

Seeing beyond the state?

The negotiation of moral boundaries in the revival and
development of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in
contemporary China

Volume 1

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Abstract

This study explores the revival and development of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in contemporary China since 1980 and its relationship to a society undergoing rapid socio-economic transformations. The speed and extent of the revival has been one of the most extraordinary aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist resurgence. Yet, monastic actors are facing serious challenges as they attempt to 'move with the times' while maintaining the soteriological and mundane bases of monastic Buddhism in rapidly changing political, economic and social contexts.

Thus far, accounts of the revival have largely been framed in relation to the Chinese state, the shifting public space for religion and culture and the 'Tibet question'. This study attempts to 'see beyond the state' to examine other contingent factors in the ongoing process of renewal and development. Taking the monastery as the central unit of a synthetic analysis of its relations to both state and society and exploring the topic 'from the ground up', this study focuses on the shifting mundane bases of Gelukpa 'mass monasticism' over the past 30 years at regional monastic centres and local monasteries in eastern Qinghai province, part of the Tibetan Amdo region. By paying attention to the subjective experiences of those involved in monastic development and focusing on its moral dimensions this study provides a fresh perspective on a process that has been intermeshed with, but not exclusively dominated or defined by, its relationship to the state.

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All images taken 2008-2009 by the author, except for Figure 5.8 (Anon. 2011).

Acronyms

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
GMD	Guomindang (Nationalist Party)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
QNU	Qinghai Nationalities University
TAP	Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
PRC	People's Republic of China
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

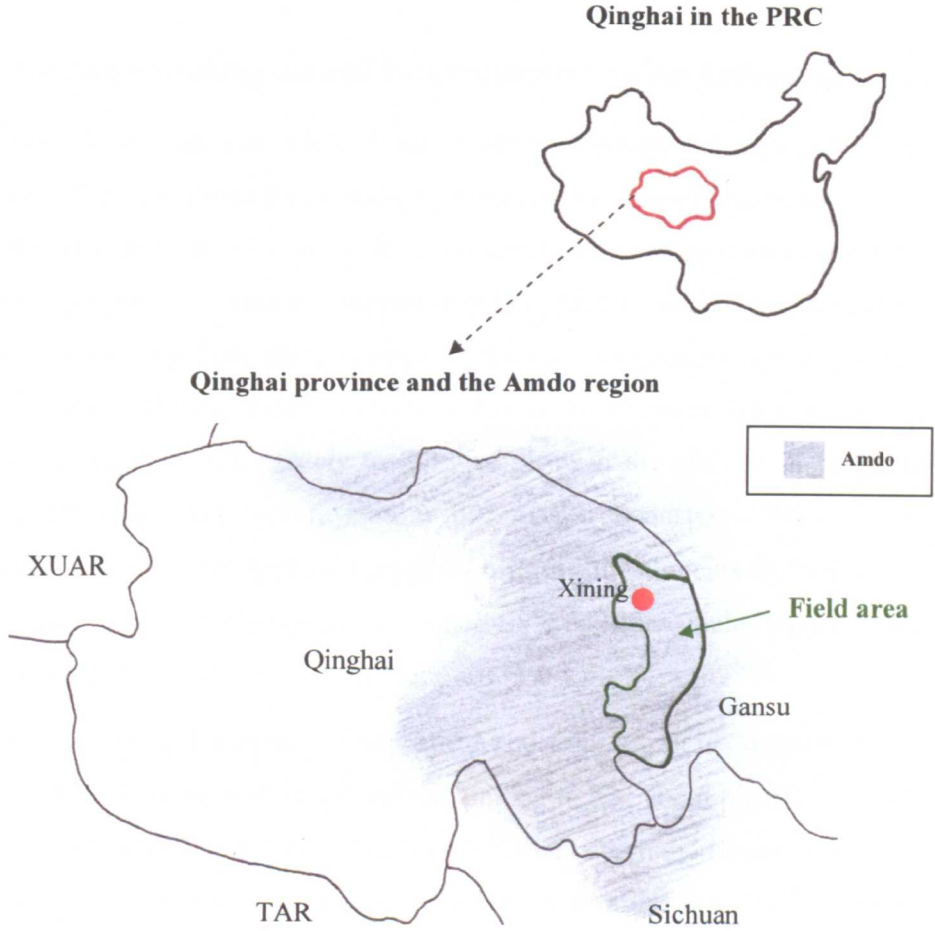
Preface

Tibetan names and terms are rendered according to their pronunciation. The THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan (Germano and Tournadre 2010) is the only standardised phonetic system, but since this is based on Lhasa Tibetan pronunciation rather than oral Amdo Tibetan it is not always followed here. Familiar spellings are used for names such as Lobsang and places such as Shigatse. The orthographic form of terms, names of places and historical figures is provided in brackets or a footnote when first used, according to the Wylie system. Chinese terms are given following the pinyin system, without the use of diacritics to indicate tones. Tibetan, Sanskrit and Chinese terms are italicised unless a term is common in English and not treated as a foreign word (for example lama, karma or Buddha). Terms are Tibetan unless I have indicated that they are Chinese (C.) or Sanskrit (S.), for example (C. *xin*) or (S. *siddha*).

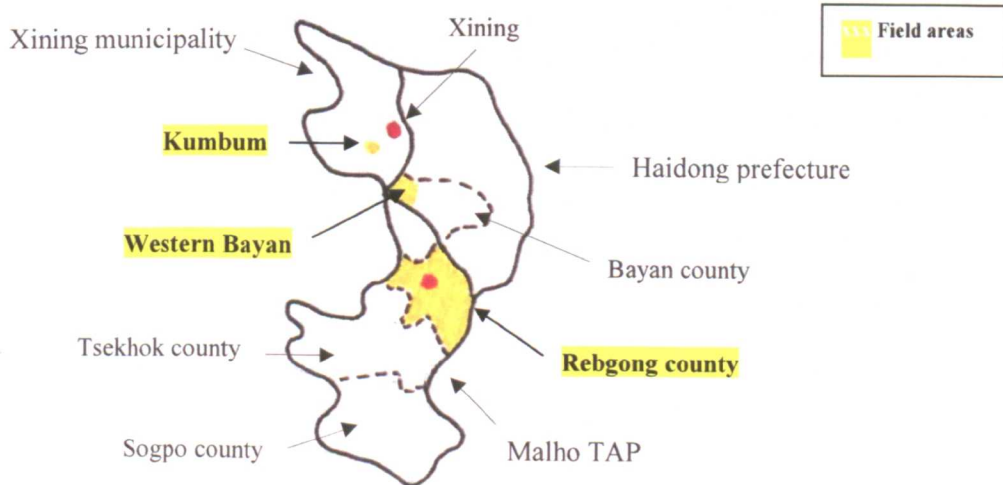
A list of the abbreviations I have used when citing legal documents is provided in the bibliography (Vol.2). To protect the anonymity of my interlocutors I have changed all personal names and have not added references to interviews or to my list of interviewees (see Chapter 2 for further discussion). However, where I cite an individual I indicate whether the interview was conducted in Tibetan (T), Chinese (C) or one of the Monguor languages (M) spoken at some of my field sites. I also indicate whether I recorded the interview (R) or took notes (N). For example, where I cite from an interview that was conducted in Tibetan and was recorded the notation (T/R) is added at the end of the quotation.

Sketch map of field areas

By the author, with reference to Gruschke (2001); Xingqiu ditu chubanshe (2008)



Eastern Qinghai / eastern Amdo



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Negotiating moral boundaries: Akhu Lobsang

I first met Akhu Lobsang when I was walking through the grounds of his monastery.¹ Tsering, a friend who had accompanied me, knew him and introduced me, explaining the reason for my visit: I was conducting research into the revival and development of Gelukpa² monasteries in Amdo³ and was particularly interested in learning more about changes in the monastic economy over the past 30 years. Akhu Lobsang invited us to visit him in his quarters that evening, but said that he had time immediately to show us some of the projects in which he had been involved over recent years as one of the monastery's Management Committee members.⁴ He appeared proud of his accomplishments and we set off at a fast pace for a tour of some of the monastery's facilities, including a medical clinic and shop (Fig.1.1).

Later that evening I was sitting opposite Akhu Lobsang in his quarters, a low table set out between us with bread and tea, talking to him about his life and work for the monastery (T/R). As a child in the 1970s he had studied secretly with his uncle, one of the elders (*rgan-pa*) who had been a monk prior to the Maoist

¹ All personal names have been changed. Akhu (*a-khu*) is the polite form of address for a monk in Amdo Tibetan.

² The Gelukpa (*dge-lugs-pa*) is one of the four main Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the others being the Nyingmapa (*rnying-ma-pa*), Sakyapa (*sa-skya-pa*) and Kagyu (*bka`-rgyud-pa*). The Bonpo (*bon-po*), in its organized, clerical form is also often considered to be a 'Tibetan Buddhist' tradition (Kapstein 2006 p.205). The characteristics of the Gelukpa are discussed in Section 1.6.2.

³ Amdo (*A-mdo*) is one of the eastern provinces of Tibet in traditional Tibetan geographical terms (Kapstein 2006 p.4), now incorporated into Qinghai, south-west Gansu and north-west Sichuan. See Chapter 2 for further discussion and problematisation of the toponym Amdo and my reasons for selecting this region for my research.

⁴ According to government regulations, each monastery must have a management committee (*do-dam-u-yon-lhan-khang*; *C. siguanhui*), which is a body of monks responsible for running its affairs, ensuring compliance with government regulations, and acting as intermediary between state agencies and monks. The actual role, membership and perception of these committees vary (see p.170 n.17).

reforms of 1958. He was in his early teens when monastic life revived in the early 1980s and he came with his uncle to the monastery. He studied for the next 20 years, completed the Gelukpa curriculum and then held various positions of responsibility in his monastery.



Figure 1.1 Monastery shop, Amdo

His involvement in monastic business development represented a shift in his attitude towards monastic financing. He said that, in his opinion, ‘we don’t need much as long as we have enough to cover our basic necessities, so before we hadn’t thought that much about developing commercial activities’. The monastery had relied on collecting alms from the people (*mang-tshogs*) to supplement sponsorship from patrons.⁵ Then he had gone to India on pilgrimage and seen that the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries there were self-supporting and ran restaurants,

⁵ The distinction between voluntary donations and collection of contributions from patron communities is explored in Chapter 4.

guest houses, and shops.⁶ This had served to change his mind about the appropriate way of funding monastic activities. He and other monks had encouraged donors to contribute to a capital fund which they invested in businesses. The income is used, along with sponsorship, to fund the annual cycle of debate sessions and rituals.

When I started my field research, I had been expecting to hear that monasteries had had to find new ways of surviving financially. I was aware that they had ‘no option’ but to adapt to contemporary political, social and economic structures (Cantwell and Kawanami 2002 p.57) and had lost many of the sources of support on which they relied before 1958. I also understood that government policy stipulates that monasteries should develop self-supporting activities.⁷ However, Akhu Lobsang was not simply relating practical steps to secure stable income sources for his monastery in contemporary circumstances and under current state policies. What was striking in conversations with him and other monks about monastic revival and development was that they were involved in a continual evaluation and re-evaluation of what was right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate for the monastery and its monks in a world undergoing rapid transformation. Issues of monastic economy were, fundamentally, moral issues.

Moreover, it was clear that issues of monastic financing were inseparable from concerns about ‘development’ in a much broader sense: the advancement of monasteries in an increasingly materialistic society and what was perceived to be a time of monastic moral decline. Akhu Lobsang had plans for expanding commercial activities, but at the same time was cautious: ‘if this becomes too much then it could be an obstacle for religious practice and studies, as at Labrang and Kumbum’.⁸ His comments on monastery businesses flowed into a long

⁶ The Gelukpa monastic centres of Drepung (‘bras-spungs), Sera (se-ra) and Ganden (dga’-ldan) were rebuilt by the Tibetan community-in-exile in Karnataka, southern India.

⁷ The development of self-supporting monastic businesses and the literature on this will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁸ Labrang (bla-brang; C. Labuleng) and Kumbum (sku-‘bum; C. Ta’ersi) are the two major Gelukpa monastic centres located in Amdo. The other four centres are Sera, Drepung and Ganden in Lhasa and Tashilhunpo (bkra-shis lhun-po) in Shigatse (gzhi-ka-rtse). Strictly

monologue in which he drew contrasts between his and other monasteries, emphasising that it was important for a monastery to expend its energies on developing education and discipline rather than focusing on external development, such as building temples.

His narrative about development illuminated the interrelatedness of soteriological and mundane concerns. He clearly felt that the monastery's ability to retain its monks and raise great scholars was contingent on its approach to development. So too, by extension, was its reputation and therefore its ability to secure the patronage and recruit the monks through which it could continue its soteriological mission. Moreover, as this study will show, conjunctures of changing political, economic and social realities mean that questions of the 'ideal' in relation to monasticism are being thrown open within monastic communities and conceptions of the good are being contested.

Akhu Lobsang, charged with responsibility for developing his monastery, was therefore faced with the challenge of finding ways to 'move with the times' while maintaining the soteriological and mundane bases of monasticism. He was trying to keep on the right side of shifting lines between what was appropriate and inappropriate for a monastery, monks and wider society in both his actions for and his representations of monastic development. In other words, he was involved in a process of ongoing negotiation of moral boundaries.

1.2 The research

The account of my encounter with Akhu Lobsang sets out the main focus of this inquiry into the revival and development of Gelukpa monasticism in the post-Mao era. The speed and extent of the revival has been one of the most extraordinary aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist revival. What were the bases of support for this revival of 'mass monasticism' (p.24) in radically altered political, economic and social contexts? How have they changed over the past 30 years and how do

speaking. Labrang is a branch monastery of Drepung Gomang ('bras-spungs sgo-mang). However, it is counted as one of the 'big six' centres because of its size and influence.

monks conceive of and represent these changes? What are the major challenges they face?

The purpose of the research, however, is to address a larger question: is it possible to see beyond the state in a study of Gelukpa monasticism in contemporary China? As will be discussed in Section 1.3, much of what we know about the Tibetan Buddhist revival (and more generally about contemporary Tibetan societies in China) is framed in relation to the Chinese state, the shifting public space for religion and culture (i.e. the sphere of action considered legitimate by the state), and the ‘Tibet question’.⁹ The aim of the present study is to try to ‘see beyond the state’ by placing the monastery at the centre of a synthetic analysis of its relations to both state and society and paying attention to the narratives and subjective experiences of monks involved in the process of monastic development. Has monastic revival and development simply been shaped by the shifting public space for religion and the state-society relationship? Or are other logics and dynamics illuminated when this topic is explored ‘from the ground up’?

Mills (2003 p.29) argues that because of the extent and influence of Tibetan monasticism an understanding of its nature is ‘of crucial importance to the understanding of Tibetan Buddhist societies’. Likewise, an understanding of the dynamics of its development is important in understanding the changes and transformations in these societies. The starting point for the research is an issue which has hitherto received little attention: monastic economic development. Goldstein (1998a) provides the only ethnographic study that focuses on the monastic institution as the central unit of analysis, discussing monastic

⁹ The political struggle over the status of Tibet and whether or not the Tibetan people have a right to self-determination (see Smith 1996, Goldstein 1997 and Shakya 1999). In the present study, the term ‘Tibetan’ is used in a descriptive, rather than essentialist, sense to refer to people and communities who ‘regard themselves as being ethnically Tibetan in the sense of sharing some form of common language, history, origin narratives, lifestyles, cultural systems and identity’ (Huber 2000 p.xiii). Tibetan areas include (but are not limited to) the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and areas administered as Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (TAPs) in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

development from the perspective of monastic actors.¹⁰ He presents the development of businesses and tourism at Drepung monastery in Lhasa in economic terms: the monastery needed to find ways to support itself without the manorial estates, money-lending operations and government funding on which it had relied in the past.¹¹ The Chinese literature on contemporary Tibetan Buddhist monastic economy (for example Donggacang and Cairangjia 1995; Zhang 1996; Kai 2000; Mei 2001) also takes an economic perspective, providing factual description and/or advocating reforms within the framework of the state's socialist modernist ideology and religious policy (see also Makley 2007 pp.264- 265).¹²

However, the monastic economy is embedded in the logics of monasticism as a soteriological and thus moral project. As will be discussed in Section 1.6, the mundane and soteriological foundations of monasticism are intermeshed. Its existence and continuity is contingent upon the dependent relationship between and shared values of monastic and lay communities, the latter providing not just material support, but also, crucially, the monastic population. These social relationships underpin the institution of monasticism both in general and in the particular form revived in the 1980s. Therefore an examination of its 'mundane' bases provides an ideal site upon which to explore the social, as well as political process and dynamics of Gelukpa monastic revival and development.

¹⁰ Makley (2007) is concerned with Gelukpa monasticism as a competing hegemonic order in the Labrang valley and does not look closely at monastic development. Her work is drawn upon and discussed where appropriate.

¹¹ Money lending has in fact been reintroduced as a form of monastic support at monasteries in eastern Qinghai at least (see Chapter 4).

¹² See Wang (2010) for a review of the Chinese language literature on Tibetan Buddhist monastic economy. Mei (2001) provides the only monograph (Wang 2010 p.124). The work of Donggacang and Cairangjia is representative of the scholarship on contemporary monastic economies and their development (ibid.), which will be referred to in Chapters 4 and 5. Much of the literature examines the 'old society' prior to Communist reforms (for example Jie and Sangjie 1997; Huare and Duo jie 2006; Huang 2007; Yang 2007). As of 2008, c.70 per cent of the 71 articles on this topic in the China Academic Journals database (<china.eastview.com>) were concerned with this period (based on a search I conducted for 寺院经济 [305 hits] and, within those results, 藏 [71 hits]). An influential Tibetan critical study of Tibetan monastic economy prior to the CCP's 'democratic reforms' is Dung-dkar blo-bzang 'phrin-las (1997).

This introductory chapter discusses the limitations of the state-society lens and provides the tentative outlines of a fresh approach. It discusses the epistemological and conceptual framework for the research before going on to contextualise it in an overview of the characteristic features and moral logics of the particular form of monasticism revived in the early 1980s. Finally, it provides a summary of the chapters. However, the political focus of much of the literature on contemporary Tibetan societies in China is not surprising in light of recent history and indeed reflects some of the conditions that have shaped the monastic revival.¹³ It is therefore important to set out the general contours of the political context and review the main perspectives of the available literature before moving beyond this to suggest new avenues of exploration.

1.3 Repression, resistance and negotiation: current perspectives on the monastic revival

The revival of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism was part of the wider revival of religious life in China following the repression of the Maoist era.¹⁴ At the end of the 1970s, when restrictions on religious practice were relaxed, there were no working monasteries: they had all been disbanded during the Maoist campaigns of the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution and most had been destroyed. Since the beginning of the 1980s, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries have been reconstructed throughout the Tibetan areas now incorporated into western China (Pu 1990; Nian and Bai 1993; Goldstein and Kapstein 1998; Kolås and Thowsen 2005), and other parts of China, including Inner Mongolia (Erhimbayar 2006;

¹³ It also perhaps reflects the commitment to solidarity with the Tibetan people underlying much scholarship in Tibetan studies (Kvaerne 2001 p.62), as well as a wider intellectual focus among many scholars on issues of power, resistance and subaltern identities.

¹⁴ Given the contemporary focus of this study, 'China' is used as shorthand for the People's Republic of China (PRC). When my interlocutors used the term 'China' (*rgya-nag*), they were often referring to non-Tibetan parts of the PRC. For example, they might talk about monks 'going to China' to perform ritual services. This reflects a drawing of cultural boundaries between 'China/Chinese' (outside) and 'Tibet/Tibetans' (inside). It should not be read as automatically implying separatist political intent. In these contexts, I use the term 'inland China', which is more commonly used to distinguish between 'inland China' and Hong Kong and Macau (see also Saxer 2010 p.34).

Mair 2008), northeast China (Erhimbayar 2006), and Wutai Shan in Shanxi (Tuttle 2006). By 1997 there were over 3,000 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries (most of them Gelukpa), 120,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and 1,700 incarnate lamas in China (Ashiwa and Wank 2009 p.1).

Shifts in state policy and the exercise of state power have clearly shaped the general contours of Tibetan Buddhist monastic history over the past 50 years, both in terms of the violent repression of the Maoist years and the possibility of revival. As elsewhere in China, the revival of public religious life and religious institutions began with the restoration of the policy of freedom of religious belief following the Third Plenum of the 11th CCP central committee in 1978, which led to a relaxation of Party policy on religion (Potter 2003 p.13). The official summary of CCP religious policy was set out in Document 19 (issued in March 1982),¹⁵ and enshrined in the revised PRC Constitution (adopted in December 1982). Since 1991 there has been a general movement in China's religious policy towards increased control of religion through law and bureaucratic regulation, most recently with the introduction of national regulations on religious affairs (RRA) which came into effect in 2005.¹⁶ These policy shifts and their impact on religious practice have been documented and analysed elsewhere (Potter 2003; Kindopp and Hamrin 2004; Chan and Carlson 2005; Leung 2005; Tian 2006; Ying 2006; Cooke 2009).

In Tibetan areas, the relationship between ethnicity and religion has added a further political dynamic to the religious revival.¹⁷ Nationalist claims for greater autonomy or independence have centred on Tibetan Buddhist symbols. Monks – in particular Gelukpa monks – have been prominent figures in overt challenges to

¹⁵ Full name: *Shehuizhuyi shiqi zongjiao wenti de jiben guandian he jiben zhengce* [The basic viewpoint and policy on the religious question during our country's socialist period] (trans. MacInnis 1989 pp.10-26).

¹⁶ There has subsequently been a series of regulations and measures relating to management of Buddhist monasteries and personnel (for example HZST, QZST, ZCB, ZJZB). These will be discussed where relevant. For an overview of regulations issued at prefectural level in 2009/2010 on Tibetan Buddhist affairs in TAPs see CECC (2011).

¹⁷ This is also the case in Xinjiang. For an overview of Sino-Uyghur relations and further references see Gladney (2004b).

Chinese rule (see Barnett and Akiner 1994; Schwartz 1994; Goldstein and Kapstein 1998). The major eruptions of tensions between state and society in contemporary Tibetan history have all been at least partly tied to religious issues and have led to increased state control over religion and monasteries: the Lhasa demonstrations of the late 1980s, the dispute over the recognition of the 11th Panchen Lama in the 1990s, and the protest activities that spread throughout Tibetan areas following the March 2008 demonstrations in Lhasa, many of which were led by monks.¹⁸

Much of the scholarship on the revival of Gelukpa monasticism (and religion in general) is framed within an account of this shifting public space. Kolås and Thowsen (2005) provide a general survey of the revival of religious life in Tibetans areas of China outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), giving an overview of monastic reconstruction and funding, religious practice and monastic education.¹⁹ They identify the main problems for monasteries as stemming from government restrictions and repression, including the implementation of political 'patriotic education' campaigns and the regulation of numbers of monks and nuns, reconstruction of monasteries, recognition of reincarnate lamas and performance of rituals (ibid. p.175). Restrictions on and repression of Tibetan Buddhism have also been examined in other academic studies (Barnett and Akiner 1994; Schwartz 1994; Goldstein and Kapstein 1998; Huber 2000; Slobodnik 2004; Diemberger 2010) and NGO reports (for example TIN and HRW 1996; TIN 1999a, 1999b; ICT 2004).²⁰ They have also been reported in the Western media. It

¹⁸ Sporadic unrest centred on monasteries has continued since 2008, for example in 2011 at Kirti (ki+rti) monastery in Ngawa (mga-ba; C. Aba), Sichuan (see, for example, BBC 2011).

¹⁹ This was part of a survey of the state of Tibetan culture which also included Tibetan medium education and the use of Tibetan language in media and publishing. Pu (1990), Nian and Bai (1993), Gruschke (2001) and dPal-bzang (2007) provide general descriptive surveys of monasteries in Amdo, including factual summaries of their histories, reconstruction and repopulation.

²⁰ This literature will be discussed in the context of specific issues (see, for example, Chapter 7).

seems fair to say that repression of religious freedom is, outside China, the most widely commented on aspect of the Tibetan Buddhist revival.²¹

Methods employed by the state to increase control have in turn exacerbated tensions, fomented further resistance and deepened the association between religion and Tibetan identity (Goldstein and Kapstein 1998 p.149; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.92).²² This brings us to another key perspective in the literature: religious revitalisation as counter-hegemonic. Kolås and Thowsen (*ibid.*) claim that monasteries have become ‘the primary symbols of Tibetans’ determination to reinforce national identity and resist Chinese domination’ (see also Goldstein 1998b p.14).²³ More generally, scholars have interpreted the Buddhist revival from a cultural perspective as oppositional, at least to some degree. This is not only in terms of the overt political activism of some monks and the use of religious symbolism in popular protest, but also what Scott (1985) refers to as ‘everyday forms of resistance’. In other words, Tibetans draw upon Tibetan Buddhist traditions, values and practices to counter the hegemony of the Chinese state in their daily lives (see for example Karmay 1994; Epstein and Peng 1998;²⁴ Schrempf 2000; Diemberger 2005).²⁵

²¹ This reflects the wider literature on religion in China: a key perspective has been state control and repression of religious freedom (Ashiwa and Wank 2009 p.4). Ashiwa and Wank (*ibid.*) argue that this ‘overlaps with the neo-liberal activist agenda of foreign media, human rights groups, governments and some scholars to “advance religious freedom in China”’. An emphasis on repression in popular representations of Tibetans ‘is reinforced by the interests of the Tibetan establishment in exile in presenting images of cultural destruction and Tibetans as victims of abuse’ (Barnett 2001 p.272).

²² Kapstein (1998a p.149) notes the quandary this poses for the Chinese authorities: ‘by suppressing Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan resentment and hence the longing for freedom are increased; but by adopting a liberal policy, the very cultural system that most encourages the Tibetans to identify themselves apart from China continues to flourish’.

²³ Monasteries are not necessarily ‘the primary symbol’ of national identity and resistance. The propitiation of mountain deities is also a potent symbol of Tibetan identity (see Karmay 1994; Epstein and Peng 1998). Moreover, Tibetan identity is not defined solely by religion (Kapstein 1998 p.142). Nevertheless, monastic Buddhism is felt by many Tibetans to be a defining characteristic of Tibetan civilisation, culture and morality (see Chapter 6.4.3; see also Goldstein 1998 pp.5-6; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.44).

²⁴ This paper examines a festival which ‘is at the more distinctively folk religion end of the continuum’ of Tibetan religious practices (Epstein and Peng 1998 p.121) and is arguably not ‘Buddhist’. However, an attempt to disentangle and classify Tibetan ‘Buddhist’ and ‘folk’ traditions reflects modernist conceptions of ‘religion’. What Stein

Much of the discussion of Tibetan Buddhism in contemporary China therefore revolves around an axis of domination and resistance between state and society. Ortner (2006 pp.42-62) has argued that studies on resistance focusing on the relationship between the dominant and the subordinate carry a risk of romanticisation and a problem of 'ethnographic refusal' – a thinness and lack of contextualisation arising from a sanitising of the politics of resisters, a thinning of culture and a thinning of subjectivity (the intentions, desires, fears and projects of actors). Subalterns, she argues, must be seen as 'having an authentic and not merely reactive' politics and culture (ibid. p.50).

Makley's (2007) work, although focusing on state-local interactions, tackles precisely this issue by using gender as an analytical tool. She frames her examination of the 'incorporation' of Labrang into the Chinese nation-state²⁶ in an elucidation of the competing patriarchal orders of the state and Gelukpa monasticism and she is therefore able to illuminate issues of power and authority within local society as well as between state and society.²⁷ Her account of the

referred to as the 'nameless' religion, centring on the cults of local deities and spirits, is 'seldom present as an anonymous substratum, but is found as an integral dimension of both Buddhism and Bon' (Kapstein 2006 p.205; see also Mills 2003).

²⁵ This reflects the broader literature on the cultural politics of ethnicity and religion in China. Issues of identity and classification have been a central concern of contemporary scholarly work on ethnic minorities (Blum 2002 p.1297), which has shown the ways in which the homogenising forces of the Chinese state and capitalism have fostered and organised distinctions among various ethnic groups (Oakes 1998; Kaup 2000; Schein 2000; Harrell 2001; Gladney 2004a; Borchert 2005). These marginalised peoples have drawn upon the cultural resources available to them (including their histories, traditions and values) to counter hegemonic state power and construct their own identities in the contemporary world (for example Oakes 1998; Schein 2000; Borchert 2008: see also Picard and Wood 1997).

²⁶ In other words, 'the legal, geographic, social, and bodily transformations entailed in nationalisation' (Makley 2007 p.78).

²⁷ Schrempf (2000) also acknowledges the cultural politics of the ritual's participants in her analysis of ritualised sponsorship at a Bonpo monastery in Amdo Shar-khog. Moreover she highlights the agency and interests of lay participants, rather than simply focusing on the ritual hegemony of the monks. However, her concluding statement ultimately gives priority to state-society as the defining relationship: 'Even though the meanings of traditional world view, values and beliefs might have shifted considerably through the impact of colonialism and modernity, the conscious revival of local customs and religious practices – even though modified in parts – shows that these are still important and socially powerful icons of religious and ethnic identity, consciously chosen by the Shar-ba to counterbalance the ideology of the state' (ibid. pp.339-340).

gendered cultural politics of the monastic revival shows Gelukpa monasticism to be a competing structure of power in the Labrang valley. She points to the accommodation of monastic elites with the state over the status of 'religion',²⁸ in particular in the reframing of Buddhism as rationalised and moralised knowledge production (ibid. pp.17, 255).²⁹ She also shows how state attempts to make Labrang monastery 'an icon of ideally contained statist "religion"' (ibid. p.257) allowed space for oppositional moves by Gelukpa elites who were working to 'reconstruct the frameworks of an ideally Tibetan patrifilial order' (ibid. p.261).

This leads us to another approach: the revival as a process of negotiation by elites. This provides a more nuanced perspective on the complexities and ambiguities of the state-society relationship than a straightforward repression/resistance paradigm. It emphasises the agency and creativity of individuals and communities as they find ways in which to revitalise traditions within the constraints of state policies. Barnett (2006), Diemberger (2007a) and Arjia Rinpoche (2010), have described how senior religious elites such as the 10th Panchen Lama and the 12th Dorje Phagmo have used the space created by state attempts to 'harness, strategically, the moral authority of the past within the modernist project of Communist China' (Diemberger 2007a p.291). These elites have used their official positions and influence under the United Front policy,³⁰

²⁸ In other words, 'religion' as a modern category and differentiated sphere of activity, the idea of which the 'concept of the secular cannot do without' (Asad 1999 p.192).

²⁹ See also Ashiwa and Wank (2009) who argue from an institutional perspective that the construction of state and religion in modern China has been a mutual process and that the politics of modern religion is 'constituted by ongoing negotiations, among multiple actors, including state officials, intellectuals, religious adherents, and businesspersons, to adapt religion to the modern state's definitions and rules even as they are continuously being transgressed' (ibid. p.8). Tibetan Buddhist leaders were part of this process during the Republican and Maoist eras (Welch 1972; Tuttle 2005; see also Kapstein 2004 p.237).

³⁰ This is the CCP's policy, also employed during the 1950s, of integrating existing structures of authority into the structures of the Chinese nation-state by giving members of the minority nationality and religious elite official posts. The CCP's deployment of a 'United Front' policy was first borrowed from the Comintern model when the CCP and the Guomindang (GMD) formed a 'united front' first during the 1920s to defeat warlordism and subsequently in 1937 against the Japanese (Fairbank 1992 p.279).

strategically manoeuvring the expanding and contracting public space, to further the interests of their monasteries and communities.³¹

Diemberger (2010) has described this process of negotiation at a local level amongst both 'secular' and 'religious' leaders involved in the restoration of religious sites. She shows how they negotiated the shifting boundary between the religious and the secular in a society in which religion and politics had traditionally not been separated. Here and elsewhere (2007b, 2008) she has argued that the lines between religious/secular and community/government are blurred as individuals occupy multiple roles: 'the contemporary Sino-Tibetan relationship is not always a clear-cut one of domination and resistance, or secular Communist suppression of Buddhist beliefs, but full of paradoxes' (2008 p.153).

The work of Diemberger and Barnett highlights the delicate balancing act performed by individuals in reviving their traditions. Elites have been criticised from within the Tibetan community for the ambiguity of their political positions (Barnett 2006; Diemberger 2007a). Makley (2007, 2010) argues that the main quandary for religious elites was that, in working to revive and expand their own hegemonic orders, they 'risked participating in their own containment within a newly segmented political and economic order that subordinated Buddhist exchanges to state and capitalist interests' (2007 p.289). The papers in Goldstein and Kapstein (eds. 1998) also show how revitalised traditions ranging from Gelukpa monasticism (Goldstein 1998a), the Nyingmapa treasure (*gtér*) cult (Germano 1998), pilgrimage (Kapstein 1998b) to deity propitiation (Epstein and Peng 1998) have had to find ways of accommodating state policy and retaining legitimacy, walking 'the thin line between ... Chinese authority and Tibetan tradition' (Germano 1998 p.93). They also draw attention to the careful path that has to be trodden between the very different visions of religion and culture

³¹ Tibetan monasteries have always existed in complex interrelationships with secular authorities and have had to mediate competing interests: 'the most successful Tibetan *trulkus* [reincarnate lamas] were those who learned to mediate competing interests while carving out privileges and relative autonomy for their monasteries and estates' (Makley 2007 p.39; see also Diemberger 2007a pp.290-291). However, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, their relationship to the modern Chinese nation-state is significantly different from historical patron-preceptor relationships with imperial powers.

emphasized by the Chinese authorities and the Tibetan government-in-exile: 'most of the religious Tibetans we have encountered here seem to be attempting to steer a delicate course between them' (Kapstein 1998a p.145; see also Kolås and Thowsen 2005).

In his introduction to the volume, Goldstein (1998b) points to the 'Tibet Question' as one of the key issues in the process of revival and this is brought to the fore in his paper (1998a), which specifically focuses on a Gelukpa monastery, Drepung in Lhasa. Drepung monks staged a protest in Lhasa on 27 September 1987 – the first in a series of events culminating, in March 1989, in large-scale demonstrations and rioting and the subsequent imposition of martial law. Goldstein, who conducted his fieldwork in 1989-1995, characterises monks as being caught between political and religious loyalties and sees this as the main dilemma facing monastic leaders:

Cut off from fellow monks and lamas in India, under scrutiny from a government they consider hostile (or at best unfriendly), unable to convince current monks to eschew political militancy (or prevent them from doing so), they find themselves embroiled in constant political tension and conflict they cannot control. And some, undoubtedly, have doubts whether they should be trying to control this. Their successes, no matter how impressive, are always just a demonstration away from disaster (Goldstein 1998a p.47).

In short, accounts dealing with the Tibetan Buddhist monastic revival have largely been framed within the shifting public space for religion. They have either been directly concerned with state-society relations and the negotiation of religious space by elites or have emphasised the political dimensions of monastic revival. In work that has highlighted the delicate balancing act performed by Tibetans in reviving their traditions the state is always on one side of the scale.

1.4 Seeing beyond the state to local logics of the good and desirable

The objective of this study is to see beyond the state-society lens to explore other factors in the ongoing process of revival and development of monasticism in rapidly changing socio-economic conditions. This attempt to 'see beyond the state' is not intended to refute the significance and impact of state-monastic interactions on both monasteries and the daily lives of monks.³² The present study recognises the constraints of the state-monastery power dynamic and 'religious space' and the politics of religion in contemporary China. What is questioned is the extent to which these interactions have defined monastic development.

Whether particular approaches, decisions or ways of thinking happen to converge with or diverge from state definitions, the relationship defining these approaches, decisions or ways of thinking is not necessarily that between the monastery and state. This perhaps seems a rather obvious point, but as argued above, the politicisation of Tibetan religion and culture means that there is a tendency to interpret the practices and identities of individuals or groups as primarily relational to (and therefore contingent upon and conditioned by) the political and hegemonic power of the Chinese state. Actors are seen as accommodating, adapting to, negotiating or opposing the boundaries of state-defined public space.

Centring the analysis on unequal state-society power relations and dynamics of domination, subordination, accommodation and resistance carries a risk of reproducing essentialised representations of 'Tibetans' as victims or resisters (see also Barnett 2001 p.303; Makley 2007 p.28).³³ This is particularly evident in Kolås and Thowsen's (2005) work. They acknowledge that Tibetan culture is contested and throughout their study they document and celebrate the active cultural construction and production efforts of Tibetans, including the

³² State-monastery dynamics have also conditioned the research (see Chapter 2).

³³ The representation of Tibetans as victims has dominated literary and political representations of Tibetans in both the West and China (Bishop 1989; Lopez 1998; Schell 2000; Dodin and Rather 2001).

reconstruction of monasteries. However, the framework for their inquiry traps them rhetorically within the limits of state-defined public space, leading them to a conclusion which implies that Tibetans are reactive and in general without agency:

As Tibetans struggle to maintain and modernize Tibetan culture, they are doing so in response to the conditions created by Chinese authorities, whether they are adapting to or opposing these conditions. One might therefore argue that in the process of development of modern expressions of Tibetanness, Tibetan culture is contested and reconstructed on Chinese rather than Tibetan terms (ibid. p.178).

One way to deal with the conceptual dilemma of how to both acknowledge the dominance of a hegemonic power *and* recognise local agency is to think in terms of what Ortner (2006 p.143) identifies as two modalities of agency. In one modality agency is closely linked to power, both in terms of domination and resistance. In this context, ‘Tibetan’ agency is defined by the state-society relationship. However, in another modality, agency is related to ‘ideas of intention, to people’s (culturally constituted) projects in the world and their ability to engage and enact them’. In this modality, people can be seen to be pursuing their own projects, ‘defined by their own values and ideals, despite the colonial situation’ (ibid. p.152). Resistance (or its opposite) can be an unintended consequence, rather than a conscious purpose, of such projects.³⁴ At the ethnographic level:

... what is at stake is a contrast between the workings of agency within massive power relations, like colonialism and racism, as opposed to the workings of agency in contexts in which such relations can be – however momentarily, however partially – held at bay (ibid. p.143).

These modalities of agency are two faces of the same thing - agency as the pursuit of projects is often inseparable from the exercise of agency for or against

³⁴ See also Lamont (2000). In her study of the moral boundary-work of working class men in the United States, she makes the point that these men ‘are not opposing upper-middle class definitions of the world as much as emphasizing different aspects of reality. They are to a large extent inhabiting a different world’ (ibid. p.246).

power. However, the latter ‘is organised around the axis of domination and resistance, and thus defined to a great extent by the terms of the dominant party’, while the former ‘is defined by the local logics of the good and the desirable and how to pursue them’ (ibid. p.145).³⁵

This study seeks to access the local logics of the good and the desirable by exploring emic perspectives on the revival and development of Gelukpa monasticism. It builds on the work of Diemberger and Makley, both of whom employ oral histories as a methodological tool. The collecting of narratives from people who have been involved in the process of monastic revival and development ‘makes it possible to construct a “history from below”, otherwise consigned to oblivion’ (Diemberger 2010 p.113). This approach therefore gives importance to the subjective experiences of my interlocutors.³⁶ Such an approach brings unexpected dynamics to the fore, for example the continuities as well as disjunctures with the past (Chapter 3), the pressures for reform within the monastic community (Chapter 4), the problems faced by monasteries in recruiting and retaining monks (Chapter 7) and the precarious position of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in relation not only to the state, but also to society (Chapter 8).

One of the reasons for the previous emphasis on state-monastery interactions may be the paucity of ethnographic data, in particular about the Gelukpa monastic revival. Kolås and Thowsen (2005) give an overview, but are limited by the geographical and topical breadth of their survey approach and are primarily concerned with the conditions under which the revival took place and limitations to religious freedom (ibid. p.45). Goldstein (1998a) and Makley (2007) provide the only ethnographic studies to look specifically at the revival of individual Gelukpa monasteries, Drepung and Labrang.³⁷ These are two of the largest Gelukpa centres and both have received a high degree of state attention. Labrang’s revival was tied to efforts to construct national models of ideal statist

³⁵ Ortner (2006 p.145) emphasizes that cultural projects are themselves organised around local power relations, but the point here is to get beyond a view of action as solely relational to and defined by the power relationship between state and society.

³⁶ See Chapter 2 for further discussion of my methodological approach.

³⁷ Of these, only Goldstein focuses specifically on the monastery (see p.6 n.10).

religion that were ‘exemplary sites for ethnic tourism and harmonious state-minority relations’ (Makley 2007 p.20). Drepung monks led the 1980s demonstrations in Lhasa (p.14).³⁸ Arjia Rinpoche’s (2010) personal account of Kumbum’s revival provides an emic perspective, but again Kumbum is a Gelukpa monastic centre and a national ‘model monastery’ (see Chapter 5) and Arjia Rinpoche was a member of the senior religio-political elite. As Makley (2007 p.25) acknowledges, the larger monastic centres are in many ways atypical (see also Mills 2003 p.29).

The present study helps to fill this gap by collecting and analysing data from a broader field, including regional monastic centres and smaller local monasteries (see Chapter 2). It takes the monastery as the central unit of analysis and focuses on the perspectives of monks to elicit the logics and concerns of those involved in the process of monastic development. This approach also provides some insight into dynamics within Gelukpa monasteries, the members of which are no less capable of divergent thought than the state functionaries in China whom Barnett (2006 pp.29-35) discusses in his challenge to the ‘monolithic cadre view’. Moreover, the present study examines developments over the past decade, during which Tibetan societies have experienced significant socio-economic change.

1.5 Action, agency, negotiation and morality

I have suggested that it is useful to think in terms of ‘agency as the pursuit of projects’ in order to provide a perspective on the practices of monastic actors that moves beyond the state-society lens. The conceptualisation of action or ‘practice’ in this research is drawn from the epistemological framework of practice theory and the work of scholars who have developed this approach in the fields of anthropology, history, sociology and moral philosophy (Bourdieu 1977, 1979, 1998; de Certeau 1984; Giddens 1984; Scott 1985, 1998; Sayer 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2011; Ortner 2005, 2006; Sewell 2005).

³⁸ Drepung has also been a focus of Lhasa’s tourism development but Goldstein (1998a) only refers to tourism as a monastic income source. My research indicates that there is an important distinction between tourism and other self-supporting activities (see Chapter 5).

These scholars are all concerned with overcoming the dichotomies between object/subject and structure/agency. At the root of this is an attempt to address the epistemological problem of the gap between theory and practice – or in other words the disjuncture between the way in which society and social life are conceptualised in the abstract and our subjective experiences of them. Although differing in their theorisations of the problem, the general approach rejects the Enlightenment constructs of free will and the rational autonomous individual. It recognises that individuals and human beings are ‘constructed’ – in other words our practices (actions, speech, thoughts, perceptions, feelings) are constrained and conditioned by our position as situated actors within particular social structures and the political, economic and cultural resources available to us. At the same time it also seeks to avoid determinism and retain some sense of human agency and creativity.³⁹

Following Giddens, Sewell, Ortner, Sayer and de Certeau, I assume that actors are at least partially ‘knowing subjects’ who operate with a degree of reflexivity, as well as acting from the dispositions of a Bourdieusian ‘habitus’.⁴⁰ Agency is understood here as ‘the capacity of social beings to interpret and morally evaluate their situation and to formulate projects and try to enact them’ (Ortner 2006 p.56). Agency is not understood as ‘some natural or originary will; it takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity – of (culturally constituted) feelings, thoughts, and meanings’ (Ortner 2005 p.34).

The idea of ‘negotiation’ is a useful way to conceptualise the practices of monastic actors. However, the research proposes to take this beyond the negotiations by elites of the shifting public space for religion in contemporary China. De Certeau’s (1984 pp.97-99) metaphorical description of the act of walking in the city as enunciation can be drawn on as a more general metaphor for action or ‘practice’ as negotiation of space. The walker moves within a spatial

³⁹ Bourdieu’s theorisation of habitus has been criticised as tending towards determinism (for example Sewell 2005 pp.138-139). However, he refutes this (for example Bourdieu 1990 pp.14-17). Therefore, it seems fair to say that he was seeking to avoid determinism.

⁴⁰ The internalisation of structures through socialisation into dispositions: ‘an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted’ (Bourdieu 1977 p.95).

order that organises an ensemble of possibilities and interdictions (walls). The walker actualises some of these possibilities, but s/he also moves them about and invents others, increasing the number of possibilities and prohibitions. ‘Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc. the trajectories it “speaks”’. As discussed above, previous work has shown how religious elites have, in pursuit of their own interests, tactically manoeuvred the space for religion defined by the state as legitimate. They have also ignored or found ways around ‘walls’ put in place by the state (for example quotas on numbers of monks and age restrictions; see Chapter 7).

However, the way in which the walker moves through space is relational not just to what s/he, as a situated actor, believes and knows to be possible or impossible, but also to the ethical/legal value s/he accords to particular paths (obligatory, forbidden, permitted or optional) (de Certeau 1984 p.99) – whether or not this is done in an evaluative way. It is the value that *the walker* accords to a particular path – the way that s/he feels about it – that is crucial to her/his movement, not the value as defined by the spatial order. The conceptualisation of morality here therefore extends beyond convention and formal norms to conceptions of the good, or in other words ideas and senses of how one should live and behave with regards to well-being (see also Sayer 2004 p.4).⁴¹ Morality encompasses moral sentiments, such as feelings of approval, disapproval, shame and guilt and dispositions towards ethical or unethical behaviours, which if enacted provoke moral sentiments (Sayer 2011 p.3). Ethical dispositions and moral sentiments, as with other dispositions, are embedded in social relations, developed contingently through social interaction and embodied through practice.

In my conversations with Akhu Lobsang and other monks, they were continually making assessments (whether consciously or not) about what was appropriate and inappropriate. Their judgements were not simply drawn against a set of established norms and values (whether those of the state-imposed spatial order or the competing order of Gelukpa monasticism). They also drew on what

⁴¹ Since there have been different and contradictory ways of distinguishing between the terms ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’, I follow Sayer (2011 pp.16-17) in using both terms ‘interchangeably to cover all the things associated with either term’.

practice theorists have referred to as practical reason or a 'feel for the game', the ethical dimension of which relates to their concerns for others about whom they care and/or towards whom they feel commitment and/or some sense of obligation – in other words to members of a moral community. It is recognised that moral reasoning can be employed to justify practices. Moreover, morality and self-interest are sometimes congruent (Scheffler 1992, cited in Sayer 2011 p.123). However, this study does not consider morality to simply function as a tool of domination or as a resource drawn upon tactically in a game oriented towards maximising power and wealth. I believe that to do so would fail to do justice to the integrity of my interlocutors, the sincerity of their ethical concerns and in some cases their endeavours to 'do the right thing' (see also Saxer 2010 p.299).⁴²

My interlocutors' conceptions of the good were grounded in both positive ('world-guided') observation and normative ('world-guiding') judgement (Sayer 2004 p.13). They related to their experiences of the world and the way in which, in their positions as situated actors, they mediated and interpreted these experiences. Moreover, they were not operating within a closed system of meaning (see also Lamont 1992 pp.182-183) or in relation to just one clearly defined moral community. What they felt to be 'right' in one context or relationship was not necessarily 'right' in another (see also Sayer 2011 p.126). These overlapping and contested conceptions of the good can lead to ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction.

It is suggested that by paying attention to these (often complex) moral dimensions of processes of change it is possible to see beyond the state to other

⁴² Here I follow Lamont (1992), Swartz (1997) and Sayer (2011) in rejecting the 'universal worldly maximisation logic' (Lamont 1992 p.185) of Bourdieu, who construes action (including acts of speech) as a competitive struggle, oriented towards the accrual of symbolic and material resources. In his concern for the subordinated and his efforts to expose power relations, Bourdieu himself was an idealist working to change and improve society (Swartz 1997 pp.259-262). As Sayer (2011 p.143) argues, we are 'ethical beings' in the sense that 'we evaluate behaviour according to some ideas of what is good or acceptable. We compare and admire or deplore particular actions, personal traits, social practices and institutions'. We are not 'mere pursuers of self-interest, creatures of habit, followers of conventions and norms or puppets of power' (Archer 2007, cited in Sayer 2011 p.143). Lamont's (1992 p.184) research suggests that respecting one's moral obligations 'is often valued as a goal in itself'.

dynamics in the process of monastic revival and development. In order to lay the ground for such an analysis, it is necessary to discuss the social bases and moral logics upon which monasticism and the particular form of monasticism revived in the 1980s were contingent.

1.6 The social bases of monasticism and ‘mass monasticism’

1.6.1 The monastic economy and the ‘monastic moral community’

I have suggested that the monastic economy is an ideal place so start this exploration of the social and moral dynamics of Gelukpa monastic revival and development (p.6). There has been a tendency to divide the study of monasticism into inquiries concerned with the practices of religious virtuosi and those concerned with the social, political, cultural, and economic realities of monasteries (Robson 2010 p.9). Goldstein (1998a), who provides the most detailed study of a contemporary monastic economy, deals with this from an economic perspective (p.6). However, we have already seen how the soteriological and mundane foundations of monasticism were intermeshed in Akhu Lobsang’s narrative (pp.3-4). Buddhist monasticism has always been intertwined with economic concerns, as is evident in Gregory Schopen’s (2004) work on Indian monasticism. These mundane concerns, far from being in tension with the soteriological function of monasticism, are in fact inseparable from it.

The popular view of the Buddhist monk as an ascetic individual who renounces the world (i.e. society) elides the social relationships that are foundational to monasticism (see also Mills 2003 pp.54-63; Robson 2010 pp.3-8). A monk renounces the processes of household production and reproduction which when paired together constitute the production of wealth (Mills 2003 p.79). The reproduction of monasticism therefore necessarily relies on the sexual and economic reproduction of the lay community. This is a point also emphasised by Mills (2003 pp.51-58), who argues that scholars writing about Tibetan culture have tended to neglect this relationship of dependence, instead characterising the social dimensions of monastic life in negative terms as isolated, individualistic, atomistic and anti-relational.

Therefore, the existence and continuity of monasticism is contingent on a relationship of dependence and a division of labour between monastic and lay communities. Monks and laity together form a moral community (hereafter the ‘monastic moral community’) whose shared values underpin its mundane bases. The monastic economy is embedded in the soteriological and therefore moral project of monastic Buddhism.⁴³ Predicated upon the Buddhist value of giving or generosity and the framework of karma and merit, the ethical relationship between the laity and the monastic community is that of patron to field of merit (karmic fruitfulness).⁴⁴ Giving is one of the bases for living an ethical life and thus accruing merit (Harvey 2000 p.19), leading to a better life and rebirth. The accumulation of merit is therefore an integral part of the Buddhist soteriological project and the practice of allowing lay people to gain merit is a monastic task (Dreyfus 2003 p.36). Since the monastic community acts as one of the best places for one to plant the seeds of one’s good action (Harvey 2000 pp.21-23),⁴⁵ the monastery becomes a normative centre of wealth accumulation (Mills 2003 p.63). This merit-based moral economic framework is common to all Buddhist traditions:

From the outset monasteries were structurally dependent on a relationship with the lay community, and the material support they

⁴³ In considering the monastic economy as embedded in social relations and values reference should be made to the intellectual heritage of Polanyi (2001) and his concept of ‘emdeddedness’. His argument about ‘double movement’ (the defensive countermovement that emerges to resist the disembedding of the economic from the social through marketisation) has been developed in the literature on ‘moral economy’, in particular Thompson’s (1971) work on the 18th century English food riots and Scott’s (1976) work on the normative roots of peasant politics. While the intellectual heritage of these scholars is acknowledged, it is beyond the scope of the present study to engage in the broader moral economy debate (for an overview see Booth 1994).

⁴⁴ Harvey (2000 p.18) argues that the Pali term *puñña* (S. *punya*; T. *bsod-nams*) is better translated as ‘karmic fruitfulness’/‘karmically fruitful’ than the more common English translation ‘merit’/ ‘meritorious’ because ‘it makes a connection with the fact that actions (karmas) are often likened to “seeds” and their results are known as “fruits” (*phalas*) or “ripenings”’ (ibid.). I have opted to follow the more standard translation for the sake of intelligibility beyond a specialist readership, while noting Harvey’s point that a ‘meritorious act’ in the Buddhist sense is not simply one that entitles the doer to a reward, but rather one that has a natural power of its own to produce a happy result.

⁴⁵ Within the Tibetan Buddhist context, the reincarnate lama is the field of most merit. On the gendered hierarchical structures of giving and merit-making in Tibetan Buddhism see Mills 2003, Gutschow 2004 and Makley 2007.

received entailed obligations for them to come into contact with the laity to provide religious services to fulfil their side of the merit exchange relationship (Robson 2010 p.8).

However, one of the distinctive features of Tibetan societies was the extent of monastic Buddhism. Goldstein (1989; 1998a; 2009) has referred to the particular form of monasticism which emerged under the hegemony of the Gelukpa as a philosophy or ideology of 'mass monasticism', defined as 'an emphasis on recruiting and sustaining very large numbers of celibate monks for their entire lives' (2009 p.1). Prior to the Maoist years, an estimated 20 to 30 per cent of the male population were monks, many of whom belonged to an extensive interconnected network of Gelukpa institutions.⁴⁶ The largest monastic centres (p.3 n.8) functioned as training grounds for monks from all over the Tibetan region and beyond.⁴⁷ Regional centres were affiliated to the colleges of the Lhasa monasteries where monks would go for further study, although some became respected centres of learning in their own right. The regional centres were the 'mother monasteries' (*ma-dgon*) of networks of local branch monasteries (*dgon-lag*) and practice centres (*sgrub-sde*). Monks and reincarnate lamas from affiliate monasteries studied at regional centres and reincarnate lamas and scholar monks visited

⁴⁶ The actual number of monks is not known and it is likely that the proportion of males who were monks varied considerably from area to area. The estimate here is based on Goldstein's (2009) latest work which cites figures provided by both the Tibetan government-in-exile (20 to 30 per cent) and Chinese government (24 per cent). This is higher than Goldstein's (1998b p.5) previous estimate of 10 to 15 per cent. A figure of 20 to 30 per cent accords with Chinese statistics provided for one of my main field areas, Rebgong (C. Tongren) county, in 1954 (Pu 1990 p.430). At that time monks (over 90 per cent of whom were Gelukpa) constituted 14 per cent of the total population. Samuel (1993 pp.309, 578-582) had previously argued that assumptions that 25 per cent or more of the male population were monks appeared to be 'greatly exaggerated'. Based on what he considered to be the most reliable ethnographic sources (dealing with monastic populations in Dingri, Sakya and Ladakh), he estimated that in centralised agricultural areas 10 to 12 per cent of the male population were monks and in other areas the proportion would have been considerably lower.

⁴⁷ Kumbum in Amdo, for example, was an important training centre for Mongolian monks. Amdo's monasteries were central in the cross-cultural network of Tibetan Buddhism, being at 'the centre of a nexus of Inner Asian relations that played a crucial role in linking Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian civilizations' (Tuttle 2010 p.32). See also Chapter 2.7.

affiliate monasteries to give teachings and initiations.⁴⁸ Moreover, lay households, villages and tribes were tied into this monastic network through the system of patron communities (see Chapter 3). This ‘web of monasticism’ (Miller B. 1961) was not a static network, but ‘a dynamic and shifting pattern’ (Samuel 1993 p.312), with the political and economic influence of different monasteries and regions expanding and contracting at different times.⁴⁹

1.6.2 The rise of the Gelukpa and ‘mass monasticism’

Although the prevalence of celibate monasticism is one of the distinctive features of Tibetan Buddhist societies, it is not the essential determinant of religious authority in Tibetan Buddhism.⁵⁰ The successful establishment of Buddhism in Tibetan regions is conceived to be dependent on the intervention of tantric masters who have the ability to subjugate the lived territory (populated by local gods and spirits) through tantric embodiment of Buddhist doctrine (see also Mills 2003 p.17).⁵¹ The development of institutionalised Buddhism within Tibetan societies has therefore been characterised by the relationship between and intermeshing of tantric and clerical elements (Samuel 1993; Mills 2003).⁵² As Samuel (1993 p.309) points out, celibate monasticism in Tibetan societies ‘was neither as uniform nor as extensive as is often supposed’ and there were a wide variety of religious practitioners. The Nyingmapa, Kagyupa, Sakyapa and Bonpo

⁴⁸ As Tuttle (2010 p.41) notes, the relationship between mother monasteries and their affiliates is understudied.

⁴⁹ Although the present study is concerned with Gelukpa monasticism, the network of relationships between reincarnate lamas, monasteries and lay Buddhists extends across Tibetan Buddhist traditions (see, for example, Miller B.1961 p.200).

⁵⁰ In the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, by contrast, the ideal of Buddhism equals monasticism (Mills 2003 p.27).

⁵¹ Tantra ‘revolves around the use of divine realities as a vehicle, both for the attainment or “realization” [S. *siddha*] of enlightenment and for the evocation of supernormal ritual powers’ (Mills 2003 p.12).

⁵² The standard Tibetan account of the founding of the first monastery in Tibet, Samye (bsam-yas), in the eighth century represents an articulation of monastic and tantric authority. The abbot of India’s Vikramaśīla monastic university, Śāntaraksita, was invited by the Tibetan King Trisong Detsen (khri-song lde’u-btsan) to found a monastery and train the first Tibetan monks. However, he was unable to do so until the tantric *siddha* Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) had used his powers to subdue the local spirits and deities and bind them to the service of Buddhism.

have monastic traditions and their large teaching monasteries were their central institutions (Samuel 1993 p.272). However, they privilege tantric practice and have a greater investment in non-monastic practice, as is evident in the importance of hereditary lay tantric practitioners (*sngags-pa*) in the Nyingmapa. Monasticism is an important, but optional element of the Buddhist path (Mills 2003 p.19).

However, with the political ascendancy of the Gelukpa, particularly from the 17th century, monasticism was encouraged on a massive scale (Kapstein 2006 p.219). One of the main characteristics of the Gelukpa tradition, as developed from the thought of Tsongkhapa (Tsong-kha-pa; 1357-1419), is its emphasis on celibate monasticism as the ‘essential determinant of religious authority’ (Mills 2003 p.20). The tradition is scholastic, focused on the study of dialectics and philosophy through formal debate, taking as its model the great scholastic monasteries of India such as Nālandā.⁵³ For most monks, tantric practice is limited to the basic training necessary for performing ritual services for the monastery and the lay community.

The synthesis of these clerical elements with the tantric authority foundational to Gelukpa monasticism arose through the institution of the reincarnate lama (*sprul-sku*),⁵⁴ which was of great importance in the social reproduction and spread of Gelukpa monasticism (Mills 2003 p.81; Makley 2010 p.130). The institution of reincarnation lineages emerged in the Karma-Kagyü school in the 14th century in the specific historical context of Mongolian-Tibetan relations and was closely linked to the re-enactment of political and religious donor-donee relationships

⁵³ See Dreyfus (2003) for a detailed description of the Gelukpa education system.

⁵⁴ Literally: emanation body (S. *nirmāṇakāya*), referring to the emanation body of a Buddha. A reincarnate lama is a human being who is understood to be the reincarnation of a historical figure and the worldly manifestation of a bodhisattva. The reincarnate lama is able to use tantric ritual practices to control the process of rebirth in order to be reborn wherever s/he can best continue her/his bodhisattva mission to liberate all sentient beings from suffering. For a discussion of reincarnation lineages in the Tibetan context see Diemberger (2007a pp.241-6; see also Mills 2003 pp.263-294). A bodhisattva is a being who has vowed to become reborn as many times as it takes to attain Perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Williams (ibid. pp.49-54) argues that we should treat with caution the common assertion in the West that the bodhisattva is a being who postpones or turns back from Enlightenment to save all sentient beings first.

from one generation to the next (Diemberger 2007a p.242; see also Makley 2010 p.130).⁵⁵ Reincarnate lamas inherit 'the tantric Buddhist capacity to violently tame enemies of the *Dharma* and command legions of protector deities' (ibid.), but their main seats are in monasteries. There is therefore an interdependent relationship between the power of reincarnate lamas and celibate monasticism (Mills 2003 p.81; Makley 2007 p.25).

The centralised, hierarchical structure and relatively clerical nature of the Gelukpa, with its emphasis on discipline and scholarship, were appealing to secular authorities (Samuel 1993 p.511), attracting financial and political patronage from local leaders and the Mongol Khans and Ming and Qing empires. This enabled it to expand rapidly through the creation of new monasteries and the conversion of existing ones. With a few exceptions, Gelukpa influence extended throughout most of the Tibetan region,⁵⁶ and beyond to Mongolia, Russia, northeast China (Manchuria) and Beijing.⁵⁷ The Gelukpa became pervasive in Amdo in the 16th century (Tuttle 2010 p.27), gaining dominance in the more centralized agricultural areas in the northern and central parts and along trade routes in the higher grassland areas of the south. The Nyingmapa and other

⁵⁵ Although some scholars (for example Makley 2007) use the term 'incarnate lama', Diemberger (2007a pp.241-242) draws an important distinction between the incarnation of a bodhisattva or tantric deity (the manifestation of a spiritual entity in a human being) and the reincarnation of an historical figure (which implies the transmission of a principle of consciousness from one human to another). Both aspects are encompassed in the figure of the *sprul-sku*. Since it is the system of reincarnation lineages (rather than the idea of incarnation) that is distinctive in the Tibetan tradition, the term 'reincarnate lama' is used.

⁵⁶ Exceptions included Derge (sde-dge; C. Dege) in Kham, which was an explicitly non-Gelukpa state (Samuel 1993 p.513). Following Samuel (1993), the 'Tibetan region' includes Tibetan societies in the present day PRC, Bhutan, northern India and Nepal.

⁵⁷ Makley (2007; 2010) conceptualises this as a process of 'mandalization': the construction of jurisdictions on the model of the Buddhist tantric *maṇḍala* palace with the reincarnate lama positioned as the central deity. A *maṇḍala* is a schematised representation (in visualised or material form) of the palace of a deity with her/his retinue, guarded by protector deities, which simultaneously represents the cosmos and a certain definable territorial space within local space (Mills 2003 p.122; Makley 2007 p.56). The process of mandalization is that of reincarnate lamas being 'ritually recognized as divinized embodied agents, operating from the centre of a *maṇḍala* and thereby pervading and encompassing space and time in order to dominate deities toward particular contemporary ends' (ibid. p.53). Makley (2007) refers to the revival of Labrang monastery as a process of 're-mandalization'.

traditions remained dominant in the southern nomadic Golok (mgo-log; C. Guoluo) region (Gruschke 2001 p.73).⁵⁸

In the 17th century, the Gelukpa gained total political ascendancy in central Tibet under the patronage of the Mongol Khans. The central Tibetan state, governed under a combined system of religious and secular rule, was founded by the 5th Dalai Lama in 1642 and extended to an area roughly analogous to the TAR. This state was based on a normative system privileging religious goals and activities and to a large extent ‘existed to facilitate large numbers of monks’ (Goldstein 2009 p.1). Beyond the central Tibetan state, there were a variety of social and political formations, including ‘extensive interregional monastic polities’ (Makley 2007 p.33) such as Rebgong and Labrang in Amdo. As in central Tibet, the political structure of these polities was based on the principle of combined religious and secular rule, centred on the legitimating authority of a particular reincarnation lineage in alliance with secular leaders. The ideological, social and economic structures of these polities supported the recruitment and maintenance of large numbers of males in lifelong celibate monastic life.⁵⁹

1.6.3 The logics of ‘mass monasticism’

The ideology of ‘mass monasticism’ was based on the principle that the more monks there were the better (Goldstein 1989 pp.21-24; Goldstein 1998a pp.15-16; Kapstein 2004 pp.233-235; Sherab Gyatso 2004 p.222). There were interlinked ideological/moral and economic logics to the expansion of monasticism. Monks are in a better position to accumulate merit than the laity, therefore the more monks there are, the greater the accrual of merit to society as a whole (Kapstein 2004 pp.233-234). For a reincarnate lama or monk (who may be later recognised as the first in a reincarnation lineage), founding a new monastery is a form of merit-making religious work of benefit to society as a whole. Local leaders would

⁵⁸ The Nyingmapa also retained a strong presence in some areas of Gelukpa dominance, including Rebgong.

⁵⁹ Mills (2003 pp.28-29) suggests that this rise in monasticism in Tibetan societies, far beyond that of the Theravāda Buddhist countries, can be linked to the general absence of secular kingships to regulate and contain the power and extent of the monastic community: ‘the Mongol overlords maintained a relatively distant role, influencing political affairs through dominant Buddhist schools rather than in opposition to them’.

both accumulate merit and gain prestige through inviting religious masters to found monasteries in their region and giving endowments to support these institutions. Therefore, as well as the underlying ideological orientation towards expansion, the founding of branch monasteries was also a way to expand the influence of a particular tradition, monastic centre and/or reincarnate lama and to secure trans-local sources of patronage (Miller R. 1961 pp.431-437).

The expansion and spread of monasteries required people, not just material resources. Some monasteries had periodic recruitment drives to increase numbers and in some areas such as Rebgong a 'monk tax' was imposed, requiring the local community to supply fixed numbers of boys to the monastery in order to increase or maintain the monastic population (Michael 1982 p.144; Samuel 1993 p.514; Mills 2003 p.40; Sonam Tsering 2008 p.2; Goldstein 2009 p.7). However, most monks were recruited as children at the wish of their parents for a mixture of religious and secular reasons (Michael 1982 p.143; Samuel 1993 p.515; Goldstein 1998a pp.16-17; Mills 2003 p.40; Kapstein 2006 p.220; Goldstein 2009 p.3).

Dedicating a son to the monastic life would bring merit and esteem to the parents and also to the child, whose status as a monk raised him above that of a layman and placed him in a better position to accumulate merit. Parents might also dedicate a son to the monastic life in fulfilment of a promise to a deity. The monkhood was also viewed as a culturally valued life for extra sons or orphans. Monasteries therefore served to absorb surplus labour during periods when fertility rates outpaced the expansion of economic activity (Kapstein 2006 p.219). Boys were sent to the monasteries at a young age because it was considered important that they be recruited before they had experienced sexual relations with girls (Goldstein 2009 p.3). Unlike the system that developed in Thailand, Tibetan monks were expected to be monks for life.

Therefore, Tibetan monasticism was 'not the otherworldly domain of a minute self-selected elite, but a mass phenomenon' (ibid. p.2). To become a monk was 'usually not so much a sign of deep religiosity as an obligation that attended individuals as members of a household group' (Mills 2003 p.40). Moreover, the household often continued to support the monk and therefore familial ties were

maintained. The monastery as a collective was responsible for funding monastic assemblies and the upkeep and expansion of monastery buildings. Individual monks would receive tea at assembly gatherings and might receive subsidies as members of the assembly (Ekvall 1964; Nornang 1990; Mills 2003).⁶⁰ However, they also had to rely on their families and/or engage in income-generating activities, for example working as servants for senior monks, providing ritual services for the laity, or engaging in trade or business (ibid.; Goldstein 2009, 1998a).

The key distinction placing any monk above a lay person was related to the act of renunciation of the productive and reproductive processes of the household in the service of Buddhism (Dreyfus 2003; Sherab Gyatso 2004; Makley 2007; Goldstein 2009).⁶¹ This was seen as the first step on a graded path, along which individuals would progress to varying degrees. The most highly respected monks were the scholars and hermits who dedicated themselves to study and practice and were often relatively poor, relying on donations from the assembly hall and support from their families.⁶² However, it was not expected that most men would have the disposition to study or practice Buddhism deeply and the monastic system worked to incorporate men of various dispositions who served Buddhism and the community in a variety of ways, not just through scholarship (Michael 1982 pp.58-59; Goldstein 1998a pp.21-22; Makley 2007 pp.247-257).⁶³ Monks were obliged to follow the rules of ritual and decorum of their monastery (for example relating to dress and deportment), but matters relating to the cultivation of an individual's mind, such as study and meditation and keeping the monastic precepts beyond the bare minimum, were largely up to the individual (Goldstein 1998a p.22; Dreyfus

⁶⁰ At Drepung monks received no subsidy at all (Goldstein 1998a p.21).

⁶¹ Makley (2007 p.244) interprets this from a gender perspective as the virtuous intention to tame to the service of Buddhism what are understood by Tibetans to be the most compulsive of male attributes: physical violence and heterosexual desire.

⁶² Goldstein (1998a p.22) and Makley (2007 p.246) emphasise the status of scholar monks (*dpe-cha-ba*), but the Gelukpa also had a tradition of hermit monks: *ritröpa* (*ri-khrod-pa*). Monks who have taken the vows of a *ritröpa* are distinguished by their yellow upper shawl (*gzan gser-po*). To my knowledge, there is no scholarship on the Gelukpa *ritröpa* tradition.

⁶³ At Drepung only c.10 per cent were scholar monks (Goldstein 2009 p.8).

2003 p.39).⁶⁴ Many monks never progressed beyond novice stage (*dge-tshul*) to become fully ordained (*dge-slong*) (Lopez 1997 p.20; Makley 2007 p.247).

1.7 Overview of the chapters

This chapter has outlined the aims and approach of the research: in short, to ‘see beyond the state’ by exploring the local logics of the good and desirable in monks’ pursuit of the project of monastic revival and development. Chapter 2 discusses my methodological approach, sources and fieldwork, and associated epistemological and ethical issues. It also introduces the geographical area and the field sites. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the reopening of monasteries in the 1980s, emphasising the social processes of revival and exploring continuities as well as disjunctures with the past. It describes the re-separation of monastic and lay communities, the re-enactment of relations of dependence between them in new circumstances and the reformation of the monastic moral community

The core of the dissertation examines the subsequent development of monasteries over the past 30 years. It moves through three levels of analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 focus specifically on the development of the monastic economy, documenting and analysing monastic perspectives. Chapter 4 outlines the monastic economies of my field sites and the key shifts in forms of collective monastic financing: the development of self-supporting businesses and a shift away from institutionalised alms collection from patron communities. By revealing the moral dimensions of these reforms, it shows that they do not simply represent monastic accommodation of state policy and discourse. Chapter 5 focuses on tourism development, a major arena of state-monastic interaction which is perceived differently to other forms of development. It contextualises monastic attitudes toward tourism within the wider problematics and politics of tourism and state patronage of monastic Buddhism, but also moves beyond the state-society lens to examine how ‘resistance’ to tourism has been conditioned by conceptions of value and meaning not tied to the state.

⁶⁴ There are four ‘defeating’ offences which entail expulsion: sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex, serious theft, killing a human being, and making false claims of spiritual attainment.

Chapters 6 and 7 move into a discussion of monastic ‘development’ in a broader sense, examining two of the common (and interlinked) themes that emerged from discussions about the monastic economy: monastic moral decline and monastic population decline. Chapter 6 examines understandings of monastic moral decline in their contemporary and historical contexts and within the framework of Buddhist ethics and cosmology. It then goes on to show how monks’ ‘sense of the times’ and their experiences of its concrete manifestations have conditioned their attitudes and practices. Chapter 7 examines the trends in numbers of monks at my field sites over the past 50 years and discusses contingent factors in the current trend towards shrinking monastic assemblies. It shows how different perceptions of the issue have shaped monastic attitudes and practices, illuminating tensions between monastic ideals and socio-economic realities. The issues discussed thus far raise questions as to the sustainability of ‘mass monasticism’ in contemporary Tibetan societies. Chapter 8 therefore revisits the ‘conceptions of the good’ that underpinned the form of monasticism revived in the 1980s, exploring the extent to which they have been challenged by conjunctures of shifting political, economic and social conditions.

Finally, the conclusion draws together the different strands of the research to explore the moral dimensions of monastic revival and development, elaborating on the notion of moral boundary negotiation raised in the account of my encounter with Akhu Lobsang at the beginning of this chapter. By thus moving the analysis beyond the domination/resistance dichotomy a fresh perspective on monastic revival and development emerges, showing that this is a process that has been intermeshed with, but not exclusively dominated or defined by, its relationship to the state.

Chapter 2

Methodology and fieldwork

Chapter 1 questioned the limitations of the state-society lens in analysing monastic revival and development and suggested that a way to move beyond this to explore other dynamics was to construct a 'history from below', paying attention to the narratives and subjective experiences of monks. For the empirical part of this research, a methodological approach was selected most suited to the research aims. The first section of this chapter elaborates on this approach, from entering the field through to the writing process. The remainder addresses various aspects of the fieldwork in greater detail and deals with related epistemological and ethical issues. It discusses issues of access and changes to the research design, data collection methods, sources and my positioning in the field. Finally, it introduces the geographical area where I was working, the reasoning behind my choice of field sites and a brief description of them.

2.1 From field to desktop: an inductive and dialogic approach

A qualitative approach, using ethnographic methods, was the most suited to the aim of my research to 'see beyond the state' by exploring the 'local logics of the good and desirable' (Chapter 1). There has been considerable debate on the reliability and validity of qualitative research (see, for example, Bryman 1988; Sliverman 2000). One of the key issues stems from the problem of interpretation and the extent to which 'researchers really can provide accounts from the perspective of those whom they study and how we can evaluate the validity of their interpretations of those perspectives' (Bryman 1988 p.73). Moreover, the fieldwork process has come under criticism for being 'a colonial (or, at best, postcolonial, encounter)' (Harrell 200 p.291), which says as much about the worldview of the researcher as it does about the understandings and interpretations of the people being studied.

One way in which researchers have attempted to address this has been to 'enter the dialogic mode, in which the field encounter is portrayed as a conversation between the ethnographer and one or a series of people from the culture studied, in which all contributed to the account' (Harrell 2007 p.291). Since one of my principal concerns was to explore emic perspectives on monastic revival and development, I attempted to follow a 'dialogic' approach. The research is exploratory, with a focus on 'discovery rather than verification' (O'Brien 2006 p.28). I thus chose to use a 'responsive interviewing' method (Rubin and Rubin 2005), starting out with ideas and hunches, but then discovering and testing new angles in a process of continuous redesign, working from the ground up to eventually arrive at the written product of the research (see also O'Brien 2006). Using the strengths of my area studies training, I have used a 'jobbing' approach (Barnett and Blaikie 1994, cited in King 2009), piecing together materials from not only interviews, but also other sources and drawing 'eclectically on concepts and frameworks from more than one discipline' (King 2009 p.20) as analytical tools.

