

ONE

## Introduction

*Melvyn C. Goldstein*

One of the most dramatic transformations in twentieth-century Chinese history was the shift in policy launched by the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress in Beijing in December 1978. This historic meeting ushered in a series of wide-ranging reforms dealing with key issues such as decollectivization and the marketization of China's economy as well as cultural issues such as the freedom to practice religion. After more than a decade of vehement attacks on traditional culture and the total suppression of religious practices, the CCP reversed course.

That decision, however, was not without precedent. In the early years of the People's Republic of China (PRC) the party concluded that, in the stage of development the Chinese people had reached, it was not reasonable to expect them readily to accept communist ideology as a replacement for religion. Consequently, a pragmatic strategy was adopted which allowed religion to continue until such a time that conditions for change were more fully present. An editorial in the *People's Daily* in 1950 conveys some of the thinking behind this:

The religious policy of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government . . . provides that the people have freedom of religious belief, that is, freedom to believe in a religion and freedom to refuse to believe in a religion. Both aspects of this freedom receive the protection of the law. . . . Some people ask, since Communists are thorough-going atheists, then why do they advocate permitting freedom of religious belief? This is because religion came into being and has continued to exist during the time when mankind has been faced with natural and social forces that it felt it could not contend with and so looked to the mystical for help. Therefore only when man has adequate means to put nature at his disposal and thoroughly destroy the exploitative class system and its remnants—only then will religion go to its destruction. Until that time, so long as a part of mankind is technologically backward and hence continues to be dependent on natural forces and so long as a part of

mankind has been unable to win its release from capitalist and feudal slavery, it will be impossible to bring about the universal elimination of religious phenomena from human society. Therefore with regard to the problem of religious belief as such, any idea about taking coercive action is useless and positively harmful. This is the reason why we advocate protecting freedom of religious belief just as we advocate protecting freedom to reject religious belief.<sup>1</sup>

Mao Zedong himself explicitly wrote on this issue, stating, "It is the peasants who put up idols and, when the time comes, they will throw the idols out with their own hands. . . . It is wrong for anybody else to do it for them."<sup>2</sup> And in his famous "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions" (1957), Mao further elaborated:

All attempts to use administrative orders or coercive measures to settle ideological questions or questions of right and wrong are not only ineffective but harmful. We cannot abolish religion by administrative decree or force people not to believe in it. We cannot compel people to give up idealism, any more than we can force them to believe in Marxism. The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education, and not by the method of coercion or repression.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, despite the CCP's adherence to a Marxist, atheist ideology, it initially adopted a flexible policy regarding the place of religion in its new state. This policy was institutionalized on 29 September 1949 in article 5 of the "Common Program"<sup>4</sup> and then officially codified in 1954 in China's first constitution, which declared that "every citizen of the PRC shall have freedom of religious belief."<sup>5</sup>

"Freedom of religious belief," however, was never operationalized in a systematic fashion. In fact, its practical meaning was complicated by the government's articulation of a distinction between religion, which was allowed, and superstition, which was to be discouraged if not prohibited. The latter included a range of activities such as fortune telling, shamanistic trances, casting horoscopes, exorcising evil spirits, geomancy, and physiognomy, although no formal listing was ever produced. These diverse activities were lumped together into the residual category "superstition," mainly because they were not part of a formal religion with an organization, activities, and a doctrine, but also because they were considered exploitive—that is, they were felt to be manipulated by a class of "superstition trade" practitioners (such as fortune tellers and shamans) to exploit the masses financially.<sup>6</sup>

Over and above such ambiguities, religious freedom was also circumscribed with respect to politics. The new government specified that religious practitioners could not interfere with or challenge the political power and authority of the CCP. The following comment made in 1951 by the editor-in-chief of the (government) journal *Modern Buddhism* illustrates this view.

