

Lessons from Tibetans in Taiwan:

— Their history, current situation, and relationship
with Taiwanese nationalism —

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1. Introduction

Ever since the 1959 uprising, the so-called “Tibetan cause” has attracted international attention. Over a hundred thousand Tibetans, including the 14th Dalai Lama (DL), have been exiled to India and other neighboring countries. Even now, these exiled Tibetans live in refugee settlements under the leadership of the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGE). Due to DL’s celebrity status, TGE could have successfully appealed for the Tibetan cause in the international arena. Today, we can say that the Tibetan question is one of the most famous among refugees’ problems and ethnic conflicts(cf. Goldstein 1997).

However, very few people are aware of the presence of Tibetan exiles in Taiwan. Although it is hard to estimate their population⁽¹⁾, our guess is that at present, they are approximately 400 in number⁽²⁾. Since there were no Tibetans in Taiwan (TT) before the Guomintang Party (GMD) came to power on the island, the TT presence has only half a century’s history in Taiwan. Because of

their small population and short history, this presence is characterized by some kind of invisibility. In other words, TT are hidden people. Not only are they hidden from the Tibetans in India and Mainland China, their presence is also unknown to the Taiwanese people. This invisibility, however, implies that this subject should be regarded in all seriousness. Why is this group of Tibetans hidden?

They are hidden not only because of their small number but also due to their political representation and the political and historical significance that they possess. In the Tibetan exile society in India, mentioning TT is considered taboo. From the viewpoint of TGE's propaganda or its perspective of national history, the presence of TT is inconvenient. For the TGE's purpose, the official story is that all the Tibetan exiles want Tibet's independence from "China." Therefore, for TGE, TT is like a black sheep⁽³⁾ or a betrayer. Although the taboo is somewhat mitigated following the DL's first visit to Taiwan in 1997, there still exists strong tension between TGE and some TT. In addition, TT are hardly ever mentioned in Mainland China or the People's Republic of China (PRC). Their presence also contradicts the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s views. For CCP, TT and GMD are collaborators. In fact, CCP's offensive propaganda toward DL and TGE was directed toward only the Tibetans in India, Nepal, and the U.S.—the TT were not even considered.

In this situation, only the Taiwanese government or the Republic of China (ROC) can refer to TT as their citizens. Their claim is based on the insistence that ROC is the only legitimate government that can rule over all of China, and the Tibetans are positioned as Chinese citizens only as a minority in China. However, this situation has changed after the democratization movement that occurred in Taiwanese politics after the 1980s. The present ROC, which has experienced democratization as well as indigenization (*bentü hua*), has already renounced the former ideology followed by Greater China, to a substantial extent⁽⁴⁾. Therefore, the government of Taiwan currently regards TT as a negative inheritance that

reminds the Taiwanese people of GMD's Greater China ideology. In short, no sect, for example, TGE, CCP, and ROC, wants to refer to the TT presence. Herein lies the basic premise of the problem. This paper aims to demonstrate that the TT's invisibility can be viewed as a function of international politics. If readers see that the history and current situation of TT is closely related to the history and politics of TGE, PRC, and ROC, in particular, then they will know that the TT community is not an isolated entity in the contemporary world.

2. Classifying TT

The TT lacks some important features characteristic to the other Tibetan exile groups such as the Tibetans in India. These features are as follows: (1) TT do not live together in a community; (2) they lack ethnic networks such as ethnic media or cooperative groups; (3) many second- or third-generation TT are unable to speak Tibetan. In this way, they have lost some features that are important for maintaining ethnicity. This loss is in keen contrast to the situation of Tibetan exiles in India. Tibetan refugees in India are famous for being "successful refugees"⁽⁵⁾, as they are called. Not only have they been able to successfully resettle in a foreign land but they have also achieved economical development to such an extent that Tibetans are more prosperous than native Indian people. It is often said that their prosperity heavily depends on successfully maintaining the centripetal force of TGE. TGE and DL have succeeded in gaining support from many Tibetan refugees in the forty years following the 1959 uprising. This phenomenon can also be considered as the success of the Tibetan resettlement project, which aimed at establishing settlements wherein almost all the inhabitants would be Tibetan. The achievement of this project involved ensuring that the original Tibetan language, tradition, and identity would be maintained in a foreign place (DeVoe 1981). However, it appears that the TT, even those who were deprived of all the above conditions above, did not entirely lose their Tibetan ethnic identity, in a sense. In addition, the TT did not consider themselves as a minority people in Taiwan. Although we can refer to the

members of this group as TT, they actually have nothing in common, such as community, network, and language. Therefore, TT are not a homogeneous people, and it is necessary to classify them. I have done this by creating a typology as follows.

- (1) The First Group: Those Tibetans who came to Taiwan with GMD in 1949 or thereabouts
- (2) The Second Group: Those Tibetans who came to Taiwan via India or some other place of exile, immediately after the 1959 Tibetan uprising
- (3) The Third Group: Those who once belonged to the Taipei Tibetan Children's Home
- (4) The Fourth Group: Those Tibetans who came to Taiwan through the ROC's vocational training project
- (5) The Fifth Group: Those Tibetans who have recently come to Taiwan on their own for study or business
- (6) The Sixth Group: Tibetan Monks who come to Taiwan for religious activities

This typology reflects the time of each group's arrival in Taiwan. In the following two sections, the history of TT will be analyzed according to this typology. In sections 3 and 4, their history will be analyzed with special reference to their position in Taiwan. The TT comprising the first to third groups have been referred to as "TT in the era of nationalist ideology"—this name reflects the GMD ideology and insistence that it can be the only legitimate ruler of Mainland China, which of course includes Taiwan and Tibet. The TT in the fourth to sixth groups will be referred to as "TT in the era of democratization." This name reflects the political movements and related phenomena that have occurred in Taiwan since the 1980s. During this period, the former Nationalist ideology had faded away and a new Taiwanese identity had become the main focus of Taiwanese politics. Such a sweeping change certainly affected the situation of TT.

