


Constructing Images of Gönpö Namgyel: a Hero or a Villain ?

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Introduction

he Nyarong region is strategically situated in the center of Eastern Kham¹. The Nyachu River (Ch. Yalong Jiang River), a tributary of the Drichu River (Ch. Chang Jiang River), flows through the region from northwest to south, and undulating mountain ranges surround it providing a natural barrier discouraging intrusion from outsiders.

The people of Nyarong, known throughout history for their fierce and warlike character, were skilled in building fortresses at strategic vantage points, and were masters of unique offensive and defensive tactics. Throughout the course of the Qing Dynasty, Nyarong was always an unruly and troublesome region, where banditry was rife and conflicts among indigenous leaders frequent. As a result, the Qing government was compelled to send as many as seven large-scale military expeditions to suppress indigenous leaders' resistance and check their territorial expansions. One such expedition was against Gönpö Namgyel (1799-1865), a local pönpo (*dpon po*, hereditary chieftain) in Nyarong.²

The earliest chief of Nyarong is said to have been the monk Sherap Gyeltsen. In 1253, as a reward for tying a knot in an iron club in Emperor Kublai Khan's presence in 1253, he was granted a chief's official seal and documents. Thus his family became known to the local populace as Chakdü pöntsang (*lcags mdud dpon tshang*, the official family who tied a knot in an iron [club]). But it is unclear how strong a leadership he provided or how extensive his jurisdiction really was.

¹ Nyarong has an area of 8,674.7 square kilometers and is located at 30.23'-31°23'N and 99°37'-100°54' E. To the east, it borders on Tawu and Drango; to the north, it is contiguous to Kardzé and Derge (Degé); to the south, it is adjacent to Litang and Nyachukha; to the west, it adjoins Palyül.

² According to the Chinese official record, the Qing launched altogether seven expeditions to the Nyarong region, two of which were supposed to be against Gönpö Namgyel. See *Xinlong xianzhi* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1992), 5-8.

Further it seems that since the fourteenth century the region consisted of various decentralized polities.³ While sometimes these various political entities formed alliances among themselves, they were frequently involved in internal strife as well. In 1373, it is recorded that five indigenous leaders (Ch. *tusi*) of Chakdū ruled the region.⁴ Later in the early eighteenth century, intense family feuding forced a division in the Chakdū family resulting in the Upper Chakdū family in Dagé and the Lower Chakdū family in Rinup. Both branches were granted the title of tongpön (*stong dpon*, chief of 1,000 households).

Yet another split was forced to resolve the rivalry for the chieftaincy between two brothers of the Lower Chakdū family in Rinup, known as Old and Young Pelgön. The Middle Chakdū family, which descended from Young Pelgön, was formed in the area between the Upper and Lower Chakdū families. Young Pelgön was Gönpoten's father and Gönpo Namgyel's great-grandfather. Both Young Pelgön and his son Gönpoten are said to have been killed by assassins sent by Old Pelgön, the chief of Lower Chakdū.⁵ When Gönpo Namgyel's father Norbu Tsering was chief, his authority was enhanced only through marriage alliances with the wealthy and powerful Akar family and with the support of six comparatively powerful sons-in-law, minor headmen under the Upper Chakdū family. At this time, the Middle Chakdū family began to enjoy a certain authority and power in the area.⁶ Later Gönpo Namgyel established a more extensive web of marriage alliances. He married his seven daughters not only into the families of his own subordinate headmen, but also into headmen families under the jurisdiction of the Upper Chakdū family in Dagé,

³ According to Chinese sources, this event took place when Sherap Gyatso, a disciple of Lama Yeshebum at Kathok monastery, accompanied the Sakya master Phakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen to teach the Dharma in Dadu in 1253. After he returned to Nyarong, he continued to live as a monk, and placed his elder sister in charge of the official seal and document. See Xirao E-re, "Xinlong gongbu langjie xingwang shi", in *Ganzi zangzu zizhizhou wenshi ziliao xuanji*, vol. 3 (1985): 1-2. However, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether Sherap Gyatso had jurisdiction over the entire Nyarong region or whether there were other chiefs (Ch. *tusi*) ruling the region as well. See *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992, 5.

⁴ In accordance with *Xinlong xianzhi*, the Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang conferred titles on the indigenous leaders of five areas in Upper Chakdū and one region in Lower Chakdū. See *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992:5.

⁵ Young Pelgön was forced to move to Kharnya between Upper and Lower Chakdū. But later his older brother, fearing that he might contend for the chieftaincy again in the future, had him secretly killed, and had his family moved to Gyaré. When the younger brother's son Gönpoten came of age, he gradually freed himself from his uncle's control, and became the dominating power in Gyaré. Thus his family was called Gyaré pönchung (the minor official of Gyaré), also known as the Middle Chakdū family. See Yelé Tsültrim, *Lcags mdud mgon rnam pa'i lo rgyus rag rim brjod pa* (manuscript), 1-2.

⁶ Yelé Tsültrim manuscript, 2-3.

and also into powerful families in the neighboring Derge, Trehor, Litang and Tawu regions.⁷ In this way, he gradually extended his family's sphere of influence over neighboring areas, laying a foundation for his future expansion into the region.

In the early nineteenth century, harboring a grudge against the neighboring chief of Drango for killing Gönpo Namgyel's older brother, Gönpo Namgyel and his men constantly attacked the Drango region. This led to the first Qing military expedition against the Middle Chakdü family in 1817 in response to the request from the chief of Drango and his relative by marriage the Chakla "king" in Dartsedo. But, the Qing troops were only able to capture empty fortresses, as Norbu Tsering and Gönpo Namgyel and their men escaped into the forested valley and continued to attack them. Finally the Qing troops had to retreat by falsely claiming that "the chief of the rebels was killed in a fire," and they granted the territory of the Middle Chakdü family to the Upper and Lower Chakdü families.⁸ But soon Gönpo Namgyel was able not only to recover regions under his family's jurisdiction, but also to force some tribes, who were neither under the jurisdiction of the Upper or Lower Chakdü families, to surrender to him. From 1837 onwards Gönpo Namgyel engaged in battles to unify the Upper, Lower and Middle parts of Nyarong. Upon receiving the appeal for protection from Dagé, one of the Nyarong chieftains, in 1849 the Qing government dispatched 6000 soldiers commanded by Sichuan governor Qi Shan to suppress the disturbance. The Qing troops were unable to defeat him, so Qi Shan, in an attempt to conceal his failure, offered him amnesty in order to claim victory. But as soon as Gönpo Namgyel agreed to accept it, Qi and his troops retreated. Later Qi reported to the emperor that Gönpo Namgyel had already pledged allegiance to the Qing, and requested that the official title of Local Administrator (Ch. *zhangguan si*) of the seventh rank be conferred upon him. However, when the button as a sign of rank and the official robes arrived, Gönpo Namgyel not only refused them but also proclaimed his disgust by ordering the regalia thrown into the Drichu River.⁹

As the first Qing expedition against him did not weaken his strength, in the mid-nineteenth century Gönpo Namgyel quickly rose to become the paramount regional power by annexing large areas of neighboring territories through sheer military force. According to a popular saying in the Nyarong region, he subjugated "the eight districts of ten thousand" (*Nyag khri sde brgyad*), including almost the

⁷ Yelé Tsültrim manuscript, 5.

⁸ *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992, 6-7; see also Yelé Tsültrim manuscript, 4.

⁹ See Xirao E-re 1985:14-17; Chen Yishi, "Qingdai zhandui shijian zai zangzu diqu de lishi diwei yu yingxiang," (1), *Xizang yanjiu*, no. 2 (1986): 37-42.

whole of Kham up to Dartsedo.¹⁰ He conquered not only the territory of the five Hor hereditary chieftains (Tib. *dpon po*),¹¹ but also the domains of Derge, Litang, and Chakla—three of the four regional powers.¹² He became so powerful that he was able to champion the idea of an independent kingdom of Kham, and his rise to power contested the authority of both the Qing and the Lhasa governments. In 1862, he gained control over Sino-Tibetan trade and communication routes, disrupted Qing official postal services and stopped the transportation of provisions and funds for Chinese troops stationed in Tibet. Since the Qing government was preoccupied with numerous rebellions in its territories and such external challenges as the Opium Wars, it could not spare much military force to suppress his insurgency.

For the Tibetans Gönpo Namgyel's control of the region had a serious impact on the tea trade between China and Tibet. He also posed a serious threat to the government of the Dalai Lama because of his anti-Buddhist stance. Thus, in response to the appeal of the indigenous leaders and people of the Derge and Trehor regions for assistance against the Nyarong invaders, in early 1863 the Lhasa government dispatched troops to suppress Gönpo Namgyel and his rule, resulting in his final defeat.¹³

The defeat of Gönpo Namgyel in 1865 made it possible for the Lhasa authority to extend its administrative rule in Nyarong by appointing a High Commissioner (Tib. *Nyag rong spyi khyab*) to govern the region and assert its influence in other parts of Kham. Thereafter, until Zhao Erfeng forcibly annexed Nyarong in 1911, the Lhasa government used the region as a base to advance its interests in Kham. In particular, it superintended the affairs of the Derge and Hor regions which had been freed from Nyarong invaders. The imposition of Lhasa authority over the region had a major impact on power relationships in the area. It complicated the already intricate relations among the various Tibetan communities since not all the local rulers who were contesting for authority and self-rule welcomed the replacement of Gönpo Namgyel by Lhasa authority, as well as straining the relationship between the Qing and Lhasa. Thus, it intensified contradictions among the diverging imperial, colonial and local forces in Kham, which led to a crisis of rule in Kham in the

¹⁰ Tashi Tsering, "Nyag rong Mgon po nram rgyal: a 19th Century Khams pa Warrior," *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization*, Barbara Minri and Matthew Kapstein, eds. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985)204; *Litang xianzhi*, (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1992), 7; Aten Dogyeltsang, *A Historical Oration from Khams: the Ancient Recitation of Nyag rong*, (Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 1993), 81-83.

