

རེག་གོང་།

Regong

Chinese: Tongren Xian

同仁县



roll/neg: 35:1

subject: wide angle view of town

location: 'Thünring' ཐུན་རིང་།, capital of Malho མ་ལོ། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön མཚོ་སྒྲུང་།

note: traditional Tibetan name, Regong རེག་གོང་།

[Ch: Tongren 同仁, Huangnan 黄南 TAP, Qinghai Province]

approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: The central, new area of the town is completely planned. Other sections have large Tibetan neighborhoods and 'Regong' Gönpa, an important monastery. An old Chinese temple and walls of a Qing garrison are near the river. The countryside is solidly Tibetan, though many Chinese live in the town. Official 1990 statistics reported county population as 68,350, with almost 82% Tibetan.
(Viewed from the east.)

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a. **Thünring (Traditional Tibetan: Regong) [Ch: Tongren] (Prefectural Capital)**

i. **Brief description and impressions**

Regong རེག་གོང་།, or Thünring ཐུན་རིང་། according to the new Tibetanized-Chinese name used officially, is the capital of Malho TAP (Ch. Huangnan TAP) and lies 194 kilometers by road from Xining on a tributary of the Yellow River inside the Yellow River's Great Bend. For centuries this fertile area has been known to both the Tibetans and the Chinese as the region "south of the Yellow River". The TAP now bears this name, "Malho" མཎལོ་ in Tibetan and "Huangnan" 黄南 in Chinese. From Xining, a good paved road turns south at Pingan, ascends to a pass just above the Yellow River valley, crosses the Yellow River near Chentsa གཙུག་ཚེ། (Ch. Jianza 尖扎), then heads due south again for about sixty kilometers to reach Regong. Tongren 同仁, the Chinese county-name by which the capital town is more widely known, is an easy six-hour drive from Xining, and a route well serviced by public and private minibuses. The landscape is beautiful, and the climate relatively mild. No natural obstacles, nor communications difficulties, discourage immigrants from coming to Regong.

Similarities unite all the Chinese colonial towns in Tibetan areas, but each place still tends to have its own particular features deriving from landscape or history. They duplicate a familiar pattern of colonial settlement: the original foundation with transport, food supply, control forces and construction facilities; a succeeding stage of more developed economic infrastructure including tax offices, higher density residential blocks, and government-run commercial goods stores; and finally the latest stage of big new banks, private shops and more grandiose government and CCP premises. Like the Tsolho TAP capital Chabcha, though on a smaller scale, Regong has obviously been developed by the Chinese as a model colonial town. It is neatly laid out, full of new buildings, many schools and a busy economic sector. Ethnic tensions are not an openly-expressed or sensed feature of the town's atmosphere. It has an obvious Tibetan population, but many are sinicized in appearance. Since 1990 new construction has increased dramatically. The new town is dominated by banks and various types of government economic units, especially tax offices. Slogans throughout the town heavily stress economic themes, particularly paying taxes. These days the town is a lively place, the seat of active commerce, both private and governmental. An impression of friendliness is received almost constantly.

But unlike Chabcha, Regong is also a town related to a monastery, or rather a group of monasteries. The famous 'Regong Gönpa', formally named Rongwogön Dechen Chökhör Ling, stands within the southern outskirts of the town, against the western hills that run along the town's edge. A few kilometers from the northern approach to the town are two more gönpas, Sengge Shongmago Gönpa and a subsidiary monastery, Gedan Phuntsog Chöling. Regong township itself is in a sense not one town, but two. The upper section through which the highway passes composes the "new" town center, constructed in the later phase of Communist colonization. This section has now absorbed the original Tibetan village that stood at the foot of Regong Gönpa, although it remains the town's largest Tibetan neighborhood. The original town Longwuzhen 隆务镇, still the municipal name for the town, lies below, along the river [see photo 35:1, p. 2118], and as a settlement with a Chinese component dates from the Qing Dynasty's construction of a garrison post here in the latter part of the 19th Century. The Communists' early installations of colonial control and administration were built here from the 1950's, inserted into the fabric of a functioning monastic circle and small but active civic settlement. Regong town's historical background has helped preserve it from the serious cultural void which unfortunately exists in Chabcha. Regong's chances of resisting total sinicization are therefore higher.

The newer section of the town contains organs of prefectural control and administration, most of the county-level equivalents, several schools, and the principal commercial scenes of activity. The central streets are decidedly Chinese in appearance and content. In the street along the base of the western hills is the prefecture's command sector: the recently-built CCP and Government headquarters, PSB and Procuratorate and the PLA's facilities [see photo 35:10, p. 2147]. The PAP compound lies on the edge of the new town at its northern end, in closer proximity to the outlying prison. The County Government and most of its agencies are on the same street as the PAP. Larger-scale commercial fixtures such as department stores and the Kanglo covered market, as well as an abundance of banks, compose the rest of the central townscape. Out on the southern outskirts of the town stands the fenced plot of the Martyrs' Cemetery, commemorating Chinese and any others who died in the cause of advancing Chinese socialism in Regong. Visiting the new section of Regong, there is no doubt that the Chinese state has created it and is directing it.

Nevertheless, a distinctly Tibetan section flourishes along the secondary north-south street of the town overlooking the river valley. Tibetan goods, shops and street stalls, teashops and hotels line both sides of the road, while the street is full of visiting rural Tibetans, their horses tied to handy telephone poles. Some of the

traders here are Chinese and Hui, but some are Tibetan. The street leads down to Regong Gönpa's eastern boundary, where the formal Chinese colonial development half a kilometer away seems suddenly irrelevant.

The old town, too, is a section apart. Lying between the river and the bluff above on which the newer town is located, much of the old town, Longwuzhen, is a densely built agglomeration of traditional wooden houses, mostly old. Much of the area is residential, a bonafide neighborhood of mixed Tibetan, Hui and Chinese ethnicity. Like Zungchu in Ngawa TAP, the population represents a mixed historical past, albeit a colonial one, not just a modern migrant influx. Old public structures as well as residences remain. These include a Hui mosque and Chinese Buddhist temple, the Erlangmiao 二郎庙, both decorated with fine woodwork and both still functioning. The south end where the mosque stands is heavily dominated by Hui. Stretching across the mid-section of the town under the bluff are the crenellated walls of a Qing-dynasty fortress, surprisingly intact, including its corner towers with gun ports (suggesting it was active in the late Qing, perhaps constructed during the Moslem Rebellion 1852-78 or the later Moslem uprisings of 1893-96, or the Tibetan anti-Qing conflict of 1875). Early-phase Communist buildings, some residential blocks and hospital and school compounds, the Municipal Government, and some county-level compounds are here, including the County PSB, Court and Procuratorate.

Substantial Tibetan neighborhoods lie to the north and south of the new town as well as across the river. Local farmers cultivate the valley and some higher terraced fields, as well as graze animals in the hills. The majority are Tibetan but some Hui also live in the village across the river. Empty fields in the valley indicate that some land is still available for cultivation, and there is ample room for urban or industrial expansion. These factors may provide an incentive for agricultural immigrants to move to Regong from the more crowded countryside north of the Yellow River - a mere hour and a half's drive. Such agricultural immigration, when it occurs, is the least welcome and most serious in Tibetan eyes. It means a loss of the land itself, as well as a Chinese advance beyond the towns and cities where Chinese usually live and where it is slightly easier for farmers to try to ignore them.

ii. **Historical background**

Long before either the Tibetans or the Chinese penetrated the region south of the Yellow River, it was inhabited by the Qiang people. During the 4th Century AD a group of nomadic tribes, the Tuyuhun, migrated from the area later known as Manchuria to the region of Tsongön. Coming into conflict with the Qiang there, the Tuyuhun

managed to break the Qiang's power and take over part of their territory, including the excellent pasturelands of Malho. Although the Qiang and the Tuyuhun later disappeared from Malho as distinct peoples, no doubt some of the Tibetans who live there today could claim a partial Qiang or Tuyuhun ancestry.