3. TT in the Era of Nationalist Ideology

3-1. The First Group

This group includes the Tibetans who came to Taiwan with GMD in 1949 as well as their descendants living in Taiwan at now. The core members of this group had been collaborators with GMD during the party's presence in the mainland; this was before CCP took control over all of Mainland China. These TT worked for the Tibetan section of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Committee (MTAC, *mengzang weiyuanhui*). MTAC was founded in 1929 with the purpose of restoring the relationship between the Mongolian and Tibetan upper classes and strengthening the center's control over the peripheral areas. However, this committee did not have much influence over Mongolia and Tibet during the 1930s and 1940s because of the civil war in China and the war against Japan. Along with GMD, the MTAC base was also shifted to Taiwan in 1949, after which almost all the GMD's policies for Tibet and the Tibetan people were planned by the committee's Tibetan section.

The first group's main exponents were Yeshe Lhadrung and Lobsang Yeshe. Yeshe Lhadrung is better known by her Chinese name, Wu Shanglan. Wu is, perhaps, the most notorious TT in the Tibetan exile society in India for her numerous activities pertaining to the spread of GMD propaganda. Wu and Lobsang were formerly the elected representatives of the National Assembly of GMD when the committee had a presence in the mainland. They are originally from Kham, which is often understood to be Eastern Tibet. Because of Kham's history and geographical proximity to China, the Chinese influence was stronger there than in Central Tibet. Most of the TT originate from the Kham area (Wu 2000).

The first group of TT included the family members or relatives of the MTAC officials, who were also from Kham. Besides some dogmatic propaganda work,

this group was not very active, because GMD and MTAC had already lost their power over Tibet in the 1950s. At the onset, this group comprised 100 people. However, in recent times, almost all of their descendants have lost contact with MTAC. Many of them have been given Chinese names and have rapidly assimilated into the Taiwanese society. Therefore, it is hard to trace their current whereabouts. Only a few of them are still active as MTAC's secret agents, who work for the Tibetans in India in conjunction with some members of the second group, mentioned in the next section. Although these people are really old now, 20 of them still work for the committee. For instance, a secret agent called Gompo (pseudonym) still plies between Calcutta and Taipei. In any case, this group has lost its importance in the present-day situation⁽⁶⁾.

3-2. The Second Group

This group consists of the Tibetans who came to Taiwan in connection with the 1959 uprising in Tibet; they include members of the anti-Chinese guerrilla force, higher officials of the TGE, and so on. In this context, it is necessary for us to consider Taiwan's position in relation to the uprising. The 1959 uprising in Tibet is regarded as the most important incident in the modern history of Tibet. This incident compelled DL and nearly a hundred thousand Tibetans to escape to India and other neighboring countries. In fact, this uprising marked the beginning of the present-day Tibet question (or the "Tibetan cause," according to the TGE). Taiwan was so far from Tibet that no one chose to seek refuge there. However, the uprising compelled GMD to resume its intervention in Tibet after a gap of one decade. In the 1950s, Tibetans lived only in that part of Tibet that was ruled by the CCP. Therefore, GMD was unable to affect this area. After the uprising, however, DL and many Tibetan refugees fled to India, and MTAC was finally able to contact them. In addition, it was at this time that Chiang Kai-shek (*Jiang Jieshi*) presented his "Letter to Tibetan friends(*gao xizang tongbao shu*)," which was an important proclamation. The letter claimed that the nature of the uprising was not "anti-Chinese" but "anti-communist"; therefore, DL and the

Tibetan exile groups were not GMD's enemies but comrades⁽⁷⁾. This initiative by Chiang confirmed GMD's basic position regarding their Tibetan policy. After this claim was made, MTAC's interventions were mainly aimed at the Tibetan exile society, not mainland Tibet.

The first operation implemented by GMD was to support the anti-Chinese Tibetan guerrillas. In September 1959, Gyama Sampel, a self-styled vice-general of the Tibetan anti-Chinese guerrilla group "Four Rivers, Six Ranges" (FRSR, *Chuzhi Gangdrug*) came to Taiwan to request help from GMD. GMD not only conferred on Gyama the rank of a Major General but also established a branch office of FRSR in Tianmu, Taipei. It is obvious from this that GMD wanted to use Gyama for influencing FRSR. However, as Wu points out, Gyama did not hold any post in FRSR (Wu 2000, p.22). At this moment, it is difficult to judge the success of this attempt by GMD to use Gyama in order to influence FRSR. However, FRSR is a special group among the Tibetan exile society. The guerrilla group was founded by Andrugtsang Gompo Tashi, a famous Kham-pa (person from Kham or East Tibet) merchant; most of the group's members were Kham-pa (Andrugtsang 1971). When it joined the TGE after the failure of its guerrilla activities in China, this group evolved into a party-like group. While maintaining distance from TGE, this group gained a somewhat independent position in Tibetan exile society (McGranahan 2001). In fact, this group is often criticized by TGE for not reflecting the interests of all the exiled Tibetans but only those of the Kham-pa exiles. Moreover, the majority of TT are Kham-pa people, and FRSR's strong relationship with MTAC is widely known. However, we cannot say whether Gyama is responsible for this connection.