The elaboration and application of a theoretical framework prior to fieldwork and an experimental approach 'may constrain researchers excessively and blind them not only to the views of participants but also to the unusual and unanticipated faces of a strand of social reality' (Bryman 1988 p.86). The flexibility of an inductive and dialogic approach, on the other hand, allows for a more open-ended process that leaves space for patterns, themes and ideas to gradually emerge 'both during the fieldwork and after ... Voices and ideas are neither muffled nor dismissed' (Okely 1994 p.20). Thus, as described in the account of my encounter with Akhu Lobsang (Chapter 1.1), an initial focus on monastic economic development opened up to wider issues, at times taking me in unforeseen directions and challenging my assumptions.

However, even when a relatively open-ended approach is taken, a considerable degree of selective attention and focus is unavoidable if research is to be conducted at sufficient depth. This inevitably means that there are interesting avenues that I have not been able to pursue within the scope of the present study. For example, the increasing involvement of Han Chinese in Tibetan Buddhism is touched upon, but is a topic that deserves fuller consideration in its own right (see p.285).

Moreover, even following a dialogic approach, the researcher holds the final authority (Harrell 2007 p.291). The entire process involves ongoing assessment, filtering and analysis of narratives and other sources, which are fed recursively back into data collection and analysis. It has been selective: I have made, reviewed and re-made decisions about the sites, issues and events on which I focus, the voices I include, the perspective I take and the theories and concepts I employ. Epistemologically, I draw upon a common anthropological perspective that data collection and analysis are 'continuing and creative processes' (Okely 1994 p.32; see also Geertz 1988), with ideas, themes and interpretations emerging from not only the 'hard' audio, visual and textual materials gathered, but also 'through the memory of field experience, unwritten yet inscribed in the fieldworker's being' (Okely 1994 pp.30-31) and through subjective reception of theories and ideas encountered in both the field and the literature. These are fed back into the process of conceptualisation and interpretation of the 'raw' data.

The final product is thus my description, interpretation and analysis of the topic of inquiry, not that of my interlocutors. Furthermore, the entire process, from entering the field through writing the dissertation is as dependent on the vagaries of the research process as any conscious planning and design and is conditioned by the researcher's positioning in what Harrell refers to as an 'ethnographic matrix':

It is no longer assumed, as it once was, that there is a single truth to be extracted from the ethnographic encounter. This idea is not necessarily rooted in the disputed philosophical point that human subjects are harder to know than inanimate objects (Roscoe 1995). It is simply the realization that all ethnographers are enmeshed in a web composed of the anthropologist's desire for knowledge and professional recognition; the subjects' help, accommodation, resistance, and sometimes purposeful deceit; and the requirements of institutions external to the field encounter, such as colonial officials, postindependence governments, funding agencies, institutional review boards, doctoral committees, journal editors, and academic presses. (Harrell 2007 p.288).

Nevertheless, certain procedures can mitigate the challenges this poses to validity. I have attempted to listen to, understand and carefully document the perspectives of my interlocutors, making audio recordings of interviews when appropriate (p.54) and using a field diary to record the situated context of field encounters. I tested facts, stories, opinions, ideas and concepts gathered in one encounter in subsequent encounters and used follow-up interviews and personal communications with key informants to discuss, check and clarify aspects of the research during fieldwork and the writing process. This iterative approach was a mechanism for testing not only what others told me, but also my own assumptions and interpretations. Another way to address the challenge of validity in qualitative research is to 'employ more than one method of investigation and hence more than one type of data' (Bryman 1998 p.130). In addition to the use of semi-structured 'responsive' interviewing, I have also drawn upon data gathered through observation, 'back-stage' vantage points, written sources and surveys to contextualise the interviews and 'triangulate' the data. The sources and data collection methods are discussed in more detail in Sections 2.4 and 2.5.

Once the main fieldwork was completed I started to systematically organise and code the data and to develop the analysis from the categories grounded in the data and the wider literature.¹ The challenges posed by the 'volume and complexity of qualitative data' have been discussed by many scholars (Bryman and Burgess 1994 p.216). Therefore, 'coding (or indexing) is a key process since it serves to organise the copious notes, transcripts or documents that have been collected' (ibid. 1994 p.218). It is also 'a powerful shaping process, determining the ways that researchers can approach data (via the specified categories)' (Richards and Richards 1994 p.148).

I have used a qualitative software programme (NVivo) to collect together, organise and thematically code my field data. Use of an electronic system 'cannot substitute for the imagination that is a necessary ingredient for analysis' (Bryman and Burgess 1994 p.221). However, it does have the advantage of enabling

¹ My choice to use one extended fieldwork period for my main data collection (rather than alternating between periods in Qinghai conducting fieldwork and periods in the UK processing and analysing data) was largely driven by difficulties of access and affiliation.

efficient organisation, retrieval and examination of topics, concepts, themes, events and stories across data sources, and it also makes it possible to search the data. Moreover, it allows for (infinitely) multiple coding of sections of narrative, thus making it possible to explore the multiple meanings in a text, rather than having to classify it as belonging to one or another of a fixed set of categories (see also Richards and Richards 1994 p.162).

As with any thematic coding/indexing system, a key challenge is to retain the sense of context when the data is cut out and disembedded from its original context (Bryman and Burgess 1994 p.218). Moreover, as the process of analysis leads to more abstract conceptualisation and theorisation of the data, the researcher departs from the meaning systems found in the field, leading to a risk of 'reifying and thereby losing touch with the real world' (Bryman 1988 p.85). One of the criticisms of qualitative research is the problem of 'anecdotalism' whereby 'research reports sometimes appeal to a few, telling "examples" of some apparent phenomenon, without any attempt to analyse less clear (or even contradictory) data' (Silverman 1989, cited in Silverman 2000 p.10; see also Bryman 1988 p.76).

Once again, use of an electronic system makes it easy and quick to move between segments of text and their original context (whether textual, audio or visual). During the analytical process of writing up I continued to take an iterative approach, moving between 'between the ideas and the data' (Hammersley and Wilkinson 2007 p.159), constantly returning to and reviewing the original materials as my ideas developed. There were occasions when the recursive processes of coding and analytical writing highlighted gaps and/or the need for corroboration, necessitating the collection of further data through key informants. However, this study emphasises the subjective experiences of situated individuals and aims to elicit depth and complexity. Thus, the messiness, inconsistencies and contradictions within and across their narratives are not seen as a 'problem' to overcome in producing a 'coherent' account. Rather, they are often as fertile a ground for discovery as consistent themes and patterns.

Finally, I have endeavoured to include the voices of my interlocutors, to be rigorous about translations which put foreign words into their mouths (p.54), and to be reflexive about my assumptions, positioning and the limitations of my field work. However, as Geertz asserts (1988 p.146), doing all of this deepens, rather than relieves the burden of authorship. Writing ‘is not only a difficult business, it is one not without consequence for “native”, “author” and “reader” (and, indeed for that eternal victim of other people’s activities, “innocent bystander”) alike’.²

2.2 Getting into the field: access, affiliation and the shifting scope of the inquiry

The objective of this study is to see beyond the state-society lens and the politics of religion (Chapter 1). Nevertheless, my research has been constrained by these dynamics, in terms both of external constraints on my actions and the way in which I operated. I entered the field with an awareness of the social, cultural and political contexts of the research and was concerned to design and conduct it in an appropriate way, mitigating risks to the research participants and myself. Flexibility, important in any qualitative study, is particularly important for foreign researchers working in the PRC, where the limits of access are often not clearly defined and ‘it is difficult to know beforehand which research topics will encounter political difficulties’ (Thøgersen and Heimer 2006 p.13). Moreover, it is impossible to predict local, national or global events, which can have a significant impact upon the research.

I had planned to start fieldwork in late spring 2008. When protests, led by monks, broke out in Lhasa in March 2008 and quickly spread to other Tibetan areas it became apparent that this would not be possible.³ I decided to wait until

² See also de Laine (2000 p.14) who argues that producing a text ‘goes beyond reporting what actually happened to interpreting how an audience will respond’. This can have implications for the researcher, her interlocutors, professional associations and the research institution. She devotes a chapter to these issues (ibid. pp.120-145).

³ There had already been unrest in Rebgong in February 2009, sparked by an argument between a Tibetan youth and a Hui balloon seller and escalating into confrontations between the armed police and local laity and monks. These events were later linked to the

after the Olympic Games and started planning an alternative approach, involving research at Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in non-Tibetan areas such as Inner Mongolia and north-eastern China. However, my interests and networks were concentrated in Amdo and so I continued to try to find a way of conducting research there. I enrolled at Qinghai Nationalities University (QNU)⁴ in Xining for three months (September-November 2008) as a language student of modern oral Amdo Tibetan. This visit was beneficial for my language skills, but also gave me the opportunity to assess fieldwork possibilities, visit some monasteries, develop my social network and start to document attitudes towards monasteries and monks. I initially visited monasteries relatively close to Xining listed as tourist attractions to test the ground (my presence at tourists sites would be uncontroversial) and to get an overview of monastic tourism development.⁵

Some common themes and patterns emerged during the initial field visit. In some cases these supported and fleshed out my original assumptions; in other cases they contradicted them, or showed them to be misplaced. I started to learn more about changes in monastic administration and financing since 1980 and to become aware of the broader contexts of the research, including the 'narrative of decline' (Chapter 6) and concerns about decreasing numbers of monks (Chapter 7). I also began to get some sense of the reputations of and distinctions being drawn between different monasteries. Many of my interlocutors during this period were educated urban Tibetans, but I also talked with monks and villagers.

I made two significant changes to my research design following this visit. Firstly, I had originally planned to focus on three monasteries: a large monastic centre (Labrang), a regional centre (Rongwo) and a branch monastery (undecided). Having got a better sense of the field and likely access, I decided to increase the

protests in Lhasa. See Makley (2008) for a discussion of interpretations and reinterpretations of these events at local and global levels.

⁴ During my initial stay, QNU was a college (Qinghai Minzu Xueyuan), but gained university status in 2009, becoming Qinghai Minzu Daxue.

⁵ It was possible to assess tourism infrastructure, but not normal levels of tourist traffic. I was told that there had been a massive drop in tourist arrivals following the March 2008 protests, partly because of local restrictions, but more importantly because Qinghai lost the (significant proportion) of its tourist industry derived from tourists stopping en route to Lhasa (by train).

number of sites. The political situation meant that it would not be possible and/or ethical to spend extended periods living in or near to any particular monastery. Increasing the number of sites is a way to reduce dependency on access to particular places (Heimer 2006 p.61). Moreover, I realised that I was less interested in documenting the minutiae of individual monastic economies than in the broader trends and themes that were emerging as I talked to people about monastic development. I had started to get a feel for what appeared to be some general patterns of change over the past 30 years. By testing these intuitions at a wider range of monasteries, I would be able to see if they extended across sites.

Secondly, I changed the temporal scope of the research, deciding to focus on the post-Mao period and abandoning my original plan to make a comparative study of monasteries pre-1958 and post-1980. I was concerned that I would not be able to give sufficient depth to either period and did not want to end up producing essentialised representations of the 'old' and 'new' societies. It was clear that changes since 1980 were of interest in their own right, particularly as I was becoming increasingly interested in exploring perspectives on monastic development and understanding how they tied into wider issues. A contemporary focus also played to my strengths in terms of my background knowledge and language skills.

I registered as a research student at QNU for my main research (January-August 2009). I made my own fieldwork arrangements and was not assigned an assistant (*C. peitong*).⁶ However, I always operated openly and on the assumption that my activities were being monitored.⁷ Until the end of February 2009 I was

⁶ See also Thøgersen and Heimer (2006 p.14), who comment that in some instances official affiliation 'amounts to nothing more than fixing an invitation for the purpose of getting a research visa', with some institutions lacking the official weight and contacts to make fieldwork arrangements.

⁷ Like Yeh (2006 p.97), my concern to avoid risks meant that the research was inevitably conditioned by 'the politics of fear, and its corollary, the fear of politics'. I subjected myself to self-censorship and self-surveillance (sometimes, it seemed, to a greater degree than done by my interlocutors). Other foreign researchers with whom I have talked and who have worked relatively freely in Tibetan areas of China have described a similar internalisation of disciplinary techniques.

able to work quite freely.⁸ Qinghai was closed to foreigners throughout March. As a research student I was permitted to stay in, but not travel outside Xining. Rebgong and other areas reopened in April, but towards the end of May, the University tightened its regulations after a foreign research student inadvertently got into difficulties with authorities in another part of the province. Until the semester ended in early July, we had to apply to the University's International Education Office for permission to travel outside Xining during the week. No trip was permitted for longer than five days (including weekends). Although this was frustrating, I was fortunate that my field sites were close to the city, making short trips feasible. Once the holidays started I could travel without restrictions.⁹

2.3 Interpersonal connections: a bridge into the field

Although it is not always explicitly acknowledged, it is common for qualitative researchers to start from personal relationships in order to build trust, establish network connections and gain local knowledge (Rubin and Rubin 2005 p.89; see also Solinger 2006 p.162; Thøgersen and Heimer 2006 p.15). This has been particularly important for my work. Access limitations meant that time spent at field sites needed to be intense, focused and as productive as possible. It was not feasible to spend a long time in one place, slowly building up familiarity and trust. I therefore relied on interpersonal connections to provide a bridge into the field. One monk with whom I discussed this said very directly that if we had not had this kind of relationship (*'brel-ba*) he would not have talked so openly. Issues of trust also worked the other way: having a relationship in common with an individual and knowing something about him/her could help me. Not being able to spend extended periods at sites had advantages as well as disadvantages. The process of leaving and being 'welcomed back' served to consolidate some relationships.

⁸ Yeh (2006 p.100) had a similar experience when she carried out fieldwork in Lhasa in 2000-2001. She says that she was not assigned a *peitong* and that access restrictions 'were never clearly spelled out'.

⁹ Some areas, for example Machu (*rma-chu*; C. Maqu) and parts of Golok, remained closed to foreigners but these restrictions did not affect me.

The social networks and trust which I continued to build on were not only vital in gaining access, but also meant that I was alerted to and able to avoid potential risks. For example, following protests in Golok and at Lutsang monastery (klu-tshang dgon-chen) in March 2009, there was renewed 'political education' at monasteries. It would have been inappropriate to have visited sites while government work teams were present – this could have posed a risk to both my interlocutors and my research. I relied on my interpersonal connections to time my visits to avoid inadvertently stumbling into this kind of situation.

I learnt that academic and official (state) connections were not going to be particularly helpful and therefore did not focus my energies on building these kinds of relationships.¹⁰ In fact, if I had gone through official channels this would probably have complicated the research process (see also Thøgersen and Heimer 2006 p.14). It would have posed a greater risk for my interlocutors given the sensitive political situation and created ambiguity as to my autonomy from government agencies. For these reasons, I would have been less likely to win the trust and confidence of my interlocutors.¹¹ I also felt that my main contribution was in constructing a narrative from below by eliciting the knowledge and views of monks, rather than officials. Nevertheless, I had intended to interview state actors in religious affairs' bureaux and tourism departments towards the end of my fieldwork to contextualise the research. I decided to abandon this plan because of time constraints and the difficult political environment.¹² This is one of the limitations of the research.

¹⁰ The exception to this was the International Education Office at my host institution.

¹¹ See also Hansen (2006 pp.85-88). She describes how producing an official invitation letter could convince cadres in state institutions to talk to her, but could be counter-productive when trying to organise interviews with 'ordinary' employees.

¹² I did not want to attract unwanted attention and was also aware that local officials were in a sensitive position: the few with whom I talked informally were more reticent and nervous than most monks. Saxer (2010 pp.28-29), who conducted research into the Tibetan medicine industry during the same period, made a similar decision.

2.4 Overview of sources

Data gathered from interviews forms the core of the research materials for this study. The choice of ‘responsive interviewing’ as the main research method was in part conditioned by the political circumstances that made lengthy stays at individual field sites impossible. Interviewing:

... can be an extremely important source of data: it may allow one to generate information that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise – both about events described and about perspectives and discursive strategies’ (Hammersley and Wilkinson 2007 p.102).

Thus, the knowledge of interviewees can be treated ‘as *both* resource and topic’ (ibid. 2007 p.99). However, due to the problem of reactivity, such solicited accounts are viewed by some ethnographers ‘as less valid than those produced spontaneously’ (ibid. p.101). Nevertheless, *all* field encounters, whether in formal or informal settings, are shaped by the presence of the researcher. Moreover, the ‘selective attention’ (Ball 1984, cited in Bryman 1988 p.73) involved in observation means that for everything noticed and noted, many things go unseen.

In short, there is no such thing as ‘pure’ data: ‘rather, the goal must be to discover the best manner of interpreting whatever data we have, and to collect further data that enable us to develop and check our inferences’ (Hammersley and Wilkinson 2007 p.102). As discussed in Section 2.1, the key to this is recognising and recording the situatedness of research encounters, using an iterative approach to test both what the researcher is told and her/his understanding, and by using multiple data collection techniques, which will be outlined in this section.

2.4.1 Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 71 monastics and 33 lay people, including students, teachers, artists and villagers. A list of interviewees is provided in Appendix A (Vol.2). I interviewed certain individuals several times and developed closer relationships with some, enabling me to check and clarify aspects of the research during fieldwork and the writing process. Since these

interviews are the main foundation of this study, the interview process is discussed in detail in Section 2.5. I have also used a number of other sources to contextualise the study.

2.4.2 Observation and informal conversation

‘Naturally occurring’ oral accounts are ‘a useful source both of direct information about the setting and of evidence about the perspectives, concerns, and discursive practices of the people who produce them’ (Hammersley and Wilkinson 2007 p.99), while observation is a method that enables the researcher to see rather than hear about the practices of actors and to appreciate the local research contexts.

Although I did not engage in long-term participant observation at particular sites, I spent time observing aspects of religious life and practice in different places. I observed ritual assemblies inside monasteries and in people’s homes, made circumambulations of sacred sites with friends, watched monastic debate classes and examinations, attended monastic and village festivals and participated in a mass public teaching (Fig.2.1).



Figure 2.1 Public teaching, Rebgong

Moreover, informal conversations with interviewees and other monks and lay people (including former monks) informed the research and contributed to my understanding. This included time spent with friends and their relatives, and with monks and lamas and their patrons, but also the many fleeting, chance encounters with strangers that are part of everyday life. To cite one example, I was taking a taxi to the other side of Xining one morning to help a friend move house and struck up a conversation with the driver. She turned out to be a Han Chinese student of a Tibetan reincarnate lama in southern Qinghai and we spent the rest of the journey talking about her faith and practice and the growing number of Han Chinese students of Tibetan lamas.

‘Creating opportunity for the unexpected’ (Pieke 2005, cited in Thøgersen and Heimer 2006 p.17) is another way to question, develop and contextualise interpretations. Unexpected encounters, seemingly unrelated to the specific research, generate knowledge and experience that is fed recursively back into the evolving enquiry and the repertoire of resources drawn on in the process of analysis and writing. Towards the end of the fieldwork I spent a week travelling around Qinghai with a reincarnate lama in his early twenties whom I had met through a friend of a friend. Having met the objectives of my latest round of focused research activities I saw this as an opportunity to step back, take a passive role and ‘see what happens’.

Late one night, driving to a monastery, we came off a mountain road, crashing into a ditch. The intensity of this shared experience not only created intimacy with my companions, but also shaped my understanding. It was fascinating to observe this young man take charge, drawing on his authority as a reincarnate lama to negotiate with local officials, who then took responsibility for the accident and agreed to compensation. When I related the incident to monastic and lay friends (leaving out details of the lama’s identity and where we had been), they either said something along the lines of: ‘of course no-one was hurt: it was a reincarnate lama driving!’ and/or made a disapproving remark to the effect of: ‘Tut, tut! Young reincarnate lamas these days!’. It thus contributed to the picture I was building of contemporary attitudes towards reincarnate lamas: a continued faith and belief in their supra-human capabilities and efficacy among many Tibetans.

but also disparagement of the behaviours exhibited by some of the younger generation.

These conversations, interactions and observations were recorded in field diaries and, when appropriate, photographs, audio recordings and video footage. I was always open about my position as a researcher. However, I inevitably ended up developing friendships and becoming involved in people's personal lives. These 'back-stage' vantage points serve to contextualise the research, but the often ambiguous positioning of the researcher raises ethical issues (de Laine 2000 pp.8-9). When comments and confidences are divulged to the researcher as a 'friend' rather than 'researcher', they should be kept 'off the record'. For example, I spent a great deal of time with a family I had known before starting my PhD. They knew I was conducting research. However, unlike other friendships which grew out of (and were to a significant extent defined by) my role as a 'researcher', I was welcomed by these people as a 'family member' not as a PhD student. Spending time with them inevitably shaped my understanding, but their lives and conversations are not disclosed in this study.

2.4.3 Written sources

Documentary materials can be valuable sources 'within the ambit of an ethnographic approach to the social world' (Hammersley and Wilkinson 2007 p.121). Written sources are produced by situated individuals, in particular political and social contexts and for different purposes, conditioning the way in which the text is framed and what is included, emphasised and omitted. Therefore, written sources (as with oral sources) can be drawn upon as both resources and topics, provided they are treated with appropriate caution. They may contain information not available in other sources, or corroborate or challenge these sources, but they are also social products providing rich material for analysis and, moreover, can themselves 'stimulate analytic ideas' (ibid. p.122). Thus, for example, I use dPal-bzang (2007) for historical detail, but also treat the text as a constructed account that can reveal emic perspectives and meanings (Chapter 3).

Various types of written sources have been important in my research. An attempt to 'see beyond the state' necessitates awareness and understanding of

policy and regulatory constraints and the discursive framework of state-defined religious space. For the 'official' perspective on monastic development, I thus draw on Chinese language sources including legislation and policy documents, academic publications and media reports. To diversify the sources from which I elicit emic perspectives, I also draw selectively from the Tibetan literature, including locally produced histories and essays published in books, journals and on the internet. Again, there are limitations to the research. Literary production in Amdo is prolific, among not only secular intellectuals, but also monks, and many monasteries produce journals. There is therefore a wide array of potentially relevant materials. Although, I could not access most of this in the limited time available, I familiarised myself with the content of some of the most talked-about publications, such as Shes-rab rgya-mtsho (2007) and the work of Shogdung (p.138 n.33). In terms of written local histories, I largely rely on the secondary literature in Tibetan (dPal-bzang 2007), Chinese (for example Pu 1990; Nian and Bai 1993) and English (for example Gruschke 2001; Tuttle 2005; Dhondup 2011).

2.4.4 Surveys

Although qualitative methods best suited the orientation of my research, I have also made limited use of the survey method. During March 2009, I designed questionnaire surveys for university and middle school students. Certain themes and patterns had emerged from informal conversations with young lay Tibetans about monasteries and monks. The aim was to test some of their opinions on the students to see how they responded. As a minor part of the overall research, a questionnaire survey was an efficient method. I collected responses from 105 university students and 149 middle school students. In one instance (pp.217-219) I have drawn directly on the results, but broadly speaking the surveys contributed in a more general way to the overall contextualisation of the study. The process of designing and then conducting the survey was a useful exercise in trying to organise my thoughts and test my assumptions. I provide more details and copies of the questionnaires in Appendix B (Vol.2).

2.5 The interviews

2.5.1 Approach

I started with a basic idea of the types of people I wanted to interview and used both 'snowballing' and more direct approaches to find interviewees. I was introduced to people by my assistants (see p.52), friends and acquaintances and some of my interviewees introduced me to other people. I also visited monastic businesses and asked workers if they would be willing to talk to me, sought out specific post-holders and, as the research progressed, tried to find individuals with specific knowledge and/or experience about whom I had heard. Finally, some of the most fruitful exchanges were the result of chance encounters.

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured 'dialogue-type interviews' (Thøgersen 2006 p.21). The objective was to understand more about certain topics and people's views on them, rather than conducting conversation analysis (although certain concepts and phrases did emerge across interviews). I wanted to gain an overall understanding of the processes of monastic revival and development, the organisation and administration of monasteries and the main shifts in the monastic economy, rather than documenting the income and expenditure of the monastic economy at a micro-level (p.40). I also wanted to listen to monastic perspectives on these changes and hear about issues that were of concern to monks. In other words, I was looking for descriptions of events, processes and structures, but I was also looking to elicit understandings and meanings from my interlocutors (Rubin and Rubin 2005 p.4). I therefore used a combination of focused and open-ended questions.

I had a general idea of what I wanted to discuss and a set of basic issues I would ideally cover depending on the knowledge of my interlocutors. However, the questions evolved as part of the iterative process of the research. I tested what I had heard in previous conversations and pursued new angles as part of the process of building local knowledge. My approach was flexible and did not follow any particular question order. I would usually start by asking some straightforward questions. For example, if the interviewee was a monk I would ask his age and how long he had been a monk. However, even this depended on

the situation and the individual. I felt I learnt most from interviews that worked as conversations, rather than question and answer sessions.

I gave my interlocutors a fair amount of latitude in taking the conversation in different directions, making notes to myself on points to follow up. Few scholars have conducted empirical research on the events and issues I was exploring and I was therefore trying to 'squeeze all the meaning out of whatever my interviewees chose to share' (O'Brien 2006 p.35). This approach was also a result of a refusal to be invasive. I did not wish to push people to talk about issues with which they were clearly uncomfortable. This included, but was not limited to politically sensitive topics (see p.40 n.7). However, my assumptions and caution about the sensitivity of particular topics could be misplaced. For example, I had not realised how sensitive monks could be about their position vis-à-vis university students (discussed in Chapter 6). On the other hand, I was surprised at the openness with which ex-monks talked about disrobing.

Some individuals had specific knowledge but limited time. In these situations, the focus would be narrower, aimed at accessing their specialist knowledge rather than general conversation about their lives and views. For example, I was granted a short audience with the head lama of one monastery to talk specifically about efforts to reform the monastic education system and organise a vocational summer school for village children. With other interviewees, there was time to digress into a wider range of topics, which could even include discussions about epistemological issues with which I was wrestling as the research progressed.

2.5.2 Process

Most interviews with monks took place in their quarters or, in a few cases, monastic businesses, and with lay people, in their homes. However, some took place in other locations chosen by my interlocutors. Most were with one individual, but there were occasions when I talked to two or more people together. Generally speaking, I conducted interviews privately with my interlocutor(s), myself and my assistant (if I was working with one). However, there were situations when other people sat with us for part or the whole of the interview. I made a record where I felt this significantly influenced what was (or was not) said.

For example, when I interviewed one young monk with his teacher in the room he was very shy and reticent, but when we later talked without his teacher present he was much more open.

None of my interlocutors received remuneration, but I did present monks and elders with an offering scarf (*kha-btags*) as a sign of respect and in accordance with custom. When I visited more senior monks and lamas I might also take a small gift, such as a bottle of soft drink. On the few occasions when an interview took place in a café or restaurant, I would attempt (not always successfully) to pay for the refreshments.

Prior to each interview, I introduced myself, the research and its purpose and made it clear that participation was voluntary and my interviewees had a right to withdraw at any point (which did happen on one occasion). People did not always agree to talk to me. When they did, their presence and active participation were judged to be the most reliable indicators of consent.¹³ I tried to be sensitive to their reactions throughout exchanges and, if necessary, to change direction or check if we should stop the interview. I explained that I was interested in their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings and that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to my questions (other than when I was asking knowledgeable individuals about specific facts). I assured them that our conversations were confidential and anonymised their personal identities using a coding system only accessible and meaningful to me. In many cases I did not ask monks their real names since this was not important and I could refer to them respectfully as 'Akhu'.

¹³ Although university research ethics committees tend to emphasise the importance of obtaining written consent from research participants, this would not have been realistic or appropriate in the political and cultural context of my research. Researchers conducting ethnographic studies in China do not usually seek written consent, given its negative association with state monitoring of and control over individuals. Asking my interlocutors to sign a consent form or record formal verbal consent would have had serious implications for the research in terms of both access and the quality of the information I received. Some people were even reluctant to sign their names when asked for receipts for expenses. Moreover, I did not consider consent to be a one-off contractual agreement, but 'a more processual and negotiated agreement' (de Laine 2000 p.24).

In writing up the research, I gave careful consideration to balancing the interests of transparency in the research process with protecting my interlocutors. In most cases I provide relevant biographical details in the text when I refer to or cite particular individuals and use the same pseudonym for individuals who are cited more than once. However, in a few places I have omitted or changed details or names. Being explicit about where I have done this would defeat the purpose (see also Saxer 2010 p.31). For the same reason I have not provided references in the text to interviews or to my list of interviewees (Vol.2 Appendix A).

The interview length depended on the situation. Most lasted for one to two hours, although some were considerably longer (up to five hours) and in a few cases time was limited to as little as 20 minutes. I checked at the beginning how much time my interviewees(s) could spare and monitored this during the course of the interview. Early on, I was enjoying a lively discussion with a monk who was very engaged and active. After roughly one hour he broke off to take a phone call, following which I checked if he had time to continue. He said he was already late for the assembly and so it was no problem – he had missed it already and so we could continue. My assistant later overheard him talking to another monk. Since he had not received prior permission to miss the assembly, he would be disciplined for his absence and would not receive a share of the distributed offerings (tea, food, cash). When he came back into the room I started to apologise, but he laughed and assured me good-naturedly that it was ‘no matter’. However, this incident heightened my awareness of the need to be more proactive in assessing and trying to minimise disruption to my interlocutors’ lives and practices.

At the end of each interview I thanked my interviewees and gave them the opportunity to ask me questions. The questions they asked could themselves be informative and this role-swapping increased my awareness of the dialogical nature of the interview process.

2.5.3 Use of interpreters

I conducted Chinese and English language interviews on my own. These were mainly with university students, teachers and ex-monks. The majority of my

interviews with monks were conducted in Amdo Tibetan and/or the languages of the 'Monguor' villages near Rongwo (p.70). I worked with an assistant for most, but occasionally worked alone in follow up interviews. I had three regular assistants and another two with whom I worked on occasion. All five were Tibetan males, from varying backgrounds and occupations, whom I met through interpersonal connections.¹⁴ I refer to them as 'assistants' rather than 'interpreters' because, as will be discussed, they contributed considerably more to the research process than their language skills. However, use of this term should not be confused with the role of the *peitong* assigned to foreign researchers by Chinese institutions.

The use of interpreters raises many issues, including the amount of time it takes to interpret exchanges, the way in which this can disrupt the narrative flow and the influence that the presence of a third person has on the research context. There is an issue of trust as the researcher cedes a considerable degree of control to a third person. There are also epistemological and ethical issues related to the use of materials gathered through interpreted interviews: the meaning of a person's words can be altered through interpretation and much of the nuance can be lost, and even a very good interpreter can miss, mishear or misunderstand part of the dialogue. This presents a particular problem when the researcher aims to incorporate the voices of her interlocutors into the final research. I attempted to mitigate some of these risks by (when appropriate) making audio recordings (pp.54-55).

However, there are several reasons that working with assistants can be a positive, valid and important part of fieldwork. Firstly, I had to take into account the limits of my language capabilities. The use of interpreters enabled me to engage in discussions to a greater degree of depth and complexity and I was fortunate to work with accomplished assistants. Therefore, despite the time taken to interpret exchanges, I built local knowledge with greater speed and less scope for misunderstandings than if I had been working alone. In addition, several dialects are spoken in my field area (p.70).¹⁵

¹⁴ In other words, I did not have to seek out students to assist me.

¹⁵ Thøgersen (2006 pp.115-116) makes similar observations about conducting research in China, noting that even native speakers conducting fieldwork outside their dialect area

Secondly, my assistants became actively interested, involved and engaged in the research process. I benefited from their local knowledge and access to their social networks. As Thøgersen (2006 p.123) argues, interpreters are best seen as part of a process of communication aimed at establishing a common understanding, rather than machines 'that can miraculously transform one language into another'. They were able to introduce me and the research, and elaborate on and reformulate my questions in ways meaningful to my interlocutors. We discussed approaches and as they became increasingly familiar with my work they sometimes suggested questions I had not considered. Thirdly, I was nervous about inadvertently transgressing cultural and religious norms, particularly as I would often be working in monasteries. I could seek guidance from my assistants and they also functioned as chaperones for at least my initial encounters with monks in private spaces.

Strong working relationships with my assistants and their presence in the research context were thus important, particularly given the frequent time limitations. To cite one example, on one visit to a practice centre, we had problems with snow and ice on the road and it was getting dark by the time we arrived. The monks invited us to stay, but our driver, concerned lest we become snowed in, was keen to leave as quickly as possible. My assistant had a strong personal connection to and good social standing with this monastery. We were therefore expected, welcomed and able to proceed immediately with interviewing one knowledgeable monk, while others served us tea and bread. We had discussed the priorities for the interview and I asked my assistant not to interpret my interviewee's narrative so that we could use the limited time to cover more ground. I could follow the gist and keep the interview going. Moreover, having worked intensively with this assistant for the past few weeks, he understood the general pattern of my interviews and directly interjected several times, pre-empting my own probes and clarifying questions. We reviewed the audio recording on the journey back.

often have to rely on a local interpreter, and that 'even native speakers of the local dialect, may get entangled in very awkward communication patterns ... It would be a mistake to think that even a native speaker's fluency guarantees a successful communication, or, for that sake, that insufficient Chinese language skills prevent you from conducting meaningful interviews'.

2.5.4 Recording

Some scholars, notably Glaser (see Puddephatt 2006), have argued that it is best to avoid using a recorder because of the length of time it takes to produce and process transcripts, the risk of getting lost in the detail, and the impact it can have on the research context. However, I felt that it was important to make an audio recording of conversations whenever appropriate. This enabled me to go back and review the interviews, rather than just relying on my assistants' translations and/or my own comprehension. The iterative process of the research also meant that I might not have noticed or understood details and themes, or seen them as significant at the time. In addition, I found that being freed from taking notes (apart from an occasional point to follow up) allowed me to form more intimate connections with people. I could focus all of my attention on them and respond to their body language, facial expressions and tone of voice, as well as their words.

I only recorded interviews with the consent of my interviewee(s), which in most cases was granted. I used a digital recorder, about the size and shape of a small mobile phone that could be left on the table or floor and was very unobtrusive. Only one interviewee (a university student) appeared obviously self-conscious when the recorder was switched on and kept looking at it. Others seemed to pay no attention to it. In three cases, monks asked me to start with the recorder switched off but consented to it being turned on once they were comfortable with direction of the conversation. I always made it clear at the outset that participant(s) could, at any point, ask me to switch off the recorder. When people were not comfortable with me using a recorder, they consented to me taking notes. This was most common during the last week of February and might have been because of nervousness leading up to the March anniversaries.¹⁶

Recording interviews mitigates some of the problems inherent in trying to incorporate voices from the field into the research. I have worked from the audio recordings with a Tibetan colleague, Lama Jabb, to check my translations from Tibetan where I have directly quoted people. I indicate in the text the original

¹⁶ These include the anniversaries of the 2008 protests, the 1989 Lhasa demonstrations and the March 1959 Lhasa uprising.

language of the interview (T = Tibetan; M = one of the Monguor languages spoken in parts of Rebgong (p.70); C = Chinese) and whether or not it was recorded (R = recorded; N = notes). This shows whether I have relied on field notes or audio materials to cite individuals.

2.6 Role(s) and positioning: working as a British, female, vegetarian researcher

My interlocutors' engagement with me as a foreign researcher, along with other elements of the research context, inevitably conditioned their responses. I sometimes felt I made little progress in breaking down the barriers and did not progress beyond question and answer type interviews into conversations. In general, younger monks from smaller monasteries were less confident and articulate, tended to give shorter answers, and appeared more concerned about giving a 'correct' response. Nevertheless, I was surprised at the extent to which most people appeared to talk quite directly and frankly about what were sometimes sensitive and/or personal issues.

The standard equation of 'insider/outsider' with 'native/non-native' in discussing fieldwork is oversimplified (Kjellgren 2006 p.225). Being 'inside' or 'outside' is dependent on understandings and definitions of the 'other' in any given encounter. Some of the difficulties I faced in my research were produced by the same state controls shaping the lives of my interlocutors. This helped me to understand the constraints and psychological pressures under which they lived (see also Yeh 2006 pp.96-98). At times it also served to position me as an 'insider': when people tried to help me, but my research was disrupted, this became another instance of unwanted state interference in 'our' lives and practices. On the other hand, some people explicitly told me that they could talk with me in a way, or about certain issues, not possible with their colleagues, family or friends. In these contexts, my position as an 'outsider' could be advantageous. At times I also benefited from the novelty value and/or social status an individual might enjoy from spending time with a foreigner.

People generally reacted positively to the presence of a foreign researcher who was taking an interest in Tibetan culture and religion, particularly as I was often introduced by a trusted relative, friend or acquaintance. In this context, the political situation could work to my advantage. For example, in January/February 2009, a protestor threw a shoe at Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao when he was giving a talk at Cambridge University. This was the talk of the town (and monastery) and people reacted enthusiastically on hearing that I was British. However, I sometimes found assumptions about Western support uncomfortable. On two occasions, monks directly said that they could not turn down my request for an interview because foreigners supported the Tibetan people. Nevertheless, I always made it clear that I was a researcher, not a journalist or political activist and did not elicit details of or opinions about the protests and their suppression in 2008, although some people talked about these issues.

Generally speaking, I followed Solinger's (2006 p.161) approach of appearing 'at once knowledgeable but ignorant, knowing and not knowing'. This was not only a strategy, but also a reflection of my position. I spent some time working with a Tibetan researcher and we both learnt a great deal from the process, partly because we looked at the same issues in different ways and raised different questions (see also Wei 2006 p.216). Some of my interlocutors said they were cautious about talking to foreigners: in some cases they were wary of sensationalist and ill-informed reporting of Tibetan culture and monastic life; in other cases they had had negative experiences of working with researchers. Therefore, being able to show a degree of local knowledge was important in building trust. For example, I shared a car with a monk on the way to one of my field sites. He was surprised that I could speak some Amdo Tibetan (in fact he tested me) and when I displayed an awareness of local history and personages. We discussed my research and he asked the driver to make a detour to show me a temple that he and his teacher were restoring, and then invited me to his monastery. He later explained that he had previously helped a foreign researcher who had taken documents out of the monastery, promising to copy and return them, but who had never returned. Being privy to internal matters can also elicit greater depth and detail and sometimes lead people to discuss issues they might

otherwise not raise: one monk talked to me about a local conflict because he had misunderstood something I said and assumed that I knew about it.

My gender directly affected my fieldwork planning since women are not allowed inside the monastery during the summer retreat (*dbyar-gnas*). I had to consider other gender-related ethical issues such as the taboo on menstruating women entering a monastery. However, my overall impression was that my position as a foreign researcher overrode my status as a woman, and the former was the identity to which monks (and lay Tibetans) primarily related. Possible reasons include the way in which I was introduced; the way I dressed and behaved, trying to maintain a respectful, friendly, but professional, attitude and distance; and the fact that I was a temporary 'guest'.¹⁷ I was usually accompanied by a male assistant and did not intrude into monastic life and space to the extent that I would have done if I had needed to live inside a monastery. I never pushed to stay in monasteries or people's homes – this was another aspect of my refusal to be invasive (see p.49). When such hospitality was offered, I allowed myself to be guided by my interlocutors and/or assistants and followed whatever arrangements they had made. Sometimes I made mistakes. For example, I returned to Xining late one night with a friend with whom I had spent a productive and intense few days at one monastery. Without thinking I turned to give him a hug 'goodbye'. As soon as I felt him tense I realised my mistake; a gesture natural among my friends in the UK was completely inappropriate in this context. Fortunately he understood this cultural difference, but this slip reminded me of the importance of maintaining certain boundaries. It also highlights the important 'emotional aspect' of fieldwork (Harrell 2007 pp.294-295).

Qualitative field research is a 'total human experience, demanding all the researcher's resources: intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive' (Okely 1992, cited in de Laine 2000 p.210) and is influenced by interpersonal contingencies (de Laine 2000 p.11). I aimed for an attitude of 'sympathetic detachment' (Wilson 1983) as a middle way between 'going native' and acting as

¹⁷ See also Makley (2007 pp.4-6) for a discussion of the unintelligibility of her gender amongst locals in Labrang when she first lived there.

an aloof and neutral 'scientist'. This is an approach favoured by many qualitative researchers (de Laine 2000 p.108). Generally speaking I did not find it hard to be sympathetic and most of my encounters were warm and friendly. However, it was sometimes harder to remain detached when conversations moved into discussion of particularly emotive issues, or when political controls tightened and there were problems in places and involving people I knew but from whom I was cut off. I also had to find coping mechanisms to mitigate the impact on the research of the mental and physical strains of fieldwork.

Diet was an issue that had concerned me: Tibetan food culture is meat-based and I was worried that my position as a vegetarian might create a barrier since I would be receiving hospitality in many research contexts. However, recent campaigns against meat-eating by respected religious figures have led lay people to take vows (permanent or temporary) of abstention and at all the monasteries I visited monks have stopped eating meat in the assembly hall. Some (although not many to whom I have spoken) have stopped eating meat altogether.¹⁸ Therefore, I found that people generally understood and respected my abstention and in some cases it created a bond. I also learnt that it was easy to avoid awkwardness when I was offered hospitality by asking for *tsampa*,¹⁹ a staple food always available in the homes of monks and villagers. The fact I could make *tsampa* (however imperfectly) and enjoyed eating it seemed to bring me closer to people, perhaps because of its symbolic significance as a marker of Tibetan identity (see Shakya 1993). My obvious love of fresh yoghurt could also serve to enliven and warm up the atmosphere and became a running joke with one of my assistants.

¹⁸ Some influential historical Tibetan Buddhist figures preached abstention from meat, but the spread of the idea and reforms to monastic rules are relatively recent. A notable advocate of vegetarianism in Amdo is Tsultrim Lodrö, the influential abbot of Larung Gar in Serthar (gser-thar; C.Seda), Sichuan (see Tshul-khrims blo-gros 2003). A similar movement has emerged in the Tibetan community-in-exile. The 14th Dalai Lama has encouraged monks and nuns to be vegetarian and Tibetan people to eat less meat. In 2006, Arjia Rinpoche launched a project to install a tofu machine in each monastery in India, Nepal and Bhutan (TCCW c2002). In 2007, the 17th Karmapa gave a teaching on the benefits of not eating meat (Harris 2002).

¹⁹ *tsam-pa*: roasted barley flour, mixed with the fingers into a bowl of hot water (or tea) and butter into a dough-like ball and then eaten by hand. In eastern Amdo, Tibetan cheese and sugar are usually mixed into the dough.

2.7 The field sites

2.7.1 The region: eastern Qinghai / eastern Amdo

The geographical focus of the present study is the eastern part of Qinghai province. My field sites are located in Rebgong (reb-gong; C. Tongren) county in Malho (rma-lho; C. Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) and the western part of Bayan (ba-yan; C. Hualong) Hui Autonomous County in Haidong prefecture. The Tibetan inhabitants of these areas consider themselves to be Amdo Tibetans. Amdo is one of the eastern Tibetan provinces in traditional Tibetan geographical terms and one of what are commonly referred to as the three provinces (*chol-kha-gsum*) of a greater, or 'ethnographic' Tibet (Huber 2002 p.xiii; see also Goldstein 1998b p.4; Kapstein 2006 p.205).²⁰ As other scholars have pointed out, 'there has never been a single or discrete Amdo in time and space' (Huber 2002 p.xx) and Amdo has never been a 'province' in a distinct administrative sense (Gruschke 2001 p.8).²¹ Throughout this study 'Amdo' is used to denote those parts of the north-eastern Tibetan plateau in which people regard themselves as 'Amdo Tibetans' (now incorporated into Qinghai province, south-west Gansu and north-west Sichuan). Although Lhasa is often considered to be the centre of Tibetan civilisation, the Amdo region became a religious and cultural core in its own right (ibid. p.16; see also Tuttle 2005). It is famous among other things for being the birthplace of some of the great Gelukpa figures such as Tsongkhapa, the 10th Panchen Lama and the 14th Dalai Lama.

Historically, Amdo consisted of a multitude of different kinds of polities, including monastic polities (p.28) and tribal societies, situated between the powers of the central Tibetan state, the Mongol Khans and the Ming and Qing empires. They were all legally under Chinese jurisdiction prior to the founding of the PRC (Huber 2002 p.xvii). However, during the imperial period the local chiefs, invested with imperial titles, were 'a law unto themselves' (ibid. p.xviii).

²⁰ The other two provinces are Kham (now incorporated into western Sichuan, northern Yunnan and Yushu TAP in Qinghai) and Ü-Tsang (now incorporated into the TAR). See Kapstein (2006 pp.2-11) for a discussion of Tibetan geographical terms.

²¹ For a discussion of the derivation of the toponym 'Amdo' and a historical sketch of the region see Gruschke (2001 pp.11-16). See also Huber (2002).

and the central Tibetan state also maintained interests and ties in Amdo (Dhondup 2011 p.9). My field areas were brought under the jurisdiction of Qinghai province when it was created in 1928 and local leaders were incorporated into the administrative hierarchy established by the Chinese Communist Party following the founding of the PRC in 1949. Their populations experienced considerable upheaval and violence during the twentieth century. The Republican period, when Qinghai was under the authority of the Ma clan, was a turbulent period in Tibetan-Hui relations.²² Following the establishment of the PRC, there were uprisings in parts of Amdo in opposition to the first attempts at collectivisation in 1956, but it was the enforcement of 'democratic reforms' in 1958 (including the closure and destruction of monasteries) which Amdo Tibetans consider to be the point of rupture in contemporary history (see Chapter 3.1).

The eastern part of Amdo is an ethnically diverse Sino-Tibetan-Mongolian border region, which also has many different Muslim populations (Hui, Salar, Bao'an and Dongxiang) and a complex and little studied history of relations between different peoples and cultures.²³ Much of Amdo comes under the administration of Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures, but many Amdo Tibetans live in areas 'hardly considered "Tibetan" today' (Tuttle 2005 p.81), notably in parts of Haidong prefecture, which is the most densely populated part of Qinghai and which 'lies at multiple crossroads of culture, religion and civilisational influences', including Islam, Buddhism, and Tibetan and Chinese civilizations (Cooke 2010 p.2). There are nearly as many Tibetans living in Haidong (c.140,000) as in Malho TAP which lies to the south (c.150,000), but they constitute less than ten per cent of Haidong's population as compared to roughly two thirds of the population in Malho.²⁴ As Tuttle (2005 p.81) notes, although monasteries in these

²² See Fischer (2008) for a discussion of Tibetan-Hui relations, including the historical context.

²³ As Tuttle (2005 p.24) notes, 'a broad history of Amdo has yet to be written in any Western language'.

²⁴ These population figures and those given in the following two paragraphs are based on the PRC's 2000 census (QRP, ed. 2003) and are provided for the sake of general comparison. However, they do not include populations that might consider themselves Tibetan but are officially classified as belonging to other ethnic groups (see p.70).

regions are 'on the fringes of Tibetan civilization [they] are not peripheral to Tibetan Buddhist culture; in fact, they are at the centre of educational and political networks that unite Buddhist Inner Asia'.

One of my field areas lies in Bayan, a mountainous area in the southern half of Haidong bounded to the north by the Tsongkha (tsong-kha; C. Laji) mountain range and to the south by the Yellow River. More than 50,000 Tibetans live in the county, constituting 21 per cent of its population. They are mainly concentrated in the western and eastern parts (Pu 1990 p.87) in which there are several Tibetan townships. My field sites are in western Bayan, an area most famous for Shachung monastery (p.80), which is perched on a mountain ridge overlooking the Yellow River to the south. The river marks the boundary line between this part of Bayan and the northern tip of Malho, named after its geographical location south (*lho*) of the northern bend of the Yellow River (*rma-chu*). Travelling roughly 60 km south as the crow flies through Malho's Jentsa (C. Jianzha) county, we arrive at my other main field area, Rebgong county.²⁵

Rebgong is famous as a centre of religious and cultural production. Its predominantly Tibetan Buddhist population of over 60,000 'Tibetans' and 8,000 'Monguors' (see p.70) makes up 85 per cent of the total population of the county, which is an area of mixed herding and agriculture, with higher pastures to the south. The county town, which is also the prefectural seat, sits about 2,700m above sea level. The highway was repaired for the 2009 Tour of Qinghai Lake (an international cycling race) and it is now possible to reach Rebgong from Xining (170km by road to the north) in less than two and a half hours. Many important figures in Tibetan religious and cultural history have come from Rebgong, including Chöje Dondrub Rinchen (1309-1385),²⁶ who was one of Tsongkhapa's teachers, the famous wandering hermit Shabkar (1781-1850/1),²⁷ and the hugely

²⁵ In local historical terms, 'Rebgong' covers a wider geographical area than the current county (see p.66).

²⁶ chos-rje don-grub rin-chen.

²⁷ Shabkar (zhabs-dkar tshogs-drug rang-grol) is one of the most famous Tibetan wandering yogins. He is understood to be an emanation of the 11th century yogin and poet Milarepa (mi-la-ras-pa) and led a similar life of renunciation and solitary practice.

influential thinker and writer Gendun Chöpel (1903-1951).²⁸ Its main Gelukpa seat, Rongwo, was one of the largest monasteries in Amdo and the region was also famous throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world for its religious arts and crafts, including *thangka* painting, appliqué *thangka* craft and statue making. The production of this art by monks and lay artists was institutionalised within several Gelukpa monasteries close to Rongwo (Stevenson 2002 p.198).²⁹ In the post-Mao era, the region has retained its reputation as a centre of Tibetan religion and culture and a spring of great thinkers and writers.³⁰

My interest in Amdo arises from previous work and studies,³¹ visits (1996, 2000, 2004), and personal connections to the region. I had previously visited monasteries including Rongwo (2000, 2004) and Kumbum (2000), affording me a diachronic perspective on certain aspects of the research, in particular external development (including tourism infrastructure). There were also practical reasons for focusing on Amdo, in particular the relative ease of access compared to the

teaching through improvised songs (Ricard 2001 p.xx). He entered a community of Nyingmapa tantric practitioners (*sngags-pa*) aged 11 and took full monastic ordination at the Gelukpa monastery of Dowi (rdo-sbis) in present-day Xunhua county when he was 20 (ibid. p.xxi). He spent many years in solitary meditation and then wandered throughout eastern, central and Western Tibetan regions and Nepal giving teachings. See Ricard (2001) for a translation of his autobiography, which is interspersed with his songs and teachings. It is a work 'known and loved throughout Tibet' (ibid. p.xiii).

²⁸ Gendun Chöpel (dge-'dun chos-'phel) from Rebgong Shonpong (sho-'ong), was a controversial and iconoclastic figure, whose unorthodox ideas and behaviour, modernist views, and highly creative oeuvre remain very influential. As a child he was recognised as the reincarnation of a Nyingmapa lama. He entered Ditsa monastery (see p.77) aged 14, where he lived for three or four years before studying at Labrang and Drepung and then spending 12 years in India (Lopez 2006, pp.6-11). While he was in India he renounced his monastic vows. His works included his poetry (trans. Lopez 2009); his *Guide to India*, credited as one of the first examples of modern Tibetan literature (trans. Huber 2000); an unfinished history of early Tibet, *The White Annals*; and a philosophical treatise on Madhyamaka philosophy (trans. Lopez 2006). He was also a translator. See Stoddard (1986) for a biography and Schaedler (2005) for a documentary about his life.

²⁹ For a discussion of the history of Rebgong art and its revival see Stevenson (2002).

³⁰ Some Tibetans to whom I spoke attributed this to the continuation of Tibetan-medium education in Rebgong during the Cultural Revolution (see also Costello 2002 pp.222-223) and/or to local educational/cultural policies in the reform era, although these were perceived to be changing.

³¹ For example, my BA dissertation was a study of Labrang monastery in Gansu.

TAR.³² I was aware that several foreign academics had managed to carry out fieldwork in parts of Amdo during the 1990s and 2000s (for example Nietupski 1999; Hartley 2002; Huber 2002; Makley 2007). Following my initial visit, I decided to focus on monasteries in Rebong and western Bayan, based again on my knowledge of and interest in particular monasteries in these areas and practical considerations, such as their accessibility from Xining and my social networks.

2.7.2 The monasteries

Previous ethnographic studies of the Gelukpa monastic revival have focused on the major monastic centres (p.17). By contrast, my field sites include regional monastic centres and smaller local monasteries, amongst which there is considerable diversity in terms of, for example, syllabus, social context, historical context, and geographical setting, not to mention the significant contingent factor of monastic leadership. In addition to providing a broader view of monastic development in specific localities, a multi-site approach allowed me to explore the relationships of monasteries to each other and the ways in which monks framed their own decisions, actions and identities in relation to other institutions.

Although this study largely draws on data gathered at 16 field sites in Rebong and western Bayan, I visited other monasteries in Xining municipality, Haidong, and Golok and Tsolho (mtsho-lho; C. Hainan) TAPS in Qinghai and Labrang in Gansu. This helped to contextualise the research. Nevertheless, the scope of this study is limited and it does not claim to be representative of eastern Qinghai, let alone Amdo or beyond. My field sites are treated as sites at which I explored some common themes and issues, rather than as cases or instances of something larger (see Appadurai 1996 p.18). Not every aspect of the research was given the same attention at different sites since my interlocutors and the sites themselves were positioned to provide different types of information (see also Heimer 2006 p.63) and the research context was different in each case.

³² Generally speaking this remained true even after the 2008 protests. Some researchers ended up in Xining in 2009 because it was no longer feasible to conduct their research in the TAR and Tibetan parts of Sichuan province. However, certain parts of Amdo such as Labrang and Machu remained off-limits.

I spent longer periods at four monasteries, visiting them more than once and interviewing a range of monks. These are the main monastery in Rebgong (Rongwo) and one of its branches; and a larger teaching monastery and more remote practice centre in Bayan. I also made shorter visits to 12 other monasteries in Rebgong and Bayan and gathered data on another site I was unable to visit. My objective was to gather information and test views on the key themes of the research and I interviewed at least one knowledgeable monk at each site. I visited some of Rongwo's branch monasteries more than once, talking with villagers as well as monks. However, rather than making return visits to all, I decided to spend more time with the monks and villagers at one site.

Before going on to introduce these monasteries, I should first briefly mention one other monastery, Kumbum (Fig.2.2).³³ I use Kumbum as a field site in a rather different way, being concerned with representations of the monastery rather than the processes of its revival and development. Kumbum is one of the 'big six' Gelukpa monasteries (p.3 n.8) and, like Labrang, a national model monastery.



Figure 2.2 Kumbum monastery

³³ Full name: sku-'bum byams-pa gling (C. Ta'ersi).

Kumbum was founded at the end of the 16th century on the site of the birthplace of Tsongkhapa. Its head, the Arjia reincarnation lineage, is considered to be the reincarnation of Tsongkhapa's father. The lineage was established in the 17th century with the posthumous recognition of Kumbum's 15th abbot as the 1st Arjia Rinpoche (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 p.243). Kumbum, one of Qinghai's top tourist destinations, is located about 25km south-west of Xining. I made regular visits and interviewed some of its monks but my principal interest was in what people (including its monks) thought and said about this monastery which appeared to serve as an exemplar of monastic moral decline (Chapters 5 and 6).

2.7.2.1 Rebgong

My field sites in Rebgong include the region's main Gelukpa monastic seat, Rongwo,³⁴ 11 of its affiliate monasteries and one other monastery. Rongwo (Fig.2.3) abuts the built-up area formed out of the town of Rongwo and its surrounding villages, which blends into one urban mass in the centre of which sit the county town and prefectural capital (Fig.2.4). According to Tibetan historical sources,³⁵ the monastery was founded in 1342 by one of Chöje Dondrub's (p.61) disciples who had familial affiliations to the ruler of Rebgong, the Rongwo *nangso*.³⁶ As a result of this and Ming dynasty patronage, the monastery expanded rapidly. It was originally founded as a Sakya monastery, but had links to the Gelukpa and was reformed according to the rules and tenets of the latter by Chöpa Rinpoche (1581-1659) in c.1607 (dPal-bzang 2007 pp.16-20),³⁷ reflecting the more general Gelukpa ascendancy under the patronage of the Mongol Khans. In 1630, the College of Dialectics was founded by Kelden Gyatso (skal-ldan rgya-

³⁴ Full name: rong-bo dgon-chen bde-chen chos-'khor gling (C. Longwusi).

³⁵ The historical detail in this paragraph is drawn from dPal-bzang (2007), Sonam Tsering (2008) and Dhondup (2011) who use Tibetan written and oral historical sources, including 'Jigs-med theg-mchog (1998) and dKon-mchog bstan-pa rab-rgyas (n.d.).

³⁶ *Nangso* (*nang-so*) was a Tibetan title awarded by the Yuan emperor to the ruler of Rebgong at this time, although the ruling system of the *nangso* was borrowed from central Tibet. The legitimacy of the *nangso* was based on official recognition by both the Chinese emperor and the Lhasa government. See Dhondup (2011) for a discussion of the origin and use of the term *nangso* and the practice of the title in Rebgong.

³⁷ Chöpa Rinpoche (chos-pa rin-po-che blo-bzang bstan-pa) is said to be a reincarnation of Milarepa (Dhondup 2011 p.11).

mtsho; 1606-1677) at the request of Chöpa Rinpoche, who was his half-brother and teacher. Since then, Kelden Gyatso's reincarnation lineage, the Shartsang (shar-tshang) lineage, has been the head of Rongwo monastery.³⁸ The 2nd and 3rd Shartsangs founded the Tantric and Kālacakra Colleges.³⁹

Prior to CCP rule, the Shartsang lineage exercised joint religious and political authority with the Rongwo *nangso* over the 12 districts of Rebgong.⁴⁰ These were Rongwo's supporting 'patron communities' (*lha-sde*; see p.94), although the monastery also had patron communities extending into Jentsa and Sogpo (C. Henan) counties in Malho, and into Tsolho TAP and Bayan.⁴¹ At its peak, it housed up to 2,300 monks; there were 1,712 prior to its closure under the CCP's 'democratic reforms' of 1958. It reopened in 1980 and housed over 400 monks in 2009 (see Table 7.1).

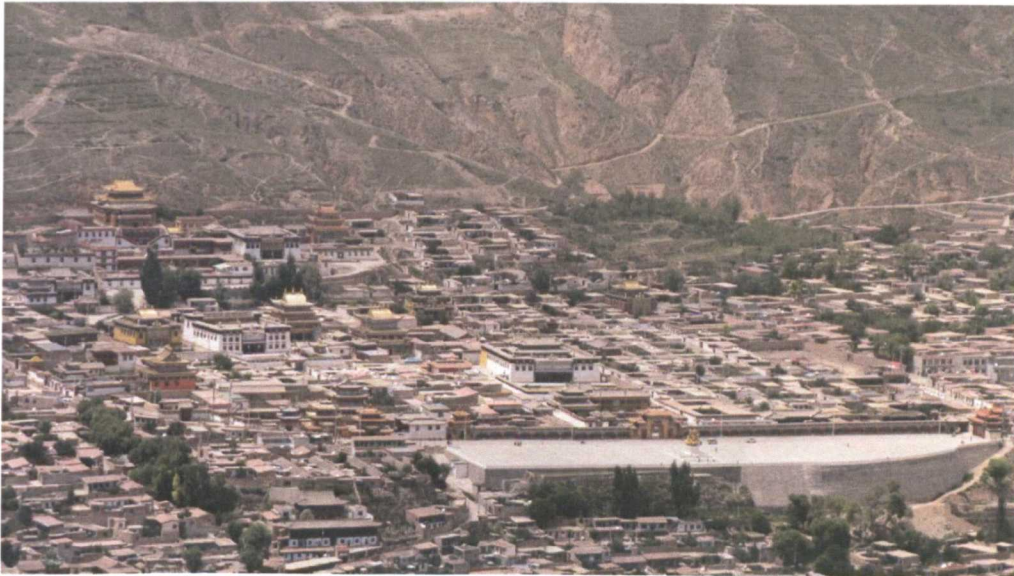


Figure 2.3 Rongwo monastery.

³⁸ Referred to locally as Rebgong Jyabgön (skyabs-mgon; supreme protector), Shar Jyabgön, Alak Shartsang or Shartsang Rinpoche.

³⁹ See p.113 (n.8) for further discussion of the system of monastic 'colleges' and my use of the term as a translation of the Tibetan term *grwa-tshang*.

⁴⁰ *Reb-gong shog-khag bcu-gnyis*, roughly analogous to today's Rebgong and Tsekhok counties. The power of the Rongwo *nang-so* declined with the rise of the Shartsang lineage (Dhondup 2011 pp.11-12).

⁴¹ These are referred to as the '18 outer divisions (*phyi-gshog bco-brgyad*)' (see dPal-bzang 2007 pp.59-60).

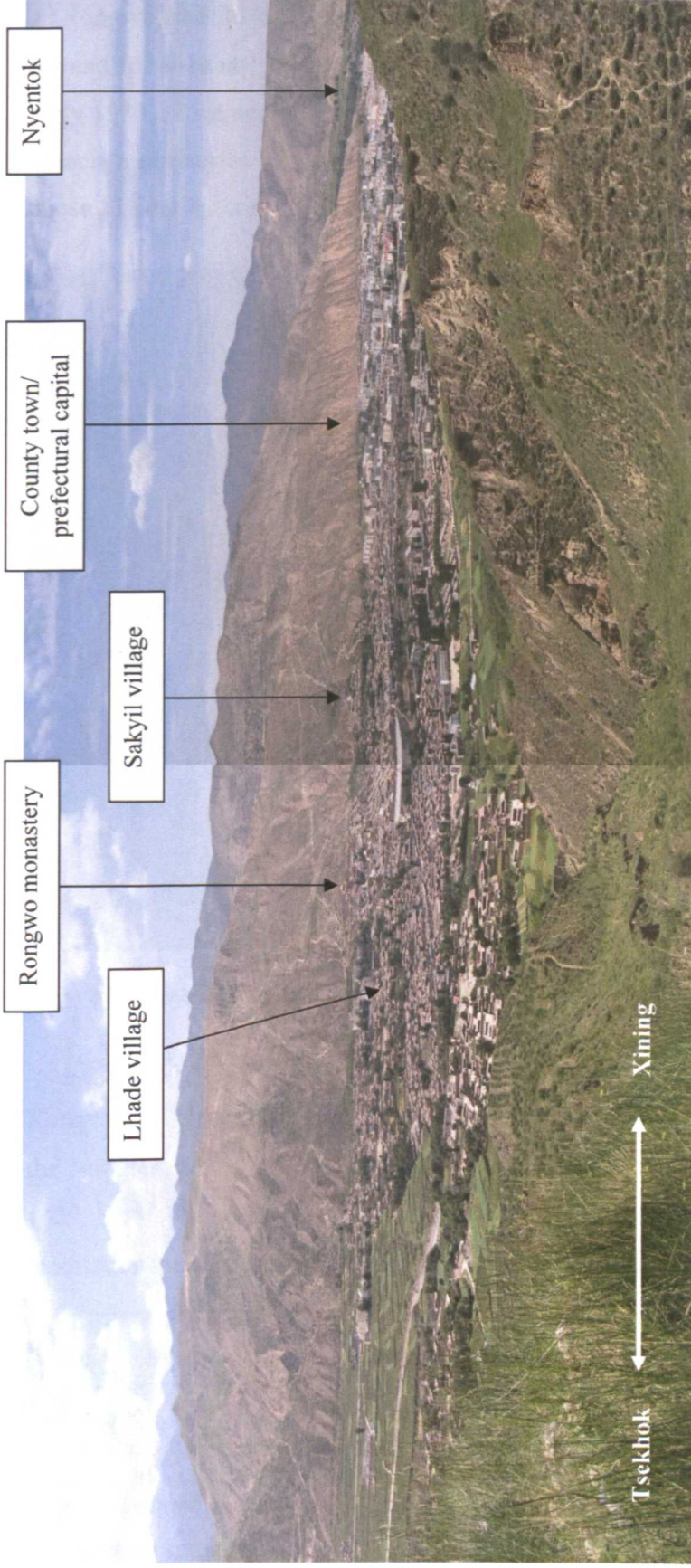


Figure 2.4 Composite view of the Rongwo valley

Rongwo had 36 affiliate monasteries in the Rebgong area and many others beyond (dPal-bzang 2007 pp.58-59), most of which have been revived since the early 1980s. I wanted to visit a selection of both practice centres (*sgrub-sde*) and branch monasteries (*dgon-lag*) in different settings and parts of the county. I chose 11 sites by consulting dPal-bzang (2007) and/or through word of mouth.⁴²

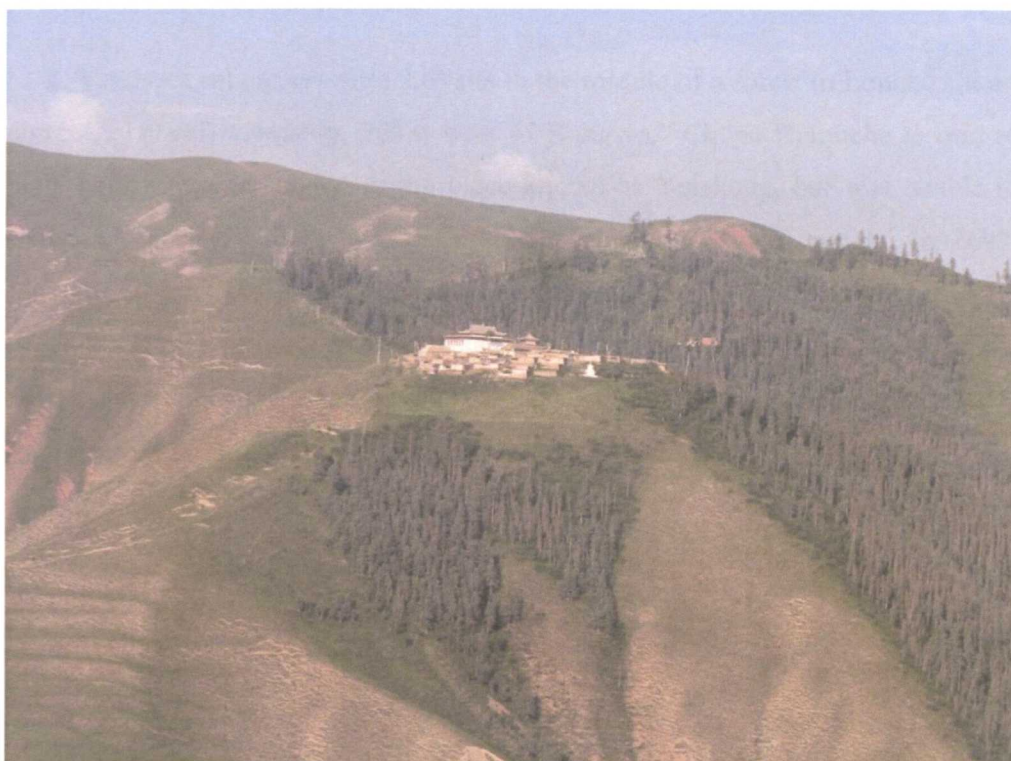


Figure 2.5 Tashikhyil monastery

1. Tashikhyil monastery (Fig.2.5) sits on a wooded hillside, 25km north of Rongwo in Hornak (hor-nag; C. Huangnaihui) township.⁴³ It is considered to be the ‘mother monastery’ of Rebgong. A hermitage was established on the site in 1429 that subsequently fell into decline. In 1625, Chöpa Rinpoche built a meditation hut there and it was named Tashikhyil hermitage. It was the meditation

⁴² The historical detail on monasteries in Rebgong is taken from dPal-bzang (2007) unless otherwise indicated. Estimated numbers of monks are based on 2009-2010 data (see Table 7.1). The dates given for the revival of these monasteries reflect the dates dPal-bzang (2007) gives for ‘the (re)opening of the *Dharma* door’, i.e. revival of monastic life (see p.86). They do not necessarily reflect the dates that monasteries received government approval for reopening.

⁴³ Full name: sgrub-pa’i gnas-mchog bkra-shis-‘khyil (C. Zhaxiqisi).

retreat of the 1st Shartsang and where he composed his spiritual songs (*mgur*) (see also Dhondup 2011 pp.11-12). Although originally a place where hermits who had already trained in exoteric and esoteric Buddhism practised, it later became a practice centre where elders and young monks gathered together. At its peak, more than 300 hermit monks stayed there. The monastery was revived in 1981 and has c.30 monks.

2. Yershong monastery (Fig.2.6) sits in the middle of a forest in Lonchö (blonchos; C. Lancai) township, 30km west of Rongwo.⁴⁴ Chöpa Rinpoche is said to have built a meditation hut in the place known as Yershong, but was unable to found a monastery there because of disputes with the local people. In 1697, Jamyang Lodrö ('jam-dbyangs blo-gros), who was recognised as the reincarnation of Chöpa Rinpoche, succeeded in establishing a practice centre on the site. This reincarnation lineage became known as the Yershong lineage. The monastery was revived in 1981 and houses c.55 monks.



Figure 2.6 Yershong monastery

⁴⁴ Full name: gyer-gshong dgon bsam-gtan chos-'phel gling (C. Yeshijiangsi).

3-7. I visited five of the six monasteries that dominated the cultural production of art in Amdo (p.62), all of which were revived in 1981. These monasteries (Nyentok, Gomar (Fig.2.7), Kasar (Fig.2.8), Upper Senggeshong (Fig.2.9) and Lower Senggeshong (Fig.2.10) are branches of Rongwo located in the Rongwo valley, adjacent to the villages that are their main supporting communities and from which the monks originate.⁴⁵ The inhabitants are officially classified as Monguor (C. *tuzu*) as distinct from Tibetans (C. *zangzu*).⁴⁶ Their oral language is distinct: in Senggeshong it is a mix of Chinese and Amdo Tibetan and in the other four villages it is Mongolic in origin mixed with Amdo Tibetan. However, in relation to the issues under discussion in this study, my interlocutors identified themselves, their monasteries and their culture as being ‘Tibetan’. Beyond the obvious linguistic differences between the inhabitants of these villages and the surrounding Tibetan population, the only point of distinction they mentioned was the style of the robes worn by lay people, a finding shared with Fried (2009 p.4).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Full names: gnyan-thog bkra-shis dar-rgyas gling (C. Nianduhusi), sgo-dmar dga’-ldan phun-tshogs gling (C. Guomarisi), rka-sar dgon-pa dga’-ldan ‘dus-bzang chos gling (C. Gasharisi), seng-ge-gshong ma-mgo dgon dga’-ldan phun-tshogs gling (C. Wutunxiasi), seng-ge-gshong ya-mgo dgon dpal-ldan chos-’byor gling (C. Wutunshangsi). Kasar received official approval to reopen in 1983 (Pu 1990 p.438).

⁴⁶ The origins of these villages are disputed. Chinese sources present theories and oral traditions tracing them to Chinese, Mongolian and/or Tu ancestors (Fried 2009 pp.15-19). In a Tibetan language introduction to Gomar and its artworks, Tshangs-dbang (2000 p.1-2) claims that the people of Gomar, Kasar, Nyentok and Töja (tho’a-kya; C. Bao’an) are descendants of soldiers, sent by King Songtsen Gampo (srong-bstan sgam-po) to Amdo after he had unified greater Tibet (*bod chen-po*), and who interbred with Mongolian and Chinese women. The genealogy he presents thus claims direct descent from Tibetan bone and links local history back to the Tibetan empire, a symbolic linkage found in Tibetan ‘proto-nationalist’ sentiments pre-dating the modern period (see, for example, Diemberger 2007a pp.39-41). In Tibetan kinship terminology, bone denotes patrilineal descent: the ‘boneline (*rus-rgyud*)’. The ‘bloodline (*khrag-rgyud*)’ denotes the maternal family line. Gruschke (2001 p.53) also discusses the contested origin of these villages.

⁴⁷ The ‘blurring of the boundaries of “Tibetan-ness” in Amdo is not new, it has been occurring for centuries’ (Huber 2002 p.xvii). For a discussion of ethnic identity amongst the ‘Tongren Tu’ see Fried (2009 p.186), who concludes that ‘the notion of being a little different, but somehow still very much like the surrounding Tibetan population, remains most central to the imagination of the Tongren Tu. ... [They] are quietly and individually ignoring and resisting the label of Tu and identifying with the label Tibetan’. Yet, there are contexts in which a separate identity has been asserted: Monguor writers have objected to Rebgong’s art traditions being labelled ‘Tibetan’ (Stevenson 2002 p.199).



Figure 2.7 View of Gomar with its distinctive *chorten*

Nyentok, Gomar and Kasar monasteries are in Nyentok (gnyan-thog; C. Nianduhu) township. Approaching Rongwo from the north along the western side of the valley, you first pass Kasar monastery (c.15km from Rongwo), then Gomar monastery (8 km) and finally Nyentok village, which runs into the expanding urban sprawl of the county town (Fig 2.4). A meditation retreat was built at Nyentok in 1665 by the local leader. His heir formed a patronage relationship with Lobsang Tenzin (blo-bzang bstan-'dzin), who founded the monastery (to the west of Nyentok village) in 1695. It was originally Nyingmapa, but was reconstituted as a Gelukpa monastery by Khenchen Rinpoche in c.1732.⁴⁸ In Gomar, a Nyingmapa monastery is believed to have been established during the 14th century, located below the present monastery. During the 17th century, it was moved, given its current name and reformed according to the tenets of the Gelukpa.⁴⁹ Kasar was founded in 1787 as a Gelukpa monastery on the site of a hermitage. The monasteries have c.54, c.70 and c.50 monks respectively.

⁴⁸ mkhan-chen dge-'dun rgya-mtsho.

⁴⁹ Some people say that Lobsang Chödar (blo-bzang chos-dar; the first Alak Gomar) invited the 1st Shartsang to found the Gelukpa monastery, but its foundation might have pre-dated him (Tshangs-dbang 2000 p.5; see also dPal-bzang 2007 p.192).



Figure 2.8 Kasar monastery

Entering Rebong on the opposite side of the valley you pass Lower Senggeshong monastery (c.7km from Rongwo) and about 1km further on Upper Senggeshong, both of which come under the administrative jurisdiction of Rongwo town. The lower monastery was founded as a Gelukpa monastery on the site of a Nyingmapa hermitage, although there is disagreement in the sources over the date (1647 or 1706). The upper monastery was originally built in 1385 and reconstituted as a Gelukpa monastery in the 17th century (Gruschke 2001 p.53). They house c.134 and c.120 monks respectively.

