

## THE REVIVAL OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM IN INNER ASIA: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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The article focuses on the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in 1980's and 1990's in Buryatiya, the Mongolian Republic and Amdo, the north-eastern part of the Tibetan plateau. It discusses the common features and differences in the destruction of religious life in these areas in 1920's and 1930's (Buryatiya and Mongolia) and 1958-1966 (Amdo). It deals with the process of religious revival, especially of the monastic aspect of Buddhism, and the issues which accompany it: for example the relations between the secular state and religion, religion as an identity building factor, the quantitative and qualitative character of this revival, the identification of new tulkus (*sprul sku*).

Inner Asia as understood in this contribution encompasses only the regions of Tibet, Mongolia and Buryatiya. This territory is situated between two centres of power, Moscow and Beijing, which had behaved expansively both as to their politics and civilizational drive. One important direction of this expansion was the above mentioned region. This region, though always politically divided into several polities<sup>1</sup> and ethnically diverse is culturally to a certain degree homogeneous due to the shared religion, namely Tibetan Buddhism, which spread from Tibet to Mongolia in two waves in the 13th-14th centuries and the 16th-17th centuries<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Till the beginning of the 20th century it was mainly Tzarist Russia and Imperial China, while the status of Central Tibet (*dbus gisang*) was ambiguous.

<sup>2</sup> See H. SERRUYS, "Early Lamaism in Mongolia", *Orient extremus* 10 (1963), 181-216; R. KASCHESKY, "Die Religion der Mongolen", in: *Die Mongolen. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. M. Weiers (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), 88-94; DRLEGE [1], *Nei Menggu lamajiao shi* [2] (Huhehaote: Nei Menggu renmin chubanshe, 1998), 1-172.

and later in the 17th-18th centuries also to Buryatiya.<sup>3</sup> During the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism from Tibet to Mongolia, the north-eastern part of the Tibetan plateau, Amdo (*a mdo*), played a crucial role.<sup>4</sup> Due to strong presence from Mongolian tribes in this area and the establishment of the two famous Gelugpa (*dge lugs pa*) monasteries Kumbum Jampaling<sup>5</sup> (*sku 'bum byams pa gling*) and Labrang Tashikhyil<sup>6</sup> (*bla brang bkra shis 'khyil*) in the years 1560 and 1709 respectively, these institutions were visited by monks and tulkus (*sprul sku*) from Mongolia<sup>7</sup> and Buryatia and many newly-established monasteries in these areas were modelled upon Kumbum and especially Labrang as far as the organizational structure (various *dratshangs* /*grwa tshangf*) and the educational system are concerned.<sup>8</sup> Amdo lamas and tulkus were often invited to give teachings in various Mongolian and Buryat monasteries.<sup>9</sup> Tzarist Russia and especially Imperial China strove to exploit the political potential of this shared cultural heritage, Tibetan Buddhism, as a tool in the pursuit of their political domination over these ethnic groups and areas.<sup>10</sup> The fall of the Chinese empire (1911) and Tzarist Russia

<sup>3</sup> See L. BĚLKA, *Tibetský buddhismus v Burjatsku* [Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya] (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2001), 39-45.

<sup>4</sup> More on the religious and political developments in Amdo see G. SAMUEL, *Civilized Shamans, Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington - London: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 87-98; R. N. DUGAROV, *Buddizm v Mongolii i Kukurone (Amdo) v XVI-XVIII vv.* (Ulan-Ude: Buryatskaya Selskokhozyaystvennaya akademiya 1999) and LI ZONGHUA [3], LI YANKAI [4], *Anduo Zangzu shilüe* [5] (Xining: Qinghai minzu chubanshe, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> On Kumbum see W. FILCHNER, *Das Kloster Kumbum in Tibet. Ein Beitrag zu seiner Geschichte* (Berlin: ESM & S, 1906); YANG GUIMING [6], *Ta'er si wenhua* [7] (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> On Labrang see LI AN-CHE, *History of Tibetan Buddhism. A Study in the Field* (Beijing: New World Press, 1994), 134-267 and P. C. NIETUPSKI, *Labrang, A Tibetan Buddhist Monastery at the Crossroads of Four Civilizations* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1999). B. BARADIN, *Zhizn' v tangutskom monastyre Lavran. Dnevnik buddiiskogo palomnika* (Ulan-Ude - Ulaanbaatar: Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> On the place of the Labrang monastery in Tibeto-Mongolian cultural relations see GAERDI [8], *Meng Zang wenhua jiaoliu yanjiu* [9] (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1996), 80-88.

<sup>8</sup> For the situation in Buryatia see L. BĚLKA, op. cit., 35, 120, 185, 199, 225; A. I. ZHELEZNOV, "O tibetskikh traditsiyakh v buryatskom buddizme", in: *Tibetskii buddizm: Teoriya i praktika*, ed. N. V. Abayev (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1995), 54-79.

<sup>9</sup> Further evidence documenting the influence of the Amdo tulkus in Buryatia is the fact, that the 4th Jamyang Zhepa Kelsang Thubten Wangchug (*bskal bzang thub bstan dbang ph-yug*, 1856-1916) wrote several ritual texts on mountain deities (*Tib. sa bdag, gzhi bdag*) around the Aginskyi Monastery.

<sup>10</sup> See S. DABRINGHAUS, "Chinese Emperors and Tibetan Monks: Religion as an Instrument of Rule", in: *China and Her Neighbours. Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*, eds. S. Dabringhaus, R. Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 119-134; on Tzarist Russia see X. M. GERASIMOVA, *Lamaizm i natsionalno-kolonialnaya politika tsarizma v Zabaykalie v XIX i nachale XX vekov* (Ulan-Ude: Buryat-Mongolskiy nauchno-issledovatel'skiy institut kulturey, 1957).

(1917) led to temporary discontinuity of historical development in this territory. Though, as regards the religious life, in all these areas anti-religious persecution was initiated by the authorities with the aim of annihilating Tibetan Buddhism. After the period of destruction, the phase of religious revival has begun at the end of the 20th century. Therefore the religious developments of these three areas have continued to have common features also during the socialist period of their history. The process of restoration of Tibetan Buddhism manifests itself in different varieties and ranges, which offers a unique opportunity to study it: on the one hand one can see this process evolving against the background of a Buddhist community representing part of multinational states (Buryatiya in Russia and Tibet in China) thus forming a religious and ethnic minority, and on the other hand the Buddhist believers constitute the majority nation (Mongolia). The political situation in this areas is not homogeneous either— one can encounter a continuous process of democratization in Mongolia and Buryatiya as opposed to restricted liberalization in China (including Tibet).<sup>11</sup>

### DESTRUCTION

The heyday of Buddhism in Buryatiya was at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, when the number of monasteries, temples, and shrines totalled nearly fifty and there were about 16 thousand monks. During World War I, differences of opinion began to appear within the Buddhist community. Later, in the 1920s, this was closely connected with political developments in the Soviet Union. The Buddhist community and Buryat intelligentsia split into two alien groups according to their relationships with development of the sangha.<sup>12</sup> There were reformers (progressists, or, in Russian, *obnovlentsi*) and conservatives (traditionalists).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The data used in this paper was collected during field research in summer 2000 and 2001. The field research was conducted in Buryatiya (mainly in Aginskyi Monastery), Mongolia (mainly in Ulaanbaatar, and in the monastery Amarbayasgalant in the north) and Amdo (mainly in the Labrang monastery and adjacent area). The discussion of religious revival in Tibet therefore concentrates on the situation in Amdo. A case-study on the revival of a monastic institution in Central Tibet see M. C. GOLDSTEIN, "The Revival of Monastic Life in the Drepung Monastery", in: *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, eds. M. C. Goldstein, M. T. Kapstein (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1998), 15-52.

<sup>12</sup> Lamas, scholars, writers, politicians and thinkers who participated in this movement understood the planned reforms in a wider sense than just the religious one. See R. A. RUPEN, "The Buryat Intelligentsiya". *The Eastern Quarterly* 15 (1956), 3. 383-398.