GMD's second action during this era was also related to the Tibetan guerrilla activity. Between 1950 and the 1959 uprising, many revolts had already occurred in the Kham area. Today, it is widely known that the CIA, which adopted an anti-communist policy, had secretly helped the guerrilla forces by recruiting and training small numbers of guerrillas as parachute troops (Jamyang Norbu 1994;

Knaus 1999). However, few have mentioned the fact that GMD also planned similar operations. Thirty-two Tibetan guerrillas were recruited, brought to Taiwan, and trained as parachute troops. Although GMD wanted to use them in anti-communist operations, their plans miscarried, and the troops were left with no choice but to remain in Taiwan for a long period of time (Lin 1999). Subsequently, most of them left Taiwan; some went to India in search of their relatives, while others returned to China after the restriction on visiting Mainland China was removed. At present, only a dozen of these troops continue to live in Taiwan. As mentioned above, they worked as secret agents (Wu 2000) and are now retired. In fact, I met some of their grandsons in Taipei⁽⁸⁾. Although they have Tibetan names, the third generation members of this group do not speak any Tibetan. Some of them have even lost contact with MTAC and have no ethnic network.

In the 1960s and 1970s, two famous Tibetan political figures—Surkhang Wangchen Gelek and Yuthok Tashi Dhundup—came to Taiwan. They were both great aristocrats and ministers in the former Dalai Lama's Tibetan government. Undoubtedly, even after exile, they were important officials in TGE. In particular, Surkhang was well known as an anti-Chinese champion and had played an important role in the 1959 uprising. Therefore, Surkhang's surrender was a mysterious and scandalous situation for both TGE and the supporters of the Tibetan cause. In addition, the news of his surrender shocked the Tibetan exile society. Surkhang was also famous for his knowledge of Tibetan history. He was one of the most educated and modern persons in Tibet's old society, and he had continued with his study of Tibetan history after being exiled. It is well known that some Tibetan studies, such as Melvyn Goldstein's historical studies on modern Tibet, have been accomplished with Surkhang's help. However, in his later years, all that we know about Surkhang is that he went to Taiwan and worked with GMD.

According to MTAC documents, in May 1964, Surkhang dispatched a letter

to GMD from the U.K., requesting information regarding the possibility of migrating to Taiwan. Two years later, in October 1966, he visited Taiwan with his family—they were living in the US at the time. Following this, he returned to the University of Washington and continued with his research on Tibetan history for a while. In 1971, however, he put an end to his research and completely migrated to Taiwan. Yuthok, another importance member of the former Tibetan Government, also visited Taiwan in October 1967, as if following Surkhang's first visit.

Today, persons such as Surkhang and Yuthok are generally perceived as strong supporters of Tibetan independence. Hence, the reasons behind their surrender to ROC, another “China,” seem incomprehensible. However, we can infer that one reason for this could be the activities of Gyalo Dhundup, the elder brother of the 14th DL. In the former Tibetan Government that ruled Central Tibet before 1959 (or from the legal perspective, 1951), there already existed some discord between Gyalo and other ministers such as Surkhang. At that time, Gyalo, who speaks fluent Chinese and has a Chinese wife, insisted that the only way for Tibet to survive was to cooperate with the Chinese. In contrast, Surkhang and his group wanted to ask the U.N. for help in an effort to achieve Tibet's independence from China. After he fled to India, Gyalo sought help from GMD in Taiwan in order to reclaim Tibet from CCP for his people. However, after realizing that GMD's powers were limited, Gyalo changed his policy and made attempts to seek help from the U.S. (Knaus 1999). Therefore, Gyalo was not pro-Chinese in any sense, after the uprising. However, the discord in TGE continued. In the early years of TGE, Gyalo's power increased, and this meant that Surkhang's influence decreased. According to Changa Tsering, the incumbent committeeman of MTAC, this was most likely to be the main reason behind Surkhang's surrender to GMD. Yuthok's speech on October 29, 1967, which took place immediately after his arrival in Taiwan, verifies Changa's belief regarding this matter⁽⁹⁾. Although the main purpose of his speech was to request assistance for the anti-communist movement, its contents included an extensive criticism of

Gyalo. Yuthok criticized many of Gyalo's activities, for example, (1) Gyalo dominates DL and controls TGE through his brother; (2) Gyalo embezzles TGE's budget and invests it into his own business; (3) Gyalo embezzles the donations intended for the Tibetan guerrilla force; (4) Gyalo controls TGE by tactics involving bribery and boycott against its officials. This talk reveals not only Gyalo's growing influence in TGE but also the discord between him and officials such as Yuthok (MTAC 2001a, pp.229–230).

Surkhang and Yuthok were welcomed by GMD as tools to promote its propaganda. In 1969, GMD started a "Tibet *Kalon* Office" in Taipei, and Surkhang and Yuthok worked to establish it. *Kalon* means minister in Tibetan, and Surkhang and Yuthok were both famous *Kalon* in the former Tibetan government. This office was responsible for spreading propaganda among the Tibetan exiled society, more specifically, persuading higher members of TGE to cooperate with GMD in its anti-communist activities. Surkhang embarked upon a trip to visit the Tibetan exile communities in India and Europe with the intention of persuading TGE (MTAC 1974). Today, at the Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Center in Taipei, we can still see copies of the photos that Surkhang brought to indicate Taiwan's development at that time. However, he was unable to attain his goal. Surkhang passed away in Taipei in January 1977, and the Tibet *Kalon* Office closed down in January 1978.

In the Tibetan exile society, Surkhang and Yuthok's behavior is regarded as a betrayal. Few people dare to discuss Surkhang's later life. The logic behind this silence is simple. According to TGE's point of view—which states that all the Tibetans want to seek independence from China—there is no room for a person who champions anti-communism and simultaneously collaborates with China, which means ROC in this context. Such a person is seen as a betrayer. Further, as long as Surkhang was a hero famous for his anti-communist stance, he was also a problematic person for CCP. The mystery and silence surrounding Surkhang's later life reveals that he is not a figure who can be simply categorized

as pro-Tibet or pro-Chinese in the context of the Tibetan cause. Surkhang has given us a hint that it is necessary to destabilize the simple binary oppositional scheme of the Tibetan cause, that is, “Tibet vs. China.”

