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Empire Out of Bounds

Tibet in the Era of Decolonization

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Tibetan discourses on empire have always had an edge to them. From nationalist alternatives to aristocratic Anglophilia in the 1940s to impassioned charges of Chinese colonialism in the 1990s, the twentieth-century Tibetan imperial experience is best described as slightly off center. Never colonized by a European power, Tibet instead had imperial relations with both Great Britain and Qing China prior to 1950 and with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States of America following 1950. Each of these imperial polities sought—and in the latter two cases, continue to seek—to put their imprint on Tibet through an educating of sensibilities, a cultivating of political affiliation, a delineating of favorable borders, and/or a disciplining of the population.¹ Their relationships with Tibet were unique yet simultaneously recognizable as imperial in a broad sense. Tibetan imperial stories, however, are not composed of familiar categories of empire. Instead, they depart from colonialism, capitalism, and European moorings, and thus from the primary foci of colonial studies and postcolonial theory.² In this essay, I suggest that exploring empire through the lived realities of people in polities and relationships not always considered imperial offers unexpected but invaluable insights for theorizing

empire. Specifically, I focus on the period of and after decolonization, roughly the 1940s to the present, and on Tibetan imperial experiences that may be best thought of as “out of bounds,” a category not as marginal to empire as it might appear at first glance.

Thinking empires out of bounds provides a means for addressing extraperipheral spaces and the roles they play in imperial imaginations. No empire ends at its geographic boundaries. Indeed, imperial boundaries may mark sites of transgression or centrality as much as they denote limits for action and analysis. Yet if empire is a contradictory and complex project within its boundaries, then what sort of project is it beyond its boundaries? Boundaries, of course, are not only geographic.³ They are conceptual and cultural, academic and analytical. They order social worlds and cultural representations as much as they do trade relations and political statuses.⁴ These orderings and claims to fixity operate in part through ambiguity: boundaries are often ambiguous and arbitrary despite claims to the contrary. The “spatial malleability” of boundaries is also constitutive of imperial formations in underappreciated ways.⁵ Indeed, as Carl Schmitt argues, “every true empire around the world has claimed such a sphere of spatial sovereignty beyond its borders.”⁶ Boundaries are deployed as strategy in service to empire, establishing modes and spatial representations in which empires are visible or not, legible or not, responsible or not. In the case of Tibet alone we see this in the “forward” policy of the British empire, the anti-imperialism of the Chinese socialist state, and the long-standing haziness surrounding US “empires.”

Yet if Tibet’s imperial turn has been particularly multifaceted over the last century, the “imperial turn” in scholarship has not made a substantial impact in Tibetan studies.⁷ Our ability to think critically about empire as a Tibetan reality or about Tibetan experiences as distinctly imperial remains underdeveloped. Peter Hansen contends that the absence of a subaltern studies—that is, the absence of a critical, theoretical, and subaltern engagement with empire and nation—for Tibet is due to the general persistence of “Tibetan exceptionalism” as both a politics of knowledge and a politics of the present.⁸ Especially enduring is the vision of Tibet as an isolated Shangri-la, or paradise on earth, remote and forbidding yet enticing and seductive.⁹ The idea of Shangri-la simultaneously positions Tibet as offering and needing sal-

vation, as offering spiritual advancement alongside its own socioeconomic disadvantages. This hegemonic vision combines with newly polemical and rigid histories of Tibet under Chinese rule to discourage complexity, contradiction, and critique.¹⁰ For Tibet's displaced government in exile as much as for the PRC government, questions of Chinese empire in the present pose new and often unwanted attention on issues of sovereignty and subjectivity. In this chapter, I use the specific case of Tibet to question our analytics of empire in the present.

In the era of decolonization, empire is a story of imperialism denied and disguised. If decolonization discouraged colonialism as a specific form of imperialism, it ironically opened the world to other forms of similar domination.¹¹ Evolutionary languages of development and progress transformed former colonies into developing countries dependent on external powers in familiar but new arrangements; multilateral institutions and corporations joined powerful nation-states to replace past empires in name if not in content.¹² However, not all decolonized forms of political and economic domination were or are imperial.¹³ Frederick Cooper argues that "the contemporary use of the word 'empire' as a metaphor for unbounded power sits uneasily with scholarship on actual historical empires."¹⁴ In this essay, I understand empire in general as an expansionist polity oriented toward or rooted in a combination of the following: cultural influence, economic gain, hierarchical relations, political domination, and/or territorial acquisition. *Imperialism* connotes the direct or indirect external influence, control, or domination by one polity and people over another; *colonialism* is the system of direct rule and domination by one polity and people over another in the latter's home territory.¹⁵ With this in mind, what is imperial about contemporary empires?

Postcolonial empires do not possess a one-to-one correspondence to earlier forms of empire. Nor, however, as the essays in this volume attest, do earlier empires follow a singular model. In advocating for "imperial formations" as an analytic of empire, rather than as a descriptive synonym for it, we directly reference the in-process state of being of all empires.¹⁶ This instability does not mean that there is not also consistency within and across empires. In the twentieth century at least, as Partha Chatterjee has argued, an inseparability from the nation-state and a "rule of difference" (that is, hierarchical relations and

inequitable treatment across socially constructed categories such as race) are consistent imperial features.¹⁷ In practice, difference becomes a civilizing imperative, that is, either a “pedagogy of violence or a pedagogy of culture.”¹⁸ Territorial or nonterritorial, by direct rule or indirect control, contemporary empires are in service to such civilizing missions and the nation-state.¹⁹ The rules under which the nation-state is hitched to and compels empire, however, have changed. Disavowal of imperial status is now *de rigueur*, such that imperial practice and policy are embedded in national languages of defense, development, and global responsibility. These changes are themselves historical, linked as much to the efficacy of any given imperial strategy as to new political categories and moments. Contemporary imperial formations respond anew to issues of sovereignty, citizenship, and human rights, and to periods and programs of the Cold War, late capitalism, postsocialism, neoliberalism, and so on. Opening our analytical frameworks to imperial formations outside Europe and in the time of decolonization is not to forfeit historical particularisms but to acknowledge that empire can no longer be a static story solely about Europe.²⁰

In the present, we have not just empires by other names but also colonialisms by other names. As the case of Tibet demonstrates, the political rhetoric and practices that sustained colonialism are still with us today. Yet at the same time that certain peoples and polities have been linked so closely to empire, others have been dissociated from it. What politics and histories, academic tendencies, and imperial strategies support these associations and dissociations? In this essay, I contend that the stories that dissociated peoples and polities have to tell about empire deserve our attention.²¹ The twentieth-century transition to more diffuse and less visible forms of imperialism in the name of decolonization is one of these stories, a story I tell from the perspective of Tibetan subjects rather than from that of architects and agents of empire.

