

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



August 2011

Lobsang Sangay takes oath of office as Kalon Tripa of the Central Tibetan Administration



Crip Screengrab via UStream

Kalon Tripa Dr. Lobsang Sangay delivers his acceptance speech at Tsuglag Khang, Dharamsala India.

Lobsang Sangay was sworn in on Monday 8 August 2011 as head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Dr. Sangay has been formally appointed Kalon Tripa at a ceremony presided by the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India, where the exiled CTA is based.

Dr. Sangay became the first person in Tibetan history to hold higher political authority than the Dalai Lama. Since his election as the new Kalon Tripa, Lobsang Sangay has said he would follow the Dalai Lama's middle way approach of seeking a "genuine autonomy" for Tibet within Chinese borders. In his inaugural speech (see: <http://tinyurl.com/3g3cvos>) he said that he would strive to communicate with China's civil society and government in order to

"resolve differences peacefully, based on mutual interest". He reiterated that his term's primary objective would be to restore freedom for Tibetans and to allow the Dalai Lama to return to his homeland. He said that he would work to fulfill the 14th Dalai Lama's vision "to create a truly secular democratic society."

Representatives of the international community sent congratulations to Lobsang Sangay on his inauguration

as democratically elected leader (see: <http://tinyurl.com/3m2qpw7>). Italian MP and co-chair of the International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet (INPaT), Mr. Matteo Meccacci, attended the oath ceremony along with MEP Eva Lichtenberger, member of the European Parliament's Intergroup on Tibet. ■

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“Spiritual Reunion” as Dalai Lama meets US President Obama



President Obama meets with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the Map Room of the White House, Saturday, July 16, 2011.

On Saturday 16 July US President Barack Obama met with the Dalai Lama in the Map Room of the White House. The Dalai Lama described the tone of the meeting as a “spirit of reunion”.

This was the second meeting between President Obama and the Dalai Lama at the White House and reflected the US’ long history with Tibet and its role in promoting human rights and the unique linguistic, cultural and religious identity of Tibetan people. The meeting took place before the Dalai Lama concluded his 10-day visit to Washington D.C. where he has been presided over a major Buddhist teaching, the Kalachakra (see: <http://www.kalachakra2011.com>). During his visit, the Dalai Lama met with Speaker of the House John Boehner, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as well as other officials and dignitaries.

The White House released a statement (see : <http://tinyurl.com/3fr2wd9>) following the President’s meeting with His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama, where the President reiterated his strong support for the preservation of the religious, cultural and linguistic traditions of Tibet and Tibetan people throughout the world, as well as the importance of the

protection of human rights of Tibetans in China. While stating that U.S. policy recognizes Tibet as a part of the People’s Republic of China and that the U.S. does not support independence for Tibet, the President encouraged direct dialogue between Chinese and Tibetans to resolve long-standing differences and produce mutual positive results. The Dalai Lama referred to the “close friendship” between the two Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and explained that as President of a democratic country, Obama naturally shows genuine concern about suffering in Tibet and other places. The Dalai Lama also briefed the US President on his decision to devolve political power to a democratically elected leadership.

While President Obama was meeting the Dalai Lama, Lhasa was practically sealed off and religious practices curtailed as the Chinese authorities sought to enforce the latest round of official commemorations of the anniversary of the “peaceful liberation” of Tibet. Moreover, China’s next top leader Xi Jinping was set to visit

Tibet to attend the official ceremony in Lhasa and conduct a major official visit throughout Tibet. Beijing reacted angrily to the Obama-Dalai Lama meeting and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement declaring that the U.S. had “grossly interfered” in China’s internal affairs and the meeting damaged Sino-US relations and hurt the feelings of Chinese people. However, only days later Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi in Bali and according to media and diplomatic statements this meeting went smoothly. According to Chinese media, Secretary Clinton told Foreign Minister Yang that the United States “understands the sensitivity of the Tibet and Taiwan issues” and “adheres to one-China policy and respects China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”. Clinton avoided characterizing Tibet and Taiwan as China’s “core issues”, the terminology preferred by Beijing. To date, there is no evidence of direct diplomatic or economic consequences of the Dalai Lama meeting. ■

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New US Ambassador to China



Ambassador Gary Locke

On 27 July the United States Senate confirmed Gary Locke as the new U.S. Ambassador to China, the first Chinese American to represent the United States in the homeland of his grandparents, who moved to the United States from China in the 1890s. He was approved unanimously without a vote. In March he was nominated to take office in China and at his confirmation hearing in May he said that he would clearly and firmly advocate for upholding universal rights in China.