<sup>13</sup> The reformers were represented by the Buryat Lama **Agvan** Dorzhiev, personal tutor and adviser to the 13th Dalai Lama Thubten Gyatso (*thub bstan rgya mtsho*, 1876-1933); see J. SNELLING, *Buddhism in Russia. The Story of Agvan Dorzhiev, Lhasa's Emissary to the Tzar* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1993); A. Dorzhiev was also the official representative of Tibet at the Tzarist court in St. Petersburg and later the Tibetan ambassador to the Soviet government in Moscow. See A. I. ANDREYEV, *Buddhiskaya svyatynya Petrograda* (Ulan-Ude: EkoArt, 1992), 9-40.

The end of 1920s and the beginning of 1930s marked a radical change, when the Bolshevik regime started open destruction of monasteries and the community of monks. "The final solution of the issue of the Buddhist clergy" was preceded by the decision of the Communist Party. As early as 1923, the 22nd Congress of the Communist party approved the resolution called "*O postanovke antireligioznoi agitatsii i propagandy*" [On Anti-religious Agitation and Propaganda], which stated that there was no place in the communist society for any kind of religion including Buddhism.<sup>14</sup> Oppression was exceptionally severe and monks were forced to go into exile, to secular life, and a number of them were executed or sent to Stalinist concentration camps (Gulags), where only a few survived. The violent suppression of Buddhist life in Buryatiya took place in three waves. The first one culminated in 1930, the second one in 1935, and the definitive one in 1937-1938 (by the 1st of November, 1938 1,864 Buddhist clergymen were arrested). In the archives of the Administration of the People's Committee of Internal Affairs (NKVD) of East Siberia the following data about the quantity of Buddhist monks of 44 Buddhist monasteries is given: 1916 – 11,276 monks, 1927 – 7,566, 1930 – 5,327, 1933 – 2,758, 1934 – 1,515, 1935 – 1,271 monks. Buddhist clergy were the most persecuted part of the population during the period of repression.

Before the outbreak of World War II, there was no functioning Buddhist monastery left in either the Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (B-M ASSR), as Buryatiya was then called, or in the two Buryat Autonomous Districts outside the Republic (i.e. Aginskyi eastward from Ulan-Ude and Ust-Orda northwestward).<sup>15</sup> The sacred buildings were torn down, some monasteries (e. g. Aninskyi Monastery) were destroyed by artillery, and others were taken into pieces (this concerned wooden log monasteries, traditionally built without foundations). Monks and novices were driven out. There was no one to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the tolerance decree<sup>16</sup> in 1941.

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<sup>14</sup> V. V. NOMOGOYEVA, "Iz istorii borby s religiei v Buryatii v 1920-1930-e gg", in: *Tezisi i doklady mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-teoreticheskoy konferentsii "Banzarovskie chteniya-2", posvyashchennoy 175-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya Dorzhi Banzarova*, ed. L. V. Kuras (Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo Buryatskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra, 1997), 79-82.

<sup>15</sup> Ts. S. DASHIRABDANOV, "Nekotorye voprosy istorii lamaizma v periody repressii", in: *Mir buddiiskoi kultury: Buddizm i mezhkulturnyi dialog*, ed. B. D. Tsybikov (Aginskoye - Chita, Administrativa ABAO, 2001), 119-123; see also I. I. LOMAKINA, "O sudbe relikvii aginskikh datsanov v gody stalinizma", in: *Mir buddiiskoi kultury*, ed. Ts. P. Vanchikova (Aginskoe - Chita - Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo Buryatskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra, 2001), 150-156.

<sup>16</sup> Tibetan Buddhism was officially recognized as a state and national religion of Trans-Baikal in 1741. The Tzarist court, which wished to have a peaceful frontier with China, started a new policy of tolerance towards the Buddhist religion in Buryatiya in the middle of the 18th century. Tzarina Elizaveta Petrovna decreed the "Tolerance Patent" as early as 1741; the existence of this decree has often been referred to in Russian literature, but real evidence has not been found in the archives.



The process of violent liquidation of Buddhist monasteries in Outer Mongolia (the former Mongolian People's Republic) was directly inspired by the Soviet pattern, although it was realized through the Mongolian (and ethnic Buryat) secret police and armed forces. "The Russian Soviet treatment of the Russian Orthodox Church prior to World War II, can be divided into five periods: 1917-1923: Intense anti-religious activity, often violent; 1923-1927: Propaganda campaign; 1928-1932: Renewed attack; 1933-1937: Relaxation; 1937-1941: Renewed attack. A similar table for the campaign against Mongol Lama Church would follow the identical chronology with the same shifts in the nature and intensity of attack, but with radically different results: 1921-1924: Anti-religious activity against Jebtsundamba; 1924-1928: Sporadic campaign Pan-Buddhist period; 1928-1932: Violent attack; 1933-1937: Relaxation; 1937-1941: Destruction of all vestiges of Church and religion. Even in detailed particulars the similarities are there. The Party programs against religion and the Church are constitutionally sanctioned."<sup>17</sup> High lamas such as reincarnated *khubilgans* or monks holding high position were executed, ordinary monks were expelled from monasteries, which were robbed and destroyed. In 1935 there were approximately 41,000 ordinary monks, at that time 48% of the adult male population (not including high lamas); in 1940 there were only 251 ordinary monks listed. In Outer Mongolia there were "some 583 temple complexes, plus an additional 260 religious meeting places of various kinds. In 1958 five monasteries existed with some 200 monks."<sup>18</sup> The total estimate of number of victims from the Mongolian Buddhist clergy is about 40,000: "Unofficial sources in Mongolia put the total figure of those killed in the anti-Buddhist campaigns at about 40-50,000. Official sources are understandably reticent."<sup>19</sup>

The destruction of monastic Buddhism in Amdo will be illustrated on the fate of the Labrang monastery<sup>20</sup> which is representative, since other, less important religious sites in this part of Tibet encountered similar development.<sup>21</sup> After the lib-

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<sup>17</sup> L. W. MOSES, *The Political Role of Mongolian Buddhism*, Indiana University Uralic-Altaic Series, vol. 133 (Bloomington, Indiana: Asian Studies Research Institute, 1977), 136, 174-176.

<sup>18</sup> L. W. MOSES, op.cit. 254-255, 262, 265; see also B. BAABAR, *History of Mongolia* (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 1999), 226-234, 356-367.

<sup>19</sup> S. SIXLOS, "Mongolian Buddhism: A Defensive Account", in: *Mongolia Today*, ed. S. Akiner (London: Kegan Paul, 1991), 180.

<sup>20</sup> On the foundation of this monastery and its internal structure see BRAG DĠON PA DKON MR HOG BSTAN PA RAB RGYAS, *Mdo smad chos 'byung* (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1982), 361-543; DBAL MANG PANDITA, *Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil gyi gdun rabs lha'i rnga chen* (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1987); LUO FAXI [10] et al., *Labuleng si gaikuang* [11] (Hezuo: Gannan Zangzu zizhizhou wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui, 1982) and ZHOUTA [12], *Lun Labuleng si de chuangjian ji qi liu da xueyuan de xingcheng* [13] (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> The data on the history of Labrang since 1949 was collected mainly from monk informants during interviews. Due to the political situation in China they will remain in anonymity.

eration of this area by the Communist forces in September 1949<sup>22</sup> the Chinese government did not try to alter the internal life of the Buddhist monastery and the economic role it played in this area.<sup>23</sup> At this time around 3,800 monks lived in the monastery.<sup>24</sup> The new Chinese government had guaranteed religious freedom to Tibetans in the seventh point of the so-called Seventeen Point Agreement signed in May 1951 in Beijing<sup>25</sup> and this legislative protection of religion was further strengthened in the first constitution of the PRC adopted in 1954.<sup>26</sup> The first half of the 1950s was in Labrang, as in other Buddhist monasteries, characterized by a tolerant policy.<sup>27</sup> “Although the Communists despised religion, in the early period Mao realistically believed that religion could not be abolished by coercive measures”<sup>28</sup> and Chinese authorities implemented a “gradualist strategy”.<sup>29</sup>

The first wave of destruction of Labrang was the result of the economic reforms (collectivization, land reform, establishment of people’s communes /Chin. *renmin gongshe* [16]/) in the years 1956 and 1958 which deprived the monastery (and the lay population) of its traditional income.<sup>30</sup> The subsequent

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<sup>22</sup> LUO FAXI et al., op. cit., 181. The monks from the monastery had some notion of the anti-Buddhist purges in Mongolia and therefore expected the arrival of Communist authorities with anxiety.