The story of Tibet’s experiences with three different empires—British, Chinese, and American—grounds my analysis in this chapter. Imperial and colonial priorities never solely directed Tibetan politics or popular life, nor defined Tibet as some have argued.²² Nonetheless, there is an important imperial imprint on modern Tibetan history. A

century of off-center imperial relations has produced a strong sense of international ambiguity regarding Tibet's political status prior to and during current Chinese rule. Derived primarily from imperial-designated political statuses such as suzerain or autonomous, this ambiguity shortchanges Tibetan pasts and futures. Thinking empire out of bounds opens new spaces for theorizing such colonial and imperial experiences, for acknowledging the transgressive reach of imperial formations (such as their appearance in unexpected locales), and for assessing how imperial categories continue to impact people's individual and collective lives. I present here a view from the inside out, from the Tibetan side of the equation, one specifically designed to allow a detailed yet broad view of these three disparate empires.

ONE COUNTRY, THREE EMPIRES

The twentieth century was not kind to Tibet. It began with the "great game" among the British, Qing, and Russian empires and ended with the severe Strike Hard campaign in the People's Republic of China. While Tibet was an independent state for centuries, its economic, military, political, and religious relations with neighbors China, India, Mongolia, and Nepal shifted over the years. During the period of this study, Tibet was an independent state until it became a part of China in 1951. Although the People's Republic of China continues to proclaim that its incorporation of Tibet was a "peaceful liberation," the exiled Tibetan government considers it a military occupation and forced colonization. Since 1959, Tibet has existed in dual spheres: as Tibetan "autonomous" units within the People's Republic of China and as a "government in exile" located in India with a refugee community centered in South Asia but increasingly spread around the world.

British efforts to court Tibetan allegiance began in the late eighteenth century but took full force in 1904 when Lord Curzon, viceroy of India, dispatched a mission to Lhasa. The "Younghusband Expedition" (whose time in Tibet is remembered by Tibetans as the Anglo-Tibetan War) successfully fought its way to Lhasa, forced the Dalai Lama into temporary exile in Mongolia, and secured favorable trade and political agreements with the Tibetan government. With the 1911 fall of the Qing Dynasty, British officials of both British India and the British Consular Service in China ensured that their "good offices" were

involved in all negotiations and governmental interactions between the Tibetans and Chinese.²³ Key to British interests at the time was transforming Tibet into a friendly buffer state between India and China. Tibet was an example of the British "forward" policy in which the literal boundaries of empire were bypassed in favor of gaining influence with and power over those on the other side of the border.²⁴ As British India became independent India, and Republican China became the People's Republic of China, change came also to Tibet. However, while the thirteenth Dalai Lama had predicted in 1933 that the communist Chinese would threaten Tibet, no one was quite prepared for the changes that were about to take place.

In 1949, two years after the British quit India, the communist People's Republic of China was formed from the ruins of Chiang Kai-shek's Republican China. One of Chairman Mao Zedong's first publicly stated goals was the "liberation" of Tibet. People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops arrived first in eastern and northeastern Tibet, and on October 19, 1950, the Tibetan governor of Chamdo surrendered to the Chinese. One month later, at the age of sixteen, the fourteenth Dalai Lama was fully vested with spiritual and temporal powers as the head of the Tibetan state. The Tibetan government unsuccessfully appealed to the United Nations for assistance and eventually began negotiations with the Chinese in Beijing. On May 23, 1951, Chinese and Tibetan officials signed the "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," commonly known as the Seventeen-Point Agreement. Tibetan officials, however, had not sent the terms of the agreement to the Dalai Lama or Tibetan cabinet for approval before signing. Although the Tibetan government felt that the agreement was signed under duress,²⁵ it ultimately decided not to renounce it for a number of reasons, including its inability to secure the international support necessary for diplomatic or military defense. The agreement called for the "local government" of Tibet to remain in place.²⁶ However, it was soon clear that the Chinese did not intend for joint governance of Tibet but for power to rest solely in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party. It was not long before ordinary Tibetans began to protest Chinese rule, including by an organized armed rebellion in eastern Tibet. By 1959, the situation had deteriorated to the

point where the Dalai Lama fled Lhasa for India, where he and the Tibetan government in exile remain today. The regeneration of Chinese empire had begun.

Great Britain and China argued over Tibet for decades, yet Tibet's imperial history is a triple one. Thus joining this examination of twentieth-century Tibet is the United States of America, whose imperial shepherding of Tibet—and the globe at large—increased following European decolonization.²⁷ In late 1949, with communist troops massing in eastern Tibet, the Tibetan government asked the United States for support if it were to apply for UN membership. The United States turned Tibet down, as did Great Britain, whose new policy was that Tibet was no longer a British issue but one for the independent government of India. Whereas Indian leaders chose not to intervene on Tibet's behalf with the leaders of the People's Republic of China, the United States did intervene to a limited extent and in a mostly quiet manner. Cold War discourses of the United States as a global but not imperial power kept the United States from full investment in the Tibetan situation, as did events in Korea. On October 7, 1950, US troops crossed the thirty-eighth parallel in South Korea on their way to recapturing Seoul, drawing China into the war on the side of North Korea. On the very same day, forty thousand Chinese troops marched into Tibetan territory directly controlled by the Tibetan government.²⁸ With the subsequent arrival of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in Lhasa, the United States offered assistance to the Tibetan government, but it was not until 1955 that the Tibetans accepted US military aid.

Hesitation in US policy is also attributable to the external ambiguity in the status of Tibet. For the most part, the United States and many other world powers have evaded serious questions of Tibet's political status by treating Tibet as a humanitarian issue rather than an issue of political sovereignty. Humanitarianism enables new imperial moves, both continuing with an imperial "politics of sympathy"²⁹ and adding a new sense of individual agency to the imperial equation. The diplomatic and analytical ability to slip from national sovereignty to individual rights is a Tibetan imperial effect established by the British that continues in the present day (surely but not only in US imperial endeavors). This is not solely Tibet's imperial past but also its imperial present.

OUT OF BOUNDS: EMPIRE AFTER DECOLONIZATION

In the advent of movements for independence and self-determination following World War II, anti-imperialist sentiment spread around the world.³⁰ Once global reality, the concept, practice, and semantics of empire turned quickly and overwhelmingly negative. Decolonization involved an evacuation of global tolerance for empire with or without colonialism. Imperialism and colonialism could no longer be known as such. Decolonization did not mean that empires went away but that they went underground, surfacing in guises ranging from socialist empire in the Soviet Union and China to various forms of neoimperialist aggressive democracy as in the case of the United States. Yet each of these polities fiercely guarded itself against any accusations of empire or imperialism. Strategies for so doing varied widely. In the case of Tibet, the Americans and the British both feared Chinese charges of imperialism should they intervene. As a result, American intervention was solely covert or behind the scenes (for example, at the United Nations), while the British declared that Tibet was now the responsibility of India. China, on the other hand, used imperialism, or more specifically socialist-style "anti-imperialism," as one of its primary justifications for its intervention in Tibet. As a socialist state, China's anti-imperialism was specifically anticapitalist.

Political maneuvering during (and after) the Cold War raises the question of whether there can be empire without capitalism. If earlier Chinese dynasties are unproblematically labeled "imperial," what would it mean to analyze the People's Republic of China as an empire? Using Tibet as an example, and the concept of "imperial formations" as an analytic term, characteristics of contemporary Chinese imperialism include accumulation, territorial expansion, direct rule, military intervention, and the simultaneous cultivation of inclusive and exclusive categories of national belonging. This list of features is as particular to imperial formations as it might be to China.³¹ In the absence of capitalism, it is not sufficient to label these practices "nationalist" or "expansionist" or even "Chinese" without also seriously considering how they might also be imperial.³² China's socialist economy exists in tandem with—and is increasingly a direct part of—the global capitalist economy.

