

***The Tibet Mirror* and History Spinning in the 1950s and 1960s¹**

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 Although *The Tibet Mirror*² was started as a small media project on the Indo-Chinese borderland, the newspaper aimed to make a big impact on its Tibetan-speaking readership, not only in India and China, but anywhere it could find readers.

Those in power or reaching out for power want to control the narrative past as a powerful resource. History is fostered by the state and conveniently communicated to the public by reliable agents or, on the contrary, is compromised by the independent ones. One can hardly find unbiased media today, and it must have been even more so during the time of the ongoing ideological battle between capitalism and communism in the mid-20th century. This was exactly the time when the chief mastermind of *The Tibet Mirror*, Dorje Tharchin Babu³ (1890–1976), a man of many talents and quite a few secrets, attempted to use his newspaper to shape the opinion of Tibetans and to construct a strong nationalist version of the Tibetan past, present, and future. Tharchin's agenda usually took the form of discourse-charged statements, which propagated stories of a historically independent Tibet and a unified Tibetan nation. Since at that time there were but few alternative sources of information in the Tibetan language regarding the establishment of communist rule in Tibet, *The Tibet Mirror* surely had its certain share in the process of constructing a modern Tibetan nationalism.

¹ I am very grateful to Franz Xaver Erhard and Daniel Wojahn for their kind support, insightful editing suggestions and scrupulous formatting that helped this article become a much better version of itself.

² *The Tibet Mirror* (1925–1963) is also known as *Yul phyogs so so'i gсар 'gyur me long*, or just *Melong*. All publications from *The Tibet Mirror* cited in the present article can be accessed through the Columbia University Libraries Digital Collections at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_6981643_000/. Accessed May 20, 2020.

³ Rdo rje mthar phyin Sba bu. In the English layout of *The Tibet Mirror*, Tharchin referred to himself as “G. Tharchin,” where “G.” stood for *dge rgan* (the Tibetan term for a “teacher”).

This article provides a selection of publications in *The Tibet Mirror* from the 1950s–1960s and presents a preliminary analysis of the newspaper from the perspective of its input in the formation of a nationalist historical narrative popular among the Tibetan exile community.

1. History of Tibet and the Political Discourse

The historian Marc Ferro believes “to control the past is to master the present, to legitimize dominion and justify legal claims.”⁴ In many countries, histories “superimpose” themselves upon each other, which results in conflicting versions of historical narratives.⁵ The history of Tibet is no exception.

Competing readings of Tibetan history are inextricably entangled with politics and the notion of the 1959 Sino-Tibetan conflict. The interpretation of the historical facts pertaining to the nature of Sino-Tibetan relations prior to the official incorporation of Tibet into the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1951, as well as the history of the so-called peaceful liberation of Tibet and the flight of the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans into exile, differs depending on whether an author decides to support the Tibetan pro-nationalist claims for independence or the Chinese claims for the territorial and national integrity of the PRC. The Tibet issue, i.e., the sensitive question of whether Tibet was a part of China before 1951 and to whom the “legitimate ownership of the Tibetan Plateau” belongs,⁶ has become an invariable part of discussions on the history of Tibet, especially after the Tibetan uprising in March 1959.

Modern histories are not written exclusively by historians. Journalists are not less involved in interpreting historical events and in constructing historical narratives.⁷ While *The Tibet Mirror* was published, the polarized discourse-charged views on the Tibet issue had not yet been shaped clearly. Therefore, it is interesting to explore how the political status of Tibet and the history of Tibet in general were constructed in *The Tibet Mirror*, which was issued from 1925 to 1963 and hence was a contemporaneous chronicle of many of the events contested until this day.

This article focuses on the historical picture laid out in *The Tibet Mirror* during the period from January 1950—the year which the

⁴ Ferro 2003: X.

⁵ Ferro 2003: X.

⁶ Powers 2004: 4.

⁷ Vanina 2014: 10–11.

editor of the newspaper designated as the starting point for his anti-communist campaign for Tibet⁸—until November 1963, when its last issue was published.

2. Background Information on The Tibet Mirror

Founded in the mid-1920s, *The Tibet Mirror* was not the very first newspaper in the Tibetan language. Yet among a few early periodicals in Tibetan, it stands out perhaps as the first—and in the 1950s, also the longest-running—edition launched by an editor of Tibetan origin.⁹ Despite the fact that the newspaper was published in India, *The Tibet Mirror* enjoyed the privilege of pioneering the media discourse on the Tibet issue in Tibetan and, in this way, exerted its influence on later generations of Tibetan media in exile. The vehement anti-communist and strong pro-Tibetan editorial policy followed in *The Tibet Mirror* conditioned the fact that the newspaper is remembered among the Tibetan exile community but is apparently “banned from collective memory” among Tibetans in the PRC.¹⁰

Before discussing the historical narrative constructed in *The Tibet Mirror*, it is necessary to provide some background information on the newspaper’s editor.

In 1925, Dorje Tharchin Babu spearheaded his newspaper project in Kalimpong, a busy city in the northwest of India situated close to the Indo-Tibetan border. At the time, Tharchin worked at the Scottish Mission, and in the first years, *The Tibet Mirror* was printed under the auspices of the Church of Scotland. However, in the 1950s–1960s, *The Tibet Mirror* was reported to function as an independent media enterprise of Tharchin, the chief architect of the newspaper’s editorial policy.¹¹ During these years, *The Tibet Mirror* made a decisive turn towards conducting persistent anti-communist propaganda and galvanizing the image of a unified Tibetan nation-state.

Tharchin’s biography and his contemporaries’ recollections of him reveal some peculiarities in his personality and career

⁸ In a letter to the Political Officer of Sikkim dated December 16, 1963 Tharchin wrote: “My paper is an Anty-Communists [sic] one since from the beginning of the year 1950” (Tharchin Collection; series 2, subseries 3, box 3, folder 5).

⁹ For more information about the history of early Tibetan newspapers, see Erhard 2015 and Erhard & Hou 2018.

¹⁰ Sawerthal 2018: 316. For more information, see Sawerthal 2018: 308–319.

¹¹ Since July 1946, Tharchin published *The Tibet Mirror* on his own. For more details, see Sawerthal 2011: 77–82.

endeavors. Firstly, while Tharchin constructed his imagined Tibetan community and invigorated the spirit of the people of Tibet, he presented himself in *The Tibet Mirror* as a Tibetan devoted to Tibet. Although, in fact, Tharchin was a Christian convert and a native citizen of India, his self-perception seemed to be often shifting. Sometimes he claimed to be a loyal British and later Indian citizen¹² and at other times, he was a Tibetan loyal to Tibet.¹³ Similarly, he appeared in turns either a “profoundly sophisticated Christian” proselytizing in the name of God¹⁴ or a brother of Buddhist Tibetans propagating the importance of Buddhist religion in Tibet.¹⁵

Secondly, beginning from the mid-1920s, Tharchin lent himself to British and later Indian intelligence and secretly reported on Tibetans stopping by his house.¹⁶ According to H. L. Fader, Tharchin’s biographer, Tharchin never ceased his intelligence services.¹⁷ Moreover, his undercover work was done “so subtly and carefully” that over the years none of Tharchin’s regular associates at the Tibet Mirror Press nor any of his friends, relatives, and family members were “ever aware that such an ongoing intelligence-gathering and -disseminating activity had ever taken place.”¹⁸

Thirdly, although Tharchin advocated for the independence of Tibet and expressed anti-communist remarks in most of his publications in the 1950s–1960s, some materials in *The Tibet Mirror* corroborate his simultaneous pro-Kuomintang sentiments. Since the Kuomintang government, no less than the Chinese communist government, saw Tibet as an integral part of China, Tharchin’s support of the Kuomintang looks ambiguous. Neither is it clear why the editor of *The Tibet Mirror* called the Kuomintang government the

¹² E.g., “I am a loyal British subject” in Tharchin’s letter to Sir Charles Bell dated 1937 (Fader 2009: 332). Tharchin’s Indian identity is documented, for example, in his letter dated November 1962, written at the time of the Sino-Indian Border Conflict: “Due to this cause all we Indian citizens ... are all united into one; and we will fight and turn the aggressors [out] in the near future” (Fader 2009: 430).

¹³ E.g., “This was humbly written by the publisher of a newspaper who is immensely loyal to Tibet” (*Melong* vol. XVIII, no. 10, Sep. 1, 1950: 5). Or: “We, [...], followers of Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan language speakers, the people [... of] the thirteen *khri skor* of Tibet [...].” (*Melong* vol. XX, no. 7, Oct. 1, 1952: 8. Translated by McGranahan 2001: 248).