¹¹ *Viz.* Drango, Khangsar, Mazur, Trehor and Beri.

¹² Xirao E-re, 1985:6-25; Aten Dogyeltsang, 1993:81-82.

¹³ There are different versions about the end of Gonpo Namgyel. For details, see Xirao E-re, 1985, 35.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This affected the overall situation of Central Tibet and loosened the hold of Qing nominal rule over Kham. As a result, the “Nyarong issue,” especially Gönpo Namgyel and his expansions, was always important for contemporary Qing policy makers and frontier officials to deliberate, and also a subject of great interest among historians and scholars.

Under the circumstances, contemporary evaluations of Gönpo Namgyel and his military expansion in both official Chinese and Tibetan records were rather negative, denouncing him as “a sinister rebel” and “a ruthless devil who disturbed the peace and order of the region.” The evaluation of individual historical figures, however, has always been influenced by the historian’s particular perspective, which is subject to the theoretical, political and ideological concerns of the day. As a result, historiographical constructions of Gönpo Namgyel’s image from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are quite diverse, leading some to portray him as a hero and others to denigrate him as a villain. Later writers adopt a more ambivalent attitude toward him.

Based on the available primary and secondary sources in Tibetan, Chinese and English, this paper explores the aforesaid factors in the construction of images of Gönpo Namgyel. The historiographical construction of historical figures is rather complex and ambivalent. This study provides an opportunity to consider various pressures that bear on that complexity, including the role of the historian’s ideological focus, the bias of official documents, and the influence of contemporary politics and academic concerns. I will show that the different perceptions of Gönpo Namgyel are the outcome of periodic constraints and the ideological motives of the writer or historian. Though the focus of this paper is not to appraise Gönpo Namgyel as a historic figure or to discuss his expansions, nevertheless as we review various accounts some illumination of these issues will result. We hope that this exploration will complement our knowledge of the many facets involved in appraising this controversial figure.

Chinese Historiographical Construction of Gönpo Namgyel

There are numerous Chinese historical accounts of Gönpo Namgyel, consisting of Qing official records, historical accounts published during the Republican period and lastly the works of historians influenced by the Marxist approach to history. As I have stated in the introduction, Qing policy makers, frontier officials and historians portrayed him as a rebel and a villain, as did historians in the Republican

period and in Taiwan. Whereas some Marxist historians, under the guiding principle that peasant insurgence and rebellions were essential driving forces of history, recast Gönpo Namgyel as a "class hero" in the post-liberation era, others who also had equipped themselves with the Marxist theory of class struggle and class analysis have censured him as a feudal lord engaged in territorial expansion and exploitation of the serfs.

The Traditional Chinese Perspective

For centuries the model for historical writing in China was deeply influenced by Confucianism and the Qing policy makers, frontier officials and historians were no exception. They naturally viewed the disruption of order as the greatest crime and revolt as anathema. They also praised harmonious social relationships, vilified rebellion and placed great emphasis on showing the greatness of the reigning dynasty. Therefore it is no wonder that traditional Chinese writings condemned Gönpo Namgyel as "a sinister rebel" and "a ruthless villain." The bias against those who rebel against authority in traditional historical practice dictates a discursive strategy depicting the rebels as cruel and unworthy oppressors of the people. This also determines the tone and style of language used in the relevant accounts. These biases are well revealed in memorials by Qing frontier officials and edicts recorded in *Qing Veritable Records*.

On the twenty-fifth day of the first month in the twenty-ninth year of the Daoguang reign (1848), Chengdu General Yu Cheng and Sichuan governor-general Qi Shan sent a memorial concerning Gönpo Namgyel's earlier activities:

Relying on his obstinacy, the wild barbarian Gönpo Namgyel of the Middle Zhandui [Chakdü] region has not abided by the law, and he came out of his lair to stir up trouble [in the gion] ...Having bullied and humiliated the various *tusi*, (he) not only killed their subjects and pillaged their money as well as livestock, but also robbed the tea packages and other possessions (of traveling tradesmen). Though the territories of various *tusi* were nibbled at by him, none of them could do anything about it.... This wild barbarian dared to be parochially arrogant by relying on his fierceness and stubbornness, and had the effrontery to plan to occupy Litang¹⁴

¹⁴ See "Buluman lingdao de nongnu qiye," collected by Mi Hongwei and Kasa Zeweng (for internal circulation only), 1986, 15-16. See also Qi Shan, "Sichuan sheng qi tongbing jingong zougao," in *Baxian dan-an*, in Sichuan Archives, cited from Chen Yishi, 1986 (2): 47-53.

To achieve their purpose, Yu and Qi employed pejorative language and adopted a tone of denunciation, using derogatory phrases such as “came out his lair” (*chuchao*), “stirred up troubles” (*zishi*) and “fierce and stubborn” (*xiongwan*). Such phrases are commonly applied to all rebels. Gönpo Namgyel is singled out as a “wild barbarian,” rather than a “civilized subject.” “Wild barbarian” is reserved exclusively for minority groups in the Qing Empire. It is a reflection of the Sinocentric sense of superiority over all other non-Chinese people, which was also inherited by the Manchu rulers in their dealings with frontier peoples.

In addition, the negative portrait of Gönpo Namgyel in official reports not only shows the dominance of Confucian ideology, but more practical concerns as well. Officials often distorted and exaggerated facts for political purposes. On the one hand, officers wanted to portray their actions in the best possible light to the Qing court, and on the other hand, they saw the reports as means of advancing their own interests. The exaggeration and distortion of the facts in Yu Cheng and Qi Shan’s joint memorial, quoted above, provides a good example. To convince the emperor and his court that it was imperative to suppress the disturbances caused by Gönpo Namgyel, Qi and Yu exaggerated the situation by claiming that Gönpo Namgyel would seize Litang to obstruct the main road to Tibet. As later historians have shown, Gönpo Namgyel’s attack on Litang was much more personal. It seems that Gönpo Namgyel did not initially aim at controlling the main road, but he attacked Litang to avenge the Litang *depa*’s (*sde pa*) refusal to wed Gönpo Namgyel’s daughter.¹⁵

In another memorial Qi Shan gives an account to the Qing court of his victory over Gönpo Namgyel, providing a glowing report of his efforts in subduing Gönpo Namgyel and his army. He reports that he and his men achieved “splendid” results on the battlefield, writing, “After we had used both guns and cannons, the barbarian thieves were not able to withstand, [so] they all fled.” He goes on to say that “our troops vigorously pursued them and killed numerous barbarians.” In reality, the actual fighting was limited and Qi relied on a policy of appeasement, offering titles and rewards for their acceptance of Qing authority. The military campaign was only a secondary factor in the “defeat” of Gönpo Namgyel.

In the same report Qi gives an account of the Qing army’s retreat from Nyarong, presenting it as a victorious event, portraying Gönpo Namgyel as “a rebel who honestly showed repentance for his past wrongdoing” and willing to return territories he had seized. Accord-

¹⁵ See Qi Shan, cited from Chen Yishi, 48.

ing to Qi, he admitted that his revengeful attack against the Litang *tusi* was presumptuous, and that he would take responsibility for his "crime." From what we know this is clearly not the case. Judging from Gönpo Namgyel's later activities, it is obvious that Qi Shan exaggerated Gönpo Namgyel's willingness to submit. There is also no evidence to show his army was destroyed. But the relevant account in the *Biography of Qi Shan* goes so far as to overstate Qi Shan's merits; Qi Shan is said to have ordered the Han Chinese and local troops to chase them away and kill their leaders. In May, when troops were sent to suppress the disturbance, all "the wild barbarians" were believed to offer back the seized lands and people as they feared Qing military power.

