CONTEXTUALLY SPEAKING: TIBETAN LITERARY DISCOURSE AND

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To my parents who taught us
the meaning of unconditional support.
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ABSTRACT

Lauran Ruth Hartley


This dissertation examines literary debates initiated by Tibetan writers and critics in the 1980s and 1990s within the context of a rapidly modernizing society. My broader project is to illustrate how intellectuals position themselves in the field of literary production regarding questions of innovation, the function of literature, periodization, linguistic idiom, and the relevance of Indic kāvyā theory, which dominated Tibetan belles-lettres for nearly seven hundred years. What discursive strategies do critics use to stake their literary claims? From what conceptual structures do they draw? How do they effect or resist, and ultimately shape literary change?

This dissertation presents a cultural history centered on the concept of discursive formations, while also drawing on theoretical insights in sociology and literary criticism. After demonstrating how translation, publishing and educational activities of monastically trained scholars since the 1940s lay groundwork for the advent of a "New Tibetan Literature," I examine the subsequent development of modern Tibetan literary criticism, focusing on topics of sustained debate. While the bulk of my findings are based on a broad survey of Tibetan-medium literary criticism in the PRC, my selection of significant texts for close reading was informed by seventeen months of fieldwork in Qinghai and Gansu Provinces, and the Tibet Autonomous Region.
My research illustrates how Tibetan literary and other journals provide a proxy public forum for intellectuals to negotiate Tibetan literature and culture. Key debates in the 1980s, during which kāvyā principles continued to prevail, regarded the criteria for defining Tibetan literature, periodization and the emergence of free verse. By the mid-1990s, however, free verse was commonplace and western literary theory more available. A growing number of critics altogether rejected the kāvyā model, suggesting instead that Tibet's literary roots lay in pre-Buddhist writings. An alternate response lay in the nascent formation of a modernist literary movement.
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Criticism was only ever significant when it engaged with more than literary issues—when, for whatever historical reason, the "literary" was suddenly foregrounded as the medium of vital concerns deeply rooted in the general intellectual, cultural and political life of an epoch....

It has only been when criticism, in the act of speaking of literature, emits a lateral message about the shape and destiny of a whole culture that its voice has compelled widespread attention. It was only when 'culture' became a pressing political project, 'poetry' a metaphor for the quality of social life, and language a paradigm for social practice as a whole, that criticism could claim any serious title to exist.

—Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*
INTRODUCTION

The significance of contemporary Tibetan literary discourse may not be self-evident at first glance. Indeed, western scholarship is only beginning to examine the burgeoning of modern Tibetan literary works published since 1980 in the People's Republic of China (PRC), let alone wade through the hundreds of Tibetan literary reviews and other critical works of the past twenty years. However, in a society where certain arenas of discussion are curtailed—most notably social and political critique—the relative importance of literature and literary criticism as "discursive practices" is all the more increased. I use this term as influenced by Michel Foucault (1972) who reminds us that the text does not merely reflect history, but acts as an active and powerful component amongst other discursive practices in a field of productive forces. If culture is viewed as a field of production (Bourdieu, 1993), then Tibetan literary criticism can be identified as playing an important role in the constitution of social and aesthetic domains. In this sense, literary criticism is a "position-taking" which seeks to establish the criteria by which symbolic objects are valued and exchanged. Moreover, it stands alongside other texts, statements and practices to produce history and its representation.1

Literary critic Terry Eagleton (1999) has noted how "at different times and in different places, one or more of the discourses of academia find themselves providing a


In the narrow sense in which it is customarily used today, [literary criticism] refers to the analysis and interpretation of texts; but in its wider application literary criticism is concerned with more fundamental questions about the nature and function of literature: what is literature? How is it created? What are its effects? How do we evaluate it? Literary criticism can include scholarly exegesis, evaluative judgement, prescriptive criticism, literary history, and theory, and thus might be broadly defined as
temporary home for what might more properly be called intellectual activity."² The point has been made with regard to Tibetan literature by Tsering Shakya (2000): "Literature has become the main arena for intellectual confrontation among competing ideas in Tibet today."³ As our study illustrates, Tibetan literary criticism during the 1980s and 1990s served an important role in the definition of Tibetan national character, the delineation and construction of a Tibetan "past" and "present," as well as the production of cultural values. Through a process of "selective tradition,"⁴ Tibetan literary scholars interpret their past and offer competing versions of a pre-shaped present, motivated largely by a desire to shape the future. Accordingly, Tibetan intellectuals are engaged in a formative process similar to that experienced by countless groups of writers and thinkers from various countries at different times in their literary history and for a multitude of reasons. Yet, given the now marginalized status of Tibetan literature—as evidenced in a limited readership, economic pressures that encourage writers to publish in Chinese, and circumstances of censorship—the stakes are high and players take their positions in the field of production with all the more fervor. In the face of very real political and economic implications, Tibetan literary criticism is viewed and serves as an important multivalent force of social and cultural definition and identification.

The emergence of a Tibetan "New Literature" (rtsom-rig gsar-rtsom) is most often attributed to the leniency announced at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978, and its flourishing to the subsequent founding of several

discourse about literature. But literature itself is not a stable or self-evident category, so that discourse will inevitably vary with the changing nature of the literature that is its object. (P. vii)
important Tibetan literary journals. At present, there are more than six hundred Tibetan
writers in the PRC and a storehouse of nearly ten thousand modern short stories, poems
and essays.⁵ Many of these works represent a significant departure from earlier Tibetan
belles-lettres, which for several centuries were preeminently based on Daṇḍin's
Kāvyādarśa (Tib. Snyan-ngag me-long), an Indic treatise on poetics.⁶ As detailed by
Matthew Kapstein (forthcoming) and Leonard van der Kuijp (1996), the Tibetan
translation of the Kāvyādarśa in the thirteenth century was perhaps the single most
influential factor for the development of Tibetan belles-lettres up to and including the
mid-twentieth century. This Indic treatise which details poetic standards and conventions
delineates hundreds of ways to "ornament" one's writing—whether it be in metric verse,
prose writing, or a combination of the two—takes a threefold approach to figurative
speech utilizing ornaments of metaphor, meaning and sound. Hundreds of commentaries
by Tibetan and Mongolian scholars have since sought to interpret the Kāvyādarśa and
apply it in a Tibetan context.⁷ Though different schools of interpretation arose over this
seven hundred year period, ideological splintering seems to have been moderate and
overall adherence to the basic principles of kāvya theory remained largely unshaken.
While attacks on the lagging quality of another's verse could be vitriolic, theoretical

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⁶ Leonard van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Belles-Lettres: The Influence of Daṇḍin and Kṣemendra," in Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre, edited by J. Cabezón and R. Jackson (Ithaca: Snow Lion 1996), 395. I have translated "snyan-ngag" in this instance as "poetics" in that Snyan-ngag me-long could be said to entail "a system or body of theory concerning the nature of poetry. The principles and rules of poetic composition...the body of principles promulgated or exemplified by a poet or critic." C. Hugh Holman, ed., A Handbook to Literature (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1972), 403. By this definition, the treatise title could be rendered "Mirror of Poetics." Nevertheless, "Mirror of Poetry" remains the more conventional translation, though "snyan-ngag" as understood in previous centuries referred to more than what we would call "poetry" in English today. A discussion of how understandings of snyan-ngag have varied over time is the topic of chapter 7.
differences were largely centered around the "East-South" distinction in Indic poetry which prioritizes either softer (jam-pa) or lighter (yang-ba) language as preferred by the Eastern School; or else the rougher (rtsub-pa) and weightier/robust (lici-ba) language of the Southern School. Dividing lines were also drawn by identification with one model poet or monastery over another, and different interpretations of kāvyā principles. (See chapters 1 and 8.)

With only scattered instances of vernacular writing prior to 1950, the Kāvyādarśa used to serve as the primary "model against which Tibetan literary critics, such as there were, measured the poetic accomplishments of their fellow writers." Starting in the 1950s, however, with the mobilization of Tibetan translation teams under Communist Party direction and the widespread expansion of secular educational opportunities beyond the monastery, Tibetan society witnessed what Anthony Smith (1986) has characterized as "the centre of [its] ethnic memory and experience shifting from the temple and its priesthood to the university and its scholarly community." The impact of these sociological changes on Tibetan literary discourse is only beginning to be addressed by western scholarship. Whereas Cabezon and Jackson (1996) have provided an important volume addressing the variety and pecularities of classical Tibetan literary genres, we have yet to see such a volume regarding contemporary Tibetan literature. Moreover, only

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7 A partly annotated bibliography of these is provided by Dung-dkar blo bzang 'phrin las in his textbook on the subject, Snyan-ngag la 'jug-ishul tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i sgo-'byed (1982), which circulated through cyclostyle copies from 1962 and was reprinted in 1994.
11 Throughout the course of this thesis, I refer to several scholars working in western languages who have made significant contributions to this growing field, including Heather Stoddard (see "Tibetan Publications and National Identity," 1994) and her students in Paris— Lara Maconi and Francoise Robin, as well as Yangdon Dhondup, Alice Grünfelder, Toni Huber, Matthew Kapstein, Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani,
a handful of short modern literary works have been translated from Tibetan and published outside of the PRC.\textsuperscript{12}

Matthew Kapstein (forthcoming) is the only western scholar of whom I am aware to have examined the "revival of K\={a}vya in Post-Cultural Revolution Tibet" and to raise the question of how modern writers relate themselves to Tibetan k\=avya. Several Tibetan literary scholars have used k\=avya theory or combined it with modern literary theory (usually Marxist-inspired) to evaluate pre-k\=avya literature such as examples of mgur (or song-poem) found at Dunhuang, as well as modern literature.\textsuperscript{13} This practice first asserted in the early eighties continues today. And yet, as will be discussed in this dissertation, in recent years some Tibetan critics have rejected the k\=avya model, arguing that it is an Indic tradition which for several centuries led Tibetan literature to stray far from its roots. Still other young writers argue that a wholly new literary path must be carved.

The aim of my study is to examine how Tibetan writers and critics have viewed, interpreted, encouraged or discouraged literary change in the context of an ongoing wider debate about the role of "tradition" in a modernizing society. The implications of modernity—literary or otherwise—are particularly interesting in the case of Tibet, a society that has been typically "Shangrila-ized" (not least, by Tibetans and young Chinese intellectuals) as a mystical alternative to the ravages of militarism and a consumerist world-economy, a site "where all that was imagined to be good and true

\textsuperscript{12} Two noteworthy anthologies are Frank Stewart, ed., \textit{Manoa} 12:2 (2000) and Riika J. Virtanen, comp. and trans., \textit{A Blighted Flower and Other Stories} (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2000).

\textsuperscript{13} Kapstein (forthcoming) observes how maverick writer Don-grub-rgyal took "recourse throughout his work [a thesis on the early mgur tradition] to theoretical categories drawn directly from the k\=avya tradition."
about the premodern had been preserved. Moreover, the characterization of Tibetan culture as rich-in-tradition, but otherwise "backward" (Ch. luohou; Tib. rjes-lu), is underscored by the discourse surrounding the attribution of nationality (Ch. minzu) status in the PRC and by the use of Tibet as an "other" against which to gauge Chinese socioeconomic progress. How do innovative Tibetan authors and literary critics resolve their intellectual positions in the face of such weighty discourse?

I would characterize my approach as that of an "ethnographic historian" (Cohen 1997:xiv) seeking to better understand how writers, literary critics, students, and educators "made sense of the [literary] world." The bulk of my findings here are derived from textual sources; i.e. literary criticism and creative works written in Tibetan and a limited amount of literary criticism in Chinese. My selection of materials for textual interpretation and critique was deeply informed by seventeen months of fieldwork conducted primarily in Qinghai and Gansu Provinces, as well as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). In addition to procuring journals and other written materials, my research comprised three activities: 1) tutored close readings of classical and modern Tibetan works, 2) long-term contact with contemporary Tibetan authors and other intellectuals; and 3) two-semesters of participant-observation on a college campus (Qinghai Nationalities Institute). Upon my return to the United States, I supplemented these findings with a survey of my nearly complete holdings of the major literary and academic journals for articles of literary criticism and consulted dozens of Tibetan-


\[15\] This fieldwork was primarily conducted during 14 months from August 1999–September 2000. I am grateful to the Committee for Scholarly Communication with China (CSCC) of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) for the generous funding and organizational support they offered which enabled me to undertake this research. Earlier work was conducted during a three-month preliminary research trip in 1997 with funding provided by Indiana University. Between the two trips, I had the opportunity to
medium textbooks on Tibetan poetry, Tibetan literary history, and modern literary theory.\textsuperscript{16}

The geographic focus of my paper includes, of course, written works originating from the Tibet Autonomous Region or "Xizang" established in 1965. However, this political entity which is most usually called "Tibet" today comprises only 34\% of the total Tibetan population in the PRC.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, our study of Tibetan literary and other intellectual currents must also include materials written in "Tibet outside of the TAR," i.e. Tibetan autonomous prefectures and other areas of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan where Tibetans live in high concentration. In Qinghai Province, for example, nearly 30\% of the total population is Tibetan, comprising 21\% of the Tibetan population living in the PRC.\textsuperscript{18} By my estimate, about 75\% of Tibetan-language literary journals are published outside of the TAR\textsuperscript{19} and a disproportionate number of Tibetan writers today were born in Qinghai and Gansu Provinces.\textsuperscript{20} Other significant locales of Tibetan literary production include the cities which house the main nationality publishing centers: Beijing, Xining, Lanzhou, Chengdu, Lhasa, and to a lesser degree the city of Dechen in Yunnan Province. In recent years, many independently financed Tibetan books have also been published in Hong Kong. Likewise, during my travels, I occasionally saw Tibetan books published in Taiwan circulating in Tibetan areas outside of the TAR. Otherwise,
very few Tibetan publications published in exile reach readers in the PRC, though several important western Tibetological works can be read in Chinese translation.

I have aimed in this dissertation to present a cultural history, rather than a literary study per se. The primary object of my study is the corpus of literary criticism written in Tibetan by intellectuals in the PRC from 1980 to 2000, with a special emphasis on literary topics that became the source of sustained debate. At the same time, my approach seeks to situate these discursive statements within a historical context, employing the conceptual tools of Michel Foucault and others inspired by his work. I am also indebted to certain theoretical insights in the fields of sociology (i.e. Bourdieu's notion of cultural production and Raymond William's "selective tradition") and literary criticism (e.g. Terry Eagleton's work on the role of the critic). Indeed, Raymond Williams (as sociologist) has described my historical venture:

What the cultural sociologist or the cultural historian studies are the social practices and social relations which produce not only 'a culture' or 'an ideology' but, more significantly, those dynamic actual states and works within which there are not only continuities and persistent determinations but also tensions, conflicts, resolutions and irresolutions, innovations and actual changes.

I have chosen to cast my lot with the historians for several reasons. First, the data from which I draw is almost solely textual, with an emphasis not on the literature itself but on the critical discourse that both interprets and informs this literature. Second, the identification of what Williams (1981:35) terms "formations"—defined by the relations in which 'cultural producers' have been organized or have organized themselves—

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19 If we were to add the number of school-produced journals, such as those published by students at Qinghai Nationalities Institute (Xining) and Northwest Nationalities Institute (Lanzhou), the percentage would be even higher.
20 For supporting details, please see page X herewith.
21 The most notable example are the works of Namkhai Norbu (Italy).
remains particularly elusive. Williams himself acknowledges the challenge posed to sociologists by the small size and short duration typical of informal groups in the twentieth century. Indeed, specialized groups of Tibetan intellectuals tend to be project-oriented, such as self-initiated translation teams, organizers of cultural performances, or the publishing of a local journal. Lack of monetary and other resources largely prohibit such informal formations, let alone non-official institutions. Moreover, political conditions in which the sustained assembly of unofficial groups is viewed with suspicion render the task even more difficult. A restricted public space in this sense serves to increase the importance of Tibetan literary and other journals as well as newspapers in providing a forum for intellectuals to articulate their positions and exchange views in varying degrees of association with other writers. Third, for the same reasons suggested by the near absence of any studies by western scholars compiling a wide range of sociological or anthropological data in Tibetan areas of the PRC, a meaningful study of most official Tibetan cultural institutions in the PRC, such as a nationality publishing house, would pose a research challenge. For all of these reasons, my study is primarily textual.

The texts examined here are "cultural texts" in that collectively they constitute a space in which notions of Tibetan literature and culture are being constructed, contested, negotiated. Though historical, this dissertation aspires to include "active social concepts as necessary elements of description and analysis." (Williams 1981:21) My sense of

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23 The anthropological surveys on nomad life by Goldstein and Beall (1990) represent one exception. The recent study by Susan Costello (2002) of Tibetan cultural production in the area of Tongren County, Qinghai Province is an important and fascinating attempt to launch such a survey. However, the absence of any statistical data or informant information in her paper bespeaks the challenges posed by formally undertaking survey research in Tibetan areas.

24 However challenging, this line of research would surely produce useful and heretofore unavailable information.
culture emphasizes both the production of literature and discourse about that literature. I wish to clearly distance myself from a Mannheimian sense of culture as a unity or Weltanschauung (world-view or "global outlook")\textsuperscript{25} and from a Geertzian perspective which would identify a "cultural system" of symbolic exchange.\textsuperscript{26} Rather, I find any wholistic notion of "Tibetan Culture" to be quite elusive. The disruptions in signifying systems vis à vis time, place, dialect and social context far outweigh the commonalities, and serve as provocative if not frustrating points of study for at least this researcher. For the purposes of my cultural history, the object of study is not only a dynamic field, but one fractured at any given point in time, a space of constant negotiation: in the writing of short stories, the circumambulating of stupas, the singing of rap music, the ubiquitous donning of the Chicago Bulls cap for its "yak"-mascot, and in a Gansu nomad's chanting mani for Bill Clinton's return to the presidential office.

The first chapter of my dissertation situates my research within a wider theoretical framework of inquiry primarily based on Foucault's concept of "discursive formation." This chapter also establishes other points of departure, discussing the literary and sociological assumptions underlying this thesis and analysis, as well as background on literary theories which prevailed prior to the advent of what has been called the Tibetan "New Literature." The chapter closes with a discussion regarding the relationship between selective tradition and modernism, which I define as "the social-cultural working out of a host of social changes and ideological conflicts that expose a national crisis as well as a collective utopia within its discourse" (Xudong Zhang, 1997:17).

\textsuperscript{26} Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
Though I have chosen the early 1980s as a starting point for my study of literary debates, the historical background presented in chapters 2–4 are critical for an understanding of the social and literary developments that informed the advent of a modern Tibetan literary criticism; namely, the activities of monastically trained scholars who contributed to the development of a written colloquial Tibetan language through various translation, publishing and educational projects launched prior to the growth of a modern Tibetan literature in the 1980s. This is followed by a discussion in chapter 3 of the literary thought of Dge-dun-chos-'phel (1903–1951) and an overview of literary developments from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1959 through the founding of the first Tibetan literary magazine in 1980. Chapter 4 compares Tibetan and Chinese literary production in the early post-Mao period, with a special focus on the emergence of Tibetan free verse and the Chinese menglongshi movement. The following three chapters (chapters 5–7) discuss in succession the most controversial topics of Tibetan literary debates during the 1980s and 1990s, including the emergence of free verse; definitions of "Tibetan literature," periodization, obscure poetry and reinterpretations of the term "snyan-ngag." In chapter 7, I make the argument central to this dissertation that the notion of "Tibetan literature" as a discursive formation did not arise until nearly a decade after the first publications of contemporary Tibetan literature.

Yet, the unprecedented emergence of a modern discourse regarding Tibetan literature in the 1980s does not represent as sharp a historical break as we might think. In chapter 8, I examine the various ways in which the writings of pre-1959 intellectuals serve as inspiration for contemporary writers and as examples of earlier but contrasting polemical forms of intellectual debate. In this chapter, I include a case study of a
prominent Amdo Tibetan writer—Ju Skal-bzang, an older generation poet and literary critic who is well-schooled in classical Tibetan literature but also writes free-verse. His literary and critical works illustrate important developments in literary criticism and production and offer examples of how contemporary Tibetan authors have experimented with various writing styles that alternately break with, and in some cases reincorporate, Tibet's literary heritage. At the same time, his educational background reveals the influence of teaching lineages in Tibet and generational differences between certain teachers and their students.

Generational distinctions cannot account for all the variation we see in literary thought during this period. In my final chapter, I discuss socioeconomic factors that have led to geographic differentials, as well as particular lacunae evident across the Tibetan plateau: the absence of any professional Tibetan writers, the lack of novels, the near absence of children's literature, and the relatively limited number of women writers. In conclusion, I suggest that recent developments in theoretical discourse about Tibetan literature and the critical analysis of it must be viewed as only one among a host of modernizing changes on the Tibetan plateau. I discuss a growing tendency among the current generation to re-evaluate the accomplishments of earlier "Literary Greats" and to identify themselves with one or another literary school of thought or role model. At the same time, I look at the "new millenium"-factor and offer evidence for what I identify as a nascent but growing movement of "radical modernism" among certain Tibetan writers and intellectuals, spanning the fields of literature, art and social thought. As we shall see, in certain geographic areas of the Tibetan plateau - most notably in Qinghai Province - the discursive space has widened such that perhaps for the first time the discussion of
tradition and change have moved beyond a literary and scholarly realm into an emerging public forum.

Though this dissertation is arranged in loose chronological order, I have resisted the temptation to construct a fully linear account of key Tibetan literary debates that occurred in the past two decades. Often a "debate" cannot be defined as such when the positions are first asserted. It is only later upon reading back and identifying a series of direct refutations or a period of heightened concern with a particular issue that one chooses to define a "debate." Invariably, one can find a stray but related article that went publicly unnoticed when first published two, three or even five years prior to the heart of "the controversy." This suggests that works cannot be interpreted merely by ferreting out the author's intent, but must be viewed within the context in which they are received and in this sense re-written by readers. That is, certain articles become "hot topics" only when they resonate among other social, political and economic forces operative at the time. As we will see, none of these debates actually reached any closure, rather they seem to have either fallen by the wayside, faded into collective memory, or in other instances transmuted with new emphases or new spokespersons as the years passed.
Chapter 1

Discursive Formations and Selective Traditions

Because the dichotomy of tradition and modern is too fixed to reflect a dynamic reality does not mean that these categories are not useful. Their value, however, emerges from understanding them as discursive representations: as ways people understand and talk about themselves and others; as ways, for instance, in which some intellectuals deploy their self-perception as self-conscious subjects and the Other as mired in superstitious beliefs.

Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation, 90

As an entree into the theoretical underpinnings which inform the following presentation of largely historical data, I will begin with a definition of terms. Frankly speaking, some of these "underpinnings" were discovered after completing the bulk of my research. Only an immersion in local detail and subsequent reading and (re)reading of certain theoretical works lent me confidence to engage in my own "selective" process, locating a framework and certain theoretical concepts to help me identify and communicate larger dynamics which the historical details might be seen as constituting. Moreover, I draw on a few comparative situations in an attempt to counter any isolatory effects of an otherwise area studies approach.

Discursive Formations and New Centralities

My working hypothesis is that we can identify (beginning with the publication of Tibetan literary journals in 1980 and 1981) the emergence of a new "Tibetan Literature" (Bod-kyi rtsom-rig)—defined not only by a great storehouse of classical texts and a growing corpus of contemporary literary works per se—but as a discursive formation (Foucault
1972: 38); that is, a profuse but finite set of statements which systematically serve to constitute the object of which they speak. For data, I examine in chapters 5–7 the succession of statements written in Tibetan by Tibetan writers, critics, officials and others in the PRC during the 1980s and 1990s regarding "Tibetan Literature" (Bod-kyi rtsom-rig) as an object of discourse. Most of these statements appeared in Tibetan language literary journals, scholarly journals, and literary columns in Tibetan newspapers. Some of the journals are nationally distributed, while others are regional. Some receive state funding, while others are private and secular. Still others are funded and published by monasteries. Each author's statement in these journals will be regarded as it emerges in its materiality, appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced. Thus the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry.

Where possible, I will describe the statements in relation to the authors' social positions and the institutions that lend authority to their enunciations.

The uses of Tibetan literary discourse today differ in many ways from the function of classical Tibetan literary criticism in earlier centuries, which focused on the application of Indic theory to Tibetan writing. These differences are linked to the political and social transformations which Tibetan society experienced from the early

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27 My definition of "Tibetan writer" is solely based on self-designation by the writer him or herself.
28 I also draw on a limited pool of theoretical statements written by Tibetan literary scholars in Chinese for comparative purposes. However, most literary criticism written in Chinese evinces little knowledge of Tibetan-medium literature. The parallel but largely separate dialogues which result are discussed in chapter 6.
twentieth century. Indeed, a primary aim of this dissertation is to illustrate how theoretical discourse about Tibetan writing has shifted from one dominated by the conceptual structures and terms of Indic kāvyā (as received and reworked by Tibetan scholars since the thirteenth century) to a discourse that constructs and centrally situates the concept of "literature" (rtsom-rig) per se in a theoretical paradigm dominated by western literary concepts. And yet, "To say that one discursive formation is substituted for another is not to say that a whole world of absolutely new objects, enunciations, concepts, and theoretical choices emerges fully armed and fully organized.... On the contrary, one can... describe and analyse phenomena of continuity, return and repetition."30 The unprecedented emergence of a discourse regarding Tibetan literature in the 1980s does not represent an absolute historical rupture. In the first place, there were many important preceding social and literary developments that contributed to the advent and flourishing of a modern literature. Secondly, contemporary literary discourse is very much dependent on at least a basic understanding of the principles of kāvyā theory which largely informed classical Tibetan literature. Thirdly, the form and rhetoric of cultural debates in the 1980s and 1990s echo literary and extra-literary debates of earlier times, a topic to be addressed in chapter 8. A second aim of this dissertation is therefore to identify elements of "residuality" of past polemics in the forms of discursive statements being made today.

A reading of Foucault (1972) enables us to identify the categorization of "Tibetan Literature" as a discursive formation and to understand that the struggles or debates within the formation (several of which question the definition of "Tibetan Literature" itself) do not weaken the notion of Tibetan Literature as a discursive object. On the

30 Foucault, Archaeology, 173.
contrary, they lend positivity to the discourse to the extent that authors are "opposing one another on 'the same field of battle'":

[That whole mass of texts that belong to a single discursive formation—and so many authors who know or do not know one another, criticize one another, invalidate one another, pillage one another, meet without knowing it and obstinately intersect their unique discourses in a web of which they are not the masters, of which they cannot see the whole, and of whose breadth they have a very inadequate idea—all these various figures and individuals do not communicate solely by the logical succession of propositions that they advance, nor by the recurrence of themes, nor by the obstinacy of a meaning transmitted, forgotten, and rediscovered; they communicate by the form of positivity of their discourse, or more exactly, this form of positivity... defines a field in which formal identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, and polemical interchanges may be deployed.]

A third aim of this dissertation is to identify conceptual structures from which authors draw in making their statements; i.e. the theoretical and strategic choices determined firstly by "the function that the discourse under study must carry out in a field of non-discursive practices." I will argue that modern Tibetan literary discourse primarily seeks to preserve the characteristics of its individuality, and that this strategy has been primarily motivated by exterior transformations, such as changes in extra-literary practices (e.g. political and socio-economic) as well as shifts in the discursive practices of other formations (e.g. Chinese discourse on modernization).

_Tibetan Belles-Lettres (13th–20th Centuries)_

An introduction to the basic principles of _kāvyā_ (Tib. _snyan-ngag_) theory as received in Tibet is necessary for an understanding of certain debates that transpired in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as for an appreciation of the profound shift represented by the introduction

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31 Ibid., 126.
32 Ibid., 68.
of western literary thought and genres into Tibetan literary discourse and educational instruction at secondary and post-secondary levels. In the tongue-in-cheek summary of Gene Smith (2001), "Poetics in Tibet begins and ends with the Kāvyādārśa of Daṇḍin."\(^{33}\)

Why this was the only treatise on poetics (Skt. alamkāraśāstra; Tib. tshig-rgyan bstan-bcos)\(^{34}\) to be translated—and several times\(^{35}\)—into Tibetan for so many centuries remains a puzzle. Daṇḍin (late 7th c.),\(^{36}\) who lived in the region of Tamil\(^{37}\) but wrote in Sanskrit,\(^{38}\) was a relatively late contributor to the kāvyā tradition which became recognized as a special literature among Sanskrit and local Prakrit writers in India from 500–100 BCE.\(^{39}\) Nor was Daṇḍin by any means among the most prominent of writers.

Most critics of Indic kāvyā were from the preceding centuries (200–600 CE).\(^{40}\)

According to A.K. Warder (1989[1972]), Daṇḍin's ideas about literature were "rather idiosyncratic," including his refusal to recognize a distinction between history and fiction.\(^{41}\) Rather, he acknowledged only three classes of kāvyā: verse (Tib. tshig-bcad, Skt. padyā), prose (Tib. lhug; Skt. gadya) and mixed prose with mingled verse (Tib. tshig bcad-lhug spel-ma, Skt. campū).\(^{42}\) Kāvyā theory as transmitted in Tibet maintained this


\(^{34}\) Warder notes how the terms "alamkāraśāstra" and "kāvyālankāra" equally applied to the whole subject of poetics or composition of literature, as the importance of rgyan (alamkāra) became increasingly central to kāvyā theory. See A.K. Warder, Literary Criticism, vol. 1 of Indian Kāvyā Literature, rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), 78.


\(^{36}\) For biographical information on Daṇḍin and selections from his writings, see A.K. Warder, The Ways of Originality (Bāṇa to Dāmodaragupta), vol. 4 of Indian Kāvyā Literature, rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), 165–211.

\(^{37}\) Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-p'rin-las (1982) states that Daṇḍin was originally from Gujarat (Tib. Gu-du-rje-tha'i yul) but moved to Kāñci (Tib. Kanyut), the Pallava capital. (p. 15)

\(^{38}\) For biographical and other information on Daṇḍin, I have drawn solely on Warder, Kāvyā Literature, vols. 1 and 4.

\(^{39}\) Warder, Kāvyā Literature, 1:2. Various kāvyā styles became more pronounced from 400 BCE to 200 CE. Ibid., x.

\(^{40}\) Warder, Kāvyā Literature, 1:x.

\(^{41}\) Warder, Kāvyā Literature, 4:165. Warder also addresses in volume 1 (p. 183) Daṇḍin's conflation of the biography and the novel into a single class, namely, prose-kāvyā.

\(^{42}\) Warder, Kāvyā Literature, 1:183.
three-fold classification. As Dandin was a "champion of the vaidarbha style" or Southern school of kātyā, this bias is also reflected in the generally negative cast given in Tibetan commentaries to the Gaudīya or Eastern school approach.

The study of snyan-ngag as derived from Dandin's treatise and subsequently reinterpreted by Tibetan and Mongolian scholars came to be regarded in Tibet as one of the five minor sciences (rig-gnas chung-ba). Yet, as van der Kuijp (1985) has noted, our knowledge of the position accorded to snyan-ngag in the Tibetan monastic curriculum is uncertain though it seems to have become regularly studied by the fourteenth century:

The exact place which rhetoric occupied in the monastic curricula still needs to be investigated. However, it would generally seem to be the case that, while the intensity of its study differed from monastery to monastery, its position in these curricula fairly closely approximated the one that was occupied by rhetoric in medieval European times. The major centers for the study of rhetoric in Tibet were those establishments in which a Sanskritist was active, inasmuch as a competence in this language was virtually a necessary condition for its scholarly study, but not, of course for its practical application through the medium of Tibetan. The date on which rhetoric became included in the initial courses of study which, like the trivium, included grammar and logic, is not known. It appears though that by the middle of the fourteenth century a number of central Tibetan monasteries offered systematic courses in this subject.

Three of the four remaining four minor sciences dealt with topics closely related to snyan-ngag: sdeb-sbyor (metrics), mgon-brjod (synonymy) and zlos-gar

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44 Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, review of Snyan-ngag me-long-gi spyi-don sdeb-legs rig-pa'i 'char-sgo, by Tshe-tan Zhab-drung 'Jigs-med rigs-pa'i blo-gros, Indo-Iranian Journal, vol. 28, no. 3, (July 1985): 212–213. Cf. Kapstein (forthcoming) who notes that the study of snyan-ngag never gained the prestige accorded to philosophical subjects. "[M]onastic education, despite the promotion of Sanskrit literary knowledge by Sa-skya Pandita and other renowned masters, was primarily a matter of Buddhist liturgy and śāstraic learning....[and] the mainstream of the monastic colleges tended to look askance at such frivolity." (p. 23) For this reason, Kapstein explains, "Where literary learning was most encouraged was among the lay aristocracy and the [minority] factions of clergy who harbored reservations about the value of the scholastic debate programs." (p. 23) According to Heather Stoddard, several great dge-bshes could only read Tibetan when they came out of Tibet in the 1950s; they could not write in Tibetan. This situation offers further evidence for the emphasis placed on philosophical scholarship. (Heather Stoddard, personal communication, 1 February 2001.)
As will be discussed below, mastery of metrics and synonymy was also requisite for a man of letters.

The foundation of Indic kāvya theory is derived "through the practical experience of actors in the ancient Indian theatre" and rests on two interrelated concepts: the rasa (Tib. nyams) and the vibhāva (Tib. 'gyur). The term "rasa" has many senses, but most literally means "taste," of which there are six original kinds: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent. In poetics, it refers to the "aesthetic experience" (Warder 1989 [1972]: 22) that is enjoyed by the audience or reader. The eight kinds of aesthetic experience (nyams) correspond to the eight basic emotions ('gyur-ba) which are tasted. See table 1.1.

Table 1.1
Basic Emotions (vibhāva) and Aesthetic Experiences (rasa) in Kāvya Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The primary emotion (Tib. 'gyur-ba, Skt. sthāyībāva)</th>
<th>The aesthetic experience, sentiment or taste (Tib. nyams, Skt. rasa)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
<td>dga'-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humor</td>
<td>dgod-bro-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grief</td>
<td>mya-ngan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anger</td>
<td>khro-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>energy</td>
<td>spro-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear</td>
<td>'jigs-pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disgust</td>
<td>skyugs bro-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>astonishment</td>
<td>ngo-mtshar-ba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Warder, Kāvya Literature, 1:23; and Tshe-tan-zhab-drung, Snyan-ngag-spyi-don, 17.

45 The fifth minor science is skar-rtsis (astrology), with little relevance for our purposes here.
46 Warder, Kāvya Literature, 1:xiii.
Vibhāva is defined as "any condition which excites or develops a particular state of mind or body, any cause of emotion (e.g. the persons and circumstances represented in a drama.)" The causes of emotion are the appropriate causes drawn from real life, which would produce the basic emotions in the characters represented on the stage. In turn, the audience tastes these emotions (e.g. love) and has an aesthetic experience (e.g. sensitivity). That is, when the viewer sees the expressions of love on stage, he or she experiences sensitivity. In other words, from the perspective of most kāvyā critics, "the audience are not supposed to have direct psychological experience of emotions in the theatre [or literature], but an indirect transfer to another level from which they are contemplated, the level of the aesthetic experience." Daṇḍin, however, was among the few philosophers who held that rasa was simply the basic emotion much increased or intensified, claiming, for example that love, when multiplied, becomes the sensitive.

In order to evoke these emotions through writing, the poet relies on ornamental poetic figures (rgyan, Skt. alamkāra) which can be based on either phonological considerations (sgra-rgyan) or semantic considerations (don-rgyan). Sgra-rgyan are the focus of the first chapter of the Kāvyādāraśa, while the 35 possible don-rgyan (including 102 sub-categories) are illustrated in chapter 2. The third and final chapter of the Kāvyādāraśa is devoted to the more elaborate and formal alamkāra such as various types of word play, formal constraints (e.g. kun-bzang-'khor-lo), poetical riddles (gab-tshig, skt. prahelikā), and so forth. One of the peculiarities of Daṇḍin's theory which was transmitted into Tibetan despite the somewhat contrived nature of the distinctions given the phonetic differences between Sanskrit and Tibetan was his outline of ten qualities

47 Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 978.
48 Warder, Kāvyā Literature, 1:24.
[Skt. guṣṭa] which were to be precisely balanced in fine writing.51 See table 1.2. These ten virtues (Tib. yon-tan bcu) are ornaments (of sound) that are not shared (thun-mong ma-yin-pa'i rgyan) between the Southern and Eastern schools. On the basis of these qualities, Dandin drew a distinction between the southern and eastern approaches and was "severely critical" of the latter style.52 Generally speaking, he defined the southern style as the genteel and graceful antithesis of the eastern school which he considered prone to exaggeration, coarse language and harsh sounds.

### Table 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>mellifluence</td>
<td>sbyar-ba</td>
<td>śleśa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>clarity, lucid, unambiguous statements</td>
<td>rab-dwangs</td>
<td>prasāda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>homogeneity or evenness of sound within a line or verse</td>
<td>mnyam-nyid</td>
<td>samatā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>pleasant-quality; sweetness</td>
<td>snyan-pa</td>
<td>mādhurya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>delicacy</td>
<td>shin-tu gzhon-pa</td>
<td>sukumārataḥ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>lucidity and completeness of the meaning in the words used, no additional words to be understood, nor further explanation necessary</td>
<td>don-gsal</td>
<td>arhavyakti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>elevated, enhanced content</td>
<td>rgya-che-ba</td>
<td>udāratva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>heavy; strength through the use of compounds</td>
<td>brjid-pa</td>
<td>ojas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>grace or agreeableness</td>
<td>mdzes-pa</td>
<td>kānti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>concentration or ambiguity as a kind of metaphor; profound</td>
<td>ting-nge-'dzin</td>
<td>samādhi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Warder, Kāvya Literature, 1:94-95; and Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, Snyan-ngag spyi-don, 33–36.

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49 Ibid., 35.
51 Warder, Kāvya Literature, 1:94.
The qualities of well-composed poetry as explained in most Tibetan commentaries tend to reflect the preferences of Dandin as outlined above. Critical criteria are also implied in Dandin's instructions for editing (skyon-bsal-ba; lit. "the clearing of faults"), discussed in the third chapter of the Kavyadarsha. The ten faults to be avoided or corrected include irrelevant words, internal contradictions, repetitiveness, uncertainty or hesitation, poor logic, etc. See table 1.3.

Table 1.3
Ten Faults (Tib. skyon bcu) of Poor Composition, as outlined by Dandin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Fault</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>weak in meaning; irrelevant words</td>
<td>don nyams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>[internal] contradictions</td>
<td>don 'gal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>same meaning; repetitive</td>
<td>don gcig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>hesitant</td>
<td>the-tshom can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>poor order</td>
<td>rim-pa nyams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>weak grammar</td>
<td>sgra-nyams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>weak divisions; excessively long lines, poor use of caesuras</td>
<td>good-mtshams nyams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>weak metrics</td>
<td>sdeb-sbyor nyams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>weak links (not applicable to Tibetan kavya)</td>
<td>mtshams-sbyor bral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>contradictions in place, time, aesthetics, common sense and logic</td>
<td>yul dus sgyu-ritsal 'jig-rt'en dang lung-rigs-dag dang 'gal-ba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


But knowledge of kavya theory was not enough to ensure beautiful writing, even by classical Tibetan standards. The Sanskrit-derived ideals of literary learning laid down by Sa-skya Pandita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251), especially in his comprehensive curriculum The entrance gate for the wise (Mkhas-pa 'jug-pa'i sgo)53 among other works "came to define, for later generations, a paradigm of classical learning."54 Among these

52 Warder, Kavya Literature, 1:95.
53 For a study of section 3 of this text, see David Jackson, Entrance Gate for the Wise.
54 Kapstein, "The Indian Literary Identity in Tibet," 18.
subjects, the study of metrics and synonymy (or lexicography) were also critical for
worthy composition:

A few remarks are in order concerning the position occupied by
lexicography [Tib. mngon-brjod; Skt. abhidhāna] in traditional Tibetan
scholarship. Basically it was the same as the role it played in India, its
primary source of inspiration. A Tibetan linguist and poet mastered the
required texts of grammar—including that of Sanskrit, poetics (snyan-
ngag, kāvya), prosody (sdeb-shyor, chandas), dramaturgy (zlos-gar,
nāTaka) and lexicography. Of these, poetics, lexicography, and, perhaps
to a lesser extent, prosody occupied all-important places in his or her
Bildung as a poet.55

One of the most common forms of synonyms is the use of kennings (compound
expressions with metaphorical meanings) such as substituting "sky-elephant" (nam-
mkha'i glang-po) for "cloud" or "quill of the clouds" (sprin-gyi myu-gu) for "river."

Accordingly, the written Tibetan language strayed far from the colloquial and this
situation maintained itself well into the twentieth century. For the educated modern
Tibetan reader, the mngon-brjod (synonymy)56 and other rhetorical devices employed in
snyan-ngag can remain opaque without tutored study. Moreover, though Dandin himself
was a novelist, original works of prose fiction are rare in the history of Tibetan belles-
lettres and indeed have been scarce even in the contemporary period.

Though Tibetan commentaries are ultimately derived from the same common
Indic source, it would be wrong to assume that the reception, interpretation and practice
of kāvya theory has been uniform among Tibetan scholars since the translation of
Dandin's text in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Rather, the Tibetan kāvya "tradition"
was at all times contested. Throughout the course of its history, different approaches or

55 Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, review of Dag-yig snog-sgron-gyi risa-ba dang de'i 'grel-pa, by Dpal-
56 This term is translated as "lexicography" in Cabezón and Jackson, eds. Tibetan Literature: Studies in
Genre, 18, and in van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Belles-Lettres," 393.

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schools of thought emerged, sometimes with extra-literary motivation. During the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682),

the 'Brug pa and the Bka' brygud pa could boast a number of skilled poets.... Several of the Bka' brygud pa masters of kāvya wrote mocking verses to tease the Sa skya pa and Dge lugs pa for their rigid scholasticism, and their constant provocation annoyed a number of important Dge lugs pa clerics. The Fifth Dalai Lama was under considerable pressure to retaliate against these offenders. His wise solution was to institute the study of poetics among his own followers. As an introduction to the subject, he composed his famed Snyan ngag dbyangs can dgyes glu, which begins with a frontal attack on the arrogance of unnamed Bka' brgyud pa critics.57

In other words, the fifth Dalai Lama employed poetry as one weapon in his arsenal "as a new sectarian policy for the Dga' ldan Pho brang was slowly evolving." (Smith 2001: 244.) A counter school of thought arose in the eighteenth century when two Bka'-brgyud-pa hierarchs from Khams—Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas (1699/1700–1774) and Khams-sprul Bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-nyi-ma (1730–1779)—suggested that poetry be analyzed in terms of three qualities: lus (form), rgyan (Skt. alamkāra, ornament), and srog (aim or inspiration). Among other differences, their approach contrasted that of the fifth Dalai Lama in that the latter's treatise acknowledged only two essential elements of snyan-ngag: brjod-bya (subject matter) and rgyan (alamkāra). The dispute resulted in two separate traditions of commentarial literature on poetics.58 Other schools and contrasting styles also formed over the years, as will be further discussed in chapter 8.

We would be remiss in implying that all Tibetan literature written prior to the twentieth century was based on Indic kāvya. The yogic songs (mgur) of Bka'-brgyud-pa

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57 E. Gene Smith, Among Tibetan Texts, 244.
masters beginning in the eleventh century, for example, were modelled upon the dōha of
the Indic māhāsiddha. However, they bore more dissimilarities than not and comprised a
"decidedly Tibetan genre." Moreover, most mgur represent a clear break from kāyva
norms:

The Tibetan yogic song (mgur), the form of poetry which became a hallmark of [Marpa's] tradition above all through the vast corpus attributed to his disciple Milarepa (Mi-la-ras-pa, 1040–1123) ... is remarkable during this period, and frequently even much later, for its eschewel of the ornamental conventions of kāyva.60

Oral literature, most notably the recitation of the Gesar epic which spans the Tibetan
cultural world, represents another literary vector which served as an alternative source of
inspiration in the development of a modern Tibetan literature.61 Most borrowed literary influences,62 however, served to reinforce kāyva models such that by the thirteenth century we can identify the emergence of "a distinctive and self-consciously Sanskritized voice... articulated through the Tibetan medium." As Kapstein has noted, even certain composers of mgur were adopting kāyva conventions by the fifteenth century.64

Similar to debates which occurred during the several centuries following the translation of Kāvyādārśa into Tibetan, literary discourse in the 1980s and 90s also represented an internal struggle among Tibetan intellectuals to negotiate issues of definition and the criteria which should inform literary production. As Kapstein

59 Kapstein (forthcoming: 15–18) compares the two genres.
60 Ibid., 16.
63 Ibid., 13.
(forthcoming) examines, "the formation over many centuries of a culturally valued 
indianité in Tibetan literature... has come to be at once reaffirmed and contested in 
contemporary Tibet." Like some of their predecessors who were apt to discuss the 
applicability of externally-generated (Indic) literary criteria to their own indigenous 
literature, Tibetan literary scholars today also have one eye turned outward. Yet, the 
political and economic context has changed since the seventeenth and eighteenth 
centuries, and the realm for comparison is far more daunting. After comparing their 
ouevre of modern literary works in the first instance to Chinese literature and their own 
classical tradition, and then again to the whole of world literature, some Tibetan writers 
express a sense of marginality bordering on despair.

The Formation of a 'Knowledge Class'?

One of the first tasks that Foucault assigns us in the description of statements is to 
identify who is speaking: what positions do they hold and from which institutional sites 
do they make their discourse? The dynamics of literary discourse among Tibetans in the 
PRC challenge traditional Marxist notions that class determines critical stance or that 
culture is a hegemonic force masking political motivations and the economic interests of 
the dominant class. Granted, in the context of pre-1950 society, Tibetan written literature 
could be viewed as having served the interests of the ruling class and thus represented a 
largely hegemonic force in the Gramscian sense. That is to say, the written word was a 
measure between the literate few (most commonly found among religious clerics or 
aristocrats) and the vast majority of the Tibetan population which was illiterate. Overall,

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64 Ibid., 32, n. 35.
monasteries and aristocratic landowners controlled both economic capital and cultural capital—the means of production and the means of knowledge. From at least the seventeenth century, when the practice of lay aristocratic writing became more fashionable and Indic poetic theory remained in force, we could identify a classical Tibetan literary "tradition," which in many ways comprised "the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits." (Williams 1977:115)

The pace of modernization in Tibetan society, which had begun to quicken in the early twentieth century, accelerated even more with the arrival of Communist cadres, ideology, developmental projects and military force. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the educational and publishing projects launched in the 1950s expanded literacy and the availability of classical Tibetan literary works and textbooks. This development was abruptly curbed during the Cultural Revolution when policies prohibiting the use of Tibetan and the reading of classical works constituted what has been called a "drive for unity" (Dreyer 1976: 237), domination or a new hegemony in the extreme. While the post-Mao era allowed for the resurgence of classical Tibetan texts and instruction in kāvya theory for a new population of literate youth, the unprecedented availability of widespread secular education in the PRC also ushered in a new curriculum. "Socialist realism" was upheld as the model approach for literature and among the subjects taught were the literature of other cultures and Chinese literature, in particular. For the first time, a significant segment of the Tibetan population was exposed to western literary

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65 Kapstein, op. cit., 2.
66 A class analysis would need to be modified in the Tibetan context, however, to the extent that we can find examples of ascetic writers among literate religious clerics, such as Zhabs-dkar-ba (1781-1851).
67 Technically speaking, overt censorship is a means of direct coercion and thus an expression of "direct domination," in contrast to the more subtle workings of "hegemony" which operates through a complex interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces. According to Gramsci, hegemony asserts itself by two principal routes: "a general conception of life, a philosophy" and "a scholastic programme." See Antonio
theories, albeit filtered through the double-sieve of socialist acceptability and Chinese translations. As new literary models gained currency among Tibetan high school students, undergraduates and graduates, the rate of experimental Tibetan writing began to increase. Likewise, with greater exposure to Chinese, socialist and other western literary theory, Tibetan intellectuals began to reflect on their own literature—past, present and future. Through their scholarship, reviews and works of literary criticism, they began to negotiate the criteria by which the field of Tibetan literature would be delimited.

One can identify in their discourse not only concurrent and divergent formulations of literary values (the focus of chapters 4 and 5), but also varying stances regarding what might be more generally called "cultural values." The work of John Frow (1995) offers an eloquent interrogation of the process by which "cultural values" are formulated in practice. His unifying notion of "regime" is in many ways analogous to Foucault's concept of a "discursive formation:"

Judgements of value are always choices made within a particular regime. This is not to say that the regime determines which judgement will be made, but that it specifies a particular range of possible judgements, and a particular set of appropriate criteria; in setting an agenda, it also excludes certain criteria and certain judgements as inappropriate or unthinkable. Regimes therefore allow for disagreement, specifying the terms within which it can be enacted. Disagreement may also take place in the space of overlap between regimes, or between discrepant and non intersecting regimes; but in a sense disagreement is only ever really possible where some agreement on the rules of engagement can be held in common.

Frow's objective is to specify the mechanism by which "extratextual" determinations like social position are translated into reading practices, that is, training in the recognition and

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68 In some cases, the "sieve" may even be threefold, given that many western literary works came into Chinese via Japanese translations.


70 Ibid., 151.
use of distinct codes of value. Critical in this process is the role of certain "interlocking institutions"—formal and informal—which "frame particular kinds of practice and produce certain axiological regularities" regarding the negotiation of aesthetic codes, a vocabulary of evaluation, and so forth. These institutions include, but are not limited to, school curricula, classroom trainings, academic certification, professional careers in cultural production, the performing arts, music, publishing industry, art market, journals, criticism and reviews in newspaper or radio/TV, peer-group cultures, conversation rituals that sustain evaluative codes; patterns of work and leisure, and codes of status-discrimination.\(^1\) For Frow, a commonly shared educational training and socialization in these institutions is a *sine qua non* for the formation of what he calls a "knowledge class."\(^2\)

Frow endeavors to revise Bourdieu (1984, 1993) who conflates the intelligentsia and its culture with the bourgeoisie and its culture. In contrast, Frow relates "the possession of special knowledge to membership of a distinct class formation, rather than to already existing, economically defined classes."\(^3\) In this sense, he also differs from Gramsci, though Frow retains the former's definition of organic intellectuals as "those whose work is socially defined as being based upon the possession and exercise of knowledge."\(^4\) In concrete terms, Frow suggests a more adequate theory of class which situates the group of "cultural intellectuals" (primarily those engaged in education and communications media) within a broader social formation of all those who work in the knowledge industries (all those whose income depends on the possession of cultural capital). He then seeks to identify a range of interests that would constrain and direct the

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\(^1\) Ibid., 146.
\(^2\) Ibid., 115–116.
actions and the social relations of this class or class fraction, such that "ideological and political struggles constitute a process not of class-representation (that is, representation of pre-given interests) but of class-formation (including the formation of class interests.)"75

Frow's model allows us to move beyond the view of cultural producers as representing a dominant hegemony—an approach that has little application in the contemporary Tibetan context—while considering the economic, political and ideological dimensions of Tibetan cultural production. In the struggles that occur in these three spheres, a "knowledge class" is formed, not as a unified class of actors with absolute origin or telos, but as a "discursive representation of interests," through a process with "definite discursive conditions, and played out through particular institutional forms and balances of power."76 The classification aptly describes the majority of educated Tibetans, who were schooled (especially in the 1980s and 1990s) in Tibetan medium state schools (primary and secondary levels) and nationality institutes for higher education. Though these programs are not uniform across the country nor necessarily open to Tibetan students from all regions,77 collectively the Tibetan educational "track" offers a unique socialization process, distinguishing the Tibetan intellectual experience from that of most other students in the PRC. The drawback or advantage (depending on how and

73 Ibid., 96.
74 Ibid., 90.
75 Ibid., 104.
76 Ibid., 111.
77 To the best of my knowledge, students in the Minority Language and Literature Department at Qinghai Nationalities Institute are solely from Qinghai Province; students in the Tibetan Department at Southwest Nationalities Institute (Chengdu) are almost solely from Sichuan and Yunnan. Tibet University has only recently begun to accept students from outside of the TAR. The Tibetan Department at Central Nationalities University, which has less than 100 students, recruits from all regions but the level of education is not considered to be very high. The Tibetan Department at Northwest Nationalities Institute, by contrast, has about 400 students who are recruited from a fairly broad geographic area, including Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. I was told that in the past couple of years a few students from the TAR have

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when one is considering) to enrolling in these schools is that graduates of the Tibetan-medium educational system acquire cultural capital that is only valid in certain sectors of society; namely, education, media (including radio, television, film and publishing), translation and to a lesser degree lower level bureaucratic positions in minority affairs offices, for example. As such positions have reached capacity in recent years, however, job opportunities are increasingly limited for the graduates of nationality institutes.

Additional groundwork for providing a shared socialization and education experience has been laid by the Leadership Group for the Coordination of Tibetan-Language Teaching Materials in the Five Provinces/Regions, which is based in Xining but directly linked to the Central Government (an arrangement that allows the Group to bypass conflicting provincial requirements). Janet Upton (1999) has illustrated how the selection of literary works for standardized textbooks produced by the Leadership Group between 1993 and 1995 served to produce "a new generation of readers" and the "ongoing training of Tibetan writers." In contrast to earlier textbooks, the new series includes many more examples of contemporary Tibetan literary works as models for young would-be writers in Tibetan-language junior-secondary schools. Indeed, this development has been further encouraged by certain literary journals which occasionally feature sections devoted to the writings of secondary school students. One regional journal (Lha-g.yag) has even sought to distinguish itself from other literary magazines by showcasing the writing of young authors. Upton convincingly argues that the "physical,
social and moral vision of contemporary Tibetan space" constructed by the literary works featured in the textbooks is a selective one. The omission of religious references from Shel-dkar-gling-pa's *Song of Lhasa Memories* (1910), for example, evokes an image of Lhasa that is "more in keeping with the official PRC narrative, which allows for reference to Lhasa as a center of Tibetan culture even as it seeks to diminish the city's hold on the spiritual imagination of the Tibetan people." In addition to providing "a model that has the potential to continue the literary legacy of the immediate post-Mao era in a new generation of engaged young readers and writers" (p. 18) and a shared "space for reflection on contemporary Tibetan society" (p. 21), I would argue that the standardization of instruction in contemporary Tibetan literature at the junior-secondary level has also contributed to the formation of a "canon" to the extent that one exists for modern Tibetan literature.

*Who Writes in Tibet?*

Having laid out some theoretical constructs with which we might hypothesize regarding the formation of a "Writing Tibet" and "Reading Tibet" i.e. those cultural intellectuals involved in the production and consumption of tibetophone literature and literary criticism, let us now look at the situation "on the ground." The picture of a "traditional intellectual" as drawn by Marxist-inspired theoretical literature arguing for the ideological function of intellectuals in upholding the interests of the dominant class only

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80 Ibid., 20.
81 In Gramsci's view, "the intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government." Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 12. Whereas Gramsci's 'traditional' intellectuals are typically comprised of academics and 'organic' intellectuals as functionaries in an emerging social class, the distinction is somewhat lost in the Tibetan case where most Tibetan-educated intellectuals can only find employment within the educational system or are monastics.
partially meshes with our data on who is actually writing in Tibet. The stereotype applies fairly well to characterize the socio-economic status of Tibetan literary critics writing in Tibetan. The overwhelming majority of tibetophone literary criticism is written by university teachers at Qinghai Nationalities Institute (QNI) and Northwest Nationalities Institute (NWNI), regardless of whether they favor the application of kavya or modern theory. Senior and junior-level editors of the leading literary journals—whether in TAR or outside the TAR—are also apt to write literary criticism. Junior-level editors in the TAR are more likely to write theoretical pieces than are junior-level editors outside the TAR. The work of graduate or undergraduate students, often in conjunction with a class paper, comprises a minor but substantial proportion of the volume of literary criticism. Only a few of these contributors, however, continue to write after graduation. Few religious teachers or monks write literary criticism. Finally, young writers are more apt to write works appraising the works of others than to engage in heavy theoretical writings.

By contrast, the writers of tibetophone literature (as opposed to literary criticism) in the 1990s are primarily middle-school teachers and middle-school students. Few university teachers or graduate students are engaged in creative writing. The only exceptions of which I know are Gangs-zhun (now graduated, NWNI) and Ta-bha (now graduated, QNI). Another contingent of literary authors can be found among the editors

82 Examples of professors who publish literary criticism include (but are not limited to) Rnam-sras (QNI), Bu-bzhi (QNI), Bdud-lha-rgyal (NWNI), Ldong-kha Dge-bshes-chos-grags (SWNI), Chos-grags (CNI), and Stobs-rgyal (Tibet University).

83 To name only one example: Stag-bum-rgyal (b. 1966, Guinan), who has authored many popular short stories and in 1999 published his first novel (the first Tibetan novel published in Qinghai Province). He is a member of the Qinghai branch of the Chinese Writers Association. Two of his short stories have been translated into Chinese. In 1997, he won second place in Sbrang-char's writers competition. To this day, he continues to work as a middle school teacher in a remote town in Bya-mdo, a nomad area of Guinan County. Another example is short story writer and novelist Don-grub-rin-chen (b.
of smaller local magazines, who often use a penname in order to hide the fact that their work in some cases comprises a considerable portion of the contents. Junior-level editors on the staffs of nationally distributed magazines also produce creative works. This includes one of the most prolific poets, Ljang-bu (née Rdo-rje-tshe-ring, b. 1963, Henan County, Qinghai Province), an ethnic Mongol who has served as a junior editor since 1989 for *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* in Lhasa and whose work will be discussed in chapter 4. A relatively well-known short story writer in Amdo, A-smyon Bkra-shis-don-grub (b. 1967, Khri-ka County), is a junior-level editor for *Sbrang-char*. In the TAR, several writers are employees of the literary arts association (*wenlian*). I am not aware of any monks who write short stories, but many monks and former monks publish poetry—mostly classical-style but also some free verse—in literary journals, often under a pseudonym. Published monastic writers are almost solely from Amdo. To the best of my knowledge, only a few monks in Lhasa publish poetry.

One group of writers more closely approximates the function of the "organic intellectual." This group includes some of the most accomplished and older writers. Foremost is 'Ju Skal-bzang (b. 1960, Dari County, Guoluo Prefecture, Qinghai Province), a highly acclaimed poet from Amdo who serves as director of the Translation Bureau in 1967) who since graduating from the same school in 1991 has taught Tibetan at the Gcan-tsha county Tibetan middle school in R ma-lho Prefecture, Qinghai Province. For a complete list of literary journals and their place of publication, see appendix. This poet graduated in 1988 from the Tibetan department of NWNI. See n. 597. This writer graduated in 1990 from the Tibetan department of NWNI, and is a member of the Qinghai branch of the Chinese Writers Association. Two of his short stories have been translated into Chinese and published in *Minzu Wenxue*. For example, Bstan-pa-yar-rgyas (b. circa 1947) in Nag-chu and Phun-tshogs-bkra-shis (native of Gzhis-ka-rtse) who is a member of the TAR *wenlian* and Writers Association. After serving as a Chinese teacher in Gshis-ka-rtse and a translator for the Chinese Tibetology Center, he now works as an assistant editor for a magazine published in the *wenlian* complex in Lhasa. His short stories and comedic skits which are frequently performed on television have won several awards. The predominance of Amdo writers is also reflected in those most active publishing Tibetan literature in the diaspora. This group tends to include new arrivals, former monks, former nuns and especially young educated Amdowans.

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his home area of Golok. His work will be discussed in more depth in chapter 6. Another
author whom I would include in this sub-grouping is an ethnic Mongol, Tshe-ring-don-
grub (b. 1961, Henan County, Qinghai Province) who has for several years been
employed as a researcher and editor for the Henan County Annals Editorial Office in
Qinghai. Khyung-thar-rgyal, a popular short story writer is a newspaper writer in Rtse-
khog (Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai Province). Among the more prolific female poets is
Bde-skyid-sgrol-ma (b. 1967, Henan County), an ethnic Mongol who serves as head of
the Women's Association in Henan County, Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai Province.
Another female poet, Pad-ma-'tsho, is a primary-school teacher in the county seat of Rebg-
gong (Tongren County). Several other people who occasionally write poetry and short
stories are employed in other media, such as the nationalities recording studio in
Xining.90 G.yang-mtsho-skyid (b. 1963, Thun-te County91, Qinghai Province), the
female author of a popular short story Journal of the Grassland, has published only this
one short story, though she is working on a novel. After graduating from NWNI in 1988,
she worked for the Hainan Prefecture Gonghe County Tibetan Language Affairs Office.
In 1992, she transferred to a government research office in Chab-cha (Gonghe) where she
researches law. Prior to college, she worked in the women's association of her hometown
in the otherwise nomad area of Thun-te (Ch. Tongde 同德 County).

Significantly, the composition of these groups has changed since the 1980s when
college undergraduates and graduates were among the first to experiment with new
writing forms in Tibetan. Few of the writers who achieved recognition for their writing
in the 1980s have continued to write. I have been told this is primarily due to family and

90 This includes the famous comedian Sman-bla-khyabs and his colleague Shi-bde-nyi-ma.
job-related time pressures. The most noteworthy exception is 'Ju Skal-bzang, whose long
history of writing provides us with a diachronic look at developments over the two
decades we are studying. See chapter 8. Other exceptions are a few graduates from the
1980s, such as Rnam-sras and Bu-bzhi, who became professors of literature at nationality
institutes. However, they are engaged almost solely in literary criticism and the
explication of literary theory and rarely write creatively themselves.

Let us compare these backgrounds with some of the most well-known Tibetan
writers writing in Chinese. One of the first western anthologies of Tibetan literature in
translation\(^2\) includes nine sinophone Tibetan writers, among whom five are full-time
writers (Tashi Dawa, Meizhuo, Alai, Dpa'-dar, Yidam Tshering), the most famous being
Tashi Dawa (b. 1952, Batang County, Sichuan Province).\(^3\) Since publishing his first
fiction in 1979, he has written one novel and countless short stories, works that have been
translated into English, German, French, Italian and Japanese.\(^4\) The remaining four hold
posts respectively in: the Sichuan Provincial Literary Association (Sebo, b. 1956,
Chengdu Sichuan Province); the Tibetan Meteorological Bureau in Nanjing, after
studying writing at the Lu Xun Institute in Beijing (Geyang); the Foreign Affairs Office
of the TAR (Tonga); and as an editor for China Tibetan Studies Press in Beijing
(Yangdon). On the whole, these writers tend to be older and well-published. In contrast
to their counterparts who write in Tibetan, most successful sinophone writers live in large
urban areas quite far from the Tibetan plateau. The existence of five full-time

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\(^1\) Chin. Tongde xian 同德县. The Tibetan name for this county is 'Ba'-rdzong, while the region was
traditionally called Gad-pa-sum-mdo.


\(^3\) For a detailed study of the negotiation of this writer's identity see Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, "Tashi
Dawa: Magical Realism and Contested Identity in Modern Tibet" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania,
2002.)

\(^4\) At least one of these publications was published by an official Chinese organ; i.e. Tashi Dawa, A Soul
professional sinophone writers and practically no such Tibetan-language writers\textsuperscript{95} begs a closer look. Such research, however, falls beyond the focus of my paper. Scholars of modern Tibetan literature or literary critics who write in Chinese also tend to be highly placed and reside in urban areas, such as Don-grub-dbang-bum (Danzhu Angben, b. 1956, Qinghai Province) who for many years worked as a researcher in the Minority Nationality Literary Research Office at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing.\textsuperscript{96} Many of his articles have been published in Tibetan, apparently translated from Chinese, though this is not always indicated. Several scholars of Tibetan literature are Han Chinese; e.g. Prof. Geng Yufang at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing,\textsuperscript{97} Prof. Zhang Jun (b. 1963?, Sichuan Province) who has written several articles on sinophone Tibetan literature and taught Chinese and Foreign Literature at Southwest Nationalities Institute (SWNI) in Chengdu,\textsuperscript{98} and Ma Lihua (b. 1953, Shandong Province) who currently resides in Lhasa.\textsuperscript{99}

One of the most startling developments has been the active involvement and modern literary contributions of younger generation monks in Amdo (primarily from areas of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan with high concentrations of Tibetans). While some monks only write in classical forms, others prefer free verse (often using a pseudonym in this case). Modern subject matter ranges from the critique of hypocritical lamas to

\textsuperscript{95} As I was nearing completion of this dissertation, I learned that the only Tibetan-medium writer to enjoy the luxury of being paid for writing is the Amdo-born poet and essayist Ljang-bu (aka Rdo-rje-tsha-ring), who was granted a writing sabbatical for two years (1992–1994) paid by the TAR Cultural Association (\textit{wenlian}). Though some staff members objected to this preferential treatment, it has recently been practiced again in the case of another Lhasa-based writer (Phun-tshogs-bkra'-shis).

\textsuperscript{96} Biographical information on this important contemporary figure can be found in \textit{Strong-char}, 1990, no. 4, back inside cover. He is currently the head of the Nationalities Language National Translation Office (\textit{minzuyuyan guojia fanyi ju}) in Beijing.

\textsuperscript{97} Geng Yufang, "Zangzu dangdai wensue fazhan gaishu" (Outline of the Development of Modern Tibetan Literature), \textit{Anduo yangjiu} (Amdo Studies), 1993, no. 1:22–28, 100.

\textsuperscript{98} I am grateful to Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani for providing me with this information.

\textsuperscript{99} In her book \textit{Xueyu wenhua yu Xizang wenxue} (Snowlands Culture and Literature from Tibet) (Hunan: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), Ma Lihua discusses literature by sinophone Tibetan writers as well as
rumblings of political dissent to more conventional topics, such as praise for a lama. In stark contrast, I did not see signs of this phenomenon in the TAR. Submissions by monks to literary journals—even in Lhasa—almost always originate from Amdo. Very few monks in Lhasa submit poetry for publication. Likewise, to the best of my knowledge (as of summer 2000) not a single monastery in the TAR was publishing any form of literary journal. This sharply contrasts with the growing number of literary magazines published by monasteries and other local groups in Amdo, which are widely available for sale at local bookshops. Ironically, the number of monastic literary journals has rapidly increased since 1995 at a time when small local literary journals started facing financial difficulties and were being phased out. (See appendix.) For example, Ri-bo-nyi-zla (Gonghe), Lha-g.yag (Tongde), Gangs-rgyan-me-tog (Delinha) and Zla-zer (Hezuo) have all faced financial difficulties in recent years. Nevertheless, more than a dozen different monastic literary journals were launched around 2000, with several explicitly referring to the new millennium in their titles.

Finally, the predominance of writing monks from Amdo surely reflects to some degree the overall predominance of writers from Amdo in the Tibetan literary scene in the PRC, as well as in the diaspora for that matter. The reasons for this deserve further

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literature about Tibet by Chinese writers. Again, I am grateful to Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani for providing me with this information.

100 I recently saw one poem written by a monk at Se-ra Monastery published in a religious-affiliated literary journal that focuses solely on Mgo-log, but is based in Beijing [!]. See Gnyen-po gyu-rtse'i gzi-dpal no. 1 (2001): 47. It is probable that the writer is from the Mgo-log region.

101 While this might be due to a tenser political climate, another determining factor may be the general lack of interest in the "lower" or more applied traditional sciences (rig-gnas), such as poetry, in comparison to avid study of these topics in Amdo. The monastic curriculum in Lhasa is mostly geared towards philosophical study and debate. Another probable factor contributing to this regional difference is the greater ease monasteries in Amdo have in finding sponsors (local or foreign) for various education and publishing projects.

102 Prins, "Tibetan Common Language," 40. This accords with my own observations, as well as those of Costello (2002). See appendix for a full list of journals and their place of publication.

103 Kha-sgang Dpal-chen-thar (1998:86) makes references to rising production costs (ink, paper and printing) which have led to "fewer issues, fewer pages, fewer copies and double issues." The situation appears to be similar in the TAR, signaled by the closing of Tibet University's journal in 1996.
research. While my review of literary journals spans the Tibetan cultural area, my study otherwise reflects a bias towards Amdo in that most of my fieldwork was undertaken there. I believe my concentration in this geographical area for the purposes of this dissertation is largely justified.\footnote{In the introduction to her fascinating study of Tashi Dawa and the early 1980s which were "golden years of freedom and creativity" (p. 20) for literary and art salon life in Lhasa, Schiaffini-Vedani discusses political and economic reasons why "the center of modern Tibetan literature seems to have moved to other Tibetan territories in China." (p. 5) See Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, "Tashi Dawa: Magical Realism and Contested Identity in Modern Tibet" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002).} Consider that nearly 40\% of contributions to the Lhasa-based journal Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal originate from Amdo. This phenomenon has been a constant since the mid-1980s.\footnote{This estimate is based on my own rough calculations comparing names and origins where mentioned or otherwise known by me from six 1986 issues and six 1998 issues of Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal, as well as four 1987 issues and four 1998 issues of Sbrang-char.} In sharp contrast, contributions from the TAR rarely appear in the Xining-based journal, Sbrcmg-char, though both journals share the same status in terms of international distribution rights.\footnote{Only one or two writers from the TAR could be found in any given issue of Sbrang-char, which generally features from 20–30 literary works (poems, short stories, essays, etc.) per issue. Nearly all of the writers published in this journal are from Qinghai or Gansu Provinces. A significant number of contributors are also from Aba Prefecture in Sichuan Province.} It would seem easier to find means for transporting journals from Xining to Lhasa (a common destination), and yet one is much more likely to find copies (new and used) of Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal in a Xining bookstore than to find a copy of Sbrang-char in Lhasa. The point was raised by one Lhasa writer/reader as early as 1986, when he noted in a letter to the editor that Sbrang-char was not available for sale in any bookstore in Lhasa.\footnote{Bkra-shis-dpal-lidan, "Klog-mkhan-gyis bskur-ba'i 'phrin" (Letters from readers), Sbrang-char, 1987, no. 2: 116–7. In this same letter, he also notes that the influence of "local dialects is very strong" in the poems, research articles and stories published in Sbrang-char. He thinks that it would be "beneficial for the broad readership" if the language "more closely adhered to the common Tibetan language (Bod spyi-skad)."} To the best of my knowledge, the Xining journal is still a scarce commodity there.
Uneven Economic Development

In studying Tibetan literature over the past twenty years, it is helpful to understand the interplay between uneven economic development and literary production. In this section, we will discuss three effects of differentiated rates of social change within Tibetan-inhabited regions and in comparison to other areas of the PRC: 1) the relatively disenfranchised status of Tibetan writers and critics, 2) a limited reading culture, and 3) strategies for criticism on the margins of modernization.

The disenfranchised status of Tibetan writers and critics was touched upon in our above discussion regarding how the composition of Tibetan literati only partially conforms to Frow's depiction of a knowledge class. For instance, many Tibetan writers hold relatively low-level positions (e.g. a middle-school teacher in a remote nomad area) and there are no full-time professional authors who write in Tibetan. Moreover, in contrast to Europe where Frow argues the dichotomy between high and popular culture has been largely elided, Tibetan cultural production remains highly differentiated across the Tibetan cultural region, as a result not least of illiteracy rates exceeding fifty percent. Finally, the limits of Frow's model for our purposes can be seen in the failure of Tibetan society to meet the structural conditions he cites as necessary for the formation of a class based in the performance of knowledge.108

1. shift of a public sector (health, education, welfare) into the state realm;
2. diversification of managerial functions, including mass industrial production; and
3. growing complexity of the planning function; i.e. research and development.

Only a shift of the public sector has undergone any sustained development in the Tibetan context. As of the mid-1990s, less than 1% of the working population in the TAR was

108 Frow, Cultural Studies, 117–118.
employed in manufacturing. This figure was the lowest for any region in the PRC, where nationwide an average of 12% are employed in manufacturing.\textsuperscript{109} The same holds true for the meager percentages of Tibetans in the TAR working in the social services or scientific research and polytechnical services.\textsuperscript{110} By contrast, the percentage of the working population employed in education, culture, arts, and radio, television and film, (3.4\%) is among the highest in all the regions of the PRC, aside from Beijing and Shanghai.\textsuperscript{111} The vast majority of Tibetans in the TAR (83.6\%) are employed in farming, animal husbandry, and perhaps forestry.\textsuperscript{112}

Since the abolishing in 1959 of the government of the Dalai Lama, which had ruled Tibet for nearly three hundred years, and the establishment of Chinese administrative structures, Tibetan intellectuals have lived in an arguably "colonial" situation. Han administrators continue to hold the primary posts of decision-making power\textsuperscript{113} and there has been a massive and unprecedented influx of Chinese military personnel and civilian settlers into the urban areas and small towns of the TAR. While the stay of these personnel might be temporary in terms of their individual lives, collectively the demographic effect has been sustained in the long-term, and the expansion of economic infrastructure dramatic. Tibetan areas outside of the TAR have experienced a rate of modernization more along the lines of other remote rural or village

\textsuperscript{109} Zhongguo renkou tongji nimjian, op. cit., 97.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 105, 108
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 107.
\textsuperscript{112} These categories are conflated in the statistics. Ibid., 95. This statistic seems to loosely concur with the fact that 86\% of the official population in the TAR live in agricultural areas. Ibid., 414. We can surmise that these figures are more or less accurate for the ethnic Tibetan population in the TAR. However, official figures gravely underestimate the urban population of Lhasa which includes many temporary Han residents from "inner China." On this point, see Ma Rong, "Han and Tibetan Residential Patterns in Lhasa," China Quarterly, no. 128 (December 1991): 814–835
\textsuperscript{113} As of 1986, only 60\% of government and party officials in the TAR were ethnic Tibetans. Tsering Shakya, "Historical Introduction," in Leaders in Tibet: A Directory (London: Tibet Information Network, 1997), 1. The Party secretary of the region who "remains the single most important figure in Tibet" has never been an ethnic Tibetan. Ibid., 9–10.
areas of China. Many intellectuals, however, receive their higher education in urban centers, including Beijing, Xining, Lanzhou, Chengdu, Guangzhou and Lhasa. They are no strangers to the opportunities and frustrations of an increasingly privatized economy. And yet, for most, their families live in a different spatio-temporal realm. Toni Huber (2002) has remarked on the "staggering contrasts" in the material conditions and how "the disjuncture between the different regimes of daily life that state-driven economic policies are creating is already a widening chasm."114 Many cultural intellectuals in Tibet find themselves on the "margins" of the wider Tibetan population. In another context, I have described this sense of geographic and temporal dislocation and the expressions of "anticipatory nostalgia" it has spurred in the works of Tibetan writers. (Hartley 1999).

The "maladies of development" in colonial situations have typically led to the romanticization of folk culture which, as Thomas Nairn (1977) notes, is one response to the

[u]neven development in the world economy since the eighteenth century—entailing domination and invasion by alien powers. Acculturation was a "tidal wave" of outside interference and control. There was no "due time" for it to happen naturally. Therefore, peoples in the peripheries mobilized against progress, but also to improve their position. Nationalism linked to a romantic culture, inventive intellectuals meet "folk culture."115

This phenomenon partially holds true in the Tibetan case, as well. Indeed, one of the first responses to a loosening of policy after the Cultural Revolution was the publication of Tibetan folk-related research (some of which had been written in the 1950s and early

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1960s but suppressed during the intervening years)\textsuperscript{116} and the establishment of folk-related research institutes including a Gesar research institute at CASS in 1983.

Moreover, many of the first research articles and columns in the earliest Tibetan literary and scholarly magazines were focused on folk literature. The reasons for dedicating significant resources towards folk-related research, however, does not solely spring from a romantic nationalism, as Nairn implies. Rather many projects have received government support and cannot be linked to nationalistic motivations per se. In practical terms, folk research provides an important employment opportunity for Tibetans who followed the "minority track" in secondary and higher education. Otherwise, as mentioned above, their job possibilities upon graduation have heretofore been limited to teaching in Tibetan language schools—with only a limited number of seats at the more prestigious levels—and working in publishing and other media industries where Tibetan language skills are needed. In recent years, "the prospects for securing a government job upon graduation are narrowing" and "the number of unemployed graduates is increasing rapidly."\textsuperscript{117}

The situation of Tibetan writers today approximates that of Irish writers in the nineteenth century: over-educated with baulked social ambitions and a history of political oppression—part of a cohort Eagleton (1999) refers to as the Irish intelligentsia or "colonial intellectuals."\textsuperscript{118} Bred by a modernizing state in which "banking and commerce remained largely in Protestant hands, and where there was an overproduction of poorly salaried school-teachers, many of Ireland's leading intellectuals faced a "native lack of


\textsuperscript{117} Susan Costello, "Economics of Cultural Production," 230–231.

\textsuperscript{118} Eagleton, \textit{Scholars and Rebels}, 5.
advancement" and were "lay enthusiasts, professionals in one field propelled by a sense of political responsibility into another." (p. 12) In contrast to the theretofore dominant traditional intellectuals in the Catholic church who valued "knowledge for its own sake" (similar to most Tibetan Buddhist ecclesiastics), the Anglo-Irish secular, organic intelligentsia wrote "no body of sustained, significant theoretical work." (p. 27)

Literature became a form of social or political critique. Their writings, however, circulated among a very small percentage of the population. Much like the small class of Tibetans literate in their own language with a higher education, the Irish intelligentsia in the 1840s comprised a mere one percent of the working population during a period when less than half of the Irish could read and write.119

Another implication of uneven economic and social development is likewise the absence of a widespread reading culture in Tibetan areas of the PRC. Such a phenomenon has been observed by Wendy Griswold (2000) in her study of "readers, writers and the novel in Nigeria." For a society to have a reading culture is to assume that literacy is necessary for full social participation; i.e. "a society with a literacy rate that is relatively high and does not exclude any particular social group."120 Griswold observes:

Most Nigerians get through their daily lives without having much occasion to read, regardless of whether they can. They conduct their commercial affairs face-to-face... keep in touch by visiting or, among the urban elite, by telephoning. They get their news from television, radio, and word of mouth. And if a letter, a bureaucratic form... requires reading, they can always find someone—a young relative, a paid clerk—to read and interpret it for them.121

119 Jacqueline Hill, "The Intelligentsia and Irish Nationalism in the 1840s," Studia Hibernica, no. 20 (1980); cited in Eagleton, Scholars and Rebels, 144, note 20.


121 Ibid., 117–118.
Much the same could be said of the nominal role of reading in everyday life for most Tibetans outside of the monastery. By the mid-1990s, the TAR still had an official illiteracy rate of 56%, compared with a national average of only 16%.

Tibetan literary journals and other publications remain very much in the realm of "high culture" as opposed to "popular culture." Music cassettes and VCDs might be seen as the primary media of popular Tibetan culture at present. No Tibetan-language journals are popular at a mass level and even Tibetan newspapers have "low rates of subscriptions." Subscriptions to the *Tibet Daily* in the TAR, for example, are almost all from government work units.

Low literacy rates are not the only factor responsible for discouraging reading habits among the wider Tibetan population. Several other sorry conditions, including poor distribution networks, are discussed in an interesting article by one staff member of the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House. While the different nationality publishing houses have departments devoted to the acquisition, editing and publishing of Tibetan books and magazines, they must work in association with the local People's Publishing House through whom the bulk of their books are distributed. According to this researcher, those responsible for distribution have no knowledge of Tibetan and are not familiar with the Tibetan market. Moreover, many Tibetan readers live in rural or nomadic areas which the official distribution network does not reach. Finally, as China

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122 *Zhongguo renkou tongji nianjian*, op. cit., 24. It is interesting to note that the illiteracy rates for Tibetan women in the TAR (61%) were not much different than the combined average for men and women. Moreover, there is only a minor difference between illiteracy rates for the urban population (47%) and the rural population (59%) in the TAR. *Ibid.*, 27–28. One last indicator of the limited success of efforts to achieve universal education: according to official figures, 61% of the population over the age of 16 in the TAR has never been to school. *Ibid.*, 83.


continues to move towards a market economy, the price of books has been rising at a rate vastly disproportional to the ability of Tibetan readers to pay for these books. "The mass readership cannot buy [the publications]."  

The author argues that one way to cultivate more consumers is to work in accord with the dynamics of a market economy by increasing production (to reduce the unit cost), paying greater attention to readers' preferences and offering more popular books, hiring sales, advertising and distribution staff who are familiar with the market, and adhering to the three-stage editing process which is supposed to be in force at the publishing houses. This authors' remarks accord with anecdotes told to me about distribution bottlenecks. I have met several writers in Amdo who paid for their own publication and then chose the option to be given 40% of the books to distribute privately, whether for sale or gift. They themselves peddle the books to local bookstores or leave bundles with friends to sell if possible or otherwise give away.

This leads us to a primary concern of this dissertation—in the context of rapid but uneven social change, dominant but shifting economic paradigms, and a modernizing but Sinicized agenda operative at the state-level and in the public sphere—where, how and why are Tibetan intellectuals positioning themselves in the field of cultural value production? In general, an opening to the West in the early 1980s for all of China seems to have convinced most Tibetan intellectuals of the need to develop their own society along with the rest of the PRC. Only later, as Chinese urban society modernized in leaps and bounds and Tibetan society was seen to still "lag behind" (rjes-lus) did views on the role of "traditional culture" divide more sharply. If a radical modernism represents one

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126 Ibid., 21.

127 The author does not clarify what this process entails.
response to the threat of shrinking social relevance, then a more vociferous culturalism represents the other extreme. While a counter-hegemonic discourse of difference has been consistently employed since the early 1980s, this approach has intensified in the last several years, revealing a Tibetan intellectual crisis spurred by two major structural changes in the PRC: in the economic sphere as discussed above with the increasing privatization since the late 1990s of the educational system and other "knowledge-producing realms"; and in the cultural sphere where a "paradigmatic shift" among Chinese intellectuals since 1993 has redefined national development on Han-terms.

Several studies by Chinese and western scholars alike (Goldman, Link and Su 1993, Barme 1996, and Zhao 1997) have discussed the shifting discourse among Chinese intellectuals as their rhetorical position vis à vis tradition, modernity and the state vacillated during the Deng era. The 1980s saw among Chinese intellectuals in several domains a rise of "cultural fever" (wenhua re) consisting of two basic themes: criticism of traditional Chinese culture and criticism of Chinese national character. In literature, this entailed a focus on indigenous culture and a resurgence of the "search for roots" (xun gen) literary movement. In the cultural fever of the 1980s, anti-traditionalism (fanchuantong zhuyi) became dominant in China's intellectual discourse. Several journals were founded during the late 1980s to carry out the debate about Chinese tradition and

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129 According to Heather Stoddard, this is also the case for many writers in the TAR. (Heather Stoddard, personal communication, 1 February 2003.)

130 I choose this term, instead of "traditionalism" in that the term includes both those seeking a revival of early Tibetan culture as well as those seeking to modernize along Tibetan terms. In recent years, for example, a few literary critics have begun to eschew foreign models altogether and call for "authentic" Tibetan literary innovation. See chapter 9.

131 "Privatization" in this sense refers to decreasing subsidies, such that "the portion of the tuition fee to be covered by students has been increasing significantly each year." (Chhoyang, "Higher Education," 67.) Cf. Costello, "Economics of Cultural Production," 225–227). From field experience, I am also aware that students are increasingly called upon to pay extra fees for incidental expenses, such as dormitory linens, technology fees, and so forth.

Cultural fever was accompanied by a fever for western learning (xixue re) and the mass publication of western greats including Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, and Weber in translation. The broadcasting of River Elegy pushed a "high tide" of cultural fever and an anti-traditionalist movement which quickly lost momentum, however, after the Tiananmen Tragedy of 1989.

To some extent, discourse among more progressive Tibetans can be seen to have trailed along beside Chinese discourse for many years. In the early 1980s, it seems many intellectuals took the rhetoric of the "Four Modernizations" to heart—at the very least, they frequently drew on this topos to argue for the advancement of Tibetan education, literature, and other aspects of Tibetan society. In contrast to their Chinese counterparts, the "anti-traditionalism" of Tibetan writers in the 1980s was not a sweeping denunciation of Tibetan culture. Rather, their critiques were limited to certain aspects of Tibetan society. Indeed, the early 1980s witnessed a strong restoration of folk and classical elements in literature. In the mid and late 1980s, "Study the West Fever" also swept through the minority institutes where Tibetan students were keen to read western philosophy and literary theory, and sought Western models for modernization. To become modernized was to become Western—and this might have been seen as an alternative to sinicization. The 1986 and 1987 issues of Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal and Sbrang-char, for example, commonly featured (out of some 20 total contributions) three translations of foreign works, and at least one piece by a Chinese writer.

As the Chinese economy modernized at an unprecedented rate, however, the economic gap between the two nationalities worsened. In contrast to the early 1980s

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132 This refers to a programme launched in the ascendency period of Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), and whose impact was felt in intellectual circles following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party
when Tibetans and Chinese together lagged behind the west, China's unabashed pursuit of capitalism with socialist characteristics had the rhetorical effect of more closely equating modernization with westernization. In the eyes of some Tibetans, westernization, modernization and sinicization all began to resemble one another. "Western clothing" was referred to as "Chinese clothing." Humorous skits mocked the new-fangled trends of sinicized Tibetans, who were "neither goat nor sheep" (ra ma lug). Tibetan intellectuals began to argue for the need to maintain nationality characteristics (mi-rigs-kyi khyad-chos) in literature, music, language and so forth. By the late 1980s, the classical Tibetan literary "tradition" no longer represented the primary hegemonic literary force. Rather, it became a potent counterhegemonic force. On the one hand, critics pointed to the failure of their literary forefathers to maintain a great and living literary tradition through renewal, one that offered substance for the next generation to stake a claim on the world literary stage. On the other hand, critics recognized that the absolute dismissal of their literary "tradition" would represent the loss of an important differentiating marker of their unique identity, albeit derived from Indic theory.

The primary rhetorical strategy to emerge in the face of this contradiction was to argue for a process of hlang-rdor (adopting and discarding)—a term with Buddhist origins, which here means keeping what is good from tradition as a base and adopting what is useful from modern world culture, while rejecting the "bad" or "useless" aspects of tradition. (Commonly cited examples are attitudes towards women and superstitious beliefs). This rhetorical position reflects a conscious and tactical use of selective tradition, defined by Williams (1977) as "an intentionally selective version of a shaping

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Congress in December 1978 when intellectuals were encouraged to "liberate their thought" to pursue the "Four Modernizations" (in industry, agriculture, military, and science and technology.)
past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification."133 The discursive strategy of blang-rdor makes explicit the role of the literary critic in value formation; i.e. he/she who articulates the criteria regarding what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected. Through this discourse, the field of modern Tibetan literature gained shape. More broadly, when literature itself is viewed as "a certain type of writing that is highly valued and seen as fine writing (belles lettres) for different reasons by people from time to time,"134 the importance of the discursive formation is underscored all the more. Moreover, the role of a "knowledge class" and the institutions in which they participate will play a key role in the value formation of what constitutes Tibetan literature.

Williams' sense of "selective tradition" is derived largely from a Marxist perspective. As such, he and other scholars have focused on its employment "in the interest of the dominance of a specific class," concluding that "the hegemonic sense of tradition is always the most active"—an assumption which underlies the "invented tradition" trope of Hobsbawm and disciples. More recently, Vlastos (1998) and others have noted how selected traditions are not just used by the dominant hegemonic. They warn against the "potential pitfalls" inherent in a dehistoricized or decontextualized emphasis on the "invented" character of tradition:

When 'invention' is narrowly construed as artifice, the possibility of a legitimate exercise of agency is erased, leaving only manipulation and mystification. Quite apart from producing boring history, such a reading entails real political costs. As Arif Dirlik recently noted in relation to the history making of indigenous peoples, a theoretical position that ignores the social conditions of the production and reception of invented traditions (and other tropes of identification) denies to marginal and oppressed

133 Williams, Marxism and Literature, 115–116.
populations legitimate recourse to the authority of the past in their ongoing struggle to fashion counter-hegemonic cultural identities.\textsuperscript{135}

Tibetan literary critics increasingly engage in a discourse of difference, uniqueness, distinguishing themselves as others from the colonizer and from globalizing tendencies. To do this, Tibetans engage in a tactical reworking of a dominant system, using acceptable discourse to carve out a cultural territory. For example, the intellectuals draw on the conceptual structure that "literature must serve the masses," but which masses? Certain critics are likely to conceive of "the people" as Tibetan, and thus it must be in Tibetan language. Or if they draw on the conceptual structure of literary realism, then the literature must portray a Tibetan reality. By one reading, such rhetorical strategies could be interpreted as constituting "oppositional cultural practices," theorized by de Certeau as "the redirection of cultural structures involves the classic compromise of power-within-weakness."\textsuperscript{136} Their use of the dominant social order deflects its power. Lacking the means to challenge this power in other domains, they escape it in the literary realm while seeming not to leave it. Engaged in a field which regulates them at a first level, they introduce into it a way of turning it to their advantage.