While Lenin may have been right that the highest form of imperialism is capitalism,³³ we should not interpret this to mean that the *only* form of imperialism is capitalism. Economic exploitation for imperial gain is certainly a key feature of all empires over the last several centuries—it is not solely a feature of capitalism or capitalist empires. Yet the fact that all empires involve economic gain does not cancel out other facets of empire, namely that economic forms of exploitation are not the sole determinant of empire or, more controversially perhaps, that not all empires operate solely within a capitalist political-economic system. Indeed, the historical trajectory of the People's Republic of China directly challenges this interpretation.

From the perspective of Tibet, the PRC can and should be understood as an imperial power. Writing from within the PRC, Chinese intellectual Wang Lixiong argues that Chinese rule in Tibet is a form of imperialism in which “the Tibetan nation’s consciousness of self” is denied: “No matter how much [Chinese rule] has tried to achieve other benefits, it has categorically suppressed Tibetan self-expression. The empire wants to control expressiveness of any kind; any breakthrough invites punishment.”³⁴ State efforts to shape Tibetan identities and histories are just as central to PRC projects in Tibet as they were for European colonial projects elsewhere in Asia.³⁵ Such experiences are basic components of the history of empire in Tibet. The lived experience of foreign rule and the cruel hopes sustained by unequal imperial relationships are felt deeply in everyday life, not just in state and intellectual levels of discourse and action. For the generations of Tibetans who “came of age colonized” inside and outside Tibet³⁶ it matters little whether or not China is a capitalist or communist state. This is not to say that it does not matter to all Tibetans; for those Tibetans with deep commitments to socialism,³⁷ Chinese policy in Tibet is a sad example of the failures of state socialism. The statewide persistence of Han chauvinism and the recent move to a modified capitalist system are but two examples of decades of deviation from the strict Marxist and Leninist teachings upon which the People's Republic of China was created.³⁸

The Cold War provided thick cover for new imperial formations after (and throughout) the process of European decolonization. By positioning themselves against empire, the PRC and the United States

each used the political moment of decolonization as a safe space from which to launch new forms of empire.³⁹ Their anti-imperial discourses—also anticapitalist for the PRC and anticolonial for the United States—served to preclude the inclusion of these two states on a possible roster of contemporary empires. Chinese and American anti-imperialisms were not abstract but were specifically directed at European (capitalist) states. As both political moment and political ideology, the Cold War was effective in thwarting charges of imperialism against China, including international criticism of China's expansion into Tibet. Time and again, in private offices in Washington, DC, and New Delhi and in public sessions of the United Nations, politicians and diplomats refrained from truly acting on charges of imperialism brought before them.⁴⁰ Much as Chinese protests against imperialism laid the ground for the Chinese takeover of Tibet (and for the absence of serious global critique), American critiques of colonialism underwrote America's new empire. As Engseng Ho argues, "US anti-colonialism is not simply a cloak for US empire, but rather a language that informs the very representation of its imperial authority."⁴¹ If the cover of decolonization made this denial of empire possible, invisibility made its practice feasible. The strategic ambiguity of boundaries surrounding imperial projects made even overt imperial practices appear invisible.

US empire, be it in the American West, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, or beyond, was rarely considered in the same imperial realm as European empires of the same period, and this analytic of political difference continued with decolonization.⁴² The postcolonial period was marked by domination without colonization (although incorporated territories or new domestic states were allowed) and with the cultivation of the sort of influence and action that could no longer be either politely or publicly called imperial. The covert military intervention that repeatedly characterized US actions around the globe is a relatively little-known part of Tibetan history as well. US-Tibetan relations began only in 1942, when the United States wanted to transit war supplies to troops in China through Tibet. Relations quickly strengthened in the 1950s as the United States took over the British role as Tibet's closest ally (*vis-à-vis* China), and this position continues to define US-Tibetan relations today. Although American empire is by no means

solely a twentieth-century phenomenon, at present US imperialism involves a combination of military action, economic power, and political influence specifically developed in the vacuum left by European decolonization.⁴³ Even at its most blunt, however, American empire relies on invisibility as its strategy.⁴⁴ The CIA provides the most obvious example. American operations in Tibet were not only run by the CIA and considered top secret at the time, but they remain classified today.

Tibetan imperial experiences are not easily categorized or neatly summarized. I turn now to case studies of each empire involved—the British, the Chinese, and the American. These are not parallel or consecutive stories, nor are they commensurate or even comparative; instead, I see these stories as complementary. While they do present a cumulative narrative about contemporary empire, this is not the only labor I ask of these histories. Instead, I present a different sort of story for each empire with the goal of illuminating the multiple ways—the stark, the subtle, the intimate, the impersonal—that empire is experienced in everyday life. These are histories, therefore, that move from the state to the individual and back again, that are told in distinct tones and distinct times. I start with the story of Rapga Pangdatsang and British archival debates over out-of-place Tibetans in India, move next to a discussion of a communist propaganda text as a pedagogy of imperialism, and conclude with a presentation of Tibetan guerrilla histories that highlight the intimacy and invisibility of US empire and CIA operations.

NOT COLONIZED: TIBET AND BRITISH INDIA

What did it mean to live in somebody else's empire? If we no longer accept a rigid separation of colonizer and colonized,⁴⁵ what space and subject positions do we recognize for noncolonized peoples? Agents of empire did not stop at colonial boundaries in terms of political intervention, cultural concerns, or the disciplining of populations. Outside empire, projects of knowledge and rule were even more incomplete than within colonial territories and yet had enormous implications for other states and peoples. As Thongchai Winichakul has convincingly shown in the case of Thailand, European notions of citizenship, geography, and sovereignty introduced via neighboring British and French polities altered concepts and practices of both nation and state in Thailand.⁴⁶ Elsewhere the incorporation of noncolonized peoples into

empire involves repercussions that persist in the present day. Nepali Gurkha soldiers, for example, still fight today in not just the Indian army but also the British army.⁴⁷ As I will argue here, Tibetans resident in British India presented a series of categorical problems to colonial officials that highlight the troubled importance of the “not-colonized” category for Tibetans and British officials alike.

Like many Tibetan intellectuals in the 1940s, Rapga Pangdastang was drawn to intellectual currents in China and India and spent time in both countries developing progressive political and social ideas intended to be implemented in Tibet.⁴⁸ Earlier efforts by the thirteenth Dalai Lama to modernize Tibet were mostly unsuccessful due to the unrelenting opposition of conservative monastic officials who comprised over half of the Tibetan government.⁴⁹ Envisioning, if not implementing, progressive, modern change was thus in itself radical. Rapga's vision for Tibet included educational and monastic reform, literacy programs, and reform of the conservative political system.⁵⁰ The vehicle for these ideas was the Tibetan Improvement Party, which Rapga headed and operated out of Kalimpong, India. At the time, there were no political parties in Tibet, and opposition to the government was not well tolerated. In India, however, the British allowed for opposition political parties, and Rapga therefore based his party there. The Tibetan Improvement Party, however, was not solely a Tibetan party. As a member of an elite family, albeit a nouveau riche one, Pangda Rapga was a product of the Tibetan patronage system in which both vertical and horizontal social networks provided financial and other necessities to those born to such privilege. These networks were not limited to Tibetans but were part of a broader (and often politically strategic) system incorporating neighboring peoples such as the Bhutanese, the Sikkimese, and the Chinese.