¹⁴ Norbu 2002: XI. Fader comments: “Tharchin made the Christian conversion of Tibet and its people a specific daily matter of prayer for many, many years” (Fader 2009: 333).

¹⁵ E.g., see Tharchin’s letter to the Political Officer of Sikkim dated June 19, 1950 (Tharchin Collection; series 2, subseries 3, box 3, folder 5).

¹⁶ Fader 2009: 330 and Sawerthal 2011: 74.

¹⁷ Fader 2009: 415.

¹⁸ Fader 2009: 347.

“true Chinese government”¹⁹ and why he favored this party in his publications, if the Kuomintang’s aspirations for Tibetan territory were no different from those of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Nor it is fathomable now how Tharchin imagined Tibet’s being independent if the Kuomintang officials were to come to power in China.²⁰ Answers to these questions could only be speculative, but it is evident that Tharchin omitted any mention of the similarity of the Kuomintang’s official policy on Tibet to that of the CCP in *The Tibet Mirror*. Instead, he created an image of the Kuomintang government as the ally of Tibetan pro-independence fighters.

Even though there is no official proof of the financial support of the newspaper by the Kuomintang or the U.S. government, Anna Sawerthal argues that in the 1950s, *The Tibet Mirror* was most likely involved in the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency’s program of assistance to the Tibetan resistance movement.²¹

There is also compelling evidence that before publishing some articles concerning Tibet, the editor of *The Tibet Mirror* sought approval from Indian government authorities. Tharchin’s archive contains his letters to the Political Officer of Sikkim, inquiring if the latter had any objections regarding a specific publication on Tibet²² or asking for “instructions and guidance on the right news for the benefit and protection of Tibet”²³ to be published in *The Tibet Mirror*. The communication ran both ways, and in reply, Tharchin was sent the requested instructions.²⁴ Given Tharchin’s service for the Indian intelligence, this correspondence at the very least suggests that the editor cared about the opinion of his Indian employers concerning the anti-communist/pro-Tibetan narrative he constructed in *The Tibet Mirror*. The broader speculation would be that Tharchin’s consultation with government authorities compromised the deemed independence of his editorial policy.

From these short biographical notes, it is obvious that Tharchin was an intelligence officer and an activist for the Tibetan cause at

¹⁹ *rgya nag gi gzhang ngo ma*. See, for example, *Melong* vol. XXVI, no. 1, Jun. 1959: suppl. 2.

²⁰ For instance, Tharchin wrote in June 1959 that, according to the Kuomintang newspapers, when the Kuomintang returns back to mainland China, it will grant independence to Tibet and the Tibetan government will return to Tibet (*Melong* vol. XXVI, no. 1, Jun. 1959: suppl. 2).

²¹ Sawerthal 2018: 122–123.

²² See Tharchin’s letter to the Political Officer of Sikkim dated June 19, 1950 (Tharchin Collection; series 2, subseries 3, box 3, folder 5).

²³ See Tharchin’s letter to Harish Dayal, the Indian Political Officer for Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, dated December 5, 1949 (Fader 2009: 417).

²⁴ See Harish Dayal’s letter to Tharchin dated December 7, 1949 (Fader 2009: 418).

the same time. His network was refined over the years and included personal informants and channels for distributing his newspaper in Tibet. Despite his Tibetan origin, Tharchin's education and socialization in the British Raj are clear indicators for the anti-communist bias that is shown in *The Tibet Mirror*, the discussion of which follows in the third part of this article.

3. The Tibet Mirror *and Its History of Tibet*

3.1. *Framing the Discourse*²⁵

Regarding the Seventeen Point Agreement signed between Tibet and the PRC in 1951, Dorje Tharchin Babu once commented that it "reminded him of an old Tibetan proverb to the effect that it was all wool with a hard stone in the center."²⁶ The editor of *The Tibet Mirror* frequently voiced this type of skepticism in regard to the assumed aspirations of the Chinese communist government. Beginning from the 1950s, Tharchin openly protested against the establishment of the communist rule in Tibet, propagating an image of Chinese communists as "bandits"²⁷ and "enemies of the Buddhist teaching."²⁸

It is, therefore, not surprising that publications in *The Tibet Mirror* during this period tend to be rather biased and persuasive. In a number of articles on China and Tibet in the 1950s and 1960s, one quickly notices the so-called *conflict* frame of Tharchin's discourse in the form of a clear opposition of the Other (i.e., communist China) versus the Self (i.e., Tibet) even in those publications which do not

²⁵ Discourse is a very broad term, which explains its relative vagueness and the differing definitions accepted within separate branches of science. Considering the so-called linguistic turn of the 20th century, in the broadest sense, everything is discourse (Derrida 1978: 280). In the present article, by discourse I refer to the employment of a specific narrative style, which involves a diverse combination of linguistic means, extralinguistic aspects of communication, and rhetorical techniques aimed to accentuate the pragmatic function of the language and the persuasive function of the text. By discourse I indicate the distinctive, expressive way of rendering information deliberately chosen by an author. Furthermore, I argue that this particular media discourse initiated by Tharchin was public and related to power. Therefore, it was used as an authoritative source for disseminating a wide array of pro-nationalist ideas. For more information on discourse analysis and the specifics of media discourse, see, for example, van Dijk 2001 and Hart & Lukeš 2010.

²⁶ Engelhardt 2012: 201.

²⁷ *jag pa*. See, for example, *Melong* vol. XXVII, no. 1, Aug.–Sept., 1960: 2.

²⁸ *bstan dgra*. See, for example, *Melong* vol. XVIII, no. 12, Nov. 1, 1950: 3 or *Melong* vol. XXV, no. 9–10, Feb.–Mar., 1959: 3.

touch upon the topic of any real confrontation. This kind of polarization sets the stage for the linguistic, stylistic, and semantic structure of the text. The opposition *us* versus *them* affects the perception of facts by emphasizing the antagonistic relationship between the two groups and by turning the narrative into the simplified judgmental black-and-white categories of *right* and *wrong*.

The sphere of the Other is usually associated with fear, violence, and cruelty, while the sphere of the Self is a familiar, safe place for everyone included within this category.²⁹ It is often the case that the Self is constructed by distancing from or playing off against the Other. The Self versus the Other opposition resembles a classic fairy tale: there is a hero, a villain, a crime, and a victim.³⁰

The domain of the Self in *The Tibet Mirror* was rendered through the concept of the Tibetan nation, whose representatives resided both inside Tibet and beyond its borders. Moreover, it also included all of Tibet's supporters and allies, for example, some of the British officials or later the Indian government. As for the Other or Tibet's *enemies*, Tharchin primarily focused on Chinese communists and communists in general, such as the Russian communist government.

3.2. Reconsidering the Past

In line with pro-Tibetan historians, the editor of *The Tibet Mirror* stood his ground that Tibet was independent before 1951 when the Seventeen Point Agreement was signed. Tharchin constructed his narrative in support of this position accordingly and dove into the interpretation of Tibetan past and Sino-Tibetan relations as far back as the 7th century.

Among the numerous examples of Tharchin's commentaries on Tibetan history, the following excerpt elaborating on the "[Role of] Patron in the Priest-Patron [Relationship]"³¹ provides ample evidence for his original reading of Sino-Tibetan relations. Tharchin writes:

For the sake of [his] followers, a lama by means of religion makes offerings to the Three Jewels and benefits this life and the next. For that, a devout patron—via the idea of the Three Jewels or the real Buddha—acts with faith and hope according to the lama's orders

²⁹ Chernyavskaya & Molodichenko 2014: 33–37.

³⁰ Lakoff 2004: 71.

³¹ *mchod yon sbyin bdag*.

and holds [him] as [his] head. As Panchen Nāropa said: "In a time before there were lamas, there was not even the term 'Buddha.' Even the Buddhas of a thousand eons sought [refuge] in lamas." Thus, is the lama more precious, or is the patron more precious?

In the past, when the Mongolian emperors resided in China, a deity of the Land of Snow—the great all-knowing victorious bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara—was the religious guru of the emperor and the emperor was the devout patron. Accordingly, communities of monks of the main monasteries, the emperor of China, Chinese and Mongolian people [were engaged in] the priest-patron [relationship]. Therefore, the Chinese and Mongolian people were the spiritual subjects of Tibet, and hence China reverently made offerings [to Tibet].

