

### 3 Living Together in Lhasa

## Ethnic Relations, Coercive Amity, and Subaltern Cosmopolitanism

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#### INTRODUCTION

Shrill warnings of an inevitable “clash of civilizations,” and their invocation as justification for xenophobic patriotism and imperial invasion, have given renewed urgency to the search for emergent cosmopolitanisms, as practices of conviviality and forms of belonging and solidarity to a world community. The “cosmopolitan” ideals and projects necessary for the task do not refer to sophisticated world travel and cross-cultural expertise, the conventional sense of cosmopolitanism as no more than a “good ethical orientation for those privileged to inhabit the frequent traveler lounges” (Calhoun 112). Nor does it signal an inevitable return to Immanuel Kant’s formulation; histories of colonialism and capitalism have long since discredited the benign potential of international commerce as a stable foundation for perpetual peace. Indeed, recent commentators have criticized the predilection to begin every discussion of cosmopolitanism with a return to European intellectual history: “[i]f it is already clear that cosmopolitanism begins with the Stoics, who invented the term, or with Kant who reinvented it, then philosophical reflection on these moments is going to enable us always to find what we are looking for. Yet [we could instead] try to be archivally cosmopolitan and to say, ‘Let’s simply look at the world across time and space and see how people have thought and acted beyond the local’” (Pollock et al. 585–86).

The search for cosmopolitanisms beyond elite border crossings and imperial universalisms animates Clifford’s argument for “discrepant cosmopolitanism,” exemplified by servants and migrant laborers who were and are also world travelers. These discrepant cosmopolitans are those excluded by Hannerz’s insistence on the distinction between genuine cosmopolitans (who by his definition must be elites) and traders, tourists, migrants, and exiles, who travel but do not immerse themselves in another culture, or only do so out of necessity. The trope of travel is also taken up by Appiah, whose “rooted cosmopolitanism” of “cosmopolitan patriots” works against the presumed opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, or patriotism. Cosmopolitan patriots are attached to a home of their own but

also take pleasure in a world of others, and live in a world of movement, travel, and cultural hybridization. Hybridity is also important in Bhabha's "vernacular cosmopolitanism," which offers a view from the margins that is "culturally particularist" but also "linked to a transhistorical memory and solidarity" (41).

These interventions are significant in their emphasis on the nonelite, and in their refusal to dismiss postcolonial nationalism in the name of cosmopolitanism. Cheah argues that postcolonial nationalism is an ambivalent necessity, a double-edged sword made necessary as a defense against the predations of neocolonial capitalist restructuring and globalization. Cheah also critiques the celebration of travel and global flows that characterizes much of the work on nonelite cosmopolitanisms. In focusing so much on cultural flux and transnational mobility, they ignore those who cannot or do not migrate; for this majority the nation-state, whatever its problems, is a necessity "because postnationalism through migration is not an alternative" (Cheah 314). Similarly, Yeğenoğlu (103) argues that cosmopolitanism needs to be "less dismissive of the need for nationalism in the Third World, a nationalism that is capable of articulating the will of the excluded subaltern populations." Gidwani explicitly uses the term "subaltern cosmopolitanism" to describe a view that, like Cheah's is not based on flux and mobility, and that critiques the marginalization and exploitation brought about by economic globalization, understanding them as constituted by transregional and transnational processes. Subaltern cosmopolitanism refers, in this formulation, to practices that enable connectivity between the disenfranchised, practices that "are transgressive of the established order and that shame and expose its hermetic and de-politicized grids of Difference as political relations of difference"(Gidwani 16).

This essay takes as a starting point Pollock et al.'s suggestion to rewrite the history of cosmopolitanism by looking across the world in time and space and thinking outside of the box of European intellectual history; this, they suggest, would reveal an extravagant array of possibilities of cosmopolitanism. However, rather than follow the literature that takes translocal or transnational mobility as the key analytic for nonelite cosmopolitanisms, I focus on cosmopolitanism as a dismantling of the ideology of the clash of civilizations—as Mayaram (this volume) puts it: How have people of different cultural and ethnic groups lived together in a convivial, or at least indifferent, fashion, and when is it analytically useful, or not, to identify the fact of successful living together as a form of cosmopolitanism?

I explore the possibilities of non-Western and nonelite cosmopolitanism through a discussion of interethnic relations in Lhasa, Tibet's religious and political center and today capital of China's Tibet Autonomous Region. I examine continuity and change in these relations before and after the traumatic breaks of 1951, which marked the incorporation of Central Tibet into the People's Republic of China (PRC) and 1959, the uprising in Lhasa that led to the exile of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and

eighty thousand Tibetans. In both the pre- and post-1950s periods, Lhasa as a city differs from its popular image. First, Lhasa is imagined as having been historically isolated and exclusively Tibetan, when it had, in fact, been an important center of trade and a multiethnic city since at least the seventeenth century. I argue that Lhasa from the seventeenth to mid-twentieth century was characterized by a form of cosmopolitanism that preceded nationalism, was conducive to convivial living together across difference, and was at least partially informed by local interpretations of Buddhism. The first part of the paper discusses Lhasa as a multiethnic and multicultural city before 1950, and in particular the status and history of its Han and Muslim communities.

Second, contemporary Lhasa is often imagined as a site of ethnic conflict between the Han Chinese and Tibetans, a result of the Chinese annexation of Tibet and the struggle of Tibetan nationalism. However, the city has not witnessed forms of open violence between Han and Tibetans. Tensions do exist between Tibetans and the Hui (Chinese Muslims), but these too have only rarely been characterized by outright conflict. I argue that threads of an older cosmopolitanism based in Buddhism, reworked and given new meaning, partially inform these interactions. However, the primary reason for the smooth daily interactions among people of various ethnicities, especially Han and Tibetan, is not cosmopolitanism but rather the state's administrative practices, especially the use of "unity of the nationalities" (*minzu tuanjie*) as a hegemonic management device. *Minzu tuanjie* is a tool developed for the incorporation of Tibet into China, and continues to be used to mitigate the threat of Tibetan nationalism, and most recently to facilitate the social "stability" deemed necessary to attract capital investment for Tibet's economic development. I argue that this reorganization of interethnic life through coercive amity and the political, social, and economic domination of the Han, means that the current state of "living together with difference" cannot be described as the outcome of cosmopolitanism.

My argument is not that there is a fundamental clash between cosmopolitanism and nationalism (the unfulfilled nationalism of Tibetans who wish for their own nation-state) but rather that coercive harmony, which goes far beyond a disavowal of interethnic violence to guarantee the triumph of official, Chinese nationalism over Tibetan nationalism, is incompatible with subaltern cosmopolitan practices, which are instead transgressive of de-politicized orders of difference exemplified by the state's *minzu* (nationality) discursive practices. This part of the essay explores how practices of cooperation, ironic commentaries of conflict, imposed conviviality, and the threat of state violence come together in daily life. I employ ethnographic description of the complicated negotiations and pedestrian pathways of everyday life to write beyond the limitations of purely statist views, but without ignoring the ways in which state practices lay the ground for even the most mundane interactions.

## LHASA IN HISTORY: MULTIETHNIC AND COSMOPOLITAN

Lhasa, “land of the gods,” has long been represented in the West with oversimplified, one-dimensional images: Shangri-la, utopia, site of spiritual wisdom. Modern Chinese representations of Lhasa before the twentieth century have focused on its smallness and backwardness, its lack of technology and modernization, rather than its utopian, mystical qualities, but the images are similarly one-dimensional. Current Chinese development practices are premised on an image of Lhasa as having always been a backwater, lagging behind the rest of the world, in desperate need of modernization through urbanization. What these divergent narratives share is blindness to Lhasa’s historical importance as a center of trade, as well as to its multiethnic mix of residents, and the ways in which they interacted across their differences.

Lhasa is said to have been founded by King Srongtsen Gampo, who unified Tibet and moved his capital to Lhasa in the seventh century. His Chinese bride, Princess Wencheng, recognized with her geomantic skills that the land of Tibet was constituted by a vast supine demoness who had to be subdued before Buddhism could be established. This unruly demoness was pinned down and controlled through the construction of a series of temples laid out in concentric squares, centered on the Jokhang temple, built over her heart. This account, which first appeared in the eleventh century, ties the founding of Lhasa to the rise of Buddhism over older religious traditions.<sup>1</sup> The presumption, often associated with this narrative, that Lhasa served continuously as Tibet’s political capital from Srongtsen Gampo’s reign onward, is not substantiated by the historical record. Only after the Fifth Dalai Lama rose to power as sovereign in 1642 did Lhasa become a true seat of government administration, and the major site of diplomatic activities (Blondeau and Gyatso).