As empires compared strategies between themselves, so too did peoples within the imperial realm. Comparison, competition, and cooperation were strategies against empire, not just of it. Rapga was particularly fond of the writings of Sun Yat-sen and translated his *Three Principles of the People* into Tibetan. He based his political party in part on the Kuomintang and accepted financial support from them. In his view, this affiliation enabled the organization of his party but did not subsume the interests of Tibet under those of China.⁵¹ In 1946, Rapga was living

in Kalimpong, working to recruit members to the party. He worked openly on the Tibetan Improvement Party such that eventually colonial officials learned about it. They decided they could not allow such "hostile" activities against a "friendly government," for if change was to come in Tibet, it would come with British influence rather than from within (or worse, from the influence of another country).⁵² As they set about to disband the party, a serious problem was immediately apparent: Pangda Rapga had not broken any laws of British India.

Upon learning about Rapga's political party, the Tibetan government requested that the government of India extradite him to Tibet. Officials of British India turned down this request because plotting against a friendly government was not a chargeable offense, nor was there an extradition treaty between India and Tibet. The categorical nonstatus of Tibetans in India was an immediate problem for colonial officials. Under British rule, noncitizens were legally categorized as "foreigners," yet Tibetans were not subject to this categorization and thus lived in India as neither citizens nor foreigners. This in-between status was a position of both power and vulnerability, enabling Tibetans to live mostly free from the regulation of the Foreigners Act but also leaving them without the security of any state-awarded rights (or the burden of accompanying obligations).⁵³ Yet in not classifying Tibetans as foreigners, the British were also left without grounds for disciplining Tibetans who transgressed colonial law or sensibilities. This categorical dilemma offers insight into the colonial disciplining of those who were not colonized, those who were not subject to the law because they were categorized as residing outside of it.⁵⁴

The case stalled for a bit until officials discovered that Rapga held a Chinese passport. This immediately provided them with an opening, because as a Chinese citizen, Rapga was liable to Indian laws that did not apply to Tibetans. British and Indian colonial officials debated Rapga's nationality and decided they could legitimately categorize him as Chinese rather than Tibetan. This categorization was a bureaucratic convenience for the colonial state rather than an instance of prepost-modern flexible nationality or citizenship on Rapga's behalf.⁵⁵ His political affinity with Republican China was genuine, as was his affiliation with the Kuomintang through the Office of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs. In the context of the times, however, his possession of

a Chinese passport did not forfeit his Tibetan nationality, heritage, or subject-citizen position. In 1946, the Tibetan government did not have a passport system. For Tibetans who traveled abroad, possession of a Chinese passport might have signaled a travel convenience or a political affinity or perhaps both, but it was not necessarily a cancellation of Tibetan nationality or citizenship. While change was dangerously imminent in Tibet and its borderlands, this was one part of the world in which geopolitical borders and identities remained locally defined (and contested) rather than internationally assigned.

In his dealings with officials of British India, Rapga claimed both identities—Chinese and Tibetan. He consulted with a lawyer on how to avoid deportation, and the following document written by Rapga gives a sense of his relationship to these identities:

I have considered over the matter and I believe that the Government of India has been placing much stress on my departure as I am the holder of an Official Passport and under the employment of the Chinese government. The Consul General might now clarify from Government whether they are prepared to allow me to stay in India if I give up employment under the Chinese Government. My opinion is that as I am a natural Tibetan born and brought up in Tibet, I have not given up the Tibetan nationality, I do not come under the Foreigner's Act. It is the question of my employment under the Chinese government which is causing all this difficulty. I shall consider over the desirability of propriety of giving up the job if that will prevent my departure from India.⁵⁶

His efforts to be recategorized as Tibetan were futile. As a Chinese citizen, Rapga was charged with routine violations of the Foreigners Act of 1940 and the Registration of Foreigners Act of 1939. He was deported on July 3, 1946.⁵⁷ While disciplinary authority rested with colonial officials in that Tibetans could be recast as "foreigners" and deported, such categorical disciplinarity was both fictive and fleeting. In the early 1950s, distraught over the Chinese takeover of Tibet, Rapga Pangdatsang returned to Kalimpong, to an India no longer British, and lived there until his death in 1976. Not all identities authored by the

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colonial state continued in the postcolonial period. Rapga's state enemy status disintegrated with the advent of an independent India, but other aspects of his story and his remembered identity and place in history remain indebted to colonial archives. Of the many ways he is remembered, the colonial version of Rapga as Chinese spy is perhaps the most persistent.

Although not composed of the usual colonized-colonizer dialectic, this tale of empire involves familiar issues of authority, discipline, and imposed subject positions while also raising new ones such as extra colonial spaces within empire and the "noncolonized" category. The residence (and not just temporary presence) of noncolonized individuals such as Tibetans poses new questions for our understandings of British empire. We already know that empire is an ad hoc, uneven, and imprecise project at times, and a smug, self-assured, and flexible one at others;⁵⁸ our understanding of imperial practices and processes, however, is almost exclusively based on colonial relations. British-Tibetan relations allow us to explore the confidences and shortcomings of a colonial empire outside of the colonial domain, in an imperial zone fraught with uncertainties definitive of the imperial imagination. Thinking outside assumed or claimed boundaries is to open for analysis the unacknowledged and understated aspects of empires.

This story is also, however, important for Tibet. At stake is nothing less than the political status of Tibet. For a country never colonized by the British empire, Tibet's history and current political status are heavily impacted by the British.⁵⁹ Thus, although Rapga's personal problems with colonial terminology might have been resolved with the advent of Indian independence, those of Tibet writ large continue. The out-of-bounds nature of British relations with Tibet both created and crystallized a politically ambiguous status for Tibet. With the British out of India, the new People's Republic of China took immediate advantage of this political ambiguity by moving into Tibet and calling it an anti-imperial act of benevolence.