In order to [make it so] that the Dalai Lama was a genuine religious guru of the emperor, [who] received the religious prayer services, representatives of the emperor shook the golden urn. Except for that [measure], the selection of the new lama by the emperor was not coercive. At that time, the amban with security guards was placed by the emperor in Lhasa. That also was only for the protection of the service of the emperor's religious guru, and not because [Tibet] was under the power of China.

In the past, *dharmarājas*³² and the *dharmarāja* Srong btsan sgam po waged war against China many times and controlled many Chinese territories. For the sake of friendly relations between China and Tibet in the future, [the emperor] even sent a Chinese wife to Tibet. Furthermore, in addition to friendly relations between China and Tibet, oaths on the mutual nonaggression were written in letters on stone pillars and set up. Up to now, there is [still] an inscription on the great stone pillar in Lhasa. Therefore, it seems like Tibet [was no] other than an independent country [and] never came under the power of China.

However, gradually [China] forcefully ate [i.e., incorporated] many Tibetan territories in Amdo and Kham. After [the Chinese people] brought down [their] own emperor as a result of the rebellion, [they] also sent troops to Tibet and attacked. Because of that, the all-knowing 13th Dalai Lama, who underwent hardships and ignored difficulties, had to go to India.

Nevertheless, gradually—by the power of karmic retribution—the Chinese soldiers were cut off,³³ and, as all know, up to now, the religious and secular government of Tibet has not degenerated but progressed, [while] the Chinese emperor [became] numb. Because

³² *Dharmarāja* (Tib. *chos rgyal*), or the "virtuous king," is a title given to the kings who were protectors of Buddhism (Goldstein 2004: 377). The term can be also translated as a "religious king" or a "Dharma king."

³³ *rgya dmag rnams ltag chu ltar chad*. The usage of the idiom *ltag chu chad* "to cut something off" (Goldstein 2004: 465) in this case is not clear, but I believe that Tharchin meant that the advancement of the Chinese army on Tibet was stopped.

[the Chinese army] attacked Tibet, the past oaths were violated, and not only until now, there has been no peace, but even in the future, it will be difficult for a peaceful lot to come. If the Tibetan Religious State is left [alone] in [its] full righteous freedom, [if] the new oaths of reverence are sworn and the past oath-breaking is repented, it is possible that the peaceful lot will come to China.

Therefore, You—the new and the old Chinese governments and all people—think well! If, in the same way, all Tibetan Buddhists residing in Chinese territories strive hard to [carry on] a loyal service beneficial for the improvement of their Religious State, [they] will surely accomplish [their] goal in this life and the next.³⁴

Tharchin addresses the topic of Sino-Tibetan relations from the point of view of the *mchod yon* (priest-patron) tradition and appeals to Tibetan Buddhists in congruent terms of proper religious conduct and moral principles. He presents a simplified version of the history of Sino-Tibetan relations highlighting those historical events that support his claim of Tibetan independence and the wrongdoing on behalf of the Chinese state. The timeline is not linear, and the interpretation of the facts is a little twisted.

According to the article, as early as in the 13th century, the Chinese and Mongolian people became part of the Tibetan religious community. While nothing is mentioned regarding Tibet's tribute to China, Tharchin focuses on China making offerings to Tibet. He tries to present Tibet as a religious hegemon and the stationing of the ambans (i.e., the Chinese imperial governors-general) and a Manchu army in Lhasa as an act demonstrating the pious service of the Chinese emperor.

In reality, the Qing emperor established the Amban institute after the 1727–1728 civil war in Tibet, in order to strengthen his control of the political situation on the Tibetan Plateau.³⁵ Although at first, the duties of the ambans mainly consisted of holding command of the small Chinese garrison in Lhasa and keeping the Qing emperor informed on Tibetan affairs, by the end of the 18th century, their power was greatly increased.³⁶ In 1751, the ambans got a broad right of supervision of Tibetan officials, which in 1792, was reformed into the right of direct participation in the Tibetan government.³⁷ Since ambans officially supervised Tibet until the fall of the Qing empire, this period of Tibetan history is usually termed as the time of Chinese protectorate. However, Tharchin insists that

³⁴ *Melong* vol. XVIII, no. 10, Sept. 1, 1950: 3. This and the following translations from Tibetan in the present article are mine, therefore, any mistake is mine too.

³⁵ Schwieger 2015: 439 and van Schaik 2011: 142–143.

³⁶ Petech 1972: 256.

³⁷ Petech 1972: 256, 260.

the ambans' service in Lhasa did not imply that Tibet was under the power of China.

Then, going back a few centuries, Tharchin reminds his readers of the Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po, the Dharma king, who ruled Tibet in the 7th century, and that Tibet warred with China and seized "many" Chinese territories. Tharchin further reinforces his pro-Tibetan narrative with some additional facts: "for the sake of friendly relations,"³⁸ a Chinese bride was sent to Tibet, and the oaths declaring mutual nonaggression were engraved on the pillars. This cursory journey into the distant past of Tibet ends with a definitive conclusion that "Tibet [was no] other than an independent country [and] never came under the power of China."³⁹

Turning to the historical background of the described events, historians generally agree that in the 7th–9th centuries the Tibetan state constituted a strong political entity that successfully played against its neighbors in Central Asia and, indeed, every so often dominated in conflicts with neighboring China, especially during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. It is also a fact that as a diplomatic measure procuring the peacekeeping on the Sino-Tibetan border, Chinese princesses were dispatched to Tibet: the princess Wencheng in 640–641 and the princess Jincheng in 710.⁴⁰ As for the oaths, they were sworn by Tibet and China in 822, and the bilingual treaty of "Uncle and Nephew" was engraved on three pillars: one in Lhasa, one in the Chinese capital Chang'an and one on the Sino-Tibetan border in Qingshui.⁴¹

Nevertheless, although Tibet was not subordinate to China during the imperial period,⁴² while presenting the facts aimed to support the claim of Tibetan independence, Tharchin omits a long period of political disintegration of the Tibetan Empire that followed in the 9th–13th centuries when Tibet's "imperial glories were a thing of the past."⁴³ He also mentions neither those parts of Tibetan history when Mongols played their role in Tibet's administration during the rule of the Yuan dynasty and later again—in the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries,⁴⁴ nor the episode when the Chinese Emperor Kangxi's (1654–1722) army "arrived victorious in Tibet"⁴⁵ in October 1720 and Tibet was

³⁸ *rgya bod gnyis kyi dbar mthun lam gyi ched du.*

³⁹ *bod rang btsan gyi rgyal khab las rgya'i mnga' 'og tu nam yang tshud tshod mi 'dug.*

⁴⁰ Powers 2004: 31; Kapstein 2006: 55, 63; Grunfeld 1996: 35.

⁴¹ van Schaik 2011: 42; Kapstein 2006: 78; Grunfeld 1996: 37.

⁴² Goldstein 1997: 1.

⁴³ Kapstein 2006: 84.

⁴⁴ Kapstein 2006: 123.

⁴⁵ van Schaik 2011: 140.

subsequently “transformed from the battleground of competing Mongol factions” into a protectorate of the Qing dynasty in the first half of the 18th century.⁴⁶

Following Tharchin’s narrative, a reader jumps from the 9th century straight to the beginning of the 20th century. Tharchin downplays the actual role of Chinese power in Tibetan politics and creates the narrative of a strong Tibetan Empire that was betrayed by its “Uncle” China. He portrays China as an aggressor that forced the abdication of the last Chinese emperor, attacked Tibet, and violated the oaths sworn during the imperial period. In this paragraph of the article, Tharchin refers to the 1910 military march to Lhasa of Zhao Erfeng, the Qing special commissioner, who was sent to secure the Chinese control in Tibet.⁴⁷ In the sight of the advancing Chinese army, the 13th Dalai Lama decided to flee to India. Factually, Tharchin distorts the timeline as these events preceded the 1911 Xinhai revolution in China and the abdication of the Qing emperor, respectively.

