Tibet in the Era of 1911 Revolution

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Abstract

This article seeks to clarify the political activities of a variety of Tibetan groups and leaders during the 1911 Revolution. After the collapse of the Qing dynasty, China planned to incorporate Tibet and Mongolia into Chinese territory by declaring the “the Republic of Five Races”. In opposition to this, the Dalai Lama Government attempted to achieve full independence as the country integrating all areas in which Tibetan people lived. During this process, the question of political status of Tibet and a border dispute between Tibet and China arose. This territorial issue developed into a controversial topic at the Simla conference between Tibet, China and Britain in 1913-1914. However, the political attitudes of the indigenous leaders and the Tibetan Buddhist priest, who living in the Tibetan border areas of Kham and Amdo, were quite varied. Their political activities were not dependent on their agreement with the principle of the “the Republic of Five Races” or Tibetan Nationalism. Thus more attention should be given to the historical relationships to both the Chinese and Dalai Lama governments that were built during the Qing period.

Keywords:
The territorial issue of Tibet, “the Republic of Five Races” (Wuzu Gonghe), The Simla conference, the Dalai Lama’s government, The Tibetan indigenous leaders in Kham, “The Native Chieftains” (Tusi), The incarnations in Amdo
Introduction

During the second decade of the 20th century, The Dalai Lama’s government in Tibet and Bogd Khaan’s government in Mongolia had both been trying to reconsider their relationship with China. Yet, Dalai Lama’s government followed a different path from that of Bogd Khaan’s Mongolia. The Kiakhta Conference (1914-1915) among Russia, Mongolia and China concluded an agreement regarding Bogd Khaan government’s “autonomy” and its range of application (regarding the outer Mongolia), which later set the basic parameter of the independent Mongolian territory. In contrast, the Simla Conference (1913-1914) among the Britain, Tibet and China failed to establish a borderline between the territory of the Dalai Lama’s government and China proper.1 In other words, the hard question of the exact territory of Tibet (which was to be politically integrated) eventually derailed the negotiation. The Dalai Lama’s government remained in power both politically and diplomatically throughout the first half of the 20th century. However, without clear international recognitions of its political status, Tibet was to be annexed to PRC. The Simla Conference was a starting point for the complicated Sino-Tibet history in the modern and contemporary era. Thus, it would be important to consider how the territorial issue of Tibet came under dispute at the first place.

The 1911 Revolution era was not only a period when many debates and confrontations about the framework of “China” emerged to the forefront.2 The definition of the Tibetan territory also became a focal point in the international political arena. Previous studies on the early 20th century Tibet has mainly centered around the political status of the Dalai Lama’s government and its diplomacy in the international community.3 As an important subject of this article,

the Dalai Lama’s government played a central role in bringing Tibet to the modern international society. Then Tibet, though, lacked a centralized political entity overseeing the entire territory. In addition to the Dalai Lama’s government based at Lhasa, there were many Tibetan polities in the border areas next to the Han area (Tibetan areas, referred to “Kham” and “Amdo” in Tibetan, ranging across Sichuan, Yun’nan, Qinghai and Gansu). Unlike the Dalai Lama’s government, they were not key players of the Tibetan foreign policy. Yet, the main agenda in Simla Conference was precisely about territories under these polities in the borderlands. Therefore, it is important to analyze the changing relationship between them, the Dalai Lama’s government, and China.

This paper uses the term “Tibet” rather loosely, precisely because of this attention to these different polities in Tibet. This paper focuses on the polities in the Tibetan borderlands other than the Dalai Lama’s government in Tibet, it aims to provide a multilayered description of how “Tibet” adapted to the process of Qing’s demise in the period of 1911 Revolution. In addition, it would try to elaborate on the complicated bilateral relationship between “China” and “Tibet” and the factors that contributed to the complexity, which may not be easily shown through the analysis of the diplomatic negotiation process of the borderline delineation. This approach would help us understand the process of how the boundary problem came to existence.

1. Tibet during the 1911 Revolution: Focused on the Dalai Lama’s Government

First, by mainly focusing on the policy direction of the Dalai Lama’s government, I would like to offer a general picture of the situation that Tibet was facing during the 1911 Revolution period. The Dalai Lama’s government mainly consisted of the Gelug, one sect of the Tibetan Buddhism. It was established in 1642 at central Tibet with military support from Gūshī Khaan—the head of the Khoshut khanate of the western Mongolia Oirat. The government had built bilateral relationship with the Qing Dynasty during the mid of the 17th century. Qing was a Manchurian regime flourished from the northeastern side of the Eurasian continent. It was extremely careful to keep the Mongolians at its side, while it expanded. In order to strengthen the ties with them, Qing’s emperors showed their deference to Dalai Lama’s authority in Mongolia where Tibetan Buddhism had strong influence.

They protected Buddhism there. Dalai Lama in return venerated the Qing emperors as the incarnation of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, as well as the patrons of Tibetan Buddhism.