Official accounts of Gönpo Namgyel's later activities also demonstrate the discursive strategy for presenting the unworthiness and brutality of the rebels. They describe territories extending over 10,000 *li* tormented by Gönpo Namgyel. In the first year of the Tongzhi reign (1862), it was reported that his troops again laid siege to Litang, disrupting the Sichuan-Tibetan main road and obstructing the tea trade route. All the people in the territories under the jurisdiction of the various *tusi* in Kham and the parts of Kham subordinate to Central Tibet "could not bear the suffering he inflicted upon them."¹⁶

Another memorial states that even the Mingzheng *tusi* (Chakla Gyelpo, Tib. *Lcags la rgyal po*), who had always been cautious and followed orders, also demolished the postage station because Gönpo Namgyel had invaded his territories. Consequently, Jing Wen, the newly appointed High Commissioner to Tibet (*amban*, Ch. *zhuzang dachen*), was unable to continue his journey. Likewise, most of the transportation corvée labor (Tib. *rkang 'gro lag 'don*) for official business was also delayed.¹⁷ In addition, according to the memorial sent by the High Commissioner to Tibet, Man Qing and others,

Having gathered together the Dege (Tib. Sde dge) *tusi*, the barbarian chief Gongbu Langjie (Gönpo Namgyel) harassed territories of various *tusi*, including Huo-er Zhanggu (Tib. Hor Brag 'go). They would arrive at Zhaya (Tib. Brag g-yab), Gongjue (Tib. Go 'jo) and other places via Batang and Jiangka ('Jo mda') soon. His son Dongdeng Gongbu (Tongdé Gönpo) laid siege to Litang, and also destroyed the main roads and bridges, opened and read the official reports and tied up the translators. Meanwhile, when Qimei Gongbu (Chimé Gönpo), a brave war-

¹⁶ See "Zhupi zouzhe: minzu lei," Dossier 1337, no.1, collected by the Chinese No. 1 Historical Archives. Cited from Chen Yishi, 1986 (2):48. Also see *Qing shilu zangzu shiliao*, Vol. 9:4309; *Qing Shilu: Muzong shilu*, Vol. 56,10-11.

¹⁷ *Qing shilu zangzu shiliao*, Vol. 9, 4305-4306. Also see *Qing Shilu: Muzong shilu*, Vol. 45:46v-47v.

rior under Gönpo Namgyel who led a large number of rebels, arrived at Sanba (Tib. Zam pa), they robbed the Chinese official in charge of military grain and supplies of his luggage, and seized memorials and official documents sent from Central Tibet.¹⁸

Man Qing and others also reported that the rebels of Nyarong seized the region under the jurisdiction of Drayab, and killed many headmen and common people in a small area of Chamdo. The rebels forced the rest to surrender, and ransacked their possessions and livestock. In sum, the rebels led by Gönpo Namgyel were presented as villains who not only harassed the neighboring *tusi* and killed their subjects, but also disrupted the flow of official documents and business.

Unlike studies by Marxist historians who are concerned with the social course of the revolt, most official documents never discuss the revolt's underlying causes. Zhang Ji, a Qing official stationed in Nyarong in the 1890s, made an unusual observation. He took note of the rampant natural disasters in the area and speculated that such hardships might be an underlying cause of the revolt.¹⁹ Zhang's linking of natural disasters with Gönpo Namgyel's activities is surprising. Traditional Chinese historical writing rarely connects natural disasters with social unrest.

Some favorable accounts of Gönpo Namgyel can also be found in Chinese historical writings because of the great importance most traditional historians attached to imparting factual information. For instance, though the Chinese official Zhang Ji generally had a rather negative view of Gönpo Namgyel, he did include some favorable remarks about him.²⁰ In the section about Gönpo Namgyel's birth and childhood, the author writes,

Gönpo Namgyel was born of a god of the Snow Mountain. From birth he had great arm strength, and also grew to be a brave and wise man. As a result, most of the (neighborhood) children were under his command when playing games. He not only was skilled at racing horses, but also practiced swordsmanship every day. Every time he looked around and boasted

¹⁸ *Qing shilu zangzu shiliao* 9. Also *Qing Shilu: Muzong shilu*, Vol. 56:10; 58:58.

¹⁹ Zhang Ji was sent to Nyarong when the Sichuan Governor-general Lu Chuanlin was attempting to restore Chinese rule to the region.

²⁰ As a Chinese official who traveled all over Nyarong region, Zhang investigated its situation, gave a detailed account of its system and witnessed the devastation caused by the war. Zhang Ji, *Ding zhan ting zhilüe: panli pian*. (Beijing: Huayuan chubanshe, 2003): 99-117.

himself, 'Why did the heaven let me be born among these barbarians?'²¹

Through such back-handed compliments this passage maintains a sense of Chinese superiority, portraying Gönpo Namgyel as someone who loathed being born among barbarians. It is as if at once he aspired to be born among the civilized, namely the Chinese, and had that been so, he would have been a great hero. Nevertheless, while the author uses rather favorable language to describe the rebel, including his noble birth, excellent skills and aptitude for leadership even during his childhood, it is as if all of this were wasted due to his unfortunate birth into a non-Chinese family.

Confucian historians in the Republican period and later in Taiwan also adopt similar views to those of most Qing officials who considered Gönpo Namgyel "a villain" and "a bandit." The similarity is not surprising because they primarily base their study on Qing official documents and are guided by the same Confucianist philosophy of history. In response to British encroachment in Central Tibet in 1904 and later Sino-British negotiations over the Tibetan issue in the early part of the twentieth century, Chinese nationalist feelings had increased steadily. In particular, late Qing imperial control in Kham brought Tibet into contemporary Chinese consciousness. As a result, during the Republican era there was renewed interest in the region and a proliferation of writing on Kham (Ch. Xikang). Since most of these books deal with only general information—whether social, historical, geographical or political—about Kham, the accounts of Gönpo Namgyel's revolt are rather brief, some consisting of only a line or two.²² A few articles on Nyarong appeared in *Kangdao Yuekan*, a journal specialized in the study of Kham area at the time.²³ However, articles and books published during the Republican era shared assumptions similar to the Qing officials about Gönpo Namgyel and his military expansions and continued to use the same pejorative languages found in earlier texts:

During the reign of Xianfeng emperor, the four *tusi* in Nyarong were annexed by Gönpo Namgyel. As a sinister, ruthless and vicious person, he had the ambition to annex Xikang so as to re-

²¹ Zhang Ji, 2003, 109.

²² See Chen Zhongwei, *The Xikang wenti*, (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1930), 20.

²³ See Zhu Zuming, "Gailiu qian de zhanhua tuqiu," in *Kaodao Yuekan*, vol. 6, no. 1, (1944):30-37; Chen Qitu, "Zhanhua gailiu shimo," *Kangdao Yuekan*, vol.1, no.3, (1938):16-18. Ouyang Shubei, "Zhanhua tuqiu zhi guoqu yu xianzai," *Kangdao Yuekan*, vol.1, no.12, (1939): 17-22. Chen Shengchao, "Zhanhua shizheng shilu," *Kangdao Yuekan*, no. 4 (1939):21-30; Xu Wenchao, "Zhunhua shangzhan qu diaocha ji," in *Kangdao yuekan*, vol.1, no. 4 (1939): 59-73.

sist Central Tibet in the west and Sichuan Province in the east. The various *tusi* in Kham were all docile and obedient to him, either ceding territories or paying tribute to him, and none of them dared to challenge him. In the first year of Tongzhi reign, a dispute started because Gönpo Namgyel seized the tea bought by the Central Tibetans....²⁴

It is clear from the quoted passage that this description is based on official Qing documents, especially a few lines that seem to quote the exact wording of the original memorials. Almost verbatim passages can be found in *Xikang Tujing: Jingyu pian* by Ren Naiqiang and *Xikang niaokan* by Li Yiren. Li in particular retains such derogatory terms as “rebel chieftain” and “the lair” in his introduction to the geographical position of Nyarong County, when he discusses the place where the “rebel chieftain” Gönpo Namgyel and his father lived.²⁵

Although some Taiwan historians engaged in Tibetan studies, including research on Xikang, their interest in the political implications and historical significance of Xikang in general and the “Nyarong issue” in particular diminished over time. Indeed, I have so far found only one relevant article focusing on the subject: Sun Zihe’s article, “The Revolt Led by Gönpo Namgyel in the Sichuan Borderlands in the Late Qing.” Sun discusses not only the revolts led by Gönpo Namgyel and his father, but also the measures taken in their aftermath and the impact of their revolts. In addition to the relevant documents in *Qing shilu* (the Veritable Records of Qing), Sun bases his study mainly on the memorials and other primary sources written by Qing officials cited in Chen Yishi’s articles, which will be discussed in the next section. He therefore follows the traditional evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel as “a disturber of the peace” and “a villain.”²⁶

The Marxist Historian’s Perspective

With the establishment of communist rule in China in 1949, there was a shift in historical writing. The new generation of Chinese historians influenced by a Marxist/materialist interpretation of history tended to focus on the masses who were viewed as the true “makers of history.” With this new trend, there was a special emphasis on class

²⁴ Hu Jilu. *Xikang jiangyu sugu lu* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan), 1928.

²⁵ Ren Naiqiang. *Xikang tujing: jingyu pian*, Li Yiren. *Xikang zonglan* (Shanghai: Zhengzhong shuju), 1946, 29.

²⁶ See Sun Zihe. “Qingmo chuanbian gongbu langjie zhi luan,” in *Xizang lishi yu renwu* (Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan), 1995, 29-57.

struggle as the primary agent for change, and the peasant movement became the main subject of historical inquiry.²⁷ The Marxist tendency to glorify uprisings as a just movement against oppression opposes the traditional Confucian model with its negative depiction of rebellions.