Freedom of religious belief is stated as clear as day in the Common Program and it will not be compromised. However, one must realize that the Common Program is a

charter for the era of the New Democracy; and the New Democracy takes as its premises the struggle against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, the overthrow of the reactionary power of the Kuomintang, and the purge of open and hidden counterrevolutionary forces. Buddhists who do not accept these premises are either reactionaries or backward elements. Reactionaries have no political rights; backward elements do not understand the times and, since in their thinking there is not much trust of the government, the government cannot treat them with the respect and concern that would otherwise be appropriate. Only if they become progressive and join the people of the era of the New Democracy can they fully enjoy all the freedoms of the Common Program. . . . Some Buddhists think that, because the Common Program provides for freedom of belief, they can do anything they like and that anyone who corrects their thinking or actions is infringing on their freedom of religion. This is a very big mistake and really is the thinking of backward elements. . . . [I]t must be corrected as forcefully as possible. Anyone who does not listen must be denounced to the government.<sup>7</sup>

Even more explicit is the report made by Liu Shaoqi in 1954 on China's draft constitution: "Safeguarding freedom of religious belief is quite a different matter from safeguarding freedom of counter-revolutionary activities; these two cannot be mixed up. Nor, similarly, will our constitution and laws ever provide the slightest facility for those elements who engage in counter-revolutionary activities under the cloak of religion."<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding such restrictions, the practice of religion was allowed to continue to some degree in the new communist state until the onset of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966. At that time all religious practices were banned, priests and monks were defrocked, and most religious buildings and paraphernalia were demolished. Religion, in essence, ceased to exist in the People's Republic of China.

The death of Mao and the rise of Deng Xiaoping in 1978, therefore, shifted the CCP's religious policy back to the more pragmatic viewpoint that had been dominant in the 1950s. The beliefs and practices that had been ridiculed and denigrated and the institutions that had been reviled and destroyed during the violent years of the Cultural Revolution were suddenly again possible and acceptable, and in the two decades since 1978 religion has reappeared throughout China. However, as in the 1950s, there were clear constraints on the practice of religion. A section in the 1982 revision of the Chinese constitution articulates these:

In our country, citizens may believe in religion or disbelieve, but politically they have one thing in common, that is, they are all patriotic and support socialism. . . . The State protects legitimate religious activities, but no one may use religion to carry out counter-revolutionary activities or activities that disrupt public order, harm the health of citizens, or obstruct the educational system of the State . . . [and] no religious affairs may be controlled by any foreign power.<sup>9</sup>

Tibetans have taken advantage of the decisions of 1978 to enact a vibrant Buddhist revival that is one of the most extensive and dramatic examples of religious

revitalization in contemporary China. The nature of that revival is the focus of this book.

#### WHAT IS "TIBET"?

To understand the Tibetan Buddhist revival, what we mean when we speak of Tibet needs clarification. Ethnic Tibetan populations are distributed over an area the size of Western Europe. They are found not only in China but also in neighboring countries such as India (in Ladakh, Sikkim, northern Uttar Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh), Nepal, and Bhutan.<sup>10</sup>

This volume deals with the 4.6 million ethnic Tibetans who are now part of China, that is, those living in the heartland of Tibetan Buddhism. The regions these Tibetans inhabit are differentiated into two broad geopolitical categories known as "political" and "ethnographic" Tibet as a result of their differing historical experiences. Political Tibet refers to the polity that was ruled by the Dalai Lamas and is equivalent to today's Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Ethnographic Tibet refers to the ethnic Tibetan areas of Amdo and Kham that are today part of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Hugh Richardson articulated the historical rationale for this distinction as follows:

In "political" Tibet the Tibetan government has ruled continuously from the earliest times down to 1951. The region beyond that to the north and east [Amdo and Kham] . . . is its "ethnographic" extension which people of Tibetan race once inhabited exclusively and where they are still in the majority. In that wider area, "political" Tibet exercised jurisdiction only in certain places and at irregular intervals; for the most part, local lay or monastic chiefs were in control of districts of varying size. From the 18th century onwards the region was subject to sporadic Chinese infiltration.<sup>11</sup>

The modern Sino-Tibetan border in these two regions was generally established during the mid-eighteenth century when Manchu China took control over most of the areas of ethnographic Tibet. While the Tibetan government has never accepted the loss of these regions as permanent or *de jure*—for example, it claimed all of Kham and Amdo in the Simla Convention of 1913–14—most of these areas in fact were not a part of its polity for the two centuries preceding the rise to power of the communists in China in 1949.<sup>12</sup>