Detailed information about Lhasa’s lay population up until the twentieth century is scarce, as Tibetan historiographers were primarily interested in recording religious history. We do know, though, that neither the physical extent nor the population of the town grew very quickly. In 1904, the invading British Younghusband expedition estimated Lhasa’s population at thirty thousand, including twenty thousand monks (Blondeau and Gyatso 26). Lhasa’s 1950s population is also frequently estimated at around thirty thousand. At that time the city was a densely packed warren of alleyways branching off from the Barkor path, only three square kilometers in area. The Potala Palace and the village of Zhöl below it were considered separate from the city. Despite its miniscule size in comparison with other cities of the day, Lhasa was the largest and basically the only urban settlement in the Tibetan cultural world (Yeh and Henderson).

From at least the seventeenth century, though, the Barkor served as both a circumambulation path around the Jokhang and a bustling market for goods around the world.<sup>2</sup> At that time, Tibet was exporting, among other

goods, musk, gold, medicinal plants, furs, and yak tails. The latter were exported not only for use as fly swatters and staffs, but also as ritual fans in Hindu temples, and as Santa Claus beards in Europe (Karan 7). Seventeenth-century imports included sugar, chilies, and tea, as well as glass bottles, copper, coins made in Nepal, Kashmiri saffron, Persian turquoise, European amber, and coral gathered from the Mediterranean and polished in workshops in Italy (Boulnois). Three centuries later, in the 1940s, Han traders sold silk and satin in Lhasa's Beijing Store, Kashmiri businessmen sold hats and pelts, and Newaris sold brocades, watches, and silk. Lhasa's wealthy residents could also afford to buy hats and cloth imported from Italy, Scotch whisky, Australian butter, and American corned beef. Heinrich Harrer, who lived in Lhasa from 1943 to 1950 recalled:

There is nothing one cannot buy, or at least order. One even finds the Elizabeth Arden specialties . . . American overshoes. . . sewing-machines, radio sets and gramophones and . . . Bing Crosby's latest records. . . we found an enormous store full of European felt-hats which are the *dernier cri* in Lhasa (126–27).

Just a few decades later, the markets and goods were gone, replaced by food rations and poorly stocked government stores (Goldstein, Siebenschuh, and Tsering 108). Only in the 1990s did internationally produced goods become available once more in Lhasa. As Barnett states, "It is one of the great tragicomic ironies of the Chinese presence in Tibet that since the new transition



*Photo 3.1* Barkor, vegetable market, Lhasa. Photo by Emily T. Yeh.

point of 1980 Beijing's main claim to legitimacy in Tibet has been the fact that it has brought consumer commodities to the shops of Lhasa: until the Chinese arrived the shops of Lhasa had been full of them" (*Lhasa* 66). This "tragi-comic irony" parallels the ways in which ethnic governance and interethnic relations shifted from the pre-1951 period to now.

### **Multiethnic Lhasa**

In addition to being a site of intense commercial activity, Lhasa was also a place where culture and arts from around Asia mingled. Jesuit missionary Ippolito Desideri, who reached Lhasa in 1716, encountered Mongol, Chinese, Muscovite, Armenian, Kashmiri, north Indian, and Nepalese merchants (Harris and Shakya; de Filippis 5). The city was also home to Ladakhis and Chinese Muslims. Merchants of different origin settled into distinct neighborhoods, with Nepalese living on the north side of the Barkor and the Kashmiri Muslims on the south (*Grong-khyer* 16–17). The Gorkhas had a strong presence in Lhasa since the seventeenth century; their office and military escort that functioned as a consulate was the oldest Nepali mission abroad.

An account by the Italian missionary Beligatti of the Monlam Chenmo celebrations performed in Lhasa in 1741 describes a celebration of difference:

The cavalcade opened with sixty Newars on horseback, dressed up in their traditional costumes. They were followed by forty Indian merchants, also on horseback, but wearing clothes made of yellow Chinese brocade, followed in their turn by fifty-seven mounted Kashmiri Muslims . . . Eight mounted laymen, dressed up in Chinese brocade, carried four different pair of banners . . . On that occasion, the local Chinese community set up a magnificent Chinese-style garden in the square in front of the Dalai Lama's residence. (Bue 195–96)

Bue suggests that the magnificent festivals of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Lhasa, together with feasts, patronage of art, and the flourishing of medicine, made Lhasa "a beacon for Tibetans as well as for their Buddhist neighbours" (197). However, the presence of Kashmiri Muslims and others in both the daily life of the city and the celebrations of festivals suggests that Lhasa welcomed and beckoned beyond the world of Buddhists to encompass multiple geographical origins and religious faiths.

This mix of ethnicities persisted through the first half of the twentieth century, during which Lhasa had a much more international flavor than it did during the century's second half. A British Mission operated in Lhasa between 1936 and 1947; there were also numerous Anglophile Tibetan aristocrats, educated in schools in England and India (Harris and Shakya). Lhasa was also home to a population of Sikh converts to Islam,<sup>3</sup> as well as Ladakhi merchants. An account by Abdul Wahid Radhu, a member of

a family responsible for the caravan transporting offerings from the Lada-khi king to the Dalai Lama, suggests many close ties between Muslims in Leh and Lhasa; two of Radhu's cousins lived in Lhasa, including one who married a Chinese Muslim. Lhasa was also home to numerous Nepalese residents, who had certain extraterritorial privileges such as being tried by their own consul rather than in Tibetan courts (McGovern 446).<sup>4</sup>

### The Chinese of Lubu

Though most Chinese living in Lhasa before 1950 were merchants and officials associated with the Amban, the Qing empire's representative in Tibet, the residents of the Lubu neighborhood, next to what is now the glittering pedestrian walkway of Yuthok Road, were descendants of Chinese settlers who farmed vegetables. They married Tibetan women, and their descendants speak Tibetan, dress in Tibetan style, and identify as Tibetan, even while holding onto their Han ancestry and, in some cases, surnames. The history of the Lubu neighborhood points to a possible future that did not come to pass: a way for Han and Tibetans to "live together" that is very different from the ways that seem natural and inevitable today.

Precise dates cannot be determined from available records, but interviews suggest that the ancestors of the current residents came to Lhasa from Sichuan as soldiers with an Amban around the 1840s–1860s. They married local Tibetan women, and the government allowed them to reclaim the marshy area around Lubu for vegetable cultivation. The Tshona family had the largest vegetable plot, land rent for which they paid to the Zhöl Laskhungs office; the women of the family also paid a yearly "labor release" (*mi-bogs*) fee to the Agricultural Office. One member of the family, born in 1918, recalled that her great-grandfather was Chinese; he married a Tibetan woman from Batang and settled in Lhasa. Her own grandfather was Chinese as well, and her Tibetan grandmother could speak Chinese well. However, she herself identified as Tibetan, and spoke primarily Tibetan. During the 1930s–1940s, a number of Lubu residents sent their children to attend the Guomindang-run school in Lhasa, and her grandmother had wanted to send her. However, "other people said, 'why would a woman need to learn Chinese?'" Instead, she was sent to a private school in the Barkor, where she learned to read and write in Tibetan. She married a Tibetan official who, she claimed, was falsely accused of participating in the 1959 uprising, for which she suffered greatly, particularly during the Cultural Revolution.

Lubu residents often worshipped at Lhasa's *Guandi miao*, or *Gesar Lhakhang*, a temple that provides an interesting example of converging mythologies and cultural sharing. The Amban established the temple in 1792 after a victory over the Gorkha army, and dedicated it to Guandi, legendary Chinese warrior hero of the Three Kingdoms Period, often considered the God of War. Over time, it also became associated with the legendary

Tibetan warrior king, Gesar of Ling, who is also considered a protector deity. Thus, the temple was a place of worship for both Tibetan and Han residents of Lhasa, and the architecture of the temple reflects both styles.

### **Muslim Communities in Lhasa, Pre-1950**

The Muslims who resided in Lhasa up through the mid-twentieth century were divided into two main groups: those of Chinese descent, referred to as Hebalin Khache (after the name of their neighborhood, Hebalin) or Chinese Muslims (rGya Khache); and those of Kashmiri, Ladakhi, or Nepalese descent, referred to as the Barkor Khache (they lived in the Barkor), the Kashmiri Khache (following the numerically dominant subgroup), the Lhasa Khache, or simply Khache. Their everyday lives in Lhasa up to the mid-twentieth century appear to have been rather similar, but the paths of the two groups diverged significantly after the 1950s.

Kashmiri Muslims first migrated to Lhasa during the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1642–1682). According to the present-day leader of Lhasa's Barkor Khache community, seventeen boys and thirty men from Kashmir and Nepal came as merchants, and were invited by the Fifth Dalai Lama to stay as guests in Tibet. From that time, they received a stipend from the Tibetan government on the first, eighth, and fifteenth day of each Tibetan month, a custom that is said to have lasted until 1959.<sup>5</sup> A number of stories explain why the Fifth Dalai Lama granted these men land for a cemetery and a mosque in an area known as Khache Lingka, two kilometers west of town. According to one, the Fifth Dalai Lama saw the Muslim saint, Pir Yakup, praying and doing "prostrations" on a small rock shaped like a prayer carpet on Darga mountain, and asked that he be brought to him. When the Pir told him that he was worshipping on the hill because there was no mosque, the Dalai Lama sent a representative to shoot arrows to demarcate the land that he granted to the Khache both for prayer and to use as a cemetery (Cabezón).<sup>6</sup> Most of the Kashmiri Muslims lived in rented houses in the Barkor and made their living through commerce. For example, though Tibetans did not fish (for religious reasons), the nobility were not above covertly buying and consuming fish sold by the Khache (and others) in Barkor markets as "water turnips."