Chatterjee (1993) has identified the strategy of selectively constructing "difference" as a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa—the division of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the


\textsuperscript{136} de Certeau, \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life}, as quoted in Frow, \textit{Cultural Studies}, 53.

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spiritual. The spiritual is an "inner" domain bearing the "essential marks of cultural identity."

The nationalist response [to a rule of colonial difference] was to constitute a new sphere of the private in a domain marked by cultural difference: the domain of the 'national' was defined as one that was different from the "Western." The new subjectivity that was constructed here was premised not on a conception of universal humanity, but rather on particularity and difference: the identity of the "national" community as against other communities. In this aspect of the political domain, then, the hegemonic movement of nationalism was not to promote but rather, in a quite fundamental sense, to resist the sway of the modern institutions of disciplinary power.

The move to demarcate a largely independent cultural territory has not been limited to rhetorical moves. One of the manifestations of this strategy was to quickly expand the vocabulary through new dictionary projects that offered new glossaries in the realm of science, computers, and so forth. Indeed, while the translation projects of the 1950s were mainly concerned with translating humanist and social science concepts that could be used for the study of Mao thought, many technological terms were left unaddressed. Only in the 1990s do we see a renewal in dictionary projects for areas such as physics, chemistry, and computers. Chatterjee addresses the implications of such projects:

The colonial state, in other words, is kept out of the "inner" domain of national culture; but it is not as though this so-called spiritual domain is left unchanged. In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful,


creative and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not Western [or Chinese].

Chatterjee is clear that his use of the term "nationalism" here is firstly a cultural nationalism by an intelligentsia without political or economic power.

In the 1990s, several concomitant factors prompted a growing Chinese nationalism: the perception of western maneuvering against the Chinese bid for the Olympics in 1993, the denial of Most-Favored Nation status, and articles published in the West which posited China as the next major threat. The surge in Chinese nationalism did not equate with strong support for the state which largely remained in ill favor since 1989. The focus was economic: modernization should be Han.

This discursive move among Chinese intellectuals has eclipsed the possibility for a Tibetan modernity in a Chinese state. Moreover, statements and actions in the political realm such as the 1997 speech by Chen Kuiyuan in an effort, as Schiaffini-Vedani (2002) characterizes it, "to rebuke the idea of a culturally unique Tibet" reinforced the gravity with which this constellation of rhetorical statements was received. Tibetan discourse thus made a dramatic shift. With no room for a Tibetan modernity on the Chinese state agenda, the intellectual community was polarized: some became arch-traditionalist seeing this as the only way to safeguard the Tibetan nation. A second group sought a radical modernity. Basing themselves on Darwinist logic, they argued that Tibetan society must shed its negative imprints (bag-chags) and develop rapidly or face immediate extinction.

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139 Ibid., 6.
140 Interestingly, for those Chinese intellectuals who question the modernizing paradigm, a romanticized and "native" Tibet has increasingly come to serve as a locus for resistance in literature. Schiaffini-Vedani, "Tashi Dawa," 51.
141 Conceptions of how a "Tibetan modernity" (cultural and economic) might be realized vary by player. The Tibetan radical modernists are often accused of playing into the hands of the Chinese state in that their calls for stripping Tibetan society of its "backward" features, including folk religious beliefs, appear to support official efforts towards sinicization, such as restrictions on Tibetan language instruction and religious practice. And yet, the modernity(ies) conceived by the broader Tibetan intellectual strata often
have discussed this debate in another context (Hartley 2002), and in chapter 9 will address its literary manifestations. Another shift in the late 1990s has been an express distancing from Tibetan classical literature and an embracing of pre-Buddhist Tibetan literature as representing "authentic" Tibetan literature.\textsuperscript{143} At the same time, a concomitant discourse of "authenticity" has the effect of delimiting the range of acceptable positions within the Tibetan cultural domain. While seeking to define themselves versus others, internal dissenting voices are quelled. In the following chapter, I seek to provide historical background on some of the social transformations briefly mentioned in this introductory chapter.

\textsuperscript{143} See, for example, the arguments posed in the textbook by Dpa'-rtse and Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring (1999). I also observed this point consistently made in an undergraduate literature class at Qinghai Nationalities Institute.
Chapter 2

Early-Twentieth-Century Contributions towards a Written Colloquial Tibetan Language

The vernacularization of literary Tibetan during the mid-twentieth century was a critical factor for the emergence and flourishing of a modern Tibetan literature in the 1980s. This is not to deny the significance of colloquial language used in earlier Tibetan texts, such as writing by certain early Bka'-gdams-pa teachers such as Dge-bshes Po-to-ba (1031–1105), the biography of the eleventh-century yogin Milarepa written by Gtsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452/3–1507/8), the writings of Zhabs-dkar-ba (1781–1851), and most abundantly in the oral literature of the Gesar epic and popular folk songs. As observed by Cabezón and Jackson (1996), "the written tradition was preceded by a well-developed oral tradition that included not only the usual repertoire of epic poetry, folk songs and legendary narratives, but also material on such areas as law and politics." Hodge (1990) identifies a "medieval period" in Tibetan literature—though he specifies no dates—at which time some writers were particularly "influenced by the colloquial language of the time." He characterizes the style as marked by a greater use of compound words, a simplification of the grammar often with ommission of 'case' particles, and the introduction of words from the spoken language. Yet, even while this medieval style was practiced, Hodge admits that Classical Tibetan "continued to occupy a position of

\[144\] Sweet (1996:246–7, 250) has also taken note of "the vernacular origins" of mental purification or blo-shyong texts and a "folk homiletic tradition" in Tibet. For more on colloquial qualities in the translations of Bo-dong Pan-chen Phyogs-las-mam-rgyal (1376–1451), see E. Gene Smith, Among Tibetan Texts, 184.
pre-eminence" from its advent in the ninth century until the twentieth century. To the extent, however, that the development of Classical Tibetan literature has been marked by the "increasing dominance of written over oral forms, of Indian over indigenous influences, and or religious over secular concerns," the written Tibetan language became quite specialized.

Due to its close association with the Tibetan Buddhist monastic system which by my definition was omnipresent in the Tibetan cultural sphere, Classical Tibetan was a lingua franca across territories which were otherwise linguistically differentiated by dialect and politically differentiated by administration for most of their history. Whereas the various Tibetan dialects were susceptible to considerable transformation over time, the written language was largely conserved for several centuries through the religious and aristocratic clerisy which had a monopoly on its use. Accordingly, there developed an "ever-increasing gap separating the spoken language from the written classical language." Beyer (1989) would assert that a complete break was a virtual fait accompli, "Classical Tibetan, unlike many written languages, is in many ways independent of spoken Tibetan language." Classical Tibetan in this sense can be seen

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146 Cabezon and Jackson, Tibetan Literature, 14.
147 Ibid., 16.
148 I would define "Cultural Tibet" as those regions, aside from Mongolia, where Tibetan Buddhism is practiced in concentration and indeed where Tibetan dialects prevail.
150 Stephan V. Beyer, The Classical Tibetan Language, SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies, edited by Matthew Kapstein (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 37. Beyer defines Classical Tibetan by default as "the language of written Tibetan texts, with the exception of the canonical translations, primarily from Sanskrit, and the language of modern newspapers and similar printed material." Finding this definition less than satisfactory, I have sought other articulations to no avail. In a footnote, Beyer observes newspaper Tibetan has been called "modern literary Tibetan" by Melvyn Goldstein. Beyer continues, "Classical Tibetan of course, continues to be written to this day, as the language of learned discourse, and even as the language of popular culture; whether newspaper Tibetan will become a vehicle for a genuine colloquial literature remains to be seen, although early signs are encouraging." (p.37)
to approximate a "sacred silent language" (Anderson 1991: 14) which coupled with Tibetan Buddhist practice served as a primary medium through which a pan-Tibetan community was "imagined." Unlike Latin, however, Classical Tibetan never truly fell out of use. Rather, modern literary Tibetan remains "très proche de la langue classique, même si elle a lentement évolué et s'est enrichie grâce à l'introduction de nombreux néologismes." Moreover, a significant number of "orthodox" writers today continue to practice classical conventions in their literary works, which to the best of my knowledge are confined to kāvyā-inspired poetic genres.

While modern literary Tibetan has narrowed the gap between the spoken and written languages, at the same time it has lost some of its "glue" as the medium of a unified field of exchange. Because the literary language underwent the bulk of its vernacularization in a colonial situation that politically precluded the possibility for an indigenous coordination of transregional administration, education, publishing, etc., the written language has actually lost some of its potential as a shared medium for the Tibetan imaginary. While it might be overstating the case to claim that "there are several versions of [Modern Literary Tibetan],” it is nonetheless true that writings from the various Tibetan regions of the PRC reflect differences in the local vernacular dialects, not to mention contrasts to the spoken and written languages of the exile population. Variations in modern literary Tibetan are perhaps most evident precisely in a realm appropos to our study; i.e. works of fiction—short stories, novels and novellas—where

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151 Nicolas Tourmadre and Sangda Dorje, Manuel de Tibétain Standard: Langue et civilisation (Paris: Langues Mondes, L'Asiatheque, 1998): 365. In the estimation of these authors, the contemporary literary language does not represent a rupture in any fashion, rather it is "une parfaite continuation de la langue classique." (p. 366)

152 As was suggested in the last chapter, employing such a strategy in the contemporary cultural and social milieu can be viewed as an "oppositional strategy."

153 And yet higher literacy rates would imply that a greater portion of the population is partaking in the "imaginary."
conversation is most likely to appear. Complaints about the "strong influence of local dialect" can be found in letters to the editors of literary journals in Amdo, for example. I also heard in my discussions with editors from both Xining and Lhasa, complaints about the "poor word choice" and "spelling errors" committed by their literary counterparts. It remains to be seen whether standardization projects, such as the Five Regions Group (Upton 1999) or efforts to further a common spoken language (Hartley 1996, Prins 2002) will have a unifying effect on the modern literary language. And yet, while the transregional hold of the written language today seems to have weakened to a minor degree in comparison to its classical pregenitor, it would be wrong to overemphasize regional differences. For modern literary Tibetan seems to remain for the most part mutually intelligible across regions. Moreover, due to the progress made in education and increased literacy, a much greater portion of the population now has access to the written word.

Projects to overcome the rift between written and spoken Tibetan started to be promulgated in the early twentieth century. One of the earliest of such efforts—the founding of the first vernacular paper in Tibet during the final years of the Qing dynasty—did little to alter the situation, however, on a widescale basis. Initiated and funded by the imperial representatives in Lhasa along with other projects aimed at "educating people in patriotism," the bilingual Chinese-Tibetan newspaper entitled "Tibet Vernacular Paper" (Xizang riyu bao 西藏日语报; Bod-ljongs phal-skad gsar-'gyur) was issued once every ten days. With a print run of nearly three hundred, its readers were

154 Hodge, Classical Tibetan, vii.
said to be primarily secular officials in Lhasa.\textsuperscript{156} Launched in 1907, the paper did not survive the end of Qing rule nor have a lasting impact on Tibetan society during the country's subsequent short-lived period of independence.\textsuperscript{157} More influential was \textit{Yul-phyogs so-so'i gsar-'gyur me-long} (= \textit{The Tibetan Mirror}), the paper first published by the Tibetan Christian convert and progressivist Tharchin Bhabu (1890–1976)\textsuperscript{158} in Kalimpong in 1925.\textsuperscript{159} This newspaper featured a wide range of topics, including world events, writings by Tibetans living or traveling outside of Tibet and editorials regarding Tibetan society and the advances of the Communist party. Since such pioneering efforts towards the modernization of Tibetan society in the pre-Communist era have been the focus of other studies, I will not survey these here.\textsuperscript{160} Four arenas of activity from 1949 to 1976 are of special interest for us, however, in terms of their influence on Tibetan literary thought in the early 1980s: 1) translation teams; 2) publishing projects; 3) newspapers and other media enterprises; and 4) educational initiatives.

\textsuperscript{156} Shar-ba-thogs-med, "Bod-ljongs gsar-'gyur," 60.
\textsuperscript{157} According to one source, 21 issues of the paper published from its inception until August 1910 are in the archives of Bod-ljongs rig-dgos do-dam u-yon tshogs-pa. Though called a "newspaper" and similar in form to the standard print newspaper of today, it resembled more a short magazine. Its content was primarily propaganda regarding patriotism, unity and the need to oppose the superstition of the masses. \textit{Zhongguo Xizang}, 1998, no. 4, cited in Kha-sgang Dpal-chen-thar, "Bod-yig rig-gzhung dus-deb-kyi dal-la'i gnas-tshul dang 'byung-'gyur 'phel-rgyas thad-kyi bsam-tshul 'ga" (Some thoughts regarding the situation and development of Tibetan language cultural journals), \textit{Nub-byang mi-rigs slob-grwa chen-mo'i rig-gzhung dus-deb}, 1998, no. 2:83–84.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, 161-162. Stoddard notes, "A sample was regularly sent to the thirteenth Dalai Lama who expressed his encouragement in financial aid. Later, the Panchen Lama also expressed his interest in writing a letter of support. Despite this patronage coming from the high prelates of the country, the \textit{Me-long} was known in Lhasa by only a small minority." (p. 162) According to her footnote, these letters were published in a 1950 issue of \textit{Me-long}.
Translation Teams (1950–1966)

Given the predominance of Classical Tibetan well into the mid-twentieth century, a monumental task confronted the earliest teams of translators who gradually made available in Tibetan the directives, constitutions, educational materials, propaganda and other nation-building documents necessary with the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. One of the first forays in communicating the ideals of the Communist Party to a wider Tibetan reading public was a short bilingual booklet of a speech by the Qinghai-born Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho (1884–1968), which circulated, at the least, in Beijing and Xining during 1950 and 1951. The main purpose of his address was to protest against American interference in the internal affairs of China and argue for the need to unite and protect the "motherland." Though Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho had earlier broadcast his message by radio across the Tibetan plateau, few Tibetans owned radios beyond a small number of aristocrats in Lhasa. Moreover, the Tibetan government was quick to counter with its own broadcasts denying the existence of imperialists in Tibet and asserting that Tibet did not need liberation. The relationship between Tibet and China, they argued, was one of priest and patron (mchod-yon), not one in which Tibet was part of China. Ultimately, it was decided that the Dge-bshes’s speech should be

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161 Additional information regarding the life and activities of Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho can be found in Stoddard 1988, Phun-tshogs 1998, and Tuttle 2002.

162 Excerpts from what was apparently the first of such radio statements by Dge-bshes Shes-rgya-mtsho, broadcast on May 6, 1950, is cited in Tsering Shakya, Dragon in the Land of Snows, 37–38. A Chinese version of a second and similar speech broadcast from Xian on May 9, 1950 and published in Chinese on May 22 in the Peoples Daily (Renmin Ribao) can be found in Zhang Yuxin, ed. Heping jiefang Xizang wushi zhou nian ji nian wenji (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2001), 12–13. The focus of this address was three-fold: 1) to urge Tibetans to "be cautious of British and American imperialists;" 2) to reassure Tibetans that "the Communist Party upholds religious freedom," and 3) to warn that "China is a mighty force." One is very much reminded of the letter written by Sa-skya Paldita to Tibetans in Lhasa when the Yuan Mongols began advancing upon Tibet.


printed and distributed. Since no Tibetan publishing house had yet been established, the booklet was prepared by the Central Nationality Affairs Commission and printed in Xikang.\footnote{The province of Xikang was established in 1928 to delineate the eastern region of the Tibetan plateau, part of which was officially under Chinese political control and part of which remained under Lhasa's jurisdiction.} The print-quality of the text was reportedly "very poor" compared to later standards, as the same Tibetan typewriters used during the two preceding decades of Nationalist rule had been moved from Nanjing to Beijing after "liberation" to be used for propaganda and other publishing purposes.\footnote{The Communist Party had a learned and experienced ally in the figure of Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho. After spending some 21 years (circa 1916–1936) in Lhasa where he was primarily employed in editing projects for the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho later "fell from grace" for unclear reasons related to philological disputes.} Though the booklet was small, as the second official Tibetan-language text ever published in the new People's Republic of China (PRC), it was nevertheless considered "greatly influential" at the time.\footnote{Jampal-rgya-mtsho, op. cit., 137.} Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho's speech came to serve as a "model" for those first employed in propaganda and translating projects for the new government, providing a standard for translators who otherwise "translated as they pleased" when faced with Chinese vocabulary unknown in Tibetan, terms such as "socialism" (shehuizhuyi 社会主义), "imperialism" (diguozhuyi 帝国主义), "liberation" (jiefang 解放), and "the Chinese nation" (Zhonghua minzu 中华民族).\footnote{The first official Tibetan language text published in the PRC was "Thun-mong rtsa-'dzin," i.e. the constitution of the first Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Jampal-rgya-mtsho, op. cit., 137.}

The Communist Party had a learned and experienced ally in the figure of Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho. After spending some 21 years (circa 1916–1936) in Lhasa where he was primarily employed in editing projects for the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho later "fell from grace" for unclear reasons related to philological disputes.

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Jampal-rgya-mtsho, op. cit., 137.}
\end{itemize}
and perhaps political differences. In 1936, the Dge-bshes accepted an invitation from the Nationalist (Guomindang) party to travel through India, Singapore, Hong Kong, and southern China at the party's expense and assume a joint lectureship at five prestigious Chinese schools: Central University, Beijing University, Qinghua University, Zhongshan University and Wuhan University. During this period, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho was active in many Sino-Tibetan religious exchanges, as well as the propagating of Nationalist party principles. In 1943, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho translated a summary of Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People" (sanminzhuyi 三民主义). Another work Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho reportedly helped translate during the 1940s was the Nationalist Party's "Constitution of the Five Powers" (Wu quan xianfa 五权宪法), which laid out the five branches of government and their authority as conceived by Sun Yat-sen. Indeed, until 1949, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho held several high positions within the Guomindang administration. We might find it ironic that in 1949, two months after the Communist Party came to power, the Dge-bshes was invited to Beijing to discuss

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172 For more information regarding the religious and cultural exchanges that occurred between Chinese and Tibetans during the Republican Period, see Gray Tuttle, "Faith and Nation: Tibetan Buddhists in the making of modern China (1902–1958)," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2002).

173 The Tibetan title of the published work was San min kru’uyi bsdus-don. According to the colophon, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho bore the official GMT title hphu-ja'o shon-ji'i khran-si (Chin. fajiao zuanjji changshi). I am grateful to Gray Tuttle for alerting me to this text and to Prof. Elliot Sperling for the exact colophon information. According to papers in the India Office, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho arrived on the Tibet-Qinghai border (Nagchuka) in 1944 accompanied by fifty Chinese soldiers, with copies of his translation in a bilingual Tibetan-Chinese edition published by the GMT. Several copies circulated in Lhasa during the following months. Cited in Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Ambo, 87.


175 See, for example, Goldstein, History of Modern Tibet, 523.
how he might serve in the new government and by January 1950 was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Qinghai Provincial People's Government. As we shall see in this chapter, however, the charisma and skills of learned religious teachers were a critical asset for the Chinese Communist Party who employed (and continue to employ) what has been called a "united front strategy," i.e. working with traditional indigenous leaders to further long-term policy objectives. Goldstein (1989) offers an explanation for the logic underpinning this tactic: "The public support garnered by these lamas and monks enhanced the credibility of the Chinese promises of religious freedom and thus was fundamental to China's plan for a peaceful liberation of Tibet." At the same time, as suggested by Dreyer (1976), the temporary alliance was expedient in providing personnel for nation-building projects. "The CCP's policy of cooperation with 'patriotic upper strata' may be seen as an effort to close this expertise gap." As for the motivation of the Tibetan lamas and learned monks themselves, Goldstein notes this is "difficult to assess" but suggests a confluence of interests including, "political expediency, belief in the Communists' promised policy toward minorities, disenchantment with the traditional system in Tibet, and enmity to Taktra and the Lhasa government." We must also recognize the degree to which social progress made during the Nationalist period inspired several Tibetan religious teachers, such as Gsung-rab-rgya-rtse-sno, who had frequent

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176 Tib. Mtsho-sngon zhi-gchen mi-dmangs srid-gzhung-gi kru'u-zhi gzhon-pa. Ch. 青海省人民政府 副 主 席 . Lis-tshun hphu'u, op. cit., 504-5. Stoddard (1985: 87) cites an article by Tharchin Bhabu in Me-long in which he notes that Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-rtse-sno was in a "delicate position" when the Communists came to power (though he reportedly sympathized with their ideas) and retreated to his home monastery of Kumbum (Sku-bum) in Amdo until shortly called upon for service by the newly ruling Communist government.

177 Shakya, "Historical Introduction," 3.

178 Goldstein, History of Modern Tibet, 686.


180 Goldstein, op. cit., 686. Cf. The view of Me-long editor Bhabu Tharchin, who wrote on January 1, 1951: "The monks were forced to realize two objectives: to prevent the atheist communist atheists from entering the land of the dharma, and constructing a barrier around the country so that Tibet could continue.
contact with Chinese students of Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese officials prior to Communist rule.

Indeed, the shifting allegiances and various initiatives launched during and after the 1913–51 period covered by Goldstein defy any monolithic or unifying interpretation of the parties involved based on nationality. While a great many of the Tibetan translation, publishing and educational projects initiated by both Chinese and Tibetan leaders during the first 30 years of Communist rule were undeniably geared towards the interests of the occupying Chinese forces, a closer look at what transpired during this period demands recognition of the continued agency of Tibetan writers and scholars acting on the basis of their own interests or broader ideals. In the first place, contributions made by Tibetans and Chinese alike during the Communist era far surpassed the needs of mere propaganda. Moreover, some of these religious and secular Tibetan leaders were seeking resources to maintain religious, educational and other projects which they had actually launched during the preceding Nationalist period. Nor can the struggle between progressive and conservative forces be reduced to an internal feud within Tibetan society or between individuals. Rather, a host of developments which occurred prior to and during the Communist Party's ascendancy to power were part of a wider matrix of systemic changes and pioneering initiatives undertaken by various parties including Tibetan religious hierarchs, Chinese and Tibetan officials alike, Chinese scholars interested in Tibetan culture or religion, as well as a growing number of secularly educated Tibetans. Many of these scholars were called upon to apply their talents to the task of translating materials for the new regime.

"For this they referred to the priest-patron relationship of Qianlong." Cited in Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 87.
The importance of the massive amounts of translation from Chinese into Tibetan undertaken in the 1950s and following decades cannot be underestimated in terms of its furthering a written colloquial Tibetan language, and in particular for its introduction of new terminology. (Shakya, 1994) Unfortunately, my research is not exhaustive since it is intended only to lay the background for my study of the 1980s and 1990s. I hope my findings here might spur a more comprehensive study of Tibetan publishing in the mid-twentieth century, as well as research on Tibetan translation projects during the 1950s and 60s—what might be called "the third great wave" of translation in Tibetan cultural history (the first being in the imperial period and the second during the eleventh century introduction of Indic Buddhist texts in Tibetan).

Information about the earliest translation teams formed after the establishment of the PRC can be gleaned from the autobiography of Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan (1923/4–1993) who while in his mid-twenties at Bla-brang monastery asked permission of his teacher Gung-thang Rinpoche to visit a large city in China ("Rgya-yul") for the purpose of sightseeing. His teacher agreed and recommended that the student travel to Beijing.\textsuperscript{181} Thus, in 1950, after first meeting with Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho in Lanzhou, Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan flew to Beijing with the elder scholar and was soon hired by Yang Jingren to work on translation projects for the Nationality Affairs Commission.\textsuperscript{182} According to Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, he was advised that Tibetan language affairs were very important because Sichuan, Khams and Central Tibet (Bod-ljongs) had not yet been liberated. Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan was assigned to the third unit of four in the Nationality Affairs Commission. Also employed in this work unit were Rdo-rje-tshe-brtan (b. 1925, Sku-
"bum [Huangzhong], Qinghai) and Phun-tshogs-bkra'-shis (b. 1924, Gro-tshang [Ledu], Qinghai), as well as "a few Chinese translators." Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan worked in this unit for more than a year editing translated material for Mi-dmangs brnyan-dpar (the Tibetan version of Renmin Huabao) and other texts. In 1951, Nga-phod Ngag-dbang-'jigs-med (b. 1910, Lhasa, Tibet) arrived by boat from India and signed the Seventeen-Point Agreement, copies of which Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan was called upon to proofread. The following year Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan decided to return home to Sichuan since he "was not feeling well." The monastic scholar remained active in the Sichuan local area studying, teaching and writing textbooks until 1966 when he was arrested by the Red Army, publicly "struggled" against and sent for labor reform. Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan was exonerated in 1973, a few years prior to the "rehabilitation" of most Tibetan scholars, which occurred only after the Cultural Revolution and as late as 1979.

The initial sojourn of other Tibetan religious and secular leaders in Beijing was encouraged by the newly established Communist government through the offices of its Northwest Division (Xibei Ju), which organized—at the request of the Party, Chairman Mao and the Nationality Affairs Commission—"tour groups" (canguan tuan) to Beijing for the purposes of "fostering relations between nationalities and raising the knowledge and awareness of minority peoples." Such an arrangement

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183 After holding several governmental posts, Rdo-rgyal-tsho-brtan (now retired) was appointed director of the Tibetology Research Center in Beijing in 1987. Rdo-rgyal-tsho-brtan also helped establish Tibet's first full-time elementary school in 1953 and served as Deputy General Secretary of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCART) in 1958. Conner and Barnett, Leaders in Tibet, 105–106.
184 Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, Collected Works, 1:575.
185 Ibid., 576.
186 Ibid., 590.
187 Ye-shes-rdo-rje, et al., eds., Gangs-can mchogs-dbang rim-kyi rnam-thar mdor-bsadus (Concise biographies of former Tibetan scholars), vol. 2 (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 2000), 449. Tour groups were also arranged in 1956 for young Tibetans from Central Tibet who were then encouraged to stay in Beijing for schooling at the Central Nationalities Institute. See the "Author's Foreword" in Kunsang Paljor,
provided Dge-bshes Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho (1896–1982) with his first opportunity to visit the new capital. Like his fellow Amdowan Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho to whom he was twelve years junior, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho was esteemed for the high level of scholarship he had attained in the monastic system. Trained primarily at Ldi-tsha (aka Dhi-tsa) monastery in Qinghai Province, he obtained his dge-bshes degree in 1938. Like his contemporary, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho assumed rather unlikely posts during the Nationalist period; e.g. serving as Tibetan tutor for the son of Ma Bufang, Tibetan secretary for the Qinghai provincial government, Tibetan teacher at a provincial Tibetan-Mongolian primary school, and member of the Tibeto-Mongolian Educational Advancement Association. When the Communists came to power in 1949, they were quick to engage his talents as well, appointing Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho as vice-director of the translation office for the Secretariat of the Military Affairs Commission.

Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho was among some forty representatives of various nationalities from the northwest region of the PRC who were invited to Beijing by the Northwest Division in August 1950. En route, the tour group visited Xi’an, Baotou and other famous cities. Once in Beijing, the delegation had an audience with Chairman Mao and Liu Shaoqi, who personally congratulated Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho on his educational and other initiatives in Qinghai Province. The trip inspired Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho to write a few eulogistic poems praising the beauty of China, which will be

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discussed below. While some scholars such as Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan chose to remain in
the capital when offered full-time positions on the newly formed translation teams,
Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho's visit to the capital inspired and enabled him to make strides at
home in furthering Tibetan secular education and cultural production. Shortly after his
return to Qinghai Province he was called upon to help establish the first Tibetan
newspaper of the Communist era, the *Qinghai Tibetan News* (discussed below). The
Northwest Division arranged a second visit to Beijing for the scholar in September 1951,
this time for the purpose of attending the All-China Minority Nationalities Education
Conference.\(^{192}\) In 1952, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho accompanied Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-
mtsho on a propaganda tour of monasteries in Qinghai in order to explain the party
policies of "Resist America, Aid Korea," and "Unity of the Nationalities." Much of
Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho's time during the following three years was spent translating and
dubbing voice-overs for the national film production office in Manchuria (Northeast
China) and later at the branch film production office he himself helped establish in
Xining.

Of greatest concern for our study here was Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho's third visit to
Beijing. This was required in 1954 when the Nationality Affairs Commission called
Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho along with several other scholars to Beijing for the purpose of
translating five different constitutions, including the Constitution of the PRC and the
constitution of the founding People's Congress. According to one account, more than
2000 terms were individually discussed and standardized by the translation team, which

\(^{190}\) Ibid.
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 449.
\(^{192}\) Details of this meeting are provided in Dreyer, *China's Forty Million*, 116–118. By her estimation,
the party sought to "minimize the possibility of conflict with those minorities who had a well-developed
included scholars from all across the Tibetan region. At the same time, selected works of Chairman Mao were also translated. With subsequent translation ventures, the number of new terms soon grew to 4000, prompting Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho to draft a Tibetan-Chinese dictionary, which he submitted for publication to the nationalities publishing house in Beijing.\textsuperscript{193} These efforts mark the first major step in the standardization of terms for Chinese-Tibetan translations during the Communist era.

Fascinating details of the translation teams who continued this work have been made available recently in the autobiography of 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho, a native of the Bathang area in Kham who authored what Stoddard (1994: 144) has called "the first modern [Tibetan] novel of any length"—\textit{Skal-bzang-me-tog}—and later worked for nearly twenty years in the Gesar Research Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.\textsuperscript{194} First called to Beijing in June 1955 to attend the People's Congress, 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho was then employed by the Tibetan section of the Nationalities Publishing House to translate Chinese documents and other texts into Tibetan.\textsuperscript{195} He considers the Second National Work Forum on Minority Languages (\textit{Dierci quanguo minzu yuyan gongzuo huiyi}) held in 1958 to be the "first time since 1949 for a deep and comprehensive discussion about practical and theoretical difficulties when translating..."
Mao's works.\textsuperscript{196} In 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho's estimation, "This forum served not only for the purpose of translating Mao's works but the translation work of the Nationality Publishing House also underwent a qualitative leap."\textsuperscript{197} At this meeting it was decided that Chinese must be the source language when translating and borrowing new terms; i.e. foreign words could not be the basis for a calque transcription. Furthermore, the transcription of foreign words—in particular, the names of people and places—were to be based on their phonetic rendering in the Chinese \textit{pinyin} system.\textsuperscript{198} Finally, "loyalty to the original" when translating Mao's works was determined to mean loyalty to the original meaning, not necessarily a literal translation.\textsuperscript{199}

The Tibetan translation of the fourth volume of Mao's collected works detailing the history of the relationship between the Nationalists and the Communists was begun after this meeting. 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho was one of the staff members assigned to proofread for fidelity between the Tibetan translation and the Chinese original,\textsuperscript{200} while Rdo-rje-rgyal-po (b. 1913) served as general editor and was responsible for the Tibetan translation as a whole.\textsuperscript{201} The entire process which began in 1959, however, entailed many more people:

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 387.
\textsuperscript{197} Jiangbian Jiacuo, \textit{Ganxie shenghuo}, 387.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 381.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 387.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 389.
\textsuperscript{201} Rdo-rje-rgyal-po (1913–1991, Gtsang-stod Gyas-ru, [now Ngamring County, TAR]). As a boy, he studied grammar at Tashilhunpo Monastery with Slob-dpon Dka'-chen-'gyur-med and Dkar-lebs Dru-pi-yig O-rgyan-rdo-rje. Eventually, he served in the Tibetan government as a private secretary for Mkhan-drung Mkyi-rab-dbang-phyug. He was also a secretary for Dza-sags Spom-mdav Yar-phyel (b. 1898) an influential Tibetan merchant from Markharm. (Stoddard, \textit{Le Mendiant de l'Amdo}, 383.) In 1952, Rdo-rje-rgyal-po taught Tibetan at the Cadre School of the Tibet Military District. (In 1955, the name of this school was changed to "Cadre School of the Tibet Region" [Bod-ljongs las-byed slob-grwa]. (Dreyer, \textit{China's Forty Million}, 112.) In 1954, Rdo-rje-rgyal-po went to Beijing and began working for the Tibetan translation office of the Nationalities Publishing House. During his time in Beijing, he studied several classical \textit{k\'h\'y\'a} texts with Slob-dpon Dka'-chen Rinpoche. Ultimately, Rdo-rje-rgyal-po himself sought to provide a definitive edition of the root text of the \textit{Snyan-ngag me-long} with concise explanations and examples. This was published by the Nationalities Publishing House in 1983 as \textit{Snyan-ngag gi rnam-bshad gsal-sgron}. It is not clear when he actually drafted the manuscript, but it was probably during the 1950s or 1960s while he was studying \textit{k\'h\'y\'a}. See Rdo-rje-rgyal-po, \textit{Snyan-ngag gi rnam-bshad gsal-...
By the end of 1962 or the beginning of 1963, we felt that the translation was fairly accurate. There were no mistakes in content and the language read comfortably. The level of translation was not so bad for the time. It was good enough. But, leaders from the Nationality Publishing House and the Nationality Affairs Commission didn't feel comfortable. They decided to select local scholars and form a revisions committee chaired by Sa Kongliao. Deling, Bkra-shis-tshe-ring (Daxi Cairen) and Phun-tshogs-bkra-shis (Pengzhe) served as vice-chairmen. Hor-khang Sras and Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho were also invited. Hor-khang Sras was an aristocrat and important scholar. Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho was Vice Director of the Qinghai Provincial Educational Bureau and a member of the National People's Political Consultative Committee. Both had a certain amount of authority. Liu Liqian, Rdo-rje-rgyal-po, Wang Chengkong and I were the Nationality Publishing House representatives. We met with the local group and together revised the fourth volume.

Bkra-shis-tshe-ring and Phun-tshogs-bkra-shis (now in Xining, then the Vice Secretary and office manager for the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region) were also contacted. Both were party members and scholar-type leaders. Both were highly fluent in Tibetan and Chinese. They mainly took political responsibility for any mistakes. They had to guarantee that there were no mistaken translations nor omissions. They were responsible for the fidelity of the meaning (xin).202

Hor-khang Sras and Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho represented the two dialects [Lhasa and Amdo]. One does not understand Chinese and the other does not know much Chinese. They took responsibility for reading the Tibetan version. If they didn't understand [the translation] or thought it was not smooth, then there was a problem. This would be raised at the meeting. They were responsible for the ease of the language (da).203

This review process took about half a year to complete. The final draft was then sent to several well-respected religious and secular scholars including the Panchen Rinpoche, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho, Ngag-phod, Phags-pa Dge-legs-rnam-rgyal (b. 1940, Lithang, Sichuan), Jam-dbyangs-dpal-mo, Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho, Sde-dge sras Skals...
bzang-dbang-rdor, and Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung. The fourth volume was revised again on the basis of their suggestions.204

The publication of Mao's works in Tibetan was finally realized in the wake of complaints from Tibetans in the TAR and other Tibetan areas about the dearth of study material, as well as protests organized in Beijing by red guards from the Central Nationalities Institute (CNI) and other institutions of higher education who sought to revolt against the crimes of the "capitalist readers."205 When word of this discontent reached the Central Committee, the Tibetan office at the Nationalities Publishing House was ordered to complete the project quickly. The party committee at the publishing house, however, was largely "disabled" due to factionalism, and a feud between the publishing house and the printing house was impeding productivity. Thus, it was left to the staff of the Tibetan Department of the Nationalities Publishing House who largely on their own initiative in the spring of 1967 hurried to make final revisions to the four volumes of Mao's Selected Works.206 Two criteria were prioritized for translation: 1) the use of colloquial language should be maximized so that the books were comprehensible by the masses, and 2) [Chinese] punctuation should be utilized.207 Several hundred thousand copies of Mao's Selected Works and more than one million copies of Mao's Red Book were printed. Given that the official Tibetan population at that time was 4 million, this meant that potentially every fourth Tibetan owned a copy of the Red Book.

204 Ibid., 390.
205 Ibid., 395.
206 Ibid., 396. *M'o-tse-tung-gi gsung-rtsom gces-bslus* (Ch. *Mao Zedong xuanji* 毛泽东选集), 4 vols. (Beijing: [Nationalities Publishing House], 1967). The four volumes were revised yet again and published by the Nationalities Publishing House in 1992, following changes to the Chinese edition. In contrast to the great numbers printed in the 1960s, however, only 1500 copies of the Tibetan edition were printed in 1992.
207 Ibid.

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According to 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho, "No other nationality possessed such a high ratio of copies."\textsuperscript{208}

When distributed to the public, the volume was received with criticism by some readers in the TAR, mainly members of the Red Army, who sent a message through the local office in charge of publishing and distributing Mao's works (Mao ban) to the PLA representative (jun daibiao) of the United Front office in Beijing. The letter charged that the translation included "many feudalistic terms, superstitious words and the language of aristocratic serf-owners (guizu nongnu zhu de yuyan)." Readers from Gansu and Qinghai also complained to the Central Committee that the translation was incomprehensible, but for a different reason. They argued that the Nationality Publishing House used Lhasa dialect, the language of aristocratic serf-owners. Observing that the gap between Lhasa and Amdo dialects was great, they requested to the Central Committee that an Amdo edition of Mao's Selected Works be published.

The PLA representative at the United Front office, Liu Yufa, paid great heed to this criticism. He turned the letters of criticism over to the PLA management team (jun guan hui) at the Nationalities Publishing House, and then made his own investigations. Ultimately, he requested the PLA management team at Nationalities Publishing House to invite relevant comrades from the TAR, Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunan, and Gansu to Beijing for a workshop entitled "Study Mao Zedong Thought Class for Translating and Publishing Mao Zedong's works in Tibetan". The different levels of local leaders also took this work seriously. Representatives of the "workers-peasants-soldiers" and professionals attended the workshop. At that time, most experts or scholars were treated as "reactionary authorities" (fandong guanwei) or "representatives of serfowners".

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 395.
(nongnu zhu dailiren), and even as "serfowners;" people called for their overthrow. Thus, most of the attendees were young, and a large proportion were members of the PLA. The meeting was said to be the most widely represented gathering, in terms of geographical and class representation, since the "New China" had been established. 209 Overall, most people supported the goals of the workshop. Liu Yufa instructed the staff of the Nationalities Publishing House to listen "carefully, seriously and humbly" to the criticism regarding the publication of Mao's works from the perspective of the comrades from different places, and especially to the views of the "workers-peasants-soldiers" and the "millions of emancipated serfs." But, the stipulation was made that only one Tibetan version of Mao's Selected Works could be published. Authority for publishing the volume would be held by the Central Committee, and only the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing was granted the mandate to translate and publish Mao's Selected Works. 210 From this account, we can see the process by which pressure was exerted to elide dialectical differences in favor of a commonly understood vernacular language. However impossible the task might be, the resulting translation set a standard for decades to come.

In all, the project of translating the four volumes of Mao's works lasted nearly ten years, from 1959 to 1967, and employed the services of more than one hundred people. 211 The composition of the translation teams is noteworthy. 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho provides a list of the key people involved. (See table 2.1.)

209 Jiangbian Jiacuo, Ganxie shenghuo, 400.
210 Ibid., 396-397.
211 Ibid., 400.
Table 2.1 Scholars Involved in Translation Projects for the Nationalities Publishing House (Beijing) in the 1950s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monastic Scholars</th>
<th>Lay Tibetans</th>
<th>Lay Chinese</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shes-rab-rgya-rtsho [Qinghai]</td>
<td>Phun-tshogs-dbang-rgyal[212] [Ba-thang]</td>
<td>Wang Yao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gsung-rab-rgya-rtsho [Qinghai]</td>
<td>Bkra-shis-tshe-ring [Ba-thang]</td>
<td>Chen Lichao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshe-tan-zhab-drung [Qinghai]</td>
<td>Skal-bzang-ye-rtshes [Ba-thang]</td>
<td>Zhang Yisong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mkhyen-rab-od-zer [Sichuan]</td>
<td>Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-bar [Lhasa]</td>
<td>Zhang Keqiang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho[212] [Lhasa?]</td>
<td>Skal-bzang-gyur-md [Ba-thang]</td>
<td>Liu Liqian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang Mingxin[213] [Xiahe]</td>
<td>Sangs-rgyas [Qinghai]</td>
<td>Dai Xian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho [Ba-thang]</td>
<td>Tang Guoxin</td>
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<td>Chos-blo (lags) [Lhasa]</td>
<td>Zhong Xiusheng</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Phun-tshogs-bkra-shis [Qinghai]</td>
<td>Li Zoumin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ngag-dbang-skal-bzang [Ba-thang]</td>
<td>Gao Bingchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dge-'dun[216] [Sde-dge]</td>
<td>Liang Da</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Bsod-nam-rdo-rje[217] [?]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nor-bu [?]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Compiled using personal knowledge and information in Jiangbian Jiacuo, Ganxie shenghuo, 422.

The majority of Tibetans active in translation projects of the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing were traditionally trained scholars with varying degrees of monastic association and lay Tibetan aristocrats. While as a whole, the translation team members represented fairly diverse geographical backgrounds, Ba-thang accounts for exactly half of the geographic origins of lay Tibetan scholars. Furthermore, a number of Chinese scholars who had good command of Tibetan were active in these committees.

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212 Dreyer (1976) mentions a Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho (b. 1894–1968). This most likely refers to an abbot of Se-ra monastery who was active in some translation projects.

213 This Chinese monk studied at Bla-brang monastery.

214 This refers to Ba-pa Phun-tshogs-dbang-rgyal (b. 1920) from Ba-thang, who served as an assistant editor at the Nationalities Publishing House.

215 This translator's full name is Thub-bstan-dbang-phyug. He was the younger brother of Phun-tshogs-dbang-rgyal.

216 Though a lay person, this translator was educated at a monastery in Sde-dge.

217 Interpreter for the Panchen Rinpoche.

To the best of my knowledge, no detailed study has been made of the Tibetan publishing industry during the pre-Cultural Revolution period following the Chinese Communist Party's establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.\footnote{Heather Stoddard (1994) provides an excellent overview of translation projects within the context of Tibetan publishing in general. A list of Tibetological publications in the PRC since 1949 are available in the *Catalogue of Chinese Publications in Tibetan Studies*, vols. 1 and 2. See also Sorensen (1991) and the *Bya-rga Tibetan Bibliographic Database*, currently being expanded by the Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library (NYC), for bibliographies of Tibetan-language research-papers and articles published in the PRC.} We could mark the start of a new era for Tibetan publishing with the establishment of the Nationalities Publishing House in 1953, despite miscellaneous projects such as the booklet by Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho mentioned above and the circulation of a few Tibetan newspapers. The Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing boasts of having released more than 1200 Tibetan titles in its first forty years of operation.\footnote{We could mark the start of a new era for Tibetan publishing with the establishment of the Nationalities Publishing House in 1953, despite miscellaneous projects such as the booklet by Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho mentioned above and the circulation of a few Tibetan newspapers. The Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing boasts of having released more than 1200 Tibetan titles in its first forty years of operation.} What might surprise even the experienced Tibetologist is that nearly half of these titles were published prior to 1980, though research on "new Tibetan literature" focuses almost exclusively on the post-1980 period. Albeit, many of the early publications were translated political tracts and less than fifty pages in length. Tibetan publishing ventures during this early period, however, were not solely devoted to translations of Communist propaganda. There were enough examples of Tibetan-authored dictionaries and classical texts to merit a closer look at what was actually produced during this time.

The number of works translated from Chinese into Tibetan between 1953–1966 by the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing alone totaled in the hundreds. What did these early modern Tibetan publications contain? During its first year of operation, the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing released a dozen political works in Tibetan, as
well as three bilingual posters. The following year, in 1954, the writings of Mao and Zhou Enlai and a large number of constitutional and other legal documents were published. Though the ultimate aim of such translation projects may have been to "civilize" the Tibetan population, as stressed by Tsering Shakya (2000) or for political indoctrination as emphasized by Heather Stoddard (1994), several of these scholars were simultaneously involved in publishing projects to make traditional Tibetan texts, grammars, poetry and folktales available to a wider newly educated readership. More than a few great scholars were optimistic at that time about Communist policy and the implications it had for increasing Tibetan literacy. A certain leniency in the publishing policy in the 1950s allowed for the publication of several classical texts and the drafting of new instructional materials by Tibet's great scholars. In 1956, for example, the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing released a classical grammar with commentary by a student of the Eighth Si-tu Pañ-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas (1699/1700–1774).220 (See table 4.2 for details on concomitant publications.) Such texts were apparently well received among educated Tibetans. For example, demand for a traditional orthographical dictionary printed in modern format in the early 1950s was so high as to require three printings in short succession.221 At the same time, new terms were being standardized through the compilation of Chinese-Tibetan glossaries.222 Lexicons and grammars characterize the some twenty Tibetan-authored contributions issued by the Nationalities

220 Thon-mi Sambhot-ja [Sambhoja] and Dngul-chu yab-sras, Sum-rtags rtsa-ba dang de'i 'grel-pa Si-tu'i zhol-lung (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1956).
221 Dge-shes ['Jigs-med]-dam-chos, Dag-yig shes-byas rab-gsal (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1954), 2nd printing, 74pp. This book was printed for a third time in 1956. The first printing was most likely in 1953 or 1954 after the founding of the Nationalities Publishing House, but for some reason the title was omitted from the catalogue.
222 For example, one of the earliest glossaries was printed twice in the same year, i.e. Tha-snyad gscar-bsgrigs, vol. 1 (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1954).
Publishing House from 1953 to the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. (Apparently, glossaries were not intended for mass distribution during the first two years of publication as the price was prohibitive, ranging from 200–1400 yuan. The majority of propaganda pamphlets, on the contrary, cost as little as 1 or 2 fen. By 1955, however, prices of Tibetan grammatical texts dropped dramatically to a price on par with other publications.)

Though the quantity of Tibetan-authored publications issued from Beijing alone during this early period is not overly impressive, original Tibetan texts—including several classical works—were also being published in modern format in the cities of Xining, Lhasa, Chengdu, and Lanzhou. I have not had access to a complete catalogue for these houses such as the one available to me from the Beijing house. However, according to other sources available to me, several Tibetan-authored classical texts or related textbooks were published prior to the Cultural Revolution, including Gzhon-nu zla-med-kyi gtam-rgyud (Tale of the Incomparable Prince), Sum-cu-pa'i snying-po legs-bshad ljor-dbang-gi slob-deh (Elementary Textbook of Tibetan Grammar), Snyan-ngag rtsa-'grel (Root Text of Dandin’s Kāvyādarśa with Commentary), Sa-skya'i legs-bshad (The Aphorisms of Sakya Pandita), Snyan-ngag me-long-gi spyi-don (The Abridged Mirror of Poetry), Bya-sbrel-gyi gtam-rgyud (Tale of Monkeys and Birds), Bya-mgrin-sngon-zla-ba'i rtogs-brjod (Story of the Cuckoo, 1958), and Rgyal-bo Dri-med-kun-ldan-gyi rnam-thar (Biography of King Drimey Kunden, 1958). Even this partial list

demonstrates that not all Tibetan publishing was politically oriented during this early period.

Though traditionally-oriented projects represent a minority of the publishing ventures from the 1950s, they were critical for maintaining a thread of continuity from the pre-communist era and disseminating traditional Tibetan writing, grammar and theory among a wider public. Cyclostyle reproductions of classical texts as well as contemporary works authored by scholars in the 1950s were distributed for classroom instruction, as several scholars involved in the translation teams of the 1950s were called upon to teach at nationality institutes in the late 1950s and early 1960s. When those who survived the Cultural Revolution were called upon again to teach in the Tibetan programs reestablished at nationality institutes in the late 1970s, their (re)published works comprised an important contribution to the renaissance of Tibetan literature after the paralyzing effects of the Cultural Revolution.\(^\text{225}\) Evidence for this can be found in the epilogues of several books published or republished in the early 1980s. For example, Tshe-tan-zhab-drung (1910–1985) recounts at the close of *Snyan-ngag spyi-don* (1981), how his summary text of *kāvya* conventions with commentary and examples was actually completed in 1952.\(^\text{226}\) This Tibetan scholar from Xunhua County, Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai Province served as a translator starting in 1953 at the Qinghai Translation Office.\(^\text{227}\) During that same year, he visited Beijing on a tour group for minority nationality figures (such as the group in which Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho participated in

\(^{225}\) See table 4.2 for a list of texts from 1957–59 that were either originally published or reprinted in 1980.

\(^{226}\) Similarly, Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-phrin-las actually completed his work *Snyan-ngag-la 'jug-tshul tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i sgo-'byed* in 1962, though it was not published until twenty years later. See the preface to this book.

\(^{227}\) Tib. Mtsho-sngon zhing-chen rtsom-sgyur u-yon lhan-khang. Ye-shes-rdo-rje et al., *Rnam-thar*, 2:470. Additional biographical information can be found in Lha-mo-sgrol-ma, "Gangs-ljongs mkhas-pa'i
1950), visiting Xi'an en route. Soon after, with a letter of appointment by Zhou Enlai, the 43-year old scholar was made vice-director of the executive office of the Qinghai Provincial Peoples Committee. From 1959 to 1964, Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung taught at Qinghai Nationalities Institute during which period he worked with Dge-bshes Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho to compile and edit a volume of selections from the popular Gesar episode, Hor-gling g.yul-'gyed in 1963. This 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. Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho was exonerated only in 1979, 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. Shar-dong Rinpoche (1920–2001), another great scholar exonerated in 1979, resumed his post at Qinghai Nationalities Institute in Xining. Charges regarding the political nature of publishing are more fairly levied with regard to the decade of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). From 1966 to 1980, not a single non-political Tibetan text was published by the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing with the exception of one Chinese-Tibetan dictionary in 1976. Virtually every

translated text during this period was grouped under one of the following headings:
"Writings of Mao Zedong and Older Generation Revolutionaries," "Important National and Party Documents," "Politics," or "Writings of Marx and Lenin." A few projects, however, serve to temper the conception of this period as a total freeze for Tibetology.

Most significantly, Chinese research on Tibetan folktales, folksongs and dialect studies were published in great number, though almost solely in Chinese. Many of these works were edited by research committees in Sichuan. Also, a certain number of medical and scientific texts were translated into Tibetan. The Tibetan translation of *Water Margin* (*Shui hu zhuan*), the most-published classical novel of the Mao years, was undertaken during the Cultural Revolution—granted, for the purpose of criticizing Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping in factional struggles during 1975. This classical tale of rebel heroes remains one of the most popularly read books among Tibetan readers in the TAR.

Finally, hand-copied volumes, the equivalent of Chinese *shouchaoben* as mentioned by Link (2000), were also popular among Tibetan students, at least in Amdo. Instead of containing entertainment fiction as they did for young Chinese readers, however, Tibetan hand-copied volumes were most often used to furtively circulate traditional Tibetan grammars or popular folksongs.

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236 Perry Link, *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 170. The original form of this novel was likely drafted around 1369, when the Mongol Yuan dynasty was succeeded by the Chinese Ming dynasty. Part factual, mostly legendary, the novel grew in size until its most complete version consisting of 120 chapters was published near the end of the ming dynasty. Cf. Cyril Birch, ed. *Anthology of Chinese Literature from Early Times to the Fourteenth Century* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965), 449.


238 Ibid., 193.

Newspapers

Another concerted launch of a Tibetan vernacularization project can be associated with the establishment of several newspapers during the early years of Communist rule. For example, the first issue of *Qinghai Tibetan News (Mtsho-sngon Bod-yig gsar-'gyur)* was ready for distribution on January 16, 1951.\textsuperscript{240} Upon returning from his first visit to Beijing, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho was requested by the *Qinghai Daily (Qinghai Ribao 青海日报)* to consider this project and promised funding.\textsuperscript{241} The main purpose of the Tibetan version was to further the reach of propaganda to the broader Tibetan population in Qinghai Province.\textsuperscript{242} Despite his poor working knowledge of written Chinese, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho had been assigned to be a translator for the secretariat of the military command committee. He worked closely with a younger Chinese colleague Chen Tongqing 沈桐青 who had previously studied Tibetan with Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho during the Nationalist period.\textsuperscript{243} Together, the two scrambled to secure an old Tibetan printing press from the former provincial headquarters of the Nationalist Party in Xining where it had been flown from Nanjing during the previous administration. Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho called on the services of a monk at Ldi-tsa Monastery who was skilled in woodblock printing to repair the press, which Chen Tongqing knew how to operate. Within a month, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho and his colleague had gathered the necessary equipment and people to launch the first issue of the paper, which remained under the

\textsuperscript{240} Hring Thung-ching, "Dge-bshes rin-po-che'i mdzad-rjes phran-tsogs 'ga' bkod-pa," in *Dge-ba'i bshes-gnyen chen-mo Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho*, edited by Mtsho-sngon zhing-chen srid-gros-kyi rig-gnas lo-rgyus-kyi dpyad-gzhi'i yig-chab'u yon-yon lhan-tsogs (Xining, n.p., [1997?]), 459; and Liu and Liu, *Sangre jiacuo zhuan*, 77. Information for this section was derived from *Sangre jiacuo zhuan* (77–81), unless otherwise noted.

\textsuperscript{241} Liu and Liu, *Sangre jiacuo zhuan*, 77.

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 78.

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 77.
auspices of the Qinghai Daily office and was a virtual translation of the Chinese original.\textsuperscript{244} The paper was published every ten days. While the content was largely concerned with party policy, agricultural production, husbandry, and other issues of local concern were also covered.\textsuperscript{245} Qinghai Tibetan News is said to have been one of the first newspaper published among any of the minorities of the PRC.\textsuperscript{246} Significantly, it was distributed not only in Qinghai, but also in Tibet, Gansu, Sichuan, and other Tibetan areas.\textsuperscript{247} Ultimately it served as a model for the founding of other Tibetan language newspapers, such as Tibet Daily.\textsuperscript{248}

Vernacular papers were not unheard of in Tibet during the pre-Communist period, as mentioned above. In addition to the Tibetan-language Me-long, aristocrats in Lhasa also had access to a great number of other papers from the Asian and South Asian region, in particular papers from Hong Kong and India.\textsuperscript{249} The arrival of the Peoples Liberation Army in Lhasa, however, spurred new publishing ventures. First issued on April 22, 1956—five years after its Qinghai counterpart—the Tibet Daily was arguably the "first veritable modern newspaper" in what is now the Tibet Autonomous Region.\textsuperscript{250} Two preceding Chinese newsletters started by independent divisions of the People's Liberation Army—The Xinhua Telegraph and Grassland News—and a bilingual Chinese-Tibetan "News Brief" were relatively small undertakings and not widely read.\textsuperscript{251} Though the immediate precursor to the Tibet Daily entitled Bsdus-gsal gsar-'gyur was not a

\textsuperscript{244} Hring Thung-ching, "Dge-bshes," 460. Also discussed in Mtshho-sngon-slob-gso, 1982, no. 5:2.
\textsuperscript{245} Hring Thung-ching, "Dge-bshes," 459.
\textsuperscript{246} Hring Thung-ching, "Dge-bshes," 459.
\textsuperscript{247} Liu and Liu, Sangre jiacuo zhuan, 81.
\textsuperscript{249} Wang-can, "Bod-ljongs nyin-re'i tshags-par," 565–566.
\textsuperscript{250} Shar-ba-thogs-med, "Bod-ljongs gsar-'gyur," 61.
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid. See also Wang-can, "Bod-ljongs nyin-re'i tshags-par," 550–551.
provincial-level paper, it lay some important groundwork. In 1955, the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region was given authority to found a provincial-level paper. The launching of Tibet Daily by the Committee involved resources on an unprecedentedly large scale. The initial staff included more than 150 Chinese and Tibetan employees who were offered training classes, and more than 6000 copies of the first issue were printed and distributed. While the Tibetan edition was largely a translation of the Chinese edition, the effort entailed an important forward stride in the vernacularization of the written Tibetan language.

One monastically trained scholar who served as a translator for the Tibet Daily was Dge-bshes Chos-grags, compiler of one of the earliest important dictionaries of the modern era, Brda-dag ming-tshig gsal-ba, which he completed in 1946. Stoddard (1985) notes that his dictionary was originally published in 1949 on xylographic blocks, but in western format, and comprised the "first unilingual modern Tibetan dictionary." Having previously gained some newspaper experience working on Me-long with Tharchin Bhabu in Kalimpong, Dge-bshes Chos-grags moved to Lhasa in 1951 where he was eventually employed by the Tibet Military Regional Editorial and Review

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253 Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 332. Of further interest for our study, Stoddard (1985: 219) notes that Dge-bshes Chos-grags was friends with Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and a certain poet "Rigdzin Wangpo" who went to the School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS) in London in 1948. Dge-bshes Chos-grags stayed in the house of Hor-khang. He finished compiling his dictionary, on which he worked for 12 years since 1936 or 1937. The dictionary was published by Hor-khang in 1949. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel helped him with some of the colloquial vocabulary. Stoddard (1985) asserts that the dictionary was certainly compiled by Dge-bshes Chos-grags, though people rumored that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was responsible for the entire work. Stoddard notes Dge-bshes Chos-grags' communist sympathies and mentions that at least a few employees in the Lhasa translation office were progressivists associated with Dge-'dun-chos-'phel: "Ce moine progressiste [Dge-bshes Chos-grags] connut Rahul Sankritayan et sympathisa avec les idées communistes. Plus tard, renonceant a ses vœux de célibat, il se maria et, après l'arrivée des Chinois à Lhasa, il rentra à l'office de traduction, auprès d'autres anciens amis et proches de Gedun Ch'omp'el." (p. 219)
Commission.\textsuperscript{254} Founded in early 1952 by Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang (discussed below), this Commission employed other important figures for the advancement of publishing in Tibet, including Lcang-can Bsod-nams-rgyal-po, De-bzhin Ka-shod Chos-rgyal-nyi-ma, Bsam-pho Tshe-dbang-rig-'dzin, Thub-bstan-legs-smon, De-mo Rinpoche, along with a few Tibetans who had accompanied the People's Liberation Army to Lhasa and Han Chinese and Hui Muslims who had lived in Lhasa since the Nationalist Period.\textsuperscript{255} The office's main responsibility was to publish the Tibetan version of News Brief (Bsdus-gsal gsar-'gyur) and translated materials, including some research articles,\textsuperscript{256} a local counterpart to the work being done in Beijing and in the capitals of provinces with large Tibetan populations. Translations were penned on wax paper and duplicated through cyclostyle (Tib. \textit{snum-par}) printing.\textsuperscript{257} Their Commission's task was considered "very difficult" during this early period, as there was no modern Chinese-Tibetan dictionary nor established terms for many political, economic, scientific or cultural terms. According to one source, the most active members were Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang, Lcang-can Bsod-nams-rgyal-po and Dge-bshes Chos-grags who "innovated based on their vast knowledge" and were responsible for devising the majority of new terms,
many of which are still used to this day. Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang reportedly often convinced the other translators after much debate to use the terms he himself coined.

Several staff members of the Tibet Military Regional Editorial and Review Commission, including Dge-bshes Chos-grags, later worked for the Tibet Daily. Though its masthead initially featured the handwriting of the fourteenth Dalai Lama, this was replaced after his escape in 1959 with the handwriting of one Rnam-rgyal-rdo-rje on whom could I find no information. Likewise, the four characters Xi zang ri bao (西 藏 日 报), originally drawn from Lu Xun's diary, were replaced with a masthead expressly scripted for the paper by Chairman Mao in 1965, the year that Tibet was officially incorporated as a "autonomous region" in the People's Republic of China. By 1961, the Tibet Daily was being published seven days a week. Starting in 1973, efforts were made to revamp the paper with an eye towards increasing the informative substance of the content and making it more widely understandable to semi-literate farmers and nomads, as well as petty urban officials. Several columns of special interest for local people were added.

The Tibet Daily 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). The Chinese version of the paper had earlier featured literary writing in its columns entitled "Mtho-sgang" (Plateau) and "Mtho-sgang brnyan-par" (Plateau Pictorial) and "Mtsho-sgang-gi

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258 Rig-gnas lo-rgyus, op. cit., 35–36.
259 Ibid., 36–37.
‘thab-’dzing-pa” (Plateau Fighter) etc. In all, the Tibetan paper eventually featured more than ten such columns. If a 1983 anthology of short stories and essays is any indication, however, the Tibetan paper was not publishing many creative pieces until 1980 and 1981.  

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. Moreover, 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, Nanjing, and elsewhere. Currently, the staff for the Tibetan department of the paper is 90% Tibetan. The office has utilized the writings of more than 2300 writers in Chinese and more than 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.

Following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1978, the number of newspapers in Lhasa increased to more than ten, including the Tibet Daily and the Lhasa Evening Newspaper (Lha-sa'i dgon-dro'i tshags-par) f. July 1985; the Bod-ljongs tshan-rtsal tshags-par (Tibet Technology Newspaper) f. 1979; and Tibet Youth Newspaper (Bod-ljongs gzhon-nu'i tshags-par) f. Jan. 14, 1985. Papers in other large towns of the TAR were launched later; for example, Gzhis-ka-rtse'i tshags-par, f. in 1987; Chab-mdo'i tshags-par, f. 1993; and Mnga'-ris tshags-par, f. in 1993; all three of

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260 Wang-can, "Bod-ljongs nyin-re'i tshags-par," 573–574.
263 Ibid., 66–67.
which are run by the local party committee. More than sixty newspapers and magazines are now published in the TAR, a region with an official population of less than 2,000,000.

Other media were also expanded during the three decades preceding 1980. The first Tibetan program on Qinghai Peoples Radio was initiated by Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho under the auspices of the Provincial Propaganda Bureau in 1951, while full-fledged Tibetan radio programming in Qinghai Province was launched in 1953. Shortwave radio transmission was available in Central Tibet through the Tibet People's Broadcast Radio office established in 1956, and in 1965 the Tibet Radio Affairs Bureau began longwave broadcasting. The Tibetan government itself broadcast to the world for the first time in Tibetan, Chinese and English on Radio Lhasa in January 1950. Preparation for the founding of a television station in the TAR began in October 1976. Subsequently, the first black and white broadcasts were started on May 1, 1978 and color broadcasts began in September 1979. Tibetan Television programming in Qinghai Province began in 1984, and the TAR Television station (Bod-ljongs brnyan-'phrin khang) was founded in August 1985.

**Education**

A final factor contributing to the emergence of a colloquial Tibetan literature in the 1980s was the increased secularization of the educational system during the preceding decades. This process had its origins with scattered educational initiatives undertaken in the 1930s.

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264 "Mdzad-'phrin," 5.
266 Shar-ba-thogs-med, op.cit., 68.
267 Shakya, Dragon in the Land of Snows, 12.
and 1940s, and most concertedly in the 1950s when secular educational opportunities available to young Tibetans both inside and outside the monastic system were greatly expanded. Perhaps most important was the founding of several Nationalities Institutes, including Northwest Nationalities Institute (Lanzhou, 1950), Central Nationalities Institute (Beijing, 1951), Southwest Nationalities Institute (Chengdu, 1951), Yunnan Institute for Nationalities (Kunming, 1951), Qinghai Nationalities Institute (Xining, 1956), and the Tibet State School (Xianyang, 1957). These totaled twelve by 1965.270 As discussed by Dreyer (1976), the basic organizational principles for these schools were modeled after the Nationalities Institute run by the CCP in Yenan from 1941 to 1947.271 The Yenan Institute offered only Chinese-medium instruction to its student population of 300, including a few Tibetans.272 Impetus for the establishment of nationality institutes in the 1950s was set forth in the decision to expand higher educational opportunities for the purpose of training minority cadres, a plan officially ratified at the First National Conference on Higher Education in June 1950.273 The conference resolved that the main task of education in minority nationality areas was the political training of cadres for government administration, in contrast to the emphasis on meeting technical needs as was the policy for Chinese student recruitment.274 On November 24, 1950, the government formally approved two directives entitled "Tentative Measures for Fostering Minority Nationality Cadres" and "Tentative Measures for Founding the Central Nationalities Institute [CNI]." The former officially granted permission to found CNI plus branch

269 Ibid.
270 A complete list is provided in Chhoyang, "Higher Education," 99.
271 Dreyer, China's Forty Million, 77.
272 Ibid., 75.
institutes in the northwest, southwest and central-south regions of the PRC and the latter outlined the details for the founding of the CNI. The effect of this decision was more quickly felt in Tibetan regions of Qinghai Province and other areas outside of central Tibet, which was not fully incorporated as an autonomous region of the P.R.C. until September 1965. For instance, the Tibet Nationality Institute was established only in 1964. Management of the minority institutes, compilation and translation work, and the training of minority nationalities cadres was all relegated in 1952 to the offices of the Nationality Affairs Commission, which fell directly under the United Front Work Department of the Party Central Committee. Though instruction at the institutes established during this time faced enormous setbacks or was even halted by the tragic excesses of the Cultural Revolution, these early institutions lay important groundwork for what would be resurrected and launched anew in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

As was the case for the translation and publishing projects discussed above, several monastically trained teachers and scholars were in the forefront of initiating progressive educational projects, even during the nationalist period and early communist era. Tibetan middle schools, let alone tertiary-level institutions, were reportedly nonexistent in Qinghai Province during the early 1940s. At least one initiative, however, in the province sought to reform the education available to monastic students and

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275 Dreyer, China's Forty Million, 113.
277 Dreyer, op. cit., 95–96.
278 The first modern school for Mongols and Tibetans in Qinghai was reportedly established in 1910. During the rule of the Muslim warlord Ma Bufang, free primary schools were established for the children of local Mongol and Tibetan elite in 1933. Chhoyang, "Higher Education," 29. See also Danzhu Angben 丹珠昂奔 (Don-grub-dbang-bum), Zangzu wenhua fazhan shi 藏族文化发展史 (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 1115. As of 1948, local officials estimated that the provincial school system consisted of thirteen middle schools and just over 1,000 primary schools. These included 14 Tibetan primary schools, totaling 900 students, in agricultural and semi-nomadic areas. According to Ye-shes-rdo-rje et al. (2000: 2:447), Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho served as a Tibetan teacher at the first Qinghai Tibetan-Mongolian Primary School circa 1939.
instruction was eventually extended to lay students: The Qinghai Tibetan Buddhist and
Chinese School, founded in what is now the township of Rdo-sbis (Xunhua County) by
Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho. Inspired by his travels abroad and in urban areas of China, and in
particular by a Tibetan Buddhist institution established by a Chinese teacher in
Chongqing, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho returned to his home area of Amdo in 1939
and soon afterward appealed to the Qinghai Province Educational Bureau for permission
to found a school.279 The bureau approved the proposal in 1941 and promised to help
fund the project with 3000 silver dollars every month. The Dge-bshes himself donated
1000 silver dollars. The school opened in 1942280 with three teachers281 and more than
ninety monk students, but was doubled in size in 1951 to include both lay and monastic
pupils.282 The initial fifty students ranging from 8 to 20 years old studied both written and
spoken Chinese, Tibetan, and a monastic curriculum. Students over 20 years of age (of
whom there were 40) studied spoken Chinese, grammar, spelling and poetry, as well as
some philosophy.283 The purpose of the classes were reportedly to improve education,
spread Tibetan culture, propagate the "Three Principles of the People" of the Nationalist
Party, and explain the government policy regarding opposing the Japanese and nation-
building. The Dge-bshes is said to have rationalized such a break from the traditional

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279 Although Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho had exposure to modern pedagogical methods and
curriculum at the universities where he taught in China, as well as institutions he visited while traveling
abroad, in a study devoted to this topic Gray Tuttle (2000), "The greater influence on him seems to have
been the Chinese Tibetan Buddhist "hybrid institutions" which combined modern methods and topics with
the Dge-lugs pa Tibetan Buddhism in which Shes rab rgya mtsho had been trained."
280 According to Gus-bang-phun-tshogs (1997?), the school was
opened on 11 November 1942. (p. 312)
281 The head Tibetan teacher was a student of Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho named Lha-rans-pa Skal-
bzang-rgya mtsho. Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho's treasurer, Dge-bshes Grags-pa,
taught the daily
lesson. The head Chinese teacher was Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho's secretary, Khrin Mu'u then (Chen
Mutian). Later Lha-mo-tshe-brtan (from Gro-tshang monastery, the older brother of Rdo-rje-tshe-brtan who
served as head of the Chinese Tibetology Center in Beijing) taught Chinese for more than a year. The
Chinese textbook was one that was used in China proper.
283 Ibid., 289–290.
monastic curriculum by stating, "If one is a monk, one can't just chant *mani*. You must still seek to become a person useful to the motherland and people."\textsuperscript{284}

Though the school lost its main source of funding in 1949 with the fall of the Guomindang, instruction continued with the monastery covering some expenses and donations from society covering the rest.\textsuperscript{285} Starting in 1951, lay male students were also admitted and enrollment rose to 200. In October 1954, the Provincial Peoples Government assigned two students who had graduated from Qinghai Teachers Training School\textsuperscript{286} to be Tibetan instructors for the lay students' class. Significantly, one of the graduates assigned was a woman with Tibetan language training, evidence that educational opportunities were indeed expanding. The government took over the school and standardized its curriculum in November 1964, renaming it Dgu-rus School.\textsuperscript{287} Though the school existed as originally conceived by Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho for only 10 years, more than 1000 students received their education in this unique environment and the reformed monastic school laid the foundation for the later school which exists to this day.

In 1951, a Minorities Educational Department was established in the Qinghai Provincial Educational Bureau; and twenty Mongol-Tibetan nomadic tent primary schools were established in the more sparsely populated areas of the province, such as Yul-shul (Yushu 玉树) Prefecture, Rkang-tsha County (Gangcha 刚察, Haibei Prefecture), Thun-te County (Tongde 同德, Hainan Prefecture), and Tu'u-lan (Dulan 都兰, Haixi Prefecture), which were inhabited almost solely by Tibetan and Mongolian

\textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 289. It is likely that this account is apocryphal and the term "motherland" (*mes-rgyal*) was not actually pronounced by Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho at this early date.
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 290.
\textsuperscript{286} Tib. Mi-rigs dge-rgan slob-grwa. This school is located in Chab-cha (Gonghe), Hainan Prefecture.
\textsuperscript{287} Skar-ma-mkha'-bum, op. cit., 292.
The very first of these was established in Dulan in 1952 with the assistance of Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho. To help meet the need for teachers at these schools, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho launched the first minority teacher training courses and was influential in furthering the establishment of the Qinghai Nationalities Institute. To help meet the need for textbooks, he translated selected ones from Chinese or wrote them himself. Several of Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho's Tibetan grammatical textbooks, originally printed by woodblock, were later published by Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House and used as standard textbooks for students region-wide.

In Central Tibet, the first school to be established by the Tibetan government independent of any particular monastery was founded during the reign of the seventh Dalai Lama (1708–57). This school was moved to the Potala Palace and renamed "Summit School" (Rtse Slob-grwa) during the reign of the eighth Dalai Lama (1758–1814). Initially, the school was expressly designed for training monks from the main monasteries of Lhasa to serve as officials in the Lhasa Ganden Phodrang government, a practice begun during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682). [By the twentieth century, the school was reportedly expanded to include lay aristocrat students as well, but shut down in 1952. A school similar in motivation to the original "Summit School" was also established in Shigatse (Gzhis-ka-rtse) by the Panchen Lama Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1781–1854). The Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute (Sman-rtsis-khang),

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290 Ye-shes-ral-rtse et al., Rnam-thar, 2:448.
291 Ibid., 449.
292 Chos-phel-ral-rtse, "De sngi'i Bod-kyi slob-grwa'i slob-gso'i skor che-long tsum gleng-ba," Bod-ljongs zhib-jug, 1985, no. 4:36–37. I am grateful to Lisa Keary for bringing this article to my attention.
founded in the early twentieth century, represented an important effort by the Tibetan government to improve the quality of its educational institutions. In the same vein, the thirteenth Dalai Lama issued an edict in the early years of his reign calling on local districts to better oversee the government schools established in their respective areas.

Formal educational opportunities for lay Tibetan students were also more widely available in Central Tibet than in Tibetan areas of Qinghai and Sichuan Province, mainly prompted by the need for a lay official bureaucracy in Lhasa and outlying areas. Foremost among these was the education provided by the "Summit School" mentioned above and the Revenue Office (Rtsis-khang), which provided schooling primarily for aristocrat children who would later likely assume an official post in the Ganden Podrang Government. This school was initiated along with other reforms in the central government during the middle eighteenth century for the purpose of training "child-accountants" (rtsis phrug-pa). Goldstein (1989) explains:

To enroll a son as a government official, an aristocratic family had to educate the son either in one of the private schools in Lhasa or at home with private tutors. Since good handwriting was a major requisite of government service, the basic education consisted mainly of learning to write the various Tibetan scripts properly.

After this, the family registered the son as a "student" in the Tsigang Office (Revenue Office) usually at about age fourteen. Such "students" underwent a loosely organized training program in which they studied subjects such as fractions and diu, the Tibetan method of making...

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294 Chos-phel-rdo-rje, op. cit., 37.
295 Ibid.
296 I have not discussed much about educational initiatives in Khams. Chos-phel-rdo-rje (1985: 40) mentions a few institutions including schools set up by missionaries in Chamdo in the 1740s, as well as a school established by the King of Sde-dge. I am personally aware that tutors were often brought into the home for the purpose of schooling aristocrat children in Khams, but time restrictions prevent me from following this line of research any further.
297 Chos-phel-rdo-rje, op. cit., 37.
After this training, Tsigang "students" could be nominated for appointment as full government officials.298 Aristocratic families were also likely to send their children to schools in Darjeeling, as early as the 1920s and 1930s. According to Hugh Richardson (1986): "The potential benefits of this kind of education were so obvious that the Tibetan government sanctioned the institution of an English school in Lhasa in 1944. But monastic conservatism was determined to thwart any such modernizing tendencies, and using the old arguments that such a school would endanger the religious views of the children, the abbots of 'Bras-spungs [monastery] engineered its speedy closure."299 The some fifty students at this school ranged in age from 5-1/2 to 17 years old and were the children of aristocrats or high and middle-level business people.300 An English language school established in Gyantse (Rgyal-rtse) in 1923 was also short-lived, closing down after only one year.301 All of the government initiatives were to serve as "a foundation for training personnel to serve in the religio-political system."302

In addition to such initiatives by the Tibetan government, Chinese nationalist representatives founded a primary school in Lhasa in 1938.303 During its initial years, however, the total student population of 50–60 was comprised primarily of Hui Muslim students (the children of Hui government officials and businessmen) and the bilingual curriculum was initially limited to Chinese and Arabic. In 1939, the school moved to the

300 Goldstein, op. cit., 422; and Chos-'phel-rdo-rje, op. cit., 38.
301 Goldstein, op. cit., 421.
302 Chos-'phel-rdo-rje, op. cit., 39.
consular office of the Nationalist representative office in Lhasa in 1939 and most of the Chinese teachers were staff from the consular office. Eventually, the curriculum was expanded to include Chinese, math, history, geography, music, art, writing and physical education, Arabic and Tibetan. Tibetan students remained few, but included the Dalai Lama's older brother, Rgyal-lo-don-grub. In 1940, a few graduates of the Nationalist Tibetan-Mongolian school in Nanjing were appointed as heads of the Lhasa school, and the level of the teaching staff was improved. Accordingly, the number of students increased to 160–170 and later 300, including more Tibetan students. Nevertheless, on the eve of the Communist rule, no Tibetan had yet graduated from that school.304

In addition, private educational opportunities were available to Tibetans as early as the 1700s when Mi-dbang Pho-lha-gnas established a school for printing. Surkhang (unpublished) notes that there were ten schools in Lhasa in the late 1940s, including her own primary school of "Narong shar" (Nag-rong shar?) which had 200 students from 6–7 years old.305 Chos-'phel-rdo-rje (1985) mentions the existence of more than twenty private schools with various emphases in Lhasa, Shigatse, and Lhoka.306 He underscores, however, that all of the educational initiatives in Central Tibet discussed herewith—whether government or private, monastic or secular—were located in small towns across the plateau. Schools in rural and especially nomad areas were virtually non-existent.307

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304 Ibid., 175.
306 Chos-'phel-rdo-rje, op. cit., 40.
307 Ibid., 41.
In 1952, two years after People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops first entered Tibet, the Chinese government established its first primary school in Lhasa\textsuperscript{308} with the assistance of the above-mentioned Rdo-rje-tshe-brtan.\textsuperscript{309} Several other distinguished scholars served as either teachers or administrators. The primary school was part of the Cadre School of the Tibet Military District which itself had 500 students and was established during the same year, primarily for training PLA cadres in Tibetan language.\textsuperscript{310} Rdo-rje-rgyal-po was among the ten Tibetan-nationality teachers on staff until he left in 1954 to work with the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing.\textsuperscript{311} In 1956, the primary school was placed under direct management of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region.\textsuperscript{312} Primary schools were also established in towns such as Shigatse, Chab-mdo, and Gyantse.\textsuperscript{313} It is reported that by 1957, 98 primary schools had been established across the TAR.\textsuperscript{314} The first official middle school in Lhasa was opened on September 21, 1956.\textsuperscript{315} With a staff of 70, the school provided education for nearly 700 students, ranging in age from 12 to more than 40. A high school class was added in 1960 and 1963 the first batch of graduates was sent for college education in Beijing.\textsuperscript{316} Local community schools intended to supplement state schools were implemented by a new directive issued by the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1959. Though these were said to be "flourishing" by 1961,
teachers and funding were provided by the community, and such projects were abandoned in mid-1960s when a new order came to instead improve the quality of the state-run primary schools. For five years during the Cultural Revolution all schools were closed from 1966 to 1971.

Most schools across the PRC were reopened in 1971, including the Central Nationalities Institute which reopened in January 1972 with a class of 700. According to Dreyer (1976), "translation work occupied an important place in the curriculum." The Tibetan Nationalities Institute in Xianyang, Shaanxi also reopened in 1972. As testimony to the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, a large majority of the students at the school were reportedly illiterate in both Tibetan and Chinese. A similar situation prevailed at the Yunnan Nationalities Institute when it reopened a few months later. Tibetan language programs restarted only in 1977–79. Despite nearly thirty years of recruiting minority students, by 1979, the minority presence in institutions of higher education throughout the PRC dropped to 3.6% of the total student body in 1979, the lowest point in 30 years. In absolute numbers, however, the number of lay Tibetan students had begun to rise. It was among these earliest graduates from the late 1970s and early 1980s that we can find our first modern Tibetan writers.

The effect of such shifts in educational policy had an impact on the language capabilities of young Tibetans who were first offered a secular Tibetan education and subsequently saw these opportunities restricted. A periodization of Tibetan-medium education during the first few decades after the establishment of the PRC has been offered by Rta-go and Ban-kho (1982) who characterize the period from 1949 to 1957 as

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318 Dreyer, China's Forty Million, 243.
being favorable in terms of greatly expanded educational opportunities such as the tent schools and other initiatives mentioned above. The institution of democratic reforms in eastern Tibetan areas and the decision to shift from locally-run to state-run schools led to a seven year period (1958-1965) in which "several aspects of nationality education suffered grave losses." These setbacks were rampant under the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) with the closing of schools and various political campaigns. As argued by these authors, Tibetan-medium instruction began to improve and expand again from 1976 to 1981, but "was still very backward (rjes-lus) when compared to... other nationalities." A similar periodization could be roughly applied to the shifting climate for Tibetan-language publication. That is, we could distinguish between the advances made in 1949-58, evidenced in the strides made in Tibetan publishing—dictionaries, poetry, newspapers, classical texts published in modern format, etc.—and the decrease of most of these materials between 1958-1966. The year 1958 has also been cited as a literary divide, marking the decline of traditional snyan-ngag:

From 1387 to 1958, the spread and advancement of Tibetan poetry based on snyan-ngag me-long [kāvyā] theory reached a certain level of quality. However, from then on the rate of development gradually slowed; in particular, it was greatly setback during the "the great ten-year calamity," such that there was no development of which to speak. The firm and steady foundation of poetry neared the point of extinction. By all accounts, the earlier enthusiasm and earnest endeavors of talented scholars in launching various translation, publishing and educational projects slowed in the late

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319 Ibid.
322 Ibid.
323 Ibid.
1950s. Tibetan researchers in the PRC most frequently blame the "ten-year calamity," but the Cultural Revolution only began in the mid-1960s. What might account for the early slowing of Tibetan language publications in 1958?

Certainly, the excesses brought about by the Anti-Rightist Campaign launched in August 1957 and the Great Leap Forward launched in April 1958 took a serious toll on the support accorded to the cultural enterprises of the early 1950s. Likewise, "democratic reforms" were launched in Tibetan areas east of the Yangtze River from 1956 to 1958 and in Tibet from July 1959. The point has been made by Dawa Norbu (1997) in reference to a report written by the Tenth Panchen Lama in 1962 in which he protests the anti-Buddhist and other campaigns promulgated in the preceding few years: "The Panchen Lama's passionate account in this text demonstrates that much cultural destruction took place before the Cultural Revolution (1966–69)." [My emphasis.] As early as 1956, the CCP's staunch ally, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho, had also protested insensitive PLA practices that were infringing on Tibetan religious beliefs. In short, what Dreyer (1976) refers to as a "gradualist policy toward China's minorities" came to an end certainly by 1959 and even earlier in the eastern regions of the Tibetan plateau. As a result, Tibetan resistance to a tightening of Chinese rule in the area intensified at this time, and many middle-aged men—in particular, indigenous local leaders and certain scholars—were rounded up and imprisoned in the eastern areas of Amdo and Kham.

325 Jiangbian Jiacuo, Ganzhao shenghuo, 490.
327 Dawa Norbu, Introduction to A Poisoned Arrow, op. cit., xxviii.
328 Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho, "Pay Attention to Minorities Special Characteristics," speech at the third session of the First National Party Congress (June 27, 1956) in Current Background, no. 409, p. 18; cited in Dreyer, China's Forty Million, 301.
329 Dreyer, op. cit., 95.
Whereas the Common Program passed by the Chinese People's Political Consultative
Conference (CPPCC) on September 29, 1949 guaranteed freedom to minorities to
develop their languages and particular dialects, as well as preserve and reform their
customs and religious beliefs, this principle was dropped in practice during the Great
Leap Forward. Dreyer (1976) suggests a possible rationale underlining this abrupt
departure:

> While cooperation with this upper stratum had been desirable until a group
> with more acceptable class backgrounds could be trained, the new elite
> was now, it was felt, ready to take over. The traditional elite was thought
to have fulfilled its historical mission and, indeed, to be hindering further
progress.330

While it is debatable whether a "new elite" had truly been established in Tibet by this
early date, the shift in policy is unquestionable. With a policy aimed at "unity through
uniformity," linguistic diversity was perceived as a barrier. Thus, shortly after the
announced beginnings of the Great Leap a 'new high tide of enthusiasm for learning Han'
was found to exist.331 The slowing of literary publications and other apolitical Tibetan
translation projects after 1958 came to a near standstill during the Cultural Revolution.
As mentioned above, there is a dearth of original Tibetan published materials from 1966
to 1976.332 In this context, the translation of Mao's *Red Book* and *Selected Works* took on
special significance, as recounted by 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho:

> [During the Cultural Revolution] one frequently heard comments such as
"No Tibetan books!" or "Tibetan [language] is backward!" or "The time
for Tibetan language has come to an end." People even claimed that
Tibetan language was a tool for the return of the slave system and a tool
for the separatists. Many people felt proud that they didn't speak or write
Tibetan. Written Tibetan faced the danger of extinction. Under such

330 Ibid., 159.
332 One exception that marked an early rekindling was the founding in Lhasa of a modern printing house,
which began to release a few traditional works, including almanacs and catalogues of medicinal herbs.
Also, the circulation of the *Tibet Daily* had reportedly reached 25,000 in 1974. Dreyer, op. cit., 244–245.
circumstances, the publication of so many copies of Mao's works truly helped Tibetan language. People could criticize Tibetan, they could say that Tibetan language mustn't be used, they could even stop Tibetan language. But, they couldn't stop the translation of Mao's *Red Treasure Book*, nor oppose the spread of Mao Zedong thought. Due to these historical conditions, the Tibetan translation of Mao's works certainly helped to maintain and spread the Tibetan language. At one level, certainly, a lot of people at that time used Mao's works as a textbook for learning Tibetan.\(^{333}\)

With the arrest of the Gang of Four and encouraging policy statements issued at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978, a slow revival in Tibetan publishing began between 1976–1980. As we will discuss in chapter 4, a genuine flourishing of modern Tibetan literature started only with the establishment of literary journals in 1980 and in the wake of the trans-regional Tibetan literary conference held in August 1981. First, however, let us take a look at examples of the limited amount of creative Tibetan writing available to us from the mid-twentieth century, for these too served to some degree as models for writers of the following generation.

\(^{333}\) Jianbian Jiacuo, *Ganzie shenghuo*, 399.
Chapter 3

Heterodox Views and the New Orthodox Poems:

Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and Writers in the Early Communist Period

In the previous chapter we offered illustrations of vernacularizing projects which were largely motivated by socially-oriented aims, such as expanding opportunities for secular education and developing new lexicons for a rapidly changing society and civil administration. In this chapter we will consider first the background and thought of the Amdo-born Dge-'dun-chos-'phel (1903–1951), a Tibetan "avant-garde" who was a contemporary of the scholars discussed in the previous chapter but whose approach was more historical and literary-centered. This "itinerant monk" and scholar repeatedly argued for the vernacularization of Tibetan literature well before such a transformation was ever effected on a broad scale in Tibetan literary works. Moreover, he put his literary ideas into practice, which may explain why the popularity and impact of his writings was more sustained than the literature of other scholars from his era. The life and work of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel offer evidence for intellectual undercurrents in Lhasa during the late 1940s and early 1950s, as well as literary influences derived from sources other than the encroaching Communist ideology; namely, from his travels in India, as well as uncommon indigenous influences. Through the course of our discussion, we will examine a few of his literary works. These will serve as contrast to what might be called the "new orthodox" poems which were written by scholars such as those discussed in the previous chapter and which we will review in the second half of this chapter.
Dge-'dun-chos-'phel (1903–1951)

With nearly twenty extant biographical books or articles on Dge-'dun-chos-'phel,\textsuperscript{334} I will not repeat a list of these here but rather highlight aspects of his life and writing which are immediately pertinent for our study. What can we find in these sources and in Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's own writings regarding his views on literary form, content, and value, as well as the writing process?

Reviews by contemporary western scholars have tended to emphasize the "modern" cast in the writing of this "progressive and open-minded scholar" and the foreign exposure he gained through his travels. Toni Huber (2000), for example, has suggested that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's Guide to India (1939)\textsuperscript{335} contains compositional as well as elements of "actual physical production" which constitute the work as one of the very first examples of modern native Tibetan literature. Some of the features which define it as "modern" are: Its synthetic and critical approach to providing an up to date Buddhist historical geography of Indian sites; its functional guide for visiting them using modern means of transportation; and its inclusion of some of the first examples of modern Tibetan cartography which Gendun Chöphel himself drew.\textsuperscript{336}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Extensive lists of biographical material on Dge-'dun-chos-'phel are provided in Toni Huber, The Guide to India: A Tibetan Account by Amdo Gendun Chöphel (Dharamsala: LTWA, 2000), 133–152, and Irmgard Mengele, dGe- 'dun-chos- 'phel: A Biography of the 20th-Century Tibetan Scholar (Dharamsala: LTWA, 1999), 14–16, 115–127. One recent work unmentioned in most bibliographies is a Chinese translation of selected works, including the White Annals. See Gesang qupi 赴桑曲批[Tib. Skal-bzang-chos-'phel], Gengdun qunpei wenji jingyao 螨锻群培文集精要 (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1996). Similarly, two other recent biographies should be added to the corpus of secondary materials: Du Yongbin 杜永彬, 20 shiji xizang giseng: renwenzhuyi xianqu gengdun qunpei dashi pingzhuo 20世纪西藏奇僧：人文主义先驱更敦群培大师评传 (Beijing: China's Tibetology Publishing House, 2000); and Hor-gtsang 'Jigs-med, Drang-bden-gyis bslus-pa'i slong-mo-ba: Mdo-smad-pa Dge-'dun-chos-'phel-gyi mi-tshe dpyad-brjod (Dharamsala: Youtse Publication, 1999). Finally, several more articles on Dge-dun-chos-'phel have been published in Tibetan journals in the PRC than are acknowledged by Mengele. See notes 1009 and 1010 in chapter 8.

\item The full title of this work is A Guidebook for Travel to the Holy Places of India (Rgya-dkar-gi gnas-chen khag-la 'grod-pa'i lam-yig). Huber (2000: 13) details the revisions and publishing of this text from its original conception in 1934/5 and publication in 1939 to its final revised version (1945/6) and publication in 1950. The Guide is also included in the three volumes of collected works published by the TAR Tibetan Antiquarian Books Publishing House (Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dpe-mnying dpe-skrun-khang) in 1990, which was then revised and edited by T.G. Dhongthog for Dzongsar Institute in Bir, India in 1991.