Tharchin’s stories of the past and present of Tibet and China often went side by side with a description of the future and usually ended with a gloomy forecast or a warning to readers in the form of a discourse strategy called “modeling the alternative future.”⁴⁸ In the article, Tharchin acts as a prophet and predicts that not only now there could not be any peace in China, but “even in the future it will be difficult for a peaceful lot to come” to the PRC.⁴⁹ However, Tharchin defines a condition upon which the alternative result could be achieved: if the new and the old Chinese governments, having repented their improper behavior, leave “the Tibetan Religious State” in freedom, “it is possible that the peaceful lot will come to China.”⁵⁰

The article is interwoven with Buddhist terms aimed specifically at Tibetan Buddhist readers: “the Three Jewels,” “Panchen Nāropa,” “Buddhas of a thousand eons,” “the great all-knowing victorious bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara,” “by the power of karmic retribution,” “*dharmarāja*,” etc. This type of narrative evokes religious imagery and makes it hard to believe that the Chinese state would not eventually deserve the “karmic retribution.” A reader is

⁴⁶ Kapstein 2006: 146.

⁴⁷ Goldstein 1997: 27.

⁴⁸ Modeling the alternative future is a political discourse strategy that addresses a discourse recipient with an alternative version of the future depending on the certain steps taken or not, see Chernyavskaya & Molodichenko 2014: 108.

⁴⁹ *slad du'ang bde ba dang ldan pa zhig yong dka'ba yin.*

⁵⁰ *gal srid bod chos ldan rgyal khab la cog ge cam mer rang dbang du bzhas nas gus bkur zhabs 'deg sogs zhu rgyu'i dam bca' gsar pa dang / sngon chad dam 'gal la 'gyod bshags byed na rgya nag tu bde ba dang ldan pa zhig yong yang srid pas.*

also being primed to perceive communist China not just as a betrayer or an aggressor, but as a religious antagonist, i.e., an enemy of the Buddhist faith.

In the same newspaper issue, Tharchin continues elaborating on the history of Sino-Tibetan relations in the article entitled in English "Humble Proposal for Admittance into the U.N.O.":

[No matter whether] Tibet was or was not independent in ancient times, earlier in 1856, there was a war between Nepal and Tibet. The Tibetan government decided on its own to negotiate an agreement with the Nepalese government. Because the points of that agreement are lived up to till present, Tibet seems to have been paying and is still paying to the Nepalese government 100,000 rupees every year.

Later on, in the Wood-Dragon Year, the year of 1904 according to the Western style, England—the country which has power in the world, [which has] wealth, prosperity and strong weapons—sent a military expedition to Tibet. At that time, the Tibetan government [had] very poor troops and weapons and was, by all means, weaker in [terms of] military drills and military strategy. However, all know that in order to defend their motherland, [their] independent country, [Tibetans] bravely attacked the army of this powerful and wealthy country. Please take a look once more at the old news in the newspaper issue from the previous month. [I] published [there] what was written in a book regarding the situation when England attacked Tibet. The treaty signed between England and Tibet when English soldiers arrived in the Tibetan state is also proof that Tibet was independent.

Although at that time, a Chinese imperial amban with security guards remained in Lhasa for the protection of the Dalai Lama, owing to [the fact that] Tibet was independent, not only did [the amban] not provide [any] military support but [he] also did not interfere in the [process of] signing the treaty.

What is [wrong] with the [the Chinese state] paying the [Tibetan] indemnity to England? Since the Dalai Lama was the religious guru of the [Chinese] emperor, China belonged to his religious subjects. If for the root guru, in whom [one] seeks refuge in this life and the next, one has to sacrifice even one's own life, what is to be surprised at in the indemnity payment?

After—as a result of the national uprising in China—the great emperor was brought down from the throne, the amban with [his] soldiers and retinue placed by the emperor to protect the Dalai Lama were expelled from Tibet.

Also, in 1914, representatives of the British government of India, the Chinese and Tibetan states gathered in Shimla. When [they] were signing the agreement, the reason why England had to perceive Tibet in the shadow of China—or what is called "suzerainty" in English—is [because] at that time, this kind of perception [of Tibet]

was needed for the own benefit of England. Nevertheless, the meaning of "suzerainty," perhaps, did not render [the meaning] that [Tibet] was a part of the Chinese territory or that it was a subject territory of China.

The Chinese government neither determined [the conditions] of that agreement [nor] even alter it. Moreover, the Chinese government did not act according to the points of the agreement, and in 1918 and later—quite a lot of times—there was even fighting on the Sino-Tibetan border. Besides, [the] communities in the Kham region, which were included in the Chinese territories, also many times rebelled and fought against China.

All know that in Tibet, there were foreign offices of independent countries and defense forces, as well as own national coins, banknotes, and postal stamps—all issued by the Tibetan state.

After the Chinese people made the emperor abdicate, China was no longer the patron in the priest-patron relationship. However, in 1934—after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama—the Chinese government, having sent its representatives for the [purpose of] friendly relations with the adjacent countries [and] in order to honor the death [of the 13th Dalai Lama], established a [Chinese] office in Lhasa. In the same way, there was also established an office of the Indian government. Last year [1949], according to the [Tibetan government's] order to deport [representatives of] the Chinese office, [the Chinese officials] were sent back.

In short, it is certain that Tibet is an independent country. Therefore, would it not be good if foreign countries, having considered [well], think of a way to admit [Tibet] into the United Nations and provide help and support so that there will not be any harm done to the Religious State?

This was humbly written by the publisher of a newspaper who is immensely loyal to Tibet. If there is a mistake, please forgive [me].⁵¹

Tharchin continues to unveil his perspective on the most crucial details in the history of Sino-Tibetan relations. He presents a compilation of nine additional facts aimed to support his claim of Tibet's independence, after which he ends with the same assertion as in the previous article: "it is certain that Tibet is an independent country."⁵²

Some of the facts offered as proof do certainly not look so definitive as Tharchin would like to present them to his readers. For instance, Tharchin avers that since the amban neither provided the military support to the Tibetan government during the British military expedition to Tibet in 1903–1904, nor did he interfere when the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 was signed, this treaty serves

⁵¹ *Melong* vol. XVIII, no. 10, Sept. 1, 1950: 5.

⁵² *bod rang btsan rgyal khab yin nges brtan*.

as proof of Tibetan independence. However, the events depicted by Tharchin should be supplemented with some additional historical facts.

First of all, the 1904 Convention was signed by the Tibetan officials left in charge by the 13th Dalai Lama, who, instead of negotiating with the British expedition, decided to flee to exile in Mongolia. Secondly, the Lhasa amban is reported to refuse to sign that convention. Thus, since Tibet was not Britain's dependency or a recognized independent country, the legitimization of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 had to be secured from China.⁵³ This being so, two years later, Britain and China—not bothering to run their decision by the Tibetan government—signed the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906, which reaffirmed “China's legitimate authority over its dependency Tibet.”⁵⁴ Moreover, according to this new convention, China took upon itself the fulfillment of the provision of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 and paid the indemnity to Britain instead of Tibet. For the declining Qing empire at the time, this was hardly a gesture of pious service to its spiritual leader, but rather a practical measure ensuring a swift withdrawal of the British troops from Tibet. It is also important to underline that for his decision to go to exile in Mongolia the Dalai Lama had been stripped of his titles by the Chinese emperor and was summoned to the Qing court in 1908 before he could return to Lhasa.⁵⁵

A similar ambiguous episode interpreted by Tharchin in favor of Tibet's independence is a reference to the Shimla negotiations. The tripartite talks in 1913–1914 did not result in the legal recognition of Tibet as an independent state. The main points of the negotiated convention dealt with the promise of Britain not to annex Tibet and the division of Tibet into Inner Tibet, which was subordinate to China, and autonomous Outer Tibet under the Chinese suzerainty.⁵⁶ As the final agreement was not reached and the draft of the convention was not ratified, the British and Tibetan representatives signed a bilateral note that bound them to the terms of the unsigned Shimla Convention, but, naturally, China neither recognized nor followed it.⁵⁷

Among other misleading parts of Tharchin's narrative, one may notice the ten-times exaggerated digit of “100,000”⁵⁸ for the Tibetan indemnity paid to the Nepalese government after the 1855–1856

⁵³ Goldstein 1997: 25.

⁵⁴ Goldstein 1997: 25.

⁵⁵ Kapstein 2006: 170.

⁵⁶ Kapstein 2006: 172 and van Schaik 2011: 194.

⁵⁷ Goldstein 1997: 34.

⁵⁸ *khri phrag bcu tham pa*.

war. Obviously, the bigger the numbers, the more impressive they appear. Accusing Chinese communists of exaggerating the facts,⁵⁹ the editor of *The Tibet Mirror* did not run short of regular overstatements himself.