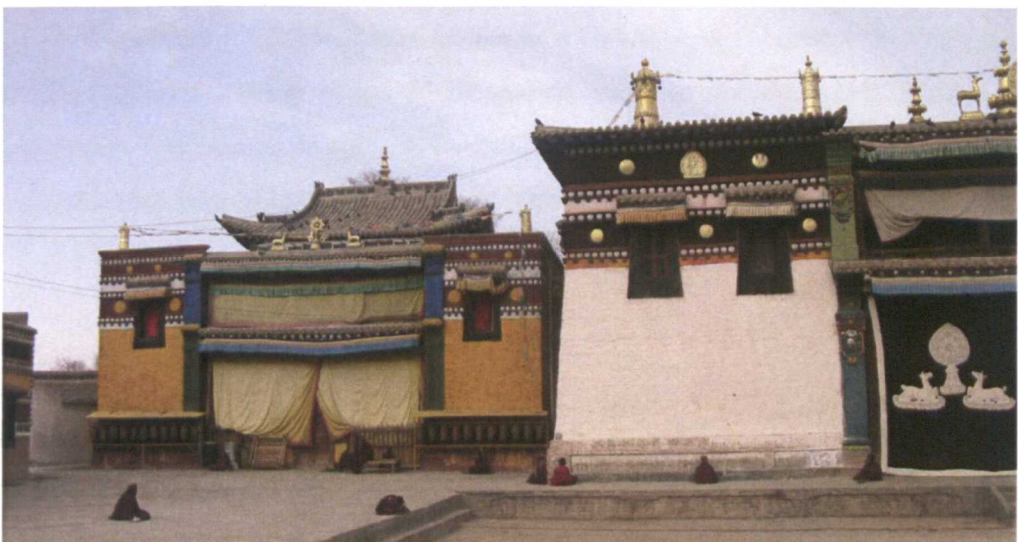


Figure 2.9 Upper Senggeshong monastery

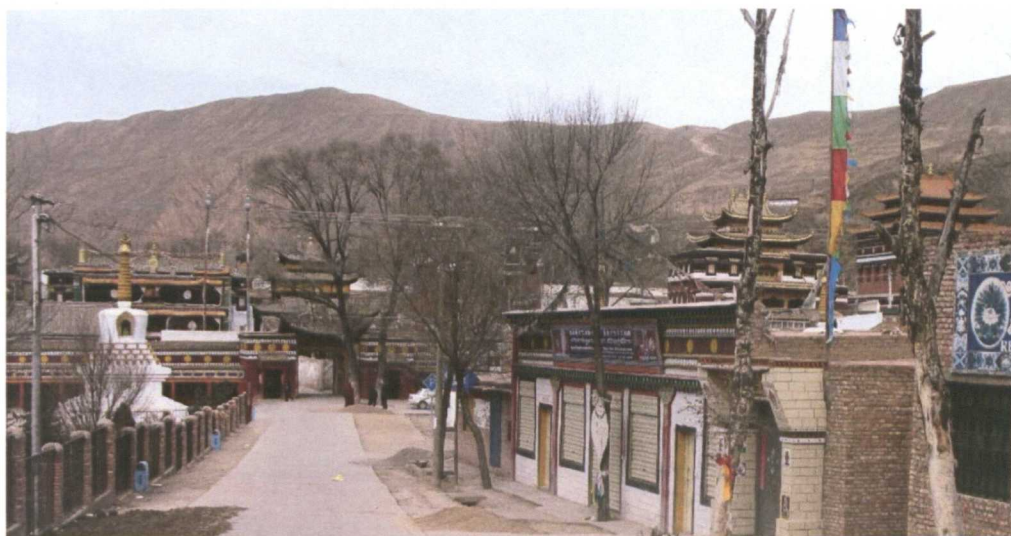


Figure 2.10 Approach to Lower Senggeshong monastery

8-10. The practice centres of Dechen (Fig.2.11), Dzongngon (Fig.2.12), and Dzongkar (Fig.2.13) are strung along the hillside on the Western side of the valley in Tsenmo (btsan-mo; C. Zamao) township about 25km south of Rongwo, near the border with Tsekhok (rtse-khog; C. Zeku).⁵⁰ Their histories are linked through important historical figures and all were founded as Gelukpa monasteries. Dechen was founded in 1692 on the site of a meditation retreat of Gonshül Kunga Chöpel Gyatso, who was posthumously recognised as the first in the Dechen Lhödrak reincarnation lineage.⁵¹ He and the 1st Dzongkar also built meditation huts on the site of Dzongngon monastery, after which many hermits came to use that place. In 1677, the former established Dzongngon as a Gelukpa retreat centre. In 1680, the 1st Dzongkar, a student of the 1st Shartsang, came to the site where Dzongkar monastery now stands to practise meditation and established the monastery there in 1683. Dechen and Dzongkar were revived in 1981 and Dzongngon was revived in 1982. They have c.80, c.50, and c.25 monks respectively.

⁵⁰ Full names: bde-chen bkra-shis chos gling (C. Deqinsi), rdzong-sngon bkra-shis chos-rdzong gling (C. Zong'esi) and rdzong-dkar bka'-gdams pho-brang bkra-shis dar-rgyas gling (C. Zonggesi).

⁵¹ bde-chen lho-brag sku-phreng dang-bo mgon-shul kun-dga' chos-'phel rgya-mtsho.



Figure 2.11 Dechen monastery

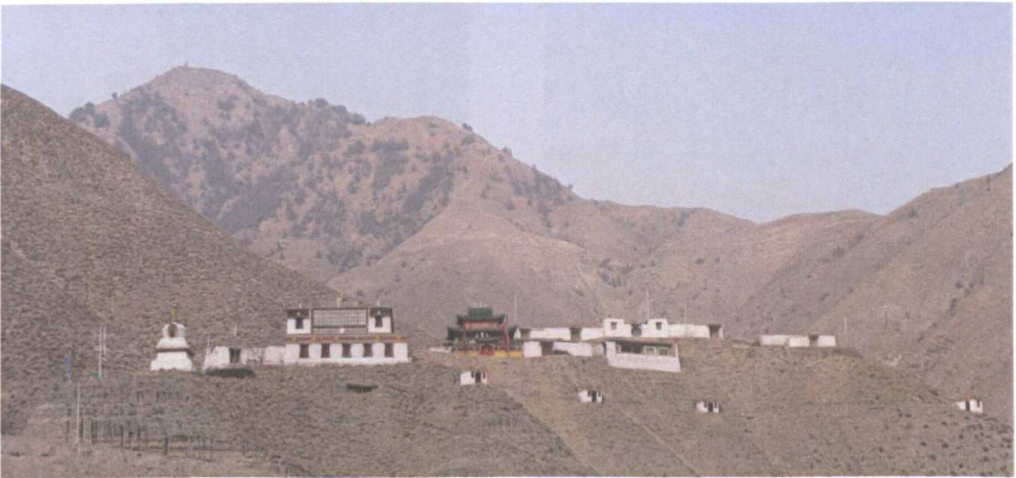


Figure 2.12 Dzongngon monastery



Figure 2.13 Dzongkar monastery

11. Dowadrok monastery (Fig.2.14) is located 97km south-east of Rongwo, just beyond the Dowa (mdo-ba; C. Duowa) township (Fig.2.15) in the lowly populated, high grasslands constituting the southern half of Rebgong county.⁵² Dowadrok was founded in 1956 by Geshe Gendun Gyatso who was born in Dowa and had studied at Labrang.⁵³ Monastic life was revived in 1983 or 1984 and the monastery houses c.25 monks.



Figures 2.14 and 2.15 Dowadrok monastery and Dowa township

I also interviewed a senior monk at one of Rongwo's branch monasteries in Tsekhok. Dorjedzong monastery is located in the grasslands about 40km east of Tsekhok county town.⁵⁴ It was founded as a Gelukpa monastery in 1922 by the 4th Alak Trigen,⁵⁵ revived in 1982 and houses c.105 monks.

Finally, I visited Gartse monastery (Fig.2.16), on the edge of the grasslands 30km east of Rongwo at the edge of Gartse town (Fig.2.17).⁵⁶ Gartse is a monastic centre that had jurisdiction over its own *lhade* and branch monasteries. However,

⁵² Full name: mdo-ba 'brog dgon mdo-sngags dar-rgyas gling (C. Ranzasi).

⁵³ bka'-rams-pa dge-dun rgya-mtsho.

⁵⁴ Full name: 'jigs-mdzad rdo-rje-rdzong dgon-pa (C. Duojezongsi).

⁵⁵ khri-rgan sku-phreng bzhi-pa 'jam-dbyangs thub-bstan rgya-mtsho.

⁵⁶ Full name: mgar-rtse gya-sa dgon thub-bstan chos-'khor gling (C. Guashezisi).

one of its monks told me that, as it is in Rebgong, it comes under the religious authority of Alak Shartsang, who gives teachings and initiations to the monks. It was founded as a Drigung Kagyu monastery then reconstituted as a Gelukpa monastery under the 3rd Gartse (d.1726),⁵⁷ whose reincarnation lineage is the monastery's head. It follows the traditions and curriculum of Labrang. Monks said that, following its revival in 1981, some of its monks trained at Labrang. Gartse now functions as an independent centre of dialectical training, housing c.164 monks.

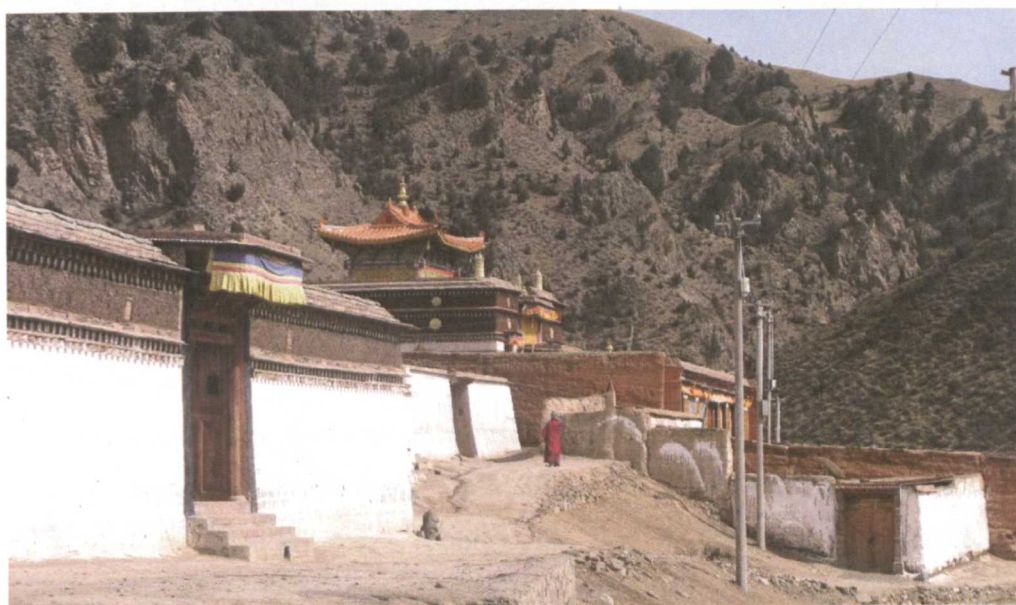


Figure 2.16 Gartse monastery

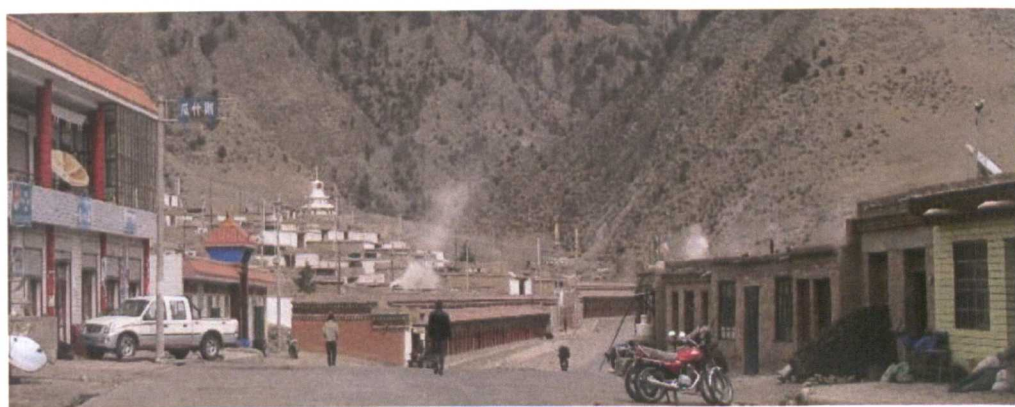


Figure 2.17 View of Gartse monastery from Gartse town

⁵⁷ mgar-tse sku-phreng gsum-pa khri-r gan mkhas-mchog rgya-mtsho

2.7.2.2 Western Bayan

My two main field sites in Bayan are Ditsa monastery and a smaller retreat monastery which was founded by a lama and some of the monks from Ditsa.

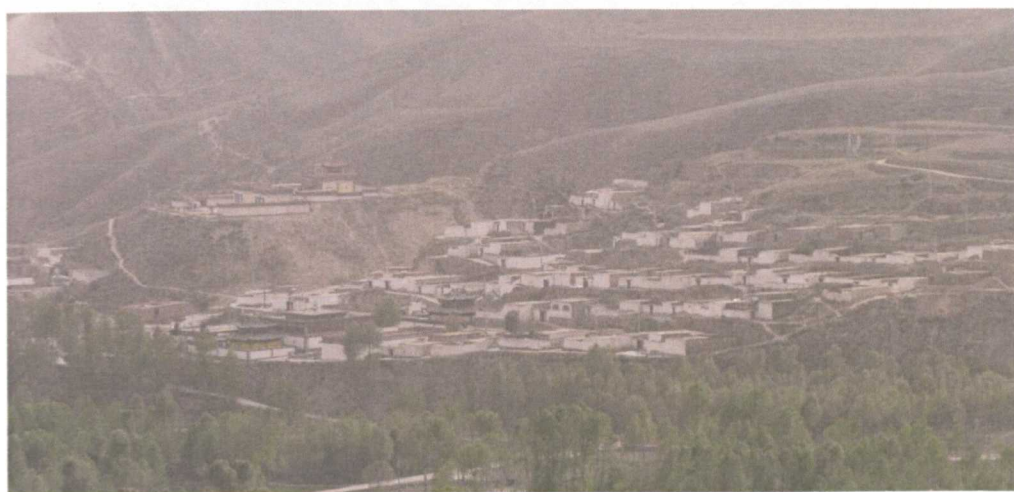


Figure 2.18 Ditsa monastery

The original Ditsa monastery was established by the Ditsa *nangso* in the 17th century as a branch of Shachung (Tuttle 2010 p.33), the regional monastic centre. It became home to Ngawang Trinley, the first in the Shamar reincarnation lineage.⁵⁸ In 1903, the 4th Shamarpa (who had studied at Rongwo and Labrang) was invited by the local leader to found a monastery with a college of dialectics above the original monastery (ibid. 2010 p.36).⁵⁹ He therefore became the head of the upper monastery (hereafter referred to as Ditsa).⁶⁰ Ditsa (Fig.2.18) was founded as a hermitage monastery for *ritröpa*, but during the reform period it has been reformed and now awards scholastic degrees. It was – and still is – an important centre of Buddhist practice and scholarship (see also ibid. 2010 p.36). Despite its relatively short history, it produced many renowned figures in the first half of the 20th century (see, for example, Zhizhadasi 2004; Tuttle 2010 pp.38-39).

⁵⁸ zhwa-dmar sku-phreng dang-po ngag-dbang ‘phrin-las.

⁵⁹ zhwa-dmar sku-phreng bzhi-pa dge-‘dun bstan-‘dzin rgya-mtsho.

⁶⁰ Full name: DHi-tsha bkra-shis chos-sdings dgon-pa (C. Zhizhashangsi; Zhazhadasi). Alternative spellings of lDe-tsha and rDi-tsha are also found in Tibetan sources (Tuttle 2010 p.33).

It was also home for a short period to Gendun Chöpel, whose ruined house has been left standing (Fig.2.19).



Figure 2.19 The remains of Gendun Chöpel's house at Ditsa

Following its establishment, Ditsa grew rapidly and at its peak housed 3,000 monks, although numbers fell after the death of the 4th Shamarpa (1912) and during the turbulent years of the Republican period (Tuttle 2010 p.37). It housed as many as 800 monks prior to 1958 (Table 7.1). When the first monks returned,⁶¹ most of the site had been turned over to fields and storehouses and only three monks' quarters and two reincarnate lamas' residences remained. Ten monks gathered in one of the quarters to hold the first ritual assembly, following which the number of monks increased rapidly (Table 7.1), assembling in the Shamarpa's residence until the new assembly hall was completed in 1984 (Fig.2.20). In 2009, Ditsa monastery had 403 monks, falling to 360-370 in 2010.

⁶¹ There is discrepancy in the sources as to the year in which the monastery reopened. The monastery's leaflet (Zhizhadasi n.d.) and website (Zhizhadasi 2004) say it reopened in 1981. This was also the date given by two of the senior monks I interviewed. Nian and Bai (2003 p.54) state that the monastery reopened in February 1980 and Pu (1990, p.93) writes that it received official approval to reopen in 1980. When I went back to my sources, I was told that the first monks returned in the second lunar month of 1980 and the monastery was granted official permission to reopen in the 11th lunar month of that year (personal communication with a key informant, June 2011).



Figure 2.20 Monks entering the assembly hall, Ditsa monastery

The 5th Kunchen (sku-mched) has been the abbot (*khri-ba*) of Ditsa since 1995 (Zhizhadasi n.d.). His is the only one of the three major reincarnation lineages to remain at the monastery. The head (*dgon-bdag*) lama, the 6th Shamarpa, disrobed in 2003 at the age of 23.⁶² In the early 1990s, a series of disagreements concerning monastic constitutional reform,⁶³ the recognition of one of the monastery's reincarnate lamas and the education of the 6th Shamarpa caused a deep rift dividing the monks into two groups according to their respective teaching lineage. This ultimately resulted in the other major reincarnate lama, Alak Jyeltsab (rgyal-tshab), leaving Ditsa with 146 monks to found a new monastery in April 1995.

The new monastery is Tashitse (Fig.2.21).⁶⁴ It sits above the valley in which Xiongxian Tibetan township lies and is accessed by a dirt road winding through the mountains. It was built on the site of a meditation retreat of a previous reincarnation of the Shamarpa and is supported by several local villages. A

⁶² Interview with a senior monk. The details on the split at Ditsa and the founding of Tashitse are reconstructed from interviews.

⁶³ The monastery was originally founded as a hermitage monastery (p.77). An elder of Ditsa told me that prior to 1958 a large proportion of the assembly 'wore the yellow robes' of the *ritröpa*. During the reform period, a leading teacher who had studied at Labrang pushed to reform the monastery and award monastic degrees.

⁶⁴ Full name: bkra-shis-rtse dge-ldan dar-rgyas gling (C. Zhaxizesi).

monastic teacher told me that the aim was to establish a hermitage monastery in accordance with the vision of the 4th Shamarpa who founded Ditsa in 1903 (T/R). When the monks first arrived they practised in an eight-roomed building at the top of the site and lived in tents and slowly, with the help of villagers and their relatives, built quarters. The monastery was officially certified by the county religious affairs bureau in April 2001 and a new assembly hall was completed in 2005. In 2009, it housed 71 monks.

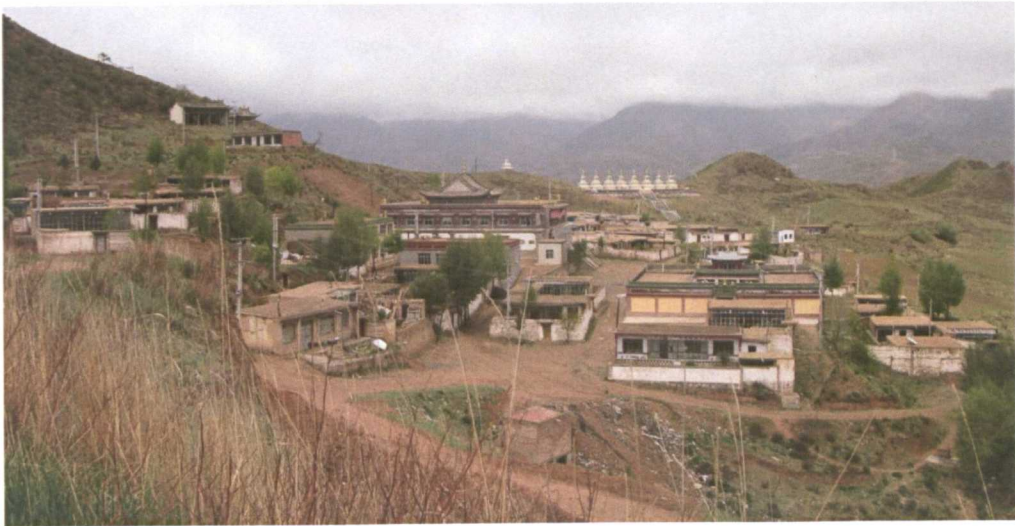


Figure 2.21 Tashitse monastery

I also visited the regional monastic centre of this area, Shachung (Fig.2.22), which is perched above the Yellow River along a mountain ridge which is said to resemble the giant Garuda bird or *shachung* (*bya-khyung*) of Buddhist mythology, hence the monastery's name.⁶⁵ Shachung is most famous for being the monastery at which Tsongkhapa trained before he travelled to Lhasa for further studies. It was originally founded in the first half of the 14th century as a Kadampa (*bka'-gdams-pa*) monastery, becoming a Gelukpa monastery in the 16th century (Gruschke 2001 p.41). At its height it housed up to 3,000 monks, although this figure might have included the population of its branches (*ibid.* p.42). There were less than 1,000 monks by the mid-1950s (Table 7.1). In 2010, the monastery housed 385 monks.

⁶⁵ Full name: *bya-khyung bshad-sgrub gling* (C. Xiaqionsi).



Figure 2.22 Shachung monastery

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach used in this study, explaining why it was considered the most suited to the aims of my research and addressing problems of validity. It has also explained how the research developed, discussed some of the obstacles encountered, and described the process of data collection and associated epistemological and ethical issues. Finally, it introduced the geographical area in which the research was conducted and the monasteries selected as main field sites.

The next chapter will examine the revival of these monasteries in the early 1980s, thus establishing the context for the subsequent chapters which will explore dynamics in their development over the past 30 years.

Chapter 3

Reordering the social world: the revival of monastic life

The revival of religion in Amdo in the late 1970s and early 1980s occurred within the same general policy contexts as elsewhere in China (p.8). It was also situated within the context of indicators of change felt in all Tibetan areas in the PRC: the rehabilitation and state patronage of religious leaders, signalling a return to the United Front policy of the 1950s;¹ renewed contact between Tibetans in the PRC and Tibetans in exile and the return of some exiled religious leaders; contact between representatives of the Dalai Lama and Beijing; and the visit of Party Secretary Hu Yaobang to Tibet in May 1980 (see Goldstein 1997 pp.61-73; Shakya 1999 pp.371-393; Kapstein 2004 pp.239-240; Makley 2007 pp.135-136). Kapstein (2004 p.249) has also commented on the relatively liberal approach to cultural and religious affairs in Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

However, in order to understand the revival of monasticism and its subsequent development, it is important to look beyond these policy contexts to its social dimensions. This chapter examines the re-opening of monasteries in the 1980s. It briefly examines the social rupture of the Maoist period before moving on to discuss the beginnings of the revival, exploring themes emerging from written and oral recollections of this time. It describes the re-separation of monastic and lay communities and the re-enactment of relations of dependence between them in new circumstances, exploring continuities as well as disjunctures with the past. Finally, it examines a published representation of the destruction and revival of one monastery, authored by a monk who locates the latter as the latest stage in the temporal context of the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. He narrates the social reordering of the 1980s, restoring monastic space from profane to sacred and the lamas, monks and laity to their proper places in the ideal integrated monastic social world.

¹ Several of my interlocutors cited the 10th Panchen Lama's 1980 tour of Amdo as a signal of change. The 10th Panchen Lama (paN-chen sku-phreng bcu-pa blo-bzang 'phrin-las lhun-grub chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan), born in Amdo in 1938, was the most senior Tibetan politico-religious leader in the PRC following the 14th Dalai Lama's flight into exile. He was released from prison in 1977 and appeared in public for the first time in 1978 (Shakya 1999 p. 372). He died in 1989. For background on his life and work see TIN (1997), Dawa Norbu (1997, pp.297-321), Hilton (1999) and Arjia Rinpoche (2010).

3.1 Social rupture: destruction and revival

The monastic ‘revival’ needs to be set in the context of the closure of monasteries during the Maoist period, which marked an enforced reordering of Tibetan society. In Amdo, 1958 represents the pivotal historical moment in popular discourse and culture rather than the Communist ‘liberation’ of 1949, or the Cultural Revolution.² In much that is written about modern Tibetan history (which tends to focus on events in central Tibet) the year 1959 is presented as the turning point, with the uprising against Chinese rule in Lhasa and the 14th Dalai Lama’s flight into exile marking the end of gradualist policies. However, in Amdo, the imposition of communisation of agricultural and pastoral areas, violent class struggle, and the closure of monasteries in 1958 was a point of social rupture. These enforced ‘democratic reforms’ resulted in large-scale revolt, which was violently suppressed (Smith 1994 p.67).

This is not to suggest that CCP rule had had no affect on the lives of Tibetans until 1958. There was resistance and rebellion when ‘democratic reforms’ were first announced in Amdo and in Kham in 1956. This was a contingent factor in subsequent events not only in these regions, but also in central Tibet (ibid. p.65; Shakya 1999 pp.161-162). However, events under CCP rule up to this period, like other episodes in the tumultuous local history of the twentieth century (such as the violence in Rebgong and Bayan during the time of Ma Bufang), did not fundamentally disrupt the social order.³ Under the United Front policy of the 1950s (p.12 n.30), local elites were incorporated into the new administrative structures. For example, the 7th Shartsang was appointed head of the Malho TAP government when it was established in 1953 (Qinghai Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui, ed. 2001 p.510).

² See, for example, the song *1958-2008* by bKra-shis don-`grub (2008), a singer from Sogpo in Malho. He compares the two ‘terrifying’ times of 1958 and 2008 and starts with the verse: ‘Hey! / The year of 1958, / is when the black enemy entered Tibet, / is when the lamas were put in prison.’ See also Makley (2007 p.105).

³ However, they did lead to a demographic restructuring of parts of Qinghai, including Bayan. See Fischer (2008) for a summary of the aggressive assimilationist policies of the Republican era Hui Muslim warlord Ma Bufang (1903-1975).

However, the 'democratic reforms' of 1958 entailed a forced reorganisation of society and a radical displacement of Gelukpa monastic authority. Many reincarnate lamas and monks (particularly the highly educated) were 'struggled against' and imprisoned and the other monks were forced to disrobe and return to lay life. In 1962, some monks were able to return to the larger monastic centres in Amdo, including Labrang (Slobodnik 2004 p.9), Kumbum (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 pp.52-53) and (in my field area) Rongwo, Ditsa, Gartse and Shachung, all of which maintained relatively small monastic populations until the Cultural Revolution started in 1966 (Table 7.1), but this did not represent a return to previous social structures. The Cultural Revolution represented a further period of violent and traumatic social upheaval, but 1958 is the point that demarcates the 'old' and 'new' societies.⁴

The Gelukpa revival in the 1980s was contingent not only on the opening of a new public space for monasticism, but also upon another social reordering and the re-formation of the 'monastic moral community' (p.23). This involved the reinscription of the social and spatial boundaries between lay and monastic communities that underpin the ethical relationship between monks as a field of merit and the laity as patrons.

3.2 The reinscription of social and spatial boundaries

Two themes emerging from written and oral recollections of this time provide informative sites upon which to examine the integrated processes of negotiation of public space and the reordering of society: the public performance of monkhood through the wearing of the monastic robes and the reclamation of monastic space.

⁴ For accounts of the Maoist period see Arjia Rinpoche's (2010 pp.31-87) description of his life at Kumbum and Makley (2007 pp.76-134) who gathered oral histories in Labrang. Monks continued to live on some monastery sites throughout the Maoist period, for example at Kumbum (Arjia Rinpoche 2010, pp.74-87) and at one of my field sites (p.98), but were engaged in productive labour and unable to live and practice openly as monks.

3.2.1 Putting on the robes

The return of the few remaining reincarnate lamas and teachers who had maintained their vows during the Maoist period marked the beginnings of the monastic revival. These men provided the unbroken transmission of teachings and practice that is the basis of authority in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Their role was essential in terms of their authority to reconsecrate monastic sites, re-establish ritual, education and practice, and (crucially) to ordain new monks.⁵

Alak Khaso,⁶ was the first of Rebgong's senior reincarnate lamas to return to Rongwo monastery following the provincial government's declaration of the new policy of freedom of religious belief in Autumn 1979. He arrived at the monastery in January 1980 and consecrated the assembly hall (dPal-bzang 2007 p.24). A senior monk at Rongwo, gave the following description of his arrival:

When Alak Khaso arrived at the monastery, he was wearing a dark brown lambskin robe and a yellow shirt and was riding a white horse.

At that time only one or two monks wore monastic robes. (T/R)

This simple description of clothing expresses the liminality of this moment of arrival, a point of disjuncture between the traumatic past and the present social world. The lama had returned to the monastery, but he still wore the attire of a layman: there were 'monks', but few wore monks' robes.

A published account of subsequent events at Rongwo written by a Rongwo monk (dPal-bzang 2007 p.24) presents the putting on of the robes as one of the significant acts in the revival of the monastery. In February 1980, the 6th

⁵ The Tibetan Buddhist tradition was also maintained in the Tibetan community-in-exile. Teacher-student relationships between lamas and monks in exile and lamas and monks in the PRC have also been an important element in the re-establishment of monastic traditions.

⁶ The 7th Khaso (kha-so sku-phreng bdun-pa blo-bzang 'jigs-med 'phrin-las), born in 1930. Alak (*a-lags*) is a term of respectful address for reincarnate lamas commonly used in Amdo instead of the term 'Rinpoche (*rin-po-che*)'. I also heard it used as a term of address for a highly respected lama who had assumed many of the duties and roles of a reincarnate lama in his monastery and its patron communities but who had not (yet, at least) been recognised as part of a reincarnation lineage.

Dzongchung,⁷ who was to be enthroned as regent (Rongwo's head, Shartsang Rinpoche, had died in prison), came to Rongwo, 'in accordance with the wishes of the faithful monks and lay people of Rebgong'. His arrival was marked by the appearance of 'a rainbow and other auspicious signs'. This was followed by the events marking the beginning of the revival of monastic life, referred to in the text as the 'opening of the *Dharma* doors'. The (re)opening of the *Dharma* door(s) (*chos-kyi-sgo-mo phye/chos-sgo phyir-phye*) is a turn of phrase commonly used in Amdo to denote the revival of Buddhism and/or specific monasteries. A '*Dharma* door' is an entrance to the *Dharma* (the Buddhist teachings on ways of practice leading to liberation from suffering).

On 26th February, the great 6th Dzongchung, the 7th Khaso Rinpoche, ... [and other reincarnate lamas and leading monks] put on the red robes, the Vajra holder Dzongchung Rinpoche gave a teaching of the *Prātimokṣa sūtra* and an auspicious restoration and purification of the vows ceremony was held, and the *Dharma* doors were first opened (dPal-bzang 2007 p.24).⁸

The wearing of the monastic robes is an important marker of identity and distinction between the laity and those who have 'gone forth', renouncing household production and reproduction (p.30). The robe, along with a shaved head, is what immediately identifies an individual as a monk, reminding the monk of his commitment to the Buddhist path and enabling the layperson to respond in a socially appropriate manner. The purpose of wearing the robe is therefore to

... signify that you're a monk or nun so that people can recognize you as such, and so that you yourself will remember. That was Lord Buddha's intention in having the Sangha [S. *samgha*; monastic community] wear robes. The clothes you wear should signify that you're ordained, distinguish you from lay people, remind you of your

⁷ dzong-chung sku-phreng drug-pa 'jigs-med mkhas-btsun lung-rigs rgya-mtsho (1923-1988).

⁸ I will return to a fuller discussion of dPal-bzang (2007) and his presentation of the significant events in the revival of monasticism in Section 3.5, including the significance of the restoration and purification of the vows ceremony.

obligations, and allow others to recognize you as a monk or nun (Thubten Yeshe 1982).⁹

Individual elements of the robes and the way in which they are worn symbolise various aspects of Buddhist doctrine and practice (see Mills 2003 pp.41-43). For monks, the robes therefore embody ‘the qualities of both Buddhist soteriology and monastic discipline and responsibility, literally swathing them in their religious vocation’ (ibid. 2003 p.41).

The re-emergence of the public performance of monkhood through the wearing of the monastic robes was an important element in the reordering of Tibetan social worlds in the early 1980s. For most Tibetans, this is the most important boundary between lay and monastic status, rather than the distinction between a novice (*dge-tshul*) and a fully ordained monk (*dge-slong*) (Makley 2005b p.272).¹⁰ However, it was a gradual process, at least in Rebgong and western Bayan. Akhu Chöpel told me that at Rongwo monastery it was five or six years before all of the monks wore the robes and that he himself had continued to wear lay clothes and work for some months before he donned the monastic costume (T/R).

As elsewhere in China, space for the revival of religious activities was created not just through shifting policies, but also a growing confidence amongst individuals that these policies were not simply a strategic trick. The social reorganisation of the Maoist period had involved a fundamental shift in the public symbolism of the robes, marking the wearer as belonging to one of the parasitic and exploitative classes of the old feudal regime, and many monks had experienced great suffering.

⁹ Lama Yeshe (1935-1984) gave this teaching at an international meditation centre in Dharamsala, India in 1982 in the context of discussions about whether Western monastics should wear robes outside their monasteries since some had been abused by lay people.

¹⁰ Contrary to Makley’s findings at Labrang, in some monasteries the robe is altered to denote status as a fully ordained monk (see also Mills 2003 p.43), as well as particular positions within the community, for example the winter upper robe (*zal-gam*) worn by the *gebké* (*dge-bskos*) or ‘disciplinarian’ at assemblies. Monks who have taken the vows of a *ritröpa* wear a yellow upper shawl (*gzan gser-po*).

3.2.2 Reclaiming monastic space

The revival of individual religious practice in Tibetan areas occurred more rapidly than that of monasticism (see also Goldstein 1998a p.25). This was partly because the Party, while tolerating individual practice, did not wish to see the emergence of independent social institutions (Shakya 1999 p.404). However, it was also because there were few surviving elders with the authority to reconstitute the monasteries and revive monastic traditions. When the new policy of freedom of religious belief was announced in Rebgong and western Bayan, ‘elders’ (*rgan-pa*), who had been monks prior to 1958, returned to the sites of their monasteries.¹¹ However, it took longer for collective monastic activities to resume.

In Rebgong, Rongwo was the first monastery to officially reopen. The elders from its affiliate monasteries assembled there along with some new monks. When the affiliate monasteries were reopened, monks returned to their own monasteries and collective activities resumed, sometimes without formal government permission (see also Shakya 1999 p.419; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.82; Arjia Rinpoche 2010 p.126;). According to Pu (1990 p.430), there were 30 Gelukpa monasteries in Rebgong county by the end of the 1980s: six had received official approval to reopen as monasteries, 17 were approved as ‘sites for religious activities’ and seven had ‘opened of their own accord’.

The reclamation of monastic space and remaking of the spatial boundaries between lay and monastic communities were essential to the resumption of collective monastic life. During the Maoist period, any surviving monastery buildings in Rebgong and western Bayan had been used as state work offices, granaries or dwellings and the sites were turned over to use as agricultural land, grazing pasture, forest or housing for cadres and villagers. Therefore the reclamation of monastic space by the monks also represented the return of the

¹¹ A *rgan-pa* is an elder in terms of age and/or seniority and can be used in reference to both monks and lay people. The term was also used more specifically by my interlocutors as shorthand for monks who were ordained prior to 1958. These men were not necessarily that ‘old’ when they returned to their monasteries in 1980. At Rongwo monastery, I was told that the youngest *rgan-pa* was only 35 when the monastery reopened (T/R).

sites from profane to sacred use and reflected the shifting power relationships between state, monastery and society.

The initial migration of the elders who had been living in lay communities to derelict monastic sites was the first step towards this re-separation, even if the ritual practices essential to the reconstitution of these sites as monasteries had not yet been performed. However, the story of Rongwo's revival as told by monks shows how (relatively) slow the process of reclamation and re-separation could be.¹² The birds eye view of the present site from the opposite hillside (Fig.2.3) contrasts sharply with the image conjured up in oral narratives of the monastery as it was thirty years ago, when the revival of religious practice began. At that time, the few buildings that had not been destroyed in 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution were used as storehouses and the offices of state agencies and the rest of the site was used as government work offices, workshops, schools and homes for Chinese families (see also dPal-bzang 2007 p.23). Although the assembly hall was officially handed back when Alak Khaso returned in 1980, it was being used as a storehouse for pesticide and fertiliser.

Even as monks began to practise publicly and recommence collective monastic activities, it was a long and gradual process before they lived as a separate community and the spatial boundaries between monastery and village/town were re-established. Initially, there were few places for them to stay inside the monastery and many lived in nearby villages. As the Chinese families living in the monastery gradually began to leave, monks moved into the houses they had left behind. Even then they were living alongside the remaining families as their neighbours. Geshe Tashi, a senior scholar and teacher at Rongwo, remarked that when he entered in 1984 'it did not seem like a monastery, but like a village' (T/R).¹³ It was not until 1990 that the government redistributed the land to the monastery. Monks who joined in the early 1990s said that many Chinese

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, the description in the following two paragraphs has been constructed from interviews with monks who entered Rongwo during the 1980s and 1990s.

¹³ Geshe (*dge-bshes*) is an academic title conferred at various levels by the major and some of the regional Gelukpa monastic centres following extended study and examination.

households were still there at that time. By the mid 1990s the remaining families had left and the monastery Management Committee divided the land and apportioned space for individual monks, whose families then helped them to build quarters. Today, the monastery occupies much of the original site, although part is still occupied by a middle school and village housing (see Fig.5.6). Rongwo's monks still consider these areas to belong to the monastery.

Some monks referred to the government's re-distribution of land as a contributory factor in the reclamation of monastic space from the remaining Chinese households. I was told a similar story by senior monks at Ditsa. When the elders returned only three monks' quarters and two reincarnate lamas' residences remained. The rest of the site had been turned over to fields and threshing grounds used by Chinese families. The land was gradually handed back. When I asked Ditsa Akhu Tenzin whether there had been any conflict in reclaiming the land, he said that 'since the state distributed the land, there was no conflict' (T/R).

By contrast, at a monastery where the monks' quarters had been used by Tibetan herding families, Akhu Wangchuk insisted that it was not the government who had returned the land: the people 'gave the houses back to the monastery of their own accord and returned to the grasslands' (T/R). His emphasis on the agency exercised by herders in the restoration of monastic space underscores their position as members of the monastic moral community. The only context in which my interlocutors acknowledged reliance on state agency was the reclamation of space from 'Chinese' outsiders, viewed as an (incomplete) restitution of monastic rights.¹⁴ More generally, written and oral accounts of monastic revival in Rebgong and western Bayan emphasise the active participation and voluntary support of the Tibetan community, not only in the reclamation of space, but also in the reconstruction of monasteries, funding of monastic activities and support for monks.

¹⁴ This appeal to state authorities over matters considered 'external' to traditional authorities is also found in other contexts. For example, Pirie (2006) shows that appeals were made to government officials in boundary disputes between nomadic tribes in Machu and Golok which resulted from state grassland fencing policies. For the resolution of feuds, however, the nomads turned to traditional authorities such as the tribe and lamas, which themselves represent complex configurations of power (Buddhist norms versus Amdo pastoralists' norms of revenge).

3.3 The re-enactment of patronage relationships

3.3.1 Material support for the revival

Material support for the monastic revival was provided through three main channels: direct support of monasteries by the lay community, family support of individual monks and patronage of reincarnate lamas. My interlocutors emphasised the voluntary and spontaneous outpouring of donations during the early reform years, a phenomenon interpreted by Makley (2007 p.251) as 'investments in hoped-for personal and collective futures' following the social upheaval and desecration of the Maoist period.

The lay community were actively involved in the physical reconstruction of monasteries in Rebgong and western Bayan, providing labour, materials and funds for rebuilding. This reflects what is known about the revival of other monasteries in Amdo. A few sites such as Kumbum, Drepung and Sera received significant government funding for reconstruction (IOSC 2005),¹⁵ and in a few cases benefactors from outside the community provided large donations to pay for re-building (TIN 1996 p.1; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.55). However, in most cases the Tibetan community provided the majority of funding in the form of unpaid labour, donated materials and sponsorship of construction and interior decoration (Kolås and Thowsen 2005 pp.53-54; see also Slobodnik 2004 p.10; Makley 2007 pp. 251, 264).

Construction focused initially on the repair or construction of each monastery's assembly hall and the building of monks' quarters (Fig.3.1). The latter often constituted a form of household support for individual monks since families came to the monastery to build the quarters. The other main form of family support was food supplies, although I was told that this was limited during the early years because of the poverty of many households at that time. Monks were also involved in construction work, particularly at monasteries remote from supporting communities, such as Yershong and Ditsa; and some monks relied on livelihood support from their 'home teacher' (see p.100) or other monks.

¹⁵ Although see also Chapter 5 (p.172 n.19).



Figure 3.1 A monk's quarters

Reincarnate lamas played a major role in the revival of monasticism. Previous research has touched on the political influence that some exercised in support of the revival of Tibetan culture through the state patronage extended to them under the renewed United Front policy (Arjia Rinpoche 2010; see also Slobodnik 2004 pp.10-11; Diemberger 2007a p.312). The material support provided by key figures such as the 10th Panchen Lama and Gongtang Rinpoche,¹⁶ and lamas in exile has also been mentioned (Slobodnik 2004 p.11; Kapstein 2004 p.240; Makley 2007 pp.262-264). On a local level, many lamas were also active in providing the material necessities for rebuilding and resumption of ritual activities, through which monks also received some livelihood support.

Many reincarnate lamas died between 1958 and 1980 and others had gone into exile. Those who remained (many of whom were imprisoned during the Maoist period and then 'rehabilitated' in the late 1970s) were instrumental in the revival of Gelukpa monasticism. Those who had maintained their vows provided the continuity of traditions essential to monastic revival (p.85). However, as in the past, they took on a combined religious and secular role, taking responsibility for

¹⁶ The 7th Gongtang (gung-thang) (1926-2000), a senior lama at Labrang.

the material support of their monasteries, as well as Buddhist practice. Others had married and were therefore unable to resume their full positions within the monastic hierarchy, but nevertheless actively supported monastic reconstruction. The 10th Panchen Lama, who had married and had a family following his release from prison in 1977, is a well known example (see p.82 n.1). However, there were many other such individuals, such as Alak Trigen in Rebgong, who returned from exile in India in 1979 and has sponsored and overseen much of the rebuilding at Rongwo and Tashikhyil (Fig.3.2).



Figure 3.2 Tashikhyil's rebuilt assembly hall

The material support provided through reincarnate lamas was dependent on the food, money, precious metals and jewellery received as offerings. It was therefore an indirect form of support from the laity. Given the relatively few lamas who remained in Amdo, there was a degree of de-territorialisation of the religio-secular relationships of particular reincarnation lineages to particular monasteries. In Rebgong, for example, figures such as Alak Dzungchung, Alak Khaso and Alak Trigen in Rebgong supported monasteries throughout the area.

To summarise, the revival of monasticism in the early 1980s was primarily based on the flow of resources between communities, reincarnate lamas and monasteries. Accounts of monastic reconstruction often refer to the support of 'local' communities (for example Kolås and Thowsen 2005 pp.53-54). However,

the territorial relationship between monasteries/lamas and their supporting communities is more complex and worth brief consideration in its historical context.

3.3.2 Patron communities

Although emerging in new contexts, material support for the monastic revival represented a mobilisation of patronage networks based on affiliations between lay communities, lamas and monasteries prior to 1958. Stoddard distinguishes between religious (monastery, Tibetan Buddhist school, lama) and regional (valley, tribe, region) affiliation as the two types of identity of which Tibetan people were aware before 1950 (Stoddard 1994 p.125). In practice, these were often interlinked, with villages or tribes acting as the patron communities of particular monasteries and/or reincarnate lamas. However, these historical territorial affiliations were not necessarily based on geographical proximity.

The joint religious and secular rule by Gelukpa monasteries in much of Amdo, including Rebgong, meant that monasteries had jurisdiction over lands and peoples, referred to as *lhade* (*lha-sde*) or ‘divine communities’, ‘meaning “communities in the service of the Buddhist gods”’ (Nietupski 2011). In contemporary contexts, the *lhade* is still the unit at which community/monastery patronage relationships function in Rebgong. It is also the relationship between a monastery and its *lhade* that determines which monastery a monk will join, providing kinship links between monasteries and communities.

I follow Makley (2005b) in translating *lhade* as ‘patron communities’. This best expresses the relationship in contemporary contexts and is useful in making a distinction between patronage by communities who have historical, territorial and kinship-based ties to particular lamas and monasteries and individual ‘patrons’ who have developed a relationship with a particular lama or monastery outside of these affiliations – an important distinction given the increasing sponsorship by Han Chinese from inland China.¹⁷ However, it is important to note that this

¹⁷ Tsering Thar (2002, p.165) refers to *lhade* as ‘offering tribes’ and provides the following definition: ‘*Lha-sde* are tribes or villages which, to a certain extent, are disciples of and belong to a monastery. They offer labour, money, material and monks to a monastery and the monastery also performs rituals for the health, deaths, crops.

patronage system is rooted in historical contexts in which the monastery held joint politico-religious authority. Patronage networks have resurfaced in a differentiated society. Monasteries and reincarnate lamas do not officially have political or legal jurisdiction over the lands and peoples of their *lhade*, whose tax obligations are now to the local government, not to the monastery.¹⁸ Goldstein's (2001 p.1179) modern Tibetan dictionary and the tri-lingual Tibet-Chinese-English oral Amdo Tibetan dictionary (Geng, Li and Lhun-grub rdo-rje, eds. 2006 p.911) both define the *lhade* as the 'subjects' of a monastery, indicating the problematic nature, in contemporary political contexts, of the re-emergence of this network of territorial and religious affiliations outside state administrative frameworks.¹⁹

There is yet to be a systematic study of the institution and history of the *lhade* in Amdo.²⁰ However, from the information that can be pieced together and consideration of the patronage networks that re-emerged in Rebgong during the 1980s, some observations can be made. In some cases, the relationship between monasteries and patron communities was indeed 'local' in the sense of close geographical proximity, for example, the 12 districts of Rebgong that support Rongwo and, even more so, the villages of Gomar and Nyentok that provide the main support and monks for 'their' monasteries which are situated at the edge of the villages. However, these monasteries also have historically rooted patronage relationships with villages and tribes further afield. For example, Rongwo has patron communities in Gangtsa (rkang-tsha; C. Gangcha) county to the north of Qinghai Lake, roughly 250km north-west of the monastery in one of Rongwo's 18 outer divisions (p.66 n.41). These translocal connections are probably related

riddance of calamities and blessings for the people in the *lhade*.' Makley (2007) also uses the terms 'offering tribes' and 'patron tribes'.

¹⁸ In practice they continue to exercise a degree of political authority which co-exists with new state structures rather than being replaced by them. For example, I was told about situations in which lamas and monks had been involved in both intra and inter-community conflict mediation (see also Pirie 2006). I also came across several instances in which reincarnate lamas had influenced the administrative decisions of government and Party leaders at the local level. See also Diemberger (2007b, 2008, 2010) who discusses the blurred lines between religious and secular roles.

¹⁹ It should be noted these definitions are grounded in a contested reading of the pre-1958 monastic economy as feudal.

²⁰ Although see Nietupski (2010, 2011) on Labrang.

to the expansion of territorial patronage relationships through the founding of new branch monasteries or practice centres by reincarnate lamas and/or the places of origin of different generations of particular reincarnation series.

Each monastery might have several affiliated communities and each community might have a patronage relationship with several monasteries and/or reincarnate lamas. The patronage system also functions at different levels. Certain villages and tribes that are the *lhade* of a monastic centre such as Rongwo or Gartse in Rebgong might also be the *lhade* of one of its affiliated monasteries. For example, Gomar's villagers are the main supporting community for Gomar monastery, but also act as sponsors for Rongwo. From a historical perspective, these patronage relationships were not static. Shifts in local power relationships could result in the gifting of land and people by local leaders to a monastery and the transference of branch monasteries from one area to another. For example some of Rongwo's affiliated monasteries were gifted to Labrang during the 18th century (Sonam Tsering 2011).

Ditsa monastery is distinguished from the monasteries in Rebgong in not having had *lhade*. Monks came to study at Ditsa from many different places in the Tibetan Buddhist world, including Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Inner Mongolia. Senior monks explained that it had relied on the patronage networks of its reincarnate lamas and monks and did not 'belong' to any particular community. According to Ditsa Akhu Samten, before 1958:

... there were more than 700 monks. At that time they were mainly from Tso'ngonpo and also Shamdo, Shinte and Bongtak Chadzom.²¹ These monks gave teachings in their home areas and collected alms for the assemblies. (T/R)

However, stable patronage relationships were still established with particular communities and have been re-enacted in the revival of the monastery. For

²¹ Tso'ngonpo (tsho-sngon-po) is in Chabcha (chab-cha; C. Gonghe). Shamdo (bya-mdo) and Shinte (zhin-te) are in Mangra (mang-ra; C. Guinan) and Bongtak Chadzom (bong-stag cha-'dzoms) is in Tsigortang (rtsi-gor-thang; C. Xinghai).

example, the tenth month festival commemorating the death of Tsongkhapa (*Inga-mchod*) was sponsored by a tribe which continues to do so up to the present day.

3.4 Repopulating the monasteries

The repopulation of monasteries was vital to efforts to re-establish mass monasticism. Previous studies have discussed various religious and economic reasons why young men chose to enter monastic life and/or were sent by their parents (Mills 2003 p.40; Kapstein 2004 pp.233-234; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.69; Makley 2007 p.249; Childs 2008 p.121).²² The elders also actively recruited monks (including two of my interlocutors) from their patron communities. There was a 'more is better' ethic reflecting pre-1958 conceptions of the good (p.29), which Makley (2007 p.82) attributes to the 'acute sense of urgency after the desecrations of the Maoist years'. Goldstein (1998a p.29) argues that there was a 'strong new religio-nationalistic belief that Tibetan religion, the basis of the greatness of the Tibetan nationality, should be revived to its former greatness'.

More generally, the monastic revival has been theorised as a response to the violence of the Cultural Revolution and an 'opportunity to publicly relocate moral agencies in the knowable space and time of a Buddhist cosmology' (Makley 2005a p.72); an expression of Tibetan identity, with monasteries coming to signify Tibetan nationhood and survival (Schwartz 1994 *passim*; see also Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.92); and as one element in:

... a spontaneous, diffuse process wherein members of a society individually have resurrected and re-integrated components of their traditional cognitive and effective systems to relieve stress and dissonance and reconstruct for themselves a more satisfying culture. (Goldstein 1994 p.105)

While these perspectives tell us much about the broad contexts of the revival, they elide some of the continuities with the past apparent in the lives of

²² See also Chapter 7.4.2. which discusses pathways into monastic life over the past 30 years.

individuals. The narratives of three monks who were among the first of the 'younger' generation to be ordained when the monasteries reopened in the early 1980s, show that the beginnings of the monastic revival are also be found in a shift from private to public practice. Despite the social rupture and state-sponsored violence of the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution, the subsequent 'revival' of Buddhism did not represent a complete break with the recent past, just as it was not a return to an older past. One of the problems with periodisation in history telling, marked out by major 'events', is that this can lead to reductiveness. There is no question that there was major social reorganisation in 1958 (p.84). However, a bracketing out of the Maoist period as totally oppositional to the reform era obscures continuities between that time, the past and the present.

It is generally known that there were 'elders' who maintained religious traditions during the Maoist period. When the monasteries were closed in 1958, the enforced integration of monks into lay society meant that many of the men who had been monks prior to 1958 subsequently married and had children. However, there were individuals who maintained their vows and practices privately. Some lived out these years as hermits, hiding in remote places. More commonly, monks lived a double life in the communes or labour camps, living in what Wynot (2002 p.67) refers to in her study of secret monasticism during the 1930s in the USSR, as a 'state of spiritual monasticism'. At one of the monasteries I visited, a few monks were able to stay at the monastery site, acting as caretakers for the vegetable gardens and tree plantations over to which the monastery land had been turned. Elder Akhu Yeshe told me that during the Cultural Revolution he wore lay clothes, but was able stay in a quarter that had not been destroyed, joking that: 'Because I was called "working class" by Chairman Mao my house was not destroyed. Chairman Mao indeed gave special treatment to the working class!' (T/R).²³

However, my fieldwork shows that (during the 1970s at least) there were also some boys who became 'secret monks', studying and practising privately with older monks. Tenzin Gyatso told me how he came to be a secret monk during the

²³ *gral-rim* 'byor med (literally the class without wealth).

1970s. His story shows the instability of individual trajectories through state-defined spaces (despite the social rupture of the Maoist period) and the disjuncture between policy aims and the social realities informing the practices of individuals. He said that he came from a rich family and his father had to 'wear the paper cap' during the class struggle of the Maoist period.²⁴ He thought his family were very bad and did not understand why they were so rich. As a result of his family's position he did not have an opportunity to go to school and when he was a child he had to go out and work. He then went to stay with a relative with whom he studied *Lamrim* (Tsongkhapa's treatise on the stages of the path to Enlightenment) and became a 'secret' monk:

At that time, we became monks secretly and wore lay clothing. There was an amazing Geshe in X village. We went there and became monks in the night because we should not be seen during the day time. ... The monks told us that, even if it is difficult to study, we should become monks and one day the *Dharma* door will be re-opened. At that time I did not know what a monastery was, but I stayed like that [as a secret monk] in expectation [that religious practice would be revived] (T/R).

This continuity of practice through personal relationships between elder monks and boys is also evident in Lobsang Tendar's life history.:

I became a monk at home. My teacher was a monk even in the 1950s. ... He is my father's older brother. ... I stayed with him from the age of 7 or 8. In summer, when he went to the nomadic grasslands he had a small house in which I served him. I fetched water and collected fuel. He taught me scriptures on the refuge practice and *The Hundred Deities of Tushita* [guru yoga practice] and so on, and I recited them in his presence. In autumn, I went back to the Chinese school and finished primary and [middle] school in the county town. Then Buddhism was revived in 1980 and I became a monk (T/R).

²⁴ In other words he was labelled a class enemy. 'Wearing the paper cap' refers to the practice of making class enemies wear a tall paper cap on their heads (see, for example, MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006 Illustration 21).

Sonam Gyatso told me a very similar story, describing how, even though there were no monasteries, he was socialised into monastic, rather than household life from a young age.

I spent my childhood living with my brother and uncle and so I had stayed with these two monks since I was a young boy. I didn't wear the monastic robes or anything, but I didn't experience secular family life. ... I went to the primary school when I was young and was planning to go to the [Tibetan nationalities teacher training] school and stayed there for a month with a teacher. I took all the exams but didn't go to the school. At that time there were no monasteries but Kumbum was beginning to re-emerge. Then I didn't go to school and decided to become a monk. I was staying with my uncle and brother and so I came here when the monastery was restored and was ordained in 1981 (T/R).

These stories highlight the importance of personal relationships between older monks and young men during this time, reflecting not only the contexts of the time, but also the traditional systems of Gelukpa monastic training. The importance of kinship relationships in these men's lives, each of whom lived with an older relative who was a monk, also has historical roots. According to Gelukpa monastic tradition, when monks first enter the monastery, particularly if they are young, they stay with an older monk, their home teacher, who will introduce them to the rules and life of the monastery and ensure they memorise the texts required to enter the monastic assembly. A young monk serves his home teacher, cleaning the quarters, cooking and doing other household chores, and gives his home teacher any income (food, money) to manage. Many monks with whom I have spoken said that when they joined their monastery their home teacher was a relative, or it was a relative who introduced them.²⁵ Therefore, although monks are renouncing household production and reproduction, kinship relationships extend into the monasteries. Young monks also form teacher/student relationships

²⁵ This also serves as a support system for older monks. One reason a household might send a boy to the monastery is to take care of an older relative who is a monk (for example, see p.255).

with their textual and tantric teachers. The continued importance of social relationships in individuals' pathways into monkhood since the early reform years will be explored further in Chapter 7.

At the same time, these narratives highlight significant changes to the social world within which mass monasticism was revived. A common element is the existence of a secular state education system, which was developed under the CCP. In the context of describing how he entered monastic life, Tenzin Gyatso mentioned that he was not able to go to school because of his family's class background. Another monk with whom I spoke had a similar history. On the other hand, Lobsang Tendar and Sonam Gyatso moved between the roles of secret monks and school students, finally deciding to enter their monasteries when they reopened. This highlights a significant difference between the contemporary social world and the world of their teachers who had become monks prior to 1958 when monasteries were *the* educational centres. The splitting of 'secular' and 'religious' in the field of education, not just of politics, has been a major shift in the social order.

Akhu Trinley, who joined one of Rongwo's affiliate monasteries in 1984, told me that at the time the monastery was reopening, the head lama, one of the most influential reincarnate lamas in the area, went to his village asking for 20 boys to become monks. Five or six, including himself, were taken from his class. Saying that he was a 'very good student' (T/N), he told me that his teacher went to the education bureau to complain, but because the lama was powerful nothing happened. This story shows the return of the authority of reincarnate lamas, not only amongst patron communities but also vis-à-vis state actors. However, viewed in an historical context, the very existence of opposition to the lama, particularly from a secular figure, highlights the new social relationships within which monasticism was emerging and the coexistence of competing orders. The relationship between secular education and monastic development is a sensitive issue for monks and will be examined further in Chapter 6.

3.5 Narrating the monastery: an alternative history of revival

In order to examine the monastic revival from an insider's perspective, I will now turn to a published account of the destruction and revival of one of Rongwo's branch monasteries taken from *Rebgong travel notes (reb-gong yul-skor zin-tho)* (dPal-bzang 2007). This text is authored by a member of the social world being explored in this study, who is himself negotiating multiple identities as a 'modern' 'Tibetan' 'monk'. Taking the monastery as the central subject and foregrounding and repressing particular elements, the author shapes his narration according to the norms and logics of his social world and narrates the reinscription of the social and spatial boundaries upon which this is based.

Before examining the text, I will briefly discuss the book from which it is taken and its author, since a contextualised understanding makes it of particular interest. It was written by a monk senior in the administrative hierarchy of Rongwo monastery and one of the young men who joined the monastery in 1980 at the age of 15. Over 500 pages of the 615 page volume (which took over ten years to produce) are dedicated to Rongwo and 46 other Gelukpa, Nyingmapa and Bonpo monasteries in Rebgong. The chapters on Rongwo's affiliate monasteries each follow the same format. They provide an overview of: the history of the monastery, the reincarnation lineage of the head lama, the monastery's sacred buildings and inner objects, the annual rituals, the monastic constitution, the education system, the funding of the main religious festivals and the patron communities.

The first distinguishing feature of the text is that the monastery is the central subject, marking a departure from traditional Tibetan histories of monasteries which are told through the historiographies of reincarnate lamas (see for example, bShad-sgrub rgya-mtsho 1995; 'Jig-med theg-mchog 1998). The second is the generally simple and factual style of the writing. In an interview, the author told me that Gendun Chöpel was one of his main influences and this is evident in both of the above points. He was particularly influenced by the *Guide to India* (1939 trans. Huber 2000), credited as one of the first examples of modern Tibetan

literature, in part for its ‘critical approach to providing an up-to-date Buddhist historical geography of Indian sites’, very different in style from traditional pilgrimage guides which revolve around the telling of the histories of religious figures (Huber 2000, cited in Hartley 2008 p.4). dPal-bzang’s other influences were his teacher, who encouraged him to write about the modern history of Rongwo and its affiliate monasteries, and a Western academic with whom he had contact during the 1990s and who had advised him on critical approaches and research methods.

dPal-bzang’s sources include local histories (published and unpublished), prefectural government records, oral histories collected from monks and lay people with local knowledge, and field visits. However, compared to brief factual histories of Rongwo and its branches (for example, Pu 1990) or the few ethnographic accounts of Tibetan Buddhist monastic revival (such as Makley 2007), his narrative is structured around the events that are most significant from within a Gelukpa monastic world view.

Through its hybrid approach, the narrative, fixed in published written form, thus becomes an alternative ‘official’ history to traditional accounts framed around the life of great lamas, factual accounts provided in guidebooks, and academic histories. The following extract relates the destruction and reopening of Lower Senggeshong monastery. It is a typical example of the author’s descriptions of this period for each of Rongwo’s affiliate monasteries:

During the 1958 ‘democratic reform’ campaign and the catastrophic storm of the 1966 Great Cultural Revolution, the statues, scriptures and *chorten* of this monastery were destroyed and the monks were expelled to the village. Fortunately, thanks to the protection offered by a few of the leaders of that time, the buildings of the great assembly hall and Maitreya temple were used as Lower Senggeshong village’s granary and survived in derelict form. The rest of the monastery site was used as a meeting place for lower Senggeshong village and transformed into living quarters for the commune cadres.

In 1980, at the same time as the revival of Buddhism in Amdo, a few monks of this monastery from former times took care of the monastic ruins and settled there. On 27th September of that year, the 10th Panchen Lama Lobsang Trinley Chökyi Jyeltsen visited this monastery. He gave oral transmissions to the monks and lay people on [the] *mani* [mantra], the refuge practice, the three deities of longevity, and so on. He spoke these words of praise: ‘That this former assembly hall survived without serious damage is because of the strength of your great faith’. Then he consecrated the assembly hall.

In 1981, a group of reincarnate lamas and geshe were invited from Rongwo monastery, led by the 6th Dzongchung Rinpoche Jikme Khetsun Lungrik Gyatso. The auspicious restoration and purification of the vows ceremony was held inside the assembly hall and the *Dharma* door was reopened. After that, under the leadership of the elder monks of former times and several new monks, and with the support of the faithful laymen and monks of this village who donated cash and materials and organised manual labour, gradually the ancient sacred inner objects were collected and those that had been destroyed were remade. Recitation and ritual practices were revived and continued according to tradition. (dPal-bzang 2007 pp.260-261).

The author refers to the revival as the ‘re-dissemination (*yang-dar*)’ of Buddhism. His use of language thus locates contemporary events within the much longer history of the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, which is commonly periodised in Tibetan accounts as the early dissemination (*snga-dar*) in the seventh century and the later dissemination (*phyi-dar*) in the eleventh and twelfth centuries following its persecution and near disappearance under the Tibetan emperor Langdarma in the ninth century.²⁶

The subsequent chronology of his account is similar to that in each of his chapters on Rongwo’s affiliate monasteries: the return of the elders to the monastery site to take care of the ruins; the visit of a senior reincarnate lama, in

²⁶ The author told me that the phrase *bstan-pa yang-dar* was first used by the 10th Panchen Lama in 1979. However, I have been unable to verify this. Diemberger (2010 p.115) also mentions use of this terminology among Tibetans.

this case the 10th Panchen Lama, and the consecration of the assembly hall; the restoration and purification of the vows ceremony; the reconstruction of the monastic buildings and sacred inner objects, supported by the lay population; and finally the revival of recitation and ritual practices ‘according to tradition’.

Through the presence of senior lamas and scholar monks, the performance of certain rituals (consecration, purification) and the revival of practices ‘according to tradition’, the monastery’s legitimacy is publicly restored according to Gelukpa norms, for which demonstrable continuity of practice through transmission and lineage is crucial. Its relationship to its ‘mother’ monastery is affirmed through the central role played by the 6th Dzungchung, who was then regent of Rongwo (p.85-6). The pivotal moment is the holding of the auspicious restoration and purification of the vows ceremony. It is only after this that the *Dharma* door is reopened. The restoration and purification of the vows ceremony, or *sojong* (*gso-sbyong*), is held twice monthly and is one of the three most important rituals of monastic discipline (*‘dul-ba*; S: *Vinaya*), without which monastic practice is not possible (Dreyfus 2003 p.320).²⁷ An auspicious (*bkra-shis*) *sojong* is such a ceremony held on a special occasion.

The actors in this narrative are the reincarnate lamas and senior monks who have the authority to reinscribe the monastic space with legitimacy and the monks and lay people who, through their faith, have protected and reconstructed the monastery. The restoration of the legitimacy of the monastery is not only performed in the presence of the lay community, but involves their active participation as sponsors. The state, implicitly present in dPal-bzang’s references to the 1958 ‘democratic reform’ campaign and the ‘catastrophic storm of the 1966 Great Cultural Revolution’, is absent in his account of monastic revival.

dPal-bzang’s narration reflects the way in which other monks talked about the process of monastic revival. They did not mention negotiations with local officials over permits and permission to re-establish their monasteries unless I specifically asked about this. Rather, they focused on the return of the elders to

²⁷ The other two are the summer retreat (*dbyar-gnas*) and the end of this retreat (*dgag-dbye*) (Dreyfus 2003 p.320).

monastic sites, the reconstitution of their monastic assemblies, the reclamation of monastic space, the reconstruction of the physical fabric of their monasteries and the resumption of monastic rituals and teaching.

dPal-bzang also ascribes agency to (and thereby underscores the continuity of) the monastic moral community during the Maoist period by referring to the protection of monastery buildings by local leaders and the Panchen Lama's words of praise. Within the framework of Buddhist ethics, the tactical manoeuvres of local leaders are moral actions. Their active participation in the transformation of the monastic site from sacred to profane use was a meritorious (rather than immoral) act because it was oriented towards the protection of the monastery and Buddhism. In his accounts of the revival of several other monasteries, dPal-bzang makes similar statements about local leaders protecting monastic buildings by making them useful to socialist construction. In one, he employs the term *thabs-mkhas* to describe their actions (dPal-bzang 2007 p.159). This can simply mean ingenuity or resourcefulness, but it is also the term for 'skilful means', one of the ten 'perfections' (*pha-rol-tu-phyin-pa*; S: *pāramitā*) cultivated by a Bodhisattva. The concept was originally used in the Lotus Sūtra, where it referred to the Buddha adapting his teachings according to the level of his hearers. However, it expanded with the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism to include any behaviour by the Buddha or Bodhisattvas motivated by compassion and animated by wisdom (Williams 1989 p.144), including actions that do not appear to coincide with Buddhist norms and values.²⁸ As a monk, the author is almost certainly aware of the doctrinal signification of this term, which roots the actions of local leaders in the Bodhisattva motivation – the altruistic motivation to seek to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

²⁸ A well known example from the *Upāyakaūśalya sūtra* is the story of the Buddha in a previous life as a ship's captain. A robber was about to kill all the merchants on board the ship and steal their possessions. In order to save them and to save the robber from the karmic consequences of his intended deeds, the captain killed the robber. Rather than being reborn in a hell realm as a result, the captain accrued great merit because he had acted skilfully out of compassion and with wisdom (insight into the nature of reality). See Tatz (1994) for a translation.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the social processes of monastic revival in the 1980s: the reordering of the social world, the re-separation of monastic and lay communities and the re-enactment of historical networks of relationships of dependency between lamas, monasteries and communities. The extent of the Gelukpa revival was thus contingent upon the resurgence of the monastic moral community (albeit within radically altered political, social and economic contexts) and its members' shared investment in the reconstruction and repopulation of monasteries on a mass scale. Although it was a gradual process rather than an 'event', the speed and scale of the revival was nevertheless extraordinary given the small number of elders who had survived the Maoist period and maintained their vows.

dPal-bzang's narration of the revival of Lower Senggeshong restores monastic space from profane to sacred and the various actors to their proper place in the ideal integrated social world of the monastery, re-establishing the ethical relationship between monastic (field of merit) and lay (patron) communities. However, as the rest of this study will explore, the permeability of these social and spatial boundaries in the lived realities and practices of individuals has been an important factor conditioning the attitudes and practices of monastic actors in the ongoing process of monastic development. From the beginnings of the revival outlined in this chapter, Gelukpa monasticism grew rapidly with increasing numbers of and expansion of monasteries and, until recently, growing numbers of monks. The ensuing economic relationship between lamas, patron communities and monasteries has been challenged under shifting social, economic and political conditions. The next chapter examines the main shifts in collective monastic financing over the past 30 years, exploring their economic, political, social and moral dimensions and from whom and where these challenges have emerged.

Chapter 4

Making a virtue of necessity? Monastic development, 'self-sufficiency' and the shift away from alms collection

During the 1980s, the number of monasteries and their size grew rapidly and they necessarily had to find ways to secure reliable sources of income to fund their annual cycle of ritual and educational activities in contemporary political and social contexts. This chapter first discusses the main trends in the development of the monastic economies of my field sites and outlines their structures in 2009. My fieldwork shows that while the lay-monastic patronage relationship remains a vital part of monastic support, many monasteries have developed self-supporting businesses. Moreover, monks at all but one field site claimed that their monasteries had ceased the practice of active institutionalised collection of contributions towards monastic activities (*dkar-thigs*) from patron communities.

The remainder of the chapter explores the reasons for these reforms. They appear to be moving the monastic economy into alignment with state religious policy and reflect practical needs to secure reliable income sources in contemporary circumstances. However, it will be shown that monks' narratives place agency for reforms within the monastic community and present impetus for reform as a moral issue. In other words, there is a sense that this is not just something that monks have to do, but something that at least some monks feel they *should* be doing, even though there is a tension between new economic practices and conceptions of ideal monastic behaviours. The chapter goes on to discuss whether this represents monastic accommodation of state policy and discourse. Are monks making a virtue out of the necessity of operating within the limits of state defined religious space? Or are there dynamics within the monastic community that need to be understood beyond the political and hegemonic power of the contemporary Chinese state? This chapter explores these questions by considering who has been advocating change, their loci of inspiration and legitimacy and their concerns.

4.1 Monastic development: 1980 to 2009¹

The reliance on the spontaneous outpouring of gifts to monasteries and reincarnate lamas in the early reform years (Chapter 3) was not sustainable, particularly as numbers of monasteries and monks rapidly increased (see Table 7.1).² Akhu Tenzin explained that when Ditsa first reopened, collective monastic activities were funded by the *nangchen* (*nang-chen*; residence/estate) of the 5th Shamar and organised by *nyerwa* (*gnyer-ba*) or monastery stewards, but then:

... the number of monks increased and also the *nangchen* had its own affairs to attend to. So it was quite difficult. Before, people would bring offerings for the lama to this *nangchen*, but afterwards it was very difficult to bring big offerings all the time (T/R).

To support their increasing numbers, monasteries began active alms collection in their patron communities, re-establishing traditional monastic offices held by lamas or monks. For example, at Ditsa, from about 1984, the *nyerwa* started travelling to villages and nomadic areas to collect money, grain and meat. Rongwo re-established the post of *sertri* (*gser-khri*; literally golden throne), traditionally held by a senior reincarnate lama responsible for looking after the religious and secular affairs of the monastery. The *sertri* collected alms from the patron communities to support monastic activities, along with *nyerwa* who raised funds for the monastery's three colleges. The post of *sertri* was re-established and held in turn by the 6th Dzongchung, the 7th Khaso and the 6th Rongwo,³ senior reincarnate lamas who had survived the Maoist period. The *sertri* travelled throughout the 12 districts of Rebgong (p.66) giving teachings and empowerments to the lay population and receiving offerings of butter, cheese, barley flour, money, precious metals and jewellery, which were used to support monastic assemblies

¹ This chapter is concerned with funding for collective educational and ritual activities. External development, such as temple building, is dealt with in Chapter 5. Unless otherwise indicated, the details in this and Section 4.2 are based on interviews with monks.

² See also Makley (2007 p.26) who states that 'lay donations to rural monasteries declined a few years after the reforms'.

³ rong-rgan sku-phreng drug-pa dge-'dun dar-rgyas rgya-mtsho (b.1942), popularly referred to as Alak Rongwo.

and rituals at Rongwo. At my other field sites traditional posts held by monks responsible for collecting alms for collective activities were also re-established.⁴

Previous studies have shown that commercial ventures were developed during the early reform years as mechanisms of monastic financing at some of the major Gelukpa monastic centres (Goldstein 1998a; Makley 2007) and Chinese Buddhist monasteries (Yin 2006). However, my fieldwork suggests that this may have been the exception rather than the rule. At Gartse, businesses were established as early as 1989/1990 and became a significant source of income alongside sponsorship by its head lama and patron communities (see pp.121-122). Some of my other field sites also started small businesses in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, these appear to have operated as self-sustaining services rather than profit-making enterprises and/or were insignificant elements in the overall monastic economy. Land (farmland, forest, grassland) was also redistributed to some monasteries, but generally speaking monasteries remained dependent on contributions collected from their patron communities.

However, as this chapter will show, the development of self-supporting activities has gained momentum over the past decade. Moreover, at all but one monastery, I was told that the monks no longer went out to collect alms. These were reported as the major changes in the monastic economies of my field sites. It should be emphasized that the focus in this chapter on these developments does not mean that lay support for monasteries has declined. Patronage remains an

⁴ This responsibility was usually held by one or more *nyerwa* but *chiwa* (*spyi-ba*) is another title given to the post in some monasteries. As Silk (2008 p.vi) notes in his study of the administrative offices of early Indian monastic Buddhism, 'administrative terms are local and particular' to both time and place and the same terms can be used in different ways. This is the case even in the relatively small and interconnected group of monasteries in Rebgong. For example, a *nyerwa* might be responsible for collecting alms for specific *Dharma* assemblies and/or fulfil the function of a steward, and one monk said that two of three temple caretakers at his monastery were called *nyerwa* rather than *gönnyer* (*dkon-gmyer*), the more usual term. Moreover, the functions of particular roles can change. This initially caused me considerable confusion because I entered the field with an understanding of monastic administration and key terms derived from previous reading that did not necessarily match realities in the field (Miller R. 1961; Ekvall 1964; Goldstein and Tsarong 1985; Goldstein 1989, 1998a; Mills 2003; Gutschow 2004). In the end, I abandoned any attempt to make generalisable classifications and simply noted the posts and structures of individual monasteries as they were explained to me.

important basis of support for monastic activities at all of my field sites, either directly or through reincarnate lamas. For example, Rongwo monastery's Monlam (Great Prayer Festival) is still sponsored in turn by one of the 12 districts of Rebgong,⁵ or by Rongwo's affiliate monasteries as was the case in 2009 (Table 4.1). Ditsa has principal sponsors for two of its four debating sessions (p.119). Some of the branch monasteries and practice centres are largely dependent on their patron communities and/or reincarnate lama(s) and at others specific festivals are sponsored by communities or individuals (Table 4.2). Moreover, I was commonly told that there had been an increase in sponsorship as local development had left both laity and monks with more disposable income.⁶ There had also been a rise in patronage from inland China and overseas Chinese.