\item Huber, Guide to India, 19. See also p. 34, n. 38.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
As Huber (1997) illustrates, the "new modern, rational set of universal criteria for making authentic identifications of Indian Buddhist sites" promoted by the scholar-monk were "borrowed almost entirely... from the writings of colonial archaeologists and orientalists," that is, from the writings of members of the Maha Bodhi Society, a Theravāda Buddhist missionary organization in India which undertook research, temple and monastery building, and the publication of journals and books, including the said Lam-yig in 1939. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel also had access to the narratives of other expeditions while cataloguing texts in Patna for the Bihar and Orissa Research Society.

Mengele (1999) has referred to Dge-'dun-chos-'phel as "the first 'modern' scholar of Tibet" for similar reasons: "He was the first who not only completed a traditional Tibetan education, but who also was courageous enough to leave the monastic society, travel abroad, learn several new languages and deepen his knowledge by collaborating with scholars of different nationalities."

From a literary perspective, however, the seeds of this progressive monk's "modern" or vernacular writing style may have been planted before the age of 19 when he went to Bla-brang Monastery. Evaluations of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's literary skill by Tibetan critics tend to emphasize the indigenous quality of his poetry and local sources of inspiration. For instance, the now-exiled Tibetan literary scholar Pema Bhum (1999) has

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338 Ibid., 302.
339 Ibid., 310, n. 36.
340 Mengele, op. cit., 1.
argued that the writer's lucid writing style, as compared to classical Tibetan kāvya with its heavy use of ornamental poetic figures (rgyan) and synonyms (mngon-brjod), was cause for his popularity in the 1980s:

The prime reason why many readers find the poetry composed by Gedun Chophel pleasing is because it is somehow in harmony with the spoken language... In school we learn to use "jewel of the sky" (nam kha'i nor bu) for the sun and "lord of the stars" (rgyu skar bdag po) for the moon, and practice substituting one name for the other... In contrast, for poetic compositions that value images and feelings, the use of words and names that are able to draw the experiences of the body and mind into the imagination is very important. However, under the influence of the "Mirror of Poetry" [Snyan-ngag me-long] it became difficult to incorporate Tibet's own spoken language. Now, the New Poetry has changed that. Although the [wording] (tshig 'gros) and [synonyms] (mngon brjod) of the "Mirror of Poetry" continue to be used, along with these the spoken language is much more in evidence.  

In his 1987 master's thesis, Sha-bo-tshe-ring suggests that the vernacular quality of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's subject matter and work might be due to the "unusual instruction" he received at the age of 15 while at the monastery Dhi-tsha Bkra-shis-chos-Iling.  

Having already studied the basic texts on kāvya poetry and demonstrated brilliance in rendering examples (dper-brjod) of even the most challenging poetic forms from the third chapter of Snyan-ngag me-long, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was encouraged to write poetry by...
Mkhan-chen Dge-'dun-rgya-mtsho (n.d.) who himself was an accomplished poet and who instructed Dge-'dun-chos-'phel in the five minor sciences during the latter's stay at Dhi-tsha. According to biographer Rak-ra Rinpoche, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel himself acknowledged the importance of this early instruction for his own literary thought:

My teacher Mkhan-chen had a teaching method for poetry that differed from others. That is, during summer vacations or when we would take walks, etc., [he would say,] "Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, look! Those elephants in the sky are tired from carrying water. They can only move slowly on the road of the gods." He wouldn't say the real names, such as 'water,' or 'tree,' or 'flower,' or 'mountain.' Rather, when he spoke he referred to the action of each object, such as "slowly going" or "water-born leg drinking" or "earth-holder." At first, it just made me laugh and feel a bit uncomfortable. But, later, when I thought about it, Mkhan-chen's method is an absolute necessity for teaching snyan-ngag.

Mkhan-chen Dge-'dun-rgya-mtsho was also unique in not exacting too many illustrations from his student. Rather, he encouraged them to write only when they truly felt moved by the pleasing scenery, etc. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel concluded from these experiences that the best snyan-ngag was that which "put into writing just what one would say with no extra words."

Eventually, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel applied this close observation and fresh outlook to the ironies in religious and social life, a potent tool when combined with his acerbic sense of humor. Shortly after his arrival in Lhasa in 1927, for example, Dge-'dun-chos-
'phel wrote the following poem entitled "Acrostic Sent to Bla-brang." This poem is written in an acrostic form such that each line begins with succeeding letters of the alphabet (i.e. ka, kha, ga, nga...). Though a model for this form cannot be found in Snyan-ngag me-long, it has nevertheless served as a popular convention or form of word play among Tibetan literati for centuries. What is uncommon about Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's poem is his writing style which is void of the flowery mngon-brjod (synonyms) that still typified most kāvya poetry during his time. Moreover, a strong local flavor and sense of humor is evoked by the use of several terms unique to the Amdo dialect, such as a-khu (monk), "na-ning do-tshig" (last year, this year), ba-lang (cow)."

Ka ye! After I went elsewhere,
a few monks who will say anything
claimed, "The Pe-har Oracle wouldn't let
that one stay because of his great arrogance."

If there is a fastidious dharma-protector,
then why does he let stay all those good for nothings
who roam around, selling tea,
chang, livestock, sheep, etc.

They hoist up their robes [to the height of] palmyra leaves.

They carry mean knives and wooden batons.

Now, they are the ones you should expel.

They have grown increasingly numerous in the last few years.

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349 This poem has been published in Dge-'dun-chos-'phel-gyi gsung-'bum, ed. by Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-bar, 3 vols. (Lhasa: Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dpe-mying dpe-skrun-khang, 1994[1990]), 389-390. I hereafter refer to this compilation as Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, Collected Works. The given title of the poem, "Bla-brang-la skur-ba'i ka-rtsom," was most likely applied by the editor Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-bar. Rdo-rje-rgyal (1997:22) mentions an alternative and more probable title for this poem: "Gnas-chung zhu-phrin" (Letter to the Oracle).
Some say, "He was expelled to another place, because he hasn't the [pure white] faith of Pa-sangs."

Then why aren't the lowest of sentient beings expelled—such as the cows, mdzo-mo, birds, little birds, bugs?

There's no reason for the four[?] vs. four fanged oracle-king to banish in his ignorance those who would endure heat, cold, drowsiness and fatigue, to study the teachings of the Buddha.

Though to us it seems there is a big difference between Degenerate monks in good hats, clothing, shoes, etc.

and degenerate monks who eat poor food, in the eyes of the [dharma] kings above, there is no difference.

Rather than banishing hither this arrogant one who knows the Rwa dialectics (bskus-grwa) and the Bse dialectics, how much better it would be to banish those arrogant ones who sell meat, chang, and smokes!

Ha! Ha! Isn't it true? Just think about it!

Closely question the geshes.

The one who has spoken here as well is the Name-Abbot,350 the Lion of Logic, Samgha dharma [Dge-'dun-chos-'phel]!

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The occasion which led Dge-'dun-chos-'phel to write this poem was to correct rumors about his alleged "expulsion" from Bla-brang Bkra'-shis-khyil monastery where he had proved to be a clever dialectician during his period of study there from 1922/23 to 1926/27. As relayed by Stoddard (1985), Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and his companion Yig-rgya'i-jam-dbyangs (alias Tshog-lang) scandalized the monastic assembly who had gathered for the "great exam" in the seventh month of 1926 by opposing the standard curriculum (yig-cha) of 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, the head lama of the monastery. Shortly after the exam, the two monks left Bla-brang "encircled by a halo of notoriety." It is said that he wrote this poem while en route to Lhasa.

Considering that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel remained in contact with 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa and several fellow students at Bla-brang for the remainder of his life, he likely intended this poem as a hard-hitting but playful joust at the assembly he had left behind, not a scathing critique per se. The sarcasm Dge-'dun-chos-'phel expresses for wayward monks might seem a precursor of the criticism Don-grub-rgyal expressed nearly six decades later for charlatan lamas in his short story, Tulku (Sprul-sku)™ Kapstein (2002), however, distinguishes the object of criticism of Don-grub-rgyal as "the hierarchical institution or even of its specific abuses." By contrast, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's poem here would fall into the category of "literature of moral exhortation" which

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351 Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 145.
352 Rdo-rje-rgyal, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, 23.
353 A major contribution to our scholarship on Dge-'dun-chos-'phel is provided by one of the most recent biographers, Rdo-rje-rgyal (1997), who is a teacher of Tibetan at the Huangnan Prefecture Teachers Training School. His biography, which is briefly introduced by Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-bar, includes many personal letters and poems which were sent in personnel correspondence by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel while he was in India to friends and family in Amdo. At the same time, it is difficult to ascertain the validity of these poems. While conducting fieldwork, I myself was shown one poem that was allegedly by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and had been submitted to an editor to see if he concurred with the identification of the author. The editor (and now myself after reading through many of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's poems) was dubious that the poem was actually penned by the subject of our study. The controversy surrounding this story is briefly discussed in chapter 5 below.
as Kapstein notes has greater precedence.\textsuperscript{356} In any case, in both content and writing style, this poem is just one example of the vernacular tendencies Dge-'dun-chos-'phel demonstrated early in his career. Likewise, another playful verse in typical nine-syllable metric verse in which he includes the word bkra'-shis in each and every line while maintaining the logical sense of the poem is void of any ornamental synonyms and reads easily.\textsuperscript{357} At the same time, these poems are not radical in form; rather, they typify the practice of aristocrat and religious writers who enjoyed the art of word play within the conventions of classical snyan-ngag.

Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's travels in India began in 1934 when he was 32 years old at the invitation of his friend, benefactor and research colleague, Rahul Sankrityayan (1893–1963)\textsuperscript{358} with whom he also studied Sanskrit. After nearly two years of pilgrimage in which he compiled and wrote material for his Guide to India, he arrived in the northeastern hill-station of Kalimpong. This bustling trade town was home to several aristocratic Tibetan families and supported an intellectual exchange less fettered than in Lhasa where conservative religious elements still held strong. Kalimpong would become his home base or retreat for the whole of his travels in India over the next decade.\textsuperscript{359} With the publishing opportunity offered by the now widely circulating newspaper Me-long founded ten years previously in Kalimpong by the progressive Christian convert Tharchin Bhabu,\textsuperscript{360} Dge-'dun-chos-'phel became a regular contributor and even briefly worked for the newspaper. Between 1936–38, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel published in this

\textsuperscript{356} Kapstein (2002:102) offers evidence (citing Dor-zhi) of another poem by "the celebrated modern rebel" Dge-'dun-chos-'phel who quips, "Who's got it better than the infernal assembly of hired ritualists (a mchod)"? The poem being cited is "A-mchod kyi lo-rgyus ka-rtsom." See Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, Collected Works, 2:390. Tib. Nga rang a-mchod-tsho las skyid pha zhig su yod/
\textsuperscript{357} See Rdo-rje-rgyal, op. cit., 31.
\textsuperscript{358} For a biographical summary, see Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 157–160.
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{360} See page 60 above.
venue his first critical essays in which he contested certain ideas received in the Tibetan tradition. Me-long also featured several of his poems. His writings during this period evince a conscious departure from the embellished language of classical kāvya, such as can be seen in his poem posthumously entitled "A Vernacular Acrostic." And yet, only later would he experiment with literary forms other than those prescribed by classical Tibetan kāvya or conventional word games. In 1938, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel briefly returned to Tibet with Rahul Sankrityayan for a second historical research trip to various sites in the southern region. When he returned to India he stayed for another seven years. Though he continued to send poems back to Tibet in personal correspondence with friends, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was less prolific during this second stay in terms of publishing artistic belles-lettres. Rather, he increasingly devoted his time to translation projects and historical writings.

Stoddard (1985) describes how Dge-'dun-chos-'phel avidly studied both Sanskrit and English during his travels in India and applied these skills to several ambitious translation projects. These endeavors comprised potential avenues for literary influence, from which we can discern three trends as suggested in various biographies and his original writing. First was his unprecedented exposure to Kālidāsa whose Sakuntalā he had access through his intensive study of Sanskrit. It is said that he felt a responsibility to translate this text into Tibetan because his newly acquired skills enabled

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361 Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 161.
362 A French translation of the poem is available in Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 176–77. It was poem was published in Me-long in 1936. Ibid., 329.
363 Another potential influence which I do not discuss here is suggested by van der Kuijp (1985): "Dge-'dun-chos-'phel appears to have been considerably influenced by S.K. De's theories." Review of Snyan-ngag spī-don, 213.
this possibility and "nobody else could render it well." According to Stoddard (1985), Dge-'dun-chos-'phel had already begun this project by 1936 though the translation proceeded shakily due to strained relations with his teacher. Two of his students offer independent testimony to their teachers teaching and commentary on the Šakuntalā while tutoring them in poetry after his return to Lhasa in 1945. Their teacher maintained the superiority of Kālidāsa's writing on the basis of its vernacular qualities. In the biography written by one of the students in 1973, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was recalled as saying:

The author of the Šakuntalā, the non-buddhist Kālidāsa, was more expert than Daṇḍin. ... Therefore, [I] greatly hope you two will accomplish a little with this poetry in the future. Literary works should not be tied up too much with synonyms. The meaning should be succinct as well as clear and easy to understand. It is said that 'The best composition is understood from the first reading.' When calling [something] a literary work, [it] should resemble the Sukhāvatī prayer by Chags-lo [Chags-med].

366 Ibid., 183.
367 Ibid., 185. Here she is citing the biographies of A-pho Bla-chung and Rak-ra Rinpoche. During her fieldwork, Stoddard was told that much later in Lhasa, Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-'bar had prepared some xylographic blocks in order to print the work (p. 185).
368 Rdo-rje-rgyal, op. cit., 101; and Sha-bo-tshe-ring, op. cit., 69. Cf. Mengele (1999: 8) and Huber (2000: 4) who state he returned to Lhasa in 1946. I have recorded 1945 here simply because Mengele herself cites Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-'bar who states that he and Dge-'dun-chos-'phel "met for the first time in 1945." Mengele, op. cit., 15. The issue should be resolved, but is not critical for the purposes of my thesis.
369 A critical edition of this biography by Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho (aka Go-'jo A-pho Bla-chung, 1905–1975) has been translated and researched by Mengele, op. cit.
370 Mengele, op. cit., 36. Tib. bya-len-ma 'di [rtsom] mkhan phy-rol-ba nag-po'i khol zhes pa dbyug-pa-can las mkhas-pa zhig yin 'dug 'gyur 'di don 'gyur kho-na byas nas bsgyur yod... [rtsom]-pa-nams mngon-brjod-kyis mang-po bceg mi nyan/ don 'dus la kha-gsal go-bde-ba zhig 'dgos/ rtsom rab lan gcig-gis go zer ba yin mod/ rtsom zer dus chags-lo'i bde-smon 'dra zhig 'dgos ang gsungs nas brda'-spod-kyi btags-ming re yang sras hyung/

The identification of this prayer remains a puzzle. I am not fully convinced by Mengele's assumption that "The author of this prayer is Karma-chags-pa-med-pa or Karma-chags-med (Rāgāśya) (~1645–1668) and not Chag Lo-tsa-ba Chos-rje dpal (1197–1264)." (p. 144, n. 274) Cf. the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center database which gives 1613–1678 as the dates for Karma Chags-med who wrote together with Sprul-skru Mi-skyyod-rdo-rje the Bde-chen zhing-sgrub or the Bde-chen zhing-ge smon-lam. This well-known melodious prayer for being reborn in the Sukhāvatī paradise of Amitābha is most probably based on Chinese Amitābha practice. I am grateful to Gene Smith for this information. Despite the widespread popularity of the bde-smon composed by Chags-med, it seems we must still reserve the possibility that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel really did consider the writings of Chag Lo-tsa-ba as a literary model. In the first place, the travel account cited most frequently by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel when writing his own lam-yig is the travel account of Chag Lo-tsa-ba Chos-rje dpal (1197–1264) who visited India in 1234–36. Huber, "Colonial Archaeology," 309. Secondly, the reference to Chags-lo'i bde-smon can be found in other texts
According to Tsering Tashi (1979):

Amdo Gedun Chophel, the literary innovator and rebel, preferred Kalidas to Dandin. In his own compositions he did not follow the traditional rules of Dandi [sic] followed by most of his contemporaries. He regretted when his translation of Kalidas's Shakuntala failed to make any impact on the Tibetan literary field. Many a time, he tutored his unwilling students in the style of Kalidas advising them that it would prove useful later.371

While Tibetan commentaries on snyan-ngag were by no means uniform, all debate ultimately remained in the "family" of views descended from the translation of Daṇḍin's Kāvyādarśa—the only Indian treatise on rhetoric translated into Tibetan. To the best of my knowledge, Kālīdāsa's Śakuntalā is the first major literary work Dge-'dun-chos-phel read which represented a profoundly different view of poetry.372 Other literary works which he translated from Sanskrit while in India included the Rāmāyaṇa and the Dhammapada in their entirety, as well as excerpts from the Veda and the Bhagavad Gītā.

He was also familiar with the Kāmā śāstra, upon which he relied in writing his own expanded 'Dod-pa'i bstan-bcos ("Treatise on Desire").373

A second literary influence to which Dge-'dun-chos-phel gained access while in India was English literature and translations of other foreign literature into English. He even wrote a few poems and essays in English which were published by the Maha Bodhi Society from 1939 to 1941.374 There are signs as well that having studied English he

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371 Tsering Tashi, "Tibetan Poetry Down the Ages," Lotus Fields, no. 2 (spring 1979): 49. I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy of this journal.

372 At the same time, we should recall that another work by Kalidasa, the Meghadūta (Tib. Sprin-gyi pho-nya) had been available in Tibetan since the thirteenth century. See Kapstein, "The Indian Literary Identity in Tibet," 22.

373 Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 184. Publishing details for these works are provided in Mengele, op. cit.

gained access to the literature of other foreign writers, such as Pushkin. Overall, however, we can not find evidence for any direct borrowing. On the contrary, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was self-deprecatory about his ability to appreciate English literature. Arguing that one must understand the spoken language to appreciate the flavor of a nationality's poem, he admitted that he himself did not have a taste for English poetry, though he himself even tried to write a few poems in English:

I tried to experience the flavor of poetry written in English, but the understanding such as they experience it never came. Moreover, even when someone else explained it, I never truly got their way of thinking. I thought maybe it would make a difference if I were to try writing in English. But, when I finished writing, the result was strange. Thus, it seems to me that if you have not been accustomed [to using] your own language since childhood, [writing in that language] will be impossible. Thus, [the issue is] whether or not one is familiar with one's own spoken language.

By the time he returned to Lhasa, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel had firm opinions about the need to vernacularize the literary language. He recommended to his students:

If you want to understand the deep meaning of the Indian teaching [Kâyâyadārśa], you must closely study the second and third chapters, especially the second chapter. These days most people consider teaching snyan-ngag a tool for writing. But how can that be? Also, there are many who think that snyan-ngag is the method of writing metric verse only. But, that's also a mistake. True writing ability depends not only on one's own propensities and writing style, but also on one's knowledge of Tibetan grammar, instruction in such texts as Nāgārjuna's [2nd c.] Surhrilekha, and memorizing all of the alamkāra; [if one has these] and if one has also been instructed in the three chapters of the Me-long, some lines of verse will undoubtedly come, regardless of how little experience or skill one

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375 This observation is made in a literary history by Central Nationalities Institute which determined that the "old fisherman" to whom Dge-'dun-chos-'phel refers in one poem is inspired by Pushkin's children's tale, "The Tale of the Old Fisherman and the Goldfish." See Sha-bo-tshe-ring, op. cit., 81.
377 Tib. Bshes-springs slob-springs. Also known in Tibetan as Bshes-po'i sprin-yig, this widely read text refers to Nāgārjuna's discussion of ethical behavior written as a letter of friendly advice to a king.
has. However, one will not [necessarily] be able to produce the affective state (nyams-gyur) or flavor such as is required for snyan-ngag. Specifically speaking, in order to write rich literature (rtsom) or poetry (snyan-ngag), if one isn't deeply familiar with the spoken language of ones own region, it will be difficult to combine meaning and sound in a sonorous and profound way.  

When Dge-'dun-chos-‘phel prescribed vernacular or easily intelligible language, however, he was not prescribing a "socialist realist" mode such as that hailed by Mao in 1942. Though he has been sometimes called an "iconoclast," Dge-'dun-chos-‘phel's literary platform by no means rejected the whole of Kāavya theory. Rather, Dge-'dun-chos-‘phel's concept of the vernacular was rooted in his "selected tradition" from Tibetan literary predecessors. In particular, Dge-'dun-chos-‘phel favored the relatively late commentary by 'Ju Mi-pham-gtse-mthun (1846–1912).  

He reportedly told Rak-ra Rinpoche, "Among the Tibetan commentaries on snyan-ngag, the commentary of 'Ju Mi-pham is the clearest, the most concise and the most complete." He was especially impressed with the translation of passages from the Mahābhārata which Mi-pham quoted. Dge-'dun-chos-‘phel surmised that the translation might have been edited by Situ Pan-chen Chos-

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379 The commentary referred to here is entitled "Snyan-ngag me-long-gi 'grel-pa dbyangs-can dgyes-pa'i rol-mtsho," entry no. 3333 in Lokesh Chandra, Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature, vol. 1 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1963). It is noteworthy that today as well several younger Tibetan literary critics also favor Mi-pham's commentary. See, for example, Dpal-lha-mo, "Deng-ribs snyan-ngag-gi rtsom-tshul la rags-tsam dbyad-pa," Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal, 1990, no. 4:21–34.


381 Considering that by the Indian kāvyā tradition, the Mahābhārata is not technically considered "snyan-ngag" (Warder 1989, 1:x), Mi-pham's use of this epic in the late nineteenth century deserves further study.
kyi-'byung-gnas (1699/1700–1774). In 1951 Bla-chung A-pho was asked by his teacher who was nearing his final hours to read a poem by Tsong-kha-pa and a poem by Mi-pham.

The third literary influence represents a return to indigenous influences, not to the classical forms of kāvya, but to the pre-kāvya writings of mgur found in Dunhuang and the practice of mgur among later writers, including Milarepa (1040–1123) and two scholars famous for their mgur who were popular in his native birthplace of Reb-gong: Shar Skal-lidan-rgya-mtsho (1607–1677) and Zhabs-dkar-ba (1781–1851). While Dge-dun-chos-phel surely had exposure to these classical writings while studying in Amdo, only his trip to India would make the Old Tibetan texts from Dunhuang available to him. We know that by 1935 Dge-dun-chos-phel had seen the old Tibetan texts from Dunhuang, though he did not write his White Annals until the late 1940s after his return to Lhasa. We do not have access to Dge-dun-chos-phel's complete ouevre, however, evidence from poems published thus far suggest that the formal influence of mgur in Dge-dun-chos-phel's writing can be found most prominently in the poems from the latest period of his career; that is, in the heart-breaking poems he wrote while imprisoned in Lhasa (1946–1949). In one poem that he wrote for his friend and publisher Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-bar (1898–1972), he even imitates a few old

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382 Mkras-mthong, op. cit., 166.
385 Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 183.
386 Fortunately, a set of heretofore unpublished works by Dge-dun-chos-phel are expected to be published in the near future by Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamsala.
387 See poems from the section Snyan-ngag thor-bu in Dge-dun-chos-phel, Collected Works.
grammatical conventions (brda-rnying) from Dunhuang manuscripts, such as using \(\text{myi}\) for \(\text{śrī}\) in \(\text{śrīnēśvara}\). \(388\)

Dge-'dun-chos-'phel also had close relations with at least a few of the more traditional but socially engaged scholars discussed earlier in this chapter. For instance, A-khu Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho (1896–1982) completed the bulk of his studies at Dhi-tsha Bkra-shis-chos-lding whence he arrived circa 1905. \(389\) This is the same monastery where Dge-'dun-chos-'phel studied snyan-ngag and other subjects for four years from the age of 15 to 19, that is from 1918 to 1922. Though the biographical information I have for Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, who was seven years senior to Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, does not mention many details concerning his early life, we can presume that their paths must have crossed since the senior scholar remained at Dhi-tsha from 1905 until receiving his dge-bshes degree in 1938. \(390\) We also know that when Dge-'dun-chos-'phel first arrived at Dhi-tsha, he was temporarily "lent the porch of the house of Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho," \(391\) though no source actually mentions their meeting. Moreover, it is rumored that Dge-

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388 See "Mi-rtag-pa dran-pa'i gsung-mgur." Though this poem is entitled as a "mgur," the use of the honorific "gsung" implies that it is likely Hor-khang himself who named the poem. The title is a bit misleading in that the actual form of the poem (eleven syllables) is that of snyan-ngag, and not mgur for which each line typically contains six syllables.

389 Liu and Liu, Sangre Jiacuo zhuan, 11. Cf. Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba (1992: 1807–8) who state he became a novice at the age of 9. This accords with Ye-shes-rdo-rje et. al. (2000: 446) who state that Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho when about 9 years old (circa 1905) entered the school (chos-grwa) of Dhi-tsha Monastery which was founded by Zhwa-dmar pandita Dge-'dun-bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho (1852–1912) [in 1903], Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho's primary teacher was 'Phrin-las-rgya-mtsho who was a student of Zhwa-dmar Rinpoche. The latter gained extra notoriety when the 13th Dalai Lama consulted him during his stay at Sku-bum and asked him to serve as his personal instructor in snyan-ngag. Zhwa-dmar Rinpoche had three especially accomplished students: 'Phrin-las-rgya-mtsho, Sgis-steng Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan, and Grags-pa-dar-rgyas. Liu and Liu, op. cit., 12. I am grateful to Pema Bhum for scanning this section of the Chinese biography for me.

390 Liu and Liu, op. cit., 11, 24, 29. The following year (1939) Dge-bshes Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho went to Xining to serve as a Tibetan secretary for the Chinese government under Ma Bufang, as well as a teacher to the warlord's son. Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1808).

'dun-chos-'phel stayed with Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho in Xining while en route to Bla-brang in 1923 and explained his decision saying, "Dhi-tsha is too small a river for a big fish.

Later, upon Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's arrival at 'Bras-spungs (Drepung) Monastery in Lhasa in 1927, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho (1884–1968) served as the primary mentor (slob-dpon) to Dge-'dun-chos-'phel who was in his college (khams-tshan). Rumors of the contentious relationship these two shared have grown to mythic proportions.392 Dge-bshes Chos-grags (the Mongolian scholar who compiled the first Tibetan dictionary of the twentieth century) was another close acquaintance of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel. After his move to Lhasa, Dge-bshes Chos-grags eventually became the head resident lama of the Hor-khang household. Through their mutual friend, Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-'bar, the Mongolian scholar and the younger Amdo monk had frequent contact.393 It is even alleged that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel assisted Dge-bshes Chos-grags with the entries in his dictionary which were peculiar to spoken Amdo dialect.

The fact that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel is hardly mentioned in the writings of these Dge-lugs-pa hierarchs may be testimony to his ambiguous standing among students of this school. Aside from the connection that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel had with the Rnying-ma school through his father, the principle factor which irked his detractors was Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's (in)famous position regarding Nagarjuna's philosophy of Madhyamaka.394 As

392 See, for example, Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 277.
393 The relationship between these two scholars is described in Rdo-rje-rgyal, op. cit., 133–136.
394 For a study of this text and its significance, see Don Lopez, "dGe 'dun chos 'phel's Klu sgrub dgongs rgyan: a preliminary study," in Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Fagermes 1992, vol. 1, edited by Per Kvaerne, 491–500 (Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994). Through my own research, I have found that the long line of philosophical refutations to Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's Klu-sgrub dgongs-rgyan can be traced as far back as 1955, when the now famous exiled scholar and chief kalan, Zam-gdong Rinpoche, wrote a refutation at the age of 18. See Stoddard, op. cit, 275. Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho also wrote a refutation, which was published in his gsung-bum in 1984. See Mengele, op. cit., 121. The debate continues until this day, as most persistently argued by Chu-skyes Dge-'dun-bsam-gtan (teacher in the Tibetan Department at Northwest Nationalities Institute) who has been publishing refutations to Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's text since at least 1990. See "Lta-ba ngag-pa'i mun-pa sel-bar byed pa shes rab nyt ma'i smang
Heather Stoddard has described it, however, strict adherents to the Dge-lugs-pa school were particularly provoked by his position:

"Parmi les traditionalistes, on distingue deux groupes: les disciples religieux, qui le considèrent surtout comme un maître illuminé, non soumis aux considérations politiques et mondaines, et les gelugpa orthodoxes, qui réfutent sa position philosophique et se sentent offensés par sa critique de la tradition." 395

She considers the bulk of his disciples and friends to be among a third category, "les progressistes." 396

By all accounts, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was ahead of his time. Yet, this is not to deny his cohort of friends and other progressive thinkers working towards the "improvement" or modernization of Tibetan society in the 1930s–1950s. Stoddard (1985) vividly portrays the wider intellectual currents of which Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's own critical writings are but one brilliant example. Other poets or accomplished writers mentioned in Stoddard's study include the nephew of Tharchin Bhabhu, Rig-'dzin-dbang-po (n.d.) who in 1948 was the first Tibetan researcher to be invited to the School of Oriental and African Studies in London where he worked for two years. 397 Lcang-lo-can Gung (1889–1972), a contemporary of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and fellow member of the

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Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l’Amdo, 290.
Ibid., 219.
"West Tibet Improvement Party," was renowned as an aristocrat poet. Finally, the two students and faithful biographers of Dge-'dun-chos-phel, Bla-chung A-pho (1902–1975) and Rak-ra Rinpoche (Bkras-mthong Thub-bstan-chos-dar Rinpoche, b. 1925) became skilled men of letters in their own right. Another member of Dge-'dun-chos-phel's immediate group of friends was the innovative painter Amdo Byams-pa (d. 2002) who introduced realism to the art of Tibetan painting.399

In retrospect, however vernacular the poems of Dge-'dun-chos-phel may be in terms of language and content, he never strayed far from the formal conventions of kāvya, that is from traditional Tibetan metrics and the practice of word games such as acrostics. Kapstein (forthcoming) has acknowledged the tendency toward philological purity which rendered Dge-'dun-chos-phel's position as moderately radical for his time:

It is only in the posthumous writings of the controversial culture-hero Gendün Chöphel that we find the beginnings of a modern critique of the Tibetan kāvya tradition, but one inspired by his encounter with Indological scholarship in India during the 1930s and 40s, that seeks a return to the direct study of poetry in Sanskrit.400

Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, Dge-'dun-chos-phel never broke with the metric form in his Tibetan-medium poetry. He did, however, experiment with many different styles of metric verse. Based on what is available in published materials, this tendency seems to be more pronounced in his writings during and after his many years in India. It was at this time that he seemed more prone to use the forms of mgur and glu, as an

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398 Tib. Nub Bod legs-bcos skyid-sdag. Chin. Xizang Geming Dang 西藏革命党. Note that the latter translates as the "Tibet Revolutionary Party." For more information on this important political initiative which was closely associated with the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) and founded in 1946, see Stoddard (1985), Goldstein (1989), and the recent work of McGranahan (2002) who brings new material to light drawing from the diary of the founder Spom-mdza' Rab-dga' (c. 1900 -1976). According to McGranahan, Spom-mdza' Rab-dga' himself took up the topic of the need for vernacular literature in the introduction to a grammar book which he wrote in the [late 1940s?]. Carol McGranahan, "Empire, Archive, Diary: A Tibetan Nationalist in India and China, 1946–1950," paper presented at Columbia University, 17 October 2002.
alternative to Tibetan kāvyā. Though less common as literary forms during his time, there is ample precedent for the writing of mgur and glu as a literary genre, especially among lama scholars from his home region of Amdo. It is a sad fact that Dge-'dun-chos-\'phel's untimely death in 1951 occurred just on the eve of the launching of new Tibetan newspapers and modern-format publishing projects. Though we can only conjecture whether his works would have been published, his literary output surely did not enjoy the access to print media and wide distribution accorded to other scholars writing only a few years later. At this earlier date, the influence of Dge-'dun-chos-\'phel was more muted than in the 1980s when his works were finally published for the broad readership, a topic to which we will return in chapter 8.

Literary Developments in the early Communist era (1949–1976)

In contrast to the vibrant intellectualism suggested by the discussions, activity and self-study of Dge-dun-chos-\'phel and his cohort of political radicals, publishers and artists, the state of literary works published in Tibetan during the first few decades of Communist rule could be bluntly characterized as "uninspired." When the First Minority Literature Conference was held in Beijing in 1956, only one Tibetan attended and he was not a writer.401 During the 25 years that followed, not a single Tibetan-medium novel or novella was published and short stories were rare.402 The few literary works written during this period were primarily poems of praise for the Communist party, its leaders,

399 For more information about this painter (aka Jampa Tseten) and the significance of his work see Clare Harris, In the Image of Tibet: Tibetan Painting after 1959 (London: Reaktion Books, 1999).
400 Kapstein, "The Indian Literary Identity in Tibet," 23.
401 Jiangbian Jiacuo, Cianzhe shenghuo, 490.
and its policy. In the following section, we will survey examples of poetry written during the first few decades following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Though the majority of literary works published at this time were by a handful of Tibetan poets writing in Chinese (See table 3.1), my study focuses on poetry written in Tibetan.

Table 3.1 Published Tibetan Writers from 1949 to 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Primary Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gsung-rab-rgya-mltsho (1896–1982)</td>
<td>Qinghai</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shes-rab-rgya-mltsho (1884–1968)</td>
<td>Qinghai</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang (1880/81–1957)</td>
<td>Rigaze (Tibet)</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rgan Bstan-pa-rgya-mltsho (n/a)</td>
<td>Qinghai</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chab-sel Tse-btanthun-thogs (b. 1922)</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rta-mgrin-mgon-po (1934–97)</td>
<td>Gansu</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danzhen Gongbu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi-dam-tshe-ring (1933–)</td>
<td>Qinghai</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yidan Cairang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skal-bzang-rdo-rje (1936–)</td>
<td>Qinghai</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesang Duojie, 格桑多杰</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rab-rgyas-pa-sangs (1935–)</td>
<td>Yunnan</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raojie Baseng, 嘎阶巴桑</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngag-dbang-tsbe-btanth</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngag-dbang-skal-bzang (c. 1920)</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angwang Gesang, osgcn gshang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgon-po-bkra'-shis (1938–)</td>
<td>Gansu</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongbu Zhuxi, 公布扎西</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor-rje pa-sangs (b. 1935)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngag-dbang-bstbn-'dzin (b. 1929)</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Jiangbian Jiacuo [JG] (2000); Dhondup (forthcoming), Geng (1984), Danzhu Angben [DW] (2001); Maconi (2002); and my own research.
Research on Chinese-language poetry by Tibetans during this same period is being undertaken by T. Yangdon Dhondup in her forthcoming dissertation. Though I have not yet had access to her dissertation, I will make references to a forthcoming article by the same scholar in which she includes an interesting survey and discussion of the earliest "pioneers," i.e. the first generation of Tibetan poets to write in Chinese. All of the five major poets whom Dhondup highlights were born between 1933–1948 in Tibetan regions incorporated in Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan provinces. Among them, Rta-mgrin-mgon-po is noteworthy for publishing in 1955 the first poem written in Chinese by a Tibetan. Dhondup concludes that "Tibetan poets [writing in Chinese] in the early 1950s and 1960s were producing works that showed their loyalty to the Party and Mao." Their poems were largely written in a "simple and straightforward style... the product of historical rather than individual circumstances." Only the work of poet Yi-dam-tshe-ring showed a richer sense of ambiguity, tension, "personal sentiment," and a certain "frankness." Not surprisingly, his popularity and influence has had a more lasting impact than any other Tibetan poet writing in Chinese.

In another study of writing from this period, Don-grub-dbang-bum (2001) focuses on three of the same poets discussed by T. Yangdon Dhondup; namely, Rab-rgyas Pa-sangs, Rta-mgrin Mgon-po, and Yi-dam-tshe-ring, all of whom wrote in

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406 Dhondup, "Roar of the Snow Lion."
407 For a thoughtful review of his life and work within the context of a "post-colonial" reading, see Lara Maconi, "Lion of the Snowy Mountains."
In his estimation, Tibetan literary production from 1949 to 1965 was foremost comprised of poetry and secondly of the collection and editing of folk literature (minjian wenxue 民间文学). Don-grub-dbang-bum identifies two "regrettable lacunae" (quehan 缺憾) during this period; i.e. the near absence of Tibetan novels, plays, essays, and so forth; and, secondly, the lack of literature written in Tibetan. He includes in his study only one poet-scholar from this period who wrote in Tibetan; i.e. Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang.

In the view of Don-grub-dbang-bum, the poetry of Tsha-sprul "absolutely didn't resemble the work of a reincarnate lama." Nor was the later life of this lama conventional. Recognized at the age of five as the reincarnation of Dga'-ldan khrig-pa Blo-bzang-dge-legs, he was enthroned and tutored at Sera (Smad) Monastery. After earning his dge-bshes degree at the age of 21, he searched Lhasa and elsewhere for well-known scholars with whom to study and became especially renown for his expertise in grammar and poetry. Many lay people studied grammar and poetry with him. Early in his career, he served as private secretary to the thirteenth Dalai Lama whom he accompanied to various sites in China including Beijing for an audience with the Qing

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408 Danzhu Angben, Zangzu wenhua fazhan shi, 1120. These three writers are also mentioned by Geng Yufang 吾于芳 (1984: 116), who also includes a Skal-bzang-rdo-rgyud 格桑多杰 and Ngag-dbang-the-brtan 阿旺丹珍. While Skal-bzang-rdo-rgyud is included among Dhondup's five, Ngag-dbang-the-brtan is not. Nor is he in Danzhu Angben's list. Apropos to this discussion, Dhondup mentions in a footnote about the existence of a "Ngag-dbang-skal-bzang" whose work she was unable to locate. Biographical information on him can be found in Takla (1969: 9, 17). He also seems to have been a member of the translation teams in the 1950s, see table 2.1 above.

409 Danzhu Angben, op. cit., 1120. One exception to this was Skal-bzang-me-tog (Gesang meduo), a novel about the arrival of the PLA into Tibet which Jiangbian Jiacuo began writing in Chinese in 1960. See Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho, Afterword to Skal-bzang-me-tog (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1982), 545. The Chinese version was published in 1980.

410 The year and place of birth here are drawn from Rig-gnas lo-rgyud, "Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang," 33-42. Another biographical sketches can be found in Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1373-1374. This contains information not found in Rig-gnas lo-rgyud, ed. See also Danzhu Angben, op. cit.; and Chab-gag Rta-mgrin, "Krung-go gsr-ar pa dbu-bryes-pa'i dus'go'i Bod-kyi rtsom-pa-po grags-cen ga' dang khong-tsho'i brtseams-chos brjod-pa," Krung-go'i Bod-kyi-shes-rig, 1999, no. 3:11-46.

411 "全然不像一个活佛所作." Danzhu Angben, op. cit., 1126.
emperor. In 1911, at the order of the Dalai Lama, he went to Japan and stayed for about one year teaching at Otani Shihong Kanji monastery. Starting in 1921, he worked for many years on the above-mentioned Kanjur editing project with Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho. In 1934, he served as a teacher at a Tibetan school in Lhasa. After the arrival of the PLA in Lhasa in 1951, Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang at the age of 72 drafted teaching materials for and taught Tibetan at the Cadre School of the Tibet Military District, and served as vice-director of the school. In 1952, he established the Tibetan Military Regional Office Literary Research Association, as discussed above. It was at this time that he wrote his well-known Tsha-sprul sum-rtag (Tsha-sprul Grammar). When the newspaper Tibet News Brief (Bod-ljongs bsdu-gsal gsar-'gyur), the precursor to Tibet Daily, was established in 1953, monks from each of the three large monasteries in Lhasa protested. Nevertheless, Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang "at personal risk" regularly delivered the paper to the three monasteries and propagated party policy and patriotic thought to the monks. In 1956, at the age of 77, he served as Tibetan teacher for an intensive study news class for the Tibet Daily to train Tibetan reporters. As there was no school, the teacher held class outside in the shade of willow trees. He is said to have been "very dedicated and didn't miss a day of work in seven

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412 Cf. Chab-‘gag Rta-mgrin (1999: 24), who states that Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang was 25 years old at the time.
413 Ibid., 24.
415 Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1373.
416 Ibid.
417 Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1373–1374.
418 Chin. 西藏军区干校; Tib. Bod dmyag khol khang las-byled slob-grwa.
419 Rig-gnas lo-rgyus, op. cit., 34–35.
420 For other grammatical texts by Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang, see n. 445.
421 The Chinese version of this paper was first published on 1 October 1952; and the Tibetan version was first published on 1 January 1953. Wang-can, "Bod-ljongs nyin-re'i tshags-par," 557.
422 Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1373; and Rig-gnas lo-rgyus, op. cit., 39.
423 Rig-gnas lo-rgyus, op. cit., 39–40.
years," leading to his recognition as a "model worker" by the Tibet Affairs Commission. In 1957, he was appointed assistant chief editor for the Tibet Daily (Bod-ljongs gsar-'gyur; 西藏日报), but fell sick in September of that year and was hospitalized. Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang died on December 1, 1957.

Certain poems of Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang have been hailed more recently by more than one Tibetan literary scholar as representing "an innovation in Tibetan literary history" and as examples of "new poetry" (snyan-ishig gsar-rtsom). "Turquoise Belt, Golden Bridge," for example, was written in 1955 in honor of the completion of the two highways joining Qinghai Province and Sichuan Province with the Tibet Autonomous Region respectively. An excerpt follows:

Many high mountains like pillars for the sky

and churning waters

extend for thousands of li.

Mighty rivers in the [valley] depths cut off

any direct route between [here] and

the motherland, Khams, and Qinghai.

The mountains are high and the steep slopes vast.

Though you might like to cross, as if flying,

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424 Ibid., 39.
427 Rig-gnas lo-rgyus, op. cit., 42.
428 Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 29.
429 Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1374.
430 The Xikang-Tibet highway was completed in 1955, and the Qinghai-Tibet Highway finished only a few months later. See Dreyer, China's Forty Million, 132.
the dangerous [slopes] each steeper than the last,
and the sharp mountain peaks, even if you
had hawk wings, they would tremble. [....]

One of the main reasons this poem and others have been considered ground-breaking is
due to its "new content and and clear meaning." Indeed, there are few precedents in
Tibetan literary history of poetry focusing on modern-day political or otherwise secular
concerns. His expressions of wonder at the fruits of scientific progress in the poem
"Silver Hue of the Iron Dove," originally published on April 12, 1956 in *Tibet Daily,*
represent a shift in literary subject matter to contemporary images—in this case, the
landing of an airplane:

The weather fine, the sun bright,
a pleasant sound is heard from the northeast horizon.
When visible overhead,
We see it is the arrival of a beautiful plane.
It is dove-hued and winged.
With beautiful cabins and brightly painted stars,435
It hovers and circles over this city.
I think a gentle eye looks on from afar.

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432 Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 29.
433 One exception is Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-nyi-ma (1732–1802), who wrote accessible
poems on uncommon topics, such as the Qing taxation system. His eulogy for the Summer Park (Yiheuan)
in Peking is in traditional seven-syllable verse, but atypical for its contemporary and secular subject matter.
This poem was featured in one of the earliest issues of *Sbrang-char,* i.e. 1981, no. 2, in a column entitled
"Sngon-byon mkhas-pa'i rtom-btus" (Writings of Early Scholars). Also, a collection of his poems was
published in modern-style book format in the 1980s, though I have not seen this book. The twentieth-
century scholar Sgis-steng Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan also wrote verse on contemporary subject matter, as will be
discussed in chapter 8 of this dissertation.
434 Tib. "Lcags-kyi phug-ron dngul-skya mdog." The poem as reproduced here is based on the version in
The literary form of these two poems follows the conventions of classical Tibetan poetry, in that the "mapping of stress" (a term borrowed from Beyer) is identical in each line; i.e. each metrical line consists of four feet where the first syllable of each foot is stressed. Moreover, the author relies on synalepha—the "single most common meter in classical Tibetan"—in which the last foot contains a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables. Using Beyer's notation, the nine-syllable metrical line employed here would be mapped as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\
\end{array}
\]

This poem is void of the metaphors which are characteristic of much classical Tibetan poetry. Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang further evokes a certain "colloquial" quality in his poetry by avoiding the "elliptical" (’khyog-brjod) forms of kāvya ornamentation. His diction is straightforward and the poem is void of metaphors. Chab-'gag-rta-mgrin (1999) observes that the lama-teacher-poet-editor favored instead the more direct kāvya "ornament of natural expression" (rang-bzhin brjod-pa'i rgyan). In summary, due to the loose nature of its definition, the term itself is open to varying interpretations. It seems to me that because of its parallels with the literary qualities prescribed by socialist realism, this term could be used to bridge traditional and modern approaches to writing. As may be the case here, one can quite easily attribute the quality of "natural expression" to poetry that has a more colloquial quality. Whether the author consciously intended to employ this ornament or not is debatable. In any case, Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin (1999) considers the printing and distribution of Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang's poetry in the print

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435 This refers to the stars on the flag painted on the side of the plane.
436 See Beyer, Classical Tibetan Language, 408.
437 Ibid., 410.
media at this critical point in Tibetan history had "no small influence on the development of [Tibetan] literature" and was important in fostering a new literary style which made content a priority, was easily understood and conveyed emotion.\textsuperscript{438} Finally, he sees this poetry as representing a break towards realism and away from traditional poetry which took inspiration from India. Ultimately, Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin considers Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang as an avant-garde "politico and writer ahead of his time."\textsuperscript{439}

One of the reasons the poetry of Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang might have been more influential than the poetry of others was precisely because he was so intimately involved in Tibetan publishing and media projects. Many of his poems were published in the \textit{Tibet Daily}, on whose editorial staff he served. While it is difficult to ascertain the effect Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang had on the reading public of his time, clearly his poetry helped set a tone for the political praise poetry that predominated during the following two decades of Tibetan literary production. His poem "The Great Unity of the Patriotic Youth" (爱国青年大会团结)\textsuperscript{440} evinces the political flavor of a trend that would only deepen in both Tibetan and Chinese poetry during the 1960s and 70s. His themes include the need for unity, protecting the motherland, resisting imperialism and building a socialist China. For example, the following poem entitled "In Praise of the Commemoration of the Founding of the CCP" was published in the \textit{Tibet Daily} on July 12, 1956.\textsuperscript{441}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Gung-khran-tang-gi 'khrungs-skar dus-chen-la bsngags-pa bijod-pa.} In the vast and happy gardens,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{438} Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 29.
\textsuperscript{440} This poem was probably written in the early 1950s when the poet-scholar became a member of the Tibet Regional Patriotic Youth League. Rig-gnas lo-rgyus, op. cit., 37.
Under the cool shade of the hoisted white canopy of sky
The fine clothing of the monks and lay people flap.
Men and women alike wear customary adornments
Everyone sings with brotherly love
happy songs and melodious refrains.
The pure and nourishing tea and food are delicious.
Their hearts are moved by the Communist Party's way.
The Communist Party and its policy are good.
Under the guidance of the great Chairman Mao, the
Autonomous Preparatory Committee was established.
The right path to the good and happy life has been
found.
We are completely freed from private ownership.
In the boat of high-level policy
We have firmly shifted course towards a good new path
May the great society also reach its summit.

Other political praise poems by Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang included "In Praise of
Premier Zhou Enlai", "Song of Praise offered for Chairman Mao, leader of the peoples of
all nationalities," and "In Commemoration of the Founding of the PLA."\textsuperscript{442}

In summary, this lama's work was both directly and indirectly influential in terms
of the colloquial Tibetan literature and modern poetry that later flourished in the 1980s.
In the first place, his professional endeavors in education, the media and translation work

\textsuperscript{442} Tib. "Tsung Li Kr'u-en-len-la bstod-pa," "Rigs so-so'i mi-dmangs-kyi gtso-'dzin Ma'o kru'u-zhir
bstod-glu 'bul," "Dmags-'dzugs dus-chen-la phul-ba." Cited in Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1374; and
Chab-'gag Ria-mgrin, op. cit., 25.
helped in a general sense to further the trend towards a secularized education and towards
the vernacularization of written Tibetan. Secondly, his poems were among the first
Tibetan literary works ever propagated through the mass media. Moreover, they were
also among the first poems to be published in the opening issues of Tibetan literary
journals founded in the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{443} Editors seeking to fill their pages with at least
some original Tibetan literary works\textsuperscript{444} turned to the writings of early "brokers" of
tradition such as Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang, whose poems—although classical in
form—might be interpreted as following the socialist realist line dictated by party
policy. Not least, the texts he wrote for teaching purposes helped continue the
transmission of classical grammar and rhetorical theory to a new generation of students,
including those who would carry on this transmission to the young writers of the
1980s.\textsuperscript{445} Most renowned among his students was Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las
(1927–1997),\textsuperscript{446} who later became the teacher of Don-grub-rgyal (1953–1985) whose
importance for modern Tibetan literature needs little introduction and whose writings will
be prominent in the following chapters of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{443} For example, two poems by Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang originally published in 1956 in \textit{Tibet Daily} are published in \textit{Bod-kyi-rtsom-rig sgyu rtsal}, 1984, no. 1:12–14. One of these is "Silver-Hue of the Iron Dove," discussed above.

\textsuperscript{444} Many of the earliest published literary works in \textit{Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu rtsal} were actually translations from Chinese and other languages.

\textsuperscript{445} Other texts by Tsha-sprul Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang include \textit{Sum-cu-pa'i snying-po legs-bsad ljon-pa'i dbang-po'i grel-ba} (Aphorisms regarding grammar: first commentary for youth); \textit{i rtsa-ba'i grel-ba} (Commentary on the root text of \textit{sum-cu-pa}); \textit{Sum-cu-pa'i rtsa'-grel-gyi dper-brjod} (Illustrations of \textit{sum-cu-pa} and commentary); \textit{Syan-ngag me-long-gi le'u dang-po dang le'u gnyis-pa'i grel-ba dang dper-brjod} (Illustrations related to the first and second chapters of the \textit{Khyadarsa}).

\textsuperscript{446} Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba, op. cit., 1374. Other well-known students of his include Zur-khang Dbang-chen-dge-legs, Hor-khang Bsdod-nams-dpal-bar, Byang-ngos-pa Rdo-rje-dngos-grub. Dung-dkar Bblo-bzang-'phrin-las (1982), however, does not mention Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang among his teachers credited on pages 19 and 560. Nor does Dung-dkar Rinpoche include any examples of Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang's poetry in his textbook, as far as I can discern. Dung-dkar Rinpoche obtained his \textit{dge-bshes} degree from Sera Monastery in 1957. He then worked at the Central Nationalities Institute as a lecturer in Tibetan literature and history. In 1985 he moved to Lhasa where he served as a professor of Tibetan History at Tibet University. Tibet Information Network, "Tibet's Leading Scholar Dies," \textit{Tibetan Review} (September 1997): 13–16.
Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin (1999) also looks at three other writers of this period who were writing in Tibetan but not considered by Don-grub-dbang-'bum: Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, and Rgan Bstan-pa-rgya-mtsho. The activity of Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho and Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho in non-literary affairs has already been detailed above. Let us look briefly at their poetry:

The literary writing of Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho spans several genres, but primarily consists of 1) poems of praise for party policy and Mao Zedong and 2) advice (bslab-byab) in metric verse which seeks to inform people about the content of Communist policy or to expound on its virtues. Several of his poems are characterized by repetition of a key phrase; for example, the repetition of "This is the basic school [of thought] of the Communist Party" in "Drum of Spontaneous Advice (Bslab-byab rang-byung lha'i rnga-bo)".

With compassion, unable to bear the sight of the country's people facing tens of thousands of sufferings, it has taken up the weapons of fearless heroes and first defeated the enemy—
The Communist Party.

Though they have no religion and don't accept it, they don't stop others [and grant] religious freedom.

Politically, though, the way of the party must be followed.

This is a fundamental tenet of the Communist Party.

All citizens must believe

in the constitution reviewed hundreds of times

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447 Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 23.
448 The poem as reproduced here is based on the version in Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 16.
449 I am thankful to Professor Janet Gyatso for suggesting the translation of this term.
by Comrade Mao Zedong and many scholars, in the Three [Red] Banners\textsuperscript{450} and the leadership of the Party. This is a fundamental tenet of the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{451}

The need to distinguish and treat accordingly the two contradictions: the enemy who must be totally opposed, and internal contradictions within the organization, This is a fundamental tenet of the Communist Party.

Making no mistake in clearly turning a despising red eye towards imperialism and a white and joyful smile towards socialism— This is a fundamental tenet of the Communist Party.

America—a paper tiger, a bubble-formation, feigns a strong and mighty appearance, with not a sesame seed of truth in it, crumbling under examination This is a fundamental tenet of the Communist Party.

The need to know that [America] lures with wealth a few small \textit{preto}-like countries to its side, while offering a witch’s smile to others— This is a fundamental tenet of the Communist Party.

China, these days a technological world power,


\textsuperscript{451} This one stanza has five lines, instead of the usual four, for reasons unknown to me.
flying over the head of imperialist America—
This is a current tenet of the Communist Party.

Further in the verse, the refrain changes to "This is Mao Zedong thought." As Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin notes, the refrain-effect of this repetition "employs the earlier writing style of aphoristic writing and offering prayers (gsol-'debs), etc." Likewise, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho draws more on religious terminology than do later writers, though he does not use much mgon-brjod. In one poem, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho compares the thought of Mao Zedong to the philosophy of the Buddha:

I, 'Jam-dpal-dgyes-pa'i-blo-gros, 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.

Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho was perhaps the earliest well-known scholar to write such praise poetry. While direct references to religion were unseen in the Tibetan poetry that flourished after the Cultural Revolution, nevertheless the latter was almost solely directed to the praise of party policy in the manner of traditional Tibetan religious eulogy. To this extent, the poetry of Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho marks a transition from religious praise poetry to party praise poetry. While the content or object of praise has changed, the form of the poetry remains the common nine-syllable verse structure. Praise poetry from 1976 to 1980 maintained this eulogistic style but was more likely to be modelled on popular forms, such as folk songs (ghu) and folk verse. The kāvyā-modelled praise poetry

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452 Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 23.
which resurfaced in 1980, as we will see, differed in quality and subject from the earlier praise poetry of Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho and others in the 1950s.

Another example of religious-inspired poetry written in praise of the party—or in this case Mao Zedong, in particular—is the eulogy penned by the fourteenth Dalai Lama in offering to Mao. The collection in which this letter has been published makes no reference to the year of its presentation. However, the colophon indicates that a few years had passed since the Dalai Lama became familiar with Mao. We might guess that the ode was written and presented on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's visit to Beijing in July 1954.

Om Sarasvati!

O, Triratna, who showers in abundance upon the

Glorious world all virtuous excellences,

Protect us always with your auspicious sacred

countenance which is everlasting and unparalleled.

[You] the people's leader, whose countless good deeds

equal in glory those of Mang-bkur Rgyal-po and of Brahma the creator of the world,

resemble the sun which illuminates the earth.

454 This is another epithet for Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho.

455 The Tibetan and Chinese versions of this poem, along with an English translation (evidently derived from the Chinese), is published in Archives of the Tibet Autonomous Region, comp. A Collection of Historical Archives of Tibet (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1995), 107–1,2,3,4,5,6,7. Except for a few differences which I discuss here, my translation (based on the Tibetan original) is otherwise quite similar to the official English translation. I am grateful to Professor Elliot Sperling for alerting me to the existence of this poem.


457 "King of Universal Respect" in the published translation. This refers to the first king of the world who was elected by the common consent of the people, according to Indic tradition. Das (1992): 952.
May the almighty Chairman Mao,
whose knowledge extends to the horizon
like ocean waves,
live in this world forever.

People regard you as a mother who protects us
and enthusiastically inscribe your image.

May he live forever to show us the good path of peace
through friendship free of bias and strife (Skt. krodha).458

The poem continues for several more stanzas, praising the actions of Chairman Mao and his work in freeing people from their suffering, especially that incurred by "our enemy—cruel imperialism." References to "peace and justice" and the "good path of peace" might be a signal of the Dalai Lama's desire for smooth and amicable relations between the two countries. In the colophon, the Dalai Lama offers some evidence of the role of at least one Mongolian religious hierarch in brokering the relation between Chairman Mao and the Dalai Lama.459

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458 I am thankful to Professor Leonard van der Kuijp for suggesting the translation of this term.
459 It is not my intent to overemphasize this role, as it is conventional in religious and other classical texts to attribute the writing to the encouragement (bskul-ma) of a patron, a spiritual teacher, or even a student.

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[I] have long wished to write such a prayer for the long life and enlightened activity of the great Chairman Mao, leader of the Chinese Communist People's Government, lord of the people who holds uncontested power deriving from the glory of his great merit.

[Now I have done so] with the added encouragement last year of Brülgu Galsang (Tib. Sprul-sku Skal-bzang) of Ganjuur (Tib. Bka'-'gyur) Monastery in [Inner] Mongolia who also sent an offering of a Mongolian silk khata and a Chinese silver ingot in the shape of a horse's hoof. May it come to be as written [here] in the Norbulingka Palace by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho, the unparalleled see who rules the three realms.

For some reason unknown to me the section about the offering of silver was deleted from the Chinese translation of the poem (and the English version which was translated from the Chinese.) Another interesting difference is that the Chinese version substitutes the term "leader of the motherland (zuguo)" for "leader of the Chinese Communist People's Government" which appears in the Tibetan version of the colophon. I have been told that the Dalai Lama wrote other such poems in praise of Mao. In any case, the poem cited here offers another important example of the religious inspired praise poetry written by hierarchs in Tibet during the early years after the Communist ascendancy in China.

Moreover, it suggests that the views of Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho and the other teachers mentioned here were not an extreme deviation from accepted discourse at the time.

Poetry could also be used for persuasion. In the poem, "Drum of Spontaneous Advice," Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho sought to explain Communist policy, to assure Tibetans that the Communist Party would allow religious freedom, and finally to underscore the might of the Communist Party. (I am reminded of the role of Sa-skya Pandita vis à vis the Mongols.) In two other instances, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho served as a broker through
his poetry; on one occasion writing to the monks of Sera, Ganden and Drepung monasteries persuading them not to resist the communist advances; and secondly, during the Great Leap Forward, offering a reinterpretation of Buddhist tradition in order to convince people it was alright to kill birds and bugs as required by Communist policy at that time.461

The influence of another great scholar Rgan Bstan-pa-rgya-mtsho was more fully felt only later when his works were published in 1980. As early as 1960, however, Rgan Bstan-pa rgya-mtsho set out to popularize the kāvya tradition and to "Tibetanize" it for his students at Northwest Nationalities Institute. The textbook he drafted for teaching his classes at that time *Snyan-ngag-gi spyi-don tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i ide-mig* was only published by Gansu Peoples Publishing House in 1980. At the same time, he laid a foundation for his students in terms of literary theory. In terms of his own creative writing, he tended to use very few religious terms or high metaphors in his poetry and was known to favor the form of essay in keeping with the "tshig bcad lhug spel ma" (mixed prose and poetry; or relaxed verse) allowed by kāvya theory. One example is his essay "Newly producing in the people the virtue of the intellectual ability" published in 1958.

Unlike the other scholars mentioned here, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho did not write very much poetry. His influence on the vernacularization of Tibetan language came more through his activities, such as I have detailed above, in the dubbing of films, establishing the Qinghai Tibetan newspaper and Qinghai radio, etc. He also served as a member of the Northwest Culture and Education Committee and as Vice-Director of the Provinical

460 This most likely refers to the Ganjuur Monastery located in Hulun Buir. I am thankful to Professor Christopher Atwood for this information. (Personal communication, 17 April 2003).
The poem for which he is best known was written in praise of the city of Changchun, located in the northeast (Dongbei) region of China, which he visited on three separate occasions from 1953 to 1956 to work on filmmaking projects at its famous studios:

Flowers of praise are flung for
the world of the great Changchun,
in the northeast of what's famed as
the mighty motherland.

With no deep canyons, here in what
resembles an immense region or the sky,
at the center of this vast earth,
the houses shimmer like constellations.

It is a clear sign of the full achievement
of the great era in which the population
of more than 800,000 enjoy
the glory of the new life of happiness.

In terms of its subject matter, cities are one of the seventeen objects of praise recommended by kāvyā theory. While references in this poem to a happy socialist life certainly add a contemporary flavor, the poem does not represent a significant break from

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461 I am thankful to Pema Bhum (Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library, NYC) for this information.
462 Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 38.
463 This poem was published in Sbrang-char, 1982, no. 4:76. The version herewith is based on the poem as cited in Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 38–39. For information on his film projects, see."Mdzad-'phrin," 5.
classical poetry in either form or subject. Moreover, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho relies on the ornate expression (mngon-brjod) in which metaphorical phrases are prescribed for representing a particular object. In this brief excerpt above, the term "holder of wealth" (nor-'dkin) is recognized by convention to mean the "earth." At the same time, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho likens the sound of airplanes flying overhead and the drone of factory machinery to thunder, while praising party policy.

Another poem by Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho certainly influenced later generations—his praise poem for Lake Qinghai, "Mtsho-sngon-po-la bstod-pa." This is more reminiscent of the mgur poetry of Zhabs-dkar-ba and Shar Skal-ladan-rgya-mtsho.464

Currents of water like melted blue sky pool into a lapis sea, from which spreads in all directions the great wave of Amdo's Blue Lake, known as "The Queen of Ten Thousand Households."465

As for the extent of this great lake's surface
One hears the people of the grasslands say that even a good horse needs about eighteen days to travel its long circumference.

On the lake's outer periphery,
on vast turquoise fields of grass,
the scattering of various grasses and flowers

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464 The version herewith is based on the poem as cited in Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 41-42.
465 Lit. "ten thousand directions." This is a homonymous variant of khrig gshog rgyal-mo, "Queen Who Destroyed Ten Thousand." See the exquisite translation of Zhabe-dkar-ba's autobiography: The Life of Shabkar: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogin, trans. by Matthieu Ricard (Albany: SUNY, 1994), 152, n. 23. "Gshog" might also be translated as "wing." The most common variant, however, is "khrig shor rgyal-mo" (Queen of the Lost 10,000), which is used by Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung below.
is very beautiful.

In the clear sky night,

the form of the moon on the lake and

the shining of many constellations leads

one to wonder if this is not the sky itself.

In this poem he also praises nomadic life, a theme that is picked up to a great extent in the late 1980s. Here the writer has employed in the final line a classic rhetorical device called the "metaphor of doubt" (*the-tshom-gi dpe*), in which the true subject (the reflection) so closely resembles the object of comparison (the sky) the doubt is raised in the viewers mind as to whether he/she is viewing the subject or the metaphor. The means by which this poem came to influence writers was manifold. It was among the first poems published by *Sbrang-char* the literary magazine founded in Xining in 1981. Moreover, the work was used for teaching literature at the six nationality institutes until 1980. We can also trace its influence in poems written by at least a few writers in the early 1980s. For example, Gcod-pa-don-grub, vice director of the Qinghai Literary Arts Association, turned to Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho’s poem as a model for his own poem "Mtsho-sngon-por bstod-pa'i glu-dbyangs." While the original poem used a seven-

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466 This type of metaphor (*the-tshom-gi dpe*) is one of 32 metaphorical ornaments (*dpe'i-rgyan*). Metaphorical ornaments themselves are one of 35 different types of meaning-ornaments (*don-rgyan*) which are discussed in chapter 2 of the Kavyadarsha. My description of *the-tshom-gi dpe* here is drawn from Tshel-brjtan Zhabs-drung, Snyan-ngag spyi-don, 56.

467 See Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, "Grong-khyer Khran-khrun-gyi gnas-tshul zhu-ba'i 'phrin-yig" (Letter in honor of the City Changchun), Sbrang-char, 1982, no. 4:76-78.

468 Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, op. cit., 44.

469 Published in his collection, Brtse-dung-gi mig-chu (Tears of Love), (Chengdu: Si-khron Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1993), 54-62.
syllable verse structure, the more recent poem has nine syllables per line, of which the opening two stanzas read:

Here at the core of this land Amdo,
the Blue Lake, rich in beauty,
with a waving white banner of fame,
is an ornament of this paradise-motherland.

However one might try, it is difficult to measure,
and rivals the radiance of the sky were it melted.
Called the holy abode of "The Queen of 10,000 Households," it is an ornament for this region's slender neck.

The poem also served as inspiration for Bkra-shis-phun-tshogs, a teacher at Qinghai Nationality Teachers Training School (Gonghe, Chab-cha), when writing "Song Offered to Lake Qinghai," published as late as 1986, though he used 15-syllables per line. According to Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, who personally knows both of these writers, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho's poem provided the "basic structure" (rtsa-ba'i sgrig-physics) for these two poems. Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin, a professor and dean of the Tibetan department at Qinghai Nationalities Institute, also wrote a poem entitled "The Song of the Queen of 10,000 Households," the content and structure of which he modelled after Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho's work. This was published in 1982.

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Though the praise of lakes *per se* are not among the seventeen objects of praise recommended by *kāvya* theory, the praise of oceans is a recommended topic. The poems here do not vary much from classical eulogies for bodies of water, except for the specific and localized nature of the object being praised. Take for example, the following excerpt from the *Skyes-rabs so-bzhi* (Skt. *Jātañjāla*)\(^{472}\) in which people are seated in a boat in the middle of a vast ocean searching for a jewel:

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We were in the immeasurable depths of the ocean whose far shore could not be seen, its blue like the hue of sapphire, as if the sky had melted from the warmth of the sun.

The strong regionalist tendency seems only to have begun in later poetry, such as the songs of Zhabs-dkar-ba a yogin from Amdo Reb-gong who has also written songs of praise for Lake Qinghai, intended as praise for a place of pilgrimage. In this way too, one senses that the later versions have changed the emphasis from praise of a religious pilgrimage site to praise as a symbol or metonymy of Amdo, exhibiting some regionalist pride. The similarities in terms of the use of metaphor (e.g. the melted sky) in this poem and the more recent poems should be obvious to the reader. This poem is drawn from a textbook on *kāvya* written by Tshe-tan Zhabs-drung who was the teacher of both Chab-'gag Rta-mgrin and Ggod-pa Don-grub at Northwest Nationalities Institute. The textbook

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\(^{472}\) This *avādāna* which describes in 34 chapters the past lives of the Buddha was composed by the Indian master Śūra (Asvaghosa). The work is also known as the *Buddhacarita*.  

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is standard for college-level literature classes in Qinghai and Gansu Provinces. Tshe-tan Zhabs-drung included one of his own poems praising Lake Qinghai in this book. 473

This fine blue sky—maiden], who descended to the plain in the form of a river so as to experience the richness of earth, is renown as the “Great Lake, Queen of 10,000 Households.” 474

Among the twentieth-century writers from the pre-1980 period, Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-’phrin-las and Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung are arguably the most widely recognized and accomplished poets if measured by the widespread use of their respective textbooks and their inclusion in important anthologies of classical Tibetan poetry. In particular, these two contemporary scholars were featured to the exclusion of any other twentieth-century writers in a compilation of examples of kavya poetry published in 1984 by the current president of Northwest Nationalities, Kon-mchog-tshe-brtan and Zla-ba-blo-gros who has worked primarily for the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House since 1993, and editor-in-chief for Sbrang-char since 1997. The book offers no root text or commentary, instead providing more than seven hundred pages illustrating the various ornamentations.

The compilers, who were both graduates of Northwest Nationalities Institute, limited the number of scholars whom they featured primarily to earlier scholars with the exceptions of their renowned professor Tshe-tan Zhab-drung and his counterpart at the Central Nationalities Institute, Dung-dkar-blo-bzang-’phrin-las. 475

474 See n. 465 for an explanation of this epithet.
475 An exhaustive list of the eleven scholars whose works they featured follows. (Those most frequently cited are marked with an asterisk.)

1. The Fifth Dalai Lama (Rgyal-dbang lnga-ba Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho) *
2. Bod-mkhas-pa Mi-pham-dge-legs-mam-par-rgyal-ba’i-lha*
3. Zhwa-dmar-pa Dge-dun-bstan-dzin-rgya-mtsho (Taught the 13th Dalai Lama snyan-ngag.)*
The Monastic Vanguard

In this chapter, I have tried to illustrate how the transitional role of monastic scholars was a *sine qua non* for the transmission of Tibetan grammar and *kāvyā* theory to students of the next generation who would more dramatically experiment with literary forms. When some of the fetters on Tibetan publishing were lifted after the Cultural Revolution and several traditional texts published and modern experimentation made, it was not as if all traces of tradition had been wiped out starting with the establishment of Communist rule. As detailed in this chapter, classical texts such as *Gzhon-mu-zla-med* and others were first published in modern format during the 1950s, as were several grammars and orthographies. While such evidence does not disprove the importance of the 1980s as a renaissance in Tibetan publishing, it does temper to some degree the idea that pre-1980 was an absolute wasteland for Tibetan literature. The publication of classical texts and grammars, and the writing of new textbooks sustained a certain thread of transmission, thin though it may have been, for a future more lenient period. Likewise, a number of scholars began to apply conventional *kāvyā* poetic forms to contemporary topics in a society undergoing revolutionary changes in many aspects. As was the case for Tibetan poets writing in Chinese, the poetry of those writing in Tibetan in the PRC during the 1950s and 1960s also demonstrated conviction regarding the promises of the Communist Party. While the impact of their own writing for transforming Tibetan literature itself in

4. A-kya yongs-'dzin Dbyangs-can-dga'-ba'i-blo-gros*
5. Tshe-tan-zla-brung dbyangs-ltan-rig-pa'i-tlo-'jo*
6. Pan-chen blo-bzang-ye-shes
7. Smin-gling lo-chens nag-dbang-chos-dpal*
8. Reb-tsha Bka'-gyur-pa Blo-bzang-nyi-ma
9. Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las*
10. 'In Mi-pham mam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho
11. Mkhyen-brtse Tshangs-sras-dbyes-pa'i-blo-ltan

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the pre-1980s period was limited, the influence of these scholars on later generations seems to lie primarily in their establishment of a trend towards praise poetry for the party, and in providing models of poetry that were later mimicked by students. Some of their writings were even among the first featured by the Tibetan literary journals launched in the 1980s, when younger writers who knew Tibetan language were hard to find.476

Moreover, I have tried to emphasize that this linguistic transformation did not happen in a social vacuum. Rather, it was largely concommitant with a host of social transformations prompted by the establishment of a new political regime. The impact of the CCP's nationality policy would also play an important role as the definition of Tibetan literature became increasingly negotiated. In 1959, shortly after the Second National Work Forum on Minority Languages, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho was sent to the Soviet Union to compare experiences with Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Khazak publishers. He has written a book about this experience, published by the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House. Unfortunately, I have not seen this work.477 The written medium held special potential as a unifying factor for "the Tibetan nationality" which was otherwise quite divided in terms of local dialect. This point was made by Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung who at the same time wanted to emphasize the importance of the Indic model for Tibetan writing:478

476 Poetry by Chab-spel Tshe-brit-an-phun-tshogs, for example, is featured in early issues of Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal (Tibetan Literature and Arts). Though I have not provided any example of his works here, he too started writing more vernacular poetry in the 1950s and his writing is said to have "reached a climax in the 1980s." Maconi, "Lion of the Snowy Mountains," 171, n. 227.
478 Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, Snyan-ngag spyi-don, 40.
[Countless burning stars and planets, like laid stones,  
in the wide and clear boundless sky,  
The great poetical works of praise written by Indian scholars—  
I enjoy what they have to say which uses hundreds of ornaments.  
Like the written word which is common to our entire nationality,  
throughout Amdo, Khams and Central Tibet—whether nomad places or farming lands—  
they are written unrivalled with very pleasant mellifluence,  
and with the flash of a pen, I produced [this poem] as an offering.]

Perhaps the most significant impact of Tibet's monastic vanguard or mid-twentieth-century scholars in terms of the Tibetan literature and criticism which would be written in the 1980s and 1990s was the "applied" aspect of their scholarship when serving on translation committees, newspaper editorial boards and film dubbing offices. In these various capacities, they began to broaden the written Tibetan language. New lexicons and several hundreds of translations published between 1950−1976 furthered the development of a colloquial written Tibetan. Though the radical orthographical experiments undertaken during the Cultural Revolution were largely revoked in 1981, the vernacularization projects in the 1950s and early 1960s and the efforts of pioneer Tibetans during this earlier period lay the foundation for continued negotiation and literary experimentation in the 1980s. Moreover, many of the scholars active in the translation and publishing projects of the 1950s served at one time or another as teachers or administrators at a growing number of educational institutions for lay students. Though I have mentioned only a few well-known figures here, such as Shes-rab-rgya-
mtsho, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, and Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, there were also unnamed others in various locales who persisted in teaching Tibetan—sometimes bravely resisting party directives—for whom we have no biographies. Due to their efforts, at least a handful of twenty-something Tibetans in the early 1980s had language skills sufficient enough to write ka"vyā-inspired verse and to begin experimenting with literary forms, despite the setbacks of the Cultural Revolution and preceding campaigns.
Chapter 4

Literary Developments in the Early Post-Mao Era (1977–85)

In this chapter, we will first consider the literary renaissance which occurred among Chinese writers following the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) as setting the intellectual milieu for a similar, but temporally lagging, development among Tibetan writers, who for the first time in the history of Tibetan belles-lettres began to experiment with western-influenced literary genres on a relatively wide scale basis. While short stories, essays and vernacular poetry appeared with increasing frequency from the late 1970s, the influence of classical snyan-ngag and folk literary forms were still prevalent. This reflects, in part, a revival of projects launched by the "vanguard" scholars discussed above, as those who survived the Cultural Revolution resumed key posts in Tibetan educational and publishing institutions. In the final section of this chapter, we will examine the rise of modern Tibetan free verse from 1983 and, in particular, the influence of its "founder" Don-grub-rgyal before his untimely death in 1985.

Chinese Writers in the New Era

Chinese literary debates launched in the New Era (Xin Shiqi, 1979–1989) may be viewed in many ways as reopening the unfinished business of the country's New Culture movement during the early 1900s. Anderson (1991) and Denton (1996) provide excellent overviews and source materials of the literary debates that transpired among Chinese literary critics (often writers themselves) during the first half of the last century. Two
main schools of thought developed, both motivated by the desire to modernize and
develop Chinese fiction beyond its limited presence in traditional literature and the
contemporary "vulgar" forms of popular literature. The two schools characterized
themselves as adhering to Western notions of "realism" and "romanticism," as
represented by the Literary Research Association (Wenxue yanjiu hui 文学研究会,
1920–1932) and Creation Society (Chuangzao she 创造社, 1921–1929), respectively.
The two approaches were differentiated in their understanding of the primary role of
literature: to represent society and address actual social issues or to serve as a vehicle for
the individual self-expression of the writer. Neither school of literary thought, however,
borrowed wholesale from the West. Rather, each was reinterpreted by Chinese writers to
accord more with the cultural and historical context of their time. Anderson (1991), for
example, argues that the gap between the "realist" and "romanticist" schools in China was
narrower than in the West. China had little precedent for the concept of "mimesis" or
representation. Rather, a writer was generally seen to be a channel for the Dao, having
first cleansed him/herself of obscurations that block the self-cultivated writer from setting
pen to paper. Thus, we see a tendency for early Chinese realists to downplay the Western
extreme of detached objective description that bordered on naturalism. At the same time,
the Romanticist view was grounded by the didactic role traditionally assigned to
literature. That is, the sense of the writer transmitting the Dao for the betterment of
society served to temper the Chinese reception of western-style Romanticism which
emphasized the writer as an individual alienated from the divine (and society) who strives
to reconnect with the spiritual through self-expression or the production of "art for art's
sake."
Nor is the term "realism" particularly useful to describe this debate, as it obscures both differences with Western literary theory, as well as the complexity of views among Chinese writers and changes over time, including the later influence of 'socialist realism.' For example, the idealist (lixiang 理想) origins of romanticism (langman 浪漫) were reconfigured again in the positive realism or new realism (xin xianshi 新现实) of more strident literary leftists in the late 1920s and early 30s. The latter merged with the original realists and together emphasized the revolutionary role of literature, but as defined by class, arguing that earlier realism was too stark and did not offer enough hope. Less polemical ventures in literary theory which started to be overshadowed by this revolutionary tendency were virtually silenced when the war with Japan (1937–45) raised the importance of developing the nationalist strain in poetry to the exclusion of all else. The realist debate and more complex discussions among leftist writers such as had characterized the New Culture movement were also truncated by Chairman Mao's talks at Yan'an on May 23, 1942 in which he clarified "There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake" and "The revolutionary struggle on the ideological and artistic fronts must be subordinate to the political struggle." While acknowledging the possibility for both "political" and "artistic" value in a literary work, the message was unambiguous: political criteria must take precedence. The new orthodox line set the tone for nearly four decades. Only in the late 1970s did the realist vs. romanticist debate resurface. One could argue that in this later period it shed much of the Daoist influence highlighted by

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479 I am grateful to Professor Yingjin Zhang for this insight. Conversation with author, Bloomington, IN, 29 January 1999.

Anderson (1991) and more closely approximated Western approaches to these schools. Proponents of realism in China were particularly influenced by Soviet socialist realism, which was readily available in translation.

The leviathan network through which writing was officially published in the PRC for the bulk of the Communist era from 1950 to 1990 has been recently theorized by Link (2000) as "the socialist Chinese literary system." Because Link focuses on literary developments in the late 1970s and early 1980s as an "entree" into this longer period, his study is particularly useful for our purposes in better understanding the contemporary Chinese literary milieu and official policies which influenced the innovative poetry of Don-grub-rgyal. Link draws in detail on written sources and interviews from the late 1970s as the Chinese literary world began reasserting itself after the Cultural Revolution decade (1966–76) which constituted a deep "freeze" for literary creativity. The first official "warming" after the Cultural Revolution began in 1976, with the 5 April memorial for Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), the 9 September death of Mao Zedong (1893–1976), and the subsequent fall of the Gang of Four in October 1976. The next two years, however, continued to be marked by a literary standstill throughout the country while writers and publishers waited to test the political waters. Most writers and literary editors remained "paralyzed" by the preceding vicissitudes of the official mood. Only following the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1978 at which intellectuals were encouraged by Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) to "liberate their
thought" to further the pursuit of the "Four Modernizations" (in industry, agriculture, military, and science and technology) did writers and publishers feel emboldened to express themselves more openly again.\textsuperscript{485} Chinese writers began searching for models to modernize their literary forms, and the work of their western counterparts was now a previously censored option. One sign of a renewed study of foreign literature following the Cultural Revolution was the publication in 1978 of the Chinese translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare by the People's Literature Press in Beijing.\textsuperscript{486} Renewed inquiry in the late 1970s and 1980s regarding the definition of poetry and the function of literature, as well as experiments with form undertaken by writers themselves was akin to earlier New Culture discourse. Not surprisingly, some of the western writers and theorists discussed during the New Culture movement were resurrected in the post-Mao years. Prominent among these was Walt Whitman.\textsuperscript{487}

Huang (1997) provides us with a close study of how the work of American poet Walt Whitman—in particular, Leaves of Grass first published in 1855—came to be disseminated among Chinese cultural reformers beginning with its first translation in 1919, and how his lyrical free verse influenced the formation of a Chinese literary modernism. As characterized by Huang, Chinese poets welcomed the opportunity offered by free verse for "unfettered expression" and the flexibility of longer prosaic lines. The significance of free verse poetry also took on a political air in early twentieth


\textsuperscript{486} Guiyou Huang, Whitmanism, Imagism, and Modernism in China and America (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997), 43.
century China given that Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* first became available in intellectual circles at a revolutionary time. Huang notes, "With the new culture movement and the foundation of the CCP—Whitman's poems were naturally read with political enthusiasm as well as literary interest."\(^{488}\) Whitman was regarded as the spokesman for "that romantic impulse through which the individual self declares its liberty."\(^{489}\) While the popular notion that Whitman was the "bard of democracy" has been rightly criticized by recent cultural studies (Simpson, 1990) and even earlier in the century by D.H. Lawrence,\(^{490}\) his influence was no less diminished in China, where since 1919 he has been proclaimed "a poet of the common people."\(^{491}\)

Huang notes three "peaks" in the reception of Walt Whitman in China, the latest beginning in 1978 with the republication of Chu Tunan's translation of selections from *Leaves of Grass* by the People's Publishing House. This work was originally published in March 1949 and again with revisions in 1955.\(^{492}\) One of the poems circulated and recited in Beijing to commemorate the death of the popular Zhou Enlai a year after Mao's death and the bloody 5 April crackdown in the square was Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!"\(^{493}\) And by the late 1980s, numerous important publications on Whitman appeared, including translations, Chinese and foreign studies, as well as biographical materials.\(^{494}\) The publication of works on Whitman spread beyond Beijing and Shanghai,

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\(^{487}\) For ideological reasons, the following American writers were approved by the government and became the best known in China: Twain, Steinbeck, Dreiser, Whitman, Stowe, and Hemingway. See Huang, op. cit., 38.

\(^{488}\) Huang, op. cit., 16.

\(^{489}\) Ibid., 17.


\(^{491}\) Huang, op. cit., 18.

\(^{492}\) Ibid., 43.

\(^{493}\) Ibid., 47.

\(^{494}\) These are detailed in Huang, op. cit., 53.
suggesting that Whitman "has gained more popularity and is more widely read than at
any time since he was introduced to China in 1919." The most positive sign of a more lenient official policy during this early thaw, however, was the phenomenal growth in Chinese literary magazines, which increased from only a handful of titles in 1976 to 110 by April 1979. For instance, the founding of Today (Jintian 今天) in December 1978, the first underground literary journal in Maoist China, has been described as a "watershed in literary history" for the country. This magazine, featuring Chinese experimental poetry, fiction, and essays as well as literary criticism, and translations and introductions of foreign literature, drew in part on a large supply of "drawer literature" (chouti wenxue 抽屉文学)—manuscripts written in preceding years that were unpublishable for political reasons. The founding of Today has been detailed by Pan Yuan and Pan Jie (1985). While their account has mythic overtones, it provides important details on those who bravely took responsibility for advancing the journal. By 1983, the number of Chinese literary journals reached

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495 Ibid.
496 Interview material as cited in Link, Uses of Literature, 16.
499 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 Jeffrey C. Kinkley, "Shen Congwen and the Uses of Regionalism," Modern Chinese Literature 1, no. 2 (spring 1985): 184.
Tibetan Writers in the New Era

In stark contrast to the flourishing of Chinese literary endeavors during the late 1970s, the Tibetan literary world remained dormant. Despite many centuries of classical-style literary production and an official population of more than 3.4 million, as few as four Tibetan journals were being published in 1980, thirty years after the Communist occupation of Tibet. This dearth of popular Tibetan reading material is partly explained by (as well as contributed to) the largely stagnant state of original Tibetan literature since the early 1950s, described in the preceding chapter. One source notes that in 1975 when a Swedish writer visited Lhasa and asked to be introduced to a tibetophone literary writer, not one could be identified. Another source notes that from 1949 to 1980, not a single novel or novella had been published by a Tibetan, in either Chinese or Tibetan. Likewise, Tibetan-authored short stories were few. The delay in a Tibetan literary revival in the late 1970s might also be attributed to what Link describes as regional variation in the national literary "weather," a euphemism for the political climate borrowed from authors writing under the strain of censorship. This explanation would be especially apt if the sense of variation were expanded to consider differences in the development of marginalized literatures in the PRC, in particular, minority literatures which are not discussed in Link's study. In the Tibetan case, the groundwork for a

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500 "Dus-deb 'di-nyid-kyi sgrig-pa-po'i gtam," Sbrang-char, 1981, no. 1:2. This editorial draws comparisons with 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.


502 Jiangbian Jiacuo, Gannie shenghuo, 490.
publishing revival\textsuperscript{503} began to be laid, ironically, only as liberal Chinese thinkers faced another "chill," signalled by the clampdown and 29 March 1979 arrest of Wei Jingsheng, a leading figure at Beijing's "Democracy Wall." Local Chinese literary magazines were shut down and certain writers who had sincerely responded to Deng's 1978 call to "liberate their thought" arrested.\textsuperscript{504}

For evidence of a lag time between Beijing and the Tibetan hinterlands which muted the impact of official policy pronouncements, we may return to the autobiographical account of 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho (2000) who worked for nearly thirty years as a translator at the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing before until January 1981 when he transferred to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)\textsuperscript{505} and eventually served as director of the Gesar Research Institute. Though the author attributes the publication of his own novel Skal-bzang-me-tog\textsuperscript{506} to the more open political and cultural environment fostered by the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in 1978, a few years lapsed before the policy shift signalled by this meeting had a tangible impact on Tibetan literature as a whole. An equally pertinent

\textsuperscript{503} I use this term in two senses, both to acknowledge the masses of classical and religious Tibetan literature published by woodblock printing which was halted during the Cultural Revolution, and to acknowledge the modern-format publishing that did occur in the 1950s.

\textsuperscript{504} Link, Uses of Literature, 18–19. The short crackdown ended by autumn 1979. (p. 20)

\textsuperscript{505} This institute was established in Beijing in May 1977 and quickly became the center of 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. Michael B. Yahuda, Introduction to New Directions in the Social Sciences and Humanities in China (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), xii–xx.

\textsuperscript{506} 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho first wrote the work in Chinese, and then rewrote it in Tibetan. The first version was published by the People's Literary Publishing House (Mi-dmangs rtsom-rig dpe skrun-khang) in 1980, and the latter by the Nationalities Publishing House in 1982. See 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho, Afterword to Skal-bzang-me-tog (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1982), 545. Cf. his autobiography (p. 490) in which he states that the Tibetan version was published in 1981. This work was the first Tibetan-authored novel published in the twentieth century, the significance of which can be better appreciated by recalling that the rise of the "novel" in other contexts has been concomittant with the formation of the modern nation-state (Anderson 1991) and (Brennan 1990). Cf. references to Gzhon-nu-zla-med (The Incomparable Youth) written by Mdo-mkhar-ba Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal in the early-eighteenth century as the "sole example of a Tibetan novel." Beth Newman, "Introduction," The Tale of the Incomparable Prince, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996, p. xiii.
factor were 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. 'Jam-dpal-
grya-mtsho details important exchanges between Tibetan writers and certain highly
positioned sympathetic government officials during 1979–80 which served as a critical
impetus for the earnest launch of projects intended to develop "a new Tibetan literature,"
which along with other minority affairs had been "seriously harmed" by "leftist errors"
during the Anti-Rightist campaigns of 1956–57 and the following two decades.\footnote{Jiangbian Jiacuo, op. cit., 493.}
Particularly supportive were the organizational leaders and writers active in convening
the Second National Minority Literary Works Conference (\textit{Di' er ci quanguo shaoshu
minzu wenxue chuangzuo huiyi 第二次全国少数民族文学创作会议}) in Beijing in early
Zhou Yang (1908–89), who chaired the conference, was vice-president of the Chinese
was President of the United Front and a member of the National People's Congress. The
famous writer Mao Dun (1896–1981) was chairman of the Chinese Writers' Association.
Yang Jingren was director of the Nationality Affairs Commission.\footnote{Chin. Zhongguo zuojia xiehui 中国作家协会. Biographical information on Zhou Yang is available in Denton, op. cit., 519; and Yang Li, ed. \textit{A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Writers} (Beijing: New World Press, 1994), 390–391.}

One important decision made at the Beijing meeting was to publish \textit{Minzu
Wenxue 民族文学}, the first national minority literature magazine in the People's
Republic of China. One of the two people assigned responsibility for this journal was Ma
Yin 马寅 who had been recently transferred from the Nationalities Publishing House to
serve as vice-chairman of the Cultural Committee of the Nationality Affairs Commission. He and Malchinhüü (b. 1930)\textsuperscript{510}, a well-known Mongolian writer from Liaoning Province, had also been the main coordinators of the Minority Literary Works Conference. Ma Yin, whose residence was maintained in the Nationality Publishing House \textit{danwei}, lived in the same building as 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho. He remarked on the special concern shown by Ulanfu, Seften (a writer from Xinjiang), Yang Jingren and Zhou Yang towards minority literature and urged 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho to "not dissapoint the leaders who are concerned about Tibetan literature." Ma Yin was also a member of the preparatory committee for another initiative sanctioning the importance of minority literature: the establishment of a department for the study of minority literature at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.\textsuperscript{511} These developments which all occurred in the aftermath of the 1978 Party Congress illustrate the ripple effect of official policy as felt in minority literary circles.