EMPIRE AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM: TIBET AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Chinese rule in Tibet directly challenges claims that colonialism is "over." It is colonialism, however, with a twist: direct foreign rule

accompanied by the claim that the colonized peoples have the same rights as all citizens of the home state. Tibetans are, after all, citizens of the PRC. Yet just as socialism does not preclude capitalism or imperialism, citizenship does not rule out colonization. If modern imperialism and colonialism both operate under the pretenses of civilizational superiority, then Chinese rule in Tibet works in a similar fashion. In the PRC, the story first told about Tibet was one of socialist difference, an evolutionary tale of needing to bring the backward Tibetans forward into a socialist modernity. Folded next into the story was a timelessness, the assertion-turned-truism that Tibet has “always” been a part of China. Neither narrative is cast in colonial or imperial language, yet each labors to justify Chinese rule in Tibet. Different emphases, forms, and strategies mark such justification attempts over the last five decades, with one constant factor being the “civilizing mission” quality of the socialist project in Tibet.⁶⁰

From its inception, Chinese socialism was a didactic project, involving educating the masses on their deficiencies and providing instruction for remedying these faults.⁶¹ In Tibet as elsewhere, the most egregious deficiencies were reserved for the elite (for landowners, intellectuals, chieftains, and religious leaders). As the elite were targeted for criticism, the lower classes were projected as collaborators in the socialist project. Through a combination of disciplinary and discursive projects, agents of the state—mostly Han Chinese but also some Tibetans—sought to reeducate Tibetan peasants and nomads and to reorder Tibetan society. This required disavowals of Tibetan political history, religious practice, and cultural sensibilities. While generally and enthusiastically overt, unapologetic, and paternalistic, Chinese legitimization strategies reflect their respective eras. Initially, a main focus was on introducing Tibetans to socialism. This project had both retrospective and prospective aspects and in general was distinctly communal, class-oriented, and formulaic in language, strategy, and tone. The predominant message was blunt and intended to be clear to all Tibetans: Tibetan society was backward and oppressive, but Chinese-style socialism was modern and liberating. Tibetan identity was not to be entirely eliminated, just aligned with Chinese socialist principles. Propaganda thus reinforced a Tibetan ethnic identity while forging a PRC citizen identity, and denigrated upper-class identities

while celebrating lower-class identities. While propaganda took many forms, texts played an important role in encouraging Tibetan consent to Chinese rule.

Rebirth of the Tibetan People (*Bod mi dmangs gsar skye thob pa*) is a classic example of Chinese justification strategies. It was published by the Beijing Nationalities Publishing House in 1960, a time of crisis. Just the year before, the Dalai Lama had escaped into exile in India, and thus there was a heightened urgency to Chinese efforts to legitimate and celebrate their presence in Tibet. Bilingual in both Chinese and Tibetan, *Rebirth of the Tibetan People* works to legitimate Chinese rule in Tibet to both colonizers and colonized alike. The book is organized into three sections: (1) class-based oppression in traditional Tibetan society, (2) Tibetan rebellion against the Chinese liberation, and (3) the glorious new life of Tibetans under the PRC. In contrast to later propaganda, the book is noticeably restrained on certain topics. The Dalai Lama is not criticized at all but is said to have been kidnapped; the term *zhing 'grin* (peasant or serf) is used rather than *tshe gyog* (slave); in reference to the Tibetan rebellion, the term *thing 'jags bzos* (pacify or subdue) is used instead of *phams* (defeat); and the book includes some positive comments about traditional Tibetan society rather than just negative ones. Other topics covered remain standard fare—for example, China and Tibet have a long history of relations, Tibet is an inalienable part of China, and Tibet has been “reborn” into a Chinese socialist paradise.

Asserting sovereignty is one means of fixing political subjectivities. Creating and re-creating subjectivities involve the reining in of unruly boundaries, populations, and ideas (at the same time that state-authorized ambiguities are maintained).⁶² Pedagogies of violence and of culture may both be at work in educating a people such as the Tibetans to the very new project of Chinese state socialism. If socialism and its prescriptive system were new to Tibet, Chinese imperialism was not.⁶³ Tibet was a part of the Qing imperial sphere, albeit to different degrees under different emperors, and always with its own interpretation of this relationship.⁶⁴ Earlier imperial and expansionist periods—Han Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian (or even that of the Tibetan empire)—certainly left traces that resonate in the PRC but had different histories, practices, and rhetorics. In assessing the imperial nature of Chinese rule in

Tibet, we need to be mindful of this past but also bold enough to assess the present in analytical spheres beyond those of “the Tibet Question” or any sort of Asian, Chinese, or Tibetan exceptionalism.

The opening pages of *Rebirth of the Tibetan People* make blunt links between sovereignty and subjectivity, pedagogy and politics. Two vastly different yet equally iconic images comprise its opening pages, aligning the reader immediately with the state in its various manifestations—socialist, imperial, national, multiethnic. The cover page depicts smiling Tibetan women expressing their gratitude to the Chinese, while inside the book, following the title page, is a portrait of Mao. Whereas the first image is iconic for its generic message of “minority” gratitude,⁶⁵ the second is iconic for its ubiquity throughout the People’s Republic of China, including Tibet.⁶⁶ Images of Mao played a major role in legitimating socialism in Tibet and, along with his spoken words, marked landscapes both literal and figurative throughout Tibet. The lead marcher in choreographed political parades always carried Mao’s portrait high, and Mao’s images hung in all public spaces and in many private ones. Under his watchful eye, Tibetans would be instructed on proper thinking via phrases of his they were made to memorize. Literacy was not required for fluency in Mao Zedong thought, as Mao’s phrases were repeated time and again on loudspeaker systems in villages, as well as in communal education meetings. They were also pasted on walls and literally written into the land with stones. Even if you could not read, you knew their message. While such projects are no longer central to Chinese socialism in Tibet, Mao’s words remain on walls and on hillsides in many Tibetan villages. These icons and their accompanying artifacts may now be familiar, but the fear associated with them does not solely reside in the past. Such fears reveal successful strategies for cultivating consent and the insecurities upon which such projects often rest.

Familiarity and fear, intimacy and intimidation have long been recognized as twin components of the European colonial project.⁶⁷ The impulse to rein in or act upon insecurities surrounding boundaries and sovereignties might indeed be a pan-imperial characteristic. Evident in the British archival debates on Rapga Pangdatsang’s case, such insecurities are perhaps a better representation of imperial reality on the ground than is any sort of monolithic view of empire as a sin-

gularly coherent or consistent project. Anxieties present in imperial projects reveal the sites where empire is perhaps not as secure as some would like to believe.⁶⁸ Chinese anxieties of rule are easily recognizable in mechanical expressions of Tibetan gratitude to the Chinese.

The first thing a Tibetan reading or listening to *Rebirth of the Tibetan People* in the 1960s might have noticed is that it is highly formulaic. Stock messages included criticism of "old" Tibetan society, praise for Chinese socialism, and multiple examples of cooperation between Chinese and Tibetans. These messages were constantly reinforced through repetition and thus were familiar to all Tibetans. They were also, however, understood as a specific sort of truth.⁶⁹ As Chinese rule progressed throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many Tibetans learned to assume that Chinese propaganda was false. It was bluntly evident that there was no space for public dissent and increasingly little space for private dissent. The lack of a civil sphere for discourse and action meant that the Chinese Communist Party enjoyed passive acceptance rather than active support, and that dissent against the party was primarily underground in the form of a guerrilla resistance army and locally based acts of protest.⁷⁰ While some Tibetans subscribed to socialist principles (if not the discursive fictions and disciplinary threats associated with the incorporation of Tibet into the PRC), overall there was a massive cultural disconnect between the socialist project and Tibetan society. Response to this disconnect took multiple forms, the most important of which was rebellion. The discussion—and containment—of the rebellion in *Rebirth of the Tibetan People* reveals particular anxieties of an imperial project in its early stages.