Historically the Chinese had made efforts to incorporate Malho into their empire, or at least to establish a controlling presence there. Both the Sui Dynasty and then the Tang Dynasty built forts and stationed garrisons at points on the Yellow River along the top of the Great Bend. None of these forts nor the soldier-settler colonies which were attached to some of them could withstand the Tibetan pressure once the region's main Chinese garrisons were withdrawn in 757 AD, and Chinese settlements from this period disappeared after the Tibetan conquest.

Tibetans first came to Malho in 638 AD, when they attacked first the Tuyuhun and Qiang of Malho and present-day Ngawa, then the Chinese garrison at Zungchu (then a Tang Chinese post, Songzhou 松州). Having thus alerted the Chinese to their power, the Tibetans asked for a Tang princess to be given in marriage to King Songtsan Gampo. The Chinese did send Princess Wencheng to Tibet in 641, but this and a subsequent marriage alliance did not cement peaceful relations, and the Tibetans and Chinese continued to contest Malho and parts of Amdo and Kham for more than a century. After the Tibetans overran the Tang Dynasty's western empire in the latter 8th Century, Malho became a politically Tibetan area. At first it was administered as part of the Tibetan Empire by military governors appointed from Lhasa, but when the Yarlung Dynasty collapsed around 845, these governors became independent local leaders.

Until the 20th Century, Malho remained essentially a Tibetan area administratively, culturally and demographically, with only intermittent periods of Mongol overlordship intervening in the political sphere. Probably at the end of the 19th Century, the Qing Dynasty extended the reach of their Xunhua Office to Regong, and built a fort there, which can still be seen today [see photo 43:15a, p. 2153]. Some Chinese and Hui settlers, traders, soldiers and officials moved into the Chinese enclave which grew up on the river flats below Regong Gönpa and its neighboring Tibetan village. The Chinese imperial government, while claiming a ritual allegiance from local Tibetan leaders, in actual practice had no effective control over them. For the first half of the 19th Century the Qing were engaged in a bitter struggle to prevent Tibetans from crossing to the north side of the Yellow River from Malho, where Chinese influence and settlement lay¹. Part of that section of the river forms

¹ *Qinghai lishi jiyao (Summary of Qinghai History)*, pp. 220-224

a contemporary boundary between Haidong Prefecture, which has no official Tibetan designation, and Malho TAP, thus still delineating the basic Sino-Tibetan divide.

The Nanjing Government of the Republic of China declared the founding of Qinghai Province in 1929, at the same time creating five counties, including “Tongren” at Regong, under the new provincial administration. Real control over much of Amdo, however, was increasingly in the hands of Ma Bufang’s warlord administration, destroyed only when the Communists’ forces marched into Qinghai Province during September 1949. From then on the CCP’s Northwest Military and Administrative Commission set about establishing a colonial administration over the whole of Amdo. Resistance to the Chinese in Malho continued until May 1952 in Chentsa, and into 1953 in the Henan Mongolian Autonomous County.

iii. **Current demography**

China’s 1990 National Population Census placed Regong’s county population at 68,349². Of this population, 47,462³ were recorded as Tibetan, a 69% share of the total. By 1994 the official population was listed as 67,400⁴, a decrease of 1.4% since 1990. Everything about the county and county town suggests a claim of shrinking population in this dynamic area should be treated with caution. Official statistics also report Qinghai Province itself grew by 6.35% over the same period⁵, yet not one area in the province, including Xining and Haidong, can be found which shows a similar growth rate [see Table 6 and Chart 6, pp. 59 and 61]. The more closely statistics are examined, the more they begin to appear as a curtain around areas of study rather than a window open for viewing.

² *China Population Statistics Yearbook 1990*

³ *Social and Economics Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1992*

⁴ *Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1995*

⁵ 1990 population was given as 4,456,946 in *China Population Statistics Yearbook 1990*; 1994 population was 4,740,000 according to the *Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1995*

In 1990, 7,477 people were recorded as ethnic Tu, 2,974 as Hui and over one hundred as Mongols, giving a total non-Chinese population of 87% for the County⁶. However, observation makes clear that the Chinese and Hui population of Regong County is higher than the combined 18% allowed by official figures. Additional demographic details for Regong can be found in Tables 12 and 23 [see pp. 175 and 1599] and Charts 49 and 49a [see pp. 2111 and 2112].

Outside the county towns, there is no question but that the main rural population is Tibetan. The pass above the Yellow River forms a clear divide between the overwhelmingly Tibetan area on the south side of the Yellow River, and the more mixed Hui, Chinese and Tibetan stretch between the Yellow River and Pingan which comes under the administration of Tsoshar (Ch. Haidong) Prefecture. A few Hui villages engaged in mixed farming and grazing still dot the countryside in the far north of Regong County, but beyond Regong township the only Hui are traders. Tibetan farmers and herders, including nomads, inhabit the good grazing lands around and south of Regong. Villages between Regong and the boundary with Sangchu (Ch. Xiahe) County in Kanlho TAP, Gansu Province, are exclusively and traditionally Tibetan except for the occasional Chinese or Hui shopkeeper.

Assessing the town population mix of Regong itself presents more difficulty, since many Tibetans there are quite sinicized in appearance. Tibetans are probably the largest component within the town, but by a relatively slim margin. Nevertheless, many Chinese and Hui also live in the town, and their numbers are growing. At present the Hui dominate private business except for the major department or foodstuff stores. In the old town, Tibetans and Hui apparently form a larger component of the residential population than the Chinese. This mix in the old town certainly has historical roots back to the late Qing Dynasty. More Chinese do business in the new town than the old.

Part of the Chinese and Hui population is itinerant, coming and going on the many daily minibuses between Xining and Regong. Road and transport connections along the short distances between Regong and the Hui and Salar counties of neighboring Tsoshar are also good, facilitating the penetration of Regong's market economy by Hui from these areas. If anything, the private Chinese immigrant presence in Regong is less pervasive than the Hui, but Chinese immigrants certainly come from as far away as Lanzhou, Chengdu, and Shaanxi Province, as shop names indicate.

⁶ *Social and Economics Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1992*

Direct or indirect government support is not necessary to effect a dilution of the Tibetan component of Regong's population. Current more open economic policies and Regong's easy proximity to Tsoshar (Ch: Haidong Prefecture), a region heavily populated by Hui and Chinese and experiencing some population pressures, by themselves facilitate economic immigration. It is in the Chinese State's interest to maintain the situation. Regong already represents the kind of development China would like to see in all TAP capitals, and county towns. Tibetans are there, but Chinese and Hui show signs of overwhelming them in the near future.

Relative population density in the four counties of Malho TAP provides a telling graph of the pattern of population growth in Tibetan areas. The closer to the heavily-populated Chinese and Hui areas the counties lie, the more dense are their populations. Population density in Chentsa is 28.3 persons/km²; 21.1 in Regong; 7 in Tsekhog; 4.3 in Yülgan. Chinese obviously prefer to migrate to areas closer to them, but are gradually filtering south.

iv. **Control and administrative apparatus**

(1) **CCP**

Control and administration are concentrated in pockets throughout Regong, in slightly different combinations among prefectural, county and municipal levels.

The highest director of operations is found in the street which runs along the western edge of the new town (Unity Road, Ch. Tuanjielu) [see photo 35:10, p. 2118]. The Prefectural Party and Discipline Inspection Committee are housed in Regong's grandest building, together with the Government. This recently completed edifice, in the familiar prefectural-level Chinese neo-imperial style, manifests the CCP's commanding role in Regong. Its control enforcement branches, the Prefectural PSB and Procuratorate, reside further down the same street, as do the PLA and the new Prefectural Guesthouse. The Prefectural CPPCC shares an older, 1980's building with the NPC in the center of town on Zhongshan Road.