The bilateral relationship between the two sides had been fairly well until the 18th century. However, it quickly deteriorated after the second half of the 19th century. Related research in today’s China often sees the competition between the Britain and Russia in Inner Asia as the definitive factor that caused the changes of the relationship. “Imperialists invasion to Tibet” tends to be the answer. However, the major interest of the British engagement in Tibet was commercial and security concerns for its protectorate – India, not domination of Tibet. This is clear from the fact that the British policy toward Tibet since the second half of the 19th century was premised on its recognition of Qing as a suzerain state of Tibet. Recent research in contrast emphasizes that the tension between the Dalai Lama’s government and Qing was due to 1) the structural changes of Qing including the rise of the Han bureaucrats; 2) the development of the recognition of the “sovereignty” toward Tibet among Qing elites; and 3) coercive policies against Tibet in later years. Indeed, Zhao Erfeng, the Border Commissioner for Sichuan and Yunnan, or Chuandian Bianwu Dachen et al’s Eastern Tibet Reform during the era of the New Policies (Xinzheng) at the beginning of 20th century entailed crackdowns of the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, which caused strong repercussions from the Dalai Lama’s government. The 13th Dalai Lama’s distrust against the Qing peaked, as the Sichuan Army invaded Lhasa in February 1910, forcing him to exile to British India. As the 1911 Revolution unfolds, the Sichuan Army and the Tibet Army fought against each other. However, with the defeat and surrender of the Sichuan Army by the end of 1912, The 13th Dalai Lama was able to return to Lhasa in January next year. Thus, the bilateral relationship was already at the brink of collapse before the revolution. It was Qing’s policy instead of the British intrigue that directly brought up the situation.

How did the Dalai Lama’s government perceive its relationship with the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China? The policies of Dalai Lama and Bogd Khaan government have often been interpreted as a process for the countries and peoples, once integrated to the Qing’s territory as Fanbu (Dependencies or Vassals), to seek

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5 For example, Zhou Weizhou. *Ying’guo, eguo yu zhongguo xiang* [The UK, Russia and Chinese Tibet] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2000).


for independence as Qing fell apart. However, it is significant that Dalai Lama’s government was facing a different situation from that of Bogd Khaan government, which had declared independence from Qing and establishment of its own country immediately after the Revolution.

To begin with, the Dalai Lama’s government was not even aware that it was under the control of Qing or China. In his letter to England after arriving at Lhasa from Darjeeling (where he took refuge at) to Tibet around the beginning of 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama wrote, “China and Tibet had long been in a purely Priest/Patron relationship (rgya bod mchod yon rim ’brel). I have written about the fact that Tibet has never been controlled by China”. The word “mchod yon” refers to the relationship between Dalai Lama as the highest being in Tibet which is the center of Tibetan Buddhism, and the Qing emperor who protects Buddhism. The 13th Dalai Lama never saw his relationship with previous Qing emperors as a lord hierarchical one. Obviously, he did not recognize a “China” that encompasses the lands of both the Hans and the Tibetans.

This perception also applies to the Republic of China. The interim President Yuan Shikai proclaimed “the Republic of Five Races”, including the Manchurians, the Hans, the Mongolians, the Muslims and the Tibetans after the Revolution. He also asked the Dalai Lama to participate in the Republic, promising that he would return the title that Qing had rescinded during Dalai’s exile in India. However, The 13th Dalai Lama replies,

After serious consideration you have decided to restore my rank and titles and to stop fighting in Tibet, and also to prosper the happiness of the five nations. [I must however point out that] when I visited Peking, I wrote to Wang Kun-Sang Norpu about Tibet only. I never asked him for any rank or title either there or on any subsequent occasion. The real truth is that Tibet is the Priest of China, but China, with intent to bring Tibet under subjection, destroyed many monasteries.

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10 Refer to Tibetan attachment in IOR/L/P&S/11/64, P. 3937.
11 We have to note that historical documents in Tibetan language during this period as listed in footnote 10 do not refer “China” as the “Middle Kingdom”. The Tibetan translation for “Han” or “China” was “rgya nag”, which refers to regimes controlling the Han territories such as Ming, Qing and the Republic. In this word, there is no connotation of cultural superiority/inferiority or concept of center-periphery between the Hans and the Tibetans.
and countries. Now, at the time of the actual withdrawal of the Chinese troops (from Tibet), it is not agreeable to the people of Tibet to allow the Chinese and Tibetans to combine, after explaining matters which have been in dispute.\textsuperscript{13}

Rejecting Yuan Shikai’s offer, Dalai Lama showed that his authority was not conferred from China, and criticized that Qing’s military campaign was a unilateral move to change the Priest/Patron relationship to a dominator/dominated one.

The then Dalai Lama’s government was consistent with this stance,\textsuperscript{14} which is clear from the 13th Dalai Lama’s “Independent Declaration” on February 13, 1913.\textsuperscript{15} It might be necessary to analyze how the Dalai Lama’s government understood the notion of “independence” and how he attempted to situate itself in the modern international society. However, this paper is in no position to make such comprehensive observations.\textsuperscript{16} I would argue that the Dalai Lama’s government had harbored strong distrust against China since the end of Qing. It sought for the power both politically and diplomatically not by maneuver of the British government but by its own volition. One of the important tasks for Tibet during that process was to exclude Chinese influence by receiving aid from and cooperating with Britain.