From 1951 to 1959, Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule varied widely throughout the country. In Lhasa in 1954, for example, a People's Party (*mi dmangs tshogs pa*) formed to publicly protest the Chinese. In eastern Tibet in 1956, villagers, nomads, and monks took up arms in response to increasingly harsh Chinese reforms; these eastern Tibetan uprisings turned into an organized but independent movement to "defend country and religion" (*bstan srung dang blangs dmag*, later consolidated as *chu bzhi gangs drug dmag*) that fought against the PLA through 1974 from a base in Nepal.⁷¹ Finally, in March 1959, there was a mass popular revolt in Lhasa during which the Dalai Lama fled to exile in India. Chinese propaganda collapsed all these acts into one category—acts by "high

class separatists.”⁷² Singling out the upper classes was an effort to create new divides among the Tibetan population (or to give new meaning to existing divides). Labeling the resistance as upper class allowed for the fiction that other Tibetans did not participate in or support it.

Graphic images and descriptions in *Rebirth of the Tibetan People* detail peasant suffering under the elite in the “old Tibetan system.” These same elite, it is claimed, continue to disrupt new life under socialism as high-class separatists. Rebellion is treated as a bourgeois aberration, a collaboration with “imperialist and foreign separatists,” and a continuation of the feudal oppression of the Tibetan people. Photos that accompany the text reinforce these messages through heroic images of PLA soldiers arresting “rebel bandits,” working with Tibetans in the fields, and dancing with Tibetans after “pacifying” the rebellion. While Tibetan resistance was to continue in ways that we are still learning about today, its members did not fit the “high-class” profile claimed for them in Chinese propaganda materials. Instead, as a movement drawn from all socioeconomic strata, the resistance contradicted the message of national unity and local gratitude cultivated by *Rebirth of the Tibetan People*. With few exceptions, the happy, smiling Tibetans who animate the pages of such texts have yet to tell their stories outside of state-sponsored media. In exile, however, the “rebel bandits” have begun to tell their stories, tackling head-on Chinese imperial narratives, negotiating the national pretensions of the Tibetan government in exile, and departing in key ways from the projects and preferences of their “imperialist” counterparts, the US government officials involved in supporting the Tibetan resistance.

IMPERIAL DEFAULT: TIBET AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Intervention and invitation, intimacy and invisibility define the Tibetan story of US imperialism. As a story of Cold War intervention, this case fits a classic pattern. Anticommunism and the evangelization of democracy fueled US action on Tibet, while Tibetan reasons for working with the Americans similarly fit a decolonization-era pattern of seeking external assistance for internal political goals. The new Pax Americana grew through a combination of imperial default and involvement in nationalist independence projects.⁷³ Historically and

politically specific, as all empires are, the new American imperial formation looked quite different from its European predecessors, being highly militarized, covert, indirect, and propelled (in Asia at least) by new, period-specific ideas of integration and interdependence.⁷⁴ As we know so well, however, empire is never only a story of the imperialists and their intentions; imperial subjects have their own interpretations, agendas, and perspectives. For Tibetans, US assistance was not a denial of their own agency and autonomy but an acknowledgment of it. This is not (solely) a naïveté regarding international or imperial politics, but a window into the type of imperial experience some Tibetans had with the United States.

A story of masculine intimacy, relationships between CIA agents and Tibetan soldiers are an example of empire on a very human scale: a homosocial history best told through the joys and pains of personal involvement and commitment; a history that is not abstract but lived. For Tibetan veterans, empire is a biographical tale, a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of betrayal, and a perpetual and lingering hope as much as it is a story of geopolitics and governments. The Tibetan men who served in the resistance army were supported not by a faceless "America" but by real people, by men with names, men who became their friends. For the American CIA officers who trained the Tibetans, this appreciation and respect was mutual. Bonds of friendship, commitment, and expectation persist between these two groups of men in ways highly unusual for CIA officers. In a perhaps unexpected appearance of Tibetan exceptionalism, officers' ties to Tibetans were rarely replicated in their work with other groups around the world. The legendary late Tony Poe, for example, who spent much of his career and personal life invested in Laos and with Laotian communities in the United States, repeatedly told me that "the [Tibetans] were the best men I worked with."⁷⁵ As far as Tibetan soldiers were concerned, US involvement in the Tibetan struggle was not an abstract diplomatic endeavor. Although they recognized the anticommunist politics guiding US action, empire in this instance was for them a very personalized, joint, and face-to-face endeavor.

Partnership is how many Tibetan soldiers viewed their relationship with their American "teachers."⁷⁶ The Tibetan resistance army considered CIA support to be an American endorsement of the righteousness

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of the Tibetan cause and, importantly, to be a collaboration between Tibet and the United States. From 1956 through 1969, the CIA covertly supported resistance activities: military excursions against the PLA, a military headquarters in Nepal, intelligence-gathering operations, the parachuting of troops into Tibet from unmarked CIA planes, provisioning of supplies, weapons, and funds, and education campaigns among Tibetans in Tibet.⁷⁷ The CIA also trained Tibetan soldiers in secret locations throughout Asia and the United States. At the US Army's Camp Hale in Leadville, Colorado, CIA officers taught classes in paramilitary operations, bomb building, mapmaking, photography, radio operation techniques, intelligence collecting, and world history and politics.

At the ground level, the Americans and the Tibetans saw each other as providing the assistance needed to accomplish their own goals, be they the securing of rare intelligence on the PRC or the securing of one's country.⁷⁸ Notions of working together on these goals involved acknowledged differential access to information and resources. At higher levels, US interest in Tibet never went as far as the Tibetans wanted, as evidenced in a January 9, 1964, memorandum: "The CIA Tibetan Activity consists of political action, propaganda, and paramilitary activity. The purpose of the program at this stage is to keep the political concept of an autonomous Tibet alive within Tibet and among foreign nations, principally India, and to build a capability for resistance against possible political developments inside Communist China."⁷⁹ The degree to which Tibetan exile political projects have been influenced and shaped by US interests remains underappreciated by both Tibetans and their foreign supporters.⁸⁰ However, despite the limits of high-level US support for Tibet, the intimate cooperation between the men on the ground enabled a very particular and potentially disappointing interpretation—a sense of imperialism as opportunity, as a chance for agency, action, national participation, and independence.⁸¹

The Tibetans in the resistance army were not career soldiers. Farmers, nomads, traders, and monks, they possessed among them a range of skills including literacy. One of their self-initiated projects at Camp Hale (known to the Tibetans as Camp Dumra, from *ldum ra*, or "garden"), was the writing of short books for distribution in Tibet, responses to communist propaganda such as *Rebirth of the Tibetan People*.

Written in colloquial Tibetan with accompanying narrative illustrations, the books beautifully demonstrate the convergence of Tibetan political projects and American imperial guidance. One example is *A Pleasure Garden for Blossoming the Tibetan People's Wisdom to Reestablish an Independent Republic of Tibet* (hereafter *A Pleasure Garden*).⁸² Authored in 1960 "by the people of Camp Dumra," this twenty-six-page book is a combination of handwritten text and line drawings that together compose a primer on Tibetan history and world politics. The book has five text sections—reasons for the rebellion, regaining independence, today's world, global independence struggles, friends of Tibet—and a sixth "history" section composed solely of illustrations. Written in the same year and for the same Tibetan audience as *Rebirth of the Tibetan People*, the soldier-authored *A Pleasure Garden* tells a very different story of Tibet under communist rule.