The Hebalin Khache began to settle in Lhasa somewhat later than the Kashmiris, in the eighteenth century. Their oldest mosque was built in 1776 (Moevus). Some Hebalin residents claim to be descendants of soldiers garrisoned in Lhasa, while others trace their ancestry to Chinese Muslims from Gansu, Shanxi, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces, who arrived in Lhasa at the beginning of the eighteenth century during the reign of Kangxi. Still others are said to be descendants of soldiers of the Chinese army that fought against the Gorkhas in 1793 (Jest; Snellgrove and Richardson). These families, many of whom were surnamed Ma and Zhang, made their living in several ways: cultivating vegetables on the reclaimed sandy banks of the

Lhasa River, butchering, operating wheat-grinding mills, and selling meat and bread. Others owned small restaurants or were barbers and cobblers.

Over time, the Barkor and Hebalin Khache alike adopted Tibetan dress, language, and other cultural practices. The Barkor Muslims in particular were considered especially expert in the use of Tibetan honorific language (*zhe-sa*), a trait for which they are still admired today. Indeed, given the great difficulty many young Tibetans in Lhasa today have speaking Tibetan without code-switching with Mandarin, the Barkor Khache (now often called the “Tibetan Khache”) are admired for their ability to speak pure Tibetan.

Many of the rights granted to the Kashmiri Muslims by the Fifth Dalai Lama applied to the Hebalin Muslims as well. Both groups were free to open shops and trade without the imposition of a tax or levy. Furthermore, both were exempted from restrictions on meat consumption during Sagadawa (Siddiqi). Muslim-Tibetan intermarriage was common, particularly between Muslim men and Tibetan women, with the Tibetans usually converting to Islam. Intermarriage between Kashmiri and Chinese Muslims was also common, though the two groups had separate burial grounds as well as mosques. The Khache had their own chief, the *Khache 'go-pa*, who judged offenses and chaired a council that advised the community on Islamic law (Jest). The Hebalin Muslims similarly elected their own leader, who was then approved by the Tibetan government. However, this leader was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture whereas the Barkor Khache leader was responsible to the Finance Office (Cabezón). Furthermore, Barkor Khache men were considered to some extent “foreign” despite generations of living in Lhasa, a designation that would work in their favor after 1959.

The Kashmiri and Chinese Muslims also seemed to have had a friendly rivalry about which group was more valued by the majority Buddhist Tibetans. The former make much of the fact that they lived on the Barkor, inside the boundaries of the Lingkor circumambulation path, whereas the Hebalin neighborhood was outside of the Lingkor. This, I was told by more than one Barkor Khache, “shows that we were more highly regarded than the Hebalin Khache.” Though there may well have been hostility, there are no records—whether Western travelers’ reports, residents’ own written records, available archival material, or narratives of family history told by descendants now living in Lhasa—of interethnic violence or overt antagonism toward these Muslim communities. Both were governed through a different set of principles than other Tibetan residents vis-à-vis relationship to land and religious regulations. If they had grievances or felt unjustly treated, we have no record of it.

### **Buddhism and Cosmopolitanism**

What might have been the sources of this prenatalist cosmopolitanism—including not only the stance of relating “self to non-self in . . . civility,

compassion, indifference,” but also deliberate celebrations of difference, as in the Monlam Chenmo festival witnessed by Beligatti in 1741? The role of the Fifth Dalai Lama in granting a place for the Kashmiri Muslims to worship, as well as the accommodations made for Hebalin Muslims and Lubu residents to cultivate land, suggests that pre-1950 Lhasa was multicultural and multiethnic through both contingency and to some extent, deliberate design. Even in the first half of the twentieth century, the Tibetan Buddhist religious establishment, by then characterized by extreme conservatism and an insular, isolationist orientation (Goldstein), accommodated the Kashmiri and Chinese Muslims and the residents of Lubu. Despite the ideology of combining religious and political affairs and the way in which commitment to Tibetan Buddhism had become the core of Tibetan national identity (Goldstein 2), neither the government nor society objected to allowing small non-Tibetan and non-Buddhist communities to thrive in Lhasa.

The long history of trade undoubtedly played a role in this ethic, but the Fifth Dalai Lama’s deliberate creation of a space for these different communities, together with the central role of religion in Tibetan politics, suggests that Buddhism also had some relationship to the ideals and practices of living together. Indeed, the impermanence of reality and the inevitability of suffering lead, in the Mahayana tradition, to the principle of cultivating compassion (*nyingjé*) and the development of charity and self-restraint. Tibetan Buddhists pray for all sentient beings to have peace, freedom from suffering, and an escape from ignorance, attachment, and hatred (that is, to achieve enlightenment). The principles of fate and reincarnation also mean that any sentient being could have been one’s mother in a previous lifetime, and should be treated accordingly. This ethical orientation is summarized in a teaching as follows: “Thinking of all living beings as the gracious parents of our past lives we should be compassionate to beggars and other unfortunates . . . with love, compassion, and an enlightened attitude we should protect the lives of other living beings, give generously and without attachment . . . be content, love others” (in Kapstein 218).

The wide acceptance in Tibetan culture of the cultivation of *nyingjé* as a basis for a proper life resonates with cosmopolitanism as ethical practices of living together peacefully and in solidarity. Of course, Tibetan Buddhists, like practitioners of all faiths, have not always put their ethical ideals into practice, and indeed have often violated principles in the name of religion. As Bielefeldt suggests: “Buddhists dupe, curse, seduce, oppress, and kill each other in the name of their religion . . . Buddhists seem expert at finding ways to find the dharma in what they appear to do as a matter of their cultural course” (241). However, the fact that ethical ideals are not always practiced does not mean that they never are. It is difficult in the absence of more detailed historical records about the founding of various non-Tibetan communities in Lhasa to know the extent to which the cultivation of compassion may have deliberately shaped the way in which these communities were regulated and day-to-day interactions in the city

conducted.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, without romantically ignoring the economic deprivation of the Tibetan underclasses, or the occasional battles between monasteries, *nyingjé* can be posited as a partial basis for the peacefulness of coexistence in pre-1950s Lhasa, and one that as we will see still plays a role today. However, compared to pre-1950s Lhasa, the city today is multicultural and multiethnic in a very different way, and very much by the state's design.

## LIVING TOGETHER IN LHASA TODAY

Lhasa, according to the Chinese state, is today a prosperous city, “home to the Tibetan, Han, and Hui peoples, as well as many other ethnic groups” who live together harmoniously, displaying in their everyday lives the “unity of the nationalities.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Tibetan residents of Lhasa appear to do a disconcertingly good job of “living together” with their new Han neighbors. I discovered this when I lived for three months with a Tibetan family in Lhasa. Descendants of a family of wealthy merchants, their Barkor house was confiscated in 1959 and redistributed to poor urban residents. They lived in work unit housing until the mid-1990s when their salaries were suddenly raised and new policies encouraged them to build a new private “retirement house.” The family moved to a neighborhood named “New Unity Village,” bought land at a highly subsidized rate, and built a house in the “new *Simsba* [nobility]” style. Tibetan in appearance, but with many modern amenities, their two-story home is built around a large courtyard with a sunroom and a small lawn. Around the courtyard are the kitchen, the bathroom, the living quarters for the family and the Tibetan maid, and three other small rooms that the family rents out—to sex workers from Sichuan.

The heavy presence of Han sex workers is a common topic of conversation among Lhasa's Tibetan residents. One common theory is that the government not only has failed to stop prostitution, but has actively encouraged it, because it gives idle men something to do other than think about political protest. In addition to professing to subscribe to this view, my host also registered his dissatisfaction with the current political situation in many other ways. He sent one of his children at a young age to Dharamsala to be educated in schools run by the Tibetan government-in-exile. He complained frequently to me that Lhasa residents have “no freedom” and that, with the arrival of so many Chinese migrants, Lhasa has changed irrevocably for the worse. He rose every morning at 5 a.m. to circumambulate the Lingkor, though instead of praying, he took along his shortwave radio and listened secretly to Voice of America. Nevertheless, he and his wife were perfectly willing to augment their already generous retirement packages by renting out part of their home to the very people whose arrival they complained about on a daily basis. Though they never invited the migrants

over for dinner, they shared a courtyard space, a water pump, and a common entrance. They crossed paths daily, said hello, and cordially lived their separate lives in close proximity.