The political separation of ethnic Tibetans into those living in the Dalai Lama's polity and those in ethnographic Tibet was bridged in part by religion. Tibetans from all over ethnographic Tibet made religious pilgrimages to Lhasa and other holy sites in political Tibet, and large numbers of monks from the borderlands continuously came to study at the great monastic seats in Central Tibet. Many of the greatest scholar-monks and abbots in political Tibet's monastic seats, in fact, came from ethnographic Tibet—Kham and Amdo.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, religion was a unifying force that to a degree reintegrated on the ideological level the millions of Tibetans politically divided between ethnographic and political Tibet

(as well as between those living in disparate native states within ethnographic Tibet). Thus, while understanding the divergent historical and political experiences of ethnographic and political Tibet is essential for any examination of Tibetans in China, in the religious and cultural spheres the commonalities seem equally significant. In this volume, both areas are examined. The chapters by Goldstein and Kapstein discuss cases from political Tibet, while those of Epstein and Peng and Germano deal with religious revival in ethnographic Tibet (Qinghai and Sichuan).

#### BUDDHISM IN TIBETAN SOCIETY

Buddhism has played a central role in Tibetan society, defining morality and the fundamental meaning of existence through its core notions of karma, rebirth, and enlightenment. At the same time, it punctuated the daily rhythm of life by engaging individuals in concrete religious practices such as counting rosaries, turning prayer wheels, doing circumambulations, and maintaining altars in homes. Individual Tibetans also made religious pilgrimages to temples, monasteries, and distant sacred locations (see chapter 4 in this volume), and they sent their sons to become lifelong monks in astonishing numbers. Roughly 10 to 15 percent of Tibet's males were monks, and virtually all Tibetans in the traditional society knew a monk or nun personally as a relative, a friend, or a neighbor (see chapters 2 and 3).

Tibetan Buddhism in its popular dimension also played a major role in the problems of daily life since it incorporated a plethora of autochthonous deities and spirits. These local gods were easily offended and caused illness and misfortune when angered, so avoiding, counteracting, or placating their potential negative power was a core concern (see chapter 5). In times of illness or uncertainty, therefore, Tibetans typically consulted religious specialists for advice on how to proceed, for example, asking monks to perform sacred divination or asking shamans to summon a god and serve as a medium so that they could consult directly with the god. Tibetan Buddhism was thus a dominant ideological framework for both day-to-day life and the ultimate questions dealing with the meaning of existence and life.

Buddhism in political Tibet also had profound meaning as the *raison d'être* of the Tibetan state, and it was the main source of Tibetans' pride in their culture and country. Tibetans traditionally considered their country unique because of its "theocratic" form of governance in which politics was intimately intertwined with religion. The Tibetan state was headed by a ruler, the Dalai Lama, who was believed to be a bodhisattva who repeatedly returned to earth to help humankind in general and Tibet in particular. Half of the government's officials were monks,<sup>14</sup> and the government actively sought to foster the practice of Buddhism. Tibetans, in fact, referred to their political system as *chösi nyindre* (*chos-srid gnyis-'brel*), religion and politics joined together, and in the great monasteries around Lhasa the pow-

erful religious role of the government was often described by the saying, "[The government is] the ruler who is the patron of the dharma."<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, unlike other minorities who were the *object* of a Manchu/Chinese "civilizing project,"<sup>16</sup> Tibetans considered themselves the *agents* of their own Buddhist civilizing project with regard to the spiritual life of the Mongols and Manchus, including the Manchu emperors of China. The Dalai Lamas, for example, regularly sent monks and incarnate lamas to Beijing to instruct the royal family in the Tibetan language so that they could read prayers in the language of the scriptures.<sup>17</sup> Tibetans were the only minority with an advanced civilization whom the emperors of China actually sought to learn from. Religious sophistication and greatness, therefore, were at the heart of Tibetans' identity and self-image. This religious-national pride was conveyed simply in a letter the Tibetan government sent to Chiang Kaishek in 1946: "There are many great nations on this earth who have achieved unprecedented wealth and might, but there is only one nation which is dedicated to the well-being of humanity in the world and that is the religious land of Tibet which cherishes a joint spiritual and temporal system."<sup>18</sup>

Tibetan Buddhism, therefore, exemplified for Tibetans the value and worth of their culture and way of life and the essence of their national identity. It is what they felt made their society unique and without equal.