(2) **government**

Malho's highest government institution, the Prefectural Government, is accommodated with the prefectural CCP apparatus in the town's most dominant building on the western edge of the new town. The Prefectural NPC, with the CPPCC, is in a more modest 1980's building in the town center. A glamorous high-rise Prefectural Guesthouse, the Huangnan Hotel, will have been completed late in 1995 on the prime site of the Zhongshan Road - Unity Road junction. The Regong County Government premises in Liberation Road (Ch. Jiefanglu) north of the town center come from an earlier period, probably the late-1970's-mid 1980's. Its authoritative but relatively spare architectural style is echoed in the County Government Hostel next door. The Municipal Government for Longwu township stands down in the old town, in an older building dating from the 1970's or early 1980's.

Support facilities for the implementation of government policy account for most of the blocks in the new town center. Bank premises abound, signifying anticipated economic development. The Agricultural Bank alone has four compounds. These include one modern four-story branch in the old town, a combined central branch and residential complex next door to the Prefectural CCP and Government in Unity Road, and two other branch buildings within the new town. The Construction Bank has three branches in the new town, and the People's Bank a twin compound including a new head branch building opened in 1995. A profusion of Tax Offices is on hand to direct dues from Regong's prosperity into state coffers. As well as separate quarters for the Local Tax Office, County Tax and Finance Office and Prefectural Tax Office, a brand new China Tax Office has recently been constructed. The old Government Hostel, a large though essentially unrenovated complex in Zhongshan Road, also houses the Tourist Development Company and the Tourist Office. The People's Insurance Company of China (PICC) has just moved into a surprisingly large new building. Great developments must be expected in Regong, to judge from such a high level of capital construction and official financing apparatus.

(3) **PAP**

The PAP presence in Regong is relatively modest for a prefectural capital, and particularly in one with a substantial Tibetan majority. The town's main PAP compound, probably county-level, of typical barracks and drilling yards lies on the northern edge of town at the end of Liberation Road. Another older PAP compound is just outside the town on the highway to Sangchu (Ch: Xiahe). The large detention facilities in the fields just north of town must also have a 'squadron' (Ch: zhongdui) of PAP prison guards.

(4) **PSB**

The Prefectural PSB enjoys a high profile in Regong, with quarters in the block of prefectural power, Unity Road, next door to the CCP and Government. Further south is the Procuratorate. The County PSB, County Procuratorate and County Court take up a long stretch of the main road in the old town under the shadow of the Qing fort walls. No PSB detention center was found nearby, although cell blocks may exist somewhere within this area.

(5) **known imprisonment and detention facilities**

A substantial prison or PSB Detention Center is isolated in the midst of agricultural fields near the north edge of town [see photo 35:35, p. 2149]. Two high-rise office or accommodation buildings in use by the PSB or PAP stand beside the prison compound itself. Official signing was not seen so precise function cannot be confirmed. The size of the prison precludes county-level status. Configuration, four separate cellblocks walled off from each other, is not typical of a PSB Detention Center. It is, however, roughly consistent with small labor camps seen at prefectural level in other capitals of TAP's. If the prison is a prefectural-level PSB Detention Center, it may serve as a 'shelter and investigation center', a use which would partially explain the separated cellblocks. The prison is ideally located to be an agricultural labor camp, with fields all around. However, no evidence was seen that prisoners are working the surrounding fields (all fields were all idle throughout the area). In the agricultural areas of Qinghai Province, especially Tsonub and Tsolho Prefectures (Ch: Haixi and Hainan), it is known there are numerous agricultural laogai. Given the importance of agriculture in Malho, there could be a prefectural-level agricultural labor camp somewhere near Tongren.

(6) **PLA**

The PLA maintains a full-scale base in Regong, as well as a large PLA Military Sub-Area Hostel. These extensive facilities are more typical of the PLA's presence in a TAP capital than their administrative office in Chabcha. The base consists of several modern administration buildings, as well as barracks, and space for transport and supply activities. As in other TAP's, the army's role is networking rather than hands-on control of the masses, now left to the PAP. The base in Regong provides a supply, administration and personnel depot so that the army can move fluidly and rapidly all over the prefecture. Since the early phase of colonization in Malho, when most of the foundation control and consolidation work was performed by the PLA, the army's presence has become more

aloof and less pervasive. Other State apparatus has taken over many of the more modern tasks of colonial development. Unlike Tibetan areas appended to Sichuan Province, no evidence was seen that the PLA are active in local resource exploitation.

v. **Economy**

Regong, despite having the prefecture's highest population and its dynamic capital town, does not have Malho's largest economy. Chentsa's 1994 GDP of 229 million Yuan far outstrips Regong's 141.3 million⁷. In a departure from the most common pattern in prefectural capitals, tertiary production, often dominated by the activities of government, is strikingly modest, insufficient to boost the county's economy to prefectural leadership. Primary production (67.8 million Y in 1994), which would include county farming and pastoralism but generally not resource extraction, was the largest component of GDP, surpassing the tertiary sector's 41 million Y and secondary industry's weak 32.6 million Y.⁸ In an even more unusual reversal of typical economic patterns, Regong's per capita GDP is the prefecture's lowest at 2,096 Yuan⁹ (1994). The county's large population, which exceeds the next largest by nearly half, no doubt contributes to the low per capita measure, but crediting county-level production to provincial State-level statistics could also play a role.

Modest levels of primary and secondary production in the presence of apparent wealth are often linked to China's statistical removal of natural resource extraction from county balance sheets and ranking of subsequent processing and manufacturing enterprises at prefectural, provincial or national level. Counties so affected may host considerable natural resource exploitation as well as processing or manufacture utilizing the raw materials, yet show none of the activity as having occurred in their local economies. Site observations consistently suggest distribution of resultant wealth follows suit, with provinces and the State being principal beneficiaries.

Additional economic details relevant to Regong can be found in Tables 9, 13 and 28 [see pp. 127, 184 and 2116] and Charts 14a, 15-18 and 50-51 [see pp. 122, 123-126 and 2113-2114].

⁷ *Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1995*

⁸ *Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1995*

⁹ *Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1995*

(1) **agriculture**

As a fertile agricultural and pastoral region, Malho has much to offer the Chinese State, starved for such resources in heartland China. Along the river valleys of Regong County the living standard of Tibetan farmers appears high compared to most agricultural areas in the TAR, though not rich. Village life remains simple, as farmers carry on mixed farming including cropping, some grazing, and the raising of chickens and, in more northerly areas, pigs. South and east of Regong township public transport or any public facilities become scarce. A very extensive block within the new part of Regong town is taken up by the Grain and Oil Office, showing that the State participates heavily in management of the agricultural sector. Prices paid to farmers for their grain crop are of course fixed by the State, rendering producing such crops an economic hardship despite its necessity. Unless farmers grow cash crops their income will not be greatly affected by growing demand. At this stage most agricultural land in Regong County is worked by Tibetans, as well as a smaller number of Hui and some Tu. The area's relative fertility and proximity to regions of Chinese settlement may make it attractive to Chinese farmers in the future. In the TAR, State-planned and funded agricultural programmes have brought Chinese farmers into Tibetan areas. Others have come as economic migrants. Similar possibilities exist in Regong.