Ten Tibetan writers and poets (including one woman) attended this convention. Jointly, they petitioned the Chinese Writers' Association and the Nationality Affairs Commission for permission to hold a Tibetan Literary Works Conference per the guidelines established in 1980 by CCP Directive #31.\textsuperscript{512} Zhou Yang, who was reportedly shocked to learn about the absence of Tibetan writers in any branch organization of the Chinese Writers' Association, immediately agreed to bypass the usual nomination process

\textsuperscript{509} Chin. Guojia Minwei 国家民委. These people are all mentioned in Jiangbian Jiacuo, op. cit., 491.

\textsuperscript{510} Ch. Malqinhu, or as appears in this text Malaqinfu 马拉沁夫. An anthology by this writer is available in English: \textit{On the Horqin Grassland} (Beijing: [Panda Books] Chinese Literature Press, 1988). Malqinhu eventually became the chief editor of the journal \textit{Literature of National Minorities} (\textit{Minzu wenxue}) and chairman of the Chinese Minority Writers' Association.

\textsuperscript{511} Jiangbian Jiacuo, op. cit., 492.

\textsuperscript{512} This party document, released prior to the departure of Hu Yaobang for Tibet, was an important marker of political relaxation in Tibetan areas.
and sponsor the membership of the ten Tibetan attendees into the Chinese Writers' Association. Moreover, he approved the Tibetan literary conference.

Thus, the first Six Provinces and Autonomous Region Conference on New Tibetan Literature was held from August 17–27, 1981 at Shengli Yuan, a select hotel in Xining, the capital city of Qinghai Province. Funding was provided by the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee and the provincial government, and the meeting received a great deal of fanfare with guest speeches by several top officials. Leaders from the Qinghai Provincial Propaganda Bureau and the Nationality Affairs Commission (wei lian) were responsible for organizing the meeting. Lhag-pa-phun-tshogs, vice-director of the Propaganda Bureau, presided over the meeting, the first ever held for Tibetan literary workers in the "six" provinces and the autonomous region. Seventy people attended the conference of whom some 40 (60%) were Tibetan. The attendees included older generation literary affairs workers, poets, translators, compilers of folk literature, scholars, news reporters, publishers, teachers of literature, as well as public officials. Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho himself was responsible for drafting the official proceedings.


514 Other figures present at the meeting included Bkra'-shis-dbang-phyug, general secretary of the Qinghai Provincial Communist Party Office; Shag-bha, vice-governor of Qinghai Province; Ma Wuntin, vice-director of the executive committee of the provincial People's Congress; Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, vice-secretary of the provincial People's Political Consultative Committee; as well as leaders from the provincial propaganda bureau, literary arts association, cultural bureau and Qinghai Nationalities Institute. See "Zhing-chen dang rang-skyong-ljongs," 69.

515 Nowadays, the typical enumeration is "five," i.e. the Tibet Autonomous Region and the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Yunan and Sichuan. More than than half of the Tibetan population in the PRC resides in concentrated areas in these four provinces. It is quite possible that Xinjiang was added as sixth regional participant, as there is a minor Tibetan population within this region. I am thankful to Robert Barnett (Columbia University) for this observation. (Personal conversation, New York City, 4 February 2003.)

516 Jiangbian Jiacuo, op. cit., 494. C.f. "Zhing-chen dang rang-skyong-ljongs," op. cit., 69, which claims that seventy percent of the attendees were Tibetan.

517 Jiangbian Jiacuo, op. cit., 495; and "Zhing-chen dang rang-skyong-ljongs," op. cit., 69.
The meeting started\textsuperscript{518} by acknowledging—in the spirit of "seeking truth from facts" (\textit{shishi qiushi 实事求是})—that difficulties and problems existed for Tibetan literature:

Especially when compared to the literature of the Chinese, Mongolian, Uyghur, Yi, Korean and Bai nationalities, there is a big gap between these and Tibetan literature.\textsuperscript{519} The improvement has been slow and is unsuitable for the new situation and development since the open policy. Nor is the level of Tibetan literature commensurate with the new situation of developing the economic and cultural affairs in Tibetan areas.\textsuperscript{520}

The opening address was given by Yang Wunqin, director of the Qinghai Nationality Affairs Commission. Malaqinfu of the China's Writer's Association and others from the provincial and autonomous regional offices also made congratulatory speeches. The issues discussed included shared experiences regarding Tibetan literature, how to advance Tibetan literary affairs, how to increase the level of writers, how to increase the amount of literature, how to seek and collect Tibetan folk literature, as well as Tibetan literary education, editing, translation and publishing. The attendees acknowledged that the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress was significant in terms of creating new forms of Tibetan literature. Minority literature was proclaimed to be an accomplishment of the party and developing it was said to accord with the implementation of party policy. One of the most substantial results to arise from this meeting was the establishment of the China's Tibetan Nationality Literature Study Group and the China's Gesar Research Office in order to 1) improve the development of socialist new literature, 2) develop a theory of epics with Chinese characteristics, and 3)  

\textsuperscript{518} "Zhing-chen dang rang-skyong-ljongs," op. cit., 69.  
\textsuperscript{519} It seems likely that this remark was based on information provided in the first issue of \textit{Sbrang-char} in 1981. See n. 500.  
\textsuperscript{520} Jiangbian Jiacuo, op. cit., 494.
develop a scientific system for Gesar studies. Thus, Gesar studies were launched at this time, spurred in part by an effort to associate the Gesar epic with China itself. Ironically, the initiative may have backfired to the extent that Gesar potentially serves as a pan-Tibetan cultural icon, a unifying element cutting across regional boundaries, as discussed by Georges Dreyfus (1994).522

The reported goal of the meeting was to develop a "Socialist Tibetan New Literature." Accounts vary regarding the role of literature written by Tibetans in Chinese or Tibet-related writing by other nationalities. According to 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho:

These proceedings also especially mentioned the view that so-called "Modern Tibetan Literature" [Zangzu dangdai wenxue 藏族当代文学] does not refer solely to the works of writers and poets of Tibetan nationality. Nor is it limited to works written in Tibetan. It also includes those writers who after liberation responded to Mao's call and went to the TAR and other Tibetan areas for the socialist revolution and socialism, and who have contributed to and who love Tibetan people, culture and art, and who have a good relationship with Tibetan people and writers, as well as [those writers who] reveal the new Tibetan life.524

The account of the meeting as recorded in Sbrang-char, however, adds that the conference resolved "to prioritize new literature in Tibetan language, which itself must be strengthened." The Tibetan account distinguishes between strengthening socialist

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521 Ibid., 495. The reference to epics with Chinese characteristics occurs because Hegel had once remarked that China didn't have an epic because of its characteristics. Jiangbian Jiacuo then wrote an article saying that Hegel had ignored the existence of Gesar which belongs to a nationality in China—i.e. Tibetan—and they have the longest epic in the world. (Pema Bhum, personal conversation, Jersey City, NJ, 6 November 6 2001).
524 Jiangbian Jiacuo, op. cit., 495.
Tibetan literature and first strengthening new Tibetan literature in Tibetan.\textsuperscript{525} This detail was omitted in 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho' s account, which stresses the inclusivity of the definition of "Tibetan literature" to encompass literature in Chinese and by writers of non-Tibetan nationalities. In contrast, the account in \textit{Sbrang-char} omitted the decision about Tibetan literature including writing by writers of other nationalities, perhaps signaling disagreement about this. As we shall see in the following chapter, this issue was hotly contested in the 1980s.

Finally, it was agreed that the TAR, Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan provinces and designated units in the Central Government should take turns hosting the Tibetan Literary Works Academic Conference (\textit{Zangzu wenxue chuangzuo xueshu taolunhui} 藏族文学创作学术讨论会). Each province or region's respective literary arts association, nationality affairs commission, and social sciences academy, in cooperation with minority colleges and publishing houses would jointly organize the conference. In total, the conference was convened six times in various venues from 1981 to 2000. (See table 4.1.) It is interesting to note the long hiatus between the

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\textit{Source:} Jiangbian Jiacuo, \textit{Ganxie shenghuo}, 496.


\textsuperscript{526} Chin. Zangzu wenxue chuangzuo xueshu taolunhui 藏族文学创作学术讨论会.

\textsuperscript{527} 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho was chair of the convening committee in 1995.
1988 and 1995 meetings. Perhaps the political tensions marking this period dampened official enthusiasm for a pan-Tibetan meeting of intellectuals.

In my estimation, the 1981 meeting could be said to mark the start of a new era for Tibetan literature. While the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress of 1978 paved the way for an intellectual revival for the PRC in general, and indeed some Tibetan publishing projects were launched at that time, a true flourishing of Tibetan-language literary and other publishing ventures was not realized until the early 1980s. The underdeveloped state of Tibetan language at this time is suggested in the account of Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho who notes the prevalence of Chinese-medium writers among the ten Tibetan writers who attended the Second National Minority Literary Works Conference in Beijing in early 1981. The Xining conference, on the other hand, granted local official sanction for Tibetan-language literary affairs and brought together writers of various generations, including Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho who made a special visit to the meeting having just been released from hospital. The meeting was praised in verse by young and old scholars alike, including Don-grub-rgyal (aka Rang-grol), Yi-dam-tshe-ring and A-lags Dor-zhi. In many ways, the meeting served as a force for the enactment of a cultural nationalism acceptable within the limits of CCP nationality policy. After more than a decade of intense Han-centric cultural policies aimed at leveling differences among the diverse peoples of the PRC, the relaxation of policy after the Eleventh Congress enabled the possibility again for Tibetan intelligentsia to be employed in various educational and cultural initiatives. The inclusion of all Tibetan

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528 I use this term, in contrast to "undeveloped," in order to emphasize the backsliding that occurred after the colonial occupation of Tibet.
529 Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, who helped bridge the relationship between pre-communist-era monastically trained scholars and young secularly trained intellectuals passed away the following year in 1982.
ethno-geographic regions enabled intellectuals from all corners of the Tibetan plateau, including some whom had been detained for several years during the Cultural Revolution, to meet face-to-face. Moreover, holding a discussion about the development of Tibetan literature within the more general context of Deng's Four Modernizations policy allowed—or even encouraged—a rhetorical strategy of framing Tibetan literature as one aspect within a wider call for far-reaching changes throughout Tibetan society. Official recognition of the meeting was especially important for the positive implications this had in terms of government funding for Tibet-related research projects and other endeavors. The emphasis on projects concerned with the preservation of folk literature, which garnered a great deal of attention at the first Tibetan literature conference, replicates a pattern in multinational countries of pursuing what is viewed as unthreatening research. To make their case for greater allocation of resources for Tibetan linguistic and literary projects, speakers compared the Tibetan situation with that of other nationalities in the PRC.

To appreciate the significance of the 1981 meeting in Xining, consider that the grammatical changes dictated for the simplification of the Tibetan written language during the Cultural Revolution were revoked only in 1980, and even then not without controversy. How such changes came to be overturned are recounted in the autobiography of Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan:

In 1959, it was decided at a study session on Mao's works held at the Nationalities Publishing that there needed to be a reform in Tibetan language. Havoc was wreaked on Tibetan grammar and it was turned topsy-turvy. A "Summary [Grammar]" was drawn up and distributed across the Tibetan region. Tibetan newspapers and journals became such that you couldn't tell if they were in Chinese or Tibetan.531

531 Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, Collected Works, 1:597.
Marielle Prins (2002) has summarized, using the same source, some of the revisions made, such as the simplification of verb forms. She notes that "the main goal of the revision was to bring written Tibetan, which had remained unchanged for several centuries, closer to the various speech varieties in the Tibetan dialect areas, and in doing so to make written Tibetan easier for young students to learn." As such, "the unavoidable side effect was that there was now no unified form of the Tibetan language left in spoken or written form." Tsering Shakya (1994) has also referred to some of the grammatical changes made in the 1960s in an attempt to colloquialize the written Tibetan language. In particular, he notes the elision of the classical use of five genitive particles ("brel-sgra) gi, gyi, kyi, yi and 'i into only one particle gi which was used in publications during the 1960s and 1970s. The banning of certain classical Tibetan punctuation marks and other literary prohibitions is further discussed in semi-autobiographical memoirs of the Cultural Revolution by Pema Bhum (2001).

The changes clearly provoked Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan who for many years took on the task of fighting for their repeal. Following the publication of a grammar (gsum-rtags) based on these changes by the Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan wrote a refutation to the publishing house but received no response. He also lectured for a half-day at Northwest Nationalities Institute in Lanzhou on his objections to the grammatical changes. Only in January 1980 after twelve days of heated debate at a minority languages conference in Beijing was it decided to revoke the "Summary [Grammar]" and in effect return to classical Tibetan grammatical conventions. Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan was active in drafting a summary of traditional Tibetan grammar which was

533 Ibid., 32.
distributed first of all to a team of scholars assembled to work on the *Bod Rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo* (Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary). The traditional "Summary" was then professionally printed in Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan's home of Rnga-ba (Aba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (where he served as vice-chairman of the Political People's Consulative Committee) and later reprinted in Lhasa and Hezuo, Gansu Province. According to Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, the decision to revoke the revolutionary changes was spread "everywhere" and he makes specific mention of receiving a letter of praise for his efforts from Dung-dkar-blo-bzang-'phrin-las who was then teaching at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing. The delay of this decision and the controversy it evoked underscore the significance of the Tibetan publishing projects undertaken immediately after the Cultural Revolution and the renaissance which shortly followed with the establishment of several important Tibetan literary magazines in the early 1980s.

**Tibetan Publishing in the Post-Mao Period**

As Link (2000) notes, "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." Having mentioned here the sorry state of Tibetan literature in the 1950s, one might think the restoration of a literary establishment from that time would be meaningless in the Tibetan context. However, Link's observation still holds to a certain degree for Tibetan publishing projects undertaken after the Cultural Revolution. In the first place, the

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536 The dictionary project itself was another example of the importance of personal initiatives on the part of both Tibetan and Chinese scholars.
The oldest standing publishing house for modern-format Tibetan publications in the PRC was the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing which opened its Tibetan section in 1951. Sichuan and Gansu provinces also had nationality publishing houses which since the 1950s had released a limited number of Tibetan texts and many Chinese texts about Tibet, such as collections of folksongs and folktales. The Tibetan Language Editing and Translation Department handled such projects at the Qinghai People's Publishing House until the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House was established in 1979. In the 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. Other houses soon followed suit. Secondly, the choice of titles lends credence to Link's argument, as several Tibetan books published in the late 1970s and early 1980s were actually reprints or revised editions of texts published or at least drafted in the 1950s. My own survey of books made me aware of this intriguing phenomenon. These were the "drawer literature" of Tibetan scholars. See table 4.2 for a list of literature-related Tibetan works published in the early post-Mao period, which were reprints of earlier works. Though this list is far from comprehensive, the number of grammars, dictionaries, classical Tibetan texts, or studies of traditional poetry included provides evidence of publishing efforts in the 1950s that went beyond the demands of political practicalities, as argued in chapter 2. Furthermore, it suggests a certain

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539 Only recently in the late 1990s has the monolithic reach of the national publishing system weakened in terms of Tibetan production, as writers seek alternative publishing venues in Hong Kong and Taiwan, or through local private printing houses. Officially, ISBN numbers must still be purchased, but certain publishers are known to be more liberal than others in making these available. Writers have also managed to bypass the need to purchase an ISBN number by not technically selling the book or through other means.
"revival"-aspect to the cultural production immediately following the Eleventh Party Congress of December 1978.

Table 4.2. List of Literature-related Reprint Editions published before 1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher &amp; Reprint Year</th>
<th>Original Draft or Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dokhar Shabdrung Tsering Wangyal</td>
<td>Tale of the Incomparable Prince</td>
<td>TPPH, 1979</td>
<td>NPH, 1957 According to a note on the back covers, &quot;This book is based on a manuscript from 1957 from Beijing Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsatrul Ngawang Lobzang</td>
<td>An elementary textbook on the essence of Tibetan grammar</td>
<td>NPH, 1989 (4th printing)</td>
<td>NPH, 1959 19000 copies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Tenpa Gyamtso</td>
<td>Key to the general meaning of Kavyadarsa and the science of ornamentation</td>
<td>GPPH, 1980 (1981 2nd printing)</td>
<td>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 &quot;circumstances were not conducive.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dapdin commentary by Bod-mkhas-pa</td>
<td>Root text and Commentary on Dapdin's Kavyadarsa</td>
<td>QNPH, 1981</td>
<td>QNPH, 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma Situ (root text)</td>
<td>Commentary on Karma Situ's Grammar</td>
<td>QNPH, 1982</td>
<td>QPPH, 1957 3750 copies. Based on Sde-dge woodblocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa-skya Pandita</td>
<td>The aphorisms of Sakya Pandita</td>
<td>SNPH, 1979</td>
<td>SNPH 1958 800 copies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakya Pandita</td>
<td>The aphorisms of Sakya Pandita</td>
<td>QNPH, 1979</td>
<td>QPPH 1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tseten Zhabdrung</td>
<td>The abridged <em>Mirror of Poetry</em></td>
<td>QNPH, 1981</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sungrab Gyamtso</td>
<td><em>Concise Tibetan grammar</em></td>
<td>QNPH, 1979</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tashi Tsering</td>
<td><em>Tibetan folk songs</em></td>
<td>SNPH, 1979</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsewang Namgyal</td>
<td><em>The good path of correct spelling</em></td>
<td>NPH, 1982 (3rd printing)</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungkar Rinpoche</td>
<td><em>Opening the door of the study of ornamentation for writing poetry</em></td>
<td>QNPH, 1982</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorje Gyalpo</td>
<td><em>Exegesis on poetry: A clarifying lamp</em></td>
<td>NPH, 1983</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trans. into Chinese by</td>
<td><em>Tale of monkeys and birds</em></td>
<td>QPPH, Dec. 1978</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Yinuan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Writers Publishing House (Beijing), June 1956</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


GNPH = Gansu Nationalities Publishing House
GPPH = Gansu People's Publishing House
NPH = Nationalities Publishing House (Beijing)
QNPH = Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House
QPPH = Qinghai People's Publishing House
TPPH = Tibetan People's Publishing House
A third link between the 1950s and the early post-Mao period was the release of certain well-known older-generation Tibetan scholars who had been imprisoned or assigned to menial labor during the Cultural Revolution. These include the above-mentioned Tshe-tan-zhab-drung, Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, and Shar-dong Rinpoche to name only a few. In the Chinese context, the "exoneration" (pingfari) and reappearance of pre-Cultural Revolution literary figures occurred a few years earlier, after the death of Mao on 9 September 1976 and provided "the clearest political sign that a literary thaw could be expected."\textsuperscript{540} While the significance for Tibetan regions might have had a different cast, in any case the exonerated scholars soon resumed teaching posts or were newly appointed to Tibetan programs at nationality institutes across the PRC. This lent a small degree of continuity to the pre- and post-Cultural Revolution periods. Finally, Huang (1997) remarks on the revival during the early post-Mao period of May Fourth writers and certain western authors who had been studied by Chinese writers and critics in the early half of the twentieth century. While few Tibetans would have read these prior to the Cultural Revolution, the translation of such works and their publication in Tibetan literary journals starting from 1982 resulted in the insertion of pre-Cultural Revolution Chinese literary discourse into the newly evolving Tibetan literary scene of the 1980s.

Ultimately, however, the literary-bureaucratic system had to be much expanded to accommodate the greater breadth of Tibetan publishing in the 1980s when compared to the 1950s. Aside from the main publishing houses and a limited amount of reprinted

\textsuperscript{540} Link, \textit{Uses of Literature}, 16.
material, there were few specifically Tibetan modern institutions to restore. The founding of the first literary magazine, *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* (*Tibetan Art and Literature*) in 1980 was in this sense truly groundbreaking—despite its being officially part of the restored national literary establishment and registration as an official provincial-level literary magazine. The evolution of this magazine demonstrates how the liberalization heralded by the 1978 Party Congress tangibly manifested itself in the expansion of Tibetan-medium cultural initiatives in the Tibet Autonomous Region. In contrast, the Chinese-language Tibetan literary journal—now called *Xizang Wenxue*—was founded by the Tibetan Branch of the Chinese Writers Association in Lhasa in 1977. As a result of the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1978, 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

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541 It would be interesting to know when traditional monastic woodblock publishing houses resumed printing.

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

543 Bstan-'dzin-rgan-pa, "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig gsar-pa'i skyed-tshal," *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal*, 1997, no. 2:1. *Xizang Wenxue* has remained the preeminent Chinese-language literary journal featuring writing by Tibetans in Chinese, and by Chinese about Tibet, as well as some translations of Tibetan-language works into Chinese. To the best of my knowledge, no other Chinese-language Tibet-related journal has even begun to match the readership of *Xizang Wenxue*. Indeed, there are few other sinophone Tibetan literary journals, inside or outside the TAR. Two examples are *Gesang Hua* (Flowers of the Good Era) published by the Cultural House (Wenhua Ju) in Hezuo, Gannan Prefecture, and *Gongga shan* (Gangs-dkar ri-bo) in Kangding. Lara Maconi (forthcoming) mentions two others (*Shannan wenyi* and *Qinghai qunzhong wenyi*), both of which were closed down in the 1980s for various reasons, including lack of readership. Contrast this situation with the plethora of Tibetan-language journals which have burgeoned since 1990. (See appendix.) And, yet, sinophone writing continues to be heavily represented among award grantees and literary serials, especially those published in the PRC.

Patricia Schiaffini (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 language journal, *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal*. Schiaffini-Vedani, "Tashi Dawa," 20–21.
By 1980, the "preparatory" was dropped, the real union begun and the emergency group disbanded. *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* was founded in this year, prior to which there were only a handful of Tibetan language newspapers existing countrywide and not a single literary journal.\(^{545}\) (See appendix for a list of some 120 Tibetan-language periodicals founded in the past fifty years.) Together with its Xining-based counterpart, the literary journal *Sbrang-char* (Light Rain) founded in 1981, *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* played a vital role not only in fostering writers, translators and critics, but in providing a proxy public forum for the exchange of ideas and a site of praxis for the negotiation of culture. The point has been aptly described by Maconi (2001):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(L)es magazines littéraires au Tibet sont de véritables carrefours d'activités littéraires diverses. Ils sont les lieux littéraires où tous les agents de l'activité médiatrice (écrivains, traducteurs, éditeurs) et les diverses phases du processus médiateur (création littéraire, traduction, édition, critique) se croisent, se superposent et interagissent d'une façon simultanée.}^{546}
\end{align*}
\]

While serving to bring together those in the knowledge class most directly involved in this form of cultural production, literary magazines also serve to link the cultural consumer. By 1984, both *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* and *Sbrang-char* were being distributed nationally. In this way, they also came to serve as an important literary link in the constitution of a "reading Tibet." That is, this magazine and other nationally

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\(^{544}\) Much of this information is provided in *Bstan-dzin-rган-pa* (1997).

\(^{545}\) Ljang-bu, "Phran-yi lta-shul re gnyis: Snyan-ngag gsar-bu'i skor-gyi gnad-don 'ga'-shas la dmigs-pa," in *Ljang-bu'i rtsom-btus: Lhug-rtson deb* (Lanzhou: Kan-su' u mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1997), 69. This article was originally published in *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal*, 1990, no. 1: 38-47. See also "Dus deb 'di nyid kyi sgrig pa po'i gta'm," 2. Though I have found it difficult to locate newspapers from these early years, selected literary works published in *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal*, *Bod-ljongs nyin-re'i lshogs-par*, *Misho-songon Bod-yig gsar-gyur*, and *Kan-lho'i gsar-gyur* during 1980 and 1981 were published as a collection in *Rdo-je-rgyal-po*, ed., *Gsar-bzhad me-tog lshom-bu*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1989). It is evident from this anthology that literary columns were featured in these newspapers, at least by 1980.

distributed journals and books provided and continue to provide a shared referent helping
to regalvanize a transregional "imagined" Tibetan readership, with a far greater
percentage of secular readers than in the pre-Communist era.547 As a forum for
intellectual activity and cultural production, literature takes on added significance in the
Tibetan context to the extent that the area which has been called "cultural Tibet" spans
several provincial borders.548 The gap between administrative boundaries and ethnic
communities—which in themselves are heterogeneous—has presented a challenge for the
implementation of Tibetan cultural programs and policies, such as standardized testing
and media distribution. "Reading Tibet" includes this cultural area within the PRC, as
well as the Tibetan-literate population outside, and thus serves as a largely unifying
factor. In this sense, the Tibetan nation could to a certain degree be grafted upon the
reading politic, though the link between print language and a national identity is tempered
by uncommonly low literacy rates (39% in 1995) among Tibetans in the PRC.549
Likewise, many Tibetans in exile are fluent in neither literary nor spoken Tibetan. The
Tibetan literature conference, held in August 1981 concommitantly with the launch of
Sbrang-char and just after the publication of Don-grub-rgyal's first collection entitled
'Bol-rtsom zhogs-pa'i skya-rengs (The Dawn of Clear and Simple Writing), also had

547 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 the gap between Latin and the "state languages" which emerged in Europe would have been much greater than that between Classical Tibetan and modern colloquial written Tibetan, my main point is that the secularization of education and more widespread literacy grants written Tibetan even more currency as a unifying force.
548 Alternatively, one could conceive of a "cultural Tibet" that is not only transregional, but transnational (including 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 doubtless 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.
549 Compare this figure with the PRC national average of 84%. Both statistics are official figures as recorded in China Population Statistics Yearbook, 90–93.
transregional implications by bringing together writers from the five Tibetan provinces and autonomous region.

Another effect of these two journals and the many subsequent literary magazine ventures that followed was to encourage would-be writers and provide both introduction and instruction on new literary trends in Tibetan. This effect, however, was not immediately realized. Indeed, a reader looking for "new Tibetan literature" would find little of interest in the very first issues of these journals, which aside from short stories published almost exclusively folk-based or classical style poetry praising the party and CCP policy. The most daring break from tradition might be to redirect this ornamental speech to praise for the beauty of the Tibetan environment or one's homeland instead of a lama, or party policy as had been the case since the late 1950s. In fact, Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal 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 a provincial-level publication and itself focused on folk literature. Thus, the transregional literature conference held in Xining in 1981 was especially significant in that it explicitly promoted the fostering of a "new literature." Aside from the advent of short stories, the early years of Tibetan publishing in the New Era were otherwise remarkable for the prevalence of classical writing forms.

The Tug of Tradition

Even a cursory survey of the earliest issues of Tibetan language publications in the post-Mao era reveals the lack of original Tibetan material from which editors could draw. Every single contribution in the first issue of Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal, for example,
was translated from Chinese.\textsuperscript{550} Academic journals also relied primarily on translated research articles originally written by Chinese scholars. A survey of \textit{Bod-kiyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal} and \textit{Sbrang-char} during their first few years of publication reveals that the contents generally consisted of 1) poetry, almost solely traditional metric verse form; 2) short stories, limited to one or two per issue in the early years;\textsuperscript{551} 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 \textit{Bod-kiyi rtsom-rig-sgyu-rtsal}, literary critic Skal-bzang-ye-shes (1983) calculated that out of 48 contributions in the fourth issue of the journal in 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 \textit{kāvya} style.\textsuperscript{552} Praise verse so dominated the poetry published in the first few years that an influential satire finally expressed the weary feeling of many readers, comparing praise-verse variously to a donkey, excessive sweets, a corpse, and a knife in ones ear. (See chapter 5 for translated excerpts from this poem.)\textsuperscript{553}

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 in 1978 paved the way for

\textsuperscript{550} Bstan-dzin-rgyan-pa (1997:1). Bstan-dzin-rgyan-pa was the founding editor of the journal, a post which he maintained until 1990. He was succeeded by Tshe-drö (b. 1949) who now serves as vice-chairman of the TAR Writers Union. Lhun-grub-mam-rgyal has been editor of the journal since 1995.

\textsuperscript{551} See Chab-brag Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho, "Bod-kiyi sgrung-gtam gsar-rtsom," 59–73.

\textsuperscript{552} Skal-bzang-ye-shes, "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig lo-rgyus," 64–65.

\textsuperscript{553} Drag-btsan rang-grol (aka Don-grub-rgyal), "Bstod-pa bklags-pa'i char-snang" (Impressions after reading praise verse), \textit{Sbrang-char}, 1984, no. 1:41–43.
economic liberalization and artistic experimentation, the end of the Cultural Revolution also sanctioned a revival in classical literary and other art forms. While this was true for all peoples in the PRC, the significance seems to have been particularly great for Tibetan culture which was especially 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.  

Tibetan intellectuals were faced with two seemingly opposing social vectors: 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, folk songs, etc. 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 the campaigns against the "olds" of the Cultural Revolution, rejoiced at the return of traditional Tibetan literary and other art forms. Not least, the revival of traditional poetry and folklore provided a newly educated generation with employment in the study of the Gesar epic and other folk traditions.

Second, Tibetan literature had never experienced the debate over vernacularization and experimentation which occurred in Chinese literary circles during the New

Culture movement in the early part of the twentieth century. 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 (discussed in the previous chapter) 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-ntsho, 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 Tshasprul 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.

Despite the fresh air offered by a relaxation of government policy in the late 1970s, a Tibetan vernacular literature needed time to flourish.

The "Tibetan New Literature"

Though dozens of articles have been published in the PRC surveying the rise of a new Tibetan literature, the topic has only begun to be discussed outside of the PRC. The most notable contributions in this field by Tibetans in the diaspora are the studies by Pema Bhum (1999) who focuses on the "new poetry," a general survey and critique in Tibetan of modern Tibetan literature by Hor-gtsang 'Jigs-med (2000) and important summary articles by Tsering Shakya (1999 and 2000). Moon (1991) has provided us with the earliest and most thorough introduction to the topic by a non-Tibetan outside of the PRC.

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555 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...
Stoddard (1994) includes a discussion of modern literature in her study on Tibetan publications in the New Era. Virtanen (2000) focuses on the work of Don-grub-rgyal (see below) and other important short-story writers within the context of the development of new literature and provides a good historical overview. Robin (1999) whose M.A. dissertation also focuses on Don-grub-rgyal continues to make contributions to the field with her translations and studies. I myself have discussed various themes in short stories and poems, especially in light of the social and geographic dislocation of many urbanized Tibetan writers in Hartley (1999). Grunfelder (1997), Maconi (2002), Schiaffini-Vedani (2002) and Yangdon Dhondup (forthcoming) have been working on Tibetan-authored and Tibeto-centric literature written in Chinese. Perhaps the earliest mention of Tibetan exile writing was made in the brief historical survey of Tibetan literature provided by Tashi Tsering (1979). Yet, despite an unprecedented burgeoning of Tibetan-language literature published in exile, I am not aware of any studies that have examined this phenomenon in detail. Anglophone literature by Tibetans in the diaspora, however, has been the focus of several provocative studies by Venturino (1995 and forthcoming).

As the main purpose of my dissertation is to examine the literary debates which later occurred in relation to the advent of new Tibetan literary forms, I do not wish to replicate or even summarize the findings of the above-mentioned scholars here. Generally speaking, however, most scholars concur that the launch of the first Tibetan literary journals Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal and Sbrang-char in 1980 and 1981 heralded a new era for Tibetan literature. By the end of 1981, the amount of original Tibetan

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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.

556 Ljang-bu, "Snyan-ngag gsar-ba'i skor," 68

557 For a summary list of Tibetan anthologies and literary journals published in exile, see Virtanen, A Blighted Flower and Other Stories, 12, n. 2.
contributions in *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* had jumped from 36% to nearly 80%; and by the end of 1982, more than 100 different Tibetan writers had submitted writings to the journal.\(^5\) As discussed above, the vast majority of these submissions were poetry and still reflected a strong classical influence. At the same time, we should recall that 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 Don-grub-rgyal (1953-1985), whom we discuss in greater detail below. 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 practised and became familiar with different traditional Tibetan literary styles."\(^5\)

*Bol-rtsom zhogs-pa'i skya-rengs* (The Dawn of Clear and Simple Writing) featured sixteen of Don-grub-rgyal's best works from 1979 to 1980. Published by the Nationalities Publishing House in January 1981, the collection included a foreword by Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las. 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 the works were poetic and quite classical in form.\(^5\)

Since the primary aim of my study is to examine literary debates which occurred in the 1980s and 1990s and the development of prose literature itself did not provoke the controversies engendered by literary innovations in poetry, I will only provide brief background information here on the general state of Tibetan prose in the post-Mao era. The reader is instead encouraged to refer to previous studies done on this topic. The

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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. 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 kāvyā 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 a novella in 1959, but this was not published until 1980.561 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 Skal-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.562 The author details the plots of stories which exemplify these tendencies. In Amdo, the theme of "suffering" is additionally applied in stories revealing the tragedies of the Ma Bufang period. Tsering Shakya (1999 and 2000) has discussed the plots of such stories including the popular novel Gtsug-g.yu (The Crown Turquoise), published in 1985.563 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, or perhaps critiques of tradition as

560 Ibid., 19–20.
561 See n. 194.
563 Tashi Tsering has suggested this alternative translation for what is otherwise usually rendered "The Turquoise Crown," as the title refers to the piece of turquoise worn by a Tibetan bride on her crown. Cf. translation in Lungta 1999 with the title as translated in Shakya (2000). (The "1999" issue of Lungta was actually released in 2002.)
interpreted by some scholars (e.g. Shakya, 1999 and Virtanen, 2000).\textsuperscript{564} 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, examples of which I have discussed elsewhere.\textsuperscript{565}

As was the case for Tibetan prose literature, the development of a widespread Tibetan vernacular poetry was not the result of a single trajectory from Tibetan traditional to Tibetan modern literature. Nor was it merely a result of progress spurred by Party policy. 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 in their works and who enjoyed a greater publishing presence. Writers such as Yidan Cairang (Yi-dam-tshe-ring) 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, a Tibetan writer and literary editor whose work we will discuss below, 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."\textsuperscript{566} These poems typically expressed longing or praise for the older revolutionary generation. Among these, he highlights as exemplary Skal-bzang's "In memory of four years after the death of Zhou Enlai" (1980), published in \textit{Qinghai Tibetan News}. Such poems were likely influenced by the Chinese anthology \textit{Poetry at Tiananmen}, published by the Nationalities Publishing House in 1979. This anthology was released nearly three years after the April

\textsuperscript{564} An English translation of this story and three other short stories can be found in Virtanen, \textit{A Blighted Flower and Other Stories}.  


\textsuperscript{566} Ljang-bu, "Snyan-ngag gsar-ba'i skor,"70.
1976 commemoration for Zhou Enlai which spurred its literary expressions, including "Zhou Zongli bangong tang de ding (The light in the office of Zhou Zongli)," "The Anguish of the First Month," and "Premier Zhou, Where Are You?" At the same time, these poems themselves could be considered to "lack originality" as they too were modeled after the Chinese panegyric songs and happy melodies of the seventeen years (1949-66) preceding the Cultural Revolution. Likewise, poems of praise modeled after folk songs or in classical kāvyā style are predominant among the earliest Tibetan poems published in literary magazines in 1980 and 1981. Bolder initiatives in experimental Tibetan poetry began several years after the advent of experimental forms in Chinese.

"Waterfall of Youth" and the Development of Tibetan Free Verse

While the appearance of short stories and essays in newspapers and literary journals during the 1980s do not seem to have provoked much opposition, the publication of free verse poetry from 1983 onwards became a hotly contested issue. The first modern Tibetan free verse poem published in the People's Republic of China (PRC) was "Waterfall of Youth," written by the young Amdo Tibetan writer Don-grub-rgyal under the pseudonym "Rang-grol" (literally, "Self-Liberated") in 1983. Though rather lengthy, the poem is translated in its entirety here for purposes of comparison with later poems it inspired and due to its serving as a cornerstone in the construction of a modern Tibetan national literature:

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567 The latter was a Chinese poem written by Li Ying commemorating the late Zhou Enlai, as discussed by Huang, op. cit., 47.
568 This poem first appeared in the official Qinghai-based Tibetan literary magazine Shrang-char (Light Rain): Rang-grol, "Lang-tsho'i rtab-chu," Shrang-char, 1983, no. 2: 56-61. A translation of this poem by Tsering Shakya has also been published in Mānoa 12:2, p. 9-13. For the purposes of my study, however, I have included my own translation herewith which is more literal, omits no lines and maintains the layout of the original poem. Since I could not locate the original magazine at the time of writing this dissertation, the
Waterfall of Youth
Rang-grol

The clear and blue sky,
The warm and gentle sunlight,
The wide and open land,
The fair and pleasing flowers,
The tall and majestic mountains ......

E ma!—
A sight yet more pleasing than these
are the waters cascading over the face
of the rocky cliff before me.

Look!
The rapids, white and unsullied;
The sunspots, a peacock's plume,
The wings of a parrot,
The design of a silk brocade,
A rainbow .......

Listen!
The sound of the flowing water is clear, soothing to the ear.
The song of youth is the song of the gods,
The melody of Brahma,
The voice of Sarasvati,
The sound of the cuckoo ... ....

Kye!—No ordinary waterfall of nature, this has
A splendid and majestic appearance
Fearless heart,
Uncowering mettle,
Hale and hardy body,
Beautiful and resplendent ornaments,
Soft and pleasant refrain .......

This—
Is the waterfall of youth of the young people of Tibet, the Land of Snows.

layout here is based on the reprint of this poem in Don-grub-rgyal, Lang-tsho'i rab-chu dang ljags-rtson bdams-sgrig (Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 1994), 89-96. AMI director Tashi Tsering assured me that this version adheres to the original layout. For reasons unknown to me, the original layout was not reduplicated in certain editions published in the PRC, including Gyur-med, ed. Lang-tsho'i rab-chu (Waterfall of Youth), Bod kyi deng-rabs rtson-rig dpe-tshogs (Modern Tibetan Literature Series) (Xining: Mtsho-sngon mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1993), 10-18. Likewise, the layout was altered for the five-volume collection of Don-grub-rgyal's works published by the Nationalities Publishing House (Beijing) in 1997, although the cascade effect was maintained.

Lit. the bow of Brgya-byin-dbang-po (Skt. Indra).

Brahma, the father of Sarasvati.
This—
Is the innovative courage
of the young Tibetan people
of the 1980s.
It is the stance of struggle,
The song of youth.

*Kye kye! The youth of the waterfall!!
The waterfall of youth!
Your fearless courage,
—uncowering bravery
—indefatigable strength
—From whence such vast eternal force
as this?

Yes.
The rains which fall from the sky in spring.
The springs released from beneath the earth in summer.
The essence of the frost and hail in autumn.
The purest essence of the snows in winter.

And still,
Snow water—mountain water—shale water—forest water
—swamp water—mountain water—valley water—water at the valley end—
water at the valley mouth—

In short,
—Water of well-wishes,
—Water of virtue,
—Water of fulfillment,
—Water with the eight good qualities,
—Water of plenty.

Not a single narrow stream, but hundreds.
Not one type, but hundreds of thousands.

You are a water that unites us, and are thereby
able to fall from the sheer steep rock.
You are a water that gathers all, and thereby
dares to leap into the sheer ravine.

You possess the courage to gather different fresh waters.
Your mind is vast and your body strong, your strength great.
You are free of arrogance, or the stain of pride; thus,
Your stream is long and your flow powerful.
You have the capacity to discard filth while imbibing nectar.
Your body and mind are clean, your youth boundless.

Waterfall!!
You are the witness of history and
The pioneer of the future.
In each and every drop of your unsullied waters is
inscribed the rise and fall of the Land of Snows, Tibet.
In every little particle of your seething spray is
gathered the flourish and decline of the realm of cool snows.

Without you,
How would the sword of grammar have otherwise been tempered?
Without you,
How would the knife of crafts have otherwise been sharpened?
Without you,
The tree of medicine would not have been able to flourish,
The flower of philosophy and Buddhism would not have borne fruit nor ripened.

Perhaps—
In your crystal-like mind, as well, lies the
wound of history,
chronic disease of war,
blister of blind faith,
dust of conservatism....

And yet,
With the majesty of your youth and the glory of
your innate strength,
there is no chance that the bitterness of winter
—will ever bury your mind in
an icy casket.
Though the razor of the harsh wind may slice at your flowing stream
—countless times, the chance of its cutting through
is even less.

And the reason?—
The source of your waters are related to the snows and
The end of your waters is mixed with the sea.
Thus, the long flow of your history
Gives us dignity and pride, and
The pleasant sound of the flow of your eons
Gives us encouragement and strength.

Do you hear me—Waterfall?
Do you hear these questions of the young people of Tibet, the Land of Snows?
What to do if the great horse of poetry is suffering from thirst?
What to do if the elephant of prosody is tormented by heat?
What to do if the lion of ornate diction is afflicted with pride?
What to do if the boy of dramaturgy is left orphaned?
Who will care for the astrology of our fathers if left arcane?
How will the young man Science be welcomed if taken as groom?
Who will be husband if the young woman Technology is welcomed as bride?

So be it—Waterfall,
These answers which derive from your pure clear and pleasant soft song
—are held in our minds like drawings carved in stone.
Truly,
Yesteryear with its glorious shining sun
is no substitute for today;
And how can yesterday with its salt-water
quench the thirst of today?
If the corpse of history, which is hard to locate,
Is bereft of the life-force appropriate for the times,
The pulse of development will never beat,
And the heart and blood of the avant-garde will never flow,
Not to mention the march of progress.

*Ka ye!* Waterfall,
Your plummeting rapids and
Seething spray express our strength—

We
—the new generation of Tibet.
Your whooshing stream and
The roar of your rapids manifest our ideals—

We
—the new generation of Tibet.
Conservatism, timidity, blind faith, sloth... ...
will find no slot among our generation.
Backwardness, barbarism, darkness, reaction... ...
have no place in our time.

Waterfall, Waterfall,
Our minds move in accord with your pace and
Our blood flows together with your stream.
On the path of the future—
Though the bends are even sharper now,
Tibetan youth have no time for fear.
We will surely build a new path of progress
for our people.

Look—
These troops standing in formation are the
new generation of Tibet.

Listen—
This song of steady beat is the step of the
youth of Tibet.
The great road of light,
The tremendous task,
The life of happiness,
The song of struggle,
Will never fade for the youth of the waterfall; and
The waterfall of youth, for this reason, is even less likely to wane.

This is—
The waterfall of youth intoned in the throats of the
young generation of Tibet.

This is—
The waterfall of youth cascading in the minds of the youth of Tibet.

In retrospect, "Waterfall of Youth" might be considered a somewhat awkward combination of Chinese Communist-style rhetoric with the manifesto overtones of an idealistic and nationalistic youth. The poem reveals an ambivalence, describing the past at the same time as both "glorious" and perjoratively "salty." Don-grub-rgyal's use of the em-dash for emphasis is inconsistent and often meaningless, as if he were trying the technique on for size. Yet, the ardent response this poem engendered among most young Tibetan readers quickly made the writer legendary, a "James Dean of modern Tibet" (Kapstein, 1999:45). Contemporary writers who favor Tibetan free verse have lauded Don-grub-rgyal's "Waterfall of Youth" (1983) as "the manifesto of the new Poetry." As will be illustrated here, this poem was one of the most influential pieces of Tibetan modern literature in verse or prose. Its greatest significance resides in its standing as the first Tibetan free verse poem published in the PRC. The distinction is an important one, as Tibetans outside of the PRC had begun writing free verse earlier, though in limited numbers. For example, Chögyam Trungpa whose earliest published poetry was written in 1968, was actively writing free verse in English by 1972. In addition, a

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572 Interestingly, "Waterfall of Youth" failed to receive an award of distinction from Shrang-char, which in its first issue of 1984 lists awards granted to exemplary works published during the first three years of the journal (1981–83).
573 To the best of my knowledge, none of this experimental writing among exiled Tibetans had any influence on writers in Tibet. Literary and scholarly exchange between Tibetans living in the PRC and those in exile started only in the late 1980s with the internal (Ch. netbu) publication of such "forbidden" works as Shakabpa's Political History. More recently, the works of certain scholars, most notably Namkhai Norbu (Italy) are being openly published in Tibet. I am not aware of this being the case for any literary works, though it is probable that a few copies of exile literature make their way into Tibet through one means or another.
short-lived literary journal published from St. Stephens College in Delhi was launched in
1977 under the title Young Tibet. Renamed Lotus Fields Fresh Winds for its second issue
in 1979 (its third issue in 1980 entitled simply Lotus Fields was its last), this magazine
featured numerous works in English by Tibetans in India, including several free verse
poems.575

In any case, for Tibetans in the PRC, the publishing of "Waterfall of Youth" was
a watershed for modern Tibetan literature. As the first example of free verse in a truly
modern sense among Tibetan writers in the PRC, this poem evinces several
Whitmanesque qualities: a "cataloguing technique" which simply lists objects calling the
reader to the immediate narratorial present; an emphasis on landscape and environmental
beauty; repetition which evokes an incantatory rhythm; and punctuating the end of a line
with a string of ellipses (...).576 The similarity, however, raises more questions than it
answers about the inspiration for this famous poem. Though Chinese studies and
translations of Whitman were enthusiastically being published again in Chinese literary
magazines after 1978,577 a contemporary of Don-grub-rgyal has suggested that the latter
was primarily inspired by the writings of his Chinese contemporaries.578

Indeed, Don-grub-rgyal wrote "Waterfall of Youth" while teaching at the Central
Nationalities Institute in Beijing,579 where free verse was rapidly gaining popularity
among the larger Chinese reading public and Chinese poets had been experimenting with

575 I am grateful to Tashi Tsering of Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamsala for briefing me on this history
and providing me with copies of the second issue.
576 The effect of these literary characteristics in the work of Whitman is further discussed by Simpson,
"Destiny Made Manifest, 179–184.
577 Huang, op. cit., 47, 53.
579 Dbyangs-can sgeg-pa’i-blo-gros (aka Dor-zhi), introduction to Dpal Don-grub-rgyal-gyi gsung-'bum,
vol. 6 (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1994), 2.
obscure poetry (menglongshi) since 1979.\textsuperscript{580} At the same time, Don-grub-rgyal was well-schooled in Tibetan classical poetry, folk literature, the life and writings of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), and even the Old Tibetan manuscripts of Dunhuang.\textsuperscript{581} This training was uncommon for his peer group. Don-grub-rgyal was among the lucky few who managed to obtain a Tibetan education during the tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution. Such training was enabled by the stubborn persistence of certain brave elderly teachers in areas such as Reb-gong, Gcan-tsha and Chab-cha in Qinghai Province.\textsuperscript{582} Accordingly, upon graduation from middle school in 1976, he was hired by the Qinghai Radio Broadcasting Station to write for the Qinghai Tibetan News.\textsuperscript{583} In 1978, he was sent to Beijing for graduate studies in Tibetan literature at Central Nationalities Institute under the tutelage of the highly esteemed Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las, whose contributions in Tibetan literature, including a widely used textbook on \textit{snyan-ngag}, we discussed in chapter 2. Upon obtaining his master's degree in 1981, Don-grub-rgyal was hired to teach a class for a select group of students with advanced skills in Tibetan. It was at this time that he wrote his groundbreaking poem. Shortly after the publication of "Waterfall of Youth," Don-grub-rgyal returned to Qinghai Province where he began to teach at a Normal College in Chab-cha (Ch. Gonghe.) Two years later, he took his own life, the reason for which a range of speculation exists.\textsuperscript{584}

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\textsuperscript{580} Some scholars (e.g. van Crevel 1996, Yeh 1992) have identified the drawer literature (chouti wenxue) published in the Chinese underground literary journal \textit{Jintian} (Today) and other early post-Mao literary journals as the "inspiration" for obscure poetry, while others (e.g. Tay 1985) view the impetus as lying in the Tiananmen Poetry movement of 5 April 1976 and the "scar literature" (shanghen wenxue) of 1978–80.

\textsuperscript{581} See Nancy Lin (2003) for her thesis on Don-grub-rgyal's study, translation, and vernacular rendering of the \textit{Rāmana} (Tib. Rāmāyāna) version found at Dunhuang.

\textsuperscript{582} Ljang-bu, "Don-grub-rgyal," op. cit. This phenomenon has also been mentioned by Pema Bhum, \textit{Six Stars with a Crooked Neck}, 146–147. It is likely that there were cases of this in the TAR and other Tibetan areas outside of the TAR, though I have not seen information on such cases.

\textsuperscript{583} Biographical information here is primarily drawn from Pema Bhum, "The Life of Dhondup Gyal."

\textsuperscript{584} Accounts vary regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of Don-grub-rgyal, as well as possible motivations. Pema Bhum (1995) recounts from second-hand sources that the writer died from asphyxiation on his bed in the inner room of his apartment after disconnecting an iron stove, still
The life and writings of Don-grub-rgyal have been discussed in considerable
detail elsewhere. Heather Stoddard (1994) and Pema Bhum (1995), for example, discuss
the writings of Don-grub-rgyal within the context of his life history, while Matthew
Kapstein (1999) offers a provocative discussion of the scholarly work and literary
innovations of Don-grub-rgyal as efforts "to find a new voice not by rejecting Tibet's
literary past, but by immersing himself within and revaluing it." Mark Stevenson
(1997) provides an intertextual reading of the popular essay "Rkang-lam phra-mo (The
Narrow Path)" emphasizing its resonance with the zawen essay style of Lu Xun. Most
recently, Virtanen (2000) has provided us with translations of two short stories by Don-
grub-rgyal, as well as historical background and speculation on other sources of
inspiration in his writing. Studies and evaluations of Don-grub-rgyal's contributions to
Tibetan literature by writers and critics in the PRC will be discussed in chapter 8.

While "Waterfall of Youth" constitutes a turning point in Tibetan literary history,
a flourishing of free verse among Tibetan writers was not immediately widespread.

smouldering, from its chimney and hauling it from the outer room. His body was found, along with a
suicide note, a bottle of leftover alcohol and scattered cigarette butts, on the morning of November 30,
1985. ("The Life of Dhondup Gyal," 26.) This account corrects that of Stoddard (1994) who states that he
put his head in a gas oven. ("Tibetan Publications," 144.) The most popular interpretation of his death, that stressing the writer's nationalist sentiments, springs
from the suicide note which allegedly read: "I hope you will understand my reason for departing from this
life... The sole purpose of my writings has been to awaken the Tibetan people from mental slumber, but I
have failed. So I have given my life for the Tibetan people." (Quoted in Lungta 9, [winter 1995]: back
cover.) Heather Stoddard, however, suggests that the long-term deleterious effects of his drinking bouts
"contributed in no small way to his suicide. ("Don grub rgyal (1953–1985): Suicide of a Modern Tibetan
Writer and Scholar," 826). Pema Bhum attributes the writer's death to the difficulties he was facing "in his
work and in society, ...[and] problems at home with his wife." (p. 26) While Riika Virtanen (2000)
favorably evaluates these accounts, she proposes an additional factor: the imminent publication of a
politically sensitive poem, written four months before his suicide, entitled, "Here also is a Living Heart
Beating Strongly," in which Don-grub-rgyal asserts that "the people inside Tibet and those in exile, are
about to rise up." (Virtanen has translated the full-length poem in her appendix.) While people with whom
I have spoken doubted this final possibility, surely the issue remains unresolved.


46 For an English translation of this essay, see Don-grub-rgyal, "A Threadlike Path," trans. by Mark
587 Virtanen (2000: 18) discusses other possible sources of inspiration for the writings of Don-grub-
gryal, including the colloquial essays of Lu Xun, Chinese translations of foreign authors, and conversations

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Other Tibetan free verse poems began to appear only in 1986 and were not a regular feature in literary magazines until 1989 and 1990. Let us now look at this later flourishing of Tibetan free verse, including evidence for the influence Don-grub-rgyal's work on later writers. We have discussed here and in the previous chapter a constellation of transformations in Tibetan society and the Chinese literary world which occurred in the decades preceding the advent of Tibetan free verse, factors that collectively influenced the writing of Don-grub-rgyal and other Tibetan writers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Not least among these was the exposure to Western writers. For example, Tibetans in the People's Republic of China came to know of Walt Whitman during the "third peak" of his reception in the late 1970s and early 1980s when "critics began to treat Whitman as part of an academic discourse and his political message became less important,"\(^{588}\) but the influence was not direct. Nor does the influence from the free verse of Chinese writers, appear to be the greatest direct influence during the early period of the development of free verse in Tibetan literature.

Despite the prevalence of Chinese free verse, we can be fairly certain by examining the poems themselves that many of the earliest Tibetan experiments with free verse were directly inspired by Don-grub-rgyal's poems and not through the reading of Chinese free verse poets. For instance, the second free verse poem to be published in an official literary magazine was [Ko-zhul] Grags-pa-'byung-gnas's "Yum-chen," which was published the following year in *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal*.\(^{589}\) The author of the poem is now a professor and researcher at the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing with people in outlying villages in Qinghai province while conducting radio interviews for the Tibetan section of the Qinghai Broadcasting Station.

\(^{588}\) Huang, op. cit., 91.

and best known for his biographical dictionary of early Tibetan scholars.\textsuperscript{590} Though he has authored several research articles, his ventures in creative writing are few. Evidently, Don-grub-rgyal's trailblazing poem prompted Grags-pa-byung-gnas to experiment with free verse. A brief comparison of an excerpt from his poem with Don-grub-rgyal's as it appears above will suffice as evidence for the source of inspiration:

\begin{verbatim}
Look!
Descendents of the decent and wise,
Accepting whatever has been entrusted to them,
Study infinite knowledge
For the purpose of new happiness.

Listen!
Groups of Youth
Offer their best wishes
For the long life of
Their beloved great mother.

Kye!
Mother,
Motherland,
Onward.
\end{verbatim}

Here we see the use of the descending "staircase" lines, which for "Waterfall of Youth" visually represents the cascading waters, though there seems to be little purpose for its use in this later poem "Great Mother." Whereas the "staircase" structure was first used by the Georgian-born Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (1894–1930),\textsuperscript{591} perhaps the only poet whose experimentation with form was accepted in post-1949 China,\textsuperscript{592} the use of this formal device in Tibetan poetry seems to have been mainly inspired by (or an


imitation of) Don-grub-rgyal's poem and not directly borrowed from Mayakovsky. I make this assumption based on other strong similarities between "Waterfall" and later poems discussed here. For instance, in the poem above, Grags-pa-'byung-gnas has also used the imperatives "Look!" and "Listen!" before two stanzas. Likewise, his exhortational tone, which at once praises youth and calls on them to work towards a modern society, mimics that of Don-grub-rgyal, though the urgent pitch could also be said to echo communist-style propaganda. During this same year, another poem "Cang-shes rta-pho" ("The Know-All Horse") was published in Sbrang-char. Though the editor published it in essay form, the work seems intended to be free verse and clearly draws on Don-grub-rgyal's poem. Likewise, the publication of another poem with strong parallels to "Waterfall of Youth" was published in 1985, the year of Don-grub-rgyal's suicide.

More original were several free verse poems submitted by Ljang-bu (b. 1963, Henan County, Qinghai Province) to Sbrang-char in 1985 (no. 1). These are not direct imitations of Don-grub-rgyal's work. However, he began writing these in 1983 and 1984, suggesting that the idea to write free verse may have come from the precedent Don-grub-rgyal established. Ljang-bu was a student at Northwest Nationalitites Institute at the time. He has since become the leading writer of free verse in the 1990s. An example of

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594 Sangs-grol (aka Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar), "Dgu-chu'i glu-dbyangs," Sbrang-char, 1985, no. 2:27-30. Though the editor also printed this in essay-form, it clearly mimics Don-grub-rgyal's poem. I have been told that many people praised this poem, which the author wrote while working at the translation office in Beijing, where he is still employed.
595 Like many people from his home region in southeastern Qinghai Province, Ljang-bu is an ethnic Mongol who was schooled in Tibetan and Chinese. He primarily writes in Tibetan. This is also the case for another popular writer, Tshe-ring-don-grub who has said of himself, "My bones are Mongolian, but I've spent my whole life speaking Tibetan, and all I've ever known was Tibetan culture." See Harley and Bhum, "Tsering Dondrup: Author of "A Show to Delight the Masses," in Persimmon: Asian Literature, Arts and Culture, vol. 1, no. 3 (winter 2001): 58-59. For an excellent study of the history of this area, the implications for national identity, and a discussion of Ljang-bu and Tshe-ring-don-grub in particular, see

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one of his earlier poems, written on 24 August 1984, follows. Significantly, this poem is not overly obscure in meaning, a quality that marks much of Ljang-bu's later poetry.

\[ H_2O^{596} \]

—Ice's love.
I am nothing more than a solid form,
but why do you call me stubborn?
I haven't the sound of rushing waters,
but why do you call me mute?

Actually, I was a joyous blue river;
my character cool and pure,
I had a pleasant flowing melody.
My love was soft and smooth. ... ...

This merciless environment,
The harsh winds of winter,
have led me to this unheard and undetected state.
However, still I am H\(_2\)O.

Don't say that I am dead.
My courage is a pill that resurrects.
I am a joyous clear blue water.
I have spirit.
I have red blood.
In the depths of this hardness and cold,
My heart and ... ... \(^{597}\)

I have unwavering
soul.
I need the springtime.
Even more, I need sunlight and warmth.

Would that I merge with the plummeting falls of freedom,
reside in the lapping waves of love,
surge into the sky of happiness, together with the Milky Way!

Still, I am H\(_2\)O.

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\(^{597}\) This is the first instance in Tibetan poetry in which ellipses were used for the purpose of showing an incomplete or understood thought. Note that the uses of ellipses in "Waterfall of Youth" expresses "et cetera," implying other items could be added to the list preceding the ellipses. I am grateful to Pema Bhum for bringing this distinction to my attention.
My lifeforce which is bound by the cold, and my love which momentarily hardened... and ... And I am the seed of a love not yet ready to bud.

While only a few examples of Tibetan free verse were being published in official literary journals at that time, free verse poems were more numerous in local "samizdat" or unofficial privately funded magazines. The first of these was founded by Ljang-bu and friends in his hometown (Henan County, Qinghai Province) in 1983. This was soon followed by another journal launched by Ljang-bu and fellow students at Northwest Nationalities Institute (Lanzhou) where he enrolled for undergraduate school in 1984. Similar unofficial publishing projects sprung up at this school and elsewhere. Significantly, these unofficial journals tend to be regional in nature and remain so to this day. For example, students from Reb-gong (Tongren) and students from Chab-cha (Gonghe) started their own respective cyclostyle journals at Northwest Nationalities Institute, where independent journals are more numerous than at other schools. Such a training ground resulted in graduates of this school being among the most accomplished of free verse poets. For example, all four of the free verse poets highlighted by the Lhasa-born editor Dpal-lha-mo in her 1990 study of modern Tibetan poetry are from Amdo and are graduates of Northwest Nationalities Institute. One reason for the predominance of experimental writing at Northwest Nationalities Institute in the mid-

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598 Ljang-bu, "Don-grub-rgyal," op. cit. The three founders of this magazine, entitled Ri-skyes me-tog (Mountain Flower) were Ljang-bu, Tshe-ring-don-grub, and Rdo-rje-tshe-brtan. The last writes in Chinese. Accordingly, this magazine included submissions in both Tibetan and Chinese.

599 Ibid. The title of this unofficial literary magazine was Mthing-zla (Blue Moon). It was succeeded by Skar-tshom (Constellation), which ran from 1986-1987 and was also founded by two students from Henan County (Qinghai), Tshe-ring-don-grub and Mgon-po-skyabs.

600 Shar-dong-ri, for example, is the name of a journal started by Chab-brag Dkon-mchog-skyabs and other students from Chab-cha (Gonghe) who were studying at Northwest Nationalities Institute in the late 1980s. I do not have access to any of the earliest issues, but I do have copies of more recent regional literary journals from the Northwest Nationalities Institute and elsewhere.
1980s might be that students at Lanzhou had more models from which to draw on, since they tended to have greater access to foreign literature in Chinese translation than Tibetan students at other minority institutes (excluding the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing). Specifically, a college "language" course (daxue yuwen 大学语文) was required for all entering undergraduates at Northwest Nationalities Institute and taught in Chinese using a nationally standardized textbook by the same name. Contrary to its name, the course did not concern grammar but was rather a rigorous introduction, primarily, to Chinese classical literature, but also to a few early-twentieth-century writers such as Guo Morou and others who wrote in free verse. The course also introduced a limited number of western writers in translation. Over the years, a greater number of modern Chinese writers and a wider representation of western writers were included. Northwest Nationalities Institute had higher requirements for Chinese-language competency on their entrance exams compared to other schools. Since incoming freshmen at other schools were less likely to have good command of Chinese, teachers at schools such as Qinghai Nationalities Institute were allowed to substitute other course material for the daxue yuwen class. At the same time, the level of Tibetan among some students at Northwest Nationalities Institute was relatively high due to the perserverance of older teachers in certain areas who insisted on teaching Tibetan throughout the Cultural Revolution. This would lend them confidence in attempting to write Tibetan literature. By the late 1980s, experimental writing in Tibetan became widespread and

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601 Dpal-lha-mo, "Deng-rabs smyan-ngag-gi rtsom-tshul," 29–30. The four writers she holds as exemplary are Ljang-bu, Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar, Seng-gshong Rdo-rje-gcod-pa, and Dpa'-rte. 602 I am grateful to Pema Bhum for sharing this information with me.
defined any generalization based on geographic area or educational background. As one poet quipped, "Even primary school students write New Poetry."603

The publishing of small-run unofficial journals tended to result in the formation of a sort-of literary group at Northwest Nationalities Institute, though not a salon in the Western European sense. Students would occasionally read poetry to one another, but their main activity centered around the publishing of the journal. Another "group" was convened in Lanzhou in the late 1980s in connection with memorializing activities for Don-grub-rgyal on November 30, 1986, but this too was informal.604

By 1986, Tibetan free verse appeared with more frequency and was beginning to diversify in terms of content and style.605 Yet, the model of "Waterfall of Youth" continued to remain primary.606 Consider, for instance, a free verse poem written by a student from the Nationalities Middle School in Rebkong (Tongren, Qinghai Province), which appeared in the smaller literary journal, Zla-zer published in Gansu in 1986. This poem, which is also exhortational in tone, praises the new developments of the 1980s and the promise of youth. It is clearly influenced by "Waterfall of Youth":

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604 See Pema Bhum, "The Life of Dhondup Gyal.," 27. The only other literary group with which I am familiar is one comprised of several writers in Chab-cha (Gonghe) who convened to publish a book of local writers in 1999. They formally recognize themselves as a group and have initiated cultural events in the Chab-cha area in recent years.
605 An average of four to five free verse poems were published in each issue of Sbrang-char during 1986 and early 1987. The third issue of 1987, however, featured as many as ten free verse poems.
606 For example, a few poems in Sbrang-char 1986, no. 3, also appear to be influenced by, but not direct imitations of Don-grub-rgyal's "Waterfall of Youth." These include Nyi-ma-bzang-po, "Sbrang-char," p. 51; Dpal-chen-rgyal, "Phugs-bsam-gyi glu-dbyangs (Song of Ideals)" pp. 54–55; and Rin-chen-rgyal, "Tsho-ba (Life)" pp. 56–57.
Youth of the Eighties

Blooms unfolding slowly,
   Rivers flowing meanderingly,
   Suns burning brightly,
   Evening clouds playing busily.

You are the
   Ornaments of the earth,
   Daughters of the snow mountains,
   Jewels of the sky,
   Beauties of dawn.

And yet,
   More beautiful than this,
   More wonderous than this,
   More pleasing than this,
   With more eternal strength than this,

Ema!
   Are the youth of the eighties,
   born on this happy earth,
   in the likeness of the wind,
   whose roots drink from the waters of science.

Look!
   [...]  

Listen!
   [...]  

Kye! The courage of youth!
   The youth with courage! [...]  

The format of another poem in this same issue of Zla-zer entitled "Friend Graceful with Youth" also replicates the layout of "Waterfall of Youth," retaining the cascading lines and employing the exhortational "Look!" and "Smell!" Note the stereotypical predominance of the topic of "youth" as a theme in many of the earliest free verse poems.

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In 1989, the accomplished Lhasa-based writer Bkra'-shis-dpal-ldan (b. 1962, Gzhis-ka-rtse) wrote what could be considered a literary retrospective of Don-grub-rgyal's works, placing them in the context of their import for "encouraging the foundation and development of a new Tibetan literature."\(^{609}\) The fact that this review was published in *Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug* (Tibet Studies), an academic journal published by the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it suggests that Don-grub-rgyal's renown had spread well beyond his birthplace of Amdo by the late 1980s. He was now received as a pan-Tibetan writer. Secondly, with this article the discourse surrounding his work moved beyond literary magazines and into a publication central to established Tibetan academia, suggesting that his works were considered more canonical, as writers and others continued to negotiate the definition of "Tibetan literature."

Bkra'-shis-dpal-ldan's lengthy critique in many ways typifies the popular regard held then for the maverick writer, four years after taking his own life. Great emphasis is placed on Don-grub-rgyal's innovative writing style and on his basing characters on people in "everyday life."\(^{610}\) The critic notes a change in Don-grub-rgyal's work from the pre-1980 period, such as poems published in the collection *Dawn of Clear and Simple Writing*. Though Don-grub-rgyal's earlier poems were "modern and realistic in content, he employed poetic figures from the *Kāvyādārśa*." In contrast, the poem "Waterfall of Youth" is praised for being "completely liberated from the old writing style."\(^{611}\) He notes that the writing style in some works by Don-grub-rgyal, such as "The Narrow Footpath" (*Rkang-lam phra-mo*), has been likened to the western "stream of conscious" technique,

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\(^{610}\) Ibid., 67.

\(^{611}\) Ibid. 70.

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while others compare his writing style to that of Lu Xun.612 Further, he observes that what is novel about Don-grub-rgyal’s work is that he studied the free verse of Russian poets and did not use "incomprehensible antiquated ornate lexical terms." Bkra’-shis-dpal-ldan himself quotes several Russian literary greats, including Belinsky (b. 1847), Gorky (1868–1936)—the so-called founder of socialist realism—and Pushkin (1799–1837), who are often cited by Tibetan literary critics in the 1980s, reflecting the literary theory most widely circulating at that time. His monologic depiction of the classical Tibetan poetry written for several centuries since the translation of the Kāvyādarsa and the deleterious effect it had on the evolution of an indigenous literature and literary theory represents the position taken by no small number of Tibetan writers and critics, even to this day:

It has long been customary for Tibetans to adopt the essence of the rich culture of other nationalities into our own rich store of nationality culture. This was also the case for the study of ornamental writing or poetic figures (tshig-rgyan rig-pa), of course, in that we translated the Kāvyādarsa of an Indian scholar, and then preserved and developed it such that it became widespread throughout Tibet.

However, the indiscriminate preservation of Snyan-ngag me-long in Tibetan literature (rtsom-rig) due to the influence of conservative and narrow thought became a restrictive covenant in terms of our poetic writing style. Until now we have only been capable of copying the kāvyā poetic figures (me-long-ma'i rgyan), and given our long-standing society, the environment and the antiquated thought of our people, we still haven’t been able to produce a theory with the characteristics of our own nationality. Because our study of the arts of other more advanced nationalities has not been sufficient, our poetry (snyan-rtsom) still has not been able to move beyond the theories of India.613

The review is interesting as well in that it speaks to a wider debate between conservative scholars and more innovation-seeking writers. He closes his article with the following clarification:

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612 Ibid., 81. See n. 589.
There is something which must be emphasized here: In an innovative stage (gsar-gtod byed-pa' bsgyud-rim), if one is not adept at adopting new things—whatever they may be—there is great danger of our becoming like the maxim of our elders "I, the girl who didn't know the way of Her Ladyship (lcam lags), lost my own way." When one is forever chasing about blindly and rashly, there is no way to accord with history and real life. For this reason, it is important to act carefully. In particular, the time has not come to transport writing style of traditional snyan-ngag to "the museum of history." We certainly must hold as important our nationality's poetic theory and literary development, foremost of which is traditional poetry. Thus, I am not saying that the writings which have been produced lately have taken the place (lit. chair) of our nationality's traditional poetry. Nor am I saying that traditional poetry has passed its time. However, my praise and regard for the writings of Don-grub-rgyal, such as "Waterfall of Youth," is wholehearted. Since he is a component of our own writing, I wanted to express that he was a writer who forged an innovative path and that his work is a new priceless gem in the store of Tibetan poetry.614

This debate which seems to have grown more heated in pitch during recent years will be discussed in more detail later, along with subsequent re-evaluations of Don-grub-rgyal. Suffice it to say here that Bkra-shis-dpal-lidan's praise for the young writer was unqualified: "[Don-grub-rgyal] was a young Tibetan writer worthy of his name, who had no need to be ashamed."615 Don-grub-rgyal's influence seems to have waned only in the early 1990s when the writings of Ljang-bu became popular among a certain sector of younger generation writers. (See chapter 9 herewith.)

As Tibetan writers became more familiar with free verse through Chinese translation and studies by Chinese literary critics, their reaction was mixed. While Chinese modern poets praised the versatility offered by the longer prosaic lines of Whitman,616 Tibetan kāvyā had never been limited in the length of its lines. Though the

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613 Ibid., 70.
614 Ibid., 84–85.
615 Ibid., 64.
616 Huang (1994) notes the irony of this however and points to an interesting phenomenon in reception studies: "The irony is that modern Chinese writers were aware of their own prose tradition, but it never occurred to them to appropriate it for poetry: the four classical masterpieces of Chinese fiction all feature
length of lines in Tibetan poems is most commonly seven or nine syllables, there are plenty of poems by classical Tibetan poets with lines of 23 syllables or more. There is even precedent in Old and Classical Tibetan, though limited, for lines of varying lengths in a single poem. Thus, while some Tibetan writers defined "rang-mos snyan-ngag" as free verse free from formal restrictions, more often emphasis was placed on the opportunity offered for "unfettered expression." Tibetan writers sought freedom not only from the restrictions on content dictated by party policy during the Cultural Revolution, but from the conventional content of Tibetan classical and religious poetry. China, by contrast, had long enjoyed a wide range of literary subject matter and more developed literary prose tradition. As Tibetan free verse became more widespread, however, the literary innovation it represented was perceived as threatening by some writers and critics. As observed by Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal editor Dpal-lha-mo (1990), "By the end of the 1980s Tibetan poetry faced a critical situation ('gal-rtsa'i gnad-don): a contradictory relationship was becoming evident between the traditional-style poetry (rgyun-srol snyan-ngag) which adhered mainly to kāvyā theory and the free verse poetry which had newly appeared on the literary stage." The debate regarding free verse will be discussed, along with other literary debates, in more detail in the following chapter. As we will see, the relatively late emergence of the debate over free verse, several years after the publication of "Waterfall of Youth," reflects in part the overall delayed engagement in literary criticism by Tibetan literati and other scholars.

vernacular prose, and although the new vernacular language differs somewhat from that used in these novels, it nevertheless points to the existence of a long Chinese prose tradition. (p. 31)

Chapter 5
Polishing the Mirror of Tibetan Literary Criticism:
Literary Debates During the 1980s and early 1990s

The novelty of the recent advent of a vernacular literature in Tibet is attested to by the relatively late standardization of terms to describe the phenomenon. The most commonly used modern Tibetan term for "literature"—rtsom-rig—was derived no more than sixty years ago, despite eight centuries of Tibetan belles-lettres (snyan-ngag). Tibetan literary historian Dga'-ba-pa-sangs (1996) has noted the fact that "rtsom-rig" does not appear in the 1946 Tibetan dictionary compiled by Dge-bshes-chos-grags. The earliest inclusion of the term in a dictionary dates to the 1976 edition of the Rgya-Bod shan-shyar-gyi tshig-mdzod (Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary), published by the Nationalities Publishing House in Beijing. Dga'-ba-pa-sangs hypothesizes that the term "rtsom-rig" was likely conceived by translation teams in the 1950s for the purpose of rendering the term "literature" in the works of Mao, Marx, Lenin, and so forth. As for the etymology of the term, he observes that it is a calque translation of the Chinese wenxue 文学, a term which has existed in the Chinese language for some 2,400 years, though what the word signified then and now has changed. The current meaning of wenxue reflects a western

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618 Dga'-ba-pa-sangs, "Rtsom-rig ces-pa dang der 'brel-ba'i Bod-kyi tha-snyad 'ga'i btags-don la dpjad-pa" (Analysis of "rtsom-rig" and the designation of related Tibetan terms), Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal, 1996, no. 1:73–78, no. 2:70–74. This article was also published as "Rtsom-rig ces-pa dang de dang rtsa-'brel-du gyur-pa'i Bod-kyi tha-snyad 'ga'i ming-'dogs-kyi dpjad-pa," Gangs-ljongs rig-gnas, 1996, no. 1:64–74. Significantly, in the latter journal, the article was included in 'Gran-gleng laum-ra (Controversy Corral), a feature section devoted to contested issues in literature or other academic spheres. There are only minor differences between these two articles, probably due to editing decisions. I have followed the version as it appeared in Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal.
understanding of literature that only came about in the early part of the twentieth century
during the New Culture or May Fourth movement and later at the urging of Lao She in
the 1950s. The Tibetan term "rtsom-rig" has hence been used to encompass both
classical writing (gna'-rabs-kyi rtsom-rig or nye-rabs-kyi rtsom-rig) and contemporary
writing which, generally speaking, does not adhere to kavya conventions. Various terms
have been used to distinguish the latter: rtsom-rig gsar-rtsom (New Literature), Bod-kyi
rtsom-rig gsar-ba (Tibetan New Literature), etc. The issue of terminology, in particular
the distinction between snyan-ngag and rtsom-rig, continues to be contested among
Tibetan literary critics in the PRC today, as will be discussed below.

The lack of standard terms to describe the rise of new Tibetan literary forms in the
eyear 1980s also points to the embryonic stage of modern literary criticism in Tibet at that
time. The conceptual structures to which late-twentieth-century proponents of Tibetan
literary development turned were derived not least from their Chinese counterparts. This
can be seen in one of the earliest designations: "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig gsar-rtsom" (New
Tibetan Literature), which was most probably borrowed from the Chinese term "New
Literature" (xin wenxue). Essays identifying the emergence of a "new literature" in China
are also fairly recent—beginning from the 1930s, some three decades after the advent of
literary criticism as a rational-critical discourse in China at the turn of the last century.
In contrast to China where modern literary criticism was engendered by the establishment
of a liberal public sphere during the late imperial period (Yingjin Zhang, 1997), initial
efforts to foster a "new literature" in Tibetan represented a close alliance between the
state and members of the new Tibetan intelligentsia. For example, the first "Conference

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619 Dga'-ba-pa-sangs, "Rtsom-rig ces-pa dang der 'brel-ba'i Bod-kyi tha-snyad," 1:75.
620 See discussion on page 246.
on Tibetan New Literature⁶²² convened in Xining in August 1981 was very much an official affair (see chapter 4) and represents one of the first instances of the designation "Tibetan new literature."⁶²³ Not until the late 1980s, however, was a discourse serving to construct and delimit a "Tibetan literature" (Bod-kyi rtsom-rig) firmly set. In this chapter we will discuss the rise of a modern Tibetan literary criticism which, similar to the Chinese case, "as a modern discourse mediated the production and consumption of literature by formulating new definitions of literature, policing 'deviant' ideologies, and contesting public opinion through ever-renewed polemics." (Yingjin Zhang, 1997:48)

The Use of Conceptual Structures in Literary Position-Taking

As a way of structuring our discussion, I will draw on the model for a sociology of knowledge offered by Brian Longhurst (1989) who revisits Mannheim with a Foucauldian concept of discourse. This model allows us to view as dynamic the relationship between the specific discourse generated by groups in struggle and the general conceptual structures on which they draw to articulate their discursive and/or ideological positions:

![Conceptual Structure Diagram]

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⁶²³ See chapter 7 for further discussion on the relatively slow entry of the concept "Tibetan literature" into academic parlance.

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Longhurst's model is particularly useful for us in its focus on the written text as one socially dynamic component, alongside other discursive statements and practices. For our purposes, we will be more interested in the elements of "conceptual structure" and "discourse" (in contrast to ideology), and the notion of "groups in struggle." The class-related concept of ideology, defined as "forms of thought which conceal exploitative social relations and which therefore operate in favour of dominant groups" (Longhurst 1989:109) seems less pertinent in our case given that Tibetan intellectuals in the PRC are rarely members of the dominant class and enjoy only a very low level of political participation in either the literary or extra-literary sphere.

Longhurst's definition of discourse as referring to the wider level of structured ideas in society, however, is central to our concern: "Discourses are relatively coherent bodies of knowledge, which are intimately related to relatively formalised practices and strategies of particular social actors and groups." (p. 111) The contrast between discourse and conceptual structure lies in the latter's serving as a common resource for social actors or groups when formulating opposing positions within a discourse. Whereas "the realm of discourse is fissured by struggle and competition, with a plurality of sets of ideas being mobilised," (p. 119) conceptual structures such as socialist realism or evolutionism provide shared raw material for proponents of whatever literary position. As for the role of the sociologist in interpreting the discourse and shaping the conceptual structure, I would prefer to emphasize the spiral or helix effect of the reader who interprets and further contributes to this discourse such that the "received quality" (my term) of the conceptual structures is itself altered and available as further resource. That is, the
generated discourse serves to replenish, expand, supplement and refract the pool of conceptual structures as received and utilized by the reader, which includes not only literary critics and writers but persons in other professions who then draw on those same but altered conceptual structures. For this reason, we can identify correlations between the discursive statements made in the Tibetan literary arena and arguments asserted in other domains within the field of Tibetan cultural production. Thus, I might alter Longhurst's model for our purposes as follows:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(contained in texts, statements and practices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generated by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups in struggle,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conceptual structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acting as a resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Finally, I must distinguish my concept of "groups in struggle" from the sociological perspective of Longhurst who emphasizes their group or institutional nature. For the same reason that my study is necessarily more historical than sociological, I have found little evidence for institutionalized groups in struggle. Rather, most of the discursive literary statements which we will examine must be seen as issued by individuals en soi. While clusterings of thought or formations will be identifiable, based at times on the association of friends or like-educated cohorts, the sense of any "group" is only at the most abstract un-institutionalized level of association. Williams (1981) observes that this loose quality is characteristic of intellectual formation in the twentieth century which leaned
more explicitly towards a particular style or more general cultural position. It may include such devices as collective exhibition or similar public manifestations, but it often does not include actual membership of anything. It is a looser form of group association, primarily defined by shared theory and practice, and its immediate social relations are often not easy to distinguish from those of a group of friends who share common interests.624

While I strongly agree with Longhurst in attributing the "struggle" not to the competitive nature of society as Mannheim suggests, but to structurally-seated interests which inform and motivate various social actors to adopt certain critical stances, I cannot concur with Longhurst's assertion that all social cleavages are determined by class, gender and ethnicity. This would imply that one could hypothesize regarding the discursive position of a given player based on the independent variable of his or her class-status, gender or ethnicity. Even a cursory glance at the backgrounds of the Tibetan proponents of obscure poetry, for example, suggests that age and educational background are better predictors of a writer's critical stance. This may change as the market dynamics of an increasingly privatised economy,625 including in the field of literary and other cultural production gain full sway in Tibetan society.626 At present, however, Tibetan society lacks the multi-tiered social structure such as Longhurst requires for his model. The wealthiest strata of Tibetan society is minute, comprised of businessmen and a limited number of nomads for whom education was not a critical factor. The large middle sector of middle-income individuals includes monastic hierarchs, college graduates and some nomad and farming households, in many of which at least one family member holds a government or office job. Tibetans in the lowest income bracket typically include uneducated farming or

624 Williams, Sociology of Culture, 66.

625 In contrast to the former monopoly of state ownership in the PRC, by 1998 the state sector accounted for only 45 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed only 18 percent of the work force. David Shambaugh, "The Chinese State in the Post-Mao Era," in The Modern Chinese State (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 161.

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nomad families with no outside source of income. Another mitigating factor which
lessens economic concerns as a determinant of critical stance is the absence to date of any
professional writers or literary critics writing in Tibetan.627

At the same time, ethnicity is a critical cleavage for PRC society as a whole.
Political struggles aside, this is immanently visible for Tibetans in terms of realizable
income and the level of education they can attain. Costello (2002), for example, has
noted sharp ethnic-based cleavages in at least one county of Qinghai Province where "the
vast majority of Tibetans are farmers, while most Chinese are employed in the offices of
the Rma iho (Huangnan) prefectural government or the Tongren county government."628
The discrepancy has real economic implications, such that the net per capita income for
village dwellers was Yuan 1,378 in 1997, while the average city or town staff or worker
earned a salary of Yuan 7,409.629 Similarly, Chhoyang (1999) and Costello (2002) have
studied the largely unfavorable differentials in terms of education and employability for
Tibetan students who follow a Tibetan-track education as opposed to a Chinese-medium
education. To the extent that ethnic group comparison (Horowitz 1985) is a tangible
factor in Tibetan society—and this will be evident in the writings that we examine—
ethnicity indeed comprises a social cleavage, which is compounded by gender
differentials. Yet, identification of this cleavage does not help us very much in
explaining the variation of discursive positions among Tibetan intellectuals themselves.

To better understand the social base for the various critical stances we find, I
would recommend a return to the emphasis Mannheim places on generation in

626 Costello, "The Economics of Cultural Production," 222.
627 This is not the case for sinophone Tibetan writers including Tashi Dawa. This distinction itself points
to a source of conflict and motivation for position-taking.
628 Costello, op. cit., 227.
629 Ibid. Yuan 8.07=U.S.$1.00.

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determining the "social location" and corresponding interests of Tibetans engaged in struggles being fought on the literary front. We might hypothesize, for instance, that older scholars and monastically educated scholars would be more likely to take a traditionalist position, while younger intellectuals would take a more radical position. This correlation will indeed be borne out, in general, by our discussion of literary debates. Generation here is not reducible to age per se. Rather, Mannheim suggests the idea of "generation as actuality" which exists "only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization." And yet, as we will see in the Tibetan case, generation is not a perfect indicator of critical stance. Mannheim himself acknowledges internal antagonisms, noting that romantic-conservative youth and liberal-rationalist youth can belong to differentiated "generation units" within the same actual generation:

"Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation units."

According to Mannheim, the generation unit constitutes the the primary bond. He attributes the greater intensity of the "unit"-level bond as lying in the "consciousness of its members," i.e. in common "fundamental integrative attitudes and formative principles." I believe that the ideological glue to which Mannheim refers should be supplemented by greater emphasis on praxis, that is, the activity of cultural production in

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631 Ibid., 304.
632 Ibid.
633 Ibid., 305.
which individuals engage and thus come to learn, shape and commit themselves to such ideologies or discourses.

In keeping with our aim to explore the construction of Tibetan literature as a discursive formation, we will consider the following questions in our discussion below:

How do the statements of various critics serve to construct a Tibetan Literature? What are the backgrounds/roles/positions of the writers and the institutions with which they are associated? Who advocates what? Do they refer to a cohort of like-minded (or differently minded) thinkers? How do these critics and writers rhetorically position themselves vis-à-vis ancient and classical Tibetan literature? What external (socioeconomic and political) and internal (literary and cultural) forces are acting alongside these statements? On what rhetorical strategies or conceptual structures do the writers draw? Did the debate have a lasting impact on the literary field? Can we identify any parallel resonances in extraliterary domains?

*Tibetan Literary Criticism in the Early 1980s*

The earliest issues of Tibetan-language literary magazines are notably lacking in literary criticism or theory. Most literary articles published between 1980 and 1983 are folk-oriented or historical accounts of how traditional forms had earlier spread in Tibet.

While several articles discuss *Snyan-ngag me-long*, they are either introductory or instructional in nature. At the same time, senior scholars were apt to extol the virtues of *kāvya* writing or offer literary counsel in short didactic poems, such as the following

634 These include *Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* (Tibetan Literary Arts, f. 1980), *Sbrang-char* (Light Rain, f. 1981), *Zla-zer* (Moonshine, f. 1982) and general academic journals such as *Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug* (Tibetan Studies, f. 1982) and the lesser known *Nyi-gzhon* (Young Sun, f. 1982).
"aphorisms on how to write" which criticize unnecessarily ornate and wordy writing, as well as unoriginal thought.635

Though there are many volumes which are completely bound by tight synonymy and wording, they are like heaps of wealth of the preta-rich, no use to anyone, as if they didn't exist.

Though the words of many phrases are vast for the sole purpose of mixing heavy and light syllables, they are like games with no essential meaning, cause for instilling doubt and confusion.

Copying the words of another, without using your own mental skills, taking from one and placing into another, is like the fox eating the lion's leftovers.

As suggested by our discussion in chapter 2, this scholar represents that school of thought which disdained overly ornate writing and sophisticated word play. It is not surprising that the legacy of this approach thus generally prevailed in the contemporary era with the promotion of vernacular literature. The expression of literary advice in verse, typical for monastically trained teachers, continued throughout the 1980s and waned only near the end of the decade.636 While such exercises hardly comprised rigorous theory, they can be

635 Ngag-dbang-byams-pa, "Rtson-’tsul-gyi legs-bshad" (Aphorisms on how to write), Shrang-char, 1981, no. 2:11. I am grateful to Pema Bhum for his help with this translation. Pema has also suggested that the bulk of this poem itself might be inspired if not plagiarized from a poem by Alagsha [Alashan] Dandar Lharamba (Tib. Bstan-darLha-ram-pa). See n. 633.

636 Contemporary poets continued to use poetry to express reflexive thought on the act of writing. See for example, Nyi-ma-don-grub, "Gal-te nga-rang snyan-ngag-pa zhib yin na" (If I were a poet), Bod-kyi 215

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seen as the earliest form of literary criticism representing a holdover from the classical period. Only in 1984 do we see a marked shift towards the introduction of modern literary theory. For example, Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar who in 1983\(^{637}\) wrote on "how snyan-ngag spread in Tibet" was by the end of 1984 discussing the "differences between short stories, novellas and novels."\(^{638}\)

I would posit a few reasons for why modern Tibetan literary criticism was slow to emerge in the 1980s, despite ongoing campaigns to realize the "Four Modernizations" countrywide. In the first place, the vast storehouse of Tibetan classical writing offered little precedent for literary criticism. As at least one critic in the early 1980s noted, "Though Tibetan literature has a history of more than 1300 years, ... any Tibetan literary criticism of our own is virtually non-existent."\(^{639}\) Van der Kuijp (1996) concludes his survey of Tibetan belles-lettres (snyan-ngag) with a similar observation:

In spite of the large volume of Tibetan poetry, when reading through Tibet's rich literary legacy, one cannot help but be struck by the virtually complete absence of literary criticism; that is to say, there is really no evidence of a conscious reflection on the creative process in literature by means of a fully articulated and explicit set of criteria. ... Literary criticism in Tibet, such as it was, appears to have been by and large confined to the making of text-critical and philological remarks, including commenting on unusual diction, and to identify the kind of poetic figure from Dandin's treatise used by a given author. It is only rarely that Tibetan authors of the pre-modern period, that is before the 1950s, give critical appraisals of the literary merit of the writings of their predecessors or contemporaries, and when they do, these are usually unsupported by an explicit mention of the criteria with which they are working.\(^{640}\)

\(^{640}\) van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Belles-Lettres," 403.
Secondly, there was a lack of contemporary Tibetan literary critics. Several of the theoretical pieces to be finally published in 1984 were translations of articles by Chinese scholars.\(^\text{641}\) This was typical for academic journals at the time. Consider that Chinese scholars wrote 5 of the 8 articles published in the first issue of *Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug* in 1982; 9 out of 10 articles in the second issue of that year; and 5 out of 9 articles in the third issue. This predominance of Chinese scholars in Tibetan-language journals slowed only around 1986. Not coincidentally, this was around the time when the first large classes of Tibetan-literate students were graduating from the nationalities institutes.\(^\text{642}\)

Thirdly, official gestures often dictated or allowed for new paths to be pursued. It was the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1978 that gave the official greenlight for the revival and development of Tibetan culture, which eventually led to the establishment of *Tibetan Literary Arts* and several other journals in the early 1980s. In the same vein, it may be that the first meeting of the five Tibetan provinces convened in 1981 to discuss the furthering of modern Tibetan literature officially sanctioned the notable increase we see in 1984 of articles devoted to this topic. A fourth factor that undoubtedly contributed to a delay in articles critical of literary tradition was that people were, on the contrary, eager to resuscitate their culture after its

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\(^{642}\) For example, the first large group of students to enter the Tibetan graduate program at Northwest Nationalities Institute began in 1985 and graduated in 1987. The preceding class, which consisted of only four students (3 Tibetans and 1 Han Chinese), graduated in 1982.
long suppression during the Cultural Revolution. In 1981–83, several accessible exegeses for students of snyan-ngag were released by various publishing houses. These were nearly all written or edited by renowned senior scholars in the years preceding their imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution. These texts, filled with illustrations of the various poetic figures or techniques, provided a critical link between pre-1950 and post-1980 scholarship. In addition to examples drawn directly from Daṇḍin’s Kavyādarśa and the writings of great former Tibetan poets, such as the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) and Bod-mkhas-pa Mi-pham-dge-legs-rnam-rgyal (1618–1685), the authors of these textbooks made concerted efforts to include their own illustrations with contemporary content. For instance, A-lags Tshe-tan Zhab-drumg offers the following example of rab-btags-kyi dpe (the metaphor of hyperbole) in which the poet imparts consciousness to an inanimate object (the first metaphor), by warning the latter he should not boast about possessing the characteristic of the object to be praised, because another object (the second metaphor) shares that same characteristic:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{གསལ་བོད་སྣག་་བོད་བོཙ་ལས་} & \quad \text{Full moon, do not boast that you have} \\
\text{མྱིལ་བོད་ལས་གཟུག་རིས་} & \quad \text{the greatness of Mei Lanfang!} \\
\text{ནག་བོད་ལས་བོན་བོཙ་ལས་} & \quad \text{For so does the soft white lotus growing} \\
\text{བོད་ལས་བོད་ལས་བོཙ་ལས་} & \quad \text{on the bank of the slowly lapping lake.}
\end{align*}
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645 Tshe-tan-zhaps-drung, Snyan-ngag spyi-don, 54. I am grateful for the patient tutorship of Prof. Bu-bzhi from Qinghai Nationalities Institute who read through the entire text with me during my stay in Xining.
The subject of this short poem, Mei Lanfang 梅兰芳, was a handsome Beijing opera performer whose fame in the 1940s approached that of Charlie Chaplin! Such poetic exercises offer examples of monastically trained scholars toying with tradition to the extent they included new content among their examples of poetic figures or techniques. The two textbooks from this period which are most frequently used in minority college classrooms today include Dung-dkar (1982) and Tshe-tan-zhab-drung (1981).

