TIBETAN PUBLISHING IN THE EARLY POST-MAO PERIOD

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Cet article traite de l'émergence de textes littéraires modernes tibétains en République populaire de Chine, un développement dont la paternité est d'ordinaire attribuée à la politique plus clémentine mise en avant lors de la troisième session plénière du XI^e Congrès du Parti communiste en 1978. Alors que le monde de l'édition en chinois a connu un regain littéraire au début de la période suivant la mort de Mao, il apparaît que l'édition en tibétain, de 1978 à 1985, se caractérise par la domination des formes littéraires populaires et classiques, en même temps que par une remise en activité de projets éditoriaux mis en œuvre dans les années cinquante par des savants issus du monde monastique. Ce dernier aspect est de nature à remettre en cause les interprétations dominantes quant à la production culturelle tibétaine au début de la période communiste. La conclusion de l'article porte sur les développements récents de l'industrie éditoriale tibétaine, dans laquelle le mécénat privé aidant aux publications de textes tibétains a refait surface sous des formes nouvelles et où les monastères jouent à nouveau un rôle dominant.

A new era in Tibetan publishing and a Tibetan “New Literature” (*rtsom rig gsar rtsom*) in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is frequently attributed to the leniency allowed by the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978. While this generalization may largely hold true for Chinese-language publications, I would argue that a certain lag time existed in the Tibetan publishing industry. By examining more closely Tibetan publishing in the immediate post-Mao era, this article demonstrates that the 1976-1985 period is characterized as much by a publishing “revival,” as it is by the unprecedented launch of Tibetan-medium literary journals.

The Advent of Tibetan Literary Journals

By all accounts, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) marked a “deep freeze” for Tibetan writing. Except for a handful of propaganda materials and translations of Chairman Mao’s speeches, Tibetan language publishing was nearly halted for most of this period. As described by Perry Link (2000) in his study of early post-Mao Chinese literature, the first official “warming” began in 1976, with the 5 April

memorial for Zhou Enlai (1898-1976),¹ the 9 September death of Mao Zedong (1893-1976), and the subsequent fall of the Gang of Four in October. For the next two years, however, most writers and literary editors remained “paralyzed” by the preceding vicissitudes of official mood.² Only after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1978, when Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) encouraged intellectuals to “liberate their thought” in pursuit of the “Four Modernizations” (in Agriculture, Industry, Science and Technology, and Defense), were Chinese writers emboldened to express themselves more openly again.³

One sign of a more lenient policy was the phenomenal growth in Chinese literary magazines, which increased from a handful of titles in 1976 to 110 by April 1979.⁴ For instance, the founding of *Today* (*Jintian* 今天) in December 1978 has been described as a “watershed in literary history” for the country.⁵ This magazine, featuring Chinese experimental poetry, fiction, and essays as well as literary criticism, and translations of foreign literature, drew from a large supply of “drawer literature” (*chouti wenxue* 抽屉文学)—manuscripts written in preceding years that were unpublishable for political reasons.⁶ By 1983, the number of Chinese literary journals reached 479.⁷

In stark contrast to the flourishing of Chinese literature during the late 1970s, the Tibetan literary world in the PRC remained dormant. Despite several centuries of classical literary production and an official population then of 3.4 million, only four Tibetan-medium journals were being published in 1980:⁸

¹ Premier of the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1976.

² Link 2000, p. 15.

³ Link 2000, pp. 18-19. For an English-translation anthology of literature from this early Post-Mao period and an historical introduction, see Link 1983. Other studies on this time period are featured in Kinkley 1990.

⁴ Interview material as cited in Link 2000, p. 16.

⁵ van Crevel 1996, p. 68. See also Yeh 1992b, pp. 379-409.

⁶ The founding of *Today* has been detailed in Pan Yuan and Pan Jie, “The Non-Official Magazine *Today* and the Younger Generation’s Ideals for a New Literature,” in *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society, 1978-1981*, ed. by Jeffrey C. Kinkley (Cambridge: The Council on East Asian Studies/Harvard University, 1990). While their account has mythic overtones, it provides important details on those who bravely took responsibility for advancing the journal. See also Berry 2002, pp. 56-59, regarding subsequent transformations of the literary magazine.

⁷ This figure was determined by the editorial staff of the *Wenyi bao* 文艺报 (Literary Gazette) and published in the October 1984 issue, as cited in Kinkley 1985, p. 184.

⁸ “Dus deb ‘di nyid kyi sgrig pa po’i gnam,” *Sbrang char*, 1981, no. 1:2. Although the editor does not specify the journal titles, I am quite certain he is referring to the four I have determined here. This editorial compares statistics for other minorities in the PRC; i.e. 24 Mongolian journals for an official population of 2.6 million; 21 Uyghur journals for a population of 5.4 million; 10 Korean journals for a population of 1.6 million; and 5 Kazakh journals for a population of 800,000. The editorial does not specify the language of these journals. Note that this figure refers only to Tibetan journals in the PRC, and does not include the handful of periodicals circulating in exile. Currently, the official population of Tibetans in the P.R.C. is 5.4 million.

Mi dmangs brnyan par (People's Pictorial, f. 1952),⁹ *Mi rigs brnyan par* (Nationalities Pictorial, f. 1955),¹⁰ *Dar dmar* (Red Flag, f. 1958),¹¹ and *Mtsho sngon slob gso* (Qinghai Education, f. 1956).¹² The first three journals mentioned here were all issued from Beijing and wholly translated from their Chinese counterparts. To the best of my knowledge, they continued to be published during the Cultural Revolution. *Mtsho sngon slob gso* includes original Tibetan articles, but faced a fourteen-year hiatus before its revival in 1979.

Tibetan-language literary journals began to appear only in 1980 and 1981, suggesting a lag time between Beijing and the Tibetan hinterlands which muted the impact of official policy pronouncements. One reason for the delay may lie in what Link describes as regional variation in the national literary "weather," a euphemism for the political climate faced by authors writing under the strain of censorship. This explanation is especially apt if we expand its sense of variation to consider differences in the development of marginalized literatures in the PRC; that is, minority literatures which are not discussed in Link's study. Ironically, groundwork for the flourishing of Tibetan journals was being laid just as liberal Chinese thinkers faced another "chill," signaled by the 29 March 1979 arrest of Wei Jingsheng, a leading figure at Beijing's "Democracy Wall," and a crackdown on certain Chinese literary magazines and writers who had sincerely responded to Deng's 1978 call to "liberate their thought."¹³

The first Tibetan literary journal—*Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal* (Tibetan Art and Literature)¹⁴—was founded in Lhasa in 1980. By contrast, its Chinese counterpart, now titled *Xizang Wenxue* (Tibetan Literature), was founded by the Tibetan Branch of the Chinese Writers Association in Lhasa in 1977.¹⁵ The

⁹ This monthly magazine is wholly a translation of the Chinese version (*Renmin Huabao* 人民画报), which was founded in Beijing in 1950. (Shu Lihua, p. 292). Its official English title is *China Pictorial*.