A few kilometers away lived an elderly Tibetan woman whose family, like every other family in the village, had been subleasing their land to Han migrants for vegetable cultivation for about a decade. Although the Tibetan families earn more from leasing out their land than they do by growing barley themselves, their earnings are only one tenth of the Han farmers' net profits. Nevertheless, they quite willingly rent out their land. The Han and Tibetans mostly kept to themselves; the woman couldn't tell me where the Han renters of her family's land were from. "How would I know?" she said. "They're Chinese." One day, I mentioned that I had lived in Beijing some years earlier. "Tell me," she said, "are there any Chinese left in China?" I think there must not be, because they've all come to Lhasa!"

How should we understand these sorts of sarcastic comments and complaints about Han migration while also taking seriously the day-to-day fact that Tibetans and Han live together peacefully in the city, sometimes in lives that significantly overlap, and sometimes in very different, parallel lives? The daily, voluntary Tibetan-Han engagement in economic activities (rentals of land and courtyard space) seems to defy Tibetan resentment of Han migration, which emerges in sarcasm and bitter speech. The coexistence of these two phenomena can only be understood by examining how *minzu tuanjie* structures the lives and subjectivities of differently positioned ethnic citizens in Lhasa.

### **Administrative Autonomy and Minzu Tuanjie as Management Device**

Sun Yatsen's theory of *minzu* ("nation/nationality") was adopted early on by the Chinese Communist Party, with each *minzu* allowed the right of self-determination, including the formation of an independent state. However, this was allowable only in theory, and not in practice, as Baba Phuntsog Wangyal, an early Tibetan communist revolutionary learned when he attempted to found a separate Tibetan Communist Party (Goldstein, Siebenschuh, and Tsering). Upon the founding of the PRC, the Party officially repudiated the option of secession and instead established a system of "autonomous" regions in areas where minorities predominated. Tibetans were divided into the prefectural-level Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and autonomous prefectures and counties in Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces.

According to the State Council, "The Tibetan people enjoy, according to law, the equal right of participation in the administration of state affairs as well as the right of self-government to manage affairs of their own region and ethnic group . . . the full exercise . . . of the right of self-government." However, there is little meaningful political autonomy. In some cases, the

exceptions made in the name of autonomy have been implemented, but have little political consequence. In other cases, policies that would actually provide a measure of cultural and political autonomy remain unimplemented. And finally, in still other cases, policies implemented in the name of *minzu* autonomy in fact *increase* rather than decrease state control; the device of *minzu tuanjie*, or the “unity of the nationalities,” is used to discursively transform measures that are administratively exceptional in their increased scrutiny and control into ones that pass as exceptions granted in the name of autonomy.

Within *minzu tuanjie* discourse, minorities’ demands for greater autonomy than the state currently provides is interpreted as *minzu fenlie* (“national splittism”), the gravest threat to *minzu tuanjie*. Those accused of attempting to split the nation, and thus threatening the sovereignty of the Chinese state, end up losing their jobs, and sometimes in detention as political prisoners. In this way, *minzu tuanjie* works as a hegemonic device to manage a coercive unity (Bulag; Yeh, “Tibetan Indigeneity”). One of the most common forms taken by *minzu tuanjie* is the portrayal of China’s fifty-six recognized *minzu* as one big, happy family, with the Han as the eldest sibling taking care of the others. A well-known political song about national unity was revived and set to pop music in Tibet in the late 1990s, when it became ubiquitous in karaokes, bars, and buses: “The sun and



Photo 3.2 “Han Tibetans one family,” Tolung Dechen, near Lhasa. People’s Republic of China. Photo by Emily T. Yeh.

moon are daughters of the same mother / The name of the mother is radiance . . . / The Tibetans and the Chinese are daughters of one mother / The name of the mother is China.”

The long history of cultural and material interaction between Chinese and Tibetan civilizations is also marshaled to bolster the legitimacy of current political arrangements. The marriage of Chinese Princess Wencheng to Srongtsen Gampo in the seventh century was invoked after 1959 to prove Chinese claims of sovereignty over Tibet. (Srongtsen Gampo’s senior, Nepalese wife is absent from this narrative.) Since the 1980s, the date of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet has been moved in official history to the Sakya leaders’ thirteenth-century submission to the Mongol Yuan dynasty, but Wencheng is still credited with bringing all manners of civilization to Tibet, including not only Buddhism, but also textiles, various technologies, music, and even (quite inaccurately) agriculture.<sup>10</sup> Her marriage is continuously used to symbolize *minzu tuanjie*, as Lhasa residents are frequently reminded, most recently by a twenty-part China Central Television series about Wencheng produced in 2000. Similarly, a recently commissioned report on ethnic unity in the TAR states:

Princess Wencheng still lives on in the hearts of Tibetan people. [She] was a daughter of a Han family, but even more so, she is a part of Tibetan culture. Her name is like the water of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, gurgling and flowing in Tibetan hearts and minds . . . This is the true meaning of the very best kind of *minzu tuanjie* (Zhang, Luo, and Xu 60).

As a device that calls itself into being, *minzu tuanjie* makes expressions and behaviors that imply anything other than a familial relationship between the Tibetans and Han a sign of splittism, deserving of punishment. The entangled nature of Han nationalism with Chinese nationalism makes staying on the side of *minzu tuanjie* a tricky proposition (Bulag; Yeh, “Tibetan Indigeneity”). In Lhasa the most pressing issue today is the ever-growing number of Han and Hui migrants, leading to Tibetan fears of being outnumbered and marginalized. However, the view of the TAR as being Tibetan land is firmly rejected by the state; the TAR is always described in official documents as a “multiethnic region,” inhabited not only by Tibetans, but also by Han, Hui, and other *minzu*. Thus, the TAR should be equally “home” to the Han as to Tibetans. To suggest otherwise, for example by objecting to the Han presence in Lhasa, becomes an offense against national unity, an attempt to split the motherland.

## SPACE, ETHNICITY, AND PROTEST

I turn here to a brief examination of how the administrative and discursive practices of coercive amity have shaped spatialized, ethnic patterns

in Lhasa from 1959 to the present. After the failed uprising in 1959, the state expropriated the houses of those who fled to India or had been sent to prison, dividing them into tiny apartments for poor residents. Young Tibetans were selected to attend schools in Shenyang and Beijing. These youth eventually returned to Tibet, many to Lhasa, to become cadres and today's new middle class. The urban area and population of Lhasa increased significantly after 1959, though available statistics have been both contentious and difficult to interpret (Yeh and Henderson).

Until the mid-1980s, most Han residing in Lhasa were cadres who had been sent to work in government offices. Of these, most returned home to inland China upon retirement. Little new housing was built, and much of the Tibetan population lived in the Barkor area. Of the 108,000 permanent residents counted officially in Lhasa in 1987, 27,500 native Lhasa residents lived in the old Barkor urban district; 37,800 Han and 33,300 Tibetans lived in work unit housing; and 8,000 Tibetans lived in nearby peri-urban villages. The Han constituted roughly 38% of the official urban population (Ma 822). Early Han migrant entrepreneurs, who began to arrive in Lhasa in the late 1980s, tended to live with their relatives in government work units. These patterns led demographer Ma Rong to remark on the fact that Han and Tibetans lived in separate spatial zones with little chance to come into contact with each other, leading to mutual lack of knowledge and misunderstandings (Ma 822, 835). As a foil to what he saw as Lhasa's problematic ethnic spatial separation, Ma pointed to Inner Mongolia, where "the relationship between Mongolians and Han . . . is reported to be generally good, they make friends from another group, live in the same . . . neighborhood, and have a certain level of intermarriage" (Ma 834), though by then the Han population of Inner Mongolia was already over 80%.

The unmentioned backdrop to the 1988 study that produced these findings was the one and only period since 1959 of open Tibetan antagonism toward Chinese in Lhasa. It began on September 27, 1987, when twenty-one monks and five lay people were arrested and imprisoned after they walked around the Barkor carrying a homemade Tibetan flag and shouting "Tibetan independence." Four days later, several thousand Tibetans besieged the Barkor police station after arrests and public beatings following another small protest; in response, police opened fire into the crowd. Over the next three years, there were three major independence demonstrations and dozens of smaller ones, all peaceful. They resulted in nearly a hundred deaths from police gunfire, some three thousand arrests followed by imprisonment and torture, and the imposition of martial law in Lhasa for more than a year (Schwartz; Barnett, untitled essay).

The target of the protests were apparatuses of the military and state, as when protestors set fire to the Barkor police station in 1987 in an effort to free those arrested inside. The only exceptions seem to have been during a riot in March 1988 when a Chinese restaurant and pharmacy were burned down; and on March 6 the following year, when Tibetans threw

rocks at passing Han cyclists, forcing them to dismount and confiscating their bicycles. In both cases, some Tibetan protesters were concerned about drawing a distinction between their anger at the state from ethnic animosity. In the first case, a debate among protestors, essentially about the Buddhist principle of compassion and the equal moral status of all human beings, preceded the burning of the restaurant. According to a monk who was at the scene:

The Chinese were chasing Tibetan demonstrators. The old people couldn't run away. They were beating them with the intention of killing them. So the Tibetans said, now we must chase away all the Chinese. Then there were two groups of opinion. One group said we should not fight all the Chinese since they are human beings also. The other group said that as long as they are Chinese we must struggle against them. At that time they burned down a Chinese restaurant and pharmacy (in Schwartz 83).