#### THE DESTRUCTION AND REVIVAL OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

To experience a revival, there first has to be a decline. This occurred in Tibet, as in the rest of China, not by spontaneous changes in the attitudes of the populace regarding the value and efficacy of religion, but rather by the conscious, hostile intervention of the Chinese communist state. The timing of this intervention in political Tibet diverged somewhat from other parts of China, but ultimately it followed a similar course. We can distinguish four main phases through which Tibetan Buddhism passed after creation of the PRC in October 1949.

The first phase covers the period from the liberation of China in 1949 to the uprising that began in ethnographic Tibet in 1956 and then spread to political Tibet. This culminated in 1959 with the Lhasa uprising and flight of the Dalai Lama to India. China's Tibet policy in the early years was characterized by a strategy of "gradualism" in both political and ethnographic Tibet. Traditional institutions, including religion and monasticism, were at first allowed to function unchanged, the government employing a top-down strategy in which Tibetan society would ultimately be transformed not by direct force but by gradually convincing the lay and religious elites of its desirability and then, through them, the masses.

In political Tibet the gradualist strategy was employed to a degree not seen in any other nationality region because of its unique political and international status. In 1949 after the CCP conquered China and established the PRC, it still faced a Tibet that was operating as a *de facto* independent government and was strongly

opposed to becoming part of China. Tibet also had an international status of sorts, engaging in diplomatic relations directly with its neighbors as well as with Britain and the United States. Consequently, although Beijing certainly had the capacity to "liberate" Tibet militarily, because its ultimate goal was to legitimize its claim of sovereignty over Tibet internationally, it did not do so. Instead it made a major effort to induce Tibet's leaders to formally accept a political settlement that made Tibet an integral part of the PRC. To this end it used a carrot-and-stick approach. On the stick side, it sent units of the People's Liberation Army into Tibet's eastern province in October 1950 to show the Dalai Lama it was ready and able to conquer the entire country. It achieved its military object in a two-week campaign. At this point the carrot part of the strategy came into play. The army stopped its advance and sent new overtures to the Dalai Lama calling for negotiations and proposing relatively liberal terms.

Receiving no external support for its urgent appeals for help, the Lhasa government reluctantly accepted these terms and signed the 17-Point Agreement for the Liberation of Tibet.<sup>19</sup> By this agreement China gained the Tibetan government's acceptance of Chinese sovereignty but in turn offered the Dalai Lama terms that allowed his government and the traditional economic system, resembling a feudal system, to continue virtually unchanged for the foreseeable future. Between 1951 and 1959 the estates of the great landlords in political Tibet were not expropriated, and no effort was made to foment class struggle by prodding the masses to rise against their masters. And, most important, the Dalai Lama continued to rule internally.

The 17-Point Agreement was particularly explicit about protecting religion, stating in point 7, "The policy of religious freedom laid down in the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference shall be carried out. The religious beliefs, customs, and habits of the Tibetan People shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not effect a change in the income of the monasteries."<sup>20</sup> Chinese officials in Tibet, moreover, were careful to show respect for religious customs and institutions, and on a number of occasions actually gave alms to all the monks in Lhasa and the surrounding monasteries. Thus, during this early period, not only did religion and monasticism continue, but so too did the socioeconomic system of estates and bound peasants that underpinned it.<sup>21</sup> Throughout most of the 1950s China's Tibet policy sought to win over Tibet's political and religious elite, and through them to persuade Tibetans to embrace socialism voluntarily. Religion, therefore, was almost totally unaffected by Tibet's becoming part of socialist China.