¹⁰ This monthly magazine is also a translation of its Chinese counterpart, *Minzu huabao* 民族画报, which is available in four additional languages (Mongolian, Uygur, Khazak and Korean) and was founded in Beijing in 1955.

¹¹ Ch. *Hongqi* 红旗. This monthly magazine was an official periodical of the Chinese Communist Party and renamed *Bden 'tshol* in the late 1980s.

¹² In addition to these four magazines, at least two other Tibetan magazines existed in the 1950s. Xu Lihua (2003) mentions a Tibetan journal entitled *Mtsho sngon po* (Qinghai Lake) which was founded with its Chinese counterpart *Qinghai hu* 青海湖 in 1956. Both editions were shut down in 1966. Only the Chinese edition was restarted in 1980 (p. 163-164). The same author has recorded a startling number of Tibet-related periodicals (105) available in China and Tibet dating from the *pre*-Communist era, albeit only five were in Tibetan language. (pp. 5-8)

¹³ Link 2000, pp. 18-19. The short crackdown ended by autumn 1979 (p. 20).

¹⁴ This is the official English translation, though a more literal rendering would be "Tibetan Literary Arts."

¹⁵ Bstan 'dzin rgan pa 1997, p. 1. *Xizang Wenxue* 西藏文学 has remained the preeminent literary journal featuring writing by Tibetans in Chinese, and by Chinese about Tibet, as well as some translations of Tibetan-language works into Chinese. No other Chinese-language Tibet-related journal has even begun to match the readership of

evolution of the Tibetan version demonstrates how the liberalization heralded by the 1978 Party Congress gradually manifested in the expansion of Tibetan-medium cultural initiatives in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Sanctioned by the historic meeting, the Communist Party of Tibet established an “Emergency Recovery Group” (*myur skyob tshogs chung*) under the newly formed Cultural Bureau. Specifically, the task of the emergency group was to recover three major traditions within Tibetan folk arts: 1) folkstories (*sgrung*); 2) opera (*lha mo*); and 3) Tibetan songs (*gzhas*) and dance (*gzhab bro*). The group then formed a twelve-member Preparatory Tibetan Literary Arts Union (ch. *wenlian*). By 1980, the “preparatory” was dropped, the *bonafide* union begun, and the emergency group disbanded.¹⁶ The first issue of *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal* was released that year.

Other Tibetan literary journals appeared in quick succession across the plateau (see Table 1). The most prominent among these was *Sbrang char* (Light Rain), founded in Xining in 1981.¹⁷ If we examine a list of periodicals from the immediate post-Mao period, we note a vitality in the number of publications issued in Lhasa. This trend ended in the 1990s, during which very few Tibetan-medium journals were launched in the Tibet Autonomous Region. By contrast, some one hundred different Tibetan periodicals (granted, with varying longevities) have been founded in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan provinces since 1990.¹⁸ This flourishing will be further discussed at the close of this article. The list also includes three magazines which I have labeled “unofficial” as these were issued not by government work units, but by private initiative (mostly students) and with no government funding. While unofficial journals were prevalent in Chinese circles, they constituted a major publishing venue for Tibetan writers only in the past decade.

Xizang Wenxue. Indeed, there are few other sinophone Tibetan literary journals, inside or outside the TAR. Two examples are *Gesang Hua* 格桑花 (Flowers of the Good Era, f. 1980) published by the Cultural Bureau (Wenhua Ju) in Hezuo and *Gongga shan* 贡嘎山 (Gangs dkar ri bo, f. 1981) in Kangding. Lara Maconi (forthcoming) mentions two others (*Shannan wenyi* 山南文艺 and *Qinghai qunzhong wenyi* 青海群众文艺), both of which were closed down in the 1980s for various reasons, including lack of readership.

Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani (2002) argues convincingly that the official English translation for this journal, “Tibetan Literature” is misleading. She also notes how the original title was *Xizang wenyi*, but this was changed to *Xizang wenxue* in 1984 so that “Xizang wenyi” could be used as the official Chinese translation of the Tibetan journal, *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal*. Schiaffini-Vedani 2002, pp. 20-21.

¹⁶ Interview with Lhun grub rnam rgyal (editor of *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal*), 23 August 1997.

¹⁷ As in the Tibet Autonomous Region, a Chinese precursor to the first Tibetan literary magazine of Qinghai Province—*Qinghai Wenyi* (Qinghai Art and Literature, f. 1975)—had been founded several years earlier.

¹⁸ For a list of Tibetan-medium periodicals published from 1950-2002, see Hartley 2003.

Table 1. Tibetan-Medium Journals Founded in the PRC (1976-1985)