<sup>23</sup> The monastery (represented by the Jamyang Zhepa /’jam dbyangs bzhad pal/ and his administration) possessed the highest political and economic authority in this part of Amdo. Its influence was maintained on one hand by the over 90 subordinated smaller monasteries, literally “monastery’s limbs” (Tib. *dgon lag*), and on the other by the special relationships (in Tibetan called *lharde* and mirde /*lha sde, mi sde*/) between the Tibetan lay population and individual reincarnations (in Amdo-Tibetan *alag /a lags/*) residing in the monastery. Tibetans were annually obliged to pay taxes (either in money or in kind) to the monastery – see LUO FAXI et al., op. cit., 77-87, 100-108.

<sup>24</sup> ANON., “Guanyu Labuleng siyuan guanli qingkuang de diaocha baogao [14]”, in: *Zangchuan fojiao aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu xuexi xuanchuan cailiao* [15] (Lanzhou: Zhonggong Gansu sheng wei tongzhan bu – Gansu sheng zongjiao shiwu ju, 1998), 200. Some Chinese materials give the number 3,424 – “Lamaism in Gansu”, *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 26 (1994), 3, 50.

<sup>25</sup> See M. C. VAN WALT VAN PRAAG, *The Status of Tibet. History, Rights, and Prospects in International Law* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), 339. Later, however, there was disagreement between the Tibetan and Chinese side whether this agreement should encompass all Tibetan areas (i.e. including Amdo and Kham /*kham*/) in China or its provisions were limited to Central Tibet.

<sup>26</sup> See D. MACINNIS, *Religious Policy in Communist China. A Documentary History* (London – Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 21.

<sup>27</sup> TSERING SHAKYA, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows. A History of Modern Tibet since 1947* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 35.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>29</sup> M. C. GOLDSTEIN, “Introduction”, in: *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, eds. M. C. Goldstein, M. T. Kapstein (Berkeley – London – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 6-7.

<sup>30</sup> WANG YUNFENG [17], *Huofu de shijie* [18] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1997), 83; W. SMITH, Jr., *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 442-443.

anti-Chinese uprising in summer 1958 was quelled by the army. After it the process of the so-called “democratic reform of the monastery” (Chin. *simiao de minzhu gaige* [19]) started which was accompanied by the removal of senior monks and reincarnations<sup>31</sup> from the monastery to prisons, labour camps or to their native villages. Some of the monastery buildings were destroyed in the course of the fighting, and the monastery archive and some sculptures and pictures were moved to Lanzhou and other places. Only a few hundred monks were allowed to stay in the monastery.<sup>32</sup> The aim of the Chinese policy was “to reduce Buddhism to a domestic ritual”<sup>33</sup> and to weaken its monastic structure.<sup>34</sup> A brief period when the grip of Chinese authorities on Tibetan monasteries was loosened, started in 1961 and was caused by a limited normalization of Chinese politics after the leftist experiments.<sup>35</sup> In Labrang, it was due to the patronage of the influential geshe Sherab Gyatso (*dge bshes shes rab rgya msho*, 1884-1968),<sup>36</sup> who enabled the restoration of religious life in the monastery in a limited scope. Some of the removed monks were allowed to return to the monastery and during this period there were about 1,200 monks in the monastery.

The final destruction of the Labrang monastery started with the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, when it became one of the numerous objects of the campaign against “four olds” (Chin. *si jiu* [25]), namely old customs, habits, culture, and thinking).<sup>37</sup> The monastery was again closed. “all the monks and tulkus were moved to the countryside to labour camps”<sup>38</sup> and the religious life

<sup>31</sup> From the 23 most important reincarnations of Labrang 15 were imprisoned (7 soon died in prison), 6 were taken to labour camps, one fled to India and the fate of one is unknown — see ZHAZHA [20], *Labuleng si huofu shixi* [21] (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> According to informants, about 200 monks lived there. Chinese sources give the figure of 410 — PU WENCHENG [22], *Gan Qing zangchuan fojiao siyuan* [23] (Xining: Qinghai minzu chubanshe, 1990), 508.

<sup>33</sup> TSERING SHAKYA, op. cit., 288.

<sup>34</sup> In 1958 the mosque (built in 1884 and later enlarged in 1936) in the city Xiahe [24] near the Labrang monastery was also destroyed, although the Moslim Hui population did not participate in the rebellion. It was rebuilt after 1979.

<sup>35</sup> O. WEGGEL, *Geschichte Chinas im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1989), 218-231.

<sup>36</sup> He was a member of the Qinghai Provincial Government and chairman of the All China Association of Buddhists. On his life see H. STODDARD, “The Long Life of rDo-sbis dGe-bśes Śes-rab Rgya-mcho (1884-1968)”, in: *Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the 4th International Association for Tibetan Studies*, eds. H. Uebach, J. L. Panglung (München: Kommission für Zentralasiatische Studien, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985), 465-471; PHUN TSHOGS, *Dge bshes shes rab rgya msho dang rdo sbis grwa tshang* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1998).

<sup>37</sup> More on this campaign and the Cultural Revolution see J. D. SPENCE, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 602-609.

<sup>38</sup> SÜODAI [26], *Labuleng si fojiao wenhua* [27] (Hong Kong: Xuanyuan chubanshe, 1998), 44.

of the monastery was discontinued for the first time in its history. Labrang was depopulated and almost all the buildings within the monastery compound were destroyed.<sup>39</sup> During the Cultural Revolution any Buddhist activity was persecuted and the state attempted to completely eliminate Tibetan Buddhism in Amdo as well as in other areas of Tibet.<sup>40</sup>

## REVIVAL

Although Amdo (Tibet) was the last of the discussed regions, where the destruction of the religious life occurred, it was here that the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Inner Asia started. As a result of the political and especially economical liberalization in China starting from 1979, a religious revival started in Tibetan communities. The new state policy towards nationalities and religions was also formulated in the new constitution of the PRC adopted in 1982 where the article 36 on religious freedom was worded in more detail<sup>41</sup> and the new religious policy was elaborated in the so-called Document No. 19 issued in March 1982 by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party<sup>42</sup> where the protection of religious freedom was again assured. This document stresses the natural weakening of the influence of religion in socialist society and opposes coercive measures which should speed up this process. This development on the central level was also mirrored in the activity in Tibetan areas. During 1979 the restoration of the Labrang monastery started with donations from the lay population and later also with the financial help of the government. During this year all the imprisoned monks and tulkus were released and rehabilitated<sup>43</sup> and soon there were about 450 monks living in Labrang. The revival of Tibetan Buddhism after 1979 was patronized by the 10th Panchen Lama Choekyi Gyaltsen (*chos kyi rgyal mishan*, 1938-1989) who due to his influence<sup>44</sup> secured financial aid for the restoration of Buddhist

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<sup>39</sup> One of the remaining buildings, *Hevajra dratshang /kye rdor grwa tshang/* in the western part of the monastery, was turned into a slaughterhouse.

<sup>40</sup> On Cultural Revolution in Tibet see TSERING SHAKYA, *op. cit.*, 314-347. A more detailed account on the developments in Labrang in the years 1949-1966 see M. SLOBODNIK, "Obnova náboženského života v tibetském kláštore Labrang" [The Revival of Religious Life in the Tibetan Monastery of Labrang], *Religio* 10 (2002), 1, 145-162.

<sup>41</sup> *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994), 30.

<sup>42</sup> English translation see D. MACINNIS, *Religion in China Today, Policy and Practice* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 8-26.

<sup>43</sup> ZHAZHA, *op. cit.*, 4.