In the second case, individual Tibetans in the crowd protected the Chinese who had their bicycles taken, and helped them to safety (Schwartz 159).

In both cases, an ethic of *nyingjé*, or compassion for the Han as humans, as well as a rigorous distinction between resentment of the apparatuses of the state, and the individual migrants who unwittingly carry out state practice, can be seen as a form of subaltern cosmopolitanism, an ethic of living together with other humans in a way that runs counter to a clash of civilizations, but also is not incompatible with postcolonial nationalism. Buddhist compassion has, as indicated earlier, not always stopped those who profess it from engaging in violence, including in the name of Buddhism itself. However, what makes the debate (and ultimate resolution) over how to handle individual Chinese during the nationalist protests subaltern cosmopolitanism is precisely the invocation of religious principles, violently suppressed during the Cultural Revolution and still tightly controlled by the state, to argue the case for compassion. Insofar as religion has been both a form of resistance and a cause for which other acts of resistance to the state are undertaken, the forbearance shown toward individual Chinese is itself a form of resistance and thus a form of *subaltern* cosmopolitanism, one that shames and exposes the established order, while also transgressing it. This ethic of compassion has become increasingly prominent in the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's public statements about the need to separate actions of the government from those of individual Chinese. It is doubly ironic that such statements might encourage Tibetans in Lhasa to take such a stance even more seriously, as the Dalai Lama continues to be thoroughly denounced by the Chinese Party-state, which has promised to engage in a "fight to the death struggle" against him.

After the protests, the state responded with a two-pronged strategy, tightening political control while also implementing a rapid program of

marketization. After 1990, security operations in Lhasa increased the use of surveillance technologies and informers, and expanded the role of the State Security Bureau (Barnett, untitled essay 187). Guaranteed prison terms for those caught advocating independence or otherwise practicing activities labeled “splittist,” has served as an effective deterrent to other would-be protestors since the early 1990s. At the same time, Deng Xiao Ping’s landmark 1992 Southern tour, combined with the declaration of Lhasa as a special economic zone, and the influx of migrants, dramatically altered Lhasa’s ethnic landscape.<sup>11</sup> The TAR relaxed and simplified the acquisition of business licenses, relaxed intraprovincial border controls, and ordered government buildings to convert the ground floor of any property on main roads into spaces that could be rented out as shops (Barnett, *Lhasa*). Within one year, the number of individually run enterprises in Lhasa increased by 56%. A large number of Han migrants began to arrive in Lhasa, often through connections to cadres and soldiers.

By opening the way for a greatly increased presence of Chinese migrants, the declaration of Lhasa as a special economic zone has helped to consolidate state control. At the same time, marketization and a discourse championing free flows of people and goods has been accompanied by a new set of often extralegal rules that by default only apply to local residents. Indeed, they tend to be invisible to the migrants both because they are unwritten and because they are particular to Tibetan Buddhism as practiced by ethnic Tibetans. These new rules include a complete ban on display of photos of the Dalai Lama, and a prohibition against religious practice not just by Party members, but by all government employees (including teachers), their families, and students of all ages. Monks and nuns are banned from entering official spaces in Lhasa, including not only government offices but also the Tibet University campus (Barnett, “Modernity”). These rules, which violate both the Chinese constitution and the principles of autonomy, constitute a form of variegated sovereignty, but one in which migrants have more, not fewer, rights than locals.

As these changes took place, Lhasa continued to grow; by 2000, the urbanized area was reported at fifty-three square kilometers, with a population of roughly 170,000—tiny by world standards but vastly out of proportion to the rest of the TAR. Of the metropolitan population, 63% are reported as Tibetan, 34.3% as Han, and the remaining 2.7% mostly Hui (Yeh and Henderson). However, many outside observers have estimated that non-Tibetans account for 50–70% of the urban population (Erickson; Tibet Information Network; Hao). Sichuanese migrants I interviewed scoffed at the official statistics, telling me I should “use [my] own eyes and look around.” As one put it, “Don’t you know that *our* Lhasa is called ‘little Sichuan’?” “Little Sichuan” is a common, affectionate name for Lhasa among Han migrants, evoking their radically different sense of place and imagination of the city than that of Tibetan residents.

At the same time as Han migration was taking off and new restrictions were being imposed on religious practices, the government also sought to mollify the Tibetan elite by dramatically increasing cadres' incomes—bringing urban salaries in the TAR to almost twice the national average, even while rural areas sank deeper into poverty. Altogether, about one half of the families of Lhasa's old residents are now employed by the government, and have become members of this newly enriched cadre class, while the rest are becoming the urban poor (Barnett *Lhasa*). Han migrants continue to rent rooms in work units, but increasingly, they also rent living space in the courtyards of the spacious new homes of the Tibetan elite. Although the Tibetan residents of the Barkor and the Tibetan urban poor, in their cramped government apartments, may still live in rather separate spaces from the new Han migrants, it is now virtually impossible to conduct any economic transactions in Lhasa without interacting with the Han. The desired situation in Lhasa implied by Ma—in which the Han and Tibetan live intermixed with each other—has been achieved, through a set of administrative and discursive practices that are designed to stamp out any traces of Tibetan nationalism.

## INTERPRETING HAN-TIBETAN RELATIONS IN LHASA

As a tool of coercive amity, *minzu tuanjie* structures the everyday processes through which people quietly make their lives in Lhasa. Han, Tibetan, Hui, and others who encounter each other on a daily basis at the office, school, market, on public transportation, and in stores, may not consciously think about *minzu tuanjie* as they interact, but their interactions are nevertheless shaped by it. Ignoring either the state's role in regulating interethnic relations or the deep entanglements of Han and Chinese nationalism leads to interpretations of Han-Tibetan relations that unintentionally mirror those of the state. I illustrate this through a brief examination of the narratives ordinary Han migrants offer about their relations with Tibetans and about the protests of 1987–1989.

Mr. Chen was one of the very first Han vegetable farmers in Lhasa. He was sent to Lhasa in January 1986 by an agreement between the Lhasa municipal government and the Shuangliu county government in Sichuan. At the time, urban neighborhoods still had collective farmland on the edges of the city; Chen subleased farmland first from an urban neighborhood and then in a peri-urban village. He recalled 1986–1987 as being a time of “very bad Tibetan-Han relations” compared to now, which he described as “no problem, no problem at all.” When asked to elaborate on the 1987 problems, however, he gave as examples only the fact that the local police station removed the sign outside of its gate (out of fear of retaliation by Tibetans), and that the (Han) policemen were afraid to leave their office in uniforms. He reported that he himself spent some sleepless nights wanting

to go home, but worrying that he could not do so because he had accrued too many debts to come to Lhasa. He avoided selling his vegetables in his Barkor during this period.

As for his relationship with the Tibetan villagers, however, “everything was fine.” He portrayed a situation of cooperation, without papering over occasional, resolvable conflicts. Water scarcity led to a fistfight with a local Tibetan when he first arrived. Villagers were unhappy about his irrigation, and cut off his water supply. After he argued with them, one man stomped on his vegetables, leading to “lots of pushing and shoving.” To resolve the conflict, he called upon the (Tibetan) village leader, who he described as “the type of person who can tell right from wrong” and who was very supportive of Mr. Chen. The leader talked to the other Tibetans, and the problem did not recur. Chen and other migrants like him told numerous stories of this sort: stories in which there is some Han-Tibetan conflict, but that is mild and can be easily resolved through a process of dialogue and cooperation.

Like some other rural Han migrants, Chen is relatively charitable in his assessment of local Tibetans, referring to them as “jovial” and “decent people.” This assessment contrasts with the more typical view of Tibetans as being of “low quality” compared to local residents (Yeh, “Tropes of Indolence”). In recounting their experience, he and other vegetable-growing migrants stressed that their conflicts were minor and resolvable, and that the Tibetans are “people just like us; if you are good to someone, they are good to you too.”<sup>12</sup> Many also claim that Tibetans “have affection toward us” and that “if you don’t give them any trouble, the Tibetan people are very good to us.” There are many examples of everyday cooperation and interaction; after harvest, Tibetans frequently help Han farmers collect vegetables, and in return take the unwanted stalks and leaves home for their livestock. Han migrants sometimes give some of their vegetables to Tibetan villagers, and more than one migrant recounted having trouble peddling heavy vegetables to market, and being grateful for a Tibetan who stopped on the street to help push their cart.