Journal	Founding Year	Place of Publication
<i>Rnga ba tshan rtsal</i> Aba Science and Technology	1977	Ma'erkang Sichuan
<i>Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal</i> Tibetan Art and Literature	1980	Lhasa
* <i>Xizang Minbing</i> 西藏民兵 <i>Bod ljongs dmangs dmag</i> [?] Tibet Militia	1980	Lhasa
<i>Sbrang char</i> Light Rain	1981	Xining
<i>Gangs dkar ri bo</i> Snow Mountain	1981	Ganze
<i>Mtsho sngon mang tshogs sgyu rtsal</i> Qinghai People's Arts	1981	Xining
<i>Shes bya zegs ma</i> Drops of Knowledge	1981	Beijing
<i>Nyi gzbon</i> Young Sun	1982	Lhasa
<i>Bod ljongs zhib 'jug</i> Tibetan Studies	1982	Lhasa
<i>Rtser snyeg</i> Climbing	1982	Xining
<i>Zla zer</i> Moonshine	1982	Hezuo
* <i>Xizang Gewu</i> 西藏歌舞 <i>Bod ljongs zlos gar</i> [?] Tibet Song and Dance	1982	Lhasa
<i>Spang rgyan me tog</i> Gentian Flower	1983	Lhasa
<i>Mi rigs skad yig gi bya ba</i> Nationality Language Affairs	1983	Xining
<i>Bod ljongs mang tshogs rig rtsal</i> TAR People's Arts	1983	Lhasa
<i>Ri skyes me tog</i> (unofficial) Mountain Flower	1983	Henan County Qinghai
<i>Shwa kha skya</i> White-Lipped Deer	1983	Guoluo Prefecture Qinghai
<i>Lho kha rtsom rig sgyu rtsal</i> Shannan Literature and Art	1984	Zedang TAR
<i>Nub byang mi rigs slob grwa chen mo'i rig gzabung dus deb</i> Journal of the Northwest Nationalities Institute	1984	Lanzhou
<i>Mi rigs</i> Nationalities	1984	Chengdu
<i>Lha sa skyid chu</i> Lhasa Kyichu	1984	Lhasa

* <i>Xueyuan wenshi</i> 雪原文史 <i>Gangs ljongs rig gnas lo rgyus</i> [?] Snowland Cultural History	1984	Ma'erkang Sichuan
<i>Tang gi 'tsho ba</i> Party Life	1985	Xining
<i>Mthing zla</i> (unofficial) Blue Moon	1985	Lanzhou
<i>Bod ljongs slob gso</i> Tibetan Education	1985	Lhasa
<i>Sbes bya kun btus</i> Compendium of Knowledge (formerly <i>Nyi gzhon</i>)	1985-1989	Lhasa
<i>Rtse chu'i zegs ma</i> (unofficial) Spray of the Rtse chu River	1985	Henan County Qinghai
* <i>A ba shi zhi</i> 阿坝史志 Ngaba Historical Annals	1985	Ma'erkang Sichuan
<i>Mang tshogs sgyu rtsal</i> [Gannan] People's Arts	1985	Hezuo

Sources: *Catalogue of Chinese Publications in Tibetan Studies 1949-91* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994); Xu Lihua (2003); and field research. (*) Tibetan title not available.

The Tibetan literary magazines detailed in Table 1 were truly groundbreaking and played a vital role in fostering writers, translators and critics. Eventually, they also came to provide a proxy public forum for the exchange of ideas and the negotiation of Tibetan culture. Lara Maconi (2001) has aptly described their role as “literary sites”:

[L]es magazines littéraires au Tibet sont de véritables carrefours d'activités littéraires diverses. Ils sont les *lieux* littéraires où tous les agents de l'activité médiatrice (écrivains, traducteurs, éditeurs) et les diverses phases du processus médiateur (création littéraire, traduction, édition, critique) se croisent, se superposent et interagissent d'une façon simultanée.¹⁹

While serving to link the intellectual class most directly involved in this form of cultural production, literary magazines also bridge Tibetan cultural consumers who are otherwise geographically scattered across five provinces.²⁰ By 1984, both *Bod kyi rtson rig sgyu rtsal* and *Sbrang char* were being distributed nationally. In this way, they came to serve as an important literary link in the constitution of a “Reading Tibet.” That is, nationally distributed journals and books provide a shared referent helping to regalanize a transregional “imagined” Tibetan

¹⁹ Maconi 2001, pp. 221-222.

²⁰ Less than half of the official Tibetan population in the PRC (totaling 5.4 million) lives in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Approximately 3 million Tibetans reside in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan or Yunnan provinces. *Tabulation on the 2000 Population Census of the People's Republic of China*, Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2002; cited in Tibet Information Network, “Overview of the Tibetan population in the PRC from the 2000 Census,” 30 September 2003.

readership, with a far greater percentage of secular readers than in the pre-Communist era.²¹ At the same time, the link between print language and national identity is tempered by low literacy rates (56%) among Tibetans in the PRC.²² Alternatively, one could conceive of a “Reading Tibet” that is not only transregional but which crosses state borders—that is, to include the Diaspora population. While the potential of the Tibetan language to serve as the “glue” for this project is likewise weakened by similarly low rates of Tibetan literacy in exile, the political implications are nonetheless tangible and surely underlie official efforts by Beijing to keep these populations separate (restrictions on travel and the importation of reading and other cultural materials), as well as efforts by actors in exile to bridge this divide.

The Tug of Tradition

The impact of literary magazines in encouraging potential writers and providing instruction on literary trends was not immediately realized. Indeed, a reader looking for “new Tibetan literature” finds little of interest in the earliest issues of these journals, which published dozens of folk-based or classical-style poetry praising the Communist Party and its policies. The most daring breaks were to redirect this ornamental speech to praise the beauty of the Tibetan environment or one’s homeland. *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal*, in fact, had little intention of publishing modern literature. The magazine decided to focus on contemporary literature only when a sister magazine, *Spangs rgyan me tog*, was promoted to provincial-level status and focused on folk literature.²³ Although scattered short stories began to appear, Tibetan publishing in the early 1980s was otherwise remarkable for the prevalence of classical writing forms.

Even a cursory survey of the earliest Tibetan language publications in the post-Mao era reveals the lack of original Tibetan material from which editors could draw. Every contribution in the first issue of *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal*, for example, was translated from Chinese.²⁴ Academic journals also relied primarily

²¹ My interpretation here is influenced by the well-known work of Benedict Anderson (1991) who has discussed how print-languages in the European context “created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars.” (p. 44) While the gap between Latin and the “state languages” which emerged in Europe was greater than that between Classical Tibetan and modern colloquial written Tibetan, my main point is that the secularization of education and greater literacy grants written Tibetan even more currency as a unifying force.

²² Compare this figure with the PRC national average of 88%. 2002 population census, as published in Department of Population, Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, *China Population Statistical Yearbook 2003*, Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2003. These literacy figures make no distinction between Tibetan and Chinese literacy.

²³ Interview with Lhun grub rnam rgyal, 23 August 1997.