<sup>44</sup> After his release from detention in 1977 he was installed to the position of Vice-Chairman of the 5th National People's Congress in August 1979. On his life see JIANG PING [28] et al., *Banchan E'erdeni pingzhuàn* [29] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1998), 88-164.

monasteries and religious sites throughout Tibet and helped to return some of the cultural relics confiscated after 1958 to their places of origin. The 10th Panchen Lama had a special relationship towards Labrang monastery as he had personally identified the 6th reincarnation of Jamyang Zhepa Lobsang Jigme Thubten Choekyi Nyima (*blo bzang 'jigs med thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma*, 1948- ) in the early 1950s<sup>45</sup> and he has visited this monastery repeatedly in November 1980 and March 1982. His visits contributed to the further acceleration of the revival. A similarly important role in the religious revival on the local level in Amdo was played by the two highest reincarnations of Labrang, 6th Jamyang Zhepa and 6th Gungthang Rinpoche Jigme Tenpe Wangchug (*gung thang rin po che 'jigs med bstan pa'i dbang phyug*, 1926-2000),<sup>46</sup> who after their rehabilitation were installed to various positions on the provincial level<sup>47</sup> and were able to exert their influence for the sake of the Buddhist community in Labrang.

The revival of monastic Buddhism in Labrang is characterized by the endeavour to reconstruct the monastery to its pre-1958 condition on both the material and spiritual levels. During the 1980s and 1990s almost all of the buildings (temples, individual dratshangs, dwellings of the monks) in the monastery compound were rebuilt in their original shape. The spiritual restoration also attempts to follow the long tradition. The religious festivities<sup>48</sup> in the monastery were again performed from the beginning of the 1980s, the educational system in individual dratshangs is based on the pre-1958 curriculum,<sup>49</sup> and the rites performed by the monks also follow the long-established rules. This attempt to revive the monastery to its original status is, however, limited only to its religious role, while the traditional economic and political influence is definitely lost.

The revival of Tibetan Buddhism in the People's Republic of China is closely connected with the sensitive issue of the status of Tibet<sup>50</sup> and the state policy towards Tibetan Buddhism is promulgated within the context of this political dispute. Monks have played a crucial role in the Tibetan independence move-

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<sup>45</sup> On the life of the 6th Jamyang Zhepa and his identification see ZHAZHA [20], *Jiamuyang hutuketu shixi* [30] (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1998), 431-445

<sup>46</sup> On his life see WANG YUNFENG, *op. cit.*; ZHAZHA (2000), *op. cit.*, 38-47.

<sup>47</sup> A list of these positions see V. CONNER, R. BARNETT, *Leaders in Tibet. A Directory* (London: Tibet Information Network, 1997), 112-113, 116-117. The 6th Jamyang Zhepa currently holds the position of Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Gansu Province People's Congress and he resides mainly in Lanzhou.

<sup>48</sup> On traditional festivities in Labrang see LI AN-CHU, *op. cit.*, 212-234.

<sup>49</sup> See LUO FAXI et. al., *op. cit.*, 24-60.

<sup>50</sup> On this issue see e. g. M. C. GOLDSTEIN, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon. China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1997), 61-131; S. M. KARMEI, "Ethnic Tension and the Struggle for Order: China's Policies in Tibet", *Pacific Affairs* 68 (1995-1996), 4, 485-508.

ment<sup>51</sup> since 1987. The political activities of the Tibetan sangha result in the effort to limit and control the process of religious revival in Tibet. The Chinese authorities have fixed numbers of authorized monks in individual monasteries. It should on one hand help to monitor the internal life of the monasteries and on the other a large monastic community is seen by the Chinese authorities as a huge financial burden for the Tibetan lay population and they urge the monasteries to support themselves economically by various productive activities.<sup>52</sup> In the Labrang monastery in summer 2001 there were 1,100 monks with the official approval of the authorities,<sup>53</sup> and about 1,200 monks with long-term residence in Labrang who are officially not allowed to stay in the monastery, but their stay in Labrang is tolerated by local Chinese authorities.<sup>54</sup> The regulation that persons under 18 must not enter Buddhist monasteries is also not strictly observed. The influence of the state in the monastery has also been maintained by the establishment of the Monastery Management Committee (Tib. *dgon pa'i do dam u yon lhan khang*, Chin. *siyuan guanli weiyuanhui* [32]) in 1981,<sup>55</sup> a self-governing body composed of the senior monks of the monastery who have to be approved by the local Religious Affairs Bureau.<sup>56</sup> The aim of this administrative unit is to implement the official religious policy. It is also the responsibility of this committee to put into practice the ideological campaigns initiated by the central authorities. Labrang monastery, like other Buddhist monasteries in Tibet, has been the object of the campaign "love the motherland and love the religion" (Chin. *aiguo aijiao* [33], Tib. *rgyal gces chos gces*) launched in summer 1997. This education campaign was a reaction to the controversy over the identification of the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama between the 14th Dalai Lama in exile and the Chinese government.<sup>57</sup> In the course of

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<sup>51</sup> Mainly monks from the monasteries in and around Lhasa – see R. D. SCHWARTZ, *Circle of Protest, Political Ritual in Tibetan Uprising* (London: Hurst & Company, 1994). The political activities of the monks and nuns are justified in religious terms. Death resulting from the fight for independence is seen as a guarantee for the rebirth as a human being – R. D. SCHWARTZ, "Renewal and Resistance: Tibetan Buddhism in Modern Era", in: *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. I. Harris (London – New York: Pinter, 1999), 240-241.

<sup>52</sup> See ANON., op. cit., 205-207; D. MACINNIS (1989), op. cit., 175; JIANG PIWE [28] et al., *Xizang de zongjiao he Zhongguo gongchandang de zongjiao zhengce* [31] (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1996), 108-109.

<sup>53</sup> These monks have monk's identity cards issued by the Religious Affairs Bureau of the Xiahe County. Each year 15-20 monks may obtain the official approval to join the monastery.

<sup>54</sup> With the population of about 2,300 monks Labrang is today probably the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the People's Republic of China.

<sup>55</sup> LUO FAXI et al., op. cit., 183. In the beginning of the 1980's these bodies were established in all reopened monasteries in Tibet.

<sup>56</sup> On the internal structure of Monastery Management Committee in Labrang and its activities see ANON., op. cit., 200-209; see also *Relative Freedom? Tibetan Buddhism and Religious Policy in Kandze, Sichuan, 1987-1999* (London: Tibet Information Network, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> TSERING SHAKYA, op. cit., 440-447.

this campaign monks were obliged to denounce the 14th Dalai Lama and reject the idea of Tibetan independence.<sup>58</sup> This campaign further worsened the attitude of Tibetan monks towards the Chinese state.

The restoration of Buddhism in Buryatiya can be split into two phases.<sup>59</sup> In 1946 seemingly out of the blue a new Buddhist monastery, Ivolginskyi Datsan, appeared. The Stalinist regime had a new building constructed, and about twenty lamas brought from Siberian and Far-Eastern concentration camps. Moreover the regime also allowed for a formal opening of Aginskyi Datsan in the Aginskyi Buryat Autonomous District. Thus from 1946 to 1989, two active monasteries with 30-40 monks existed in Buryatiya. More precisely, from 1946 to 1970, only Ivolginskyi Monastery was in operation, and Aginskyi Monastery began to accept monks as late as 1970. Ivolginskyi Monastery was allowed to accept a few novices each year, from whom just a small number could obtain higher Buddhist education in Mongolia (in Gandantegchinling Spiritual Academy in Ulaanbaatar, established in 1970), and in the last years of the Soviet regime, in Dharamsala, India. In 1978, the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso (*bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho*, 1935- ) visited Buryatiya (Ivolginskyi Datsan) for the first time.