The second group of TT includes those who came to Taiwan after the 1959 uprising. There were strong political reasons behind their arrival. Although their numbers were small, their presence compelled GMD to start intervening in the Tibetan exile society, and it created a credibility gap between TGE and MTAC, which reveals the importance of this group. However the GMD’s policy of intervening in TGE failed and met with few results. After Surkhang’s death, MTAC has changed its policy toward Tibet. Let us consider the third group of TT in the following section.

3-3. The Third Group

The third group refers to the children of the Taipei Tibetan Children’s Home (TTCH, *xizang erdongzhi jia*), which was established by GMD in 1980. Tibetan children who were collected from the refugee camps in India lived together in TTCH.

TTCH has a previous history. In the 1970s, GMD initiated the project of educating the Tibetan younger generation from refugee communities in order to create ethnic cadres in Taiwan. This project was begun in 1971. That year, two girls from a settlement in Nepal came to Taiwan and studied in the National Overseas Chinese Middle School. Following this, over a dozen or more Tibetan youths came and studied in Taiwan. However, this project eventually failed; it was discontinued in 1978 because most of the students did not want to remain in Taiwan after finishing school—they returned to the settlements in India or Nepal (Liu 1996, p.164).

However, these students did not want to remain in Taiwan for the simple

reason that they were unable to master Chinese. MATC and GMD realized that it was better for Tibetan children to start learning Chinese at an earlier age. Based on this expectation, MTAC started the TTCH project. The first of these children came to Taiwan in 1978, shortly after Surkhang's death and the abolishment of the Tibet *Kalon* Office.

TTCH began on September 6, 1980⁽¹⁰⁾. In collaboration with the Taipei Center of Children's Welfare, MATC prepared a home in Fulin Street, a suburban area of Taipei. Lobsang Gyatso, a former guerrilla who was trained in Taipei and Tanshui, and his wife lived with the children and took up the responsibility of managing TTCH. TTCH covered three thousand square meters and consisted of four blocks of houses, a temple of Manjushari, a common house that functioned as a dining room as well as classroom, and separate dormitories for boys and girls. All the costs, including the children's expenses, were paid by MTAC. Most of children arrived when they were between four to ten years of age. It would be futile to calculate the children's number and average age because children continuously came to TTCH through the 1980s. Initially, there were 10 or more children, which became 42 in 1985, and progressed to 102 children during the institution's heydays in the late 1980s. These children lived in TTCH with Lobsang Gyatso, his wife, and another Chinese superintendent from MTAC. They attended Tibetan classes two or three times a week and prayer meetings twice a week. The children went to nearby schools such as Xinya Elementary School and Yongchun Middle School after the morning prayer meeting. After school, they had to study Tibetan and complete their homework under the supervision of superintendents.

The situation of TTCH was positively depicted in the Mongolian and Tibetan news and other popular magazines published by MTAC. Reports told of a better standard of living and education for children as compared to that in the refugee settlements in India and Nepal. It was also reported that the students were expected to be the future ethnic cadres after GMD had reunited the mainland.

However, at the very same time, the more confidential 1985 reports of MTAC analyzed this situation from a negative perspective (Du 1985). The problems were as follows: (1) due to the lack of fluency in Chinese, the children's grades in school were extremely poor in all subjects except English; (2) the superintendents were unable to maintain discipline among the children in everyday life, for example, children would avoid taking bath and cleaning their rooms; (3) many children turned delinquent; (4) many children forgot Tibetan; (5) many were bullied at school for their appearance and language, or they bullied Taiwanese students; (6) many of them gave up further education on completing junior high school and found low-wage jobs such as being shop assistants at Karaoke houses (Du 1985; Liu 1996; Wu 2000).

Because of these problems and the project's poor results, there was much criticism regarding this project from the Ministry of Education and even from inside MTAC. MATC stopped bringing in children from the refugee communities in 1990. After a debate that lasted a year, in 1991, the authorities decided to close the TTCH, which housed 79 children at that time. MTAC transferred those who were over 12 years old—46 of them—to the experimental branch of the National Overseas Chinese Middle School (Liu et al. 1992, p.34). These children were shifted to the school dormitory. The children under 12 years of age remained in TTCH for a year. In 1991, MTAC moved the dorm to Sanxia, on the outskirts of Taipei, and transferred these children to schools located in the vicinity, such as Sanxia Mingde Elementary School and Mingde Middle School (MTAC 1998a, p.55). After that, although MTAC hosted many activities such as computer training and fellowships for the children, most of the TTCH children had lost their contact with MTAC, which was a deliberate move⁽¹¹⁾.

Therefore, the TTCH was an arbitrary, enforced project that separated children from their parents without any considerations for the psychological repercussions on the children, who had to live in completely strange and isolated circumstances. These children were tragic beings, at the mercy of politics. Although MATC does not want to discuss the TTCH project today, its meaning

should be considered from the political and historical perspectives.

An important feature of the third group of TT, comprising the children, was that they belonged to the non-elite sections of Tibetan society. They were from refugee settlements, not mainland Tibet, and came to Taiwan without their own political intentions. This reflected the change in MTAC and GMD's policies regarding Tibet. The fact that the Overseas Chinese Relief Association also attended the project shows that GMD considered this group's members as not only champions of anti-communism but also "victims," for example, refugees and therefore people in need of help. Although a powerful GMD ideology covered this change, we can also discern the germ of this important change in GMD's Tibetan policy. This change included the growing recognition of Tibetans as "refugees" rather than a "Chinese minority nationality." In fact, this change continues even now. At present, MTAC acknowledges itself as a humanitarian support group for Tibetans. This process began in this era, and the activities of TTCH can be seen as an icon of this change.