(2) **pastoralism**

Outside the river valleys, Regong is pastoral country. The land offers excellent grazing. Large herds of yaks and goats tended by nomadic Tibetans may be seen particularly in the alpine grasslands east of Regong, before crossing the Qinghai-Gansu border into Sangchu County in Kanlho TAP, where some of the villages in the region consist of "settled nomads". The dreariest of these, Ganjiaxiang 甘加乡, composed of dull barrack-like dwellings with pens for animals on the settlement's edge, clearly illustrates the consequences of the settlement policy. The scheme of relocating nomads in fixed settlements has been enforced to some degree in most Tibetan areas, especially parts of Ngawa TAP, Tsonub M&TAP, Tsoelho TAP and Tsojang TAP. It is not popular with the nomads concerned. A certain resistance to the imposed change is apparent in the tenacity the settled nomads show in retaining their traditional dress. Once they lose control over their traditional way of life the land may be more easily put to other uses by the State. Regong County is a rich area, and the State would find greater control over it an attractive proposition.

Whereas the State has the largest role in channelling Tibetan flocks to markets, Hui Muslims have become extremely active in marketing various byproducts. Skin and hide are a favourite trading area, one which they have come to virtually control. Another is in the remnants of butchery. Truckloads of bones bought from local government abattoirs can be profitably peddled to distant producers of animal byproducts, often in the Xining or Haidong areas, where factories face tighter supplies and must pay higher prices [see photo, p. 2151].

(3) **natural resources exploitation**

To the north and immediate area surrounding Regong township, most land is used for agriculture and grazing. Further south and east along the highway to Sangchu conifer and poplar forests cover much of the landscape. A fair proportion of the roadside forest remains intact or partially so, an unusual situation so close to a major thoroughfare. There is ample evidence of logging in some areas, however, and small roadside logging camps may be seen. The research team did not note any forestry or lumber units within the town of Regong, unusual in an area that has even limited timber resources.

Mineral deposits of lead, iron, copper and zinc are known to exist in Regong County¹⁰. A very large aluminum factory is located north of Regong township at Bao'an (see below). The nearest known aluminum deposits are in Henan Mongolian Autonomous County in the south of Malho TAP.

(4) **industrial**

At present industrialization in Regong is at a low level. A wool spinning factory operates within the town precincts at the northeastern end of Liberation Road. The factory consists of at least five industrial buildings as well as related facilities. Raw material is supplied by the large flocks of goats and sheep kept by Tibetan and smaller numbers of Hui herders in the county. The factory is not a new facility, probably dating originally from the 1960's or 1970's. It most likely employs local people. Markets for its products lie outside the county: no wholesale or retail outlets for its products were noted within the town.

A much more developed industrial installation is located at Bao'an, ten kilometres north of Regong. This very large aluminum factory has the capacity for substantial production. Employment probably includes Chinese

¹⁰ *Tibet - A Land of Snows: Rich in Precious Stones and Mineral Resources*, map opposite p. 22

workers and technicians, and products would be destined for markets in China. Local Tibetans obviously have their apprehensions about this facility and have expressed them a unique fashion. They have erected a line of chötens along the whole length of the hill-line overlooking the factory to the west. The configuration seems a conspicuous effort both to offer prayers mitigating damage done by the mining as well as creating a metaphysical barrier between the Chinese industrial activity and the deeply religious and traditional way of life Tibetans maintain a few kilometers further south.

(5) commercial and retail activity

Commercial and retail activity appear to be the liveliest sectors of Regong township's economy. Daily busloads of Chinese and Hui traders and entrepreneurs arrive from Xining and other counties in Haidong (Tib: Tsoshar) to do business in the town. It is not just the Chinese who are taking advantage of Regong's relative prosperity and proximity. Regong is close to the Hui-dominated region of Xunhua, Hualong and lower Haidong (Tib: Tsoshar). The Hui and Salar of these counties form community trade and transport networks and can easily penetrate the economic sector of Regong. Much business in Regong is therefore conducted by private individuals and concerns. Government units are also operative. The obligatory Nationalities Trade Wholesale Company occupies the largest single commercial premises in the town. The Kanglo Market, a covered mall of shops and stalls, runs the entire length of the block between the new town's main east-west cross streets. Its shops sell a variety of foodstuffs, fresh produce and sundry commercial goods, all brought in from Xining or further afield from inland China. Vendors are primarily Chinese and Hui.

Several sizable new department stores and groceries have also opened in Regong recently. Their stock, while more expensive, seems to be in demand. Ownership of these businesses and origin of goods is clearly Chinese, but shop staff are often Tibetan, as are many of the customers. Smaller shops selling everyday items and foodstuffs around the town are sometimes run by Tibetans and are quite well stocked, but do not offer a great variety of goods.

The commercial sector of Regong is developing quite rapidly. As in Chabcha, resident Tibetans are able and willing to buy the goods offered. Supply, transportation and marketing are nevertheless overwhelmingly in the hands of Chinese and Hui. Regong's commerce is thus tied inextricably into the Chinese economic system.

vi. **Educational and medical facilities**

Education has been given a high priority in Regong, a policy common to all TAP capitals. Drawn into the Chinese educational system, Tibetan children will be taught to fit into a Chinese political, social and economic order. Educational facilities noted in Regong township included a kindergarten, two primary schools, a prefectural middle school, county nationalities middle school, nationalities normal school, and hygiene school.

Two of these institutions, and possibly one of the primary schools, provide a “nationalities” component. They are also the newest schools in the town. At the Nationalities Normal School, located past Regong Gönpa at the south end of town and already a large complex of modern buildings, additional construction was still in progress in 1995. It will train teachers to fill the expanded education facilities that are being developed in Tsongön, at least in prefectural and county towns. “Nationalities” teacher training schools obviously form part of the national pattern of the “nationalities” education scheme, as they are found in many TAP capitals. All have been built in the last ten years. The County Nationalities Middle School, also in the new town, has only recently been completed. Like many modern Chinese units it has an oversized entrance gate of unbalanced proportions. School children and students in Regong township were noticeably bright and well-dressed. Impressions created by the schools further suggest that Regong is functioning as a formal model for regional Tibetan ‘development’.

The dilemma of education in TAP’s remains the contradiction between need for education as such, and the fact that education as currently provided does a disservice to Tibetans. If they take the regular education stream, they will not learn their own language. If they take the “nationalities”, or “ethnic education” stream, they will not learn a high enough standard of Chinese or English to qualify for the better jobs. Fortunately Regong is built around an active religious center, with several supporting religious centers nearby. The existence of these can provide a cultural counterforce to the weight of an invasive and dominating Chinese system.

Regong’s medical needs are served by a large Prefectural Hospital, a Hygiene School and a Tibetan Medicine Hospital. All these institutions look functional, with reasonable if not brand new facilities. The report has no information about medical facilities further afield in the County.

vii. **Culture**

In terms of both traditional cultural influences and government-established cultural facilities, Regong enjoys a comparatively high level. Traditional cultural influence is due to the presence of several large and operative gönpas within and near the town. Perhaps under this stimulus, State-established cultural facilities are also more evident than is usually the case in TAP capitals in Tsongön. China must attempt to match cultural levels set by Tibetans.

Regong has long been famed as a center of Buddhist art. Monks trained in the gönpas of Regong are particularly known for their fine thangka and mural painting, as well as a high level of fine craftsmanship in wood. To some extent these traditions are still carried on. High quality rebuilding and decoration were certainly being practised at Regong Gönpa and at Sengge Shongmago Gönpa [see photo 36:7a, p. 2157]. The Chinese authorities also like to cash in on Regong's artistic fame, marking it on tourist maps as "Regong Art Town". A large complex named collectively as the Huangnan Art Gallery, Art Research Institute & Art Development Company has been established in the new town's northern sector. These units presumably deal with Regong's Tibetan Buddhist Art, but curiously the architecture of these buildings is Chinese neo-imperial. The premises currently look a little bedraggled and not very active.

The Workers' Cultural Palace in the old town, on the other hand, was a very lively place. This plain building is a 1970's relic, but housed a library and other facilities for children who, with several obviously committed teachers, were involved in a variety of activities there.