However, a distinction is being drawn between 'voluntary' sponsorship and alms collection and active institutionalised collection of contributions towards monastic activities from patron communities (hereafter 'institutionalised alms collection') and there has been a growing impetus for monasteries to be self-supporting (*rang-kha rang-gso*). Many of my field sites have established capital funds from the donations of lamas, lay people and monks, which are lent out at interest. The monastic teaching centres of Rongwo, Ditsa and Gartse have also invested these funds in the development of various self-supporting businesses, such as shops, restaurants, Tibetan medicine clinics and incense and treasure vase production. Some of the branch monasteries and practice centres also run small businesses.

The rest of this section provides further details on the funding of collective activities at my field sites in 2009. Most of the expenses for collective rituals and *Dharma* sessions (debating 'semesters' or ritual cycles) consist of providing tea

⁵ Different villages, in whichever district is responsible that year, fund different days and the whole district funds the final day.

⁶ Since much of this sponsorship is of rituals rather than monastic festivals and *Dharma* sessions, it has perhaps had more impact on the livelihood of individual monks than the funding of collective monastic activities (see also Chapter 6.3.2).

and food for the monks.⁷ Monks also receive a share of food and cash offerings at sponsored assemblies (for example, when someone has died) and an annual subsidy from their monastery. Rongwo and Dorjedzong have started giving cash payments to monks who attend debate practice or teachings (pp.114; Table 4.2). However, as in the past, monks supplement their income through support from their families and other monks, and offerings of food or cash when they provide ritual services in the lay community (Tables 4.1, 4.2). Some engage in private money lending and at Gomar, Kasar, Nyentok, Upper Senggeshong and Lower Senggeshong monks earn income from religious arts and crafts. While I provide general data on the livelihood of monks, the discussion in this chapter focuses on the economy of my field sites at the collective level, rather than the economic activities of individuals. Ethical issues regarding the economic practices of individual monks and the distinction between monks engaging in business on behalf of the collective and as individuals will be discussed in Chapter 6.

4.2 Monastic economies: 2009

4.2.1 Rongwo monastery

All of Rongwo's monks gather together for four main annual festivals and various other rituals and assemblies (Table 4.1; Chart 4.1). These collective monastic activities are funded either by patrons or from endowment funds managed by the monastery Management Committee. The monastery as a collective unit has no businesses, but does receive some income from the sale of tourist tickets (split between the monastery and local government). This is channelled into a central fund, also managed by the Management Committee. The fund is used to finance repairs to the assembly hall and temples, monastery maintenance and construction, and relief for sick or poor monks.

⁷ In the past, sponsors would have donated foodstuffs, for example, butter, meat or tea, which would have been distributed among the monks. Nowadays, it is becoming more common for sponsors to donate cash, which the monasteries then use to buy supplies.

The monks are also members of one of Rongwo's three colleges or *dratsang*.⁸ These are the College of Dialectics,⁹ the Tantric College,¹⁰ and the Kālacakra College.¹¹ Each has its own assembly (*tshogs*), constitution (*bca'-yig*), education system, texts and administrative structure, and is a separate economic entity. Each therefore has its own annual ritual calendar and *Dharma* sessions (debating 'semesters' or ritual cycles depending on the college). Before 1958, each had its own abbot (*khri-ba*) and *nyerwa* who raised funds for college activities, but in the reform period, they were all looked after by the *sertri*. The College of Dialectics opened a medical clinic in 1989 and also ran some small businesses, such as a general store and monastic tailor shop. However, these operated as self-sustaining services for monks rather than profit-making enterprises.

Alak Rongwo, the last *sertri*, stepped down in 2001. By 2003, each college had established a *Dharma* Session Fund, donated by lamas, monks and lay patrons. The capital of each fund was invested in interest bearing loans and other businesses, such as shops, medical clinics and buses (see Chart 4.2 and Fig.4.1-4.4). The funds are managed by a group of managers (*kha-'go-ba*), changed every two years, who form each college's *Dharma* Session Fund Committee. The committees are responsible for managing college income and expenditure. In the

⁸ I follow convention in translating *dratsang* (*grwa-tshang*) as 'college' while noting Dreyfus' (2003 p.46) comment in his analysis of the great Lhasa monasteries that the use of the term 'college' leads to the misconception that colleges 'are merely subdivisions of a larger unit' whereas they are essentially separate monasteries. At Rongwo, although the revived *dratsang* still function as separate assemblies, they no longer have their own abbots. Contemporary administrative structures officially place all monks under the administration of Rongwo monastery's management committee, headed by the 8th Shartsang. For the sake of clarity I have decided to refer to Rongwo as a collective entity as 'Rongwo monastery' and the *dratsang* as 'colleges'.

⁹ Full name: rong-bo grwa-tshang thos-bsam mam-par rgyal-ba'i gling. It is often referred to amongst the monks as 'Rongwo Dratsang' or simply 'Dratsang'. For the sake of clarity I have opted to refer to it as the 'College of Dialectics' (*mtshan-nyid grwa-tshang*) in accordance with its function. It is the largest college and its monks study the Gelukpa scholastic curriculum and practice debate. It was formally re-established in 1985 with the inauguration of its assembly hall (dPal-bzang 2007 pp.61-62).

¹⁰ Full name: rgyud-pa grwa-tshang gsang-chen chos-kyi bang-mdzod gling. It focuses on tantric ritual and sādhana practices and resumed its full activities in 1988 (dPal-bzang 2007 p.102).

¹¹ Full name: dus-'khor grwa-tshang gsang-sngags dar-rgyas gling. It focuses on tantric ritual and practice and astrology and was revived in 1989 (dPal-bzang 2007 p.118).

College of Dialectics, this responsibility falls to the *dzö* (*mdzod*; S. Abhidharma) class on completion of their *dzö* studies and the number of managers therefore depends on the class size.¹² In 2006, the College of Dialectics established an Education Fund from capital donated by Shartsang and other lamas, monks and lay patrons. This is used to pay monks a salary based on how many days they have attended the debate courtyard (5 yuan per day in 2006/07, 7 yuan in 2007/08 and 10 yuan in 2008/09). In 2009, the Tantric College and Kālacakra College also established education funds which are used to give money to monks who attend teachings.

Table 4.1 Rongwo monastery: funding for collective activities, 2009

Source: field data and dPal-bzang (2007 pp.58-59, 100, 117, 126)

Activity	Funding
<i>Collective activities</i>	
Great prayer festival ¹³	The 12 districts of Rebgong or Rongwo's affiliate monasteries.
Great fifth month offering festival ¹⁴	Separate endowment fund (invested in interest bearing loans).
Great eighth month offering festival ¹⁵	Separate endowment fund (invested in interest bearing loans).
Tsongkhapa's death day offering festival ¹⁶	Patrons. If no patrons, Shartsang <i>labrang</i> (<i>bla-brang</i> ; estate) or monastery central fund.
Senior lamas' death day offering festivals	Separate endowment funds (invested in interest bearing loans); patrons.

¹² The *dzö* class is the 10th of 11 classes in the College's curriculum.

¹³ *smon-lam chen-mo*, 11th to 16th of the first month in the Amdo (lunar) calendar.

¹⁴ *lnga-ba 'i tshogs-mchod chen-mo*, 4th to 8th of the fifth month.

¹⁵ *brgyad-pa 'i tshogs-mchod chen-mo*, 19th to 21st of the eighth month.

¹⁶ *dge- 'dun lnga-mchod chen-mo*, 25th to 29th of the tenth month.

<i>College of Dialectics</i>	
Four <i>dharma</i> sessions (totalling six months), and other assemblies and rituals	<i>Dharma</i> Session Fund of c.2-300,000 yuan (capital donated by lamas, monks and lay people; invested in college businesses).
Debate (payment made to monks based on how many days they attend)	Education Fund of c.200,000 yuan (initial capital donated by Alak Shartsang, added to by lamas, monks and lay patrons; invested in businesses).
<i>Tantric College</i>	
Three <i>dharma</i> sessions and other assemblies, empowerments and rituals	<i>Dharma</i> Session Fund of c.200,000 yuan (donated by Alak Rongwo and monks; invested in college businesses).
Teachings (payment made to monks based on how many days they attend)	Education Fund (initial capital donated by Alak Shartsang, added to by lamas, monks and lay patrons; invested in businesses).
<i>Kālacakra College</i>	
Five scripture recitation festivals, and other assemblies and rituals	<i>Dharma</i> Session Fund (donations from local people invested in businesses).
Teachings (payment made to monks based on how many days they attend)	Education Fund (initial capital donated by Alak Shartsang, added to by lamas, monks and lay patrons; invested in businesses).
<i>Individual monks</i>	
Food, housing, books etc.	Family, salary for attending debate/teachings, food/money offerings at assemblies, distribution of college surplus, ¹⁷ ritual services in the community, support from other monks, offerings from the laity.

¹⁷ The amount varies from year to year depending on how the college businesses have fared.

Chart 4.1 Rongwo monastery: central funds, 2009 (based on field data and developed in consultation with monastic officials)

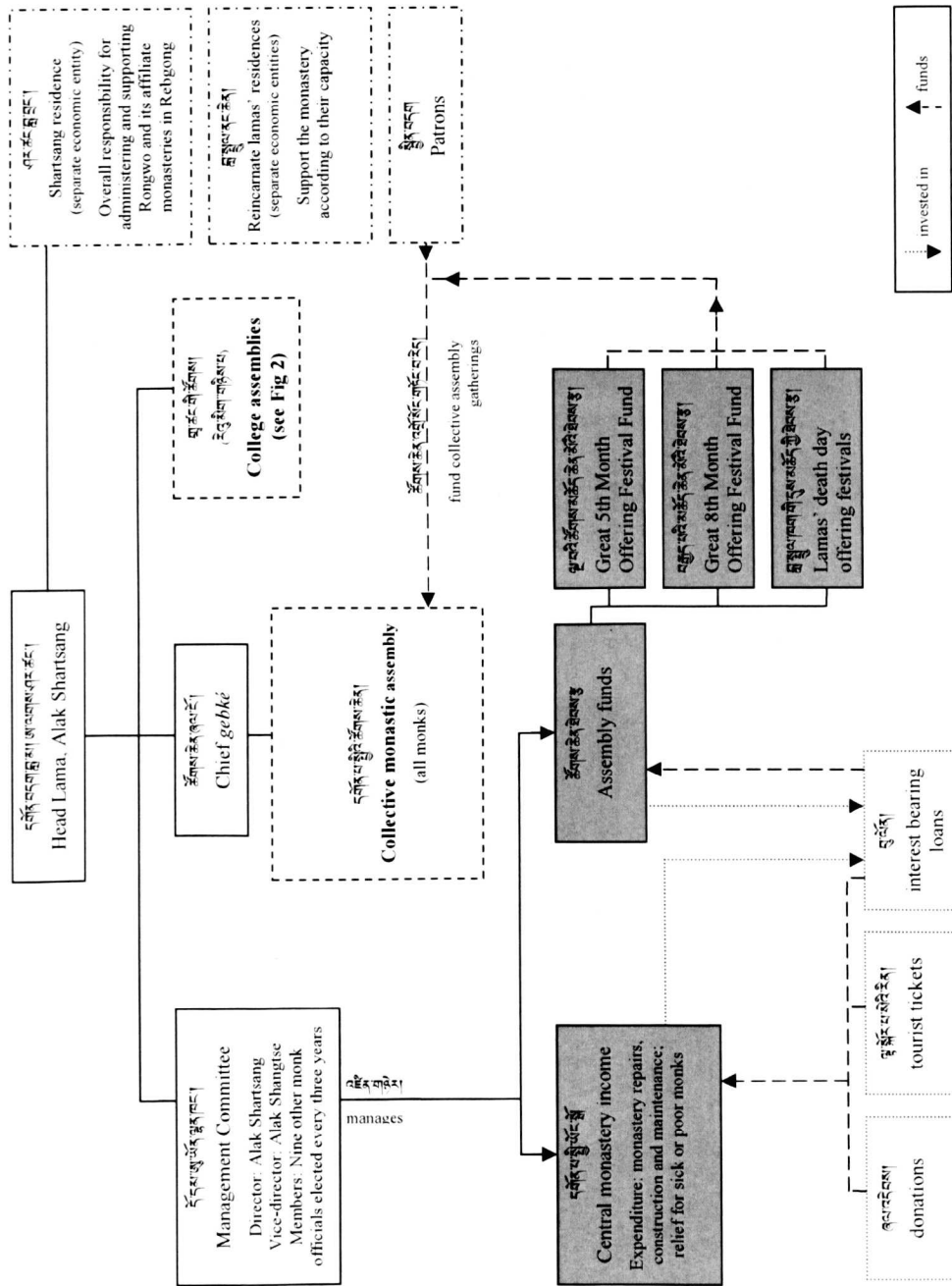
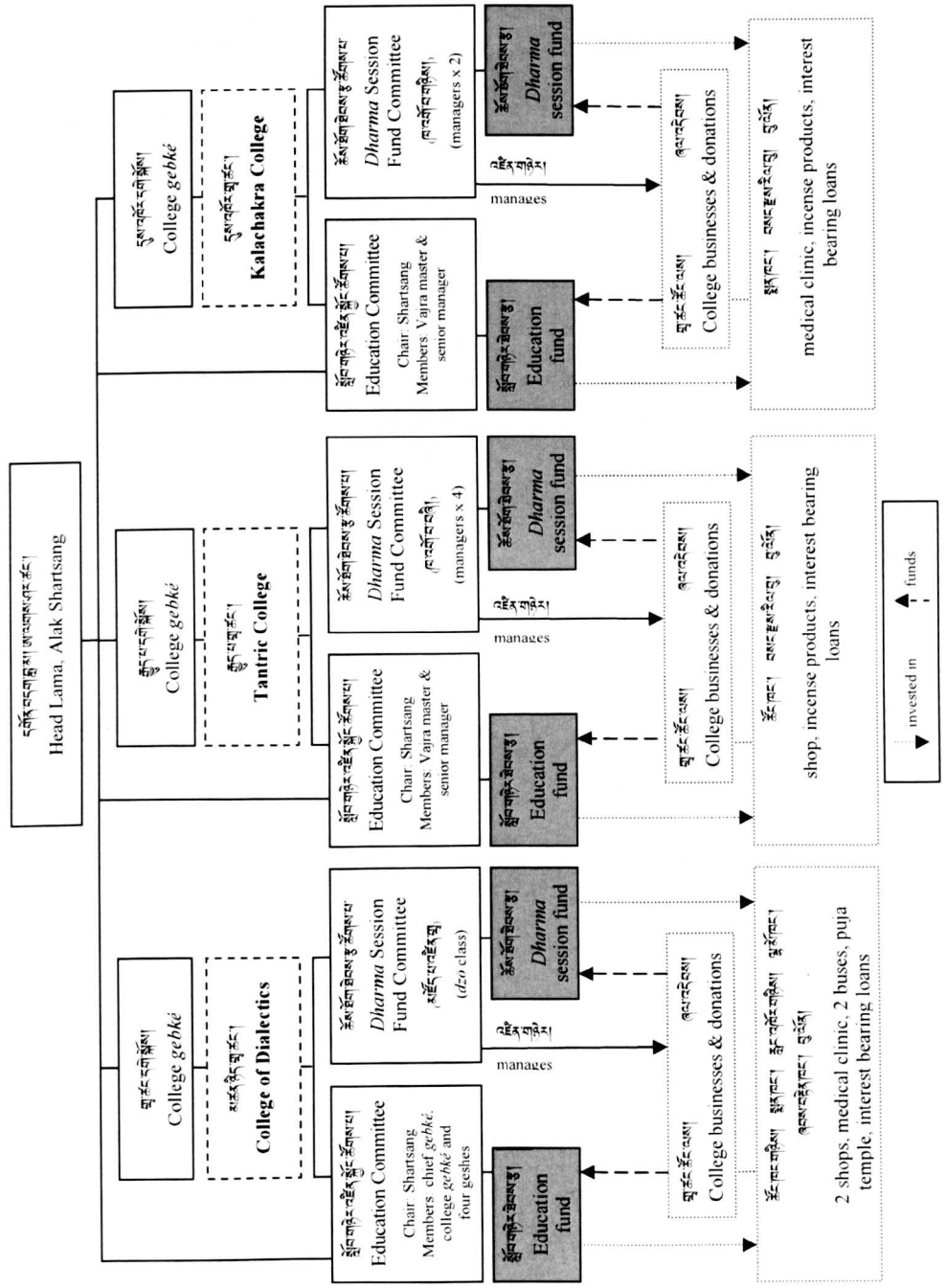


Chart 4.2 Rongwo monastery: college funds, 2009 (based on field data and developed in consultation with monastic officials)



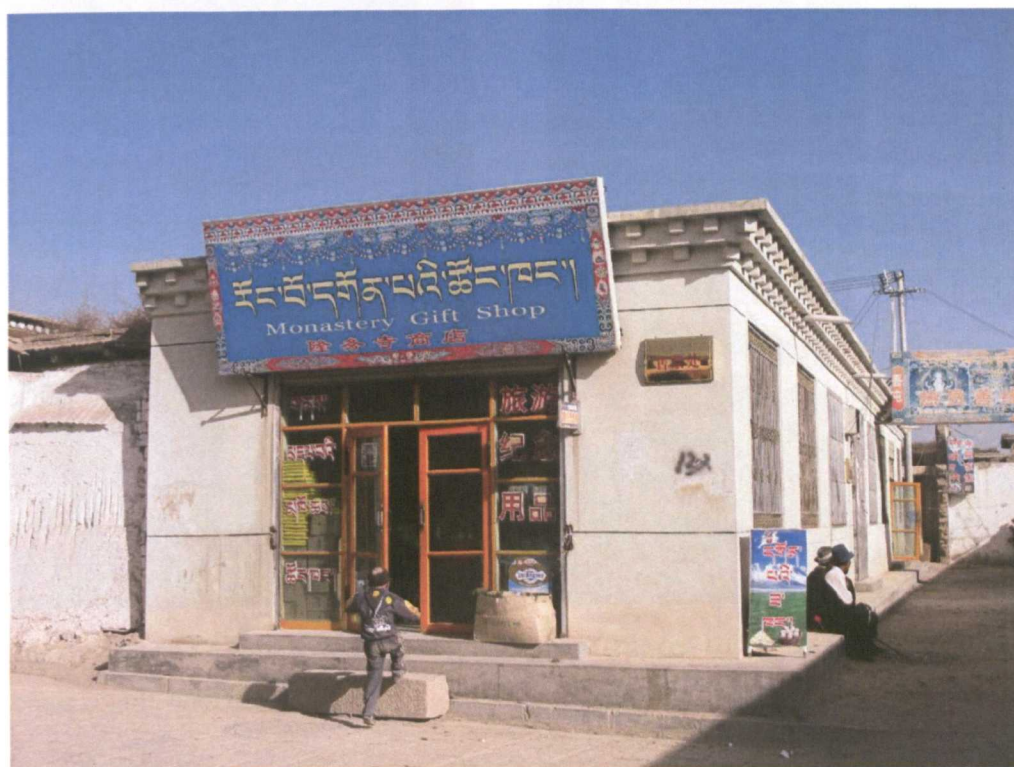


Figure 4.1 Rongwo College of Dialectics shop (in the monastery)



Figure 4.2 Rongwo College of Dialectics bus



Figures 4.3 and 4.4 Rongwo Tantric College shop (left) and Kālacakra College medical clinic (right), both in town

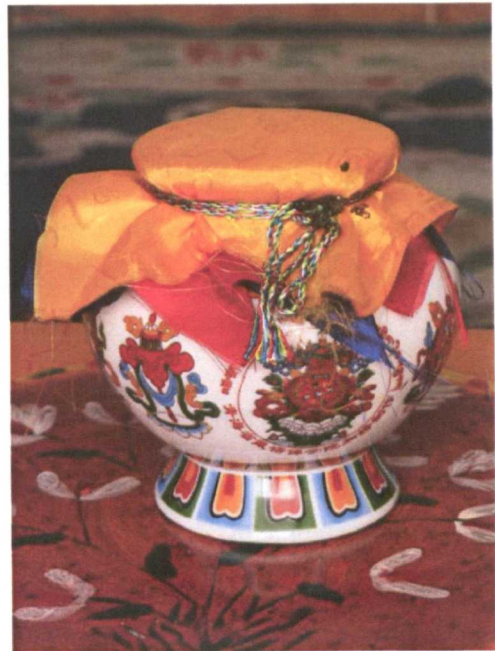
4.2.2 Ditsa monastery

Ditsa monastery has five major festivals (totalling 36 days) and three *Dharma* sessions during which the monks practise debating (totalling 100 days). In 2008, the monastery also started a fourth, autumn *Dharma* session (30 days). In addition, many of the monks remain in the monastery for the (optional) summer retreat (*dbyar-gnas*) (45 days). The monastery's financial management is handled by the Management Committee, which my interlocutors also referred to as the 'Elders' Committee (*rgan-tshogs*)'.

When Ditsa first re-opened the Shamar's estate funded the monastery assemblies and festivals, which were organised by the *nyerwa*, but from about 1984 the *nyerwa* started travelling to villages and nomadic areas to collect money, grain and meat (p.109). In 1995, the monastery decided to collect together a fund, which was then loaned out to lay people and the interest used to help fund the *Dharma* sessions. Subsequently, some capital was added by patrons from inland China to make a balance of 600-700,000 yuan. Although the monastery raised some income through money lending, it still relied on donations collected by the *nyerwa*. In 2000, the monastery established a shop near the assembly hall, but this

was leased out as a private business and the only income was the lease fee. In 2003, the Management Committee decided to take over the running of the shop and also bought a truck for transporting the merchandise.

In 2006, the monastery raised another fund from patrons to build a new complex inside the monastery (Fig.4.5), which contains another shop, a restaurant, a vegetable shop, a computer room, a book shop, a printer's, a tailor's, a meeting room and a medical clinic. Of these, the shops and restaurant (which is leased) provide the main income, while the other facilities provide self-sufficient services for monks and villagers. The monastery has also started producing *sādhana* pills for long life and 'treasure jars (*gter-bum*)', containing purified/blessed substances (Fig.4.6). Akhu Ngawang, who showed me these products, said that they are mostly sold through family and relatives elsewhere in Qinghai during the summer when there are many tourists.



Figures 4.5 and 4.6 New business/service centre at Ditsa (left) and a treasure jar (right)

Akhu Samten said that the businesses were lower risk investments than money lending:

We are a monastery. The state has regulations, but as a monastery when we lend money, people would say that they would pay interest,

but when it came to it ... there were many people who didn't pay. Later on we only lent money to a few people. It is quite risky if we lend money. (T/R)¹⁸

In addition, the profit is greater. For example, Akhu Ngawang told me that the *sādhana* pills are sold at a 300 per cent mark up. In 2009, they had increased their initial capital investment of 20,000 yuan to 60,000 yuan: 'if you lend 20,000 yuan to people, you don't get this kind of income' (T/R).

Sponsorship remains an important base of support and the monastery continues to build and expand its patronage networks. In 2009, for example, the spring *Dharma* session was sponsored by villagers in one district of Hainan prefecture. They had pledged to sponsor it for three years in return for which monks from that area were released from the obligation to serve as *nyerwa*, enabling them to focus on their studies. The summer session was to be sponsored by a monk from another part of Qinghai. The monastery also has a Chinese language website, established in 2004, which is clearly aimed at fundraising (Zhizhadasi 2004). However, in 2008, the senior monks decided to prohibit the *nyerwa* from going out and begging for alms because they now had sufficient capital to cover any shortfall in sponsorship: 'If anyone comes voluntarily and gives a donation, then so be it, but since last year we said that there will be a punishment for begging. Expenses come from the monastery itself' (Akhu Ngawang, T/R).

4.2.3 Other monasteries in Rebgong and western Bayan

Gartse is the other regional monastic centre among my field sites and, along with Rongwo and Ditsa, has the greatest number of monastic businesses. The head lama is still the principal sponsor of collective activities, but the monastery's businesses are also an important source of income. These were developed relatively early. In 1989, the monastery collected donations from the people and its head lama and founded a monastic education organisation that established a medical clinic and two shops. In 2008, it started running a petrol station opposite

¹⁸ This problem was also mentioned by two other senior monks at Ditsa, but only at one other monastery. When I raised this issue at other monasteries, monks said that since it was a monastery loaning the money, people would naturally pay it back.

the monastery (Fig.4.7) and also now produces incense and treasure jars and invests capital in interest-bearing loans. The monastery's businesses used to be managed by the Management Committee, but since 2007 it has appointed two monastic managers who oversee them and employs four lay people to work in the petrol station and shops.



Figure 4.7 Gartse petrol station

Many branch monasteries and practice centres have also established capital funds which are invested in interest bearing loans and/or monastery businesses (Table 4.2) and two monasteries reported income from the sale of tourist tickets. The importance monks attribute to commercial activities in their monastic economies varies across sites and all still rely on sponsorship, either directly and/or through their reincarnate lamas. For example, at Gomar the income from its shop is split between the monks at the end of the year, while monastic festivals and rituals are principally supported by villagers and through interest on the monastery fund. At Tashitse, the monastery has sponsors for certain festivals, but the income generated from monastic business is now sufficient to cover the expenses of its three *Dharma* sessions.

Some monasteries have rights to forest, farmland or grassland, but the contribution of this to individual monastic economies also varies. For example, at

Nyentok, Akhu Puntsok said that the income from leasing its fields provided a significant source of income. Monks at Dorjedzong and Dowadrok also listed their grasslands (which they lease out) as one of their main income sources.¹⁹ At Gartse, however, Akhu Thubten told me that the income from its grasslands is minimal. Three monasteries had received income from the government for forestry protection, but in two cases this ceased in 2008.

Table 4.2 Monastic funding in Rebgong and western Bayan

(Source: interviews with monks, 2009)

Note: Estimates of numbers of monks based on field data (see Table 7.1).

Monastery	Funding of monastery activities	Individuals
Gomar (70 monks)	Villagers and other sponsors, monastery fund (capital donated by Alak Yershong and lent at interest), shop, forest leased to Hui businessman, tourist tickets	Ritual services, some <i>thangkha</i> art
Kasar (50 monks)	Villagers	Ritual services, <i>thangkha</i> art.
Nyentok (54 monks)	Villagers and other sponsors, fields and forest (leased), fund of c.2-300,000 yuan (lent to businessmen)	<i>Thangkha</i> art.
U. Senggeshong (120 monks)	Sponsors (villagers and monks) ²⁰ .	<i>Thangkha</i> art and statue making.
L. Senggeshong (134 monks)	Sponsors (villagers, monks, other patrons), tourist entrance tickets ²¹	<i>Thangkha</i> art, patrons from inland China
Tashikhyil (30 monks)	Donations collected from the <i>lha-sde</i> by the <i>gnyer-ba</i> , sponsorship by Alak Trigen, monastery shop, forest	Monastery assembly

¹⁹ A monk from Dorjedzong said that the grasslands leased out by the monastery were not redistributed by the government, but had been gifted by lay people.

²⁰ According to dPal-bzang (2007 p.284), Upper Senggeshong also has fields.

²¹ According to dPal-bzang (2007 p.274), Lower Senggeshong also has fields and forests.

	protection	
Yershong (55 monks)	Villagers, monastery fund (donated by Alak Yershong and other monks; lent at interest), small clinic and shop (leased), income from monks providing ritual services, <i>nangchen</i> funds	Family
Dzongkar (50 monks)	Sponsors, small shops ²²	Family, ritual services
Dzongngon (25 monks)	Head lama, monastery fund lent at interest, small shop	Lama, ritual services, family
Dechen (80 monks)	Sponsors, 3 shops, money lending, incense and ritual products	Family, ritual services
Dorjedzong (105 monks)	Shops, grassland (leased), clinic, donations	Family, ritual services, salary for attending debate (July and November)
Dowadrok (25 monks)	Grassland (leased), clinic, houses (leased), donations	Family, ritual services, monastery assembly
Gartse (164 monks)	Head lama, businesses (clinic, shops, incense and treasure vase production, petrol station), monastery fund lent at interest, <i>lhade</i> /sponsors	Family, monastery assembly
Tahshitse (Bayan) (71 monks)	Monastery fund (collected from lamas, monks and lay people) lent at interest, shop, medical clinic, sponsors	Ritual services, family, monastery assembly

²² According to dPal-bzang (2007 p.363). Dzongdkar also has forests, grasslands and a medical clinic.

Despite differences in individual monastic economies, a common theme in my discussions with monks at these monasteries was that donations were voluntarily given and/or that their monastery had stopped collecting alms. At only one monastery was I told that it still relies on donations collected from its patron communities by the *nyerwa*.²³ At one field site, senior monk Palden Gyatso told me that the monastery opposes the development of businesses ('that is the job of the lay community, not the responsibility of monks'). Even so, he still emphasised that 'we never go to the villages to collect donations' (T/N).

In short, the development of self-supporting activities has varied across sites, but significant development has taken place at the monastic centres of Rongwo, Ditsa and Gartse over the past decade. Many branch monasteries and practice centres have also established capital funds which they have invested in interest bearing loans and monastery businesses. Moreover, the development of self-supporting activities is linked to the more general distinction that monks are drawing between voluntary donations and institutionalised alms collection.

4.3 Monastic reform: towards alignment with state policy?

4.3.1 State policy

The development of self-supporting businesses and the distancing from methods of institutionalised alms collection seem to be moving monastic economies in Rebgong and western Bayan towards alignment with state policies. Self-sufficiency is one of the principles through which the existence of a discursive space for the existence of religion was opened within the overall atheist

²³ According to dPal-bzang (2007), four of Rongwo's other branch monasteries (one in Tsekhok, three in Rebgong) collect donations from their *lhade*. However, since some of the monasteries I visited only stopped collecting in recent years, this information may not reflect current practice. According to the information he gathered, nine of Rongwo's 15 other affiliate monasteries in Rebgong county relied solely on patrons, one on a reincarnate lama, four had a capital fund, four had grassland (one of which had livestock), two received income from forest protection, one had fields, and only one had a shop. Of Rongwo's seven other branch monasteries in Tsekhok county, all (in addition to donations/patrons) have grassland, three have livestock, three have forest, three have shops, one has a medical clinic and four have capital funds. One collects donations from its *lhade*.

framework of the Chinese Constitution (Wank 2009 p.144), although it should be noted that it has ideological roots within the history of Chinese Buddhism's relationship to the state in China as early as the fifth century (Ornatowski 1996 p.220).²⁴

Since the beginning of the revival of religion in China in the late 1970s, state policy has been that monastics should make efforts to be self-supporting and engage in productive labour as part of a more general obligation to serve the Socialist modernisation enterprise.²⁵ In line with the policy that there must be no revival of traditional exploitative 'feudal privileges', government regulations draw a distinction between voluntary donations, which are permitted, and any form of 'apportionment' or 'coercion' which is prohibited (RRA Article 20; QZST Article 39; HZST Articles 42, 45). Until September 2009, provincial legislation required monastery management committees to 'organise religious personnel in actively developing all kinds of productive service activities and social welfare undertakings, and to increase economic income, and move towards realizing self-sufficiency' (QZHG Article 7). This clause was omitted from the superseding 2009 provincial regulations (QZST), but monastery management committees in Rebgong are still required to develop self-sufficient activities under prefecture level regulations (HZST Article 20).²⁶

Academic writing in China on contemporary Tibetan Buddhist monastic economy is rooted in this policy framework and has emphasized the need for monasteries to develop self-supporting activities, including tourism, animal husbandry, agriculture, shops, restaurants, Tibetan medicine, scripture printing,

²⁴ See also Welch (1972), Gernet (1995), and Yu (2005).

²⁵ For example, Document 19 (trans. MacInnis 1989 pp.15-16) stated that religion would not be permitted to 'recover in any way those special feudal privileges which have been abolished' and that 'we must organise religious persons according to their differing situations and capabilities respectively, to take part in productive labour, serving society, and in the scholarly study of religion'. See also Zhao Puchu's statement to the China Buddhist Association in October 1983 (trans. MacInnis 1989 p.175) in which he said that 'monks and nuns should be encouraged to be self-supporting'. See also Yin (2006).

²⁶ Similar regulations have been issued for other Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan (see CECC 2011). I have not found similar regulations for Haidong, which is not a TAP.

religious product manufacturing, crafts and transportation (Mei 2001 pp.153-164; see also Donggacang and Cairangjia 1995, 1997; Kai 2000; Makley 2007 pp.260-261).

Literature produced outside the PRC has presented the development of commercial enterprises as a pragmatic response to the loss of traditional systems of support (Goldstein 1998a p.35),²⁷ or as a state requirement (Schrempf 2000 pp.338-339; Kolás and Thowsen 2005 pp.52-58). Makley (2007 pp.157-161) argues that rationalisation of monastic capitalism as non-exploitative 'self sufficiency' worked to appropriate the monastic moral economy for state-sponsored capitalism, constructing the monastery as an 'ideally disciplined capitalist firm (altruistically) operating on behalf of both the locality and the nation'. However, this provided space for members of the monastic elite to pursue their own interests, working as 'oppositional entrepreneurs' seeking capital to reconstruct 'an ideally Tibetan patrifilial order'.²⁸ Schrempf (2000 pp.338-339) on the other hand, who conducted fieldwork in Sichuan, argues that the policy imperative for monasteries to be 'self-maintaining and financially independent from the laity ... is neither wished for nor found necessary by any Tibetans adhering to their traditions and also unrealistic or even damaging if monasteries want to continue their monastic disciplines and education'. However, it should be noted that she only mentions tourism, which my interlocutors perceived differently from other forms of monastic business (see Chapter 5).

A few monks whom I interviewed did mention government pressures to be self-sufficient and the fact that they were left with few other options. The first detailed account I heard of monastic economic reform was framed in this way. Akhu Lungtok, a monk in his forties, explained that his monastery had been under

²⁷ This account of the turn to business as necessity reflects what has been written about the development of monastic business activities at Chinese Buddhist monasteries (see for example Yin 2006).

²⁸ See also Arjia Rinpoche (2010 pp.150-151) who discusses the 10th Panchen Lama's plan during the 1980s to set up an organisation, which he would run, to oversee all Tibetan monasteries and institutions, and which would eventually be funded by self-sufficient businesses: 'the Panchen Lama argued that his plan was in keeping with Communist China's cultural policies and would be beneficial to the government because it would eventually reduce the budget for religious affairs'.

pressure from the government to be self-sufficient since the 1980s, but had few means to achieve this. Even though most of its original site was gradually returned, the fields previously owned by the monastery were not.²⁹ Therefore, while some other monasteries had some grassland or fields from which they could generate income, his monastery did not have this option:

The monastery is no longer allowed to go into villages to find donors. So the monastery said to the government, 'if we can't find donors, then how can we maintain our income? Provide us with a farm where we can plant crops or grassland'. But the government did not respond. The monastery said, 'if you can't provide land, then grant us some loans from which to generate income'. This was not accepted. Finally, some lamas in the monastery donated some cash and the monastery started a trust fund and tried to raise funds in the name of this trust fund. They used it to open wholesale shops. The government said the monastery should be self-sufficient, but how without land? (T/R)

However, my fieldwork also revealed other contingent factors in the process of monastic economic reform, showing that it has not simply been a reluctant response to state policies.

4.3.2 Historical precedent: the endowment fund

Firstly, it is important to consider these reforms in their institutional context. Generally speaking, the basic mechanism of monastic financing developed at monasteries in Rebgong and western Bayan over the past 30 years is the endowment fund. In other words, monasteries have collected donations from the faithful (lamas, monks and laity) which then constitute a capital fund which is invested in money lending and small businesses. There are exceptions: at one monastery monks told me that they had taken out a loan from the local township

²⁹ See also Kolås and Thowsen (2005 p.52) who note that 'the redistribution of land has been a complicated issue for a number of monasteries', citing the case of Ragya (rwa-gya) monastery in Golok, the original lands of which now straddle county and prefectural boundaries. In 1988, Zhao Puchu (head of the China Buddhist Association at that time) stated that one of the problems in implementing the policy of religious belief was that mountains and forest had yet to be returned to some monasteries (MacInnis 1989 p.74).

government in order to purchase buildings for lease (which they were struggling to repay). However, in most cases the basic mechanism for financing development remains rooted in a merit-based moral economic framework.

The present study does not attempt to compare contemporary monastic economies with the system prior to 1958 (p.40). However, it is worth noting that there are both textual precedents and historical practices for forms of institutionalised support based on profits from endowment funds, the principal of which is kept intact. The long-established practice of money lending as an institutionalised mechanism for maintaining the principal of monastic endowment funds is well documented in studies of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism (see, for example, Miller R. 1961; Goldstein 1989; Ciwang Junmei, ed. 2001; Mei 2001).³⁰ When Akhu Samten talked about the difficulties that Ditsa experienced in securing reliable income for its collective activities, he directly linked the monastery's decision to establish a fund in 1995 to past precedent:

In the old society, the monastery had capital for religious studies and teaching that was loaned to farmers and nomads who would repay in grain or meat and butter, so that became a source of income and funded the studies. We had a discussion with that kind of system in mind, and some lamas and scholar monks who were studying [at our monastery] and other senior figures and some people from the villages took part and we accumulated a capital fund. (T/R)

Schopen (2004 pp.56-72) shows that the legal precedent for the lending on interest of capital is contained in at least two texts in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, the version of the monastic rule used by the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. This suggests that the practice stretches back to early Indian Buddhist monasticism. These texts deal with rules for permanent endowments, the principal of which monks were required to lend out at interest. These endowments can be made for any purpose for the benefit of the Buddha, *Dharma* and *Sangha*, including religious practice as well as building (ibid. pp.56-57). This is presented in one text as having been developed in response to the concerns of lay donors. The donors'

³⁰ Chinese Buddhist monasteries also engaged in money lending (Ornatowski 1996).

gifts would, through this mechanism, constitute a permanent source of ongoing karmic fruitfulness, as well as meeting institutional concerns to secure stable income for the support of monastic buildings and activities (ibid pp.69-72). Investment of capital in interest bearing loans has continued to be used as a form of Tibetan Buddhist monastic support in at least some places that did not come under Communist control, such as Zangskar and Ladakh in India (Shakya, Tashi Rabgyas and Crook, eds. 1994; Mills 2003; Gutschow 2004).

4.3.3 Monastic economic reform as a moral issue

Secondly, the way in which monks talked about these reforms revealed a moral dimension. Given the politically sensitive time and location of my research, I was initially wary that monks might simply be making 'politically correct' statements about self-supporting activities and alms collection that accorded with state policies. However, monks placed agency for monastic economic reform within the monastic community and many presented the impetus for change as a moral issue. Monks who were openly critical of the government were amongst the staunchest advocates of monastic economic reform.

The appropriateness of monasteries developing self-supporting business activities has been contested internally. At Rongwo, for example, I was told that there were heated discussions about the issue. Some monks, including individuals who agreed with reforms, were clearly uneasy about monks engaging in business from the perspective of Buddhist ethics. In particular, they were concerned about the blurring of boundaries between monks and the laity and the potential effect this might have on the minds of monks, with the risk that they would disrobe (issues that will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7). However, these concerns were not only balanced against the practicalities of needing to secure reliable income sources in contemporary circumstances. There was also a moral imperative to cease the practice of institutionalised alms collection, and (in many cases) to develop self-supporting businesses.

A common motivation claimed for monastic economic reform was concern for the situation of the people and a need to reduce the burden of the lay population. Akhu Jamyang, a monk in his early forties, said that although the development of

monastic businesses 'seems inappropriate, we had to do it to be self-sufficient' (T/R). His argument in favour of self-sufficiency emphasised concern for the people and implied an element of compulsion in the old system: if the *sertri* goes out begging for alms, he said, it is difficult for the people because they must give – 'if they don't, it's an awkward situation'. This was echoed by Akhu Kelsang, a monk in his thirties, who was recalling the discussions among monks at Rongwo. He said that in the end it was agreed that the system should be changed because:

... if the *sertri* goes out asking for donations, then people are compelled to give. Even if they don't have much they try their best and make offerings. This was not right. We therefore started running buses and shops and services in which people can spend their income.
(T/R)

At one of Rongwo's branch monasteries, a monastic teacher proudly told me that there used to be a *chiwa* who collected donations, but that his monastery:

... was one of the first monasteries to stop going to the villages. The idea came from Alak [our head lama] in 2000 or 2001 to lighten the responsibility of the lay people. He gave some money for a fund and this was lent to other people and the interest is spent on the *Dharma* sessions (T/N).

Most monks did not mention government policy and in some cases explicitly denied that it had been a factor in monastic economic reform when I raised the issue. When it was mentioned, some monks displaced state agency. For example, when Ditsa Akhu Ngawang explained that they had to develop collective businesses in order to be self-supporting, he added: '*even the government is encouraging the self-sufficient way*' (T/R). Akhu Palden from one of Rongwo's branch monasteries acknowledged that the government had circulated a document advocating monastic self-sufficiency, but:

...we didn't really take notice of the document's ideas. Mainly we took notice of the lay people's position and felt we had to reduce the burden on the lay community (T/N).

4.3.4 Making a virtue of necessity?

From a state-society perspective, the recurrent use of the trope of ‘reducing the burden’ could be interpreted as tactical: a way to reclaim moral authority and agency from the state in response to challenges to the moral legitimacy of the economic basis of Gelukpa monasticism. During the campaigns of the Maoist era, monasteries were attacked as parasitic. Moreover, ‘reducing the burden on the masses’ is a trope employed by the state in attempts to bring Tibetan monasteries into line with the principle of self-sufficiency. This can be seen, for example, in the following extract taken from a manual used in political education sessions in Qinghai monasteries in the late 1990s:

Some monasteries’ self supporting [activities] now make up a great portion of their overall income, which has reduced the burden of the religious masses. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries must uphold the saying ‘pay equal attention to agriculture and meditation’ and the guiding principle of using the monastery to support the monastery This allows the monks and nuns to get some exercise by carrying out productive labour and lightens the burden of the religious economy on the religious masses. (Qinghai United Front Work Department 1997, trans. TIN 1999b p.35)

Contemporary scholarship produced within PRC institutions by Chinese and Tibetan scholars also presents monastic economic development as a way to ‘lighten the economic burden on the believing masses and overcome monastic reliance on the parasitic abuse of the believing masses’ (Mei 2001 p.144; see also Donggacang and Cairangjia 1995 p.69; Zhang 1996 p.24; Makley 2007 pp.260-261).

Do monastic attitudes towards economic reforms simply represent a rationalisation of their position? Are they reinterpreting monastic accommodation of state policies according to a normative framework acceptable and meaningful to them in their positions as monks? The following description of monastic reforms, given by Geshe Tenzin, one of Rongwo’s elders, could be read in this way:

Nowadays, in accordance with societal trends, people are speaking of being self-sufficient or not being self-sufficient, so therefore if we consider the words of the benevolent Lord Buddha and all the other factors, self-sufficiency reduces the burden of the people. The sacred *Dharma* is for the benefit of the people, not to increase the burden of the people, so we ceased the traditional practice of asking for donations ... in order to be self-supporting. This was mainly carried out through the management of shops and clinics to meet the needs of the people. (T/R)

Geshe Tenzin's narrative not only emphasises that the reforms were to reduce the burden on the people, but that the businesses were 'to meet the needs of the people'. Several monks and lay people emphasised the positive value of monastic businesses such as shops, medical clinics and transportation services. I was told that lay people trusted monastery businesses and the monks who run them to provide good quality services at reasonable prices and not to cheat them. In addition, certain products had added symbolic value; for example, medicines blessed by the monks, incense manufactured inside the monastery, or treasure jars made by the monks. Dorje, a Rebgong farmer in his thirties, also mentioned that because of the extent of the monastic network monasteries provided services that were otherwise unavailable:

Most people live in places where communications are inconvenient or there are no shopping facilities. In terms of monasteries, their merchandise is of good quality and they have the capacity to provide goods to the people and therefore I think it is right for monasteries to run shops and try to make some income. Most people carry out business at the monastery. This is something beneficial to the monastery and does not contravene policies. (T/R)

His final comment that shops are 'beneficial' to the monastery leads us to another finding of the research: some monks and lay people have (re)interpreted self-supporting activities according to the logics of a Buddhist worldview. By using monastery shops, clinics, buses and other services, Tibetans are giving their money to the monastery rather than to a private business. They have therefore

become a means of lay support, blurring the line between direct exchange (cash for services) and the generalized exchange of a symbolic act of giving. For example, in one village in Rebgong I was told that villagers tended to use the monastery shop rather than others because by doing so they were supporting their monastery. Monks from two monasteries made similar claims for interest-bearing loans: borrowing from and paying interest to the monastery is a form of giving for local people who are relatively poor. Market transactions were thus transformed into meritorious acts of giving, both legitimising this method of income generation and maintaining the relationship (and separation) of the lay person as patron to the monk as field of merit.

However, is it sufficient to view the development of self-supporting businesses and the use of the trope of 'reducing the burden on the laity' simply as a case of monks and the laity accommodating, internalising and then redeploying state discourse in ways meaningful in their everyday practices? Are they making a virtue out of necessity in their representations of monastic reforms as being of benefit to the people, and even as providing a new way of giving? As will be shown below, if the analysis is thus confined to the space of the contemporary Chinese nation-state, other contingent factors are overlooked.

4.4 Locating the inspiration and legitimacy for reforms

First, consideration of dynamics within the monastic community enables us to view elder Geshe Tenzin's rationalisation of self-sufficiency (p.113) from a different perspective: one that takes into account internal pressures for reform arising from transnational flows of ideas and practices within the Gelukpa monastic network.

At Rongwo, some monks credit the senior reincarnate lamas with taking the decision to abolish the *sertri* post and develop self-supporting activities. However, it is apparent from other interviews that there were pressures coming from the bottom up – from the 'younger generation' of monks who had joined the monastery since it reopened in 1980, as compared to the elders who were monks prior to 1958. The issue of economic reform had been under discussion at

Rongwo for some time. I was told that some monks in the College of Dialectics had been advocating reforms since the early 1990s. Discussions about economic reform took place within a wider context of internal tensions over monastic development in general, including the education system and other issues, such as the style of the monastic robe. It therefore seems to have been part of a more general dynamic in which reformist ideas amongst some of the younger generation have gradually been challenging the ways of thinking of the elders, who tend to be more conservative and advocate the maintenance of traditional systems. I heard about a similar generational dynamic at one of the monasteries outside my main field area. A young reincarnate lama from a large Gelukpa monastery in southern Qinghai said:

Many monks came back from India and America and said we have to reform and develop the economy. It was not because the government said we had to do this. The young monks want to do business. They like new, modern things. (T/R)

His statement points to another important factor: many monks located the main inspiration and moral legitimacy for reforms in the self-sufficiency activities of the major Gelukpa monasteries in exile. In Chapter 1 we saw that it was after visiting India that Akhu Lobsang changed his thinking (pp.3-4). When Akhu Jamyang spoke about the decision to abolish the *sertri* post at Rongwo (pp.130-131), he said that although some people felt that it was inappropriate for a monk to do business, the Tibetan monks in India farmed, ‘so we thought it would be okay to do business’ (T/R). Other monks mentioned the shops, restaurants and guesthouses run by Gelukpa monasteries in India as examples for Amdo monasteries to follow. The influence of the self-support activities of these monasteries on the ideas of monks was even acknowledged by Akhu Lungtok, who presented his monastery’s economic reforms as the only practical option given state policy (p.128).

Despite the Chinese state's distrust of the 14th Dalai Lama, it should be recognized that, as a leading 'Buddhist modernist' in many respects,³¹ he is a source of both inspiration and the authority and legitimacy for reforms to the monastic system that converge with principles found in Chinese state discourse. This includes his advocacy of self-sufficiency and criticism of aspects of the traditional monastic economy. A similar observation can be made regarding monks who have spent time in India: they are often treated with suspicion by the authorities, but are in fact important transmitters of reformist ideas.

It is not surprising that legitimacy for reforms is not derived from state policy, which has no moral authority within the monastic community. However, it is interesting that no monks mentioned the precedents for Tibetan monastic self-sufficiency within Amdo or elsewhere in the PRC, such as business developments at Labrang and Kumbum or the activities of the 10th Panchen Lama. The latter is a very influential figure in Amdo and an early advocate of self-sufficiency as a mechanism not just for monastic, but also wider Tibetan development (TIN 1997 p.xiii; see also p.82 n.1).

The absence of Amdo monasteries and Buddhist leaders as models for Amdo monks is perhaps linked to internal narratives of a moral decline of Tibetan monasteries and monastic leaders in China, compromised by their inevitable accommodation with the Chinese state and the materialism of contemporary Chinese society (see also Chapters 5 and 6). India, on the other hand, represents a place of mythological inspiration and purity. As Huber (2008 p.3) points out: 'thanks to the selective memory born of a particular historiographical tradition,

³¹ Lopez (1998 p.187) calls the 14th Dalai Lama 'the chief spokesman for Buddhist modernism,' although as other scholars have noted (Mills 2003; Dreyfus 2005; Huber 2008), his views and practices do not fit certain characteristics of 'modern Buddhism' as defined by scholars, notably a de-emphasis and mistrust of ritual. Dreyfus (2005 pp.7-10) presents the Dalai Lama's ideas as a hybrid product of his traditional Buddhist education and his encounters with figures whose ideas are themselves the product of complex interactions between different cultures and worldviews. These figures included Mao Zedong, Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian figures such as Rajendra Prasad (the first President of India), and subsequently Westerners such as the Trappist monk and writer Thomas Merton. The Dalai Lama's ideas constitute 'an interpretation of the Buddhist tradition which is certainly modern and hence new, but which is nevertheless well grounded in the tradition'.

Tibetans have consistently and almost exclusively focused upon India as the “mother” of everything they value in their civilization’. Furthermore, it is in this motherland of India, not the People’s Republic of China, that the displaced authorities of Gelukpa monasticism – the Dalai Lama and the three monastic seats of Drepung, Sera and Ganden – are now located.

4.5 Social criticism of monastic Buddhism

The above-mentioned narratives of Tibetan Buddhist monastic moral decline also play a part in moral imperatives to reform monastic economies. Rapid socio-economic transformations, in particular capitalist development and its attendant materialism, are seen as posing challenges to the soteriological functioning of monasteries. This is both in terms of the state of monks’ minds and the faith and confidence of the laity. This issue will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 6. However, it is worth commenting here on how it links directly to the monastic economic reforms under discussion in the present chapter.

Monks’ engagement in business is one aspect of contemporary social criticisms of monasticism. Yet a perceived moral decline in an increasingly materialistic society was also one of the reasons people gave for the need to abolish alms collection and develop self-supporting businesses. For example, farmer Dorje was in favour of the cessation of alms collections in patron communities because ‘these days there are all kinds of people and even fake monks’ (T/R). Nyenthok Akhu Puntsok talked about the way in which the misconduct of a few monks and ‘fake’ monks has affected the faith of the people (T/R). Akhu Lobsang Chöpel referred to the latter as being one of the reasons that Tashitse decided to collect a capital fund for investment (T/R). Spending time with monastic and lay Tibetans in Amdo, it soon became apparent that there were many such stories circulating about monks and lamas who cheated people, collected donations under false pretences, and/or who were ‘fake’.³²

³² See also Makley (2007 p.266) on the distinction drawn between ‘real’ and ‘fake’ monks in 1990s Labrang; and Borchert (2005 p.103) and Svensson (2010 p.226) for complaints about ‘fake’ monks at Theravāda Buddhist and Daoist temples.

Social criticism of monasticism extends to reincarnate lamas, at least among some monks and the urban intellectual elite.³³ The dubious quality of some contemporary lamas was one of the reasons given for the abolition of the *sertri* post at Rongwo. Some monks placed agency for monastic reforms with the monastery's reincarnate lamas in accordance with monastic Gelukpa hierarchies. However, others showed a distancing from their authority. For example, one senior monk told me emphatically that reforms were led 'not by the government' and 'not by the lamas', but by 'our younger generation'. Some lamas, he said, would still like to hold the position of *sertri*, but the monks decided that it was not right to have this system because there 'are all sorts of lamas' (T/R). The implication was that not all would act as honest and sincere *sertri*, but would be more concerned with accruing personal wealth and status.

The problem is not that monks or reincarnate lamas accrue wealth per se, but that there are those who act unethically by accumulating wealth for themselves rather than ploughing it into their monasteries. Rongwo Akhu Tenpa, a monk in his late twenties, made a comparison between current times and the 'old days' when lamas went to the lay community and visited each family to collect donations that 'funded monks' studies'. He affirmed the validity of this practice against external critiques of the traditional monastic economy by making a point of saying that 'this was asking for donations, not imposing a tax', but he then went on:

Nowadays, most lamas are concerned with their own interests and accumulation of their own wealth and there are few who spend money for the collective good of the monastery. The attitude of these lamas and their conduct has deteriorated. ... They should be more educated

³³ The most obvious example of the latter is the 'New School of Thought', a group of writers referred to by Hartley (2002 p.13) as 'radical modernists'. This includes Shogdung (zhogs-dung), whose works include harsh criticisms of Tibetan Buddhism and its position and influence in Tibetan society, and Sangdhor (seng-rdor), a former monk who was recognized as a reincarnate lama, but subsequently disrobed and now publishes highly provocative essays and poetry critical of institutionalised Tibetan Buddhism and monks. However, even among less radical university students with whom I spoke and who continue to view Buddhism and monasticism as important for the future of Tibetan society, there is growing criticism of the institution of the reincarnate lama (see, for example, p.223).

than monks, but are neglecting the proper tasks of a lama. So their endeavours are not for study or religion, but for the pursuit of money.

(T/R)

Once again, legitimacy for these critiques can be found in the modernist ideas of the 14th Dalai Lama who has himself expressed distrust of the institution of the reincarnate lama (Dreyfus 2005 p.8). However, it is important to acknowledge that these social criticisms have historical roots. Like Rongwo Akhu Tenpa, many monks view the contemporary situation in opposition to either the early 1980s or pre-1958, times when monastic life is remembered or imagined to have been simple and the minds of monks and lamas pure (see also Chapter 6.1). Nevertheless, critical scrutiny of religious hierarchs and monks existed within traditional Tibetan religious discourse (Kapstein 2002 pp.100-103).

In addition, although there is not the same history of ideas relating to moral imperatives to monastic self-support and productive labour that existed within Chinese Buddhism (p.126), there is a negative connotation in the Tibetan attached to the term for those who rely upon offerings (*dkor-zas za-mkhan*). The implication is that they are not genuinely doing religious work (Goldstein 2009 p.22). Criticism of monks' reliance on offerings is found in Gendun Chöpel's work.³⁴ There were also much earlier influential Tibetan Buddhist figures, such as Milarepa (1040-1123), Drukpa Kunlek (1455-1529)³⁵ and Shabkar (1781-1850/1), who were critical of the propensity for spiritual corruption and materialism amongst religious practitioners and their dependency on the wealth and labour of pious nomads and farmers.³⁶

What is significant in contemporary circumstances is how social criticism coming from within Tibetan society (including some monks) is challenging

³⁴ See, for example, his alphabetical poem on the household priest (trans. Lopez 2009 pp.96-99).

³⁵ Drukpa Kunlek ('brug-pa kun-legs) was a 'crazy yogin' whose outrageous exploits are popular in folklore (Samuel 1993 p.523) and who 'eschewed monastic ideals and ridiculed the contradictions between the practice of tantra and rigid monasticism' (Mills 2003 p.278). See Dowman and Sonam Paljor (1980) for a translation of his biography.

³⁶ My thanks to Lama Jabb for making this point.

certain monastic economic practices. From the perspective of monastic actors, the non-virtuous behaviour (or rumours of non-virtuous behaviour) of monks and lamas involved in alms collection is problematic. This is both in terms of Buddhist ethics and the public reputation of monastic Buddhism and the impact this has on the faith and confidence of the laity. The problem extends beyond Tibetan patron communities to relationships with Han Chinese patrons. For example, I heard various rumours about one reincarnate lama (who, some people claim, is not a 'real' reincarnate lama) who was said to have gone to inland China collecting donations under false pretences, and now lives in the Shangrila housing zone, the most exclusive address in Xining. Akhu Ngawang mentioned that few monks from Ditsa go to inland China to collect donations and that the monastery is cautious to avoid this because of fraudulent practices amongst many of the people who seek donors from inland China (T/R). In an essay on religious scams, Caiwang Naoru (2009), founder and editor of a Chinese language blog on Tibet (<www.tibetcul.com>), uses the analogy of 'one mouse ruining the pot of soup'. He also writes about the damage caused as a result of tourists being scammed by fake incarnate lamas and their spread, particularly in inland China and Taiwan:

There are some people who study Tibetan Buddhism with a pure and faithful heart, but because they don't have a basic understanding of Tibetan Buddhism, they are swindled and then do not know what to do, and thereafter feel hostility and hatred towards Tibetan Buddhism. The actions of a swindler are like a leaf that blocks their eyes, nearly defaming Tibetan Buddhism. (ibid.).

Some monks therefore feel that it is better for monasteries to distance themselves from systems of support tainted by these negative representations. This helps to explain the line that monks are drawing between alms collection on the one hand, and voluntary sponsorship of collective activities by faithful patrons. However, there is also perhaps another factor in monastic reforms connected to these narratives of moral decline. Some monks said that it had become difficult for monks or lamas to have to go and collect alms from the people. For example, Akhu Kelsang Tenpa from one of Rongwo's affiliated practice centres said that it was not proper for the monastery to go out asking for donations, but also that

'even if we do, we don't get much' (T/R). The way in which some people talked about monastic development suggests that there may be increasing discrimination in giving depending on the perceived virtue of particular reincarnate lamas or monasteries. In an informal conversation, Norbu, a Tibetan postgraduate student from Rebgong offered precisely this interpretation of Rongwo's reforms: younger lamas, he said, were not respected as much as the older lamas, such as Alak Khaso, who had many donors; that was why the monastery started a capital fund (E/N). On the other hand, Akhu Ngawang at Ditsa, which enjoys a good reputation (p.213), said that it was relatively easy to secure sponsorship if a monastery had high education standards (T/R). A village elder, Dawa, made a similar value judgement: if a monastery was good and its monks were virtuous there were plenty of people who would offer support (M/R).³⁷

4.6 National imaginings: monks' responsibilities to the Tibetan community

The moral imperative to challenge 'traditional' ways of thinking and reform the monastic economy also needs to be considered within the context of contemporary imaginings of a shared Tibetan collectivity and monks' identities as Tibetans. It is perhaps in conceptions of the good that are rooted in the relationship between religion and nationality that the moral imperative to 'reduce the burden' on the laity and reclaim moral legitimacy is being felt particularly keenly. This is not, of course, peculiar to Tibetan monks. For example, the Chinese Buddhist reformist monk Taixu (1890-1947) was a strong nationalist and patriot who provided an interpretation of Buddhism that could suit the purposes of nation-building. One of the elements of this included monastic self-sufficiency.³⁸ This nationalist spirit also plays a part in contemporary Tibetan monastic reforms, except in this case the imagined community is a Tibetan rather than a Chinese one.

³⁷ See also Makley (2007) whose work on Labrang suggests a similar pattern, with support in the valley becoming concentrated on the regional monastic centre, which enjoyed a high reputation for scholarship, and charismatic reincarnate lamas such as Gongtang Rinpoche.

³⁸ For an intellectual biography of Taixu see Pittman (2001).

To make this point, I will turn to an essay, published on a Tibetan language website in Qinghai, entitled *Solving the Tibetan Monastic System through Three Revolutions* (sGo-yon 2009). It was written by a monk under the name of sGo-yon and published on 14 May 2009 on the website of the Amdo intellectual Sangdhor, placing it among the more radical of contemporary Tibetan literary productions.³⁹ sGo-yon writes in a polemical tone characteristic of some of the leading contemporary Amdo essayists. He is, however, a monk and his critique is not of Tibetan Buddhism and monasticism's place in society per se. It is of aspects of the current monastic system which he believes are damaging to both Buddhism and the Tibetan people. My fieldwork suggests that the issues he tackles are among the main contentious talking points amongst contemporary Gelukpa monks: the system of leadership through reincarnation, the monastic education system and the topic with which we are concerned here – the monastic economy.

The essay employs Buddhist and modernist (and Buddhist modernist) tropes. His opening call to 'take refuge in the dynamism of three revolutions' is a play on the most basic and fundamental Buddhist practice of taking refuge in the 'Three Jewels': the Buddha, *Dharma* and *Sangha*. It also immediately brings to mind Taixu, who himself advocated three revolutions.⁴⁰ sGo-yon's ideas are arguably not particularly 'revolutionary'. His views are certainly shared by some monks with whom I talked and echo the discourse of other modern Buddhist figures such

³⁹ Sangdhor, a former monk, is one of the 'New School of Thought' (see p.138 n.33). His website, www.sangdhor.com, on which he posts writings by himself and other intellectuals, has been periodically closed down since Shogdung was arrested in April 2010 in connection with a book he wrote analysing the 2008 demonstrations in Tibet (*gnam-sa go-'byed*).

⁴⁰ Taixu advocated a revolution in teaching and doctrine, focusing on the problems of the living world; a revolution in institutions, including the teaching of a secular curriculum alongside the Buddhist curriculum, rationalisation of temple management and self-sufficiency; and a revolution in religious property, with temple property collectively shared by the monastic community rather than privately owned by abbots (Ashiwa 2009 p.55). According to Pittman (2001 pp.80, 154-155), Taixu called for an 'organizational revolution (*zuzhi geming*)', an 'economic revolution (*caichan geming*)' advocating productive work by monks and closer ties to educated lay Buddhists, and an 'intellectual revolution (*xueli geming*)' through which 'Buddhists could learn to express the *Dharma* in ways that were inspired by scripture, faithful to the original spirit of Śākyamuni, and appropriate for the time'.

as the 14th Dalai Lama and Taixu. However, the appearance of this kind of open critique from a monk in the public domain in Amdo seems significant.

As with Taixu, one of sGo-yon's 'three revolutions' is for monasteries to become self-sufficient.⁴¹ He makes a pointed comparison of the 'current mode of subsistence based on collection from the people' to 'the state system of coercive taxation'. Playing on the established hierarchy that gives monks an elevated social and moral status, he says that 'this dishonest way of making a living is not at all suitable practice even for an ordinary person of the mundane world, let alone for a follower of the non-violent principles of Buddhism'. Even if monasteries do not actively support the poor, he argues, 'is there not a need to completely abandon the old influences of this bad custom of being looked after?'.

The target of sGo-yon's criticisms is the monastic leadership (the head lamas and management committees). However, he places the responsibility for reform with Tibetan monks and nuns who 'have a justifiable and unavoidable duty to weigh up the merits and shortcomings of the monastic system'. Having outlined his three revolutions, he finishes by making an appeal to Tibetan nationalist sentiment, linking the monastic system, including the monastic economy, to the future of the Tibetan people. His tone is nationalistic to the extent that he draws on a shared collective identity and sense of responsibility for the Tibetan people. However, the contemporary state is absent. The monasteries and their monks and lamas are still positioned as leaders in Tibetan society and it is they who have the agency and responsibility to shape the fate of an imagined Tibetan collectivity.

⁴¹ sGo-yon's (2009) other revolutions are in the monastic leadership and education. He argues that there is a need to move from a system of leadership through reincarnation to one based on democratic and meritocratic appointment, taking into account an individual's ability, public spiritedness and knowledge of both traditional and modern sciences. The behaviour and thinking of monks and nuns, he says, is dependent on the monastery head (*dgon-bdag*), who is like a parent, and there is a need to recognize that all the historical shortcomings of monastic institutions in fact result from the 'unfitness' of the head lamas (*dgon-bdag-rnams ma-'grig-par*). In terms of education, he writes that the monastic education system should be revolutionised by embracing modern Western scientific, philosophical, literary, educational and electronic knowledge alongside the traditional syllabus.

Since there are hardly any Tibetans who are not under the command and control of a monastery and the lamas and reincarnate lamas, if there are flaws in the monastic system this will definitely cause problems for the situation of the entire Tibetan people. If the monastic system were to become more transparent and complete than the previous one, this would be a slight ripening of a hope for the fate of the entire Tibetan people. Therefore, I believe that the real task right now, for both monks and the laity, is to reform and clean up the Tibetan monastic system. In particular, it is of the utmost importance for those in charge of the monasteries to ensure that the Tibetan monastic system should not be separated from Buddhist principles and should not contradict the times. (sGo-yon 2009)

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and discussed the main shifts in the monastic economies of my field sites over the past 30 years. The main monastic economic reforms about which monks talked were the development of self-supporting activities and a distancing from the revived practice of collection of contributions to collective activities from patron communities. These appear to be moving monastic practices into line with state religious policy. However, this chapter has argued that on closer examination these developments are considerably more complex than simple accommodation of the terms of the (dominant) state by the (subordinate) monasteries. An exploration of monastic perspectives has revealed that the ethics of certain institutionalised practices are being contested from within the monastic community, thus illuminating moral dimensions which relate to the de-territorialised authorities of Gelukpa monasticism, perceptions of social moral decline and imaginings of a shared Tibetan collectivity.

As the following chapters will show, sGo-yon's call to 'ensure that the Tibetan monastic system should not be separated from Buddhist principles and should not contradict the times' is a major challenge for monks in keeping on the right side of the shifting line of what is 'appropriate' in the development of their monasteries. We have seen that there has been a convergence of the discourse and

practices of monks in at least some Gelukpa monasteries with the principles of the state's discourse of 'religion'. Yet, the argument that there are logics to monastic business development that extend beyond 'accommodation' is supported when the limits to this convergence of values are considered. These limits are explored in the next chapter, which discusses tourism development, a major site of interaction between state and monastery as well between monks and contemporary China's changing urbanities.

Chapter 5

Competing visions of monastic development: tourism, heritage and state patronage

Buddhist monasteries have become some of China's key tourist sites. Thus tourism is one of the main contexts (other than regulation of religion) within which monastic development has been touched upon in the available literature. It has been represented as an arena in which state and monastic interests can converge. It was therefore surprising that monks generally did not raise the issue themselves. This chapter begins by reviewing the literature and examining the significance of tourism and heritage in the revival and development of my field sites and the difference in monastic attitudes to tourism as compared to other 'self-supporting' activities.¹ It challenges the assumption that tourism and heritage provide arenas in which monastic and state interests converge, showing that, at some sites at least, there have been tensions between state aspirations and monastic development imperatives. The rest of the chapter explores these tensions.

Firstly, issues of state power, control and resistance are brought back into the discussion. I discuss the cultural politics of tourism development, using the case of Rongwo to illustrate the ways in which tourism works to standardise and commodify monastic space. I then contextualise monastic attitudes by examining them within the wider problematics of state patronage. However, this study argues that it is not sufficient to view monastic development solely through a state-society lens. Even in the case of tourism and heritage, major arenas of state-monastic interaction, consideration of the values emphasised in the narratives of members of the monastic moral community can provide a thicker understanding of monastic attitudes towards development. Having outlined the politics of state-funded development, this chapter therefore goes on to explore the local logics of

¹ This chapter is concerned with monastic attitudes rather than the broader issues of tourism within local socio-economic development and cultural production. I recognise that there many actors with different interests involved in tourism development at the local level and that individuals (for example, government officials) operate from multiple positions. However, the purpose of the present study is to gain insight into the logics of what is good and desirable from monastic perspectives.

what is good and desirable in relation to heritage funding, temple building and tourism. It finishes by exploring competing visions and values of monastic development, taking Kumbum monastery as an example.

5.1 Tourism and heritage: alignment of monastic and state interests?

The literature on ethnic tourism in China has emphasised its potential as an arena in which Buddhist monastic and state interests can converge, providing space for the pursuit of religious/cultural projects, identity construction, and resistance to the cultural hegemony of the state.² While acknowledging the disruptive impacts that tourism can have on Buddhist practice (see p.190), scholars have thus also pointed to the ways in which tourism and heritage have been a contingent factor in monastic revival and development at Tibetan, Chinese and Theravāda Buddhist monasteries in China.

Tourism can generate income for monasteries through entrance fees, offerings, and contact with potential sponsors (Donggechang and Cairangjia 1995 pp.27-28; Goldstein 1998a p.76; Mei 2001 pp.43-44; Hillman 2005 pp.36-37; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 pp.55-56, 169-170; Yang and Wei 2005 p.76; Pu 2006 p.204; Yin 2006 p.88; Makley 2007 pp. 158, 261-262, 2010 p.144; Kolås 2008 p.53; Ashiwa 2009 p.66; Wank 2009 p.135). More significantly, scholars have pointed to an alignment of state and monastic interests. There are political and/or economic reasons that state agencies at national and/or local level may push for monastic tourism development (see Section 5.2). This has resulted in state funded restoration and, moreover, has provided a public space for monastic revival and

² Much of this literature is situated within a wider body of literature on the cultural politics of ethnic tourism in China, which has explored the role that ethnic minorities play as cultural producers and agents in the shaping of their own identities in the contemporary world and their re-appropriation of tourism for their own projects and as a route to modernity (Oakes 1998, 2006; Schein 2000; Kolås 2008; Chio 2009; Hillman 2009, 2010; Su and Teo 2009). Makley (2007 pp.7-8) and Kolås (2008 pp.122-123) point to the role of tourism in the affirmation and accentuation of the 'Tibetanness' of Labrang and Shangrila (formerly Gyaltang – see p.156). On the interplay between tourism, states and the ongoing processes of ethnic/cultural construction elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region see Picard (1993), Picard and Wood (1997), Yamashita and Eades (1997) and Yamashita (2003).

expansion (Cingcade 1998 pp.20-1; Borchert 2005 pp.100-104; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 pp.55-56, 170; Yang and Wei 2005 p.76; Ji 2004; Makley 2007 pp.157-163; Hillman 2009 p.6; Arjia Rinpoche 2010 p.184; McCarthy 2010 p.178). Hillman (2009 p.6) claims that tourism has given Tibetan Buddhism a 'boost in profile' and that in Shangrila (formerly Gyaltang – see p.156) in Yunnan, the main Gelukpa monastery 'has enjoyed growing influence in the local area':

As a showcase of the region's cultural heritage, the monastery is a prime tourism asset. Local government has pumped millions of dollars into its renovation and expansion. It has become increasingly popular for young men to join the monastery, and many applicants are turned away. Senior monks command more and more resources and enjoy increasing clout with local authorities.

I was therefore surprised to find that, generally speaking, tourism development was not mentioned until I specifically raised it. Moreover, it became clear that monks perceived tourism differently from other forms of monastic development. Several factors can explain this.

5.1.1 Tourism as a factor in monastic revival

Firstly, the previous scholarly focus on the more famous Gelukpa monasteries and popular tourist destinations creates a misperception of the significance of tourism in Tibetan Buddhist monastic revival and development.³ Revitalisation of certain monasteries such as Kumbum, Labrang, Tashilhunpo and the Lhasa monasteries was supported by the state for their value as policy models and tourist sites (Makley 2007; Arjia Rinpoche 2010) and at Kumbum at least, considerable income is generated from tourism (Mei 2001 p.143; Pu 2006 p.204; Cooke 2010 p.11). Studies of Gelukpa monastic revival have focused on these sites because of their relative accessibility and historical significance (Goldstein 1998a; Makley

³ This is probably also true of Chinese and Theravāda monasteries. Government support is most pronounced at large and famous Chinese Buddhist monasteries that are tourist attractions (Birnbaum 2003 pp.443-444); and probably only 10 out of more than 500 Dai (Theravāda) temples in Xishuangbanna are regularly seen by tourists (Borchert 2005 p.100). However, these major monasteries tend to be the sites that have been the subject of detailed academic study (for example Borchert 2005; Ashiwa 2009; Wank 2009).

2007) or as models of development (Donggechang and Cairangjia 1995; Mei 2001; Pu 2006). The impact of tourism on Gelukpa monasticism has also been discussed in studies of places such as Shangrila where tourism is relatively highly developed (Hillman 2005, 2009, 2010; Kolås 2008).⁴ Images of monasteries circulated in the West are also mostly of these sites. However, monasteries such as Labrang and Kumbum and locations such as Shangrila are exceptional, rather than typical.

If my findings are an indicator of wider patterns, it appears that at most monasteries tourism and heritage have not been significant factors in monastic revival and development. In Rebgong, which is (increasingly) easily accessible from Xining, Rongwo is being developed as a tourist site and the nearby monasteries famous for their religious arts are also being incorporated into tourism plans and have received heritage funding (see Section 5.2). However, many monasteries have not experienced tourism development and, even when they have, their basic infrastructure was rebuilt through the support of their patron communities (Chapter 3; see also p.174). There was no tourism development (as of 2009) at sites that are not in close proximity to the county town in Rebgong, nor at Ditsa and Tashitse in Bayan.

Only Rongwo and two other monasteries in Rebgong reported tourism-related income (p.112; Table 4.2), in each case from entrance tickets, although at Rongwo this was presented as an insignificant part of the overall monastic economy (this will be discussed further on p.152).⁵ Tourism can bring monks and monasteries into contact with potential donors and increase recognition of particular monasteries.⁶ However, patronage networks expand beyond local patron communities without tourism development. There has been an increase in sponsorship of temple building by Han Chinese from the PRC and overseas at

⁴ See also Huber (2002, 2006b) and Peng (2008) on Bon monasteries and tourism development in the Jiuzhaigou/Songpan area of Sichuan, another key tourist area.

⁵ See also Kolås and Thowsen (2005 p.56) who stated that only 'a handful' of monasteries they heard about charged entrance fees.

⁶ This includes active participation of reincarnate lamas in the 'museumisation of Tibetanness' at theme parks and exhibitions in non-Tibetan parts of China, as well as tourism at monasteries (Makley 2010 p.144).

several monasteries I visited. Although detailed examination of Chinese patronage is beyond the scope of this research (p.34), it appears that travel, personal connections and teacher/student relationships have been more important than tourist arrivals.⁷ For example, monks at one practice centre where there is no tourism started raising funds at the end of the 1990s to build a new assembly hall. Akhu Palsang told me that he had contacted a monk in Beijing who had a patron from Hainan Island who donated first 200,000 yuan, and then a further 200,000 yuan when her business was successful. The rest of the funds were raised from local people and nomads from the birthplace of the previous reincarnation of the monastery head. Likewise, other monks told me that the sponsor of a monk from Sichuan (the student of a teacher at the monastery) funded the construction of a school for monks and village children (during school holidays).