Meanwhile, the Republic of China did not recognize the Dalai Lama’s government and its policy orientations. It attempted to annex Tibet through mobilizing the army led by the Sichuan Governor Yin Changheng et al. The

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\textsuperscript{14} The forewords of The Mongolia-Tibet Treaty signed at Urga on January 11, 1911 was a Tibetan document proving the understanding that Tibet was under control of Manchu. The document says, “Our two countries of Mongolia and Tibet achieved independence from China by freeing ourselves from the Manchu dominion (rang re bod sog gnyis manyju’i rgyal khab gyi mnga’’og nas thon rgya nag po dang bral te bod sog so so rgyal khab rang btsan pa bgyis)”. However, further studies are needed to confirm whether this understanding was shared within the then Dalai Lama's government. According to Makoto Tachibana, “at least for Bogd Khaan, this treaty meant reconciliation with Dalai Lama after a period of antagonism. The treaty also strengthened his authority, for it was signed under equal footings with Dalai Lama”. This implies that the working-level officials at the negotiation may have intended to compare the Qing-Tibet relationship to that between Qing and Mongolia (a hierarchical relationship). This might also refer to Tibet’s independence from its temporary subjection to Sichuan Army at Lhasa in 1910. These are the points about the Mongolia-Tibet Treaty that need to be clarified in the future. Makoto Tachibana, Bogudo han seiken no kenkyu—mongoru kenkoku shi josetsu 1911-1921 [A Study on the Bogd Khaan Government—History of State-Building in Mongolia, 1911-1921] (Tokyo: Kazama Shobo, 2011), 115, 116. Refer to the treaty’s original text in Tibetan, Batsaikhan, E. O. Bogd Jebsundamba Khutuktu, The Last King of Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar: Admon, 2008), 323.
\textsuperscript{15} Shakabpa, W.D. op. cit., 219-221.
\textsuperscript{16} We have to carefully analyze the linkage between the terms such as “independence” (rang btsan) and “freedom” (rang dbang) and the process of Tibet’s acceptance of modern vocabulary.
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political status of Tibet became a focal point during this period, and a tripartite conference was held including Britain at Simla, India in October 1913.

2. The Tibetan Indigenous Leaders and Monks in Border Areas.

(1) The Submission to the Dalai Lama’s Government

What political stances did other Tibetan polities, except the Dalai Lama’s government, take during this period? We cannot understand the relationship between Tibet and Qing just by looking at the interactions between Dalai Lama and the Qing emperor. Many Tibetan indigenous leaders including those powerful leaders and kings enjoyed their power bases at the periphery of the Dalai Lama’s government, ranging across the border areas (for the simplicity of argument here, I would use the term “border area”, though its actual expansion is large) of Qinghai, southern Gansu, western Sichuan and northern Yun’nan. Qing granted the most of them with official status as *Tusi* (native chieftains) and allowed their hereditary powers. In particular, Eastern Tibet, which was incorporated to Sichuan, was a key transportation region linking the lands of the Hans and central Tibet. Many indigenous leaders were appointed as Tusi along the major routes, and they provided animals and labor to support the transportation of people, goods and information. Thus, the indigenous leaders played an important role in connecting Qing and the Dalai Lama’s government.

Although close to the Han territory, the geographical barriers of the Tibetan Plateau had made it difficult for the Qing authority to steadily exert its influence on Eastern Tibet. Not many Han agricultural migrants were able to enter this area until late Qing period when the government began to promote development of the region. As I will discuss later, it was not the Hans but the Eastern Tibetan merchant network that controlled the indigenous leaders economy by linking Tibet to the outside world. Until the end of Qing Dynasty, these Tibetan leaders enjoyed extremely autonomous political authorities in their territories.

Previous research on the reality of Eastern Tibet and the indigenous leaders’ policy orientation during the Qing era has focused on Qing’s rule of this region through the *Tusi* system. Similarly regarding the post Qing period, previous studies mainly emphasized the process of replacing the indigenous leaders by government appointed officials (Gaitu guiliu), such as the dismantlement of the *Tusi* system that Zhao Erfeng carried out as part of the Eastern Tibet reform.
policy.\textsuperscript{17}

Here it is significant that the Dalai Lama’s government had enjoyed a relatively dominant position vis-à-vis other indigenous leaders, regardless of the demarcation of the administrative border by Qing. When the indigenous leaders of the Nyarong region launched a large-scale campaign in Eastern Tibet to conquer other regions in 1865, the Dalai Lama’s government subdued it. As a result, Dalai Lama had the Nyarong region and multiple Sichuan Tuis (in particular the Derge Kingdom and the five kingdoms of Hor, which had been dominated by Nyarong before) under control. This was the beginning of a complicated political situation for these indigenous leaders who had to enter a suzerain status vis-à-vis both the Dalai Lama’s government and the Qing Dynasty. This complication in turn had at times caused conflicts between the two big powers.\textsuperscript{18} Yet, it may not be appropriate to grasp the bilateral relationship over Eastern Tibet solely in terms of conflict and competition. The Dalai Lama’s government did not attempt to foster any exclusive relationship with these indigenous leaders at the first place. The Dalai Lama’s government was aware of the fact that these indigenous leaders were also within Qing’s sphere of influence as Tuis. Also, the Dalai Lama’s government made them promise to fulfill their responsibilities in officials’ transportation and commercial activities between the two powers.\textsuperscript{19} As long as it maintained a healthy relationship with Qing, the Dalai Lama’s government did not object the idea of overlapping authority and power with Qing in Eastern Tibet.