Nevertheless, a start was made to integrate Tibet's Buddhism into the incipient national system of religious organizations. In 1953 an eleven-person Tibetan delegation went to Beijing to participate in the inauguration of the Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA), which spanned the entire country and served as an intermediary between the Buddhism community and the government. It helped to elect 29 Tibetans to the 93-member CBA council.<sup>22</sup> The key governmental office involved

with the actual administration of religion, the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB), was set up in Tibet in 1956, its first head being the highly respected incarnate lama Trijang Rinpoche, the Junior Tutor of the Dalai Lama.<sup>23</sup> A year later a branch of the CBA, the Tibetan Buddhist Association, was also begun in Lhasa. These offices, however, had no authority over Tibetan monasteries or popular religion.

The parallel experiences of political and ethnographic Tibet with regard to religion began to diverge in 1955–56 as a consequence of the “Socialist Transformation” campaign launched by Mao in the middle of 1955. This called for a speeding up of the collectivization of rural China and set local officials in most areas scurrying to create new collectives. Although the gradualist policy for Tibetans was still in effect, the provincial leaders of Sichuan decided that the time was appropriate for collectivization all over the province. Consequently, they began to implement the socialist transformation campaign in Tibetan as well as Han Chinese areas even though “democratic reforms” (expropriation of land from the aristocratic and monastic landlords) had not yet been conducted in the Tibetan areas. The Tibetan religious and lay elites opposed these reforms and responded by launching a series of bloody uprisings that involved monks of several of the most prominent Gelugpa monasteries such as those in Litang and Batang. The separation between religion and politics was now breached and the Chinese army responded vigorously, bombing and shelling both of these monasteries. Socialist political and economic reforms now began in earnest.<sup>24</sup>

The frustration of those seeking to finesse a *modus vivendi* between Tibetan Buddhism and the socialist ideology of the state is seen somewhat poignantly in two speeches made by Geshe Sherap Gyatso, a learned “progressive” monk who was a ranking PRC cadre in Qinghai Province. In the first, Sherap Gyatso criticized Tibetans who use Buddhism to further political ends hostile to the CCP, articulating the view that this will lead to the destruction of Buddhism, not its advancement: “Purging the enemy who hides under the cloak of religion is a righteous struggle entirely in keeping with the freedom of religious belief provided for in the Constitution. If they are not purged or if they are believed and allowed to influence people, then freedom of belief will be lost.”<sup>25</sup>

In a second speech delivered at the National People’s Congress on 22 June 1956, Sherap Gyatso criticized officials of the Chinese Communist party for trying to constrain Tibetan monasticism in ways that are incompatible with its foundational norms.

It is, of course, an undisputable truth that cooperation is the only way to improve minority people’s agriculture and animal husbandry so as to follow Socialism, but owing to their different standards, the methods of following socialism should not be the same. The key point is to pay quick attention to the religious problem of minority nationalities. Our State policy of freedom of religion is a policy which is very satisfactory to religious people, but in carrying it out, various authorities have to be careful at all times. The Tibetan lamas have the Buddhist rule and custom whereby they cannot take part in farm work—a tradition which can not easily be

changed. . . . [T]he lamas cannot obtain remuneration by labor after these farms and animals are transferred to farm cooperatives. Therefore, the remuneration for their farmlands and cattle and sheep should still be paid to them to solve their difficulties and relieve their uneasy feelings. . . .

The expenses for certain religious activities of lamaseries and monasteries had always been borne by a certain tribe, or several villages, or a single village or several families as a matter of custom. After all of them were organized into higher cooperatives, it has become difficult to find benefactors. In future, adequate arrangements should be made so that expenses for this kind of religious activities will not be affected.<sup>26</sup>

In the end the rapprochement experiment of the 1950s failed and the 1959 uprising in Lhasa resulted in the Dalai Lama fleeing to exile in India and denouncing the validity of the 17-Point Agreement, that is, Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Following the suppression of this rebellion, Beijing also renounced the agreement and incorporated political Tibet directly into the PRC’s administrative system, launching its program of democratic reforms. All religious estates were confiscated and the political, economic, and ideological dominance of the religious and aristocratic elites was totally destroyed.