The revival of a large and well respected scholastic monastery like Ditsa outside the context of tourism not only raises a question as to the extent of the importance of tourism for monastic economies. It also challenges the view that tourism is necessarily an important factor in creating public space for monastic revival, development and expansion. Senior monks at Ditsa said that they did not believe tourism to be an appropriate mechanism for economic development in contrast to their other self-supporting activities. Although encouraged by local officials, they had decided against developing it because it would be disruptive to monastic education and practice. This brings us to the next point: the fact that there is resistance to tourism and that it is perceived differently from other development suggests a need to question the assumption that tourism is an arena in which monastic and state interests converge.

5.1.2 Resistance to tourism development

Although the existing literature provides an exaggerated view of the significance of tourism in monastic revival and development, it is an increasingly important

⁷ Smyer Yu (2008) also points to the role of the internet, although his assertion that contemporary Chinese Buddhists' fascination with Tibetan Buddhism is largely a result of the cyber-representation of Tibetan reincarnate lamas deserves problematisation elsewhere in light of the history of relations between Chinese Buddhists and Tibetan lamas (see Tuttle 2005).

issue. During the last decade, national, provincial and local level state actors have placed increasing emphasis on it as a driver of local economic growth in Tibetan areas, and monasteries are positioned as key 'cultural resources'. Within the Chinese academic literature, tourism is presented as one among various development opportunities for monasteries in their shift to self-sufficiency, depending on local circumstances (p.126). Monasteries close to towns and cities or on tourist routes are encouraged to be active in developing tourism and associated service industries (shops, restaurants) and products (for example Mei 2001 pp.156-158). Monks at some of my field sites said that government officials had encouraged them to develop tourism as a way to secure income.

As we have seen, Ditsa's monks were reluctant to engage in local tourism development plans. A similar reluctance was also reported at some of my other field sites. Akhu Samdrub told me that government officials came to his monastery to persuade the monks to develop tourism but many did not feel this was appropriate.

After we sell tickets, the monastery will automatically be controlled by the government. The government says it is good to develop tourism for the monastic economy, but the monks don't agree because a monastery is a place where people come to prostrate and worship and learn about the monastery and culture. If we sell tickets, the monastery will become a place where people come just to visit and look (T/N).

This line of reasoning highlights two recurring themes in the narratives I collected about tourism: concern over erosion of monastic autonomy and, linked to this, the aestheticisation of monastic space. At another field site, Akhu Chidar said that local officials had encouraged tourism development at his and a nearby monastery. The latter now has a fairly well developed tourism infrastructure. However, Akhu Chidar said that his monastery decided not to register as an official tourist site and therefore received no tour groups (state control over the tourism industry means that sites and routes must be registered and approved before they can officially receive tourists). He emphasised the issue of control in

distinguishing tourism from other forms of development, saying that every monastery needs to develop, but: ‘the thing is, if we were to join [the group], then we thought that we would fall into the hands of the Chinese’ (T/R).

The above accounts are the narratives of individuals and cannot be taken as representative, even though they claim to speak collectively for the monks at their respective monasteries. However, as this chapter will show, the concerns they expressed over the ceding of control are credible when considered in the context of the perceptions of tourism expressed by other monks and the cultural politics of tourism in contemporary China.

Even where there has been tourism development and associated heritage funding, this was often elided or discounted by my interlocutors and tourism was treated differently to other economic reforms. At one field site where tourism was reported as a source of income, a Management Committee member said that the monastery, which had previously split revenue with the local government, had started to make its own entrance tickets and controlled and kept all revenue. Hillman (2005 pp.35, 46) discusses a similar case in which the ‘younger generation’ of monks were disgruntled by government appropriation of funds from entrance tickets. The county government subsequently gave full control over entrance fees to monks as part of efforts to resolve a conflict involving intra-monastery factions and state agencies.

At Rongwo, on the other hand, tourism income was presented as a relatively insignificant element of the overall monastic economy. Revenue from entrance tickets was not used for assembly gatherings or education, but went into the central monastery fund for repairs, construction and maintenance, and relief for poor or sick monks (Chart 4.1). Moreover, there was a tendency amongst monks to discount this income, in part because a portion was appropriated by the local government which managed tourism development in line with provincial regulations (QZST 2009 Article 44).⁸ Tourism was therefore seen as principally an income generating mechanism for the state, rather than the monastery.

⁸ This is also the system in other Tibetans areas (Kolås 2008 p.14) and more generally in the PRC (Yin 2006 p.91).

However, this distancing from tourism is not simply an economic issue. While the development of monastic businesses was presented as the internal affair of my field sites (even where state pressures to reform were acknowledged), tourism was perceived differently. It invariably involves government agencies as both stakeholders and regulators (Nyíri 2009 p.163) and therefore represents a ceding of control over monastic space and practice to an external agency with competing values. In order to appreciate the significance of this in monastic attitudes it is necessary to discuss briefly the cultural politics of tourism development in China.

5.2 The cultural politics of tourism and heritage

5.2.1 Tourism development in Qinghai

The state at various levels has economic and political interests in exercising a high degree of control over tourism development. Tourism and heritage have been used as tools of propaganda and modernisation by the Chinese state in the ongoing process of nation-building.⁹ During the Maoist period, tourism was limited to revolutionary sites for the ‘patriotic education’ of red guards and sympathetic foreigners. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping emphasised its importance as part of the new open door policy and for the contribution that restoration and protection of heritage and folklore sites could make to national unity (Sofield and Li 1998 p.377). Document 19 (p.8) established the principle that major monasteries ‘are not only places of worship, but are also cultural facilities of important historical value’ and gave monastics responsibility for ensuring that ‘the surroundings are clean, peaceful and quiet, suitable for tourism’ (trans. MacInnis 1989 p.18). During the 1980s in Tibetan areas (as elsewhere in China), the focus was on international tourism and key ‘spots’ were developed (including the main Gelukpa monastic centres) to showcase religious freedom and earn foreign exchange.

Tourism has become an increasingly important part of nation-building and local economic development, particularly over the last decade. The emphasis has

⁹ See Su and Teo (2009 pp.30-36) for a review of the literature. This has been the case in many developing countries (Yang, Wall and Smith 2008 pp.751-752; see also Winter 2007: Winter, Teo and Chang 2009 pp.11-17) but also, for example, in England (Winter 2007 pp.13-14).

shifted towards the domestic tourism industry, which has seen phenomenal growth and now far outstrips international tourism. It was designated as a key growth area in 1998 and the following year the state established three 'golden weeks' of public holidays (Nyíri 2009 p.153). This was motivated by concerns to stimulate domestic consumption, but was also part of the state's social modernisation project to construct a 'socialist spiritual civilisation' and a harmonious, united, modern, Chinese nation (Oakes 1998; Sofield and Li 1998; Nyíri 2006, 2009; Murakami 2008; Shepherd 2009). The growth of domestic tourism as part of a 'leisure culture' fitted with the logics of a loosening of control over population movement to enable labour migration, with both forms of mobility signifying modernisation (Chio 2009 pp.208-209; Nyíri 2009 pp.153-154; Shepherd 2009 pp.256-257). However, tourism, unlike migration, is a 'two-way civilising tool' (Nyíri 2009 p.154), not only bringing modernity to host communities, but also cultivating a superior national culture through tourist consumption of state-scripted narratives (see also Oakes and Sutton 2010 pp.6-7).

In Qinghai, the state's drive to develop the western regions of China (*C. xibu da kaifa*) from 2000 placed renewed emphasis on tourism as a way of achieving the dual imperatives of stability and economic development. This emphasis was reflected in the establishment of tourism studies courses at its universities over the past decade and a burgeoning academic literature (Zhang 2008), largely focused on cultural (including religious) tourism and scenic tourism, and the development of scenic spots, areas and lines (*C. xian*). The opening of the Qinghai-Tibet railway in 2006 boosted tourism at Xining and surrounding sites. In Qinghai, as in other parts of China with large minority nationality populations, ethnic culture is seen as a key tourism resource alongside the natural environment. Monasteries, particularly those that are relatively easily accessible, are viewed as important sites in provincial and local cultural (ethnic) tourism development.

The fact that some monasteries appear to have resisted tourism development (p.150-151) suggests that there is some space for negotiation at a local level (see also Hillman 2005 pp.48-50; Svensson 2010 pp.227-228). However, this depends in part on the extent of local and/or national political and commercial interests in particular sites. Kapstein (2004 pp.254-255) notes that a monastery's remoteness

and size ('small being beautiful') can be factors in the relative freedom under which it operates (he also stressed the importance of local conditions and local state and monastic leadership). Tourism can bring attention and tension: the more state interest, the more difficult it can become for monastic leaders to pursue their own institutional agendas (see also Birnbaum 2003 pp.443-444).

When I visited Shachung monastery in autumn 2008, there was little visible tourism infrastructure. I was told by a monastic teacher that many monks are uneasy about tourism development for reasons similar to those cited in Section 5.1.2). Nevertheless, Shachung, a site of considerable historical importance (p.80), was designated a 3A tourist scenic area in 2010 and the county government had reportedly invested 32 million yuan in developing the 'Shachung scenic area' and 'Shachung brand' (Lu 2010). I have insufficient data to comment on the extent of opposition to tourism amongst the monks. However, this is the same 'scenic area' as that in which Ditsa has been encouraged to participate. It will therefore be interesting to see what happens over the next few years at Ditsa, where senior monks do not consider tourism to be an appropriate direction of development.

5.2.2 Standardising and commodifying monastic space: tourism development at Rongwo

The highly politicised nature of ethnic tourism in China because of its role in the construction and scripting of national and ethnic culture has been discussed elsewhere (Oakes 1998; Gladney 2004; Nyíri 2006, 2009; Makley 2007; Murakami 2008; Shepherd 2009; Su and Teo 2009). Tourism policies seek to preserve not erase performative differences (Shepherd 2009 p.255), but these differences are scripted (Nyíri 2006 pp.75-76). The development of tourism at Rongwo illustrates how state-sponsored tourism-related development standardises and commodifies monastic space, incorporating it into national and local systems of symbols and signs that have little to do with the monastery as a lived-in community and place of education and practice.

Rebgong was designated a state-level 'famous city of history and culture' in 1994, but there has been a visible increase in tourism development since 2004, when it was designated a 'China nationalities folk culture protection project' by

the State Cultural Bureau. In 2005, Li Xuansheng was appointed Party Secretary of Malho prefecture. Prior to his appointment, Li, who was born in Qinghai, was head of the provincial tourism bureau (Xinhua 2008) and led mass tourism development at Kumbum. This is a worrying precedent for Rongwo's monks since, as we shall see (Section 5.6), Kumbum has become symbolic of contemporary monastic decline.

Under Li's leadership, tourism development has accelerated rapidly and in August 2008 Rebgong was awarded 4A status by the national Tourism Bureau (Tongren Xian Zhengfu 2008), even though tourist arrivals dropped sharply following the 2008 Tibetan protests. Tourism is now one of the 'five pillars' of local economic development plans. As a 4A site, Rebgong is expected to attract at least 500,000 tourists per year, of which 30,000 should be international. The prefecture reported 382,200 tourist arrivals in 2007, including 5,990 foreigners (HKTDC 2009). In 2009, Rebgong was incorporated into the route of the annual international cycling race, the Tour of Qinghai Lake. Infrastructure development, including the construction of a 3km long tunnel through the mountains, has reduced the journey time from Xining to less than two and a half hours (compared to as many as eight hours in 2000).

Monasteries have been incorporated into the local cultural tourism landscape. One of the development strategies in Rebgong (as elsewhere in China) has been the selection, commodification and marketing of certain local cultural characteristics and promotion of a regional brand. Perhaps the most commented on case is that of Gyaltang (rgyal-thang; C. Zhongdian) in Yunnan, which has been officially re-named 'Shangrila (C. Shanggelila)' (see Gang Yue 2005; Kolås 2008; Hillman 2010).

In Rebgong, the brand is 'Regong', a Chinese transliteration of the Tibetan name of the area (as opposed to Tongren, the Chinese administrative designation). The Regong brand centres around the 'Regong arts' such as painted and appliqué *thangka* and clay statues, but also includes other aspects of ethnic culture, such as the 6th month mountain deity festivals and local monasteries, in particular Rongwo and the 'Regong art' monasteries of Nyentok, Gomar, and upper and

lower Senggeshong, all of which lie close to the prefectural seat. Rongwo monastery in this imagining is not the nexus of a web of monasteries and patron communities. It is one of various sights on a tourist route, all of which are marked out through the valley with uniform signage (Fig.5.1).



Figure 5.1 Signage in Rebgong

To some extent religion as a marker of Tibetan identity is reinforced by contemporary representations of Tibetanness in China. Those linked to the tourism industry are often of a spiritual land of beauty and mysticism, with the simple religious faith of the people a marker of their exoticism and backwardness, similar to orientalist representations of Tibetans in the West (see also Heberer 2001; Makley 2007 pp.6-10). However, monasteries are represented within the tourist landscape as one element of local 'Regong culture'. State-scripted tourism therefore works to aestheticise (Shepherd 2009 p.255) and ethnicise (Murakami 2008 p.65) 'Tibetan' culture, relegating Buddhism to 'a flavour of Tibetan-ness' (ibid.) and transforming monasteries into 'de-politicised spaces of "culture" and "tradition" securely within the People's Republic' (Shepherd 2009 p.255).

Having visited Rongwo monastery several times since 2000, I have witnessed the transformation of the site in accordance with the common features of scenic spots, which Nyíri (2009 p.159) lists as: a cultural square, ticket gate, shopping street, accommodation area, cultural performances and elaborate narratives on the history of the site.¹⁰ Standardised signage, mapping out and narrating the buildings of significance to the tourist, has existed at the monastery since my first visit.

However, there has been significant development since, notably the construction of the symbolic ceremonial space of a stone-paved 'cultural square' in front of the monastery, completed in 2009 (Fig.5.2), and a ticket gate at the front entrance, which was under construction in summer 2009 (Fig.5.3). The latter enables encasement of the monastery as a ticketed tourist sight. Previously, tickets could be bought from the monastery shop, but there was no policing of entrance to the monastery or individual temples. A senior monk told me that souvenir shops would be opened at the ticket gate or inside the monastery, although my fieldwork period finished before the gate was completed.

Monastic festivals and rituals have been reinterpreted as cultural performances and incorporated into the calendar of cultural events listed on the Qinghai Tourism Bureau website (QLJ 2010d; see also Fig.5.4). The monastery has been made cleaner and more orderly, with the widening and repaving of the main thoroughfares and the installation of a public toilet in 2008. In terms of other associated local development, in the lead up to the Olympic Games in 2008, there was new hotel construction in Rebgong, the shop fronts on the street leading up to the monastery were painted in Tibetan style and a gate was erected separating the street from the monastery entrance and new cultural square (Fig.5.5).¹¹

¹⁰ See Cooke (2010 pp.22-24) for a description of the (earlier) 'touristification' of Kumbum monastery between 1993 and 2002.

¹¹ Local people told me that this was in preparation for an anticipated tourist rush during the Olympic Games which did not materialise because of the 2008 protests.



Figure 5.2 Rongwo cultural square under construction, autumn 2008



Figure 5.3 Rongwo ticket gate under construction, early summer 2009



Figure 5.4 Photographers and monks during Rongwo's Monlam



Figure 5.5 Looking through the new gate to Rongwo's Tibetanised shopping street

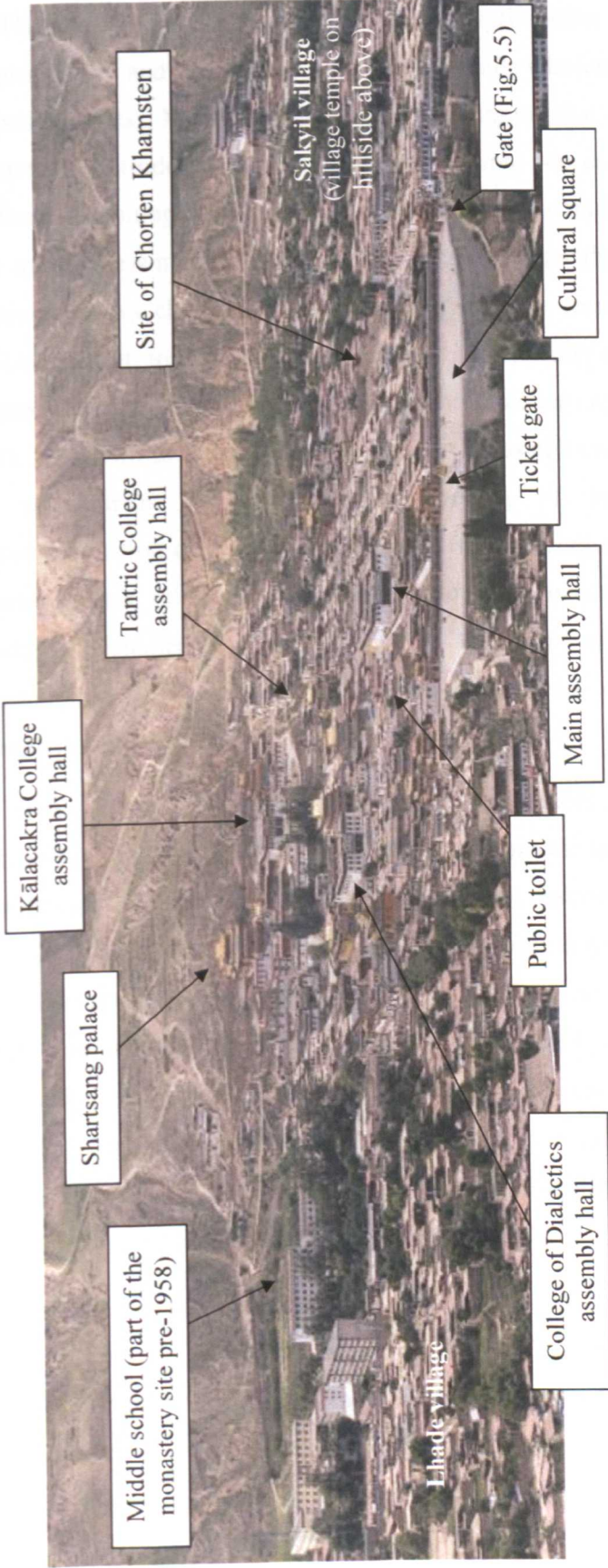


Figure 5.6 View of Rongwo monastery

Harvey (2007 p.36) has argued that commodification through tourism, with its appropriation and exploitation of culture, 'entails wholesale dispossession'. In the Tibetan context, Murakami (2008 p.62) has argued that tourism has involved the systematic introduction of economic value 'into the core of traditional Tibetan culture', encouraging a reconsideration of religious traditions as commodifiable. He treats tourism as an isolated phenomenon, rather than as an aspect of wider socio-economic change (perhaps stemming from his focus on the tourism industry in Lhasa). Yet, tourism needs to be placed in the wider context of the 'process of commodification and consumption inherent in modern capitalism' (Meethan 2001 p.4). As shown in the previous chapter, at monasteries where there has been little or no tourism development, the opening of businesses has involved commodification of religion, for example in the production and sale of incense, treasure vases, relic pills and other religious products and commercialisation of Buddhist handicrafts. Moreover, the process of commodification and consumption is viewed as problematic outside the contexts of tourism (see Chapters 6-8).

What distinguishes tourism for my interlocutors is therefore not simply 'dispossession through commodification' of monastic space, bodies and practices – although this is indeed problematic and will be discussed further in Section 5.6. Tourism also represents political dispossession through the ceding of control over monastic space and practice to state agencies. Tourism in China is 'a major front in the state's efforts to maintain its paramount authority over the realms of cultural production and national identity construction' (Oakes and Sutton 2010 p.13). Market logic is subordinated to state imperatives, which are stronger than global market demands; rather, the latter are harnessed for state interests (Sofield and Li 1998 pp.364-365; see also Nyíri 2009 pp.168-169).

The remodelling of monastic space for tourism is therefore part of a more complex process of the 'production of space' (Lefebvre 1991), an ongoing process of creation and dialectical interaction between the ideal and the real. From this perspective, what tourism highlights is the coexistence of competing orders, with different visions of the monastery and monastic development. Since the early 1980s, the monastic moral community has been reclaiming the space of the

monastery from the state, reasserting monastic ownership, reconstructing the physical symbolic spaces of the monastery and re-establishing the social and spatial boundaries underpinning monasticism (Chapter 3). We have seen how, at Rongwo, this was a gradual and ongoing process that the monks still do not view as being completed (p.90; see also Fig.5.6). State-sponsored tourism projects, such as the ticket gate and cultural square redefine monastic space and represent a re-infiltration of state agencies, with competing imaginaries of the monastery. The questions this raises as to who is authoring monastic development are deeply problematic for monks in terms of relations within both the monastery and the wider monastic moral community.

As the following section will show, monks' distrust of and uneasiness about state involvement in and material support for monastic development are part of the more general problematics of state patronage of monastic Buddhism in contemporary contexts.

5.3 Money is power? The politics of state patronage

5.3.1 The shifting politics of patronage

Negotiation of patronage relationships have always been 'a delicate matter involving careful strategic considerations' (Diemberger 2007a p.43). However, in contemporary contexts, state patronage poses very particular risks to the integrity and legitimacy of Gelukpa monasticism. As Makley (2010 p.150) points out, the contemporary relationship between the Chinese state and monastic Buddhism is markedly different from the patron-preceptor (*mchod-yon*) relationship that framed relationships between reincarnate lamas and the Qing emperors who donated money to reincarnate lamas and supported monastic construction. The latter sought to incorporate Tibetan areas into the imperial framework through institutionalising and ritualising relationships with reincarnation lineages, as well as with other local leaders (Diemberger 2007a pp.282, 291), but the relationship was one of 'calculated ambiguity' (Makley 2010 p.150). Moreover, Qing supporters of Tibetan Buddhism were, as 'believers', integrated into the monastic moral community, accruing merit and divine status through the relationship. The

mchod-yon relationship was framed within an understanding of the connection between spiritual and temporal powers:

... as two orders within one system of legal and moral rules ... even though a distinction between the spiritual and the temporal is found in Tibetan thought, such concepts do not rely on binary oppositions like the distinctions between the sacred and the profane common in Western traditions. (Diemberger 2007a p.43)

The formation of the modern Chinese nation-state entailed differentiation between the 'religious' and the 'secular'. The state is a 'radically secular' (ibid. p.291) order that imposes its own system of legal and moral rules based on Chinese Communist ideology. The contemporary 'state' is a complex, multi-layered network of Party and government agencies (for example, religious affairs, tourism, heritage, security) operating at many different levels (national, provincial, prefectural, county, township). Moreover, state actors often operate from multiple positions (see for example Diemberger 2007a; 2010). Nevertheless, my interlocutors commonly referred to the state/government (*rgyal-khab*) as a monolithic 'other', with its various agencies and actors representative of the same competing order threatening the autonomy of the monastic institution.¹² This order is not only outside of, but has a history of violent confrontation with the monastic moral community.

Akhu Samdrub, who talked about his monastery's reluctance to engage in tourism development (p.151), provided an insight into the underlying antagonism towards and distrust of the 'state' rooted in collective memories of the violence of the Maoist years, as well as more recent political history. He employed (or claimed the monks employed) tactics of rhetorical resistance that undermined the legitimacy of tourism and heritage projects led by the same political order that had destroyed the monastery.

The officials asked if we could collect old objects that the monastery used, such as pots and bells. The monks said 'these were all

¹² People sometimes used the terms 'China' (*rgya-nag*) or 'the Chinese' (*rgya-mi*) interchangeably with 'the state' in these contexts.

completely destroyed, there is nothing left. There is no need to protect [the monastery's cultural relics] because [the monastery was] completely destroyed' (T/N).

This distrust of and uneasiness towards state involvement in and material support for monastic tourism development extends to other forms of state support.

5.3.2 Beyond tourism: Chorten Khamtsen

The politics of state patronage as the latest stage in ongoing power shifts between state and monastic authority over the past 50 years is illuminated in the history of the site of a housing block at Rongwo. Prior to 1958, the site was a sacred space of Buddhist power and practice, occupied by at least one *chorten* (a structure representing the cosmos and containing Buddhist relics) and known as Chorten Square (*mchod-rten thang*).¹³ During the Maoist period, the *chorten* was destroyed and a three-storey building, contained within a walled compound, was erected and used for government work units and housing. As monastic authorities regained control over much of Rongwo's original site by the early 1990s, the building was used as monks' housing and re-named 'Chorten Khamtsen (*mchod-rten khang-tshan*).' This name incorporated references to both its pre-1958 use as the site of a *chorten* and its contemporary use as housing for monks coming from outside Rebgong to study at Rongwo: *khamtsen* are the residential subunits (based on region of origin) within larger Gelukpa monasteries such as Sera and Drepung. Rongwo does not have *khamtsen*, but the building was thus named as it was occupied by outsiders.

The state-funded project to demolish and rebuild the housing block is the latest episode in the history of this space. The monks moved out and the old structure was knocked down in summer 2009 (Fig.5.7). Subsequently a new neo-Tibetan style six-storey building and adjacent three-storey structure have been constructed in its place (Fig.5.8). This is the first instance that I have come across of state

¹³ It is unclear if the space was occupied by one or more *chorten*. Two monks said that the site had been occupied by *chorten* in the plural. However, a pictorial representation of Rongwo monastery prior to 1958 shows only one large *chorten*. I was shown a draft of this painting and also saw a copy of the finished work, printed in a book on Rebgong arts.

funded monastic housing. Quarters are generally built by monks' families, while those coming from far away to study are often helped by monks from their home places to find quarters.



Figure 5.7 Demolition of Chorten Khamtsen, Rongwo

Rumours were circulating in Rebgong in summer 2009 that the new building was part of government efforts to control the monks. I heard that it would include offices for the cultural bureau, religious affairs bureau and security agencies on the ground floor, thus physically reinserting state agencies into monastic space. These were connected to other rumours that the encasement of the monastery as a tourist site was also intended to contain the monks within its boundaries and make it easier to lock down the monastery. These rumours were reproduced in print in a Tibetan publication produced in exile (bLo-bzang kun-mkhyen 2010), which linked the Chorten Khamtsen project to other state-funded work, including tourism infrastructure, and claimed that all were pretexts for the commodification and control of monastic space. By contrast, Xinhua (2010c) presented the housing project and other state funding as acts of state benevolence. Extracts from the articles are translated and displayed in juxtaposition in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Media representations of the Chorten Khamtsen project

100 or more Rongwo monastery monks move into apartment block

Xinhua, 12 April 2010

(translated from Chinese)¹⁴

A six-storey modern apartment block, that will solve the housing problems of 180 monks, has suddenly risen from the ground in the more than 700 year old Rongwo monastery. For many years, conditions at the monastery had improved and it had 23 Buddhist temples and palaces, but the monks' housing was still crowded. In 2009, the Huangnan prefecture government raised 8.5m yuan to resolve the housing problems of Rongwo monastery's monks. ... The vice-director of Rongwo's Management Committee, Alak Shangtse, explained that following the completion of the apartment block: 'Every person has 38m² of room to themselves, with electricity, water and furnishings. The conditions are very good'. He also said that, in addition to building the residence, the government has invested over 10m yuan in repairs to the monastery's assembly hall and in paving the monastery's main street. 'The monks more and more profoundly feel the material advantages of the state's religious policy.'

The deceptive seductions of the Chinese economy

bLo-bzang kun-mkhyen, writing for the Shambhala Post (sham-bha-la'i pho-nya), 25 March 2010

(translated from Tibetan)

... In 2009, saying that housing was needed for the monks, a six-storey building was being erected. As a result, not only were the traditional features of the monastery destroyed, but, according to subsequent reports, this building does not belong to the monastery. It was built for Chinese business and it was planned that government supervisors to oversee the monks and relevant monastic departments would move inside. The hot topic amongst the monks nowadays is that this came about because the so-called monastery managers, such as Alak Shangtse [shang-rtse], Gedon [dgedon], Tenzin Chödrak [bstan-'dzin chos-grags], Chidrak [dpyi-grags] and so on, in collusion with the red Chinese cadres, deceived the monastery. In these development projects, it is apparent that the Chinese government has merely been using deceptive means for its own ends.

Even though these articles represent opposing political viewpoints, the politics of the project are implicit in both, even leaving aside use of the building by state agencies.¹⁵ As Xinhua (2010c) claims, the project appears to have originated in a genuine housing problem. A senior monk told me that Alak Shartsang had

¹⁴ An English language version of the article appeared in China Daily (Zhang 2010).

¹⁵ The building had not been erected by the time I left. I have photographs, but have been unable to confirm if it is occupied by state agencies and/or Chinese businesses in addition to monks' quarters.

previously applied for permission to establish residential units for monks from outside Rebgong who were living in Chorten Khamtsen or renting rooms in surrounding villages. However, the timing of the granting of state funds for the project places it among a series of measures that can be interpreted as the carrot to the stick of the increased surveillance, detention and ‘political education’ of monks following the 2008 protests. This is implicit when Xinhua quotes Alak Shangtse as saying: ‘The monks more and more profoundly feel the material advantages of the state’s religious policy.’ In other words, there will be material rewards if monks behave themselves and remain within the boundaries of state-defined religious space.



Figure 5.8 New housing on Chorten Khamtsen site

The construction of the new housing block can therefore be seen as part of wider ‘soft power’ strategies to deal with political unrest. There is past precedent for this kind of approach. For example, following the Lhasa protests of 1987, led by Drepung and Sera monks, these monasteries were given 400,000 yuan (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 p.153). Since 2008, state involvement in monastic development has been incorporated into prefecture level Tibetan Buddhist affairs regulations in Malho which stipulate that governments at all levels ‘shall incorporate basic infrastructure construction at sites for Buddhist activities, such as water,

electricity and roads, into urban and rural development plans' (HZST Article 8). The state-controlled media claims that 'in the past few years' the prefectural government has invested 50 million yuan in road-building, water, electricity and sewerage at monasteries (Xinhua 2010b). I saw state-funded road construction at Gomar and the relaying of water pipes at Rongwo (Fig.5.9). Many of these infrastructure projects (particularly the cementing of mud access roads and paving of internal monastic thoroughfares) serve the dual interests of pacification of monks through strategic use of material development and tourism development.¹⁶



Figure 5.9 Work at Rongwo to lay new water pipes

Monks were aware of the politics of state funding. They were also aware that it carried dangerous implications of incorporation, collaboration and dispossession. Student Norbu (p.141), for example, saw government investment in road construction and other projects as representing the erosion of monastic autonomy:

That is the sad reality. The government has paid so much, maybe 30-40 million yuan. If the officials want to just come in the monks can't really say it's 'our monastery' any more. (E/N)

¹⁶ See also Hillman (2005 p.35) who says one county government invested in construction projects at a Tibetan monastery where there had been disquiet about government appropriation of tourist income 'to appease the monks while simultaneously expanding capacity for growth in tourism'.

Moreover, monks have a 'proprietary outlook' over their monasteries (Dreyfus 2003 p.43) and state funding can be a potentially explosive issue in intra-monastery relations. bLo-bzang kun-mkhyen (2010) personally vilifies members of the monastic leadership at Rongwo. Barnett (2006) shows that, from an analytical perspective, such a simplistic view of 'collaboration' is outdated. The subtleties of the manoeuvres of members of the religious elite working within the system should be acknowledged (p.12). This is a view shared by a Tibetan reader who posted an equally polemical response to bLo-bzang kun-mkhyen entitled *A worthless statement full of lies and jealousy* (Anon 2010). Dismissing the article as 'meaningless gossip' he concluded by asking: 'The Tibetan brothers of this topic live under the claw of the tiger, so is it fair to shout forth from an independent country?'. Nevertheless, bLo-bzang kun-mkhyen's reportage reflects genuine tensions within the monastery, which have been running particularly high since 2008. One monk who spoke about this said that it felt as if some of 'our people' were 'state people'; when they were placed under pressure from higher authorities 'they would say many offensive things to us' (T/R). There appears to have been particular antagonism towards Alak Shangtse who sits permanently on the Management Committee as its deputy head. My interlocutor said that monks had even thrown stones him, 'that is how much they do not want to see him'.¹⁷

bLo-bzang kun-mkhyen's polemic locates the Chorten Khamtsen project within the problematics of state funded projects in general. The 'development projects' he mentions also include the cultural square ('not constructed out of affection for the monastery, but to draw tourists to the surrounding area') and the new monastery ticket gate (the income from which will be 'thrown to the Chinese

¹⁷ A senior monk told me that the monastery and college *gebké* sit on the Management Committee because otherwise the assembly of monks would never heed its orders (T/R). See also Hillman (2005 p.34) who alludes to similar tensions between monks and the Management Committee at another monastery. However, it should be emphasised that the make-up of and attitudes towards monastery management committees vary. Even at Rongwo their members are by no means all perceived of as collaborators or 'political monks'. Tensions appear to be greatest at monasteries which have had greater interaction with state agencies through tourism development or political protest (often both, for example Drepung, Sera and Rongwo). None of my field sites had lay officials sitting on the management committees as distinct from some monasteries in the TAR.

master'). Tourism is therefore perceived as one of the many ways in which monastic leaders have ceded control of the monastery to an external authority.

Both Makley (2010) and Cooke (2010) argue that tourism works to incorporate Gelukpa monasticism into the PRC and has contributed to the 'defanging of Tibetan Buddhist authority'. Makley (2010 pp.149-151) argues that the participation of lamas and monks in 'ethnic museumization' epitomises the dangers of close accommodation with the state and global capital. Even though they divert meanings and values for their own projects, they are also participating in the 'categorical incarceration' of Tibetans (as a '*minzu*') and Tibetan 'religion'. She cites Arjia Rinpoche's story as typifying the hazards of such accommodation. He succeeded in raising funds from the state for Kumbum's revival in part to develop it as a tourist destination, but found that this ultimately 'entailed his public avowal of the incarceration of religion in a display of political loyalties to the state' and eventually led to his decision to escape into exile.¹⁸

It is not simply the problematic issue of political control that conditions monastic attitudes, but the implications this has for the soteriological (and interlinked to this, mundane) foundations of monasticism. There is little value and meaning to much state-funded development in terms of the logics of what is good and desirable from the worldview of the monastic moral community. The danger of 'incorporation' is that the monastery loses its authority as a 'monastery' and is transformed into an aestheticised site. Akhu Tenpa made precisely this point:

Rongwo monastery is like a university for studying Buddhism. A university has its own system. So if there is too much preoccupation with economic interests and too much development then the monastery will turn into some kind of spectacle. It will not have the necessary conditions of a real academic institution. (T/R)

¹⁸ The 8th Arjia Rinpoche was recognised in 1952 (aged 2). During the reform period he took on his traditional role as Kumbum's abbot and was appointed to high-ranking official posts. He escaped into exile in 1998, one of the highest profile Tibetan defections in the reform period alongside the 17th Karmapa. He says he believed his 'political life was betraying my religious and moral principles' after he was appointed tutor to the boy selected by the Chinese government as the 11th Panchen Lama and following a socialist education campaign at the monastery in 1997 (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 p.212).

5.4 The logics of temple building and heritage funding

An analysis of the role of heritage funding in monastic development elucidates not only its political dimensions, but also the local logics of what is good and desirable, thus providing a perspective on the problematics of state funding from within the ethical frameworks of Gelukpa monasticism and Buddhist practice.

As with tourism development, state heritage funding is a political and highly contested issue. Government funding of monastic restoration and conservation is used as evidence of freedom of religious belief and the benevolence of the state towards minority nationalities (for example, IOSC 1992 pp.56-57, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). In the TAR alone, the central government claims to have invested more than 300 million yuan to help renovate and open up to the public over 1,400 monasteries (IOSC 2008a). However, at many of the monasteries I visited, monks denied that they had received state support and emphasised the role of local people in monastic reconstruction. Kolås and Thowsen (2005 pp.52-56) also found that claims of government funding for monastic reconstruction were disputed locally and that state funding accounted for a very small percentage of total costs, with the exception of a few monasteries such as Kumbum, for which the state council apportioned 37 million yuan for renovations in 1991.¹⁹

The monasteries of Rongwo, Gomar, Nyentok, upper Senggeshong and lower Senggeshong have all been designated state-level cultural protection units (QLJ 2010a) and have received state heritage funding. These sites are integral to local tourism development plans and marketing through the 'Regong Arts' brand, showing the close relationship between tourism and heritage. Yet, I was repeatedly told by monks that the government did not support these monasteries and that their reconstruction was due to the efforts of the local Tibetan people, the lamas and monks. Akhu Tsultrim told me that he thought that the heritage

¹⁹ Even in the case of Kumbum, the 8th Arjia Rinpoche had to use considerable political skill to negotiate for these funds. He says (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 pp.183-185) that he secured the grant following a major earthquake in 1990. He filed a petition for disaster relief and then made monthly trips to Beijing to plead his case, using his positions in various religious and political organisations and the connections these positions gave him. The original 37 million yuan allotment (or 36m according to Arjia Rinpoche) was later reduced to 20 million yuan after flooding in southern China (ibid. p.191).

projects at his monastery were good because it was difficult for the villagers to fund this kind of work (T/R), but this was an exception. Other monks elided or dismissed the significance of heritage funding.

To an extent, monks' representations of the significance of heritage funding reflect the fact that much of the work has, indeed, been sponsored by Buddhists. For example, according to the state-controlled media, in the four year period 2004-2008, the government invested 25 million yuan in what it referred to as the '5th phase' of renovations at Rongwo (Xinhua 2009). In 2008, 7.1 million yuan was invested in repairs, paved stone paths and the painting of walls and carved beams and painted pillars, although it is not clear if this was included in the figure of 25 million quoted above (ibid. 2010a). The government had funded previous work to the printing house (2000), main assembly hall (2000) and College of Dialectics assembly hall (2001) (Table 5.2). Yet, the data in dPal-bzang (2007), aggregated in Table 5.2, shows that, although the state funded these restoration projects (and the Cultural Square), reconstruction of religious structures was sponsored by Buddhists.

Table 5.2 Construction projects at Rongwo since 1980²⁰

(Source: dPal-bzang 2007)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Tibetan name</i>	<i>Belongs to</i>	<i>Funder</i>
(1) 1980 (2) 2000	Main assembly hall	<i>tshogs-chen 'du-khang</i>	Monastery	(1) Monastery (2) Government and locals
(1) 1980 (2) 2000	Printing house (now closed)	<i>par-khang chen-mo</i>	College of Dialectics	(1) Monastery (2) Government
1982	Shar Mañjuśrī temple	<i>shar 'jam-dbyangs lha-khang</i>	Shartsang residence	Lobsang Khyenrab, nomads, monk and Sakyil villagers

²⁰ The data in dPal-bzang is reproduced here since it is more comprehensive than details gathered from interviews, but the latter support his data. Table 5.2 does not include data on the restoration/reconstruction of the sacred inner objects of the temples (statues, murals, wall hangings and so on), which have been sponsored by lamas, monks and the laity. See dPal-bzang (2007) for more details.

1982	White rock hermitage	<i>brag-dkar sgom-khang</i>	Monastery	Monastery
(1) 1982 (2) 2005	New temple	<i>lha-khang so-ma</i>	College of Dialectics	(1) College (2) College
(1) 1983 (2) 2001	College of Dialectics assembly hall	<i>grwa-tshang 'du-khang chen-mo</i>	College of Dialectics	(1) College (2) Government
1985	Mahākālī protector temple	<i>lha-mo'i mgong-khang</i>	College of Dialectics	College
1985	Tantric College assembly hall	<i>du-khang chen-mo</i>	Tantric College	6 th Dzongchung
1985	Tantric College protector temple	<i>mgon-khang</i>	Tantric College	College
1987	Mahāsiddha Chöpa Rinpoche's reliquary temple	<i>grub-chen chos-pa rin-po-che'i sku-gdung lha-khang</i>	College of Dialectics	6 th Rongwo
1987	Amoghapāsa temple	<i>don-yod-zhags-pa'i lha-khang</i>	College of Dialectics	7 th Drakkar Ngakrampa
1989	Hayagrīva temple	<i>rta-mgrin lha-khang</i>	Monastery	4 th Mentsang
1989	Kālacakra College assembly hall	<i>du-khang chen-mo</i>	Kālacakra College	College
1993	Printing house	<i>rong-bo dgon-chen gyi par-khang</i>	Alak Khaso residence	7 th Khaso
(1) 1993 (2) 2002	Mañjuśrī foundation temple	<i>sa-'dzin 'jam-dbyangs kun-'gzigs lha-khang</i>	College of Dialectics	(1) Lobsang Khyenrab and Tenpé Jeltsen (2) 5 th Trigen, 5 th Rongwo and college
1994	Kālacakra College <i>homa</i> (burnt offerings) temple and <i>maṇḍala</i>	<i>sbyin-sreg khang</i>	Kālacakra College	4 th Mentsang
(1) 1995 (2) 2005	Mañjughoṣa temple	<i>jam-dbyang kun-gzigs lha-khang</i>	College of Dialectics	(1) 7 th Yershong (2) college

1996	8 tathāgata stupas	<i>bde-gshegs mchod-rtan-rnam brgyad</i>	Monastery	Two lay elders
(1) 1997 (2) 2002	Temple in Shar palace	<i>shar bla-brang nor-bu gru-'dzin pho-brang</i>	Shartsang residence	8 th Shartsang
1998	Temple of Buddhas of 3 eras and public protector temple	<i>dus-gsum sangs- rgyas kyi mchod khang / spyi-ba'i mgon-khang chen-mo</i>	Monastery	Rongwo and Lonchö villages
1998	Khenchen Maitreya temple	<i>mkhan-chen lha- khang</i>	Monastery	7 th Khenchen
2000	Protector temple in Shar residence	<i>shar bla-brang chen-mo'i mgon- khang</i>	Shartsang residence	8 th Shartsang
2000	Tārā temple	<i>sgrol-ma'i lha- khang</i>	Monastery	5 th Trigen
2004	Tantric College Tsongkhapa temple	<i>rje lha-khang</i>	Tantric College	5 th Trigen
2004	Kālacakra College protector temple	<i>mgon-khang</i>	Kālacakra College	5 th Trigen
2005	Cultural square	<i>rong-gong rig- gnas thang-chen</i>	Monastery	Party Secretary Li
Ongoing	Prayer wheels along the outer circuit of the monastery	<i>dgon-pa'i shar gyi bskor-lam</i>	Monastery	Donors (lamas, monks, laity)

In the 1980s and 1990s funds (as well as labour) mainly came from local Tibetans, either directly, or through their offerings to lamas and the monastery. During the last decade there has been a great deal of temple building and restoration, funded through reincarnate lamas. This boom in construction is partly because the local population has become wealthier. Another important factor (not immediately apparent in Table 5.2), is the expansion of the trans-local patronage network of the 5th Trigen, who has been the principal sponsor of much of the

work.²¹ In addition to the projects listed in Table 5.2, he has also funded the construction of a 1,000 Buddha images temple (*sang-rgyas stong-sku lha-khang*), under construction in 2009 (Fig 5.10), and a new debating courtyard completed in 2009. Alak Trigen receives donations from the Tibetan community and locals are involved in construction, but many of his funds come through his nephew who has patrons in Taiwan. In terms of the sums of money involved, to take the example of the renovation of the Mañjuśrī foundation temple in 2002 (originally rebuilt in 1993), the 5th Trigen provided funds of five million yuan, which was supplemented by 500,000 yuan from the 5th Rongwo and 250,000 from the College of Dialectics (dPal-bzang 2007 p.79). According to a senior monk the Tārā temple cost an estimated four million yuan.



Figure 5.10 Rongwo 1,000 Buddha images temple under construction, summer 2009

²¹ Alak Trigen (khri-r gan sku-phreng Inga-ba 'jam-dbyangs 'phrin-las dbang-bo) is a reincarnate lama, now in his 80s, who went into exile in India during the Maoist period and disrobed. He returned to Rebgong at the beginning of the reform period and has been very active in monastic reconstruction.

However, there are various other reasons that monks might elide or dismiss the significance of heritage projects. These include (but are not limited to) the dynamics of state-monastery relations. Monks are aware of the propaganda agenda of heritage funding, just as they are aware of the politics of tourism, and are suspicious of the motivations behind it. Moreover, heritage funding is problematic for the same reasons as other forms of state patronage since it represents a ceding of control to a competing order. Akhu Lungtok claimed that the government did not give his monastery any money but then elaborated on this saying that it made repairs in the interests of tourism development (T/R). Akhu Kunchok said that if the government really cared about the monks then it would support educational development (T/R).

These comments suggest that the issue is not only one of control, but also of value. The 'monastery' as a place of Buddhist education and practice is not supported through these heritage projects. This was echoed by Akhu Namjyel, a monk in his forties at one of Rongwo's affiliate monasteries. He acknowledged that the local government had supported external development at his monastery, but argued that this had little value when it did not support monks' study. He felt that this support did not necessarily need to be financial, but there should at least be space for monasteries to develop their education. Instead, the government was closing down monastery schools (see p.238 n.12). At the end of the interview, when I asked if he had any questions, he returned to this issue, asking which did I think was more important: financial support or support for studies? (T/R).

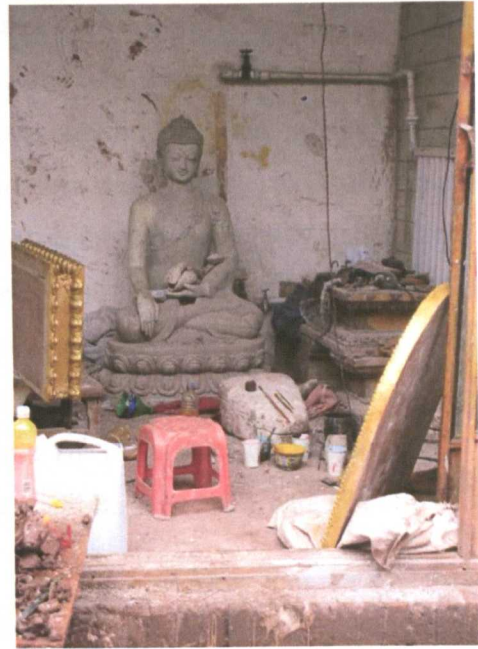
Therefore, it is not simply that monks are suspicious of the motivation behind heritage projects, but that these projects have very little to do with the soteriological functioning of the monastery. This is an issue that extends beyond state-monastery relations to more general attitudes towards Gelukpa monastic development. Many of my interlocutors were ambivalent about the value of temple building. A common theme in monks' narratives is that too much emphasis has been placed on the external development of monasteries, while not enough attention has been given to the development of monastic education. This reflects wider narratives of monastic decline combined with an emphasis on Gelukpa monastic education and discipline which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Nevertheless, construction of religious structures, such as temples and *chorten*, are a form of religious practice, even if the value of this is questioned in the more specific context of the soteriological function of a monastery. It is an expression of faith and a form of giving for lay people, monks and lamas. Arjia Rinpoche (2010 p.140) describes his efforts to fundraise for and organise the renovation of the *chorten* on Tsongkhapa's birth site at Kumbum as 'the first time in my life that I felt I was truly working to accumulate merit'. To take another example, when the 10th Panchen Lama visited Rebgong in 1980 he asked the people to build a *chorten*. He gave his nephew, Alak Yershong, responsibility for the project, and the latter chose Gomar as the site. A Gomar villager acted as the main sponsor and others worked voluntarily to construct and paint it (Fig.5.11). I asked village elder Dawa how he and others felt about doing this work. He said that they were very 'happy' and 'participated enthusiastically' (*dga'-dga' 'gro-'gro*) because building a *chorten* was of great merit. During the time it was being built 'nobody in the village fought with each other' (M/R). The *chorten*, he said, is not just of benefit to the villagers and the people of Rebgong. It also provides a merit-making opportunity for pilgrims who make offerings of even 1 or 2 yuan dedicated to all sentient beings.



Figure 5.11 Gomar *chorten*

This brings us to one final point: restoration projects funded by the atheist state have little value and meaning from within the merit-based logics of Buddhism. Temple building projects (whether the funds for sponsorship initially derive from patron communities or outside sponsors) are ethical works carried out from within the monastic moral community. They are merit-making activities involving the whole community (lamas, monks and laity) in sponsorship, labour and art production. They not only reinforce social ties, but also the sense of ownership of monastic space by and for the whole community.



Figures 5.12 and 5.13 Work in progress: a painted *thangka* for a temple (left); clay statue workshop (right)

Construction and restoration has resurrected ties with villages and areas historically associated with monastic construction and particular trades and arts. For example, village elder Ngawang, who was involved in the construction of Rongwo's 1,000 Buddha images temple (Fig.5.10), told me that the leader of the labourers and all the carpenters came from a village with links to Rongwo that was historically famed for its carpentry skills. The artisans for the gold roof would be brought in from Ngawa and Kumbum, the artists would come from Kumbum to paint the beams and the master *thangka* painter and his students

were from nearby Senggeshong. The artisans and artists were the same as those who worked on Rongwo's other temples. Again there is a merit-based logic to these relationships. Two of Rebgong's most renowned artists independently said that if asked to produce work for monasteries this was a duty they must fulfil. Nowadays they could earn considerably more from commercial artwork, but they did this work as Buddhists (M/R).²²

In contrast to meritorious temple building, controlled, designed and constructed from within the monastic-lay religious community, state-planned and funded cultural heritage projects (as distinct from monastic use of disaster relief funds at Kumbum) are, like tourism infrastructure, external projects. They exist outside the merit-based logics of temple building and the monks and local population have little or no involvement in them. For example, at Gomar, the state invested 800,000 yuan to restore the floors in the main assembly hall and rotten pillars and beams (Xinhua 2003). The funds were handled by the County Cultural Bureau. The research for the works was conducted by students from Tianjin University who came to Rebgong in 1996 to conduct a survey of Rongwo, Gomar, Nyentok and upper and lower Senggeshong. The repairs at Gomar, started in 2003, were carried out by Hubei Daye Yinzu Landscape Garden and Historical Site Company (*ibid.*).²³

This perspective on heritage funding which takes into account local conceptions of value and meaning can also be applied to tourism to provide a thicker understanding of monastic attitudes to its development.

²² Their narratives also reflected the wider narratives of increasing materialism in society (see Chapter 6) when they both said that it was getting difficult for monasteries to find good artists to undertake art works because they paid so much less than commercial buyers and making money had become more important than religion.

²³ There is also ongoing international NGO involvement in art conservation projects at Gomar and other monasteries.

5.5 The 'good tourist'

Tourism was not rejected by monks outright. In fact many monks responded positively to the idea of tourism.²⁴ However, this was not related to its potential to generate income or political space for the monastery, but to its potential to propagate Buddhism and increase awareness of and support for Tibetan culture. Moreover, monastic perspectives on tourism have been conditioned by its perceived value from within the ethical framework of karma and merit.

Tourists are distinguished from pilgrims in that pilgrimage is a specific form of meritorious activity following established norms and practices. The distinction between the two groups is reflected in the new Tibetan vocabulary coined for tourism: *yul-skor spro-'cham/'khyam* (wandering for fun/pleasure around a region/location); or *lta-skor* (going around to look/view/gaze, i.e. 'sight-seeing').²⁵ This is distinct from pilgrimage (*gnas-skor*), which involves going around (i.e. circumambulation of) a *gnas* or 'abode', 'specifically the location or residence of a Buddha or other significant beings in the pantheon or cosmos' (Huber 2008 pp.60-61; see also Buffetrille 2004 p.325; Makley 2010 p.138). Pilgrimage might be oriented towards merit-making and/or this-worldly concerns, such as health and fertility.²⁶

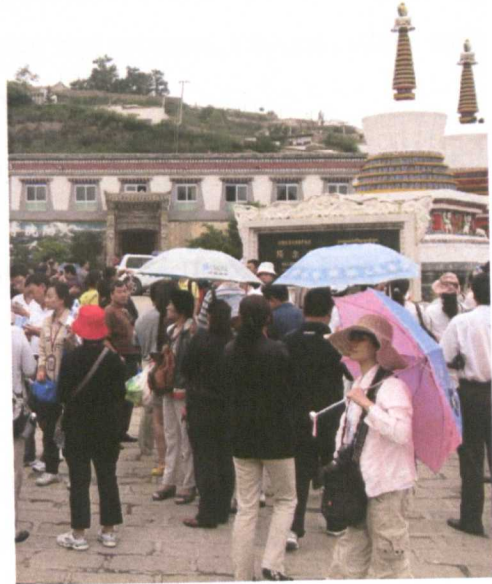
In practice the lines between 'traditional' 'religious' pilgrimage and 'modern' 'secular' tourism are blurred, as elsewhere in China (Oakes and Sutton 2010) and the world (for example, Eade and Sallnow, eds. 1991). Tourists can have religious/spiritual motivations and pilgrims can become more like tourists (Oakes

²⁴ It should be noted that responses to my questions about tourism were inevitably influenced by my positioning in these encounters. As a visiting foreign researcher I was often perceived as a kind of 'tourist'. In some cases, I felt that an initial positive response to the idea of tourism was at least partly related to this.

²⁵ *Yul-skor spro-'cham/'khyam* is usually contracted in speech to *yul-skor*. Another term for tourism is *ljongs-rgyu* (to roam/wander throughout a region/land), but my interlocutors most commonly used *yul-skor* or *lta-skor*.

²⁶ See Buffetrille (1998) for a discussion of the synthesis between Buddhist and pre-Buddhist beliefs and actions in Tibetan pilgrimage practices. On the history of Tibetan pilgrimage practices see Huber (1999, 2003, 2008) and McKay (ed. 1998). On the revival of pilgrimage practices, including interactions between pilgrims and tourism, see Kapstein (1998b), Peng (1998) and Huber (2006).

and Sutton 2010 p.10). An example of this mixing is the phenomenon of group pilgrimage bus tours for Tibetans of the key sacred sites of central Tibet. Several of my friends have taken these trips and Rongwo's buses are used for similar tours (Fig.4.2). However, a conceptual boundary between pilgrims as 'insiders' and tourists as 'outsiders' was still evident in the way people spoke to me about tourism.²⁷



Figures 5.14 and 5.15 Kumbum: pilgrims starting their circumambulation (left) and tourists (right)

Nevertheless, monks often made a distinction between two kinds of tourists: those who come to understand Buddhism and Tibetan culture; and those who come simply for sight-seeing, as if going to a park. The latter is the form taken by state-sponsored mass tourism, which consists of tour group sight-seeing of 'scenic spots'. The experience is rushed and largely visual and 'there is little room for appreciating religion' (Sutton and Kang 2010 p.121). This is the dominant form of tourism, but was seen by monks as holding little value or meaning.

²⁷ A discussion of the relationship between religion and tourism and the pilgrim-tourist dichotomy is beyond the scope of this study. See Timothy and Olsen (2006) for a review of the literature (pp.13-16) and further discussion of these issues.

On the other hand, there was a positive attitude towards tourists who come to understand Buddhism and Tibetan culture. The role of tourism in providing a space for Tibetans to present their own image of Tibet to outsiders, and that of foreign tourists as witnesses and supporters of the cause of Tibetan self-determination has been commented on (Klieger 1990; Schwartz 1994 pp.2-3, 201) and problematised (Cingcade 1998) elsewhere. Some of my interlocutors still viewed the idea of tourism from this perspective: it was good because it provided an opportunity for foreigners to learn about and promote Tibetan culture and/or bear witness to government control of monasteries.

This desire to communicate with outsiders extends beyond 'foreigners' to Chinese, at least for some monks. While there is still a desire amongst some monks to learn English and meet foreigners as in the 1980s and 1990s (see also Makley 2007 p.271), some of the younger monks with whom I spoke were keen to learn Chinese. This was in part so that they could function within contemporary society, but also appeared to be linked to the increasing potential for Buddhist exchange and propagation and, interlinked with this, patronage opportunities. Growing numbers of Chinese Buddhist students and pilgrims are visiting monasteries (see also Kapstein 2004 pp.258-260) and there is also an emerging class of young urban backpackers, although Shepherd (2009 p.263) argues this group's engagement with Tibetan culture and religion remains at the level of spectacle. While further research is needed, it is possible that, in addition to (or perhaps through) propagation of Buddhism and patronage relationships, some forms of tourism may be seen as a way for monks to win sympathy and support from Chinese as well as foreigners.

Monks therefore draw a distinction between 'sight-seeing' tourists and those with an interest in and commitment to Buddhism and/or Tibetan culture, even if they are not considered to be 'pilgrims'. Divergent interpretations of the meaning and value of tourism can be illustrated by borrowing and extending Nyíri's (2006 p.64) characterisations of the 'good tourist' from different cultural perspectives. According to his model, the good Soviet tourist was rugged and selfless, the good Western tourist has come to be one who recognises the authentic and approaches it in an authentic way, while the good Chinese tourist learns the canonical

representations of the sites s/he is planning to visit. From a monastic perspective, the good tourist can be characterised as a seeker of knowledge and a patron: an outsider who visits the monastery to learn and understand about Buddhism and Tibetan culture and who plays the role of patron, either economically or in terms of the promotion of Tibetan culture and Buddhism on return to their place of origin.

However, this analysis of the good tourist, which emerges from the Euro-American theoretical framework of cultural politics, fails to capture parallel representations of the benefits and disadvantages of tourism grounded in the framework of Buddhist ethics and the concepts of karma and merit. From this perspective, 'beneficial' action is that which is meritorious. Tourism as a phenomenon that brings outsiders into Buddhist monastic space has the potential to aid the propagation of Buddhism and to function as a beneficial merit-making activity for participants. Conversely, the opening of monastic space to the gaze of outsiders carries a risk of both polluting the minds of monks (see Section 5.6) and undermining the faith and confidence of the laity. According to this logic, 'good' tourism is that which is meritorious, while 'bad' tourism is that which is damaging to all sentient beings (the non-dual 'self and others') through defamation of Buddhism.

This understanding of the merits and risks of tourism emerged during my interviews with several monks and lay people, sometimes parallel to other understandings. It was best expressed by Rongwo elder Geshe Tenzin:

Firstly, it is said that if people who have never heard of *Buddhadharma*, or seen any aspects of it, encounter Buddhism or images of the Buddha, just once, it has inconceivable benefits. So in terms of the diffusion [of Buddhism] it is good. Secondly, when people come and see inside the monastery without understanding, they become spiritually disillusioned and say 'monks behave like this' and then they go to foreign countries and spread this perception from country to country. And in that case, instead of being beneficial it becomes disadvantageous and a cause for the ruin of both self and others. So then I believe it is not something good (T/R).

In short, mass tourism, scripted and controlled by external (state) agencies, and its objectification of monastic space, robed bodies and religious practice, appears to leave little room for monks to pursue their own aims as Buddhist and/or Tibetan subjects. It is therefore not surprising that my interlocutors saw little benefit or value in this form of tourism. Moreover, the judgements of Geshe Tenzin and other monks about the benefits and dangers of tourism are not simply based on institutionalised norms and values, but on their experience of the world. They have seen the impact that it has had on other monasteries, not only in terms of education and practice, but also reputation, and this has made them wary. In particular, Kumbum has become the archetype of a monastery as a mass tourism destination. An examination of the ways in which my interlocutors talked about this monastery not only sheds further light on their attitudes to tourism, but also illuminates underlying issues that extend beyond tourism and its impacts.

5.6 Kumbum: an exemplar of development or decline?

5.6.1 Competing visions of monastic development

This chapter has argued that direct state involvement in tourism sets it apart from other forms of monastic economic development which are authored by monks. However, the ‘dangers’ of tourism extend beyond the political implications of accommodation to the ethics of Buddhist monastic practice. What is at stake is the definition of values. Although state actors may, as individuals, be part of the monastic moral community (p.148 n.1), the state as a competing order is external, has different priorities and interests, and privileges materialist values. Within the official discursive space for religion in China, the measure of the progressiveness of a monastery and the positivity of its role lies in demonstrating its compatibility with and active participation in the construction of modern socialist society. In terms of the monastic economy, the imperative is not just to be self-supporting (pp.125-126), but to be a productive and active participant in state visions of development and the consumer economy, shifting the focus of the monastic economy from ‘internal support’ to ‘external radiation’ (Donggechang and Cairangjia 1995 p.32).

According to this way of viewing the world, the monastery's role, in addition to being a place of religious education and a provider of religious services for Buddhists, is to be a driver for local economic growth, a provider of social welfare services and an exemplar for Tibetan farmers and nomads in adopting modern scientific ways of thinking and production (Mei 2001 pp.143-148, 204-212; see also HZST Articles 20, 30; Makley 2007 pp.159-160, 260-261; Cooke 2010 pp.13, 25). The monastery and its monks are analysed in rational economic terms as resources and their value and legitimacy are measured in terms of their material and secular social contributions to state and society.

The Gelukpa monastic ideal, on the other hand, was expressed by Ditsa Akhu Tenzin when he explained that they had decided not to develop tourism because of the potential harm it could cause to discipline and studies:

A monastery like this is a seat of knowledge. It is somewhere you study. That is its function. ... That is why we try to bolster that side and we forbid anything that undermines it. So if it doesn't harm or undermine studies then we carry it out (T/R).

There is therefore a tension between different ideals of 'service'. As with reformist movements within other Buddhist traditions, there are pressures from within and without the monastic community for lamas and monks to engage more with society. Some intellectuals have provided materialist critiques of monastic Buddhism. Sangdhor, for example, composed a poem entitled *Offering a ceremonial scarf to the monks and nuns* (Sangdhor 2010), extolling their role in rescue efforts after the Yushu earthquake and saying that for once he had no quarrel with them because they were actively helping the people. At the same time, there is increased emphasis on monastic education and discipline and, generally speaking, criticisms of contemporary monks are linked to a perception that they are not fulfilling monastic ideals (see Chapters 6-8). Thus, even if there is a belief that monks should do more in this world, this should not undermine the ideals of monastic 'service'. Moreover, unless the boundaries between the lay community and the monastic community are maintained, the ethical basis of monasticism as a field of merit for the laity is undermined.

Competing contemporary representations of Kumbum monastery, one of Qinghai's main tourist destinations, make this an ideal site upon which to explore competing visions and values of monastic development from state and monastic perspectives. Kumbum has been promoted by PRC scholars and state actors as 'the future trend or development model for Tibetan Buddhist monasteries under socialist conditions' (Pu, Quan and Wanma Lengzhi 2006). However, it acts as an exemplar of contemporary monastic decline in the popular discourse of Tibetans, and a future trend or 'model' which monastic actors seek to avoid.

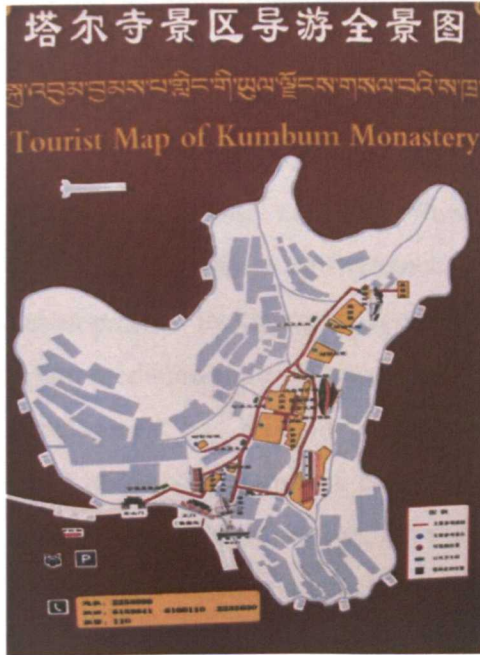
5.6.2 Kumbum: a national 'model'

The appropriation of Kumbum (Fig.2.2) as a national 'model monastery' dates back to the Maoist era and has several logics, including the monastery's religio-political historical significance and importance in Sino-Tibetan relations, its accessibility from Xining and its location in a Han and Hui dominated area (see also Cooke 2010 p.31). In 1961, it was designated a 'national key cultural heritage protection unit' (QLJ 2010c) and was one of the few Tibetan monasteries not completely destroyed during the Maoist years. Some monks even continued to live on the site, although they were not able to wear robes or practise openly (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 pp.67-87).

The 'museification' of Kumbum began during the Maoist years. Arjia Rinpoche (2010 pp.92-93) describes how, in the early 1970s, the monastery was used as a patriotic education site, with thousands of soldiers, farmers and factory workers visiting Kumbum to 'learn about exploitation in Tibet's feudal past'. In the late 1970s, Tibetans were given a tour of Kumbum on release from prison and rehabilitation (*ibid.* pp.99-100). In 1980, the monastery was used as a showcase of freedom of religious belief and government support during the first fact-finding mission of the Dalai Lama's representatives (*ibid.* pp.118-123). Its importance for propaganda purposes meant that it received state funds for maintenance of its main buildings. Renovations began as early as 1973 when monks were ordered to repaint damaged artworks and renovate part of the assembly hall (*ibid.* pp.93-94).²⁸

²⁸ See also Kolås and Thowsen (2005 p.49) who state that funds were set aside for repairing key sites, including Drepung monastery, as early as 1972.

Since the early 1980s, the monastery has developed into a major mass-tourism destination (Figs.5.16-5.19). In 2000, the state tourism bureau awarded it a 4A rating (QLJ 2010c) and it was listed as no.1 in the provincial tourism bureau's 2009 list of scenic areas (QLJ 2010b). It has by far the most developed tourism infrastructure of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Qinghai and, from January to July 2007, had over one million domestic tourist arrivals (Lu 2008 p.30).



Figures 5.16 and 5.17 New tourist signage at Kumbum, 2009

Within the discursive framework of state policies Kumbum is promoted as a model of Tibetan monasteries adapting to socialist society. Central to this is its development as a major tourist site through which the monastery serves both nation and society (see also Cooke 2010). For example, Mei (2001 pp.143-144), writing about the influence of the monastic economy on Tibetan areas, cites Kumbum and its tourism industry as an example of the role that monastic self-sufficiency and development can have in stimulating socio-economic development and local markets:

Not only is it a sacred place for believers, it is also one of Qinghai's important tourist spots. It has stimulated great development in trades such as tourism, infrastructure, restaurants, hotels and shops and the

taxes these businesses pay to the state have become an important component of local financial income. The employment provided by trades such as the manufacture of religious products and handicrafts has solved a real problem in wider society.

In a paper on the development of Kumbum authored by provincial officials, the monastery is held as a model for modernising shifts in attitudes and practices that can be divided into three main areas: economy, education and management (Pu, Quan and Wanma Lengzhi 2006 pp.204-208).²⁹ Kumbum is lauded for its development of self-supporting activities and diversified skills and services, such as medicine, printing, arts and crafts, with over a third of the monks engaged in monastic economic activities. Furthermore, the monks are praised for their 'changing attitudes to self-reliance and use of religious activities for wider local development,' including engagement in social welfare activities, such as disaster relief, medicine and environmental protection as well as the benefits that monastic development has brought to the local economy (which echo Mei's comments cited above). In terms of education, the monastery has unified religious and secular/vocational education, for example introducing subjects such as computing, languages, Tibetan medicine and religious painting. As for management, it is has combined 'traditional' with 'modern' management.

Many of these aspects in which Kumbum is held as a 'model' are not necessarily directly in conflict with the ideas of some monks. We have already seen that reformist monks like sGo-yon (2009) hold opinions that converge with state discourse on the need for economic, educational and management reform (see also Chapter 6). Yet, even monks who expressed such reformist views to me used Kumbum's development as a cautionary tale and/or an example against which to extol the relative virtues of their own monasteries.

²⁹ This is in addition to the usual prerequisites for being a model organisation or individual: being patriotic, accepting Party and government management and abiding by state laws and policies (Pu, Quan and Wanma Lengzhi 2006 p.203)

5.6.3 Kumbum: a symbol of monastic moral decline

As Mei (2001 p.142) remarks, Kumbum is a 'sacred place', but even though it remains an important pilgrimage destination because of its association with Tsongkhapa (Fig.5.14), it is widely disparaged as a 'monastery'. In her study of Shangrila, Kolås (2008 pp.76-77, 126-127) argues that tourism can be a sacralising rather than secularising force: the gaze of outsiders leads to 'a new understanding and appreciation of the significance of these sites on the part of the visited'. However, there is an important distinction between the understanding of place as sacred or powerful (part of a network of sacred sites) and the space of a monastery as a lived-in community of monks (a place of practice and education).

Such a distinction was made by Tibetans when they talked about Kumbum. The site was still considered to be sacred, but was described as no longer being like a monastery. It had become like a 'public park' or 'museum', stripped of its meaning as a working monastery.³⁰ Lobsang, a university student, told me that when he was in high school he had heard that Kumbum was 'a very important place for Tibetan culture and religion':

But when I went there it was like a museum. The tourists go and look and then leave, and then nothing - just money. The monks can earn a lot of money, but what does that mean? The first time I went there with my friend I felt very sad (E/R).

Many of the criticisms I heard about Kumbum reflect the findings of scholars who have written about tourism impacts in Tibetan, Chinese and Theravāda monasteries in China: disruption to monastic ritual and practice (Kolås 2008 p.75; Sutton and Kang 2010 p.105), monks being pulled away from traditional roles to look after tourists (Birnbaum 2003 pp.443-444; Borchert 2005 pp.104-105, 109; Yin 2006 pp.91-92), a blurring of boundaries between inside/sacred and outside/profane (Makley 2002 p.80; Birnbaum 2003 pp.443-444), and corruption because of the relative wealth of tourists (Borchert 2005 p.109).

³⁰ Similar reservations were expressed to me by foreigners and to Cooke (2010 p.26) by 'PRC citizens of various nationalities', including Han Chinese.

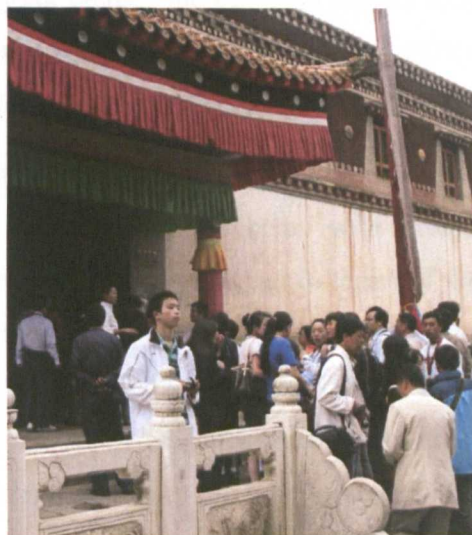
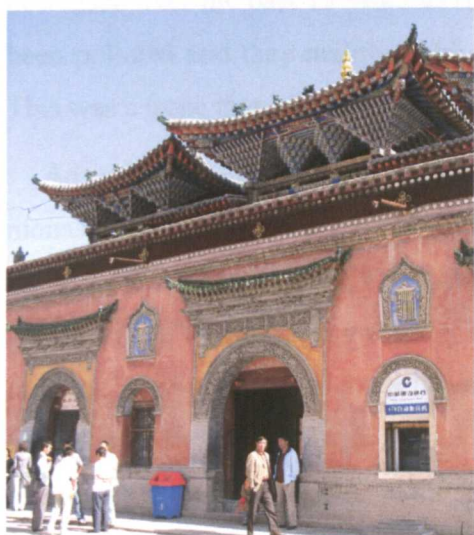
The disruption to monastic ritual and practice caused by mass tourism is the most obvious impact. Monks are not able to gather for assemblies during tourist hours and the monastic space is taken over by tour groups. Disruption to the 40 day summer retreat (*dbyar-gnas*) is one example of competing priorities. During this period, lay people (in particular women) should not be permitted within the monastery boundaries. However, the retreat period coincides with the peak tourist season and the closure of monastic space to outsiders has become impossible.³¹ As I saw in my visits to Kumbum, mass tourism also disrupts the flow of pilgrims, who in their quick and fluid circumambulations of the site have to weave through static groups of lectured sightseers to approach the sacred objects inside the temples and vie with tour groups for space for their prostrations.

From a state perspective, tourists have become a new clientele for the monastery. It has a duty to serve their interests (as well as those of monks and religious believers) and meet their demand to 'go back to nature and see sacred Tibetan monasteries and beautiful scenery' and consume traditional products, including religious commodities (Mei 2001 p.157). Mei (*ibid.*) writes that tourism development involves changing mentalities: 'praying to Buddha is a spiritual need of the religious masses, while tourism is a spiritual necessity of life for the non-believing masses'. Monks are therefore required to perform their roles for an audience external to the merit-based logics of monastic/lay interactions. Geshe Lobsang told me that Sera monastery (where he had studied) introduced debating classes on a Sunday in response to tourist demand. He explained that 'when there are no debating sessions they [tourists] ask for their tickets to be refunded and this is a financial loss, so therefore we had to assemble for debating' (T/R).

There are also criticisms of monks being pulled away from traditional roles to look after tourists. This is linked to uneasiness over the commercialisation of monastic space and activities as monks work as ticket sellers and temple gate keepers and take fixed priced donations for various ritual services. The latter is

³¹ This is also an issue at Rongwo. Akhu Chöpel said that women were no longer prohibited from entering the monastery during the summer retreat period 'in the interests of income generation', while a senior monk in the College of Dialectics said that women are not allowed inside the College of Dialectics assembly hall, but the whole monastery was not closed off as it would have been in the past.

particularly problematic since it commodifies the relationship between giving and merit. This undermines the ethical basis and value of the exchange between the laity as donors and monastics as a field of merit, which is derived from its generalised nature: the merit accrued from the exchange depends on the motivation and faith of the donor not on the sum offered (Mills 2003 p.61).



Figures 5.18 and 5.19 Kumbum: ticket gate with ATM; tourists queuing to enter assembly hall

Akhu Lungtok compared the monks at Kumbum to government officials going to an office job and two of my lay friends in Xining also referred to '9-5' monks who simply act the part for tourists. Other Tibetans also expressed dissatisfaction with the workmanlike attitude of some monks. For example, I attended the festival marking the anniversary of the death of Tsongkhapa (*Inga-mchod*) with a middle-aged female friend. During this time the monastery displays clothing, books and other sacred objects that belonged to religious figures, including Tsongkhapa and previous Panchen Lamas. As the pilgrims circumambulate the assembly hall, monks touch the sacred objects to their heads. My friend criticised the flippant attitude of the monks performing this ritual. The previous year, she said, her colleague had berated one monk who was particularly rough: rather than touching a book to the pilgrims' heads, he was giving them a solid whack.