²⁴ Bstan ‘dzin rgan pa 1997, p. 1. Bstan ‘dzin rgan pa was the founding editor of the journal, a post which he maintained until 1990.

on translated research articles originally written by Chinese scholars. The contents of *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal* and *Sbrang char* in their first few years of publication generally consisted of 1) poetry, almost solely in traditional metric verse; 2) short stories, limited to one or two per issue in the early years; 3) folk literature; 4) articles about Tibetan culture or history; 5) proceedings or announcements of official policy; 6) essays; and 7) a limited number of translated works from Chinese or other languages. In a study of the earliest issues of *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal*, literary critic Skäl bzang ye shes (1983) calculated that out of 48 contributions in the fourth issue of 1980, for instance, 32% of the literary works and articles were translated from Chinese, 31% represented Tibetan folk literature, and only 36% were original contemporary works in Tibetan. Most of these were poems, all written in classical *kāvya* style.²⁵ Praise verse so dominated Tibetan poetry that Don grub rgyal (1953-1985) penned in 1984 an influential satire expressing the weariness of many readers, comparing praise-verse variously to a donkey, excessive sweets, a corpse, and a “knife in one’s ear.”²⁶

The prevalence of traditional literary forms from 1980 to 1984 can be explained by a couple of factors. First, in the period immediately following the Cultural Revolution the publication of traditional material was itself a novelty. While the reforms announced by the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress paved the way for economic liberalization and artistic experimentation, the end of the Cultural Revolution also sanctioned a revival in classical literary and other art forms. This was true for all peoples in the PRC, but the significance seems to have been particularly great for Tibetan culture which was hard hit during the campaign against the Four Olds. Pema Bhum (1995) has recalled the moment when the chanted melodies of the Gesar epic were first heard again from loudspeakers after so many years when even folk songs could not be sung.²⁷ Tibetan intellectuals were faced with two potentially opposing social forces: on the one front modernization launched in the PRC at large, and on the other the revival of traditional cultural forms, such as Tibetan grammar and folk songs, which had been suppressed during the Cultural Revolution. The contrast with the Chinese intellectual milieu at this time is an important one, for the tussle between traditional preservation and literary experimentation in Tibetan society seems to have been weightier. While most of the country, including many Tibetan intellectuals, enthusiastically supported Deng Xiaoping’s program for the “Four Modernizations,” Tibetan intellectuals were less quick to criticize their early traditions as part of the modernizing campaign. An older generation who could immediately recall the hardships faced during the democratic reforms and campaigns against the “Olds” during the Cultural Revolution, rejoiced at the return of traditional Tibetan literature and other art forms. Not least, the revival of traditional poetry and folklore provided a newly educated generation with employment as teachers and in the study of the Gesar epic and other folk traditions.

²⁵ Skäl bzang ye shes 1983, pp. 64-65.

²⁶ Drag btsan rang grol (aka Don grub rgyal) 1984, pp. 41-43.

²⁷ Bhum 1995, p. 19. See also Bhum 2001, chap. 3.

A second reason for the slow emergence of new writing lies in the fact that Tibetan literature had never experienced the wide debate over vernacularization and experimentation which occurred in Chinese literary circles during the New Culture movement in the early part of the twentieth century.²⁸ In contrast to their Chinese contemporaries, Tibetan writers seeking a more colloquial writing style in the 1980s had few indigenous literary models on which to draw. Nor were the literary innovations of the preceding decades considered exemplary. As one writer remarked with regard to the 1950-1980 period,

Though it seemed there were many signs that fine poetry would appear, the “food for thought” and “tonic for the mind” offered to readers for enjoyment by writers who dominated the literary stage were poems such as “I, Rdo dbyis Shes rab rgya mtsho, have seen in this holy person named Mao Zedong a great many of the praise-worthy marvels found in the untarnished thought of the Buddha,” (1956) and a few poems by Tsha sprul Ngag dbang blo bzang. Amidst the hardship and chaos of each subsequent movement, our poetry was like a child wandering the barren plains, with no relatives to take care of him and no support. He was nearly gasping for his last breath, without support.²⁹

Despite the fresh air offered by a relaxation of government policy in the late 1970s, a Tibetan vernacular literature needed time to flourish. By the end of 1981, original Tibetan contributions in *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal* had jumped from 36% to nearly 80%; and by late 1982, more than 100 different Tibetan writers had submitted writings to the journal.³⁰ And yet, as discussed above, the vast majority of these submissions were poems reflecting a strong classical influence.

The New Tibetan Literature

Bolder initiatives in experimental Tibetan poetry began several years after the advent of experimental forms in Chinese. A pastiche of influential elements can be found in the earliest Tibetan writing projects of the 1980s. Not least among these influences were works by Tibetans writing in Chinese who were quicker to experiment and who enjoyed a greater publishing presence. Writers, such as Yidan Cairang (Yi dam tshe ring, b. 1933), who had been publishing during the Cultural Revolution, were well-seasoned by the time government policy relaxed enough to allow them greater exercise of their talents. Ljang bu (né Rdo rje tshe ring, b. 1963), a popular Tibetan writer and literary editor, has pointed to the importance of Tibetan-authored poems in Chinese published soon after the Cultural Revolution as “seeds of the ‘new’ poetry which was to come later.”³¹ These poems typically expressed longing or praise for the older

²⁸ Many present-day Tibetan literary critics are quick to draw similarities between the Chinese May Fourth movement and the development of a new Tibetan literature. While the basis for comparison is limited given the dissimilar political and economic situations, there is a *social* and *cultural* parallel in that the late 1970s and early 1980s marked a period of rapid change for Tibetan society.

²⁹ Ljang bu 1997, p. 68.

³⁰ Skal bzang ye shes 1983, p. 66.

³¹ Ljang bu 1997, p. 70.

revolutionary generation. Among these, he highlights Skäl bzang's "In memory of four years after the death of Zhou Enlai" (1980), published in *Qinghai Tibetan News* (f. 1951). Such poems were influenced by the Tibetan translation of the Chinese anthology *Poems at Tian'an men* which was published by the Nationalities Publishing House in 1979.³² Other poems of praise were modeled after Tibetan folk songs or written in classical *kāvya* style. Only in 1983, with Don grub rgyal's now-famous poem *Lang tsho'i rhab chu* (Waterfall of Youth), was Tibetan free verse born. Yet, this even Mayakovsky-esque staircased poem "retained strong influences of versified poetry" as characterized by Françoise Robin (2002) in her study of the modern Tibetan genre.³³