The five years between the 1959 uprising and the onset of the Cultural Revolution comprise the second period. With the old socioeconomic system ended, the funding of monasteries and monks also, and monastic life disintegrated rapidly. Though folk rituals and ceremonies continued, monastic life became moribund. Monasteries were seen as intrinsically disloyal and hostile to the CCP, and with only a few exceptions, their power and influence were crushed.<sup>27</sup> The leaders of Tibet’s great monasteries were incarcerated along with many scores of monks involved in the uprising, and most other monks were sent home or to other work units since the government did not organize a system of funding monks qua monks as Sherap Gyatso had urged. As chapter 2 on Drepung Monastery describes, monasteries ceased to function as centers of study and prayer. The policy of gradualism was over. In fact, among Chinese cadres there was a backlash to the gradualist strategy that led to many excesses and concomitant hardship and suffering.<sup>28</sup> Individuals, however, were still permitted to practice religion, and Tibetans continued to recite prayers and maintain altars to deities in their homes.

The third religious period began with the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. A hallmark of the Cultural Revolution was the view that China must eliminate traditional values carried over from the old society.<sup>29</sup> Religion was one of the key targets of the Red Guards, and within two years *all* remaining vestiges of religion in China were eliminated. Tibet was shown no special consideration because of either its minority status or the central role of religion in the people’s way of life. All practice of Buddhism and popular religion was prohibited and effectively eliminated, Tibetans being told over and over that their religion—their gods, lamas, and monks—were primitive and false. Private religious activities, including altars, were forbidden; religious structures such as temples, monasteries, and

prayer walls were torn down; and thousands of religious texts and icons were burned or desecrated.<sup>30</sup> Tibetans, therefore, were forced to abandon deeply held values and customs. Although this policy was implemented all over China, because Tibetans' national and cultural identity was so closely associated with Buddhism, the attacks on these struck squarely at Tibetans' core ethnic identity in a way that the destruction of Chinese Buddhism or Christianity did not do for Han Chinese. Thus, while many Tibetans became Red Guards and enthusiastically attacked traditional culture,<sup>31</sup> for the majority of Tibetans the Cultural Revolution was a tremendous shock that led many to feel they had been lied to by the Party and the State during the gradualist era. A black joke that became popular during this period captures the essence of this feeling. "Chinese policies are like a leather hat," the joke goes. "At first when moist it fits very comfortably, but after a while, it dries out and becomes more and more constrictive." This period, therefore, created a broad-based community memory of hatred and distrust that continues to the present.

The fourth, or current, "revival" period began with the Eleventh Party Plenum's decisions in 1978. With regard specifically to Tibet, the reform policy represented Beijing's attempt to redress the wrongs that had been done to Tibetans within the framework that Tibet was an inalienable part of China. It had a number of salient dimensions, such as quickly improving the living standard of individual Tibetans, developing the economic infrastructure of Tibet to enable sustained growth in the years ahead, and most critically, allowing more cultural autonomy for Tibetans in the realm of religion, customs, and language and education.

Although many Tibetans initially feared this was a trick to expose those still harboring old thoughts and ideas, very quickly it was understood that the policy had really changed. Over the past two decades, Tibetans have actively availed themselves of the new opportunities, and Tibet today is alive with religion and religious activities.

This outpouring of religious activity has been interpreted as a spontaneous resurrection of beliefs that continued to exist in the minds and hearts of Tibetans during the period when their expression had been prohibited by state decree and sanctions. Israel Epstein expresses this view, arguing that the revival was not a "new surge of faith but an unworried coming into the open of what had been there all along." In the previous period, he says, a believer who did not take his prayer wheel outdoors might have fingered a rosary, instead, within his sleeve. And a circuit pilgrim would walk around the Bargor (the market route surrounding the sacred temple in the center of Lhasa) as though "taking a stroll."<sup>32</sup> In other words, although the state was able to suppress all overt practice of Buddhism in Tibet during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, it could not obliterate such practice on a cognitive and emotional level. A new people's proletarian culture was widely hailed but not genuinely created in the sense of being felt and believed. Most Tibetans maintained their belief and faith in Buddhism unshaken. Consequently, as soon as the State revoked its legal prohibitions and persecution of religion, Ti-

betans spontaneously began to practice the religion that had continued to exist in their minds during the ten dark years. Like pent-up air in a balloon whose opening is tied, the religious practices rushed forward when the binds were removed.