What is at issue here is not simply that monks are being pulled away from traditional roles. The criticism is that the commercialisation of monastic space has

changed their attitude and shifted their focus away from their responsibilities as meditators, scholars and ritualists towards wealth creation. Lobsang Drakpa, a senior scholar and teacher at Kumbum was particularly frank when he estimated that the College of Dialectics has perhaps only 20 students who could be considered 'scholar monks'. He said that the number of serious students has decreased over the past 15 years as life has got better: 'the minds of monks have been polluted and they mainly think about earning and spending money' (T/N). This was a trope that I heard again and again from monks and lay people.

An important element of perceived monastic moral decline is the blurring of monastic/lay boundaries, not simply in the division of labour, with monks engaging in commercial activities like their lay brothers, but also in terms of the intermingling of bodies as outsiders enter monastic space and monks spend time in town. A common trope in narratives of the ideal monastic environment is that monasteries should not be too close to urban areas. Distance from urban areas represents a distance between the monastery and laity in both practical and symbolic terms. In the case of Kumbum, its proximity to Xining was seen as particularly problematic for both political and social reasons. Akhu Jyeltsen, a monk in his thirties at Kumbum related the dangers of state-sponsored tourism development to both the moral decline of monks and the faith and confidence of the laity. He said that a monastery should be in a solitary place:

People who come here purposefully to pay homage to the monastery, driven by their devotion and faith in the monastery, for them it does not feel like a monastery. The state has turned it into a tourist place by making a road and ... increasing its [tourist] grading in order to make it nationally and globally famous. Their main objective is financial. Once sights are set on money then the whole atmosphere changes from that of a monastery into a public park. If you turn it into a public park there are many things that are bad for the monks. There are more occasions when monks and the laity mix. In the worst cases monks seek opportunities to make money out of this situation. (T/R)

The perceived corruption caused by this intermingling combined with an increasingly materialist society is evident in widespread gossip about Kumbum's

monks. When I entered the field, some of the first stories I heard were rumours about their immoral behaviour. Lay (mostly young, educated) friends told me in informal conversations that some take off their robes at night and go into town to hang out and meet girls. I was also told stories about sex tourism, usually involving monks and Han Chinese girls, adding an ethnic dimension to these gendered narratives that express the pollution of monastic space and bodies not only by women, but 'Chinese' women. This popular denigration of contemporary behaviours (even if only by urban, educated youth) is particularly dangerous for monastic actors. It erodes Gelukpa authority by undermining the fundamental distinction that places monks above lay men: the monk's vow of celibacy (p.30; see also Makley 2007 pp.206-207). There are also stories about monks and lamas, real or fake, taking advantage of tourists for money.

Performance is of great importance to the tourism industry. Pu, Quan and Wanma Lengzhi (2006) praise Kumbum's young monks for engaging in economic activities and becoming increasingly secularised. However, in an article on the development and protection of religious tourism at Kumbum, Qi (2009) sounds a note of warning. She argues that cultural assimilation is a problem and that it is important to guard against a purely economic focus which damages religious culture: 'If something is not done to limit and solve the secularisation of monks then the monastery will lose its attractiveness and its original spiritual style'.³² This tension between modernisation through tourism and the need to preserve the ethnic culture that is the key tourism resource is a common theme in ethnic tourism studies (see, for example, Oakes 1998; Peng 1998; Winter 2007; Yang, Wall and Smith 2008). Qi's argument is situated within this framework. The robed bodies of monks and their ritual practices are represented as intangible cultural heritage assets that are part of the value of the site as a tourist attraction.

However, the primary concern for monks is not the erosion of ethnic culture for public consumption, but the disintegration of a social order that fosters

³² A similar line of argument was being employed by religious leaders as early as the 1980s. For example, in a speech to the CPPCC in 1988 Zhao Puchu (trans. in MacInnis 1989 pp.71-76) argued that the religious features and special characteristics of China's mountains needed to be preserved to benefit both religion and tourism: 'If we turn these mountains into nothing but tourist attractions, the tourist business will suffer as well'.

Buddhist education and practice and, fundamentally, the ethics that underpin the logics of monasticism. The issues discussed above all represent the monastery, or individual monks, in one way or another as prioritising material well-being over education and practice. It is therefore not so much a question of ‘authenticity’ that is problematic as a perceived shift in values (see also Makley 2010 p.139).

Monks such as Akhu Jyeltsen direct linked this value shift with state-led tourism at Kumbum, but generally speaking, my interlocutors did not paint a picture of monks as passive victims of either state-led policies or capitalist forces. They placed a degree of responsibility for perceived monastic moral decline with the monastic leadership. My fieldwork suggests that this is a common attitude amongst both monastic and lay Tibetans. For example, when Geshe Lobsang spoke about the dangers of tourism development he emphasised the agency of monastic leaders:

Nowadays everything is dominated by economic interests. With this preoccupation with financial matters it looks like in the future all monasteries in Tibet will turn into centres of spectacle. ... Monks will become like lay people and the remnants of monasteries will be remembered as: ‘this used to be a monastery’. There will be some temples but the monks will not be there. They will all have become lay people. I find this scenario to be the greatest danger. Many do not see this as a risk, but as a success. Once a person becomes a [monastic] leader, they are concerned with economic issues and want to leave their mark in terms of the economy. ... That’s what everyone is trying to do. They are preoccupied with financial matters. (T/R)

Ultimately the Geshe’s critique is not of tourism per se, but of the monastic leadership’s prioritisation of the economy and wealth creation. Akhu Lungtok expressed the same rhetoric, drawing a simple comparison between Kumbum and his monastery. Having said that the commercialisation of monastic space and practices at Kumbum ‘does not accord with the *Dharma*, but it does with politics’, he asked: ‘What is the good of having financial benefits when you cannot carry out religious studies?’. His monastery, he said, does not have great financial resources because ‘it does not matter if there is no wealth. The main thing is to be able to run the monastery according to the monastic rule (*‘dul-ba*)’ (T/R).

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has questioned the significance of tourism and heritage in Tibetan Buddhist monastic revival and development and the extent to which they represent arenas in which monastic and state interests converge. I have argued that tourism was not a contingent factor in the revival of most monasteries. Moreover, as local tourism industries have developed there has been resistance at some sites, as well as a more general distancing from state-funded development. Tourism, heritage and other forms of state patronage of monasteries are deeply political, re-inserting into monastic space the authority of a competing order that has different priorities and interests and an understanding of the value of the monastery and monk rooted in a materialist worldview. They carry dangerous implications of incorporation, collaboration and dispossession and, in contrast to commercial development authored by the monastic community, erode the autonomy of monks in shaping the futures of their monasteries.³³

Nevertheless, monastic attitudes towards tourism, heritage and other forms of state funding are not only contingent on the politics of tourism and state patronage. They are also conditioned by local conceptions of the good grounded in the ethical frameworks of Gelukpa monasticism and the Buddhist soteriological project. Tensions between wider socio-economic changes and monastic ideals are particularly pronounced in the context of tourism development. The production of Kumbum as a mass-tourism destination has involved the commodification of monastic space and bodies and it is surely no coincidence that Kumbum is both the monastery in Qinghai at which tourism is most developed and the exemplar of monastic moral decline. However, as the next chapter will show, critiques of Kumbum form part of a general narrative of monastic moral decline which extends beyond tourism and its impacts and beyond state-monastic interactions.

³³ Birnbaum (2003 pp.443-444) points to similar tensions arising from state support of Chinese Buddhist monasteries that have become tourist attractions. Monastic autonomy and self-direction becomes difficult at monasteries that have become 'living history exhibits'.

Chapter 6

Narratives of decline (1): morality

A recurring trope illuminated in the discussion thus far (and expressed not least by monks themselves) is that the external development of monasteries continues to improve and monks these days are better off materially, but their 'minds' are changing and they are increasingly focused on material over spiritual interests. This chapter examines these understandings of monastic decline in their contemporary and historical contexts and the framework of Buddhist ethics and cosmology. It then goes on to show how this 'sense of the times' and monks' experiences of its concrete manifestations have conditioned their attitudes toward monastic development.

This chapter revisits the development of monastic businesses, highlighting some of the tensions and challenges for monks attempting to maintain the bases of monasticism within changing socio-economic, as well as political realities. As indicated in the story of my encounter with Akhu Lobsang (Chapter 1), issues of monastic financing are inseparable from concerns about 'development' in a much broader sense: the advancement of monasteries in a rapidly transforming and increasingly materialistic society. Examination of the ethics of monastic business thus leads into a discussion of the role of the monk and monastery and the (changing) economic relationship between the monastery as a collective and its individual members. This highlights a tension between the roles of monk as ritualist and as scholar, which is examined in its historical and contemporary contexts. The chapter then moves into a more detailed exploration of the contemporary emphasis on scholastic education and discipline and the relationship between Gelukpa ideals, Tibetan identity, social change and monastic development. It finishes by examining a section of narrative that serves as an illustrative example of the moral rhetoric concerning contemporary monasticism, links economic to wider concerns and highlights some of the concrete contingent factors shaping monastic development.

6.1 The 'sense of the times'

The common underlying theme in Tibetans' criticisms of Kumbum (Chapter 5) is that too much emphasis has been placed on external development and wealth creation to the detriment of study, practice and discipline. This has influenced the minds of its monks and led to a blurring of monastic/lay boundaries which not only disrupts monastic discipline and practice, but also the faith and confidence of the lay community. In the narratives I collected, similar themes were repeated more generally about monastic Buddhism. Monks frequently drew contrasts between their own and other monasteries, themselves and other monks, Tibet and India and the past and the present. They often employed contrasts whether or not an invitation to comparative evaluation was embedded in a particular question. Sometimes their narratives extolled the virtues of the speaker and/or his monastery, but in many cases their evaluations were unfavourable to themselves, their monasteries, their generation and/or their time.

Some directly attributed this 'moral decline' to the policies of the Chinese government which, they believed, subordinates culture to the economy. However, concerns over the decline of monastic Buddhism in the face of socio-economic change can be found dating back at least two centuries. In the 19th century, increased commercialisation in the thriving market town that grew up around Labrang led to the issue of monastic edicts warning monks and reincarnate lamas 'not to be greedy, exploit others, or embezzle communal funds for personal profit' (Makley 2007 pp.70-71). Gendun Chöpel lamented during the first half of the 20th century that purely celibate asceticism was increasingly rare in the ferment of expanding commerce (ibid. p. 191). Arjia Rinpoche (2010 p.245) mentions moral decline at Kumbum following the collapse of the Qing, when 'a sense of Western modernism swept the land, further undermining discipline among some monks'.

Viewed in historical perspective, monasteries have always existed in complicated social environments and have had to contend with balancing social, political, economic and cultural realities with Buddhist ideals (see, for example, Benn, Meeks and Robson, eds. 2010). The fundamental issue of secular/monastic boundary maintenance can be found in pre-modern Buddhist sources that antedate

the spread of Buddhism to Tibet. In the 5th century Sri Lankan monk Buddhaghosa's commentary *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, he lists 18 ways in which a monastery can be unfavourable to meditative practice. They include 'the presence of incompatible persons', 'famousness', and 'a nearby city' (Robson 2010 p.10), which bear a striking similarity to some of the issues discussed in Chapter 5. Moreover, traditional Tibetan religious discourse incorporated a 'literature of moral exhortation' (Kapstein 2002 p.102), including criticism of religious fraud and of those monks and lamas who did not live up to the standards expected of them (Chapter 4.5).

Nevertheless, there has been 'unprecedented change ... within the short space of a few generations' (Huber 2002 p.xvii), not least through the process of marketisation that Anagnost (1997 p.6) characterises as 'the controlled insertion of capitalist forms by a powerful bureaucratic state', for example through the nationally driven and scripted development of the Western regions (*C. xibu da kaifa*) and ethnic tourism. Narratives of decline of monastic Buddhism reflect more general narratives of moral decline in Tibetan society as a result of increased emphasis on material development (see also Makley 2007 p.144).¹ It is not the intention here to interpret monastic perspectives and practices as representing the response of 'tradition' to 'modernity' - the tradition/modernity

¹ This is not a discourse unique to Amdo or Tibetan societies. Many of the social dynamics discussed in this and the next chapter could be viewed as characteristic of the 'individualisation' thesis (see, for example, Giddens 1991; Bauman 2001; Beck and Gernsheim, 2001), such as: the disembedding of the individual from external social constraints (including, for example family) through, for example increased mobility; increased reflexivity (an indicator of 'obligatory self-determination'); and a belief in equality of relationships (an indicator of 'cultural democratisation') (Yan 2010 pp.4-5). However, it has not been the purpose of this study to apply and test this theory in the Tibetan case, but rather to explore local logics of the good and desirable and emic perspectives on social change. There is yet to be a study considering Tibetan experiences of modernity in the framework of the individualisation thesis. For its application and extension to the Chinese case see Yan (2009) and Hansen and Svarverud, eds. (2010). The former highlights 'moral challenges', such as the rise of the 'uncivil individual' (Yan 2009 p.xxxii), that have echoes in Tibetan narratives of decline, although the historical, social and political contexts are sufficiently different to advise caution in reading work grounded in empirical data gathered in a Han Chinese community as representative of the PRC as a whole.

dichotomy itself being a construction of the ‘modern tradition’.² As other scholars have argued, there is a need to deconstruct and move beyond this oppositional construction (in the context of China see, for example, Duara 1995; Gladney 2004a). Rather, this chapter seeks to explore the ways in which socio-economic change has been understood and negotiated by monks as situated actors, conditioning their approaches and attitudes towards monastic development.

Gelukpa monasticism is a ‘moral project’ oriented toward the liberation of all sentient beings from suffering. Its logics are grounded in a way of seeing and knowing the world as ‘a morally-composed universe’ (Adams 2008 p.117) based on a natural law of ‘action’ (i.e. karma; T: *las*) as a moral force: ‘beings are reborn according to the nature and quality of their actions ... A person’s actions mould their consciousness, making them into a certain kind of person’ (Harvey 2000 pp.14-15). We have seen that a recurring trope in narratives of moral decline is that people’s ‘minds’ (T. *sems*) are changing. In the Tibetan context this is, of essence, a notion of changing (in this context, declining) morality:

[The] *sems*, or ‘sentient mind’ ... is located in the heart, not the brain. It is closer to our notion of ‘conscience’ in so far as it ties sensibility to a moral compass. When people feel compassionate, it comes from their *sems*. A more literal notion of ‘consciousness’, *rnam-shes* is used to talk about the mind stream that connects one life to the next through rebirth. *Rnam-shes* is the ‘container’ of one’s moral accounts, but *sems* is the guiding force that directs one toward or away from moral action in life. (Adams 2008 p.116)

Monks often viewed contemporary times in opposition to either the early 1980s or pre-1958, times when monastic life was remembered or imagined to have been simple and the minds of monks were pure. A common boundary drawn

² Modernity can be understood as both an ideology or ‘tradition’ (Friedman 2002) claimed and imposed from above (for example, by the PRC state), and a process of configuration, through which what modernity is and stands for is constructed from below (see, for example, Houben and Schrempf, eds. 2008). As an ideology or ‘tradition’, modernity is understood here as a socially constructed ‘representation of, and strategy for, social order’ (Houben and Schrempf 2008 p.15), based on a binary opposition between that which is modern/progressive and that which is traditional/backward (Friedman 2002, pp.296-297).

was that between the morality of the first flush of monastic revival in the early 1980s and the present, accompanying which was a distinction between the qualities of the elders and (at least most of) the present 'younger' generation. This study has discussed the rumours abounding about religious fraud and fake monks and the immoral conduct of some reincarnate lamas and monks (Chapter 4). The permeability in reality of the social and spatial boundaries reinscribed during the 1980s (Chapter 3) has also contributed to narratives of moral decline. In particular, the public display of inappropriate wealth-seeking behaviours of some monks and monasteries (Chapters 4 and 5) and the presence of 'too many robed bodies visible in traditionally unsuited places' (Makley 2007 p.276), such as restaurants or internet cafes, are seen as evidence that most monks do not live up to the monastic ideal embodied by the 'heroic' elders who led the revival (p.85). As Chapter 7 will discuss, increasing numbers of young men are disrobing and fewer are entering monastic life. This is perhaps the most potent symbol for monks of a change in minds and hence morality that, as we shall see, threatens the continuity of monasticism.

These perceptions of moral decline are also grounded in the framework of Buddhist cosmology and prophecies of the decline and demise of Buddhism. According to this framework, the universe alternates between periods of advance and decline. We are currently in an extended period of decline. A certain number of years following the Buddha Śākyamuni's death, the Buddhist teachings will disappear from the earth following successive periods of increasing decline, only to reappear millions of years later with Maitreya, the future Buddha (Nattier 1991 p.26). In the Tibetan tradition, the period of duration of the Buddhist teachings is generally considered to be 5,000 years, although there are alternative systems, including that of the *Kālacakra tantra* which calculates the life span of the *Dharma* as 5,104 years (ibid. pp.59-61).

Therefore, the general sense of the times as morally troubled is enmeshed with understandings of being in an age of inexorable decline. For example, when Rongwo elder Geshe Tenzin spoke about social change and the increasing materialism of monks, he referred to prophecies made by Tsongkhapa and the Buddha Śākyamuni:

The great master Tsongkhapa foretold in his teachings of the destructiveness of the unwholesome environment that is brought about through increasing wealth. If this wealthiness increases, just about all of the virtuous monks will not be able to achieve the mind of emptiness and it is extremely difficult to revive [the teachings of Buddhism] completely. Secondly, the lord Buddha prophesied that his teachings would remain in the world for 5,000 years and thus with each day the period of destruction is coming into being (T/R).

In short, monastic actors understand themselves to be operating during a time of moral decline when 'pure' Buddhist practice is becoming increasingly difficult. As this chapter will show, this 'sense of the times' and monks' experiences of its concrete manifestations have conditioned their attitudes toward monastic development.

6.2 The ethics of monastic business

Chapter 4 examined contingent factors in the practice and rhetoric of monasteries becoming 'self-supporting' and ceasing institutionalised alms collection, one outcome of which has been the development of monastic businesses at many monasteries. However, this development has been contested and some monks, including those who agree with the economic reforms, are uneasy about monks engaging in business. This section examines the ethical dimensions of monastic business development, showing that they are inseparable from concerns about 'development' in a much broader sense: the advancement of monasteries in a rapidly changing and increasingly materialistic society and in the context of widespread narratives of moral decline.

6.2.1 The ethics of moderation, simplicity and compassion

A common theme emerging in discussions with monks about appropriate monastic development was the need to take a 'middle path': they should be neither too wealthy nor too poor, or as Akhu Konchok put it 'great hardship is not good and comfort is also not good' (T/R). This view is rooted in the basic premise of Buddhism as a middle way approach between radical asceticism and wealth. If

conditions are too good, monks are distracted from their studies and it is hard to be a pure religious practitioner. However, if conditions are too poor and monks do not have the basic necessities to live, it is also hard for them to focus on their studies and practices.

Therefore, while some monks may feel a moral responsibility to 'reduce the burden on the laity' and develop self-supporting activities (Chapter 4), there is a co-existing ethic of simplicity and subsistence. Within the ethical framework of monasticism the monastery is a normative centre of wealth accumulation (p.23), but socio-economic status is a means to soteriological ends rather than a normative end in itself. Popular representations of monasteries as materially well developed but of low moral quality undermine their value and legitimacy, as was shown in the case of Kumbum (Chapter 5). However, this tension extends beyond tourism to the development of self-supporting businesses, conditioning the attitudes and responses of monks to development.

We have seen that some monks and lay people consider monastic businesses to provide a valuable service (p.133). It seemed important to some monks to emphasise this aspect, but moreover to claim that they did not make that much money. Ditsa Akhu Tenzin said that their medical clinic was 'principally founded for the benefit of the people. We just wanted to make sure the capital is maintained. It was not to make any income'. As for the shops, he explained that during Losar (New Year), which presented a good opportunity to generate income, they instead hired trucks to transport large quantities of goods to sell at wholesale prices to the laity, making a 'huge saving' for the people.

We are not purely thinking of income, we are also thinking of ways to help [the people]. So we sell wholesale, separate from the shop business. It is quite harmful for the business of the shop. ... Every Losar, the monks' only thought is to benefit the people in this way (T/R).

However, it is not only in their relationship to society that monastic actors have had to negotiate the ethics of business activities, but also in relation to the soteriological and mundane functioning of their institutions. Many of the monks with whom I spoke felt that medical clinics were an appropriate way for

monasteries to generate income. Tibetan medicine is grounded in the epistemological and ethical framework of Tibetan Buddhism and its purpose is 'to contribute to the benefit of all sentient beings' (Saxer 2010 p.19). Since the 10th century, monasteries have provided one of the main sources of Tibetan medical training (Arya 2009). Some monastic centres have colleges of medicine, and Tibetan medical science is also taught at other monasteries.

Akhu Lungrik, senior monk at Tashitse, explained why developing a medical clinic would be the best way to develop his monastery's economy:

If the monks from this monastery who run clinics elsewhere were to come back and set up a clinic here, this would be appropriate for the monastery. It would be of great benefit to the people and it would also help the monastery's economy. Not only does the monastery teach medicine and have the ability to manage the clinic itself, the work of a doctor is completely fitting work for a monk. From this perspective, this would be the best way to develop the monastery economy (T/R).

The appropriateness of this work for a monk lies in its concordance with the Mahāyāna ethics of benefiting sentient beings by ministering to their needs on both mundane and trans-mundane levels, which includes nursing the ill (Tatz, cited in Harvey 2000 p.131). At an ideal level, it is therefore meritorious (moral) work through which a person can cultivate and exercise compassion.

Nevertheless, through their experiences of the world some monks are re-evaluating the appropriateness of running clinics. Monastic doctors spend time with lay people and, perhaps more significantly, have access to an alternative status and material basis for life outside the monastery. I heard many stories about monks who trained as doctors and then left their monastery, either remaining as monks but setting up private clinics, or disrobing and working as lay doctors. For example, Akhu Yonten an elder monk-doctor told me that when his clinic first opened in 1989 there were two doctors from the monastery and four or five monk students who were sent away to study medicine. On their return, they either left to start their own clinics and/or disrobed (T/R). To cite another example, in 2008 I saw a new monastic medical college being constructed in Xunhua, Haidong.

sponsored by a local lama. By summer 2009, a teacher from the area told me that a decision had been made to construct a college of dialectics instead because of concerns that monks who trained as doctors would ultimately disrobe.

6.2.2 The maintenance of secular/monastic boundaries

We have seen that the blurring of monastic and secular boundaries and disruption to monastic study and practice through mass tourism development is ethically problematic (Chapter 5). The development of monastic businesses, including medical clinics, has been contested for similar reasons, even though it has been advocated on moral grounds and is controlled from within the monastic institution. Akhu Lungtok believed that commercial activity of his monastery might provide some income in the short-term, but:

... in the long run it will be the great enemy. It will be very harmful for the monastery because everyone who is involved in the businesses is in contact with larger society and therefore it is difficult to continue to be a monk. There are incidents of those monks disrobing and then carrying out business privately (T/R).

These concerns are shared by many monks, including those who advocate self-sufficiency. Akhu Lungtok was the only monk to explicitly state that participation in business was contrary to monks' vows, although he also said that it was in accordance with the changing times. More commonly, monks expressed concern over the effect that engagement in business had on the minds of monks. The root of these concerns is the same. As Harvey (2000 p.94) notes, the monastic vows are 'formulated' rather than 'natural' virtue and are 'best seen as tools to help to transform the mind and behaviour'. Their purpose is to underscore the separation between monks and worldly life (Dreyfus 2003 p.35) and to promote a way of life that aids monks in their advancement on the Buddhist path. A monastery should ideally provide an environment free of distractions in which particular rules of conduct are followed not for their own sake, but in order (along with study and practice) to cultivate the mind and gradually transform dispositions towards

particular mental states (greed, hatred and delusion), which are the roots of unwholesome action.³

Uneasiness about monks working in monastic businesses is therefore rooted in the potential effect on their minds through a dangerous, distracting engagement in secular life. The problem is not so much that they are contravening rules, but that their thinking and behaviour might be transformed. The greatest risk is that they will disrobe – one of the most pressing issues for monasteries (see Chapter 7).

Monastic actors therefore have had to find ways of balancing the need to secure income and the moral imperative to become self-supporting against the dangers of involvement in business in contemporary circumstances. Akhu Lungtok, for example, who saw this as ‘the great enemy’ argued that a monastery should employ lay people (this, he said, is the system in India). Gartse monastery already operates such a system, placing two monks in charge of overseeing its businesses, but employing four lay people to work in them (p.122). At other monasteries, businesses, land and property are leased out, generating income through rent (see Table 4.2). The leasing system minimises monks’ active engagement in business (and reflects historical systems of monastic support). However, it has the disadvantage of being less economically productive and at several monasteries, including Ditsa, Rongwo and some of the smaller monasteries monks had taken over the running of formerly leased businesses.

Ditsa decided to take over the running of its shop in 2003 in order to generate more income (p.120). However, this and its other businesses and services are contained inside the monastery and mostly run by monks for monks. The senior monks I interviewed all emphasised that this allows money to circulate within the monastery. Rather than spending their money elsewhere, monks are supposed to shop and eat in monastic businesses. This self-containment not only supports the monastery leaders’ attempts to become self-supporting. It also maintains the separation between the monks and the lay community.

³ Tantric methods can also be used to effect the transformation into Enlightenment but the Gelukpa tradition emphasises the need for lengthy philosophical preparation (see Samuel 1993 pp.506-515).

Monasteries have also taken different approaches to organising their division of labour to balance mundane and soteriological interests. In general, all administrative posts, including those related to finance, are fixed-term appointments. At the smaller monasteries these are usually held in rotation depending on monks' ages and length of monastic service, although at one practice centre the monastery shopkeeper was permanently in post. Ditsa follows the system of the Lhasa monastic centres, maintaining the traditional distinction between scholar monks (*dpe-cha-ba*) who study the formal curriculum and others who engage in work for the monastery.⁴ Monks who are particularly dedicated in their studies are exempt from official work, such as acting as *nyerwa* or shopkeeper. Akhu Samten said that the *nyerwa* are selected from amongst the monks who are not very good at study and philosophy, but who are 'honest and good communicators' (T/R), the latter being important skills for raising and managing funds. In addition, the monastery has introduced a monk sponsor system (which also has historical precedent): since c.2002, if monks give the monastery 10,000 yuan, or secure sponsorship of *Dharma* sessions from their home areas, they do not have to serve as *nyerwa*.

On the other hand, the College of Dialectics at Rongwo has eradicated the distinction between scholar and worker monks, changing its system in 1995, when the senior scholar monks decided to appoint the *dzö* class to act as managers (*kha-go-ba*) for a two year term. A senior monk explained that:

... in order to do work appropriate to both religious and secular affairs, it was felt to be more skilful to appoint a senior class able to distinguish between the religious and the mundane as organisers, rather than a few monks who were not very good at studies like the old system.⁵

The implication is that these senior students have already been instilled with the necessary discipline and mental training to carry out their duties with correct

⁴ Goldstein (1998a pp.21, 33-34) reports this system at Drepung and I was told by a monk who had studied at Sera that the system there is the same.

⁵ Personal communication with a key informant, April 2010.

moral conduct and to cope with the distractions of this work. Once again, India was drawn upon by one of my interlocutors as a legitimising reference for this particular reform: 'in India, all monks are the same, whether or not they are good at study' (T/R).

6.3 The livelihood of monks

So far this chapter has discussed the perceived dangers of monastic business development. Nevertheless, a concurrent logic emerged from the narratives I collected: by developing a self-supporting collective economy, monasteries can *improve* the environment for study and practice by increasing disbursements to individual monks, thus limiting their need to engage in private income-generating activities. This indicates a shift in the economic relationship between the monastery as a collective and its individual members. It also highlights a tension between the roles of monk as ritualist and monk as scholar.

6.3.1 The relationship between the collective and individuals

A Tibetan Buddhist monastery is not responsible for the livelihood of individual monks, who need to supplement their income from the assembly, relying on support from their families and private income-generating activities (p.208; see also Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Some of the monks I interviewed said that they were 'self-supporting' (*rang-kha rang-gso*), using the same terminology as that applied to the monastery as a collective (Chapter 4). On further questioning, this generally meant that they generated income through ritual services and in some cases religious crafts. Marketisation has brought increased opportunities for monks to earn money through small business activities, although none of the monks I interviewed claimed this as a source of personal income (two engaged in private money-lending, but I became aware of this through other sources).

Monks' engagement in commercial activities for the collective is a form of service to their monastery. Although perceived as risky, it is considerably less problematic than the economic activities of and private accrual of wealth by individual monks. Ditsa Akhu Ngawang emphasised this distinction:

If there are any occurrences of trading or business they will be punished – and we have punished each and every one when that has occurred! But in terms of the monastery as a collective, then we manage the businesses. Without that we cannot be self-sufficient (T/R).

He said that the monastery's annual disbursement to monks along with the food and tea they received during *Dharma* sessions (also partially funded through the collective businesses) now gave them enough to support themselves without needing to earn extra income, but not enough 'to accumulate wealth to buy cars and other material things'. They were therefore able (and encouraged) to focus on their studies.

A similar logic is evident in inter-related educational and financial reforms at Rongwo. Since 2005, monks have received a payment during *Dharma* sessions for each day they attend the debate courtyard (p.114) and are fined if they are absent. Akhu Lobsang Tenzin, one of the monks involved in implementing this reform, explained that the purpose was to 'continue traditional education and improve the monks' study' (T/R). The financial incentive makes life easier for monks with a predilection for studies and encourages other monks in this direction. By supplementing monks' livelihoods it also serves to contain the monks, limiting their need to go outside the monastery to earn income.

This new system at Rongwo resembles that introduced at Drepung in 1984, which had precedent in a previous attempt by the monastic leadership of the 1950s to shift monastic disbursements to the *Dharma* grove where monks practised debate (Goldstein 1998a pp.31-34). This was controversial and ultimately failed because it represented a change in the monastery's rules and challenged the traditional monastic system. Rongwo's reform also appears to have been controversial and one of the points of tension between the elders and the younger generation (p.135-136). Akhu Lobsang Tenzin told me that it 'had been something that everyone had wanted for a long time, but for a long time we were unable to realize this aspiration' (T/R).

It is not only monks' engagement in commercial activities that is problematic and (partially) driving efforts to improve standards in education and discipline by increasing collective support for monks. It is any form of work involving them in 'going out' into lay society, including the provision of ritual services in the community. Geshe Lobsang, for example, believes that the appropriate path for monastic development is to establish leased businesses and a medical centre. 'Monks need to have a source of income', he said, but not only are their minds corrupted if they engage in business, 'going out to carry out rituals is a waste of one's life and one becomes more and more narrow-minded' (T/N). Jampel, a shopkeeper who used to be a monk at one of Rongwo's affiliate monasteries, expressed views on monastic businesses that echoed the moral reasoning examined in Chapter 4, but he also mentioned the positive impact on monastic practice at his former monastery, casting ritual services in the community in an almost workmanlike light:

Monks want to reduce the burden on the lay community so they opened the shop and monks do business. If there are only some monks working in the shop, this is very good for the other monks who are living in the monastery. They can do meditation and [monastic] rituals and live the monk's life. Before the shop was opened the monks went to the villages and did rituals and gave 10 per cent to the monastery. Since opening the shop, the life of monks has been better and they never go to the villages asking for money (T/N).

These attitudes are rooted in a long-standing tension between the roles of the monk as scholar and as ritualist, which appears to have intensified in contemporary circumstances and was one of the common themes in the narratives I collected.

6.3.2 The monk ritualist

Monks play an important role in rituals for the dead, part of what Samuel (1993 p.31) refers to as the 'karma-oriented' sphere of death and rebirth. However, they also engage in 'foot firming (*zhabs-brtan*)' rituals that 'have an instrumental purpose: to cure disease, repel evil spirits, create auspiciousness, bring luck in

commerce, and so on' (Dreyfus 2003 p.46). These rituals can be conducted collectively in the assembly hall or by individuals in the homes of sponsors. They are an important source of support for monks and many, particularly those at the branch monasteries, specialise in providing ritual services (see also *ibid.* p.46). Some of my interlocutors (monks and laity) considered this to be an important role for monks.

However, as Dreyfus (*ibid.* p.46) notes, many scholar monks such as Geshe Lobsang consider rituals oriented towards this-worldly concerns as 'an obstacle to scholarly pursuits'. When I raised the importance of the ritual role of monks in the community, Geshe Lobsang distinguished between karmic and pragmatic-oriented rituals. He said that if someone dies it is appropriate and meritorious if a monk, motivated by compassion, goes and chants for the family. However, it is not good for monks to perform ritual services oriented towards wealth creation, for example, to bring success in that year's caterpillar fungus (*cordyceps sinensis*) collection and trade.⁶ He also drew a distinction between monks asked by a family to provide a ritual service, and those who seek out this kind of work.

The tension between the roles of a monk as scholar and ritualist is dealt with to some extent at institutional level. Monastic constitutions (*bca'-yig*) contain rules on the times when monks are permitted to go into the community to provide ritual services. At the monastic centres, this is limited to specific times during the year, unless they receive special exemption from the *gebké*. As I saw at Rongwo, monks are in particularly high demand during the New Year period, when each household's root lama tells them which rituals are needed for the year ahead (see also Makley 2007 p.277). However, monks from some of the smaller monasteries spend much of their time chanting scriptures, either locally in the community, in other parts of Qinghai or, in some cases, in inland China. There are also 'travelling monks' (not members of a monastic assembly) who support themselves through providing religious services.

⁶ A medicinal root found only on the Tibetan plateau (T. *dbyar-tswa dgun-'bu*; literally 'summer grass, winter worm', so named because the fungus grows out of the body of a caterpillar).

Tensions between the roles of scholar and ritualist and criticism of 'ritualists-for-hire' are 'not particularly novel' (Kapstein 2002 p.102; see also p.139). Nevertheless, they appear to have become particularly problematic in the context of contemporary widespread narratives of monastic moral decline. One of the main reasons that my interlocutors gave for monks being materially better off is that socio-economic development has brought an increasing demand for ritual services. At the same time, the number of monks is decreasing (Chapter 7). Some said that this has resulted in many monks spending increasing amounts of time engaged in this kind of activity. Akhu Yeshe, a young monk in his twenties, remarked that this was 'good for livelihood', but when I asked how it affected studies he said it was harmful in that respect (T/R).

Moreover, the lines between 'business' and 'ritual' activities have become blurred as the latter have, to a certain extent, become commodified and reflexively viewed from a materialist perspective. Rituals have traditionally been an important source of income for monks, but 'the rule of the game is that objective convertability and calculability must never appear as such' (Bourdieu 1979 p.21). The relationship is one of generalised exchange (p.192) and the performance of rituals 'is of no intrinsic value unless one has established a basis of *dad-pa* ('faith' or 'trust') in the performance or the performer' (Mills 2003 p.202). The normative basis and efficacy of the ritual relationship is undermined if reduced to its economic dimension, as done by Gendun Chöpel in his alphabetical poem about the nature of humans:

They read the scriptures of the Victor for the sake of offerings.

If we consider it calmly, it's all for the sake of wealth.

(Gendun Chöpel, trans. Lopez 2009 p.99)

Precisely this economic dimension is highlighted in what are now widespread criticisms of inappropriate wealth-seeking and wealth-accumulating behaviours and rumours of religious fraud and fake monks and lamas (see also Chapters 4 and 5). Rongwo Akhu Tenpa commented that nowadays lay people treat monk ritualists as workers and do not respect them as they did in the past, citing this as

an example of societal changes in attitudes towards monks (T/R).⁷ Perceptions of the monk ritualist are thus conditioned by wider narratives of moral decline. At the same time there appears to be an increasing emphasis on the role of the monk as scholar.

6.4 The monk scholar

Most of my interlocutors evaluated monasteries according to their perceptions of standards of monastic education and discipline. It was by these measurements that I was commonly told that the ‘best’ monasteries in Amdo were Rongwo, Ditsa and Ragya in Qinghai, Serthar in Sichuan and Labrang in Gansu.⁸ Sometimes Lutsang was also mentioned.

It is perhaps not surprising that centres such as Rongwo have emphasised the development of scholastic education, privileging this over ritual. In addition to its recent education reforms, Rongwo has shortened the assembly time (during which collective rituals are carried out) to allow more time for education and has increased the number of annual collective debating sessions from two to four (Fig.6.1). Since its revival, Gartse has also developed its education system and now offers the full Gelukpa curriculum (following that of Labrang monastery) and awards monastic degrees. Ditsa started a new *Dharma* session in 2008 (p.119). The sense of urgency in developing monastic education is partly a result of the violence and upheaval of the Maoist years, which resulted in a missing generation in student/teacher lineages. Ditsa Akhu Tenzin, for example, said that there was not enough time for the great teachers to transmit all of their knowledge and practices to the younger generation before they passed away (T/R).

⁷ Makley (2007 p.277) noted that her lay interlocutors were critical of monks who did not study, but would still employ them for ritual services.

⁸ However, Labrang, which enjoys a high scholarly reputation but is also a major tourist site, was perceived by some monks as having become ‘too developed’.



Figure 6.1 Collective debating session for the monks of Rongwo and its affiliate monasteries to celebrate the completion of the new debating courtyard in 2009

However, there also appears to be increased emphasis on developing education at smaller, local monasteries that previously focused on ritual. This was evident to some degree at three of Rongwo's affiliate monasteries which I visited. Palden Gyatso, a senior monk at one practice centre, told me that they had invited teachers from other parts of Amdo and the monks now studied philosophy and debating. He said that this had changed the quality of the monks: 'Before 1958, this was only a practice centre. Because the venerable teachers gave us precious teachings it has become better than other practice centres in Rebgong' (T/N).

6.4.1 'Rationalisation' and 'purification' of monasticism?

Makley (2007 p.255) has argued that Gelukpa monastic elites had 'an urgent interest in re-establishing the authoritative foundations of Buddhism in Labrang as a superior form of rationalised and moralised knowledge production'. The rationalisation and 'purification' of Buddhist traditions has been interpreted as a characteristic of modern state formation in Asia, including China (see for example Tuttle 2005; Ashiwa and Wank 2009). Scholars of Buddhism have also tended to

categorise a reinterpretation of Buddhism as rationalised knowledge production, compatible with modernist values of ‘science’ and ‘rationality’, as a ‘response ‘to the challenges posed by the problems of colonialism and modernisation’ (Borchert 2008 p.135). It is thus a characteristic of what has variously been termed ‘Buddhist modernism’ (Bechert 1966), ‘Protestant Buddhism’ (Gombrich and Obsysekere 1988) or ‘modern Buddhism’ (Lopez, ed. 2002).

Indeed, some of the monks I interviewed at both regional monastic centres and branch monasteries emphasised the rational aspect of Buddhism (sometimes comparing it to ‘other’ religions), saying that the Buddha had encouraged people to investigate his teachings for themselves, rather than to blindly believe. However, an interpretation of the contemporary focus on monastic education and discipline at my field sites as a form of ‘purification’ and ‘rationalisation’ in response to ‘modernity’ and/or an internalisation of ‘colonial’ values is too thin. Rather than seeing monastic development as the response of ‘traditional’ religion to ‘the modern world’, I follow Borchert in arguing that we should be interrogating ‘modern forms of Buddhism ... as the way in which contemporary people practise their religion and build their communities within contemporary conditions’ (Borchert 2008 p.138).

By turning again to the narratives I collected it is possible to see beyond the modern/traditional dichotomy to examine the historical, ideological and contemporary social contexts and internal logics of contemporary attitudes and practices. These suggest that the emphasis on the scholar monk, rather than being a reinterpretation of the ‘ideal’ in response to ‘modernity’ or state discourse, reflects a greater sense of urgency (driven by various factors and by both monks and laity) for monks to live up to Gelukpa ideals in contemporary conditions.

6.4.2 The scholar monk: historical roots

Firstly, the emphasis on education and discipline should be viewed in its historical context. The Gelukpa is a tradition characterised by its scholastic approach, continuing the academic and clerical tradition of early Indian Buddhism (Samuel 1993 p.504). Its founder, Tsongkhapa, placed a renewed emphasis on the status of the ordained monk (and thus monastic discipline) as the basis of Buddhist practice

and on the importance of philosophical training (p.26). Following in the footsteps of Atīśa, he believed that an intellectual understanding of emptiness/voidness (*śūnyatā*), grounded in the ‘rationalizing philosophy’ of the Madhyamaka, should be a prerequisite for tantric practice (ibid. pp.510-512). Therefore, Tsongkhapa, who was himself a visionary, did not reject tantric practice, but saw it as dangerous and only suitable for advanced students (ibid. p.507). In the Tibetan tradition, the ideal thus came to be ‘the master who was believed to have successfully integrated the highest tantric levels of attainment with the intellectual refinement of a monk-scholar’ (Kapstein 2006 p.231). Although a common theme of narratives of monastic decline is that there are fewer monks who seriously study, several people also lamented that nowadays there are far fewer *ritröpa* or that now people wear the yellow robe, but it is not the same; they are not like the *ritröpa* of former times.

Conceptions of the ‘ideal monk’ can be gleaned through a hierarchy of regrets that emerged from the narratives of monks who spoke about their own lives and practices. These were grounded in a framework that can be traced back not just to the Gelukpa tradition, but to evaluative distinctions drawn between the roles of meditator, scholar-reciter and administrator in the Indian Buddhist literature (Silk 2008 pp.17-37), although, as we have seen, the emphasis on scholasticism in the Gelukpa tradition places the scholar monk above the reciter.

Elder Geshe Tenzin said that his great regret was that he had not been able to spend time in lengthy meditative retreat. When he was younger he was caught up in the turmoil of the Maoist years. He now has the aspiration to practice as a hermit, but no longer the physical capacity. Akhu Kunsang, a monk in his forties at one of Rongwo’s branches, regrets that he did not study at Rongwo because it is a great centre of scholarship. Akhu Palsang had worked in monastic administration for many years and secured sponsorship for and organised the construction of a new assembly hall (p.150). He told a friend of mine that since he was not a great scholar, he could at least serve his monastery in this way.

However, monks’ expressions of regret and evaluations of their personal inadequacies were not just conditioned by their position as Gelukpa monks, but

also as Tibetans. Kumbum Akhu Jyeltsen expressed ‘some strong regrets’ that due to his own laziness and mental distractedness, he has not studied to a satisfactory level or strictly adhered to monastic rules. He said that when he entered monastic life aged 14 he thought his duties would simply be to put on the robes and recite scriptures, but he later realised that ‘a monk is a guardian of tradition and studies’ (T/R). This brings us to another factor in the contemporary emphasis on monastic discipline and education: the relationship between monasticism and Tibetan identity.

6.4.3 Monasticism, Tibetan identity and morality

Emphasis on the importance of morality (discipline) and education amongst Gelukpa monks is reinforced through the relationship between contemporary monasticism and imaginings of a distinct Tibetan collectivity with a shared history, language and culture perceived to be under threat through assimilation into a ‘Chinese’ modernity (see also Adams 2008 p.109). That ‘Sinicisation’ is a more pressing concern for Tibetans than ‘Westernisation’ reflects the globally manifested ‘scalar dynamic’ commented on by Appadurai (1996 p.32), who cites examples including Irian Jaya:

... for polities of smaller scale, there is always a fear of cultural absorption by polities of larger scale, especially those that are nearby.
One man's imagined community is another man's political prison.

Most Tibetans I spoke to perceived monks to be agents of continuity of Tibetan language and culture and saw this as one of their most important roles.⁹ When people talked about the decreasing numbers of monks (Chapter 7), they often expressed the idea that, without monasteries and monks, there would be no Tibetan culture. This link between monasticism and culture was also reflected in surveys I carried out among Tibetan middle school and university students (Vol.2 Appendix B). Most students considered the protection and/or development of Tibetan culture to be an important role of a monastery in contemporary society

⁹ Another important role is that of ritual service provider (pp.210-211). A perceived link between the continuity of a people’s culture and monastic Buddhism is also found amongst the Dai Lue in Xishuangbanna (Borchert 2005).

(89 per cent of 149 middle school students, aged 15-18; and 98 per cent of 105 university students, aged 20-22). There was greater consensus about this than other roles suggested to them, including providing a suitable environment for Buddhist practice or providing religious services for the laity (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).¹⁰

Table 6.1 The role(s) of monasteries: middle school students

(sample: 149, aged 15-18)

What roles do you think monasteries have in contemporary society? (more than one answer can be selected)	
Provide education	52
Protect Tibetan culture	113
Develop Tibetan culture	93
Protect and/or develop Tibetan culture (aggregated)	133 (89%)
Provide a suitable environment for Buddhist practice	39
Provide religious services for lay people	59
Attract tourists, developing the local economy	11
Provide social welfare services, such as poverty relief, education, medicine	26
Provide moral leadership in society	27
Attract investors, therefore helping local economic development	14
Other	2

¹⁰ The question design was different for the two groups (Vol.2 Appendix B), but in neither case were students made to choose between categories and they were given space to add their own.

Table 6.2 The role(s) of monasteries: university students

(sample: 105, aged 20-22)

What roles do you think monasteries have in contemporary society?						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No reply
Provide education	64	29	7	1	2	2
Protect Tibetan culture	93	9	2	0	1	0
Develop Tibetan culture	82	19	2	0	2	0
Protect and/or develop Tibetan culture (aggregated)	96 (91.5%)	7 (6.5%)	1	0	1	0
Provide a suitable environment for Buddhist practice	72	24	7	1	1	0
Provide religious services for lay people	57	34	12	1	1	0
Attract tourists, developing the local economy	29	43	19	5	9	0
Provide social welfare services, such as poverty relief, education, medicine	39	36	24	2	2	2
Provide moral leadership in society	56	34	6	4	3	2
Attract investors, therefore helping local economic development	32	27	32	6	8	0

The term ‘culture (*rig-gnas*)’, which literally means ‘abode of knowledge’, can be used in a specific way to denote the traditional Tibetan sciences, fundamental to which is the Tibetan language. However, it is also more than this: a way of knowing that distinguishes ‘Tibetans’ from others:

Modernity requires a specific kind of reflection on one’s ‘difference’.

For Tibetans, this difference is found in their ability to see morality as at the foundation of the empirical universe, not separate from it.

(Adams 2008 p.118).

As Adams has argued, ‘it is in part precisely the idea held by many Tibetans that there is a moral foundation of the empirical world that is under assault in China’s rapid push to modernity’ (ibid. p.111). The logic and discourse of modernity imposes on the world a particular way of knowing based on scientific rationality and objectivity. It brings about a ‘reversal of the terrain on which beliefs develop’ (de Certeau 1984 p.187): the possibility of knowledge under modern conditions is based on observation and proofs (what is seen, observed and shown). Knowledge is thus ‘uprooted from its moral foundations’ (Adams 2008 p.119): morality is affirmed by a particular view of ‘objective’ truth, but ‘truth is not “known” by way of those moral propositions’ (ibid. p.113).

Monks and monasteries are highly visible symbols of ‘Tibetan’ difference and, in particular, moral distinction. This difference is idealised and romanticised not only in politicised representations of Tibetans by others (Barnett 2001), but also by Tibetans themselves, who draw on morality as a ‘resource’ in the symbolic boundary-work (Lamont 1992 *passim*) through which they differentiate themselves and configure and refigure their place in the world and their relationship to it (Adams 2008 p.119). For example, at a monastery school teaching monks and lay children, a student had written his English homework on Tibetan Buddhism (Fig.6.2). The text reproduced idealised representations of Tibetans as Buddhists and thus virtuous (they are ‘kind and honest’ because ‘they have a good religion’), symbolised by the large numbers of Tibetan monastics (who ‘can contribute more peace and genuine harmony to society’).

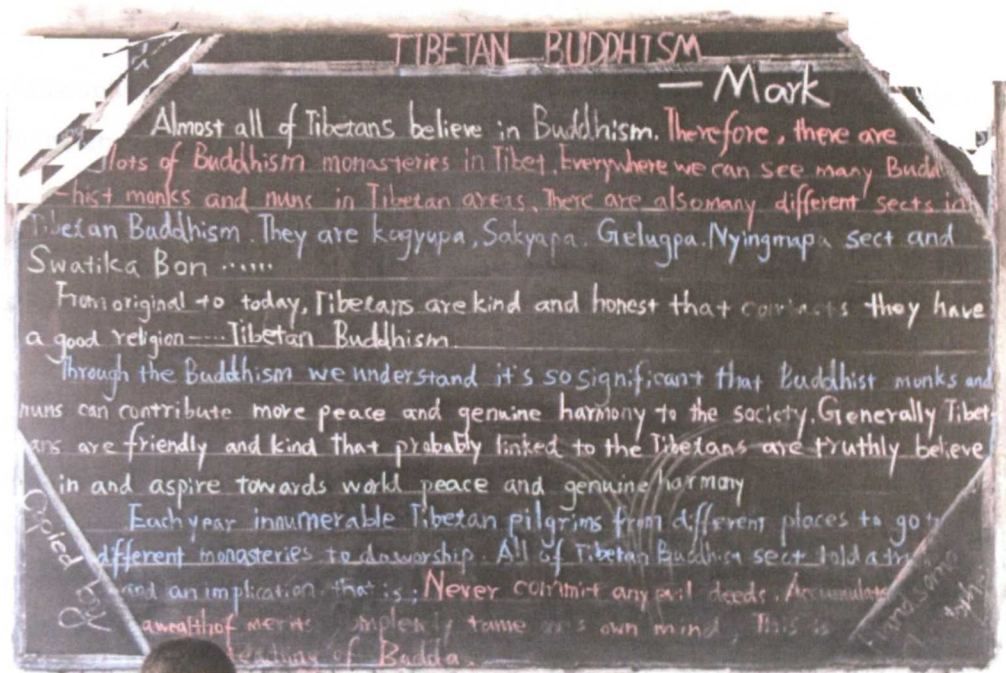


Figure 6.2 School blackboard with student's English homework

Therefore, what is at stake is not simply the functioning of the monastery as a place of Buddhist practice, education and study. During a morally troubled time, the significance of the monastery as an idealised space of 'Tibetan' morality, and of monks and lamas as exemplars and leaders, is heightened. Moreover, the distance between idealised representations of monastic (and by extension Tibetan) virtue and the everyday lives and practices of many Buddhist monks denigrates the morality of the Tibetan moral community at large (see also Makley 2002 pp.79-80). The globalisation of information flows means that ideas and representations are disseminated in the public domain within and outside Tibetan society through the media, placing the performance of monkhood (and thus Tibetan morality) under a (global) public spotlight. In his essay on religious scams (p.140), Caiwang Naoru (2009) writes:

Before you could say there wasn't a public opinion environment. Now the public opinion environment has matured, these scandals should be exposed, clearing the air and the image of the Tibetan people.

6.4.4 Challenges to the status of monks

Although the significance of the monastery as an idealised moral space is heightened, the position of monks in Tibetan society and its future has also been undermined and challenged by the emergence of a secularly educated elite. This has not only reinforced the emphasis on ‘traditional’ Gelukpa scholasticism, but is also a factor in contentious reform efforts.

As Kapstein (2002 p.110) has previously argued, criticisms of monastic morality now come from outside the religious establishment through a corps of secular intellectuals that did not exist in pre-Communist Tibetan society, and which privileges modernist, materialist values. Moreover, since the turn of the millennium, the debate amongst Tibetans about Tibetan development and ‘survival’ has intensified the search ‘for a cause of the backwardness of Tibetan society’ (Hartley 2002 p.6), often associated with its Buddhist culture and mass monastic tradition.¹¹ Pressure is also growing from within and without the monastic community to engage more with society and this-worldly concerns (p.186).¹² There is therefore a tension between different ideals of ‘service’ and a questioning of the societal norm expressed by Akhu Kunsang that ‘there are many different ways to serve others, but the best way to serve others is through the *Dharma*’ (T/R).

It is not within the scope of the present study to discuss these debates in detail. However, it is worth noting that monks are sensitive to the questions they raise as to the value of monastic Buddhism and its role in Tibetan futures. In particular, my fieldwork suggests that monastic development has been shaped by feelings of insecurity amongst monks in their position vis-à-vis secularly educated youth and

¹¹ See also Robin (2008) who discusses Tibetan intellectuals’ internalisation of ‘a certain idea of modernity as presented through colonial cultural values’. She argues that a reappraisal of religion took place in Tibetan literature from the 1990s onwards as part of a reappraisal of the ‘backwardness’ of Tibetan culture, which was ‘a sign of the growing autonomy of Tibetan writers’. Nevertheless, the relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan ‘backwardness’ was still a common topic in my conversations with young secularly educated Tibetans both in Amdo and in exile. Some also believed that Buddhism weakened Tibet and led to the Chinese ‘occupation’, echoing Younghusband’s justification for the British invasion of Tibet in 1904: religion made Tibetans passive and weak and thus they themselves were to blame (Dagyab Kyabgön Rinpoche 2001 p.383).

¹² This is not peculiar to the Tibetan tradition (see, for example, Queen and King, eds. 1996. 2003; King 2009).

a sense of displacement from the centre to the margins of education and culture. The significance of the issue for monks was underscored in a chance fieldwork encounter. I had been sitting in the grounds of a monastery, writing my field diary, when a group of around 30 young monks gathered around to ask about my research. They then launched a volley of questions on issues about which they were clearly passionate: my views on religious freedom, the importance of Tibetan Buddhism in the world *and the difference between monks and university students*, with one monk asking ‘which is more important for the future of Tibetan society?’.

Yet, when I probed further, it seemed that for many Tibetans, the problem lies in not so much the value of monks per se, but the failure of most monks to live up to monastic ideals (see also Chapter 8). Even amongst the younger, secularly educated Tibetans with whom I have spoken in Amdo and in exile who firmly believe in the importance and value of Buddhism and monasticism, there appears to be a more evaluative attitude towards monks and even reincarnate lamas. Rather than viewing them as, by definition, ‘higher’ than the laity, there is a sense that respect is something to be earned.

For example, Lobsang, the student who was so disheartened on his first visit to Kumbum (p.190), studies Buddhism with monks at his home monastery during the holidays. He displayed a meritocratic attitude to religious figures, only respecting those reincarnate lamas who are ‘very good, very wise.’ He attributed greater value to the ‘three good characteristics’ of erudition, moral discipline and altruistic intention (*mkhas-btsun-bzang-gsum*) than to the inherited divine status of a reincarnation lineage. He considered his Buddhist teachers at his home monastery, who possessed these qualities, to be higher than reincarnate lamas. It is they, not the lamas, who embody Buddhahood: ‘they are the *trulku!*’ (E/R). As we have seen, some monks have displayed a similarly meritocratic attitude (Chapter 4).

The extent of social criticism of monks, and particularly reincarnate lamas, should not be overemphasised. Several people said they would not be able to express their views to their families. Lobsang talked about his friendship with a young lama. One evening he was working and had asked the lama to pour him

some tea: 'in my hometown if I let the reincarnate lama pour a cup of tea, my father would beat me!'. Another student, Kelsang, related an occasion on which he witnessed a lama behaving inappropriately with some young women, but said that he could not talk about this with his family who would consider such talk to be harmful for him in his next life. He said that if his father witnessed similar behaviour he would explain it in terms of 'skilful' (p.106) or purposive action (E/R).

Nevertheless, many of the people with whom I spoke believed that there had been a shift in the laity's attitude towards monks, particularly amongst younger people. A change in bodily dispositions was the most common evidence cited. In the past, I was frequently told, a lay person would automatically stand if a monk (even a child monk) appeared, but nowadays this was not necessarily the case. Such attitudinal shifts were perceived by some as being indicative of social moral decline, sinicisation and/or a measure of a person's culture and 'education', or in other words whether they have been instilled with Tibetan values rather than the materialist values of the modern Chinese state and its secular education system. The ritualised behaviour of standing in the presence of a monk, symbolic of the *Sangha* (regardless of his individual status), can be interpreted, like prostration, as the performance of 'faith' (*dad-pa*), 'that very physical orientation of submission, devotion, homage, and offering ... that had become the "line in the sand" for identification with Tibetanness in the face of threatening social change' (Makley 2007 p.162).

Yet, at the same time, narratives of moral decline combined with the emergence of a secularly educated elite have challenged the position of monks as the educated and *cultured* corps of society, thus reinforcing the emphasis on Gelukpa scholastic ideals. We have already seen that Ditsa reconstituted itself as a scholastic centre awarding monastic degrees (p.79 n.63) and that some of the practice centres in Rebgong have introduced elements of the Gelukpa scholastic curriculum (p.214). The head lama of one monastery, Yeshe Gyatso, talked with me about his plans to develop education. He said that his was originally a monastery where monks focused on ritual, but 'nowadays that wouldn't do'; monks had to have a good grasp of Buddhist principles and 'that means we have to study texts such as *Lamrim*' (T/R).

Moreover, the presence of secularly educated youth can cause monks to re-evaluate their position, even in the field of ‘traditional’ culture and its lynchpin, the Tibetan language. The Gelukpa curriculum is largely based on oral training methods. Therefore, even monks who are skilled in oral debate and learned in philosophy will not necessarily be as accomplished in writing as university students who study Tibetan language and literature. At practice centres and branch monasteries which focus on ritual the emphasis is on learning to read and memorise texts, rather than on writing. One of Rebgong’s practice centres started teaching grammar and *Lamrim* in 2008. Senior monk Akhu Khedrub said that the monks had decided to do this because the laity expects monks to be well-educated. He also said that students would tease monks if they were to make a mistake writing the names of the villagers (T/N).

More generally, efforts have been made to broaden the monastic curriculum at some monasteries, often by starting schools which teach writing, grammar, and other subjects such as Chinese, mathematics and English. These educational reforms have precedent in the efforts of senior Gelukpa hierarchs to ‘modernise’ monastic systems. For example the 14th Dalai Lama has expanded the curriculum of the monasteries in exile to include primary school level Tibetan, Hindi, English, social studies, science and mathematics (Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche II 2003), and Arjia Rinpoche started a ‘Western style’ school at Kumbum in 1990 ‘to adapt to modern times’ (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 pp.182-183). Once again, reformist ideas are contentious. Some of my interlocutors argued that monks should focus on studying Buddhism and that ‘modern’ education only serves as a distraction and, at worst, contributes to the problem of monks disrobing. Geshe Lobsang displayed remarkable pragmatism when he argued that one reason for broadening monastic education was to provide young monks with some transferable skills should they return to secular life (T/R; see also Goldstein 1998 p.43).

One reason that schools were set up at some of my field sites was to deal with the issue of underage monks (p.238 n.12). However, various other logics were also expressed by monks, including the above-mentioned contingency that monks may disrobe, the need to improve basic literacy, the need to cater for those monks not interested in studying philosophy, the need for monks to function in

contemporary society, and the capacity built by foreign language learning for Buddhist exchange and propagation. Only the latter is explicitly connected to the soteriological goals of monastic life. The other arguments are related to a perceived need to 'keep up' with a fast moving and changing society in which the monastery is not the only educational option and the 'minds' and aspirations of young men are changing.

6.5 The 'triumph' of Ditsa: an exemplar of monastic development?

This chapter finishes with an illustrative example of the moral rhetoric concerning contemporary monasticism that also highlights some of the concrete factors shaping monastic development. Akhu Ngawang had been explaining Ditsa's commercial development and its decision to ban the *nyerwa* from collecting alms. Stating that his monastery was not like others, he launched (unprompted) into a comparison with nearby Shachung to explain and extol the direction of development taken by Ditsa. His narrative thus linked issues of financing to wider issues of monastic discipline, education and 'quality'. He started by saying that Ditsa had 'prioritised studies over economics and construction':

If you compare Shachung and Ditsa, since the reconstruction of the monastery Shachung has concentrated on construction and neglected the studies. As for us, all expenditure was used for religious practice and study and we tried to survive. At that time we did not build any of these great temples. We were humble and people would say 'look Shachung has all these things.' We did not take much notice. ... If you look now, I think the direction we took is the right one. Shachung apparently had 700 to 800 monks at that time. Last year they took a census and there were only just over 300 monks there. As for us, we only had 200 monks before and now have over 400.

... Whatever we do here, we need to endeavour with our studies, that's what we said. If you get television everybody will spend time watching. We said no and banned it. In terms of computers, there were a lot of computers before and we said that's not allowed and we

banned that as well. So, for, example, if you allow them to have a computer ... there is this danger of watching all sorts of DVDs and they wouldn't study at all and then their minds would change and they would stop being monks. So that's why we banned it.

But if we do not install any computers we are not keeping pace with the times ... so that's why we built that [computer room; Fig.6.3]. If you need to type, print, copy DVDs or CDs, or download anything onto your mobile phone [i.e. ringtones or music], whatever you have to do, you can go and use the computers inside the monastery and it is also a special, cheap fee. ... So it provides us with income, it satisfies [the monks] and also keeps us abreast with the times. ... And then it hasn't got any of the problems in terms of the monastic environment.

Then in terms of buying vehicles, a few people bought vehicles and we said that was not allowed so that was banned. If they buy a vehicle they can go to many different places and also they would say, 'okay, we could transport these people from here to there' and they would earn some money and it would become an obstacle for their studies because [study] would be neglected and they would become preoccupied with earning money. That's why all that was banned. There is nothing for them to do but study.

So these are the directions we took. Nowadays when you look at Shachung the monks are very undisciplined. There are monks doing business and monks driving vehicles around for money and so that's why it's getting worse and worse. Usually, the saying goes that Shachung is 'the spring of the *Dharma*' and one of the four big northern monasteries. But now if you look at the quality and people, what the Chinese call '*rencai*', it has all changed – very unsteady and unreliable. They have changed in everything and also in terms of knowledge. So naturally we have triumphed (T/R).

This narrative positions Ditsa as a model of monastic development, much as the narratives explored in Chapter 5 positioned Kumbum as the archetype of monastic decline. The values that Akhu Ngawang draws upon reflect the common

themes and moral judgements that have emerged from this study. Ditsa's leaders have been faced with the challenge of how to maintain monastic/lay boundaries and at the same time 'keep pace with the times'. The monastery has 'triumphed' because it has privileged education over wealth creation and external development such as temple building, and has maintained strict monastic discipline. At the same time, it has found creative ways to accommodate the demands of the times and the aspirations of monks to participate in 'modern life' while minimising the potential disruption this can cause to the soteriological functioning of the monastery.



Figure 6.3 Computer room at Ditsa

Akhu Ngawang raised some of the concrete issues with which monastic actors have had to deal in the context of a rapidly modernising and globalising society. These have included the increased opportunities for personal wealth accumulation through small business ('monks as entrepreneurs'), but also the spread of multi-media technologies. Similar concerns over the spread of the latter and other facets of 'modern' life into monastic space were expressed by many of the other monks with whom I talked. Each monastery has its own rules of decorum. At my field sites these now include a requirement to switch off mobile phones during assemblies and *Dharma* sessions. At some field sites I was told that monasteries also had rules prohibiting the use of televisions and motor vehicles, but these had

relaxed in recent years. The relaxation of these and other rules, for example those concerning footwear, was seen by some of my interlocutors as one of the symptoms of monastic decline.

Ditsa's approach, which combines strict prohibitions on personal ownership with the provision of centrally controlled services, appears to be exceptional. At other monasteries, some monks argued that it was up to individuals to use new technologies, such as computers and DVD players, for appropriate purposes (such as accessing Buddhist teachings). Others, however, expressed a certain degree of resigned helplessness in the ability of the institution to control and contain these developments. This was linked to the general narratives of moral decline explored in this chapter and a perception that minds have changed and young men are no longer willing to live a life of simplicity and hardship.

This brings us to one final point. Akhu Ngawang not only evaluated Ditsa's 'triumph' in terms of the 'quality' of its monks. He also measured it in terms of 'quantity', citing as evidence the monastery's success in increasing its population as compared to Shachung, which has shrunk. Akhu Lobsang Tenzin, who was involved in Rongwo's educational reform (p.209), also measured its success by Rongwo's ability to attract monks. By rewarding attendance at the debate courtyard and punishing absentees:

...within one year there was noticeable improvement in studies. To give you an indicator of this: the reputation has spread far and wide. Monks have come here for their studies from far away places, many more than before. That is a sign of progress. They have come from Golok, Yushu, Ngawa, Chabcha and Shachung (T/R).

This emphasis on quantity does not simply reflect the ethic of mass monasticism which accompanied the Gelukpa revival. It highlights an issue of pressing concern for monks, which will be discussed in Chapter 7: fewer boys are entering monastic life and increasing numbers of monks are disrobing.

6.6 Conclusion

Monastic actors' attitudes to development reflect their efforts to adapt to the times without undermining the boundaries that underpin monasticism. As this chapter has shown, changing conceptions of the good, such as those regarding monastic self-sufficiency, can be in tension with, and have to be balanced against, coexisting normative frameworks and moral sentiments relating to ideals of monks and monasteries. Moreover, monastic actors are operating during a time when pure Buddhist practice is perceived to be becoming increasingly difficult and minds (and thus morality) are changing. Attitudes towards monastic economy are thus inseparable from concerns for monastic development in a much broader sense, which are grounded in both the way monks know the world and their lived experiences. These concerns are conditioned by contemporary narratives of monastic moral decline and a concurrent heightening of the significance of the monastery as an idealised space of 'Tibetan' morality. These dynamics, as well as the emergence of a secularly educated elite, serve to reinforce scholastic ideals but are also a contingent factor in reforms to 'traditional' systems and practices.

As this chapter has shown, perceptions of monastic moral decline are not simply a reactionary response to societal change. In fact, Ditsa, which is in some respects the most 'traditional' of my field sites, has taken perhaps the greatest steps to 'keep up with the times'. Monastic actors are dealing with concrete issues that have an impact on both the mundane and soteriological underpinnings of their institutions. They are facing very real challenges in maintaining not only the authority and reputation of Gelukpa monasticism, but also the basis of its existence: the monastic assembly. As we have seen, the danger of monks disrobing was a recurring theme in my discussions with monks about monastic development. It represents one of the greatest and most pressing challenges for monastic actors and will be discussed further in the next chapter, which examines the current trend towards a shrinking monastic population.

Chapter 7

Narratives of decline (2): numbers of monks

During one of my conversations with Akhu Konchok, a monk in his forties, he made a particularly bleak prediction: in years to come the branch monasteries would close, the old monks would converge in the monastic centres and then these too would also eventually disappear. Again and again I heard the same story: fewer boys were joining the monasteries and increasing numbers of young men were leaving, many of them disrobing. These trends and the implications for the Gelukpa monastic tradition have barely been touched upon in the literature. Yet this decrease in monastic populations is, as Rongwo Akhu Tenpa put it, 'the principal concern of most monks' (T/R). As we have seen it is an important factor in monks' perceptions of and attitudes towards monastic development (Chapter 6). Given the important position of the monastery in Tibetan society and community life, it is also an issue of great significance in our understandings of a society undergoing rapid transformation.

This chapter will first examine the trends in numbers of monks at my field sites over the past 50 years. It will then discuss various explanations for this. The available literature has touched upon the impact of state regulation and control of monasteries and monks. However, from the perspective of those participating in monastic development, the issue is considerably more complex. In the context of current demographic and socio-economic transformations, state regulation does not appear to be the greatest problem facing monasteries in increasing or even maintaining their populations. This chapter contextualises the issue in relation to the position of monks as both household members and as mobile and agentive individuals. Finally, it will show how different perceptions of the issue have shaped monastic attitudes towards development, illuminating tensions between monastic ideals and socio-economic realities.

7.1 Trends in numbers of monks 1958-2010

It is important to place current concerns over the declining monastic population within the context of the extraordinary extent of repopulation. The speed and scale of the monastic revival were dramatic given that all monasteries had been closed and largely destroyed and the majority of monks had either died or married during the Maoist period.

Data on estimated numbers of monks at my field sites are presented in Table 7.1. The available data reflect more general trends during the Maoist years and the 1980s (see, for example, Pu 1990, Nian and Bai 1993, Kapstein 2004, Kolás and Thowsen 2005). Following their closure in 1958, the monastic centres (Rongwo, Shachung, Ditsa and Gartse) were reopened during the relatively liberal period between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution (1962-1966), but numbers remained low. Branch monasteries remained closed throughout the Maoist period, although a few monks continued to live on at least one site (p.98).

The repopulation of monasteries in the early 1980s began with the return of reincarnate lamas and monks who had been ordained prior to 1958 (Chapter 3). This was followed by an extraordinary upsurge in new monks. Although numbers never reached pre-1958 levels, there was nevertheless a revival of 'mass' monasticism, with a 'more is better' attitude to monastic population growth (p.97). In 1999, the Rebgong county government reported 1819 monks in the county (Kolás and Thowsen 2005 p.207). If this figure is compared with the 2000 census data (QRP 2003 pp.82-85, 102-105), over five per cent of the population of Tibetan males in the county were monks by the end of the 1990s.¹ Of these an estimated 90 per cent or more were Gelukpa monks.²

¹ This includes those officially classified as Monguor (*C. tuzi*), 12 per cent of the county's male population. Official statistics on both total and monastic populations are problematic and may reflect under-reporting as a result of unregistered births and unregistered monks, but they nevertheless give an indication of the extent of repopulation.

² This figure is based on the proportion of Gelukpa to non-Gelukpa monks in the late 1980s, early 1990s and 2000s, calculated from the data on numbers of monks in Pu (1990), Nian and Bai (1993) and dPal-bzang (2007).

Table 7.1 Estimated numbers of monks 1958-2009/10

(Data sources indicated in notes)

Abbreviations: U. Seng. = Upper Senggeshong; L. Seng. = Lower Senggeshong

Monastery	1958 ¹	1959-1962	1962 ¹²	1965 ¹³	1966-1980	1989 ¹⁴	1992 ¹⁵	Peak ¹⁶	2009/2010 ²¹
Shachung	887 ²	0	130	94	0	224	350	600	385 ²²
Rongwo	1712 ³	0	70	170	0	291	307	700	424 ²³
Ditsa	700 ⁴	0	57	57	0	163	250	403	365 ²⁴
Gomar	305	0	0	0	0	72	119	160	70 ²⁵
L. Seng.	350	0	0	0	0	80	100	170 ¹⁷	134 ²⁶
Gartse	137 ⁵	0	10	10	0	70	117	160 ¹⁸	164 ²⁷
Tashitse	0 ⁶	0	0	0	0	0	0	146	71
U. Seng.	208	0	0	0	0	80	116	140	120 ²⁸
Dorjedzong	258 ⁷	0	0	0	0	34	65	120	105
Dechen	204 ⁸	0	0	0	0	24	65	80 ¹⁹	80
Yershong	90 ⁹	0	0	0	0	48	64	70 ²⁰	55
Dzongkar	94	0	0	0	0	40	44	70	50
Nyentok	210 ¹⁰	0	0	0	0	15	35	65	54
Tashikhyil	290 ¹¹	0	0	0	0	-	34	60	30
Kasar	115	0	0	0	0	41	55	60	50
Dowadrok	60	0	0	0	0	20	36	50	25
Dzongngon	43	0	0	0	0	9	14	25	25

Notes to Table 7.1

¹ Data taken from Nian and Bai (1993) unless otherwise indicated. Significant discrepancies with other sources are noted.

² During the Qing dynasty, Shachung housed 3,000 monks (Pu 1990 p.89). By the end of the 19th century, the American diplomat and explorer, W.W. Rockhill reported 1,500 monks at Shachung (Gruschke 2001 p.42).

³ At its peak Rongwo monastery housed up to 2,300 monks (Sonam Tsering 2008 p.5)

⁴ An elder who joined the monastery in 1947 aged 15 told me that he knows there were over 700 monks in 1958 because he made butter for each monk (T/N). The monastery's website (Zhizhadasi 2004) and brochure (Zhizhadasi n.d.) give a figure of 800. Pu (1990 p.92) states that there were 300 monks in the early part of the 20th century (the monastery was founded in 1903), 780 during the 1940s and 571 in 1958. Nian and Bai (2003 p.54) give a figure of 550 in 1958.

⁵ Pu (1990 p.449) gives a figure of 82.

⁶ This monastery was founded in 1995.

⁷ Pu (1990 p.485) gives a figure of 200.

⁸ Pu (1990 p.458) gives a figure of 154.

⁹ Pu (1990 p.441) gives a figure of 60.

¹⁰ This figure is cited in both Pu (1990 p.430) and Nian and Bai (1993 p.157) for 1954. No data are available for 1958.

¹¹ Pu (1990 p.442) gives a figure of 210 for 1954.

¹² Data taken from Nian and Bai (1993).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Data taken from Pu (1990).

¹⁵ Data taken from Nian and Bai (1993), which was based on research carried out in 1991-1992.

¹⁶ Estimates of the highest number of monks at each monastery over the past 30 years based on interviews with monks (2008-2009) and, where indicated, dPal-bzang (2007).

¹⁷ dPal-bzang (2007 p.261); Gruschke (2001 p.54).

¹⁸ dPal-bzang (2007 p.243) gives a figure of 160 monks. However, it is likely that numbers at Gartse peaked after he collected his data. In 2009, I was told that the monastery's population had continued to increase until 2008. In 2011, there were a reported 164 monks, but the monastery was experiencing a decrease in numbers because monks from other areas had been unable to stay at Gartse since 2008 (personal communication with a key informant, February 2011).

¹⁹ dPal-bzang (2007 p.336).

²⁰ Ibid p.143.

²¹ Estimates of the number of monks at each monastery, based on interviews with at least one monk at each in 2009. In some cases I checked the data through personal communications with key informants in 2010 and 2011 and indicate where I have relied upon the latter. The data on monasteries in Rebgong was cross checked against dPal-bzang (2007) for significant discrepancies (for example, see note 25). Where estimates were given as a range (for example 380-90) I have taken the median figure (i.e. 385).

²² Personal communication with a key informant, June 2010. In 2008, I was told the number of monks was 430.

²³ Numbers as of 2009 (personal communication with a key informant, April 2010). It is not clear whether this figure includes those monks studying at monasteries in the TAR who were sent back to Amdo following the 2008 protests and subsequently joined the College of Dialectics.

²⁴ Ibid, June 2010.

²⁵ There is some discrepancy in the sources. In 2009, a Management Committee member said that there were 105-6 monks (T/R). In 2011 I was told numbers had dropped to 70 (personal communication with a key informant, February 2011). dPal-bzang (2007 p.195) gave a figure of 'at least 80' monks. All of my interlocutors here said that numbers have been decreasing, with two monastic officials independently stating that numbers peaked in the late 1980s.

²⁶ Personal communication with a key informant, February 2011. In 2009, a senior monk said that there were 'over 100 monks' (T/R).