The revival of Buddhism began at the end of the 1980s, when, under the influence of "perestroika", religious life was beginning to be restored. The social and political environment in Russia was subject of changes during the 1980s, and the formerly stiff regime gradually thawed. The state control of religious life still existed in that period, but under the influence of a new policy it steadily weakened. The state control in fact vanished at the beginning of the 1990s, when a new Buryat state (still in the frame of Russian Federation) was formed. It does not mean that there were no controversies, problems etc. connected with state and religion.<sup>60</sup> In the early 1990's, we can speak of a "Buddhist

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<sup>58</sup> During the summer of 2001 this campaign was still going on, although in a smaller scope. More on this campaign see *A Sea of Bitterness, Patriotic Education in Qinghai Monasteries* (London: Tibet Information Network, 1999) and *Background Briefing Papers, Political Campaigns, Documents and Statements from Tibet: 1996-1997* (London: Tibet Information Network, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> The first restoration – called also a "microrevival" – took place from 1946 till the end of the 1980's. See W. KOLARZ, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (London: Macmillan Press, 1961), 457-458; see also E. BENZ, "The Status of Buddhism in the Soviet Union and Its Relations to Buddhism in Southeast Asia", in: *Buddhism or Communism: Which Holds the Future of Asia?*, ed. E. Benz (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), 171). The second, current phase from the beginning of the 1990's till today. The first restoration appears almost unexpectedly and in fact it was not a real restoration but a small resurrection of the almost destroyed religious life there. See A. PIATIGORSKY, "Buddhism in Tuva: Preliminary Observations on Religious Syncretism", in: *The Buddhist Heritage*, *Buddhica Britannica*, Ser. 1, ed. T. Skorupski (Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1989), 219-228; see also H. BRÄKER, "Buddhism in the Soviet Union: Annihilation or Survival?", *Religion in Communist Lands* 9 (1967), 1, 27-41.

<sup>60</sup> G. FAGAN "Buddhism in Postsoviet Russia: Revival or Degeneration?", *Religion, State and Society* 29 (2000), 1, 9-21; see also M. BORDEAUX "Religion Revives in All its Variety, Russia's Religions Today", *Religion, State and Society* 28 (2000)1, 9-17.

boom"<sup>61</sup> in Buryatiya: new monasteries were built, many young men entered the Buddhist Academy at Ivolginskyi Monastery to gain basic Buddhist education under the guidance of Buryat, Mongolian, and Tibetan lamas in order to be able to work in the restored monasteries later on. Beginning in 1991, several religious buildings and treasures have been given back to the believers. For the moment seven religious buildings have been given back to the church and nine are used by clergy without official procedure of transition. Over 2,000 religious objects have been given back by the State to churches and temples during this period.<sup>62</sup>

As far as the question of the governing body of the Buddhist clergy and believers is concerned, in 1922 at the first congress of Buddhists of the Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous districts of the Far-Eastern Republic and the RSFSR, the Central Religious Council (CRC) was set up, to be the supreme board in charge of the activities of Soviet Buddhists. In the 1930s as a result of repressions the CRC ceased its activity. In 1946 it resumed its activity under the name of the Central Religious Board of the Buddhists of the USSR (the USSR CRBB). One should note that the Russian Federal Law on "The freedom of consciousness and religious organisations" which was passed on 25th of October 1990 wholly deprived the government of control over the religious processes in the country. This has prompted a dramatic situation both in Russia and Buryatia as well. This accounts for the situation which is being observed now in Buryatia with the Buddhist confession that formerly had a pronounced hierarchy and independence in the body of the USSR CRBB. Now the former USSR CRBB and the Buddhist sangha have broken into separate independent communities: the Traditional Sangha headed by Bandido Khambo Lama D. Ayusheev; the Religious Board of Buddhists of Russia (or Dharma-centre), headed by N. Ilyukhinov, each of them regarding itself as the heir of the USSR CRBB; numerous autonomous small dugans (private temples) and believers and lamas taking a neutral position. Against the background of such a situation which had weakened the positions of the Buryat Buddhist clergy, the Kalmyk and Tuva Buddhist communities announced their autonomy and registered their own religious boards. There are strong centrifugal and separatist tendencies among Buddhist clergy in present-day Buryatiya. For example, almost every community or rich lama wants to build an individual monastery or temple. One should note that the crisis of culture and science in modern Russia has also influenced the state of religion in Buryatiya.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> N. L. ZHUKOVSKAYA, "Religion and Ethnicity in Eastern Russia, Republic of Buryatiya: A Panorama of 1990's", *Central Asian Survey* 14 (1995), 1, 25-43; see also N. L. ZHUKOVSKAYA, "Buddhism and Problems of National and Cultural Resurrection of the Buryat Nation", *Central Asian Survey* 11 (1992), 2, 27-41.

<sup>62</sup> Among them are famous sculptures of *Zandan zhuu*, *Maidari* of the Aginsk temple, etc.

<sup>63</sup> T. VANCHIKOVA, "Buddhism in Present-Day in Buryatia", unpublished manuscript, 8 pp.



The process of democratization of Mongolia has also substantially influenced the relations between the state and the religion. The new constitution of the Mongolian Republic adopted in 1992 has guaranteed the freedom of religion. The status of the traditional religion, Tibetan Buddhism, is equal with other religious beliefs. Article 9 of this constitution stipulates that "in the Mongolian state the government holds religion in high esteem and the religion supports the government". As in Buryatiya, a schism in the sangha has existed in Mongolia since the mid 1990s: "... last year [1998] the conflict among the Mongolian Buddhists became a big sensation in the media. The two big sides of Gandan and Dashchoilon monasteries clashed. One part was trying to cancel the status of Gandan as the centre of Buddhist faith in Mongolia. There was also an argument of misuse of Gandan's money and privatization about monasteries. This quarrel has lasted many months but nobody is a winner. An outside observer can clearly see that Mongolia's Buddhist leaders are split into two camps. It seems like a bomb to explode soon, even though on surface it looks calm."<sup>64</sup> Some of the monks and monasteries have joined the main monastery of Gandan in Ulanbator, another part has remained in opposition. There are at least two main reasons for this schism. The first one concerns the figure of the 9th Bogdgegen and his potential role as the traditional head of Mongolian Buddhists. The other reason is the dispute over Gandan monastery. Although this is an internal religious dispute, it also extends to the areas of home and international policy. This mainly concerns the status of the 9th Bogdgegen who is an ethnic Tibetan, Jampal Choekyi Gyaltsen (Tib. /'jam dpal chos kyi rgyal mtshan/; born in Central Tibet in 1925 and recognised as a tulku in 1929), and has been living in the Indian exile since 1959, and who fully supports Dalai Lama.<sup>65</sup> That is why he is not acceptable for the Chinese government and its foreign policy. The Mongolian government does not want to start an international dispute with China over this issue, mainly because it is not immediately interested in supporting the 9th Bogdgegen in Mongolia. The government does not want to intrude into the process of reinstalling the 9th Bogdgegen as the head of Mongolian Buddhists. It bases its attitude on the support by a part of the Mongolian Buddhist clergy who do not want to change the *status quo* and mean to keep the institutional form of the church that was introduced after World War II. This form is an innovation in Mongolia which has no support in the tradition and

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<sup>64</sup> T. MANDALA, "Religion in Modern Mongolia: Has Freedom Brought Stronger Religious Beliefs?", *Ger Online Magazine* 2 (1999), 2, 2-3 (<http://www.un-mongolia.mn/ger-mag/issue2/buddhism.htm>).

<sup>65</sup> For details see "The Ninth Khalkha Jetsun Dampa", <http://www.indiana.edu/~mongsoc/mong/jetsun.htm>, (10.11.1999); see also S. HERTZOG, "A Buddhist in Mongolia", <http://www.mol.mn/dharma/index.html>, an interview with the 9th Bogdgegen (30.11.1999); see also R. T. SABIROV, "O problemakh vozrozhdeniya buddizma v Mongolii", in: *Problemy istorii i kultury kochevykh tsivilizatsii Tsentralnoi Azii, Tom 1*, ed. B. V. Bazarov (Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo Buryatskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra, 2000), 270-272.

was introduced as an analogy to the church form existing in the USSR where Buryat Bandido Khambo Lama was elected by the representatives of the sangha. The main difference from the Buryat model, which introduced the institution of an elected head of the church in the 18th century, is that in Mongolia, the highest representative has always been a tulku and has not been elected (the first one to hold this position was Dambadorzhi Zayagin from 1764 to 1777).