Two bookshops operate in Regong, a high number for a medium-sized prefectural capital. One was the ubiquitous Xinhua Bookshop, occupying a floor in a prominent corner commercial building in the new town. It was not overly-well stocked with material and was basically irrelevant to Tibetan culture. The Tibetan-language section was not impressive. A smaller private bookshop on the road leading to Regong Gönpa had a much larger selection of local-interest material in both Tibetan and Chinese. Many of the titles on sale were Tibetan religious texts, and the shop was run by Tibetans. This example of Tibetan resourcefulness and enterprise shows how these attributes may be successfully applied within the market in favor of cultural preservation.

Tibetan goods are readily available in Regong township. As in all other Tibetan areas many of them are actually manufactured in China, not from traditional sources or materials. All the same, they find a ready market among visiting rural Tibetans. Vendors are mostly, but not exclusively, Hui and Chinese.

Traditional Tibetan architecture is being preserved within the gönpas, and at the village level even on Regong township's outskirts. In the old town many old Chinese wooden houses remain intact. New residential quarters however are simply modern Chinese cement construction. It is unlikely that any traditional Tibetan structures will be erected in the central section of the new town. Outside, traditional designs and materials have every chance of being preserved unless specifically repressed. Currently Tibetans in Regong show themselves to be committed and energetic in continuing their architectural traditions.

Within Regong township many of the Tibetans appear thoroughly assimilated in terms of everyday living conditions and activities. They live in new apartments and work units and have abandoned traditional dress for daily use. Chinese entertainments such as video games and pool have taken over as recreations, and are also enjoyed by rural visitors. Outside the new town many more are living in ethnic neighborhoods where Tibetan flavor is strong. Those wearing traditional clothing are mostly rural and usually nomadic. Yet despite the obvious urban/rural division among Tibetans, Regong remains Tibetan to an encouraging degree. Chinese inroads into social habits and economic patterns have penetrated deeply, and not without consequences which can only become more detrimental. But the presence of functioning and beautiful monasteries close to the town and throughout the county carries the surest hope for cultural continuity at its deepest level. Sinicization, while progressing in an economic, social and demographic sense, has not weakened the personal sense of Tibetan identity in Regong.

viii. **Religion**

Religion has been able to maintain a higher level of activity in Regong than in many other TAP capitals. This situation stems from the presence of several functioning gönpas within the town vicinity, and an apparently low level of official interference, relatively speaking.

Official Chinese sources counted 45 gönpas within Regong County in the early 1990's, of which ten are not really operative¹¹. Regong has been a major historical center for Buddhism in Amdo for over a thousand years. Tradition relates that the earliest monastery was built here in 842 AD during the reign of Ralpachen, by Tibetan soldiers coming to settle in the region. The monastery of Dangpo'i Zhimagön Thubten Chökhörling དང་པོའི་གཞི་

མ་དགོན་ཐུབ་བསྟན་ཆོས་འཁོར་གླིང། (Ch. Danggeyimasi 当格乙麻寺) now stands on this site, four kilometers northwest of Regong township¹². Before the Chinese closed gönpas in Amdo and Kham in 1958, there were 44 gönpas in Regong County housing 5,966 monks and nuns¹³. Although the gönpas were allowed to re-open after 1978, only 1,692 monks and nuns are officially attached to them now¹⁴. Compared to pre-invasion times, this represents a radical drop in numbers, only 22% of the former total. Chinese regulations limit the number of monks and nuns permitted to join gönpas. Monks in Regong confirmed that many more Tibetans would join the gönpas if these regulations were relaxed.

Regong Gönpa, formally titled Rongwogön Dechen Chökhör Ling རོང་བོ་དགོན་བདེ་ཆེན་ཆོས་འཁོར་གླིང།, stands at the southern end of the new Regong township [see photo 35:18, p. 2155]. Even with the growth of the new Chinese-sector sprawl, Regong Gönpa remains the focal point of Regong township. The gönpa has a history of more than six hundred years. First built as a small Sakya gönpa in 1301 by followers of Phagpa, it was taken over in 1370 by the Gelugpa, one of the earliest of all Gelug monasteries, and has been expanding ever since. At its height in the latter 18th Century, over 2,300 monks belonged to the monastery. Before 1958 it had 1,712 monks, a number reduced in c.1990 to 307¹⁵. Violence during the closure period of 1958-9 and again in the Cultural Revolution caused serious damage to monastic buildings. When restoration began in the 1980's, the government

¹¹ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, p. 22

¹² *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, p. 158

¹³ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, pp. 21

¹⁴ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, pp. 21-22

¹⁵ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, pp. 154-155

supposedly returned most of the gönpa's land and invested 140,000 Yuan in rebuilding¹⁶. The bulk of restoration funds, and of labor, has come from local donations.

Regong Gönpa has been undergoing rebuilding for several years. Craftsmanship is of high quality and skill if judged by current standards. Modern building materials, namely cement, are occasionally being incorporated into new structures. The monastery, its surrounding village and other gönpas in the valley are famous as producers of Buddhist fine arts, especially thangka painting, sculpture and architectural decoration. Murals at the gönpa, painted on canvas rather than directly onto the walls, perpetuate these fine traditions as far as possible. Some workers on the building restoration sites say that their wood-carving skills are self-taught.

Beside the highway, six kilometers north of town is the beautifully rebuilt Sengge Shongmago Gönpa སེང་གེ་ཤོང་མག་གོ་པ།

གཞིང་མ་མཐོ་དགོན་པ། (Ch. Wutunxiasi 吾屯下寺). A Nyingma gönpa had already stood on the site before

1621, but a lama from Regong Gönpa, who had recently converted the valley's other Nyingma gönpa (see below) across the river into a Gelug establishment, also converted this one in the middle of the 17th Century¹⁷. Both gönpas were to become sources of the famous Regong Buddhist art. Before the Chinese suppression of 1958, 350 monks were in residence¹⁸. 150 monks are claimed to belong to the gönpa at present, less than half the former number. Nowhere near 150 monks were in evidence but new residence quarters could easily accommodate that number. Restoration, begun in 1985, continues at the site at a high level of quality [see photo 36:7a, p. 2157].

Directly across the river from Sengge Shongmago Gönpa is a related monastery, Sengge Shongyago Gönpa

Paldan Chöjorling སེང་གོ་གཤོང་ཡ་མགོ་དགོན་པ་དཔལ་ལྷན་ཆོས་འབྱུང་གླིང། (Ch. Wutun shangsi 吾屯上寺), with

a huge, impressive chöten. Founded as a very early Nyingma gönpa, it was converted into a Gelugpa gönpa in

¹⁶ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, pp. 154-155

¹⁷ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, p. 156

¹⁸ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, p. 156

1630 under the patronage of Regong Gönpa¹⁹. In 1946 a fire destroyed most of the monastery's buildings, but it was rebuilt in 1949. In 1958, 208 monks lived at the gönpa. There are now (c.1990) half that number²⁰.

Religious activity flourishes among both monastic and lay practitioners in Regong. The area apparently enjoys a relatively high level of religious tolerance from the authorities. This is partly out of deference to the fame of Regong's Buddhist art, an officially-appropriated tourist attraction. Official regulation nevertheless interferes with any real sense of freedom in the monasteries. Numbers of monks and nuns are limited. "Democratic Management Committees", set up and controlled by local Party organs, must operate within the monasteries. Campaigns to politicize and control religious practise may be implemented at any time, as the campaign begun in August 1996 at Sera Monastery in Lhasa demonstrates²¹. Tibetans everywhere, including in more tolerant counties like Regong, must tread carefully in their religious activities.

ix. **History**

(1) **history of ethnic presence and changes**

Human habitation in the fertile Malho region dates back to Neolithic times. Control and use of this rich grazing land with its network of arable river valleys, encircled by the Great Bend of the Yellow River and protected on its eastern edge by the Hengduan Mountain Range, has been sought by many peoples. The first historically-known inhabitants, the Qiang, contested the area with the Chinese for about five hundred years without lasting victory for either side. By the 5th Century Malho had fallen under the control of the Tuyuhun, a nomadic group of tribes recently arrived from the region of Manchuria. The Tuyuhun, too, fought with the Chinese in Tsongön, but retained possession of Malho even after the Chinese and Tibetans squeezed them out of most of their territories further west during the 7th Century.