There is much evidence, then, of quotidian practices in which Han and Tibetan residents in Lhasa, while often living quite parallel and separate lives, also practice acts of reciprocity and sharing, seeing each other first and foremost as “people just like us.” And yet Chen’s views of himself and the Tibetans with whom he deals are structured by *minzu tuanjie*. In particular, his explanation of the 1987–1989 demonstrations strongly echoes the official narrative of these events. It was, he explained to me, the result of “a very small group of people” agitating for independence. Further, he said, part of the “problem” with the atmosphere of Han-Tibetan relations at the time, which has now been “fixed” was that “back then, all the Tibetans displayed Dalai Lama photographs” (now banned). Though he is in general no great admirer of the government, complaining about corrupt officials and taxes, he portrayed the government’s work in Lhasa in the most conciliatory of lights:

... the Central Government tried very hard to use methods of unity to deal with the rioters. The Central Government strictly forbade the use of force against the rioters; instead, 3000 People's Armed Police and People's Liberation Army soldiers linked arms and encircled the rioters, isolating the few from the rest of the city, but without opening fire.

This account, diverging dramatically from the well-documented state-sanctioned violence toward the Tibetan protestors, fits well within the conventions of *minzu tuanjie* in Lhasa today, according to which the Han and Tibetans get along because the Han are like a protective elder sibling to the Tibetans. The protests can only be understood as the work of a few "splittists," blindly following the Dalai Lama, himself a dupe of foreign meddlers into China's sovereignty.

These accounts suggest that the imperatives of *minzu tuanjie* shape Han and Tibetan subjectivity and interactions with each other. For Tibetans, to do anything other than live peacefully together with the new Han migrants is to invite accusations of *minzu fenlie*. Though Tibetans and Chinese also lived peacefully together for centuries in Lhasa before 1950, the terms of ethnic interaction have fundamentally changed. Incorporation into the PRC introduced *minzu* not only as a conceptual category but also as an administrative one, which fosters certain kinds of interaction while discouraging others. Furthermore, the economic reforms enacted in the early 1990s, made in the name of economic liberalization but also implemented to address the protests of the 1980s, introduced Han migration on a large scale. These reforms put an end to hopes for a Tibetan-centered development by invoking the logic of the market; the most efficient seller of labor, services, and commodities would now be the winner, and the unlevel playing field for Han and Tibetans ignored. While the uneventful everyday interactions between Tibetans and Han in Lhasa that results thus cannot meaningfully be said to be a product of cosmopolitanism, the debates that took place during the nationalist protests of the late 1980s, and the continuing care with which most Tibetans in Lhasa separate their anxiety and anger about Han migration from the migrants themselves as human beings, can be understood as a form of subaltern cosmopolitanism rooted in both religious principles and the politicization of religion by the state.

## TIBETANS AND MUSLIMS IN LHASA

Though *minzu tuanjie* refers to the unity of all nationalities in China, it has a special reference to the majority Han and their relationship with minorities, because of the strong association of the Han (*hua*) with the Chinese state through the notion of the Chinese (*Zhonghua*) *minzu* (Bulag). It has different effects on interethnic relationships among minorities, including

between the Hui and Tibetans. In this last section, I examine the different trajectories of the Kashmiri and Chinese Muslim communities of Lhasa after 1951, and finally the implications of state ethnic policy for Tibetan-Hui relations today.

### The Divergent Paths of Kashmiri and Chinese Muslims

In March 1959, the committee of Kashmiri Muslims asked the Indian Consulate to aid the entire community in migrating to India. The Chinese government at first refused, but the Indian government intervened and the families became the focus of a diplomatic dispute between India and China (Siddiqui). The result was that late in the year, 192 families—almost all of the Barkor Khache in Lhasa at the time—migrated to India and Nepal, and some farther on to the Middle East.<sup>13</sup> In 1962, some of the poorest families of the Khache community returned to Lhasa, and in 2004 there were fifty-two Kashmiri Muslim families living there. The Barkor Khache today express a deep sense of connectedness to Lhasa. Several community members spoke to me proudly about their long history in Lhasa (claiming that they had been there for five hundred years). Several also complained that “these days it’s very hard to find real Lhasa Tibetans”—alluding to the influx of Han, Hui, and Tibetans from the eastern areas of Kham and Amdo into the city. “In the past,” they bemoaned, “the Lhasa Tibetans knew that we are good people and respected us” but “now the Khampas and villagers don’t know any better and so treat us Khache poorly.”

The trajectory of the Hebalin Muslims has been very different. From 1951 to 1959, many became cadres, recruited to teach Tibetan to Chinese soldiers. Nevertheless, many members of the community, including those who had been cadres, asked for permission to leave in 1959 along with the Barkor Khache. However, as Siddiqui writes, the government “took revenge on those Muslims of Chinese origin . . . They were offered a choice by the Chinese—if they sold their properties to the Chinese, they would be allowed to go to any Muslim country. Seeing this as a way of saving their religion and faith, they sold their properties, but then were not allowed to leave the country . . . the Chinese government declared a social boycott of these Chinese Muslims—nobody was allowed to sell them food” (79–81). Many pulled out of their work units and were subsequently imprisoned for years.

Thupden Khatsun (296–301) offers a more detailed but somewhat less sympathetic account, according to which the “Hui troubles” began in 1961 when the Hebalin Muslims organized a scheme to leave the country as the Kashmiri Muslims had done. They left their jobs and moved in protest to their cemetery area in the Dogbde valley. Because they believed they would soon to be allowed to leave, they declined the grain and oil rations that were being distributed at the time. The government sent other Hui cadres to plead with them to stop protesting and trying to leave. However, the Muslims did not listen, instead telling the cadre messengers that they

were “rotten inside” and beat them up. This led to the imprisonment of their leaders and severe hardship for the others, as they had no grain or oil rations. To survive, they were forced to buy grain and oil secretly at extraordinarily high prices. With no income, many were forced to send their children to Lhasa to beg.

### **The New Hui Arrivals**

Since the mid-1980s, Lhasa’s Muslim population has been dominated not by members of the former Hebalin and Barkor communities, but instead by a rapid influx of newly arrived Hui traders, who engage in a whole spectrum of economic activities, including running restaurants, driving rickshaws, butchering, and currency exchange. In 1991 there were officially three thousand Hui residents in Lhasa (Moevus) but Gladney suggests that even in 1985 there were some twenty thousand to thirty thousand Hui traders in Lhasa. Whatever the actual numbers, they have increased significantly since 1992. The newly arrived Hui are all the more visible given their heavy presence in services and trade.<sup>14</sup> Many have settled in Hebalin near the *Qing Zhen Si* mosque used for hundreds of years by the Hebalin Khache.

Gladney remarked that “the local ‘Tibetan Hui’ did not interact with [the new Hui traders], whom they regarded with suspicion, and preferred to marry their children to other Tibetans instead of to their co-religionists from outside Tibet” (34). My interviews and observations confirm both their preference for identifying with Tibetans over the new Hui, and the tension between the Hebalin Khache and the new arrivals. Despite sharing both ethnicity and religion, there is a significant difference between the two groups’ identities, and the way they are perceived by Tibetan residents. The middle-aged brother and sister of the Zhang family, former Hebalin vegetable cultivators, were instructive in this regard. The siblings had retained their Chinese last names, and unlike some of the other families, could have passed as new Hui migrants. The sister wore a headscarf, and decorated their home with wall hangings depicting Mecca. However, they referred to themselves again and again as “we Tibetans,” claiming a Tibetan identity that coexisted with, and was not subordinate to, their Khache identity. Another Hebalin Khache, a sixty-seven-year-old former vegetable cultivator, cadre, and prisoner, punctuated his life story with frequent assertions that he and his family were and are “real Tibetans.” In the “old society,” he said, he always wore a *chupa* (Tibetan robe). Today, his family eats Tibetan food and, he said, the only thing that distinguished them from other Tibetans was their religion. Otherwise, he stressed, he and his family were “the same as real Tibetans.”

These assessments are reflected in the everyday talk of Tibetan Buddhists as well. In the course of other conversations, I frequently heard off-hand comments such as those of an elderly Tibetan woman who said: “The

Hui are really bad. They do things that are much worse than the Han; they do all of the things that have *dikpa* [sin]. They're not like the old Khache at all. They didn't eat pork, and they wore head coverings, but otherwise, they're exactly the same as Tibetans. They eat tsampa and drink butter tea and speak Tibetan, and only speak Chinese now because they have to learn it in school." This attitude in turn affects the outlook of the remaining old Muslim communities in Lhasa. One complained, "These days the Hui from Xining [Qinghai] do bad things and give Muslims a bad reputation."