In 1970, the Mongolian Bandido Khambo Lama was elected president of the Asian Buddhist Congress for Peace. It was he who first invited the 14th Dalai Lama to visit Mongolia in 1979. Then, in 1981, 1982 and 1995, further visits were realized. However, the Dalai Lama has never been officially welcomed by the highest representatives of the Mongolian state and government. In 1995, the abbots of fourteen monasteries addressed the Mongolian government in a letter asking "openly to consider the situation concerning the institution of the Bogdgegen". The request to officially invite the 9th Bogdgegen to Mongolia was part of the letter. This was turned down by the government, and the 9th Bogdgegen visited Mongolia as late as 1999, following his visits to Moscow, Buryatiya and Kalmykiya. He was festively inaugurated in the Mongolian monastery, and he was given back the traditional seal of the preceding 8th Bogdgegen Ngawang Lobzang Choekyi Nyima (*ngag dbang blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma*, 1870-1924).

#### COMPARISON

In all of the discussed areas Tibetan Buddhism encountered an attempt to destroy its monastic structures and also to persecute individual monks.<sup>66</sup> This experience shows that in the long term there was little chance for a peaceful coexistence of the state founded on Marxist ideology with its negative attitude towards religions and Tibetan Buddhism. The attacks on the monasteries were usually based on the principle of class struggle and in the first phase the authorities tackled the senior monks, lamas and reincarnations, who were labelled "feudal exploiters". In the case of Tibetan Buddhism in China, the purges against Tibetan Buddhism were first focused not at the religion *per se*, but the government had tried to limit their criticism to the upper strata monks. The quantitative and qualitative character of the revival is heterogeneous, which is caused by the character of the traditional religious life in these three areas and also by the length of the rupture of the functioning of monastic institutions. The period of non-existence of monasteries was shortest in Tibet (about 15 years),

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<sup>66</sup> The attitude of the Chinese authorities towards Tibetan folk religion followed the development of the policy towards monasteries. Our research in the area near the settlement Gengya (*rgan rgya*), about 30 km north-east of Labrang, has shown that the mountain cult around Gengya was also prohibited in 1958 and again started in 1980 – more on the mountain cult of Amnye Kungri (*A myes skung ri*) near Gengya see D. BEROUNSKÝ, M. SLOBODNÍK, "Uctívání hor v amdoských vesnicích Gängja" [The Mountain Cult in the Villages of Gengya in Amdo], *Hieron* 6 (2001), in print.

where there used to be a tradition of mass monasticism in the past.<sup>67</sup> The religious revival in Tibet is characterized by the endeavour to rebuild the monasteries and establish monastic communities in their full pre-1958 scale. According to Chinese figures, there were 114,100 monks in Tibet in 1958 and about 42,500 monks in 1994.<sup>68</sup> The example of the situation in Labrang shows that the current population of the monastery represents about 60% of the pre-1958 condition.

Today, there are about thirty Buddhist monasteries in Buryatiya, but only a few of them are located on the premises of the original temples and monasteries. Now the situation has stabilized, earlier enthusiasm has subsided, and Buryat Buddhists are renewing traditional religious life. The estimated number of Buryat Buddhist monks is about 300-500 men. In 1996 there were about two thousand Buddhist monks in Mongolia and more than 155 registered monasteries, temples and shrines.<sup>69</sup>

Due to the fact that the rupture in Tibet was comparatively short, the revival of the educational system in Labrang has been carried out mainly by Tibetan actors (lamas and senior monks) living inside China. The exiled Tibetan community played a limited role in this process as some monks from Labrang have been leaving to study mainly at the Gomang<sup>70</sup> (*sgo mang*) dratshang in the Drepung (*'bras spungs*) monastery in Karnataka State in southern India and some of them have returned back to Amdo.<sup>71</sup> Senior monks in Labrang, however, criticize the lower educational level in the individual dratshangs after 1979 which is understandable as a large part of the human resources of the monastery was lost after 1958 (some monks have died either from natural cause or by violence, and others were forcibly laicized). The situation is different in Mongolia and Buryatia, where due to the about 60-years long rupture the knowledge of Buddhist rituals and teachings was to a large extent lost as a result of the almost

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<sup>67</sup> M. C. GOLDSTEIN, *A History of Modern Tibet 1913-1951, The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>68</sup> YAN HAO, "Tibetan Population in China: Myth and Facts Re-examined", *Asian Ethnicity* 1 (2000), 1, 17; M. C. GOLDSTEIN (1989), op. cit., 5. These figures take into account only monks in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

<sup>69</sup> U. B. BARKMANN, "The Revival of Lamaism in Mongolia", *Central Asian Survey* 16 (1997), 1, 69-79; see also L. CHALOUPOKOVÁ, "Vozrozhdenie buddizma v Mongolii" in: *Mir buddiiskoi kultury*, ed. Ts. P. Vanchikova (Aginskoe - Chita - Ulan-Ude: izdatelstvo Buryatskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra, 2001), 175-182.

<sup>70</sup> The Gomang dratshang in the Drepung monastery near Lhasa was traditionally the monastic college where monks from Labrang went to pursue their further studies. The founder of Labrang, 1st Jamyang Zhepa, was the abbot (Tib. *mkhan po*) of the Gomang dratshang in the years 1700-1707 - ZHAZHA (1998), op. cit., 17-21. However, after 1979 monks preferred the Drepung monastery in exile.

<sup>71</sup> This situation is also caused by the political environment of the religious revival in Tibet, namely the difficulties which Tibetan monks encounter when they want to leave China for India or return back.

total liquidation of Buddhist learning, which concerned learned lamas, the Buryat lay intelligentsia and monastery libraries. Connections to the centres of learning in Tibet were interrupted in the 1920s and 1930s. In Buryatiya and Mongolia the Tibetan exiled community has played an important role in the religious revival. Buddhist teachers have often given teachings in monasteries in these countries while Buryat and Mongolian monks have pursued their Buddhist studies in the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India.<sup>72</sup>

The concept of "recognized reincarnations" (tulku) transformed itself considerably during its adoption by Buryat Buddhism during the 18th-20th centuries. Although the tradition of recognition of a rebirth (often called "reincarnation") of an important religious official (Bur. *khubilgan*) had no historical background in Buryatiya, many lay-people wished to introduce the recognition of religious officials according to the Tibetan and Mongolian pattern. The Russian government controlled Buryat Buddhist life according to clearly set rules, and it was not acquainted with the institution of a *khubilgan*. Therefore it was not possible to found the new tradition of Buryat *khubilgans* on the basis of official recognition by the state. The forming of this institution had to proceed in a different way than in Mongolia. In principle, it was not possible for the highest representative of the church, the Bandido Khambo Lama, to become a *khubilgan*, which was a situation different from that in Mongolia. In Tibet and Mongolia, the institution of a *khubilgan* was a firm part of the social structure, whereas in Buryatiya it was non-systematic and partly accidental, resulting from the needs and wishes of local believers.<sup>73</sup> Introduction of this institution did not serve the needs and interests of the relationship which had developed during two centuries between the Russian state and the Buryat church structure. The Russian state administration could not accept a Buryat Buddhist hierarchy approved by a different authority than the Tzarist one. The state did not want to approve of these reincarnations, who were recognized in Tibet or Mongolia, because it feared that the total control over religion in the Russian empire would be lost.

In the context of the religious revival in Buryatiya and neighbouring Mongolia it is legitimate to ask a question, whether an effort to restore the cult and institution of *khubilgans* is part of this process. The official representative of Buddhist life in the country, the *Traditional Buddhist Sangha of Russia* (Rus. *Traditsionnaya buddiiskaya sangha Rossii*), does not eagerly support the present trends to renew the cult of Buryat *khubilgans*. However, this tradition has not completely disappeared from Buryatiya. Though rare, there are lay believers

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<sup>72</sup> Monks from Buryatiya and Mongolia have been studying mainly at the Gomang drats-hang in Drepung. In the past, there were strong Buryat and Mongolian monk communities in Drepung and Sera (*se ra*) monasteries near Lhasa – see G. C. Cybikov, *Cesta k posvátným místům Tibetu* [The road to the holy places of Tibet] (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1987), 231, 237, 245.