Early Efforts to Foster Literary Exchange

One publication in the early 1980s—Magic Key for Opening the Door of Tibetan Ornamentology (Skt. alamkāraśastra)—veered farther afield than the others and prompted perhaps the earliest written exchange in modern Tibetan literary criticism.

Written by Sangs-rgyas, a 1981 graduate of Qinghai Nationalities Institute, the book published in 1983 was a moderately revised version of his master's degree thesis. The author is now a leading editor for the Xining-based literary journal Sbrang-char. The debate was concerned with interpreting the theories of the Snyan-ngag me-long, as was typical for the earliest literary criticism appearing in Tibetan literary journals. Sangs-rgyas' stance was particularly provocative, however, in that he was among the first to tackle the definition of poetry itself. In one section of the book, he argues that snyan-ngag (which I will translate as "poetry" here) cannot be defined merely by the criteria of its "pleasant-sounding" quality as some scholars have asserted. According to Sangs-

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647 To the best of my knowledge, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was the sole voice in the first half of the twentieth century to argue for greater use of the vernacular in Tibetan literature. See chapter 3.
648 Sangs-rgyas does not clarify whom he is quoting here, but based on information provided by Kun-dga' (1996), scholars holding this view include the seventeenth-century scholar-poet Bod-mkhhas-pa, as well as twentieth-century scholars such as Tshe-tan-zhab-drung, Rdo-rje-rgyal-po, and Bse-tshang Blo-bzang.
rgyas, ornamentation or the poetic figure (tshig-rgyan) is only one necessary component for successful snyan-ngag. Equally important components are form (lus) and above all content (srog).\textsuperscript{649} He argues, "A poem without good content is like dressing a corpse, while a poem with good content but poorly worded is like a beautiful woman with no clothes."\textsuperscript{650} (Presumably an ungainly sight for Sangs-rgyas.) Though he claims to have gained some knowledge of the theories on rhetoric of other nationalities,\textsuperscript{651} he makes few mention of non-Tibetan scholars. Citations of foreign writers are limited to a quote by the Tang Dynasty (618–907) writer Kya'a-to,\textsuperscript{652} as well as a quote by Guo Moruo (1892–1978) urging that poetry be based on logical content, grammar and ornamentation.\textsuperscript{653} These criteria would probably not be contested by older scholars and Sangs-rgyas is adamant that "to claim that the ornaments necessary for modern times are very few is uncomely prattle that nearly shatters the ear."\textsuperscript{654} (p. 3) However, he clearly stakes his position between two opposing schools of thought which he identifies as the following:

These days one group of scholars (shes-rlom kha cig gis) argue on the one extreme that the "indirect" and "hard to understand" poems are types that do not accord with modern times or they consider these to be solely the writings of monastics. They argue with bravado that poetry must be clear (kha-gsal) and easy to understand, and that by all means verse should be drawn on the various dialects and vernaculars (phal-skad). [This view] is nothing but a sign of ignorance. In their view, it is a fault that Tibetan culture is religious culture and all Tibetan scholars are monastics (chos-lugs-pa). Moreover, they don't agree there is any danger of the study of Tibetan poetry being unnecessarily wasted [through disuse]. At the same time dpal-lidan. Given that Sangs-rgyas' thesis was published in 1983, he is most likely referring to Tshe-tan-zhad-drung's text or possibly that of Bod-mkhas-pa. This view, however, was widespread.

\textsuperscript{649} Sangs-rgyas, Bod-kyi tshig-rgyan-rig-pa, 12–13. An ongoing discussion, which I do not discuss in this dissertation, has been over the definition of srog with interpretations ranging from the "life-force" or spirit of a work to "content," which is clearly the author's interpretation here.

\textsuperscript{650} Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{651} Ibid., 4. Tib. mi-rigs gzhed-dag- gi tshig-rgyan rig-pa las blo-skyped tog tsam thob-pa/

\textsuperscript{652} Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{653} Ibid., 15–17.

\textsuperscript{654} Ibid., 3.
time, there are some who fall into the other extreme and—because they prioritize the wording\(^{655}\) (tshig-sgro-skyi nyams), think that poetry is only as great as it is obscure (go-dka'-ba), and who view plain (kha-gsal-ba) folk poetry as a mass of coarse speech (grong-tshig). They don't agree that there is any inherent danger of Tibetan poetry eventually becoming so obscure that no one is able to write it.\(^ {656}\)

Sangs-rgyas argues that "this literary form called 'Tibetan snyan-ngag'" can be distinguished as two types, depending on the stage of literary development; i.e. the poetry of scholars and the poetry of the people; or written poetry versus oral poetry; in other words "high poetry" versus "low poetry." Poetry of all types, he suggests, are necessary for a rich revival of Tibetan poetry.\(^ {657}\)

The most controversial statement in Sangs-rgyas' master's thesis was the following:

In his work *How to Write Poetry: Opening the Door of Ornamentology*,\(^ {658}\) Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las includes metric verse, prose and a combination of the two within the rubric of snyan-ngag. While this is fine thought, in my estimation "snyan-ngag" is the expression of meaningful content in [metric] verse only, with rich ornamentation, concise expression and mellifluous wording.\(^ {659}\)

This statement was controversial due to Sangs-rgyas' refusal to abide by the commonly espoused view, as explicitly stated in the *Kavyadarśa*, that snyan-ngag was comprised of three genres or writing style: metric verse, prose writing, and works that combined metric verse and prose (campū).\(^ {660}\) Sangs-rgyas then devotes one chapter each to what he notes as other points of controversy:

- Whether or not poetry (snyan-ngag) and ornamentation (tshig-rgyan) are the same.

\(^{655}\) I use this translation as recommended by Pema Bhum. (Personal conversation, 17 September 2002).

\(^{656}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{657}\) Ibid., 23–24.

\(^{658}\) Tib. Snyan-ngag-la 'jug-tshul tshig-rgyan-rig-pa'i sgo-'byed


\(^{660}\) The significance of this argument will be addressed again in chapter 7.
As the reader might now surmise, Sangs-rgyas claims not. For him, poetry includes more than ornamentation. Also, some ornamental writing is not in verse and thus cannot be considered poetry. He argues that "snyan-ngag" is a literary form or genre (rnams-pa) and "tshig-rgyan" is an aesthetic means of joining words. Snyan-ngag is in verse, concise and evocative.

- Whether or not poetry (snyan-ngag) and ornamentation (tshig-rgyan) existed in Tibet before the translation of the Kāvyādārśa.

Here, Sangs-rgyas argues that "our early people not only had knowledge of ornamentation, but used it both orally [in folk songs and mgur] and in writing [as evidenced in Dunhuang materials.] However, there was no theory or treatise on ornamentation until the introduction of the Me-long into Tibet."662

The first person to publicly challenge certain points in Sangs-rgyas' thesis was the writer and scholar Don-grub-rgyal who was rapidly growing in popularity. (See chapter 4.) In contrast to later literary debates, however, the tone here is cordial. Indeed, it was Sangs-rgyas himself who sent Don-grub-rgyal's letter to the literary magazine Shrang-char for publication:

Dear Comrade Editor:
...there were a few points [in my thesis] with which Dondrup Gyal disagreed. His golden thoughts have inspired new ideas for me and could inspire others.... Thus, I'm sending you his letter for the enrichment of theory regarding Tibetan ornamentation (tshig rgyan rig pa). I hope that publishing these letters will be a start in enabling you to foster critical discussion about my work.

From Sangs-rgyas
February 27 [1984]

661 Ibid., 18–29.
662 Ibid., 36
Similarly, Don-grub-rgyal expresses his thanks and intentions in writing his "thoughts offered in response to my friend Sangs-rgyas": *I am sending this to you directly, so that there isn't any misunderstanding regarding my intent... Thank you for opening the door to a 'selective' ornamentology.* Don-grub-rgyal's main point of contention is that he believes snyan-ngag encompasses more than metric verse and can even include prose writing. He argues that the lack of examples in the Me-long is no proof that prose cannot be snyan-ngag (belles lettres). In short, he agrees with the prevailing view of Dung-dkar Rinpoche, who was Don-grub-rgyal's professor at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing.

For my purposes here, however, I find a few points about this exchange even more significant. One is the role of magazines or the most immediate institutions of cultural production in encouraging a discussion of literary criteria, as consciously acknowledged in this case by the editorial board of *Sbrang-char*:

*Editorial Note: In addition to the welcome which the publishing of Comrade Sangs-rgyas' book, Bod-kyi tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i sgo-'byed 'phrul-gyi lde-mig received among the vast readership, some readers expressed disagreement with a few of the views in this book. In order to foster a scholarly debate and in accord with the author's [Sangs-rgyas] wishes, we have reproduced exactly here the following letter sent by Comrade Don-grub-rgyal. Readers, please mail us the results of your own analytical investigations.*

This strategy was used in subsequent years by other publications, as well, which launched columns to spur discussion of controversial topics. In 1984, however, few readers took up *Sbrang-char*'s bait. I could find only one other direct response to Sangs-rgyas' article.

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663 Don-grub-rgyal, "Bod-kyi tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i sgo-'byed 'phrul-gyi lde-mig bkla-gs-pa'i myong-tshor" (Impressions after reading *Bod-kyi tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i sgo-'byed 'phrul-gyi lde-mig*), *Sbrang-char*, 1984, no. 2:84. Tib. *blang-dor yod-pa'i sgo-nas tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i sgo-mo phy-ge-pa la bka'-drin-che zhu-ba lags/*
This was written by one Don-grub-tshe-ring whose main objections regarded technical points on how Sangs-rgyas categorized some of the examples he used. The opening of his letter offers evidence of the influence of Sangs-rgyas' thesis among younger readers:

Since the publishing of Comrade Sangs-rgyas' thesis _Magic Key to Opening the Door of Tibetan Ornamentology_, the vast readership and young readers, in particular, have enjoyed it. However, some of the points he makes in it need to be examined which I have discussed below.665

A second noteworthy aspect of this exchange is that Don-grub-rgyal is openly critical of the application of an Indic treatise to Tibetan writing. This position contrasts with the more conventional view expressed by Sangs-rgyas: "Though [Dandin's] _Kāvyādārśa_ is the treatise of another nationality, a great many of the _rgyan_ it discusses fully accord with Tibetan cultural characteristics and way of joining words."666 The bulk of Sangs-rgyas' thesis is a delineation of the various _rgyan_ which he feels "are useful for and thus essential to Tibetan poetry."667 Don-grub-rgyal, on the otherhand, is the earliest proponent of the need for an indigenous Tibetan theory of poetry. He argues,

"East" and "South" refer to the two different aesthetic experiences (nyams) of scholars from various regions in India. Though Tibet [also] has different literary images, it is not divided by East and South. Moreover, in terms of literary images and the way of joining words (tshig-gi sde-bshyor) it differs from the East and South [schools] of India. Thus, there is no reason for this "Eastern style" or "Southern style." Rather, it makes more sense [for us] to talk about a "concealed/indirect style" (kha-dampa'i lugs) and a "overt/direct style" (kha-gsal-ba'i lugs). [A distinction made on this basis] would have Tibet's own characteristics (Bod rang-gyi khyad-chos) and would be easily understood.

Our scholars have a weakness which is to rely as much as possible on India for our cultural and historical origins. In general, there is a close

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664 For example, "Gran-gleng ldum-rwa" (Controversy Corral) in _Bod-ljongs zhib'-jug_, "Shes-rab rga-pa'i 'bel-gam" (Words of Wise Elders) in _Sbrang-char_, and "Tshong-kha'i gleng-mol" (Conversations in Tshong-kha) in _Mtsho-sngon Bod-yig gsar-'gyur_ (Qinghai Tibetan News).
667 Ibid., 51.
relationship between Tibet and India in all sorts of aspects. But to think that all we have came from India would mean that Tibet has nothing of its own history, own culture, own characteristics, own thinking (bsam-blo), own customs, etc. More than 30 years have passed since liberation, but we still haven’t been able to resist this view. We youth should be ashamed of this and our nationality should be ashamed as well. Your work [Sangs-rgyas] founded a path to redress this shame. Tibetans with national pride and the pride of youth thank you.

Producing a treatise on ornamentology (Skt. alamkāraśastra, Tib. tshig-rgyan rig-pa’i bstan-bcos) that accords with Tibetan characteristics is not the work of just one or two people, of course. But, with the likes of your [book] "Magic Key," we can open each and every rusty lock of omissions, excess, errors and contradictions (chad lhag nor ‘gal), and it surely won’t be long before a Tibetan alamkāraśastra (Bod-kyi tshig-ryan rig-pa’i bstan-bcos-kyi me-long) is born.

Sangs-rgyas la, in my view, if Dandin could write a Kāvyādārśa, why can't we write a Tibetan Kāvyādārśa...

Calls for an indigenous Tibetan literary theory are still repeated to this day, as will be discussed in more detail below. Don-grub-rgyal is more direct in tying literary concerns to the need for national pride and development. He is arguing for the uniqueness of Tibetan poetry in comparison to that of India and would seem more likely to eschew this model than would Sangs-rgyas who seeks rather to revise it so that it is more applicable to the Tibetan situation. At the same time, Don-grub-rgyal makes no reference to the earlier Tibetan Dunhuang documents as sources of Tibetan literature, though we know that he was closely familiar with them.

We will address the significance of this debate over the definition of "snyan-ngag" in chapter 7, for it was only in subsequent years that articles concerned with terminology returned with fresh vigor. Moreover, the discussion expanded to address the definition of "literature" (rtsom-rig) itself. The trend more recently is to determine whether or not snyan-ngag is equivalent to a western understanding of poetry, or more broadly to literature as a whole. In light of these later debates, the exchange between
Sangs-rgyas and Don-grub-gyal takes on added significance. As we will see, the framing of their argument bears evidence of what I would call a "snyan-ngag centered orientation" which prevailed throughout the 1980s and even the early 1990s. Let us continue here, however, with our loose chronological framework in order to examine other points of contention which emerged in the 1980s and also served to inform and delimit the practice of Tibetan literature.

The Sprul-sku Controversy and other Content-Related Debates

Don-grub-rgyal was at the center of another heated literary debate which occurred at this time was over the publishing in 1981 of Don-grub-rgyal's short story, Tulku (Sprul-sku).669 The story takes place in Amdo and concerns a lama who one day arrives in a village claiming to be a religious adept. By abusing his title, he succeeds in procuring valuable objects and otherwise duping most of the villagers, including young women whom he takes as consorts. The heart of the controversy seems to have been whether the generic title that Don-grub-rgyal assigned to the story implied he was criticizing the institution of reincarnated lamas in general, or simply offering an example of the abuses which can occur in the monastic system through the portrayal of one corrupt lama or fraud, in particular. As in the case of Chinese essays and fiction which criticized official corruption and were widespread at the time, it is possible that Tibetan readers too tended

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668 Don-grub-rgyal, op. cit., 89.
669 The debate over this story is discussed in Pema Bhum, "The Life of Dhondup Gyal," 22; Tsering Shakya, "Waterfall and Fragrant Flowers," 39; and in another version of the same article, Tsering Shakya "Literature or Propaganda?," 65–66. Kapstein (2002) uses this debate to frame an interesting discussion about expressions of "critical scrutiny of religious hierarchs" in the writing of religious teachers. See "The Tulku's Miserable Lot."
to believe that "any story about corruption probably represented a pattern." I have asked several literary writers and scholars in Amdo and Lhasa about this debate. Regardless of region or age, all knew of it and most remarked on a generational difference in reaction to the debate. One informant who was a contemporary of Don-grub-rgyal estimated that about seventy percent of students agreed with the maverick writer, while some sixty percent of older teachers (at secular institutions) openly opposed the story. Protest was strongest in the monastic community and Don-grub-rgyal even received one death threat as a result. However, this debate, as in the case of other literary disputes in the early 1980s, seems to have remained in the oral realm. One finds little written evidence of this controversy.

Only in the late 1990s, as Kapstein (2002) notes, was the controversy directly addressed in an "attempt to reclaim Don grub rgyal from a traditional religious perspective." The effort was made by Professor A-lags Dor-zhi of Northwest Nationalities Institute who will figure prominently in our discussion below. He argues that there is a precedent for criticizing the institution of reincarnated lamas and offers examples, including poems by Gung-thang Bstan-pa'i-sgron-me (1762–1823), Thu'u-

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670 Link, *Uses of Literature*, 263. My own reading of the story *Tulku* is that it is most likely a straightforward plot written along the lines of more standard exposes and not, as Shakya (2000) suggests, a veiled piece criticizing the "blind trust that people had placed in Mao and the Communist Party." (p. 39) I cannot definitively prove this point, except to remind us of the generally sympathetic light in which the villagers were portrayed in Don-grub-rgyal's story and the temporal coincidence that fictional or non-fictional exposé of official corruption was growing ever more common in Chinese literature precisely in 1979 and 1980. According to the information accompanying the Beijing edition of this story, Don-grub-rgyal completed *Tulku* in the village of Padma-rong on January 25, 1980. See Don-grub-rgyal, *Collected Works*, 2:155). Presumably he was home on vacation from Beijing for the Amdo Tibetan New Year while working on his masters degree at the Central Nationalities Institute, from which he graduated in 1981. This deduction is based on the chronology given in Don-grub-rgyal, *Collected Works*, 4:1.


672 For a better known example of a poem written by an older generation scholar urging young Tibetans to adhere to indigenous literary and other cultural standards, see Shar-gdong Blo-bzang-bshad-sgrub-rgya-mtsho, "Cong" (Bell), *Sbrang-char*, 1986, no. 2:25.

Some people have suggested that Sprul-sku would not have raised the controversy now that it did during the middle 1980s. To the best of my knowledge, this was one of the few debates during the 1980s to focus on the content of a literary work. Most articles of literary criticism written during this time were concerned with literary forms or the definition of terms. However, the issue of poetic content, to which we will now turn, felt a more sustained debate.

As prescribed by Dandin's Kavyadarśa, belles-lettres should draw for content from the four aspects or sections of worldly existence (brjod-byas de-bzhis). The Buddhist enumeration de-bzhis (lit. "four sections") includes the "dharma section" (chos) which is the cause of definite goodness, birth in a high realm; the "wealth section" (nor) which is seeking instruction and protecting accumulated wealth; the "desirables section" ('dod) which is the enjoyment in the lands of gods and men; and emancipation or "liberation section" (thar), which is achieving enlightenment. The understanding is similar in Tibetan commentaries on snyan-ngag. Rdo-rgyal-po (1983), for example, characterizes the four subject matters as follows: dharma refers to "reality, higher reality and ultimate reality" (mngon thos thos ris gsum); wealth refers to the wealth of knowledge or material wealth; desire refers to "actions that approximate the desirable qualities of gods and men (mi) outside the hell realms;" and liberation refers to achieving boddhi, i.e. the cessation of suffering and its karmic seeds. Though not all traditional

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676 Rdo-rgyal-po, Snyan-ngag-gi rnam-bshad gsal-gron, 42–43. In practice, the goals of the author might not have been so lofty. As one can find in classical Chinese literature, under the pretext of describing what one should not desire, titillating literature could be penned with a modicum of social propriety. A good example of this is the eighteenth century Tibetan novel Gzhon-nu zla-med (Tale of the Incomparable Prince.)
verse is praise poetry, a great deal of it is. This too touches on the question of content, for the \textit{K\=avy\=adar\=sa} specifically outlined seventeen bases or objects for praise (\textit{dngos-bstan bcu-bdun}). This narrowly defined list of appropriate subject matter for eulogy includes the city, ocean, mountain, season, rising and setting of the sun and moon, public gardens, playing of water, drinking, wedding, not meeting as planned, finding a wife, birth of a child, growing up, retinue's demeanor, coming of a messenger (\textit{pho-nya'i 'bro-'ong}), military invasion (\textit{g.yul 'thab-pa}), and the flourishing of one's realm (\textit{mnga'-thang dar-ba}). These subjects were to be addressed through the artful use of \textit{nyams} and \textit{'gyur}. (See chapter 2). Even in the Post-Mao Era, older generation Tibetan teachers encouraged this menu of content options for students practicing the art of writing \textit{snyan-ngag}. Tshe-tan-zhab-drung, for example, states "When one writes a long or far-reaching poem with many stanzas or chapters, though it is not absolute that you must use all seventeen objects of praise as discussed above—past events and those specified by the \textit{Me-long}, such as the city, etc.—it more or less should be like that."\textsuperscript{677} He then recommends students refer to exemplary works by Indian and Tibetan authors, for which he provides a list of examples.

Among the earliest content-related debates to occur were complaints by younger generation readers who were growing tired of eulogistic verse. Don-grub-rgyal, writing under his penname Rang-grol, voiced one of the most famous objections to this tendency in a poem entitled "Bstod-pa bklags-pa'i 'char-snang" (Impressions after Reading Praise), of which an extensive excerpt follows:\textsuperscript{678}

\textsuperscript{677} Tshe-tan-zhab-drung, \textit{Snyan-ngag spyi-don}, 18. Tib. \textit{tshigs-bcad mang zhing le'u 'ga'-re yod-pa'i snyan-ngag chen-po'am snyan-ngag rgya-pa zhig rtsom nal' de la gong smos ltar bangag-par bya-ba'i gzi sngon byung dang/ me-long-gi dngos bstan grong-khyer sogs bcu-bdun po re re nas tshang dgos-pa'i nges-pa med kyang phal-cher de-'dra zhig yin dgos

\textsuperscript{678} Drag-btsan rang-grol (aka Don-grub-rgyal), "Bstod-pa bklags-pa'i 'char-snang," \textit{Sbrang-char}, 1984, no.1:41–43. It is popularly assumed that the single author cited in the journal refers, in fact, to two co-writers: Don-grub-rgyal and a certain "Drag-btsan," which is a penname for Zia-ba-blo-gros (now a senior editor for \textit{Sbrang-char}). This verse is preceded by four stanzas of 23 and 31-syllable lines containing

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Excerpts from "Impressions after Reading Praise"

Don-grub-rygal

With [all due] respect for the confident young who are skillful at placing literary steps on the ladder of scholars' shoulders, I have written this short piece on praise.

Midst the snow mountains of literary magazines a few inferior [lowland] lions [who write] praise-verse\(^{679}\) find this wailing spectacular.

In the mouth of the Garuda bird, the tongue of the parrot is not beautiful. And yet, it is amazing that these [poets] are embraced by Sarasvati.

Though scholars may have offered her one hundred propitiations, she has not empowered their voices. It is even more amazing that they secured her with a single praise verse.

[...]

Calling blind people the thousand-eyed [Avalokiteśvara], or a crippled person a horse, they are strewing about flowers of praise. But, if you look closely, their poetry has no essence.

Though the content may not be fake, and the words well-composed, isn't the knife of praise's reputation stabbing your ear?

Like the person ruined by constantly eating sweets, Continual offerings of praise

\(^{679}\) According to popular Tibetan lore, there are two types of lions—those who live in the snow mountains and those who live in the "mud" or lowlands. The latter are considered to be inferior.
can only lead to future regret.
When the spirit resides in the body of the corpse,
it qualifies as "consciousness."
But when content is void of meaning,
it is a lifeless literary corpse.

It is amazing that magazines are so eager to welcome
the bride of praise the instant they see her beauty,
with no thought as to whether [the poem] has meaning,
or to whether it is well-composed.

While artistic rockets have been launched into
the space of contemporary writing (rtsom),
we vainly want to fly in the sky
riding our donkeys of praise.....

Similar expressions of protest against "exaggerated praise" were also beginning to appear
in letters to the editors and soon after in literary criticism. Ironically, though Don-grub-rgyal is often described as an iconoclast, he himself wrote poetry in praise of party policy and so forth, especially in the early years of his career. Whether this was due to the climate of the times or genuine sentiment is not the topic of this dissertation.

Aside from the debate regarding Sprul-sku and the more general objections raised to the predominance of eulogistic themes in the poetry being published, most other debates during the 1980s were related to issues of form. Literary criticism in the 1980s was primarily based on socialist realist principles which argued that literature reflect reality. A reaction against this occurred in Tibetan circles only in the late 1980s, several years after the menglong movement in Chinese poetry. Content has more frequently been the focus of controversies in Chinese writing about Tibet. For example, in 1987 Ma Jian

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680 See, for example, the letter by Rnam-thar-rgyal in Shrung-chor, 1985, no. 1:91. This reader does not oppose traditional verse. On the contrary, his criticism is directed towards shallow mimicry of its techniques. He concludes: "Not until what was good long ago is practiced now; [until we] develop the good and block the bad [and] prioritize reality; only then will we be able to reach the level of the unique characteristics of our nationality which have been maintained and developed since our forefathers' time."
was attacked by Tibetan intellectuals and eventually the Chinese literary establishment for his offensive novel *Stick out the Fur of Your Tongue or You'll Have Nothing* (Liangchu ni de shetai huo knog kong dandan). As Schiaffini-Vedani (2002) notes, the scandal resulted in the firing of the editor of the journal which published the piece (*Renmin Wenxue*) and the self-exile of the writer to Hong Kong.

**Generational Differences and the Debate over Free Verse**

Polemical exchanges over the emergence of Tibetan free verse illustrate statements of a nastier tenor to which some critics have been prone, as well as the tendency for cleavages to occur along generational lines. This debate began with a review by Tshe-ring-rnam-rgo (1986) of three poems in *Tibetan Literary Arts*. After praising the journal for its farsightedness in fostering such new literature, he then lauds the three poems—one of which is by an older scholar—for the progressive literary characteristics they evince, such as being easily intelligible and describing life vividly. Early poetry, he complains, cannot show life exactly. (p. 58) Rather, "Poetry unfettered by metrics (sdeb-sbyor) resembles our vernacular language and is close to real life." (p. 59) While the tone of his article is not particularly confrontational, he clearly sides with the need for literary change: "It is difficult for traditional poetic methods to realistically record the new things and characters arising today.... We need to discard synonyms (*mgon-brjod*; Skt.)

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681 Pema Bhum (1995) recalls, "It wasn't long before both editors and readers of these journals grew tired of reading eulogistic verses." (p. 22)
682 Schiaffini-Vedani, "Tashi Dawa," 63.
683 Schiaffini-Vedani, "Tashi Dawa," 65. While this incident is perhaps the most well-know of such offensive cases, it is important to remember that the Chinese Government clearly stated its opposition to such offensive acts against minorities through notices (tongzhi) issued by the National Minorities Affairs Commission (Guojia Minwei). The text of such directives issued in 1951, 1983, 1987, for example, can be found at www.e56.com. I am grateful to the Latse Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library (NY) for providing me with this information.
abhidhāna) which have no relation to our modern vernacular." (p56) As if apprehending the objections his article might spur, he attempts to mollify his opponents: 

Praising new poetry such as I am doing here is not to say that earlier style poems are useless or a ruin. Traditional poetry is the primary achievement of the history of Tibetan poetry. Our early Tibetan poetry and these works have an uncommon Tibetan character to them. A great many of the poems appearing now that are written in the former style express modern life with excellent artistry and elevated thought. It isn't good to discard what is good of our nationality's culture... but neither is it acceptable to consider modern verse as heterodox and to disparage it simply out of love for the old.

He continues by noting that many contemporary writers are "taking the essence of early poetry and combining it with the writing styles of other nationalities on a selective basis." (p59) In short, "If content is to develop, so must the means of expression." (p57)

Professor Dor-zhi from Northwest Nationalities Institute was quick to respond, charging that the author of the article was "evidently a young student judging by his content and way of writing. These days a lot of youth have neither a firm educational foundation nor a deep understanding of the teachings of their own nationality and in their own language." He then criticizes Tshe-ring-rnam-rgol's grammatical, spelling and other errors for 3-1/2 pages—the original article was less than five pages—in the interests of "the young who know little of Marxism or their own culture's teachings and in whom [such an article] might foster waves of doubt." The professor continues in Part 2 with another three-page critique of Tshe-ring-rnam-rgol's content, only to continue his refutations in the next issue of Moonshine for another seven pages. His main argument was to defend traditional poetry saying that it does indeed use the vernacular and that "the

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684 Tshe-ring-rnam-rgol, "Snyan-thig rgya-mtsho'i gsar-skyes me-tog" (New buds in the ocean of poetry), Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal, 1986, no. 4:59.
poetry of today also contains vocabulary that will be unclear to future generations. While he also discusses other topics, the bulk of his article comprises a harsh critique of an article by the young scholar Tshe-ring-rnam-rgol entitled "New Flowers in the Ocean of Poetry." A-lags Dor-zhi published a similar retort in the *Journal of Northwest Nationalities Institute*. The debate continued with at least two counter-responses from both parties. This exchange was especially remembered in Lhasa, more so than it was in Amdo, most likely because the young writer originated from Lhasa.

It was not the first time Professor Dor-zhi had chosen to publicly argue against the views of a younger-generation scholar. Another exchange widely mentioned in Amdo, though not in Lhasa, was the professor's scathing review of one of his graduate students' masters thesis at Northwest Nationalities Institute. Dor-zhi's critique was published in *Qinghai Education (Misho-sngon slob-gso)* in 1990, but still clearly remembered by several people I interviewed ten years later. Even Dge-'dun-chos-'phel has not been spared the challenges of this professor cum watchdog of tradition. The irony is that Dor-zhi was the main professor of many young Amdo intellectuals whom I have elsewhere described as "radical modernists." (See Hartley 2001.) This seeming contradiction in part reflects a change in his position during recent years, a transformation that signals the extent to which modern literary theory and models now dominate Tibetan literary discourse. For example, despite the vehemence of his earlier opposition to free verse and other literary forms that broke with kāvya conventions, more than a decade

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686 Ibid., 50.
688 See comments in the introduction by Dor-zhi to a recently published refutation of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's view on Madhyamaka philosophy in Chu-skyes Bsam-gtan, *Log-smra'i tshang-tshing sreg-pa'i lung-rigs rdo-rje me-lce* (Scriptures and reasoning to burn the forest of heresies: Vajra flame), Lanzhou: Kan-su'u
later in 1998 Dor-zhi authored the introduction to an anthology of contemporary poetry, precisely half of which is comprised of free verse. He seems to rationalize his decision by noting that "whether these poems are well-written or not, [the authors all] endeavored to write their poems in the language of our nationality and the content is not meaningless babble." This comment must also be seen as hardly veiled criticism against obscure poetry, which was growing increasingly controversial. (See chapter 9.) A-lags Dor-zhi characterizes the poems as possessing three consciousnesses; that of nationality (mi-rigs), culture (rig-gnas) and progress (yar-rgyas). He says it is an "issue of courage" and that a nationality must be vigilant of these three factors so that "no one else will be able to defeat it.

Likewise, this influential professor remains selective in other projects he supports. In another recent introduction, Professor Dor-zhi (2000) is careful to distinguish between the approach of NWNI graduate Rdo-lha (b. 1967, Gcan-tsha, Huangnan Prefecture) and his classmate, poet and former literary editor, Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho (aka Gangs-zhun, b. 1969, Bya-mdö, Hainan Prefecture) in their compilation of essays on various

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689 Dor-zhi, introduction to Log-smra'i, 3. Tib. ...snyan-rtshig thog-tra pa'i don-gnyer byed-pa dang rtsom-gyi dang-don yang don-med-kyi 'chal-gtam lta-bu ma yin par....'

690 Bla-nag Blo-bzang-chos-dar and Rma-chu'i-sbyn-pa, eds. Deng-rahbs Bod-kyi rtsom-pa-po'i snyan-ngag phyogs-sgrigs (Selected Poetry from the Youth of Modern Tibetan Poets [sic]) (Hong Kong: Tianma tushu youxian gongsi, 1998). In its careful compilation, this volume belies certain cleavages in the Tibetan literary world. Precisely half of the poems selected are in metered verse and the other half are in free verse. About half of the metered verse is written by monks. Only one monk has written a poem in free verse (Byams-pa-dge-legs, aka Gcan-rang-sad, b. 1972, Gcan-tsha, Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai Province.) With few exceptions, the anthology includes only one poem per poet. The volume seems aimed at showcasing the writers and includes biographical notes for each poet, often quite extensive and accompanied by a photo (by which their lay or secular status can be marked). Care was taken to include five women poets (more than the average in other volumes). Most of the writers are fairly well-known and in their 20s or 30s (a few are in their 40s). Despite the inclusive-sounding title, the only writer from outside of Amdo is the accomplished lyricist Mkhas-grub (b. 1957, Lho-kha (Shannan), TAR). The publishing of the book itself represents an important lay-secular collaboration, sponsored in part by A-lags Blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho from Labrang Monastery and compiled with the help of another well-known lyricist Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring (b. 1960, Kri-kha, Guge County, Qinghai) from Hezuo Nationalities Teachers Training College in Gansu Province. Works by both of these poets are included in the collection.

691 The tradition of written debates between Tibetan scholars which has been widespread for centuries will be further discussed in chapter 8.
controversial topics, including the "opening of the western regions" and the future path of Tibetan literature.\textsuperscript{692} Dor-zhi characterizes the position of these two graduate students as recognizing "Tibetan religious culture is valuable" and contrasts this with the approach of "fools who think that even western garbage is a jewel... [and] who pride themselves in being national[ity] heroes and revolutionaries,"\textsuperscript{693} i.e. those who urge a more radical revision or overthrow of cultural standards. This book will be discussed further in the final chapter of this dissertation.

In any case, as suggested by the debates between A-lags Dor-zhi and these younger scholars, reception over innovative changes in free verse has not been uniformly favorable. During the late 1980s, a few factors contributed to staging free verse poetry at the center of a controversy; or more accurately, discussions about free verse began to constitute a discursive field within which various writers of different ages started to stake their claims; that is, engaging in a critical "position-taking" (Bourdieu, 1993). In the first place, free verse poems were appearing with more frequency, as noted above. Second, a greater amount of translated works from Chinese and especially western writers began to appear in 1986, including introductions to some western writers and their works, such as Shelley. Third, literary criticism or articles about free verse in Tibetan language began to appear around 1988.\textsuperscript{694} By 1990, free verse (rang-mos snyan-ngag) was the featured

\textsuperscript{691} Ibid. Tib. De lia-bu'i 'du-shes gsun dang ldan-pa'i mi-rigs shig yin na gezan-su zhig-gis kyang pham-bri lag hyed-par mi nus-so.

\textsuperscript{692} Gangs-zhun and Rdo-lha, eds. Lta-ba bsam-blo lag-len (View, ideology, practice) (Lanzhou: Kan-su'u mi-rigs dpe-srung-khang, 2000). In a similar vein, Professor Dor-zhi also wrote the introduction for an important critique by a Sichuan-based researcher of the current Tibetan educational system which calls for the improvement and expansion of Tibetan-medium programs: Dpal-ldan-nya'i-ma, Bod-kyi rig-gnas gong-phel dang stob-gso'i nram-kshad, trans. by Rgyal-lo (Lanzhou: Kan-su'u mi-rigs dpe-srung-khang, 1998).

\textsuperscript{693} Dor-zhi Gdong-drug-snyems-blo, introduction to Lta-ba • bsam-blo • lag-len, 4. Tib. nub-gling-gi phyags-lud yan-chad rin-po-che'i 'du-shes 'dzin-pa'i blun-po rnam-khyis...mi-rigs-kyi dpa'-bo dang gsar-bri. mkhan-du rrom-pa.../

\textsuperscript{694} For one of the earliest pieces, see Tshe-ring-mam-grol, "Gsar-skyes me-tog-gi skyes-stobs: Slar-yang rang-mos snyan-rsoms-gyi skor cung-tsam gleng-ba" (The vitality of the new flower: Another word about free verse), Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal, 1988, no. 6:41–47.
topic in "Chat with Wise Elders (Shes-rab rgyan-po'i 'bel-gtam)," a column Sbrang-char started in 1985 in which students could question older scholars about concerns they have regarding Tibetan traditional culture or modern science and technology. Typically, the concerns raised in this column were related to a pressing controversial topic. In that year and the following, many articles on issues such as writing modern poetry, the virtues of free verse, and introductions to modern poetry were published.695

Shortly following the above-mentioned debate, Professor Dor-zhi (1988) turned his criticism towards free verse in general, concluding one of his articles with a poem (in metered verse) in which he expresses his opposition to free verse for exemplifying several of the ten faults of bad writing (skyon-bcu) as taught in the Snyan-ngag me-long.

Untitled696
Dor-zhi

In this garden with hundreds of teachings on poetry—our own and others, happily buzzes the honey-bee with the wings he’s been allotted. He has tasted the nectar of one-hundred thousand flowers, and chooses for his dish the sweet honey of Sarasvatī. These days when but a lame person with uneven steps has been placed on the dancer’s stage, the thousand-image dance of Sarasvatī is the sole true spectacle.

Though the thousand-ray teaching of Danḍin was well-invited from the sky through the generosity of Sakya Pandita, Gshong Lotsawa and Dpang Lotsawa, who loosened the knots of the lotus flower of verse, the eyes of the hooting owl are closed.

Through the crack of the door the sun shines and

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in the open vent of the tent roof the sky is but palm-size.
Night and day are the same to the blind eye.
How sad, they who are so sure they are right!

So amused is the deity-father of Sarasvati (Tshangs-pa)
by this show of fools throwing axes into the air
only to have their heads split open,
that his teeth have fallen out from laughter along the far borders of Tibet.
Though all this is just the game of children who would
praise some and scorn others,
by natural law darkness is dispelled
when the sun shines.

The above discussion took a more general turn with the publication of two poems
in an oft-cited exchange between an elder scholar and his student at Qinghai Nationalities
Teachers College. According to all accounts, the older and younger scholar—Bshad-
grub-rgya-mtsho (aka A-khu Bshad-grub) and Rgya-ye Bkra-shis-phun-tshog (aka Bkra'-
bho), respectively—were on friendly terms but differed in their views towards free verse.
They together sent their poems for publication to the editorial office of Sbrang-char:

A Short Untitled Work
(Ming-med rtsom thung)

Bshad-sgrub-rgya-mtsho

In the vast sky of modern literature,
we see the clouds of free verse (rang-dbang-snyan-tshig).
Know that this is why it is difficult to see the
The teachings of Dandin which shine like a sun of elegant sayings.

It is alright for people to have freedom,
But what is the use of verse having freedom?
If there is too much freedom,
aren't you afraid that it is like
a prostitute who will sleep anywhere?

697 This school is also referred to as Qinghai Nationalities Normal College. Tib. M développement ens mi-rigs dge-'os mtho-rim ched-shyong slob-grwa. Chin. Qinghai minzu shifan zhanke xuexiao. The school was founded in 1984 and is located in Chab-chu (Ch. Gonghe) in Hainan Prefecture. With more than 600 students (all from Qinghai Province) it constitutes "the largest Tibetan-medium higher education program in the province." Chhoyang, "Higher Education," 36.

698 This work appeared in Sbrang-char, 1989, no. 4:49.
The freedom of free verse and fulfilling all one’s desires
is not the freedom to cut verse into pieces.
Like the right to choose content and words,
Well-joined words which roll like ocean waves are beautiful.

And when the poet scholar as well does not see clearly,
Isn’t free verse a thorn in the eyes of all,
Like a nomad woman wearing modern (lit. Chinese) clothing?

May this rain from the generous sky
which benefits all
cause flowers of poetry to
bloom in the garden of excellent literature.

The poem written in response by the student follows. He objects to the elder teacher’s
view and choice of metaphor:

True Speech: Thorn in the Eye

(Bden-gtam mig-gi thur-ma)
Bkra-shis-phun-tshogs

When in the shining beautiful garden of modern literature
blooms the white lotus of free poetry (rang-dbang snyan-ngag),
it is no wonder that the face of a tree that has lived for many years
makes our minds suffer.

As manifestation of the people's freedom
freedom of speech is also key.
If the door of one’s voice is too tightly closed,
one day [his speech] will surely get stuck in his throat.700

What fun! Having long ago been freed from the tethers that
bound its limbs, the emotions of this horse running in the fields
of paradise, are a strong gale
keeping pace with his hooves.

Surely test-tube babies, computers, etc.

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699 This poem appeared as a response to Akhu Bshad-sgrub's poem in the same issue, Shrang-char, 1989, no. 4:50.
700 Lit. "One day it will surely become wrapped in the [wind]pipe." Tib. nam zhig sbubs-su 'thumbs-par 'gyur ta re/
are an incredible sight!
Though former scholars never saw them,
why wouldn't they toss flowers of praise for this knowledge?

There are beauties and non-beauties,
but it is unfitting to point out the
unbecoming nomad woman wearing modern clothes.
What pleasure does such talk induce in the unbiased man?

A young woman, New Poetry, has just arrived
at the literary palace in the cold land of Tibet.
Though at first her mother-in-law disdains the bride,
Someday she will surely regard the young woman as she does her son.

Is not softly-worded discussion
about issues of great learning
the way of educated beings?
A far cry from this “prostitute or beauty” business!

Rgya-ye Bkra'-shis-phun-tshogs was born in 1963 in Hainan Prefecture. In 1987, he obtained his master's degree from the Minority Literature and Languages Department at Qinghai Nationalities Institute. He focused on Tibetan ancient literature and his master's thesis related to the categorization of snyan-ngag was influential among his fellow students and for several years among younger generation students. Rgya-ye Bkra'-bho currently serves as Director and professor in the Tibetan department of Qinghai Nationalities Teachers College (Gonghe). According to Bkra'-shis-phun-tshogs, he and his teacher didn't expect their two poems to spur a heated debate. A local literary magazine, Ri-bo-nyi-zla, then received a poem in support of A-khu Bshad-grub's poem but decided not to publish it as they feared the debate would become too heated.

Through inquiries at the office of this magazine, I was able to retrieve the unpublished manuscript which had been submitted by a monk who later relocated to Lhasa.

The debate continued throughout the next decade in essays and research articles on the characteristics, virtues and weaknesses of free verse. Free verse proponents
argued that its unrestricted nature was necessary for artistic expression in modern society.

Another contested issue related to this topic concerned what term should be used to describe the literary phenomenon in Tibetan. The various proposals included \textit{nges-med bcad-rtsom} (Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar, 1992) verse with lines of varying length; \textit{snyan-ngag gsar-ba} ("new poetry") calqued from the Chinese term \textit{xinshi} (新诗 new poetry); and the most widely used \textit{rang-mos snyan-ngag} (free poetry) from the Chinese term \textit{ziyoushi} (自由诗 free poetry). Other optional renderings were "\textit{snyan-ngag rang-dbang-can}" as proposed by G.yu-'brug (1988), "\textit{rang-dbang-can-gyi snyan-rtsom}" (Rab-brtan-tshe-ring, 1992), and "\textit{grol-ba'i snyan-ngag}" (Lcags-thar-tshe-ring, 1996). Another disagreement centered on whether or not the \textit{mgur} found at Dunhuang with lines of varying length were the precursors of Tibetan free verse.\footnote{See for example, the discussion by Bu-bzhi (1999) who concludes that \textit{mgur} is not a predecessor to today's modern free verse since it required an accompanying melody and were not as expressive as modern free poetry.} Most critics held that they were not, since the unfettered expression of emotion is also a \textit{sine qua non} of new poetry.

Articles regarding free verse poetry waned by the mid-1990s. According to one poet whose view is typical for those writers and scholars who graduated in the 1980s and partook in these debates: "Frankly speaking, \textit{rang-mos snyan-ngag} has won... a base has been formed for it. Now we need to improve it. Even in the monasteries, there are a lot of monks writing \textit{rang-mos snyan-ngag}.

\footnote{See Lauran Hartley, "Ventures in Polishing the Mirror of Tibetan Literary Theory (1980–2000)," paper delivered at the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, IL, March 2001.} Indeed, as mentioned above, even A-lags Dor-zhi has recently authored the introduction to a book of modern poetry. The few remaining holdouts tend to be either older professors at the nationality institutes or...
monks. For example, two literary journals are being published at Bla-brang Monastery divided largely on the issue of whether or not to include free verse poetry in their publication. The journal representing the more traditionalist school of thought includes only metric verse and other poems based on kāvyā style. The other journal was edited by a mid-thirties monk who was known to take unpopular stances on other issues at the monastery. When we spoke in the fall of 2000 he was concerned that he might have to stop publishing his journal due to the social pressure he was facing. Recently, he escaped into exile and now lives in the seat of the Tibetan exile government in Dharamsala, India.

703 Maconi (forthcoming) discusses an uncommon example of an explicit statement of "pro-tradition literacy advocacy" published by a professor from Tibet University professor as late as 1994 in which he openly criticizes the formal innovations of free verse poetry by young Tibetan writers.
Chapter 6
Periodization and the Definition of 'Tibetan Literature':
Historical and Ethnic Delimiters

In the previous chapter, we discussed the emergence of a modern Tibetan literary criticism beginning with Sangs-rgyas' (1983) reinterpretation of kāvya theory and Don-grub-rgyal's response. Several years passed, however, before Tibetan literary criticism experienced the vitality already seen in the surge of short stories and poems being submitted to Tibetan-medium literary journals. As in the case of China, these literary discussions were soon "deeply involved with the questions of the nation," a turn portended by Don-grub-rgyal's query: "... why can't we write a Tibetan Kāvyaśāstra?"

Yet, Tibetan scholars in the late twentieth century had to grapple not only with the relation of their writing to Indic models, but also to its status vis-à-vis Chinese and western contemporaries. Dramatic political and social transformation had opened the door to world literature. In this chapter, we will look at two debates that were expressly concerned with the construction of a national literature. While the individual statements made within these exchanges were not always in direct response to each other, collectively they aimed 1) to found a unique narrative of the historical trajectory of "Tibetan literature," and 2) to establish the criteria by which "Tibetan literature" would be defined.


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Periodization

In Europe, the practice of writing literary histories emerged in the eighteenth century as literary scholars shared a growing sense of "historical difference," a perception that their present was qualitatively and historically different from their past. In much the same way as Enlightenment thinkers in the new "Age of Reason" sought to distance themselves from previous ages through selective representations of the past, a new corps of secularly educated Tibetan literary scholars have not only taken up the task of redefining "snyan-ngag" but have actively concerned themselves with the periodization of their literature.

The sense in which these projects and other literary exchanges entail a "historical" practice can be understood as follows:

To say that literary criticism was 'historical' is not to say that it began to draw upon some outside information or 'context' from which it was, essentially, separated; it is rather, to note that these new practices of criticism and history were operating with the same sense of difference between the past and the enlightened and liberated present.

By differentiating the contemporary period as one of a "new Tibetan literature" or "modern Tibetan literature," Tibetan writers and scholars distance themselves not only from their literary past and the influence of Indian derived kāvyā but also from Sinocentric periodizations offered by Han scholars in the early 1980s. Like their Chinese counterparts in the late 1980s, several Tibetan scholars urged that the criteria for delineation should rely on literary developments, in contrast to political delimiters, for example. In this aspect too, their project shares similarities with the Romantic view of

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706 Ibid., 13.
late-eighteenth-century Europe when "literature was profoundly aware of its own position in history, and in a specifically literary history."  

The publishing of two Chinese literary histories, in particular, touched off a debate among Tibetan literary critics regarding the status of Tibetan literature and its periodization. One of the earliest Tibetan critics to address this issue was Dga'-ba-pa-sangs (1988) in his article "A Brief Discussion of the Periodization of Tibetan Literary History." This essay was published in "Controversy Corral" ('gran-gleng ldum-rwa), a special section of Bod-ljongs zhib-jug featuring current contested topics. Again, it is important to consider how the very designation of an article in this way influences its reception among readers. In any case, Dga'-ba-pa-sangs minced no words in his criticism of You Guo'en, et. al. (1979)'s China's Literary History and Huang Xiuji's A Brief History of Modern Literature in China. Neither of these collections, protests Dga'-ba-pa-sangs, includes any mention of literature in the minority languages of China: "One would think that the term 'China' refers solely to the Han Nationality. If China really consists of more than fifty nationalities, then the literature of its minorities with written languages should be included in a literary history of China." He continues, "Though Gesar is even recognized by scholars worldwide as worthy of study, it was not included..."
in either of these books.⁷¹² And yet, the author's main purpose is not to incorporate Tibetan literature into a Chinese literary framework, but to urge its unique consideration.

According to Dga'-ba-pa-sangs, Chinese literature is divided into four periods: 1) traditional or classical (until the Opium War of 1840); 2) early modern (1840 until the May 4th Movement of 1919); 3) modern (1919 until the founding of the PRC in 1949); and 4) contemporary (since 1949).⁷¹³ He warns, however, against using the same periodization for Tibetan language literature "since the Chinese nationality and the Tibetan nationality have their own political, social and literary histories."⁷¹⁴ Rather, Dga'-ba-pa-sangs recommends a three-part periodization for Tibetan literature that is distinct from Chinese historicization: 1) ancient (gna'-rabs) until 841 C.E.; 2) classical (nye-rabs) 841–1951; and 3) modern (deng-rabs) 1951–present, where 841 [sic] marks the death of Khri Ral-pa-can whose linguistic reforms "no doubt entailed literary change" and 1951 marks the liberation of Tibet which spurred major changes in language and thought. Unlike some scholars, Dga'-ba-pa-sangs makes no distinction between "modern" (deng-rabs) and "contemporary" (da-rabs) Tibetan literature. While Dga'-ba-pa-sang's conflation of the two terms represents one side of the debate, another approach reflects influence from Chinese literary criticism in arguing that contemporary Tibetan literature,⁷¹⁷ which began in 1980, is distinct from modern Tibetan literature,⁷¹⁸ which is

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⁷¹² Ibid.
⁷¹³ The respective terms for these periods in Chinese are gudian 古典, jindai 近代, xiandai 现代, and dangdai 当代.
⁷¹⁴ Ibid.
⁷¹⁵ The Tibetan term nye-rabs literally refers to "recent times," as opposed to gna'-rabs ("ancient times"). It is a calque from the Chinese term jindai 近代, which in the Chinese context refers to early modern literature. In the Tibetan context, however, I have chosen to gloss the term as "classical."
⁷¹⁶ Khri Ral-pa-can actually died in 836 AC.
⁷¹⁷ The Tibetan terms for "contemporary literature" (da-rabs-kyi rtsom-rig or da-lta'i rtsom-rig) correspond to the Chinese term dangdai wenxue 当代文学. Lara Maconi (2002) discusses how the term contemporary literature (dangdai wenxue) in Chinese implies not only "present-day literature", but also "new or "more advanced" literature. Maconi, "Lion of the Snowy Mountains," 168, n. 217. For this reason, she prefers to use the term "post-Liberation literature" as "related to a specific interpretation of the term"
periodized from 1951 to 1980. While this distinction received a significant amount of attention (though not in writing) among scholars in the TAR, to the best of my knowledge there was no parallel for this literary controversy in other regions.

Though Dga'-ba-pa-sangs does not mention them by name, it is likely that his article is more directly responding to two histories of Tibetan literature which were written in Chinese and circulating in the 1980s. The first was compiled by scholars at the Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing (1985), a project that shared characteristics of the proliferation of Chinese literary histories from 1979 to 1981 which were "the result of collective efforts.... [and which] fulfilled a specific institutional purpose." The preface of this textbook includes a discussion of problems in the periodization of Tibetan literature. The criteria used to distinguish four Tibetan literary periods are clearly Marxist: remote antiquity and slave society, feudal fragmented society, early feudal serf society and later feudal serf society. A second and widely used history was written by scholars at Northwest Nationalities Institute, Wang Yinuan 王沂暖 and Tang Jingfu 唐景福.

"post-colonial." (p. 167) While 1951 might constitute an appropriate delimiter for sinophone literature by Tibetans (which indeed is Maconi's focus), I don't consider the term "post-Liberation literature" to be very informative for classifying Tibetan-language literature. While there were changes in the Tibetan literary style of many published writers following the PLA's arrival in Tibet, such as greater use of vernacular language, new subject matter and neologisms, tibetophone writing was still quite conventional by kavya standards, as discussed in chapter 3 above. Tibetan-medium literature experienced a large-scale dramatic shift only in the post-Mao era, as should now be clear from our discussion. Indeed, 1950 marked not the beginning of a "post-colonial" era—however apt the literary comparison—but the beginning of Tibet's first truly colonial period.

The Tibetan term for "modern literature" (deng-rabs rtsom-rig) is a calque of the Chinese term xiandai wenxue 现代文学. Thus, the literary "modernists" called xiandai pai 现代派 (the modernist school) in Chinese are called "deng-rabs-can" in Tibetan. Generally speaking, however, deng-rabs rtsom-rig is the most commonly used phrase to describe Tibetan writing which has appeared since 1980. Thus, it really has the sense of "contemporary" and usually does not imply any particular aesthetic view. This is indicated by a recent overview of literary and publishing developments in the 1980s and 1990s by Tshed-rdor (1999) who uses "deng-rabs rtsom-rig" interchangeably with an alternative term, "deng-dus rtsom-rig," for which a more literal translation would be "contemporary literature." By whatever name, Tshed-rdor is full of praise for current literary developments while at the same time urging continued translations of foreign literary criticism for the purposes of "study and imitation" in the continued enrichment of Tibetan-medium literature. This article includes interesting details on his experience as editor of Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal from 1990–1995. Tshed-rdor, "Dus-rabs gsar-pa'i Bod-yig-gi rtsom-rig bya-gzhag la bla-ba" (Views on Tibetan-medium literary affairs in the New Era), part 2, Krung-go'i Bod-kyi-shes-rig, 1999, no. 1:114–131. 1719 Yingjin Zhang, "Institutionalization," 369.

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Prior to its official publication, this textbook circulated through cyclostyle copies used for classroom instruction at Northwest Nationalities Institute and Qinghai Nationalities Institute. The authors divide Tibetan history into three parts determined mostly by Chinese dynastic years: the Tufan period including poetry, prose, myths and legends; the Yuan and Ming periods; and the Qing and Republican periods. These represent the first official versions of Tibetan literary history and precede any literary history written in Tibetan. A third history was published by Ma Xueliang 马学良 et. al. (1994) who maintained the same periodization as that used by the Central Nationalities Institute: remote antiquity to A.D. 842; period of fragmented rule (843–1264); the early period of feudal serfdom (1265–1644); and the later period of feudal serfdom (1645–1949). Note that none of these texts addresses the subject of modern Tibetan literature.

From 1993 to 1996, at least five Tibetan critics again took up the issue of periodization. This wave of articles occurred nearly fifteen years after a similar but more vital proliferation of Chinese literary histories in the early 1980s. Ldong-kha Chos-grags (1994) quips, "Though it is of little significance to old nomads whether or not Tibetan literary periods have been clearly defined, the issue is an important one for

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720 Ch. geju 割据, Tib. sil-bu.

721 This two-volume history is being translated (from Chinese into Tibetan) and significantly revised by Rgya-ye Bkra'-shis-phun-tshogs (author of the poem in support of free verse, see chapter 5) and a colleague of his at Qinghai Teachers Training College.


723 Yingjin Zhang, "Institutionalization," 369. Book-length histories of Tibetan literature remain scarce, though as mentioned in the preceding footnote, an important volume is forthcoming. In the only published literary history in Tibetan of which I am aware, Dpa'-rtses and Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring (1999) adopt Tibetan Buddhist terminology in delineating an "early spread" (11th-mid 17th c.) and a "later spread" (mid 17th-mid 20th c.) of Tibetan literature, which ends with Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho. These early and later spreads were preceded by "ancient literature," including mgur found at Dunhuang to which the authors pay a great deal of attention. Modern literature is not covered in their study, though a separate chapter is devoted to the poetry of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel. See Dpa'-rtses and Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring, Bod-kyi rtsom-rig

248 Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Chos-grags (aka Ldong-spel Chos-grags) was born in 1959 in Songpan (Tib. Zung-chu, Nga-ba Prefecture, Sichuan Province). In 1986 he went to Northwest Nationalities Institute where he studied with Professors Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung and A-lags Dor-zhi, as well as Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan (the Rnga-ba born scholar who protested the grammatical reforms made to the Tibetan language in post-1950s period). He was in the third group of graduate students accepted at NWNI after the Cultural Revolution. Chos-grags' masters' thesis discussed criteria for constituting "Tibetan literature" and will be discussed later in this chapter. Upon graduating in 1989, he began teaching literature in the Tibetan Department at Southwest Nationalities Institute in Chengdu where he continues to work today. In his article on the periodization of Tibetan literature, he evaluates some seven previous schemata (including that of Dga'-ba-pa-pa-sangs) and then offers his own criteria for periodization. Chos-grag's main point is that political change shouldn't serve as the criteria for demarcating a literary period—whether it be Chinese political history or Tibetan political history. He proposes instead that Tibetan classical literature began with the translation of Dandin's Kāvyādārśa and its influence continued until the 1951 "liberation" of Tibet. Presumably, he saw this event as bringing literary reform in addition to political change, a defensible view given the translation and other publishing endeavors launched in the 1950s. (See chapters 2 and 3, and Stoddard 1994.) Chos-grags refuses, however, to acknowledge any literature of caliber prior to the Me-long. This sharply contrasts the history of Tibetan literature.

byung-'phel-gyi lo-rgyus dang khyad-chos (On the historical development and characteristics of Tibetan literature) (Lanzhou: Kan-su'u mi-rigs dpe-srung-khang, 1999).

Ldong-ka Dge-shes-chos-grags, "Bod-kyi nye-rabs rtson-rig gi dus-mtshams dyo-stangs skor bshad-pa (On the periodization of classical Tibetan literature)," Bod-ljongs zhig-'jug, 1994, no. 4:58-63. The first group was admitted from 1979–1982 and the second group from 1985–87. Nearly every last graduate from these programs is working either as a researcher and/or professor in a nationalities institute, teachers training college or academy of social science.
written by the scholars from Central Nationalities Institute and students at this school, such as Don-grub-rgyal, who include Dunhuang literature, mgur and glu prior to 1264 in their classification of Tibetan classical literature. Chos-grags considers literature written prior to 1277 to be "ancient literature" (gna'-rabs), literature from 1277–1951 to be "Tibetan classical literature" (Bod-kyi nye-rabs rtsom-rig), and post-1951 literature to be modern or contemporary, though he gives no name for this.

One of the more interesting articles to address the topic of periodization was by Bdud-lha-rgyal (1996), a graduate student and now literature professor at Northwest Nationalities Institute. He highlights Dga'-ba-pa-sangs' periodization as the best option among otherwise illogical chronologies which use political criteria to demarcate literary change. Bdud-lha-rgyal agrees with Dga'-ba Pa-sang's emphasis on linguistic or literary change, but offers his own criteria which more comprehensively defines artistry (sgyu-ritsal) as encompassing both external form and content. He delineates four literary periods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Key Cause for Transformation</th>
<th>Key Literary Characteristics or Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. &quot;ancient&quot; (gna'-rabs)</td>
<td>up to Khri Srong-lde-btsan [ca. 755]</td>
<td>Prevailing influence of Bon.</td>
<td>Tales (gtam rgyud) which were the earliest story form and mgur and glu which were the earliest forms of poetry. These remained the same despite reign period changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. unnamed</td>
<td>[ca. 755]-Translation of the Snyan-ngag me-long [circa 1270]</td>
<td>Spread of Buddhism among general populace</td>
<td>Pillar edicts, rock inscriptions, etc. with little concern for artistic value.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

726 It is as if Bdud-lha-rgyal is responding directly to the need expressed by Bu-bzhi Bsam-pa'i-don-grub (1994) who argues that periodization should be based on aesthetics (e.g. form, content, style) not Chinese history or Tibetan history or politics. Professor Bu-bzhi, however, offers no scheme in his own article.
"Truly new thought," argues Bdud-lha-rgyal, "came in the 1980s. Whether it was 841 or 1951, the Tibetan nationality was still under the power of spirits (bla) and there was no natural transformation. It was not a decisive milestone in terms of a transformation in thought [or literature.]"\(^\text{727}\) This scholar is one of several contemporaries who suggest that the Me-long led Tibetan literature astray from its natural roots:

In our early ancient literature, there were scattered works with ornamental forms (rgyan) that had a Tibetan flavor (Bod rang-gi bro-ba). From the time of Khri Srong-lde-btsan all of this disappeared; nor was there any artistic virtue other than the joining of words and mellifluosity. Since the translation of the Kāvyādāraśa, ornamentation influenced by Indian culture spread and this was a major transformation in the external Tibetan literary form. From then on, this way of joining words became the literary form not only for poetry, but for all other types of writing—historical, religious, etc. Poetry and literature became synonymous\(^\text{728}\).... No attention was paid to the natural literary image and Me-long ornamentation prevailed until 1980s.\(^\text{729}\)

Bdud-lha-rgyal chooses the arguably pejorative term "Middle Ages" to refer to the second and third periods of his chronology. One senses a challenge in his closing remarks: "I myself haven't found good names for these periods. Ancient (gna'-rabs) is alright for the first and New Literature (rtsom-rig gsar-ba) is alright for the last, but this

\(^{727}\) Bdud-lha-rgyal, "Bod rtsom 'byung lo-rgyus-kyi dus-kyi dgar-tshul thad nas rang dang gzhan-gyi 'dod-pa gleng-ba" (A discussion of my thoughts and others regarding the periodization of Tibetan literary history), Nub-byang mi-rigs slob-sgrwa chen-mo'i rig-gzhung dus-deb, 1996, no. 1:46.

\(^{728}\) Consider the significance of this statement in light of the discussion in chapter 7 herewith.

\(^{729}\) Bdud-lha-rgyal, op. cit., 51–52.
would leave 'classical' (nye-rabs)\textsuperscript{730} for the second and third period and 'classical' is a term that expresses the newly emerging social sprouts of capitalism. Since capitalism never came to Tibet, we should not use this term for our literature. I would suggest 'the middle ages,' but welcome the ideas of others.\textsuperscript{731} More recently, a few critics have sought to more closely examine particular periods, but additional overarching periodizations have not been proposed, to the best of my knowledge.

As in the case of China where "the concept of literary history was not available in the discourse of traditional Chinese literary criticism,"\textsuperscript{732} contemporary Tibetan critics had no indigenous models for constructing a literary history. As suggested above, the move to articulate an awareness of their own position in a specifically Tibetan literary history was partly spurred by the early efforts of Chinese scholars to apply an evolutionist framework to the course of Tibetan belles-lettres writing. This approach reflects the predominance of literary evolutionism as "the most influential [paradigm] in modern Chinese literary historiography" since its rise in the 1920s. (Zhang 1994:350) It is ironic that precisely when Chinese literary historiography "released itself from a rigid paradigm of ideological interpretation" in the 1980s,\textsuperscript{733} an orthodox Marxist analysis was still seen to be fitting for Tibetan literature.\textsuperscript{734} Tibetan critics themselves mostly adopted an evolutionist approach. Few writers argued for a return to some "golden age" of belles-lettres. On the contrary, young Tibetan literary critics typically hailed the new vernacular

\textsuperscript{730} The Tibetan term nye-rabs is usually translated into English as "modern times," "contemporary times," or most literally as "recent times" (e.g. Goldstein 2001: 420, and Skorupski 2001: 1299). In the realm of literature, however, I believe it is best translated as "classical" when it refers to the centuries of writing after the translation of the Kavyadarsa into Tibetan in the thirteenth century and prior to the advent of modern literature. As noted above, the advent of modern literature occurred in 1951, but 1980 for Bbud-lha-rgyal. For a discussion of the term nye-rabs, see n. 717.

\textsuperscript{731} Bbud-lha-rgyal, op. cit., 55.

\textsuperscript{732} Yingjin Zhang, "Institutionalization," 347.

\textsuperscript{733} Ibid., 348.

\textsuperscript{734} This phenomenon continues today.
literature for its "truly new thought" and unfettered expression. As in the case of eighteenth-century England and early twentieth-century China, to name only two instances, in 1980s Tibet

> [t]he practice of literary criticism not only emerged once writers began to have a sense of themselves as existing within a particular tradition, the very sense of literary tradition was given through the practices of history writing and literary criticism.735

The construction of a Tibetan literary past and present occurred through multiple representations, each statement staking a discursive claim regarding Tibetan identity. Bdud-lha-rgyal's comment about true Tibetan flavor lying only in the most ancient works, for example, is not an uncommon statement these days.736 This view is also expressed by Dpal-rdo-thar (1995), for example; and in the fall of 1999, I attended an undergraduate literary history class at Qinghai Nationalities Institute where the teacher several times expressed the same opinion. I believe the publication of several works by the Italy-based scholar cum philanthropist Namkhai Norbu737 have contributed to this search for "authentic" Tibetan roots in pre-Buddhist society and literature. With the dual aim of distancing themselves from both Chinese literary historiography as well as the preceding Indic kāvya tradition, the more radical among Tibetan literary theorists have had to look elsewhere to select an "authentic" tradition. Literature from Dunhuang presents one option. Another option is to delineate the terms by which contemporary Tibetan literature is considered authentic or, as frequently stated, evincing the "qualities of the nationality" (mi-rigs-kyi khyad-chos).

735 Colebrook, New Literary Histories, 12.
736 This view is also expressed in Dpal-rdo-thar, "Grub-mtha'i phyogs-su 'gro-ba'i deng-rabs Bod-kyi snyan-ngag-la thog-na'i dp Yad-pa" (A preliminary study of modern Tibetan poetry as it is forming into schools), Nub-byang mi-rigs slob-sgrwa chen-mo'i rig-gzhung dus-deb, 1995, no. 1:65–71.

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What is 'Tibetan Literature?'

With Tibetan society propelled into the trajectory espoused by those shaping a "single, unified, multinational Chinese state" (Kim and Dittmer 1993: 276), Tibetan intellectuals have also had to grapple with being self-consciously on what Kronfeld (1996) has coined "the margins of modernism." First, the economics of cultural production in the PRC were such that "indigenous" minority languages were assigned a minor status. Thus, an increasing number of Tibetans began writing in Chinese in order to reach a wider readership—or because they themselves had not been educated in Tibetan language.738 This development among others prompted a controversy in Tibetan circles during the 1980s over the question of engaging the "idiom of the hegemonic culture." (Kronfeld)

Accordingly, the nationalistic implications of literary debates739 heated up in 1986 at the Lhasa Tibetology Conference where three papers addressed the issue of whether or not literature written in Chinese could be classified as Tibetan literature. One speaker delivered a paper in which he outlined three criteria for what should constitute Tibetan literature (Bod-rigs rtsom-rig): 1) the writer must have the unique psychology of the Tibetan nationality; 2) the work must be based on Tibetan life; and 3) the language must be Tibetan. The article was first published in the issue of Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug and then again in a collection of papers from the conference released in June 1987.740 The speaker, Bsod-nams (who has since left academia and works in a Lhasa travel agency)

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737 Tib. Nam-mkha'i-nor-bu. This scholar, born in the Sde-dge principality of Khams in 1938, now resides in Naples, Italy.

738 This topic is briefly addressed in Prins, "Tibetan Common Language," 33–34.

739 Don-grub-rgyal was one of the earliest to write about extra-literary issues in the literary realm, whether it be the nationalistically-intoned "Lang-tsho'i rtab-chu" (Waterfall/Torrents of Youth), his closing comment about the need for a Tibetan literary theory, or his fascination with the imperial period.

contrasted this so-defined "Tibetan Literature" with "Tibetan Regional Literature" (Bo-dljongs sa-khul-gyi rtsom-rig) which can be written by any nationality and can be in Chinese or any other language, but must be about Tibetan life. It is possible that the role of Wu Jinghua in attendance as the chief convening official at the 1986 meeting in Lhasa might have contributed to the freedom people felt to so openly discuss this issue.

Wu Jinghua—whose nickname was "Lama"—was known to be a liberal and a herald of the linguistic rights of nationalities. Both Ye-shes-bstan-'dzin (author of The Defiant Ones, published in Chinese in 1981) and 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho (author of Skal-bzang-me-tog, published in Chinese in 1980) reportedly spoke at the meeting in support of sinophone Tibetan literature. However, their papers were not published in the proceedings.

To gain some sense of the resentment Tibetan writers must have felt about the attention being granted to sinophone writers, consider that Ye-shes-bstan-'dzin and 'Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho—both of whom wrote their novels in Chinese—were the only two writers first accepted in the National Writers Association in 1981. Moreover, in 1985, one year preceding the Lhasa conference, four writers from the TAR were recipients of the Second National Minority Excellent Literary Works Awards (granted every four years). Among these, only one wrote in Tibetan. The underrepresentation of literature written in Tibetan continued into the 1990s. In 1991, a series entitled "Contemporary Tibetan Authors Series," was published by the TAR Writers Union to commemorate the

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skrun-khang, 1987), 192–238, which includes a large selection of papers from this meeting and other background information.


742 See Nub-hyang mi-rigs slob-grwa'i rig-gzhung dus-deb, 1992, no. 2, for the Tibetan translation of a speech by Wu Jinghua delivered about this same topic but in reference to the Mongolian context.

743 There are now some sixty Tibetan members in the national association, many of whom write in Tibetan.
"forty years since the liberation of Tibet." Of the eleven books released, only four were in Tibetan.\(^{745}\) Likewise, a 1995 "Tibetan Literature Special" edition of the English version of *China's Tibet* featured solely sinophone Tibetan writers to illustrate the "bumper harvest" in Tibetan Literature.\(^{746}\) These examples reflect the official representation of "*Xizang wenxue*" (literature from the TAR), and the implications for the professional advancement of tibetophone writers in the TAR are discouraging even today. According to Tshe-rdor (1999), only thirty of the more than one hundred members in the TAR Writers Union write in Tibetan; and among the twenty people from the TAR accepted into the China's Writers Union, only seven write in Tibetan.\(^{747}\) Though I do not have such figures for Tibetan areas outside the TAR, the otherwise skewed representation has been replicated outside the PRC where sinophone writings have predominated among the translated single works and anthologies of Tibetan writers published to date in western languages.\(^{748}\)

The papers presented at the 1986 meeting\(^ {749}\) in Lhasa caused a stir in intellectual circles across the plateau and led to the republication of an earlier article by Sangs-rgyas (author of the 1983 thesis on the *Me-long*) who asserted,

> [t]he spoken and written language of a nationality is the sole condition for achieving nationality literature. If what you write is not in the language of your own nationality and cannot be enjoyed by the vast masses of your nationality, the nationality character of your work will naturally weaken. As a result, though your work is literature, it is not nationality literature....

\(^{744}\) Tshe-rdor, op. cit., 129.

\(^{745}\) Tshe-rdor, op. cit., 121.

\(^{746}\) See *China's Tibet*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1995.


\(^{748}\) E.g. Blatt (2001) and *Mânôa* 2000, not to mention the translated works by writers such as Tashi Daya, Yeshe Tenzin and Ahì.

\(^{749}\) A counter-article was reportedly published in a Chinese-language journal, but I have not yet been able to locate this. I was told that it had been written by Ye-shes-bstan-'dzin (Yeshe Tenzin) and published in the journal of the regional government's translation bureau; i.e. *zizhizhou zhengfu banggongting fanyi zu 自治区政府办公厅 翻译组*. 

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Some Tibetan comrades now are writing in Chinese many short stories, novels and poems which express the real Tibetan situation, path and life in Chinese. As a way to clear the misconceptions of inexperience, ignorance and misconceptions of Chinese readers, they have introduced and are introducing to them in literary form Tibetans' early history, present life, future ideals, customs, characteristics of our livelihood, etc. This is truly virtuous work... However, these cannot be classified as Tibetan literature (Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig gi khongs-su 'jog-pa'i 'os ma mchis) because your work is not in Tibetan language. As soon as I say this it is possible that a group will become angry, as if I have kicked them out from the Tibetan nationality. However, if these comrades relax and think closely, there is no cause for misunderstanding. Surely, if you work hard and become a top writer, you too will be famous among minority writers in the history of Chinese literature. So, do not worry yourselves about this meaningless debate.

The tone of his article is more incendiary in terms of Han-Tibetan relations than any piece of literary criticism that I have seen from the 1990s. Yet, the entire article had been published once before in 1983 with no noteworthy reaction, albeit in a less widely circulated magazine, Mi-rigs skad-yig-kyi bya-ba (Nationality Linguistic Affairs).

According to one informant, Sangs-rgyas may also have delivered the piece as a speech in Beijing in the early 1980s.

How was Sangs-rgyas able to justify his controversial stance? One could point to three rhetorical strategies in his article. First, he relies on socialist literary theory as espoused by famous Russian and Chinese communist leaders. For example, he opens his article with a quote from the collected works of "Comrade Stalin:" "The culture of the nationality should be rich with the content of the working class. Either create the culture of the working class with the content and form of the nationality's culture, or don't.

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The author shifts from referring to his comrades in third person to addressing them in the second person here. Ironcally, there is little historical evidence for Tibetan writers having achieved any modicum of fame as minority writers in China, especially at the time of this article. Consider, for example, the histories cited above which make no reference to Tibetan literature of any kind. Sangs-rgyas, "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig gser-rtsom byed na nges-par-du Bod-kyi skad dang yi-ger brten gdos" (When writing new Tibetan literature it must be in Tibetan), Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug, 1987, no. 1:121.
Sangs-rgyas draws on this to interpret that the realization of a "socialist Tibetan literature" should be based on "the new socialist content and whatever is necessary to establish the Four Modernizations," while the form should be in the Tibetan nationality's own language. As do several other critics, Sangs-rgyas argues that if literature is "the art of language", then the nationality's language must be "the seed for that literature." He closes his article by appealing to the "aphoristic medicine" by Marxist leaders Lenin, Stalin and Zhou Enlai. This tactic is not unique to Tibetan literary critics. Moreover, party doctrine continues to be heavily cited in Tibetan academic articles today, more so than in articles by Chinese scholars.

A second strategy Sangs-rgyas employs is to quote Russian and Chinese literary scholars. For example, Sangs-rgyas quotes Introduction to Literature by Chinese literary scholar Ba Ren, who wrote in 1940: "Any literature of a nationality should be expressed in the language of that nationality...." Sangs-rgyas' reference above to the "weakening" of nationality characteristics when literature is written in another language is directly borrowed from Ba Ren. Sangs-rgyas reasons that if Tibetan literature is to serve the masses of nomads and peasants who "hold the most democratic thought" (he

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754 Sangs-rgyas, "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig gsar-rtsom," 119–120.
755 Ibid., 120.
756 Ba Ren 巴人 (1901–72). Born in Fenghua, Zhejiang Province. An Introduction to Literature, published in 1940, deals with the history of Chinese literature. Revised twice, the work was published again after the founding of the PRC in 1949 and exerted a strong impact on Chinese readers. In 1957, while serving as chief editor of the People's Literary Publishing House in Beijing, Ba Ren was labeled a rightist for his essay, "On Human Feelings," which supports a humanist perspective in literary works. During the Cultural Revolution, he was persecuted and sent back to his hometown where he died of illness two years later. Ba Ren was posthumously rehabilitated by the Central People's Government in 1979.
757 Cited in Sangs-rgyas, op. cit., 120.
quotes Gorky), then literary works must be understood by them and Tibetan literature should thus be written in Tibetan.\textsuperscript{758}

Thirdly, Sangs-rgyas frames the issue of discrimination against tibetophone writers as a question of professional negligence and failure to uphold party policy:

Nowadays, some ill-minded people have been proclaiming loudly in various magazines that if a writer is Tibetan (Bod-rigs), then his works are Tibetan literature regardless of what language he uses. Moreover, they consider works written in Chinese to be one aspect of modern Tibetan literature and repeatedly grant these exaggerated praise. They stubbornly include writers writing in Chinese (Rgya-yig rtsom-pa-po) in the ranks of new Tibetan writers and even claim they are the core (srog-shing) of the new [Tibetan] writers. This is really not a good omen. It is a bad omen, and I want to say clearly to everyone: pay great attention to this!

Furthermore, many comrades who have been given responsibility for literary affairs in Tibetan areas are not implementing this in fact. Though these are [designated] nationality areas, they shirk the use of the nationality's language. They respect writing in Chinese. Not only are Tibetan writers who write in their own language not given respect, they have a very low position among the ranks of writers. Most of the award-winning minority literature in China is written in Chinese. In such a situation it is clear that they are unconsciously fostering unequal shoots in the field of nationality language. These comrades need to become familiar with what is really meant by "nationality" and to recognize the nationality characteristics. They also need to know how to regularly employ the character of the nationality in the nationality's literature.\textsuperscript{759}

By placing the focus on the question of officials not performing their jobs well, Sangs-rgyas garnered sympathy for what might otherwise be an untenable complaint. Recall that articles criticizing corrupt or ineffective government officials were not only acceptable but one of the "most widespread and persistent of popular complaints" in Chinese writing after the death of Mao and with the publication of Liu Binyan's "People

\textsuperscript{758} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{759} Ibid., 125.
or Monsters?\textsuperscript{760} The trend can also be found in Tibetan literature as mentioned above in the context of Don-grub-rgyal's short story \textit{Sprul-sku}.\textsuperscript{761}

Following the Lhasa dispute and the publishing of Sangs-rgyas' article, a rash of other articles appeared countrywide prescribing varying formulas of criteria for "Tibetan Literature." A closer look at these are merited by our concern with the shaping of "Tibetan Literature" as a discursive formation. The definition of Tibetan literature itself is one of the most direct ways in which writers, critics and literary scholars attempt to construct the field. One of the earliest articles after the Lhasa conference was by Tshe-dbang-stobs-'byor (1988) who argues that the issue of nationality characteristics in contemporary Tibetan literature is one of the most urgent questions to be theorized and practiced for the sake of developing modern Tibetan literature:

Once this issue is correctly decided, Tibetan modern literature can join the ranks of the advanced literature of our sister nationalities and forge a broad path for entering the ranks of the advanced world literatures.\textsuperscript{762}

The expression of an urgent need to catch up to other literatures—Chinese, in particular and "world literatures" in general—is typical for articles published in Tibetan since the late 1980s. Tshe-dbang-stobs-'byor's article is representative of literary criticism in Tibetan during the late 1980s for other reasons. First, he cites Mao, Marx and Stalin for such remarks as "The nationality characteristics of literature is a gift offered by a nationality to the storehouse of world culture." Second, he bases his argument on realist discourse. That is, he states that the definitive characteristic for Tibetan contemporary

\begin{thebibliography}{1}

\bibitem{link} Link, \textit{Uses of Literature}, 260–261.

\bibitem{two later examples} Two later examples are 'Brong-bu Rdo-rje-rin-chen [1992], "Roadside Journal" (\textit{Lam-'gram-gyi nyin-tho}), trans. by Lauran Hartley, \textit{Exchanges} (Journal of the Translation Laboratory at Iowa University), no. 10 (spring 1998): 20–34; and Mog-chung phur-kho [1991], "Diary of a Primary School Student."

\bibitem{tib} Tshe-dbang-stobs-'byor, "Bod-kyi deng-nabs rtson-rig gi mi-rigs khyad-chos skor rags-tsam gleng-ba" (A discussion of the nationality characteristics of contemporary Tibetan literature), \textit{Bod-kyi rtson-rig sgyu-rtsal}, 1988, no. 5:61. Tib. \textit{Gnad-don de thag-good yang-dag-pa byung-tshe Bod-kyi deng-rtson 'di}

\end{thebibliography}
literature should be that its content reflect "real contemporary Tibetan life." He cites examples of Chinese writings which depict real life and are thus "rich in [Han] nationality characteristics," including popular short stories from the late 1970s such as Liu Xinwu’s (b. 1942) "The Homeroom Teacher" and Gao Xiaosheng’s (b. 1928) "Li Shunda Builds a House." He opines that the most well-known works by Tibetans thus far—Jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho’s *Skal-bzang-me-tog* and Ye-shes-bstan-'dzin’s *Rab-rib-kyi sa-gzhi chen-po* which were both written in Chinese and Dpal-'byor’s *Crown Turquoise (Gtsugs-g.yu)*—"are incapable of revealing the unique characteristics of the Tibetan nationality and thus cannot express Tibetan modern social life." He commends Tibet’s long cultural history, laments the "backward" state of education, and suggests that the spread of Buddhism posed a constant challenge to the development of realism and psychology in Tibet. He argues, "Writers need to be able to correctly express actual Tibetan life, which is unique from that of other nationalities;" and literature should describe "model nationality figures" and the "unique nationality character." (p. 64) He suggests environmental motifs—Tibet’s place at the peak of the world, the strength of the sun, and the nomads of the grassland. Though he does not stress the need to use Tibetan language, the use of Tibetan is implied or assumed in his urging writers to abide by Tibetan grammar.

The most thorough discussion of criteria for constituting Tibetan literature (*Bod-kyi rtsom-rig*) appears in the master’s thesis of Sichuan-born Ldong-spel Chos-grags (b. 1949).
1959) who graduated from Northwest Nationalities Institute (NWNI) in 1989 and authored one of the articles on periodization discussed above. An article extracted from his master's thesis (chapters 1, 2 and 4) was first published in Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug, the academic journal published by the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences in Lhasa. The full thesis was published only in 1996. I will refer mostly to the shorter article, as it was the version publicly circulating in the late 1980s and 1990s. Chos-grags (1989) acknowledges the controversy that has been brewing over the issue of language and summarizes three prevailing positions on the criteria for designating "Tibetan Literature:"

1. The content must be about Tibetan life.
2. The writer must be Tibetan nationality.
3. The language must be Tibetan, the writer must be Tibetan, and the content must be about Tibetan life.

Chos-grags himself concludes that "the need to base [the literary work] on Tibetan spoken and written language is the sole criteria for Tibetan literature." He cites literary works by Shakespeare (1564–1616), Gorky (1868–1936), Goethe (1749–1832) as well as other foreign and Chinese writers to prove that the writer need not write about his own nationality. He also observes that classical Tibetan writers have written about the lives of the Buddha, penned a Tibetan Rāmāyaṇa, and that one Tibetan living in India, whose name is not mentioned, even wrote a praise poem about Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948). He argues that in foreign countries and in Chinese literature as well, language is the

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766 Tshe-dbang-stobs-'byor, op. cit., 63. Tib. de-dag la Bod-rigs-kyi thun-mong ma yin-pa'i khyad-chos da-dung yag-po thon thub med-pa dang/ Bod-kyi deng-rabs-kyi spyi-tshogs 'sho-ba'i rnam-pa de-bas mngon thub mi 'dug/
768 See Ldong-pel Chos-grags, "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig-gi tshad-gzhi brjod-pa drang-srong tshangs thig ces bya-ba," Bod-kyi shes-rig dbyad-rtsom phye-sgsags-bdyigs blo-gsal hung-ba dren-pa'i dbyi-dkyi pho-nya zhes bya-ba, vol. 4, (Beijing: Krung-go'i Bod-kyi shes-rig dpe-skrun-khang, 1996): 147–180. There are significant differences between the journal article and the master's thesis, in addition to the former being a condensed version. It seems likely that the dissertation was edited again before being published in 1996.
determining criteria. For example, works by Manchu writers such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *Camel Xiangzi* are considered Chinese literature. Like Dga-'ba-pa-sangs (1988) whose article appeared in the previous year, Chos-grags notes that any Chinese anthology (whether classical or modern) excludes literature by minority writers who write in their own languages. Only the writings of minorities who write in Chinese are included, and thus "It wouldn't be wrong to assert that the literature of China equals Han literature."  

Chos-grags quotes from the original paper presented at the 1986 meeting in Lhasa by Bsod-nams (1987) and lauds the latter's position. His concurrence, however, is somewhat contradictory. For, in fact, Chos-grags' linguistic delimiter differs from the criteria required by Bsod-nams, who argues that besides writing in Tibetan, the author needs to have "a Tibetan psychology" and the content must concern Tibetan life. This elision of detail points to the staking of a position in one particular school of thought, i.e. the third stance as summarized by Chos-grags at the start of his article and as represented in the "icon" of Bsod-nam's earlier article. He gives examples of Chinese writers who write in Tibetan, such as one Bsod-tshe, and argues that their works should be considered "Tibetan Literature."

Based on my survey of articles on this topic written in Tibetan and published in Tibetan-language literary journals, I can only conclude that emphasizing the linguistic criteria is by far the prevailing attitude held by those who write primarily in Tibetan. Moreover, nearly every one of the some eighty writers, editors and professors I

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770 Ibid., 103.
771 Ibid., 100–101.
772 I have not been able to identify who this Bsod-tshe is. However, he is certainly not the Bsod-[nams]-tshe-[ring] associated with performing groups in Lhasa, who writes local comedic scripts and researches folk music. No other information is given in Chos-grag's article.
interviewed—all of whom were educated in Tibetan—rejected the idea that Chinese-medium works should be considered "Tibetan literature." Schiaffini-Vedani (2002) found the same to be true for tibetophone writers she interviewed. Sinophone writers, in contrast, typically included sinophone writing by Tibetans in the category of "Tibetan literature," whereas sinophone writing about Tibet by Han Chinese is generally considered "literature from Tibet." After extensive fieldwork, Lara Maconi (forthcoming) also concluded, "Generally speaking, Tibetan [language] writers show an intellectual and cultural 'rejection' of the idea that sinophone literature written by Tibetans may be considered as Tibetan literature per se." The views of Tibetan national sinophone writers are discussed in more detail in her article.