Although Gary Locke doesn't have a long history on Tibet, hints on his views can be gained from answers given to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (see: <http://tinyurl.com/3ho3aq2>). Locke explained that traveling to Tibetan areas is a priority for the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and that he will be pressing Chinese authorities to relax restrictions on movement in and out Tibet. He committed to work closely with the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues and her office to ensure that Tibetan issues are raised frequently and candidly with China's leaders as well as support further the dialogue between China and representatives of the Dalai Lama.

Interestingly, on 20 July the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee passed a Foreign Relations Authorization Act including provisions whereby China cannot build new consulates in the United States until it allows a U.S. consulate in Lhasa, Tibet. The legislation directs the State Department to pursue a consulate in Lhasa "to provide services to United States citizens traveling in Tibet and to monitor political, economic, and cultural developments in Tibet, including Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces." It stipulates that "until such consulate is established, [the Department] shall not permit the establishment in the United States of any additional consulate of the People's Republic of China." The bill would establish a Tibet Section at the U.S. embassy in Beijing to monitor "political, economic, and social developments inside Tibet... until such time as a United States consulate is established in Lhasa." ■

See also:

- ▶ Article by Robbie Barnett: <http://www.thechinabeat.org/?p=3626>
- ▶ Article by Kate Sander: <http://tinyurl.com/3efx63c>
- ▶ ICT Blog, Todd Stein: <http://tinyurl.com/3jcvqbf>
- ▶ ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/3bbvgcy>

Demonstrations in Kardze: new information and updates

A new wave of demonstrations has taken place in Kardze in eastern Tibet despite an already intense crackdown in the region. The demonstrations took place during the holiest month of the Tibetan calendar, coinciding with Saga Dawa, one of the most important religious festivals celebrated in Tibet, marking the anniversary of the Buddha's birth, death and enlightenment. During this period it is believed that good deeds and prayers are multiplied, which may have been a motivating factor for the Tibetans who demonstrated.

On the main day of Saga Dawa, 15 June, 37-year old monk Ngawang Lobsang staged a solo demonstration on the main street of Kardze County town in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province (the Tibetan area of Kham) at around 7 am. He called for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and threw leaflets into the air. On detention,

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Tibetan writer Tashi Rabten sentenced to four years in Ngaba

On 2 June 2011, young writer Tashi Rabten was sentenced to four years in prison by the Ngaba Intermediate People's Court on charges linked to a collection of bold essays on the unrest and crackdown in Tibet since 2008. Rabten is the editor of the banned literary magazine *Eastern Snow Mountain* (Shar Dungri).

His sentencing follows that of three other Tibetan intellectuals who wrote powerful essays for Shar Dungri (see: <http://tinyurl.com/6axol2l>). The journal was quickly banned by Chinese government authorities, but not before copies had circulated in areas of Qinghai and Gansu provinces and beyond. The writers of Shar Dungri are from Ngaba, and it was funded by local businesspeople.