All in all, the article presents a very abridged version of Tibetan history and says nothing regarding the delicate intricacies of almost every historical fact that Tharchin cites as proof of Tibet's independence. Tharchin's journey into the past ends with an image of Tibet as a humble Religious State, which, in order not to be harmed by China, now needs the support and help of the international community.

3.3. Narrating the Present

As far as current events were concerned in *The Tibet Mirror*, news from Tibet in the 1950s–1960s presented an emotional story of the “brutal” Chinese aggression and the “oppressed” Tibetan nation “rightfully” fighting back against the communist regime.

Some of Tharchin's articles on Tibet and China from that period are overly metaphorical,⁶⁰ some appear naive and seem heavily charged with moralization. But there are also publications in *The Tibet Mirror* which are complemented with references to such modern socio-political concepts as “violation of international law,” “human rights,” “a self-sufficient state,” “a secular legal system,” etc. As an example, one can read the article entitled “Attack of the Chinese Communist Government on the Tibetan Religious State”:⁶¹

Lately, after the negotiations between the representative of communist China and representatives of the Tibetan government, Tibetan delegates went to Beijing. Even though [Tibetans] decided to negotiate and settle [the dispute], communist China suddenly ordered the troops to advance on Tibet. Is this not a deed that contradicts international law?

If the Chinese communist government does not withdraw soldiers [from Tibet] and conduct negotiations only peacefully, will [this] not become a public provocation against the [whole] world?

North Koreans, the followers of communist Russia, suddenly attacked South Korea. All know well that the followers of communist Russia got embarrassed because by the time they owned almost all southern areas, [it was] as if they went against the current

⁵⁹ E.g., see *Melong* vol. XXV, no. 12, May 1959: 5, 8.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the numerous figurative means used by Tharchin in his narrative, see Moskaleva 2018.

⁶¹ *rgya dmar gzhung nas bod chos ldan rgyal khab la dpung 'jug.*

and now, they are on the verge of losing all northern areas.

To resume, the sudden attack of Chinese communists—the followers of Russia—on the Tibetan Religious State is not the [big] goal of [this] big country. Is not [their] task [to do so that] there is no religion and there is no karmic retribution?

The statement that “Tibet is the Chinese territory” is not true. Saying that “Tibet will be freed from [its] fetters” is also an inappropriate talk. Tibet has not been bound by anyone. Atheist communist China wishes to bind with a rope the independent Tibetan Religious State, is “liberation” not a brazen expression for that?

The English and Indian governments acknowledge that Tibet is merely under the shadow of China. However, if all clearly recognize that Tibet is also a state [with] its own government which manages domestic and international affairs [on its own], what is the purpose of going on with the attack [on Tibet]?⁶²

This article from November 1, 1950 discusses the marching of Chinese communist troops into Tibet. Tharchin is indignant that Chinese communists did this despite the fact that Tibetan delegates went to Beijing for negotiations. The article raises five rhetorical questions. The first presuppositional question conveys that there was a breach of international law: is not the sudden attack of communist China on Tibet “a deed that contradicts international law?”⁶³

The second question addresses a larger audience beyond the range of Tibetan readers: “If the Chinese communist government does not withdraw soldiers [from Tibet] and conduct negotiations only peacefully, will this not become a public provocation against the [whole] world?”⁶⁴ Tharchin accuses Chinese communists of the military pressuring of negotiations and plants the seed for eliciting the public outcry on behalf of the global community.

Tharchin argues that the plan of the Other is not simply to intimidate “the Tibetan Religious State.” With the help of the third presuppositional question, the author inquires if the Chinese communist government’s goal is not to go further and destroy the Buddhist religion: “is not [their] task [to do so that] there is no religion and there is no karmic retribution?”⁶⁵ The question implies the positive answer, what else could the atheist Other want? Thus, a threat to the religion and “the Religious State” accordingly is created.

⁶² *Melong* vol. XVIII, no. 12, Nov. 1, 1950: 3.

⁶³ *rgya dmar nas glo bur du bod la dpung 'jug byas pa de ni 'dzam gling spyi khirms las 'gal pa min nam.*

⁶⁴ *gal srid rgya dmar gzhung nas dmag mi phyir then thog zhi ba'i sgo nas bka' mol ma gnang na 'dzam gling spyi 'khrugs kyi rkyen du 'gyur mi yong ngam.*

⁶⁵ *chos med las 'bras med pa'i las ka ma red dam.*

Alongside references to international law, Tharchin touches upon the topic of ethics and integrity. The Other is accused of lying that “Tibet is the Chinese territory”⁶⁶ and of “inappropriate talks”⁶⁷ of “freeing Tibet from [its] fetters,”⁶⁸ when in fact, the atheist Other does the opposite, i.e., binds independent Tibet with “a rope.”⁶⁹ Thus, with his fourth question, Tharchin suggests that the term “liberation” is “a brazen expression”⁷⁰ for what communist China is actually plotting in Tibet. He counterposes the metaphor of freeing from the fetters with that of bondage with a rope. The metaphors redirect the interpretation of the narrative into the sphere of emotional comprehension and, by turning on the imagination, make further factual arguments redundant.

The article ends with the fifth and final question: “if all clearly recognize that Tibet is also a state [with] its own government which manages domestic and international affairs [on its own], what is the purpose of going on with the attack [on Tibet]?”⁷¹ The presupposition in Tharchin’s question entails that “all clearly recognize,” that firstly, Tibet is “a state,” secondly, that Tibet has “its own government,” and thirdly, that Tibet “manages domestic and international affairs” on its own. Therefore, the logical conclusion should be that there is no valid reason to attack Tibet. The end of the article once again points out the implied violation of international law.

In his publications, Tharchin tried to persuade readers that Chinese communists were worse than the traditional Tibetan government or any Chinese government which exercised its power in Tibet earlier. In an article from October 1952,⁷² Tharchin predicts that even if Tibetans are being treated well now, everything will change in the near future. For this reason, he insists, “it is better to suffer at the hands” of Tibetan officials (because despite their wrongdoings, they still belong to the Self) than “to destroy your own people and religion while being deceived by others,”⁷³ i.e., the Other or Chinese communists. The editor makes an appeal that

⁶⁶ *bod rgya’i sa khongs yin.*

⁶⁷ *’os min gyi skad cha.*

⁶⁸ *bod bcings pa nas grol bar byed rgyu yin.*

⁶⁹ *bod rang dbang rang btsan chos ldan rgyal khab de la rgya dmar chos min gyis thag pas bcing ’dod yod pa.*

⁷⁰ *de la bcing grol brjod pa ngo mi tsha’am.*

⁷¹ *bod rang gzhang phyi nang ’tsho ’dzin gyi rgyal khab yin pa’ang tshang mas ngos len gsal red na ga re don la dpung ’jug byas pa red.*

⁷² *Melong* vol. XX, no. 7, Oct. 1, 1952: 8. For a full translation, see McGranahan 2001: 247–248.

⁷³ *gzhan gyi g.yo thabs kyi mgo bskor thog rang rigs dang rgyal bstan rtsa rlag tu btang ba las rang dpon gyis sdug po btang ba de yag pa.*

readers “strive to gain independence”⁷⁴ and protect Tibetan history: “it is very important that [all of] you think well in order [to be] loyal to [your] kinsmen and people and so that [your own] history does not [become] *impaired* [emphasis added].”⁷⁵

Tharchin repeatedly linked Chinese communists to the annihilation of the Tibetan people and argued that all steps taken by the Chinese communist government in Tibet aimed to deceive Tibetans:

These days, communist China has established many institutions—such as, [for instance,] loan [offices]—all over Tibet. An evil policy on attempting to trap Tibetans into these institutions has been initiated.

For example, [the establishment of] bank offices is a means of collecting all Tibetan gold and silver, [the establishment of] offices for aiding the hunger or improving the living standards is a means to comprehend how much Tibetan arable land, grain, and resources there are. Handing out hundreds of thousands of white *da yang*⁷⁶ for the procurement of Tibetan grain and property now is a means to make Tibetan people starve and catch [them] with a lasso trap. The construction of roads now is a means to transport many soldiers and weapons and gradually put Tibetans behind the secure iron fence. Sowing of many fields now is a means to bring in and gradually settle there many Chinese. Gradually, the Tibetan nation will surely be annihilated.