The stances taken by Sangs-rgyas (1987) and Chos-grags (1989) represented the bulk of statements on this topic until the debate over language as a constitutive factor for "Tibetan literature" slowly tapered off in the mid-1990s. I have been told that it was informally agreed among writers at a conference in Xining in August 1994 not to discuss this topic anymore. Indeed, no articles addressing the topic have been published since that date. It is possible that the softening of nationalist rhetoric in literary arguments from 1995 might also be connected to the political ramifications of an October 1995 meeting in which Chen Kuiyuan, party secretary of the TAR, declared that the pro-independence movement was linked to Buddhism and traditional culture. Crackdowns

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775 One exception to the otherwise later dearth of articles addressing the criteria for "nationality literature" is Chas-pa Rta-ugrin-tshe-ring, "Rtsom-rig-gi mi-rigs rang-bzhin dang mi-rigs rtsom-rig-gi gngs-yul byed-pa'i kungs-tung skor gleng-ba" (On nationality characteristics in literature and the source of the scope of nationality literature), Zla-zer, 1998, no. 1–2:2–15. His article, however, barely mentions Tibetan literature itself and all of his examples are drawn from Chinese and western writings.
on religion and Tibetan language use in education soon followed.\footnote{Bass, Education in Tibet, 54–59; cited in Schiaffini-Vedani, note 50.} Another related reason for such an accord was suggested in one interview I conducted with a leading poet who remarked, "This question [of whether literature written in Chinese should be classified as 'Tibetan literature'] still hasn't been decided. My own view is that it must be in Tibetan language. At the same time, we Tibetans must be united, so I don't criticize Yi-dam-tshe-ring and others [who write in Chinese].\footnote{Bass, Education in Tibet, 54–59; cited in Schiaffini-Vedani, note 50.}

Writers often make an exception for Yi-dam-tshe-ring whom they feel expresses a "Tibetan psychology" in his poems.\footnote{Lauran R. Hartley, "Ventures in Polishing the Mirror of Tibetan Literary Theory."} In at least one article he is even listed as a model example of a "traditional Tibetan poet."\footnote{Dpal-rdo-thar, "Grub-mtha'i phyogs-su 'gro-ba'i deng-rams Bod-kyi smyan-ngag," 71.} Reasons for why Yi-dam-tshe-ring is more palatable for tibetophone writers and critics may have to do with his strong nationalistic themes and skill with language. Lara Maconi (2002) has convincingly argued that the middle-aged poet accomplishes in his poems the "Tibetanisation of the Chinese language,"\footnote{Maconi, op. cit., 185.} such that "to know Tibetan is necessary, if not indispensable" for appreciating his work.\footnote{Ibid., 187.} By "Tibetanisation," Maconi is referring to "cross-linguistic devices," such as employing Chinese characters whose phonetic and semantic values rely on an understanding of spoken Tibetan and/or Tibetan culture, history, geography and so forth. Maconi considers these techniques to be the "linguistic strategies that Yi-dam-tshe-ring adopts to convey his sense of cultural distinctiveness to Chinese...."\footnote{Ibid., 186.}

Three of the last articles on this topic published in 1994 and 1995 are strident in their demand for language to constitute the sole criteria. Ban-de-mkhar (1994), for

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\footnote{Bass, Education in Tibet, 54–59; cited in Schiaffini-Vedani, note 50.}
example, asserts "It is necessary to base oneself on the unique language of our nationality in order to reflect the literary characteristics of the nationality." While his article is typical in that he quotes Stalin and Gorky in the beginning, the literary authorities and examples on which he otherwise draws, including Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Alex Haley, illustrate the greater familiarity Tibetan writers and critics in the 1990s had with contemporary western writers. Moreover, he is unique in citing particular modern writers who are exemplary in their use of "nationality characteristics." While commending the works of Dge-'dun-chos-phel (implying that he is a modern writer), Don-grub-rgyal, and two ethnic Mongols, Ljang-bu and Tshe-ring-don-grub, he is frank in criticising sinophone Tibetan writers, such as Tashi Dawa:

While the artistic methods of artistic expression in many of Tashi Dawa’s stories are excellent and the content is about the Tibetan people, the points of view and thoughts of the characters, and the characteristics of their actions, and the customs are greatly influenced by other nationalities. Thus, he is divorced from the nature of our nationality and from modern conditions. One needs to reveal the unique characteristics of ones own nationality.

Ultimately, his criteria for determining Tibetan literature is linguistic, regardless of the nationality or subject of the work:

Though the content of Tashi Dawa’s “Across the River” is Tibetan, it is written in Chinese and thus doesn’t count as Tibetan literature. Similarly, Wang Chendong, a Tujia nationality living in Lhasa, wrote a story “Dpa’-bo-sme-nag-can” (Hero with a birthmark). The content is Tibetan, but the story is in Chinese. [On the otherhand,] Guru Padmasambhava was Indian and the topic Indian, but because such works are written in Tibetan, this is Tibetan literature. Similarly, though Mgon-po-skyabs [NWNI], Ljang-
bu, and Tshe-ring-don-grub are all Mongolian, they write excellent Tibetan literature.\textsuperscript{787}

Yet, in Ban-de-mkhar's view, "Tibetan literature still has no system for writing the vernacular language."\textsuperscript{788} He raises the point mentioned above in chapter 2 that the modern literary language has weakened as a lingua franca between regions when compared to the classical language:

There was nothing that a person from Lhasa didn't understand in the writings of Amdo Dge-'dun-chos-'phel. And the Amdo shepherd could recite Lhasa Mdo-mkhar-ba's Gzhon-nu zla-med. In modern Tibetan literature, however, Amdowans don't understand the writings of Lhasans and Lhasans don't understand Amdo writings.\textsuperscript{789}

The solution, he argues, is to adhere strictly to Tibetan classical standards for grammar while promoting the use of a standardized vernacular language for composition.

Other writers from the same period, such as Tshe-lo-thar (1994) and Lha-phyug-skyid (1995), also argue that language is the "critical component" defining Tibetan literature. Lha-phyug-skyid characterizes writings by Tibetans in Chinese as "having nationality characteristics in terms of content, but with regard to form it is difficult to say."\textsuperscript{790} The authorities to which she refers include A-lags Dor-zhi, Gorky and Engels and her reasoning too is based on the assumption that "literature is the art of language." She argues for a standardized language, without which "one doesn't have a nationality literature with [the nationality's] own characteristics." For Lha-phyug-skyid, language and literature are powerful tools with reflective, aesthetic and educational capacities. Tshe-lo-thar takes a more sociological approach emphasizing the poor standing of Tibetan education in comparison with other regions in China. Because few Tibetans are

\textsuperscript{787} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{788} Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{789} Ibid., 61.
educated beyond the elementary level, much less read Chinese, he reasons, literature must be based on the language of the people. He urges reliance on the "common characteristics of Tibetan literature," which he delineates as 1) the realistic prose of the biographical (rnam-thar) genre, 2) the evocative quality of snyan-ngag, 3) popular aphorisms, 4) religious advice, 5) mgur and glu, and Tibetan dramas. Though he places great emphasis on the need for the writer to possess a Tibetan psychology, he ultimately privileges language as his main criteria for Tibetan literature (Bod-kyi rtsom-rig). He concludes his article by distinguishing between sinophone literature by Tibetans as "Tibetan regional literature" (Bod-gnas sa-khul-gyi rtsom-rig) and sinophone literature by "Chinese (and other nationalities)" as "western literature" (nub-khul rtsom-rig). Writers of the last type share "the courage of the western frontier" and thus "basically share the same essence as the western literature of America." Though I have never read this particular remark in other sources, I believe it points to the tendency for Tibetan intellectuals in the late 1980s and early 1990s to conflate contemporary Chinese thought and literature with Western literature. (See my discussion in chapter 1.)

The several articles from which I have quoted here are nearly unanimous in arguing for the exclusion of sinophone writings from the category of "Tibetan Literature." These articles were for the most part randomly selected from a variety of journals and seem to be representative of the discourse in Tibetan-language journals. The debate in some ways resembles the "failed" effort of African writers in 1952 to define "African literature" through discussions at "A Conference of African Writers of English"

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790 Lha-phug-skyid, "Mi-rigs skad-cha dang mi-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig" (Language of the nationality and nationality literature), Gangs-rgyan me-to, 1995, no. 2:72.
792 Ibid., 54.
Expression.\textsuperscript{793} One of the key questions raised there was whether "African Literature" should be solely in indigenous African languages or also include Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans, etc. Anglophone Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe (1975) who was an active participant at the meeting notes, "In the end we gave up trying to find an answer….\textsuperscript{794} In contrast to the situation facing his fellow writers, however, for whom as Achebe observes, "There are not many countries in Africa today where you could abolish the language of the erstwhile colonial powers and still retain the facility for mutual communication,"\textsuperscript{795} Tibet has a mutually comprehensible written language. At the same time, writing in a widely current language offers "a great advantage" as noted by Achebe, who adds that even a world language can and should be altered by the African writer who "should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to convey his own peculiar experience."\textsuperscript{796} It is an approach that the popular sinophone poet Yi-dam-tshe-ring has taken.\textsuperscript{797} Yet, as illustrated above, most tibetophone writers would side with Obi Wali, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and other African writers who stood against the "conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer."\textsuperscript{798} Quite late in his career, Ngugi began writing in his mother tongue—Gikuyu, a Kenyan language—a decision which he characterizes as "part and parcel" of the struggle against imperialism and the "colonial


\textsuperscript{794} Ibid., 428.

\textsuperscript{795} Ibid., 430.

\textsuperscript{796} Ibid., 433.

\textsuperscript{797} See discussion on page 265.

alienation" it engenders.\textsuperscript{799} The late date of Ngũgĩ's essay, written in 1986, suggests that the debate still continues. In both cases, the Tibetan and the African, the issue of idiom is closely tied to questions of ethnicity and/or national identity.

Indeed, the rhetoric used to define Tibetan literature frequently employs terms that might otherwise be used to define the Tibetan nation. The optional criteria rarely stray from the qualities of language, writer, content, and psychology. The origins for this primordial depiction of national letters can be traced back to the writings of Rousseau (1712–1778) who equated nation with "the people" and Herder (1744–1803) who linked the formation of a nation to its language and thereby "transformed Rousseau's people into the Volk... a woollier Romantic insistence on the primordial and ineluctable roots of nationhood as a distinguishing feature from other communities. Each people was now set off by the 'natural' characteristics of language, and the intangible quality of a special Volkgeist."\textsuperscript{800} If we look at the sources cited in articles by Tibetan literary critics, however, the adoption of essentialist rhetoric did not derive directly from Western European Enlightenment writings. Rather, Stalin's definition of the nation provided a useful conceptual structure upon which Tibetan literary critics frequently based their arguments, even in the mid 1990s:

\begin{quote}
A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.\textsuperscript{801}
\end{quote}

The elements Stalin highlights (common history, economy and, above all, language and psychology) to describe the nation are integral to the discourse by which Tibetan

\textsuperscript{799} Ibid., 451.
literature has been constructed as a category in Tibetan-language criticism. In this sense, I would argue that Tibetan literary critics while engaged in the debate to define "Tibetan literature" also partake tangentially in the negotiation of Tibetan national identity *en soi.*

Further, Tibetan literary critics frequently recommend for subject matter the unique characteristics of Tibet's environment and point to Tibet's long historical tradition when discussing the need to safeguard and develop their literature. Carving out a cultural territory in which the educational and symbolic capital they have accumulated gains greater currency, these writers, critics and other scholars are in effect "narrating the nation" (Bhabha 1990), alongside competing constructions of the Tibetan nation and its literature as put forth in official representations and by the majority of sinophone scholars and writers.

As demonstrated by Benedict Anderson, "European conception of nation-ness as linked to a private-property language had wide influence in 19th century Europe." Indeed, there are other similarities between late twentieth-century Tibet and early nineteenth-century Europe. First, literacy rates in Britain and France, which were only 50% in 1840 approximated those of Tibet today. Secondly, the intense translation activity from Chinese into Tibetan during the 1950s (described in chapter 2) and a new launch of dictionary projects in the late 1990s recalls the "lexicographical revolution"

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802 While the use of "environment" emphasizes land and surroundings, the meaning is often theoretically expanded with reference to Mao Dun 茅盾 (1922) who argued, "[E]nvironment is not strictly limited to the physical world—contemporary ideological trends, the political situation, social customs, and practices all go into the environment of a given period." Mao Dun, "Literature and Life 文學與人生," trans. by John Berninghausen, in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945,* ed. by Kirk A. Denton, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 192. Environment is one "subdivision" of the literary social context as conceived in the west and relayed by Mao Dun; the three other elements with close links to literature being race 人种, era 时代 and the writer's personality 作家的人格.

803 Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 68.
804 Ibid., 75.

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begun by European scholars some two hundred years earlier. According to Anderson, this "golden age of vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists and litterateurs… were central to the shaping of nineteenth-century European nationalisms." Moreover, economically speaking, Europe was experiencing the gradual expansion of a bureaucratic middle class and the rapid and uneven expansion of a commercial and industrial bourgeoisie. In similar fashion, a newly educated Tibetan intelligentsia in the 1980s had little trouble finding jobs in academia, communications, publishing and county or prefecture-level administrative offices. However, unlike Europe, in Tibetan areas of the PRC neither the bourgeoisie nor the "vernacular language of state" represents that of the demographic majority. Given the limited opportunities for graduates of Tibetan-medium programs to advance, the job market grew tighter in the late 1990s, as the first tier of positions were filled to capacity. Chinese counterparts, on the other hand, were more likely to enjoy the fruits of a growing market economy.

From the perspective of Seton-Watson (1977), the situation was ripe for the emergence of discontents:

Where political and social power are concentrated in a group who differ in both religion and language from the majority of the population among whom they dwell, and an educated elite is emerging from that population, then the optimum conditions are given for the rapid growth of a nationalist movement.

Most scholars of nationalism acknowledge the same. Recently published statistics regarding the make-up of political prisoners in Tibetan areas of the PRC, however, only

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805 Ibid., 71.
806 See discussions on pages 41–43 and 212.
808 Ernest Gellner (1983) argues, for example, that classical liberal western nationalism occurs when one cultural group enjoys easy access to education and holds political power, while another separate and distinct cultural group shares similar access to education but faces obstacles to realizing political power (p. 94). Eric Hobsbawm (1990) would similarly classify Tibetan nationalism as an "anti-imperial movement."
partially confirm this supposition. While 20% of political prisoners outside the TAR are students or teachers, this sector of the population accounts for only 4% of political prisoners in the TAR. And, overall, the numbers are quite small. Cultural intellectuals or members of Frow’s "knowledge class" in fields outside of education do not seem to be exercising their voice in overtly political ways, given that only 1.2% of all Tibetan political prisoners are employed in the arts, crafts or literary fields. The role of Frow's "knowledge class" is (largely by definition) markedly low in the political and economic spheres of Tibetan society. Writers, critics, and other scholars are more likely to exercise their "capital" in the ideological sphere, that is, in the production of culture.

The debate over the criteria for constituting a Tibetan Literature might be better described as both representative and constitutive of a cultural nationalism. John Hutchinson (1987) seeks to distinguish this socio-political project from Gellner's interpretation of folk research as a primitivist or retreatist stance. Instead, the cultural nationalist
disavows the passive isolationism of the traditionalists and presents the nation as a progressive culture in active contact with other societies. At the same time it opposes the assimilation of the community to any universal model of development, liberal or socialist. For each nation has its own

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809 Steve Marshall, *In the Interests of the State: Hostile Elements III - Political Imprisonment in Tibet, 1987–2001* (London: Tibet Information Network, 2002). A disproportionately large number of student political prisoners are from Gannan or the Northwest Nationalities Institute, arguably two of the most active centers for literary arts and publishing.

810 A disproportionately large number of student political prisoners are from Gannan or the Northwest Nationalities Institute, arguably two of the most active centers for literary arts and publishing.

811 Marshall, op. cit., 21. Recall that the percentage of the working Tibetan population employed in education, culture, arts, and radio, television and film is 3.4%. See my discussion on pages 41–43.

812 Cf. Anthony D. Smith (1995: 13) who argues against the sundering of political and cultural nationalism. Rather, nationalism possesses a "chameleon-like ability to transmute itself according to the perceptions and needs of different communities and of competing strata, factions and individuals within them."
Cultural nationalism has been described as a major force among intellectuals in countries such as late nineteenth-century India and China, challenged by Western models of modernization. Hutchinson notes that this two-edged sword often fails in terms of its communitarian goals, since it is unable to extend beyond the educated strata. At the same time, the strategies by which Tibetan cultural elites seek to institutionalize their ideals has the potential to provide "alternative channels of social mobility for a disaffected intelligentsia."  

The influence of economic developmental thought and nationalist discourse is directly evident in essays by Tibetan literary critics who identify the development of a national literature as a sign of the overall progress of a civilization. One also frequently sees references to a supposedly "traditional" saying, which claims "our Tibetan nationality is a poetic nationality." Likewise, Tibet is described by writers and critics as "an ocean of poetry" (snyan-ngag-gi rgya-mtsho). Thus, in the eyes of some critics the demise of Tibetan poetry would signal the demise of the nationality. Accordingly, Tibetan literary discourse, by young and old alike, is infused with pressing calls for regeneration of the nationality, especially in comparison to what are viewed as the

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814 Ibid., 130.
815 Ibid., 125.
817 This seems to be a variant of a view put forth by Chinese observers who during the Cultural Revolution dubbed Tibet as an "ocean of song," given the popularity of Tibetan folksongs for which
"developed nationalities" (yar-thon-can-kyi or sngon-thon-can-kyi mi-rigs) of the world.

For Tibetan writers, the question then becomes will they adopt the terms and forms that predominate world literature or forge their own literary path.

\footnote{\textit{politically correct} slogans were substituted for the original lyrics. I am grateful to Pema Bhum for this information.}
\footnote{\textit{\textsuperscript{318}} See discussion on p. 301.}
Chapter 7

Definitions of Snyan-ngag and Rtsom-rig: A Shift in Discursive Formation

The sublimation in 1995 of the more nationalistic debate regarding the criteria for Tibetan literature, as discussed in the last section, coincides with the re-emergence in the late 1990s of articles regarding the definition of literature in general. The debate over the definition of literature illustrates in the most direct way the practice of negotiating what "Tibetan Literature" would comprise. As addressed in chapter 5, the term "rtsom-rig" was coined only in the mid-twentieth century to roughly equate the contemporary Western-influenced understanding of the Chinese term wenxue or "literature." This raises certain questions regarding classical Tibetan writing. Should certain genres of pre-modern writing be classified as "rtsom-rig?" Are "snyan-ngag" and "rtsom-rig" mutually exclusive categories? How to account for overlaps? Is one a sub-category of the other? These are the types of questions which Tibetan thinkers began to raise in the late-1980s, and the discussion returned with fresh vigor in the late 1990s. How do articles regarding the definitions of snyan-ngag and rtsom-rig in the late 1990s differ from those in the previous decade?

In general, discourse on writing in the 1990s shifted from the discursive formation of "snyan-ngag" and the constellation of related terminology it carries to a discourse that constructs and centers the concept of "rtsom-rig." A key point I would like to make in
the following section is that in practice the contemporary understanding of *snyan-ngag* has shifted more closely to a Western understanding of "poetry"—or has been subsumed under the category *rtsom-rig*. I would argue that beginning around 1996 the discussion is more academic and draws less on the conceptual structures of nationalism as discussed above. In addition, with greater access and familiarity to Chinese translations of Western literary theory, Tibetan critics are more apt to draw on contemporary Western literary terms. Whereas classical and even contemporary works were evaluated through the prisms of *snyan-ngag* or socialist realism in the 1980s, now foreign literary criteria are more often applied to a wide spectrum of Tibetan literary works, including classical texts, modern poems and short stories, folk songs and even Old Tibetan texts from Dunhuang.

**Classical Understandings of "snyan-ngag" and "rtsom"**

If we were to translate the understanding of *snyan-ngag* up until the time of Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung's *Snyan-ngag spyi-don*, it might be best glossed as "belles-lettres," the term

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819 Consequently, the most frequently used term these days for writer "*rtsom-pa-po*" is also new to the Tibetan lexicon. Contrast this to the terms used in classical literature including *mdzad-pa-po*, *shyar-pa-po* and *mkhan-po*. One also finds alternative renderings today, such as *rtsom-mkhan*.

820 While a final definition of the term "poetry" is unattainable, certain qualities figure prominently in the characterizations offered by literary scholars. Holman (1972) groups these under three qualities: the content of poetry dealing primarily with emotion, imagination, significance and beauty; the form being characterized foremost by rhythm and the concrete presentation of images; and its main purpose being "to please." (pp. 405-408) Accordingly, he defines "poem" as "a composition characterized by the presence of imagination, emotion, truth (significant meaning), sense impressions, and concrete language; expressed rhythmically and with an orderly arrangement of parts... with the dominant purpose of giving aesthetic or emotional pleasure." (p. 399)

Cuddon (1977) defines "poem" as "a metrical composition, a work of verse, which may be in rhyme or may be blank verse or a combination of the two;" but adds, "In the final analysis what makes a poem different from any other kind of composition is a species of magic, the secret to which lies in the way the words lean upon each other, are linked and interlocked in sense and rhythm, and thus elicit from each other's syllables a kind of tune whose beat and melody varies subtly and which is different from that of prose - 'the other harmony.' " (p. 504)

Not least, *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (2001) defines "poem" as "a piece of writing that partakes of the nature of both speech and song that is nearly always rhythmical, usually metaphorical, and often exhibits such formal elements as meter, rhyme, and stanzaic structure;" and "poetry" as "literary work
preferred by van der Kuijp (1996) and Newman (1996). According to Snyan-ngag me-long, the forms of snyan-ngag are three-fold: tshigs-bcad (metric verse), lhug-pa (prose), and tshigs-bcad-lhug-spel-ma (a mix of metric verse and prose).\(^{821}\) Theoretically, the classical concept of snyan-ngag covered all fine writing and, thus, for older generation Tibetan scholars, the question of whether or not snyan-ngag is identical to rtsom-rig was not an issue. When Sa-skya Pandita (1182–1251) discussed in the first chapter of the Mkhas-pa rnams-'jugs-pa'i sgo ("The entrance gate for the wise")\(^{822}\) how to compose (rtsom-pa la 'jug-pa), he was talking solely about snyan-ngag.\(^{823}\) For Sa-skya Pandita, to write (rtsom) was one of the three tasks of a scholar, the other two being to instruct ('chad) and to debate (rtsod).\(^{824}\) In practice, however, commentaries and illustrations of Tibetan belles-lettres were almost solely focused on metric verse.

The classical definition of snyan-ngag most frequently cited in contemporary Tibetan literary criticism is a phrase for which I have been unable to find the original source: "the mellifluous and charming joining of words" (rna-bar snyan zhi dang-yi dbang 'phrog-pa'i tshig-shyor).\(^{825}\) This anonymous quote is ubiquitous among articles today in which younger generation scholars would like to depict how earlier scholars (sngon-byon mkhas-pa) conceived of the meaning of snyan-ngag. While it would be misleading to conflate the various interpretations from seven hundred years of scholarship into a single

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\(^{821}\) Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, Snyan-ngag svi-don, 13.

\(^{822}\) For a translation and study of this text, see David Jackson, Entrance Gate for the Wise.

\(^{823}\) Sa-pao Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Sa-pan mkhas-'jug rtsa-grel bzhugs with commentary by Bo-thar Bkra-shis-chos-phel and Ngag-dbang-chos-grags (Chengdu: Si-khron mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1998), 25

\(^{824}\) Dga'-ba-pa-sangs, "Rtsom-rig ces-pa dang der brel-ba'i Bod-kyi tha-snyad ga'i btags-don la dpyad-pa" (Analysis of "rtsom-rig" and the designation of related Tibetan terms), Bod-kyi rtsom-rig ayyu-rtsal, 1996 no. 2:73.

\(^{825}\) Kun-dga', for example, states "khong-rnam-pas snyan-ngag-gi mtshan-nyid de rna-bar snyan zhi dang-yi dbang 'phrog-pa'i tshig-shyor tsam-gyi thog-tu bzhag yod-pa la ma gros gcig-mthun la-bu'i dgongs-pa gtad 'dug/ (They [earlier scholars] unanimously agree that the definition of snyan-ngag is nothing but the mellifluous and charming joining of words.) Ibid., 70.
phrase, such an understanding does seem to approximate the prevailing opinion among scholars who bridged the transition from pre-1950 to early 1980s Tibetan society. Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, for example, argues that if the prose form (Ihug) of snyan-ngag is considered, then the territory covered by the term snyan-ngag is vast:

If one considers "snyan-ngag" to be merely metric verse, prose and mixed writing (campü), it is still too narrow. In addition, when one is writing a meaningful speech amidst a gathering of scholars, teaching the sciences among the people, teaching hardworking students, debating one's opponent by retort and critique, satire and one-upping for the purpose of cutting through the meaning at hand, and even [recording] conversation and talking for the purpose of expressing friendship between friends,—if any of these have the following characteristics: smoothly worded without the fault of contradictions, easily understood by any thinking being, untarnished by coarse or common speech which is unfitting for gatherings, and so forth, then the aesthetic experience (nyams) of snyan-ngag will be effortlessly produced.826

Rdo-rje-rgyal-po (1983) shares a similar understanding: "Whatever meaning expressed—whether it be large or small—if its expression is not ordinary but rather particularly sublime, then it comprises snyan-ngag."827 Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-phrin-las (1982) goes so far as to define the act of writing snyan-ngag using the contemporary terms most often applied in a realist view of literature:

Snyan-ngag is a [piece of] writing in which the author expresses in written form his own thoughts on his impressions of many real-life phenomena in the environment where he resides and [it is] an art which surpasses that real life and is concisely expressed.828

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It seems clear from these examples that a broader understanding of the term *snyan-ngag* as "belles-lettres" prevailed until the early 1980s. From the perspective of these scholars the term "*rtsom-rig*" was an awkward if not superfluous rendering of the vast writing styles already covered by the term *snyan-ngag*, at least in *kātyā* theory if not in practice.

Moreover, a survey of Tibetan literary publications in the immediate post-Mao period reveals that the term *rtsom-rig* had still not gained much currency. I could find no mention of the term *rtsom-rig* in any of the three books just mentioned, which were perhaps the most widely disseminated Tibetan literary textbooks even through the mid and late 1980s. Instead, the older generation scholars simply refer to "writing" (*rtsom* or *rtsom-pa*). One also occasionally finds the term "*rtsom-yig*" (literary work) in these works. Younger scholars as well made only spare reference to "*rtsom-rig*" per se at that time. For instance, in the full two hundred pages of Sangs-rgyas' master's thesis, completed in 1981 and published in 1983, the term only appears twice and its use is inconsistent. Sangs-rgyas uses the term to argue against the idea that all literary forms (*rtsom-rig-gi rnam-pa*) should be considered *snyan-ngag*, while elsewhere in the book he refers only to the relationship between *snyan-ngag* and "writing" (*rtsom*), arguing that *snyan-ngag* is a form of writing (*snyan-ngag ni rtsom-gyi rnam-pa zhig*). He sees his thesis not as a project for developing Tibetan "literature" per se, but as responding to the need to develop Tibetan culture (*rig-gnas*) in general, a theme which comprises the main message of his afterword. In all of these examples, the prevalence of the term "*rtsom*" as simply "writing"—whether by older or younger generation scholars—approximates the...
use of this word by the Mongolian lama and grammarian Agwang-Dandar (1759–
1831)\textsuperscript{831} from Alashan (Alxa) in his work *Chad rtsod rtsom gsum-gyi rnam-gzhag* (Classification of discourse, debate and composition).\textsuperscript{832}

*Understandings of "snyan-ngag" and "rtsom-rig" in the 1980s*

In the early 1980s, critics still employed many poetic concepts to discuss prose literature. Such was the case for ancient Western literary criticism, as well, for which "the origins of criticism in Greece are deeply bound up with poetry, for it is in response to poetry that many of the fundamental doctrines of ancient literary criticism are formulated, and it is in poetry that the impulse to criticism first manifests itself." [Murray 1965 (2000): viii]\textsuperscript{833}

Several factors reinforced this tendency in the Tibetan intellectual milieu of the 1980s. First, the vocabulary of *snyan-ngag* was the most readily available and familiar conceptual storehouse for discussing writing. Recall the plethora of *snyan-ngag* related texts (many of which were authored in the intervening years since 1950), which represented the bulk of Tibetan publishing in the cultural recovery period after 1976.

\textsuperscript{831} In Tibetan, his name is rendered A-lag-sha Ngag-dbang-bstan-dar. According to Ko-zhul and Rgyal-ba (1992: 1915), at a very young age, this lama resided in Sgo-mang College of 'B ras-spungs Monastery. He later returned to his native region of Alashan [Alagshaa or Alxa] where he wrote the text in question. At the age of 51, he went to Labrang Monastery and then later resided as a religious teacher in the Yonghegong Monastery (Beijing). The two volumes of his collected works were printed at Shu-bum monastery in Amdo.

\textsuperscript{832} This comparison is drawn by Dga'-ba-pa-sangs, "Rtsom-rig ces-pa dang der 'brel-ba'i Bod-kyi thas-nyat," no. 2:70.

\textsuperscript{833} Penelope Murray, introduction and notes to *Classical Literary Criticism*. Poetry as envisaged by poets themselves in the "pre-theoretical" period of Ancient Greece bears strong resemblance to the kāvya-inspired criteria for well-written poetry which was eventually adopted in Tibet. Consider, for example, the five sources of "sublimity" as outlined by Longinus circa 5 B.C. (Murray: xlvi-xlviii)

1. grandeur of thought and ability to visualize
2. powerful and inspired emotion
3. the effective use of stylistic and rhetorical figures as a means of increasing the emotional impact of literature.
4. noble diction and phrasing, including skillful use of metaphors and other poetic figures
5. dignified and elevated composition... organic unity.

Longinus' date is unknown but it is likely after the fifth century B.C. when "rhetoric came more and more to dominate the Hellenistic Greek world (xxxix). Though I am unqualified to posit any link between the
(See appendix.) By the early 1980s, *snyan-ngag* was being taught in many secondary schools and at the undergraduate level in nationality institutes, usually by teachers who were trained monastically and/or who had written these textbooks. Secondly, one of the first foreign literary critics to which Tibetan students had access through Chinese translation—and who is often cited in Tibetan articles of literary criticism—was Belinsky (b. 1847) who when explaining a novel frequently referred to it in poetic terms.\(^{834}\)

Further, the influence of Russian formalism, which arose in the years before the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and flourished during the 1920s, was also known to Tibetan critics through Chinese translation:

To think of literature as the Formalists do is really to think of all literature as poetry. Significantly, when the Formalists came to prose writing, they often simply extended to it the kinds of technique they had used with poetry. But literature is usually judged to contain much besides poetry—to include, for example, realist or naturalistic writing which is not linguistically self-conscious or self-exhibiting in any striking way. People sometimes call writing 'fine' precisely because it doesn't draw undue attention to itself...\(^{835}\)

Finally, the formulation of mainstream or popular literary theory prevailing among Chinese scholars shared some close similarities with the concepts of Tibetan *snyan-ngag*.

For example, the four qualities by which literature could be defined were outlined as follows.\(^{836}\)

1. Music-like. *(yinyue xing)*
2. Emotional. *(qinggan xing)*
3. Fine Imagery. *(xingxiang xing)*
4. Concrete. *(jutixing)*

quality of the "sublime" and poetic figures as advocated here and the emphasis on "snyan" (pleasant or sublime) in the writings of Danjin (7th c.), the parallel is striking.\(^{834}\)

Belinsky also typically referred to all writers in general as "poets."\(^{835}\)


\(^{836}\) Pema Bhum, class lecture, Indiana University, 25 March 1996. "Typicality" (*dianxing* 典型性) was a fifth criteria upheld during certain periods, especially in the short-lived political campaign launched by Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang in the early 1980s to modify the amount of criticism being levied at corrupt public officials in contemporary Chinese literature.
These literary concepts were taught by Chinese literature professors to Tibetan students in nationality institutes, starting from 1977 when the university system was restored. At that time, the various departments of Tibetan Language and Literature all had a survey course on literary theory (wenxue gailun 文学概论). In particular, the concept of "fine imagery" has a close affinity with kārya theory, as it suggests that literature should be comprised of a series of pictures (huamian 画面). Thus, the writer would use imagery to describe or illustrate the emotions of a character, for example, in a story. Theatrically derived kārya theory went so far as to categorize the emotions one should depict (gyur) in order to elicit a particular emotional experience in the reader (nyams). (See chapter 1.)

This is not to say that socialist literary terms were non-existent in Tibetan writing. But, in Tibetan criticism, they appear almost solely within the context of critiques of short stories or novels and rarely are applied to poetry which comprised—and continues to comprise—the bulk of Tibetan-medium literary output. Among the models for such criticism was the text of Mao's 1942 speech at Yan'an, which was required reading for students at nationality institutes in the 1980s, and even for secondary school students, for example, at the Nationality Teachers Training School (Minshi) in Rebkong (Tongren) in the mid-1970s. It is ironic that orthodox Marxist literary theory continued to inform Tibetan literary criticism, even in the late 1990s, though Chinese critics (e.g. Liu Xiaobo) by the mid-1980s had begun to publicly question socialist principles prescribing literary theory. The view that literature comes from the singing of people as they labor together is still being taught in Tibetan literature courses, as I witnessed firsthand and as stated in
the new Tibetan literary histories being written by college literature professors discussed below.837

We have already discussed one set of writings which sought to re-evaluate the notion of snyan-ngag—that is, the exchange between Sangs-rgyas and Don-grub-rgyal—but this discussion remained strictly within the discourse of Tibetan snyan-ngag itself. A conceptual formation of "rtsom-rig" was not central to the discussion; indeed, no mention was made of the term "rtsom-rig" in their exchange. Don-grub-rgyal argued that Tibet needs its own indigenous treatise on rhetoric,838 not a unique literary theory such as is argued in later years. By the late 1980s, however, as the term rtsom-rig gained currency and literary students had greater access to Western literary theory, the definition of terms became an increasingly contested topic.

The next set of articles to reevaluate the concept of snyan-ngag appeared in 1988. While the concept of "rtsom-rig" was more firmly established in the discourse by this later date, a few leading scholars were still apt to argue that "snyan-ngag" and "rtsom-rig" were two different terms for the same literary phenomenon. For instance, Tshe-rdor839—currently the vice-chairman of the TAR Writers Union840—unequivocally asserts that "snyan-ngag and rtsom-rig do not differ, the two signify the same meaning.841 He acknowledges, however, that if the Me-long is to serve as a theory for contemporary literature, it will need to be revised: "If we are to produce a literary theory with the capacity of directing us to a contemporary literature with Tibetan characteristics

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837 See, for example, Dpa'-rtse and Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring, op. cit., 18.
838 Tib. Bod-la rang-gi khyad-chos dang mthun-pa'i tshig-rgyan rig-pa'i bstan-bcos shig yod dgos/
839 See n. 552.
841 Tshe-rdor, "Rtsom-rig dang snyan-ngag tha-dad yin nam" (Are rtsom-rig and snyan-ngag distinct?), Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgvyu-rtsal, 1988, no. 5:85.
in these modern times, the only way to do so is to use the *Me-long* as a base and substitute for the newly spreading theories about writing contemporary literature a theory like that enunciated in the *Me-long* which accords with its name in being more complete. [Italics mine.] The rhetorical strategy Tshe-rdor applies throughout his article might be summarized as framing basic Western literary theory in classical Tibetan terms. For instance, he explains the contemporary phrase "artistic language" as being "the rich joining of words (*tshig-sbyor*) achieved through ornamentation (*rgyan*), lexicography (*mngon-brjod*), prosody (*sdeb-sbyor*), conciseness (*tshig-sdud*), and so forth." Tshe-rdor describes the quality of good writing in Western terms: the author does not speak directly but expresses what he wants to say through the character's motivation, personality, thoughts, and environment. To illustrate the point, however, he refers solely to classical works including the biography of Milarepa, the opera *Snang-sa 'od-bum*, and *The Tale of the Incomparable Prince* which "clear as mirrors, are able to move readers through their *kāvyā*-derived imagery." He makes no reference to any contemporary literary works in his article, nor does he refer to the writings of his contemporary critics. The scholarly authorities whom Tshe-rdor quotes are either deceased or older-generation Tibetan scholars (Khams-sprul Rinpoche, 'Ju Mi-pham-rnam-rgyal, the fifth Dalai Lama, Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las and Bse-tshang Rinpoche) and the Russian literary scholar Belinksy. While he too notes that the understanding of the Chinese term *wenxue* (literature) went through a change at the turn of the century, he quotes no Chinese writers or critics.

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842 Ibid., 79.
843 Ibid., 82.
The following year, Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar also argued that *snyan-ngag* was identical to *rtsom-rig*. a position he maintained even in 1994. To make his case in the 1994 article, however, he [or perhaps the journal editor] erroneously misquoted Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las claiming that the elder scholar himself equates *snyan-ngag* and *rtsom-rig*. Yet, as we noted above the term "*rtsom-rig*" does not appear in Dung-dkar Rinpoche's text. Here is the erroneously quoted section:

*snyan-ngag ni/ rtsom-pa-po des rang-nyid gnas-pa'i khor-yug gi 'tsho-ba dangs-kyi snang-tshul mang-po rang-nyid kyi bsam-blor 'char-ba de gzugs-su 'god-pa'i rnam-pa'i thog-nas rang-nyid kyi bsam-tshul mtshon-pa byed-pa'i [rtsom-rig cig yin].

I have bracketed the misprepresented phrase which originally read "*rtsom zhig dang pa byed-pa'i [rtsom-rig cig yin]."

"'tsho-ba ngos de las tshad-mtho zhing gcig-bsdus rang-bzhin ldan-pa'i rig-rtsal zhig yin."

In the original quote, Dung-dkar Rinpoche refers to *snyan-ngag* as "a writing" (*rtsom zhig*) and "an art" (*rig-rtsal zhig*). However, he never actually uses the term "literature" (*rtsom-rig*), such as Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar claims. The elision is a small but significant one which effectively changes the understanding of *snyan-ngag* from "one type of writing" to "a literature." While it is quite probable that the error was inadvertant or a result of the critic's eagerness to support his point, I believe this incident demonstrates the shift in thinking that had occurred in the intervening fourteen years—that is, the ascendancy of the term "*rtsom-rig*" into literary discourse in general, including discussions of poetry.

Though the implications of Tshe-rdor and Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar's argument is similar to the perspective of Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung and other older generation scholars—

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that is, both parties see snyan-ngag as encompassing more than metric verse—Tshe-rdor's reasoning is more informed by Western theory and direct references to "rtsom-rig," basing the likeness of snyan-ngag and a Western notion of literature on their mutual use of imagery and language. If we were to translate Tshe-rdor's understanding of snyan-ngag in 1988, it might be more accurately glossed as "literature" rather than the "belles-lettres" conception of earlier scholars. Tshe-rdor does not base his criteria on the mellifluous quality of the wording, and he is clear that other types of writing such as news articles, business-related writing, and contracts are not literature. Furthermore, whereas Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar in 1989 employs classical terms such as "nyams" and "gyur" and "sdeb-sbyor" to describe basic modern literary concepts, by 1994 he draws almost solely on socialist literary concepts such as "upholding the social consciousness" (spyi-tshogs-kyi 'du-shes 'dzin-stangs). Though he distinguishes tshig-rgyan (Skt. alamkāra) as a tool of snyan-ngag, he equates the latter with rtsom-rig, concluding, "Since snyan-ngag and artistic literature signify the same meaning, I will not write many meaningless words on this here."\(^47\) While the articles by Tshe-rdor and Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar in 1988 and 1999 respectively sought to equate snyan-ngag and rtsom-rig, they did so in a way that essentially subsumed rtsom-rig into a discourse still centered around snyan-ngag. Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar's later article suggests that the focus and terms of the discourse were beginning to change in the 1990s.

\(^{46}\) Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las, op. cit., 5; cited in Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar, op. cit., 81. 

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Understandings of "snyan-ngag" and "rtsom-rig" in the 1990s

Only in the 1990s does the evaluation and discussion of literature in poetic terms shift to a discourse in which Western literary theory (as received and translated by Chinese literary scholars) is more central and used to define "literature." This shift in the conceptual structures available to Tibetan intellectuals can be viewed largely as a result of social change. I am influenced here by the thought of Terry Eagleton (1996) who argues that the value-judgements by which literature is constituted are "historically variable" and "these value-judgements themselves have a close relation to social ideologies," where ideology is understood as "the largely concealed structure of values which informs and underlies our factual statements." Thus, the socially accepted norm defining literature at any time is not completely arbitrary, but informed by "deeper structures of belief" or "assumptions by which certain social groups exercise and maintain power over others." Among the socially-ingrained assumptions that took hold among young Tibetan intellectuals in the late 1980s was a belief in the inferiority of Tibetan culture and the perceived need to learn from and "catch up to" other cultures.

Rebkong-based Seng-gshong Rdo-rje-gcod-pa (1990) defines "rtsom-rig" as a "means of communication" and "a representation of social life." His emphasis is on clarity and the ability of the reader's ability to understand and he thus protests the development of obscure poetry (go-dka-ba'i snyan-ngag). At the same time, he criticizes classical Tibetan literature—especially moralistic genres inspired by Buddhist avadāna—for being too simplistic and inferior in terms of literary quality: "Unfortunately, Tibetan

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Eagleton, Literary Theory, 14.
Ibid., 13.
Ibid., 14.

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literature includes a host of works that serve as models for the purpose of directly transmitting many concepts from Buddhist texts that have influenced the world, but these works do not manifest many qualities found in genuine literature.\textsuperscript{852} He suggests that the capacity of literature is greater than that of other arts for its ability to express life experience,\textsuperscript{853} and should be used to criticize one's own nationality for the purpose of progress.\textsuperscript{854} His concern with the nationality is prominent, but his reasoning is based mostly on elementary Western literary theory, with frequent reference to the various elements of literature: character, environment or setting, theme, etc. While Rdo-rje-gcod-pa mentions snyan-ngag it does not figure prominently in his discussion. If his article represents the thinking of his contemporaries, we could say that by around 1990 the discourse on writing was beginning to shift from a discursive formation which privileged and centered snyan-ngag to one which revolved around—and thus served to further construct—the concept of "rtsom-rig."

In another article from this same year, published in a local Qinghai journal, Gnam-lha-rgyal (1990) is primarily discussing snyan-ngag, but defines it using modern terms and clearly states that it is a special type of literature.\textsuperscript{855} "Snyan-ngag is a literature that is rich with strong emotion and romanticism. Its main ability is to express the salt, sweet and bitter [aspects] of life."\textsuperscript{856} He argues against the classical position which privileges "mellifluous quality" as the defining characteristic. In his view, "it is not

\textsuperscript{852} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{853} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{854} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{856} Ibid., 128. Tib. snyan-ngag ces-pa ni shugs-drag-gi bsam-pa'i thos-`du dang phun-sum-tshogs-pa'i 'chag-smang-gis phyogs-pa'i rtsom-rig cig sie` de'i gos-pa gso-bo ni ishe srog-gis tsho-ba'i khrod-kyi tsa mngar skyar gsum-gyi bro-ba mtshan-pa'yi nus-pa gtsang-bo snyan-pa'i cha bsam-gyis snyan-ngag-gi mtshan-nyid du jog mi 'os/
appropriate to define snyan-ngag by merely pleasant wording." Nationality rhetoric still figures heavily in his discussion but his examples are all drawn from traditional literature. In short, his article represents a snyan-ngag focused discussion which draws heavily on nationalist and realist conceptual structures.

At the same time, there was a growing tendency—especially among the younger scholars—to see snyan-ngag as comprising metric verse only, representing a return to the argument of Sangs-rgyas but with a much altered line of reasoning. Dpal-lha-mo, an editor at Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal and a poet in her own right, has characterized the debate over the term snyan-ngag as follows:857 She notes that since the translation of Daṅjin's Kāvyādārsā, "snyan-ngag" has been understood to be any writing that is "pleasant-sounding" and in which the words are well-joined.858 She then observes that the definition for "tshig-rgyan" [Ch. xiuci] in a modern Chinese dictionary859 is identical to how earlier scholars viewed "snyan-ngag," a perspective that she claims is still held by some contemporaries. She includes Mi-pham, Bstan-pa-rgya-mtsho, Rdo-rje-rgyal-po, Bse-tshang Rinpoche and Tshe-tan-zhab-drung among those who saw no difference between snyan-ngag and tshig-rgyan, both defined on the basis of their pleasant wording.

Dpal-lha-mo then outlines her own position, arguing that snyan-ngag should be defined as a literary genre or form in which the writer conveys a mental image to the reader in order to evoke the strong emotion felt by the writer; and he/she does this by linking sound and emotion. To support her argument, she draws primarily on the authority of Dor-zhi and 'Ju Skal-bzang, as well as [Gunter Grass?] and two Chinese thinkers: Han Cuorong

858 Tib. snyan-ngag ces-pa snyan zhing yid-du 'ong-ba'i tshig-sbyor la bshad!
Dpal-lha concludes her article by comparing the practice of early scholars in equating *tshig-*rgyan and *snyan-ngag* to "calling a petal the flower." In other words, for this editor, *snyan-ngag* is the same as the Chinese *shi* and the English "poem," distinguished not by its mellifluous quality and poetic figures, but by its mental images and the capacity to express and evoke emotion.

Ultimately, this statement represents a narrower view of *snyan-ngag*—one that does not allow it to be equated with "belles-lettres" as a whole, but a literary genre that more closely approximates (or in her terms is identical to) the constellation of concepts by which the English sense of "poem" is most typically conceived. Based on similar statements appearing with greater frequency starting in the mid-1990s, I believe this delimiting of *snyan-ngag* represents a new norm of thought, which results from the construction of *rtsom-rig* as a discursive domain, one which essentially stripped *snyan-ngag* of its wider associations and more closely equated it with the Western and Chinese understanding of "poetry." *Snyan-ngag* was thus subsumed within the purview of *rtsom-rig*. In the discursive transformation, *rtsom-rig* as "literature" has gained the *lhug-spel-ma* category of *snyan-ngag*, and the concept of *snyan-ngag* is more narrowly confined to poetry—whether it be in verse or free form. However, the broader understanding of *snyan-ngag* continues to be upheld by some, their stance now representing an oppositional strategy in protest to a wider discursive shift. It is not so much that the definition of *snyan-ngag* has changed completely, but that there are now two

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859 Tib. *skad-yig gi thabs-lam sna-tshogs ia brten nas rang-gis brjod-par 'dod-p'ai don-rnams gston-*nyams dod cing yang-dog-pa rna-bar snyan zhing yid-la 'jebs-pa'i sgo nas snyan-pa-por go-brda sprod-thabs byed-pa'i chos/*
860 Having spent more than one decade in America (1943–1956) during the first part of her career, Zheng Min authored several essays on and translations of foreign literature. As of 1994, she was teaching courses on the history of British Literature and British and American literary works at Beijing Normal University. Yang Li, op. cit., 380.
understandings of the term: 1) the holdover from before in which snyan-ngag comprises all forms of literature, and 2) a second understanding that more closely approximates "poetry."

**Mapping the Discourse: the late 1990s**

Dpal-lha-mo's article was the fourth in a series of articles also issuing from Lhasa which sought to reconstruct the term "snyan-ngag." All of these articles (from 1996 to 1997) began referring and even classifying the different positions being taken in the debate over the classification of writing. For instance, Ye-shes (1996)—a researcher in the Languages and Literature Research Office of the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences—acknowledges that "there has been a debate about whether rtsom-rig and snyan-ngag are the same."\(^{862}\) He suggests that this might be a debate between generations, with elder scholars equating the two and younger generation scholars claiming that snyan-ngag is only metric verse. He stereotypes scholars in the first group (those who insist that rtsom-rig is identical to snyan-ngag) as having only studied Tibetan texts. The Me-long as a "literary theory" (rtsom-rig gzhung-lugs) is the main source for their thought. He himself discusses the relationship between rtsom-rig and snyan-ngag, offering a position that I have not seen elsewhere; namely, "rtsom-rig is a branch of snyan-ngag."\(^{863}\) Given the scholar's own classical leanings, it seems possible that this position represents a faint expression of resistance to the ascendancy of a Western conception of rtsom-rig in discussions concerning Tibetan literature.

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\(^{862}\) Ye-shes, "Rtsom-rig dang 'brel-ba'i snyan-ngag-gi go-don 'gar dpyad-pa" (An analysis of several issues regarding snyan-ngag as it relates to literature), Bod-ljongs-zhib-'jug, 1996, no. 1:49–56.

\(^{863}\) Ibid., 51.
A second article was published in the same year and in the same journal by Kun-dga' (1996) who is also from the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences and assistant editor of Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug, the journal in which three of the four articles appeared. He summarizes four different definitions or understandings of "traditional Tibetan snyan-ngag" (Bod-kyi srol-rgyun snyan-ngag): 864

Table 7.1 Understandings of the term snyan-ngag, as characterized by Kun-dga' (1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View</th>
<th>Representative Scholars</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Mellifluous Joining of Words Only (tshig-shyoor tson)</td>
<td>This view is the view held by most past scholars: Bod-mkhas-pa Mi-pham-dge-legs-rnam-mgyal Ju Mi-pham Bse-tshang Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan Rdo-rje-rgyal-po Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung Rje Tsong-kha-pa Zur-mkhar Blo-gros-rgya-ba</td>
<td>These scholars unanimously consider the term snyan-ngag as referring solely to the joining of words in such a way that is attractive and pleasant to the ear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identical to &quot;Literature&quot; Itself (rtsom-rig)</td>
<td>This is the view held by many modern poetry critics: Dung-dkar-blo-bzang-phrin-las A-lags Dor-zhi Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar</td>
<td>This broader view combines kavya and socialist realism in order to reconceive snyan-ngag as a type of writing &quot;based on the mellifluous joining of words, which expresses social life phenomena using excellent artistic images and feelings (nyams 'gyur) ... just like literature.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A Particular Literary Form or Genre (rtsom-rig-glus sam rnam-pa bye-brag-pa zhig)</td>
<td>Italian scholars of aesthetics (1920s) Lao She (1930s) [No Tibetan scholars are specified.]</td>
<td>Snyan-ngag as a literary form is characterized by its direct and heartfelt expression of emotions, possessing a clear melody, and with artistry that springs from one's own knowledge, behaviour and skill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Metric Verse Only (tshigs-su bcad-pa'i rtsom-lus 'ba' zhig)</td>
<td>Sangs-rgyas (1983)</td>
<td>In practice, most Tibetan composers of snyan-ngag wrote only in verse. For this reason, snyan-ngag should refer to metric verse only, as distinct from its counterpart free verse (rang-mos snyan-ngag).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author's own position is that "views number one and three should be discarded (spangs), while views two and four should be adopted (blangs)." 865 In other words, Kun-dga' suggests that the two current and prevailing views—snyan-ngag more broadly

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864 Kun-dga', "Bod-kyi srol-rgyun snyan-ngag las 'phros-pa'i bye-brag-gi dbye-ba 'ga zhiig skor gleng-ba" (A discussion of several classifications from traditional Tibetan poetics), Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug, 1996, no. 3:70-82.
865 Kun-dga,'Bod-kyi srol-rgyun snyan-ngag." 81.
defined as equivalent to literature \((rtsom-rig)\) in general, and \(snyan-ngag\) more narrowly conceived as comprised by metric verse only—are equally legitimate and there is no reason for further contention. On the other hand, defining \(snyan-ngag\) by its mellifluous quality (view 1) runs the risk of being too inclusive such that even histories which are beautifully written (e.g. Rgyal-rabs-gsal-ba'i me-long or the fifth Dalai Lama's Dpyid-kyi rgyal-mo'i glu-dbyangs) or grammar texts would be labelled "\(snyan-ngag.\)"866 The third view of snyan-ngag approximates a Western understanding of "poetry" as a literary genre. Kun-dga' describes how following the division of literature into three forms (poetry, fiction and drama) in the 1920s by the Italian "scholar of aesthetics" Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), and Chinese writers in the 1930s, such as Lao She 老舍 (1899–1966), who urged consideration of these three categories and a fourth category (essay) for Chinese literature.867 Though Kun-dga' offers no examples of indigenous Tibetan scholars who hold this view, he uses the arguments of A-lags Dor-zhi, Don-grub-rgyal and Sangs-rgyas to show precedent in Tibetan literature and criticism for the idea of internal literary division or the concept of genre. Kun-dga' expresses the sentiment that "we in Tibet certainly need such a categorization" and this is naturally occurring "in step with the historical development of [world] literature."868 However, he ultimately discards the third view, claiming it is too broad a characterization to be of any use. Though his long article may contain contradictions or unfounded arguments, it offers a good summary of the different positions and extensively quotes passages not only from traditional and contemporary scholars. Foremost among the scholars he relies on are

\[\text{\footnotesize 866 Ibid., 80.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 867 Ibid., 74–75.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 868 Ibid., 75.}\]

Kun-dga' also quotes from the thesis of Sangs-rgyas' (1983) in order to argue for the fourth position, which confines an understanding of snyan-ngag to verse only. We must consider, however, that the bulk of literary critics now conceive tshigs-bcad to be broader than what Sangs-rgyas had in mind when writing nearly two decades earlier. Recall that tibetophone literature had not yet produced a free verse poem when Sangs-rgyas was graduating from university. When he used the term tshigs-bcad within a snyan-ngag-centered discourse, he most certainly was considering metric verse only, that is lines comprised of an equal number of syllables. When Kun-dga' wrote his article in 1996 the term tshigs-bcad had been theoretically expanded to include both metric and free verse, with "bcad" (lit. "cut") referring to cut lines of undetermined length. Kun-dga' himself proposes that "free verse" (rang-mos snyan-ngag) be added as a fourth category to the traditional three forms (lus) of writing as outlined by kāvya theory—metric verse, prose, mixed. In other words, he clearly delineates between tshigs-bcad and rang-mos snyan-ngag.

Lhag-pa-chos-'phel (1996)—a professor in the Tibetan department at Tibet University—attempts to bridge what he considers to be the two extreme schools of thought: "In the minds of those who know only the Me-long and are not familiar with any other literary theory, rtsom-rig is that which is 'pleasant sounding,' and it is hard for any
sort of new thought to come into their minds; while in the minds of those who know nothing but reflection theory, *rtsom-rig* is a reflection of social life based on language.\(^7\) He notes that in 1989 there was a debate in Chinese literature over the meaning of "literature" which some critics defined as "a means of holding (embodying) the social conscience."\(^7\) Lhag-pa-chos-'phel himself prioritizes the need to know Western literary theory\(^8\) and spends a great deal of time in his article discussing the Western literary concepts of mimesis and imitation as the nature of literature,\(^9\) as well as expressionism (Tib. *mngon-mtshon smra-ba*). Lhag-pa-chos-'phel grounds himself in this literary school to conclude, "Literature is a writer's aesthetic analysis of social life speech and writing and an impressionistic expression of his feelings about [that social life]."\(^10\)

Among the many foreign thinkers he cites (whose names are often undecipherable in their transcription to Tibetan via Chinese) are the German philosopher Immanuel Kant\(^11\) (1724-1804), the English essayist and critic William Hazlitt\(^12\) (1778-1830), a literary critic (Tib. O-kas-nyi Hphur-lung) who in 1878 wrote an essay entitled "Aesthetics," and the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866-1952). His reference materials for

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\(^7\) Lhag-pa-chos-'phel, "Rtsom-rig-gi ngo-bo'i skor gleng-ba rang-blo'i rtsi-bcud" (A discussion of the essence of literature: My own thoughts), *Bod-ljong zhib-jug*, 1996, no. 3:84.

\(^8\) Ibid., 83.

\(^9\) Ibid., 84.

\(^10\) Mimetic criticism views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or representation of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work is that of the truth of its representation. This concept first appeared in Plato and in Aristotle, and remains characteristic of modern theories of literary realism. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines poetry as an imitation (Greek *mimesis*) of human actions. By "imitation" he means something like "representation" in its root sense.

While imitation tended to be displaced in the early nineteenth-century romantic view, it has returned in the last half century, revived by Crane and other Chicago critics, who ground their theory on the analytic method and Aristotle. Many Marxist critics also hold a view of literature as an imitation, or, in their preferred term, "reflection," of reality. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th ed. (Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993?), 88-90. In chapters 1-2 of *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), Abrams discusses in more detail the concept of "imitation" and mimetic theories of literature. Evidently, this work (or sections of it) have been translated into Chinese, for references to Abrams (1953) appear in current Tibetan literary criticism.


\(^12\) Tib. Khang-te

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Western philosophy and literary thought, as cited in his bibliography, are anthologies or secondary sources published in Chinese.\(^{878}\)

This series of exchanges from 1996 to 1997 by scholars in Lhasa (Ye-shes, Kun-dga', Lhag-pa-chos-'phel and Dpal-lha-mo) represents another situation—similar to the 1986 debate on criteria constituting Tibetan literature—where discourse spread in the direction from Lhasa to the far regions of the Tibetan plateau or at least to Amdo.\(^{879}\)

Only in 1997 and 1998 does the topic begin to be addressed again by scholars from Gansu and Qinghai provinces. The first of these articles was by a graduate student at Northwest Nationalities Institute, Bsam-gtan (1997) who, quoting from the Kāvyādārśa and several classical Tibetan commentaries, seeks to remind the reader that snyan-ngag is not just metrical verse. Among contemporary scholars he quotes A-lags Dor-gzhi and Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar (both Amdo scholars) who argue that snyan-ngag includes all literary forms. Bsam-gtan’s new contribution to the exchange, though he offers little

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One can imagine the challenges faced in translating certain philosophical and literary terms into Tibetan when no standardized lexicon exists for many of the more current terms. Since 1998 (no. 1), the editors of the literary magazine Shrang-char have begun to include in each issue a Chinese-Tibetan glossary of new literary terms, sometimes with extensive explanation. While it might seem that this column is merely defining certain terms, in point of fact, it also represents the promotion or standardization of translations which are not always in current use. In addition, the magazine already had two other columns devoted to introducing readers to Chinese and Western literary thought ("Rtsom-rig brda-chad gsed-’grol" [Explanation of Literary Terms]), started in 1997 (no. 1); and a series on twentieth-century Chinese cultural figures, also started in 1997 (no. 1). Individual scholars have also taken it upon themselves in the last ten years to introduce western philosophical and literary thought to the Tibetan readership, either directly via Chinese-Tibetan translations or indirectly through secondary exegesis. Among the most prolific writers dedicated to such "enlightenment"-projects is Brong-bu Tshe-ring-rdo-rje (b. 1963?), an Amdo-born and educated scholar who now works at the Tibet Academy of Social Science in Lhasa. From 1994–1996, he published three book-length studies and several articles on western philosophy (Tib. sher-rtags rig-pa, Chin. zhecui 李泽荣).

\(^{879}\) I believe this points to a general trend, which I have mentioned above, i.e. key journals from Tibet (Bod-ljongs zhib-jug and Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal) are more likely to be found and read in Amdo than vice versa.
evidence for his point, is that the *Me-long* thus has theoretical significance for the wider literary field.\(^\text{880}\)

Bsam-gtan's thesis is contested by a professor from his own institute, 'Ba'-stod Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal (1998) who claims that a shift in the conception of *snyan-ngag* as an all-inclusive category equivalent to the neologism "rtsom-rig" to a genre (metrical verse) within the wider rubric of literature is a fait d'accompli: "By looking at the history of [world] literature, we can see that *snyan-ngag* used to be understood as all forms of writing in general. And in terms of our own Tibetan literary history *snyan-ngag* was understood to be the study of *alamkāra* (poetic figures). These days, what we call *snyan-ngag* is a literary genre and [identical to] neither of the two [concepts] just mentioned. Since this is as clear as a hawthorn in the palm of ones hand, there is no need for a lot erroneous speech [to counter this].\(^\text{881}\)

If one considers the current differentiation of the concepts of *tshig-rgyan* and *snyan-ngag* and the narrowing of the latter term, as exemplified by the statements of Dpal-lha (1997) and Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal (1998), then we have witnessed the return—though by no means unanimous—to the position of Sangs-rgyas who in 1981/83 argued that "*snyan-ngag*" is a form of writing (*rtsom-gyi rnam-pa*) and "*tshig-rgyan*" is an aesthetic means of joining words. Indeed, his thesis is resurrected nearly twenty years later by Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal (1998), an assistant professor of literature at Northwest Nationalities Institute who takes the same position as Sangs-rgyas, but draws on a range

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of classical Tibetan, as well as contemporary Western and Chinese sources. Similar to some of the critics mentioned above, Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal is conscious of a discursive shift which has occurred concerning the understanding of the term "snyan-ngag." At the same time, he partakes in the reification of that shift by urging the reader to accept this change: "We must realize that the way snyan-ngag is recognized varies by time period," implying that the time for a shift in understanding has come.

Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal's reasoning can be summarized as follows: whereas previous scholars equated the two terms "tshig-rgyan" and "snyan-ngag," nowadays snyan-ngag should be seen as one form of writing (rtsom-gi rnam-pa). The author then quotes several passages from a commentary by 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho—as do other critics in the late 1990s—noting that 'Ju Mi-pham's definition is fitting for a contemporary view of snyan-ngag in that he considers both the form and content of what one is saying. Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal also favors the definition of Ye Yiqun for being more cognizant of content as opposed to the classical focus on sound (sgra-bshad):

Poetry in a very extensive sense is a literary form that manifests (mngon-par snang-ba) social life, abounds in rich realization and emotion, concisely and directly expresses real-life phenomena of the times, makes a distinction between high and low, as well as being mellifluous.

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882 Ibid., 9. Tib. nga-tshos snyan-ngag ces-pa 'di la dus-skabs so-sos ngos' dzin tshul mi-'dra ba re yod pa shes dagos/
883 Ibid., 10. He does not use the term "rtsom-rig" here which might suggest that the shift towards the primacy of rtsom-rig is not complete.

884 'Ju Mi-pham defines snyan-ngag as "any oral pronouncement which possesses exceptional beauty and is compelling in the form and means of expression in terms of both sound and content." Tib. ngag-gi rgyun gang zhig sgra dang don gyi rnam-pa brjod-tshul mdzes shing yid-du 'ong-ba'i yon-tan-gyi khyad-par dong ldan-pa. Cited and explained in 'Ba'-stod Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal, op. cit., 10.

885 According to Yang Li (1994), Ye Yiqun was chief compiler of the book Fundamental Principles of Literature, which first appeared in 1961 and was republished many times thereafter. "A standard textbook in Chinese universities and colleges, the book greatly influenced students. In it, Ye systematically expounds Marxist principles on literature." This was the writer and editor's main work after a lifetime of dedication to the literary field. He was forced to commit suicide in 1966 as a result of persecution during the Cultural Revolution. (p. 346)

886 'Ba'-stod Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal, op. cit., 9.
In contrast, "tshig-rgyan" should be considered a "starting point" for snyan-ngag or one element of snyan-ngag. Whereas "previous rgyan (poetic figures) have disappeared, new rgyan are coming and will come." One of the tasks of the modern poet is to create new rgyan which follow the language, character and customs of the nationality. These rgyan can be applied not just to poetry, but to language and literature in general. But, poetic figures alone are not enough, a poet "must have wisdom to catch the essence of meaning." In short, Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal places great emphasis on content as the defining characteristic of good snyan-ngag and as that which distinguishes it from tshig-rgyan. Padma-dbang-rgyal responds to a remark by Sangs-rgyas who argued that "because Tibetan older scholars were influenced by Kāvyādāra, they worked hard to produce nyams ("taste" or aesthetic experience, Skt. rasa) when joining words, but didn't pay much attention to deeper and more extended content," and makes this a major point of his thesis. Though a subtle difference, I believe this offers evidence of a greater overall concern with content, which, as we will see, increasingly occupies Tibetan literary discourse in the late 1990s.

And yet, however much Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal would like to believe that a shift in the conception of snyan-ngag has fully occurred, he must recognize that detractors (including one of his own students) remain in the "traditional" camp. At the end of the same year, a writer from Hainan Prefecture Ye-shes-bzang-po (1998) continued to urge that the "mellifluous quality" of writing remain the primary criteria for defining snyan-ngag: "It is better if one realizes that the claim made in the early Tibetan teachings on snyan-ngag—'snyan-ngag is that which is pleasant[-sounding] and well-worded'—is

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887 Ibid., 8.
888 Ibid., 13. Tib. don-gyi snying-bo zin-pa'i shes-rab cig ldan dgos/'

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merely an etymological [statement] or literal explanation or a fundamental characteristic of snyan-ngag [and one should understand it that way.] Otherwise, because snyan-ngag is a deep and vast study, no one can conveniently sum up this term in one word saying, 'It is this!'889 Ye-shes-bzang-po urges that the Me-long remain the primary "foundation" (rmang-gzhi) for contemporary writers. He complains:

Some people these days claim that after [Dandin's] Kavyadarsha was translated in Tibet, it obstructed Tibetan snyan-ngag, and because of its long influence on Tibetan poetry that now we should toss it into the rubbish bin of history.

In my opinion, this is an incorrect view. I think the reason [for the poor state of poetry] is due to [contemporary writers] not having closely studied the Snyan-ngag me-long. As a result, they have no clear familiarity or knowledge of the poetic figures and the means of expression based on the [Me-long].890

In particular, this critic warns against the demise of traditional poetry which he links directly to the extinction of the nationality: "If we indiscriminately borrow the poetry and means of expression from other nationalities, our own unique culture will disappear and in the end our nationality will itself become extinct for lack of roots."891


890 Ibid., 89. Tib. deng-skabs la-las Snyan-ngag me-long Bod-du 'gyur-rjes Bod-kyi snyan-ngag-la bkag-sdom thebs shing dus yun-ring-hor Bod-kyi snyan-ngag-gi rtsom-stegs-la dbang bsgyur-pas da ni de lorgyas-kyi gad-snyigs khrud-du g.yug dgos zer/ phran-gyis bta-s na de na yang-dog-pa'i ita-ba zhig min te ci'i-phyir zhe na/ de ni "snyan-ngag me-long" la zhib-tu ma sbyangs-pa de las bstan-pa'i rgyan te mtshan-thabs-dag la 'dris-cha dang ngos-'dzin gsal-bo zhig-med-pa'i rkyen-gyis byung-ba red snyam/


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By What Terms? On Whose Terms?

Though the founding of Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsaṅ in 1980 and other Tibetan literary magazines thereafter is often hailed as marking the rise of a new literature (rtsom-rig gsar-rtson), widespread references to a "Tibetan literature" did not appear in these journals until several years later. Schiaffini-Vedani (2002) has rightly noted that it took several years of debate to reach a consensus on how "to refer to the literature produced exclusively by ethnic Tibetans, in order to separate it from the already extant and misleading category of Xizang wenxue." Accounts vary as to which term—Xizang wenxue (literature of the TAR) or zangzu wenxu (Tibetan nationality literature)—replaced the other term. Maconi (forthcoming) argues that "Xizang wenxue" was introduced to replace the notion of a zangzu literature through a "rectification" of categories by which "the attention has shifted from the nationality of the writers to the geopolitical notion of the TAR." Schiaffini-Vedani (2002) implies instead that the term "zangzu wenxue" was proposed as an alternative to name the ethnically and linguistically determined category of writing in Tibetan, as distinct from "works about Tibet written in Chinese by Tibet-based Han authors" which were included in Xizang wenxue. Though the present official view of "Xizang wenxue" includes works in Tibetan, works by Tibetan writers in Chinese, and the works of Han and other minority

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892 A history of the founding of these magazines can be found starting on p. 174.
894 One of the earliest uses of the term "Zangzu wenxue" was by Professor Wang Yimaun (NWN) in his unpublished class notes on Tibetan literary history during the early 1980s.
895 Schiaffini-Vedani (2002: 71) translates these terms as "Literature from Tibet" and "Tibetan literature" respectively. Cf. Maconi (forthcoming) who translates these terms as "Literature of the TAR" and "literature by Tibetans."
896 Maconi, "One Nation, Two Discourses." I would add that in practice the term "Xizang wenxue" has crossed geopolitical boundaries to include the writings of Tibetans living in provinces of the PRC outside of the TAR, whether it be in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan or the city Beijing. Cf. the term "Zangxue" (TAR Studies), which tends to be more regional than the broader term "Zangxue" (Tibetan Studies).
writers writing in the Tibet Autonomous Region,\textsuperscript{898} the categorization of sinophone Tibetan writers remains a contested issue.

In Tibetan-medium discourse, however, any mention of "Tibetan literature" is rare until 1987 and 1988. A survey of the major Tibetan-medium academic and literary journals published from 1980 to 1986 reveals that "Tibetan literature" is mentioned in the titles of only two articles. The first of these articles, "A new era in the history of Tibetan literature: A look at the development of Tibetan literature in the Tibetan-language journal Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal,"\textsuperscript{899} was published in 1983 in the Lhasa-based academic journal Bod-ljongs zhib- jug of the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences. The article was written by a native of Lhasa, Skal-bzang-ye-shes, who became one of the more prolific literary critics in the 1980s and 1990s. Most probably, he gained an early literary savvy by virtue of being educated in Beijing at the Central Nationalities Institute with the likes of Don-grub-rgyal.\textsuperscript{900} In any case, I would call attention to his use of the term "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig" which is a direct calque of the Chinese term "zangzu wenxue" (Tibetan nationality literature), as opposed to the term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig," which eventually became the standard term. The second article specifically referring to "Tibetan literature" by name was written by Sangs-rgyas (the Amdo-born author of the 1983 [1981] thesis concerning the Snyan-ngag me-long)\textsuperscript{901} and was also published in 1983 but in a Xining-based journal Mi-rig skad-yig-gi bya-ba. He uses the term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig" (Tibetan literature) when arguing for the dominance of linguistic criteria in

\textsuperscript{899} Skal-bzang-ye-shes, "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig lo-rgyus," 62–78.
\textsuperscript{900} It is said that Don-grub-rgyal was his teacher while at CNI, but I have not found textual proof for this.
\textsuperscript{901} See pages 219–226.
delimiting a nationality literature. Only in 1987 and 1988 did several articles address the subject of "Tibetan literature"—referred to alternatively as Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig and Bod-kyi-rtsom-rig. A careful examination of these occurrences demonstrates that use of the former term "Tibetan-nationality literature" is limited to TAR-based journals and articles by Lhasa-based writers. Especially telling is that when reprinting Sangs-rgyas' article in 1987 the editors of Bod-ljongs-zhib-'jug changed the original term to "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig." The term "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig" otherwise appears only in articles by TAR-originated authors. Articles from 1987 to 1990 using the term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig" are usually written by Amdo writers, with only a couple of exceptions. When translating Danzhu Angben (Don-grub-dbang-'bum)'s article on "zangzu wenxue" from Chinese, for example, Rta-mgrin-skyabs uses the term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig." Use of the term "Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig" prevailed only from 1987 to 1990, after which all journals used the term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig." By 1991, even Skal-bzang-ye-shes used the term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig" when discussing the increase in critical articles concerning Tibetan literature. Significantly, the term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig" is not a

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direct calque of either Chinese term: "Xizang wenxue" or "Zangzu wenxue." Though "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig" more closely approximates the first term linguistically, it is semantically closer to the second as delimited through Tibetan-medium discourse on what constitutes Tibetan literature. It is also interesting to note that the term Bod-rigs-kyi rtsom-rig for the short time it was used mainly referred to modern or contemporary works, while Bod-kyi rtsom-rig covered and continues to cover classical writing as well. I would argue that this terminological evolution signifies the emergence of a discourse on Tibetan literature in 1987 and 1988 as inspired by the 1986 meeting in Lhasa at which the debate over the criteria for constituting Tibetan literature was most famously debated. Only by 1990 and 1991—more than a decade after the earliest publication of modern Tibetan literary works—does critical discourse reflect a consensus on what to call this phenomenon; namely, the settling upon the Tibetan term "Bod-kyi rtsom-rig."

Modern Tibetan Texts on Literary Theory

The clearest testimony to the emergence of a new discursive formation, one which constructs and centers a concept of "Tibetan literature" relying primarily on Western terminology, is the flourishing in the mid to late 1990s of Tibetan-medium books on "Tibetan literary forms," "the development and characteristics of Tibetan literature," and...
"the new Tibetan literature." For the most part, these textbooks are loosely structured from a Western or contemporary literary perspective. Most were written by undergraduate-level teachers of literature at the minority institutes, such as Bsod-nams-dbang-ldan and Bu-bzhi (1996) at Qinghai Nationalities Institute, Lhag-pa-chos-phel (1997) who based his book on his notes from teaching literature for many years at Tibet University, Bdud-lha-rgyal (1998) who uses his book as the sole textbook for his course at Northwest Nationalities Institute,913 Rin-chen-bkra-shis (1998) and Blon-phrug Gnam-lha-rgyal (aka Rin-chen-tshe-ring) (1998) from Qinghai Nationalities Teachers Training School, and Dpa'-rtse and Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring (1999)914 from Northwest Nationalities Institute and Hezuo Teachers Training School respectively.915 These publications were preceded by another work authored for similar purposes by researchers from the Gansu Tibetan Cultural Research Office, Sangs-rgyas-rin-chen and 'Brug-thar (1994). The only text on literary criticism which seems to stray from the more western orientation of the others is that of a slightly older generation scholar, Go-shul Grags-pa-'byung-gnas (1996) at Central Nationalities Institute in Beijing. His is organized on a kāvyā-centered schema. It is telling that his book is based on his master's thesis written under the tutelage of Professor Dor-zhi in 1988 during his final year at Northwest Nationalities Institute.

913 His book is unique among the others in that it solely focuses on contemporary Tibetan literature. It is also more clearly oriented for classroom use and discussion of the literary works themselves, featuring many short stories, poems and essays each followed by his own brief critiques of the works as informed by western literary theory.

914 Dpa'-rtse (b. 1963?) and Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring (b. 1962) are poets in their own right with Dpa'-rtse tending towards free verse and the latter towards Tibetan classical metric verse influenced by 19th century romanticist poets such as Shelley.

915 An earlier work which by its title might seem to fit in this genre and is also by a teacher/researcher at a nationalities institute is Klu-tshang Rdo-ije-rin-chen, Bod-kyi rtsom-rigs rnam-bzhag (Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1992). His book, however, focuses on publishing and bibliography studies. Also, Khri Bsam-gtan, a senior professor at NWNI wrote a textbook on writing in 1994, which includes sections on essay writing, writing literary criticism and realist literature.
One of the first textbooks among this rapid flourishing of studies to combine Tibetan classical literary thought and examples with Western literary theory was *Rtsom-rig rmam-bshad* (On Literature), written by two Amdo-born teachers at Qinghai Nationalities Institute and published by the Chinese Tibetology Center in Beijing in 1996. A sizeable section of this book—that dealing with the definition of the term "rtsom-rig"—was republished during the same year in the Lhasa-based academic journal *Bod-ljongs-zhib-'jug*. Here, co-author Bsod-nams-dbang-ldan draws on the Western concept of textuality in order to characterize the "broad understanding of the term rtsom-rig." In particular, he highlights the work of Roland Barthes who as early as 1953 was investigating the "paradoxical relationship that existed in the nineteenth century in France between the development of a concept of Literature (with a capital L) and the growing sense of a breakdown in the representational capacities of language." The theory of literature that Barthes eventually laid out was based on a split between a) the classic notion of a work (oeuvre) as a closed, finished reliable representational object and b) the modern notion of text as an open and infinite process. From this perspective, Literature is seen as "a series of discrete and highly meaningful Great Works, while textuality is the manifestation of an open-ended, heterogeneous disruptive force of signification...." Bsod-nams-dbang-ldan interprets Barthes to infer that "literature" (rtsom-rig) in this broad sense includes all writings—historical, scientific, everyday, as well as what might be commonly called belles-lettres. Bsod-nams-dbang-ldan considers this category of literature to be understood solely on the basis of the "knowledge" it provides (rtsom-rig ces-pa shes-rig cig-tu go-ba). On the contrary, a "narrow understanding" of literature

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would be that solely defined by aesthetics (rtsom-rig ces-pa mdzes-dpyod cig-tu go-ba). The main point of his article is to argue for an understanding of literature that can combine these two qualities—knowledge and aesthetics—and thus serve as a more accurate categorization of certain classical and modern Tibetan works which are at the same time "historical" and "aesthetic." For examples, he cites as examples the mgur from Dunhuang, modern Tibetan free verse, as well as Sgis-steng Blo-bzang's Rtogs-brjod gsar-gyi me-tog and other classical texts. He concludes, "Literature is an artistic form which expresses aesthetic knowledge through language."

Bsod-nams-dbang-Idan's article is impressive for its original thought which avoids the repetition of citations which are otherwise quoted and requoted in article after article. For his source on Western literary theory, Bsod-nams-dbang-Idan relies on the Chinese translation of M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (1953), which offers a detailed discussion and application of the classification of traditional Western literary theories, including criticism in the early nineteenth century. The Tibetan critic also cites René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (rev., 1970), which was available to him through Chinese translation.

This article likely had widespread influence among the younger generation in that it comprised one section of a Tibetan textbook on literary theory. Bsod-nam-dbang-Idan was himself a teacher at Qinghai Nationalities Institute. He co-authored this volume with another professor at the same school, Prof. Bu-bzhi [Bsam-pa'i-don-grub], who was actively teaching this textbook in his undergraduate literature course at Qinghai.

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917 Barbara Johnson, "Writing," in Critical Terms, 39–49.
918 Ibid.
919 Bsod-nams-dbang-Idan, op. cit., 60. Tib. rtsom-rig ces-pa skad-cha la brten nas mdzes-dpyod-kyi rig-gshes mishon-pa'i sgyu-rtsal-gyi rnam-pa zhig yin
920 See n. 876.
Nationalities Institute when I was there in 1999–2000. In an afterword to their book, Bu-bzhi notes that he and Bsod-nams-dbang-ldan started their project in 1990 and wrote in their "spare time" while teaching. The book was completed in 1995 with the following motivation as discussed in the afterword:

Our thinking was to establish a [system of] literary theory with nationality characteristics, by basing ourselves on literary theoretical materials from different eastern and Western countries as well as our own Tibetan traditional literary artistic thought and applying as much as possible the new experiences and new fruits of literary theory and new literature.

With an eye towards curriculum needs in terms of structure and content, [this book] has clear theoretical points and is full of knowledge, systematic, pithy and easily understood. Moreover, these are interspersed with works from the world in general and China which we drew on for examples, together with our own model Tibetan literary works. For this reason, [this book] clearly exhibits a broad quality and nationality characteristics.922

The articles and books which I have presented here were selected in order to demonstrate the range of views at various points in time, as they have collectively shifted from a snyan-ngag centered discourse which employed the concepts of kāvyā to a discourse on literature which, generally speaking, privileges the concepts of Western literary theory. This shift should not be seen as a collective shift in position. On the contrary, the arguments made by various scholars have differed at any given time and might even be seen as forming loose schools of thought. However, if all of these

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921 He has since been hired as a researcher by the museum in Lhasa which opened in the late 1990s.
statements are considered in their relationship to each other and especially in the conceptual structures drawn upon to make their points, they point to a relatively recent formation of the concept of "literature" per se, one that continues to be actively negotiated by Tibetan scholars, writers and other intellectuals. Space and time prevents me from examining all of the statements, which comprise this formation. Indeed, a detailed study of this emergence alone could comprise another dissertation. I hope, however, that the identification of this new discursive formation offers conceptual material for future research.
Chapter 8
Negotiating Past and Present

In chapter 3, we discussed the role of Tibetan scholars in the mid-twentieth century who through their educational and publishing initiatives engendered what might be called an "applied" influence on post-Mao Tibetan writers and critics via the social change they effected and translation projects which expanded the Tibetan lexicon available to future generations. In the first half of this chapter, we will discuss two other modes through which the work of previous scholars served as precedent for the literary debates that occurred among Tibetan intellectuals in the PRC in the 1980s and 1990s. Specifically, we will examine 1) precedents for the form and tone of contemporary debates, and 2) the re-evaluation of literary greats as a resource for contemporary writers in staking their literary positions. In the second half of this chapter, we will look at a final mode of influence: the role of classical works as literary models, as is evident in the writing of poet 'Ju Skal-bzang (b. 1960).

The Dialectic Game

Van der Kuijp (1986) has identified perhaps the first controversy to arise in the history of Tibetan belles-lettres, a debate that transpired following the translation of Daṇḍin's Kāvyādārśa into Tibetan by Dpang Lo-tsā-ba (1276–1342). The disagreement concerned the delineation of literary genres (verse, prose or mixed) and the question of whether
uninterrupted dandaka\textsuperscript{923} should be considered a subgenre of prose or if it constituted a fourth and separate literary genre. Two "camps" emerged in the debate: 1) those who agreed with Dpang Lo-tsa-ba (1276–1342) and argued for the fourth genre, and 2) those who defended his predecessor Sa-skya Panḍita (1182–1251), who implied in his writing that uninterrupted dandaka could be considered a form of prose.\textsuperscript{924} Van der Kuijp notes how Dpang Lo-tsa-ba's view "reflects a slavish adherence to an idealized Indian tradition, seen as the only source through which Tibetan civilisation could find its legitimation." (p. 50) In contrast to the Indic orientation of this debate and many that followed in subsequent centuries, the literary exchanges of the 1980s and 1990s discussed in chapters 5–7 offer evidence for the emergence of concerns well beyond the pale of the kāvya paradigm. Contemporary Tibetan critics and writers seek to negotiate a new measure of authenticity, one rooted not in India but in the construction of a Tibetan national literature.

Yet, precedent for the form and occasional harsh tenor of the debates in the 1980s and 1990s can be found throughout the course of Tibetan intellectual history. Lopez (1996), for example, has identified strategies employed by fifteenth-century scholars in what could be categorized as a Tibetan Buddhist literary genre of "refutations" (dgag-lan)

\textsuperscript{923} Dandaka is a writing form in which each line has at least 27 syllables, a convention that "did apparently not find its way into Tibet." See van der Kuijp, "Sa-skya Pandita Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan," 41–53.

\textsuperscript{924} Professor van der Kuijp provides a useful list of the scholars who adhered to each respective view:

On this issue, Tibetan writers on poetics can be divided into two camps; those who agreed with Dpang Lo-tsa-ba and those who attempted to vindicate Sa-pa's analysis. In the first grouping, we shall have to include 'Jigs-med gra-ga (1376–1451 or 1375–1451), alias Bo-dong Pan-chen Phyo-ga-ma-rgyal who was Dpang Lo-tsa-ba's maternal great-great nephew, Zur-mkhar-ba Blo-gros rgyal-po (1509–?), Padma-dkar-po (1527–1592), Bod-mkhas-pa, the Fifth Dalai Lama and others. Those who took up Sa-pa's defense were Snar-thang Lo-tsa-ba Dge-'dun-dpal (ca. 1370–1430), alias Sanghasn, gser-mdog Pan-chen, Mang-thos Klu-sgrub-rgya-mtsho (1523–1594), Rin-sprungs[pic]-pa Ngag-dbang 'jig-ren dbang-phug-grags (1542–1625) and Ngag-dbang chos-grags (1572–1641). Less decisive were Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi-byung-gnas (1700–1774) and his disciple Khams-sprul who were inclined to give Sa-skya Pandita the benefit of the doubt. (Ibid., 50)
or polemical literature. Among the strategies Lopez lists are 1) dismissing the opponent's work as unworthy of serious consideration; 2) bemoaning the desperate situation in the author's homeland of Tibet "where wrong views are rampant;" 3) evoking famous debates in Tibetan history; and 4) turning to authorities outside one's own school for support, ideally the founder of the opponent's own school. Examples of these tactics can also be found in the secular *dgag-lan* of contemporary Tibetan literary debates.

A look at earlier disputes between religious scholars can help explain the sometimes friendly jesting and sometimes vitriolic nature of modern literary sparring. In the seventeenth century, for example, a feud developed between the fifth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho (1617–1682) and the 'Brug-pa Bka-brgyud-po poet Bod-mkhas-pa Mi-pham-dge-legs-rnam-rgyal (1618–1685). While this debate had political and personal undertones, it was also related in part to the greatly different writing styles of the two masters. The fifth Dalai Lama's poetry is best known for its grand, robust or powerful quality (*brjid-po*):

The fifth Dalai Lama's poetry naturally gives one the feeling of beauty due to its magnificence and the ornate joining of words; it possesses a strength as if the earth and sky were full of confidence; it makes excellent use of metaphor and often exhibits a romantic writing style. Whether the snyan-ngag is verse or prose, it is mellifluous. In particular, he excelled in writing verse with many syllables, prose poetry, riddles, etc. Moreover, his works are rich in thought and deep in meaning.

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The fifth Dalai Lama had the opportunity to propagate his writing style (though this was not likely the main purpose) through the establishment of a government school for lay and ecclesiastic officials, where poetics was taught. By contrast, the poetry of Bod-mkhas-pa and the fourth Amdo Zhwa-dmar Dge-dun-bstan-pa-rgya-mtsho (1852–1912), who "relied on Bod-mkhas-pa as a standard" is considered more elegant. Their writing has been described by the same critics as follows:

Most of their examples are rich in terms of ornamentation, mellifluous quality and poetic flavor, and thus are a standard for poets all over Tibet. Compared to Bod-mkhas-pa, Zhwa-dmar's poetry is clearer and broader in thought; and in terms of its rich thought, the content is deep and vast. He especially excelled in sbyar-ba'i-rgyan, riddles and complex phonetic ornaments (sgra-rgyan; Skt. sabdālamkāra). Moreover, like Bod-mkhas-pa, he [Zhwa-dmar] was skilled in analysis that cut to the point of the matter (piercing analysis) and clear expression. Bod-mkhas-pa and Zhwa-dmar were also skilled in the use of simile and [their works] have educational value as illustrations of snyan-ngag.

The division between the fifth Dalai Lama and Bod-mkhas-pa founded the origins for two separate lineages of poetic writing. The influence of the fifth Dalai Lama's writing style with its emphasis on strong language is evident in the snyan-ngag of the founding religious hierarch of Bla-brang Monastery (Xiahe, Gansu), 'Jam-dbyang-bzhad-

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928 The fourth Amdo Zhwa-dmar-pa was a teacher of Sgis-steng Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan and 'Jigs-med-chos-rgya-mtsho (aka Mar-nang Rdo-rgi-chang) (1898–1946), and the latter was the teacher of Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung (1910–1985). See Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center Database, resource codes P196, P221, and P401, respectively. Time prohibits me from pursuing a study of this lineage (from Bod-mkhas-pa to Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung) any further. However, the TBRC database would make such a venture relatively easy to accomplish.

929 Lit. "the ornament of joining." A figure of speech described by Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung as "discussing together [in the same stanza] two different subject matters which [share a] particular sound or meaning." Tib. sgra'am don-gyi khyad-par brjod-byi don tha-dad-pa gnyis la mnyan-por 'jug-pa'i ngag go! (Snyan-ngag spyi-don, 99–100.)

pa (1648–1721/22) and students of Labrang tended to follow his lead. Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho and A-lags Dor-zhi, for example, whose poetry and other writings were discussed in chapters 2 and 5, could be placed in this lineage. The second poetic school, that following from Bod-mkhas-pa which places greater emphasis on mdzes (aesthetics), influenced (among others) the writing of certain scholars at Rong-bo Monastery (Tongren, Qinghai). These include Sgis-steng Blo-bzang dpal-ldan (1880/81–1944), and his students, foremostly, Mar-nang Rdo-rje-chang (alias 'Jigs-med-dam-chos-rgya-mtsho, 1898–1946), the principle hierarch of Rong-bo monastery Shar Skal-ldan Blo-bzang-'phrin-las (1916/17–1978?), and Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung (1910–1985).

One heated scholarly dispute between men of letters in the pre-Communist era occurred between two representatives of these contrasting approaches: Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho and Sgis-steng Rinpoche. In one of their famous exchanges, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho dubbed his retort to a philosophical treatise by the latter as a "fire of conflagration" (skal-pa'i me-dpung). In response, Sgis-steng Rinpoche sub-titled his refutation (dgag-lari) a "water machine" (chu-yi 'khrul-'khor). The personal attacks he launches at various points throughout his discourse grant his opponent no mercy. Here is merely one example, written in seven-syllable verse:

What's so amazing about the earth bearing

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931 This information provided by Pema Bhum (Latse Tibetan Contemporary Cultural Library, NYC).
932 Contemporary representatives of this lineage include 'Jam-dbyangs-grags-pa, professor at Qinghai Nationalities Institute; and to a lesser degree 'Ju Skal-bzang, who in his early years frequently modeled his writing on works by poets in the Reb-gong school. (See below.)
933 While these debates usually center on philosophical points, it would be naïve to ignore the political tensions between the two scholars' representative monasteries during this period. Several factors contributed to this rivalry, not least of which was a tussle over influence in Sog-po or Henan county (Dhondup and Diemberger 2003), and grassland wars between the adjacent communities of Rgan-rgya (Xiehe) and Rgyal-bo (Tongren).
934 The full name of this text is 'Jam-dpal rnam-par rol-pa'i ting-nge dzin-las byung-ba'i legs-par bshad-pa chu'i 'khrul-'khor, in Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan, Selected Works, 2:3–186. The term 'khrul-'khor is now more commonly rendered 'phrul-'khor.
935 Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan, Selected Works, 2:175. I am grateful to Pema Bhum for locating this excerpt and assisting me with its translation.
the four continents, Mount Sumeru, and the oceans?

Look! One old man carries the burden of thousands of contradictions here [in his text.]

Were it the sun-chariot on the shoulders of the mountain peak, Śiva, et. al.,

But, alas! Look at his load of internal filth!

Blithering from drinking inebriating spirits is no marvel.

[But,] regard the crazy blither of the lha-rams-pa who has attained the white victory banner [of fame]!

Dogs and pigs will eat any sort of manure collecting it for their food.

Eating excrement together with urine,

What’s wrong with this Great One?

If this captain who bears such filth from the precious [Drepung] monastery was not evoked by the mantric curses of gauri936, who is he other than the messenger Kāmadeva?937

[Oh Buddha], if your benevolence is not mistaken, please usher to the Primordial Realm the consciousness of this Devadatta938 who despises You,

936 I have not been able to identify this figure, but it seems possible that it might be one of the sri-demons as discussed in Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet, 302, 516–517.
Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho also wrote such versified attacks against Sgis-steng Rinpoche.³³⁹ And yet, it is popularly understood that the two great scholars actually held mutual respect for each other and that their sparring was largely in jest. Written evidence for their mutual regard can be found in the closing comments of Sgis-steng Rinpoche's dgag-lan in which he urges Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho to not foresake their "meaningful chats" and to stay in touch "in the manner of pure friendship."³⁴⁰ He also reminds his debate partner that many of the remarks in his dgag-lan are meant to be taken humorously.