Such overlap in Eastern Tibet had to certain extent set the basic parameter for tribal leaders’ political orientations during the New Policies era. It is significant that some of them resisted the \textit{gaitu guiliu} policy and exiled to central Tibet for Dalai Lama’s protection. According the a report from the Dalai Lama’s government to the Indian government, 600 families of the Sertas—a nomad group from Eastern Tibet, escaped to Nagchu—a pasture land to the north of central Tibet.\textsuperscript{20} Objecting Qing’s orders to return the official seal and the certificate,  

\textsuperscript{17} Recent studies include, Yanqin Wu. \textit{Qing mo min’guo shiqi chuanzang guanxi yanjiu} [Research on the relationship between Sichuan and Tibet during the late Qing and Republic era] (Kunming: Yun’nan renmin chubanshe, 2007).
\textsuperscript{19} Ryosuke Kobayashi. “19 seiki matsu ~ 20 seiki shotou, Dalai lama seiken no higashi chibetto shihai to deruge ooku (dege doshi)” [The Dalai Lama’s government’s rule of Eastern Tibet and the Kingdom of Derge (Dege Tusi) during the late 19th to early 20th century] \textit{Toyo bunka kenkyu} [Toyo Culture studies] (2011) 13.
\textsuperscript{20} NA, Foreign Dept. Proceedings, Feb. 1911, Secret-External, Nos. 553-701, No. 583-C., C. A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, the Nov, 15, 1910.
Khangsar ponpo, known as Kongsa Tusi, at Karze attempted to head for Lhasa with some 300 people and priests.\(^{21}\)

The story of Ngawan Jambel Rinchen at the Derge Kingdom is worth detailed account. He not only escaped to Lhasa following Zhao Erfeng’s invasion to Derge, but also flew to the British India together with the 13th Dalai Lama in February 1910 when the Sichuan Army moved to Lhasa.\(^{22}\) Ngawan Jambel Rinchen behaved so not only because he was very much against Zhao Erfeng’s reform and the Han people, but also there were internal conflicts within the family over imperial succession since the end of the 19th century. Next is a letter from Ngawan to the Indian Governor Minto on March 15. This text is an important material for us to understand indigenous leaders’ political behavior against the backdrop of gaitu guiliu.

My country of Der-ge has been under the kind protection of the Chinese and Tibetans without getting any trouble. In the Earth-monkey year the Chinese official Chao Erh Feng came Der-ge. He did not consider the cause and effect of an action, but simply considered gold and silver. He sent soldiers and nearly killed me. Through the kindness of God I managed to escape. I have sought the protection of Dalai lama and am now in his service. ...... We have got a sanad from the Chinese Emperor Chienlung authorizing us to hold the country of Derge as long as the kalpa lasts i.e. forever. ...... As we could not perjure ourselves, we have been serving the Dalai lama so far. My father handed over to me the land and administration of Der-ge. My elder brother and the Chinese officials conspired together with an evil intention and brought soldiers to Derge. They attacked and destroyed the monastery of Ser-shul and Chao Erh feng and his soldiers annexed the country. (I request) that this may be now returned to me. ...... If the British government can punish him for taking much gold and silver and then conspiring with Chao, and for oppressing the people, I will serve the British Government as a child living in the same house serve his father\(^{23}\).

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\(^{21}\) Qing found out about and prevented the attempted escape to Lhasa, and the female leader was caught. A report from Luxianxi to Zhao Erfeng concerning the Khangsar issue.Qing mo chuanbian dacheng dang’an ziliao[The Archival Materials for Affairs of the Sichuan and Yunnan Frontier at the End of Qing Period] (abbreviate as CDBW) Xuantong year 2 May 5. no.0596 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book store, 1984).

\(^{22}\) Please refer to my work in footnote 19 about Derge Kingdom during the late Qing and early Republic era.

\(^{23}\) IOR/L/P&S/10/149, P.2750, Tel. from C. A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, Mar. 31, 1910. Unfortunately, the original text in Tibetan language does not exist today. Britain decided not to interfere in the Derge internal strife. NAI, Foreign Dept. Proceedings, Feb. 1911; Secret-External, Nos. 553-701, No. 598, The Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, to C.A., Bell., Political Officer in Sikkim, Nov. 30, 1910.
The last paragraph maintains that the Derge Kingdom had been under control of Qing and Dalai Lama’s government. This implies that the status of the Derge Kingdom during the Qing era is not a simple dichotomy of whether it is a “Tibetan territory” or a “Chinese territory” as will be discussed later about the confrontation between the Republic of China and the Dalai Lama’s government. I will also show that Ngawan Jambel Rinchen aimed to take advantage of support from the Dalai Lama’s government and Britain to regain power from his elder brother who ostracized him and seize the throne. These examples show that we need to analyze not only indigenous leaders’ ethnic identity, but also each of their interest in the power relations in the region so as to better understand their behavior rationale.

The role of Tibetan merchants’ (who were indispensable in distant economic transactions among various places in Tibetan area) is also important for the analysis of the relationship between the then Dalai Lama’s government and Eastern Tibet. In particular, Pandatshang family at Markham of the west bank of the River of Golden Sand were successful in trading teas between Tibet and Han lands, controlling the key transportation area of Chamdo. The family grew to a huge business group after the end of the 19th century when the Britain-Tibet trade began. They based their economic activities not only at Lhasa but also Kalimpong, Calcutta and other areas. What interesting here is that Panda Nyima Gyaltsen from this family played an important role in assisting the 13th Dalai Lama’s exile to India in 1910. In return, the Dalai Lama’s government granted Panda Nyima Gyaltsen an important position to conduct trade, including the exclusive rights to control sheep wool in northern Tibet. As a result, the family grew to become a powerful family that would occupy high positions in the Dalai Lama’s Government as those aristocrats in central Tibet had enjoyed. The shifting international environment around Tibet brought about opportunities for new leaders, such as these elite trading groups, who are different from the priests and aristocrats supporting the government, to rise to the front stage.