Tashi Rabten's sentence follows more than a year in detention during which his whereabouts and wellbeing were unknown. He was set to graduate from the Northwest Nationalities University in Lanzhou before his detention in April 2010. He established Shar Dungri, in which a group of young Tibetan intellectuals associated with the Northwest Nationalities University, known for their progressive and secularist views, wrote about the situation in Tibet following the 2008 unrest and subsequent crackdown. Rabten and his fellow editors wrote in the introduction that it was "a sketch of history written in the blood of a generation." Rabten also co-authored a collection of essays, titled "Written in Blood," addressing the situation in Tibet since 2008. He was detained for a temporary period in July 2009 before his subsequent arrest on 6 April 2010. ■

See also:

- ▶ ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/3vqa9sa>



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he was severely beaten by police. On 17 June 2011 two monks of Khangmar monastery in eastern Tibet staged a peaceful demonstration calling on the Chinese government to respect human rights in Tibet. Reliable information gathered from exiled monks in India confirmed that Rinchen Gyatso and Lama Tsering took the street in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) and raised a series of slogans such as "long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama", "ensure human rights in Tibet" and "invite Kalon Tripa Lobsang Sangay to Tibet". They were immediately detained and forcibly taken away by the police.

At least 30 Tibetans, including some senior monks, nuns and laypeople, have been detained in at least 15 separate peaceful demonstrations calling for freedom, the release of local and respected religious teachers, and for the Dalai Lama to return home. The incidents, carried out with the knowledge that violent reprisals and imprisonment are certain on detention, indicate the strength of Tibetans' determination to express themselves and protect their cultural and religious identity despite the dangers of doing so.

A Tibetan in exile who is in contact with Tibetans in the region told ICT: "The current security situation in Kardze is extremely tense, with Kardze County town completely locked down by paramilitary forces who have set up so many checkpoints - there's one at every road junction. Pedestrians have to show their household registration and their identity cards, as well as a document issued by the local government saying that you have permission to travel from one given place to another, and where you were born and where you are staying."

On 1 July the International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet (INPaT) released a statement urging China to end repression against peaceful protesters in Eastern Tibet (see: <http://tinyurl.com/3pcb5uv>). INPaT expressed its deep concern about the continuing arrests of Tibetans, including nuns and youths, who took the street to openly express their grievances and asking for human rights to be restored in Tibet and for the Dalai Lama to return to his homeland. ■

See also:

- ▶ CTA website: <http://tinyurl.com/3oj9gew>
- ▶ ICT Report: <http://tinyurl.com/6d7dum6>

Tibetan monk dies of self-immolation during Protest



Tsewang Norbu, 29, was identified as the monk who died by self-immolation.

In a second reported self-immolation this year, Tsewang Norbu, a 29 year old Tibetan monk from Nyitso monastery in Kardze, Kham, Eastern Tibet died on August 15 after setting himself on fire to protest Chinese rule in Tibet. Tsewang was heard calling slogans for freedom in Tibet and the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet, before setting himself alight. State media confirmed that Tsewang Norbu had been swiftly cremated on Wednesday 17 August, evidence that the Kardze Party Secretary's instructions for a prompt cremation were followed. Troops have surrounded Tsewang Norbu's monastery, an important historic center of Tibetan religious culture, and there are fears for the safety of the monks and local people. ■

See also:

- ▶ <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/tibet-news/tibetan-monk-dies-self-immolation-protest>

China's next top leader Xi Jinping visits Tibet

China's Vice President Xi Jinping, who will likely take over as president next year, visited Lhasa to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the 17-point agreement between China and Tibet in 1951.

Xi has emphasized the "fight against separatist activities by the Dalai clique" in his visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region, which has been closed to tourists and under tight lockdown. The visit took place in an atmosphere of fear and tension, with a number of Tibetans being detained in Lhasa prior to the arrival of the Chinese Vice-President on Sunday 17 July 2011.

Xi presided over a ceremony in Lhasa on 19 July to mark the anniversary of what Beijing characterizes as "the peaceful liberation" of Tibet. In a speech made in front of the Potala Palace, the Dalai Lama's former home and seat of the former Tibetan government, Xi Jinping reiterated the current hard-line position of the Chinese government on Tibet, emphasizing the importance of "the fight against separatist activities by the Dalai clique by firmly relying on all ethnic groups... and [the need to] completely smash any plot to destroy stability in Tibet and jeopardise national unity" according to reports in the state media. ("Full text of speech by Xi Jinping at Tibet's peaceful liberation anniversary conference," Xinhua, 19 July 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/3vbp366>).