According to one popular account, when Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho was invited to India for a meeting and praised for being a scholar, he said, "It is not just me. There are others, such as Sgis-steng Rinpoche." One day after his return to Lhasa, he was handed a letter. Seeing that it was from Sgis-steng Rinpoche, the Dge-bshes held the envelope to his head in reverence and exclaimed to his students who were gathered: "There isn't a scholar in Amdo as great as this. Just look!" And he passed the letter around. It turned out to be a polemical retort against an earlier assertion of Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho, posing a potentially embarrassing moment for this notary in front of his students. And yet, it is also said that when Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho heard about Sgis-steng Rinpoche's death and people assumed he would be unmoved by the passing away of his main rival, on the contrary, he allegedly made public his grief acknowledging the

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³³⁸ Tib. Lhas-byin. According to Das, this refers to "a brother of Ananda and cousin of Gautama Buddha, who, as the legends have it, continually annoyed Buddha by malicious artifices, whereby, however, the blameless character of the latter shone but the more conspicuously; hence proverbially used for a malicious character." (p. 1338) Sgis-steng Rinpoche refers to himself in this text as "Char-ka" who was an attendant of Buddha, who became a bhikṣu. (Das, 442).

³⁴⁰ Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan, Selected Works, 2:183. Tib. grogs-kyi dwangs-mar 'brel-ba'i ngag-tshul thugs la bcags nas don dang ldan-pa'i 'brel-gram dang 'phros-las-'khyi 'jug-pa rab-tu bzang-bo dri-ma med-pa'i mu-tig-gi phren-ba ltar la brgus-pa'i tshul-du bka'-drinjes skong mi 'dnam-pa sogs 'dor med zhu zhu zhu/
collaborative effort of polemical undertakings: "Sgis-steng Rinpoche was a dharma-drum (chos-kyi-rnga) and I am a stick. Without him, I have nothing to beat on."941 Though I cannot attest to the veracity of this account, its very existence as hearsay among Tibetan intellectuals today provides evidence for the significance of the dgag-lan tradition. This debate recalls the exchange between Rgya-ye Phun-tsogs and A-khu Bshad-grub regarding the suitability of free verse poetry as a Tibetan literary genre. (See chapter 5.) These two scholars were close colleagues, but sparred as sport and together submitted their poems for publication in order to spur readers to consider their views. Another example of a gentlemen's disagreement can be seen in Don-grub-rgyal's response to Sangs-rgyas's master thesis. (See chapter 5.)

At other times, the debates can become quite vitriolic. In his characterization of five "schools of poetic composition" to have evolved over the course of Tibet's literary history,942 exile scholar Tashi Tsering (1979) mentions another incident involving Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rnga-mtsho, whose poetry he characterizes as "egoistic and harsh." In a

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941 I am grateful to my teacher Bu-bzhi Bsam-grub for relaying this account to me as told to him by one of his teachers.

942 The emblematic writers he mentions are 1) Zhang-zhong-pa Chos-dbang-grags-pa (1404–1469) who wrote in an obscure style with frequent use of synonyms and poetic riddles that was "a much sought after style of composition - among the Tibetan intellectuals." This disciple of Mkas-grub-rje wrote several famous literary works including a poetic biography of his countryman, Lo-chen Rin-chen-bzang-po, hymns of praise to Mi-la-ras-pa, the Rgyal-bu zla-ba'i riogs-brjod, and the Ra-ma-pa'i riogs-brjod, a literary reworking of the story of the Ramayana. See E. Gene Smith, Among Tibetan Texts, 319, n. 665; 2) Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rnga-mtsho - egoistic and harsh; 3) Dgi-lDan Dzeh-med Rinpoche - satire and sarcasm; 4) Dge-'dun-chos-phel and Rdzma Dpal-sprul Rinpoche - clear, sharp and critical writing; and 5) Khri-jang Blo-bzang-ye-shes, whose writing "fills readers with a sense of calm devotion and deep humility... smooth and moving." See Tashi Tsering, "Tibetan Poetry Down the Ages."

Compare the categories above with those identified by Dkon-mchog-thsa-brtan et. al, the PRC-based editors of Snyan-ngog dper-brjod (1984). Two of these styles have already been mentioned above (the schools of the fifth Dalai Lama and Bod-mkhas-pa). The third style they identify is exemplified by the poetry of two twentieth-century scholars, Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung and Dung-dkar Rinpoche, whose work the editors praise:

Their ornamentation is exceptionally clear, correct and pleasant sounding. It is easy to understand and easy to pronounce and in terms of the words they use to express themselves they are purely correct. Because their poetry is great—not only is it easy on the mouth, pleasant to the ear, it accords with these times and uses a great deal of new content. For these reasons it has many virtues. In terms of the language they use, as well, they offer good examples to be held as a standard for later generations. We certainly should study them as much as possible. (P. 7)
debate with a *nying-ma* scholar of poetry 'Bras-ljongs[-pa] Lama O-rgyan-bstan-'dzin (19th c.), the famous *dge-legs-pa* teacher sent a verse composition which read:

> The wisdom-sword of Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho
> Becomes sharp like fire when sharpened
> To cut off the dumb head
> Of the ignorant.

Tashi Tsering adds that writers could be "harsh on their critics, comparing them to rats, etc. in a bid to humiliate them."

Indeed, polemical literature gained added notoriety for the sarcastic verse through which scholars might disarm their adversaries. In a philosophical tussle between Sgis-steng Rinpoche of Rebkong and A-lags Dngul-ra'i-hre-bo (aka Dngos-grub) of Labrang, for instance, the former criticized the writings of 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa to which A-lags Hre-bo took offense. Responding to A-lags Hre-bo's defense of his monastery's founder, Sgis-steng Rinpoche launched an all-out attack, questioning his debate partner's logical abilities, scholarship and personal character:

> Hre-bo can't distinguish tea from sheep droppings. He doesn't even know how to spell his own name. He hasn't the food to fill his mouth, nor the clothes to cover his bum. He takes up whatever comes to mind, says whatever comes to mind. He does not belong to the ranks of men at Bkra'-shis-khyil, but to the rank of dogs. He is famous for being someone who hasn't even learned to debate the categories of red and white, and was thus stopped short while debating [in futility] the meaning of ambrosia.944

As noted by Lopez above, the *ad hominem* attack or rhetorical technique of discrediting ones opponent was frequently employed in religious debates. Sgis-steng Rinpoche

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943 According to the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center database, this O-rgyan-bstan-'dzin authored a book of illustrations of *snyan-ngag*, as well as a commentary on the second chapter of the *Snyan-ngag* melong. See www.tbrc.org, resource code (P4662).

944 Blo-bzang-dpal-lidan Selected Works, 2:194. Tib. Hre-bo kho-rang ja dang ril-ma'i khyad-par ma phyed-pa' rang ming-gi yi-ge'i dag-cha tsam yang ni shes-pa' rang kha zas-kyis ma sur rang 'phongs gos-kyi ma kheb/ gang bsam lag-tu len-pa/ gang dran kha nas snra ba/ bkra-shis-khyil rang na mi gral-la ma chad-par khyi gral-la bion-pa' kha-dog dkar-dmar-gyi khyab-pa legs-po klong-thouse yang ma lob-pa zhir-gi ar tsig nir tsig dang ar-mri-la'i sgra don brisad pas kyang kha la snra bcead-kyi rgya byin-pa kun la grags pa zhir yin gshis'...
suggests that all of the effort A-lags Hre-bo put into his writing, such that "his fingers must take a rest" (mdzud-mo ngal-bo'i dgos-pa) was of little value, and the latter shouldn't bother "wasting ink and paper" (Tib. snag shog gron-pa).\textsuperscript{945} Finally, Sgis-steng employs another of the tactics Lopez highlights in citing a long list of other scholars who had previously criticized Jam-dbyang-bzhad-pa, including notables from Labrang monastery itself: "You claim that [I am] too lowly and now is not the time [for me to debate Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa]. Let alone those [of] other great monasteries, need I mention those famous at the debate school of your own monastery, especially 'the skinny one from Sdi-tsha' [a nickname for Dge-'dun-chos-'phel]?\textsuperscript{946}

The criticism of certain teachers towards unorthodox students can be especially harsh, as seen in the vicious critique of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's philosophical treatise on Madhyamaka, Klu-sgrub dgongs-rgyan, by Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho.\textsuperscript{947} The latter calls his student's treatise "meaningless" (don-med) and "brash speech" (kha-tshod mtho-bo),\textsuperscript{948} the result of "lying to yourself." He claims that Dge-dun-chos-'phel's writing is the result of too much drinking which made him a "big lunatic," and though his student might have a corps of friends, this makes his argument no stronger: "It is nothing but stacking crazy onto crazy, and mistakes upon mistakes."\textsuperscript{949} Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho reasons that because Dge-'dun-chos-'phel is creating bad karma for himself by such mistaken views, out of compassion the teacher finds it necessary to "debate,\

\textsuperscript{945} Ibid., 2:183.  
\textsuperscript{946} Ibid., 2:195.  
\textsuperscript{948} Ibid., 3:71.
nurture, and scold" his student.\textsuperscript{950} He goes on to criticize his student for "not understanding anything"\textsuperscript{951} and for his "unbounded ambition": "You want to kill a wild yak on your fingernail! I am worried about you."\textsuperscript{952} As will be seen below, the tenor and even some of the rhetorical strategies employed by Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho most probably served as a model for the \textit{dgag-lan} of Professor Dor-zhi against his students and other scholars (including Dge-'dun-chos-phel) some thirty to forty years later. Both teachers are prone to the use of insults, sarcasm and hyperbole.

Indeed, it was considered a teacher's responsibility to reprimand students who strayed too far from canonical truth. In a letter to Khri-byang Rinpoche, Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho makes clear that his \textit{dgag-lan} against Dge-'dun-chos-phel was written at the request of the Dalai Lama's two main tutors.\textsuperscript{953} He writes, "When I began a close analysis of \textit{Klu-sgrub dgongs-rgyan}, [I felt] it was no wonder you two strongly encouraged me [to write a \textit{dgag-lan}]. There were also a lot of special subtle points which I certainly needed to counter."\textsuperscript{954} This incident is indicative of what I would call "mechanisms of orthodoxy," that is, the concrete means through which dissenting views and their authors were kept in check by prevailing scholars. Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho proudly states that he has criticized "everything from the title down to the author's

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{949} Ib id., 3:2. Tib. smyon-pa'i steng-du smyon-pa dang 'khrul-ba'i steng-dun 'khrul-ba brtsegs-pa tsam yin-pa/
\item \textsuperscript{950} Ib id., 3:71.
\item \textsuperscript{951} Tib. ci yang ha mi go-bal
\item \textsuperscript{952} Ib id., 3:76. Tib. sen-mo'i steng nas 'brong rgod gsod-pa ya re nga/ bu khyod pas nga-rang sems-khral-che/
\item \textsuperscript{954} Ib id., 575–576. Tib. klu dgongs zhib-mo'i dpyod yul-du blangs-pa na rnam-pa gnyis nas bkas-bkal nan chags mtzad-pa la thugs khag mi 'dug/ nges par bdag rang-gis 'gog-dgos-pa'i gsang gnad thun-mong-ma-yin-pa yang mang/
\end{itemize}
Like teachers in the 1980s and 1990s, he targets the spelling and word choice of the writer as additional evidence for the young scholar's ignorance and lack of foundation for making such unorthodox claims.

In the past two decades, there have been similar exchanges between elder and younger scholars. In 1985, for example, Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan—whose life and works we discussed in chapter 2—wrote a refutation to a persuasive article by Chab-'gag Rdo-rje-tshe-ring, a young graduate of Northwest Nationalities Institute, who had argued that the 'Dzam-gling version of the Gesar epic was actually the history of Khri Srong-Id'e'ubrtsan. The elder scholar argued instead that Gesar was a real historical figure, namely, the King of Gling in Sde-dge. What has been most remembered, however, is Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan's two-page tirade (set off by parentheses midst the greater text) against young scholars "who have just studied a bit of the culture of other nationalities." Three different present-day scholars brought this account to my attention as rare evidence of generational conflicts in print. Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan suggests that he himself "has not managed to finish reading the collected works of all [the great Tibetan scholars] even once." How much less of a "basis for challenging and mocking the early scholars" has this young scholar who dared make such an unorthodox claim.

Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan continues,

There are also some who make such unfounded statements as, 'Because early Tibetan scholars were enamored of religion, the histories they wrote are not accurate. Not a single Tibetan scholar has written an accurate history of Tibet. For this reason, we must look only to foreign countries,' Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, "Gling seng-cheng-yi byung-ba mdor-bsdus," Sbrang-char, 1985, no. 4:47–59, 78. 

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955 Ibid., 576. Tib, ming nas dpal-byang-qi bar rdzogs-par bkag-pa yin.../
958 Ibid., 50.
959 Ibid.
Chinese writings and the Dunhuang texts as sources for Tibetan history.

Of course there are some mistakes and incorrect writing in the early histories. However, if you completely discard these and only follow other histories—fine! Let the son throw away his father’s inheritance! I strongly suspect that you will become sellers of your ancestors’ souls.

...there is a lot of baseless speech regarding Tibetan history, but there are few people among our nationality who maintain the majestic pose of the lion. Rather, we are seeing ‘the internal biting of a pack of dogs’....

This is a culture of which we don’t need to be ashamed in front of others. Since the time of Srong-btsan and Sambhota to whom we are grateful, I think we are grateful for all the scholars leading up to our [present lamas]. If our culture does not remain like this, we will become neither Chinese nor anything else, such has occurred to a few nationalities both small and large. Moreover, we will become backward like some nationalities, in terms of any sort of cultural economy. And, I think we will be nothing more than a nationality in name.

If [it were true that] possessing a religion renders progress impossible, then Japan would not have been able to progress. And if [it were true that] not possessing a religion [enables] progress, then the Yi nationality too would have [undergone] unsurpassed progress.960

This exchange between Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan and the young student first appeared in the Amdo literary journal Light Rain (Sbrang-char). The editorial staff granted additional authority to Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan’s position by featuring his photo on the cover of the journal for that particular issue, the third cover-photo in a series featuring well-known older generation scholars who had survived the Cultural Revolution. Two years later, however, the more scholarly journal Bod-ljongs zhib-’jug, published by the Tibetan Academy of Social Science in Lhasa, deemed Chab-’gag Rdo-rje-tshe-ring’s argument worthy of reprinting.961

While Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan’s dgag-lan was concerned with a matter of historical representation, the rhetorical strategies he employed have also been wielded by older generation scholars in defense of Tibet’s literary heritage, in particular, the primacy that

960 Ibid., 50–51. The author implies that the Yi nationality (dbyis rigs) is atheist.
should be granted to the *Snyan-ngag me-long* as a guiding literary theory for contemporary literature. Northwest Nationalities Institute Professor Dor-zhi, for example, has been prolific in meting out harsh criticism towards younger generation students of literature. We have already discussed in chapter 5 his extended debate with Tshe-ring-rnam-rgo. In a similar case of intergenerational conflict, A-lags Dor-zhi wrote a *dgag-lan* to the undergraduate thesis of his former student at Northwest Nationalities Institute. The 1987 graduate, Lha-mo-skyabs (b. 1964), vehemently argued in his thesis against the utility of *Snyan-ngag me-long* for contemporary Tibetan literature and instead lauded the advent of free verse. Dor-zhi responded harshly to the sweeping denunciations which characterized Lha-mo-skyabs' thesis, though the teacher doesn't mention his student by name. In his now famous retort, published in the journal *Mtsho-sngon slob-gso* (Qinghai Education) in 1990 and republished in a book of his selected works in 1996, Dor-zhi employs several classical rhetorical strategies, such as those mentioned by Lopez (1996). A few (sometimes painful) illustrations will suffice.

First, Dor-zhi opens his article with popular quotations from a few well-known past scholars, including Gung-thang Rinpoche, Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho, and Dpa'-ris Rab-gsal. He then asserts his general claim or complaint about the current deplorable situation of education:

> These days the quality transmission of Tibetan culture is in serious decline. While a bit of spelling, grammar and *snyan-ngag* is sort of being taught in the schools, etc., teachers of scholar-standard and students who are objective, intelligent and hardworking are becoming rarer and rarer,

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such that they exist in name only. Likewise, so-called 'literature,' 'history,' and so forth, have no leg to stand on.\(^{563}\)

His attack is launched against not just the author of the thesis, but a "rotten lot" (khog-rul kha-shas) who claim—as Dor-zhi’s recaps—that Tibetan society has no need of its religion, language or culture… and ultimately no need of the nationality itself. He compares his opponents to "crazy dogs" (khyi-smyon), calling them "brainless" (klad-med) and "possessed" (bdud-kyi[s] yid brams-pa). The hyperbole which marks Dor-zhi’s summary of the other faction’s argument permeates his logic as well:

If we say that all old customs and traditions are bad and they need to be changed, then we also need to be against speaking with the mouth, eating with the mouth, as well as defecating and urinating from down there. For these are the oldest traditions, going back to the age when ape became man. It seems we must also change the custom of not going naked, for this is a custom associated with free thought and liberated times. It seems we must also discard the customs of covering our bodies with clothes and of not making love in public, for this is an old custom of the eastern nationalities, especially Tibetan. Throw out all of these, like a worn-out shoe, and do as you like! No doubt you will get a gold medal for the world’s most advanced innovators, liberated from old customs and traditions.\(^{564}\)

The rhetorical jump from arguing against the spurning of the classic treatise on poetry to the dismissal of all convention is even more extreme in tone than the argument made by


Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan. Dor-zhi's *dgag-lan* is a statement not only of literary conservatism, but also one of social conservatism.9 6 5

At the same time, the thesis against which Dor-zhi argues itself employs a strident tone:

We need to knock off from the comfortable bed and heartlessly banish to the far reaches of history [this saying that] 'There are explanations,' [for these] are divorced from our own view; above all, [we will banish] the *Me-long* (*Snyan-ngag me-long*) which for a very long time has in all honesty monopolized the stage of our literary theory and still continues to do so.... We will drive the *Me-long* from the throne that rules our literature.9 6 6

Lha-mo-skyabs' manifesto-like tone is typical of later non-literary debates regarding the role of traditional culture in contemporary society, such as heated up in the late 1990s. In fact, the author of this statement against the predominance of *snyan-ngag me-long* and in support of free-verse poetry and Western literary theory is among the corps of editors, publishers and other media figures in Amdo who argued a few years ago for an intellectual "revolt" (*'os-langs*) against the fetters of Tibetan tradition and the residue (*bag-chags*) of Tibetan religious thought. (See Hartley 2002.) Bourdieu explains such manifesto-type statements as a strategy for the locating of difference: "As well as the countless labels too obviously intended to produce the differences they claim to express, one could point to 'manifestos', which often have no other content than the aim of

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965 The timing of this statement is intriguing if we consider that Dor-zhi's article was published nearly two years after the student graduated, but only months after the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, when the ramifications of liberated thought and behavior were uppermost in people's minds. 966 [Lha-mo-skyabs], undergraduate thesis, NWNL, 1987, quoted in Dor-zhi, op. cit., 276. The graduate student's thesis was never published for wide readership. However, Dor-zhi quotes extensively from it, emphasizing the directly quoted excerpts with quotation marks, in addition to the traditional Tibetan grammatical markers (zhes, zer, etc.) Tib. dus yun shin-tu ring-po zhiig-di nang-du rang-re'i rtsom-rig-di gzholung-lugs stegs-bur lugs mthun tshul mthun gyis sger-geod byas shing/ da-lta da rung byed bzhin-pa'i me long (snyan-ngag me-long) gtsug byas/ zhar la rang-nyi-kyi lta-lishul bral-ba'i 'grel-ba yod do spro [sic] skyid-kyi gzims-khris las phabs te/ gdrag-rtsub kyi lo-rgyus kyi pha-mthar spro dgos/... snyan-ngag me-long de rtsom-rig-gi dbang-sgyur khri thog nas 'ded rgyu yin/
distinguishing themselves from what already exists. At the same time, we can see in the Tibetan case where older generation scholars have also been prone to hyperbole, but perhaps for different reasons.

Dor-zhi counters by calling into question the abilities of the writer and like-minded youth: "These days in many universities and middle schools, and in certain monasteries, [some] think it wouldn't be so bad to be rid of our valuable culture... most critics of the *Me-long* and verse have never studied the *Me-long*; and even if they have, it was just a bit of the root text from chapter 2 [illustrations of poetic figures] and not a close study of the commentaries." When Lha-mo-skyabs argues, "Not only does [Snyan-ngag me-long] have no ability for guiding Tibetan literature, it hasn't and never had any ability to guide India's own literature," Dor-zhi mocks the student, "How do you know this?... from mo-divination? Divine transmission? Did an Indian Muslim tell you this? Did a Chinese businessman tell you this? Compare his query to that made by Dge-bshes Shes-rab-rgya-mtsho in his *dgag-lan* to Dge-'dun-chos-phel's *Klu-sgrub dgongs-rgyan*. The teacher asks, "Who accepts that [unorthodox position]? Did a demon (dre) secretly tell you that?"

At the same time, there are significant differences in A-lags Dor-zhi's assertions, claims which can be found in similar statements by more conservative scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, but not earlier. These unprecedented styles of claims are four-fold.

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968 Dor-zhi, op. cit., 276. Tib. deng-sang yang dgon-sde khag so-so dang/ slob-grwa che ’bring mang-bo na rig-gnas gal-chen med-du mi-ring-ba zhig-tu brtsis nas... snyan-ngag me-long dang tshigs-bead la skyon-brjod byed mkhan phal-cher snyan-ngag me-long bslabs ma myong ba dang/ bslabs kyang le’u gnyis-pa’i rtsa tshig mgo chad rnga rdum rags rim tsam las tshig ’grel zhib mo zhig kyang mi ’gro zhing/....
969 [Lha-mo-skyabs 1987], quoted in Dor-zhi, op. cit., 277.
970 Dor-zhi, op. cit., 277.

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First, Dor-zhi demonstrates knowledge of contemporary science or theory, in making references to Einstein and Newton (p. 280) and even appeals to the authority of modern science and historians (p. 275). Secondly, he argues that extreme criticism of snyan-ngag me-long (or other representations of 'traditional' Tibetan culture) can be equated to attacks launched during the Cultural Revolution (p. 277). This tactic has also recently been employed in response to the "radical modernist" position enunciated by a cohort of thirty-something Amdo intellectuals in the late 1990s. (Hartley 2002) Third, the author argues that so-called "modern literary theory" is not innovative, but can be found in classical Tibetan literary theory. Dor-zhi argues, for example, that the graduate student is wrong in claiming that the sixth Dalai Lama Tshang-dbyangs-rgya-mtsho did not employ any kāvya conventions in his popular folk-based poetry. On the contrary, Dor-zhi states, one can find illustrations of many poetic figures from kāvya. Likewise, Dor-zhi argues that the Tibetan "four sections" (sde-bzhi)—the Buddhist enumeration of the four aspects of worldly existence recommended in the Kāvyādārśa as appropriate objects of praise—already include secular and emotional concerns and thus reserve room for any modern literary topic. The student claims, "The essence of literature is people's thoughts, their emotions, and the expression of their soul. Thus, sde-bzhi and so forth are not literary themes. Likewise, the time has passed and it is backward to consider them as.

972 Dor-zhi, op. cit., 284. In my opinion, the graduate student's point is well taken. Sorenson (1990:15) considers the influence of mgur in the sixth Dalai Lama's poetry. Dor-zhi's argument is an interesting twist of a tactic typical of contemporary articles of literary criticism in which authors are wont to apply snyan-ngag conventions as an analytical measure of modern literature. Here, Dor-zhi applies the conventions to an earlier work in which the author most likely did not consider the use of kāvya conventions.
973 See discussion in chapter 5.
974 For the root text and commentary concerning "subject matter for this method of eulogizing through long poems," see Rdo-rje-rgyal-po, Snyan-ngag-gi rnam-bshad gsal-sgron, 42.
Dor-zhi responds, "This [statement] reveals your weakness of great ignorance. All the world's affairs... in short, the mental, the material, all are included in sde-bzhi."976

A final resource upon which Dor-zhi (1996) draws is Marxist theory itself. At a time when few Chinese literary critics continued to raise the maxims of Marx and Mao, Dor-zhi still evoked their authority to argue against his student's position. For instance, Dor-zhi argues that even historians, philosophers, scientists, as well as Marx and Mao, accept the position that "old traditions and customs contain views that accord with science" and thus needn't be wholly dismissed.977 In an even more disturbing vein, Dor-zhi appeals to political orthodoxy in an effort to discredit the young student. Near the end of his article, Dor-zhi hypothesizes about the source of such unorthodox literary views, locating these in the realm of political transgression. He warns that arguments such as those appearing in his student's thesis are spurred by "leftist extremism in our country" and in "the liberated bourgeois thought from Hong Kong."978 Obviously, these are tropes that would not have been used among Tibetan intellectuals prior to the emergence of Marxist conceptual structures.

My objective in this section has been not to expose the seamier side of Tibetan scholarship, but to illustrate precedents to some of the rhetorical devices used in intellectual debates of the last two decades. Gene Smith (2001) has aptly described the gentlemanly quality such philosophical and literary debates could have in his description of a nineteenth-century debate between 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho (1846–1912) and Dpa'-
ris Rab-gsal (1840–1910?) concerning different interpretations of the ninth chapter of the Bodhicāryāvatāra:

... it should be noted that they were intellectuals and compassionate teachers who shared similar principles and values. They became close personal friends and often visited each other. Their polemical exchange is remarkable for its warmth and good humor. Both love a lively literary style filled with comparisons and syntactical usages drawn from the colloquial idiom and made elegant by the imaginative use of the rhetorical devices of Tibetan kārya. There is none of the vulgarity and crudeness in the writings of Dpa' ris Rab gsal to which certain of Mi pham's other opponents resorted. The crude attack as attempted refutation is certainly not unknown in the Tibetan tradition.980

As Smith suggests, at other times a vitriolic tone may comprise more than a rhetorical conceit used between friends. In her study of early to mid-twentieth-century Tibetan intellectual history, Heather Stoddard has dubbed such polemical practice as the "jeu dialectique" and suggests that the vicious tenor of these debates may lie in the milieu of Tibetan society at that time:

Nous avons évoqué la glorification de soi comme élément récurrent du jeu dialectique, des polémiques écrites chez le gelugpa. Conventions rhétoriques plutôt que fanfaronnades égoïstes, néanmoins la grande éloquence, l'hyperbole et le pléonasme, si fréquents dans les écrits tibétains de l'époque, ne traduisaient-ils pas une certaine décadence de la société?981

Be that as it may, self-glorification and disparaging one's opponent are still tactics wielded by critics on both sides of the tradition/modernity divide. While older generation scholars, monastics and graduates of minority institutes, are likely to criticize the unorthodox for not knowing traditional literary theory, the more radical writers or critics accuse conservatives of being ignorant of modern literary theory or science and western thought, in general. This tendency began in the late 1980s as seen in the exchanges

979 Dates from the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) database.
980 E. Gene Smith, Among Tibetan Texts, 233.
981 Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 290.
between A-lags Dor-zhi, Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, the two graduates of Northwest Nationalities Institute, and the writer Tshe-ring-rnam-rgol from the TAR. Lha-moskyabs himself poignantly describes the dilemma faced by this newly educated tier of students: "Many of us young people have had the opportunity to study. In particular, [we] have grown nervous hearing via the Chinese language the steps of progress being made by the human race. We are anxious, disappointed. We clearly see that the source of the grave which has been dug for our nationality is the duplicity and poison of our traditional culture with its thousands of years of history. [We] are the first to rise up as enemies of tradition."982

**Position-Taking in the Field of Tibetan Literary Production**

How else might we explain the strident tenor with which critics on all sides of the debate argue? A-lags Dor-zhi, for example, is well-established in an institutional sense. What could be so threatening in the writing of an undergraduate or young poet to warrant such vicious public flogging? Shall we merely attribute this to the professor's personality? Or to the polemical conventions between scholars of similar stature in classical religious and literary debates? Is this teacher assuming an expected role in reprimanding the wayward student, such as Dge-bshes Shes-rab-ryga-rtse-mdzod did with Dge-'dun-chos-'phel? Or does A-lags Dor-zhi's *dgag-lan* arise from a certain fear?

Bourdieu suggests a possible source for such urgency in the tendency for heretofore consecrated players in the "field of cultural production" to pursue, whether by conscious strategy or habitus, the maintenance of their dominant position:

982 [Lha-moskyabs 1987], quoted in Dor-zhi, op. cit., 282.
The field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer... [T]he fundamental stake in literary struggles is the monopoly of literary legitimacy; i.e. inter alia, the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves writers; or, to put it another way, it is the monopoly of the power to consecrate producers or products... 

And yet, ironically, the nature of the field is such that membership belongs to anyone who produces effects within it:

One of the difficulties of orthodox defense against heretical transformation of the field by a redefinition of the tacit or explicit terms of entry is the fact that polemics imply a form of recognition; adversaries whom one would prefer to destroy by ignoring them cannot be combated without consecrating them. 

Bourdieu argues that the very structure of the field of cultural production is itself based on the opposition between orthodoxy and heresy:

[T]he history of the field arises from the struggle between the established figures and the young challengers. The ageing authors, schools and works is far from being the product of a mechanical, chronological slide into the past; it results from the struggle between those who have made their mark (fait date - 'made an epoch') and who are fighting to persist, and those who cannot make their own mark without pushing into the past those who have an interest in stopping the clock, eternalizing the present stage of things. 

While Bourdieu considers the field to operate as a system with its own internal dynamics, he recognizes the importance of extraliterary developments, through their transformation of the field itself. According to Bourdieu, these changes are the entrée for the next social generation:

When the newcomers are not disposed to enter the cycle of simple reproduction, based on recognition of the 'old' by the 'young'—homage, celebration, etc.—and recognition of the 'young' by the 'old'—prefaces, co-

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983 Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 42.
984 Ibid.
985 Ibid., 60.
optation, consecration, etc.—but bring with them dispositions and position-takings which clash with the prevailing norms of production and the expectations of the field, they cannot succeed without the help of external changes.  

In previous chapters we have discussed such transformations, shifting sands beneath Dorzhii's feet: the cultivation of a readership at primary and secondary levels where new poetry and fiction continue to be introduced into the educational canon, an increasingly privatized economy in which popular demand will continue to tip the scales of cultural production, and political change since the 1950s which led the "new Tibetan literature" to be first defined in the 1980s as a "socialist literature" and thus a realist one. The new literary orthodoxy accorded well with the aspirations of a growing pool of young secularly educated Tibetan writers who were growing familiar with literary trends among Chinese writers and gaining a peculiarly selective (though outdated) exposure to western literature and theory. Accordingly, Tibetan literary discourse shifted by the early 1990s from one that centralized snyan-ngag to one pervaded by western literary theory.

The very changes promoted by the great scholars of snyan-ngag in the mid-twentieth century—such as the vernacularization of the written language, efforts toward a universal education, translation ventures and the founding of modern publishing houses—have transformed the structure of the cultural field, in such a way as to lend currency to newcomers, would-be writers studying in middle and secondary schools. Moreover, as the applicability of the Tibetan-language curriculum developed in the 1980s began to slip in the ever-tightening job market of the 1990s (encountered by Tibetan graduates of nationality institutes throughout the country), the audience for classical Tibetan works was increasingly threatened. Demand has grown for teachers who can offer a modern

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986 Ibid., 57.
and marketable education. Such pressures must be taken into account when considering the relative positions professors like A-lags Dor-zhi now occupy in the field. Finally, his harsh retorts can be more directly understood as a response to what he views as a threat to Tibet's literary legacy—a storehouse of writing and conventions which itself was shaped by contesting views of membership and position-taking, whether it be for students' edification, the political interests of a religious school, personal reputation or simply for love of the *jeu dialectique*.

While criticism such as that written by Dor-zhi might be painful, it can also create a new rallying point for writers and critics who oppose his position and/or seek to gain footing in an ever-shifting field. For Bourdieu reminds us that this is more than an exchange between individuals. The exchange and impact always occurs in the plural:

> The most personal judgements it is possible to make of a work, even of one's own work, are always collective judgements in the sense of position-takings referring to other position-taking through the intermediary of the objective relations between the positions of their authors within the field. Through the public meaning of the work, through the objective sanctions imposed by the symbolic market upon the producers' 'aspirations' and 'ambitions' and, in particular, through the degree of recognition and consecration it accords them, the entire structure of the field interposes itself between producers and their work.967

Moreover, the past becomes a resource for staking positions in the present. As the cultural field shifts, so does literary discourse—but too radical a rupture would close the doors of leading literary journals to would-be writers and critics. One option is to found student or local literary journals. A more common tendency is for students today to draw on classical writings to legitimize innovation and the assertion of new theoretical concepts. It is a strategy enabled by the instruction of teachers who from their side

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attempted to draw classical writing closer to the new literary criteria demanded by socialist realist theory.

Re-evaluation of Literary Greats

While we can often trace the influence of previous scholars in the writings of Tibetan intellectuals today, at other times the current generation makes special effort to declare their style as unprecedented, progressive or innovative. In either case, however, contemporary writers must engage with the literary 'past' they construct:

Through the stakes of the struggle between the dominants and the challengers—the questions over which they confront each other—these strategies also depend on the state of the legitimate problematic, that is, the space of possibilities inherited from previous struggles, which tends to define the space of possible position-takings and thus orient the search for solutions and, as a result, the evolution of production.988

How and why do contemporary Tibetan writers and critics align or distinguish themselves from the literary greats who preceded the advent of a modern Tibetan vernacular literature? What can we learn about how authors negotiate the past from contemporary reviews of classical works?

One of the predominant approaches in current literary reviews by Tibetan critics is to reinterpret the works of early scholars using the lens of contemporary literary theory so as to declare their writings examples of "literature," in a western sense of the term. Through this tactic, a trajectory of Tibetan literary history can be established with a line of indigenous transmission drawn to the present age. Articles about Sgis-steng Rinpoche (1881–1944), for example, were especially numerous in the early 1990s.989 In particular,

young scholars have endeavored to draw his poem "Young Don-grub the Courier" (Zhu-phrin pho-nya gzhon-nu don-grub) and other classical works into the realm of a newly conceived sense of "literature." Young Don-grub is a poetic "letter" written by Sgis-steng Rinpoche (1881–1944) while residing in Tse-khog (Rma-lho [Huangnan] Prefecture, Qinghai Province) to his student Mar-nang Rdo-rje-chang (1898–1946) at Ka-ring Monastery in Xunhua. Mar-nang Rdo-rje-chang was also the reincarnation of Sgis-steng Rinpoche's teacher, which explains why the elderly lama would expend so much effort in writing to his student and praise him so highly. This poem is of the Tibetan literary genre called chab-shog, which are epistles typically sent from teachers to students and vice versa. While in form they read as poems, their content comprises a letter to the addressee.

One student writing in 1991, for example, argued that Young Don-grub not only illustrates the "true" meaning of snyan-ngag (which he defines as the expression of the writer's thought), but also evinces the qualities of contemporary realist literature; i.e. use of vernacular language, concern with the natural environment (drawing on Gorky), and detailed character description. In an interesting extension of the East-South debate, this student of Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung at Northwest Nationalities Institute, used modern

literary theory to argue why the Southern style of kāvyā, with its relatively accessible language and writing style, is the better school. This poem of Sgis-steng Rinpoche (who himself is considered by some scholars of the Rong-bo lineage to be the twentieth-century exemplar of the mdzes-pa or aesthetic writing style descending from Bod-mkhas-pa) is praised by Blon-phrug Gnam-lha-rgyal (1991) for using "the language of the people:"

It is good to write such that the content is accessible and easy to understand. For example, Yong-l-dzinBlo-bzang-dpal-ldan's poem is like this. It is rarely bound by alamkāra, archaisms, heavy words or obscure meaning. Though it might contain a few instances of these, it doesn't have the fault of being inexplicable. In particular, his poem frequently evinces the quality of being in accord with the essence of the language of the people.993

This young critic recommends that all aspects of language in Sgis-steng Rinpoche's poem (the vernacular and the aesthetic) should be selectively studied (blang-rdor bcud-len-gyi tshul-gyis slob-sbyong byas) and thus serve as a model for contemporary writers of "both short stories and poetry."994

In an article published in the same journal in the following year, Stobs-ldan (1992) made a similar argument, praising Sgis-steng Rinpoche's poem for being unique in its wording, poetic form and lines of varying length and claiming that for these reasons, its literary artistry was superlative.995 The junior-level teacher at Qinghai Nationality Teachers Training College (Gonghe) argued that Young Don-grub possesses qualities of Indic poetry, in particular the southern style. At the same time, he argues for the

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993 Blon-phrug Gnam-lha-rgyal, Yong-l-dzinBlo-bzang-dpal-ldan, "53. Tib. brjod bde zhing go sla-ba'i tshul-gyis brtsams na legs ia / dper na / yongs-l-dzin Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan khong-nyid-kyi snyan-rtsom 'di lta-bur mitshon na spyr mgon-brjod dang brda nyang sogs tshig brjed cing don go dka' bas beings-pa ches cher nyung la' skabs la lar beings yod pa re gruas yod na'ang don la gzhel zhing 'bab-pa las' brel med kyi skyon med de/ khyad par du khong-qi snyan-rtsom 'di'i nang-du dmangs-throd-kyi skad-cha'i snying-bcud gcig-tu bsdu s pa lta-bu'i khyad-chos 'bur-du thon-pa mang-ba...

994 Ibid., 54.

995 Stobs-ldan, op. cit., 26–27.

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inclusion of chab-shog (the epistle-style of poetry in which Young Don-grub is written) as a literary genre (rtsom-rig gi rnam-par):

Chab-shog is a literary genre; and literature creates new images through language or terms; that is, it expresses social life and the thoughts of the author. Not only does [literature] need to be accessible in accord with the level of readers, but its words as well should be soft and mellifluous. In Sgis-steng Rinpoche's chab-shog, the words used to express most of the required meanings reflect this because they are easy to understand and mellifluous. The pleasant sound of each syllable completely produces the qualities of snyan-ngag which is nectar to one's ears.996

This excerpt demonstrates the conflation in the understanding of "snyan-ngag" and "literature" (rtsom-rig) that continued to prevail through the early 1990s. Stob-ldan mixes contemporary qualities (easy to understand) with traditional standards (mellifluous) and clearly seeks legitimacy in outside theory.

The ability to entertain is a capacity of literature by any theory. That which everyone accepts as literature—whatever the work—has the ability to entertain. Because of his [Sgis-steng Rinpoche’s] literary skill, [Young Don-grub] is superior to other works and thus also has more capacity for entertaining.997

Fence-sitting on the "art for art's sake" debate, the critic finds both entertainment and instructional value in Young Don-grub:

This [ability to educate] is a sine qua non of literature and Sgis-steng Rinpoche's own pure thought is focused on real social issues. His pure view accords with the cycles of history. All told, this letter was developed solely out of pure motivation in order to remove the ignorance of his...
students, and thus each syllable, each line, is pervaded with the scent of education.\(^{998}\)

These two articles give some indication of the emergence of basic western literary theory; in these cases, still drawing mostly on socialist realist values.

A third article written during this time barely mentions western literary concepts. Zon-thar-rgyal (1992) approaches his comparison of *Young Don-grub* with its inspirational model *Meghadūta* (Tib. *Sprin-gyi pho-nya*) by Kālidāsa, which had been available in Tibetan since the thirteenth century, almost solely in the terms of *snyan-ngag*. That is, he analyses the two poems from different angles, but focuses primarily on identifying the metaphorical conventions (*dpe*) and other poetic figures (*rgyan*) utilized in the two works. A token nod to western analysis is limited to mention of how *Young Don-grub* was written in the first person, but all secondary references in the article are to classical texts. The article is significant in that it suggests one reason why so much attention has been paid to the poem *Young Don-grub*:

> This late period in which *Young Don-grub* was written was a time in which poetic development was flourishing in Tibet itself. For this reason, this poetic quality which both poems possess made their mark for a long time on the literary stage.\(^{999}\)

In comparing the two works, the author has set out to show why the latter (Tibetan-authored) work evinces "Tibet's own linguistic qualities." Stobs-ldan implies that during the decades immediately preceding the communist era a more vernacular Tibetan-
oriented poetry was being written. This writer also recommends that students selectively
draw (*legs nyes blang-dor mzdad par zhu*) on these two works as literary models.

Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, who was a contemporary of Sgis-steng Rinpoche and whose
works we discussed in chapter 2, has also been the topic of modern reinterpretation. For
many contemporary intellectuals, he has become a sort of cultural icon, representing a
progressive voice quelled by the same conservative factions that are seen to have held
Tibetan society back from social and cultural development. For others, he still represents
a threat to conventional Dge-lugs-pa thought. Stoddard (1985) suggests that one source
of such varied readings may be attributed to Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's multi-faceted character
vis à vis the multiple contexts in which he was received, both during his life and
posthumously:

Dans la perspective de situer Gedun Ch'omp'el à l'intérieur du contexte
tibétain, doivent être pris en considération la richesse de sa personnalité,
les divers rôles qu'il joua et les périodes successives de sa vie. Si les
descriptions et les récits contradictoires abondent à son sujet, cela tient
tout autant aux milieux culturels différents auxquels appartiennent les
témoins qu'à la complexité même de l'individu et à sa capacité d'adapter
son discours aux besoins et aux intérêts de son interlocuteur.\[1000\]

The reception or influence of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel did not become widespread until more
than twenty years after his death, in a case of "delayed salience," such as Kronfeld (1996)
has observed in literary discourse "on the margins of modernism." Apparently, about one
hundred handwritten copies of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's imperial history based on ancient
Dunhuang texts, the *White Annals* (*Deb-ther dkar-po*), were surreptitiously circulated
throughout Tibetan areas during the Cultural Revolution. After the fall of the Gang of
Four, cyclostyle copies were privately produced and distributed. The now ubiquitous
three-volume official collection of Dge'-dun-chos-'phel's work was not published in the

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PRC until 1990. In the foreword, compiler and editor Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-bar—to whom Dge-'dun-chos'-phel entrusted the "legacy" (pha-gzhis) of his writings—explains how the initiative to publish his friend's work in modern format first began in 1962, but with no immediate results. In this year, a Tibetan Minority Social History Research Group from the Nationalities Research Institute of the National Minorities Affairs Commission and the China Academy of Sciences visited Hor-khang in Lhasa and borrowed the entire manuscript of A Guide to India to make a copy and returned it. During the Cultural Revolution, all documents in Hor-khang's possession (including most of Dge-'dun-chos'-phel's writings) were taken by the TAR Advisory Office (canshi shi 参事室) and never returned. Hor-khang finally retrieved the documents only in 1988 through the good graces of the group leader (zuzhang 组长) Chen Jinzhong of the China Historical Research Group who informed him that the documents were in the Nationality Research Office of the China Academy of Social Sciences. After repeated trips and negotiations, and the assistance of Lhag-pa-phun-tshogs, head of the TAR Academy of Social Sciences, it was arranged for the writings to be published in Lhasa in 1990. Copies of the first edition soon sold out and a second edition with corrections was published in 1994.

Despite the limited availability of texts by Dge-'dun-chos'-phel, we see signs of the reception of GC before this, including a few biographical pieces published in the

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1001 Stoddard, Le Mendiant de l'Amdo, 289.
1003 Tib. Khrin[sic?]-cin-krung.
1004 Hor-khang Bsod-nams-dpal-bar, "Dpe-skrun-gsal-bshad" (Explanation of Publishing), 1–3.
1980s. Prior to the release of the three volumes, it seems Hor-khang published in 1987 a small preliminary collection of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's poems entitled Dge-chos snyan-rtsom thor-bu. The first is the inclusion of two poems in the collection of scholars' writing in 1989. Another is a 1987 master's thesis regarding his writing. One of the sources used for this study is Rak-ra Rinpoche's biography of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, evidence that this book from India was circulating in the PRC. We can gather from its being publicly cited in a master's thesis, that the circulation of this text from India was not as politically sensitive as the circulation of Tibetan exile writings today. This thesis is interesting in that it looks at the literary quality of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's work.

Most reviews of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's work were written from 1993 to 1995, and more recently, additional articles have appeared, including one by a Chinese scholar.

1004 The first article in Tibetan language journals in the PRC to document the life of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was written by one of his principal friends and biographers, Hor-khang Bsdod-nams-dpal-'bar, "Mkhas-mchog Dge-'dun-chos-'phel-gyi rtags-pa brjod-pa dag-pa' snang-ba," Bod-ljongs-zhib-'jug, 1983, no. 2:3-32. A Chinese version of this article appeared in Xizang Yanjiu (1985, no. 2), which was subsequently translated into English and published in the TAR Academy of Social Sciences' short-lived English language journal, Tibet Studies (1989, no. 1). Other related articles from the 1980s include a history by Li-yi'u-dbyi (Li Youyi 李幼仪), "Bod-rigs-kyi lo-rgyus mthabs-can Dge-'dun-chos-'phel-gyi lo-rgyus mdor-bsdus," Bod-ljongs-zhib-'jug, 1984, no. 4:19-38; and as translated elsewhere: Li-yu-yi "Bod-k'i lo-rgyus smra-ba-po Dge-'dun-chos-'phel-gyi byung-ba che-long tsam brjod-pa," Rtsers-snyeg, 1985, no. 4:23-38. The only other article that I have found from this period is 'Brug-thar, "Bod-k'i mthabs-dbang chen-po Dge-'dun-chos-'phel," Zla-zer, 1986, no. 2:63-77. In 1989, Sha-bo-tshe-ring, whose master's thesis is discussed in chapter 3, published an excerpt from it in Sha-bo-tshe-ring, "Mkhas-dbang Dge-'dun-chos-'phel-gyi snyan-rtsom las bsam-blo'i rang-bzhin skor gling-ba (A Discussion on the poetic thought of the scholar Gedun Choephel), Bod-ljongs-zhib-'jug, 1989, no. 3:67-83.

1005 Though I have not seen this collection, it is frequently cited in Sha-bo-tshe-ring (1992) who based his 1987 master's thesis on the writings in this collection and on the biography by Mkras-mthong Thub-bstan-chos-dar (aka Rak-ra Rinpoche). The volume is also mentioned by Rdo-rgyal, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, 35.


This article was translated by Bde-nub Rdo-rje-dgra-'dul and published as "Ri-mo'i sgyu-rtsal-la byang-ba'i dge-'dun-chos-'phel," Gangs-ljongs rig-gnas, no. 2 (1993): 51-58.

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biographer Du Yongbin 杜永彬. The evaluation of his work in the mid-1990s has tended to stress the vernacular or modern qualities of his writing. Lara Maconi (2002) has identified another trace of this controversial monk in the writings of the sinophone Tibetan poet Yi-dam-tshe-ring. She notes, "When looking for a reference in Tibetan tradition to legitimise his views on life, on progress and on Tibetan issues, [Yi-dam-tshe-ring] likes to evoke the brilliant and iconoclast figure Dge 'dun chos 'phel (1905–1951)." Dge-'dun-chos-'phel has now become somewhat of a cult figure among Tibetans in the PRC. He is frequently quoted in literary magazines and a Tibetan aid organization has now been founded in his name.

When the re-evaluation of literary greats is applied to the more recent past, we might find another motivation in the need to generate "cultural currency." Bourdieu observes that in the field of cultural production:

> the initiative of change falls almost by definition on the newcomers, i.e. the youngest, who are also those least endowed with specific capital: in a universe in which to exist is to differ, i.e. to occupy a distinct distinctive position, they must assert their difference, get it known and recognized, get themselves known and recognized ('make a name for themselves'),... One way to do this is to distinguish oneself from even the most popular of literary heroes. For example, even Don-grub-rgyal, whose popularity also borders on cult-like intensity, has been the object of recent reevaluation on both sides of the

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1009 Lara Maconi, "Lion of the Snowy Mountains," 180.

1010 Among Tibetans in exile, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's popularity was already well-established in the 1970s and 1980s. Elliot Sperling, personal communication, 9 April 2003.

1011 Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 58.

1012 His photo accompanies that of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel in a poster that has been circulating throughout Amdo in recent years.
orthodox/heretical divide. Kapstein (1999) has illustrated how A-lags Dor-zhi's introductory remarks to the third volume in the collected works of Don-grub-rgyal (1997) may represent "one of the means by which Tibetan tradition has long sought to domesticate discomforting genius, and creativity that defies traditional molds, is by a process of sanctification."\(^{1013}\) (He too notes that the tactic may also be seen in the posthumous exaltation of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, "another brilliant rebel from Rebkong."\(^{1014}\)) Dor-zhi defends Don-grub-rgyal against charges of blasphemy in the writing of the short story Sprul-sku (discussed here in chapter 5), arguing that the author was only criticizing religious charlatans and not the institution of reincarnates as a whole. Dor-zhi also "seeks a precedent in the eccentricities attributed to, for instance, some of the great tantric masters of the past" as well as several well-revered Dge-lugs-pa teachers.

Younger generation writers have also sought to reinterpret Don-grub-rgyal but for different reasons. One of the earliest reviews came from Lhasa, an article by Bkra-shis-dpal-lidan (1989) who praised the Amdo writers' style for evincing 'nationality characteristics' and above all for "inspiring the foundation and growth of new Tibetan literature."\(^{1015}\) In another act of reverence, at least one student-published literary magazine bears a title evoking the memory of Don-grub-rgyal after his untimely death in 1985, i.e. Rbab-chu [Waterfall], founded at Qinghai Nationalities Institute in 1992. Furthermore, memorial services for Don-grub-rgyal continued for years after his death. In May 2000, I attended a poetry reading at the school where Don-grub-rgyal taught in Chab-cha, which was held in his honour. And yet, reviews of Tibet's first free verse poet have not always been so favorable. While Don-grub-rgyal's untimely death helped make

\(^{1014}\) Ibid.

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him a legendary hero in the eyes of most Tibetan youth, the poem "I Accuse You! To a Dead Young Scholar" by the Lho-kha based poet O-rgyan-rdo-rje,\textsuperscript{1016} is both a tribute and reproach. The poem expresses the sense of anger and betrayal that the suicide elicited among peers of his generation. While I do not want to question the sincerity of O-rgyan-rdo-rje's angry poem, at the same time I believe his poem can be read as a statement of differentiation such as described by Bourdieu.\textsuperscript{1017}

The acts of prophetic denunciation of which [Zola's] \textit{J'accuse} is the paradigm have become, since Zola, and perhaps especially since Sartre, so intrinsic to the personage of the intellectual that anyone who aspires to a position (especially a dominant one) in the intellectual field has to perform such exemplary acts.\textsuperscript{1018}

Bourdieu, however, is not speaking of connivance. His sense of "strategy" lies in the realm of habitus or predisposition to situate oneself within a limited range of possibilities constrained by the structure of the field: "they distinguished themselves, even without searching for distinction."\textsuperscript{1019} More recently, Don-grub-rgyal and his era of writers have been criticized for their unoriginal imitation of western and Chinese writers. In particular, the first free poets have been criticized for "merely copying external

\textsuperscript{1015} Bkra-shis-dpal-ladan, "Don-grub-rgyal-gyi brtams-'bras," 64.


\textsuperscript{1017} Another poem which fits this category of writing is Ljang-bu, "Dmar-po khrag-gi glu," (Song of Red Blood), Sbrang-char, 1987, no. 3: 72. The following English translation of this poem is by Ron Schwartz, as appears in Pema Bhum, "Heart-beat of the New Generation," 4.

\textsuperscript{1018} Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 63.

\textsuperscript{1019} Bourdieu, "Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works," 184.
forms. Others have noted how Don-grub-rgyal's "Waterfall of Youth" is not truly free verse, but merely lines of traditional verse chopped into shorter segments which are still fairly consistent in length. As the more modernist writings of Ljang-bu became popular among a certain sector of younger generation writers, Don-grub-rgyal's influence began to wane by even the early 1990s. The significance of this shift will be discussed in chapter 9.

Classical Models and Critical Change: The Literary Thought of 'Ju Skal-bzang

One writer who has never had a cult-like reputation such as Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, Don-grub-rgyal or Ljang-bu and yet is among the most prolific of Tibetan poets is the Amdo-born 'Ju Skal-bzang (b. 1960). His career and writings provide an opportunity for a diachronic case study of how one writer has negotiated the tradition-modern divide, since he has grappled with the issue of his position vis à vis tradition for nearly the full two decades of our study. Moreover, his poetry and critical statements have helped shaped the writing styles and views of today's younger generation writers. In order to study changes in the structure of the field, Bourdieu (1993) suggests not ordinary biography, but a "trajectory," through which we can describe "the series of positions successively occupied by the same writer in the successive states of the literary field, it being understood that it is only in the structure of a field that the meaning of these successive positions can be defined." Accordingly, the course of 'Ju Skal-bzang's writing provides not only evidence for the influence of preceding writers, but a blueprint of

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1020 Gangs-zhun and Rdo-lha, Lta-ba bsam-blo lag-len, 199.
general literary trends of the last two decades—not through coincidence or even imitation, but as defined by the possibilities existing in the field of cultural production at any given time and by the writer's relative position in that field during the some twenty-five years of his writing career. Our task is made easier by the fact that the writer has expressed his own thoughts on literary development on several occasions. In the discussion that follows, we will identify ways in which 'Ju Skal-bzang has drawn for inspiration on the works of two literary forefathers. Secondly, through a comparison of his literary studies and critical essays, we will identify how this poet's views have changed over time and how this transformation might reflect new possibilities or emphases in the wider field of Tibetan literary discourse.

'Ju Skal-bzang was born in 1960 in Dari County (Tib. Dar-lag Rdzong), Mgo-log (Ch. Guoluo) Prefecture, Qinghai Province. He owes his early foundation in Tibetan language to his father who taught him to read at the age of seven. During the first few years of the Cultural Revolution, 'Ju Skal-bzang started primary school but was soon sent to work as a "barefoot doctor" at the age of ten. He continued this for five years after which he was sent to Xining for further schooling at Qinghai Nationalities Institute. Three years of education there qualified him to be assistant director for the Propaganda Bureau in his home county. Only in 1977 did higher educational opportunities in Tibetan begin to expand. The premiere program then was at the Central Nationalities Institute (Beijing) under the tutelage of Dung-dkar Blo-bzang 'Phrin-las (1927–1997) and other renowned teachers. 'Ju Skal-bzang earned his associates degree at this school in Beijing from 1982 to 1984. His teacher there was Don-grub-rgyal who was quickly gaining

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2. This information was provided to me by 'Ju Skal-bzang in the form of his vita upon our first meeting.
notoriety as a talented scholar and iconoclastic writer. 'Ju Skal-bzang then returned to Xining where a master's degree program in Tibetan literature had been established at Qinghai Nationalities Institute from which he graduated in 1987. Whereas many writers move to urban areas for employment and live displaced from their rural or nomadic birthplaces, 'Ju Skal-bzang is uncommon for having chosen to return and work in his native home of Mgo-log, where since graduation in 1987 he has worked for the Nationalities Section of the Mgo-log Prefecture Translation Affairs Office (Guoluo Zhou Fanyi Shi Minyu Ban). He now serves director of the office.

'Ju Skal-bzang's first literary work was written in 1977, just after the end of the Cultural Revolution. Not surprisingly, it was a poem entitled "Song of Praise" and published in the journal of Qinghai Nationalities Institute. Recall that there were no Tibetan language literary journals at this time. Moreover, after the Cultural Revolution, eulogistic poems adhering either to kāvyā convention or replicating Tibetan folk song styles were most prevalent when creative works in Tibetan were again allowed to be published. 'Ju Skal-bzang wrote his first poem while a student at Qinghai Nationalities Institute. While I do not know for certain the subject matter of 'Ju Skal-bzang's first poem, it most likely was written in praise of the motherland or nationality policy, the safest of topics for testing the political waters after the new opening called for by Deng Xiaoping.

In 1982, 'Ju Skal-bzang went to Beijing where he had the opportunity to further study Tibetan literature at Central Nationalities Institute with Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-

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1023 Don-grub-rgyal also began publishing his poems and short stories at this time.
In contrast to many young writers today, 'Ju Skal-bzang was trained in traditional Tibetan verse forms, which dominated literary instruction at that time. In chapter 3, we discussed how the poem in praise of Lake Qinghai written by Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho in the 1950s served as a literary model for several poets in the early 1980s. In similar fashion, 'Ju Skal-bzang drew for inspiration on poems by early twentieth-century writers as models for his earliest truly accomplished poems. Not least among these, was the poem "Young Don-grub the Courier" (Zhu-'phrin pho-nya gzhon-nu don-grub) written by Sgis-steng Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan circa 1938 and discussed above for the reinterpretation it underwent in the 1990s.

A comparison of Sgis-steng Rinpoche's poem "Young Don-grub the Courier" and 'Ju Skal-bzang's "Poetic Words to Encourage the Illusory Courier: The Play of Youth" reveals several aspects of intertextuality. Firstly, 'Ju Skal-bzang copied the overall story line or plot; i.e. the narrator of the poem has conjured an imaginary messenger to deliver a special letter. The bulk of both poems are descriptions of the lands that the messenger will travel through on his way from the writer to the cherished recipient. In this sense, the instructions to the imaginary messenger serve as a conceit to offer a guided tour for the third-party reader through regions intimately familiar to the writer. Along the virtual journey, the narrator extols the merits of particular communities or geographic wonders while elsewhere warning against certain hazards. The message to be relayed to the recipient is secondary to the aim of introducing the reader to the terrain. In fact, Young Don-grub was written as a poetic flourish and at times humorous accompaniment

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1024 I have been told that Don-grub-rgyal held a special class there for students from Amdo who had good Tibetan but who did not have a graduate degree. 1025 'Ju Skal-bzang, "Sgyu-ma'i pho-nya skul-ba'i snyan-tshig gzhon-nu'i rol-rtsed," Sbrang-char, 1984, no. 1:35–40. Sgis-steng Rinpoche’s poem also served as inspiration for a poem by Sangs-rgyas (author of
to Sgis-steng Rinpoche's actual letter to Mar-nang Rdo-rje-chang, which comprised a separate text. (The latter was also in verse and considered a chab-shog.) To the best of our knowledge, Sgis-steng Rinpoche wrote this poem in 1938. It too is modeled after an earlier work; namely, Bod-mkhas-pa's 'Phrin-yig ngag-mo rnam-rtsen, which in turn was modeled after the Indian classic Sprin-gyi pho-nya. Thus, a substantial and identifiable genealogy lies behind 'Ju Skal-bzang's work, more so than could be traced for most other poems by his generation.

Let us compare the opening verses from each of the two poems. Here is the opening of Sgis-steng's "Young Don-grub the Courier":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{"Ten thousand miles north of here,}\hspace{1cm}
\text{is the embodiment of Rgyal-kun Ye-shes Thig-le,}\hspace{1cm}
\text{who is [as dear to me as] the eyes on my face and my heart inside. His name alone is nectar to my ears.}
\end{align*}
\]

Could there be a messenger who would swiftly accomplish the entirety of the needed task, carrying a letter without delay.

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1025 The reasoning for this was explained to me by Professor 'Jam-dbyangs-grags-pa (a student of Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, who himself studied directly with Sgis-steng Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan) who tutored me on the entirety of this poem in the spring of 2000 during my stay at the Qinghai Nationalities Institute in Xining. According to his biography, Sgis-steng Rinpoche went to Rdo-rje rdzong (Tshe-khog) twice in his lifetime: once when he was 44 years old and later when he was 57 years old. It is more likely that he wrote the poem at this later date (in 1938), at which time he was engaged in Vajrabhairava meditation (Jigs-byed-kyi bsnyen-pa).

1026 Skt. Meghaduta. The Indian classic is about a treasurer (phyag mdzod) who is exiled by his king for his lassitude. Separated from his lover, the treasurer sends messages of longing via the clouds. Bod-mkhas-pa's "translation" of this is actually a re-writing of the work giving it a Tibetan cast.

1027 The translation of this poem is based on the version that appears in Blo-bzang-chos-grags and Bsod-nams-rtsmo, op. cit., 3:2031–2047. Hereafter I will refer to this as Young Don-grub.

1028 The two monasteries are not really this far apart. As in much snyan-ngag, this exhibits use of hyperbole ("ud-chen-po.

1029 This refers to Rdo-rje-rdzong Monastery located in Rma-iho Rlse-gzhung.

1030 An emanation of Manjushri in human form. This refers to Mar-nang Rdo-rje-chang (Jigs-med-dam-chos-rgya-mtsho), who was Sgis-steng's student. The reason Sgis-steng tsang's praise for him is so great is that his student is the reincarnation of Sgis-steng Rinpoche's own teacher, Jigs-med-bsam-gtan (1814–1897).
whom if I were to invest upon his head responsibility for this poetic letter would have all the great virtues [of a messenger]?"

Just then, because the necessary karmic conditions were unstoppable, a young white she-cloud smiled and there was the son of a lha upon whom I could have gazed forever. He strolled slowly, like a baby elephant.

"Kye! Kye! You, boy who accomplishes great things. Come here! Come here! With this flower of prayer, which will ensure for you the auspiciousness of the exoteric and esoteric arts, I appoint you fine messenger...."

'Ju Skal-bzang breaks with Sgis-steng Rinpoche in opening his poem with a short section of thirteen syllables per line, but otherwise has also chosen a metric verse form of nine syllables per line. 'Ju Skal-bzang's starts his poem with the following.

With its vast fence stretching for miles, the environs are hung on a coral net. The fans of the trees' branches are hoisted in sequence and the garden is spring to the eyes. The tireless mirrors of bathing pools hold the reflection of the young at play.

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1032 Tib. bden-tshig. Words spoken by a lama for someone's safety, success, etc., and which have a powerful prophetic effect.

1033 The choice of nine syllables is not necessarily an intentional modeling after Sgis-steng Rinpoche, however, as "seven and nine syllables are the most common forms for traditional snyan-ngag." Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, Snyan-ngagspyi-don, 13. Tib. Bod ltar na tshigs head gcig-gi tsheg-bar rnams mang-nyang gcig hyas-pa'i tsheg-bar bdun ma dang dgu ma shas che shing! ... Sgis-steng Rinpoche actually switches between sometimes nine and sometimes seven syllables per line, and uses 23–syllable lines in a four-line stanza near the close of his poem. 'Ju Skal-bzang similarly takes liberty in varying the length of his lines, including a few lines with nineteen syllables each and others with fifteen syllables. Flexibility in the number of syllables per line, according to Tahe-tan-zhabs-drung, constitutes a key difference between Indian and Tibetan kavya theory.

The ever-changing layout and bustle surpasses the imagination.

A pair of attractive magical birds fly near.

They play flitting in the sky above.

Just then, I place the words I want to say into

their ears as if adorning them with a rosary of fresh

pearls finely strung on a thread of pleasant words

Fresh nectar for the eyes.

"E-ma! Magical birds..."

The intended recipient of 'Ju Skal-bzang's letter is not a religious student, but his parents residing in Mgo-log (Ch. Guoluo, Qinghai). 'Ju Skal-bzang himself seems to be writing from Beijing where he was studying at the time. In his poem, however, he first sends his messenger to Lhasa with its awesome sights and the journey is detailed from there.

In another section, 'Ju Skal-bzang draws on Sgis-steng Rinpoche's warnings about the emotions that will be generated in the messenger at certain hazardous points along the way.\textsuperscript{1035}

In the abyss where tussle streams, forests, canyons and rocks, are hiding places for thugs on the forest path which is hard hard to find though a a thousand eyes glitter. Don't go to this

terrifying place. It would invite your very soul to death.

\textsuperscript{1035} Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan, \textit{Young Don-grub}, 2034.
Compare this with a similar passage in 'Ju Skal-bzang's work.\textsuperscript{1036}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{The pristene primeval forest,}
the roar of various beasts, and
the whistling sound of the bitter wind
prompts a dance on the stage of the coward's chest.
\end{quote}

Likewise, 'Ju Skal-bzang draws on metaphorical conventions employed by Sgis-steng Rinpoche to describe such sights as the bustle of citylife or the physical beauty of young men and women in town.

From Blo-bzang-dpal-ladan (p. 2039):

\begin{quote}
The shine of their moon[-like] faces fully surpassing [those of] divine youth, the people fine clothed with a spectrum of fine ornaments dangling from their belts enjoy themselves immensely.
\end{quote}

Slim-waisted women who move like ducks strolling slowly, weighed down from the burden of many necklaces on their beautiful young breasts are in all ways as beautiful as goddesses.

Compare this with the following two stanzas from 'Ju Skal-bzang's poem (p. 37):

\begin{quote}
The sport of handsome young men in fine attire and arrogant with youth shows off the glory of the earth, causing goddesses to descend with the pretense of watching the spectacle.
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{1036} Ju Skal-bzang, "Sgyu-ma'i pho-nya," 36.
\textsuperscript{1037} This should probably read \textit{legs-bris}, a metaphor for \textit{lha} (god, deity).
\end{footnotes}
The smiles that shine from the white lotuses of the moon-like faces of beautiful women, who are clothed in rainbows and move like the tsandala tree, are the magic of Kāmadeva.

At the same time, the reader familiar with kārya conventions and especially the use of synonyms (mngon-brjod) will recognize these images as fairly typical for Indic-influenced Tibetan poetry; for example, in comparing a woman's eyes to the utpala flower. Published lists of such metaphors while useful for young Tibetans trying to make sense of a poem can also be used as a list of metaphorical options, lending an almost formulaic element to the composition of some poetry.

'Ju Skal-bzang writing in the 1980s, however, is confronted with modern objects such as trucks and motorcars for which there are no conventional metaphors. His poem differs most notably from that of his predecessor in referring to such subject matter:1038

And then look again! On the network of roads, the intersecting lines of an everlasting knot, a constant flow of vehicles and so forth, the rosary of waves of traffic never subside.

What we might call a "temporal mediary" between the poems of Sgis-steng Rinpoche and 'Ju Skal-bzang can be found in the textbook of the latter's professor at the Central Nationalities Insitute, Dung-dkar Blo-bzang 'Phrin-las, who himself applied traditional verse in the description of modern-day phenomena:1039

When they stepped onto the crown of the clotted hair of the world's [highest] plateau, jewel-dust from the toes of the mountain climbers (?) raised as adornment the five-starred red flag on the crown of the very queen of sky and snow.

Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las' contemporary Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung also wrote on contemporary subject matter in his concise textbook of poetic illustrations (*dpe-brjod*): To somewhere distant, hundreds of thousands of miles away on a seemingly useless thin wire, sending off well-wishes in an instant! Inconceivable! The wizardry of this telegraphy envoy.

These two textbooks were standard curriculum in the 1980s for instructing students on how to write traditional poetry. Students in the Tibetan departments at the various nationality institutes were required to write their own verses as exercises for employing similes (*dpe'i-rgyan*) as prescribed by *kavya* theory. Thus, we might see 'Ju Skal-bzang's work as a sort of study, though he surely surpassed what was required for the homework assignment.

There are other differences worth noting between 'Ju Skal-bzang's poem and that of his predecessor. For example, Sgis-steng Rinpoche seems more willing than the 1980s

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**Footnotes:**

1040 Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung, Snyan-ngag spyi-don, 22.
poet to refer to the contemporary political climate, including the horrors of Ma Bufang’s
dwarf rule in Rebkong.  

Having cut off the heads of the hosts of enemies
who affront them—like ears of wheat—
the sound of demons smacking their lips in an
ocean of blood and fat is the music of the night.

Furthermore, Sgis-steng Rinpoche refers to the two poems on which he self-consciously
based his own poem: "Isn't my poetry a mixture of that by Ma-khol and Chos-dbang-
grags-pa? Doesn't my rasa burn with the youth of the āryas?"  
'Ju Skal-bzang makes
no such reference, though his title clearly evokes Sgis-steng Rinpoche's poem, which was
being taught during the 1980s at Northwest Nationalities Institute (Lanzhou) and
presumably at his own school, the Central Nationalities Institute (Beijing). This was not
the only instance of his drawing on Sgis-steng Rinpoche's work. 'Ju Skal-bzang also
quotes his predecessor in a poem that appeared recently in a contemporary anthology.

'Ju Skal-bzang's mastery over classical verse forms is evident in poems such as
the one just discussed. Yet, 'Ju Skal-bzang was never a dyed-in-the-wool traditionalist.
Like Dge-'dun-chos-'phel whom he greatly admires for the same quality, 'Ju Skal-bzang
has mixed classical and colloquial languages. Contrast what we have just been reading

\[1042\] Blo-bzang-dpal-ltan, Young Don-grub. 2036.
\[1043\] Tib. Mo-khol dbyangs dang chos-dbang-grags-pa'i ngag rig gcig-tu 'dres-pa min-nam nyams-kyis
\[1044\] 'phags-pa'i lang-tsha 'bar
\[1045\] See 'Ju Skal-bzang, "Chos thog-ma'i dbyangs-rta," in Deng-rabs Bod-kyi rtsom-pa-po'i snyan-ngag

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with the following free verse poem in praise of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, which 'Ju Skal-bzang wrote circa 1990.\textsuperscript{1045}

\begin{center}
Dge-'dun-chos-'phel
\end{center}

(Part 1)

Once you realized the nature of the world,
You laughed easily and were quick to cry.

Having smashed many large and small terminological clay pots,
You combined the remaining blank spaces into one expanse.
The thread of "hope and suspicion/fear is frayed,
but how to widen the eye of the needle of principles?

No matter how hard one might stare
when one eye sees existence and being
while the other sees non-existence and non-being,
this pair of eyes can't encompass you.
Thus, nearing the age of fifty
(No, those fifty years
are the march of time.
How could they be you?
You never left behind a hoary old conclusion,
nor even wrote a decrepit poem.)
When you knocked on the door of the world beyond,
your mortal head dipped in blood,
I saw you—on dim twilight evening
slowly departing beyond the highest snow ridge of the mountain
dragging a chain of question marks.

After some time,
with the haze of the smoke wafting from
the barrel of a sinful gun,
I found your grave at a bend in history.

Indeed, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was another poet upon whose work 'Ju Skal-bzang drew for inspiration in his early experiments with traditional \textit{kavya} forms. In a recent interview, our poet addressed this practice and subsequent changes in his writing style:

\textsuperscript{1045} 'Ju Skal-bzang, "Dge-'dun-chos-'phel" (2 parts), \textit{Sbrang-char}, 1999, no. 1:84–85. This poem was published in the tenth anniversary issue of the magazine and reprinted in \textit{Lang-tsho'i rhab-chu} (1993) in the
Because I thought Gedun Choephel's writing was good, I have in the past copied it. Later, my writing didn't resemble Gedun Choephel's in the least. I do have some poems that are similar to Gedun Choephel's. Because I had read many of his works, they influenced me. However, I really think that in terms of copying Gedun Choephel I did very little of that. I used to write traditional poetry. Then I wrote more vernacular poetry. And then I wrote free verse. Gedun Choephel didn't write free verse during his time, did he? If writing free verse, there isn't even a place for copying Gedun Choephel. In short, though influenced by Gedun Choephel's writing, I have written very little that was exactly like his.

Testimony to the influence of 'Ju Skal-bzang's master's thesis is the fact that it was one of only two full-length literary studies published in 1990 as part of the ten-volume modern Tibetan literature series compiled by the Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House. (The other study is by A-lags Dor-zhi.) In the third chapter of his master's thesis, which is entitled "A Discussion of Maintaining the Tibetan snyan-ngag Tradition and its Development," 'Ju Skal-bzang applies a Marxist-Hegelian perspective on the dialectical nature of struggle as the root of literary change. He argues that from the struggle between traditional writing forms and new experimental forms, a unique artistry will emerge that is in keeping with the indigenous characteristics of the nationality (mi-rigs-kyi khyad-chos):

It is a natural law of literary development [that] in general the real essence of any thing is dependent upon the movement of its internal contradictions, while its external surface is caused by whatever power is produced from that internal conflict. This is the basic view of dialectical materialism. Literary transformation as well, along the lines of what we've just discussed, to a certain extent is dependent on the socio-economic base and the influence of the trend in political thought. Sometimes, these are even the decisive forces. However, trying to explain all transformations in the realm of literature with this theory—which is mechanistic materialism—is impossible. Rather, the movement of internal

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1046 Tib. dmangs-srol. Lit. "in the style of the people."

1047 Interview by Luc Schaedler, who is producing a film about Gedun Choephel, summer 1999. I thank Luc for providing me with the original Tibetan transcript.
contradictions, which is the natural law of literary development, is the actual internal cause for transformations in the essence of literature and for its development. \(^{1048}\)

Here, 'Ju Skal-bzang draws on conceptual structures from Marxist theory—the idea of movement from internal contradictions (which he notes accords with the laws of physics)—to counter the more conventional Marxist theory that would try to explain all literary change through external causes, such as economy and politics.

What is the actual internal cause or the nature of the internal contradictions in the realm of the nature of the development of our own poetry? One might identify three causal forces: 1) the nature of the internal development of art itself; 2) the view poets hold about aesthetics; 3) accordance with the requisites of readers' aesthetic sensibilities. \(^{1049}\)

'Ju Skal-bzang prioritized the need for "a new poetic form," considering this a "critical issue" for the development of Tibetan poetry (snyan-ngag). \(^{1050}\) He focuses on poetry, because poetry is the most potent in feeling among literary forms and the most flexible, most literary transformations begin with poetry and then spread to other realms of literature. This being the case, poetry is the first place in all of literature where the needs of the times are first written about. Given that this is the case, if we still cling solely to the poetic principles of yesteryear and these don't move forward at all, because these can't express the new and progressing life nor the rich and complicated thoughts and feelings [this entails], our poetry will continue to be more and more removed from life. \(^{1051}\)

Bourdieu offers other reasons for why the subject of poetry has predominated literary debates:

...poetry, by virtue of its restricted audience (often only a few hundred readers), the consequent low profits, which make it the disinterested


\(^{1049}\) Ibid., 201.

\(^{1050}\) Ibid., 208.

\(^{1051}\) Ibid., 200.
activity par excellence, and also its prestige, linked to the historical
tradition initiated by the Romantics, is destined to charismatic legitimation
which is given to only a few individuals, sometimes only one per
generation and, by the same token, to a continuous struggle for the
monopoly of poetic legitimacy and a succession of successful or abortive
revolutions...¹⁰⁵²

At the same time, Bourdieu notes a rather plebian quality to the undertaking itself:

Poetry continues to represent the ideal model of literature for the least
cultured consumers.... members of the working and lower middle classes
who write have too elevated an idea of literature [and maybe not enough
time - lrh] to write realist novels ; and their production does indeed consist
essentially of poetry—very conventional in its form—and history.¹⁰⁵³

Bourdieu's remark closely parallels sentiments expressed by 'Ju Skal-bzang himself in a
1991 article introducing readers to a history of modern poetry. With regard to the fervor
with which "new poetry" was spreading among the younger generation in Tibet at that
time, he satirizes, "The educated write modern poetry. The uneducated also write modern
poetry. University students write modern poetry. Elementary school students also write
modern poetry."¹⁰⁵⁴ The point of his article is not to check this enthusiasm but to urge a
sound base for the endeavor, one based on a clear understanding of the development in
world literary history and its relative status in Tibetan literary history. Above all, he
urges would-be writers to understand what it really means to achieve liberated poetic
forms, free from kāvya conventions.

As 'Ju Skal-bzang gained fame as an accomplished poet, he was called upon to
give lectures at universities and to further write essays of advice for younger writers. A
comparison of his master's thesis written in 1987 and a more recent letter of advice
(1998) published in the Qinghai Tibetan News reveals a significant shift in the author's

¹⁰⁵² Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 51.
¹⁰⁵³ Ibid.
focus, which I would characterize as a switch from prioritizing form to prioritizing content-related issues:

If I were to speak about what path we need to take in terms of modern literature, I would say it should be one along the lines of happiness and enjoyment; and if I think about it now, it might also be in order to express the value of my life.1055

His focus is on content. Indeed, I would argue that a survey of literary debates over the twenty years reflects this same general shift. He chastises young writers for having read too little and experienced too little. He suggests new content that could be addressed in order to remedy the current situation of trivial content and narrow thinking. Finally, he acknowledges that the "absence or near absence of professional writers among us [Tibetans] until now is not the case in most societies."

Let us now broadly compare the approach and concerns of ‘Ju Skal-bzang during the past two decades of his career. We have seen that as an undergraduate in the early 1980s, he initially modelled his poetry after twentieth-century pre-Communist writers (Sgis-steng Rinpoche and Dge-'dun-chos-phel) whose works were considered by kāvya standards as somewhat aberrant due to their contemporary subject matter and vernacular qualities. In his master’s thesis completed in 1987, ‘Ju Skal-bzang stressed the need to find new ways or means of expression, i.e. new writing styles or literary forms. This emphasis on form is also reflected in his 1991 article on free verse. And yet, he makes fairly radical statements in this article which he did not dare make in his thesis some four years earlier. Indeed, his thesis barely addresses the subject of "free verse" by name. Finally, we see a shift towards greater concern with content in his 1998 letter urging

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1056 See my discussion on pages 37–38.

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writers to read more and experience more for the purpose of enriching the content of their works. What shift in the field might have occurred to spur 'Ju Skal-bzang to place new emphasis on the literary content of young writers? I would hypothesize that he is writing in response to a growing modernist movement, that is, he is trying to curb the movement towards obscure poetry, the controversy over which we shall address in the conclusion of this dissertation.

'Ju Skal-bzang represents a more centrist approach to the tradition-modernist dichotomy. In his own words:

My view on new literature is that by maintaining the rich traditional culture of Tibet as a base and adopting new modern literary ways of expression, a new poetry with nationality characteristics and modern literary character will be written. This is no easy task. So, if my works have a new artistic form or some amount of artistic flavor, this would be the characteristic of my new works.1057

Such a position seems to accord with the editorial offices of the main Tibetan publishing houses, for 'Ju Skal-bzang has been well received by the Tibetan literary establishment. His poems, for example, are by far the most numerous in the anthology of contemporary poetry compiled in 1991 by Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House. Sixteen of the 89 poems are by 'Ju Skal-bzang; with a total of eight poems, the next most featured poet is Yi-dam-tshe-ring (who wrote the introduction for an anthology of 'Ju Skal-bzang's poetry). In contrast to most other writers, 'Ju Skal-bzang has not had to pay for the publishing of his own books and yet he has been known to quip: "In other countries, they pay to read literature. We Tibetan writers must pay for others to read our books!" A translator of government documents and related materials by profession, 'Ju Skal-bzang continues to write and translate in his spare time. In particular, he is now involved in a

1057 This statement appears on 'Ju Skal-bzang's vita which he provided me in 1999.
project to translate selected western classics from Chinese into Tibetan. 'Ju Skal-bzang opted for a text by Nietzsche (1844-1900).

By Bourdieu's criteria, 'Ju Skal-bzang has joined the ranks of established writers, the new orthodox. As the field of literary production changed, so has his relative position. Indeed, Dpal-rdo-thar (1995) identifies 'Ju Skal-bzang as a "traditionalist" in his delineation of emerging Tibetan literary schools. 'Ju Skal-bzang is frequently juxtaposed with and now stands in contrast to the younger and more avant-garde Ljang-bu, who has become the new icon for a group of self-fashioned modernists and other proponents of new heresies, the subject of the next and final chapter of this dissertation.
Chapter 9

A New Millenium and New Formations

"[Poetry] lives in the hectic rhythm of the aesthetic revolutions which divide the continuum of ages into extremely brief literary generations." Bourdieu 1993, 52.

In this dissertation, we have examined the main issues addressed by Tibetan writers and critics during the past twenty years. These have included differing views on the utility of the Snyan-ngag me-long for modern literature, controversies over content interpreted as attacking tradition, different criteria for what constitutes Tibetan literature, issues of periodization and the debate over free verse. In this final chapter, I would like to discuss what I consider to be a growing modernist trend in the field of Tibetan cultural production, one that self-consciously spurns any relationship to the "baggage" or residue (bag-chags) of traditional thought. Whereas I have elsewhere discussed a growing radical modernism in non-literary arenas (Hartley 2000), here we will focus on similar projects in the area of literature and literary criticism.

Tibetan Modernisms

Surely the term "modernism" has been one of the most variously defined cultural concepts of the twentieth century. Among the theoretical works and secondary sources I have consulted here, the categorical designations of "modernism" include "culture," "historical genre," "horizon of expectation," "aesthetic-artistic movement," "historical period" and "literary trend." This variation is symptomatic firstly of what Vargish and
Mook (1999) argue is the "inherently subdisciplinary or transdisciplinary" nature of the concept of "modernism," which, when approached separately, leads to varying emphases. They argue for a multidisciplinary approach to identify values that simultaneously emerge across disciplines, such as science, art and literature. Their notion of culture is one in which "the interactions are always mutual: the cultural matrix guides individual inquiry at the same time that the inquiry helps to form, or transform, the matrix." As such, one can identify a "climate of opinion" which "rather than direct borrowing or transmission... is the underlying force guiding intellectual inquiry." Here the definition of culture, asserts Vargish and Mook, is not an underlying or "deep" structure, but rather the existence of particular values as "cultural products of a particular period and thus subject to historical change."(p. 13) They identify "Modernism" as a culture made up of specialized but comparable phenomena at the forefront of intellectual change—a culture acutely aware of its own innovation." I would like to borrow this understanding as a starting ground for our consideration of a new modernist formation in Tibetan society. Secondly, several of the "defining characteristics or values" that Vargish and Mook identify can be found in the writing of Tibetan intellectuals in the late 1990s: "epistemic trauma, contextualization (as a shift away from absolute or normative standards), observation (as replacing 'reality' as the subject for representation and analysis).... and a particular kind of abstraction and reflexivity."(p. 6)

And yet, a primary aim of Vargish and Mook is to propose "a coherent method for defining periods of intellectual and cultural history."(ix) Accordingly, "Modernism" in their study is expressly delineated as "a period with clearly set historical limits [between

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the 1880s and World War II], and one that has come to an end." Thus, while their multidisciplinary approach otherwise provides an exemplary model for this chapter, their franchise on the concept of modernism is exclusively Western with little room to consider similar trends or tendencies in other contexts, at other times, or with different values. How can we account, for example, for conflicting positions in the field of Tibetan cultural production today such that modernist values are in no way "pervasive, almost ubiquitous," a condition required by their Euro-American based model?

The point has been made by Raymond Williams (1989) in *The Politics of Modernism*:

After Modernism is canonized, however, by the post-war settlement and its accompanying, complicit academic endorsements, there is then the presumption that since Modernism is here in this specific phase or period, there is nothing beyond it. The [once] marginal or rejected artists become classics of organized teaching and of travelling exhibitions in the great galleries of the metropolitan cities. 'Modernism' is confined to this highly selective field and denied to everything else in an act of pure ideology, whose first, unconscious irony is that absurdly, it stops history dead.

.... [W]e must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margins of the century.1060

Inspired by Williams' "last testament" (these notes are among the last he wrote), in her study *On the Margins of Modernism*, Chana Kronfeld (1996) notes that discussions of modernism have often been "stuck" in one of two methodological extreme. Scholars who define modernism as a *genre* tend to provide "inventories of modernist traits, styles, and themes and to ignore the difficulties which modern genre theory has had to confront," whereas critics who favor *periodization* "have tended to reduce modernism to periodical division," an approach that ignores the degree to which "modernism as a literary trend

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1059 Ibid.
does not fully correlate with the total literary production and consumption of the period.\textsuperscript{1061} In an effort to avoid the blinders of positivist categorization, Kronfeld proposes that modernism is best described heterogeneously as "a transitional concept between classical notions of period and genre;" i.e. a literary trend. Kronfeld lays out the "rudiments of an alternative conceptual framework for the analysis of the literary category modernism," (p. 23) in which the literary trend is reconfigured as "an open-ended category that maintains a culturally structured family resemblance [Wittgenstein, Lakoff] among its members rather than being defined by a series of necessary and sufficient conditions." (p. 64) The overlapping of many pre-modernist, modernist and neo- or post-modernist trends is illustrated through her visual metaphor of the "rope model" of literary historiography:\textsuperscript{1062}

Though Kronfeld does not clearly define what each of the many, long and short strands in her model represents, I will interpret these to be different poets, group codes, or

subtrends—some of which are dominant for a period of time and others which are secondary, but later emerge as dominant, and so forth. In any case, her theoretical insights offer a new perspective on synchronic heterogeneity within the poetic trend, whether it be modernist or otherwise, and for diachronic overlapping between trends, i.e. complex, interrupted or ambivalent continuities. (p. 63–64)

Kronfeld’s model of modernism helps account for what Maconi (2002) has termed a "disjunction" in contemporary Tibetan literature:

[S]ince the 1950s (in spite of Beijing’s official policy on literature and the arts), a Tibetan mother tongue literature and a Tibetan sinophone literature have undergone a parallel development. The expression of a certain 'continuity' with Tibetan literary tradition coexists with the expression of a major 'disjunction.' Tibetan 'post-Liberation' literature shows that—at the present time in Tibet—two cultures co-exist within a single social context. If Maconi is associating "continuity" solely with Tibetan-medium literature and "disjunction" with the rise of sinophone literature, then it seems important to add that within the context of Tibetan-medium literature and criticism alone, one sees signs of both continuity and disjunction. That is, on the one hand, there is still ample evidence of literature and literary criticism which continues from a snyan-ngag centered discourse. Such writings are most prominent in the more conservative literary journals being published by monasteries and in literary criticism by older generation scholars and/or students who have adopted an "opppositional strategy." At the same time, modern short stories, essays and free verse and discussion of these more recent genres spring from what I would call a "rtsom-rig"-centered discourse; namely, one that draws primarily on

1062 Ibid., 63.
1063 Maconi, "Lion of the Snowy Mountains," 172.
socialist realism or more recent western literary theories in translation or as received by Chinese scholars.

With Kronfeld's model we have a conceptual tool to recognize both the remaining influences of kāvya theory in modern Tibetan literature, the "resurrection" or emanation of earlier writers who achieved salience posthumously, as well the relative influence of Chinese or Western literary theory in the overall "field" of Tibetan literary discourse at any given time. At another level, the model might be used to describe the varying interdisciplinary trends comprising a modernism in Tibetan society which resonates in different domains of the cultural field; that is, isochronous expressions and projects in different cultural domains which could be seen to comprise a loose intellectual or cultural formation. While some of these radical modernists have been charged with merely parroting the hegemonic and cultural-leveling rhetoric of the Chinese state, the insights of de Certeau and other theorists discussed above allow us to retain the possibility that their position is in fact subaltern.

Kronfeld's study of modernist Hebrew and Yiddish poetry is important for a second reason: that is, her expansion of the notion of "minor literature" to include not only literature written by minorities in a major language, but literatures that "resist, quite literally, the idiom of the hegemonic culture: the ultimate refusal to obey the linguistic imperative to write in the language of the major modernisms...."1064 While Kronfeld is referring to the "major modernisms of European culture," we might extend her analysis to better understand those Tibetan intellectuals who by choice write/sing/speak in Tibetan as opposed to the more widely consumed and thus more profitable Chinese language. At the same time, we must recognize a number of alternative reasons why writers might
choose to write in Tibetan, including: less competition, greater chance of being
published (and thus paid) in some Tibetan literary journal, the perception that their
writing would be of interest foremost to Tibetan readers, confidence in their Tibetan
linguistic skills compared to Chinese, the relatively superior capability of Tibetan
language to depict concerns/objects/proverbs etc. specific to Tibetan culture, and perhaps
an impression that sensitive writing faces less risk of censorship if written in Tibetan. In
any case, Kronfeld's critique of exclusionary models of modernism when combined with
an interdisciplinary approach offers grounds for identifying a heterogenous and sub-
dominant "modernist" discourse which can be seen as emerging self-consciously among
Tibetan intellectuals in the late 1990s.

In addition to the values identified by Vargish and Mook, other inventories of
modernist characteristics provided by genre or period studies of modernism also have
resonance in the Tibetan case. Bradbury and McFarlane (1976), for example, have noted
that modernist movements often tend "towards sophistication and mannerism, towards
introversion, technical display [and] internal self-skepticism." Such qualities are
found in the writing of what could be called the first wave of Chinese modernists. Leo
Ou-fan Lee (1999) has described the emergence in the 1920s and 1930s of a "new (linear)
mode of time consciousness" marking the arisal of a Chinese modernity with its
concomitant discourse derived from the Western post-Enlightenment tradition of
modernity. In contrast to the anti-bourgeois character highlighted by scholars of the
confrontation between a historical modernity and the rise of European "aesthetic
modernism" (e.g. Calinescu 1987), Lee describes among Chinese writers a simultaneous

1064 Kronfeld, op. cit., 14.
glorification of modernist trappings as well as expressions of alienation. A self-consciously cosmopolitan Shanghai, in particular, served as "the center of cultural production for such ideas about modernity" in that the great majority of newspapers and publishing houses were located there.\textsuperscript{1067} Any avant-garde tendencies were soon cut short, however, by a turn towards socialist realism among the League of Left-Wing Writers and by a literary patriotism demanded during the war with Japan from 1937.