(2) Indigenous Leaders and the Republic of China and “The Republic of Five Races”

The gaitu guiliu crackdown was harsh for indigenous leaders in Eastern Tibet. Some faced the situation with confrontation, others with conciliation, or exile to central Tibet, as the Derge Kingdom example illustrated earlier. On the other hand, many leaders succeeded in maintaining or recovering their power after

the Revolution and the retreat of the Qing armies. Some bowed to the newly established Republic of China. “the Republic of Five Races” was often thought to be the notion that helped to reconstruct the relationship between China and Tibetan people after the Revolution.  

However, this line of argument tends to downplay the behavior of the indigenous leaders. Although it is difficult to obtain first-hand materials, I would like to analyze the political behaviors of conciliatory indigenous leaders of Eastern Tibet, including their reaction to the “the Republic of Five Races” notion.

Historical documents of the Republic specifically mentioned the Derge Kingdom and the Chala Kingdom, known as Mingzheng Tusi (which occupied Dartzemdo—a key area for Han-Tibet trade) as the indigenous leaders that declared obedience, as a result of the Sichuan Governor Yin Changheng’s invasion to Eastern Tibet in the summer of 1912. However, a report from Wilkinson—British Consul at Chengdu to Hardinge—Governor-General of India on August 24 maintains:

The King of Chala visited me on August 7th. He wore on his breast a gold medal given him by Yün tutu. He looked to be reinstated, though not in full. …..The King wishes to re-build his palace in the city, while the tutu hopes to use him in the Tibetan Expedition.

The report shows that mutual interests in political and military agenda served as a basic background for Chala King’s obedience and Yin Changheng’s generous treatment. Based on his personal experiences of meeting Chala King, Louis King at the British Consul of Dartsedo maintains:

Naturally enough, he was not in sympathy with democratic ideas, and deplored the change from Empire to Republic. …..He hoped that one day his kingdom would be restored to him-- that was the leit-motif of his life.

This passage shows that Chala King yielded to Yin Changheng not because he agreed to the idea of “the Republic of Five Races”, but in order to reclaim his status (taken away due to the gaitu guiliu) and rebuild his kingdom. In other words, during a quickly shifting era with the gaitu guiliu, the advent of the

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27 “Yunchangheng dian zhengfu deng tusi chuli qingjiang” Mingguo Cangshi shiliao huibian vol.4 (Xuefan chubanshe, 2005), 10.
revolution, the establishment of the Republic and the arrival of Yin Changheng’s invading armies, indigenous leaders in Eastern Tibet were forced to take opportunistic moves so as to protect their own power bases.

(3) Priests and Monasteries

Another interesting topic to consider when we try to analyze Tibetan people near the bordering areas during the Revolution would be the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and the monks there. In Tibet, monasteries are not only religious organization but also political authorities owning their lands and people. Many monks had the experiences of studying at the Lhasa Monastery, thereby enabling exchange of information and people within Tibet.\(^{30}\) The Monastic network between central Tibet and its periphery is very important, as it is clear from the fact that many tribes protested many times to Qing through the Dalai Lama’s government against Zhao Erfeng’s demolition and looting of the Eastern Tibetan monasteries.\(^{31}\)

Yet, this does not mean that these Tibetan Buddhist monks and monasteries had acted as a monolith under the Dalai Lama’s government in the Revolution. One important example here would be the behavior of reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries at Qinghai and Gansu. In 1912, Thukwan Hothogthu at the Qinghai Gonlung monastery wrote to Yuan Shikai, “I am truly respectful to the idea of ‘the Republic of Five Races’ and all the five races live happily together in the Republic of China”. “Our Buddha also taught us that we should not discriminate people based on their classes, but bring salvation to everybody solely by learning the canon. The idea of ‘union’ indeed matches our Buddha’s teaching”.\(^{32}\) Thus, in reply to Yuan Shikai, he accepted “the Republic of Five Races”, likening the idea to Buddhism.

However, it would be foolhardy to accept Thukwan and other high-ranking priests’ behavior as literally maintained in this historical document. They may not have complied just because they were compassionate with the Republic’s integration principles. Although Thukwan’s original letter written in Tibetan is not found yet, Zangwen Baihua Bao (Tibetan colloquial magazine, issued by The Mongolia-Tibet Administrative Office), which served as a propaganda engine for Tibetan policies, published a Tibetan edition of the article, which was retranslated from the Chinese edition. There, “the Republic of Five Races” was translated as

\(^{30}\) Regarding the connection among the Gelugpa Monasteries, refer to Yumiko Ishihama, Shinchou to chibetto hukkyo—bosatsuou to natta kennyu tei [The Qing Dynasty and The Tibetan Buddhist World—the Qianlong Emperor who became Bodhisattva] (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 2011), Chapter 4.