As for prose literature, a smattering of Tibetan-medium short stories and essays began to appear in newspapers as early as 1976. Among the most prolific of Tibetan writers in the early post-Mao period was the above-mentioned Don grub rgyal, born in Qinghai Province and educated at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing (B.A., 1975; M.A. 1981). As Pema Bhum (1995) observes, "Don grub rgyal's writings were primarily featured in *Qinghai Tibetan News* from late 1976 or early 1977 until 1979. While a few works were experimental or done in a contemporary literary style, he mainly practiced and became familiar with different traditional Tibetan literary styles."³⁴ Sixteen of Don grub rgyal's best works from 1979 to 1980 were reprinted as a compilation entitled *Bol rtsom zhogs pa'i skya rengs* (The Dawn of Clear and Simple Writing), published by the Nationalities Publishing House in January 1981 with a foreword by his professor Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (1927-1997). This was the first book of collected works by a young Tibetan since the restoration of Tibetan culture. While the collection included a few of his earliest modern short stories, most of his works at that time were poems and classical in form.³⁵

The earliest multi-authored anthology of Tibetan modern literature was compiled and edited by Rdo rje rgyal po of the Nationalities Publishing House in 1983.³⁶ The writings featured in this volume were essays, short stories and dramas published in various newspapers and magazines from 1980 to 1981. It is interesting to note that many of the earliest short stories included brief passages of poetry written in classical *kāvya* style. There is also a tendency to write dialogue in verse form, as influenced perhaps by the combined prose-poetry form of the orally transmitted *Gesar* epic and other literary genres. Rdo rje rgyal po himself wrote the first modern Tibetan novella, which he drafted in 1959 though it was not published until 1980.³⁷

³² Tib. *Gnam bde sgo mo'i snyan tshig 'dra bshus*. (Ch. *Tian'an men shichao* 天安门诗抄). This anthology included poems written on walls and elsewhere at the April 1976 memorial for Zhou Enlai, including "*Zhou Zongli bangong tang de deng* (The light in the office of Minister Zhou)," "The Anguish of the First Month," and "Premier Zhou, Where Are You?"

³³ Robin 2002, p. 453.

³⁴ Pema Bhum 1995, p. 19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

³⁶ Rdo rje rgyal po 1983.

³⁷ Rdo rje rgyal po 1980. Translator and scholar Rdo rje rgyal po wrote the novella at

For an overall classification of the novels, novellas, and short stories published in *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyu rtsal* from 1980 to 1982, the reader is referred to Skäl bzang ye shes (1983) who identifies the following themes: 1) suffering under the feudal slave system in the old society; 2) suffering under the misguided policies of the Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution; and 3) the potential benefit for all society if one studies hard and practices Communist ideology.³⁸ In Amdo, the theme of “suffering” is additionally applied in stories revealing the tragedies of the Ma Bufang period. Discussions of contemporary issues in Tibetan society might also be added to this list of themes, as evidenced in Don grub rgyal’s *Sad kyis bcom pa’i me tog* (“Frostbitten Flower”) published in 1982.³⁹ The range of subject material in these earliest stories is quite narrow when compared to the various themes and writing styles that can be found in the short stories and prose essays of the 1990s.⁴⁰

A Growing Book Industry

The unprecedented production of journals, literary and academic, had its parallel in the book industry, but with an important qualification. Many of the books first released in the late 1970s and early 1980s were reprints of editions drafted or even published in the 1950s. Link (2000) has remarked on this “revival” quality of cultural production in the post-Mao period:⁴¹

The literary-bureaucratic system that was revived in the late 1970s was, in important respects, the one that had been built in the 1950s by borrowing from a Soviet model and that had lasted in China until the mid-1960s.

Link identifies the leviathan network by which writing was officially published in the PRC from 1950 to 1990 as “the socialist Chinese literary system.”⁴² Tibetan publishing also had its place within this national infrastructure, starting with the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing which opened its Tibetan section in 1953. Its publications were printed by the Central Nationalities Printing House⁴³ which had opened two years earlier. Sichuan and Gansu provinces had their

the urging of his teacher at the Central Nationalities Institute. The story, written in Lhasa dialect, takes place sometime after the fall of the Tibetan empire and concerns the love between an aristocratic woman and a poor, but kind and skilled, blacksmith. It can also be found in the scholar’s collected works (Rdo rje rgyal po 1992), pp. 823–889.

³⁸ Skäl bzang ye shes, “Bod rigs kyi rtsom rig lo rgyus,” pp. 69–72.

³⁹ An English translation of this story and three other short stories can be found in Virtanen (2000).

⁴⁰ See Laurant Hartley 1999, pp. 29–44. The plots of additional short stories are discussed in Moon 1991 and Tsering Shakya 1999 and 2000.

⁴¹ Link 2000, p. 13.

⁴² Link (2000) argues that this system finally dispersed or was made irrelevant by the early 1990s with “the revival of popular fiction, the rise of film, the emergence of elite avant-garde writing, and the gradual replacement of political controls with market forces” (p. 14).

⁴³ Zhongyang minzu yinshuachang 中央民族印刷厂.

respective nationality publishing houses, which in the 1950s and even 60s released a limited number of Tibetan texts and several Chinese studies on Tibet, including collections of folksongs and folktales. At the Qinghai People's Publishing House, such projects were handled by the Tibetan Editing and Translation Department (f. 1954), which was expanded and renamed the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House in 1976.⁴⁴ In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Tibetan publishing fell under the jurisdiction of the People's Publishing House, which was among the first to resume Tibetan-language publishing in 1978.

While Tibetan society had fewer cultural institutions to restore, Link's "revival"—model holds true to a surprising degree for Tibetan publishing projects undertaken after the Cultural Revolution. A general survey of publications for the purpose of my dissertation made me aware of this intriguing phenomenon. As Table 2 demonstrates, many Tibetan books published in the late 1970s and early 1980s were actually reprints or revised editions of texts published, or at least drafted, before the Cultural Revolution. These were the "drawer literature" of Tibetan scholars. Though the following list is not comprehensive, the number of classical orthographies and grammars, not to mention classical Tibetan texts, operas, folklore and studies of traditional poetry, provides evidence of cultural initiatives in the 1950s that went far beyond the demands of political propaganda. Furthermore, this list serves as evidence of a "revival" in Tibetan cultural production immediately following the Eleventh Party Congress of December 1978.