As Chinese intellectuals in the post-May Fourth era tried to imagine a new nationhood (of which Tibet was a part),\textsuperscript{1068} the popularization of knowledge—making it accessible to the wider public—was approached with fervor. Enlightenment projects undertaken by Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshu guan) of Shanghai, for example, included textbooks and compendiums of knowledge, as well as the translation of Anglo-American, French, Russian, European, Japanese and Indian (e.g. Tagore) literature.\textsuperscript{1069} To this degree, Tibetan translation and other book projects by the official nationality publishing houses and older generation Tibetans (over 40) in the 1980s and 1990s more closely resemble the Enlightenment endeavors of China's early modernists. Avant-garde works by young Tibetan poets, however, tend more to resemble the obscure and other experimental poetry penned by Chinese writers in the late 1970s and 1980s, i.e. the second wave of Chinese modernism in the PRC. One of the clearest expressions of disaffection was illustrated in—though not limited to—the obscure poetry (menglongshi)

\textsuperscript{1066} Lee, \textit{Shanghai Modern}, 44.
\textsuperscript{1067} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{1068} While "Tibet Fever" (Xizang re) is prevalent among contemporary popular artists in China, I have been surprised by the not infrequent references to Tibetan motifs in the writings of 1920s and 1930s avant-garde writers in China. Consider for example, Shi Zhencun (b. 1905)'s story, "The General's Head" (Jiangjun ds ton) in which the "protagonist, a Tang general, is a racial hybrid of Han Chinese and Tibetan blood. He is caught in a conflict of loyalties when he is ordered to lead a platoon of Han troops to fight the 'barbarian' Tibetans in the border territory of Szechuan." (Lee, \textit{Shanghai Modern}, 158.)
movement and especially what Yeh (1998) calls "post-menglong poetry." The latter prioritized innovation and experimentation above all else: "rather than being unified by a set of formal and stylistic characteristics, it is marked by a radical openness to experimentation." 1070

For the purposes of this dissertation, we will focus more on critical statements made about obscure poetry, rather than the creative works themselves, and yet the latter too exhibit a high degree of self-consciousness of the act of writing and the life of a writer. While a handful of Tibetan writers began experimenting with obscure poetry in the mid-1980s, several years passed before the tendency became widespread. That is, from about 1993, a new corps of Tibetan writers were prone to writing free verse poetry which conveyed a general sense of angst and alienation. This shares features of another tendency among European modernists who, with an "awareness of contingency... a sense of disorientation and nightmare" in the early twentieth century, expressed in their experimentation a certain "bleakness, darkness, alienation, disintegration" and who exhibited a "tendency to bring [form] closer to chaos." 1071 Such qualities can be seen in the collections of the Xining-based comedian cum poet Sman-bla-skyabs (1995) and the younger Gansu-born Skyabs-chen-bde-grol (1998), whose writings are more psychological than the poems we have otherwise been discussing here. Moreover, in many poems from the mid-1990s, any meaning or emotion being conveyed by the poet is elusive. The debate over obscure poetry in Tibetan literary circles has marked the

1069 Lee, Shanghai Modern, 52-64.
1071 Bradbury and McFarlane, Modernism, 26.
emergence of what might be called a Tibetan modernist movement, drawing a line between literary generations that only approximates chronological age.

Obscure Poetry

In the Chinese literary context, post-Mao experimental poetry evolved in two stages, starting with the Obscure or Misty Poetry (menglongshi) from 1979 to 1984; followed by the poetry of the post-Menglong or "Newborn Generation" from 1984/85 to early 1990s. While the flourishing of Tibetan free verse was concomitant with this latter stage, Ljang-bu (1990) draws a distinction between the "new" poetry of Tibetan literature and Chinese "New Poetry"; i.e. vernacular poetry since the May Fourth movement. Noting "the large gap between literary Chinese and vernacular Chinese," he characterizes the change for Tibetan poetry as being more a question of new content rather than groundbreaking forms. His reasoning is based on the existence of early precedents (though admittedly few) for "free verse" (i.e. poems with lines of varying lengths) in Tibetan literature and on the fact that widespread experimentation among Tibetan writers did not occur until the mid-1990s. A concern for socially relevant content continues to drive the Tibetan debate regarding obscure poetry.

Comments by Tibetan writers and critics regarding the relative value of obscure poetry (go-dka'-ba'i snyan ngag) first started appearing around 1990, a decade after the development of menglongshi was being actively discussed in Chinese literary circles. When Tibetan critics first broached the topic, their objections to obscure poetry were typically included within a broader discussion about the relative virtues of free verse in

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1072 Michelle Yeh, "Light a Lamp in a Rock: Experimental Poetry in Contemporary China," 379.
1074 See for example Seng-shong Rdo-rje-gcod-pa, op. cit., 76–77.
Proponents of *kavya*-based poetry argued that the new Tibetan poetry was broke too many grammatical rules and was unintelligible or obscure. Eventually, younger Tibetan writers began to defend their right to author obscure poems, adopting an "art for art's sake" stance. For instance, Bya-gzung Dbyangs-bha (1994) who now works as a middle school teacher in Thunte (Hainan Prefecture, Qinghai Province) argued in a reflective essay that obscure poetry has value if it can evoke emotion in the reader. However, this view waned for several years and, like 'Ju Skal-bzang, most literary critics increasingly insisted on socially relevant and comprehensible content.

In 1999, the controversy surfaced again with the publishing in the Xining-based literary journal *Sbraṅ-chaṅ* of a rather confrontational article entitled "Is Obscurity a Poetic Virtue?" Gangs-zhun, the author, was then a graduate student in the M.A. program of the Tibetan Department at Northwest Nationalities Institute in Lanzhou, where he also served as editor of the Tibetan poetry newspaper (*Snyan-ngag tshags-par*, f. 1990). He asserts that the single "hottest" concern which needs to be resolved soon is the issue of poetic works which "a reader, however many times he reads [it] and reconsider [it], still can't draw any meaning [from it]." He acknowledges that "many [people] are worried these days" about what contemporary poets are saying and the implications for the state of Tibetan poetry in general. Gangs-zhun suggests that Tibetan modern poetry has developed "too rapidly and without any guiding theory." The main point of Gangs-zhun's essay is to argue against the writing of obscure (*go-rgyu med-pa*)

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1078 Ibid., 125.
or meaningless (brjod-hya med-pa) poetry. Using a rhetorical strategy which we have seen previously—that of attacking the authority and level of knowledge of the opposing side—Gangs-zhun claims that writers of obscure poetry

1) have no familiarity with proper Tibetan; 2) have not clearly learned Tibetan tshig-rgyan rig-pa [alāṃkāraśāstra, treatises on poetics]—i.e. the Me-long and traditional poetry in that style; 3) have no trace of Tibetan common customs, consciousness, aesthetic psychology, preferences, way of knowing, etc., or if they do, they do not respect these; and 4) think Tibetan traditional culture is inferior or its thought is minor, and cannot sense in the slightest its substance (nying-bcud). ¹⁰⁷⁹

He also voices suspicion of those who try to borrow from Western culture but have only superficial knowledge of its literature. The NWNI graduate student of Tibetan literature considers as "gibberish" the assertions of young Tibetans who say "we need to free ourselves from tradition" or "poetry should be something obscure and inexplicable."

Moreover, he is critical of certain editors who are "supportive of obscure poetry and make special efforts to support and promote it in any way they can." ¹⁰⁸⁰

As an antidote, Gangs-zhun makes four suggestions: ¹⁰⁸¹

1. Poetry should be in the vernacular and with content that all people easily understand so that it serves all of Tibet.

2. Poetry should educate people to think deeply and be brave for the advance, civilization (dpal-yon), peace and equality of the people.

3. The artistic nature of poetry should follow the tradition of Tibetan ancestral (gna'-mi) literature which is pure and easy to understand.

4. Despite the popularity of various avant-garde schools, writers should be careful when selecting these and as much as possible choose those [views] which are helpful for developing Tibet's own culture and choose scientific world views which hold regard for human life.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ibid., 126.
¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid., 125.
¹⁰⁸¹ Ibid., 126-127.
Note that there is a strong emphasis on the *content* of new poetry here, which Gangs-zhun feels should serve the interests of the nationality. "We must work hard to unify the thought of our own nationality. We shouldn't import various views willy-nilly."

He urges writers to oppose obscure poetry and instead model themselves after easily intelligible poems, such as "Chag-lo'i bde-smong (Prayer of the Translator Chag)" and "Lang-tsho'i rbab-chu (Waterfall of Youth)."

Importantly, this is not an argument about free verse as a *form* in itself such as occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. "Lang-tsho'i rbab-chu" was often touted as a model for free verse poets, but here Gangs-zhun highlights it for its natural and "easily intelligible" qualities, and especially its content. Gangs-zhun is more concerned with the motivation and message of the poet. By pointing to Don-grub-rgyal's poem, it seems that Gangs-zhun seeks a grander inspirational style of poetry urging "the unification of the writer's and readers' thought" such that all are "working hard towards a common goal." Gangs-zhun does not specify this goal except to say that it "accords with the general world and human trend." Though his aim might be literary, it seems more likely that his goal is a social one related to his above stated desire that Tibetan literature serve the "advance, civilization, peace and equality of the people." He clearly conflates the literary and the social in his final appeal to "produce the conditions for nearing and more

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1082 Ibid., 127.

1083 This refers to the "Prayer of Chag Lo-tsi-ba" penned in the 13th century by Chag Lo Chos-rje-dpal (1197–1264) from Lho-kha who became "deeply involved in the thirteenth-century cultural reawakening of Central Tibet, where purity of practice and demonstrable authenticity of lineage became issues of fundamental importance." See E. Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 238. This was the same poem favored by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and to this day is popularly chanted by householders in certain areas of Amdo.

1084 Gangs-zhun, "Go dka'-ba snyan-ngag gi yon-tan yin-nam." 127.
easily following the civilization (dpal-yon) of world culture and its ranks of writers and
the human civilization."1085

A counterpoint article to Gangs-zhun's essay was published nearly two years later
in a feature column of Sbrang-char entitled "Thunder of Debate" with introductory
remarks by the editor:

Our publishing house has received many articles with varying views about
Tibetan modern poetry. Not being able to publish all of them, we are
publishing a few representative articles in the form of debate. The reason
for our publishing this column of debates is that through such exchange,
gradually the virtues and shortcomings will be exposed (lhang la 'phud
pa). Our sole aim is for this and conditions so that in the 21st century, our
new poetry will be intelligible and developed. Thus, readers and
participants are invited to join in this conversation.1086

Compared to short-lived attempts by this magazine and others to foster literary
developments in the 1980s,1087 "Thunder of Debate" generated a more prolonged
response as seen in the receipt of several responses to Gangs-zhun's original article. This
evidence of wider and more active participation in literary debate by the late 1990s
parallels the wider breadth of participants in extraliterary "tradition versus modernity"
debates which also occurred at this time. (See Hartley 2002.)

The first retort to Gangs-zhun is written by one Skya-bha (b. 1979?) from Xinghai
County, Hainan Prefecture, who graduated from the Qinghai Nationality Teacher's
Training School in 2001.1088 Skya-bha considers the gradual transition from easily

1085 Ibid., 128. I translate dpal-yon as "civilization" at the suggestion of Pema Bhum. (Personal
conversation, 15 October 2002.)

1086 "Brgal-brtag dom-snying rgyal rlangs-gsang" (Debate: The brass drum of summer), Sbrang-char, 2000, no.
4:119. The column itself featuring controversial literary topics was launched without editorial comment in
Sbrang-char, 1998, no. 3.

1087 I am referring here to the 1983 exchange between Sangs-rgyas and Don-grub-gyal which prompted
only one other letter to the editor. See chapter 4 above. Similarly, in Sbrang-char (1988, no. 1), the editors
started a column entitled "Sgyur-rtsal 'gran-pa'i lus-ras" (Forum for Competition in Translation Skill), an
attempt "to encourage the translation of works by other nationalities." This column lasted only one year.

1088 Skya-bha, "Go-dka'-ba snyan-ngag-gi yon-tan yin: Sku-zhabz Gangs-zhun la bgro-glen-gi lshul du
phul/" (Obscurity is a Poetic Virtue: Offered in the manner of conversation with Mr. Gangs-zhun), Sbrang-
char, 2000, no. 4:119-122.
intelligible poetry to obscure poetry to be a phenomenon of all world literatures. Indeed, he argues that the most sublime poetry is that which is difficult to understand.¹⁰⁸⁹ In order to prove the value of obscure poetry, Skya-bha quotes the much respected professor Tshe-tan-zhab-drung who acknowledged the existence of both obscure poetry and easy-to-understand poetry among classical belles-lettres. This refers to what van der Kuijpp (1985) has termed a characteristic "diffuseness" in the writings of such scholars as Mkhas-grub Dge-legs-dpal-bzang-po, Rin-spungs-pa Ngag-dbang-’jig-rten-grags-pa, Bod-mkhas-pa Mi-pham-dge-legs-rnam-rgyal and the fifth Dalai Lama. Dung-dkar Rinpoche notes that such writers "delight in not being quite easily understood and in somewhat elusive phrasing" and are considered to emulate the Gauda or "Eastern" school of Indian poetry and poetics.¹⁰⁹⁰ Skya-bha also quotes the French poet Mallarmé and the Indian poet Tagore regarding the value of obscure poetry. Skya-bha is careful to distinguish himself from the traditionalist camp, arguing adamantly that "Snyan-ngag me-long cannot fulfill the desires of the Tibetan nationality and most of its examples are distant from our own lives." His tone is somewhat aggressive and his stance clearly controversial: "The statement that 'Snyan-ngag me-long's time is up'... is not thoughtless speech. It is saying that we need to free [ourselves] from our very backward tradition and to not remain preoccupied (mgo-'khor) solely with the old, to move in the direction of innovation (gsar-gtod) and reform (bcos-bsgyur)."¹⁰⁹¹ He adds, "All should know that the people who make statements such as the above do not actually look down on Snyan-ngag me-long; they are simply recognizing that whatever virtues Snyan-ngag-ngag me-long might have, it is not without fault."

¹⁰⁸⁹ Skya-bha, op. cit., 120. Tib. go-dka'-ba ches khyad phags kyi snyan ngag gi yon tan yin/
Skya-bha complains that Gangs-zhun has misrepresented the majority view of those who write obscure poetry. He says only an extreme few would argue "it is not poetry if you can understand it." Also, he says that "we are not unanimous in the view that poetry needn't be explained."¹⁰⁹² (Italics added.) This article is interesting for the "we" versus "them" rhetoric he uses. While Skya-bha names no certain school of thought by name (and I don't believe one exists), he does refer to a "we"—an unnamed amorphous group of writers who believe in the value of writing obscure poetry. Moreover, this "group" or constellation of thinkers is concrete enough for Skya-bha to draw internal distinctions of positions within the group; that is, "only a few of us think like that..." or "most of us think..." Additional evidence that there is a perception of "sides" in the debate can be seen in how Skya-bha associates Gangs-zhun with "those few people who have unnecessary doubts or worries" about the fate of Tibetan poetry. He asks, "How can you take their side and be sarcastic and derisive about these writers and their type of poetry?"¹⁰⁹³

The third article published in this set of statements about obscure poetry stood in defense of Gangs-zhun. This writer, a monk from Rong-bo Monastery (Reb-gong) who has recently published his own book of free verse poetry,¹⁰⁹⁴ also expressed the sentiment that such debates are "as necessary as food" and our young writers should continue this discussion.¹⁰⁹⁵ He first asserts that it is wrong to distinguish the worth of a poem on the basis of its oblique nature. In the end, however, he sides with intelligible poetry: "When

¹⁰⁹¹ Skya-bha, op. cit., 122.
¹⁰⁹² Ibid., 121.
¹⁰⁹³ Ibid., 120.
¹⁰⁹⁴ Dge-'dun-lhun-grub, Brong g.yag-gi ngur-sgrwa. (No publishing information available.)
we weigh obscure and easily intelligible poetry, the latter is more valuable." More middle-of-the-road than Gangs-zhun who has no patience whatsoever for obscure poetry, Dge-'dun-lhun-grub (from Rma-lho [Huangnan] Prefecture) acknowledges the literary quality of obscure poetry, but agrees with Gangs-zhun that "the direction in which we young writers must turn is that which is related to our readers and their society. Poetry must stand on the nationality's father-language and needs to benefit society [which is built on] mutual interaction." His primary reasoning is based on meeting the needs of the readership. If snyan-ngag is firstly a way to communicate or express oneself and no one understands the poem, then the poem is not successful. Obscure poetry does not facilitate communication and thus has little value. Dge-'dun-lhun-grub takes issue with Skyab-bha and argues that it is the content of a person's speech which determines how we judge him. He explicitly states that he sides with Gangs-zhun's view.

A fourth article—this time in defense of obscure poetry—appeared in the following issue. This essay was authored by Rdo-rje-rgya-mtsho, a graduate student from Northwest Nationalities Institute, who is in his late 30s. He is more conciliatory in tone than Skya-bha. He primarily argues that the relative obscurity or clarity of a poem should not serve as grounds for critiquing the work. Rather the issue of obscurity has more to do with the capacity of the reader to appreciate the meaning of the poem. To prove his point he discusses how various poems, including the songs of the sixth Dalai Lama can be read on different levels—either literally as love poems, or with hidden political meaning, or even as tantric texts such as been argued by a few scholars in the

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1096 Ibid., 132.
1097 Ibid., 131.
1098 Rdo-rje-rgya-mtsho published his first literary works in Sbrang-char in 1990 and 1991. He then served as a minor government official in Mgo-logs, during which time he stopped publishing any poetry.
PRC. Rdo-rje-rgya-mtsho draws on a range of authorities including the literary writer and scholar Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962), the Fujian Province based female poet Shu Ting 舒婷 (1952–), and the poet Gu Cheng 顾城 (1956–1993), as well as A-lags Dor-zhi, an unidentifiable "English writer" (Hume? or Homer?) and the writings of Dante. His reference to these Chinese writers is noteworthy in that both Gu Cheng and Shu Ting were active from 1978 to 1980 in the underground *Jintian* (Today) group, forerunners in post-Mao experimental poetry. The works of Gu Cheng elicited wide polemics regarding obscure poetry (*menglongshi*) in the early 1980s. Rdo-rje-rgya-mtsho's defense of Tibetan obscure poetry is clearly informed by an awareness of the significance of this movement for Chinese literary history. Though not a modernist per se, the Shanghai-born Hu Shi was among those foreign-educated Chinese writers advocating literary reform during the early twentieth century.

This exchange is significant in that it demonstrates a shift in the boundaries of what is negotiable in Tibetan literary debate and perhaps a generational shift. The debate no longer centers on the question of the acceptability of free verse as a literary form. Rather, the crux of this turn-of-the-century issue for Tibetan literature is over the relative value of obscure poetry. Gangs-zhun himself is a leading free verse poet. Moreover, he himself has actively worked for social reform, most notably in the compilation of a far-reaching and ground-breaking collection of critical essays regarding the "Opening of the West" and other controversial issues in contemporary Tibetan society. He is not the

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1099 In his late 30s, Rdo-rje-rgya-mtsho entered graduate school where he majored in Tibetan literature and once again began to publish poetry.
1100 Tib. *Hum.* I have not been able to identify this writer, despite queries made of several writers from the PRC.
1101 Yeh, "Cult of Poetry," 188.
1102 Yang Li, op. cit., 88.
same sort of "traditionalist" as those who defended kāvyā-based poetry in the 1980s, and
yet he seems to represent the old school of thought for at least Skya-bha and his cohorts
who see the issue in a "we-versus-them" perspective. Since I have no information
regarding the age or background of the three respondents, I cannot comment on what
generation they might represent. I am certain, however, that Gangs-zhun is the only
writer among the four to have attained a high level of notoriety. However socially
progressive he might be, his position represents the new Tibetan literary establishment.
He is of the "middle-aged" generation, having been born in 1969 in the hilly but rural
valley of Gcan-tsha just three hours south of Xining in Qinghai Province. His is a
generation once concerned with form, but which now prioritizes the utility of literary
content.

**Emerging Young Generation Writers**

As the influence of Snyan-ngag me-long waned, the tendency grew for younger
generation poets to be less closely schooled in this. We can find a large number of
younger Tibetan "modernists" in this group. They seek to assert new criteria or grounds
for critiquing literature, and in the process represent a voice against both kāvyā
prescriptions and socialist realism. The argument made by Skya-bha above affirming the
virtue of obscure poetry is one expression of a modernist tendency. Ironically, while one
argument against kāvyā-based snyan-ngag was that its archaic language rendered the
poetry unintelligible for the common reader, now a new generation of writers argues for
the right to compose obscure modern poetry.
A second literary battlefront regards access to publishing. This issue emerged in the early 1990s as signified by a letter to the editor in Sbrang-char (1991, no. 3) accusing the editorial staff of being "cliquish" in their selection of poetry; that is, not admitting younger and more avant-garde writers. In response to what was viewed as conservatism by the main nationally-distributed magazines, such as Sbrang-char and Bod-kyi rtsom-rig-sgyu-rtsal, several smaller unofficial regional magazines were founded in Amdo. While several alternative local literary magazines were already being published across the Tibetan plateau (e.g. Lho-kha'i rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal, Spang-rgyan me-tog, Zla-zer, Gangs-rgyan me-tog), these were only precursors to a much broader grass-roots burgeoning in magazine publication that occurred in regions of Amdo and to a lesser extent Khams in the late 1990s. (See the appendix for a chronology of literary magazines.) As noted by Yeh (1998) with regard to Chinese publications: "unlike their official counterparts, unofficial poetry magazines tend to have a highly irregular publication schedule and a short life span, mainly for political and financial reasons." And yet, "it is unofficial poetry that has spear-headed experiments in avant-garde literature in post-Mao China." And in yet another similarity with Chinese and probably most other world literatures: "The [avant-garde] poets range in age from their twenties to their forties; they are predominantly male, although a handful of women poets has achieved distinction."

A third development which provides a means for younger writers to distinguish themselves from the former generation is what I would call the iconisation of the contemporary writer Ljang-bu (aka Rdo-rje-tshe-ring) whose pioneering efforts in free

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1103 Yeh, "Cult of Poetry," 189.
1104 Ibid.

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verse poetry we discussed above. (See chapter 4.) In many ways, Ljang-bu has served as an emblematic figure for younger generation writers who tend to characterize their own position in literary debates by evoking his work as an exemplary model. On the otherhand, I spoke with several writers (generally in their late 30s) who were careful to distinguish their approach from that of Ljang-bu. While it would be overstatement to say that he has replaced Don-grub-rgyal as literary hero, Ljang-bu now represents the new iconoclast for the latest generation of Tibetan writers. He has more than once served as a "lightning rod" for mobilizing dissent or accord among writers. I believe this capacity springs in part from personal controversies in which he has been involved, as well as his "marginal status" within Tibetan literary circles as an ethnic Mongolian who writes in Tibetan. Nevertheless, he has secured a reputable position in the literary establishment as an editor for the Lhasa-based literary magazine Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-ritsal. Though his notoriety has just barely reached a "cult"-like level, I would call his position pivotal in that his work and influence is a resource for aspiring young writers.

As of the year 2000, the Lhasa-based literary journal Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-ritsal had received more letters of praise for his writing than for any other single author. In particular, as the meaning of Ljang-bu's poetry became more obscure over the years, this appealed to certain younger writers who liked to identify their writing with his. At the same time, the number of critics who specifically objected to obscure poems such as those written by Ljang-bu also grew. In this sense too, Ljang-bu's free verse has become

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1105 Ibid.
1106 Not least, he is known for his efforts to found a nightclub/salon in Lhasa, which unfortunately proved to be a financial disaster.
1107 According to hearsay, Ljang-bu has demonstrated a certain pride in his Mongolian status that some Tibetan writers found offensive, leading to the exchange of sharp remarks in public.
1108 While I have not seen the bestowal of religious significance on Tibetan poetry such as that described by Yeh (1998) in the Chinese context, the regard held for Ljang-bu among some young writers parallels the
a sort of nodal reference point by which Tibetan writers and critics stake their position in
the field of cultural production.

One example of Ljang-bu's influence can be seen in an article written in 1999 by a
young writer from Rma-chu, a nomad area in Gannan Prefecture from which several
accomplished young writers began to emerge in the late 1990s. Living what might be
called a bohemian lifestyle, Skyabs-chen-bde-grol by the age of 25 had already published
several innovative short-stories and was being considered by some editors as an "up-and-
coming writer who needed to be fostered." His article is a critical response to a critique
of contemporary Tibetan poetry written by the same Gangs-zhun discussed above and
published a few issues earlier in the Delinha-based literary magazine Gangs-rgyan me-
tog, which has a reputation for being more willing to publish writers who have not yet
established a reputation. (The magazine also frequently features obscure poetry.) Gangs-
zhun's article was entitled "No one in this world is capable of spontaneously commanding
[their] poetry." Skyabs-chen-bde-grol counters him saying, "There are many in this
world who can spontaneously command their poetry." The point in contention is whether
or not any human poet possesses the skill to masterfully write poetry. Gangs-zhun argues
that the limited capacity of human beings in relation to the infinite possibilities
encompassed by the art of poetry, requires conscious effort and training to write good
poetry. No poet can simply dash off a finished poem of any caliber in a single inspired
moment, nor can they run every which way after the latest trend and produce quality
poetry. One of Skyabs-chen-bde-grol's main counterpoints is to claim that Gangs-zhun

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has not read enough "pure poetry" to realize that there are many poets in the world who are in command of their poetry. Skyabs-chen-bde-grol is speaking globally here, but to make his point he also draws on the example of one Tibetan poet whom he considers to be a master poet; namely, Ljang-bu. Skyabs-chen-bde-grol claims that Ljang-bu exemplifies those accomplished poets "who live in the world they seek." The two western writers he highlights for the same quality are T.S. Eliot (1888–1965) and the French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867). While Skyabs-chen-bde-grol agrees with Gangs-zhun that many modern poets are aimless and playing mere word games, he resents what he sees as Gangs-zhun's implication that all contemporary Tibetan writers share this fault.

Skyabs-chen-bde-grol's essay can be seen as an attempt to draw boundary lines between the preceding generation and a newly emerging school of thought—or at least, a cohort of younger generation writers. He classifies Gangs-zhun together with "the monastic poets who see the world as suffering" and complains that the elder poet "wants to revive the era of explanation." Skyabs-chen-bde-grol argues instead that a poem need not be explained but need only generate emotion in an experienced reader. Moreover, the young writer considers "attachment-aversion and discursive thought" (chags-sdang dang rnam-rtog) to be the "seeds" of poetry. Accordingly, anybody divorced from these qualities "cannot be considered a poet and whatever he says is

\[\text{1110}\] Gangs-zhun, "Gnam-og 'di-na snyan-ngag-la rang-dbang-du kha-lo bsgyur thub-mkhan med" (No one in this world is in free command of their poetry), Gangs-rgyan me-tog 1998, no. 3:51–55.
\[\text{1111}\] In particular, Skyabs-chen praises T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland, written in 1922 and first translated into Chinese in 1935 by Zhao Mengrui 趙夢扉. (David Der-wei Wang, class lecture, Columbia University, 18 February 2003.) As a critical expression of a disillusioned generation, The Wasteland is considered by some to mark the rise of literary modernism in the Anglo-American literary sphere.
\[\text{1112}\] Baudelaire's most famous work, Les Fleurs du Mal, written in 1857, is a series of 101 lyrical verses that explore his isolation and melancholy, as well as the attraction of evil and the macabre.
\[\text{1113}\] Skyabs-chen-bde-grol, op. cit., 54.
\[\text{1114}\] Ibid., 55.
nonsense with no relation to poetry. Skyabs-chen-bde-grol thus positions himself against 1) traditional Buddhist motivation in writing; 2) the orthodox socialist prescription of realism; as well as 3) the realism favored by Tibetan writers and critics in the 1980s (which was largely influenced by socialist realism, though not exclusively). He accuses Gangs-zhun of discrediting the younger generation of writers: "While talking about 'what is world literature,' etc., you mock (zur-za byas) us young people who love literature (I won't mention any poet's names here)." As mentioned, Skyabs-chen-bde-grol is earning a reputation as an innovative short story writer and poet. Throughout the course of our acquaintance in 1999-2000, he was living in hotels so that he might stay in Xining for private English classes (for which he was a quick student) and so that he might otherwise devote his time to writing. He prides himself in having read many western literary and philosophical works, thus far in translation, though his long-term goal is to read his favorite writers (including Kurt Vonnegut) in the original English. Skyabs-chen-bde-grol represents for me the formation of a Tibetan modernist or avant-garde literary trend, such as will be further discussed below.

Emerging Tibetan Literary Schools?

To the best of my knowledge, the first article to suggest that Tibetan literary circles were becoming more self-conscious of the positions they were asserting was published in the Journal of Northwest Nationalities Institute in 1995. The author, Dpal-rdo-thar was a fourth-year undergraduate student at the Institute when he wrote the article. The article is quite original in thought, in that he tries to identify newly emerging Tibetan literary

\[1115\] Ibid., 54.
\[1116\] Ibid.
schools of thought. The author is careful to underscore that he does not see this formation of schools as complete. Rather, he believes groups of writers with shared characteristics such as he has described are coming into being.\textsuperscript{1118} The three schools (grub-mtha') he identifies are the 1) ancients (gna'-rabs-ring-lugs); 2) expressionism (mtshon-don-ring-lugs); and 3) modernism (deng-rabs-ring-lugs). While obviously drawn from western models, these categories seem to be his original contribution to Tibetan literary theory. He mentions the existence worldwide of post-modernist theory, but does not identify any Tibetan writers as adhering to this school.

Dpal-rdo-thar sees "the ancients" as an active force and mentions both older deceased and living writers among the exemplaries of this writing style, which adheres to classical conventions. He believes that as a school these poets are opposed to free verse and view the contemporary avant-garde as "the destroyers of Tibetan literature." I have indeed heard this view expressed by at least two older scholars of literature. It is evident that the author is speaking in general, for surely 'Ju Skal-bzang whom he includes as an ancient has also written free verse himself. Also, it is noteworthy that Yi-dam-tshe-ring who writes in Chinese is labeled as pursuing a traditional Tibetan writing style. Dpal-rdo-thar marks the rise of a new school—"the expressionists"—with the advent of Don-grub-rgyal's "Waterfall of Youth." Their poems are written in free verse, easy to understand, but also have hidden meanings. They discuss real life situations. He notes that this poetry expanded and improved with the introduction of Chinese menglong theory in Tibetan. Finally, "the modernists" are distinguished by their total dismissal of traditional writing styles and by the level to which they are influenced by Chinese and

\textsuperscript{1117} Ibid., 55.
western theory. Their works exhibit extremely frank writing of the depths of their mind and a brooding psychology, expressing depression/angst and anomie/emptiness.

More recently, another attempt to differentiate stages or approaches in the development of a modern Tibetan literature over the last twenty years was offered by the same Gangs-zhun, who served as co-editor for the critical anthology *View, Thought, Practice* (2000). This collection of essays by various religious and secular intellectuals, primarily from Amdo, addresses contemporary developments in economy, culture, literature, language, education and medicine. Of the two articles regarding literature, one is by a monk from Bla-brang who argues for bridging what he sees as a religious-secular divide among writers.\textsuperscript{1119} The second article argues for the development of truly innovative poetry, but founded on traditional forms.\textsuperscript{1120} The greatest challenge facing Tibetan literature, he argues, is the absence of any [indigenous] theoretical base.\textsuperscript{1121} As editor of the chapter on literature, Gangs-zhun provides an historical overview of "contemporary Tibetan literature" which he dates from 1980. Within the last some twenty years, he notes six periods which he delineates on the basis of the prevailing writing style and one or more representative literary figures. (See table 9.1).

\textsuperscript{1118} Dpal-rdo-thar, "Grub-mtha'i phyogs-su 'gro-ba'i deng-rabs Bod-kyi snyan-ngag-la thog-ma'i dpyad-pa" (A preliminary study of modern Tibetan poetry as it is forming into schools), *Nub-byang mi-rigs slob-sgrwy chen-mo'i rig-gzungs dus-deb*, 1995, no. 1:71.

\textsuperscript{1119} Bsang-khog-dpal-lدان, "Bod-yul la phri-ba'i snying-gtam thor-bu" (Miscellaneous thoughts in offering to the land of Tibet), in *Lta-ba bsam-blo log-len*, ed. by Gangs-zhun and Rdo-lha, 176–197 (Lanzhou: Kan-su'u mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 2000).

\textsuperscript{1120} Tshe-grub, "Bod-kyi snyan-ngag gsar-ba'i thad-kyi bsam-gzhigs phran-bu" (Thoughts on the new Tibetan poetry), in *Lta-ba bsam-blo log-len*, ed. by Gangs-zhun and Rdo-lha (Lanzhou: Kan-su'u mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 2000), 207.

\textsuperscript{1121} Ibid., 206.
### Table 9.1. Periodization of Contemporary Tibetan Literature (Gangs-zhun 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Period</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Characteristics and Contributions</th>
<th>Representative Authors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>contemporary social life through their traditional writing style, and taught the younger</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>generation the importance of the need to work hard in cultural education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Rang-grol (Dong-grub-rgyal) Period</td>
<td>1983–1986</td>
<td>This period established the practice of innovation and experimentation. In this period, they</td>
<td>Don-grub-rgyal, Nor-sde, Dpal-byor, Reb-gong Rdo-rje-mkhar, Chab-gag Rdo-rje-tshe-ring, Geod-pa-don-grub, etc.</td>
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<td>advanced with great courage in terms of short stories, poetry (snyan-ngag), essays, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As evidenced in such experimental writings as &quot;Waterfall of Youth&quot; and &quot;The Threadlike Path,&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and &quot;The Frost-Bitten Flower,&quot; this period produced great ability for this Tibetan literature</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>to progress on a wholly new path.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ljang-bu Period</td>
<td>1985–1989</td>
<td>This period was important for the advancement of Tibetan literature on the path towards wholly</td>
<td>Ljang-bu, Dpa'-rtse, Rinchen-bka'-shis, Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring, Tshe-ring-don-grub, Rnam-sras, Sgom-pa-bka'-shis, and O-rgyan-rdo-rje, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>new forms. Foregoing praise poetry and artifice (tshul-chos), they closely analyzed the reality</td>
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<td>of their time, and employed such writing styles as magic realism and critical (dgag-rgyag, Ch. piping)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>realism. Many high quality works appeared, such as 'Consciousness from Mongolian Bones,'1123 'Under the Spell of the White Snow Goddess,'1124 and 'Ancient Bells.'1125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 'Ju Skal-bzang Period</td>
<td>1988–1993</td>
<td>'Ju Skal-bzang is an extraordinary writer in that he has been influential ever since the first</td>
<td>'Ju Skal-bzang, Bkra-shis-dpal-ldan, Bstan-pa-yar-rgyas, Mkhas-grub, Ba-res, Chas-pa Rta-mgrin-tshe-ring, Dkon-lo, and Dur-bud-mam-grags [aka Mtsho-skyes-rdo-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1122 It is interesting to note that at least three of these writers hold official positions. Two are intermediate-level political officials in the Qinghai party structure. All are card-holding communist party members.

1123 Ljang-bu, "Sog-rus las mched-pa'i rnam-shes."


1125 Dpa'-rtse, "Gna'-bo'i cong-mying."
"Thoughts, and "Dge-'dun-chos-'phel"). Thus, I have dubbed this 'the period of Ju Skal-bzang.' It was a period of love for the nationality and phenomenal truth... in which the social conditions were threefold: [writers possessed] personal intelligence, ability and experience.

| Five Demons of the Old Fort$^{1126}$ | 1993–1996 | During these four years, the knowledgeable five demons forged a new artistic method for expressing the most subtle changes in primordial thought, with theoretical influence from Western thought, romanticism, magical realism, futurism, surrealism, etc., and adopting positive elements in the writings of Baudelaire, Eliot, Pound? (Phang-te), Rilke, and the Chinese menglongshi (obscure) poets, in particular, the poet Haizi (Zha Haisheng) [1964-1989]. Many very good writings came from this period, including "Golden Goose,"$^{1127}$ "My Friends and I,"$^{1128}$ "Artistic Faith,"$^{1129}$ and "New Sensation[s]."$^{1130}$ These led to a great movement (g.yo-'khul) in Tibetan literature. They are still writing an amazing amount of comedic scripts, monologues, and lyrics.

| The period of many [diverse] scholars (mkhas mang) | 1996 to present | The five demons having discarded from the base all of the backward writing styles of traditional Tibetan writing, this Tibetan literature as if freed from prison has diversified and become enriched (sna-mang phun-tshogs can du gyur). Schools and monasteries, offices, the masses, etc., many voices have appeared like the burgeoning of mushrooms after a rain and a new form of Tibetan literature has arrived.

This table is derived from Gangs-zhum and Rdo-lha, Lta-bsa bsam-blo lag-len, 209–213.

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1126 Tib. Gna'-mkhar 'dre Inga. This refers to the wall of the old city in Xining, near which most of these writers live.
1127 Tib. Ngang-bo ser-bo
1128 Tib. Ngag dang nga'i grogs-po-tsho
1129 Tib. Sgyu-rtsal-gyi dad-ldan
1130 Tib. Tshor-snang gsar-ba
Gangs-zhun recommends four goals for the future development of Tibetan literature.\footnote{\textsuperscript{1132}}

1) The subject matter and content should be close to life.
2) It should accord with our own Tibetan aesthetics, culture and psychology (i.e. our nationality characteristics.)
3) It should prioritize elevation in terms of logic, value and view.
4) It should be broad thinking and far-sighted.

All four of these qualities (with the exception perhaps of aesthetics) are content-oriented.

While he is quite positive about the contribution of the "five demons of the old fort" and acknowledges their debt to the obscure poetry movement, we know from recent articles that Gangs-zhun does not consider obscurity to be a great asset in poetry.

Though Gangs-zhun's periodization does not exactly accord with the progression I have described here, I believe our schema are complementary in that he emphasizes the literary works themselves, whereas I have examined the discourse accompanying the writing of those works. One group of writers and other intellectuals who are proponents of what I would consider an unprecedented radical modernist approach are the "five demons" and certain colleagues who are not literary writers, but whose essays on the role of tradition in a modernizing society appear in many of the same literary journals. They represent the first and older strata or subgroup of a formation of Tibetan modernists or avant-garde writers such as described by Bourdieu (1993):

Structurally 'young' writers, i.e. those less advanced in the process of consecration (who may be biologically almost as old as the 'old' writers they seek to oust), will refuse everything their 'elders' (in terms of legitimacy) are and do, and in particular all the indices of social ageing, starting with the signs of consecration, internal (academies, etc.) or external (success), whereas the 'old' writers will regard the social non-existence (in terms of success and consecration) and also the 'obscurity' of their young rivals as evidence of the voluntaristic, forced character of their positions.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{1131} Gangs-zhun notes that the first four are generally recognized as the "four ancient fort demons," but he has added Sman-bla-skyabs as a fifth.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{1132} Gangs-zhun and Rdo-lha, op. cit., 213–216.}
some endeavours to overtake them (as Zola puts it, 'a gigantic, empty pretension').

I would also include in this emerging formation certain writers who are about ten years younger than Gangs-zhun's "five demons" but who are influenced by many of the same thinkers. Foremost among these is the young Skyabs-chen-bde-grol who appears nowhere in Gangs-zhun's short-list. It is unlikely that the omission comes from oversight, as Skyabs-chen-bde-grol was the writer who disagreed most famously with Gangs-zhun's critique of contemporary poetry. To this degree, Gangs-zhun himself participates in the production of cultural values and acts as "gatekeeper" vis à vis those whom he views as the pretentious young.

Copies of View, Thought, and Practice were soon in short supply. The work is also interesting for its inclusion of responses to some seventy-five questions posed by Gangs-zhun when he served as editor of the poetry periodical at Northwest Nationalities Institute. These questions regard the role of Tibetan language, traditional culture, and so forth in a modernizing society. In recent years, other journals have begun this approach to encourage an exchange of ideas among readers, offering further evidence for our hypothesis that literary journals have begun to serve as a proxy public forum for the exchange of both literary and extraliterary concerns.

In summary, we can identify several responses or strategies as Tibetan writers encounter and negotiate modernity in the literary realm. One development has been the rise of a modernist school of thought, as suggested by Dpal-rdo-thar (1995). This approach faces a special challenge, however, within the sociopolitical context of a Tibetan literary scene that remains on the margins of both Chinese modernity and global

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literary discourse. To follow the lead of Western writers, theorists, and the Chinese avant-garde is to open oneself to the criticism of Tibetan literary peers and the older Tibetan establishment who for the most part continue to prioritize above all else that Tibetan literature develop in accord with "nationality characteristics." Writers who want to express alienation from Tibetan society or general angst, or those who want to experiment with new forms, imitate Western and Chinese counterparts, or even write about subject matter that is introspective or psychological, not "broad in thought" or serving to "uplift the nationality," tend to found or publish in unofficial journals, such as those described above. A modernist trend, however, represents only one response to the question of literary modernity.

*Locating Difference*

Another tactic has been to utilize a rhetorical strategy which emphasizes "difference." For some Tibetan writers and critics, a strategy of difference means preserving the "unique characteristics of the Tibetan nationality" and continuing or resurrecting classical kāvya forms. Yet, Tibetans writing in Chinese, such as Yi-dam-tshe-ring have also adopted a tactic of difference through what Maconi (2002) has called "the 'Tibetanisation' of the Chinese language,"heavily employing references to Tibetan history, culture and special linguistic markers. Others seek literary change, but look for roots elsewhere in Tibetan culture than in the Indic-derived kāvya. Two recent developments among Tibetan literary critics who seek literary change but want to fashion an "authentic" Tibetan literature can be seen in 1) the elevation of pre-Buddhist literature as the source

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1134 Maconi, "Lion of the Snowy Mountains," 185.
of authentic Tibetan literature; and 2) the eschewal of traditional Tibetan, Western, Chinese and literary models all together, arguing instead that what Tibetan literature needs foremost is true innovation.

We can date from the mid-1990s a strong and unprecedented tendency to look towards Bon and pre-Buddhist literature as the source of "authentic Tibetan culture." Dpal-rdo-thar (1995), for example, clearly states the opinion that writing with true Tibetan character was destroyed by the advent of the Snyan-ngag me-long and Buddhism to Tibet. For Dpal-rdo-thar, this view falls outside the three schools of thought he delineates. He does not distinguish between upholders of snyan-ngag or those who would uphold a pre-Buddhist model. Recall that this view was also espoused in the following year by Bdud-lha-rgyal (1996), an assistant professor at NWNI, in the context of the periodization of Tibetan literature. Moreover, it is a premise of the textbook on Tibetan literary history authored by Dpa'-rtse and Lha-rgyal-tshe-ring (1999), who are both graduates of Northwest Nationalities Institute. Dpa'-rtse now teaches at NWNI, while his co-author teaches not far away in Hezuo. It is likely that a major impetus for this thought arose with the widespread publication and distribution of the writings of Namkhai Norbu (b. 1938), now based in Italy, who has maintained an active social presence in Amdo through his support of various educational and other social projects.

The implications of a strategy of difference have not been lost on political leaders, and the approach is not without its official detractors. In 1996, for example, TAR party secretary Chen Kuiyuan admonished writers to abide by certain criteria. Schiaffini-Vedani (2001) has demonstrated how his remarks specifically sought "to rebuke the idea
of a culturally unique Tibet.\textsuperscript{1135} Moreover, in 1997 the party secretary drew on the argument that Indic-derived buddhist culture served to block the indigenous development of Tibetan culture in order to prove why writers and artists in the TAR shouldn't equate "Tibetan culture with religion" and to rationalize repressive religious campaigns in the late 1990s.\textsuperscript{1136}

Concomitant with the search for indigenous Tibetan models has been a re-evaluation of the means by which Western models are adopted for Tibetan literature. Maconi (2001) has offered us the most thorough study completed to date of the existence and influence of western translations in Tibetan language journals.\textsuperscript{1137} In an extensive survey of Tibetan literary journals, she offers data on the various writers being translated, almost always through Chinese. The most frequent category of translated writer is Tibetan writers who write in Chinese. Secondly, literary journals often feature works of Han writers or political speeches related to the arts in Tibetan translation. Among the literary works of other nations most frequently translated are Russian and French. Translations of English literature are more intermittent.

While Maconi correctly notes that translations of literary criticism rarely appear in literary journals,\textsuperscript{1138} this does not mean that Tibetan literary critics fail to draw on foreign literary theory. In the first place, a growing number of Tibetans are educated in the Chinese-medium and thus accessing Western theory directly from the Chinese translations. A close reading of literary criticism in Tibetan, especially from the 1990s reveals an increasing variety in the western literary critics upon whom Tibetan critics draw for inspiration—or as Maconi points out—for purposes of instructing the reader.

\textsuperscript{1135} Schiaffini-Vedani, "Tashi Dawa," 51.
\textsuperscript{1136} Ibid., 51–52.
Maconi has also noted certain vicissitudes in the amount of translation available, which she ascribes to the "refinement of the translation process." I think it is important to note that the desire to translate western literature has not always been constant.

In the mid and late-1980s western literary models were actively embraced. Both *Bod-kyi-rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal* and *Sbraṅ-chen* often featured as many as three translations of works by foreign writers in any given issue. Frequent references were made to the "need to study the West for models." More recently, however, a few counter-voices can be heard to the otherwise prevalent view that Tibetan writers have much to learn from the West. Some writers and literary critics evince greater awareness of the risk of becoming a "signifying monkey" (Gates 1988). Gangs-zhun (1998), for example, has protested this trend: "To mistakenly consider that [solely] European and western literature is 'world literature,' and to then study this and follow it in our own writing is truly crazy." He is not alone in his resistance to the wholesale absorption of western thought. In an article entitled "Our Poetic 'Borrowism'," Rgya-grol (1999) complains, "If there were only foreign food in a Tibetan restaurant, though it may be 'borrowed' it hasn't any of the flavor of a Tibetan restaurant." Another expression of disenchantment with not only western scholarship but any intellectual endeavor whatsoever appeared recently in a small journal called *Rhun-gtse*, based in Chab-cha (Ch. Gonghe, Qinghai Province).

By Mgar-rtses Rta-mgrin-rgyal's (2001) estimation, "In terms of content, 98% of

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1137 Maconi, "Une longue marche translinguistique."
1138 Ibid., 226.
Tibetologists from foreign countries [research] useless matter; and 99% of domestic Tibetologists call the dog of small political transformations a 'lion'." He names as "rare" exceptions Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las and A-lags Dor-zhi.

Though the unofficial journal *Rhung-rta* falls just beyond the limits of our study (it was first published in February 2001), its contents include writings from some of the most influential and provocative thinkers in Amdo today and in several ways offer evidence for the modernist formation I have described here. The primary criteria for selecting poetry and essay submissions lay in the extent to which they expressed "new perspectives" (*lta-bagsar*) and "exposed significant wrongs" (*don-gnadmtshang-'byin-byed-pa*). In terms of form, however, the editors were less concerned with innovation and included a few poems in metric verse. Prominent among the featured poems are calls to the Tibetan nationality, including one poem entitled "Tibetans!" (*Bod-pa-tsho*), which the editor grouped together in a column called "Footstep" (*rdog-sgra*). The poems are otherwise marked by expressions of angst regarding, for example, the predicament of the poet or youth. As in their counterpart situation where "the modernist theme of alienation strikes a sympathetic accord in the Chinese avant-garde," the same could be said of many younger Tibetan poets. Consider the following poem published in *Rhung-rta*:

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1142 "Editor's Note," *Rhung-rta* no. 1 2001: (n.p.)
1143 Yeh, "Cult of Poetry," 208.
1144 Mang-ra'i skar-rtsom, "Dbyangs-can-ma," *Rhung-rta* no. 1 (2001): 61–62. The writer is from Guinan county, Hainan Prefecture, Qinghai Province. As I was concluding this thesis, I noticed a poem with the same title in the anthology edited by Rmog-ru Don-grub-tshe-ring, et al. This poem, written by Gzungs-phyug-skyid, was originally published in *Gangs-rgyan-me-tog*, 1998, no. 1:29–31, and her collection of poetry (1999) opens with this poem. The first line reads: "My whole world is foggy." Amidst other similarities, she evokes in refrain, "Sarasvati, what should I do?" Either this poem by Mang-ra'i skar-rtsom (pseudonym) was plagiarized from Gzungs-phyug-skyid's original, or both poets closely "imitated" a third poem, almost verbatim. A third possibility is that Gzungs-phyug-skyid reworked her poem and published it under a pseudonym. Gzungs-phyug-skyid (also born in Guinan county) is largely self-educated in terms of the free verse she writes, having only completed the third year of middle school (equivalent to grade 9). (Rmog-ru Don-grub-tshe-ring, et al., op. cit., 221.)
Sarasvatī

Midst the fog and dark there is no morning sun
Between life and revenge there are no kin
Sarasvatī I am alone in this world
What should I do
Wherever I step, countless bugs
Wherever I look, heavy dark
Sarasvatī show me a way
I have carried this suffering mind for many years
Though I struggle with my sadness, I cannot move
Sarasvatī weeds grow on my face
Snow falls in my mind
How to endure amidst countless agonies
Sarasvatī I'm afraid
All that I see is clouded over
All that I think is held by a woman
Sarasvatī show me a way
If I could set my whole body on fire
In this world winning, losing, living and dying run rampant,
While truth and purity are rare In any case, I
Would forego much of what I can obtain
For the sake of one thing I desire
Sarasvatī show me a way?!

The poet here has foregone use of the shad ( || ), a punctuation mark that generally signifies the end of a sentence or phrase. He closes the poem, however, with a question mark and exclamation point; that is, western punctuation markers which are sometimes used in contemporary Tibetan verse.1145 Among the other poems included in this issue are "Drifter's Song" ('Khyam-glu) and the melancholy free verse "The Middle of Winter" (Dgun gzhung), and one essay entitled "Notes from the Edge." (Khram-pa'i zin-tho) Byagzhung Dbyangs-bha, one of the featured writers interviewed by the editors, has been

1145 Though such punctuation can be seen in Tibetan publications released during the Cultural Revolution, such grammatical reforms were revoked in 1980. See Dmu-dge-bsam-gtan, Collected Works, 1: 600.
writing since 1994 almost exclusively prose poetry (lhug-rtsom snyan-ngag). The interviewer prompts him to explain the genre to readers. As mentioned above in reference to his statements in support of obscure poetry, Dbyangs-bha (b. 1968, Hainan Prefecture) is an elementary school teacher in Thunte. Indeed, several of the contributors to Rlung-rta are either elementary or middle-school teachers and a majority come from Hainan Prefecture, though not necessarily the prefectural seat Gonghe where the journal is published.

While the editors consider Rlung-rta to be a "literary journal" (rtsom-deb), some of the articles regard questions of tradition and modernity in non-literary arenas. In fact, the editors elicited opinions from local intellectuals regarding two such questions. The first regarded the case of a young Tibetan man from the village of Chu-nag (Black Water) in the "highland region of the Yellow River" (Rma-chu stod-rgyud-kyi chu-nag sde-ba), who one year after passing the entrance exams for Northwest Nationalities Institute was suddenly recognized by his father, some lamas, and a group of village elders, as the reincarnation of a local lama. The boy was forced to reside in his new home monastery and thus forfeit his college admission. Indeed, the interview format which is used several times in this journal, also distinguishes it and offers another example of how literary journals can serve as a proxy-public forum.

The second question posed to local intellectuals was an attempt by the editors to encourage readers to reevaluate the contribution made by Don-grub-rgyal. They query:

The sudden death of Don-grub-rgyal on November 30, 1985, was a great loss for the path of new Tibetan literature. However, in the opinion of many many Tibetan critics—old, middle-aged, and young alike—this loss was powerful and produced an ability to inspire, which surpasses [his capacity to inspire] if he were here today. And yet,
Readers, if he were still living today how would it be? Has this loss, his death, turned adversity into favor for us? While the editors merely hint at a shift vis-à-vis the most famous of Tibetan literary predecessors, the editors strongly signal their interest in the Chinese avant-garde movement by featuring the translation of several poems by the Chinese obscure poet Haizi 海子 (aka Zha Haisheng, 1964–1989). Yeh (1998) has noted the significance of this poet-martyr for Chinese modernists and how after ending his life in March 1989, Haizi "became a cult hero in the unofficial poetry scene in China." According to MacDougall and Louie (1997), Haizi's suicide was "regarded by his fellow poets as the ultimate expression of their shared nihilism." An additional reason for his favorable reception among Tibetan critics may be that he apparently traveled to Tibet. (One of the poems translated here is entitled "Lhasa.") Despite the above-mentioned criticism of western thought, another critic interviewed highlights the importance of "translation" for which he revives the more traditional Sanskrit-derived term "lo-tsa," in contrast with the now more prevalent term [yig]-bgsgyur. This too evinces parallels in the Chinese literary world where since the early 1980s translations of Anglo-American and European literature have "become popular among Chinese writers, and modernism in particular has received much attention."

While these individual textual and social indicators may not offer definitive proof for a modernist formation, in the composite we see resonances both within the journal...

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1147 The other foreign work translated is a passage from Tagore's Gitanjali. I believe the popularity of this work among Tibetan readers both in the PRC and in exile holds potential for fruitful research.
1148 Yeh, "Cult of Poetry," 200.
1151 Yeh, "Cult of Poetry," 208.
itself and in relation to other projects by Chinese and Tibetan avant-garde thinkers. Among the essays included in *Rlung-rta* is one by Zhogs-dung, whose famous article in 1999 kicked off a region-wide controversy over the role of tradition in a modernizing society. Though Zhogs-dung tends to associate himself with members of the "five sky-demons and 'Brong (who translated the poems by Haizi) is one of the original "five demons," three of the writers featured and interviewed in *Rlung-rta* (e.g. Stag-bum-rgyal, Don-grub-tshe-ring and Dbyangs-bha) are listed as representative of the final phase of Gangs-zhun's periodization. Significantly, one of the literary critics interviewed has written several articles regarding free verse and more recently an article entitled "Common Knowledge in the Literature of the Modernists: Necklace of Edification."¹⁰⁵²

**Conclusion**

At the start of this dissertation, I laid out several far-reaching hermeneutical suppositions through which we might consider the development of Tibetan literature. These included the concepts of a shift in discursive formation, the emergence of what might be called a knowledge class, the adoption of a strategy of difference, and the role of conceptual structures in the formation of a discursive category. Throughout the course of my dissertation, I have tried to organize my discussion with reference to the identification of these wider developments. As such, my dissertation has two major drawbacks: one is its unwieldy range of ideas and historical span. Any single chapter herewith could have been the focus of an entire dissertation which would more closely examine individual statements and tie them directly to the social position of the writer. A second limitation

of my study is that I have included only a handful of primary and secondary Chinese sources. Thus, my findings may differ from those who focus on Chinese-medium writing and criticism. A third limitation is that data from writers and critics in Khams are lacking in this dissertation. This not only reflects the fact that the bulk of my fieldwork was done in Qinghai, Gansu and Lhasa, but also that literary publications issuing from Khams are relatively scarce. Chengdu, for example, has only recently started a literary magazine (Dong-ri) equivalent in status to Bod-kyi rtsom-rig sgyu-rtsal or Shrang-char.

The reader may also have noticed the minor number of references to Tibetan women critics or writers, the most notable exception being Dpal-lha-mo whose article on contemporary poetry is discussed in chapter 7. Yeh (1998), likewise, has noted the predominance of men among avant-garde poets (and critics) in China:

> Few women poets can be found actively participating or closely involved in the discourse [of the cult of poetry]. One major reason, I believe, is that all the unofficial poetry publications are founded, edited, and published by male poets; they are the initiators and organizers. This does not mean, of course, that the women poets are passive or silent; their work is primarily published in the same venues as the male poets, and a few have been invited to serve on editorial boards.... Their absence in the cult of poetry bespeaks exclusion from a male-centered, male-dominated discourse. It is possible that for the women poets the primary concern is their identity as women vis à vis men, rather than as poets vis à vis society.\(^{1153}\)

While I cannot comment on Yeh's last supposition, it is true that most Tibetan journals are initiated by male writers. I am not aware of any exceptions to this, though young women may be on the editorial boards of student journals. To the best of my knowledge, only two women writing in Tibetan in the PRC have published book-length anthologies of their poetry; namely, Gzungs-phyug-skyid (1999)\(^{1154}\) from Hainan Prefecture and Bde-

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\(^{1153}\) Yeh, "Cult of Poetry," 21.
\(^{1154}\) Gzungs-phyug-skyid, Byu-ru'i las-dbang (The fate of coral) (Hong Kong: Then-ma dpe-skun kun-gzi, 1999.)
skyid-sgrol-ma (2002) from Huangnan Prefecture. Both collections were published with private funding through two different small Hong Kong presses. In terms of literary criticism, one female scholar at the Southwest Nationalities Institute in Chengdu has edited a small volume of statements by ten Tibetan writers and an analysis of their works. Book-length volumes are more common among Tibetan women writing in Chinese. Those with whom I am familiar include Meizhuo and Geyang, and a book of literary criticism by Bde-skyid-tsho (1999) of Southwest Nationalities Institute entitled *Singers Without Regret* (*Gezhe wuhui*). At the same time, there are perhaps one dozen women poets writing in Tibetan who publish regularly in official and unofficial literary journals. While it is true, as Yeh (1998) mentions, that women poets publish in the same venues as men, Tibetan literary journals frequently feature columns devoted to the writings of women. In such special issues, works by women tend not to appear elsewhere in the journal. Though many male writers in one way or another describe the hardships of women, especially those working in rural or nomadic areas, I have not seen the underrepresentation of women writers or critics widely discussed in journals.

Despite these limitations, I believe that the overview provided in this dissertation allows us to identify the recent emergence of a discourse regarding "Tibetan Literature" (Bod-kyi rtsom-rig) within the context of a half-century of social and literary change. Moreover, the content, form and tenor of current controversies belie the influence of
literary debates which transpired for some seven hundred years following the translation of Dančin's *Kāvyādarśa* into Tibetan. We have also examined how monastically trained scholars in the early twentieth century served as a critical link in the transmission of pre-Communist Tibetan learning and the emergence of a vernacular literature in the post-Mao era. Their influence can be seen in the use of classical literature as inspiration, in the instruction of *kāvyā* theory by older generation scholars who taught in nationality institutes in the late 1950s and again after the Cultural Revolution, and in the teaching materials they developed for this purpose. At the same time, we have seen how the emergence of socialist realism as received by Chinese scholars and the introduction of western literary theory has permeated the rhetoric of contemporary Tibetan literary critics, and how these conceptual structures have taken on such a presence as to constitute an overall shift from a snyan-ngag centered discussion of Tibetan writing to one that privileges western theoretical concepts. In such a context, the arguments of those who previously safeguarded the classical literary hegemony now resonate as oppositional strategies in a modernizing society facing pressures of both sinicization and globalization. And for those who seek to distinguish themselves from the hegemonic pressures of all three forces (the *kāvyā* tradition, socialist realism and the dominance of western literary theory), one response has been to return to the so-called "pre-Buddhist" roots of Tibet.

Nevertheless, we can identify elements shared by the range of Tibetan writers engaged in cultural critique and literary criticism in particular. One common factor is the relatively similar positions they hold as cultural producers in contemporary Tibetan society and the socialization they share approximating that of a "knowledge class."

Among the authors and other thinkers whose writings we have discussed, the voices of
secondary teachers and college professors or the editors of literary journals themselves are most prominent. Several articles were also written by undergraduate and graduate students from nationality institutes, while more radical expressions tend to be voiced by lower and higher middle school teachers. In fact, I am not aware of any article written in Tibetan by a Tibetan who did not follow a Tibetan educational "track," whether it be through state schools or via a monastic education.

Secondly, while some debates have been ongoing, we can identify a general turn away from historical and more formal concerns to issues of content, definition and influence. Poet and literary scholar, 'Ju Skal-bzang, for example, recently admonished young writers for their "trivial content" and "narrow thinking" in a letter of advice he had been urged to write by an assistant editor at Qinghai Tibetan News responsible for the newly founded biweekly literary supplement of the newspaper:

Though we have pretended to write a great number of literary works, actually, we haven't been able to express much other than a bit about the fate of our nationality, the small stirrings in the writer's mind, or a bit about love. This is a major shortcoming in my works. At the same time, it seems a group of us share such common defects in our writing. For example, writings about our high plateau, people's happiness, their virtues and their faults, the environment, and life, not to mention, the sky, the political and economic changes at the heart of our whole society, business and trade, education, construction, development, etc. are very few. And in terms of thought, rare are the works which deeply discuss from either a world philosophical perspective or from the deep analytical thought we share, the conflict between sentient beings and the world they inhabit, the relationship between our life situation and values, things and consciousness, etc., the assessment of happiness and suffering, virtues and faults, the relationship between subject and object, etc. Those who adopt the view of those considered the world's great thinkers are as rare as a star in the daytime.1159

One notes a great contrast between the writer's influential master's thesis in the late 1980s which focused on the need for "new artistic means of expression" and the overarching concern about content which he expresses in this letter, written more than ten years later.

A preoccupation with content and concommitant objections to obscure poetry are not reactions unique to the Tibetan literary field. Indeed, the contours of the field of cultural production are drawn by such exchanges in which, as Bourdieu has observed, "newcomers" to the field are endeavouring to impose new modes of thought and expression, out of key with the prevailing modes of thought and with the doxa, and therefore bound to disconcert the orthodox by their 'obscurity' and 'pointlessness'. The fact remains that every new position, in asserting itself as such, determines a displacement of the whole structure and that, by the logic of action and reaction, it leads to all sorts of changes in the position-takings of the occupants of the other positions.1160

In our Tibetan version of "the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns" (Calinescu 1987), emphasis on content from whatever part of the literary spectrum reflects the reality that Tibetan literary criticism is a discursive space where much more than writing technicalities are contested. Writers of all persuasions are united in their attempt to shape an elusive vision of a "Tibetan Literature"—to define its contours, to prescribe its content, and to seek "authentic" literary forms and writing styles. 'Ju Skal-bzang eloquently synthesized these thoughts toward the end of one of our discussions:

All of us—Rdo-je-rgyal-po, A-lags Shar-dong, Don-grub-rgyal, myself, A-lags Dor-zhi—our goal was the same. We wanted to raise the nationality in the 1980s, but now it is basically raised. You could say we basically have our traditional culture back. But, now we are in a modern era (dus-skabs gsar-ba). We are at a crossroads now and need to choose which road to go down. It would be great if we could just go where we pleased, like in America. But, we can't do that now. We must think carefully. Before, we all wanted to revive our culture. But, now we must think about survival in a modern age. Frankly, our nationality (mi-rigs) is

1160 Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 58.
a burden (khur-ba) we must carry. There is a big difference between China and America. It seems you don't have a single prescribed path. But, in China the path has always been prescribed—whether it be Marxism or socialism or whatever—but along this path with defined limits, we zigzag and there is a lot of internal contradiction. That is China. We Tibetans must find our own path.  

As Tibetan writers and critics negotiate the search for a literary path, one of the common points on which most agree is the need for an indigenous Tibetan literary theory, a plea voiced as early as 1983 by Don-grub-rgyal in his response to Sangs-rgyas's thesis. In recent years, the number of articles highlighting the importance of literary theory has notably risen, and we have mentioned several times here how the lack of a native literary theory is described by writers and critics as an obstacle for the development of Tibetan literature. Their reasoning parallels that of May Fourth writers who argued that a major reason for the lack of good Chinese fiction lay in the absence of a tradition of literary criticism.

A key presence in the production of Tibetan literary theory and criticism is the literary journal itself. If the growth in unofficial Tibetan journals being published in Amdo by middle school students, avid undergraduates, matriculated but unemployed twenty-somethings, private businessmen and even monks at the most established religious institutions is any indication, the public space available for critical discourse on both literary and extraliterary issues has grown considerably in the last five years. Whether this trend will expand to the TAR and Tibetan areas in Sichuan and Yunnan

1161 Lauran R. Hartley, "Ventures in Polishing the Mirror of Tibetan Literary Theory.

1162 See for example, the Lhasa-based editor Tsha-rti Phun-tshog-don- grub, "Bod-kyi-rtsom-rig-gi skyon-yon brjod-pa'i gal-che'i rang-bzhin skor mdo tsam dpyad-pa," Bod-jong-s-shib-jug, 2000, no. 1: 63-72; and the translation into Tibetan by Lha-phug-skyid of Kui Ceng 柯凈, "Guanyu jiangou shaoshu minzu wenxue lilun de ji dian si kao 关于建构少数民族文学理论的几点思考" (Some issues and thoughts regarding the establishment of a minority literary theory), Journal of Qinghai Nationalities Teachers College, 2000, no. 2: 41-45.

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remains to be seen. The situation, at least among educated Tibetans in Qinghai and Gansu Provinces, shares parallels with eighteenth-century England where periodicals served as "a primary constituent of the emergent bourgeois public sphere."\textsuperscript{1163} And if, as occurred in early twentieth-century China, the presence of a public sphere is conducive for "the project of building a national literature,"\textsuperscript{1164} then indicators are encouraging for the realization of such hopes as expressed by the vast majority of Tibetan writers and critics during the past two decades. If on the other hand, political conditions worsen or if a Tibetan-medium education can no longer provide useful capital for professional advancement, we may see yet again a threat to the continuation of Tibetan-medium education and its concomitant cultivation of a Tibetan readership.

\textsuperscript{1163} Eagleton, \textit{The Function of Criticism}, 17.
\textsuperscript{1164} Yingjin Zhang, "Building a National Literature," 48.
### APPENDIX

**Tibetan Language Periodicals in the PRC (1950–2002)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Founding Date</th>
<th>Place of Publication</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Frequency and Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>西藏藏文报纸</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>Edited by Qinghai Tibetan Language Newspaper</td>
<td>every other day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Aba News]</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Ma'er kang, Aba, Sichuan</td>
<td>Edited by Aba Newspaper Editorial Board</td>
<td>three times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Garze News]</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Ganze Sichuan</td>
<td>Edited by Garze Newspaper Editorial Board</td>
<td>three times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tibet Daily</strong></td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Lhasa TAR</td>
<td>Edited by Tibet Daily Editorial Board</td>
<td>daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>西藏教育</td>
<td>1957–65, 1979 to present</td>
<td>Xining Qinghai</td>
<td>Sponsored by Educational Dept of Qinghai Provincial Govt.</td>
<td>six times per year; print run: 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Nationalities Pictorial]</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Nationalities Publishing House</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Tibetan Legal Newspaper]</td>
<td>Lhasa TAR</td>
<td>Edited by Tibetan Legal System</td>
<td>semimonthly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan Youth Weekly</td>
<td>Lhasa TAR</td>
<td>Edited by Tibetan Youth Editorial Board</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Gannan News]</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Hezuo Gansu</td>
<td>Edited by Gannan Newspaper Editorial Board</td>
<td>three times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Seeking Truth]</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; solely translated pieces from the Chinese version of this journal</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Tibetan Literature and Art</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Lhasa TAR</td>
<td>TAR Cultural Association (wenlian). First Tibetan-language literary mag in the PRC.</td>
<td>six times per year; intl. distrib.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1165 English titles given by the publisher are designated by the omission of brackets. My English translations and "popular" phonetic transcriptions of the titles are bracketed. Magazines devoted primarily to literature are designated with an asterisk (*).

1166 Several of the newspapers mentioned here are available at the East Asian Starr Library of Columbia University. I am grateful to Waye Mache Chopathar, bibliographic assistant at this library, for his assistance in compiling this list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Publisher/Agency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Light Rain</em></td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House</td>
<td>quarterly; int'l distrib.; print run grew from 4,000 to 10000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Qinghai Folk Art and Literature</em></td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>Sponsored by Qinghai Provincial Popular Arts Center</td>
<td>quarterly (since 1985); int'l distrib.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Drops of Knowledge]</td>
<td>1981-1992</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Nationalities Publishing House</td>
<td>quarterly; print run fell from 5,500 to 500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Young Sun]</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>TAR People's Publishing House</td>
<td>intermittent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan Studies</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>Sponsored by Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences</td>
<td>quarterly; int'l distrib.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>Qinghai Party School</td>
<td>quarterly; int'l distrib.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Moon Shine</em></td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Hezuo</td>
<td>Ganlho Prefecture Cultural Association (wenlian)</td>
<td>quarterly, but intermittent in the late 1990s; int'l distrib.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Qinghai</em> Legal Newspaper</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>Qinghai Judicial Department (sifa ting)</td>
<td>every ten days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gentian</em></td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>Sponsored by TAR Association of Scholars of Folk Literature (part of the TAR Cultural Association)</td>
<td>quarterly; int'l distrib.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality Language Affairs</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>Qinghai Nationalities Languages Affairs Office (Tib. Mshos-nsong zhung-chen mi-rigs skad-yig hya-ba'i gzhung-las-khang)</td>
<td>three times per year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mountain Flower</em></td>
<td>1983–84</td>
<td>Henan Co., Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>First unofficial privately-funded literary magazine.</td>
<td>intermittent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Mountain Flower]</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Lanzhou</td>
<td>Northwest Nationalities Institute (NWNII)</td>
<td>semianual; int'l distrib.; print run: 1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1168 For magazines which have been discontinued, I have tried my best to include the year of last issue. This information, however, is incomplete due to the unavailability of a complete run for many titles.

1169 Forty copies of this journal are sent abroad, 250 are sent to minority institutes of higher education and secondary schools, 400 are sold internally (at NWNII?), and 200 are stored for stock. 70–80% of the articles are by professors or research students. Kha-sgang Dpal-chen-thar, "Bod-yig rig-gzhung dus-deb," 87.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAR People's Arts</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>1983-1988</td>
<td>TAR People's Arts Office (Bod-ljongs mang-tshogs sgyu-rtsal khang)</td>
<td>quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Succeeded by Gangs-ljongs rig-gnas)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAR Science and Technology Newspaper</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Edited by the TAR Science and Technology editorial board</td>
<td>once every ten days, now 2 times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalities</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Chengdu City Cultural Commission (wenhua yuan)</td>
<td>quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Entitled Si-khron mi-rigs las-don [Sichuan Nationality Affairs] from 1984 to 1988)</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinghai Science and Technology Newspaper</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Science and Technology Association (Tib. tshan-rig lag-rtsal mthun-tshogs; Ch. kexue weiyuanhai)</td>
<td>monthly, print run: 3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* ༢ྱུ་༢ྱུ་[Lhasa Kyichu]</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Party Life]</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* རྟེ་ཟླྜྷ [Blue Moon]</td>
<td>Lanzhou</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Founder by students primarily from Henan County (Qinghai), studying at NWNI. Unofficial, privately funded literary magazine (handwritten and mimeographed.)</td>
<td>intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan Education</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>TAR Education Bureau</td>
<td>quarterly; intl. distrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Compendium of Knowledge]</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>1985-89</td>
<td>TAR Peoples Publishing House</td>
<td>bimonthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* རྫྱོང་ངོ་[Spray of the Rtse-chu]</td>
<td>Tongren</td>
<td>1985?</td>
<td>Nationalities Teachers Training School (minzu shifan xuexiao)</td>
<td>annual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reb-gong), Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* བཙོན་བོད། [Constellation]</td>
<td>Lanzhou</td>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>Founded by students from Henan County (Qinghai), studying at NWNI. Unofficial, privately funded literary magazine.</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tibetan version)</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>publisher/organizer</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of the Teachers Training School, Dartsedo</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Kangding, Ganze, Sichuan</td>
<td>Nationalities Teachers Training School (minzu shizhuan)</td>
<td>annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibet Buddhism Magazine</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>Chinese Buddhist Association, Tibet Branch (Tib. Krung-go nang-bstan mthun-tshogs Bod yan-lag mthun-tshogs)</td>
<td>semiannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shigatse News</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Rigaze</td>
<td>Edited by the Shigatse News Editorial Board</td>
<td>semimonthly, now weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China's Tibetology (since 2001)</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>China Tibetological Research Center</td>
<td>quarterly; intl. distrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhokha Literature and Art</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Shannan</td>
<td>Lhokha Cultural Association; Sponsored by the Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles of Shannan Prefecture, TAR</td>
<td>previously three times per year; quarterly (since 1998); intl. distrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Snowland Youth Newspaper]</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Xining</td>
<td>Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House</td>
<td>print run: 12000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Snowland Flower]</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Delinha, Haixi, Qinghai</td>
<td>Haixi Prefecture Cultural Association (wenlian)</td>
<td>quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship the Sun</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Lanzhou</td>
<td>Northwest Nationalities Institute</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Proprietor]</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>TAR Federation of Trade Unions</td>
<td>biannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan Art Studies</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>TAR Nationalities Arts Research Office</td>
<td>biannual; intl. distrib.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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This magazine was founded in memory of Professor Tshe-tan-zhabs-drung.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Publisher/Editor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Eastern Snow Mountain</em></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Lanzhou, Gansu</td>
<td>Tibetan Department, NWNI. Private funding from individuals and monasteries, mostly from Aba (Rnga-ba) Prefecture in Sichuan Province.</td>
<td>semiannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Journal of the Hezuo Nationalities Normal College</em></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Hezuo, Gansu</td>
<td>Hezuo Nationalities Normal College</td>
<td>annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Song of Lake Qinghai</em></td>
<td>1990/91</td>
<td>Lanzhou, Gansu</td>
<td>Published by students primarily from Hainan Prefecture (Qinghai) studying at NWNI. Unofficial, privately funded literary magazine. (Handwritten and cyclostyle.)</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Journal of Qinghai Nationalities Teachers College</em></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Gonghe (Chab-cha), Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Qinghai Nationalities Normal College</td>
<td>semiannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China's Tibet</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Nationalities Publishing House; edited by the China's Tibet Editorial Board</td>
<td>quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tibetan Poetry</em></td>
<td>1991 (45th issue on Dec. 15, 1999)</td>
<td>Lanzhou, Gansu</td>
<td>Published by students in the Tibetan Department of NWNI. Privately funded. (Originally handwritten and cyclostyle; later in newspaper print format.)</td>
<td>quarterly newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Riwo Nyida</em></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Gonghe, Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Tibetan Language Affairs Association (Zang yuwen gongzuo weiyuanhui)</td>
<td>annual, but intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterfall</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Xining, Qinghai</td>
<td>Qinghai Nationalities Institute; a student published magazine.</td>
<td>semiannual, lately annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Years Published</td>
<td></td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Sound of the Yellow River</em></td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Maqu (Rma-chu), Gannan, Gansu</td>
<td>Student magazine of Maqu Tibetan Middle School. (Handwritten and cyclostyle.)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Turquoise Lake of Dongri</em></td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>Student published magazine. (handwritten and cyclostyle)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Tibet University</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tibet University, semiannual, int'l distrib.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Burgeoning</em></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Jianzha (Gcan-tsha), Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Graduates of Huangnan Prefecture Teacher Training School who are from Gcan-tsha; funded by private donations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Twigs of Pontilla Fields</em></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Tongren, Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Huangnan Teachers Training School; published by the graduating class (handwritten and cyclostyle)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Herder's Song</em></td>
<td>1994/5</td>
<td>Gonghe, Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Hainan Nationalities Teachers Training School; student publication. (handwritten and cyclostyle)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Thoughts of Tibet's Youth</em></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Gonghe, Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>privately published (handwritten and cyclostyle)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Saffron</em></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Xiahe, Gansu; Ruo'erge and Aba, Sichuan</td>
<td>A joint publication by Bla-brang Monastery (Xiahe), Da zha Monastery (Ruo'ergai); and Gemou Monastery (Aba). Privately financed by monks, lay individuals and religious institutions in the three areas and printed in Aba.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Amdo Studies</em></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Xiahe, Gansu</td>
<td>Gansu Province Tibetology Center (Tib. Kan-su’u zhing-chen Bod-kyi shes-rig zhib- jug-khang)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tears of the Yellow River</em></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Lanzhou</td>
<td>Student published magazine at NWN1.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Publisher/Issuer</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Golden Goose</em></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Student published magazine. (Handwritten and cyclostyle.)</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Tongren, Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Mgar-rtse Monastery</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(* ) [Dharma-Conch]</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Aba Sichuan</td>
<td>Stag-tsha Monastery</td>
<td>annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Garden of Good Dharma]</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Ruo'er ge, Sichuan</td>
<td>Privately published magazine; address is at the Tibetan Medical Institute in Xiahe</td>
<td>quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fourth Year</em></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Published by a graduating class; unable to determine school.</td>
<td>single publication?</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Yak]</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Tongde (Thunte), Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Tongde County Educational Bureau (jiaoyu ju)</td>
<td>semianual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gold Bridge</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Tongren, Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Rong-bo Monastery</td>
<td>annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note of Canticle</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Senduo (Sum-mdo) Twnp., Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Sendo Township Education Committee (jiao wei)</td>
<td>annual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nyenpo Yutse</em></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Guoluo? Qinghai</td>
<td>Smin-thang 'Od-gsal theg-mchog-gling Monastery</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Sunlight of the Times]</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Lanzhou, Gansu</td>
<td>Published by the class of 1997 at NWWI.</td>
<td>semiannual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Cultural Development]</td>
<td>1999 (5th issue in 2002)</td>
<td>Maqin (Ma-chen), Guoluo (Mgo-log), Qinghai</td>
<td>'Jigs-med-rgyal-rgyal-rgyal-rgyal Monastery</td>
<td>semiannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Time</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Tongde Co., Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Gser-lag Monastery (Dga'-ldan-phun-tshogs bstan-rgyas gling) (Ch. Guo mang xiang sai la si)</td>
<td>annual</td>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>City/Province</th>
<th>Publisher/Editor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* བྱུང་བོད་ཆོས་ཐོད་དཔོན་མོ་སེམས། (Refutation from the Plateau: Atomic Weapons)*</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bla-brang Monastery; privately funded and edited</td>
<td>semiannual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* གཞན་བོད་ཁྲག་མེད་པ་གྲགས། (Tibetan Writing Center)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Xiahe, Gansu</td>
<td>Bla-brang Monastery; privately funded and edited</td>
<td>tba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* ཤབ་ཆེན་གཉིས། (Flower of the Snowpeak)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aba Co., Sichuan</td>
<td>Ge'er deng si (Monastery)</td>
<td>annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* མོང་དབང་ (Call of the Conch)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Chengdu, Sichuan</td>
<td>Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House</td>
<td>tba; intl. distrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* བྱུང་སྤྲོལ་ (The Surf of Times)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Xiahe, Gansu</td>
<td>Bla-brang Monastery</td>
<td>tba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* སྒྲ་མི་ཤེས་ (Huangnan News)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tongren, Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Published by the Huangnan Newspaper Office</td>
<td>semimonthly</td>
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<tr>
<td>* ཤུབས་པའི་འཨ་ (Voice of Buddha)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aba Co., Sichuan</td>
<td>A-mchog Mtshan-nyid Monastery</td>
<td>tba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>སྨྲིག་ (New Millenium Voice)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Xiahe, Gansu</td>
<td>Bla-brang Monastery</td>
<td>tba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* སྲིད་ལྡན་ (Qinghai Buddhism)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Xining?</td>
<td></td>
<td>tba</td>
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<tr>
<td>* རྡོ་རྗེ་ (Golden Prayer Flag)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Xinghai Co., Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Xinghai County Tibetan Language and Cultural Affairs Office</td>
<td>tba</td>
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<tr>
<td>* ིྷོ་ (Golden)*</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quguo (Dpon-tshang) Vill., Senduo twnp, Guinan Co., Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Dpon-tshang Village?</td>
<td>annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* སྲུང་ཀུབ་ (Surf of Lake Qinghai)*</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gonghe, Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Dgon-gsar Monastery, Jiala (Rgya-ra) village, Chab-cha township</td>
<td>tba</td>
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<tr>
<td>* སྐོར་གྲོགས་ (Reliquary of Remembrance)*</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Probably published by a monastery.</td>
<td>tba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1171 I have used "tba" to designate newly started magazines whose frequency remains to be seen; while a question mark designates magazines which I believe to have a more steady publishing history, but for which I am uncertain of the frequency.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Publisher/Institution</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Oceans of Memorial Offerings]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Probably published by a monastery.</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Glory of Nyenpo Yutse]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Writers are based in different places (e.g. Lhasa, Beijing, Mgo-log, Derge), but all write about Mgo-log, the journal's sole focus.</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Sun]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Xining, Qinghai</td>
<td>Sku-bum Monastery (Xining Branch)</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Thought of the Times]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Tongren, Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Mgar-rse (township) Monastery</td>
<td>annual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Smile of Compassion]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Probably published by a monastery.</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Rivers</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Yushu, Qinghai</td>
<td>Yushu Prefecture Nationalities Teachers Training School</td>
<td>biannual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>[Search]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Xining, Qinghai</td>
<td>Qinghai Institute of Finance (caizheng xueyuan)</td>
<td>tba</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Wind]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Tongde, Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Post Office? (you zheng ju)</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>[Windhorse]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Gonghe, Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Hainan Prefecture Nationality Teachers Training School (minshi)</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>[Study of Thought]</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Guinan Co., Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Klu-tshang Monastery Shes-rab-bstan-dar1172</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Altruism]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Chengdu, Sichuan</td>
<td>Privately funded. Address is for the town of Pixian in the vicinity of Chengdu.</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Starling]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Xining, Qinghai</td>
<td>Tibetan Department, Qinghai Nationalities Institute</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngakmang Research</td>
<td>2002?</td>
<td>Xining, Qinghai</td>
<td>Qinghai Province Buddhist Research Center (fojiao wenhua yanjiu zhongxin)</td>
<td>annual?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Steps of Progress]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Maqing, Guoluo, Qinghai</td>
<td>'Jigs-med-rgyal-mtshan Private School, Lajia (Ra-rgya) Town</td>
<td>tba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1172 I am unsure if this refers to a monk by the same name who has written several articles of literary criticism, or if it is the full name of the monastery.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Monastery/Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Melody of Mt. Dolaringmo]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Qilian, Haibei, Qinghai</td>
<td>A-rol (Ch. A-rou) Monastery</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Glory of Tsongkha]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Hualong Co., Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Gser-chen mun-sel smyg-shogs, Dhitsa Monastery (Ch. Zhi zha da si yuan); Sponsored by the Qinghai Minorities Charity Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qinghai Minorities Charity</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Xining, Qinghai</td>
<td>Qinghai Minorities Charity Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Surf of the Dzachu]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Tongren, Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Rong-bo Monastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Spray of Knowledge]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Privately funded, featuring articles by monks from various monasteries (Klu-tshang, Bla-brang, Rong-bo, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Garden of Culture]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Xiahe, Gansu</td>
<td>Bla-brang Monastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Cultural Studies]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Luqu (Klu-chu) Co., Gannan, Gansu</td>
<td>Shis-tshang Sgar-neying Monastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Blue River]</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Footstep]</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Gonghe, Hainan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Hainan Prefecture Tibetan Middle School; (typed and cyclostyle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Petal of White Clouds]</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Jianzha, Huangnan, Qinghai</td>
<td>Student published magazine (handwritten and cyclostyle); named after a poem by Don-grub-rgyal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Lhokha Newspaper]</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Shannan, TAR</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Catalogue of Chinese Publications in Tibetan Studies (1949–1991), 422–428; Qinghai baozhi qikan jianjie, 1993; Kha-sgang (1998); information provided by Mkha’-bum-rgyal of Blo-gsal Re-kong Dpe-mdzod-khang (Reb-gong); and fieldwork conducted 1999–2000.1173

1173 Other Tibetan language periodicals for which I have no information include: Bod-liongs glu-gsar; Bod-kyi gso-rig zhib-jug; Jo-mo-glang-ma, Zhogs-pa’i mtsams-sprin, and among student or privately funded local magazines: Lang-tsho, Dgu-chu'i zegs-ma, Chu-thigs, Zla-gzhon, Gangs-skyes phug-ron, Gangs-rlabs, Gangs-liongs dga'-tshal, Rma-rgyal smyg-gsar, Gangs-ri’i od-zer, Skya-rings, Bzho-dbyangs, Ryes-lus-kyi rkang-rgyugs, Dar-lce, Lho-sprin, Dpal-yon, and ‘Od-dkar ri-bo’i lang-tsho.
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422


Hartley, Lauran and Pema Bhum. "Tsering Dondrup: Author of "A Show to Delight the Masses."


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**TIBETAN LANGUAGE SOURCES**


Bdud-lha-rgyal, "Bod rtsom 'byung lo rgyus kyi dus kyi dgur tshad nas rang dang gzhan gyi 'dod pa gieng ba" (A discussion of my thoughts and others' regarding the periodization of Tibetan literary history), Nub-byang mi-rigs slob-sgrwa chen-mo'i rig-gzhung dus-deb, 1996, no. 1:40–55.


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Chab-'gag Rdo-rje-tshe-ring. "Sgrung-las 'dzam-gling ge-sar rgyal-po zhes-pa de don-du su yin-pa'i skor la dp Yad-pa bden don snying-bo 'dzin-pa'i lcags-kyu" (An analysis of who really was the "King Gesar of Ling" from the epic: A hook to catch the essence of truth), *Sbrang-char* 1984, no. 1:73–92.

———. "'Dzam-gling ge-sar rgyal-po'i sgrung-rtsom de kham phyogs gling ge-sar rgyal-po'i lo-rgyus mtshon-byed yin-nam" (Does the Gesar epic relay the history of King Gesar from Gling in Khams?), *Bod-ljongs zhib-jug*, 1987, no. 3:29–46.


Chos-'phel-rdo-rje. "De snga'i Bod-kyi slob-grwa'i slob-gso'i skor che-long tsam gleng-ba" (On Tibetan education in previous times). Bod-ljongs zhib-jug, 1985, no. 4:30–42.


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"Rgyal-yongs srid-gros-kyi u-yon nam zhing-chen srid gros kyi kru'u-zhi gzhon-pa Blo mthun Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho sku gshigs par mya ngag zhu ba'i tshogs 'du zi ling du 'tshogs pa" (Memorial service for the passing away of comrade Gsung-rab-rgya-mtsho, member of the National People's Political Consultative Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Provincial People's Political Consultative Committee). Mtsho-sngon-slob-gso, 1982, no. 5:1–3.


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**Chinese Language Sources**


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**Education.**

**Indiana University** (Bloomington, IN)  
Thesis: "A Socio-Historical Study of the Kingdom of Sde-dge (Derge, Kham) in the Late Nineteenth Century: Ris-med Views of Alliance and Authority."

**Northwestern University** (Evanston, IL)  

**Fellowships and Honors**

2001  
Dissertation Fellowship - Association of American University Women.

1999  
Graduate Fellowship - ACLS/Committee for Scholarly Communication with China.

1998  
Gordon Fellowship - Dept. of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University.

1997  
Summer Pre-Dissertation Fellowship - Office of International Programs, Indiana University.

1996  
Recipient of Denis Sinor Essay Prize for best paper submitted by a departmental graduate student.

1996  
Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship for the study of Amdo Tibetan dialect.

1995  
Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship for the study of Chinese.

1994  
Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship for the study of Tibetan.

1993  
Title IX GANN Fellowship for the study of Tibetan.

**Publications**


*Bya-ra: A Tibetan Research Database.* Released at the VIIIth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. This CD-ROM, published in 1998 by Rdza-chu bsil-ma Publications, contains more than 4,000 bibliographic records of Tibetan-language research articles published in the PRC.


**Conference Papers**


"Mipham and the Historical Context in Sde-dge." Presented as invited participant in the *Seminar on Ju Mipham Gyamtso*, convened by E. Gene Smith of Himalayan and Inner Asian Resources (HIAR) in New York City on August 2, 1998.


**Teaching and Related Experience**

**Columbia University** (New York, NY)
Jan-May 2003  *Adjunct Lecturer*. Hired by the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the East Asian Institute to develop and teach a seminar (3 cr.) entitled "Writing Tibet: 'Tradition' and Change in Twentieth-Century Tibetan Literature" for undergraduate and graduate students.

**Indiana University** (Bloomington, IN)
Jan-May 1999  *Lecturer*. Taught an undergraduate seminar (3 cr.) entitled U481 "Religions of Tibet."

Sept 1998  *Research Assistant*. Helped research and develop an exhibition of posters from the Cultural Revolution, funded by the Luce Foundation.

Oct 1997  *Assistant Lecturer*. Substitute taught U483 "Introduction to the History of Tibet."


**Recent Lectures**


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