For example, what is the purpose of the so-called increasing of the scarce population in Tibet now? The establishment of schools with instruction in the Tibetan language now is a trick. Saying that no damage will be done to the religion now is a trick. Whether it is a trick or not, one can understand if one takes a look at the Chinese soldiers that arrived in Tibet [and] whether or not [they] have a religion. Being good and friendly to aristocrats now is a trick too. When a long period of time passes, all will certainly see whether it is so or not. All know well what was done to the Amdo region.⁷⁷

The first part of the article is built on the parallelism of five statements conveying that anything done by Chinese communists “is a means to ...”⁷⁸ covertly achieve the opposite of the proclaimed objectives of the official development program. The second half of

⁷⁴ *tshang ma gcig mthun thog rang btsan lon thabs la 'bad dgos.*

⁷⁵ *khyed rnams rang rigs mi rigs kyi lar rgya dang / rgyal rabs mi nyams pa'i ched du dgongs pa chen po bzhes dgos pa shin tu gal chen yin no.*

⁷⁶ The term *da yang* refers to the Nationalist silver dollar or silver yuan, the currency used by the Chinese communist government in Tibet after its incorporation into the PRC, see Shakya 2000: 95.

⁷⁷ *Melong* vol. XXI, no. 2, May 1, 1953: 3.

⁷⁸ *thabs red.*

the article is built on the parallelism of three similar claims: anything done by Chinese communists, in reality, is “a trick.”⁷⁹ The accuracy of the presented judgment (“whether it is a trick or not”) is suggested to be evaluated based on whether the Chinese soldiers that arrived in Tibet “have a religion.”⁸⁰ Tharchin’s forecast for Tibet under the PRC is unvaryingly gloomy: “gradually,” Tibetans will be “put behind the secure iron fence”;⁸¹ “gradually,” many Chinese will be settled in Tibet;⁸² and “gradually, the Tibetan nation will be surely annihilated”⁸³ by the Other.

In Tharchin’s narrative, one can find regular examples of the discourse strategy of creating a unique threat,⁸⁴ which made readers feel that all that was going on in Tibet at the time had never happened before. For instance, an article from June 1959 reads:

Although earlier, lamas and aristocrats slightly mistreated [Tibetan citizens], there has never been such oppression as now. Earlier in the times of lamas and aristocrats, it has never been like [it is] now that a person does not have a right to food, a right to clothes, a right to freedom of movement, a right to talk, a right to make religious offerings to the Three Jewels, a right to one’s own accumulated wealth, a right to strive [to accumulate] one’s own wealth, as well as [it has never been] that [a person], after having done hard work all day, does not have enough of the distributed food to eat. Although there may have been similar hardships [earlier], there has certainly never been such oppression as that of communist China in Tibet now.⁸⁵

Even though the editor of *The Tibet Mirror* admits in the article that earlier Tibet was not a perfect place, he is sure that Tibetan aristocracy and clergy minorly mistreated the citizens, and “there has never been such oppression as now.”⁸⁶ The almost identical line is repeated at the end of the article again: “Although there may have been similar hardships [earlier], there has certainly never been such

⁷⁹ *mgo skor red.*

⁸⁰ *mgo skor yin min bod du bslebs pa’i rgya mi chos yod med bltas na ha go thub kyi red.*

⁸¹ *bod kyi mi rnams la rim pas lcags ri btsan po’i nang la bcug.*

⁸² *rim pas rgya mi mang po ’khrid de ’jog.*

⁸³ *rim pas bod rigs rtsa med gtong nges red.*

⁸⁴ Creating a unique threat is a political discourse strategy that intensifies the extent of a threat coming from the Other and underlines the uniqueness and the extraordinariness of this particular threat, see Chernyavskaya & Molodichenko 2014: 117.

⁸⁵ *Melong* vol. XXVI, no. 1, Jun. 1959: suppl. 2–3.

⁸⁶ *sngon du bla sger khag gi phran bu re sdug po btang rung /da lta lta bu’i btsan dbang nam yang byung yod pa ma red.*

oppression as that of communist China in Tibet now."⁸⁷ Between these two lines, there is a very similar third one reiterating that "earlier in the times of lamas and aristocrats, it has never been like [it is] now."⁸⁸ Thus, a unique threat is created. The reader is bound to understand that there is something extraordinary going on. Tharchin specifies what is different now. He avers that, at present, Tibetans are not only oppressed with the hard work but are denied all basic human rights.

3.4. Alienating the Other

Continuous antagonism towards Chinese communists played a very important part in Tharchin's discourse. Alienation of the Other was accomplished both verbally through a number of discourse strategies and visually with the help of regularly published drawings and political cartoons.⁸⁹ The Other was characterized by the brutality, disrespect for religion and traditions, and an inhumane attitude even towards children, women, and elderly people.⁹⁰

Tharchin emphasized that Chinese communists were doing such outrageous things in Tibet that they were to be described with the metaphor of "flesh-eating demons."⁹¹ A long article entitled in English as the "Rocket for Assailing the Red"⁹² from September 1960 provides an emotional discourse-charged account of "an absolutely unbearable, desperate situation"⁹³ created in Tibet by "Chinese communist bandits."⁹⁴

The article draws a distinctive dividing line between the *violent* Other and the *peaceful* Self. Communist China is reported to have "violently invaded and seized"⁹⁵ the "state of the beloved ancestors"⁹⁶ of Tibetans. By "slaughtering a countless number" of Tibetan "peaceful and virtuous parents, relatives and close friends,

⁸⁷ *ma gshis rdab bsigs 'dra byung yod srid kyang da lta'i rgya dmar gyis mnar spyod ltar nam yang bod du byung med nges gtan red.*

⁸⁸ *da lta bu'i [...] sngar bla sger khag gi dus su nam yang byung yod pa ma red.*

⁸⁹ For more information on the political cartoons in *The Tibet Mirror*, see Engelhardt 2012.

⁹⁰ E.g., see *Melong* vol. XXI, no. 5, Aug. 1, 1953: 6; *Melong* vol. XXV, no. 9–10, Feb.–Mar. 1959: 11; *Melong* vol. XXVI, no. 1 Jun. 1959: 3–4.

⁹¹ *srin po.*

⁹² *dmar por rgol ba'i me shugs 'phur mdel* (*Melong* vol. XXVII, no.1, Aug.–Sept. 1960: 2).

⁹³ *'u thug bzod thabs rbad bral gyi gnas su gyar.*

⁹⁴ *rgya dmar jag pa.*

⁹⁵ *drag po'i btsan 'dzul byas pa nas bzung.*

⁹⁶ *dga' zhing gces pa'i pha mes kyi rgyal khab.*

young and old [people],”⁹⁷ the Other “filled every part of the pure and beautiful Tibetan land with blood and tears.”⁹⁸

According to Tharchin, Tibetans used to enjoy “peace and good manners,”⁹⁹ but the Other made them “eat manure and dirt”¹⁰⁰ and enforced “severe oppression, which had doubled in comparison to earlier [times].”¹⁰¹ One also cannot help but notice the excessive description of the means used by the Other to subjugate the Self: Chinese communists expose Tibetans to “the unbearable pressure of twines, iron chains, horsewhips, sticks, bullets, and explosives.”¹⁰² Furthermore, using the strategy of magnification of the enemy’s aggression,¹⁰³ Tharchin hyperbolizes and accuses the Other of oppressing not only Tibetans but “ruthlessly harming the human race”¹⁰⁴ in general.

The article describes Tibetans as “the nation fond of peace,”¹⁰⁵ who “never practiced [any] violent and abusive manners”¹⁰⁶ and who “have compassion and love for [all] animate beings including insects.”¹⁰⁷ However, the “righteous anger”¹⁰⁸ of Tibetans has heaped up, and, therefore, they started attacking Chinese communists, but “all understand that this objective is lawful and right.”¹⁰⁹ The almost identical statement is repeated a few lines further in the article and is alleged to belong to the supreme Tibetan leader—the 14th Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama confirms that the “principled and peaceful people”¹¹⁰ know that Tibetans’ “objective is lawful and right.”¹¹¹

Tharchin persuades his Tibetan readers that they should act “with pristine altruistic intentions, like the white snow of Mount Everest atop the world” and, having united for the common good,

⁹⁷ *zhi dul dge sems can gyi pha ma spun nye rgan gzhon grangs las 'das pa dmar gsod btang.*

⁹⁸ *gtsang zhing yid du 'ong ba'i bod sa gang sar khrag dang / mig chus khengs pa zhig bzos.*

⁹⁹ *zhi bde lugs bzang la dga' ba'i bod mi mangs.*

¹⁰⁰ *sa lud thal ba zas su byed.*

¹⁰¹ *btsan gnon drag po sngar las ldab 'gyur gyis shugs cher btang.*

¹⁰² *lus la rtsa thag dang / lcags thag rta lcag dang / rgyug pa/ me mdel 'bar rdzas kyi reg bya mi bzod pa myong.*

¹⁰³ This discourse strategy aims to expand the scope of conflict and to create the effect of global aggression on behalf of the Other, see Chernyavskaya & Molodichenko 2014: 134.