While Table 2 focuses on books that were first printed or drafted in the 1950s (in order to illustrate the "revival" quality of publishing in the early post-Mao period), many first edition publications from 1976-1985 also had a traditional or historical cast. For example, episodes from the Gesar epic were prevalent among the books released in the immediate post-Mao period. These must have been popular, as nearly every title was soon reprinted for an average total print run of 50,000 copies. Indeed, I have been told that some Tibetan entrepreneurs (especially nomads) made significant profits by re-selling copies of the Gesar epic in areas with no official Xinhua bookstores.⁴⁵ In the late 1980s, more than a dozen additional episodes were released, but print runs then tapered to about 10,000 copies per title.

The Gesar project also had its seeds in the pre-Cultural Revolution era. For example, the first episode published by the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House—*The Battle between Hor and Ling* (1977)—was edited by the renowned scholars Tshe tan zhabs drung and Dge bshes Gsung rab rgya mtsho in the early 1960s.⁴⁶ Their effort to record the oral literary epic was later used in 1965 to charge Dge bshes Gsung rab rgya mtsho with being a "counter-revolutionary" and a member of the "Panchen clique" and to forcibly retire him at home. The wealth of his household was confiscated and the family faced great hardship.

⁴⁴ "Shuoming 说明" (Explanation). *Bod yig dpe cha'i dkar chag* (1979 -1988), Xining: Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House (1988), p. 1.

⁴⁵ Conversation with Pema Bhum, 4 September 2004.

⁴⁶ Ye shes rdo rje 2000, p. 457.

Table 2. Selected List of Reprint Editions Published in the Early Post-Mao Period (by genre and date)

1. Orthographies and Dictionaries

Author	Title	Publisher & Reprint Year	Original Draft or Publication
n/a	<i>Rgya Bod shan sbyar gyi tshig mdzod</i> (Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary)	NPH, 1976	NPH, 1964
Dpa' ris 'Jigs med dam chos (18th c.)	<i>Dag yig shes bya rab gsal</i> (Tibetan Orthography, Elucidated with Examples)	GNPH, 1979 GNPH, 1981	NPH, 1954 NPH, 1956
Nub byang mi rigs slob grwa chen mo'i bod yig slob dpyod tsu'u, ed. (Northwest Nationalities Institute Tibetan Language Education and Research Group)	<i>Rgya Bod ming mdzod</i> ("Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary"), but actually a Tibetan-Chinese dictionary	GNPH, 1979	Published in 1963 at Northwest Nationalities Institute.
Dpal khang lo tswa ba (15th c.) Bstan 'dzin rgyal mtshan (1894-1977)	<i>Dag yig ngag sgron gyi rtsa ba dang 'grel pa</i> (Root text and Commentary on The Lamp of Orthography)	TPPH, 1980 TPPH, 1982	QPPH, 1957
Gsung rab rgya mtsho (1896-1982)	<i>Dag yig nyi ma'i 'od zer</i> (Orthography: Rays of the Sun)	QNPH, 1982	Preparatory Dept for the QPPH, 1954 QPPH, 1955 (2nd ed.)
Tshe dbang rnam rgyal (20th c.)	<i>Dag yig ma nor lam bzang</i> (The good path of correct spelling)	NPH, 1982	NPH, 1958
Yu Daoquan 于道泉, ed.	<i>Bod rgya shan sbyar gyi lha sa'i kha skad tshig mdzod</i> (Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary of Lhasa Colloquial Tibetan)	NPH, 1983	Revised three times between 1954 and 1960, and cyclostyle copies distributed.
Dge bshes Chos kyi grags pa (1898-1972)	<i>Brda dag ming tshig gsal ba</i> (Tibetan-Tibetan and Chinese Dictionary)	NPH, 1985	NPH 1957. Translated into Chinese from a 1949 woodblock print of the Hor khang Printing House in Lhasa.
Zhang Yisun 张怡荪, ed.	<i>Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo</i> (The Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary, 3 vols.)	QPPH, 1955 (part 1)	This project was started in the 1950s.
Tshe tan zhabs drung (1910-1985)	<i>Dag yig thon mi'i dgongs rgyan</i> (Orthography: The thought-ornament of Thonmi Sambhota)	QPPH, 1957 (part 2)	n/a

2. Tibetan Grammars

Author	Title	Publisher & Reprint Year	Original Draft or Publication
Gsung rab rgya mtsho (1896-1982)	<i>Sum rtags gyis kyī tshig don mdor bsdus</i> (Concise Tibetan grammar)	QNPH, 1979	QPPH, 1955
Tshe tan zhabs drung (1910-1985) Tsha sprul Ngag dbang blo bzang (1880/81-1957)	<i>Bod gangs can gyi sgra rig pa'i bstan bcos le tshan 'ga' phyogs bsdus</i> (Summary of several chapters from Tibetan grammar treatises)	GNPH, 1980	QPPH, 1954
Dngul chu chos kyī bzang po (aka Dharma Bhadra, 1772-1851)	<i>Sum cu pa'i snying po legs bshad ljon dbang gi slob deb</i> (An elementary textbook on the essence of [Tibetan] grammar)	NPH, 1981	NPH, 1959
Dbyangs can grub pa'i rdo rje (1809-1887)	<i>Sum rtags rtsa ba dang de'i 'grel ba si tu'i zhal lung</i> (Thonmi Sambhota's texts and commentary)	NPH, 1982	NPH, 1956
Karma si tu chos kyī 'byung gnas (1699/1700-1774)	<i>Karma Si tu'i sum rtags 'grel chen mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan mu tig phreng mdzes</i> (Commentary on Karma Situ's grammar)	QNPH, 1982	QPPH, 1957

3. Classical Tibetan Poetry (Instruction)

Author	Title	Publisher & Reprint Year	Original Draft or Publication
Bstan pa rgya mtsho (20th c.)	<i>Snyan ngag gi spyi don tshig rgyan rig pa'i lde mig</i> (Key to the general meaning of <i>Kāvyādarśa</i> and the science of ornamentation)	GPPH, 1980 (1981 2nd printing)	Written in 1960 for classroom use while teaching at Northwest Nationalities Institute. In 1963, the GPPH had plans to publish the book, but these were dropped when "circumstances were not conducive."
Daṇḍin with commentary by Bod mkhas pa Mi pham dge legs rnam rgyal (1618-1685)	<i>Snyan ngag rtsa 'grel</i> (Root text and Commentary on Daṇḍin's <i>Kāvyādarśa</i>)	QNPH, 1981	QNPH, 1957
Tshe tan zhabs drung (1910-1985)	<i>Snyan ngag me long gi spyi don</i> (The abridged <i>Mirror of Poetry</i>)	QNPH, 1981 (two printings in one year)	QPPH 1957 This text was actually completed in 1952.
Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (1927-1997)	<i>Snyan ngag la 'jug tshul tshig rgyan rig pa'i sgo 'byed</i> (Opening the door of the study of alamkāra for writing poetry)	QNPH, 1982	The author wrote this text in 1962 while teaching poetry at the Central Nationalities Institute, where it was printed by cyclostyle and distributed to students.
Rdo rje rgyal po (1913-1992)	<i>Snyan ngag gi rnam bshad gsal sgron</i> (Exegesis on poetry: A clarifying lamp)	NPH, 1983	The author's remarks in the afterword suggest that this book was written in Beijing during the early 1960s.

