#### *5 August, 2008 – The Olympics torch reaches Beijing*

When the torch relay reached Lhasa, Lhasa just experienced a “political earthquake” as well, unlike the torch relay in Chengdu where there were no traces left by the earthquake except a few minutes of standing in silent tribute. In the process of the torch relay in Lhasa one could feel everywhere that the impact of this political earthquake was far from fading away.

Even though the Lhasa authorities would like to try their best to display the enthusiastic scenes of the Tibetan people welcoming the arrival of the Olympic torch relay in Lhasa, one could still see the tense situation and anxiety of the holy city even in the TV broadcasts with skillful filming. One saw the armed police and troops guarding the area all the way as the torch relay went through as well as the torch bearers who functioned as political symbols. Except the starting point and the ending point where one would see some people, in other places along the way of the torch relay it was desolate without many people. In particular, the political speech full of provocations made by the Party Secretary Zhang show that the Lhasa people did not really welcome the torch relay, and even if they welcomed the torch relay, they did so with fear.

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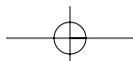
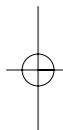
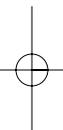
It is said that on the day when the torch relay took place in Lhasa, the common people were notified they were not allowed to go outdoors as they pleased. The groups of people on both sides of the streets welcoming the torch relay, as appeared on TV, were actually painstakingly arranged by the authorities. Those people were selected through much investigation many days in advance, then they were gathered together one day before the torch relay and were arranged to stay in designated hotels. The authorities checked the number of people and their names three times. On the day when the torch relay took place, at 4:00 am they were gathered together. After countless checks, they put on their robes and held the red flags in their hands as they were required to do so, then they were transported to the streets through which the torch relay would go, and would wait for the arrival of the torch relay under the supervision of the Chinese troops. Their task was to show the excitement and happiness of the Lhasa people in front of the Chinese people when the torch relay and the video cameras arrived.

If the torch bearers in Chengdu were to be criticized for having no conscience, then we should have more sympathy and feel more distressed for the Lhasa people.

The psychological and political “earthquake” will have greater damage than the geographical earthquake, and its impact will last longer.

I do not know whether the authorities thought of this.

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Untitled, by Sonam Lhundup (Samchung) [www.bodpa.com](http://www.bodpa.com)

## THE FIRE NEXT TIME IN TIBET

*By Wang Lixiong*

In this article published by China Digital Times, Chinese scholar and author Wang Lixiong discusses his 2000 prediction that the Tibetan people's frustrations were growing to the extent that large-scale protests to eclipse those of 1987 and 1989 centered in Lhasa were all but inevitable. Wang has long been a vocal advocate for direct negotiations on Tibet between the Dalai Lama and representatives of the Chinese government, and cites the Chinese authorities' stalling of progress in its dealings with the Dalai Lama as a major factor behind the protests in 2008.

Having predicted the protests that eventually broke out in 2008, Wang goes on to predict that the Dalai Lama's eventual passing will lead to yet another round of serious protest which in turn will eclipse those of 2008, unless substantive progress is made in negotiations between Beijing and the Dalai Lama on the future status of Tibet.

In the May 2008 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Columbia University contemporary Tibet expert Robert Barnett wrote—in response to the widespread belief that no one foresaw March's Lhasa riot and subsequent region-wide unrest—that Chinese intellectual Wang Lixiong had predicted the uprising. According to Barnett: "In 1998 Wang wrote that Tibet is materially better-off than at anytime in its history. But this has not bought the Communist Party Tibetans' good faith. On the contrary more and more people are turning toward the Dalai Lama... The present stability is superficial. There will come a day when people will participate in insurrections larger than those of 1987 and 1989."

I came to understand that Chinese police shared my conviction at that time. They were in fact more accurate than Robert, because I had written that essay in 2000 – not 1998. It was entitled: "The Dalai Lama is the Key to Resolving the Tibet Problem." But the Chinese police did not discuss this with me at the time. Their responsibility is to suppress unrest, not analyze its cause. But I again predict: The next time there is unrest in Tibet, it will be larger than that of the spring of 2008.

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I can even predict the timing of the next uprising in Tibet: If the Dalai Lama dies without returning to Tibet or without there being significant progress in the situation in Tibet, his death will be like a clear signal to the people of Tibet to rise up en masse. And China's massive repression apparatus has no means of stopping this. It requires no formal organization or planning on the part of Tibetans, this sense of solidarity cannot be expunged through punitive measures.

All those who understand Tibet know that the Dalai Lama's fate is like a wound in every Tibetan's heart. As Tibetan Buddhism's spiritual leader, this bodhisattva [an enlightened being who seeks rebirth in order to help others] has made tremendous sacrifices. He has relinquished the demand for independence, and just desires a high degree of autonomy to preserve Tibet's unique culture and religion. But to these modest conditions the Chinese government has responded with unceasing humiliation. They have not permitted the Dalai Lama to return to his birthplace, not permitted him to meet his people who have waited a whole lifetime to see him. In this way they will be parted forever by death. This kind of pain is incomparable. While the Dalai Lama is still alive, no matter how many obstacles are encountered, Tibetans harbour hope. But once the Dalai Lama dies, this hope will be replaced by despair, anger will outweigh fear, grief will give rise to frenzy. For these reasons the next uprising will be extremely fierce. The scope will be broader, the affected area greater, and the number of participants larger than those of spring 2008. And it will not be possible to pacify it in a short period of time.