¹⁹ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, p. 156

²⁰ *Bright Mirror of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, p. 156

²¹ *Tibet Information Network*, Information Updates, 7 September 1996 and 18 September 1996

Tibetans first penetrated Malho in 638 AD when their armies advanced through the region and to the edge of the Tang empire at Zungchu (Ch. Songzhou). Both the Chinese and the Tibetans set up garrisons in Malho over the next one hundred and fifty years. Tibetans began to graze their animals on the rich pasturelands, together with the Tuyuhun who still lived there despite losing their territory north of the Yellow River. Once the Tang Dynasty's empire in the west collapsed during the 760's, through rebellion inside China and Tibetan conquest, large numbers of Tibetans moved into Malho, and it was dominated by Tibetans from this period onwards. Many Tuyuhun nevertheless remained in the area, as well as Sumpa, originally from the Nagchu and Chamdo region, whom the Yarlung Dynasty had conquered and sent to guard the Tibetan Empire's eastern frontier²². Malho, in particular the Chentsa and Regong districts, became an important center for the revival of Buddhism during the latter 9th Century, and over many centuries of Tibetan control and habitation it developed into a flourishing religious and cultural sphere. During the Gelugpa ascendancy initiated by the 5th Dalai Lama, more than twenty monasteries were founded in the Regong area alone.

As a prime grazing region, Malho was bound to draw the attentions of nomadic peoples other than the Tibetans. Since the 13th Century, successive waves of Mongol tribes had swept across Amdo, settling mostly west of Tsongön but also amongst Tibetan nomads elsewhere. The vastness of the grasslands could accommodate both peoples until the early 19th Century, when competition for good pastureland began to increase. The situation was exacerbated by intensified Chinese efforts to extend their presence in the Tsoshar area, centred on Xining, and to exercise some kind of control over the Tibetans and Mongols of Amdo. Battles were fought at this time between the Tibetans and Mongols over possession of Malho. The Tibetans emerged as victors, but the price included Chinese armed intervention and increased Chinese anxiety over security in the region, and they began to strengthen their nearby garrisons²³.

The Qing had built a small fort at Bao'an 保安堡 north of Regong in 1743²⁴, but late in the 19th Century extended their holding line to Regong, constructing a fort in the river valley below Regong Gönpa [see photo 43:15a, p. 2153]. A small settlement of Chinese and Hui traders grew up around the fort, but their presence did not extend beyond the town itself. Even just before the Communist invasion of 1950, the number of these traders

²² R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 31

²³ *Qinghai lishi jiyao (Summary of Qinghai History)*, pp. 209-219

²⁴ *Qinghai lishi jiyao (Summary of Qinghai History)*, p. 575

in Longwu 隆务, as the Chinese called the garrison town, was very small²⁵, consisting of several tens of private businesses²⁶. A far larger Tibetan community lived in the village below Regong Gönpa, the countryside was exclusively Tibetan, and the monasteries in the immediate valley together housed over two thousand monks.

With Chinese invasion and colonization, the ethnic mix in Regong changed dramatically. Chinese sources state that 210 businesses were operating in Regong township in 1951²⁷, as commercial opportunities suddenly grew with the Communists' policy to develop Amdo through increased immigration, land reclamation and collectivization. The PLA did not enter Regong until July 1950, although the Communists had declared the founding of the Tongren People's Government already in September 1949 when they occupied Xining²⁸. The Communists immediately began dividing the agricultural and agricultural-grazing areas into administrative areas and imposing an organization²⁹. Tibetan resistance to the Chinese in Malho lasted until 1952, but was finally crushed in a major annihilation campaign³⁰. By the end of 1955, nearly 83% of households in Qinghai Province had reportedly joined the agricultural collectivization programme³¹, which must have included farmers in Regong which was not too far from the Xining capital vicinity. Collectivization of herdsmen accelerated in 1958³², provoking revolt, which was severely crushed through punishment, cultural destruction, and the deeper imposition of collectivization. Chinese soldiers and cadres arrived to implement control and establish an administrative structure, while forcibly transferred population turned some former pastures into farming land, an operation that affected northern Malho in particular.

Chinese immigrant numbers increased during the 1960's and 1970's, by State-sponsored population transfer of various kinds. In the 1980's, with the adoption of more open economic policies, immigration increased further, since the new policies required a stronger input from both government and private personnel to develop townships and markets. Regong township took on its more modern appearance as infrastructure was developed

²⁵ *Qinghaisheng zhi: shangye zhi (Annals of Qinghai: Commerce)*, p. 76

²⁶ *Qinghaisheng zhi: shangye zhi (Annals of Qinghai: Commerce)*, p. 80

²⁷ *Qinghaisheng zhi: shangye zhi (Annals of Qinghai: Commerce)*, p. 80

²⁸ *Jiefang Qinghai (Liberating Qinghai)*, p. 487

²⁹ *Jiefang Qinghai (Liberating Qinghai)*, p. 496

³⁰ June Teufel Dreyer, "Ch'inghai", p. 7

³¹ June Teufel Dreyer, "Ch'inghai", p. 19

³² June Teufel Dreyer, "Ch'inghai", p. 28

to support a growing migrant population. In 1992, with the lifting of migration restrictions everywhere and the drive for an even more “open” economy, voluntary immigration received its greatest impetus. Chinese and Hui now compose about half the population of Regong township. It will not be possible for Tibetan numbers to keep pace. Although the countryside is unlikely to be deeply affected by non-Tibetan immigration in the near future, urban settlements will be unable to escape overall sinicization of their population.

(2) **history of political control**

Political control of Malho has been contested by a succession of peoples over the centuries, its rich grazing land below the Yellow River offering a strong economic and strategic advantage to its controllers. The short-lived Sui Dynasty claimed the area from the Tuyuhun early in the 7th Century after several bitter military battles, setting set up a garrison command over northern Malho called Jiaohe Commandery 浇河郡 with its seat at present-day Tika (Ch. Guide) in Tsolho. Although the Tuyuhun reclaimed their territories when the Sui Dynasty collapsed in 618, they soon found themselves embroiled in conflict with both the Chinese Tang Dynasty and the expanding Tibetan Empire. Eventually the Tuyuhun could no longer withstand such pressure from both sides, having suffered a major defeat by the Chinese in 635 and another decisive defeat by the Tibetans in 663. Many of them left Tsongön and retreated to Malho where there were ample empty grazing lands to support them. The Tang, now face to face with the Tibetans, built forts garrisoned by thousands of soldiers along the upper edge of the Yellow River’s Great Bend to try to counter the Tibetan advance, establishing the commandery of Kuozhou in the general region of Chentsa (Jianza), a territory especially vulnerable to Tibetan and Tuyuhun attack. The Tibetans also built forts and bridges across the Yellow River, and for the next hundred years the Chinese and Tibetans fought continuously for control of the area. The Tibetans particularly wished to control upper Malho’s pastures, as a base from which they could raid north and east into the Chinese borderlands.