The TTCH's failure also implies the cessation of MTAC's efforts to send Tibetans to take up residence in Taiwan. In contrast to the fact that all the TT from the first to the third groups held ROC citizenships, the TT from the fourth group onward were considered to be visitors, not inhabitants. This change also reflected a transition in Taiwanese politics. The possibility of regaining the mainland appeared less realistic in this era, and the nationalist ideology declined to such an extent that the claim "Tibet is a part of ROC" sounded ironical.

However, there exists yet another problem. The situation did not imply that GMD had renounced its assertion that Tibet was an inseparable part of China. Rather, the transition meant that Taiwan's position as a separate political entity from Mainland China would be regarded in a positive light. Therefore, the activities of MTAC and GMD for Tibet have been merely forgotten, not paid off, in the tide of Taiwan's democratic movement. This indicates the structure of

hidden-ness and amnesia within which TT currently live. MTAC still exists in the era of democratization and indigenization of Taiwan. The committee has to continue with its Tibetan policy for its *raison d'être*. However its actual activities are not the same.

4. TT in the Era of Democratization

4-1. The Fourth Group

This group of TT consists of the people who have been working as factory hands or construction workers in places on the outskirts of Taipei, such as Taoyuan. At first, MTAC invited them from the refugee settlements in order to impart vocational training to them. However, many of them choose to stay on in Taiwan after their training and acquired an illegal overstay status. In addition, dozens of Tibetans work in Taiwan without work permits. This problem of illegal overstay resulted in lawsuits pertaining to human rights issues. Although these problems were solved to some extent in 1991, numerous other problems abound. In this section, we will closely consider these cases.

The vocational training project for Tibetan refugees started in June 1983. Although this project also involved bringing in Tibetans from refugee settlements and training them in Taiwan, it was totally different from the TTCH project mentioned above. In this project, the trainees were expected to return to their settlements after completing training. They were regarded as visitors, not inhabitants of Taiwan. Although the vocational project was aimed at helping Tibetan refugees from a humanistic point of view, officially, ideological propaganda was the other agenda. For example, it was intended to cultivate the trainees' "patriotism" and "identity as a member of China, which is united through the Three Principles" (Chen 1984, p.7). In the same year of TTCH's inauguration, 1980, MTAC started the new policy of giving donations to refugee settlements through some Buddhist associations based in Taiwan. An official document records that this plan failed "because of international factors" (Chen 1984, p.12).

Although the document does not specify the international factors that prevented the success of this plan, it can be assumed that one factor could be the TGE's opposition to MTAC and refusal to accept its aid. This was problematic, because it was not easy for MTAC to conduct activities in refugee settlements without TGE's approval. Therefore, it is very likely that MTAC adopted this vocational training plan in order to overcome the above problem. The training items comprised (1) motor mechanics, (2) cooking, (3) hairdressing, (4) learning to operate a sewing machine, (5) computer training, and so on (Liu 1996, pp.189–193).

The project was, without doubt, implemented without TGE's approval. Due to the deep discord between TGE and MTAC as well as the stateless condition of the Tibetan refugees, the recruitments had to be done secretly. In general, Tibetan refugees do not hold a passport and citizenship of the country wherein they live. While crossing the international border, they had used the refugee cards provided to them by the U.N., with the permission of TGE. Therefore, MTAC's secret agencies initially urged the refugees to obtain fake Nepalese passports stamped with false names⁽¹²⁾. After obtaining these passports, the trainees came to Taiwan via Thailand. Since they pretended to embark on a sightseeing or business trip, neither their relatives nor their friends actually knew where they had gone. The visas and tickets were procured by MTAC's secret agencies.

By means of such processes, the first group of vocational trainees, comprising six Tibetans, arrived in Taiwan on June 11, 1983. Following this, two groups would regularly arrive in Taiwan every year. Although each group in the initial years consisted of just about 10 trainees, this number kept increasing. For instance, there were over 20 trainees in the sixteenth group. The period of training extended over half a year for each group.

However, this pace was changed from the seventeenth group onward, which

arrived in 1990. Trainees often complained that half a year was too short a duration for training. In addition, the serious lack of labor force became such a big issue in Taiwan that it was decided that Southeast Asian foreign workers would be allowed to work in Taiwan. Under these circumstances, the government also allowed the Tibetan trainees to work in factories as a form of internship. Therefore, MTAC and the government extended the duration of their stay to a year and a half—which included six months of training and a year of practice. At the same time, groups containing an increasing number of members—up to 40 Tibetans—would enroll for the training program. For MTAC, the expansion of their project did not imply that the trainees would work and live in Taiwan forever. The internship in the factories was merely the means to enable the Tibetans to earn enough money to start a business in whichever place their exile took them.

From then onward, however, many Tibetans began overstaying in Taiwan after completing their training and practice period. Most of them cut off contacts with MTAC and moved to other small factories along with other foreign laborers. At that time, due to the lack of adequate labor force and rapid economic development in Taiwan, it was easy for even illegal foreign laborers to secretly obtain employment. While some of them did not initially intend to overstay, they did so due to the lack of “informed consent” regarding the training period, on one hand, and insufficient understanding of concepts such as “visa” or “overstay,” on the other. In addition, another deciding factor was that MTAC was unable to supervise each and every trainee scattered over the numerous small factories even during the legal practice period. Therefore, intentionally or not, many Tibetan ex-trainees became illegal workers in Taiwan. This issue went on to be called the Tibetan Black Resister Problem (*xizang heihu wenti*) in the late 1990s.