¹⁰⁴ *mi'i rigs rgyud dang bcas par ya nga bral ba'i gnod 'tshe byed.*

¹⁰⁵ *zhi bde la dga' ba'i mi rigs.*

¹⁰⁶ *drag cing rtsub pa'i bya spyod lag len nam yang mi bstar ba yin.*

¹⁰⁷ *srog chags 'bu srin yan chod la snying rje dang brtse sems yod.*

¹⁰⁸ *bden pa dang ldan pa'i khong khro.*

¹⁰⁹ *dmigs yul 'di yang lugs mthun yang dag cig yin pa kun gyis rtogs gsal ltar yin.*

¹¹⁰ *'dzam gling ya rabs zhi sems can gyi mi mangs.*

¹¹¹ *khong rnam pas rang tsho'i dmigs yul de lugs mthun yang dag yin pa mkhyen yod.*

“persistently support” their “ethnic groups of kinsmen who joined fighting” against communist China.¹¹² The lengthy narrative ends with an appeal to take “stronger steps towards the glory of what is called ‘independence’ and ‘freedom’”¹¹³ and the projection that “it is determined” that Tibetans “will certainly be victorious.”¹¹⁴

While the Chinese communists are repeatedly marked as “demons” (seven times) and “bandits” (four times) in this article, Tibetans are marked as “peaceful” people (three times) with a “lawful and right” objective to fight Chinese communists. The pejorative terms describing the Other are counterbalanced by the employment of semantic amelioration for the Self. This article gives one of the many examples in *The Tibet Mirror* of using the strategy of demonizing the enemy. The strategy intends to intimidate discourse recipients with the image of a particularly cruel, unprincipled, and treacherous enemy.¹¹⁵

The graphic representation of Chinese communists as the violent Other is pervasive in *The Tibet Mirror* issues from the 1950s—1960s. Many more examples, unfortunately, could not be included here due to the scope limitations of the present article.

3.5. Conceptualizing the Self

A few more words should be said about the image of Tibetans constructed in *The Tibet Mirror*. In Carol McGranahan’s translation, Tharchin defines Tibetans as: “the tsampa eaters, chuba wearers, dice players, raw and dried meat eaters, followers of Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan language speakers, the people from Ngari Korsum, U–Tsang Ruzhi, Dokham Gangdrug, the thirteen trikos of Tibet.”¹¹⁶

Tharchin consistently referred to Tibetans as the nation of the

¹¹² *nga tshos 'dzam gling na mngon par mtho ba'i gangs ri jo mo glang ma ji bzhin spyi don la rab dkar lhag bsam gcig tu bsdebs pa'i mthun sgril dam bca' brtan pos 'thab 'dzings la zhugs pa'i spun rigs rnam la nus shugs gang yod kyi rgyab gnyer rgyun btud de byed dgos pa yin no.*

¹¹³ *nga tshos rang dbang dang rang btsan zhes pa'i gzi brjid [...] gyi phyogs su gom stabs shugs cher spo thub pa zhig byed dgos.*

¹¹⁴ *rgyal kha ni nges par du nga tshor thob rgyur gtan 'khel ba zhig yin no.*

¹¹⁵ Chernyavskaya & Molodichenko 2014: 124.

¹¹⁶ *tsam pa za mkhan phyu pa gyon mkhan rtsed sho rgyag mkhan sha dmar dang sha skam za mkhan skad yig gcig pa theg chen gyi rje su 'brangs mkhan stod mnga' ris skor gsum dbus gtsang ru bzhi mdo khams sgang drug bcas bod khri skor bcu gsum gyi spun zla rnam (Melong vol. XX, no. 7, Oct. 1, 1952: 8. Translated by McGranahan 2001: 248).*

thirteen Tibetan *khri skor*.¹¹⁷ According to Tibetan historical sources, in the 13th century, Khubilai Khan (1215–1294) presented the thirteen *khri skor* to the Sa skya leader 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280) for his service.¹¹⁸ The thirteen *khri skor* are assumed to be originally confined to the territory of Central Tibet (namely, U–Tsang).¹¹⁹ However, in *The Tibet Mirror*, this term seems to have a different meaning, denoting the three regions of Ngari in the west, the four regions of the central provinces U–Tsang, and the six ranges of Amdo and Kham in the east. Tharchin's thirteen *khri skor* thus occupy the territory of the so-called Cultural Tibet¹²⁰ and are comparable to the three bigger regions of Tibet now known among the Tibetan exile community as the *chol kha gsum*.¹²¹

Although the *chol kha gsum* concept has a complicated story of origin and could be traced back to the 14th-century historical sources, after 1959, it has become “a postexile conceptual configuration of the three areas that Tibetans consider to constitute their land.”¹²² At present, the *chol kha gsum* or the three regions model unites the population of U–Tsang, Amdo, and Kham as “Tibetan nation and state” and being “a cultural and political organizing force” has become particularly efficient in presenting “a strong, united front” of the Tibetan exile community.¹²³

The editor of *The Tibet Mirror*, however, chose to encapsulate the image of the population of Tibet within the thirteen *khri skor* model

¹¹⁷ As a term denoting the Tibetan administrative units, *khri skor* was introduced in Tibet by the Mongols during the Yuan dynasty and referred to a myriarchy of households (Yang 2016: 557). Although *khri sde*, the equivalent of the term *khri skor*, is mentioned in the documents dated as early as the 8th–9th centuries, at that time it was not used to denote the subdivisions of Tibet proper (Petech 1990: 50).

¹¹⁸ Yang 2016: 561.

¹¹⁹ Nor brang o rgyan 2008: 2798.

¹²⁰ Germano 2013.

¹²¹ The term *chol kha* is most likely a translation of the Mongolian word *čiyulyan*, which is an equivalent of the Chinese term for an administrative unit *lu* (Chin. 路). The exact time of origin and the initial meaning of the Tibetan term *chol kha gsum* is not known. Starting from the 15th century, this term referred to another additional part of the Tibetan territory assigned by Khubilai Khan to the Sa skya leader 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan for his religious initiation. However, as the scope of the territory defined by the *chol kha gsum* differs in the sources, it is possible that this term did not mean the three regions of U–Tsang, Amdo, and Kham back at the time, see Yang 2016: 553, 559, 561.

¹²² Powers & Templeman 2012: 147.

¹²³ McGranahan 2010: 51. At the same time, the *chol kha gsum* model is argued to offer a “central Tibetan perspective” and to reflect the influence of the U–Tsang people in the Central Tibetan Administration. Since the natives of Kham and Amdo “were never consulted about this notion,” it has been largely rejected by them (Powers & Templeman 2012: 147).

as early as 1950. It was almost a decade before the establishment of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and the subsequent naturalization of the modern reading of the *chol kha gsum* configuration in their official narrative. According to a preliminary analysis, at least in one publication from the 1960s, Tharchin's thirteen *khri skor* merged into the *chol kha gsum* model, which consisted of "Dbus gtsang *chol kha*," "Mdo smad a mdo'i *chol kha*" and "Khams bod *chol kha*."¹²⁴ Further research on Tharchin's coining of the new reading of the *chol kha gsum* term is forthcoming.

The following excerpt from *The Tibet Mirror* provides an early example of Tharchin's introduction of the thirteen Tibetan *khri skor* model:

In the single Tibetan Religious State, there are so-called thirteen Tibetan *khri skor* of Stod, Dbus, Gtsang, Mdo smad, etc. However, all of them are one Tibetan nation. Therefore, [even though] I am called a *dbus pa*, you are a *gtsang pa*, he is a *stod pa*, they are *khams pa*, [Tibetans as] one nation with a single language and a single religion, having distinguished [some] differences do not break up into factions, [but] thinking of all [as] one nation or the ones tamed by the Tibetan deity—the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, all live in mutual agreement. Would not it be good if nowadays the separated [factions] in many countries use Tibet as an example accordingly?¹²⁵

Tibetan unity is presented through the concept of nationhood based on the geographical affiliation to the thirteen Tibetan *khri skor*, the Tibetan language, and the Buddhist religion. In line with the narrative, Tibetans were "tamed"¹²⁶ by the bodhisattva of compassion and "all live in mutual agreement"¹²⁷ thus setting an example for other countries in the world.