Until the expansion of the *Qing Zhen Si* mosque, there was considerable tension between the two groups of Chinese Muslims over use of the overcrowded space. In 2002, the mosque was significantly enlarged, with a prayer hall that can accommodate two thousand people. This resolved the conflict between the older Hebalin community and the newly arrived Hui, but has become the source of significant disgruntlement among Tibetans. Only 200 meters from the Jokhang temple, the mosque is also higher than it (though both buildings are two stories). Historically, the mosque was only allowed to be one floor high because, one Tibetan explained to me, "there is a saying that, 'The shoulder can't be higher than the head.'" However, this disgruntlement has not led to public protest; as a Tibetan cadre put it, "Of course Tibetans don't like it—but the mosque expansion was approved by the government's Religion Bureau. So what can we do? It would be a *minzu* problem." Here, then, *minzu tuanjie* was perceived as a threat to anyone who might protest the mosque, which was approved by the state. However, the issue for most Tibetans was what they saw as the state's purposeful belittling of Tibetan Buddhism, which came simultaneously with a battery of other new regulations restricting religious practice.

There have, however, been other types of conflicts between the newly arrived Hui and Tibetans. In 1995, an incident occurred in which Tibetans claimed that they had been served human flesh in a Hui restaurant. They subsequently smashed the restaurant's windows and broke its furniture. In retaliation, the owners threw bricks at the windows of nearby Tibetan restaurants. Police and People's Armed Police arrived quickly on the scene in large numbers, and there does not appear to have been extensive damage.<sup>15</sup> Though no other incidents of Hui-Tibetan violence or destruction of property have been reported in Lhasa, Tibetans there frequently complain about the Hui. Their complaints often take the form of allegations that "just recently" someone eating at a Hui restaurant "found a finger in their food" or found that bathwater was used for cooking. Quite a few Tibetan Lhasa residents refuse to patronize Hui restaurants, a stance unheard of for Chinese restaurants or for the services Chinese Muslim store owners before the 1950s.

This form of Tibetan-Hui antagonism is found across the Tibetan Plateau. However, as Fischer notes, the history of Muslim-Tibetan interactions is rather different in the east, particularly in Amdo, where military campaigns and the harsh rule of the Muslim Chinese warlord Ma Bufang

in the Nationalist period killed thousands of Tibetans. In recent years, rural Amdo has been the site of a number of Tibetan boycotts of Hui restaurants. In Golog, a 2003 clash between Tibetans and Hui led to the stabbing of a Tibetan, rioting, and destruction of Hui-owned property. This was followed by the poisoning of three Tibetans in a restaurant in 2004, leading to a Tibetan boycott of Hui business. Within a year, the number of Hui restaurants in the entire prefecture reportedly fell from seventy to twenty (Fischer).<sup>16</sup> The small nomadic township of Thangkor in Zorge, Sichuan, also recently organized a successful boycott leading to the closure of all Hui-owned restaurants. Such boycotts have not, however, been conducted in Lhasa.

Fischer argues that the conflictual Tibetan-Hui relationships in the east are more representative than the harmonious relationships between Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists in pre-1950s Lhasa, which he argues are of little importance. However, I argue that thinking about Lhasa's exceptionalism in this regard can be quite suggestive and important, pointing as it does both to the possibility of cosmopolitanism (and its relationship to a city), and to the power of the sedimented histories of place. Memories of the Hui in Amdo are those of the depredations of the Ma Bufang years, whereas among Lhasa's Tibetans, the magnanimity of the Fifth Dalai Lama in granting land to the Khache community still plays a role in how Tibetans imagine themselves, and thus how they interact with others.

When I have asked Tibetans in Lhasa and elsewhere to look beyond purported incidents of provocation to underlying reasons why Tibetan-Hui relationships seem more strained than Tibetan-Han relationships, they often responded, "It's a clash of religions. Buddhism and Islam aren't compatible." Yet, a history of amicable living together in Lhasa before the administration of *minzu tuanjie* makes this an unsatisfying explanation. Instead, what seems to be at stake in contemporary Tibetan-Hui antagonism across most Tibetan areas of China is the perception that the Hui have taken jobs away from Tibetans, contributing to the latter's economic marginalization since economic reform. Indeed, Gladney has shown that Hui across China have since economic reform prospered at an astounding rate through small private businesses and industry, often far surpassing their Han neighbors. While the Hui, the Han—and indeed, the Tibetans—argue that the Hui predisposition toward trade is an inherent ethnic feature, a historical analysis shows instead that "it was state policy that encouraged and stimulated entrepreneurialism among the Hui, while at the same time restricting it as still antisocialist among the Han" (Gladney 284). Chinese *minzu* discourse specifically identified "entrepreneurialism" as a defining nationality trait of the Hui; this in turn created preferential policies to further support their entrepreneurialism.

Thus, Gladney argues, government policy encouraged ethnic entrepreneurialism among the Hui, while encouraging much more ambivalence toward capitalism and economic prosperity among the Han.

This ambivalence toward entrepreneurialism that Gladney finds in the Han is even more pronounced among Tibetans (Yeh, “Tropes of Indolence”), who have been defined as an even less entrepreneurial group by the state, despite the long history of trade in Lhasa. Most Tibetans in Lhasa who are wealthy today are so because of their relationship vis-à-vis the state, not their independent business ventures. State minzu discourse has preslotted Tibetans and Hui into opposing discursive categories, making it conceptually safe to invoke economic antagonism between the two groups, despite the fact that by sheer number it is Han migrants who pose the much greater threat to Tibetan livelihoods.

Finally, one other important factor distinguishes Han-Tibetan from Hui-Tibetan relationships. The identification of the Han with the Chinese state through the conflation of Han and Chinese nationalisms means that overt discontent against Han presence is politically much riskier than public displays of anger at the Hui. The latter is treated as a pesky problem between two minorities, both of whom need to mature and learn the lessons of national unity through the guidance of the big-sibling Han, but is not interpreted as a threat to state security. The former, on the other hand, is immediately translated into an attempt to split the motherland. Thus, public frustration over the presence of the Hui can be a politically relatively benign surrogate toward which the state indirectly funnels Tibetans.

## CONCLUSION

The peaceful coexistence of peoples of different cultures, religions, and ethnic groups has characterized Lhasa from at least the seventeenth century to the present. The “clash of civilizations” is far from inevitable. However, in Lhasa, the terms through which everyday practices of living together have been structured have changed dramatically, and not all can be considered cosmopolitanism.

Before the 1950s, the Barkor and Hebalin Muslim were outside of the Tibetan social hierarchy and governed through a different set of rules and institutions than other residents. Though they practiced their own religions and lived in distinct neighborhoods, they also adopted local dress and language, while also retaining their own languages. The Barkor Muslims were treated as “foreigners,” but because Tibet was not a modern nation-state, this had rather different implications than it would now. Calhoun writes that cosmopolitan sensibilities seemed to have thrived, without explicit effort, in market cities, imperial capitals, and court society such as those of Ottoman Istanbul and old regime Paris “partly because in neither were members of different cultures and communities invited to organize government together” (111). In pre-1950s Lhasa, Chinese and Kashmiri Muslims had their autonomy within their communities, but no role in the governance of Lhasa as a whole.

*Minzu tuanjie* promised to rectify this by officially making Tibetans, Han, and Hui equally valued citizens of the PRC as a multinational state—whether or not they wanted to be, as shown by the case of the Hebalin Muslims' failed attempt to leave in 1959. This has created very different grounds for multiethnic living today. The script of *minzu tuanjie*, while ostensibly liberating in its provision that Tibetans, as minorities, have a role in the government, puts Tibetan officials in the unenviable position of always having to prove their loyalty to Chinese nationalism by showing, for example, that they unreservedly welcome Han brothers and sisters to come to Lhasa, for Lhasa belongs to China, and not just to Tibet.

Unlike the ancestors of residents of the Barkor, Hebalin, and Luba neighborhoods, who migrated to Lhasa and settled down for good, the vast majority of today's Han and Hui living in Lhasa are short-term migrants, who stay for several years or a decade, but have no intention of settling permanently. Despite this, the demotion of Lhasa from political center of the Tibetan world to capital only of the TAR, a geopolitically strategic but economically trivial provincial-level unit of the PRC, has meant that today it is Tibetans who learn to speak Chinese, not the other way around; young Tibetans in Lhasa are increasingly unable to read and write Tibetan, or to speak it without code-switching. A number of terms exist to describe this new hybridity among residents of Lhasa, of which the most popular is *ramalug*, "neither goat nor sheep." This hybridity is the subject of black humor, not uncritical celebration; hybridity is not the foundation of subaltern cosmopolitanism such as it exists in Lhasa.

With the deepening of marketization efforts, the availability of commodities and the delivery of a consumptive lifestyle to a privileged stratum of Tibetan citizens in Lhasa has been increasingly used as a justification for Tibet's inclusion in the PRC. Ironically though, before 1950, Lhasa's shops were already overflowing with goods from across the world. Similarly, under *minzu tuanjie*, the peaceful living together of all of Lhasa's different ethnic groups is said to be proof of the rightness of rule. But this too is no great leap forward, as peaceful coexistence was the norm half a century ago. Indeed we can argue, without romanticizing pre-1950s Lhasa, that the city has undergone a process of decosmopolitanization. An ethic of living together, only partially deliberate, was dislodged by the incorporation of Tibet into the PRC, which introduced both *minzu* as a way of governing ethnic life and a large Han presence in Lhasa, the questioning of which is not tolerated.