When internal rebellion necessitated the recall of the Chinese frontier armies to defend the Dynasty nearer the capital, the Tibetans easily overran the Chinese border possessions, converting them to Tibetan territories within the Imperial administration. By 763 they had taken over Malho and the whole of Tsongön. Malho appears to have fallen within the jurisdiction of the military governorship of Machu³³, which maintained several major garrison towns in the Tsolho region at present-day Tika and Gepasumdo (Ch. Tongde), and settlements around

³³ Geza Uray, “Khrom: Administrative Units of the Tibetan Empire in the 7th-9th Centuries”, p. 313

Regong. The first Buddhist monastery was founded in Regong during this period, in 842³⁴. Until the collapse of the Yarlung Dynasty in Central Tibet and the subsequent demise of a centralized Tibetan Empire, military officials were appointed by Lhasa to posts in Amdo, where they administered the soldiers and their families who had settled there. Thereafter these local leaders acted as independent chieftains over a Tibetan cultural and increasingly ethnic area. One of these chieftains, Gyelse, whose power base centered on Tsongkha (Xining region), established a kingdom that extended over eastern and northern Amdo, including Malho, until 1104, which greatly increased the cultural, religious and economic cohesiveness of the Tibetan areas affected³⁵.

When the Mongols conquered most of East and Central Asia, Malho fell under the part of their empire they termed the Tibetan Region Pacification Commissioners' military command 吐蕃等处宣慰司. They maintained garrison posts north of the Yellow River and at Tika, but did not interfere with the Tibetan leaders' control inside Malho. The Ming Dynasty, who succeeded the Mongol Yuan Dynasty in China, maintained religious contacts with Tibet, and kept a garrison at Tika under the jurisdiction of the Xining Guard 西宁卫, but had no political control of Tibetan areas beyond these frontier positions. Tibetan chieftains of Malho continued in their local independence, the Regong districts ruled by a confederation of twelve principal clans. During the 17th Century the Qosot Mongols under Gushri Khan invaded Amdo including into Malho³⁶, establishing a form of overlordship of the invaded areas for a time, although by the 18th Century the Qosots had lost any political authority and become just an element among the dominantly Tibetan population of Malho. However, the Mongol presence was to have repercussions there later in the 19th Century with Tibetan-Mongol rivalry over pastures. Monastic links between institutions in Malho and those in Central Tibet, Kham and the rest of Amdo were strong, and became increasingly important as a politic-religious force after the ascendancy of the Gelugpa from the latter 18th Century onwards.

During the 18th Century the Qing Dynasty began to implement a more forward policy in Tibetan regions. Following their intervention against the Dzungar Mongols in Central Tibet, they declared a Chinese Protectorate over Amdo and set up their own representative, the Amban, in Lhasa in 1728 and another Amban at Xining in 1725. A military camp was established at Tika and in 1743 a subsidiary fort, Bao'an Fort 保安堡, was built

³⁴ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Qinghai*, p. 158

³⁵ *Anduo zangzu shiliu (Brief History of the Tibetans of Amdo)*, p. 77

³⁶ *Qinghai lishi jiyao (Summary of Qinghai History)*, p. 567

about ten kilometers north of Regong³⁷. These posts, established to defend Qing interests in the Xining vicinity, had to withstand continuous threats from Tibetans and Mongols of the Malho region. As competition for pastureland intensified in Malho, Tibetans and Mongols there were also involved in violent clashes, provoking Qing armed intervention on several occasions between 1806 and 1832. Direct Tibetan and Mongol attacks on the Qing frontier positions also forced the Qing to defend their borderline in eastern Amdo with stronger fortified settlements at Xunhua and Tika. Late in the 19th Century they also built a fort at Regong.

The position of local Tibetan leaders and monasteries of Regong was not affected by these developments, until after the founding of the Republic in China in 1911. In 1916, a claimant to the Qing throne, supported by Tibetans in the Regong area and Kanlho, rose against the new Chinese government. Troops of the local Hui warlord Ma Qi, who enjoyed far more power in the region than the Republican officials, crushed the rebellion after a year's fighting³⁸, though no Chinese or Hui administrative presence penetrated Malho as a consequence of this unrest. From this period until the late 1940's, however, much of Amdo fell increasingly into the grasp of the Hui warlord Ma Bufang, who like the Chinese tried to impose an organizational system over Tibetans and other indigenous peoples of the region, and promote the establishment of colonies in various districts. The first such colonies were started in 1918 in Dulan and Daheba, but the program was greatly extended after the Wasteland Reclamation Office was established in 1927 to supervise such undertakings³⁹.

After the founding of Qinghai Province in 1929, the Chinese administrative structure, albeit under the real control of Ma Bufang, was extended to include several districts of Amdo as counties. As one of the recipients of this new status, Regong received a contingent of Guomindang representatives sent to the town, though their presence seems to have made little appreciative difference at the time. Once the Chinese Communists had defeated the Guomindang in China and the combined forces of the Guomindang and Ma Bufang in Lanzhou, however, their armies systematically moved to seize Tibetan areas as well, reaching Regong in July 1950. The Communists had already declared the establishment of the Tongren County People's Government on 22 September 1949, a month after the PLA's entry into Xining. Tibetans fought a fierce campaign of resistance in upper Malho for two years

³⁷ *Qinghai lishi jiyao (Summary of Qinghai History)*, p. 575

³⁸ *Qinghai lishi jiyao (Summary of Qinghai History)*, pp. 280-281

³⁹ *Qinghai lishi jiyao (Summary of Qinghai History)*, p. 591

until a massive annihilation was mounted against them by the PLA, which resulted in their defeat in May 1952⁴⁰. The Chinese deliberated for a time over Regong's administrative status, establishing the Tongren Tibetan Autonomous Region in 1952, then changing it to Tongren County in 1954⁴¹. The wider region of Malho, first designated a Tibetan Autonomous Region in 1953, was converted to a Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture at the end of the year⁴².

Chinese control and collectivization moves, which provoked the Tibetan revolt in Amdo in 1958, only intensified as a consequence of Tibetan opposition, developing into the highly damaging Great Leap Forward policies followed by the tragic madness of the Cultural Revolution. Economic and social recovery began gradually after c.1973, and reformed religious policy after 1978 allowed Tibetans to revive monastic building and activity, although still within limitations imposed by the Chinese State. Overall, Chinese "development" in Malho has been modest but steady since the Communist occupation, relative to some areas in Amdo like Chabcha or Tsonub. However, under post-1992 reform and opening up policies and the State's ambitious hydro-electric schemes along the Yellow River, the pace and nature of change in this historically Tibetan region will move inexorably in a Chinese-oriented, and manipulated, direction.

x. **Special emphasis, problems, other factors unique to this site**

Regong has had closer contact with some form of Chinese administration than many parts of Amdo and Kham, but the Chinese could not be described as "in control" of Regong until the Communist invasion of 1950. For a relatively short period prior to that date, the Chinese did have a garrison there to forestall unrest along the border, but this did not amount to jurisdiction. Religious contacts between Regong Gönpa and the Ming and Qing Courts also existed, but these did not amount to any kind of political control. Except for the presence of the Qing garrison and small town below Regong Gönpa, and some incursions by Mongol nomads in the 16th and 17th Centuries, the area has been exclusively Tibetan for over a thousand years. But because Regong is now easily accessible by good road from Xining and the populous Hui counties within Haidong, its cultural autonomy is

⁴⁰ *Jiefang Qinghai (Liberating Qinghai)* pp. 504-505

⁴¹ *Zhongguo diming cidian (Dictionary of Chinese Place-Names)*, p. 346

⁴² *China Nationalities Economy 1993*, p. 248

threatened as never before. The economies of Regong township and smaller settlements in the county are being easily and increasingly drawn into the Chinese-style “market” economy. Chinese policy facilitates this trend. Fortunately Regong County has the advantage of numerous active monasteries which at present enjoy a relative degree of tolerance from the Chinese authorities. Hopefully these functioning centers of Tibetan religion and culture will offset the sinification of Regong’s economy and town demography.

xi. **Summary comment**

It will be extremely difficult to curb, let alone stop, the drift of Chinese and Hui into Regong. The area is relatively rich and will attract business. It lies close to more crowded Chinese and Hui population areas. It can be reached north from Xining and Haidong, and southeast from Sangchu (Ch: Xiahe, in Kanlho TAP), by good roads, linking it with two areas where Hui businessmen are now particularly active. Regong township’s situation in a wide river valley between moderate grassed hillsides allows plenty of space for expansion. Streets are prepared, a financial, commercial and social-facility infrastructure is well in place, and an improbably large new bus station has recently been completed. From a Chinese or Hui point of view it is a very pleasant place, with a familiar urban environment and an agreeable climate and landscape. Transit to Xining is easy, six hours by bus on a sealed road. Frequent minibuses provide easy passenger transport, and the town receives commercial traffic from Xining and Haidong in the north, and Kanlho to the southeast. In short, growth is inevitable.