Under these political, ideological and academic circumstances, Marxist historians began to recast Gönpo Namgyel according to a theory of class struggle and class analysis. Among Marxist historians, there was a natural bias in the selection of sources and facts. Even when they used Qing official sources they ignored what they believed to be accounts that “slander the peasant revolt.” In the 1950s, a new type of narrative account began to appear. A good example of this trend is the internal report written by members of the Sichuan Nationalities Investigation Team in 1959. In a romantic account somewhat reminiscent of Robin Hood, Gönpo Namgyel was for the first time praised as the leader of a “serf uprising” against the feudal lords:

The participants grew from a few thousand to over 10,000. The three-year long uprising, involved Zhandui (Chakdü), Kardzé, Dergé and other regions, and its impact extended to Eastern and Southern Kham as well as Central Tibet. Having routed the armed forces of the feudal class and either driven out or killed the members of the feudal class, including *tusi* (indigenous leaders) and others, the masses of the uprising occupied the domains of the *tusi* and replaced their regimes. They immediately opened the storehouses of the *tusi* to distribute the grain, gold, silver and clothes to the masses; they also burned the deeds and account books kept by *tusi*, and abolished *u lag* (corvée labor). But the internal organization was not sound because the leaders of the uprising became corrupt in the later stage of the uprising and took some erroneous measures, so it failed eventually under the suppression of the local feudal ruling class in collusion with the feudal force in Central Tibet.²⁸

Xizang jianzhi (A Brief Tibetan Annals) published in 1963, based mainly on the 1959 report, depicts Gönpo Namgyel and his movement as “a large scale serf uprising:

²⁷ For a detailed discussion, see , James Harrison, *The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions: A Study in the Rewriting of Chinese History* (New York: Atheneum), 1971.

²⁸ See the report of the investigation by Sichuan Nationality Investigation Team in 1959, cited by Xuming. “Gongbulangjie shi nongnu qiyi lingxiu ma?” in *Xinan minyu xuebao*, no. 1(1980):20-35.

In 1887 a serf uprising led by Buluman (Tib. Bu long ma, “the blind boy,” Gönpo Namgyel’s nickname) broke out in Chakdü. Having first defeated the feudal armed forces of the indigenous leader of Zhandui and killed the ferocious *tusi*, the insurrectionary army confiscated all his possessions and property, and proclaimed the abolishment of corvée labor. After fighting in one place after another in Chakdü, Dergé and Kardzé for three years, they not only drove out the indigenous leaders of Khangsar and Mazur into exile, but also forced the indigenous leader of Derge to flee to the west bank of the Drichu (Jinsha) River to seek refuge with the ruling clique of serf-owners in Central Tibet. The serfs in various regions rose in force and spirit at the news, responding to the uprising with full support.²⁹

The struggles to resist land rent and corvée labor broke out one after another. After the insurrectionary army achieved initial victory, Bulongma and others became arrogant, and began to lead a corrupted life. Disunity developed within the uprising leadership, and they cut themselves off from the masses. Not long after, they were defeated by the indigenous leader in collusion with the serf-owners of Central Tibet. Bulongma led the remnants of his army retreating to Nyarong, but they were surrounded. At last (he and others) were burned alive in a fire set by the serf-owners, and the uprising failed.

It is evident from the two paragraphs quoted above that one group of Chinese historians portrays the incident exactly as other historians deal with a typical “righteous” peasant uprising. As the following features will be discussed in more detail below, here I would like briefly to touch upon them. First, like most studies on peasant revolts by communist historians, we see the thread of class antagonism that runs through these paragraphs. Second, communist historians typically stress or focus on activities that show the progressiveness of peasant revolts as a whole, including the distribution of wealth of the “ruling class” among the masses, the destruction of deeds and account books and resistance against land tax and corvée labor. Finally, the reasons given for the uprising’s failure are also typical: disunity, the corruption of the leadership and their aloofness from the masses, their mistaken measures and so forth.

However, the changing political, ideological and academic atmosphere since the 1970s has had an impact on intellectual life, leading also to some new developments in studies of peasant revolts. Following the demise of the “Gang of Four” in 1976 and subsequent academic liberalization in China, though much attention continued to be

²⁹ The year is incorrect. It should be 1848. *Xizang jianzhi*, 1963, 27-29.

focused on the subject of peasant rebellions, the criteria for evaluation and style of academic discussion and perspective on peasant rebellions as a whole changed accordingly. Because productive forces rather than class struggle were emphasized as the primary motive force in history, there was room for a less positive appraisal of the role of peasant uprisings. While the perceived importance of class struggle receded into the background, so, too did the need to portray China's peasant rebellions as part of a glorious proto-revolutionary tradition, leading inexorably toward communist victory in 1949. On the contrary, historians have begun the task of reevaluating the character of various peasant uprisings, stressing the many "backward" aspects of the movements. Furthermore, since a comparatively open style of academic discussion prevails in China, conferences and writings on the topic of peasant rebellions often reflect an exciting spirit of controversy.³⁰

Once again Gönpo Namgyel became the subject of new studies and a number of interesting articles about him were published. This caused heated debate among historians as to the nature of the uprising and the status of Gönpo Namgyel. There emerged two opposing views of him. One group, including some books and articles from the late 1970s and even through the 1990s, continued to present him as a leader of serf rebellion. The other group considers his activities as exemplifying "contradictions within the governing class," and condemns him as a feudal lord engaged in territorial expansion and the exploitation of serfs. And yet another historian has proposed that what began as an anti-Qing revolt developed into a "tribal" war, with Central Tibet becoming involved in 1863.

One of the representative pieces of the first group, an article by Zeng Wenqiong, is a case in point that demonstrates a unique discursive structure and shows how political, ideological and academic factors bear on the construction of a "righteous" leader of a serf uprising, as well as the historiographical reconstruction of the uprising itself.³¹ Zeng's article still adopts the typical framework of studies on peasant wars in China popular at the time. Because the main theme of Zeng's article, like most other studies on peasant wars in 1950s and 1960s, argues that the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel was a just serf uprising, the theme of class and class struggle features in every aspect of his discussion and approach.

³⁰ Elizabeth J. Perry, ed. *Chinese Perspectives on the Nien Rebellion* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1981), 3; Liu, Kwang-ching, "World View and Peasant Rebellion: Reflection on Post-Mao Historiography." *Journal of Asian Studies* 11 (1981):295-326.

³¹ Zeng Wenqiong, "Shijiu shiji zhongye chuankang diqu de yici nongnu da qiye," in *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao* 1 (1979):30-39.

The author claims that the revolt occupies an undeniable position in the history of Chinese peasant wars and that it provides new materials for the study of the history of class struggle against serf-owners by serfs. Probing the causes of the uprising, he cites first the *Collected Works of Mao Zedong* concerning the frequency of peasant uprisings as a sign of the intensification of class antagonism and national conflict. He moves on to the many anti-Qing revolts in western Sichuan Province to show how oppressive government drove the people to rebellion and that the masses were living in dire poverty. Looking at the general situation in Kham, Zeng enumerates not only the land and livestock taxes, usury and commercial exploitation as the means of economic plunder, but also details the religious oppression and persecution of the serfs. Finally, the natural disasters lasting for a few years prior to the uprising and the excessive exploitation of the serf-owners in Nyarong are recounted as the specific causes of the uprising. In sum, the serfs were leading a miserable life without sufficient food and clothes, and they were exploited and oppressed by the Tibetan feudal serf-owner class. But above all, the author cites the miserable life of the serfs ultimately to show the intensification of class conflict in Tibetan society in Kham, which Marxists take as the motive force of history.

Zeng's examination into the political program and measures of the revolt is a perfect example of the extremes to which some Marxist historians will go. Faced with a lack of any information in the relevant Chinese official sources, Zeng digs up a 1950s field report and then reinforces it with findings of his own field investigation in the region. He also lists "positive" political activities, stressing aspects that reflect the progressiveness of the revolt, namely the distribution of wealth, the destruction of deeds and account books, and the resistance to land taxes and corvée labor. In his description of the political activities and measures taken by the "serf uprising" in Dergé, first he offers a slightly more detailed account of the former issues based on his own findings in a field investigation. He then cites the report of the late 1950s about the relevant measures adopted by Gönpo Namgyel with the help of his aide, Lugu Tsering (Achö Lugu):

In regions occupied by the insurrectionary army, it is stipulated that the masses do not provide corvée labor or pay tribute to either the Central Tibetan government or the *tusi*. However, the grain, firewood and grass presented to the *tusi* by the masses in the past should be handed over to the insurrectionary army.³²

³² Zeng 1979:34. See also the field report known as "Bu Lungba Serf Uprising."

To further prove that the insurrectionary army must have laid down a series of measures other than the above-mentioned few, he quotes from the *History of Zhandui* to show that Lugu Tstring was considered such a wise and resourceful man that he would have definitely drawn up more stipulations.³³ He comments that more detailed information of the relevant issues awaits further investigation and research. Moreover, as he recounts the different stages of the “serf uprising,” he repeatedly points out that it is the appeal of its political programs and revolutionary measures that helped win the support of the people.