\(^{31}\) For instance, the letter from the Ganden TIPA to Zhao Erfeng, July 2, 1908, CDBW, No.0197.

\(^{32}\) The petition from Thukwan to the president, December 10, 1912, ZDLDXZ, No.18.
“The Kongho consists of all the people of the five races” (rigs lnga’i mi thams cad geig tu ’dus pa’i kong ho). The Kongho is obviously a transliteration of Gonghe showing “republic” in Chinese, not a technical term in Tibetan. It is extremely doubtful that Thukwan or the readers of the magazine (such as Tibetan Buddhist monks and Tibetan indigenous leaders) accepted the idea that they were destined to jointly build a country with the Hans and Muslims who did not share the Tibetan Buddhism.

We should pay attention to the continuity of policies from Qing to Yuan Shikai if we want to analyze the behavior of high-ranking priests from the Amdo region, namely Qinghai and Gansu. As one of its Tibetan Buddhist policies, Qing had conferred many statuses and titles to Tibetan Buddhist monks ever since the 17th century. Those from Qinghai and Gansu were assigned with particularly important positions. For instance, beginning with the grant of Daguoshi (The title of Great State Preceptor) to Changkya Hothogthu centered at Gonlon Monastery, many reincarnations have become the high ranking officials in the Qing Dynasty.

In fact, Yuan Shikai seems to have succeeded many institutes and policies of Qing’s Tibetan policies. First, Thukwan received the “Jingxiu Chanshi” title and rewards in silver on December 21, 1912, just as he did in the Qing era. On October 19, Yuan offered Changkya Hothogthu “Hongji guangming daguoshi”, the same title from Qing. Bka’ ’gyur ba ho thog thu, who was also from Qinghai, also received his title. In addition, Yuan also decided to grant changkya 10,000 Yuan per year around the same time. Thus, Yuan attempted to assimilate high-ranking priests to his regime by protecting their statuses and monetary resources that they had enjoyed since Qing. Obviously, this is not just about the Republic’s political manipulation of the priests. The same also applies to the priests. They

33 The petition from Thukwan to the government of Republic China, Zangwenbaihuabao [Tibetan Colloquial Magazine] (Jan 1913) no.1.
34 Based on his analyses of the biography of the 6th Panchen Lama (who escaped to China in 1923) and other documents, Gray Tuttle concludes that Panchen Lama did not share and understand the idea of “Five Races under One Union”. Gray Tuttle, Tibetan Buddhism in the Making of Modern China (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 143-146. Regarding the audience, its penetration and influences of Zangwen baihua bao [Tibetan colloquial paper], refer to Yuxin Zhang, “‘Zang wen baihua bao’ lueshu” [A brief introduction about Zang wen baihua bao] Zang wen baihua bao, .3.
37 The staff department’s address to the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs department, March 13, 1913, ZDLDXZ, Vol.2, No.32.
were consciously aware of political changes within the Tibetan Buddhist sphere, such as the advent of the Bogd Khan regime and the collapse of Qing. We should pay attention to their efforts in establishing and maintaining their authority against this context. Therefore, to understand the rationale of priests’ compliance with the Republic, we have to analyze not only Yuan Shikai’s carrot policy, but also its relationship with high-ranking priests’ intentions and the general background.

3. The Simla Conference and Territorial Problems

As maintained earlier, the politics across the borderlands with the Hans had exhibited many behaviors during the political changes of the revolutionary era when the Dalai Lama’s government and China gradually headed toward confrontation. Yet, the only political entity that received international recognition was the Dalai Lama’s government. It was against this backdrop that the Tibet representative headed to the trilateral conference at Simla.

Simla Conference could be traced back to the memorandum that Jordan—Envoy to Beijing, submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China on August 17, 1912, requiring signing a new agreement about Tibet. The memorandum stated British understanding of Tibet’s political status. As many researchers argue, the content of this memo set the basic policy orientation for Britain to draw the draft for the Simla Conference. While recognizing China’s suzerain rights over Tibet, the document elucidates that Tibet maintains the rights for its own domestic affairs, thereby rejecting the Chinese sovereignty over Tibet ever since the Qing Dynasty.

The British side, however, remained undecided over one crucial issue when it was drafting the memorandum, i.e., the definition of the exact territory of Tibet under the Dalai Lama’s government. Meanwhile, the Republic of China, Britain and the Dalai Lama’s government all had (or were about to have) their own understandings of the territory of “Tibet”, and this perceptual gap was about to surface in the Simla Conference among the three parties.

The Tibetan representative Shatra Penjol Dorjie demanded that the territory should be based on Tang-Fan huimeng bei (The treaty between Tang and Tibet during the first half of the eighth century) and its contents. The area would encompass almost all the Tibetan resident territories including Kham and Amdo (see map 1). In addition, he presented many materials that show the historical relationship between the Dalai Lama’s government and other indigenous leaders.

40 Alastair Lamb, op. cit., 426-506.
and monasteries, arguing for territorial unity with the Dalai Lama’s government at the center.

As maintained in the second section of this paper, the Dalai Lama’s government had approved the coexistence or overlap of its authority and power with that of Qing over the bordering areas with the Han people. This makes it all the more significant that the government changed its attitude to exclusive authority over these areas soon after the collapse of Qing. For the government, it was the first time for it to clearly illustrate its own territory at an international conference. Thus, it is important that we analyze the government’s territorial perception from the modern concept of “national border”.