This interpretation accurately conveys an important dimension of the revival but also oversimplifies it by ignoring its dynamic and adaptive dimensions. As the chapters in this volume reveal, the matrix of beliefs and practices that comprise Tibetan Buddhism have not been restored to their original state like frozen vegetables defrosted in a microwave oven. Some individual cultural traits have reemerged identical with the past, but others have reappeared somewhat changed, and still others have not reemerged at all. In still other cases, views held by a minority in the old society have now gained prominence. And this process has not been homogeneous throughout the areas where Tibetan Buddhism was practiced. Not only were there historical differences between political and ethnographic Tibet (cf. chapters 2 and 3), but differing local sociopolitical conditions have also fostered variant adaptations and new complexes of beliefs and practices. Tibetan religion, therefore, has not simply reappeared. Rather, a dynamic process of adaptation has occurred and is still occurring.

One of the key issues affecting this process of adaptation is the Tibet Question, that is to say, the conflict over what should be the political status of Tibet vis-à-vis China. Beijing's leaders in 1978-79 appear to have been eager to put the Tibet Question behind them and set out to achieve rapprochement with the Dalai Lama. They saw themselves as reformers committed to a policy of improving conditions in Tibet and rightly considered normalization of relations with the Dalai Lama to be in their long-term interests. Not only would it silence one of China's most vocal critics abroad and end all doubts about the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, but it would also send a positive signal to Hong Kong and Taiwan. Informal talks took place in Hong Kong in 1978 between representatives of the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama's elder brother (Gyalo Thundrup) at which both sides expressed an interest in reconciling the Tibet Question. Soon after this, in 1982, Deng Xiaoping invited the Dalai Lama to send representatives for face-to-face negotiations in Beijing.

The problem facing the Dalai Lama and Dharamsala's leaders was how to respond to the Chinese at these meetings. Should he and his officials indicate willingness to accept less than independence, and if so, how much less? Although they felt strongly that history clearly supported their contention that Tibet had been independent, at least from the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, they understood that China had physical control of Tibet and was a powerful nation that Tibetans could not defeat on the battlefield. The focal decision, therefore, was whether they should take a hard-line approach that held out for their regaining political control in Tibet because time was on their side, or whether they should adopt a more conciliatory posture in the belief that this was a unique moment for them to secure the best deal they could to preserve an ethnically "Tibetan" Tibet. These very difficult choices prompted months of in-depth discussions in Dharamsala.

On top of this, the exile government was deeply committed to the re-creation of a "Greater" Tibet, that is to say a Tibet that included traditional political Tibet and ethnographic Tibet. This had been a goal of previous Tibetan governments, but it was especially important in exile because of the presence of large numbers of Tibetan refugees from those ethnic areas. The Dalai Lama had worked hard since 1959 to meld the disparate refugees into a unified community by including them in the exile government as equals and by setting as a fundamental political objective the inclusion of their areas in a future free Tibet. However, Tibet had not ruled most of these areas for a century or more, and it is difficult to see how China could have handed over large areas in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan, many of which included Chinese and Chinese Muslim populations that had migrated there well before the communists came to power in 1949. However, if Dharamsala decided not to pursue a demand for a Greater Tibet and this leaked out, it would be breaking the faith with the eastern Tibetans in exile. Like forsaking independence, this issue was highly contentious and could easily split the unity of the exile community if handled wrongly.

In the end, therefore, not only was there no consensus in Dharamsala as to what the Dalai Lama's bottom line should be regarding political and territorial concession, but there was pressure *not* to create one for the negotiations in Beijing. Dharamsala, consequently, sent its high-level representatives to Beijing with a brief to talk only in general terms, for example, to present historical arguments about Tibet and Sino-Tibetan relations. The discussions, therefore, did not get down to substantive issues about the Dalai Lama's return. The Tibetans made only a single comment about their political position, stating *in passing* that if China was willing to offer Taiwan the "one country, two systems" option, Tibet should receive far more.