Like most Chinese communist historians, the author comments on the uprising as a part of the peasant wars, and even though the hope for an outcome for the government is poorly defined, he still speaks highly of the uprising. He attributes the ambiguity of the uprising’s goals to the limitations of the social and historical conditions of time and location. Zeng argues that it is impossible to create a regime out of the void created by the theocracy in the feudal serfdom of Kham, where “deities” were ubiquitous. However, in spite of all his ambiguity, the author maintains the uprising’s significance should not be discounted, and argues that Gönpo Namgyel and his uprising was not a localized incident but part of a widespread peasant uprising movement in China in opposition to Qing rule. In his own words,

The great significance of (the serf uprising) should be viewed as an important component of the great patriotic anti-Qing revolutionary struggles by the whole Chinese nation, rather than a revolt limited to Kham only. Kham is far away from Inland China, but the fate of the Tibetan people is closely linked to that of the various ethnic groups in China. The whole history of the serf uprising proves the (following) truth: the revolutionary struggles of the Tibetan people will not succeed without the victories of those of various ethnic groups led by Han Chinese. When the revolutionary struggles of the various ethnic groups headed by the Taiping Revolution failed, the Tibetan serf uprising also ended along with them. The truth fully shows that the various ethnic groups in China, who have fought and won together, have shared a common fate since time immemorial. The nation has been founded by them together, and history has also been written together by them with their blood.³⁴

As we can see from this paragraph, Zeng’s account of the uprising’s significance follows the guiding principle that Tibet has always been part of China. Indeed, this principle is the unquestioned ultimate

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Zeng 1979:37.

goal toward which most Marxist historians understand the flow of Tibetan history. It is interesting to note the concrete reasons for the failure of the uprising cited by this author. Basing his reasoning on new findings from his field investigation, he adds another reason to the typical ones discussed above—sabotage by enemies hidden within the uprising. Zeng argues that the “serf uprising” led by Gönpo Namgyel, like all other peasant wars lacking the complete support and guidance of the proletariat and the Communist Party, was doomed to defeat.

What merits our special attention is the author’s particular discussion about the uprising’s participants, and how he attempts to reconcile apparent contradictions in Gönpo Namgyel’s class origins. The author notes that while the poorest layers of Kham society—*khorpa* (*khor pa*), *trepa* (*khral pa*) and some poor monks—are the basic participants in the “serf uprising,” the serf-owner class represented by *tusi*, headmen and high-ranking lamas in monasteries had always been the target of the “revolutionary army’s attacks.” He further points out that though the insurrectionary army had such great political vitality first and foremost because it put forward slogans representing the interests of the serfs, such important factors as the class nature of the basic participants who fought for the realization of the slogans and the revolutionary resolve of the leadership should not be overlooked. Turning to the leadership of the “serf uprising,” Zeng holds a positive view of Gönpo Namgyel’s role in the uprising, even though a contradictory account of his family background is evident:

According to the folk stories, Bulongma, one of the main leaders of the insurrectionary army, was born in a poor serf family in Boré village, Zhandui. Since his youth, he participated in activities against the oppression and exploitation by *tusi* and headmen. He had gradually become a mature leader of the serfs in the class struggles. But the documents clearly recorded that Bulongma was born in a *tusi* family.... It is evident (from the official document) that after Luobu Qili (Norbu Tsering) was killed, his land and property was first confiscated by the Qing, then was awarded to indigenous leaders who supported the Qing in its suppression of him. Here for the time being I will not investigate whether his son Gönpo Namgyel’s status had been lowered to that of serf; however, it is certain that he would not let the Qing and other indigenous leaders get away with their deed of ‘killing his father and seizing his property.’ No matter what kind of family background Bulongma had and what his purpose of joining the uprising at the beginning was, judging from his struggles against the Qing dynasty and the fifteen *tusi*, his activities were beneficial to the insurrectionary army from start to the finish. It is especially praiseworthy that

he did not surrender to the enemies when facing death in the final fight against them, showing the revolutionary determination of the serfs.... Other leaders of the uprising, all born in poor serf families, also fought bravely and charged at the head of their men. In particular, none of them wavered or turned coat when they were surrounded.... The heroic deeds of these many leaders not only represent the majority of the insurrectionary army, but also fully reflect the Chinese nation's spirit of fighting to the finish against their enemies.³⁵

It is clear from the quoted passage that Zeng seeks to distinguish the leader Gönpo Namgyel's social origin or family background (Ch. *chusheng*) from his "class attributes" (Ch. *jieji shuxing*) or the class which he served.³⁶ In fact, the stress on "class attributes" makes it possible to have a positive appraisal of Gönpo Namgyel in spite of the conflicting materials about his family background. In addition, the fact that all other leaders were born as serfs also supports the author's claim that Gönpo Namgyel's activities served the interests of the serf class. Thus, by resolving the problem of the criteria for being a progressive serf leader, Zeng manages to praise Gönpo Namgyel as a loyal heroic leader of the uprising who served the serf class and fought to the finish against his enemies.

Finally, in terms of the language used to describe the uprising and the sources selected for this purpose, Zeng follows a typical Marxist approach, glorifying the peasant wars and criticizing the "ruling class." Zeng writes most enthusiastically about the uprising, filling his article with praise and a tone of admiration. For instance, in the account of the battles, the soldiers are portrayed as brave and heroic, and Gönpo Namgyel's three sons are depicted as excelling in the martial arts and skilled in battle. Meanwhile, Gönpo Namgyel himself is extolled as a leader who enjoyed the full support of the people, shared weal and woe with the common soldiers, and who strictly disciplined his army so that not the slightest harm might be inflicted on the people. And Gönpo Namgyel's refusal to accept the official title of the sixth rank and their spirit of fighting to the finish rather than surrendering in the decisive battle demonstrate the firmness of the serfs' revolutionary spirit. By contrast, derogatory words and criticism are reserved for the ruling class, the enemy of the peasants. The *tusi's* army is criticized as being fierce as wolves and tigers in a time of peace, but complete pushovers in battle. Qi Shan, the general dispatched to quell the revolt in Nyarong by the Qing court, is criticized as a representative of the landlord class, and his "scandalous"

³⁵ Zeng 1979:36.

³⁶ See Harrison 1971, 57.

behavior to “expedite” his retreat by staging a fake victory is also exposed. Though he occasionally quotes the official records to corroborate his argument, he mainly bases his accounts on oral reports, *i.e.*, the findings of various field investigations, including his own. He tends to select those official documents supporting his view of the uprising, but ignores anything contradicting his argument without analysis or explanation. Even when the very passage he quotes contains information opposed to his central theme, he makes no effort to resolve the problem. For example, to contrast the contradictory accounts of Gönpo Namgyel’s family background in folk stories and the official documents, the author quotes Sichuan Governor-general Luo Bingzhang’s memorial to emperor Tongzhi. But he does not explain its negative view of Gönpo Namgyel, which presents him as a greedy and vicious person who seized the territories and official seals of other *tusi*. While the general trend of research on peasant wars, is to dismiss these official documents as “slandering the peasant class,” historians like Zeng generally ignore them in their study on peasant wars.

Turning to the second group of articles, representatives are “Gongbu Langjie shi nongnu qiyi lingxiu ma?” (Is Gönpo Namgyel a leader of a serf uprising?) by Xu Ming and “Zhandui *tusi* Bulu bingbian zayi” (A discussion of the riot led by Bulongma, a *tusi* in Nyarong) by Shangguan Jianbi.³⁷ Like those of the first group of articles, Xu’s article is also based on class analysis, but his selection of relevant documents is different from that of Zeng, and he also offers a contrasting image of Gönpo Namgyel. Unlike Zeng who generally dismisses the official documents, Xu quotes extensively from them to present the history of the Nyarong region since 1728, when the *tusi* of Nyarong submitted to the Qing dynasty. This is a history of frequent disturbances and wars, especially against the Qing dynasty.

Based on local history, he concludes that the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel should be distinguished from others, and he examines it in connection with the general behavior of the feudal serf owners in Nyarong throughout Qing history. He holds that their activities, whose purpose was to restore and expand their power weakened by the Qing government, were actually “revolts” to fight for the interests of their own class and for the high-handed power to exploit the people of their own ethnic group. In Xu’s introduction, he notes the diverse evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel in academic circles. In his opinion, the question of Gönpo Namgyel’s class status is the key to judging the nature of the revolt led by him.

³⁷ Shangguan Jianbi. “Zhandui *tusi* bulu bingbian zayi,” in *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao*, no. 1 (1980): 27-35.

According to Xu, to determine whether Gönpo Namgyel was a serf-owner or a leader of the serf uprising, it is necessary to examine the measures and policies adopted under his rule. That is to say, one can only understand fully whose interests Gönpo Namgyel represented by examining whether his measures supported the serfs or the feudal regime. Xu quotes extensively from the Qing official Zhang Ji's account, and an eyewitness account of Gönpo Namgyel and his activities by Yele Tsültrim, a contemporary of Gönpo Namgyel, a monk and fellow Nyarong man.³⁸ He presents Gönpo Namgyel as an ambitious military expansionist who aimed at extending his sphere of influence in Kham, and a ruthless butcher who persecuted and oppressed the people. Far from being the sympathetic leader of serf uprising, he in fact not only demanded substantial amounts of both grain and livestock whenever he seized territories, but is also said to have burnt down houses and killed anyone who could not escape. In the regions he took over he placed individuals from the serf-owner class in official positions and coerced the local people to provide corvée labor to build official residences for him. As a result, it is said that the Tibetan people in Kham rose against Gönpo Namgyel one after another since they did not support his policy of feudal exploitation and brutal massacre. Xu argues that because Gönpo Namgyel led military expeditions in Kham to expand his own sphere of influence and to oppose the rule of the Qing court and Central Tibet, his measures were those of the feudal serf-owner regime. Moreover, Gönpo Namgyel's measures did not conform to those of the serf revolution at all. What deserves our attention is Xu's claim that it does not matter much whether Gönpo Namgyel was born into a *tusi* family or not, but that Gönpo Namgyel acted as a member of the feudal serf-owner class and the army under his leadership definitely did not take part in a serf uprising.³⁹

To refute the evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel as the leader of a serf uprising, Xu raises questions about the authenticity of a few major historical facts. These include information about Gönpo Namgyel's family members and his family background, his military expeditions in certain regions and the causes for the revolts. In conclusion, Xu characterizes the revolt as the rise of a local chief who sought to gain great personal power and expand his dominion. He goes on to say that other historians with a rather positive view of Gönpo Namgyel have failed to use Tibetan and Chinese historical materials that truthfully record the relevant events. More importantly, Xu feels that some authors who wrote about Gönpo Namgyel relied too heavily on the

³⁸ Yelé Tsültrim's manuscript.