Many TT in this group experienced a credibility gap and dissatisfaction with MTAC. In principle, they had come to ROC as a member of China. However, they were compelled to use false passports while entering Taiwan, were denied the right to gain a permanent residence, and became illegal overstayers. Due to their

illegal status, they neither possessed health insurance nor were they able seek treatment from hospitals when they became sick. The factories also took advantage of their illegal status, and in general, their wages were low.

Around 1998, this Black Resister Problem received attention as a human rights issue, in conjunction with similar problems experienced by other Southeast Asian foreign laborers. This problem was rapidly addressed in September 2001, when the government issued residence visas to 113 overstaying Tibetans. Several factors were responsible for this resolution. At that time, the legislator Chen Xuesheng and Taiwan Society for Human Rights Progress worked hard to solve this problem, and Taiwan's progressing democratization also assisted the cause. Moreover, it is my firm belief that DL's visits to Taiwan were also crucial factors. During his second visit to Taiwan in March 2001, DL demanded a solution to this problem for Chen Shuijian, the newly elected president of Taiwan. In addition, the incident that first attracted attention to this cause was the petition of Tenzin Lhawan and his 18 comrades in December 1998 (MTAC 2001b, p.91). This petition was also related to DL's first visit in 1997. Since a similar petition by Jamyang Yeshe and his comrade in 1995 had been ignored, we can say that DL's visit changed Taiwanese society's attitude toward TT.

Some problems currently persist, even after this partial solution was implemented in 2001. Many illegal overstaying Tibetans still reside in Taiwan, because the wages and standards of living in Taiwan are attractive to Tibetan refugees. Going to Taiwan is still considered a "chance" in the Tibetan exile society. Currently, numerous Tibetans try to enter Taiwan using illegal means⁽¹³⁾. Solving this phenomenon is an important future task.

The distinctive feature of the fourth group of TT is their legal status in Taiwan. In contrast to the groups mentioned before, the members of this group were treated not as a minority nationality and inhabitants of ROC but as foreigners, and therefore, visitors. From the perspective of Chinese ideology,

which claims that Tibetans are inseparable members of the Chinese nation, the fact that Tibetans are denied a permanent residence visa and need to carry a visa presents a serious contradiction. This contradiction creates a credibility gap for MTAC and ROC among the Tibetans. One TT was of the opinion that “the government just needs Tibetan land, not Tibetan people.” However, it would be unrealistic to conceive that the Taiwanese government, which has experienced democratization, still claims to rule over Tibet. In the context of Taiwanese politics, achieving democratization and a relationship with the mainland are more important tasks. “Since the efforts of the Taiwanese people do not suffice for even the Taiwanese cause alone,” “there is no room for the Tibetan cause”⁽¹⁴⁾. Hence, at present, we can say that TT are the “internal others” for the Taiwanese government and people.

The members of the fourth group were the first to be treated as foreigners according to the ROC law. However, in principle and propaganda, they are still called “Tibetan brothers” (*zangbao*) and recognized as members of ROC. This contradiction shows that the fourth group of TT represents a transition in the Tibetan policy of ROC, which represents a transition in ROC itself. The above mentioned vocational training project was discontinued in 1999⁽¹⁵⁾. It included the last wave of Tibetans arriving in Taiwan as per the governmental policy. All subsequent Tibetans who have entered Taiwan are voluntary newcomers.

4-2. The Fifth Group

The fifth group consists of the Tibetans who recently came to Taiwan for studies and business. In 1995, MTAC initiated a project for providing grants to refugee students for studying abroad in Taiwan (MTAC 1998a, p.55).

Although the Tibetan students from refugee settlements in India, Nepal, and Saudi Arabia are not very different from the foreign students who study in Taiwan, their status is foreign from the beginning. Despite the fact that MTAC's help to the students becomes troublesome for TGE, the project was started in 1995, and by then, the Chinese ideology had already become outdated. The

students were tested by MTAC officials at their respective settlements. The records of these tests and the questions that were asked are included in a MTAC report (MTAC 1998b). Not surprisingly, the examination report does not include any sensitive question, for example, statements that would compel the candidate to accept Chinese ideology. Presently, over sixty Tibetans belonging to this group study in Taiwan.

Compared to the other TT groups, this group's members are characterized by the fact that they came to Taiwan voluntarily and stayed as foreigners legally. Their motivations were that they were attracted to Taiwan's higher standard of living and economic development. Some also insisted that they came to study Chinese⁽¹⁶⁾. Many of this group are already accustomed to Taiwan and do not wish to return to their original country. They wish to be employed in Taiwan and reside on the island as long as they can. It should be noted that this behavior does not possess many political implications. In a sense, these TT are somewhat similar to the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia who study and work in Taiwan. Bai (pseudonym), a Tibetan student, told me that "I am stateless whether I am in Taiwan or in India. The entire world, except Tibet, is the same to me." Bai is studying in National Mingchuan University in Taipei and has never been to Tibet. From his discourse, it is evident that the TT's sense of statelessness motivates them to cross international borders with ease⁽¹⁷⁾.

4-3. The Sixth Group

This group consists of Tibetan Buddhist monks. As I mentioned earlier, these monks are visitors to Taiwan and stay Taiwan for only a year or even less. Therefore, it is difficult to refer to them as TT. However, their numbers are large enough to exceed the population of all the other TT groups; hence, we cannot neglect their importance in Taiwan. For example, over 1,500 Tibetan monks—three times the population of all the other TT combined—entered Taiwan in 2002.