²⁷ See note 18.

²⁸ By 2011 numbers had dropped further to 110 (personal communication with a key informant, February 2011).

However, the general trend towards growth has reversed, even taking into account the variation in individual monastic populations from year to year (for example, monks may take a leave of absence to study at other monasteries in China or India). I was told that numbers at most of my field sites were decreasing, although the extent of the decline varied. At Rongwo I was told about a recent upsurge in numbers, but this is explained by a specific moment in contemporary history. Until recently, monks from all over ethnographic Tibet studied at Sera and Drepung in Lhasa. Following the 2008 protests, those who were not from the TAR were sent back to their places of origin after a lengthy period of detention and 'political education'.³ This resulted in an influx into the College of Dialectics in autumn 2008, but beforehand, numbers had been decreasing.⁴ In the Tantric and Kālacakra colleges numbers had roughly halved since the 1990s.⁵

At most monasteries numbers appear to have peaked during the 1990s, although at some (Gomar, Shachung) it was as early as the late 1980s, while at Ditsa numbers only started dropping in 2009. At Gartse, numbers decreased in 2008 because monks who came from other areas were no longer able to stay (Table 7.1 n.18). At two monasteries (Dechen and Dorjedzong) numbers were reported to be holding steady. The reasons given by monks for differences between monasteries will be explored in Section 7.6. The decreasing Gelukpa monastic population was mentioned more generally by Tibetans in Rebgong and western Bayan and anecdotal evidence suggests that the trend extends to other parts of Amdo, although further work is needed to confirm this.⁶

³ Monks from Qinghai were detained in Lhasa, then sent to a detention centre in Golmud for three months' re-education and then to detention centres in their home prefectures.

⁴ Monks said that in the 1990s there were as many as 700 monks at Rongwo, of whom up to 570 would have been in the College of Dialectics (see n.5 below).

⁵ I was told by senior monks from each college that numbers had fallen from 72 to 41 in the Tantric College and from 50 to 25 in the Kālacakra College (T/R). Another senior monk said there were 49 and 25 monks in the respective colleges in 2010 (personal communication with key informant April 2010). According to dPal-bzang (2007 pp.102, 119), there were 80 monks in the Tantric College and 40 in the Kālacakra College.

⁶ Although beyond the scope of the present work, anecdotal evidence suggests that, by contrast, the number of nuns is increasing, albeit from a much smaller base.

Monks see the current decrease in the size of monastic populations as one of the most problematic and pressing issues they face, yet it is barely mentioned in the literature. Makley (2007 pp.268-269) touches on the issue, stating that there was a 'decrease in the number of young men choosing (or agreeing to) the monastic life by the late 1980s' linked to their aspirations for social mobility and participation in the 'modern' globalizing economy. I will return to this issue in Section 7.4. Costello (2002 p.228) makes a passing reference to a 'natural decrease' in Rongwo's numbers 'as fewer monks than before are entering the monastery, and more monks are leaving after a period of study', but offers no further analysis. Other than this, the issue of monastic population has only been discussed in the context of state control and regulation of monasteries.

7.2 State restrictions on monastic growth

Scholars and activists have claimed that state regulation and control of monasteries has been an obstacle to their growth (for example ICT 2004 p.63; Childs 2008 p.274). Policy shifts over the past 30 years have included a tightening of regulation over monastic populations. During the 1980s, there was more or less unrestricted growth of monasteries and numbers of monks. This countered the Party's religious policy as outlined in Document 19 (p.8). Shakya (1999 p.419) argues that local officials were unwilling to provoke tensions with the Tibetan population and Arjia Rinpoche (2001 p.126) says they would neither approve nor act against monastic expansion because of a lack of clarity on what should be permitted under new religious policies.⁷

However, the shift towards increased regulation of religion from 1990 (p.8) included efforts to control monastic growth. New regulations codified requirements for monasteries to fix maximum quotas of monks and for monks to undergo approval and registration before being allowed to enter monastic assemblies. In Qinghai, these were implemented in 1992 (QZHG; QZRG), and monastic quotas were fixed by 1996 (TIN 1999b p.9; Kolås and Thowsen 2005

⁷ Monks at Kumbum referred to this as 'the policy of "three not knows": not know how to regulate religion, not know how religion would eventually be regulated, and not want to know' (Arjia Rinpoche 2010 p.126).

p.85). However, in Qinghai and elsewhere, these policies did not necessarily work to contain the number of monks, but rather led to the existence of large populations of 'unofficial' monks, particularly at major sites such as Kumbum, Labrang and the big Lhasa monasteries (Schwartz 1994 p.63; Goldstein 1998a pp.31-43; TIN 1999b p.10; Makley 2007 pp.253, 267).⁸

The literature has reported periodic attempts, since the early 1990s, to deal with the unofficial population of monks (although not always through expulsion⁹), to enforce monk quotas and to return school-age monks to their villages (Schwartz 1994 pp.180-181; TIN & HRW 1996 pp.115-120; Goldstein 1998a p.45; TIN 1999b pp.6-8).¹⁰ Some monasteries without official approval have been closed down (TIN & HRW 1996 p.118). In general, regulation and control appears to have been tighter in the TAR, although the largest scale expulsions were at the Buddhist institutes of Larung Gar (Serthar) and Yachen Gar in the Amdo part of Sichuan in 2001 (TIN 2002 pp.50-58; ICT 2004 pp.64-72).

Despite periodic campaigns and specific instances of mass expulsions, in practice there appears to have been a general lack of enforcement of monk quotas (Kapstein 2004 p.256; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.87; Makley 2007 p.253) and monasteries have employed a degree of 'creative accounting' (Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.87). Restrictions on minors being allowed to join and/or remain at monasteries seem to have been more problematic, particularly at larger monastic centres such as Rongwo (see also Costello 2002 pp.224-225), but monasteries have found ways around this.¹¹ There were still many young monks

⁸ Makley (2007 p.266) argues that in Labrang this contributed to perceptions of moral decline by creating an 'institutional vacuum' that left many young monks outside the disciplinary frameworks of monastic life.

⁹ Under the patriotic education campaign in 1996, Drepung was permitted to raise its quota in order to admit the many unofficial monks living there (Goldstein 1998a p.50).

¹⁰ Under PRC education legislation, children are required to attend nine years of compulsory education from the age of six or seven (CEL 1986 Article 5). Corresponding limits on the admission of monks have been written into recent religious affairs legislation (QZST Article 25, HZST Article 18, ZFSGB Article 27).

¹¹ In some cases young monks are hidden from inspection teams. Some monasteries have founded schools for young monks, although these have been subject to periodic closure. For example, I was told that Rongwo's school was founded in 1997 for monks under the

in evidence at monasteries in Amdo in 2008/09 and most of the monks with whom I talked (including those who had only recently become monks) entered monastic life when they were under the age of 18. Since 2008, restrictions on monks studying outside their home regions have been enforced. This has had a negative impact on the number of monks at Gartse, but has also meant the assembly of Rongwo's College of Dialectics has grown (p.235).

Finally, regular political campaigns inside monasteries, including pressure on monks to denounce the Dalai Lama, have provoked tensions between monasteries and state authorities, the consequences of which have included monastic expulsions, arrests, deaths in detention, and even suicide (see, for example, TIN 1999a, CECC 2010). Some of my interlocutors spoke about the psychological stress, leading some monks to move to monasteries in exile or disrobe. There was an influx of monks from Tibetan areas of China into monasteries in India in the 1980s and 1990s (Ström 1997 p.41; Dreyfus 2003 p.328; Childs 2008 p.144). For example, at Sera in Mysore, numbers increased from 650 in 1980 to 3000 in 1994, 60 to 65 per cent of whom were newcomers from Tibet (Ström 1997 p.41), and to 4,477 in the early 21st century (Sherab Gyatso 2004, 221). According to Childs (2008 p.144), 79 per cent of monks in the community in exile aged 15 to 34 were born in Tibet. However, many go to India temporarily to study and then return to their home monasteries (see also Ström 1997 pp.39-40).

In short, the implementation of religious policies has at times had an impact on the numbers of monks, at least at some institutions. However, this remains at best a partial explanation for the current problems experienced by monasteries in maintaining their populations. In some cases, it may even be becoming an increasingly irrelevant issue. At Tashitse, for example, the number of monks has fallen far below their maximum quota, a phenomenon also reported at a monastery in Kham (Kapstein 2004 p.256). Furthermore, the increased regulation of monasteries tied to state security concerns does not account for differences

age of 18, who were going to be expelled from the monastery as part of a patriotic education campaign (see also TIN 1999a p.18; Costello 2002 p.225). The school was closed following the 2008 protests, but subsequently re-opened. Ditsa's school was reported to have been shut down in March 2010 (Phayul 2010).

across field sites. This is particularly striking in the case of Ditsa and Tashitse. In 1995, 146 of Ditsa's 300 monks left to found Tashitse (p.79). Ditsa's recovery and subsequent increase to 403 monks in 2009 is impressive, even in light of a subsequent fall in numbers to 360 to 370 by April 2010 (Table 7.1). In stark contrast, Tashitse has experienced a significant decrease, with a halving of its population since it was founded in 1994 (from 146 to 71). Moreover, some of Ditsa's monks have engaged in public protest activities (TIN 2004; Phayul 2010), but Tashitse has no such political profile.

It is therefore necessary to look beyond state regulation and control to consider other factors. Ström (1997) has shown that Tibetan monasteries in exile are also facing problems in recruiting and retaining monks from amongst the Tibetan community in exile, which further supports this argument.

7.3 Changing family structures: monks as household members

The state's family planning policy was usually the first factor mentioned by both monks and lay people to explain the shrinking monastic population. Demographic changes are undermining the social structure that made mass monasticism feasible in the past, and this represents a potential crisis for monasteries in maintaining their populations.

There has been a significant demographic transition in the Tibetan population since the mid to late 1980s: by the turn of the century, fertility levels had fallen to below replacement levels (i.e. less than two births per female) (Childs et al. 2005; Childs 2008; Fischer 2008). In a qualitative study conducted in Rebgong, Schrempf (2008 p.138) found that birth rates had declined from 5 to 7 children before 1980, to 2 to 3 children. Falling fertility levels in Tibetan populations reflect the overall drop to below-replacement fertility in the PRC and wider global demographic trends (Yong 2010 p.419).¹²

¹² It is beyond the scope of this study to enter into the debate about the extent to which demographic change is a result of state family planning policies (as generally perceived by my interlocutors) or socio-economic development and globalisation. On the fertility

The significance of these demographic trends for monastic recruitment lies not so much in the projected decline and ageing of the Tibetan population (Childs 2008 p.259), but with the decrease in average family size. Regardless of how the drop in fertility rates is explained or of total population size, the transition towards smaller family sizes will lead to decreasing numbers of boys entering the monasteries. Potential monastic recruits are household members. As my interlocutors pointed out, if a household only has two or three children, and maybe only one son, then the son is needed to look after the farmland and/or herd, or to go to school to get a secular education and professional job. His role is to provide for the household and take care of his parents.

Many young Tibetan men in Amdo and in exile with whom I talked said that they considered becoming monks at some point in their childhood. This included 11 out of 17 lay men in Amdo (including students, teachers and artists) whose responses on this issue I documented. Eight explicitly said that their parents had been opposed to them entering monastic life and all but three said they did not become a monk because they were the only son (6), the eldest son (1) or their brother was a monk (1). For example, Chöpel, a postgraduate student and the youngest of five brothers, said that when he was eight to ten years old he wanted to become a monk, but ‘my older brother was a monk so my parents weren’t willing. The family already had one monk, so they sent me to school’ (C/R).

This underscores the dependent relationship between monasteries and households and it is clear that current demographic trends pose a major challenge to the continuity of mass monasticism in Tibetan societies. Childs (2008) discusses a similar issue within the Tibetan community-in-exile in South Asia, which has displayed remarkably similar demographic trends to the Tibetan

transition in Tibetan areas of China, see Goldstein, Jiao and Beall (2002), Childs et al. (2005), Fischer (2005), Childs (2008) and Schrempf (2008). These studies, which engage with broader debates on demographic transitions, indicate that family planning policies have been a significant factor, reinforcing ideational changes that may also have been motivated by, for example, increased costs of living, rising health care and education costs, unemployment and diminished land holdings. Schrempf (2008) discusses Tibetan attitudes towards state family planning policies in Qinghai and the tensions between these and Tibetan cultural values and practices.

population in China, although the transitions within the two populations occurred under different socio-economic and political conditions and for different reasons.

However, it is more difficult to judge the extent to which the fertility transition explains monastic population trends over the past thirty years. With no available data on the average age at which monks entered monasteries it is not possible to make a direct comparison against total population trends. Most whom I interviewed became monks aged between 12 and 17 years old. If, for the sake of argument, we take this as a guide, smaller family sizes will now be having an impact on recruitment. However, it does not explain declining numbers where this is reported to have started as early as the late 1980s. At that time, potential recruits, even if they were considerably younger than the average age of my interlocutors, were born when fertility levels were still high. Moreover, the fertility transition still does not explain the difference in the degree of the problem at different monasteries.

Monks themselves see the problem as related not only to family planning policies, but also the impact of rapid socio-economic transformations, in particular capitalist development and its attendant materialism, and the resulting shift in values (Chapter 6).

7.4 Socio-economic change: monks as agentive individuals

7.4.1 Secular versus monastic life

As noted above (p.236), Makley (2007 pp.268-269) referred to a perception in 1990s Labrang that fewer young men were choosing to become monks by the late 1980s because of the alternative paths to and aspirations for mobility opened up by market-oriented development. She cites one monastic elder who lamented that boys thought that monastic life was too hard. This was a common theme in the narratives of lay people and monks with whom I spoke: not only were parents less willing to send their children to monasteries because of changing family structures; boys were increasingly unwilling to enter monastic life.

Thus, even when a household wanted one of its members to enter monastic life, young men might counter these interests. I asked a group of postgraduate students whether, if they had children who wanted to enter monastic life, they would agree.

Chöpel: I would strongly agree and support him. But nowadays children are not willing to enter monastic life because the conditions in monasteries are not good. ... Monastic life is very hard. ... For example, when I was at primary school, I lived at Labrang monastery during the holidays. In the morning you get up at 4.30am, study and read scriptures and then you do not get to bed until midnight at the latest. This is too hard! They are not willing to live this kind of life. Really!

Jikme: ... When we were at school, six or seven out of our classmates became monks. Nowadays, generally speaking, there are none. The youth of today aren't willing to become monks. Ideas have changed.

Jane: Do you think it is the children who are unwilling, or their parents?

Chöpel: For the most part it is the children who are not willing. Society has completely changed. Conditions - everything - has become chaotic nowadays. They are unaccustomed and unable to remain in a monastery, a peaceful place (C/R).

Over the past 30 years, there have been major socio-economic transformations and an increase in living standards for many Tibetans. Secular educational and professional employment opportunities that were non-existent before 1958 are now available to many young men. The development of a market economy has also led to alternative routes to secure livelihoods and social mobility through capitalist entrepreneurship. In Rebgong, for example, Tibetans have benefited from a boom in the trade in caterpillar fungus (p.211 n.6), the growing market in 'Regong Arts' and tourism development.

Improved living standards and aspirations to participate in the 'modern' world, when set against the hardship and regulation of life as a monk, were seen by my

interlocutors as important factors in fewer boys becoming monks. It is not simply that the life of a monk is poor. Their material life has improved significantly and some people (including monks) believe it is easier to earn money providing ritual services for the laity than it is to earn a living as a lay person (for example, p.253). Rather, as Chöpel and Jikme argued, monastic life is seen as too hard in terms of its discipline and solitude. Monks connected this with a perceived shift in mental orientation (morality) towards the benefits of this life rather than the next (Chapter 6).

However, in order to gain a thicker understanding of these shifting aspirations, it is worth reconsidering the reasons that monks enter monastic life. Previous studies have tended to focus on the initial revival and to emphasise active religious or religio-nationalistic motivation and/or rational choice on the part of parents or young men (Schwartz 1994; Goldstein 1998a; Kapstein 2004; Makley 2007). However, my fieldwork suggests that a process of socialisation within the monastic moral community and young men's imaginings of monastic life are important factors which have been overlooked, but which serve to contextualise not only pathways into monastic life, but also the decreasing numbers entering monasteries.

7.4.2 Pathways into monastic life

Individual pathways into monkhood can involve a complex mesh of religious, economic, social and cultural reasons for both parents and boys. As in traditional Tibetan society, there have been various reasons for parents sending their children to monasteries: as a means of merit-making, to fulfil a promise to a deity and as a culturally valued career for extra sons or orphans (Mills 2003 p.40; Kapstein 2004 pp.233-234; Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.69; Makley 2007 p.249; Childs 2008 p.121). Bass (1998 pp.103-105) and Makley (2007 p.260) argue that during the 1980s and 1990s other reasons included the poor state (and in some cases complete lack) of secular education in Tibetan areas and a preference for monastic education, deemed more culturally relevant.

Some boys were forced to become monks by their parents. Four men I interviewed explicitly said they had been sent to monasteries by their parents.

Two of them (both now ex-monks) said that they did not want to be monks. For example, Tenzin reluctantly entered monastic life when he left school, aged 18, because his parents wanted him to assist his cousin who had been recognised as a reincarnate lama (C/N). On the other hand, some young men directly countered the interests of the household in their individual aspirations to become (or not become) a monk. Akhu Palsang, for example, said that he ran away from school after being beaten by his teacher because his Chinese was poor. His parents wanted him to train as a lay tantric practitioner (*sngags-pa*) so that he could stay at home and have a family, but he wanted to study Tibetan. He went to his uncle who was a monk, and his uncle spoke to his parents who finally agreed to him entering the monastery (T/R).

Perhaps more commonly, there is a convergence of aspirations. It is fairly common for Tibetan men to consider becoming a monk at some point in their childhood (p.240). Rongwo Akhu Tenpa, who entered monastic life in 1992 aged 12, said that when he was young he really wanted to be a monk because:

... I thought being a monk was fun. I didn't have any other reason. My parents took two of us brothers to the lama and asked who should be a monk. Alak chose me and I became a monk. Honestly speaking, I wouldn't attribute it to family pressure. I myself really wanted to be a monk. I thought it was fun. Of course there was pressure from my parents as well. They wanted one of us to study this cultural heritage which has been handed down from our ancestors. All of the people at home are farmers who have never had educational opportunities. So like that they had big ideas (T/R).

Akhu Tenpa's story does highlight the religio-nationalistic motivation and cultural aspirations of his parents. However, his imaginings of monastic life as 'fun' also show his socialisation within a community in which monasteries and monkhood were a normal part of life and society, not an extraordinary vocation. This is a significant factor that has been overlooked in previous studies.

In their own understandings of why they became monks, men see their interactions with other monks and their own imaginings of monastic life as

important. Forty-one of the men I interviewed in Amdo who became monks during the post-Mao era said something about their pathways into monkhood, either directly in response to a question about this, or through their accounts of their lives (Tables 7.2 and 7.3). Although the group covers a wide range of ages (16-52) and years of entrance to monasteries (1980-2006), this is not intended as a representative sample, but rather a collection of individual narratives.¹³ There are various reasons for advising caution before drawing comparative conclusions between different age groups. In particular, younger monks were in general less confident and articulate in interviews (p.55). Moreover the depth of the data varies: I spent many hours talking with some of these men, but others I met only once for as little as 30 minutes. However, certain patterns emerged from these narratives.

Most men expressed personal agency in becoming a monk. Twenty-eight explicitly stated (sometimes emphatically) that they wanted to become a monk or that it was their choice (Table 7.2). Makley (2007 p.251) says that the monks with whom she spoke and who had entered monasteries during the early reform years 'invariably expressed a sense of prideful agency' at having participated centrally in the revival by having taken monastic vows to become a field of merit for the laity.¹⁴ Some monks with whom I talked stated religious or religio-nationalistic motivations. For example, Akhu Lodrö became a monk when he was 23. At that time, he was a demobbed soldier waiting to be allocated a government job:

During that time my grandfather said 'you may not agree, but if you would consider my wishes then you should become a monk'. I thought long and hard. I had been in the army and when I returned they let me join the Party and the local government also took me in. Then the policy of religious freedom was introduced. ... I became a monk thinking that if I become an official I will be sure to get some money, but to become a monk is beneficial for both this life and the next (T/R).

¹³ The monks I interviewed who were older than 52 entered monastic life before 1958.

¹⁴ Makley (2007 p.252) states that she interviewed 18 monks ordained in the reform period, but does not say how many entered in the early years.

Table 7.2. Pathways into monastic life: personal agency and understanding
(Source: interviews with monks)

Note: Numbers 18, 28, 30 and 36 are no longer monks. Number 1 described himself as having becoming a monk in 1975, although he was unable to enter a monastery until 1980.

	Year became monk	Age became monk	Age (2009)	Wanted to be / own choice to be a monk	Sent by parents	Recruited by lama or monks	Did not understand Buddhism/ monkhood
1	1975	17	51				
2	1980	12	41				
3	1980	13	45				
4	1980	15	42				
5	1980	15	44				
6	1980	16	45				
7	1980	17	46				
8	1980	23	52				
9	1981	14	42				
10	1981	15	43				
11	1982	14	41				
12	1983	13	39				
13	1983	15	41				
14	1984	14	39				
15	1984	17	42				
16	1984	18	43				
17	1984	24	50				
18	1985	15	39				
19	1985	16	40				
20	1987	15	37				
21	1987	16	37				
22	1987	16	38				
23	1989	21	41				
24	1990	12	31				
25	1991	13	31				
26	1991	14	32				
27	1991	15	33				
28	1992	11	28				
29	1992	12	29				
30	1992	16	33				
31	1992	19	36				
32	1993	13	29				
33	1994	15	29				
34	1995	10	24				
35	1996	14	27				
36	1997	18	30				
37	2001	13	21				
38	2004	15	20				
39	2005	16	22				
40	2005	17	21				
41	2006	13	16				

Table 7.3 Pathways into monastic life: reasons for entering monkhood
(Source: interviews with monks)

Note: Numbers 18, 28, 30 and 36 are no longer monks. Number 1 described himself as having becoming a monk in 1975, although he was unable to enter a monastery until 1980.

	Year became monk	Age became monk	Age (2009)	Reasons for entering monastic life		
				Other monks ¹	Socio-economic ²	Study/ practice ³
1	1975	17	51			
2	1980	12	41			
3	1980	13	45			
4	1980	15	42			
5	1980	15	44			
6	1980	16	45			
7	1980	17	46			
8	1980	23	52			
9	1981	14	42			
10	1981	15	43			
11	1982	14	41			
12	1983	13	39			
13	1983	15	41			
14	1984	14	39			
15	1984	17	42			
16	1984	18	43			
17	1984	24	50			
18	1985	15	39			
19	1985	16	40			
20	1987	15	37			
21	1987	16	37			
22	1987	16	38			
23	1989	21	41			
24	1990	12	31			
25	1991	13	31			
26	1991	14	32			
27	1991	15	33			
28	1992	11	28			
29	1992	12	29			
30	1992	16	33			
31	1992	19	36			
32	1993	13	29			
33	1994	15	29			
34	1995	10	24			
35	1996	14	27			
36	1997	18	30			
37	2001	13	21			
38	2004	15	20			
39	2005	16	22			
40	2005	17	21			
41	2006	13	16			

Notes to Table 7.3

¹ Including: living with monks; spending time at a monastery as a child; being advised by monks (elders and/or relatives); seeing others becoming monks; admiring elder monks; seeing and admiring monks in general.

² Including issues of livelihood and education such as: difficult family circumstances; security of livelihood; care of relative monks/lamas; lack of secular educational opportunities; unhappiness at school; difficulties of life as a farmer/herder.

³ Including: to study Tibetan Buddhism; to study Tibetan language and culture (in one case, explicitly rather than Chinese); to serve Tibetan Buddhism; to serve others through religion; to work for the next life rather than this life.

Many however, like Akhu Tenpa, understood their initial attractions to the monkhood as less purposeful than this. In fact, it was fairly common for monks to say that they did not really understand much about Buddhism or the value of monastic life when they joined their monasteries (Table 7.2). When I asked one of my interlocutors why he became a monk in 1980, he laughed and said that he had been encouraged by some elder monks and that he himself thought it would be good. 'It was not because I understood the real meaning of Buddhism, for example, realisation of the meaninglessness of *samsāra* or aspiration for liberation' (T/R).

Some monks said that they wanted to study Tibetan language, culture and/or Buddhism and/or had socio-economic reasons for entering monasteries (Table 7.3). However, the most common theme in their narratives was attraction to the monastic life through interactions with other monks: they had lived with elder monks, spent time in monasteries as a young child, seen and admired other monks, or been advised by monks about the greatness of monastic life. Their conceptions of the 'attraction' to monastic life are also grounded in the framework of karma and rebirth, according to which a child is understood to have a predisposition towards the monkhood through the virtuous actions of his previous life. Akhu Jikme explained his pathway into monastic life in 1990 in both social and karmic terms:

My idea to become a monk is maybe due to karmic imprints. At that time I was 12 years old and did not know that if I became a monk it

would accumulate merit. I did not think according to that logic. ... When I was young I admired monks and my parents and this elder monk used to tell me 'it would be good if you become a monk'. So because of a combination of this and my karmic imprints I became a monk. Other than that, I did not know much about any specific thinking about specific merits and things like that (T/R).

These individual perspectives show the importance of socialisation and imagination in individual pathways into the monkhood. Monks viewed the decreasing numbers of boys becoming monks as indicative of a shift in values. However, an alternative perspective is to consider this in terms of what Appadurai (1996 p.53) refers to as 'the peculiar new force to the imagination in social life today'.

Until recently, whatever the force of social change, a case could be made that social life was largely inertial, that traditions provided a relatively finite set of possible lives, and that fantasy and imagination were residual practices, confined to special persons or domains, restricted to special moments or places. ... In the past two decades as deterritorialisation of persons, images, and ideas has taken on new force, this weight has imperceptibly shifted. More persons throughout the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by mass media in all their forms. (Appadurai 1996 pp.53-54)

The socio-economic transformations of the past 30 years have opened up a 'wider set of possible lives' (ibid. p.53) for young men. While some are still attracted to the monastic life for a variety of reasons, many are choosing and/or being encouraged by relatives, peers or role models to follow a different path.

However, it is not simply that fewer boys are becoming monks. These changes have also made it increasingly possible and imaginable for monks to return to secular life.

7.5 Pathways out of monastic life

7.5.1 Monks returning to secular life

The vow of renunciation (*rab-byung*) is taken for life according to the Tibetan Buddhist monastic rule (the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*; T. 'dul-ba), unlike in Thailand where temporary ordination is common. In Tibetan societies, if a man decides to return to secular life this is viewed as a morally (karmically) negative action. Yet, increasing numbers of young men are leaving monasteries to return to secular life. This represents perhaps one of the most significant shifts in Gelukpa monastic moral authority and has been a pressing concern which has informed attitudes towards monastic development (see also Chapter 6).

Just as socio-economic changes and perceived hardships of monastic life are seen as a reason for fewer boys joining monasteries, they are also the main explanations my interlocutors offered for monks' disrobing. Akhu Kunga, a senior monk at one of Rongwo's branches said that just as every person has a different reason for becoming a monk there are many different reasons for disrobing.

Some monks become monks because they get carried away by the popular trend – 'oh people are becoming monks and I want to be a monk.' Then they become a monk and get bored with monastic life and return [to secular life]. Some people turn back because there aren't enough people to work at home. Some people turn back because they did not know how hard the monastic life is. To be a monk is very difficult. It entails hardship. You need to study hard and abide by rules. Once they become a monk they get fed up with these things and return to lay life. There are some who return to lay life because they encounter all the distractions of modern life through using computers, watching TV and listening to CD players, and believe the deceptive messages conveyed by some of these (T/R).

This narrative reinforces the point made in the previous section that social influence and imagination are important factors in pathways into the monkhood. It also expresses many of the common themes I heard from other monks and lay

people who spoke with me about the increasing numbers of young men disrobing: in particular a lack of understanding of the realities of monkhood, an unwillingness to withstand the hardships of monastic life and rule, and the corrupting influences of modern technology which enables the secular world and visions of ‘modern’ lay life, including sex and wealth, to infiltrate monastic space. Once again, there was an underlying moral rhetoric to these explanations, which are tied to wider narratives of moral decline (young men are no longer able to remain steadfast) and a perceived shift in societal values.

Yet, it is not simply that some young monks feel unsuited to, dissatisfied with, or unable to cope with the hardships of monastic life. They are also increasingly able to imagine for themselves possible lives other than the monastic one.

7.5.2 Disrobing as an imagined possibility

A banlok is the lowest of all humans

A cow is the lowest of all animals

Popular Amdo saying

Changing attitudes combined with new socio-economic opportunities have made disrobing an increasingly imaginable possibility over the past 30 years.¹⁵ The popular Amdo saying cited above, which positions former monks as ‘the lowest of all humans’, illustrates the social stigma attached to disrobing. The common term applied to monks who have returned to secular life is *dralok* (*grwa-log* or *banlok* (*ban-log*)). *Dra* (or *ban*) means ‘monk’. *Lok* can both mean ‘to return or turn away from’ and ‘a mistake’ and the compound *Dralok* carries both

¹⁵ To say whether it would have been a considerably less imaginable possibility prior to 1958 would require further research. Sherab Gyatso (2004 p.233) argues that there is an increased emphasis on individualism and personal choice in contemporary Tibetan societies (see p.199 n.1 on the ‘individualisation thesis’). However, there is evidence to suggest that disrobing may not have been as uncommon in the past as one might assume. Gendun Chöpel is one example, although he was an extraordinary individual. Mills (2003 p.315) cites an early 20th century account which contextualises the founding of a temple at Labrang in the 18th century in the moral decline of the time: ‘At that time ... the moral vows were observed very loosely, the cases when monks returned to mundane life were not uncommon’. Samuel (1993 p.150) mentions the practice of monks returning to lay life to preserve the household in the event of a brother dying, although it is not clear how widespread this was.

connotations: ‘the ex-monk has not only turned away from monasticism, he has also committed an error’ (Cabezón 2004).¹⁶ The term thus has a negative connotation and those who disrobe are looked down upon (see also Makley 2007 p.273).

However, as more monks have disrobed, it has become more commonplace and imaginable, especially for younger monks. It is something that monks talk about and think about as they see other monks return to lay life and maintain friendships with them. Moreover, the social stigma of being an ex-monk appears to be lessening as it becomes more commonplace, an attitudinal change that has also occurred in the Tibetan community-in-exile (Sherab Gyatso 2004 p.233).¹⁷ As Rongwo Akhu Chöpel put it, people still have a ‘bad attitude’ towards ex-monks ‘but it is not like before’, adding that some monks feel that those who disrobe are not to be blamed; their action is understandable when social change and their economic circumstances are taken into consideration (T/R). Therefore disrobing has become an increasingly imaginable possibility for younger monks who, for whatever reason, are not happy with monastic life.

Disrobing is much less imaginable for those who have spent longer as monks. Akhu Dondrub became a monk in 1982, aged 14, at a monastery which has recently seen large numbers of monks disrobing. When I asked if this had made him think about returning to secular life, he indicated that for him the question was irrelevant saying that he was already 40 years old (M/R). Some of the practical difficulties facing monks who disrobe were expressed by Kumbum Akhu Jyeltsen. He had told a mutual lay friend that monastic studies had no relevance for modern life and he wanted to become lay, but was concerned about how he would make a living. When I interviewed him, he would not say directly that he had considered disrobing, but when I asked what difficulties a monk

¹⁶ *Lok* can also mean to fall down. Makley (2007 p.244) translates *dralok* as ‘fallen monk’, drawing a comparison between this and the opposite spatialised trope of vertical deference used by Tibetans to refer to respect for monkhood, ‘placing monks up high’.

¹⁷ According to Sherab Gyatso (2004 p.233) it is ‘increasingly the case that monkhood is viewed as something in the nature of a career (i.e. in which failure or lack of suitability become possible and the prospect of a ‘career change’ may be contemplated).’

would have should he disrobe he said that there were many because he would need 'to start a new life all over again':

A lay person needs to earn a living whereas a monk can go to the monastic assemblies and doesn't need to do any work to earn a living. It's easier for the monk to find 10 yuan than for a lay person to find 1 yuan. A lay person has to earn everything through his own labour. So those monks who have been a monk for 10 to 15 years and returned to lay life, they really can't cope with the difficulties. They cannot do manual labour and it's difficult to do business. They haven't got stamina either. They might do okay for a year or two but then they can't maintain the same effort (T/R).

The reality that young men may disrobe is not only a problem for monasteries in terms of retention. It also appears to be having an impact on monastic recruitment. I was told that some parents were reluctant to send their sons to a monastery because they were concerned that they would disrobe. The mere fact of a boy entering a monastery does not provide any guarantee that he will remain there for a life-time of meritorious service. Akhu Jamyang Tenzin, for example, said that his parents had mixed feelings when he became a monk aged 19 in 1992 because one of his brothers had disrobed. They were happy for him to become a monk, but were worried and would be upset if he disrobed after a short time.

Similar to the co-existing motivations that may exist in parents wishing their son to be a monk, a son disrobing is problematic not only for religious (karmic) and social (status) reasons. There are also economic causes for concern: a boy who grows up and is educated in a monastery will not have received a secular education. He will therefore have lost the opportunity to pursue other secure, high status occupations, such as that of government official or teacher, and to provide economically for the household. As Akhu Lungtok put it, he will become 'stuck in limbo – somebody who is neither an able student nor an able monk nor a good religious person' (T/R). Therefore, as increasing numbers of monks disrobe, the monastic life is seen as an increasingly risky prospect for both the household and individual.

7.5.3 Palden and Sonam: the stories of two former monks

The complex individual trajectories of young men into and out of monastic life are illustrated by the stories of two former monks, Palden (E/R) and Sonam (E/R), both of whom now have secular professional occupations. While they cannot be taken as representative, their stories touch upon many of the issues discussed so far and reflect wider normative and socio-economic contexts.

Palden ran away from his monastery after two years. He had become a monk when he was 15 years old, influenced by various factors. When he was nine or ten years old, at the beginning of the monastic revival, his grandfather took him to Kumbum where he saw a monk from his village and he thought that perhaps it would be good to be a monk. He also had two cousins at the monastery who talked to him about the greatness of monastic life. His parents had conflicting attitudes: when he was at primary school his mother had asked him to become a monk, but his father was opposed and wanted him to become an official. After finishing middle school he made what he described as a conscious choice: he felt that if he did not become a monk then and instead went on to high school, he would end up with a job and would never become a monk. When he told his parents his mother was very pleased and his father unhappy. His mother contacted an elder monk from his village and they arranged for him to be admitted.

Palden enjoyed chanting and playing with the other young monks, but his home teacher was very strict and did not let him go out to play or study other subjects such as grammar and poetry. One of his cousins had left to go to India, and the other kept telling him that it was not good to be a monk because of homosexual practices within the monastery. The pivotal moment came when he and his cousin went to the grasslands to recite scriptures. They attended a ritual:

At the end of the ritual, I saw people drink this kind of water and I also drank it. And then I found out that it contained alcohol. So that made me feel, oh, I'm not a pure monk any more. So I decided I definitely couldn't stay in the monastery as a monk.

When he eventually found the courage to return home and face his family, his mother begged him not to disrobe and locked him inside the house. However, he

escaped over the wall and ran away to school with a friend from his village who wanted to leave an unhappy marriage.

Sonam's transition out of monkhood was a more gradual process. He had entered his local monastery at the age of 11. His father had died and his mother could not afford to pay school fees and so his older brother remained at home to help with farm work while he was sent to the monastery to care for an elderly relative. When he was 14, he left his home monastery and went to Lhasa with the aim of going to India. He stayed in a Lhasa monastery for only a short time before moving to the city to find work. By the time he was 17 he had started wearing lay clothes. However, he said that his heart 'stayed clean' until some time later he had sex with a girl:

I was sad the next day because I knew I couldn't be a monk any more.
If you do that the complete nature of you changes. ... I had sex with a
girl and I drank beer. I broke two rules and there is no way to go back.

Sonam said that he does not think he ever really wanted to be a monk. When he was in the monastery he had liked collecting and repairing broken things, such as radios. 'As a monk you really honestly and purely study and practise philosophy and meditation. But I did not do that. I was more interested in modern society'. He said he felt bad because he was not a good student and 'if I continued to be a monk, my family would feed me until my death'. He was also uncomfortable that, regardless of his state of mind, the local people 'just see the robes and respect you'. He thought that if he could not be a 'respectable person' he should no longer be a monk.

Sonam's and Palden's narratives contain many of the elements already discussed: the relationship of boys to the household and their simultaneous positioning as agentive individuals, the influence of other monks, and young men's experiences of the realities of monkhood. Despite the symbolism of the monastic robe in social relations (one of the aspects of monastic life felt by Sonam to be problematic), the pivotal moment for both men related to transgression of their monastic vows, although Palden had not committed a defeating offence (p.31 n.64). It was through their actions that they ceased to be

monks, whether or not they were still wearing robes and living in their monasteries. Both men mentioned various contextual factors in their transitions back to secular life, but also expressed a moral rationale for their decision to disrobe framed in terms of their own personal inability to live up to monastic ideals.¹⁸ For Palden, this was again linked to breaking a vow. For Sonam, it was his failure to live up to his understanding of the ideal monk and therefore the lack of value to his parents and community in him continuing in this role.

One of the most striking elements of these and other stories of men who have disrobed is their individual mobility. Palden ran away from his monastery relatively early on, in 1987. He described how terrified he was to return home and face his parents. Even today he does not (and asked me not to) tell people that he used to be a monk. Sonam (who disrobed in 1998) said that he did not tell his mother that he left monastic life until, many years later, he returned home to visit her. Nevertheless, both men made this agentive move out of monasticism against the wishes and interests of their households and in contravention of social norms.

7.6 Population and development

7.6.1 Monastic agency in recruiting and retaining monks

My fieldwork suggests that problems of monastic recruitment and retention have shaped monks' attitudes to monastic development. All monasteries are facing challenges in recruiting new monks as a result of demographic and socio-economic transformations and face the practical reality that young men may no longer stay monks for life. However, the extent of the monastic population decrease varied across field sites (Table 7.1). The explanations offered by monks for these variations directly linked the issue to the narratives of moral decline not only among young men, but also of monastic Buddhism at institutional level. Chapter 6 has shown that monks viewed the size of a monastery's assembly as an indicator of standards in education and discipline and emphasised the agency of

¹⁸ See also Sherab Gyatso (2004 p.234) who states that monks in exile who disrobe couch their justifications in 'the language of personal inadequacy' rather than in terms which represent a rejection of traditional values or a challenge to the institution of monasticism.

the monastic leadership in this. Thus, although there is little that monks can do about macro-level socio-economic changes such as the demographic transition, the monastic leadership is perceived to exercise a degree of agency in maintaining their populations, in particular where this is related to monks disrobing.

Monks at monasteries where numbers are reported to be holding steady or have only recently started to fall attributed this to the following interlinked factors: their reputation in the local community (Dechen, Gartse, Ditsa), their standards in education and discipline (Dzongngon, Gartse, Ditsa) and the guidance of their head lamas (Dzongngon, Gartse).¹⁹ Gartse is the only monastery that houses more monks than in 1958. Akhu Thubten thought that the monastery had attracted and retained many monks because of its 'traditional culture' and education (monks study the full Gelukpa curriculum), but above all it was because

... our lama has great power in his supervision of the monastery. He does not go to other places. He has done much for the education of the monks and the local people. Since his leadership is good, there are many who have gone forth on the Path [to Enlightenment] (T/R).

The emphasis placed by Akhu Thubten on the physical presence of the head lama, as well as his leadership, was echoed by other monks who viewed the poor example and absence of head lamas as a factor in monastic moral decline and, linked to this, the decreasing numbers of monks. To a certain extent, the qualities of individual leaders can be an ephemeral factor explaining the success or otherwise of any institution or organisation. However, reincarnate lamas have played a particularly significant role in Gelukpa monasticism as 'transmitters of lineages of tradition that related directly back to Buddhahood, a Buddhahood they simultaneously represented as *tulkus* [reincarnate lamas]' (Mills 2003 p.317). The position of a monastery's founding lama and his subsequent reincarnations as the 'parent' of the monks (p.143 n.41) thus derives from his simultaneous connection through lineage to the Buddha and his embodiment of Buddhahood, and also his tantric power to tame/discipline/subdue (*'dul*), which was the Tibetan term chosen

¹⁹ Akhu Konchok Trinley at Dzongngon also said that access to Buddhist teachings through DVDs and CDs had positively influenced the minds of the monks (T/N).

for the monastic rule (*'dul-ba*).²⁰ A weakening of the authority and morality of reincarnate lamas is thus significant in narratives of monastic moral decline.

Monks at monasteries experiencing a decline in their numbers see this as a pressing issue. Some have used very direct ways to try to maintain their populations. For example, many of the monks at one of Rongwo's branch monasteries had disrobed and so the monastic elders actively recruited boys by going out to speak to villagers in their patron community. Chapter 6 has shown that the issue of monks disrobing has been a contingent factor shaping attitudes towards monastic economic development and efforts to foster education and discipline. At both Ditsa and one of Rongwo's branch monasteries, it was also a reason given by monks for the decision to stop the *nyerwa* collecting contributions for *Dharma* sessions. They said that each *nyerwa* would feel pressure to better his predecessor. Some monks worried that if appointed they would be unable to raise the necessary funds and had left and disrobed.

Monastic development is thus in part shaped by pragmatic acceptance of the need to adapt the system to suit the (morally declining) times. For example, I heard stories circulating in the monasteries about monks who fell ill and died alone in their quarters, with nobody discovering their bodies for many days. I was told that many monks talked and worried about this solitary aspect of monastic life, as compared to the life of a householder with a spouse and children to care for him. Akhu Tsultrim is a senior monk at one monastery that has seen increasing numbers of monks disrobing. He believed the solution was to establish an old people's home and communal canteen (free) so that the monks 'do not have any other responsibilities apart from undertaking *Dharmic* tasks at appropriate times', thus echoing the logic of the financial/educational reforms discussed in Chapter 6. He saw the necessity of this reform as stemming from the changing times, making a (moral) distinction between the younger (reform era)

²⁰ See Mills (2003 pp.314-317) for a discussion of the connection between reincarnate lamas and the constitution of monastic discipline. Based on his interpretation of personhood as chthonic, he sees monastic ordination as ritual subjugation, the source of power for which is the reincarnate lama.

generation of monks and those of 'the old days'. The 'mental preoccupation' of contemporary monks, he said:

... is that once you become old there won't be anyone looking after you because you are a single simple monk. This is the reason they return to lay life. Nowadays people do not have faith. In the old days, the old people had strong faith and stamina. With strong faith they could take refuge in the Three Jewels [p.142]. Nowadays, we young people are not like that (T/R).

7.6.2 Monastic ideals versus pragmatic considerations

The above-mentioned examples and those discussed in Chapter 6 show how certain development approaches are seen by monks to reinforce lay/monastic boundaries, thus maintaining monastic reputations and providing a suitable environment to cultivate monks' minds and their commitment to (lifelong) monastic life. However, pragmatic concerns over maintaining assemblies, conditioned by the 'sense of the times', can also be in tension with monastic ideals. This is evident if we return to the fates of the two groups of Ditsa monks that split in 1995. Ditsa was successful in growing its population following the split, but numbers at Tashitse have dwindled - in fact it had the biggest proportional decrease of any of my field sites. A senior monk, Akhu Lungrik, explained:

Today there are only 71 monks. Some people went to India, some returned to lay life, some went to other monasteries, such as Kumbum and Rebgong and some became doctors or went to study medicine. That's why the number is decreasing. There are more people leaving than coming in. [...] This year only one person has become a monk and six monks have left: four returned to lay life, one went to Shachung and one went to a medical clinic in Tsekhok (T/R).

This reflects issues already discussed: fewer boys are joining and monks have left to go to India, disrobed or become doctors. It also suggests a sense of competition between monasteries. Monasteries should ideally be distant from urban areas (p.193). This is reflected in the Tibetan for monastery, *gonpa* (*dgon-pa*), 'gon' also meaning solitude. Yet, monks at Tashitse felt that its remoteness

from urban, and therefore 'modern' life, was a reason for monks leaving. This was again explained by reference to moral decline. Akhu Kelden Gyatso, a monastic teacher, said that Tashitse was an ideal place to study because there were few distractions, but nowadays there were increasingly fewer diligent students (T/R). The monastery's remoteness is one of the contextual factors differentiating Ditsa and Tashitse, another being its position as a practice, rather than scholastic centre.

The different experiences of the two groups of monks have given them different perspectives on the relationship between economy and education. Tashitse's monks invert the logic of the Ditsa monks, who see their 'triumph' in monastic recruitment and retention as directly related to their privileging of education and discipline over economic and external development (Chapter 6.5). Akhu Lungrik, on the other hand, argued that in order to improve its standards, the monastery must first increase its numbers since it was hard to implement monastic discipline and produce better scholars with few monks. He believed that it needed to improve its material conditions in order to achieve this: if it could provide a monthly allowance for monks, people would want to join 'maybe from other monasteries as well as ... from amongst the local population':

The monks' stomachs are full and the monastery does provide food and clothes. But this does not satisfy today's youths. Therefore, if we need to increase the number of monks in this monastery the living standards need to be in pace with contemporary life and should not be below those of wider society. If there is that sense of being more comfortable at the monastery, then people would come (T/R).

Yeshe Gyatso also felt that developing the monastic economy was crucial to his plans to develop education at his monastery (p.224), another site at which many monks have disrobed. He said it was a 'difficult situation':

If you say 'you need to study' then you need to guarantee their livelihood. ... Nowadays society has developed and there has been economic progress and there needs to be a little improvement in monks' livelihoods. If there is no improvement then the situation is not good for

the monks. If they want to improve their livelihoods they have to do it for themselves because the monastery cannot provide for them (T/N).

Yet, the idea that monasteries must improve material conditions and even compete with the economic standards of secular life is in tension with the ideal of the 'simple monk'. The increasing material well-being of monks and their engagement with modern life is an element in contemporary narratives of moral decline (Chapters 5 and 6). It is thus a factor in public perception and therefore monasteries' reputations and ability to attract monks. It is also seen as a factor in monks disrobing (Chapter 6). This brings us once again to a recurring theme of this study: the balancing act played by monastic actors who face the continuing challenge of maintaining the bases of monasticism (including their population) within changing cultural and socio-economic, as well as political, contexts.

Problems of monastic recruitment and retention are important factors in many of the debates and dilemmas explored in previous chapters. Should monks be involved in collective business activities? On the one hand, this can be a mechanism for increasing disbursements to monks, encouraging them to study and limiting their need to engage in potentially corrupting private economic activity. On the other hand, it is also perceived as dangerous, blurring monastic/lay boundaries and influencing monks to disrobe. How strict should monastic discipline be? For example, should monks personally own televisions and computers? If the rules are very rigid this might make it difficult to attract new monks and lead to some monks disrobing. However, lax rules are seen as a factor in monks returning to secular life. Should the monastic curriculum be broadened to include subjects such as basic Tibetan literacy, Chinese and English? This would enable monks to participate in modern life and could make monastic life more attractive. Yet it is also perceived to erode the distinction between monastic and secular life. One of my friends, who used to be a monk at a scholastic monastery, has argued forcefully for the broadening of the monastic curriculum so that monks who are not interested in philosophy have something else to study. Another friend, Karma, agreed that monks should receive a secular education, but then again: 'What is a monk? That's the big question. What is a monk – what is the role of a monk?'

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted one of the most pressing concerns for monastic actors: that their monastic assemblies are shrinking as fewer boys join monasteries and increasing numbers disrobe. Although state-monastic interactions have been a contingent factor in population dynamics at some institutions, this chapter has argued that socio-economic transformations have brought deeper structural changes that pose much greater challenges for monastic actors. Moreover, problems of retention and recruitment have influenced monks' perceptions of what is good and desirable at a local level. In some cases this has provoked tensions between conceptions of the 'ideal' in relation to monastic Buddhism and the urgency of maintaining large monastic populations in the context of contemporary 'realities'.

The issue of a shrinking and ageing population is, of course, not unique to Tibetan Buddhist monastic communities. For example, an ageing membership and the need to look after the elderly are also seen as problems facing contemporary Christian monastic communities (Wittberg 2000 p.330). Yet, while these dynamics of 'modernising' social change and their impacts on my field sites may reflect more global trends, they are particularly significant in the Tibetan context. The extent of monasticism, its integral position in Tibetan society and community life and association with Tibetan identity (Chapter 6) mean that the shifting population dynamics of monastic Buddhism have societal implications extending far beyond the monastic community. Moreover, as monasteries make efforts to recruit and maintain large populations within a rapidly changing society, their role is being questioned by individuals such as my friend Karma. Thus, as the next chapter will discuss, societal value shifts and a shrinking population do not simply represent a challenge for monastic actors who seek to maintain their local monastic assemblies. They also raise questions about the future of the very institution of mass monasticism in Tibetan societies and thus the shape of Tibetan society at large.

Chapter 8

A future for ‘mass monasticism’?

Thus far this study has explored the dynamics of the revival and development of Gelukpa monasteries in Rebgong and western Bayan over the past 30 years, largely from the perspectives of monks. This chapter extends the focus of the discussion to consider briefly the institution of mass monasticism itself. Above and beyond the negotiations of religious space by monastic and state actors, the revival of Gelukpa monasticism was contingent upon the re-formation of the monastic moral community (Chapter 3). The extent of the Gelukpa revival would not have been possible without this community’s shared investment in the values underpinning the ideology of ‘mass monasticism’ (Chapter 1): that monkhood is a life-long service, that the younger the age at which boys enter into monastic life the better, that the more monks there are the better and, by extension, that a form of monasticism that accommodates men of various dispositions is supported. This chapter explores the extent to which the political, economic, social and moral dynamics explored in this study are challenging these general ‘conceptions of the good’. This tentative discussion at the macro level thus touches upon the sustainability of the institution of mass monasticism in contemporary Tibetan societies and highlights some possible avenues of future research.

8.1. Monkhood as a lifelong service?

Chapter 7 has shown that it is a practical reality that men no longer necessarily remain monks for life and that the social stigma of the disrobed monk is lessening. However, has the basic norm that a monk should be a monk for life been challenged? In general, my research suggests that Tibetans still view monkhood as a life-long service. When I talked with monks about the system of temporary ordination in Thailand they were unable to conceive of such a system for Tibetan Buddhism: after all, ordination is taken for life according to the monastic rule followed by the Tibetan tradition.

However, one of the narratives I collected towards the end of my fieldwork hints at the possible beginnings of an ideational shift. Akhu Kunsang, a monk in his forties, was talking about a monastery in his area that recently experienced an influx of young recruits. I had previously been told by a senior monk that many men had disrobed, but it had maintained its assembly through new admissions. Akhu Kunsang said that he had been told by monks at the monastery that many children from the village were both becoming monks and attending school. He was told that the reason many children were being sent to the monastery was because people believed that an individual who had been a monk was a better person than someone who had never been a monk, even if he disrobed. Therefore, it did not matter if he ended up returning to secular life.

Akhu Kunsang's comments were surprising since disrobing is understood to carry negative karmic consequences, even if it is becoming more commonplace. Some ex-monks expressed a similar logic about the benefits of having experienced monastic life, feeling that this distinguished them in culturally and morally positive ways from other men. Village elder Ngawang, who had been a monk in 1958 and married during the Maoist years, commented that the literate members of the male lay elder population had previously been monks. Sonam, whose story was told in the previous chapter, said that he and other ex-monks thought differently from other men, implying that they had a more compassionate mind. He cited their treatment of women as an example.

The person who was never a monk will cheat on girls and kick them out easily, with no heart, nothing. The person who was a monk is always thinking and takes a long time, even if they don't like the girl. It's natural because they learned that from the monastery and these guys are always thinking about this, always, that's their nature. I used to have a girlfriend for a few years and we fought a lot. Sometimes it made me really unhappy and she was really unhappy too. My friends said 'kick her out', but I couldn't do that. It was hard, she might be sad. It was horrible for me (E/R).

However, the story told by Akhu Kunsang was the only instance in the narratives I collected where such logic was applied more widely. When I went back to test the story, a monk from the monastery in question said that there was no such way of thinking: it was no longer surprising for monks to disrobe, but it was still considered to be an action that carried negative karmic consequences. The reason that there were many young monks was that the monastery elders had actively recruited in the *lhade*.¹ More research, beyond the scope of this study, would be needed within the lay, as well as monastic community to further test these ideas. Yet, the mere fact that Akhu Kunsang mentioned such attitudes is significant for the present discussion. He was generally relatively conservative in his views, but when I asked him what he thought about this approach he simply said: 'I would prefer them to become monks and remain in the monastery, but I don't think there is anything wrong with it' (T/R). Whether this represents the beginnings of a new pragmatism towards monastic recruitment will hopefully be answered by future studies.

8.2. 'The younger the better'?

There is clearer evidence of an ideational shift amongst at least some Tibetans regarding the ideal age for boys to enter monasteries, linked to narratives of moral decline and the increasing numbers of young men disrobing.

Before 1958, most monks were placed in monasteries by their parents as young boys so that they would be socialised within the monastic community before their minds were exposed to the polluting influences of household life (p.29). Many Tibetans (monks and laity) still consider this to be the best system. For example, Akhu Kunsang (who himself became a monk in 1980 aged 17) said that in his experience there was a big difference between monks who entered the monastery as children and those who became monks when they were 18 or older after finishing school. The former became familiar with monastic norms and conduct from a young age and felt at ease with them:

¹ Personal communications with key informants, February and March 2011.

Those who became monks during their childhood were very young, and so ethical conduct has become ingrained. Some of those who became monks at 18 or over have been to school. Their conduct is very bad and among them there are even those who smoke! They don't have the patience to stay in and study. So in my opinion there's a huge difference. If they become a monk after they have gone to school it is very difficult to remain a monk for long because of their old attitudes. Their conduct is indeed bad! (T/N).

However, concern over the increasing numbers of young men disrobing presents a challenge to the normative logics of sending boys to monasteries. There is a perception that many who disrobe do so because they became a monk without understanding the lived realities of monastic life or what it means to be a monk (Chapter 7). Some of my interlocutors, including monks, therefore thought it better for young men to make a conscious decision to become monks when they were older, after having finished high school or even university.

Divergent views on this issue were voiced during a discussion with a group of male postgraduate students, including Chöpel and Jikme. Both believed that many children nowadays were unwilling to become monks (p.242). However, in principle, Chöpel was a proponent of the 'younger is better' ethic and cited senior Gelukpa figures as examples to be followed. Jikme, however, disagreed.

Chöpel: For example, Master Tsongkhapa was four when he became a monk and so was the Dalai Lama. When they are small, they are very pure, very simple and have not been influenced.

Jikme: My thinking is a little different. I think that relatively many Tibetans are little when they become monks. But I think it is better after they graduate, after their thinking is developed and then their knowledge is wider. If you become a monk when you're small, you don't know about external life. Then when you reach a certain age, you start to be introduced to outside society and then your thinking changes and you become lay (C/R).

When I talked with people about the ideal age for entrance to the monastic life, their responses were generally not expressed within the framework of neo-liberal values relating to the rights of the child. Instead they revolved around the central issue of which system was likely to produce monks closest to Buddhist normative ideals. Moreover, which was most likely to result in boys remaining monks for life? Was it better that the monastic rules and ways of life are habituated from a young age, or that young men consciously chose to enter monastic life?

8.3 'More is better'?

8.3.1 The high quality/low quantity ideal

The 'more is better' ethic of the early reform years, reflecting pre-1958 conceptions of the good regarding mass monasticism, is also being called into question by at least some Tibetans. There were challenges to this ethic from the beginning of the reform period, with some Tibetan intellectuals viewing the revival of monasticism as holding back Tibetan modernisation (Shakya 1999 p.403; Makley 2007 p.258). This viewpoint appears to have been popularised in Amdo in the last decade by writers such as Shogdung, who has been influential amongst many Tibetan university students (see also Hartley 2002).

However, critical responses to mass monasticism have emerged that extend beyond this secular elite. Makley (2007 p.276) has argued that the 'inappropriate' behaviours of many monks in Labrang during the 1990s led villagers, monks and officials to question the ethic of mass monasticism and to appeal to a high quality/low quantity ideal that echoed state discourse. Studies of the revival of major monastic centres have also directly linked an emphasis on monastic 'quality' among Gelukpa elites to a change in their attitudes towards 'quantity'. Goldstein (1998a pp.31-34) argues that there was a shift in emphasis from quantity to quality at Drepung for economic and ideological reasons. Makley (2007 pp.255-257, 312 note 28) points to a similar shift at Labrang, arguing that there was a convergence between the interests of the Gelukpa elite in purifying monastic Buddhism to maintain its authority and the state's efforts to distil the monastic community down to a group of scholar monks, approximating the 'ideal state monastic subject'.

I also found an emphasis within the monastic moral community on 'quality', in terms of discipline and education, and have explored various reasons for this (Chapter 6). Those amongst my interlocutors who felt there were 'too many monks' tended to put forward the argument that most did not conform to imaginings of the ideal Gelukpa monk, the unspoken implication being: 'so of what use are they?'. There is, therefore, evidence that the value of the traditional system and ideology of mass monasticism, which worked to incorporate men of various dispositions, is being questioned by both monks and lay people.

However, this high quality ideal does not necessarily correlate to a corresponding ideal of low quantity. On the contrary, we have seen that monks at regional monastic centres, branch monasteries and practices centres consider monastic discipline and education to be directly linked to their ability to recruit and maintain large monastic assemblies. Moreover, a large monastic population is cited as evidence of and/or an essential requirement for improving monastic 'quality' (Chapter 7). Rather, my fieldwork suggests that the invocation of the high quality/low quantity ideal amongst both monks and laity needs to be viewed in the context of national imaginings.

8.3.2 Fertility, nationality and culture: too many monks?

The ideational shift away from the 'more is better' ethic is linked to more general concerns over the future of the Tibetan people, in particular the decline in the Tibetan population and tensions between the nationality's physical reproduction and its survival in terms of its language and culture. Chapter 6 argued that monks are viewed as agents of continuity of the culture that incorporates the shared values, beliefs and morality distinguishing 'Tibetan' from other. This identity is felt to be under threat from assimilation into a 'Chinese' modernity. Although the role of monks in Tibetan figurations of modernity may be contested for socio-economic reasons, most people with whom I spoke see the continuation of monasticism as linked to the survival of a 'Tibetan' people.

However, low fertility among Tibetans and the in-migration of non-Tibetans have generated fears of assimilation that place an increased emphasis on the reproductive responsibility of young men and women, not just for the good of the

household, but for the good of the Tibetan people. Childs (2008 p.275) and Makley (2005b p.283) have commented on the tension between women's reproductive responsibilities and celibate monasticism in the context of the gender politics of contemporary nunhood. However, the issue also extends to monkhood. Indeed, the 14th Dalai Lama has pointed to the dangers to the Tibetan population 'if the number of monks and nuns is raised further' (Tenzin Gyatso 2006).

This tension was evident in a conversation with Akhu Konchok. He emphatically stated that the increase in numbers of nuns was 'not good', but when I asked him why, his reply incorporated the reproductive responsibility of both women and men:

Nowadays if we think of the interests of the nationality or religion, we need to prioritise the nationality. One needs to think about one's own people. Of course one needs to think about religion. If the people have freedom, if religion is practised under such circumstances, then it will flourish and endure for a long time. Otherwise it will not endure. If all the men become monks and all the women become nuns then this nationality will go into decline in a short time. Once the nationality goes into decline, then its religion and language will also decline. That is not good at all (T/R).

His narrative underscores the demographic pressures undermining the social structure which made mass monasticism feasible in the past. He then turned to the issue of 'quality' and made a judgement about the relative value of the average monastic in these pressing contemporary circumstances.

From a religious perspective, of course there are a lot of people who are practising religion and nowadays lots of people are becoming nuns, but there isn't this genuine intention to practice religion. Out of ten nuns, only a few of them have the intention to practice genuine religion. ... Monks are exactly the same. It is not good. Maybe from a religious perspective it might be good, but the nationality is becoming extinct (T/R).

Akhu Konchok thus makes a distinction between a religious perspective, according to which the simple existence of large numbers of monastics is good (p.28), and a nationalist perspective. His challenge to the conception that 'more is better' therefore arises from his moral judgements about the motivations of contemporary monastics (the issue of 'quality') *combined with* his concerns for the survival of the Tibetan people.

In general, I found that tensions between different conceptions of the good regarding mass monasticism as an ideal were, like Akhu Konchok's narrative, expressed in relation to an imagined Tibetan collectivity. For example, this was evident during an interview with two Tibetan postgraduate students in Lanzhou: Jamyang, a young man from a village in Rebgong, and his friend Drolma, a young woman from a nomadic area in south-west Gansu. Jamyang believed that quality was more important than quantity of monks, but that 'too many monks is not good, even if their quality is high'. Drolma, on the other hand, said that it was important for her that monasteries simply existed: 'This is in my heart (C. *xin*). Even if the quality of monks is not good, the idea of the monastery being there is reassuring. It is custom - a way of thinking'.

Jamyang: Our land mass is big, but our population is small, so having too many monks is not good for the population. Also, we need different kinds of education. If all education is Buddhist then what about law, economics and so on? We also need to develop these to develop our culture. If we do this inside the monastery, this is in conflict with Buddhism and the practice and life of a monk. So again, it is not good if too many people only study Buddhism.

Jane (to Drolma): What do you make of these arguments?

Drolma: I think that having many monks is good because they are continuing Tibetan culture in the monasteries. The level of Tibetan of school students is not good. They study maybe two hours per day, whereas monks spend all their time studying traditional language and culture. Anyway, I don't think it is ever going to be the case that there are too many monks now (C/R).

However, there are other, competing priorities even for those who continue to view mass monasticism as the ideal in terms of both nationality and religion. Drolma's final comment that it is no longer possible for there to be 'too many monks' reflects the tensions she herself experiences between her own her beliefs and sense of what is good regarding monasticism in society and her conception of the good at the level of the household. I asked her whether, if she had a son, she would want him to be a monk. She replied: 'If I only have one child, no. If I have two or three... maybe' (C/R).

Finally, in light of the challenges to the form of Gelukpa monasticism revived in the 1980s, it is worth briefly touching upon its position within the broader religious landscape. One of the limitations of the present study has been its focus on the Gelukpa monastic revival, a focus that was necessary to provide sufficient depth to the discussion given the lack of available ethnographic data (Chapter 1). Yet, within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition monasticism is not the ultimate basis of authority: non-monastic virtuosi have always played important roles and 'the general status of monks ... cannot be taken for granted' (Mills 2003 p.53; see also pp.25-26). Therefore, a potentially fruitful avenue of future enquiry would be to compare the dynamics illuminated in this study with the revival and development of other traditions.

For example, there is a strong Nyingmapa influence in Rebgong, even though it is an important Gelukpa centre (see Dhondup 2011). What is the relationship between the Gelukpa and Nyingmapa revivals? Two monks told me that their parents had tried to persuade them to train as Nyingmapa lay tantric practitioners instead of joining a Gelukpa monastery.² This would have enabled them to pursue a religious life and to marry and have children. Given current demographic pressures and the growing number of monks disrobing, will more boys/men take the path of the lay tantric practitioner rather than that of life-long celibate monasticism? On the other hand, anecdotal evidence suggests that there may have been a relative increase in the numbers of celibate Nyingmapa monks.

² The lineage of a Nyingmapa tantric practitioner (*sngags-pa*) is often hereditary, passed from father to son. However, individuals who do not belong to a lineage can also enter into this training (Dhondup 2011 p.14).

A comparative study of the revival and development of these traditions and the interactions between them might shed further light on this latest episode in the history of Tibetan Buddhist development, a history that Samuel (1993) has characterised as an ongoing process of tension and synthesis between its clerical and visionary/yogic aspects. The clerical side is 'the voice of realism, which accepts and works within the structures of state power' (ibid. p.374) and fits well with the terms of 'progressive' modernist discourses that privilege rationality and empiricism (Chapter 6.4.1). Yet, the visionary side perhaps has a different attraction in contemporary circumstances as 'a way of being, and a form of social and political activity, capable of flowing around and beyond any kind of hierarchical structure' (ibid. p.573).

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has brought the discussion to a reconsideration of the basic principles supporting the form of monasticism on which Tibetans have expended so much effort and energy to revive. It has shown that socio-economic changes and shifting values have not only resulted in certain monastic practices being challenged from within the monastic moral community. The very form of institutionalised monasticism that was revived in the early 1980s and its appropriateness in contemporary circumstances have been questioned. The norm of monasticism as a lifelong service has been undermined in practice, if not in principle. However, the very ethics of 'younger is better' and 'more is better' have been questioned in the context of contemporary perceptions of moral decline combined with socio-economic and demographic changes which have altered the social structure that supported mass monasticism.

The current form of monasticism is not sustainable if these basic underlying values are no longer shared. This exploration of the tensions between competing norms and co-existing conceptions of the good regarding monkhood from within the monastic moral community thus seems to raise questions about the future of mass monasticism in Tibetan societies much bigger than those raised by a two-dimensional analysis focusing on monastic-state interactions. The tensions

explored in this chapter are moral in nature in that they relate to coexisting conceptions of what is good and 'right' for various overlapping moral communities, including the monastic moral community, the household, the Tibetan community and, at the universal level, all sentient beings. These and other moral dimensions of the Gelukpa revival that have emerged from this study are drawn together in the conclusion, which discusses the dynamics revealed by this study's attempt to 'see beyond the state'.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

In the introduction, I suggested that by paying attention to the local logics of the good and desirable and the (often complex) moral dimensions of processes of change it might be possible to see beyond the state to other dynamics in the process of monastic revival and development. This conclusion first revisits and elaborates on the notion of moral boundary negotiation raised in the account of my encounter with Akhu Lobsang at the beginning of this dissertation. It then draws together the different strands of the research to show how monastic revival and development has been shaped by an iterative process of moral boundary negotiation. It demonstrates that an approach that moves the analysis beyond the domination/resistance dichotomy enables a thicker understanding of processes of change and restores meaningful agency to situated actors in their pursuit of projects that are defined by the local logics of the good and desirable, rather than the terms of the dominant power.

9.1 Seeing beyond the state: negotiating moral boundaries

An exploration of the shifting mundane bases of monasticism ‘from the ground up’ has shown that monks in Rebgong and eastern Bayan are not simply moving within and around constraints imposed by the state and, even when they are, the way in which they move not only relates to ‘the state’ or state actors. As well as negotiating public space, they are negotiating, as both individual and institutional actors, multiple, overlapping and shifting moral boundaries. These boundaries demarcate the sphere of ethical action for Gelukpa Buddhist monasticism and monks in the contemporary world.

Morality is of course only one of the dimensions influencing actors’ movements. Socio-economic, cultural and moral considerations all shape social life to varying degrees in different times and places (Lamont 1992 p.181). Moreover, reasons and motives (instrumental and ethical) are complex and mixed (Sayer 2011 p.170; see also p.21). This has been shown for example in the

analysis of monastic economic reforms which have been driven by a complex mixture of practical necessity and ethical considerations (Chapter 4). Nevertheless, by focusing on its moral dimensions, it is possible to gain a fresh perspective on a process of monastic revival and development that has been intermeshed with, but not exclusively dominated or defined by, its relationship to the state.

The idea of boundaries has become an important conceptual tool across a wide range of social science research (Lamont and Molnár 2002 p.167). Moral boundary-work has been shown to be one of the ways in which individuals and communities, including Tibetans, differentiate themselves from and define their identity in relation to others. 'Negotiation' can, in this sense, imply an arranging or settling of boundaries. However, it can also convey a sense of movement, of finding a way through, around or over boundaries. These two senses of negotiation are similar to de Certeau's (1988 pp.35-39) distinction between strategies (which define space) and tactics (which are ways of operating within that space). Monks have been negotiating moral boundaries in both of these senses. By way of example, I will return to the account of my encounter with Akhu Lobsang which opened this study and encapsulates many of the issues discussed within it.

Firstly, as an institutional actor, Akhu Lobsang has been involved in a process of evaluating and (re)defining what is ethically acceptable or not acceptable and in what circumstances. We saw that he changed his mind about the appropriateness of a monastery developing self-supporting business activities, but he also told me that individual monks were not permitted to engage in trade or business. He was thus drawing a line between business for the monastery as a collective (appropriate) and monks privately engaging in business activities (inappropriate). He also (similarly to many other monks) drew a distinction between alms collection (now banned by his monastery) and voluntary donations (permitted). As an institutional actor and part of the monastic leadership, he has thus played a part in (re)defining the limits of the ethical space within which monks may appropriately engage in profit-making business activities and the ethical relationship between the monastery and its patrons.

At the same time, he was feeling his way along, moving within, around or over moral boundaries in a step-by-step process of ‘muddling through’, interpreting ‘the results of and reactions to an initial step in order to determine the next step’ (Scott 1998 p.328). His initial sense that it was inappropriate for a monastery actively to develop businesses was challenged when he saw the monastic economic system in India. He appeared very proud of his subsequent role in developing the monastic economy through profit-making ventures and its benefits for the soteriological as well as mundane interests of the institution, but also said it should not ‘become too much’. Moreover, his original sense of uneasiness with regard to the ethics of a monastery engaging in commercial activities resurfaced when he showed me around the medical clinic. He emphasized the service it provided for the monks and local lay people: ‘At the hospital, if you have to pay 40 yuan, maybe here it will be 20 yuan or less *because we don’t want to make a profit*’ (emphasis mine).

My encounter with Akhu Lobsang thus underscores not only the moral dimensions of monastic revival and development, but the relationship between these different modes of negotiation. The following sections draw together the different strands of the research to show how monastic revival and development have been shaped by an iterative process of negotiation as movement (within, around, beyond moral boundaries) and negotiation as arranging or settling (redefining moral boundaries).

9.2 Local logics

In Chapter 1 I argued that resistance (or its opposite) can be an unintended consequence, rather than a conscious purpose, of projects that are defined and shaped by ‘the local logics of the good and desirable and how to pursue them’ (Ortner 2005 p.144). It was suggested that, following Ortner (2005), we consider two modalities of agency. Agency as organised around the axis of domination and resistance is (in the context of this study) defined by the state-society relationship and can, as Sahlins puts it, ‘cover every historical eventuality’ in some combination (Sahlins 2002 p.52). Practices that converge with state discourse and

policy represent ‘accommodation’, while those opposing or subverting state defined limits of legitimate action are forms of ‘resistance’. This study has shown that other logics emerge when these practices are examined as the exercise of agency in the pursuit of projects.

9.2.1 Beyond ‘accommodation’

Some of the patterns identified across my field sites appear to have placed monasticism within the boundaries of state-defined religious space, such as reforms to the monastic economy and the emphasis on ‘quality’. However, I have argued that these patterns do not simply represent the adaptation and accommodation of institutionalised Buddhism to the modern category of ‘religion’ in the PRC (Chapters 4, 6 and 8).

State-imposed definitions of the sphere of legitimate action for Gelukpa monasticism are contingent in monks’ assessments as to the *possibility* of taking particular paths and may inform the way they tactically move through this space (for example, finding ways around monastery quotas or age limits). However, my research suggests that state-imposed ‘walls’ and ‘paths’ have little *moral* force. The ethical contours of the terrain that monks are negotiating has shifted less through state-monastery interactions, than through local, translocal and transnational exchanges of ideas and practices within the moral communities with which monks identify and with whom they therefore share common values.

It has already been argued (Chapter 1) that the existence and continuity of monasticism is contingent on a dependent relationship and division of labour between monastic and lay communities, which together form the ‘monastic moral community’. Grounded in the framework of karma and merit, these are the deeper ‘structures’ (Sewell 2005 p.146) or ‘taken-for-granted and cross-situational rules’ (Lamont 1992 p.190) that inform the social world of monasticism.

However, the values and judgements that constrain and enable monks negotiating monastic development are not just drawn from the institutionalised norms and values of Gelukpa monasticism, but from ‘a continuous dialogical process’ (Zigon 2008, cited in Sayer 2011 p.159) of interaction between their senses of right and wrong in relation to others about whom they care and/or

towards whom they feel some sense of obligation and the judgements and evaluations of these others. The moral force of these judgements is greater the 'stronger the commonality of values' (Sayer 2005 p.6).

This iterative process of moral boundary negotiation is evident, for example, in the dynamics of monastic economic reform discussed in this study (Chapters 4 and 6). The ethics of certain institutionalised economic practices have been challenged from within the monastic community. Monks have drawn on a social moralism conditioned by the discourse and practices of the Gelukpa community in exile, local narratives of moral decline and national imaginings and their interplay with Mahāyāna ethics (Chapter 4). Yet, economic reforms have been contested and have produced new ethical dilemmas (Chapter 6).

These debates about appropriate monastic development show that monks' evaluations are drawn from their mediation of lived experiences as situated actors. They have become wary of particular practices through experience of their impacts on, for example, education, discipline and monastic retention, and (interlinked to this) the way in which particular practices, individuals and even entire institutions are perceived and judged by others (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7). Akhu Lobsang, for example, said that businesses should be developed in moderation lest they have a negative impact on education and discipline 'as at Labrang and Kumbum' (p.3).

However, these debates also show that monks have drawn on examples and ideas from other times and places. In particular, contact with the monasteries and the Gelukpa hierarchy outside the PRC appears to have had a particular impact on the 'younger generation' of monks, making them feel differently about monastic organisation, financing and education systems and leading them to re-evaluate what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate for monasteries and monks in contemporary times. The moral force of 'modern' yet 'Buddhist' values, still grounded in a 'belief-based way of knowing the world' (Adams 2008 p.111), appears to be much greater than the moral exhortations of an external, competing order, the moral/legal framework of which privileges values irrelevant to the pursuit of the monastic project. Therefore, the revival and development of

Gelukpa monasticism in Amdo has been shaped by wider changes in Gelukpa monasticism and, more generally, Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan societies, both within and beyond the boundaries of the PRC.

As we have seen, moral judgements about what is right for a monastery and its monks are intermeshed with evaluations of what is felt to be right for ‘the people’ (*mang-tshogs*) or the Tibetan people or nationality (*mi-rigs*). The emphasis on a ‘social moralism ... a solidarity with the people that defines you morally’ (Lamont 1992 p.31) is particularly prominent in sGo-yon’s polemical essay, when he appeals for monastic reforms in terms of their relationship to the ‘fate of the whole Tibetan people’ (p.144). In this context the moral community in question is an imagined Tibetan collectivity. I have suggested that monks’ identities as ‘Tibetans’ have conditioned the ethical value they accord to particular paths, for example, in the context of monastic economic reforms (Chapter 4), scholasticism and discipline (Chapter 6) and their conceptions of the good relating to ‘mass monasticism’ (Chapter 7).