At present, however, Regong still provides an interesting combination of cultural preservation and the growth of a sinified economy and social elements. It has a greater chance than TAP capitals like Dartsedo and Chabcha of maintaining this combination rather than being overwhelmed by everything Chinese. Success will depend largely on efforts made by local Tibetans, in the monasteries and outside them, to uphold their sense of identity and culture.

Sites tagged on photographic panoramas not accompanying text report

Panorama labels:

Thünring (Regong)/Tongren **frames 35:5-17, 13pc**

Agricultural Bank
Agricultural Bank
Agricultural Bank
Agricultural Bank
Art Development Co.
Art Research Institute
Bureau of Meteorology
Bus Station
CCP Discipline Inspection Comm.
Cinema
Construction Bank
Construction Bank
County Court
County Government
County Govt. Hostel
County Nationalities Middle School
County Procuratorate
County PSB
County Tax & Finance Offices
Electric Power Plant
Erlang Temple
Government Hostel
Grain & Oil Office
Highway Maintenance
Hygiene School
Kindergarten
Local Tax Office
Market
Martyrs' Memorial
Middle School
Mosque
Municipal Government
Nationalities Normal College

Nationalities Trade Wholesale Co.
No.3 & 4 Construction Co.
No.3 Primary School
PAP
People's Bank of China
People's Insurance Co. (PIC)
PLA Hostel
PLA Prefectural Headquarters
Post Office
Pref. Art Gallery
Pref. Communist Party
Pref. CPPCC
Pref. Government
Pref. Hospital
Pref. Hotel
Pref. Hygiene Management & Epidemic Control
Pref. Middle School
Pref. NPC
Pref. Procuratorate
Pref. PSB
Pref. Tax Office
Prefectural PSB Detention Ctr. or Prison
Qing Dynasty fort
Rongwogon Dechen Chökhör Ling
(a.k.a. Regong Gönpa)
Sports Stadium
Tax Office
Tibetan Gönpa
Tibetan Medicine Hospital
to Tsekhog [Zeku]
to Xining
Tourist Bureau
Tourist Development Co.
Transport & Vehicle Repairs
Wool Spinning Factory
Workers' Cultural Palace
Xinhua Bookshop



<u>roll/neg:</u>	35:10
<u>subject:</u>	town center section with main commercial, Government, Party, PLA areas
<u>location:</u>	'Thünring' ཐུན་རིང་།, capital of Malho མཎ་ལོ། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön ར་ཆོ་སྤྱོ།
	note: traditional Tibetan name, Regong རེ་བ་གོང་།
	[Ch: Tongren 同仁, Huangnan 黄南 TAP, Qinghai Province]
<u>approx. date:</u>	winter 1995/1996
<u>comment:</u>	Regong's center, an example of engineered modernization of which Chinese authorities are proud, still remains ringed by Tibetan neighborhoods and monasteries. Banks and hotels dominate the tree-lined street. Starting at the top of the street and moving right are: a new hotel, PLA Prefectural Headquarters, a PLA hostel, Prefectural PSB and, in the large white building at upper right, Prefectural Government and Communist Party. (Viewed from the east.)
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roll/neg: 35:35

subject: Prefectural PSB Detention Center or a prefectural prison

location: 'Thünring' ཐུན་རིང་།, capital of Malho མ་ལོ། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön མཚོ་སྒྲུང་།

note: traditional Tibetan name, Regong རེག་གོང་།

[Ch: Tongren 同仁, Huangnan 黄南 TAP, Qinghai Province]

approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: While this could be the county PSB Detention Center, the size of the prison, the town's status as a prefectural capital, the configuration of the prison into two sections and some visual suggestion that agricultural labor may be performed by prisoners would render it a prefectural-level prison. It could be a Prefectural PSB Detention Center coupled with a 'shelter and investigation center'.
(Viewed from the east.)

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roll/neg: 43:14a

subject: truckload of bones

location: 'Thünring' ཐུན་རིང་།, capital of Malho མ་ལོ་ ཧི་ཁོ་ Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön མཚོ་སྒྲོན་

note: traditional Tibetan name, Regong རེ་གོང་།

[Ch: Tongren 同仁, Huangnan 黄南 TAP, Qinghai Province]

approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: Meat production continues to expand and become more organized under State sponsorship. This truckload of skeletal remnants from an abattoir, parked in front of the Tongren Nationalities Trading Company, appears to be headed toward Xining, probably the same destination the flesh had. Increased levels of grazing are a mixed blessing for Tibetans. Pastoralists' incomes have risen but damage to grazing areas is unsustainable.

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43: 15a

Regong: guard tower on Qing walls in 'old town'

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<u>roll/neg:</u>	43:15a
<u>subject:</u>	guard tower on Qing walls in ‘old town’
<u>location:</u>	‘Thünring’ ཐུན་རིང་།, capital of Malho མ་ལོ་། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön མཆོ་སྤྱོད།
	note: traditional Tibetan name, Regong རེག་གོང་།
	[Ch: Tongren 同仁, Huangnan 黄南 TAP, Qinghai Province]
<u>approx. date:</u>	winter 1995/1996
<u>comment:</u>	Regong’s old town skirts the river, nestled against a low bluff. The walls of an old Chinese fortress can still be seen, relatively intact, with an official government unit occupying the space inside. County level police, procuratorate and court are nearby. The watch tower has gun ports, which could have been installed by Qing soldiers or could have been an addition by later warring factions.
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roll/neg: 35:18
subject: Rongwogön Dechen Chökhör Ling Monastery
 འཇོན་ལོ་རྒྱལ་ལྷོ་ཆོས་འཁོར་གླིང་།

location: 'Thünring' རྩུན་རིང་།, capital of Malho མ་ལྷོ། Tibetan Autonomous
 Prefecture, Tsongön མཆོག་རྩུན་།

note: traditional Tibetan name, Regong རེག་གོང་།
 [Ch: Tongren 同仁, Huangnan 黄南 TAP, Qinghai Province]
approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: 'Regong Gönpa', as it is often called, is one of Amdo's leading centers of Buddhist studies and arts, particularly renowned for thangka painting. There were over 1,700 monks in 1958. In 1990 the number was just over 300 but has grown considerably since.
 (Viewed from the east.)

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36:7a

6km north of Regong: Sengge Shongmago Gonpa construction

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<u>roll/neg:</u>	36:7a
<u>subject:</u>	new construction at Sengge Shongmago Gönpa སང་གེ་གཤམ་མ་མགོ་དགོན་པ།
<u>location:</u>	6km north of 'Thünring' ཐུན་རིང་།, capital of Malho མ་ལྷོ། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön མཆོ་སྡེ་ན།
	note: traditional Tibetan name, Regong རེབ་གོང་།
<u>approx. date:</u>	[Ch: Tongren 同仁, Huangnan 黄南 TAP, Qinghai Province] winter 1995/1996
<u>comment:</u>	A new lhakhang adjacent to the main prayer hall of the monastery was being built completely by Tibetan craftsmen and paid for by private donations. Quality appeared to be very good; the woodworkers were unabashed in their pride and pleasure. About 150 monks were said to be in residence at the temple.
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