<sup>73</sup> In literature there is evidence of at least five lines of *khubilgans*, which emerged from Buryat cultural and ethnic background. See L. BÉLKA, "Burjatští převtělenci (chubilgani)" [Buryat incarnations (Khubilgans)], *Hieron* 4 (1999), 3-12

who worshipped the few remaining Buryat khubilgans, particularly Danzan Norboyev, during the sixty or seventy years of official atheism.<sup>74</sup>

In Amdo, the identification of new reincarnations was prohibited by the Chinese authorities in 1958. This practise was revived only after 1990, since when the two highest tulkus of Labrang monastery, the 6th Jamyang Zhepa and the 6th Gungthang Rinpoche, have identified and enthroned more than 50 new reincarnations from the Labrang monastery and other monasteries in the region.<sup>75</sup> The continuation of these lineages is a significant aspect in the process of revival. The traditional political role of the tulkus in Amdo (and in Tibet general) has been not re-established. The process of the identification of a new reincarnation in contemporary China is supervised by the different levels of the Religious Affairs Bureau, which have the highest authority to approve the candidate chosen by the Buddhist clergy using the traditional method.<sup>76</sup> This issue will be crucial also for the Labrang monastery, as after the death of the late 6th Gungthang Rinpoche in February 2000, the search for his new reincarnation has started. While the Chinese government tries to prevent the independent Buddhist church co-operating with the government in exile and the 14th Dalai Lama through control over the search for and the installation of tulkus, this problem does not exist in such a form in Buryatiya and Mongolia. However, even in these two areas problems with reincarnations exist, even though religious activities are no longer controlled by the state. *De facto*, no khubilgans exist here, but there are problems with the leading representatives of the government in exile: the 14th Dalai Lama and the 9th bogdgegen.

The Buddhist revival in Buryatia has some distinctive feature which were not present during the period before the destruction. The restoration of Tibetan Buddhism was to a large extent influenced by the Tibetan government in exile. The visit of the 14th Dalai Lama to Buryatiya in 1978 preceded the religious revival and his subsequent visits in 1990s resulted in the establishment of the representative office of the government in exile in Moscow which is headed by Jampa Thinley (*byams pa 'phrin las*). He came to Russia for the first time in April 1993 and in 1998 he received Russian citizenship. His main task is to help to revive Buddhism and Buddhist education for monks, and to create Dharma centres for the lay people. Due to his proselytising talent his activities are successful. He has acquired lots of disciples all over Russia who consider him to be their guru. All his sermons were published in Russian in

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<sup>74</sup> L. BELKA, "K voprosu ob institute khubilganov v buryatskom buddizme" in: *Mir buddistskoi kultury*, ed. Ts. P. Vanchikova (Aginskoe - Chita - Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo Buryatskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra, 2001), 120-126.

<sup>75</sup> A list of tulkus enthroned in the years 1991-1995 see COLL., *Gannan zangchuan fojiao siyuan gaikuang* [34], Vol. 3 (Hezuo: Gannan Zangzu zizhizhou weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui, 1995), 241-242.

<sup>76</sup> *Zangchuan fojiao aiguozhuyi jiaoyu xuexi xuanchuan cailiao* [15] (Lanzhou: Zhonggong Gansu sheng wei tongzhan bu - Gansu sheng zongjiao shiwu ju, 1998), 193-197.

large editions.<sup>77</sup> Another Tibetan tulku Yeshe Lodo Rinpoche (*Yeshe blo gros rin po che*) teaches in the capital of Buryatiya.

Another important feature in the changed religious environment in Buryatiya is the role played by the distinctive Buryat-European Buddhist tradition, a new religious movement led by Bidia D. Dandaron.<sup>78</sup> Dandaron's pupils live in relative isolation and information about them are scarce. A distinctive feature of Dandaron's school is its connection to the research community of Buddhologists in Buryatiya. Apart from these indigenous Tibetan Buddhist traditions, during the religious revival in Buryatiya followers of other Buddhist schools have established their presence there. Since the beginning of the 1990s a group of Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*) followers (Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's teachings) and a group of Western Karma Kagju (*karma bka' brgyud*) branch –teachings of Ole Nydahl – have been functioning in Buryatiya. They do not take part in the institutional rebuilding or reconstruction of the official structures of religious life. The “new Buddhists” have their own shrines and preaching houses, though no monasteries.

The situation in Mongolia is similar to some extent. There are also a few “new Buddhist groups” which are not rooted in the traditional forms of Mongolian religious history. The activity of Tibetan exiles has also played an important role during the revival, mainly through the person of the Tibetan tulku Kushog Bakula Rinpoche (1919- ), Indian ambassador in Mongolia (from January 1990), who founded a new monastery Pe Thubtengye Choekhorling (*dpe thub bstan rgyas chos 'khor gling*) in Ulaanbaatar in 1999, where he has been regularly giving teachings.<sup>79</sup> The above-mentioned new and specific features of the process of restoration in Buryatiya and Mongolia are mainly inspired by the West (Russia, USA, European countries) as well as by India (Tibetan exiles). Another new phenomenon is the vivid activity of various Christian missionaries (for example Roman Catholic Church, Assemblies of God, Mormons, International Church of Christ, Moonists, English Speaking Church, Bahai) in Mongolia after 1990. Due to the political changes in the 1990s such new features exist in Buryatiya and Mongolia without almost any constraints or limitations from the state. Different political situation and traditions are the reasons why such features as the strong presence of Christian missionaries and Western Buddhist schools are absent in Amdo.

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<sup>77</sup> T. VANCHIKOVA, op. cit., 5.

<sup>78</sup> See L. BĚLKA, “Bidia D. Dandaron: A Case of Buryat Buddhist and Buddhologist in the Soviet Period”, in: *The Academic Study of Religion During the Cold War: Ideological and Theological Constraints, East and West*, ed. L. H. Martin, I. Doležalová, and D. Papoušek (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 171-182; see also S. BATCHELOR, *The Awakening of the West. The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (London: Aquarian, 1994), 283-302.

<sup>79</sup> See NAWANG TSERING SHAKSPA, “The Role of Incarnate Lamas in Buddhist Tradition: A Brief Survey of Bakula Ripoche's Previous Incarnations”, *The Tibet Journal* 24 (1999), 3, 38-47.

A new phenomenon in the institutional form of Buryat and Mongolian Buddhism is "a new type of monasticism". Monks (and rarely also nuns) are not bound by celibacy, the only exception are the highest hierarchs. Monks do not live in monasteries all the time, they are accommodated in villages where they live with families and often reside in the monasteries only temporarily. Another innovation is the women's Buddhist movement in Buryatiya and Mongolia. Nuns and lay-women represent an important and sometimes also influential part of the new religious community of Buddhist believers. Lay communities of Buryat women were organized, for example "Green Tāra". Moreover a "Buddhist women's centre" was established. Though its members have not taken strict nun's vows they have managed to construct a special building that is planned to be the first Buddhist nunnery in Buryatiya. This centre works in close co-operation with the nuns (khandamas) from Mongolia. On the contrary, in Amdo (and in Tibet generally) there were traditionally also nunneries and after 1979 they were also rebuilt. On the western outskirts of Labrang, there is the Geden Tengyeling nunnery (*dge ldan bstan rgyas gling*),<sup>80</sup> where about 70 Tibetan and Mongolian (from China) nuns live at present.

Although the religious revival in Inner Asia is unfolding almost simultaneously, the traditional bonds between Amdo on one side and Mongolia and Buryatiya on the other were loosened. There are still cases of Mongolian and Buryat monks who have received their education either in Labrang or Kumbum, but the numbers are considerably smaller than in the past. However, as it used to be in the past, the religious literature published in the Tibetan language inside China is also distributed in Mongolia and Buryatiya, where there is a lack of Buddhist texts and they are purchased either from China or from India. In the past Labrang and Kumbum were pilgrimage sites frequently visited by Mongolian and Buryat pilgrims. Although under current conditions the influx of pilgrims is much smaller, the pilgrimage routes from Mongolia and Buryatiya are again operating and lay and monk pilgrims can be seen both in Labrang and Kumbum. Another aspect of the traditional religious links between Amdo and Mongolia/Buryatiya, namely the visits of lamas and tulkus who gave teachings in local monasteries, has not been revived so far mainly due to the political situation in China. However, in the process of revival, this role was taken over by the 14th Dalai Lama and other exiled Buddhist teachers.