The large number of foreign monks indicates that Tibetan Buddhism is a recent trend in Taiwanese society. It is often said that Taiwan contains five hundred thousand believers in Tibetan Buddhism⁽¹⁸⁾. Although this number is apparently exaggerated, the influence of Tibetan Buddhism on Taiwan cannot be ignored. In this context, it is necessary to consider the brief history of Tibetan Buddhism in Taiwan.

The discord between TGE and MTAC mentioned earlier is the biggest obstacle in the way of the missions undertaken by these Tibetan Buddhist monks. Even the Geluk sect—being the sect of DL himself—was unable to enter Taiwan because of the DL's prohibition on all the Tibetans regarding contacting MTAC. The other Tibetan Buddhism sects also dare not enter Taiwan for their missions. Those monks who worked for international missions were from the exile society. The missions were located in the U.S., Europe, and Japan. At that time, Taiwan was not only too far but also too problematic for the monks, who also doubted the effectiveness of their mission in Taiwan. This situation changed in 1984, when Dong Shufan, the chairman of MTAC at that time, proposed that MTAC should promote Tibetan Buddhist missions in Taiwan (Chen 1993). This proposal spurred the missions of sects such as the Kagyu and Sakya sects. The Kagyu sect has an extensive experience in conducting international missions and has many supporters in the U.S. and Europe. The Sakya sect has a good relationship with ROC through their leader, the Sakya archbishop, who lives in the U.S.. Both sects were relatively autonomous as regards DL.

However, the missions of the Geluk sect, the most powerful and authoritative sect in Tibet, did not prosper. The discord between Geluk and MTAC as well as the GMD's dictatorship had created disturbances in their work from their early years of exile. In addition, their relations had completely collapsed in 1994. In this year, Zhang Junyi, the chairman of MTAC at the time, met with Litang Atar, the leader of FRSR, at Bangalore in South India. At that time, FRSR, formerly the anti-Chinese resistance army, became a party-like organization to represent the

interests of the refugees from Kham, Eastern Tibet. FRSR consisted of twelve thousand members and had a relatively independent position with respect to TGE. They reached an agreement that FRSR would admit the “One China Principle” of GMD. This means that they would accept that Tibet was an inseparable part of China. This statement angered the central TGE authorities and DL, who announced that all Tibetans would immediately cut off contacts with MTAC. Given this situation, it is not surprising that the monks of the Geluk sect dare not enter Taiwan for their missions. In the process of democratization, the importance of MTAC, which apparently represented Chinese ideology, has declined at present. From 1997, when DL first visited Taiwan, Tibetans obtained another way of entering Taiwan that did not require contacting MTAC. However, the missions of the Geluk sect have been unsuccessful thus far. The reasons are not only political, as mentioned above, but also pertain to the nature of the sect. The Geluk sect considers trivial Buddhist dialectics and philosophy as extremely significant. This feature is not compatible with the Taiwanese people’s needs regarding worldly merit.

The most popular Tibetan Buddhist sect is the Kagyu sect. The exiled Kagyu sect has plenty of experience conducting missions in Europe and the U.S., in contrast to the Geluk sect. They stress on practice, not philosophical dialectics, and emphasize the exoteric aspect, especially when they mission abroad. For example, when they mission in Taiwan, their main activity is not reading and explaining Buddhist texts, but to bless the believers (Chen 1993).

In any case, this boom of Tibetan Buddhism brought so many monks to Taiwan that it influenced MTAC’s activities. In recent times, special importance is attached to the religious affairs, such as introducing Tibetan culture and religion to the Taiwanese people. This can be viewed as a shift from political cooperation to cultural foundation. The result of this reformation of MTAC depends on its future activities. However, it is clear that the Tibetan Buddhism has become one of the strongest ties between Taiwan and Tibet in recent times.

Thus far, we have seen the history of TT according to the classification made in this study. In this section, we discussed some features of TT. Since their migration to Taiwan has been continuous, almost all the TT are first generation immigrants, that is, most of the TT are from India or other places of exile. Without GMD's Chinese ideology, most of them would not have been in Taiwan. Therefore, their existence is political and can shed some light on Taiwan's political problems. This will be further discussed in the concluding section.

5. Concluding Remark: Lessons from TT

It is evident that the existence of TT is entirely political. TT would not have entered Taiwan without the nationalist ideology of early GMD. However, such political intentions—whether they involved propaganda or the creation of future ethnic cadres—would have completely failed anyway. At present, it is unrealistic to think that Taiwan will be able to regain the mainland by force. The greater China ideology has given way to the new concept of Taiwanese identity in the process of democratization. Under these circumstances, it seems ironic that MTAC still exists. In a sense, TT comprise a really strange and tragic group. I was often told that “no one regards them as an ethnic minority in Taiwan”⁽¹⁹⁾. However, they were brought to Taiwan as members of a Chinese ethnic minority. Therefore, the transition of ROC from China to Taiwan is partly responsible for the current predicament of the TT.

The problem results from the fact that TT are hidden from the people of Taiwan. It is really important for the Taiwanese people to know the history and current situation of TT. Without this awareness, it is impossible to give them their due in the process of democratization. Currently, the rhetoric of a “multi-society” (*duoyuan shehui*) is evolving in Taiwanese society. Today, TT are treated as members of this multi-society, not only by MTAC's propaganda but also by the popular mass media. However, the concept of a multi-society was initially invented for the citizens of Taiwan, consisting of “four major ethnic groups” (*sida*

zuqun)⁽²⁰⁾. However, this rhetoric now extends to include foreigners such as the foreign laborers from Southeast Asia. However, the situation of TT is totally different from not only such foreigners but also the people of Taiwan. Once more, this rhetoric has merely served to conceal the TT

TT comprise only four hundred people. They lack their own community and ethnic network in Taiwan. In addition, they are currently divided into pro-MTAC and pro-TGE groups after DL's office was founded at Taipei in 1997. In addition, there are some TT who are not in contact with any of these groups⁽²¹⁾. Therefore, "TT" is a category including several incompatible groups. However, the term itself is not meaningless. This is because while the history of TT reveals the contradictory stances of the former GMD government, their current situation shows the imperfections in the process of democratization that is presently occurring in Taiwan. Modern history continues to boast about the "Silent Revolution" or democratization as a great achievement of Taiwan. However, it is necessary to pause and consider this small group of TT, who can teach us about the unfinished nature of this democratization. In this way, we can learn rich and profound implications and lessons from the situation of TT. The author will continue to carefully monitor their situation.