³⁹ See Xu 1980:20-26.

1959 field report, which he criticizes as neither comprehensive nor objective.

Following similar objectives, Shangguan argues that to judge the nature of war, one should mainly take into consideration whose interests it serves, whose interests the leaders of the war represent, what kind of slogans it proposes and what benefit it brings to the people. Again relying on both official Chinese documents and Tibetan historical materials, Shangguan also considers the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel as a pillaging war waged by the serf-owner class. He argues that the war was not to overthrow the feudal serf-owner regime, but to establish feudal rule in Kham with Gönpo Namgyel reigning as a local despot. Meanwhile, the war brought great suffering to the common people, who were forced to migrate to various places and could not pursue normal productive activities. It led to rule by yet another serf-owner, rather than freedom from enslavement by the serf-owner class.

Like Xu's argument, in the sections about the historical background of Gönpo Namgyel's revolt, Shangguan holds that the war waged by Gönpo Namgyel's family was a reactionary war, neither beneficial to safeguarding national unification nor helpful in uniting against foreign invaders. Shangguan relates that the major oppositions straining Chinese society in the mid-nineteenth century changed from tensions between the landlord class and the peasant class to imperialism versus the Chinese nation and feudalism versus rule by the people. Thus, only the Tibetan people's struggles against invasion by the foreign imperialists or struggles against conspiracies to split the country or resistance to oppression and exploitation by feudal forces within the country are acceptable as motive forces for the progress of the Tibetan region. Though it was at the height of the Tibetan people's struggle against foreign invaders at that time, the war waged by Gönpo Namgyel is not viewed as a patriotic anti-imperialist one since none of his subordinates had ever participated in the struggle against foreign Catholic churches entering the Tibetan regions. On the contrary, to achieve its goal of extending its ruling power and building the Kham region into an independent "kingdom," the feudal serf-owner class in Kham, represented by Gönpo Namgyel's family, took advantage of not only the local Tibetan people's resistance against the Central Tibetan government and the ruling group of the Gelukpa monasteries, but also their struggle against national oppression by the Qing dynasty.

Shangguan also devotes a section to how Gönpo Namgyel used religion to advance his interests and to expand his power. Because of the negative evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel shared by both Xu and Shangguan, it is natural for them to quote the official Chinese and Ti-

betan documents that are so critical of Gönpo Namgyel and his military expeditions. Thus, they also inherit their harsh derogatory language and critical tone.

It is interesting to note that sometimes a historian's position can change with the passage of time. Chen Yishi originally viewed Gönpo Namgyel as the leader of a serf uprising in one of his earlier articles,⁴⁰ but his 1986 article portrays Gönpo Namgyel as an ambitious *tusi* and a big serf-owner who engaged in wars of territorial expansion.⁴¹ In a footnote, the author mentions that he has come around to a different opinion, but he does not explain why. Commenting that a historical figure is usually as much censured as praised, he only briefly refers to the fact that while Gönpo Namgyel was depicted as an outstanding hero in the relevant field reports and some folk stories, he was also severely scolded as a devil who took pleasure in killing in other folk stories. The author attributes the positive evaluation to Gönpo Namgyel's policy of light taxation and corvée labor in the regions he conquered, and attributes the negative view to his annexation of the territories of neighboring *tusi* as well as his heavy hand against Tibetan Buddhism. His later presentation is apparently also based on official Chinese documents since he quotes extensively from them. In many ways Chen's later account is more balanced both in terms of language use and treatment of the subject. Chen avoids using popular political phrases and judgmental wording, and his evaluation is also more balanced. He does not completely adopt the standard Chinese perspective of total condemnation, but instead considers Gönpo Namgyel to be a courageous and insightful Tibetan leader with an independent understanding of politics and religion. Politically, Gönpo Namgyel is portrayed as a *tusi* attempting to expand his power with the ultimate purpose of gradually uniting the entire Tibetan area. His policy of light taxation and corvée labor is understood as progressive because it is offered in exchange for the serfs' being at his command. As for his attitude toward religion, Chen points out that he was strongly against Tibetan Buddhism which "poisons" people's minds and advocates resignation to one's fate. More interestingly, unlike others, Chen refrains from discussing Gönpo Namgyel's class status an important factor in understanding the events in Nyarong. Chen maintains that Gönpo Namgyel's struggles against the Qing dynasty is a somewhat progressive movement. In addition, because of his policies and his struggle against religion, Gönpo Namgyel, praised by the local Tibetan people even now, de-

⁴⁰ Cited from Chen 1986, 3:53. Also see Chen Yishi and Zeng Wenqiong. "Lüelun 1889 nian chuanbian Zangzu diqu Sala Yongzhu lingdao de nongnu qiyi," *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao*, no. 3, (1984): 51-56 (80).

⁴¹ Chen 1986, parts 1-3.

serves to be regarded as an outstanding figure in Tibetan history. Nevertheless, Chen also notes that he too exploited and oppressed the serfs as a serf-owner. According to Chen, the wars of territorial expansion and annexation led by Gönpo Namgyel at the later stage led to adverse consequences for Kham society and economy. Furthermore, the long-term wars also brought disaster to both the Tibetan and Han Chinese people. In sum, when Gönpo Namgyel's activities are regarded as a whole, he does not deserve to be lauded as the leader of a serf uprising, let alone to be held up as a 'hero among the people'.

Still some other accounts written later than those of Xu and Shangguan fail to note the existence of the ongoing debate, but simply present whatever facts they deem veritable and draw conclusions accordingly. A short paragraph about the relevant events in the book entitled *Xizang Jianshi (A Brief History of Tibet)*, without any reference to class struggle and class analysis, presents the events in Nyarong as a series of armed riots, including the attempt of Gönpo Namgyel and his father to extend their influence to the territories of the neighboring *tusi* in Kham.⁴² A similar approach is found in another slightly longer account by Xu Jun from 1999.⁴³ The sources, language and tone of these accounts are similar to that of Chen's 1986 paper. In keeping with the more open political, ideological and academic atmosphere since the late 1970s in China, clearly these authors can afford to have a less positive appraisal of the role of serf uprisings and to refer freely to the official documents to advance their arguments. Furthermore, as the perceived importance of class struggle recedes into the background, the authors are able to engage in historical investigation itself without applying class analysis and class struggle to almost every aspect of historiography.

However, there are four more accounts that continue to extol Gönpo Namgyel as the heroic leader of a large-scale serf uprising even though they were published after Xu's and Shuangguan's articles.⁴⁴ The first, a paper entitled "The Serf Uprising Led by Bulongma" written in 1986, is mainly based on folk stories circulating in Gönpo Namgyel's home region.⁴⁵ The second is an account in the *Xinlong Xianzhi (Gazetteer of Nyarong County)* published in 1991,

⁴² *Xizang Jianshi* 1985.

⁴³ "Qing ji dui chuanbian de renshi yu juece, jianlun zhandui wenti de youlai," in *Kangding minzu shifan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao*, 8, no.1 (1999):16-27.

⁴⁴ Ding Ren, "Buluman qiren," *Xinan minzu xuexiao xuebao*, No.4 (1992): 40-45; Zheng Qin, "Shilun Gongbu Langji qiren," in *Kangding minzu shifan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao*, No. 00 (1987): 41-47.

⁴⁵ Mi Hongwei & Kasa Zeweng 1986. "Buluman" is the Chinese transliteration of the Tibetan *bu long ma*, meaning "the blind boy," the nickname for Gonpo Namgyel.

which chronicles the relevant historical events in Nyarong and contains a biographical sketch of Gönpo Namgyel as one of its outstanding historical figures. Judging from the content of the biographical sketch, the facts are clearly derived from folk stories though no sources are listed.⁴⁶ Like Zeng's article, both these articles predictably present a rather positive evaluation because Gönpo Namgyel is revered as an outstanding hero by the local people. Likewise, the discursive framework, the choice of sources, the language and tone are rather similar to those of the first group, especially Zeng's. The only difference is that the 1986 article is more detailed than Zeng's, but the gazetteer account is much shorter. In the first account, Gönpo Namgyel's family history, the process of his unification of Nyarong region, his military expeditions against neighboring *tusi* and his struggles against both the Qing and Central Tibetan armies are much more detailed and vivid. All the complementary information seems to enhance Gönpo Namgyel's image as the brave and resourceful leader of a serf uprising, who represents the interests of the people and whose revolt is progressive. For instance, to show that Gönpo Namgyel cared for the poor even as a child, he is said to have often distributed food to poor children from his family pantry. Furthermore, to present Gönpo Namgyel as someone representing the interests of the people, in addition to the favorable policies of tax-exemption and abolition of corvée labor described in Zeng's article, he is said to have carried out three other well-received policies. The first was the equal distribution of confiscated land among male serfs, and the second allowed immigrating subjects of conquered *tusi* to live among the families of the insurrectionary army so as to prevent internal disturbances. The third, which was strongly supported by the serfs and broke the bonds between serf-owners and serfs, was the abolition of marriages among families who were well-matched in social status, and his advocacy of having poor men marry women from rich families and poor women men of rich families. Finally when Gönpo Namgyel conquered a *tusi*, he ordered that the official seal, robes, etc. bestowed on that *tusi* by the Qing court be disposed of; he was said to proclaim: "I am not going to be an official of the old fool emperor, but I am going to be an official of us poor."⁴⁷

A historian with a different evaluation of the initial and later stages of the event is Ya Hanzhang, a prominent Chinese scholar of Tibetan studies. He holds that the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel in 1849 was an anti-Qing rebellion, and also marks the beginning of open

⁴⁶ *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992, 377-378.