In addition to analyzing the ideational shift in territory and dominance, we should also consider the actual crisis that the Dalai Lama’s government faced at that time. Let us not forget that the Dalai Lama’s government was fighting squarely with the Sichuan Armies in Eastern Tibet at the time. From the letters (mostly only in English translations) that the Dalai Lama’s government sent to Indian government between January 1913 when the 13th Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa to October when the Simla Conference took place, we could notice that the Dalai Lama’s government expected British recognition of its political status as well as support to ward off the Chinese armies from Eastern Tibet.

For instance, the 13th Dalai Lama sent a private letter to Hardinge, Governor-General of India amidst the conference on July 24, maintaining, “The great British Government, being the only hope Tibet, will very kindly see that the Chinese officers and soldiers are withdrawn from the Tibetan territory of Kham, and that they are not permitted again to come to Tibet by false pretention as before.” Thus, the issue was of the 13th Dalai Lama’s central concern at the Simla Conference.41 The then Dalai Lama’s government had to set the Sino-Tibetan border as far away as possible so as to exclude the Sichuan Armies at Eastern Tibet and permanently keep China’s influence at bay. Thus, upon the conference, it carefully prepared for historical proofs of its de facto dominance of the border area.

In contrast, the Chinese representative Chen Yifan argued for continuing domination of the territory since Zhao Erfeng at the end of Qing period. Zhao had mobilized his armies, cutting much deeper across the two ends of Sichuan borders. Zhao’s successor Fu Songmu, the Border Commissioner for Sichuan and Yunnan—advised the Emperor to establish Xikang province in Eastern Tibet on August 10, 1911.42 The suggestion was made just three months before the outburst

41 NAI, Foreign Dept. External-B, Nov. 1913, Nos. 283-286, Letters and Presents from His Highness the Dalai Lama to His Excellency the Viceroy and the Foreign Secretary, dated Simla, Oct. 6, 1913.
42 Fu Songmu’s address to the throne regarding establishment of Xikang Xingsheng (June 16, Xuantong year 3), CDBW, no. 0934.
of the Revolution, and it was never approved from the central government. On the other hand, within the Republican government, more and more people came to share the view that, instead of leaving them to Tibet, China should annex the areas all the way to Jomda, which Zhao’s army had arrived and stationed. Thus, the Sichuan Army did not completely halt its campaigns in Eastern Tibet even with diplomatic pressures from the British government, and neither did Chen Yifan easily compromise over this issue at the conference (see figure. 1-⑥).

What attitude did the British government take as an arbiter at the conference regarding the diverging views between the two plenipotentiaries? Yet, neither Shatra’s nor Chen Yifan’s contention drastically influenced the British calculation over border delineation. Prior to the conference, the British side started to draw the agreement draft based on the memorandum as mentioned earlier. It states: The draft basically determined the range of “Tibet” as the Dalai Lama’s government enjoyed its autonomy.

For the purposes of the present agreement, Thibet shall be held to include the districts of Za-yul, Mar-kham, Draya, Chiamdo, Gyade, and Nagchuka, and all country lying south and west of the Tang-la Range.

This area coincides with the autonomous “Tibet” (“outer Tibet” as will be mentioned later), which was presented at the last stage of border negotiation at Simla Conference. Before the conference, the British side had already decided its bottom line to compromise vis-à-vis the Chinese counterpart as to the basic range of the autonomous “Tibet”.

The British government was mostly concerned with how to contain the Chinese political and military influence at the border area of Tibet next to the northeast region of the British India. At the crossroad of Assam, Tibet and north Burma, Zayul was a particularly important region for British security as Zhao Erfeng’s army once arrived at the region in late Qing and the threat of Sichuan Army’s entrance after the establishment of the Republic had always lingered. Meanwhile, India’s position on border delineation was based on Charles Bell, an intermediate with the Dalai Lama’s government as mentioned earlier. In December 1912, Charles Bell included in the fifth article that “Tibet” should be an “prohibited area” of Chinese forces. The integration of Markham on the west bank

43 Regarding Chen Yifan’s change of attitudes regarding border delineation negotiation, see Mingzhu Feng, Jindai zhong ying Xizang jiaoshe yu chuanzang bianqing [Modern negotiation among China, Britain and Tibet, and the Tibet border areas] (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1996), 328-39.
44 FO371/1610, 10751, Revised Draft of Treaty with China respecting Tibet, encl. in India Office to Foreign Office, Mar. 7, 1913.
45 Alastair Lamb, op. cit., 459-460.
of the Golden Sand River was considered especially important to secure Zayul right behind Markham. This suggestion concurs with the border area between Markham and Batang delineated during the Yongzheng era. In addition, it was also compatible with British line to contain China’s influence on Tibet at the pre 1904 level when the New Policies was yet to begin in Tibet.