- 1 There are two reasons for this. First, Tibetan Buddhism has become very popular in recent times, and there are so many Tibetan monks in Taiwan at present that we can hardly comprehend their numbers. Although more than a thousand monks arrive per year, almost all of them stay in Taiwan only for a year, or sometimes, even half a year, so it is difficult to estimate their number. Therefore, we can remit the monks from the calculation below. Second, many Tibetans are illegally overstaying in Taiwan at present. Certainly, their exact number cannot be easily known.
- 2 This number is calculated based on the following procedure. First, 258 Tibetans were registered in MTAC's 2002 document. This data remitted 113 overstaying Tibetans, who had recently acquired residence permission in 2001. In addition, there are over 60

Tibetan students and merchants who have recently entered via the normal route. This makes up a total in excess of 430. There is further evidence to confirm this number. Tenzin Phuntsog Atisha, the chief director of DL's Tibetan Religious Foundation, told me that the foundation registered 573 Tibetans during the second visit of DL in 2001 (Interview with Atisha, August 9, 2002). At that time, almost all TT had attended the celebration. This number also includes 300 monks, which can be subtracted from 573. To this number, we should add the 100 or more Tibetans who were unable to attend either because of their business or their political stance, in other words, those Tibetans who were associated with MTAC. For example, Changa Tsering, an incumbent MTAC committee member, did not come to the celebration; he only attended the celebration held for DL's first visit in 1997. This makes a total of 373 or more Tibetans. From these two calculations, we can assume that there are approximately 400 Tibetans in Taiwan.

- 3 This expression was used by Atisha, August 9, 2002.
- 4 Concerning the process of democratization and *bentuhau*, we can refer many works by Taiwanese and Japanese scholars. Still today, *Wakabayashi*(1992) is the one of the best works of this field in any languages. Recently Makeham and Hsiau published a book concerning *bentuhua*(Makeham and Hsiau eds. 2005).
- 5 It is often said that they are successful both culturally and economically. A large amount of foreign support and the popularity of DL enable the refugees to construct larger settlements, and they can also resettle in large numbers. Therefore, they can run their own Tibetan schools and maintain their language. This is implied by the word "culturally." Economically, the successful resettlement, foreign support, and the popularity of Tibetan sweaters has made the refugees relatively rich, at least, more prosperous than the native Indian people (Goldstein 1978; Subba 1990).
- 6 Telephone interview with Gompo (pseudonym), a secret agent of GMD, held on January 14, 2003.
- 7 We can see whole content of the letter in MTAC (2001a, p.197).
- 8 The third generation members of this group are already assimilated into Taiwanese society. The girls I met were unable to speak Tibetan, in spite of their Tibetan names and distinctive beautiful brown complexion. MTAC helped them to study Tibetan, but due to the lack of motivation, this plan was not successful. Interview with Jamyang, an MTAC official, November 16, 2002.
- 9 This statement by Changa is cited from Wu (2000).

- 10 The documents reveal some confusion regarding the date. Liu (1996, p.164) informs us that it was 1978, Du (1985, p.1) refers to it as 1979. In fact, the first children came to Taiwan in 1978; however, both Liu and Du have confused this with the inauguration of TTCH in 1980.
- 11 However, the sentiments of the children are so complicated that it would be difficult to say that they hate the GMD. Tashi (pseudonym), a TTCH child, told me that “the government (i.e., the GMD government) was really kind to us; they gave me money, food, citizenship, and everything…” Interview with Tashi, June 14, 2004.
- 12 Chen Youxin, an ex-director of MTAC’s Tibetan department who also worked as a coordinator and translator in this project, had informed Wu that MTAC was unaware that the Tibetans used false passports (Wu 2000, p.37). However, according to the confidential report written by Chen himself in 1984, it is clear that both Chen and MTAC knew about the passport problem at that time (Chen 1984, p.16).
- 13 Interview with Atisha, August 9, 2002.
- 14 Interview with Atisha, August 9, 2002.
- 15 Interview with Karma Sonam Gelek, an MTAC official, dated September 17, 2002.
- 16 Many TT told me like this. For example, Lhundrup, an MTAC official also told me like this. It is very likely that why TT like this statement is that this reason is convenient and appropriate for those who do not want to talk about political matters. Interview with Lhundrup, October 24, 2005.
- 17 Interview with Bai, September 21, 2002.
- 18 Wu (2000, passim). Zhang Junyi, an ex-chairman of MTAC, also told me the number. This number, apparently an exaggerated one, has become a cliché in Taiwan now. Interview with Zhang Junyi, May 30, 2002.
- 19 Interview with Lin Xiusa, a professor at National Zhengzhi University and a colleague of Zhang Junyi, on May 30, 2002.
- 20 The four categories are: Mainlanders, Hoklo (Minnan), Hakka, and Taiwanese aborigines.
- 21 For example, third generation members of the first and second groups. They cannot speak Tibetan and have weak ethnic identities.

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