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Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping (3rd R Front) attends the celebration conference marking the 60th anniversary of the 17-point agreement in Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, July 19, 2011.

According to local accounts of events in Lhasa, security in the city was high. People not involved in the official events were “not allowed on the streets” and had to stay at home, according to information posted on Twitter by the Beijing-based Tibetan writer Woeser, while tricycle rickshaw drivers were compensated for the time they had to be off the streets. In May 2011, Hu Jintao presided over the same celebrations and delivered a similar hardline message as Xi.

According to Claude Arpi (see: <http://tinyurl.com/43rpdnm>), this visit was important for several reasons. Xi will likely be taking over from Hu Jintao as president of the PRC in March 2012 and will cover other leadership posts both in the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party. Xi also has a strong past connection with Tibet through his father Xi Zhongxun, who was responsible for Tibetan affairs in the 1980s. Arpi stressed that this visit was unusual as it didn't coincide with the 60th anniversary date of the signature of the 17-point agreement (23 May) and that Xi's visit to Lhasa was the second occasion to celebrate the event. It is rare in the annals of the PRC that a second celebration is organized nearly two months after the anniversary day.

It has also been noted that Gyaltzen Norbu, the Panchen Lama selected by Beijing, did not appear beside Xi during the celebrations. This could be considered as a small but significant gesture, showing some acknowledgement that most Tibetans do not recognize the legitimacy of the candidate selected by the central Chinese government. ■

See also:

- ▶ ICT Report: <http://tinyurl.com/44g19jc>
- ▶ Article by Claude Arpi: <http://tinyurl.com/43rpdnm>

“What China could learn from the Dalai Lama”, Op-ed by elected Kalon Tripa, Lobsang Sangay, published in the Washington Post, 5 July 2011

Wednesday, on his 76th birthday, His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be honored at Verizon Center by 11,000 people, including Arun Gandhi and Martin Luther King III, the grandson and son of the two stalwarts of nonviolence. This spring, when people put their lives on the line for democracy during the Jasmine Revolution, with Col. Moammar Gaddafi still shedding blood to hold on to power in Libya, and despite impassioned appeals by Tibetans, the Dalai Lama devolved all his political power to democratically elected Tibetan leaders. That means that the Dalai Lama gave up his constitutional power to dismiss the Tibetan parliament, judiciary and executive; to sign or veto bills; to summon emergency meetings; and to appoint representatives and envoys abroad.

The decision of the 14th Dalai Lama to end the 400-year reign as the Tibetan people's political leader shocked many Tibetans and the world at large. But this development was neither abrupt nor surprising. In fact, it was a long time in coming. For decades, the Dalai Lama had been quietly dismantling the traditional theocratic-aristocratic system of his position and preparing Tibetans for the day he would not be at the helm. The Dalai Lama's democratic changes began as early as 1954, with the establishment of a reform committee to exempt poor farmers and indigent Tibetans from heavy taxes. But the committee was disrupted by the invading forces of Communist China.

After Tibet was occupied, the Dalai Lama arrived in India in 1959. His vision of a secular democratic society began to be realized. In 1960, at the behest of the then-25-year-old Dalai Lama, Tibetans elected their first parliament;

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soon, Tibetan women were elected as representatives. Tibet's first democratic constitution, adopted in 1963, included, at his insistence, a provision to allow for the impeachment of the Dalai Lama. In 1991, amid the "Third Wave" of democracy, the Tibetan parliament was expanded and empowered to elect the cabinet, which had been the prerogative of the Dalai Lama as the head of state. In 2001, on the eve of the "color revolutions" in Eastern Europe, the Dalai Lama declared himself semi-retired and introduced direct election of the head of the cabinet (known as Kalon Tripa, the position is equivalent to prime minister). Samdhong Rinpoche won with 90 percent of the votes.