The Chinese were disappointed by the Tibetans' attitude. They had hoped the exiles would arrive ready to discuss specifics about their return in a friendly and forthcoming manner, and were frustrated when they persisted in talking about general issues and past history in a way that indicated they were not ready to accept a Tibet that was under the "unified leadership" of the CCP. Beijing wanted rapprochement but did not want to enter into a genuine give-and-take with the exiles over the issue of changes in the political control of the Tibet Autonomous Region. In the end, therefore, this historic meeting not only produced no new movement toward solving the Tibet Question but also raised serious questions in Beijing about the feasibility of rapprochement with the Dalai Lama. In the aftermath of the 1982 meeting, the exile leadership showed some goodwill by refraining from commenting on the meetings but at the same time continued to attack Chinese policies and human rights violations in Tibet,<sup>33</sup> often actually going beyond what the actual situation warranted, for example, with charges of Chinese genocide. Dharamsala still felt more comfortable pursuing an adversarial model of interaction than one that emphasized friendship and harmony.

On the Chinese side, opponents of the "moderation" policy toward Tibetans interpreted the Dalai Lama's unwillingness to get down to substantive issues and

his officials' continuation of attacks as a sign of their insincerity. In fact, some explicitly saw this as *déjà vu*—as a replay of what they considered the duplicitous behavior of the Dalai Lama and his government in the 1950s when the Dalai Lama talked to Mao and others in Beijing with the voice of a "progressive" but did not act as one after returning to Tibet. Beijing, therefore, moved to intensify a strategy of trying to win the approval and loyalty of Tibetans in Tibet by allocating increased funds for development. This policy was finalized at the Second Tibet Work Conference held in Beijing in 1984. It approved forty-two major construction projects in Tibet and extended China's Open Door policy to Tibet, despite the concerns of some leaders and experts that this would draw more non-Tibetans to Tibet and would therefore exacerbate Tibetan hostility toward China and the Chinese. In a sense, since Beijing could not solve the Tibet Question by inducing the Dalai Lama to return to solidify its control of Tibet, it sought to do so without him by quickly modernizing and developing Tibet while allowing Tibetans the freedom to express their culture and practice their religion.

Another face-to-face meeting in Beijing in 1984 between representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government yielded no results. At this meeting the Tibetans made a substantive proposal that included creation of a demilitarized Greater Tibet that would have a political status in excess of the "one country, two systems" proposal for Taiwan.<sup>34</sup> It was, of course, futile from the start. Beijing was not willing to discuss real political autonomy for Tibet. It was looking to enhance its stability and security in Tibet, not lessen it by turning over political control of Tibet to its "enemies" in Dharamsala, let alone give up control over a Greater Tibet. Dharamsala's leaders, in one sense, had misjudged both their own leverage and Beijing's desire for an agreement, but, in another sense, they simply could not bring themselves to contemplate accepting anything less. They were angry and frustrated by Chinese intransigence. In this strained atmosphere, a proposed visit of the Dalai Lama to China/Tibet fell by the wayside.

Dharamsala thus found itself in an awkward situation. It was clear that Beijing had no intention of allowing them to rule Tibet with a different political system, let alone independence, and it was also clear that Beijing was pursuing, with some success, their worst-case scenario in that its new economic reforms in Tibet might win, if not the hearts of Tibetans, at least their stomachs. Material life had improved tremendously in both Lhasa and the countryside where communes had been disbanded. At the same time, China's economic power and international prestige were increasing, and a major goal of U.S. policy in Asia was to strengthen its strategic relationship with China. Thus there was now a real danger that the exile's role in the Tibet Question would be marginalized.

Dharamsala and the Dalai Lama responded in 1986–87 by launching a new political offensive—what is described as their "international campaign."<sup>35</sup> It sought, on the one hand, to secure new Western political and economic leverage to force Beijing to offer the concessions they wanted and, on the other, to give Tibetans in Tibet hope that the Dalai Lama was on the verge of securing U.S. and