However, this policy on border issue had to be reconsidered after the conference. First, the differences between the representatives from Tibet and China were extremely wide. The British representative Henry McMahon presented the agreement draft to both representatives from Britain and Tibet on February 17, 1914. In order to seek a common ground between the two sides, the draft suggested a compromise plan dividing Tibet to “Outer Tibet” under the Dalai Lama’s government and “Inner Tibet” that function as a buffer zone against the Chinese mainland (see fig. 1-② and ④). This way of dividing shows that the British side particularly heeded to the Tibetans who brought in many materials to make their point to claim the border territories. The British side was considering the following policies: 1). To introduce a “Inner Tibet” with its borders closely

46 FO371/1609, 3189, Telegram P., No. 235S, from The Political officer, Sikkim, to the Foreign Secretary, Delhi, dated Dec. 22, 1912.
47 FO371/1609, 3357, India Office to Foreign Office, Jan. 21, 1913.
along the peripheries of “Tibet” as the Tibetan representative claims; 2). To recognize the Dalai Lama’s government’s de facto dominance of Nyarong and Derge during the late 19th century and annex them to “Outer Tibet”; 3). To grant the Dalai Lama’s government the power to not only administers religious issues of the “Inner Tibet”, but also authority over wide range of issues including taxation, and appointment and dismissal of bureaucrats.48

British intentions are clear from its policy of “Inner Tibet”, which neither recognizes China’s de facto dominance of the region, nor incorporate the area into the Dalai Lama’s “autonomous” government. First, worried about China’s military actions at Eastern Tibet even during the conference, McMahon attempted to more effectively prevent Chinese influence by forming “Inner Tibet” as a buffer zone. The Britain was also uneasy about Russia’s possible strengthening of its presence through Mongolia, as a result of changes in international politics such as the Russo-Mongolian Treaty and the Mongolia-Tibet Treaty. Thus, Britain thought it necessary to introduce a border zone that partially admits China’s control in order to avoid direct contacts between the autonomous Tibet and Mongolia. While looking for a common ground as the arbitrator, the Britain was consistent in its geopolitical position in reconstructing the regional order mainly by protecting India.49

Thus, all three actors participated in the negotiation of border issue, with different ideas of the territory of “Tibet”. Regarding the settlement, Britain was able to secure an agreement from Tibet, who needed London as a counterweight against China. However, the Chinese did not agree, and only the British and the Tibetan representatives signed the July 3 draft. In other words, the negotiation failed, as the three parties were unable to reach agreement over border delineation. These regions remained key areas for Sino-Tibetan relations throughout the first half of the 20th century, fraught with conflict of interests among warlords and Tibetan indigenous leaders.


49 FO371/1931, 43390, Jul. 23, 1914, Final Memorandum. In this regard, this is different from the “Inner Mongolia” and “Outer Mongolia” differentiation appeared during the Qing era. Junko Miyawaki, Mongoru no rekishi [The history of Mongolia] (Tokyo: Tousui shobo, 2003), 222-25.
Conclusion

During the political upheavals of Qing’s demise and establishment of the Republic, two issues regarding Tibet emerged. One was its political status. The other was the concrete boundary of “Tibet”, which awaits to be unified. What could be made clear about the then Tibet through the analysis of its territorial issue?

Until the 19th century, Qing and the Dalai Lama’s government basically maintained a friendly relationship. Although sometimes tensions existed between the two, the Qing emperors worshipped and protected Tibetan Buddhism. Both were able to exert authority and power in the bordering regions such as Eastern Tibet, and neither aimed to establish exclusive dominance at the expense of the other. However, as a result of its changing national structures after the second half of the 19th century, Qing changed its policy and attempted to assimilate Tibet under its sovereignty. Sino-Tibet relations collapsed during this process of the New policies. Thus, territorial issues of Tibet originate from Qing’s domestic transformation and (often military) confrontation between the two sides. Soon they developed into disputes over border delineation, added with British interferences.

On the hand, although it is less obvious from the level of international politics, many polities in the disputed areas exhibited diverse political behaviors. Ethnicity and political ideologies of the Republic do not suffice to account for these different political decisions. These policy lines ought to be understood in terms of multiple factors, including the suppressive New policies particularly at the end of Qing Dynasty, historical relations between Qing and the Dalai Lama’s government, power distribution among indigenous leaders, and the religious and economic network that goes beyond such indigenous localities within Tibet.

Obviously, this paper does not intend to emphasize the lack of unity within the then Tibet by discussing its inner diversity. Rather, no fixated conceptual framework can explain the political behaviors of these polities during the revolution era, for these behaviors reflect the complex relations between “China” and “Tibet”. The bilateral relationship consists of many components that are fully exhibited during the historical processes of the bordering regions. These regions were not under constant confrontation for territorial enlargement since the Qing era. Whereas Tibetan Buddhists in Qinghai and Gansu played important roles in Qing’s Tibetan Buddhism policies, indigenous leaders of Sichuan—Tusi supported the transportation between Qing and Tibet. These leaders and Monks were intermediaries between the two powers. As such, they acted in a way that was quite different from the administration on a territorial basis, characterizing their diverse political behavior patterns in the revolution period.

During the political processes of border delineation, many characteristics of
The Buddhism based Qing-Tibet relationship had been either ignored or treated as bargaining chips of the negotiation. However, in order to realize the reason why the boundary problem continued to haunt the relationship of the Dalai Lama’s government with China after the Simla Conference, we have to pay attention to the historical relationship between “Tibet” and “China” and its transformation cannot be understood in the modern context of territorial control. Furthermore, the territorial issue had always been connected with the question of Tibet’s political status even after the assimilation of Tibet to the People’s Republic. The issues about “Tibet” during the 1911 Revolution as treated in this article have to be analyzed as the origins of the disputes.

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