The article was published in September 1950, when the Chinese communist officials had already taken over some of the eastern areas of Cultural Tibet and when it was obvious that the advancement of the People's Liberation Army into Central Tibet was merely a question of time. In this respect, it seems to be a questionable statement that the entire population of U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham did see themselves at the time as one nation-state sharing a bond of mutual agreement. Due to limited contact with people from distant parts of the Tibetan Plateau prior to the exile, many Tibetans have reported that back then, they used to perceive themselves primarily as "residents of a particular area" in Tibet or

¹²⁴ E.g., see *Melong* vol. XXVI, no. 12, Jun.–Jul., 1960: 10.

¹²⁵ *Melong* vol. XVIII, no. 10, Sept. 1, 1950: 6.

¹²⁶ *'dul bya yin*.

¹²⁷ *phan tshun tshang ma gcig mthun du bzhugs*.

as “members of a certain clan.”¹²⁸ The sense of the shared pan-Tibetan identity was actively promoted among the exile community by the CTA.

4. *Legacy Left by The Tibet Mirror and Tharchin*

To conclude the article, I would like to give an example of what Dorje Tharchin Babu wished *The Tibet Mirror* was for Tibetans and how it was expected to shape public opinion:

Question 1. What is bigger than the power of a thousand soldiers?

[Question] 2. What is bigger than the power of an atomic bomb?

[Answer 1]. The first [is] the distribution of the newspaper to the people.

[Answer 2]. The second [is] the dissemination of one’s own country’s history and the origin of [its] independence through the distribution of effective news in newspapers and on the radio in [different] countries.¹²⁹

This rhetorical riddle was published in November 1950. Ever since Tharchin made anti-communist discourse-charged materials a regular feature of practically every issue of *The Tibet Mirror* for the years to come. One can see that Tharchin expected his narratives of the “unimpaired” history of Tibet to produce an effect more powerful than that of an atomic bomb.

Tharchin is remembered as a popular figure among his Tibetan contemporaries, some of which even claimed that the little they knew about Westerners they learned from him.¹³⁰ Thus, being an influencer who earned the trust of Tibetans, Tharchin was particularly well-equipped for enabling the persuasive function of the newspaper he produced.

In Tharchin’s correspondence with the Political Officer of Sikkim in December 1963, one can read that *The Tibet Mirror* was greatly enjoyed by the Tibetan exile community that had “great confidence” in the word of the newspaper editor:

Although now there are several Tibetan papers yet all the Tibetans in India as a refugee [sic] even H.H. the Dalai Lama likes my paper very much and they request me to continue its publication as they have a great confidence on [sic] the news published in it, and I am

¹²⁸ Powers 2004: 156.

¹²⁹ *Melong* vol. XVIII, no. 12, Nov. 1, 1950: 4.

¹³⁰ McGranahan 2001: 244.

trying my best to do so.¹³¹

Reading through secondary literature, I found those who share similar views on the role of *The Tibet Mirror* for the exile community. According to the opinion of a Kalimpong citizen, the Tibetan community considered Tharchin “indispensable” to the Tibetan cause vis-à-vis the PRC.¹³² Carol McGranahan maintains that Tharchin’s “editorial nationalism” in *The Tibet Mirror* in the 1950s is “an important part of the story of how we now tell the history of this period in Tibet.”¹³³ Besides, Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa believes that *The Tibet Mirror* was instrumental in “championing a transnational Tibetan identity.”¹³⁴

Based on my preliminary observations, I contend that imagining the unified Tibetan nation as the population of *chol kha gsum* and the areas of “Great Tibet,”¹³⁵ as well as many other arguments and narratives in support of Tibet’s independence diffused among Tibetan exiles and were repeated in their versions of Tibetan history at least partially owing to Tharchin and his pioneering articles in *The Tibet Mirror*.

To compare Tharchin’s narrative with that of representatives of the Tibetan exile community, one can read, for example, *China’s Tibet Policy* by Dawa Norbu. Among other things, the author engages in a lengthy discussion of the British term “suzerainty” in the context of Sino-Tibetan relations. Similar to Tharchin, he argues that Chinese “suzerainty” did not mean their “sovereignty” in Tibet.¹³⁶ Alongside with it, Dawa Norbu also shares Tharchin’s opinion that the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 was a sign that “Britain recognized Tibet’s treaty-making power.”¹³⁷ Additional cross-comparisons exceed the scope of the present article, but certainly must be discussed in future research.

John Powers stresses that the Tibetan exile community places a strong emphasis on history and producing a “coherent historical narrative” that constructs Tibet as independent before 1951.¹³⁸ In

¹³¹ Tharchin’s letter to the Political Officer of Sikkim dated December 16, 1963 (Tharchin Collection; series 2, subseries 3, box 3, folder 5). This letter was written in English, therefore, Tharchin’s grammar is left intact.

¹³² Fader 2009: 339.

¹³³ McGranahan 2001: 250.

¹³⁴ Holmes-Tagchungdarpa 2014: 90–91.

¹³⁵ Tharchin defined “Great Tibet” as the territory “from Ladakh in the west, Kanding in the east, lake Kokonor in the north” and Bhutan in the south, see *Melong* vol. XXV, no. 9–10, Feb.–Mar. 1959: 3.

¹³⁶ Norbu 2001: 149, 166–167.

¹³⁷ Norbu 2001: 169.

¹³⁸ Powers 2004: 147.

line with Tharchin's narrative, writings on the history of Tibet published by Tibetans in exile accentuate shared Buddhist cultural markers and make references to the period of the Tibetan Empire and Srong btsan sgam po as the argument in support of the idea of a historically independent Tibet.¹³⁹ Religious ideology framing and the concept of the priest-patron relationship, in particular, are argued to "lie at the heart" of the Tibetan exiles' claim for the independence of Tibet.¹⁴⁰

For centuries, Tibetan historical works have described Sino-Tibetan contacts in terms of the priest-patron relationship.¹⁴¹ *The Tibet Mirror* was, perhaps, among the first written media examples of adopting modern socio-political terms—hitherto unfamiliar to Tibetan historical works—for rendering the history of Tibet and Sino-Tibetan relations. For this reason, when Tharchin combined elements of traditional Tibetan historiography (e.g., underlining the sacred role of the Tibetan religious leader for the Chinese emperor or the misdeed in the form of the oath's violation) with accusations of human rights or international law violations in Tibet, some parts of his narrative look grotesque and inconsistent. Tharchin's style, however, is very similar to how the Tibetan exile community adopted Western practices of narrating nationalism and how it tried to construct its history of the Tibetan nation-state.

While analyzing the historical narrative constructed by Tharchin in *The Tibet Mirror*, one also often comes to wonder at the sequencing of events presented in his texts and the selective sampling of the facts. In some cases, it seems as if the cited facts are the replies to the possible objections from pro-Chinese supporters, who, laying out a variety of claims of their own, would try to contradict Tharchin's version of historical events. This feature was also observed by John Powers in his research on pro-Tibetan historical narratives.¹⁴²

To sum up, *The Tibet Mirror* constructed the image of Tibet as an independent state throughout various periods of its history. The selection of historical facts or "proofs" employed in *The Tibet Mirror* to advocate this view probably nourished the pro-nationalist versions of the history of Tibet which were written after 1959 and which were well-received among the Tibetan exile community.

The story of Tibet's present in the 1950s and 1960s was depicted in *The Tibet Mirror* through the frame of conflict of "treacherous" Chinese communists versus "peaceful" Tibetans. In contrast to the

¹³⁹ Powers 2004: 144–145.

¹⁴⁰ Klieger 1989: 3.

¹⁴¹ Klieger 1989: 12–13.

¹⁴² Powers 2004: 6–8.

Chinese communists' offensive, the Tibetans' fighting back was represented in *The Tibet Mirror* through lexical amelioration.

Tharchin's practice of portraying Tibetans as "helpless victims" in need of attention from the world and as "innocents" incapable of defending themselves was later continued by the Tibetan exile community in their writings.¹⁴³

Whether Dorje Tharchin Babu really saw the history of Tibet in the way he presented it in *The Tibet Mirror*, or whether it was his job to construct an image of independent Tibet and to mobilize Tibetan masses to imagine themselves as one Tibetan nation, cannot be established conclusively at this point.

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¹⁴³ See Powers 2004: 150.

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