However, a social moralism oriented towards the ‘Tibetan community’ is intermeshed with the social moralism of Mahāyāna Buddhism, with its normative emphasis on the bodhisattva motivation, which extends the moral community to all sentient beings. Such solidarity defines their virtue and distinction as ‘monks’ and thus (ideally) moral exemplars – a responsibility heightened in the context of contemporary narratives of moral decline and national imaginings (Chapters 4 and 6). It was apparent for example in the narratives of monks, such as Akhu Lobsang, who emphasised the services they provided to the community through their commercial activities (see also Chapter 6). It was also evident in the trope of ‘reducing the burden on the people’ (Chapter 4), which was often drawn in relation to members of a moral community at a local and particular level (the villagers and nomads of the monastery’s patron communities); and in the critiques of monks and lamas who accumulate personal wealth rather than feeding this back into their monastic communities (Chapters 4 and 5), which by extension serve ‘the people’ at both local and universal levels through their soteriological mission.

Thus, in pursuit of the project of monastic revival and development, monks' practices (actions, speech, thoughts, perceptions, feelings) are constrained and enabled by their multiple positioning as 'Tibetan' 'Buddhist' 'Gelukpa' 'monks' who belong to particular localities and monasteries. There can be tension between conceptions of the good in relation to an individual's role and responsibility within different moral communities and the relationship towards one or another moral community may be privileged in different contexts. Goldstein (1998a) highlights such tensions, bifurcating two, distinct moral communities, arguing that 'once some Drepung monks began political dissidence in 1987, all monks were forced to reassess whether their primary loyalty was to Buddhism and their monastery as in the past or to their nationality and the Dalai Lama' (ibid. p.42).

However, the lived practices of individuals I interviewed are not this clear cut. Even when oriented towards pursuing a particular project, such as monastic development, the boundaries between moral communities (which are not just those of 'nationality' and 'religion') are fuzzy and overlapping. It is therefore not surprising that there are apparent contradictions in the ways in which individuals (monks and lay people) view monastic development and the position of monasteries in contemporary society. Overlapping and contested conceptions of the good can lead to ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction. This is not due to an irrationality or inconsistency or lack of belief in a particular value, but through the complexity of the ethical landscape through which these individuals are moving and the relational nature of morality. It is entirely 'logical' that Akhu Lobsang may be both proud of and uneasy about developing profitable businesses or, for example, that Akhu Konchok may believe that there are too many monks (p.269) and yet also express genuine concern that numbers are decreasing (p.231), or that Drolma may feel that the more monks there are the better, yet she still does not want her own son to enter monastic life (pp.270-271).

9.2.2 The terms of 'resistance'

This study has shown that tourism, as a site of monastic-state interaction, is an arena in which the dynamics of "massive" power relations, like colonialism' (Ortner 2005 p.143) are particularly pronounced (Chapter 5). These dynamics

have conditioned monastic attitudes towards tourism development, which is perceived differently to other monastic commercial activities and has been resisted by some monks in their discursive and/or physical practices. However, I have argued that the terms of this ‘resistance’ have not been solely defined by the state-society relationship, but are also connected to conceptions of value and meaning not tied to the state. This argument is reinforced by juxtaposing different forms of development and considering their relationship to the monastic moral community and the merit-based moral economic foundation of monastic Buddhism.

Although the establishment of monastic businesses is contested (Chapter 6), the basic mechanism of monastic financing that has been developed in Rebgong and eastern Bayan over the past 30 years is the endowment fund (invested in money-lending and monastic businesses), which has historical and doctrinal roots in not just Tibetan Buddhist, but also early Indian monasticism (Chapter 4). The capital for these funds still generally originates in the gifts of the ‘faithful’ (*dad-ldan skya-ser*; *dad-ldan mang-tshogs*) (although see pp.128-129). It is therefore generated from within the monastic moral community and remains embedded within a merit-based moral economic framework.

In addition, it is primarily monks and lay people from within the monastic moral community who use these businesses, which (when viewed in a positive light) can benefit both lay and monastic communities and provide religious (alongside more mundane) services. The shops make much of their profit from sales of incense and other products used in devotional practices, the buses are used for pilgrimage tours as well as more mundane purposes, and Tibetan medicine is strongly linked to Buddhism as well as being a social service (Chapters 4 and 6). Moreover, use of these businesses has been reinterpreted by some people as a form of giving in itself (pp.133-134). Therefore, although there is ambivalence towards monks’ involvement in business, these kinds of commercial ventures at a collective level do not necessarily undermine the moral logics of monasticism.

The current model of state-sponsored mass tourism, on the other hand, transgresses the boundaries of the monastic moral community, bringing 'outsiders' into monastic space and disembedding monastic financing from its merit-based moral economic framework. This kind of tourism not only poses a greater risk of disruption and polluting interactions than other businesses, but (from the perspective of the monks I interviewed) it also has little positive ethical value. Chapter 5 showed that tourism can be conceived as being for the good if tourists are, to at least some degree, operating within the monastic moral community (thus transforming tourism into a form of merit-making activity). However, unless tourists have some investment in shared values, there is a risk that monastic tourism becomes a tool of exploitation (of and by both tourists and monks), rather than functioning as a process of mutually beneficial exchange.

These shared values do not necessarily have to be oriented towards the soteriological goals of Buddhism and the moral community is not necessarily the monastic moral community as defined here. Monks may also conceive of monastic tourism as being for the good if it increases awareness of and support for 'Tibetan culture', of which monasticism is an integral part (Chapter 5.5). In this context, the tourist stands inside the boundaries of a moral community brought together through the 'modern' values of a liberal rights-based discourse. Within this framework, Gelukpa monasticism is viewed as an integral element and important symbol of a 'culture' under threat. However, as already argued (p.280), these communities overlap. Moreover, the logics of the monastic project are rooted in its soteriological/moral, rather than socio-economic or purely 'cultural' value even (or perhaps *even more so*) in relation to an imagined Tibetan collectivity (Chapter 6).

Despite the difference in the way in which tourism is perceived, this study has shown that there is an underlying unease towards both monastic business and tourism grounded in the same ethical issue: the undermining of the boundaries between the lay and monastic communities that order the social world of monasticism and underpin its merit-based moral economic framework. The erosion of these boundaries in practice and/or belief undermines the integrity of the moral community upon which the continuity of monasticism depends.

Therefore an underlying logic to monastic development has been the affirmation of these boundaries through the negotiation (as movement) and renegotiation (as definition) of ethical space. The following section returns to further examine one of the patterns that emerged from the research, the shift away from institutionalised alms collection from patron communities, as an example of this dynamic.

9.3 (Re)negotiating ethical space

9.3.1 (Re)negotiating the ethical relationship between patrons and monks

I have argued (Chapter 3) that the monastic revival was based on the reordering of the social world and re-enactment of historical networks of relationships of dependency between lamas, monasteries and communities. This restored the monastic moral community in both a general sense, and in a particular sense at local monastery level, albeit within radically altered political, social and economic contexts.

Since the initial revival monastic actors at most of my field sites have renegotiated the boundaries of the ethical relationship between monasteries and their patron communities by first resuming and then distancing themselves from methods of institutionalised alms collection (Chapter 4). Contingent factors in the latter movement have included both practical necessity and moral considerations (Chapter 4). When conceptualised in relation to the monastic project rather than state-society relations it is also possible to see how this movement has worked to reinforce (rather than undermine) the normative framework upon which the Buddhist monastic economy is based.

The representation of giving as a 'burden' on the laity (and the associated moral logic for developing self-supporting activities) would appear to undermine Buddhist ethics, according to which giving, particularly to monks, is a meritorious act (p.23). Reflexive questioning of the taken-for-granted dependency between lay and monastic communities would therefore also appear to undermine the monastic

moral community and monasticism's merit-based moral economic framework.¹ However, having considered the moral dimensions of internal pressures for reform, the opposite would appear to be the case.

By distancing themselves from practices with connotations of coerced giving, my interlocutors (monastic and lay) are re-establishing the possibility of an ethical relationship of giving between monks and lay people.² Monks are not eschewing sponsorship. Rather, they are drawing a boundary between different forms of patronage that works to *reassert their morality and compassion*. The assertion of the virtue of a particular monastic community (sometimes in contrast with others that act 'unethically') makes it more worthy of gifts. Moreover, since it is not the act itself, but the intention of the donor and her/his faith in the virtue of the recipient that make the act of giving meritorious (or not) (see also Mills 2003 pp.202-203), the distinction between forms of patronage also reasserts the virtue of the lay donors, whose motive and manner of giving are purified of any implication of reluctance.

Therefore, the drawing of a moral boundary between different types of sponsorship not only works to exclude certain practices from the sphere of legitimate action - an exclusion that happens to be in accord with state discourse and policy. It also works to create a space within which the patronage relationship between lay and monastic communities continues to be ethical in contemporary circumstances in the terms of Buddhist ethics. Monks may use the tropes of state discourse, but they are 'stolen' in the pursuit of their own project. To borrow from de Certeau (1984 p.85), they have drawn upon the 'invisible resources of a time which obeys other laws and which, taking it by surprise, steals something from the distribution owning the space'.

¹ Schwartz (1994 p.67) even argues that it is this relationship 'that Chinese religious policy finds threatening and attacks through sanctions'. However, he claims that Chinese policy proscribes 'voluntary donations' (ibid. p.69). Like Goldstein (1998 p.162 note 53) and Schrempf (2000 p.343 note 30), I found no evidence of this in policy or practice, although it can be problematic for monasteries to receive large donations.

² The villagers with whom I spoke also asserted the voluntary nature of donations (money, goods, labour). One group of lay women with whom I talked informally about local labour for temple building were very indignant when I asked them how the work had been organised; they insisted it was the voluntary, spontaneous actions of individuals.

9.3.2 The changing shape of the monastic moral community

Patronage relationships, and thus the shape of the monastic moral community, are not static and extend beyond the local. This study has focused on the changing conceptions of the good with regard to the relationship between monasteries and their patron communities and a wider imagined Tibetan community. It has been beyond its scope to provide detailed examination of the connections between reincarnate lamas, monks and monasteries, and Han Chinese patrons. However, these relationships are becoming an increasingly important part of the expanding network of patronage relationships extending beyond the local to the national and global. In other words, the shape of the moral community of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism is changing.

Moran (2004) has examined the dynamics of transnational and cross-cultural patronage of monasticism in his study of Tibetan Buddhism in Kathmandu. He suggests (*ibid* pp.73-78) that Asian sponsors (particularly those from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) have more 'natural' patronage relationships with lamas and monasteries than Westerners who tend to dichotomise economics and religion. However, the limited data gathered in this study indicate that (in eastern Qinghai at least) the dynamics of the Tibetan Buddhist patronage relationship with its Han sponsors are very different to the 'natural' inter-community patronage relationships which function largely through a non-discursive practical feel for the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1990 pp.60-61). These relationships, the changing shape of the Gelukpa monastic moral community and its impact on 'local' inter-community relationships deserve fuller consideration in their own right and are important topics for future research.

9.4 Affirming the moral past and negotiating change

As we have seen, monastic actors have sometimes challenged past norms in their negotiation of multiple and shifting moral boundaries and renegotiation of the contested sphere of ethical action (Chapters 4 and 6). Thus, 'resistance' is not only to be found in monastic-state relationships, but also within the dynamics of the monastic community. To elaborate on this point, I will return to a discussion

of the narrative of monastic moral decline which has been a recurring theme of this study. Monks frequently made comparative judgements that appeared to undermine monastic morality by denigrating the virtue of their own time, place, and/or generation, thus drawing moral boundaries between themselves and moral others. This has worked to both affirm the legitimacy of monasticism as a project, but also to create an ethical space for change in practice, enabling, as well as constraining monastic actors in their pursuit of what they sense or feel to be good and desirable as they negotiate the shifting contours of the moral landscape.

9.4.1 Affirming the moral past

A moral decline requires a moral 'other' in time and/or space. As we have seen, people often distinguished between the present and an idealised past. This was implicit in comments such as 'the minds of monks have been polluted and they mainly think about earning and spending money' (p.286); 'nowadays, most lamas are concerned with their own interests and accumulation of their own wealth' (p.138); 'nowadays people do not have faith' (p.259). By drawing these boundaries, monks are affirming a moral past and, to borrow from de Certeau (1984 pp.16-17), creating a 'utopian space' in which a possibility for the ideal exists.

This possibility, based on belief, is set against the realities of what is seen every day: for example, the increasing numbers of monks who are disrobing, displaying inappropriate wealth-seeking behaviours or being seen in inappropriate places such as video game parlours. It is affirmed through stories, which make the 'nature' of the present historically contingent (ibid. p.16). These stories are drawn from the exemplary lives of great figures of the past, including those contained in the Buddhist sūtras and the biographies of lamas, but also from the popular tales of the lives of the heroic figures who remained hidden and continued to practise during the Maoist period and from memories of the first flush of monastic revival in the 1980s. The possibility of the ideal is also affirmed through idealised institutional models in other times and places, such as the early Indian monastic university of Nālandā and the Gelukpa monasteries in India (Chapter 4).

The 1980s in many respects represents a liminal space of possibility and imagination, suspended between the past and the present. It was a time other than that of the ‘old society’, the morality of which has been brought into question through not only socialist, but also modern Buddhist discourse (for example, Dzungkar blo-bzang ‘phrin-las 1997; Gendun Chöpel trans. in Lopez 2009; sGo-yon 2009).³ It was also a time other than ‘the present’ time of material development and moral degeneration. Characterised as the ‘re-dissemination’ (i.e. third diffusion) of Buddhism in Tibet (p.104), it was a new beginning and is generally remembered in the narratives I collected as a time when life was hard but simple, and people’s minds were pure, steadfast and faithful. An insider’s narration of the revival of idealised monastic space during this period was examined in Chapter 3.

These memories, stories and imaginings of other times and places affirm a belief in the ‘ideal’. This not only offers examples of how to live (Sayer 2011 p.158) and allows for the maintenance of hope (de Certeau 1984 p. 17). It also affirms the morality and legitimacy of the monastic project in general and, more specifically, the recent Gelukpa revival. Yet, at the same time, the drawing of moral boundaries between an (increasingly distant) ‘ideal’ and the ‘real’ creates an ethical space for the transformation of established ‘traditions’.

9.4.2 Creating space for change

One of the dynamics of monastic revival and development illuminated by this study consists of the tensions between different visions of monastic development (in the wider sense) *within* monasteries. The younger generation have new ideas, values and conceptions of what is good in relation to monastic systems and practices. However, the elders, the ‘heroic’ monks and reincarnate lamas who represent continuity with the past and provided the authority for the monastic revival, have great authority. Puntsok, a former monk, remarked that it is not easy for the younger monks to implement changes. The elders are respected by the laity and have the final authority. If there is a difference of opinion, the elders are more powerful and ‘will win the battle’ (T/R).

³ Monks told me that the Dalai Lama has also given teachings on the negative aspects of some traditional monastic economic practices.

Many of the monks I interviewed were those among the younger generation who are now in positions of responsibility in their monasteries. They usually presented reforms as (at least partially) ethically driven in relation to 'the people' and/or the soteriological functioning of their institutions. As we have seen, this was often linked to the perceived moral decline of (an increasingly materialistic) society, which was explicitly or implicitly tied to a distinction between the qualities of the elders and (at least most of) the 'younger' generation. Examples explored in this study include methods of collective monastic financing (Chapter 4), collective support for the livelihood of individual monks (Chapters 6 and 7) and related changes to the education system (Chapter 6). Another issue that has been touched upon is the system of monastic leadership through reincarnation lineage (Chapters 4 and 6).⁴ It is even possible that attitudes towards the norm of monasticism as lifelong service are starting to change (Chapter 8).

On the one hand, these monks expressed a genuine 'sense of loss' in these morally troubled times. Their perspectives and practices have been conditioned by the 'sense of the times' and their experiences of its concrete manifestations, in particular the decreasing monastic population (Chapters 6 and 7). Yet, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the moral degeneration of 'the times' and the failings and weaknesses of the younger generation not only reinforces the virtue and heroism of the elders and thus the moral authority of the past upon which legitimacy of the monastic revival was based; but also allows room for ethically motivated reforms to institutionalised practice and 'traditions'. The ideal must be pursued within the contexts of the political, economic and social realities of the present time. Their negotiation of this moral boundary between past and present and the elders and the younger generation thus creates an ethical space for ways of being and doing that depart from past practices that, in at least some cases, the elders have sought to maintain.

⁴ The implications of challenges to this system extend far beyond Gelukpa monastic organisation to the very foundations of leadership and authority in Tibetan Buddhist societies. The religio-political role and status of reincarnation lineages, contested within both the PRC and Tibetan communities-in-exile, is a complex issue beyond the scope of the current inquiry and deserves much further exploration in its own right.

9.5 Concluding remarks

This study of Tibetan Buddhist monastic revival and development has attempted to move beyond an analysis framed in terms of state-society relationships, the 'Tibet question' and the politics of religion. While the available literature has emphasised the precarious position of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism vis à vis the state, the present study has highlighted the uncertainty of its position in relation to society. It has shown that conjunctures of changing political, economic and social realities have not only posed practical challenges for monks in Rebgong and western Bayan seeking to revive and develop their monasteries. They have also thrown open to question conceptions of the good with regard to institutionalised practices and, moreover, the very form of monasticism that was revived.

The monks with whom I talked were deeply concerned about the implications of rapid socio-economic and cultural transformations. They were also sometimes openly critical of state policies and often appeared beleaguered and frustrated by government restrictions. However, the present study has shown that they placed agency and responsibility within the monastic community for monastic development – the pursuit of a project that has been defined by local logics of what is good and desirable, rather than on the terms of the Chinese state. Local as well as national conditions have shaped their attitudes. For example, monks at the more remote and struggling Tashitse have a different perspective on the relationship between economic and educational development than that of the monks at Ditsa (Chapter 7). Yet the underlying logics articulated at these and other monasteries were the same: their long-term survival is dependent upon their ability to cultivate monastic education/practice and discipline and maintain their monastic assemblies in morally troubled times. They thus face the continuing challenge of maintaining the intermeshed soteriological and mundane bases of monasticism within changing social as well as political contexts.

The social dynamics of monastic revival and development are intermeshed with the complex processes of wider social change and 'modernisation'. These processes have been conditioned by the incorporation of Tibetan societies into the PRC and the resulting restructuring and transformation of the economy, politics

and society. However, as we have seen, state-defined space is superimposed upon pre-existing and newly emerging configurations of relationships that, to borrow from de Certeau (1984 p.201), 'lie in layers within it' and extend beyond it.

Thus, as monastic actors and other Tibetans configure and refigure their place in the world and their relationship to it (Adams 2008 p.119), struggling to 'maintain and modernise' (Kolås and Thowsen 2005 p.178), they are not doing so 'on Chinese rather than Tibetan terms' (ibid.). Rather, they are situated agents who have drawn upon the socio-economic, cultural and moral resources available to them in pursuit of their own projects, 'defined by their own values and ideals, despite the colonial situation' (Ortner 2006 p.152). In their pursuit of the project of Gelukpa monastic revival and development, monastic actors have been both constrained and enabled by multiple, overlapping, shifting and sometimes conflicting moral boundaries that are not necessarily tied to the temporal or spatial framework of the contemporary Chinese state. Thus the process of monastic development and its future has and will be shaped by the agency that monks exercise not only in their negotiation of state-defined religious space, but also in their negotiation and renegotiation of the shifting ethical terrain of a rapidly changing society.

Seeing beyond the state?

**The negotiation of moral boundaries in the revival and
development of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in
contemporary China**

Volume 2

Jane Eluned Caple

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Glossary

Akhu	<i>a-khu</i>	polite form of address for a monk
Alak	<i>a-lags</i>	term of respectful address for a lama
Amdo	<i>a-mdo</i>	eastern Tibetan province
Arjia Rinpoche		8 th in the Arjia reincarnation lineage, former abbot of Kumbum monastery who escaped into exile in 1998
Atīśa		Indian Buddhist master (982-1054), an important figure in the second transmission of Buddhism to Tibet
Bodhisattva	<i>byang-chub-sems-pa</i>	a being who has vowed to become reborn as many times as it takes to attain Perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings
Bonpo	<i>bon-po</i>	1) pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet; 2) organised religious tradition, often referred to as a form of Buddhism
<i>chiwa</i>	<i>spyi-ba</i>	monastic office
<i>chorten</i>	<i>mchod-rten</i>	a structure representing the cosmos and containing Buddhist relics
Geshe	<i>dge-bshes</i>	academic title awarded by Gelukpa monasteries
<i>gebké</i>	<i>dge-bskos</i>	monastic official responsible for enforcing decorum
Gendun Chöpel	<i>dge-'dun chos-'phel</i>	Influential Tibetan thinker and writer (1903-1951).
<i>Dharma</i>		Buddhist teachings on ways of practice leading to liberation from suffering
<i>Dharma door</i>	<i>chos-sgo</i>	lit. <i>Dharma</i> door, entrance to the <i>Dharma</i>
<i>gönnyer</i>	<i>dkon-gyner</i>	temple caretaker
Gelukpa	<i>dge-lugs-pa</i>	Tibetan Buddhist tradition
<i>sertri</i>	<i>gser-khri</i>	reincarnate lama responsible for looking after religious and secular monastic affairs (lit. golden

		throne)
<i>nyerwa</i>	<i>gnyer-ba</i>	monastery steward and/or fundraiser
Kagyu	<i>bka'-rgyud-pa</i>	Tibetan Buddhist tradition
Kālacakra	<i>dus-'khor</i>	tantric cycle (lit. wheel of time)
<i>khamsten</i>	<i>khang-tshan</i>	residential subunit in monastery
<i>Lamrim</i>	<i>lam-rim</i>	Tsongkhapa's treatise on the stages of the path to Enlightenment
<i>lhade</i>	<i>lha-sde</i>	patron community
<i>labrang</i>	<i>bla-brang</i>	1) residence/estate of a reincarnate lama; 2) Gelukpa monastery in Amdo / Gansu
Madhyamaka		the 'middle way' Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition founded by Nāgārjuna
Mahāyāna		the 'great vehicle'; branch of Buddhism followed by Tibetan and East Asian traditions
Management Committee	<i>do-dam-u-yon-lhan-khang</i>	body of monks responsible for running monastic affairs and liaising with state agencies
Milarepa	<i>mi-la-ras-pa</i>	11 th century yogin and poet
<i>dzö</i>	<i>mdzod</i>	Abhidharma, lit. higher <i>Dharma</i> , Buddhist psychology
<i>nangchen</i>	<i>nang-chen</i>	reincarnate lama's estate / residence
<i>nangso</i>	<i>nang-so</i>	title of local ruler
Nyingmapa	<i>rnying-ma-pa</i>	Tibetan Buddhist tradition
<i>ritröpa</i>	<i>ri-khrod-pa</i>	hermit monk
Rinpoche		term of respectful address for reincarnate lamas
Sakyapa	<i>sa-skya-pa</i>	Tibetan Buddhist tradition
<i>saṃsāra</i>		cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth
Sangdhor	<i>seng-rdor</i>	contemporary Tibetan writer and poet
Sangha (S. <i>saṃgha</i>)		lit. 'group', used to refer to 1) the community of 'noble ones' who have attained the first stage on the Buddhist path; 2) the monastic

Shartsang (lineage)	<i>shar-tshang</i>	community
Shogdung	<i>zhogs-dung</i>	head lama of Rongwo
<i>tulku</i>	<i>sprul-sku</i>	Pen name for the contemporary Tibetan writer bKra-rgyal
<i>thangkha</i>		reincarnate lama
Theravāda		painted or appliqué Buddhist scroll painting
Tsongkhapa	<i>tsong-kha-pa</i>	Buddhist tradition followed in southern and south-east Asia
treasure jar	<i>gter-bum</i>	founder of the Gelukpa tradition
Vinaya	<i>'dul-ba</i>	jar containing blessed/purified substances
		monastic rule (lit: taming/subjugation)

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Acronyms

CECC	Congressional-Executive Commission on China (US)
HKTDC	Hong Kong Trade and Development Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICT	International Campaign for Tibet
IOSC	Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China
QLJ	Qinghai Lüyou Ju
QRP	Qinghai Sheng Renkou Pucha Bangongshi
TCCW	Tibetan Centre for Compassion and Wisdom
TIN	Tibet Information Network

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Appendix A

Lists of interviewees

A.1 Monastics (age and detail as at date of interview, 2008-2009)

Note: When monks held particular titles, roles or posts these are indicated, including:

MC Serving or had served on the monastery Management Committee

Business Working in a monastery business, such a shop

Work Serving in a monastic post, such as *nyerwa* or *gonmyer* for the monastery (or *nangchen* where indicated)

Monks	Age	Detail	Monks	Age	Detail
1	70s	Elder	38	30s	Work
2	70s	Elder, doctor	39	30s	MC
3	70s	Elder	40	30s	Work (<i>nangchen</i>)
4	70s	Elder	41	30s	Work
5	60s	Elder, geshe	42	30s	Work
6	50s		43	30s	Work (<i>nangchen</i>)
7	50s	MC	44	30s	Teacher
8	50s	MC, <i>gebké</i>	45	30s	Teacher
9	40s?	Teacher	46	30s	Teacher
10	40s	Business	47	30s	
11	40s	Business	48	30s	
12	40s	MC	49	30s	
13	40s	MC	50	30s	
14	40s	MC	51	30s	
15	40s	Geshe, MC	52	30s	
16	40s	MC	53	30s	
17	40s	MC	54	30s	Reincarnate lama
18	40s	MC	55	20s	Business
19	40s	MC	56	20s	Work
20	40s	MC	57	20s	Work
21	40s	MC, <i>gebké</i>	58	20s	
22	40s	MC, <i>gebké</i>	59	20s	
23	40s	MC, <i>gebké</i>	60	20s	
24	40s	MC, <i>gebké</i>	61	20s	
25	40s	Work	62	20s	
26	40s	Lama, teacher	63	20s	(now disrobed)
27	40s	Teacher	64	20s	
28	40s	Geshe, teacher	65	20s	
29	40s	Teacher	66	20s	
30	40s	Geshe, teacher	67	20s	Reincarnate lama
31	40s		68	teens	
32	40s				
33	30s	Business	Nuns		
34	30s	Business			
35	30s	Business	1	40s	
36	30s	Work	2	40s	
37	30s	Work	3	30s	

A.2 Laity (age and occupation as at date of interview, 2008-2009)

Laity	Gender	Age	Occupation	Ex-monk?
1	M	70s	Arts/crafts	
2	M	60s	Village elder	Yes
3	F	50s	Farmer	
4	F	50s	Farmer	
5	M	50s	Village elder	Yes
6	M	40s?	Arts/crafts	
7	M	40s	Arts/crafts	
8	M	40s	Arts/crafts	
9	M	30s?	Doctor	
10	M	30s	Arts/crafts	
11	M	30s	Farmer	
12	M	30s	Teacher	
13	M	30s	Student	Yes
14	M	30s	Teacher	Yes
15	M	30s	Service industry	Yes
16	M	30s	Student (postgraduate)	
17	M	20s	Arts/crafts	
18	M	20s	Arts/crafts	
19	M	20s	Arts/crafts	
20	M	20s	Teacher	
21	M	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
22	F	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
23	M	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
24	M	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
25	M	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
26	M	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
27	M	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
28	M	20s	NGO worker	
29	M	20s	Student (undergraduate)	
30	M	20s	Student (undergraduate)	
31	M	20s	Service industry	Yes
32	M	20s	Student (postgraduate)	
33	M	20s	Businessman	Yes

Appendix B

Surveys

B.1 Survey aims, design and process

I conducted questionnaire surveys with two groups each of undergraduate and middle school students. The surveys were designed to test opinions that had emerged from informal conversations with young lay Tibetans about monasteries, monks and monastic economy. From the anecdotal evidence I had gathered in the lay community, students were often the most critical of certain aspects of contemporary monasticism, whilst also being the most vehement in their belief in the importance of the monastery and monks to the future of Tibetan culture.

Social surveys are a common quantitative research method, viewed as a means to generate 'quantifiable data on large numbers of people who are known to be representative of a wider population in order to test theories or hypotheses' (Bryman 1988 p.11). However, the surveys in the present study were designed as an efficient way to test and gather opinions in order to build local knowledge, rather than as a generalisable scientific theory or hypothesis testing tool such as the surveys used in correlational research. The surveys I conducted contributed to the overall contextualisation of the study and were a useful exercise in trying to organise my thoughts and test my assumptions. They have not been relied upon as a principal research method (see Vol.1 Chapter 2) and have only been directly cited in one part of the dissertation (pp.217-219).

In designing the questionnaires I used a combination of open and closed questions. Closed questions enabled me to code in advance, enabling easier and quicker data processing. Moreover, one of the aims of the survey was to feed in opinions (some of them arguably provocative) that I had heard from their peers to test the students' responses. For the university students I decided to use rating rather than ranking questions so that the students would not have to choose between categories. The exception was a question (2.5) which asked them to rank the most important forms of economic support for monks whom they knew. I also

included open-ended questions on key issues. The questionnaire for university students was designed first, and then modified and simplified for the middle school students in consultation with a middle school teacher. Rather than the more complex rating questions, I used a combination of one answer multiple choice and multiple answer multiple choice questions. Since the questionnaires were not a major part of the research I did not run a pilot survey, but they were tested on two individuals.

I collected responses from 105 Tibetan university students (52 males, 50 females and 3 unspecified; aged 20 to 22) and 149 Tibetan middle school students (85 males, 60 females, 4 unspecified; aged 15 to 18). The university students were all taking evening classes in English language and they therefore included students from both the arts and sciences.

The surveys were conducted 'on-the-spot' in the classroom. I explained my research and the purpose of the questionnaire, assuring the students that I was interested in their personal opinions and that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Both surveys were bilingual Tibetan-Chinese and students were encouraged to use the language with which they were most comfortable to complete the questionnaires (in some cases they used a mixture). At the middle school, a teacher talked the students through the questionnaire, reading out the questions and explaining how to complete them. At the university, a teacher explained the questionnaire and students were left to complete it by themselves, but were given the opportunity to raise any questions. In return for their co-operation I provided English-language conversation practice with each of the four groups and invited the students to ask me questions about the survey and my research. Copies of the two questionnaires are provided in the following section.

B.2 Questionnaires

B.2.1 University students

དགོན་པའི་དཔལ་འབྱོར་སྐོར་གྱི་རྟོག་ཞིབ་གྱི་དྲི་ག གློབ་གྲྭ་ཆེན་མོའི་གློབ་མ། ཉེས་སྤོང་དགུ་ཡོའི་རྒྱ་གསུམ་པར།
寺院经济调查表 / 大学生 / 2009 年 4 月

རྟོག་ཞིབ་གྱི་དྲི་བ་འདི་འདི་དམིགས་ལུལ་གཙོ་བོ་ནི་བོད་གྱི་གློབ་ཆེན་གློབ་མ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ད་ལྟ་ལ་མ་དེའི་ས་ཆའི་དགོན་པའི་དཔལ་
འབྱོར་དང་བོ་གནས་སོགས་ལ་ལྟ་རྒྱུ་ལ་གཞུགས་ཞིག་བཟུང་ཡོད་པར་རྒྱུ་ས་ལོན་བྱ་རྒྱུ་དེ་ཡིང་ལ། རྟོར་བ་དང་ཡང་དག་པའི་
ལན་ངེས་གཏན་ཞིག་མེད་པས་ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་ང་ལ་བསམ་རྒྱུ་དང་ལྟ་རྒྱུ་དངོས་ལུགས་རྟོགས་གནོང་ས།

说明：这是一份有关安多寺院的调查表。通过调查表，了解您对寺院当今经济状况及社会作用的想法。请回答下列问题。回答没有正误之分。请表述您的真实看法。

ཚན་པ། 1 第一部分

གཤམ་གྱི་སྤོང་ཆ་རྣམས་གྱི་ཁ་བསྐྱར་བ་དང་ཡང་ན་དྲི་བར་བོར་རྟོགས་ “ ” བརྒྱབ་ནས་ལན་གདབ་རོགས་གནོང་ས།
第一部分 个人信息 请把答案圈起来或填写在横线上

1.1 ཁྱེད་རང་ཚོ་མོ་གཉིས་ལས་གང་ཡིན། 性别： མོ། 男 མོ། 女

1.2 ཁྱེད་རང་ནས་སྐྱེས་པ་ཡིང། 您的出身年月：_____

1.3 ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ཆེན་ལས་ཅི་ཞིག་ཡིན། 您在大学的专业是什么？

a) བོད་གྱི་སྐད་ཡིག་དང་ཚོམ་རིག་ 藏语言文学

b) ལོ་རྒྱུས། 藏史

c) ཕྱི་ས་རིག་ 数学

d) དངོས་ལུགས། 物理

e) རྗེས་འགྱུར། 化学

f) ཕྱི་ས་འཕྲོད། 计算机

g) གཞན་པ་ (བྱི་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་ལོར་འབྲི་རོགས།) 其他学科 (请填写) _____

1.4 བྱིན་མཚན་གྱི་ཡིན། 您的籍贯?

1 ཁྲི་ལུང། 西宁	3c ཅུ་ཁོག། 泽库	5a རྒྱལ་ཚུ། 共和	6a མ་ཚེན། 玛沁	7a རྒྱ་དལ། 玉树
2a བ་ཡིན། 化隆	3d རོག་པོ། 河南	5b བི་ཀ། 贵德	6b དགའ་བདེ། 甘德	7b འཕྲི་ལྷོ་དཀ། 治多
2b ཡ་ཇི། 循化	4a རྒྱ་ཚུ། 刚察	5c གང་པ་ལུང་ལོ། 同德	6c པད་མ། 斑马	7c རྩ་ལྷོ་དཀ། 扎多
3a རེབ་ལོང། 同仁	4b མང་འབེལ། 海晏	5d མང་རྩ། 贵南	6d དར་ལག། 达日	8a ལུ་ཁྲུ་ཡུན། 乌兰
3b གཅན་ཚུ། 尖扎	4c ཚུ་ཡིན། 祁连	5e ཅུ་ལོང་ཚང། 兴海	6e མ་ལྷོ་དཀ། 玛多	8b ལུ་ཁྲུ་ཡུན། 都兰
གཞན་པ་ (བྱིན་གྱི་མ་ཚན་གསལ་པོར་འབྲི་རྟགས།) 其他 (请填写) _____				

1.5 བྱིན་གྱི་མ་ཚན་ལས་གཅིག་ལེགས་བཞིན་ཡོད། (མ་ཚན་གྱི་མ་ཚན་མོ་མོ་བ་གཉེར་བཞིན་ཡོད་ན་གཤམ་གྱི་དྲི་མ་ལན་ལས་གཅིག་ཡིན་བདམ་ཚོགས།) 您父母的职业 (可以选两个):

- a) འབྲོག་པ་ཡིན། 牧民
- b) རོང་བ་ཡིན། 农民
- c) དགོ་ཚན་ཡིན། 教师
- d) སྲིད་གཞུང་གི་ལས་བྱེད་པ་ཡིན། 公务员
- e) གཞན་པ་ (བྱིན་གྱི་མ་ཚན་གསལ་པོར་འབྲི་རྟགས།) 其他 (请填写) _____

1.6 བྱིན་ལ་མིང་སྲིད་ཡོད་དམ། 您有兄弟姐妹吗?

ལུ་མོ་དང་རུ་མོ་འདི་གུང་ས་ཀ། 有几个兄弟 _____

ལུ་ཅི་དང་སྲིད་མོ་འདི་གུང་ས་ཀ། 有几个姐妹 _____

1.7 གཤམ་ཉེ་ཡོད་ན་བྱིན་གྱི་མིང་སྲིད་རྒྱམས་ལས་གྲུ་བ་དང་ཇོ་མོ་ཡོད་དམ།
如果您有兄弟姐妹，您的兄弟姐妹中是否有僧侣或尼姑? (可以选两个)

- a) མེད། 没有
- b) ཡོད། ལུ་མོ་དང་ཡང་ན་རུ་མོ་གཅིག་གྲུ་བ་ཡིན། 有一个弟弟或哥哥是僧侣
- c) ཡོད། ལུ་རུ་ལས་གྲུ་བ་གཉིས་དང་ཡང་ན་གཉིས་ཡན་ཆད་ཡོད། 是，不止一个兄弟是僧侣
- d) ཡོད། ལུ་ཅི་དང་ཡང་ན་སྲིད་མོ་གཅིག་ཇོ་མོ་ཡིན། 是，姊妹当中一个是尼姑
- e) ཡོད། ལུ་ཅི་དང་སྲིད་མོ་ལས་ཇོ་མོ་གཉིས་དང་ཡང་ན་གཉིས་ཡན་ཆད་ཡོད། 是，不止一个姐妹是尼姑

ཚན་པ། 2 第二部分

ཚན་པ་འདི་ནི་དགོན་པ་དང་གྲུབ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལས་ལྟུང་དང་འཚོ་བའི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་ཇི་ལྟར་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་པ་དང་།
ད་ལྟའི་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཁྲོད་ཀྱི་དགོན་པ་དང་གྲུབ་པའི་སྐོར་གྱི་དྲི་བ་འགའ་ཡིན་ལ། རྣམས་ལ་དང་ཡང་དག་པའི་ལན་ངེས་གཏན་ཞིག་
མེད་པས་རང་གི་བསམ་ཚུལ་དང་གནས་ཚུལ་དངོས་དེ་འདྲིམ་གསལ་གྱི་རོགས་གཞོན་པ།

下列问题是关于您对寺院和僧侣经济来源的看法以及寺院和僧侣在当今社会的问题。在此提醒您，回答没有正误之分，请表述您的真实看法。如果空白不够，请填写在调查表末尾的空白页。

2.1 རྒྱུ་ཁྲུང་གི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་དཔལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་ཇི་ལྟར་དགོན་པར་རོགས་རམ་བྱས་ན་འོས་པ་རེད།

认为寺院应该怎样得到资助？

རྒྱུ་ཁྲུང་གི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་འཐད་མིན་གྱི་གྲངས་ཀ་རེ་གཏམ་རོགས་གཞོན་པ། 1 = ཉ་ཅང་འཐད་པ་རེད། 2 = འཐད་པ་རེད།
3 = འཐད་མིན་བཤད་རྒྱུ་མི་འདུག། 4 = འཐད་པ་མིན། 5 = གཏན་ནས་འཐད་པ་མིན།

请您给下列陈述打分。标准：完全同意 为1分，同意 为2分，不确定 为3，不同意 为4，完全不同意 为5。请把您认为最合适的一项圈起来

དཔེར་ན། གལ་ཏེ་དགོན་པས་རང་གི་ལྷ་སྡེ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལས་སྐོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སོགས་བསྐྱེད་ཞེས་པར་རྒྱུད་རང་ཉ་ཅང་འཐད་པ་
ཡིན་ན། རྒྱུ་ཁྲུང་གིས་ཡང་གྲངས་དང་བོ་ལ་གོར་རྟགས་། “འབྲི་དགོས།
例如，您完全同意这个陈述“寺院应该从自己的社区积极地收集捐赠”，您应该选择1:

དགོན་པ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལས་ལས་སྐོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སོགས་ཀྱི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་བསྐྱེད་ཅི་ ① 2 3 4 5
ཐུབ་བྱེད་འོས། 寺院应该从自己的社区积极地收集捐赠

ཉ་ཅང་འཐད་	གཏན་ནས་
པ་རེད།	འཐད་པ་མིན།
完全同意	完全不同意

དགོན་པ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལས་སྐོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སོགས་ཀྱི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་
བསྐྱེད་ཅི་ཐུབ་བྱེད་འོས། 寺院应该从自己的社区积极地收集捐赠

	1	2	3	4	5
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དགོན་པ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལས་སྐོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་
སོགས་ཀྱི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་བསྐྱེད་ཅི་ཐུབ་བྱེད་འོས། 寺院应该从社区之外收集捐赠

	1	2	3	4	5
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<p>དགོན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་བསྐྱོད་ཚེས་ལྷགས་པ་རྣམས་ལས་སློར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སོགས་ཀྱི་མཚན་རློན་བསྐྱོད་ལོས། 寺院应该收集汉族佛教徒的捐赠</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཕྱི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་རྣམས་ལས་སློར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སོགས་ཀྱི་མཚན་རློན་བསྐྱོད་ལོས། 寺院应该收集外国佛教徒的捐赠</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པའི་དཔལ་འབྱོར་དང་མཚན་རློན་རང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་དགོན་བདག་སྐྱོར་ལ་བརྟེན་ལོས། 寺院应该依靠寺主活佛的扶持</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པས་མི་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དགོན་པར་བྱིར་ཡོང་བའི་སློར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སོགས་བཀོལ་ལོས། 寺院应该利用教徒捐给寺院的财物</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པས་བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་ཚེས་ལྷགས་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་འདོན་སྤྲོད་བྱེད་ལོས། 寺院应该给俗人提供有偿的宗教服务</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པས་ཚོང་ལས་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་བཀའ་ལོས། དཔེར་ན་ཚོང་ཁང་དང་སློན་ཁང་སོགས། 寺院应该经营小生意，例如商店，门诊等</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པས་ས་གནས་ཀྱི་བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་སློར་མོ་བསྐྱིས་ནས་སྤྲོད་ཀྱི་འཕེལ་རྒྱུ་ལེན་ལོས། 寺院应该给俗人提供有息贷款</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པས་ལྷ་སློར་དང་ཡུལ་སློར་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་རྒྱ་ཚེར་བསྐྱོད་དང་དེའི་ཐད་ཀྱི་བྱ་ལུགས་ལེན་ལོས། 寺院应该发展旅游业</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པར་ཞིང་ས་དང་ཕུགས་ཚོག་ཡོད་ལོས། 寺院应该有自己的土地和牲畜</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>དགོན་པས་ཀྱང་ཟིའི་མ་ཀར་(股份)ལ་མ་དདུལ་བཀོད་ལོས། 寺院应该投资和持有股票</p>	1	2	3	4	5

2.2 ལོང་དུ་ལག་བཅུ་རྣམས་ལས་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་དགོན་པའི་དཔལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་ཡོང་ཁུངས་གཙོ་བོ་གང་རེད།

从上面的表格来看，您认为寺院主要的收入来源应该是那一些？

2.3 ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་གྲྭ་བ་སློར་གྱི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་ལ་རོགས་སྐྱོར་རྒྱུ་བྱེད་འདུག།

您认为怎样扶持个别僧侣？

	ཉུང་འཐད་པ་རེད། 完全同意			གཏན་ནས་འཐད་པ་མིན། 完全不同意	
གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་རང་རང་གི་ཁྱིམ་བདག་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་འོས། 僧侣应该得到家人的捐赠	1	2	3	4	5
དགོན་པས་རང་གི་གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་དཔལ་འབྱོར་དང་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་འོས། སྐུ་ལྷན་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་འོས། སྐུ་ལྷན་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་འོས། 寺院应该扶持自己的僧侣	1	2	3	4	5
ཁྱིམ་པའི་སློན་བདག་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་གྲྭ་བའི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་ལ་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་འོས། 俗人赞助者应该赞助僧侣们	1	2	3	4	5
གྲྭ་བས་ཁྱིམ་པ་རྣམས་ལ་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་འདོན་སྤྲོད་བྱེད་འོས། 僧侣应该对俗人提供有偿宗教服务	1	2	3	4	5
གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་རྒྱ་ནང་གི་ས་ཆ་གཞན་དག (དཔེར་ན་རྒྱ་དང་། ཕི་ཅིན། ཀོང་གི་གྲྭ་བུ། ལ་མོང་ནས་སློན་བདག་བཅའ་འོས། སྐུ་ལྷན་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་འོས། 僧侣应该到中国内地或东方寻找赞助人，比如说上海，北京，广州	1	2	3	4	5
གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཞིང་ལས་དང་ཕུགས་ལས་གཉེན་འོས། 僧侣应该耕作或放牧	1	2	3	4	5
གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་སྐྱུ་རྩལ་དང་ལག་རྩལ་གྱི་ལས་གཉེན་འོས། དཔེར་ན་ཐང་ག་བཞེང་ས་པ་ལྟ་བུ། སྐུ་ལྷན་གྱི་ཐད་ནས་རོགས་སྐྱོར་བྱེད་འོས། 僧侣应该从事手工业，比如说唐卡等	1	2	3	4	5

གྲྭ་བ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ཀྱིས་ཚོང་ལས་ཉིད་འོས།	1	2	3	4	5
僧侣应该做生意					

གྲྭ་བས་བྱིས་པ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལ་སྒོར་མོ་བསྐྱིལ་ནས་སྤྱིད་ཀྱི། (འཕེལ་ཏོག) ལེན་འཕེ།	1	2	3	4	5
僧侣应该给俗人提供有息贷款					

2.4 བོད་དུ་བཤུད་པ་དེ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལས་ཀྱི་བྱི་བས་མ་ཚུ་ལ་ལྟར་ན་གྲྭ་བ་སྤོར་གྱི་མཚན་རྒྱུན་ལ་རོགས་སྐྱོབ་ཇི་ལྟར་བྱེད་འོས།
 从上面的表格来看，您认为扶持个别僧侣主要的办法应该是那一些？

2.5 བྱི་བས་ཇི་ལྟར་བཟོ་བའི་གྲྭ་བ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ཀྱིས་ཇི་ལྟར་རང་གི་མཚན་རྒྱུན་བཟོ་བཞིན་ཡོད། བྱི་བས་གཤམ་གསལ་གྱི་དྲིམ་ལམ་རྒྱུ་ལས་གཏོ་ཕལ་གྱི་དྲིམ་པ་ལྟར་རེའུ་མིག་ཡང་གྲངས་ 1 - 8 ཡོད་པ་དེ་ཉིད་དུ་བྲིས།

您认识的僧侣是如何谋生的？请您为下列八个陈述排序。按照‘最不重要’到‘最重要’的标准：最不重要 序号为1，最重要 序号为8

- རང་རང་གི་བྱིས་པ་བཤུད་རྒྱུ་ལས་ཀྱིས་རོགས་སྐྱོར། 得到家人的捐赠
- གྲྭ་བས་བྱིས་པ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལ་ཚོས་ལུགས་གྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ། 对俗人提供有偿宗教服务
- དགོན་པ་གྱི་རོགས་སྐྱོར། 寺院的扶持
- ཚོང་ལས་ཉིད་འོས། 做生意
- བྱིས་པ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ལ་སྒོར་མོ་བསྐྱིལ་ནས་སྤྱིད་ཀྱི། (འཕེལ་ཏོག) ། 给俗人提供有息贷款
- ལྷ་རྩལ་དང་ལག་ལས། དཔེར་ན་ཐང་ག་བཞེངས་པ་ལྟ་བུ། 从事手工业，比如说唐卡等的收入
- ཤིང་ལས་དང་སྤྲུགས་ལས། 耕作或放牧
- གཞན་པ་ (བྱི་བས་གཤམ་གསལ་བོར་འབྲི་རོགས) ། 其他 (请说明) _____

2.6 དཔོན་པ་དང་གྲ་བར་རིམ་ལོན་ལྗོངས་ལྟེང་ལོས་པ་དང་མི་ལོས་པ་ལི་ཐད་ནས་ཁྱེད་ལ་རང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ལྷན་ཚུལ་དང་བསམ་འཆར་ཡོད་དམ། 对于寺院或僧侣是否接受赞助，您有何看法？

2.7 ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྱུང་ན་པོད་ཀྱི་ནང་བསྟན་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་དཔོན་པ་ནམས་ཀྱིས་ད་ལྟའི་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཁོང་དུ་གོ་བཅས་གལ་ཆེན་ཞིག་བསྟར་ཡོད་དམ། 您是否认为藏族佛教寺院在当代社会中起着很重要的作用？

a) ཡོད། 是

b) མེད། 不是

2.8 གལ་ཏེ་དཔོན་པས་གོ་བཅས་གལ་ཆེན་ཞིག་བསྟར་ཡོད་དམ། ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྱུང་ན་ད་ལྟའི་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཁོང་དུ་དཔོན་པའི་གལ་ཆེན་རང་བཞིན་གང་དག་ཡོད། 如果您回答了上述 2.4 的问题，您认为寺院在当今社会中起着什么作用？

ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྱུང་འཐད་མིན་གྱི་གྲངས་ཀ་རེ་གདམ་རོགས་གནོངས། 1 = ཉ་ཅང་འཐད་པ་རེད། 2 = འཐད་པ་རེད། 3 = འཐད་མིན་བཤད་རྒྱ་མི་འདུག། 4 = འཐད་པ་མིན། 5 = གཏན་ནས་འཐད་པ་མིན།

请您给下列陈述打分。标准：完全同意 为 1 分，同意 为 2 分，不确定 为 3，不同意 为 4，完全不同意 为 5。请把您认为最合适的一项圈起来。

	ཉ་ཅང་འཐད་པ་རེད། 完全同意					གཏན་ནས་འཐད་པ་མིན། 完全不同意
སློབ་གསོ་འདོན་སྤྲོད་བྱེད་པ། 提供教育	1	2	3	4	5	
པོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གནས་རྒྱན་འཛིན་དང་སྲུང་སྐྱོབ་བྱེད་པ། 保留藏族文化	1	2	3	4	5	

<p>བོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གནས་གོང་འཕེལ་དུ་གཏོང་བ། 发展藏族文化</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>ནང་བསྟན་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཉམས་ལེན་པ་རྒྱུ་ལ་འོས་འཚམ་གྱི་ཁོར་ལུག་ཅིག་བསྟན་པ། 为佛教修行提供一个适合的环境</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>ཁྲིམ་པ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་འདོན་སྲོད་བྱེད་པ། 为世俗团体提供宗教服务</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>ལྷ་སྐོར་བ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ཡིད་འགྲུག་རྒྱུ་པ་དང་ས་གནས་ཀྱི་དཔལ་འབྱོར་གོང་འཕེལ་དུ་ འགྲོ་བར་ཡན་ཚེགས་ཡོད་པ། 吸引游客，带动地方经济</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>ས་གནས་ཁྲུལ་སྤེལ་སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་བསྟན་པ་སྟེ། དཔེར་ན། དབུལ་ སྐྱོར་དང་། སློབ་གསོ། སྤྲོད་ཁང་སོགས་ཀྱི་ཐད་ནས། 提供社会福利服务，比如扶贫，教育，医疗卫生</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་ཚད་ལྡན་དང་ཡང་དག་ཡིན་མིན་གྱི་བྱ་སྲོད་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་ཐོག་ལ་ འདོན་པ། 引导文明的社会道德</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>མ་དཔལ་གཏོང་མཁན་རྒྱུ་ལ་ཚོར་བསྐྱེད་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་ས་གནས་ཀྱི་ དཔལ་འབྱོར་གོང་འཕེལ་དུ་འགྲོ་བར་ཡོད་པ། 吸引投资者，这样能帮助 当地经济的发展</p>	1	2	3	4	5
<p>2.9 ད་ལྟོ་མཚོ་ས་ཚའི་དགོན་པ་དང་གྲྭ་བའི་གོ་གནས་ཐད་ནས་བྱིད་ལ་རང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ལྟ་ཚུལ་དང་བསམ་འཚར་ཡོད་དམ། བྱིད་ཀྱི་ལྟ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་དེ་ལ་འགྲུར་ཕྱོགས་བྱུང་བཞིན་ཡོད་དམ། 您对安多寺院或僧侣在当今社会中的 作用有哪些评价和建议？这些作用有什么变化吗？</p>					

2.10 བྱིས་དཔྱད་འཇོན་པ་དང་གྲ་བར་ལྟ་ཚུལ་གཟུང་ཞིག་བརྒྱུང་ཡོད།
您对当今寺院和僧侣的看法

	དུཅང་འཇན་པ་རེད། 完全同意			གཏན་ནས་འཇན་པ་མིན། 完全不同意		
གྲ་བའི་མང་ཉུང་གི་གྲངས་ལས་གྲ་བའི་སྤུས་ཀྱི་གལ་ཆེ། 僧侣的质量比僧侣的数量更重要	1	2	3	4	5	
གསལ་ཉེ་དཔྱད་པ་དང་གྲ་བའི་དན། བོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གནས་དང་ཡུལ་སྲོལ་ལོ་རྒྱུས་གཤིས་ལོ་ལོ་སྤོངས་ མི་ལྟུང་བར་ཉམས་དམས་སུ་གྲོེ་སྡིད། 没有寺院和僧侣，藏族文化会消失	1	2	3	4	5	
གྲ་བ་རྣམས་སྤྱི་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་སྲོད་དུ་ཞིགས་ཚད་ཇེ་མཐོར་འགྲོ་དགོས། 僧侣应该更多地接触社会	1	2	3	4	5	
བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དཔྱད་པར་སློར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སྲར་ལས་མང་བོ་སྤྲོད་འོས། 寺院应该得到俗人的更多赞助	1	2	3	4	5	
གྲ་བ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ན་ཚེ་གང་ཐོར་གྲ་བ་ཞིག་བྱེད་དགོས། 一个僧侣应该当一生的僧侣	1	2	3	4	5	
དཔྱད་པ་རྣམས་གྲོང་ཁྱེར་དང་གྲོང་བརྒྱུ་མང་མར་ཆགས་དགོས། 寺院应远离城市	1	2	3	4	5	
བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དཔྱད་པར་སློར་མོ་དང་ཟས་དེ་འདྲ་མང་བོ་སྤྲོད་མི་འོས། 俗人不应该大力赞助寺院	1	2	3	4	5	
གྲ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་བརྟན་འཕྲིན་ལ་བལྟ་འོས་པ་དང་གྲོག་ཁྱེད་བཀོལ་སྤྱོད་བྱེད་འོས། 应该让僧侣看电视，用电脑等	1	2	3	4	5	
གྲ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་རྒྱུ་སྤྲོད་ལའོར་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ཡོད་འོས། 僧侣应该有自己的车	1	2	3	4	5	
གྲ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་གྲོང་ཁྱེར་དུ་ཉོ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ནི་འོས་པ་ཞིག་མིན། 僧侣在城里买东西不应该被俗人看到	1	2	3	4	5	

སྐྱེ་འབྲུམ་གྱི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 塔尔寺的僧侣质量高	1	2	3	4	5
སྐྱེ་འབྲུམ་གྱི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 拉卜楞寺的僧侣质量高	1	2	3	4	5
འོང་པོ་དགོན་གྱི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 隆务寺的僧侣质量高	1	2	3	4	5

2.12 བྱིས་པོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། བྱིས་པོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད།

根据您认识的僧侣，请您表示一下您对下列陈述的看法

	ཉ་ཅང་འཇུག་པ་རེད། 完全同意				གཏུན་ནས་འཇུག་པ་མིན། 完全不同意
ངས་འོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 我认识的僧侣自给自足很困难	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་འོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 我认识的僧侣专心学习佛经	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་འོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 我认识的僧侣愿能成为俗人	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་འོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 我认识的僧侣不常出四院门	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་འོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 我认识的僧侣很关心自己挣钱，不太关心自己的佛教修行	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་འོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 我认识的僧侣到中国别的地方去对俗人提供宗教服务	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་འོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲོ་མཉམ་རྒྱུད་སྤྱུས་བཟང་པོ་རེད། 我认识的僧侣的行为像俗人一样	1	2	3	4	5

ངས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲ་བས་འགྲོ་བ་སེམས་ཅན་སྤྱད་བཟུལ་ལས་སྐྱོབ་པར་འབད་ འབྲངས་བྱེད་བཞིན་ཡོད། 我认识的僧侣为利益众生生活了	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་སྒོར་མོ་ཉ་ཅང་མང་། 我认识的僧侣太有钱	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲ་བ་རྣམས་བརྟན་འཕྲིན་ལ་བཟོ་བར་དགའ། 我认识的僧侣喜欢看电视	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲ་བར་རྒྱངས་འཁོར་རྒྱང་རྒྱང་ཡོད། 我认识的僧侣拥有乘用车	1	2	3	4	5
ངས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཁོ་ཚོའི་ས་གནས་སུ་རྩེ་བརྩོན་གྱིས་ལས་ལ་ འབད་བཞིན་འབྲུག། 我认识的僧侣为自己的社区努力工作	1	2	3	4	5

2.13 དཔྱལ་གྲ་བ་དང་དགོན་པའི་སྐོར་ནས་བྱིད་ལ་ལྟ་ཚུལ་དང་བསམ་ཚུལ་གཞན་བཤད་རྒྱ་ཡོད་དམ།
您对当今社会的僧侣和寺院有没有更多的建议和看法？

ངའི་ཞིབ་འཇུག་གི་དྲི་བར་ལམ་བཟབ་པར་བཀའ་དྲིན་ལོན་ཏུ་ཆེ་ཞེས་ལུ་བ་ཡིན།
谢谢您的合作！

ངས་སྐོབ་མཁའ་ཤེས་ལ་ཞིབ་འཇུག་སྐོར་གྱི་ཁ་བརྒྱུན་བྱེད་ཐུབ་ན་ང་ལ་མཚོན་ན་རོགས་ཆེན་པོ་ཡིན་ལས་ཆེ། འདི་ལ་
འགན་ཁུར་ཅི་ཡང་མེད། གལ་ཏེ་བྱིད་རང་ང་དང་ལབ་གླེང་བྱེད་པར་འཐད་པ་ཡིན་ན་འདིར་བྱིད་ཀྱི་འབྲེལ་གཏུགས་བྱེད་ས་
བསྐྱར་རོགས་གནོངས།
如果有机会跟一些同学交谈，对我的研究工作将有很大帮助。谈话完全出于自愿，您感兴趣的
话，请把姓名，联系电话和邮件地址留在这里。

རུས་མིང། 姓名
ཁ་པར་ཡང་གུངས། 电话
དྲ་གནས་ཡིག་སྐྱམ་གྱི་ཁ་བྱང། 邮件地址

1.8 བོད་དུ་བཤད་པ་དེ་རྣམས་ལས་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་ཁོ་རང་གྲུབ་བྱས་པའི་རྒྱ་མཚན་གཅིག་ཅེ་གེ།
以上几个原因之中，您认为哪个原因最重要？

1.9 ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཉེ་དང་གྲོགས་པོ་རྣམས་ལས་གྲུབ་དང་ཇོ་མོ་ལོད་དམ།

您的亲戚或朋友中是否有僧侣或尼姑？（可以选两个）

- a) མེད། 没有
- b) ཡོད། ཤེས་ཉེ་དང་ཡང་ན་གྲོགས་པོ་གཅིག་གྲུབ་ཡིན། 有一个亲戚或朋友是僧侣
- c) ཡོད། ཤེས་ཉེ་དང་གྲོགས་པོ་ལས་གྲུབ་གཉིས་དང་ཡང་ན་གཉིས་ཡན་ཆད་ཡོད། 不止一个亲戚或朋友是僧侣
- d) ཡོད། ཤེས་ཉེ་དང་གྲོགས་པོ་ལས་གཅིག་ཇོ་མོ་ལོད་ཡིན། 有一个亲戚或朋友是尼姑
- e) ཡོད། ཤེས་ཉེ་དང་གྲོགས་པོ་ལས་ཇོ་མོ་ལོད་གཉིས་དང་ཡང་ན་གཉིས་ཡན་ཆད་ཡོད། 不止一个亲戚或朋友是尼姑

1.10 གལ་ཏེ་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ཤེས་ཉེ་དང་གྲོགས་པོ་རྣམས་ལས་གཅིག་གྲུབ་ཡིན་ན། ཁོ་རང་རབ་རྒྱ་བྱུང་བའི་རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་ཅི་ཞིག་ཡིན་པ་
ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་ཡི་ཤེས། (ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་དྲི་བ་གཉིས་སམ་གཉིས་ཡན་ཆད་ལ་གོར་རྟགས་“○” བརྒྱབ་ནས་ལན་གདབ་ཚོག།)
如果您有一个亲戚或朋友是僧侣，您认为他为什么会成为一名僧侣？（多项选择）

- a) དའི་ཕ་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་ཁོ་རང་གྲུབ་བྱེད་དུ་བརྟུག་པ་རེད། 我的父母想让他去寺院当和尚
- b) ཁོས་ནང་བསྟན་ཚེས་ལྷགས་སྤང་འདོད་པ་རེད། 他想去学佛学
- c) ཁོས་རབ་རྒྱ་བྱུང་ན་འཚོ་བ་རོལ་སྤྲོ་བར་བསམས་པ་རེད། 他认为寺院的生活比较好过
- d) འགྲོ་བ་སེམས་ཅན་ལ་སྤྱིང་ཇེ་སྤྱིས། 为了芸芸众生
- e) སྐབས་དེར་བྱིས་ཚང་ལ་དཀའ་ངལ་ཉ་ཅང་ཆེ་བ་རེད། 当时家境比较困难
- f) བྱིས་དུ་ཕྱོན་ཆད་གྲུབ་བྱས་ཕྱིང་བ་ཞིག་ཡོད་པ་དེའི་ལྷགས་རྒྱུན་ཐེབས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་ཁོ་རང་བྱུང་བ་རེད།
他受到家中曾经当过僧侣的爸爸或舅舅等的影响
- g) ཁོ་རང་ལ་དགོན་པ་ན་གྲུབ་ཤེས་ཉེ་དང་གྲོགས་པོ་ཡོད་པ་དེའི་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་སྤྲོལ་བ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དགོན་པར་རབ་རྒྱ་
བྱུང་བ་རེད། 在寺院当僧侣的亲戚或朋友说服他入寺为僧

h) མི་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་གྲོ་བུ་རྒྱལ་ལ་བརྟེན་པའི་རྒྱུ་ལྡན་གྱིས་ཁོ་རང་རབ་ཏུ་བྱུང་བ་རེད།
他想当僧侣的原因是因为他见到僧侣受人尊敬

i) གཞན་པ་ (བྱི་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་ལོར་འབྲི་རྟགས་) 其他 (请填入) _____

1.11 ཁོང་དུ་བཞད་པ་དེ་རྣམས་ལས་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་བསམ་རྒྱུ་ལྟར་ན་ཁོ་རང་གྲོ་བུ་སྤྱི་ལོ་མཚན་གཅི་ཅི།
以上几个原因之中，您认为哪个原因最重要？

1.12 ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་ཁྱོད་རང་རབ་ཏུ་བྱུང་རྒྱུ་ལྟོར་ལ་བསམ་སྒོ་བཏང་གྱོང་ངམ། ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་ཁྱོད་རང་གི་བཞུགས་པ་ལ་གཞུགས་པ་ལྟོ་མཁུ་གཏུག་གི་མཚན་གཅི་ཅི། ཁྱེད་ཀྱིས་ཁྱོད་རང་གི་བཞུགས་པ་ལ་གཞུགས་པ་ལྟོ་མཁུ་གཏུག་གི་མཚན་གཅི་ཅི། 您有时考虑自己当僧侣吗？

a) ལྟོ་མཁུ་གཏུག་གི་མཚན་གཅི་ཅི། 有

b) མ་ལྟོང་། 没有

1.13 ཁྱེད་རང་རབ་ཏུ་མ་བྱུང་བའི་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ཅི་ཞིག་ཡིན། (ཁྱོད་ཀྱིས་དེ་བཞུགས་སམ་གཞུགས་ཡན་ཚད་ལ་གོ་རྟོགས་
..〇.. བརྒྱུ་བཞུགས་ཡན་གཏུག་ཅིག) 您为什么不会成为一名僧侣？(多项选择)

a) ངའི་པ་མ་གཞིས་ཀྱིས་ང་རང་གྲོ་བུ་སྤྱི་ལོ་མཚན་གཅི་ཅི། 我的父母不让我去寺院当和尚

b) ངས་ནང་བསྐྱོད་ཚེས་ལུགས་སྤྱང་མི་འདོད། 我不想去学佛学

c) ངས་དགོན་པའི་འཚོ་བ་དཀའ་ཁག་ཅེ་བར་བསམས། 我认为寺院的生活比较难过

d) ང་སློབ་གྲྭར་འགོ་འདོད་པས་རེད། 我想去上学

e) ང་རང་ལ་དགོན་པ་ན་གྲོ་བུ་སྤྱི་ལོ་མཚན་གཅི་ཅི་ལྟོ་མཁུ་གཏུག་གི་མཚན་གཅི་ཅི་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དགོན་པར་རབ་ཏུ་
མ་བྱུང་བ་ཡིན། 在寺院当僧侣的亲戚或朋友说服我不入寺为僧

f) གཞན་པ་ (བྱི་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་ལོར་འབྲི་རྟགས་) 其他 (请填入) _____

ཚན་པ། 2 བྱ་བའི་འཚོ་བའི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་འཚོལ་སྐྱབས། 第二部分 僧侣的谋生

2.1 བྱོད་ཀྱིས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་བྱ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཇི་ལྟར་རང་གི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་འཚོལ་བཞིན་ཡོད། (བྱོད་ཀྱིས་དྲི་བ་གཉེས་སམ་གཉེས་ཡན་ཆད་ལ་གོར་རྟགས་“○” བརྒྱབ་ན་ས་ལན་གདབ་ཚོག།) ཅེ་རྒྱུ་བཞུགས་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་བསྟུན་པ།
您认识的僧侣是如何谋生的？（多项选择）

- a) རང་རང་གི་ཁྲིམ་བདག་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རོགས་རམ་བྱས་པ་རེད། 得到家人的捐赠
- b) བྱ་བམ་ཁྲིམ་པ་རྣམས་ལ་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་བསྟུན་པ། 对俗人提供有偿宗教服务
- c) དཔོན་པའི་རོགས་སྐྱོར། 寺院的扶持
- d) ཚོང་ལས་གཉེར་བ་རེད། ཇི་ཇི་ཇི། 做生意
- e) ཁྲིམ་པ་རྣམས་ལ་སློར་མོ་བསྐྱིལ་ནས་སྤྱོད་ཀ (འཕེལ་ཉོག།) ལན་པ་རེད། 给俗人提供有息贷款
- f) ལྷ་རྩལ་དང་ལག་ལས། དཔེར་ན་ཐང་ག་བཞེངས་པ་ལྟ་བུ། 从事手工业，比如说唐卡等的收入
- g) འོང་ལས་དང་ལྷུགས་ལས་གཉེར་བ་རེད། 耕作或放牧
- h) རྒྱ་ནང་གི་ས་ཆ་གཞན་དག (དཔེར་ན་ཅང་དང་། བོ་ཅིན། ཀོང་གི་གཞུང་བྱ) ལ་སོང་ནས་སྤྱིན་བདག་བཅོལ་པ་རེད།
到中国内地或东方寻找赞助人，比如说上海，北京，广州
- i) གཞན་པ་ (བྱེ་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་ལོར་འབྲི་རོགས།) ། 其他（请说明） _____

2.2 བོད་དུ་བཤད་པ་དེ་རྣམས་ལས་བྱོད་ཀྱི་བསམ་རྒྱལ་ལྟར་ན་བྱོད་ཀྱིས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་བྱ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་འཚོལ་བའི་ཐབས་ལམ་གཅོད་པ་དང་། 以上几个谋生手段之中，您认为哪个最重要？

2.3 བྱོད་ཀྱིས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་བྱ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་སློར་མོ་མང་ངམ། (བྱོད་ཀྱིས་དྲི་བ་གཉེས་སམ་གཉེས་ཡན་ཆད་ལ་གོར་རྟགས་“○” བརྒྱབ་ན་ས་ལན་གདབ་ཚོག།) 你认识的僧侣有没有很多钱（多项选择）

- a) མི་མང་། ངས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་བྱ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རང་ཁ་རང་གསོ་བྱེད་པར་ཉ་ཅང་དཀའ་བ་ཚོར།
没有，我认识的僧侣自给自足很困难
- b) ངས་ངོ་ཤེས་པའི་བྱ་བ་རྣམས་ལ་སློར་མོ་ཉ་ཅང་མང་།
有，我认识的僧侣有太多钱
- c) གཞན་པ་ (བྱེ་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་ལོར་འབྲི་རོགས།) ། 其他（请说明） _____

2.4 བྱིས་ཡུལ་ན་དགོན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་སྒོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སྲུང་ལས་མང་གི་མཐུན་རྐྱེན་སྟུང་པ་རེད།
在您的籍贯寺院是否积极地收集捐赠？

- a) རེད། 是
- b) མ་རེད། 不是
- c) མ་ཤེས། 不知道

2.5 བྱིས་ཡུལ་ན་དགོན་པས་བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་ཚོས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་འདོན་སྤྲོད་བྱེད་བཞིན་ཡོད་དམ།
在您的籍贯寺院是否给俗人提供有偿的宗教服务？

- a) རེད། 是
- b) མ་རེད། 不是
- c) མ་ཤེས། 不知道

2.6 བྱིས་ཡུལ་ན་དགོན་པས་ཚོང་ལས་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་གཉེར་བཞིན་ཡོད་དམ། དཔེར་ན་ཚོང་ཁང་དང་སྒྲན་ཁང་།
在您的籍贯寺院是否经营小生意，例如商店，门诊等？

- a) རེད། 是
- b) མ་རེད། 不是
- c) མ་ཤེས། 不知道

2.7 བྱིས་ཡུལ་ན་དགོན་པས་ས་གནས་ཀྱི་བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་སྒོར་མོ་བསྐྱིལ་ནས་སྤྲོད་ཀ (འཕེལ་རྒྱུ) ལེན་བཞིན་ཡོད་
དམ། 在您的籍贯寺院是否给俗人提供有息贷款？

- a) རེད། 是
- b) མ་རེད། 不是
- c) མ་ཤེས། 不知道

2.8 བྱིས་ཡུལ་གྱི་དགོན་པས་ལྷ་སྐོར་ཁེལ་ས་ཡར་རྒྱས་བཏང་པ་རེད་དམ།
在您的籍贯寺院是否已经发展了旅游业？

- a) རེད། 是
- b) མ་རེད། 不是
- c) མ་ཤེས། 不知道

2.9 བྱིས་ཡུལ་ན་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དགོན་པར་སྒོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སྲུང་ལས་མང་བོ་སྤྲོད་འོས།
您认为寺院应该得到俗人的更多赞助吗？

- a) འཐད་པ་རེད། བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དགོན་པར་སྒོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སྲུང་ལས་མང་བོ་སྤྲོད་འོས།
同意.寺院应马该得到俗人的更多赞助
- b) འཐད་པ་མིན། བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དགོན་པར་སྒོར་མོ་དང་ཟས་སྲུང་ལས་མང་བོ་སྤྲོད་མི་འོས།
不同意. 俗人不应该大力赞助寺院
- c) གཞན་པ། (བྱི་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་ལ་བོར་འབྲི་རྟོགས།) | 其他（请说明） _____

2.10 བྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་དགོན་པ་དང་གྲྭ་བ་ཉ་ཅང་མང་དྲགས་པོང་། 您认为寺院和僧侣太多了吗？

- a) འཇད་པ་རེད། དགོན་པ་དང་གྲྭ་བ་ཉ་ཅང་མང་དྲགས་པོང་། 同意, 寺院和僧侣太多了
- b) འཇད་པ་མིན། གྲྭ་བ་ད་དུང་ཇི་མང་དུ་འགོ་དགོས། 不同意, 没有足够的僧侣
- c) གཞན་པ་ (བྱི་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་བོར་འབྲི་རོགས) ། 其他 (请说明) _____

2.11 བྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་བྱི་བ་དོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ནང་བསྟན་ཚུལ་ལུགས་ལ་འབད་པས་སྦྱོང་བཞིན་ཡོད། 您认为您认识的僧侣专心学习佛经吗？

- a) འཇད་པ་རེད། དཔལ་དོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ནང་བསྟན་ཚུལ་ལུགས་ལ་འབད་པས་སྦྱོང་བཞིན་ཡོད། 同意, 我认识的僧侣专心学习佛经
- b) འཇད་པ་མིན། དཔལ་དོ་ཤེས་པའི་གྲྭ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ནང་བསྟན་ཚུལ་ལུགས་ལ་འབད་པས་སྦྱོང་བཞིན་མི་འདུག 不同意, 我认识的僧侣不专心学习佛经
- c) གཞན་པ་ (བྱི་བྲག་གིས་གསལ་བོར་འབྲི་རོགས) ། 其他 (请说明) _____

2.12 བྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་བོད་ཀྱི་ནང་བསྟན་ཚུལ་ལུགས་ཀྱི་དགོན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ད་ལྟའི་སྤྱི་ཚུགས་ཁྲོད་དུ་གོ་གནས་གསལ་ཆེན་ཞིག་བརྒྱུད་ཡོད་དམ། 您是否认为藏族佛教寺院在当代社会中起着很重要的作用？

- a) ཡོད། 是
- b) མིན། 不是

2.13 གལ་ཏེ་དགོན་པས་གོ་གནས་གསལ་ཆེན་ཞིག་བརྒྱུད་ཡོད་ན། བྱི་བསམ་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ན་ད་ལྟའི་སྤྱི་ཚུགས་ཁྲོད་དུ་དགོན་པའི་གསལ་ཆེན་རང་བཞིན་གང་དག་ཡོད། (བྱི་བྱིས་ཅི་བ་གཉིས་སམ་གཉིས་ཡན་ཆད་ལ་གོ་རྟོགས་“O” བརྒྱབ་ནས་ལན་གདབ་ཆོག)

如果您回答了上述 2.4 的问题，您认为寺院在当今社会中起着什么作用？ (多项选择)

- a) སློབ་གསོ་འདོན་སྤྱོད་བྱེད་པ། 提供教育
- b) བོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གནས་རྒྱན་འཛིན་དང་སྲུང་སྦྱོབ་བྱེད་པ། 保留藏族文化
- c) བོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གནས་གོང་འཕེལ་དུ་གཏོང་བ། 发展藏族文化
- d) ནང་བསྟན་ཚུལ་ལུགས་ཉམས་ལེན་པ་རྣམས་ལ་འོས་འཚམས་གྱི་ཁོར་ལུག་ཅིག་བསྟན་པ། 为佛教修行提供一个适合的环境
- e) བྱི་བ་རྣམས་ལ་ཚུལ་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ཞབས་ཞུ་འདོན་སྤྱོད་བྱེད་པ། 为世俗团体提供宗教服务