4. Classical, Folk or Historical Literature

Author	Title	Publisher & Reprint Year	Original Draft or Publication
Bkra shis tshe ring	<i>Bod rigs kyi glu gzhas gces btus</i> (Tibetan folk songs)	SNPH, 1979	SNPH, 1959
Mdo mkhar ba Zhabs drung Tshe ring dbang rgyal (1697-1763)	<i>Gzhon nu zla med kyi gtam rgyud</i> (Tale of the Incomparable Prince)	TPPH, 1979	NPH, 1957
Sakya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251)	<i>Sa skya'i legs bshad bzugs so</i> (The aphorisms of Sakya Paṇḍita)	SNPH, 1979	SNPH 1958
compiled and edited by Tshe tan zhabs drung with Gsung rab rgya mtsho	<i>'Dzam gling Ge sar rgyal po'i sgrung: Hor gling g.yul 'gyed</i> (Gesar Epic: The Battle between Hor and Ling)	QNPH, 1979 (Part 1) 1980 (Part 2)	QPPH, 1962
Rdo rje rgyal po (1913-1992)	<i>Ye shes lha mo dang mgar ba Stobs rgyal</i> (Yeshe Lhamo and the Blacksmith Tobgyal)	NPH, 1980	Novella drafted in 1959 while the author was at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing.
n/a	<i>Gling Ge sar rgyal po'i sgrung: Hor gling g.yul 'gyed</i> (Gesar Epic: The Battle between Hor and Ling)	TPPH, 1980 (Parts 1 & 2)	n/a
Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1714-1762)	<i>Bya mgyin sngon zla ba'i rtogs brjod</i> (Story of the Cuckoo)	TPPH, 1981	n/a, 1958
Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682)	<i>Dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs</i> (Song of the Queen of Spring) A history of Tibet by the Fifth Dalai Lama	NPH, 1981	NPH, 1957
n/a	<i>Rgyal bo dri med kun ldan gyi rnam thar</i> (Story of King Drimey Kunden)	QPPH, 1981	QPPH, 1958
Tshe tan zhabs drung	<i>Gzab gsbar mdzes rtsal gyi bod yig ji ltar 'bri ba'i ma phyi</i> (Model book for writing Tibetan script)	QNPH, 1984	This book of model calligraphy was first published by the Qinghai People's Publishing House in 1960.

Sources: Survey of collection at Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library (NYC), supplemented by titles from the *Catalogue of Chinese Publications in Tibetan Studies* 1949-91 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994), and *Bod yig dpe cha'i dkar chag* (1979-1988) (Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House, 1988). The dates of several scholars were obtained from the online database of The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center at www.tbrc.org.

Key to Abbreviations

GNPH = Gansu Nationalities Publishing House; GPPH = Gansu People's Publishing House
 NPH = Nationalities Publishing House [Beijing]; QPPH = Qinghai People's Publishing House
 QNPH = Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House; TPPH = Tibetan People's Publishing House

Gsung rab rgya mtsho was exonerated only in 1979,⁴⁷ three years before his death in 1982. Tshe tan zhabs drung was also arrested on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. After spending more than thirteen years under house arrest, he was finally exonerated in 1978 and invited to teach at Northwest Nationalities Institute in Lanzhou, Gansu Province.⁴⁸ Tshe tan zhabs drung also compiled a history of a monastery in Qinghai, such as were published by the Nationalities Publishing House in 1982 and 1984.

Indeed, the revival in Tibetan publishing had as much to do with individuals as it did with institutions per se. Many of the authors or editors of the books listed in Table 2 were monastically trained Tibetan scholars who were employed in translation teams in the 1950s but arrested in the mid-1960s. These include Tshe tan zhabs drung, Gsung rab rgya mtsho, Shar gdong Rinpoche, Dmu dge bsam gtan, to name only a few. When exonerated and released after the Cultural Revolution, they were asked to resume teaching posts or were newly appointed to Tibetan programs at nationality institutes across the PRC in the late 1970s.⁴⁹ Their instruction of younger generation writers (and the textbooks they wrote) lent no small degree of continuity to Tibetan writing in the pre- and post-Cultural Revolution periods.

Fascinating details of the early translation teams can be found in the autobiography of 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho (2000),⁵⁰ who worked for nearly thirty years as a translator at the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing before transferring in January 1981 to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS),⁵¹ where he eventually served as director of the Gesar Research Institute. Though the author attributes the publication of his own novel *Skal bzang me tog*⁵² to the more open political and cultural environment fostered by the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978, the original Chinese version was published only in 1980 and the Tibetan edition in 1982. In his autobiography, 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho also details the initiatives taken by Tibetan writers and other scholars to increase Tibetan cultural production in accord with the flexibility allowed by the 1978 Congress and in keeping with literary and other artistic developments elsewhere in the country.⁵³

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

⁴⁸ Tshe tan zhabs drung 1981, p. 136.

⁴⁹ Here too we witness a lag time, in that many Tibetan scholars were released later than their Chinese counterparts.

⁵⁰ Jiangbian Jiacao 2000.

⁵¹ This institute was established in Beijing in May 1977 and quickly became the leading center for social science research in the PRC. By 1984, CASS had thirty-three research institutes, three research centres, a postgraduate school and publishing house. One of these institutes was the Institute of National Minorities Literature, within which the Gesar Research Institute was established. Yahuda 1987, pp. xii-xx.