This past March, after delegating all his political powers to elected leaders, the Dalai Lama rejected an appeal to stay on as the nominal head of state. Tibet's constitution, which guides primarily the exile administration, was ratified to reflect the new state of affairs. The Kalon Tripa, as the legitimate political leader of the administration, now signs bills into law, appoints representatives and envoys, and implements major policies. This transition doubtless has been a source of

anxiety for many Tibetans. This moment, however, also provides an opportunity to work toward a more secular, stronger and sustainable Tibetan freedom movement. For Tibetans, this is uncharted territory. But there are indications that Tibetans are gearing up to accept the new challenges. The Dalai Lama's power transfer was accompanied by an unprecedented election on March 20, when Tibetans in 30 countries — from Asia to Europe to North America and beyond — cast ballots to elect a new Kalon Tripa and members of parliament. Tibetans in Tibet followed this historic election closely; the process demonstrated the indomitable spirit and resilience of the Tibetan people. The election sent a clear message to Beijing that leadership of the Tibetan freedom movement has been entrusted to a younger generation that will build on the legacy and hard work of their elders over the past five decades. The Dalai Lama's retirement from politics also proves wrong the Chinese government's propaganda that the Dalai Lama is not a religious figure but a politician.

It is a pity that the Chinese Communist Party is obsessed with the Dalai Lama's

political role and resorts to the blame game, when China's primary concern should be the future of Tibet and its people. Meanwhile, confusion abounds in Tibet about the Dalai Lama's role thanks to the lack of information and transparency. This moment poses a test for the authoritarian regime in China. Tibet has endured 50 years of rule by force. The current state of affairs in Tibet — undeclared martial law, with ongoing protests in Kirti and Kardze and a ban on tourists — shows that Beijing's rule in Tibet has failed. Instead of hosting indicted war criminals such as Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in the Great Hall, Beijing's leadership has a golden opportunity to prove its sincerity, garner good will and improve the image of China if it would, as the Dalai Lama devolved his political authority, devolve its power to Tibetans to resolve the issue of Tibet.

Whatever happens, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has proven that he is a democrat. ■

To see the original article, see <http://tinyurl.com/3g6scent>

Thousands enthrone the Dalai Lama's portrait in Tibet



His Holiness the Dalai Lama's life-size portrait being enthroned in eastern Tibet at a large religious gathering.

Monks and nuns from over 100 monasteries in eastern Tibet gathered for the 4th Jang Gunchoe Chenmo held at Kham Lithang Gonchen from July 15-25, 2011.



A religious gathering of over 5000 people in eastern Tibet violated Chinese government orders and publicly enthroned a portrait of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama with full religious ceremonial gaiety. Read the full story at: <http://tinyurl.com/3ot5p9m> ■

This number's reading suggestion

Clichés tibétains

By Françoise Robin

Françoise Robin supervised a team of Tibetan specialists to collect the best and widest range of information and sources to explain and dismantle certain "clichés" and misinterpretations about the people of Tibet. This book helps to improve our understanding and vision of Tibet, its people and culture. Moreover, it steps aside from an either pros- or cons- Tibetan attitude, while trying to provide an objective and documented approach on different questions regarding Tibet.

Françoise Robin is "maître de conférences" at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris, France, and a specialist of Tibet. She was the editor of the section "Contemporary Tibetan Literature" for the French magazine *Siècle 21* (number 18, March 2011) and is the author of several translations into French of Tibetan texts and novels. ■

See also:

► <http://tinyurl.com/42wjss4>

Upcoming Events

- **13-15 August 2011:**
Dalai Lama's visit to France (Toulouse)
- **16-20 August 2011:**
Dalai Lama's visit to Estonia and Finland
- **6-7 September 2011:**
EU-China Human Rights Seminar, Beijing
- **10-11 September 2011:**
11th Tibet and Himalaya Festival in Paris (pagode du Bois de Vincennes)
- **15-18 September 2011:**
International Conference, "The Growing Prominence of China on the World Stage: Exploring the Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations of China and Global Stakeholders", Berlin, Germany
- **25 October 2011:**
EU-China Summit (Tianjin)