The question of the religious revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Inner Asia cannot be detached from the conflict between the Dalai Lama's government in exile and the Chinese government as it has negatively influenced also Chinese-Mongolian relations, because the Chinese side have repeatedly issued diplomatic protests against the visits of the 14th Dalai Lama to Mongolian Buddhist believers. But this political conflict has overshadowed mainly the religious revival in Tibet. The conditions in Labrang – and in Amdo generally – are different from Lhasa, which is the centre of open pro-independence activities and consequent-

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<sup>80</sup> According to local informants founded in the 19th century.

ly the surveillance of the monasteries in Central Tibet is also tighter. The peripheral position of Labrang and the multiethnic character of the area (numerous Hui and Han-Chinese population) has proven to be an advantage. Due to restraint of overt anti-Chinese protests in the monastery and the influence of the 6th Jamyang Zhepa and the 6th Gungthang Rinpoche Labrang was able to secure a higher degree of autonomy and a larger monastic community than is the case in Central Tibet.<sup>81</sup>

The distinctive religious tradition, Tibetan Buddhism, has been a core identity building factor for Tibetans ever since the 12th century when it was well established in Tibet.<sup>82</sup> According to some authors Tibetan Buddhism was even the symbol of the superiority of their civilization for Tibetans<sup>83</sup> and in pre-1950 Tibet “the monasteries held themselves to represent the essence of religion ... Therefore, the monks believed that the political and economic system existed to further their ends and that they, ..., could best judge what was in the short- and long-term interests of religion”.<sup>84</sup> The political influence of the monasteries after the revival is lost, but Tibetan Buddhism has again started to play a crucial role for the individual and the community in Tibet. As was the case in the past, in the ethnically diverse area of this part of Amdo, Labrang has again become “an icon of Tibetan identity for local people”<sup>85</sup> and in the process of religious and cultural revival Buddhist monasteries became the locus of this revival as they are crucial repositories of Tibetan cultural traditions.<sup>86</sup> The rebuilding of the temples is also a “public way to express nationalistic pride”.<sup>87</sup> Although the social and political environment has changed considerably, Tibetan Buddhism – not only in its mo-

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<sup>81</sup> However, the proximity to territories inhabited by Han-Chinese has also negative consequences, e. g. the influx of Chinese tourists who interfere with the internal life of Labrang (but they are also a source of income) – see L. BĚLKA, M. SLOBODNIK, “Vplyv turizmu na tibetské kláštery - príklad Labrangu” [The Influence of Tourism on Tibetan Monasteries – the Case of Labrang], *Hieron* 6 (2001), in print.

<sup>82</sup> G. DREYFUS, “Proto-nationalism in Tibet”, in: *Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Vol. 1, ed. P. Kvaerne (Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 208; S. KARMAY, “Mountain Cults and National Identity in Tibet”, in: *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, eds. R. Barnett, Sh. Akiner (London: Hurst & Company, 1994), 114; H. E. RICHARDSON, *Tibet and its History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 11.

<sup>83</sup> M. C. GOLDSTEIN (1998), op. cit., 15.

<sup>84</sup> M. C. GOLDSTEIN (1989), op. cit., 23.

<sup>85</sup> P. K. NIETUPSKI, op. cit., 12.

<sup>86</sup> W. W. SMITH, Jr., op. cit., 579; Ch. E. MAKLEY, “Gendered Practices and the Inner Sanctum: The Reconstruction of Tibetan Sacred Space in ‘China’s Tibet’”, *The Tibet Journal* 19 (1994), 2, 64.

<sup>87</sup> D. GERMANO, “Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet: Contemporary Visionary Movements in the People’s Republic of China”, in: *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, eds. M. C. Goldstein, M. T. Kapstein (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1998), 79.



nastic expression -- was able to reestablish its influence in Tibetan society to the traditional level and the religiosity is very strong in all social and age groups.

During the current religious restoration the issue of the relationship between the national/ethnic identity of Buryats and Mongolians, and Tibetan Buddhism is rather different in comparison with the situation in Amdo. The specific feature of Buryatiya is that the country is a multi-ethnic state, where the ethnic Buryats represents a minority (about one third of the total population). Despite their status as a minority, a strong nationalist movement hardly exists among the ethnic Buryats. Some very rare attempts do de-Russify the state and to create an ethnic Buryat based mono-ethnic state failed in the beginning of 1990'.<sup>88</sup> Buryat national identity is not directly constructed on Buddhism.<sup>89</sup> Among Buryats, there were three constitutive elements of their national identity: namely shamanism, epic heroism (the figure of **Geser**) and Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>90</sup> The implantation of Buddhism in Buryatiya remained superficial even in the period before the destruction. After the religious, cultural and political revival of Buryatia in 1980s and 1990s Tibetan Buddhism is struggling to regain its original role, but it is certainly not a crucial element in the ethnic identity of Buryats. In Mongolia Tibetan Buddhism did not play an important role in the creation of Mongolian ethnic identity when it began to emerge during the 18th and 19th centuries. The shamanist practices and especially the shared historical tradition were crucial for this process. After the cultural revival the cult of Chinggis Khan re-emerged as a symbol of political legitimacy and ethnic identity both in Outer and Inner Mongolia,<sup>91</sup> while the Buddhist tradition also plays a certain role in

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<sup>88</sup> See J. BECKER, *The Lost Country* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992).

<sup>89</sup> I. N. DASHIBALOVA, "Nekotorye metodologicheskie podkhody k izucheniyu etnicheskikh stereotipov Buryat", in: *Problemy istorii i kultury kochevykh tsivilizatsii Tsentralnoi Azii*, Tom 2, ed. B. V. Bazarov (Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo Buryatskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra, 2000), 77-78; see also L. E. ELAYEVA, "Teoreticheskie podkhody k izucheniyu etnicheskoi identichnosti v otechestvennoy nauke", in: *Etnologicheskie issledovaniya. Vypusk 1.*, ed. S. G. Zhambalova (Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo Buryatskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra, 2000), 28-65.

<sup>90</sup> See R. N. HAMAYON, "Shamanism, Buddhism and Epic Heroism: Which Supports the Identity of the Post-Soviet Buryats?", *Central Asian Survey* 17 (1998), 1, 51-67.

<sup>91</sup> See ALMAZ KHAN, "Chinggis Khan: From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero", in: *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. S. Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 248-277. Ch. KAPLONSKI, "Creating National Identity in Socialist Mongolia", *Central Asian Survey* 17 (1998), 1, 35-49. About the situation in Mongolia see also R. N. HAMAYON, "The Moral Authority of the Past in Post-Socialist Mongolia", *Religion, State and Society* 30 (1992), 3-4, 375-389; K. SAGASTER, "Religion and Group Identity in Present Mongolia", in: *Dissociation and Appropriation - Responses to Globalization in Asia and Africa*, eds. K. Füllberg-Stolberg, P. Heidrich, E. Schöne (Berlin: Verlag Das Arabische Buch, 1999), 185-193; K. SAGASTER, "Identität im Tibetischen Buddhismus", in: *Religion und Identität: im Horizont des Pluralismus*, eds. W. Gephart, H. Wandenfels (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 170-191; cf. also M. JUERGENSEMEYER, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1993), 116, 122-123.

Outer Mongolia, but it has not penetrated the Mongolian society in the manner encountered in contemporary Tibet.

Although the traditional social and political conditions has changed considerably, the current revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, Mongolia and Buryat-**ia** has some similarities with the “later diffusion” (Tib. *phyi dar*) which occurred in Tibet during the late 10th and the 11th centuries.<sup>92</sup> These processes in the three regions under discussion have numerous common features, but the individual peculiarities resulting from distinctive local traditions, historical developments and different social, religious and political environments should not be disregarded. The revival of Tibetan Buddhism cannot be interpreted as a mere resurrection of original practices, beliefs, and religious institutions which hibernated for several decades.<sup>93</sup>

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32. 寺院管理委员会
33. 爱国爱教
34. 甘南藏传佛教寺院概况

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<sup>92</sup> On this comparison see D. GERMANO, *op. cit.*, 89.

<sup>93</sup> See M. C. GOLDSTEIN (1998), *op. cit.*, 11.