⁴⁷ See Mi Hongwei and Kasa Zeweng, 11.

resistance against the Qing rulers by the people of Kham. But he argues that the anti-Qing revolt became a tribal war with Central Tibet becoming involved in 1863.⁴⁸

Tibetan Historiographical Construction of Gönpo Namgyel

Like the Chinese evaluations of Gönpo Namgyel, the Tibetan construction of him is also far from uniform. On the one hand, Gönpo Namgyel has been considered a villain, a military expansionist and an enemy of Buddhism by contemporary Central Tibetans and fellow Khampas from neighboring regions. On the other hand, Tibetans in his home region and some Tibetan Marxist historians are rather positive, extolling him as a local hero and the leader of serf uprisings.

In comparison to Chinese reports, it is surprising to note that there are only a few primary or secondary Tibetan sources on Gönpo Namgyel publicly available. The Tibetan sources in the public domain consist of only a few petitions submitted by the local Khampas to the Lhasa government, oral accounts collected by others and a few relevant studies by later historians. There is also an account of Gönpo Namgyel and his activities written by a contemporary monk in Nyarong, which vividly reflects on how fellow Tibetans of the time viewed him. In the discussion of Gönpo Namgyel's family origin, he is depicted as greedy, cruel, irascible, envious of others and one who mistreated his servants. It recounts in detail how Gönpo Namgyel slaughtered people and demanded corvée labor to build residencies for himself. It also gives a detailed account of how people of various regions in Kham rose in armed struggle in resistance to his oppression and his policy of brutal massacre. In brief, he is shown as a bloodthirsty devil who seized the territories of other local rulers by sheer force, massacred innocent people, blasphemed against "sacred" religion and defied the authority of both Central Tibet and the Qing.⁴⁹

In view of his robbing the best tea in the custody of the Tibetan government trade representative and his annexation of the territories of the neighboring *tusi*, it is understandable that the Lhasa government and the people of neighboring regions judged him so negatively. In the report sent by the chief of Litang, Gönpo Dramdül and Khuwo Gelong Lozang Jinpa to the Tibetan government, they refer to Gönpo Namgyel as a destroyer of Buddhism and the happiness of

⁴⁸ See Ya Hanzhang, *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas* (English Edition). Wang Wen-jiong, trans. (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1991), 99-100. The Chinese edition was published in 1985.

⁴⁹ Yelé Tsültrim's manuscript.

sentient beings, and a bandit cursed for a long period who robbed the people of Kham of the opportunity for happiness. They also describe his forces as "bandit troops," who not only harassed their regions, but also blocked the courier stations between Tibet and China.

The dominant image of Gönpo Namgyel in Tibetan sources as generally antagonistic toward Buddhism and particularly hostile towards the authority of religious figures is worth looking at. In addition to the report stated above, there is an oral account cited by Tashi Tsering in a paper presented at the 1982 IATS conference that states: "Though A Mgon believed in Buddhist doctrines of karma and rebirth, he had no faith in incarnate lamas generally—only in those who could perform convincing miracles before his very eyes."⁵⁰ Later writings by Sherap Özer, a prominent lama of Kelzang Monastery in Nyarong, present Gönpo Namgyel's attitude towards Buddhism as ambivalent. He built a *chokhang* (*chos khang*, shrine room) on the top floor of his residence, but he also took local lamas hostage. Local people had different perceptions of Gönpo Namgyel's attitude towards Buddhism. An oral account cited by Sherap Özer states that one local lama commented that Gönpo Namgyel was an incarnation of the devil while another two monks claim that he was an incarnation of a protective deity.⁵¹

The local view of Gönpo Namgyel contrasts sharply with the official view presented in government records and works by historians. One of the earliest attempts to take into account local views was the 1959 field investigation carried out by the Sichuan Nationalities Investigation Team. According to this investigation, people from his home region portrayed him as a chivalrous leader performing various deeds to alleviate the sufferings of the poor peasants. Among the locals, Gönpo Namgyel's exploits are told in a mythical way; in fact some even believe that he was not killed by the Lhasa army and was able to escape. Some Chinese historians attempt to dismiss this favorable account of a "reactionary" feudal lord by denying it any veracity. And certainly, like all other oral materials, there are limits to their accuracy, especially since these accounts were collected decades after the event. Neither can we exclude the possibility that local people interviewed by the investigators might have their own hidden agendas to provide a positive evaluation of him simply because their ancestors were actively involved in his military expeditions, or these stories served, at least in part, as propaganda for Gönpo Namgyel

⁵⁰ "A Mgon" refers to Gonpo Namgyel. See Tashi Tsering, "Nyarong Gonpo Namgyel: a 19th Century Kham pa Warrior." In Barbara Nimri Aziz and Matthew Kapstein, eds. *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985), 207.

⁵¹ Sherap Özer "Xinlong gongbu langjie xingwang shi," in *Ganzi zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji*, 3 (1985):1-44.

and his followers. Still, it is equally possible that local families have handed down favorable stories, because they in fact directly benefited from Gönpo Namgyel's activities. In sum, oral accounts do indicate that Gönpo Namgyel enjoyed some popular support and that he had the respect of the local people because of his popular policies. Even Qi Shan, the Qing official sent to suppress the revolt, had to admit that Gönpo Namgyel was "strongly supported by the local Tibetans,"⁵² and Zhang Ji also commented that "at that time, he was able to command all the people in Nyarong."⁵³

In the early 1980s, Gönpo Namgyel began to attract the attention of a number of young Tibetan scholars living abroad and inside China. While Tibetan writers in China adopt a Marxist approach, Marxist historians are also divided in their stand on the issue. Gönpo Namgyel is still praised as the leader of a serf uprising in Ge Le's *Ganzi zhou shihua* published in 1984. Though the author is aware of the controversy over the evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel, curiously enough he only mentions such conflicting views in a footnote without any explanation of the inconsistency. The author often quotes from Zeng's article and *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas* by Ya Hanzhang, both of which have a rather positive evaluation, and it is natural that his account follows a similar line as the group represented by Zeng's article discussed above. Thus, its discursive framework and choice of sources, language and tone conform to those of this group. But, compared with other historians such as Zeng, Ge Le draws on new folk stories about Gönpo Namgyel's childhood and youth, especially the story of how he became blind. In these stories, Gönpo Namgyel is depicted as a brave and resourceful man with high aspirations, gregarious and sociable. In contrast to Zeng, Xu and Shangguan, Ge Le does not examine in detail his reasons for classifying him as a leader of serf uprisings. In particular, the problem of the class attributes applied to Gönpo Namgyel is not used as an important criterion for evaluating him as compared with other accounts. Instead, based on the information that Gönpo Namgyel's father was killed and his family properties confiscated, the author infers that his family status had probably fallen and possibly been degraded to serf status. Meanwhile, to show that Gönpo Namgyel's hatred for the Qing dynasty and other *tusi* for killing his father and seizing his family properties as a possible cause for his revolt, the author cites the relevant account by Yelé Tsültrim, whereas he ignores completely

⁵² See Zhupi zouzhe: minzulei, no, 3, Dossier No. 1334. Collected by the Chinese No. 1 Historical Archive, cited from Chen 1986:47-48.

⁵³ Zhang Ji, 2003, 109.

the fact that the book presents an overwhelming negative image of Gönpo Namgyel.⁵⁴

We also find Gönpo Namgyel acclaimed as the leader of the serf uprising in the *Xinlong xianzhi* published in 1992. Relevant accounts, again, are based on the field report of 1959, and continue to extol him as a leader of serf uprisings, and a fighter for the interests of the common people. Furthermore, he is accorded a short biography as an outstanding historical figure. The account given in this Nyarong gazetteer reflects popular local sentiments and portrays him favorably, in an almost folkloric style.