Ironically, the imperatives of coercive amity can also unintentionally heighten ethnic sensitivities, creating boundaries even as it purports to erase them. Ordinary conflicts that have no ethnic motivation are subject to being defined by fiat as ethnic problems, if both Han and Tibetans are involved. However, Han-Tibetan ethnic violence is not, in fact, bubbling up beneath the surface, submerged only by state violence and ready to erupt at any time. There are cross-ethnic friendships, particularly in the

case of government workplaces, and over the past two decades all Tibetan lives in Lhasa have become increasingly economically intertwined with those of Han migrants. Nevertheless, peaceful interethnic coexistence and interaction in Lhasa today is grounded on a hegemonic discursive practice of *minzu tuanjie*, which is both premised upon and seeks to continually impose an always already existing state of unity. Although there is much evidence of long histories of cultural and material exchange and shared religious traditions between Han and Tibetans, their marshaling to bolster the legitimacy of the state's claims to the contemporary political status quo is not in the spirit of cosmopolitanism. The ethical ideals and practices of living together that define cosmopolitanism need to be disentangled from neoliberal discourses on the one hand, and state-sponsored official nationalism (masquerading as unity) on the other. Whereas a prenationalist cosmopolitanism grounded in both trade and religion characterized Lhasa as a city before 1950, it no longer does today.

At the same time, though, there is a subtler subaltern cosmopolitanism at work. It is grounded in religion through multiple valences, calling upon principles that have long been interpreted as Buddhist, as well as new meanings for Tibetan Buddhism in China forged in the present political moment. Drawing on the principle of compassion, it suggests that all humans should be treated as equal. At the same time, the very fact of drawing



Photo 3.3 “National culture belongs to the world,” Lhasa, People’s Republic of China. Photo by Emily T. Yeh.

on Tibetan Buddhism, and especially any principled association with the Dalai Lama and his public statements about compassion, becomes itself an act of resistance. This form of subaltern cosmopolitanism is opposed to official nationalism but not to postcolonial nationalisms. Its existence in Lhasa today, together with historical evidence of a long earlier period of multiethnic and multicultural conviviality, shows the promise of being archivally cosmopolitan, of looking across world history and geography beyond Kant for arguments against both primordial ethnic conflict and theories that cosmopolitanism belongs only to the Western elite.

## EPILOGUE

This chapter was completed before March 2008, when antigovernment protests erupted in more than forty sites across Tibetan areas of the PRC, calling for religious freedom, human rights, and a return of the Dalai Lama, often through the idiom of independence and the Tibetan national flag. The protests were unprecedented both in their geographical scope and in the broad spectrum of participants, including not only monks and nuns, but also nomads and farmers, cadres and university students. They began in commemoration of the March 10, 1959 uprising and as a specific reaction against intensified “patriotic education” campaigns in which monks are required to denounce the Dalai Lama.

After four days of peaceful protests came a day marked by unprecedented Tibetan violence in Lhasa toward Han and Hui property and persons. This turn to violence was unexpected and shocking to most Tibetans; the Dalai Lama threatened to step down as Tibetans’ political leader if it continued. The Chinese media quickly took control of all information, kicking out foreigners and restricting phone and Internet service. Thousands of heavily armed paramilitary troops, including elite combat units, were quickly deployed to Lhasa, where according to currently available accounts, Tibetans have been subject to arrests, intense surveillance, house-to-house searches, and restrictions on movement.

After a deliberate news blackout, the Chinese media repeatedly broadcast selected images of Tibetan violence in Lhasa against Han and Hui, while not reporting dozens of peaceful protests or the violent state responses, including the firing of live ammunition at unarmed demonstrators, in Lhasa and elsewhere. The fact that there was ethnically marked violence in the first place can be seen as a tragic victory for a biopolitical logic of sovereignty, in which the targets of anger were successfully displaced from symbols of state power onto the bodies of the Han and Hui. Even more tragic is the way in which state media has successfully whipped up Han nationalism against Tibetans, calling forth old stereotypes of Tibetans as lazy, barbaric, and ungrateful, and justifying discrimination anew. Against reason and evidence, the state has rejected the Dalai Lama’s calls for negotiations in

the context of meaningful autonomy, and blamed all acts of violence on the Dalai Lama, calling him a jackal in monk's robes.

As of this writing it is too early to know the details of what has happened or the shape of things to come. One thing does, however, seem unfortunately clear from official reactions to date. In demonizing the Dalai Lama and his call for what is effectively Buddhist cosmopolitanism, through a targeted crackdown of bodies marked as Tibetan, and by encouraging its Han citizens to be angry at "ungrateful" Tibetans, the state reinforces the coercive nature of amity, fosters a hardening of ethnic boundaries, and calls into being a terrain more conducive to future interethnic violence.

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## NOTES

1. Bön is the conventional name for the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet. However, many scholars argue that in its contemporary, institutional form, Bön is better thought of as a variant of Buddhism that began to take shape in the tenth century. Other autochthonous beliefs, such as cults of local protector deities associated with particular mountains and lakes, have been absorbed by both Buddhist and later Bön traditions (Kapstein).
2. Until the mid-twentieth century, the city of Lhasa was defined by three nested ritual circumambulation circuits, centered on the Jokhang: the Nangkor, "inner circuit" within the Jokhang; the Barkor; and the Lingkor, the outer path encircling the old city and the Potala Palace.
3. Known as Singpa Khache, they were descendants of prisoners taken during the Dogra wars (Cabezón 15)
4. The *Kazara*, as descendants of mixed Nepali-Tibetan marriage are known, are Nepalese citizens but have the right to live in Lhasa, where some own the most popular tourist hotels today. In 2003, there were 338 official Nepali residents of the TAR (Turin and Schneiderman, n.d.); their children may attend either local Chinese schools or the Nepalese government-sponsored Gorkha Primary School. Kazara today often speak Newari, Nepali, Tibetan, and Chinese.
5. Cabezón (17) was told a very similar story, but with slightly different numbers: "the Fifth Dalai Lama . . . is said to have given official patronage to the fourteen elders and thirty youths . . ."
6. According to another version, when the Khache arrived, they first settled in a place just southwest of the Potala but were moved given concern that they

were using a site inside the Lingkor to bury their dead and butcher livestock. This story, however, is quite different from the ones recorded by Cabezon and by Gaborieau as well as those I was told in Lhasa, all of which emphasize that it was the Kashmiris who had trouble with their cemetery, and the Dalai Lama's proactive role in granting them new space. The area today is site of a mosque and cemetery, as well as a community gathering area.

7. What is often interpreted as Tibetan Buddhist ideals in the West today is necessarily quite different, especially in its universalism and lack of specific ritual elements, from what Tibetans in specific times and places believed and practiced. My argument is thus not about a universal Buddhism but rather about the ways in which locally grounded interpretations of what it means to be a proper Buddhist were mobilized in a possibly cosmopolitan way.
8. <http://zt.tibet.cn/tibetzt/lasa/index.htm>.
9. Here she used the term *rgyanag*, which nowadays refers to the Han-dominated, eastern areas of the PRC.
10. See for example *Lhasa, Tibet: A Bright Pearl on Snowland*. Beijing: China Tourism Press, 2002.
11. The declaration of Lhasa as a Special Economic Zone serves a very different function from similar zones in China's coastal regions. The latter are, according to Ong, neoliberal exceptions to socialist rule in China, and examples of technologies "of a form of market-driven rationality that demarcates spaces . . . in order to capitalize on specific locational advantages of economic flows, activities, and linkages"(103). The zoning of Lhasa, however, was designed not to take advantage of flows, but to encourage them to begin, to overcome what the central government claims is a deficit in development compared to coastal China because "Tibet had very little to start with in terms of social development, and because of its high-altitude oxygen deficiency and other harsh natural conditions" (State Council). Rather than global economic competitiveness driving a move to variegated sovereignty, the declaration of Lhasa as a special economic zone uses neoliberal discourse to consolidate state control.
12. This is not universally true, of course. Some Han migrants I interviewed describe the Tibetans as being "barbaric" and "low quality."
13. According to Naik, "One day the Chinese commanded that all the Tibetan Muslims of Kashmiri origin should stand in line. There they were warned that they would be shot if they were heard repeating any words indicating their desire to leave Lhasa." However, the Indian government intervened, arguing that the Tibetan government had always treated the Kashmiris as foreigners, exempting them from compulsory levies and local courts.
14. According to the 2000 census, 7.7% of those involved in "wholesale and retail trade, catering services" were neither Tibetan nor Han (and thus presumably Hui).
15. TIN News Update, 7 Feb. 1995.
16. Also Sue Costello, personal communication.

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