A Pleasure Garden immediately lays out the reasons for the Tibetan rebellion, contending that the Chinese not only invaded independent Tibet but also intend to destroy the Tibetan people and their culture:

They redistributed monastic estates and cut the revenues so that it made it impossible to have a monastic community. Aiming to take away Tibetan identity completely, they forcefully sent young Tibetans to China to study communism. Older Tibetans, monks, nuns, and lay people, both male and female, are continuously forced to engage in unbearable hard labor.⁸³

After laying out these facts, the book then takes a pedagogical tone, explaining the need for an organized and united rebellion force and an accompanying nonviolent aspect to the struggle. They will succeed, they contend, because world history is on their side. "Except for us Tibetans," the authors instruct, revolution has swept the world such that old governments are transformed into one of two new forms—democracy "based on peace and justice" or communism "based on violence and deception."⁸⁴ They explain that the primary difference between the two systems is that under democracy, language and religion are left unchanged, but "negative aspects of the old system" are changed only with the consent of the people of the country, not through interference from other countries.⁸⁵ Communism, on the

other hand, seeks to turn all peoples into communists and to destroy traditional languages and religion and despite professing to make changes with the consent of the people, "in reality does not give any power to the people."⁸⁶ While thus far *A Pleasure Garden* is a direct response to Chinese propaganda, its next two sections introduce new information about colonial revolution to its Tibetan audience.

Tibetans trafficking in critiques of European empire at this time were mostly intellectuals in exile—Rapga Pangdatsang, Gedun Chopel, and other Tibetans in India, China, and Japan, some of whom left documentary traces, others of whom did not—and their audiences were not necessarily the Tibetan villagers of *Rebirth of the Tibetan People* and *A Pleasure Garden*. Through lectures on world history at Camp Hale/Dumra, Tibetan soldiers developed a new approach for explaining Chinese rule in Tibet to their fellow Tibetans via analogies to specific examples of colonialism:

A country called Algeria was occupied by France one hundred years ago. Algeria was very much like today's Tibet. For example, because they did not have good leadership, the people of the country were not unified, and therefore the country was defeated by the French. After six years of French occupation, an educated Algerian man living in a neighboring country started the Algerian Freedom Movement. He planned for five years how best to unify the people and revolt. Through the dual violent/non-violent method, the country regained its independence. Today, Algeria is a developed and democratic nation.⁸⁷

The story of Ethiopia is told with similar themes: Ethiopia was independent but with poor leadership and without a unified population; Italy was able to defeat the Ethiopians; the revolt was planned in exile by Haile Selassie; an Ethiopian people's guerrilla army formed and was able to defeat the Italians, thereby regaining independence for the country.⁸⁸ The narrative structure of these mini-histories parallels that presented for Tibet, thereby legitimating the Tibetan rebellion against the Chinese. Paired with a discussion of Tibet's "friend countries" around the world, some of which were formerly colonized and all of which are now democracies that "love world peace and free

dom," the Tibetan revolt is effectively globalized as an anticolonial, anticommunist struggle.⁸⁹ This narrative places Tibet squarely within an imperial circuit of knowledge production emanating from the United States over the course of the twentieth century.⁹⁰

In a telling example of US imperial invisibility, the United States is not mentioned in *A Pleasure Garden*. Empire recedes on behalf of a national liberation struggle. While the United States could be included among the "sixty countries" that support Tibet, the specific nature of US assistance was neither acknowledged nor equated with empire. US support for the resistance was a public, but not printable, secret among Tibetans.⁹¹ The absent presence of American influence in *A Pleasure Garden* is attributable to Tibetan soldiers' notions of partnership with their American counterparts and to more general US anticommunist strategies in which overt policies are paired with ongoing covert activities. This intimate intervention is not singular on any side of the equation—the Tibetan veterans were not the Dalai Lama's exile government, nor were the CIA officers simply carrying through dictates they received from Washington, DC, or Langley. Multiple interests and multiple strategies were (and remain) at work to achieve parallel goals: the expansion of US influence and the regaining of Tibet.

As with empires past, this new imperialism is frequently defended as benevolent, as "empire-building for noble ends rather than for such base motives as profit and influence."⁹² This is a story imperialists tell themselves. For the majority of Tibetan refugees, however—and perhaps for Tibetans within Tibet as well—a critique of the shadows underlying benevolence is not the issue: discomfort with American empire building on the back of the Tibetan struggle pales in comparison to the gratitude for the support. Intervention by the United States provided (and continues to provide) external legitimation of the threat that China posed to Tibet. Nonterritorial and noncolonial, US imperial involvement in Tibet is a hybrid of earlier and new US and other forms of empire, neither simply replicating past forms nor abandoning them entirely. It is out of bounds only in the sense that US empire itself seems at times to have no boundaries but also in that the term *empire* is still only uneasily and unevenly applied to the United States. CIA operations in Tibet are thus part of a "larger phenomenon of imperialism in all of its historical complexity [and of] the US role as

the hegemonic power of the capitalist world."⁹³ Simply put, the contemporary United States is not an exception to the category of empire. Sometimes public, sometimes invisible, this is an imperial formation that has more than its fair shares of corners, shadows, and secrets. Tibet is one of them, an example of the painful inequalities of empire and its unflagging persistence in the present.

CONCLUSIONS

We are often told "Colonialism is dead." Let us not be deceived or even soothed by that. I say to you, colonialism is not yet dead. I beg of you, do not think of colonialism only in the classic form which we of Indonesia, and our brothers in different parts of Asia and Africa, knew. Colonialism has also its modern dress, in the form of economic control, intellectual control, actual physical control by a small but alien community within a nation. It is a skilful and determined enemy, and it appears in many guises. It does not give up its loot easily. Wherever, whenever, and however it appears, colonialism is an evil thing, and one which must be eradicated from the earth.

—President Achmed Sukarno, Bandung, 1955⁹⁴

Thinking empire out of bounds casts new light on the sovereignties each empire has claimed beyond its boundaries (to return to Carl Schmitt's observation). These sovereignties, these entitlements of power, are so often couched in other names, hidden from public debate, and never as stable or singular as they are thought to be. If we are to accept Sukarno's challenge to continue the battle against colonialism in the present day, we must open our analyses to empire in the era of decolonization. I suggest that thinking out of bounds, for both classic European empires and the ones that followed them, will open our understandings of empire to microscopic and wide-angle perspectives at the same time.⁹⁵ This approach is microscopic in terms of getting inside the minutiae or even the marginalia of empire, the centrality of people's everyday lives and experiences,⁹⁶ but wide-angled in terms of assessing the unexpected, the not allowed, the renounced on the larger scales of nations, empires, and their respective histories.

In the supposed absence of empire, the importance of Tibetan imperial experience is undeniable. Rapga Pangdatsang and British India, Tibetan peasants under the People's Republic of China, Tibetan soldiers and CIA agents—each of these individual examples reveals the deep impact of empire on Tibetan communities. Together we see how these different imperial formations attempted to shape experience, to shape historic and political subjectivities that have had lasting effects for individual Tibetans as well as for the Tibetan state as it currently exists in exile and as part of the PRC. In terms of this volume, I suggest that our collective efforts to think more broadly about empire must be in dialogue with peoples in a range of relations to empire. Living in someone else's empire was similar to, but not the same as, being colonized. To be an imperial subject was not necessarily to be a colonial one. Key here, however, is unraveling the similarities, not just the differences. What historical lessons do we learn from an analysis of the category of the noncolonized? Or from the condition of lived empire in cases of imperialism denied?