In 1985, an article by Sherap Özer presents our subject as an ambitious military expansionist destroying the stability and peace of the region. Similar sentiments are found in the brief relevant account in *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba*⁵⁵ and the short comment by Pelkar Rinpoché of Lingchu Monastery,⁵⁶ both of which give only the bare outline of the events. I will focus on Sherap Özer's article since it attempts to present a complete history of the rise and fall of Gönpo Namgyel. Having noticed the ongoing debate over how to evaluate him, the author points out in his introduction that, in order to probe into what actually happened, he systematically engaged in verifying and collecting relevant information about his family background, his family's social standing and his life story. Sherap Özer has not only conducted a profound investigation in the Nyarong region, but also consulted both the Chinese and Tibetan sources; thus, his account is so far the most exhaustive and comparatively balanced in treatment of the subject. His account finely details Gönpo Namgyel's family background, his childhood, the process of his unification of the whole Nyarong region and his successive armed struggles against the Qing armies. It also describes in detail his occupation of the territories held by other *tusi*, his defeat by Central Tibetan troops, his ambivalent attitude toward Tibetan Buddhism, the corvée labor and taxes he levied and his system of military service. However, readers should bear in mind that since most of the information outside the official records has been collected from folk stories, it is unsurprising that a favorable presentation of Gönpo Namgyel and his activities emerges. But unlike other studies which take one-sided views either of condemnation or praise, his account is full of nuance incorporating both favorable and negative views of Gönpo Namgyel. In explaining the

⁵⁴ Ge Le. *Ganzi Zangzu zizhizhou shihua* (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1984), 199-213.

⁵⁵ Chappel Tseten Püntsock and Nordrang Urgyen. *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba* (Lha sa: Bod ljongs Bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1991).

⁵⁶ See Pelkar Rinpoché Tupten Tsering n.d. This short article evaluating Gönpo Namgyel was published for internal circulation only (2002).

praise of people in the Nyarong region, the author maintains that people recount Gönpo Namgyel's "heroic deeds" to express their hatred toward the severe exploitation and oppression by Central Tibetan government officials resident in Nyarong. He concludes that Gönpo Namgyel is indeed a tragic historical figure, and that although his whole life has a legendary flavor, in the end he is not worthy of emulation by others. He reminds us that during his childhood, he is thought to have been a fanatic believer in settling personal scores, and that when he came of age, he appears to have been corrupted by his growing power and influence to the degree that his ambition was unbound. As someone who bore grudges and was bloodthirsty, his rule and the measures he took did not reap benefits for the common people. Although Sherab Özer generally considers him to be a military expansionist, he argues that he obstructed the unification of the "motherland," and undermined the unity of nationalities as well as the prosperity and stability of the nation. Again, as I have already discussed, contemporary political concerns related to the "Tibetan issue" in China nowadays, such as the unification of the "motherland" and the unity of nationalities, are all reflected in Sherap Özer's criteria for the evaluation of a historical figure.⁵⁷

Additionally, a few Tibetans in exile have also written some accounts of Gönpo Namgyel. Most notably Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa's *Tibet, A Political History* adopts a traditional view of Gönpo Namgyel by portraying him negatively and describing his rule in Kham as "a reign of terror."⁵⁸ Indeed, the Tibetan edition of Shakabpa's book is even more scathing, describing him as "the enemy of Nyarong" and his activities as "plundering the various regions of Kham."⁵⁹ Shakabpa gives the reason for the Tibetan government's attack on Gönpo Namgyel as a result of a petition received from local people, writing, "Six thousand refugee families poured into Lhasa from Dergé, Horkhok, Litang, Chatreng, and Dzakhok. They submitted petitions to the Tibetan government for help, and in 1863 the government sent troops to Nyarong under the command of Kalön Pulungwa and Dapön Trimön."⁶⁰ It is evident that Shakabpa takes a Lhasa-centric view of Gönpo Namgyel, not surprising given that Shakabpa was an important Lhasa official.

A study by Tashi Tsering, a Tibetan historian in India, presents a relatively balanced picture of Gönpo Namgyel without either demon-

⁵⁷ Sherab Özer 1985, 1-44.

⁵⁸ Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet, a Political History* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967), 187.

⁵⁹ Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs* (Kalimpong: Shakabpa House, 1976), Vol. 1, 42-45.

⁶⁰ Shakabpa 1967, 187.

izing or glorifying him to the extreme. Tashi Tsering's article is one of the most exhaustive accounts of Gönpo Namgyel that is comparable to the article by Sherap Özer. Like the latter's, Tashi Tsering's article tends to concentrate and emphasize local elements, and he draws heavily on interviews with local informants. Since the study is mainly based on the author's interviews with Gönpo Namgyel's descendants and accounts by contemporary local lamas, it contains some new information. For instance, in the discussion of Gönpo Namgyel's character, the author recounts the curse inflicted upon him by the Tibetan government and the Dergé ruler's invoking the gods and praying for an end to his power as one of the reasons for his abnormal behavior. No other account mentions these episodes.

Tashi Tsering's study is particularly interesting for the attention he gives to underlying local perspective, which is completely obscured in official accounts. The subaltern perspective of the local Nyarong population concerns the reason for the Tibetan government's intervention, the local view of Tibetan government forces, the Tibetan government's betrayal of Gönpo Namgyel and his family, and local reactions to his death. All these aspects are suppressed in the official documents and also in accounts that demonize Gönpo Namgyel and his followers. Nyarong people are said to maintain that the Tibetan government intervened at the instigation of the *ambans*. In addition, contrary to Shakabpa's claim that the Tibetan government troops were revered as "celestial troops" and strongly supported by the local people, the author claims otherwise: "The people of Kham were not especially happy at the arrival of the Tibetan government force because they looted and inflicted much violence upon the local population." Next, based on his interviews with Gyaré Nyima Gyeltsen and Wuli Dapön Dogyeltsang Rapten Dorjé of Upper Nyarong, the author describes how Gönpo Namgyel and his family were betrayed by the Tibetan government.⁶¹

In sum, although Tashi Tsering provides a wealth of information about Gönpo Namgyel, his study reveals contemporary political concerns among exile Tibetans. Tashi Tsering describes Gönpo Namgyel's campaigns in a positive light as unifying Kham. He describes the Lhasa government's defeat of Gönpo Namgyel and his army as "exterminating him through deceit and treachery" and goes on to say that with his defeat, "Tibet lost the last wall that might have stopped expansionist Chinese designs." He sees Gönpo Namgyel's rise as resisting the encroachment of Manchu rule in Kham.

⁶¹ Tashi Tsering 1985, 196-214.

Conclusion

The construction of historical figures is always a complicated and ambivalent undertaking, upon which various subtle and not-so-subtle pressures play their part. Ideological focus, biases in official documents and the influence of contemporary politics as well as academic concerns have all colored the picture of Gönpo Namgyel that various authors have left us. It should be clear from this paper that the image of Gönpo Namgyel has shifted between that of a loathsome destroyer of peace to that of a tragic folk hero. He has been cast by some as the leader of oppressed serfs while others portray him as nothing more than a self-serving warlord.

Since Gönpo Namgyel infringed the vested interests of the Tibetan government in Lhasa, the neighboring chieftains and “kings” as well as the Qing court, they naturally portrayed him negatively. Both in official Tibetan and Chinese accounts Gönpo Namgyel appears as a destroyer of the peace and stability of Kham. Confucian antipathy toward social unrest among traditional Chinese historians led them to adopt a disparaging view of Gönpo Namgyel, and to disregard out of hand anything positive about him.

In contrast, under the influence of the new trend in China to write a “history of the people” and the ideological concern of glorifying peasants revolts, Chinese Marxist historians of the 1950s recast him as “the leader of the serf uprising” representing the interests of the common people. The “new history of the people” approach shifts its focus from the ruling class to the common people—what the Marxist historians call “the maker of history.” For them official documents were full of “slandering of the common people.” Thus, these historians mainly sought out field investigations to glorify Gönpo Namgyel’s heroic deeds, but totally dismissed any evidence from official documents that was contradictory or challenged their arguments.

In the late 1970s, there was room for a less positive appraisal of the role of peasant uprisings. Consequently, a heated debate arose over the evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel: was he “a leader of the serf uprising” or “an ambitious feudal lord engaging in territorial expansion and wars of plunder?” Some continue to wax lyrical about his revolutionary spirit and his heroic struggles against the oppression and exploitation of the counter-revolutionary ruling class. But others consider him not only an ambitious military expansionist trying to extend his sphere of influence in Kham, but also a ruthless butcher persecuting and oppressing the people.

In sum, it is apparent from the above portrayals of Gönpo Namgyel that historical discourse relies on prevalent discursive strat-

egies that frame historical figures in narrative structure, which reflects the concerns of the period. We have seen how prevalent biases against social disruption in the relevant official Chinese records have led authors to employ derogatory language and pursue a discursive strategy that demonizes Gönpo Namgyel as much as possible. Other typical examples are found in studies of the Chinese peasant rebellions in general, and the relevant studies of Gönpo Namgyel in particular. In the general framework of peasant rebellion studies of the 1950s and 1960s, studies of Gönpo Namgyel tended to praise his activities and to dismiss official documents that denounced him. Even where evidence is lacking to pursue research on certain aspects of Gönpo Namgyel's revolt, *i.e.*, his "slogans," programs and policies, they invariably follow the standard framework, mentioning it even in brief.

Thus we are left with a changing image of Gönpo Namgyel that shifts from brigand leader, whose objective was to plunder and conquer, to that of leader of a serf uprising or nationalistic leader who unified Kham. I hope to have demonstrated that truth emerges only by looking at the spectrum of possibilities and to try to see which of the various lenses have produced a particular picture at various times of this dynamic regional figure.

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