Masses rising up at the death of a leader is a known phenomenon in China. The protests and subsequent crackdown in Tiananmen Square on April 5, 1976 followed the death of Premier Zhou Enlai. The April 1989 death of Hu Yaobang led to the bloody events in Tiananmen Square on June 4. If the Chinese government wants to avoid another insurrection in Tibet, the only solution is to make progress, and ideally have a breakthrough, on the Tibet problem before the Dalai Lama dies.

### **The Cry of Tibet**

*By Wang Lixiong*

The following piece, translated by the noted scholar Perry Link and published originally in the *Wall Street Journal* on March 28, 2009, is a comprehensive but concise analysis of the situation in Tibet in the immediate wake of the March 2008 protests, as well as a repeat of Wang Lixiong's call for substantive dialog on the future of Tibet. Wang also calls on the Chinese authorities to realize the role that the Dalai Lama has in ensuring a lasting solution to the situation in Tibet.

The recent troubles in Tibet are a replay of events that happened two decades ago. On Oct. 1, 1987, Buddhist monks were demonstrating peacefully at the Barkor – the famous market street around the central cathedral in Lhasa – when police began beating and arresting them. To ordinary Tibetans, who view monks as "treasures," the sight was intolerable – not only in itself, but because it stimulated unpleasant memories that Tibetan Buddhists had been harboring for years.

A few angry young men then began throwing stones at the Barkor police station. More and more joined, and then they set fires, overturned cars and began shouting "Independence for Tibet!" This is almost exactly what we saw in Lhasa two weeks ago. The fundamental cause of these recurrent events is a painful dilemma that lives inside the minds of Tibetan monks. When the Chinese government demands that they denounce their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, monks are forced to choose between obeying, which violates their deepest spiritual convictions, and resisting, which can lead to loss of government registry and physical expulsion from monasteries.

From time to time monks have used peaceful demonstrations to express their anguish. When they have done this, an insecure Chinese government, bent on "annihilating unstable elements" in the "emergent stage," has reacted with violent repression. This, in turn, triggers violence from Tibetans.

In recent decades, the Chinese government's policy for pacifying Tibet has been to combine the allure of economic development on the one hand with the threat of force on the other. Experience has shown that this approach does not work.

The most efficient route to peace in Tibet is through the Dalai Lama, whose return to Tibet would immediately alleviate a number of problems. Much of the current ill will, after all, is a direct result of the Chinese government's verbal attacks on the Dalai Lama, who, for Tibetan monks, has an incomparably lofty status. To demand that monks denounce him is about as practical as asking that they vilify their own parents. It should be no surprise that beatings of monks and closings of monasteries naturally stimulate civil unrest, or that civil unrest, spawned in this way, can turn violent.

Why aren't these simple truths more obvious? Phuntsog Wanggyal, a Tibetan now retired in Beijing who for years was a leading Communist official in Tibet, has observed that a doctrine of "anti-splittism" has taken root among Chinese government officials who deal with religion and minority affairs, both in central offices in Beijing and in Tibet. Having invested their careers in anti-splittism, these people cannot admit that the idea is mistaken without losing face and, they fear, losing their own power and position as well.

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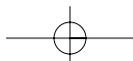
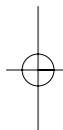
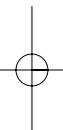
Their ready-made tag for everything that goes wrong is "hostile foreign forces" – an enemy that justifies any kind of harsh or unreasoning repression. When repeated endlessly, anti-splittism, although originally vacuous, does take on a kind of solidity. Careers are made in it, and challenging it becomes impossible.

I am a supporter of the Dalai Lama's "middle way," meaning autonomy for Tibet in all matters except foreign affairs and national defense. This arrangement eventually would have to mean that Tibetan people select their own leaders – and that would be a major change from the way things are now. Tibet is called an "autonomous region," but in fact its officials are all named by Beijing, and are all tightly focused on their own personal interests and the interests of the Communist Party. Tibetans can clearly see the difference between this kind of government and self-rule, and there is no way that they will support bogus autonomy.

It follows – even if this is a tall order – that the ultimate solution to the Tibet problem must be democratization of the Chinese political system itself. True autonomy cannot come any other way.

It is time for the Chinese government to take stock of why its long-term strategy in Tibet has not worked, and to try something else. The old problems remain, and they are sure to continue, perhaps in places like the "Uighur Autonomous Region" of Xinjiang, if a more sensible approach is not attempted.

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A performer in a traditional monastic dance ceremony in eastern Tibet. Cham dances are usually performed on the occasion of important religious festivals and anniversaries. This image was taken during the Sungma Düchen or 'Buddhist Protectors' Festival' at Gonchen monastery in Derge, Kham. (Photo: ICT)

## A SHEET OF PAPER CAN BECOME A KNIFE

*By Woese*

A sheet of paper can become a knife  
– A rather sharp one, too.  
I was only turning the page  
When the ring finger of my right hand got sliced at the knuckle.  
Though small, the sudden wound oozed blood,  
A thread as fine as silk, and stung a little.  
Startling transformation,  
From paper into knife:  
There must have been some mistake, or  
Some kind of turning point.  
This ordinary paper ... a chill of awe.

October 16, 2007  
Beijing

From *Tibet's True Heart*, transl. A. E. Clark