⁵² *Gesang Meiduo* was published by the People's Literary Publishing House (Beijing) in 1980, and *Skal bzang me tog* by the Nationalities Publishing House in 1982. See 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho 1982, p. 545.

⁵³ For further discussion of these initiatives, see Hartley 2003.

Newspapers

While scholars played a major role in founding key newspapers in the 1950s, they were not active in this arena during the post-Mao period. Many shied away from official or political projects, and newspapers were almost wholly the organs of the party or related offices. Nevertheless, several newspapers were launched following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1978. The role of these papers in furthering the Four Modernizations cannot be ignored. Newspapers focused on science and technology, construction, and law dominate the titles launched in the early 1980s. In Lhasa, where the Tibet Daily had been operating since 1956, the increase was particularly dramatic (see Table 3). Papers in other large towns of the TAR tended to be launched only later; e.g. *Gzhis ka rtse'i tshags par* (Shigatse Newspaper), f. in 1987; *Chab mdo'i tshags par* (Chamdo newspaper), f. 1993; and *Mnga' ris tshags par* (Ngari newspaper), f. in 1993—all three of which are run by the local party committee. Aside from the official provincial newspapers, smaller local newspapers have been started only recently outside the TAR. Reb gong (Ch. Tongren), for example, has long been a vital Tibetan cultural center but only launched a local Tibetan paper in 2000.

Table 3. Tibetan Newspapers Founded in the Early Post-Mao Period (1976-1985)

Newspaper	Founding Year	Place of Publication
<i>Kan lho'i gsar 'gyur</i> Gannan News	1978	Hezuo
<i>Bod ljongs tshan rtsal tshags par</i> Tibet Technology and Science Newspaper	1979	Lhasa
Rnga ba tshags par Aba Newspaper (originally * <i>Mingjiang bao</i> 岷江报, f. 1953)	1981	Ma'erkang
<i>Khrims lugs tshags par</i> [Qinghai] Legal Newspaper	1983	Xining
<i>Mtsho sngon Bod kyi tshan rtsal tshags par</i> Qinghai Tibetan Science and Technology Newspaper	1984	Xining
<i>Bod ljongs gzhon nu'i tshags par</i> Tibet Youth Newspaper	1985	Lhasa
<i>Bod ljongs khrims lugs tshags par</i> Tibet Legal Newspaper	1985	Lhasa
<i>Lha sa'i dgong dro'i tshags par</i> Lhasa Evening Newspaper	1985	Lhasa
<i>Bod ljongs gzhon nu'i tshags par</i> TAR Youth Newspaper	1985	Lhasa
* <i>Qinghai jiankang bao</i> 青海健康报 Qinghai Construction Newspaper	1985	Xining

Sources: *Catalogue of Chinese Publications in Tibetan Studies 1949-91*, 1994; and Xu Lihua (2003).

As mentioned above, literary columns in these newspapers were the first venues for Tibetan writers experimenting in their own language. The *Tibet Daily*, for example, was an important project among others that furthered the vernacularization of the written Tibetan language. At the same time, the paper did not directly foster the growth of a new Tibetan literature until the end of the 1970s when its first literary column was added: “*Smyug gsar*” (New Pen or Fresh Bud).⁵⁴ In all, the Tibetan paper eventually featured more than ten such columns. If a 1983 anthology of short stories and essays drawn from newspapers is any indication, however, Tibetan papers did not publish many creative pieces until 1980 and 1981.⁵⁵ Another important effect of the newspaper was to increase the broad exposure of young Tibetans in the TAR not only through the news they received from outside but through exchange with news staff sent from Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Shanghai, Anhui, and elsewhere. Starting in 1982, young staff from the Chinese and Tibetan papers were selected and sent for study and professional development at universities and secondary schools in Shanghai, Beijing, Chongqing, Chengdu, Shenyang, and Nanjing. Currently, the staff for the Tibetan edition of the *Tibet Daily* is 90% Tibetan. The office has utilized the writings of more than 2300 writers in Chinese and 1000 writers in Tibetan. By the mid-1990s, the print run for the Tibetan edition had reached nearly 20,000, and nearly 30,000 for the Chinese edition.⁵⁶

Conclusion

It has been my purpose to temper the idea that 1978 heralded a new era in publishing with the same brilliance seen in the Chinese context. While political documents continued to be translated from Chinese into Tibetan, and many educational works (including basic scientific textbooks on weather or electricity) started to be translated in the late 1970s, classical works and instruction on classical grammar and literature constituted a large portion of Tibetan publishing in the immediate post-Mao period. At the same time, the revival did not include religious or shastric titles, which were scarce until 1986. Literary anthologies or single-authored works were also rare in this early period; and translations of foreign literature were available mainly through literary magazines, not in published anthologies.

The Tibetan publishing industry (and modern Tibetan literature) expanded more rapidly only in the late 1980s with a burgeoning of regional Tibetan literary magazines outside of the TAR. Worthy of further study is the question of what happened in 1992 when the Chinese government began to privatize the media. I

⁵⁴ The Chinese version of the paper had earlier featured literary writing in columns such as *Gao yuan* 高原 (Plateau).

⁵⁵ See Rdo rje rgyal po 1983. This book is one of the earliest anthologies of modern Tibetan writing. Selections were culled from *Tibet Daily*, *Tibetan Literary Arts*, *Light Rain* (*Sbrang char*), *Qinghai Tibetan News*, and *Ganman News*, from 1980 to 1981.

⁵⁶ Shar ba thogs med 1999, pp. 65–66.

shall make only a few preliminary observations here. One effect of government subsidy cuts was to greatly weaken the “Chinese socialist literary system” and to reduce the proportion of Tibetan publishing integrated in the national infrastructure. Note that only three unofficial magazines were launched in the early 1980s (see Table 2.). This number grew but mainly due to school or student-sponsored projects with intermittent publications. By contrast, in the mid-1990s, even local official magazines had to seek outside funding and monasteries began to resume their role as important centers of cultural production. Dozens of religious institutions in the northeast region of Amdo started to launch their respective literary and even social magazines. Despite the plethora of new magazines, newspapers continue to play an important role in featuring the works of young writers. For some editors, literary feature sections have proved to be a mechanism for buttressing rapidly falling subscription rates. Finally, the monolithic reach of the national publishing system was further weakened in the late 1990s as writers sought alternative publishing venues in Hong Kong and Taiwan, or through local private printing houses.

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