Empire is as cultural and social as it is economic, military, or political. Building on William Appleman Williams's idea of "empire as a way of life,"⁹⁷ Amy Kaplan advocates attention to the cultural zones of empire as a means of gaining insight into empire at home as well as abroad:

To understand the multiple ways in which empire becomes a way of life means to focus on those areas of culture traditionally ignored as long as imperialism was treated as a matter of foreign policy conducted by diplomatic elites or as a matter of economic necessity driven by market forces. Not only about foreign diplomacy or international relations, imperialism is also about consolidating domestic cultures and negotiating intranational relations.⁹⁸

I turn again to Wang Lixiong for a perspective from China that is similar to Kaplan's. Wang states that present-day imperialism operates in disguise and in the realm of culture, albeit with the same notions of civilizational superiority and benevolence of earlier imperial formations:

Imperialism in its contemporary state is neither only about military force and politics, not only regarding the acts of a

handful of colonizers. It is also about culture and involved with the participation of ordinary people in empire.... [In China, with regard to Tibet, cultural imperialism] has taken root in the mind of every member of the ruling nation. Since it has become a collective consciousness, to change it is de facto a difficult task.⁹⁹

Empire folds into the national consciousness. How and why this takes place is often consonant across imperial formations.

As Shangri-la, for example, Tibet has an important spot in the imperial imaginaries of Great Britain, the United States of America, and the People's Republic of China. Utopian, exceptional, mysterious, Shangri-la is now perhaps not so much a religious idea, an unreachable place, or even a state of mind as it is a state-sponsored tourist destination in the PRC: Shangri-la County in Yunnan Province, formerly known as Zhongdian County.¹⁰⁰ Putting Shangri-la on the map was a joint British-American-Chinese endeavor: British writer James Hilton penned the novel *Lost Horizon* in 1933, American director Frank Capra made the film *Lost Horizon* in 1937, and seven decades later the Chinese state made Shangri-la not just a county but a premier domestic and international tourist destination. Tibetans, of course, have been both intimately involved in and absent from each of these projects. Each is imperial in its own way, each involves representations of the Other, and each pushes civilization up against salvation.

If these three imperial formations are all out of bounds in some ways, be it in relation to Tibet, to other empires, or to academic or popular discourses on empire, then I suggest we consider this extraperipheral space as an opening to be further explored. In terms of Tibet alone, an out-of-bounds approach raises new questions for empires we thought we knew well in addition to those we still need to understand. This is, undoubtedly, part of a larger critique of the transformation of particular regional or historical versions of empire and experience into universal forms of knowledge.¹⁰¹ Arguing that "colonial differences" are "the house where border epistemology dwells," Walter D. Mignolo suggests that the hegemonic transformation of such differences into values theoretically downgrades the experiences of some imperial formations and colonized peoples as derivative.¹⁰² In this formulation, we

lose the ability to “create new possibilities for thinking from and about the exterior borders of the system,” about cosmological as well as temporal and structural differences between imperial formations.¹⁰³ In the era of decolonization, empire is not limited to one state model. Thus, while China is more commonly said to have “occupied” Tibet than to have “colonized” it, and while Tibet fell within British imperial realms and still falls within the realm of the new US “empire” without being colonized by either power, the imprints of all three of these states—these imperial formations—resonate in people’s individual and collective everyday lives.

Tibetans’ relationships with British India, the United States, and the PRC are not neatly commensurate with each other. Instead, they point to the difficulty of translating empire across time and state form. They also direct us to the necessity of specifying the differences and analyzing the similarities between such “empires” and the political projects that accompany them. Analyzing empire through the twentieth century requires attention to imperial spheres in which colonialism is but one model for imperial powers. In the wake of decolonization, therefore, critical approaches to empire must involve a reconfiguration of places and players, of our conceptual and geographic maps, and of how we understand a “decolonial” but still profoundly imperial world.

Notes

My thanks to the Tibetan men and women who not only made these histories come alive but also taught me that they were imperial and ongoing. For helping me put them to paper and theorize them beyond Tibet, my gratitude to Tenzin Bhagen, David Bond, Carla Jones, Charlene Makley, Mithi Mukherjee, seminar participants in Santa Fe, two anonymous press reviewers, and, for over a decade of encouragement and support with this project and much more, Ann Stoler.

1. For histories of these periods, see Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*; McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*; Norbu, *China’s Tibet Policy*; Shakabpa, *Tibet*; Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*; Sperling, “Awe and Submission”; and Tuttle, *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*.

2. For work in colonial studies, see Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*; Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture*; Cooper, *Colonialism*

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in Question; and Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*. On postcolonial studies, see McClintock, "Angel of Progress"; Said, *Orientalism*; Shohat, "Notes on the Postcolonial"; and Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.

3. As Inderpal Grewal argues in the case of the contemporary United States, "as a superpower, America produced subjects outside its territorial boundaries through its ability to disseminate neoliberal technologies through multiple channels." Grewal, *Transnational America*, 2–3.

4. An eclectic sampling of influential thinking on borders and boundaries in anthropology and history includes Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*; Donnan and Wilson, *Borders*; Gupta and Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture'"; Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth*; Sahlins, *Boundaries*; and Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

5. The term "spatial malleability" is Ian Lustick's. He argues that state borders are always "products of war and other processes of territorial aggrandizement, contraction, or consolidation...contingent as well as constitutive of political, technological, economic, cultural, and social processes." Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands*, 43–44.

6. Schmitt, *Nomos of the Earth*, 281.

7. On the imperial turn, see the collected essays in Burton, *After the Imperial Turn*.

8. Peter Hansen, "Why Is There No Subaltern Studies for Tibet?" The Subaltern Studies Collective, originally headed by Indian historian Ranajit Guha, rewrote and retheorized Indian experiences under British rule from the perspective of the "subalterns" of society; see *Subaltern Studies*, vols. 1–11. For critiques of and engagements with subaltern studies, see Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, and Ludden, *Reading Subaltern Studies*.

9. On the myth of Tibet as Shangri-la, see Bishop, *Myth of Shangri-la*; Dodin and Rather, *Imagining Tibet*; Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-la*; Norbu, "Dances with Yaks"; and Shakya, "Tibet and the Occident."

10. See Hansen, "Why Is There No Subaltern Studies for Tibet?"; McGranahan, "Truth, Fear, and Lies"; Powers, *History as Propaganda*; and Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*.

11. See Brennan, "From Development to Globalization"; Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism"; Duara, *Decolonization*; Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*; Le Sueur, *Decolonization Reader*; and Louis and Robinson, "Imperialism of Decolonization."

12. On development as imperial practice, see Escobar, *Encountering Development*.

13. See Adeeb Khalid, this volume, for a consideration of “where empire ends and other forms of nonrepresentative or authoritarian policy begin.”
14. Cooper, “Empire Multiplied: A Review Essay,” 247.
15. For one effort to establish working definitions of imperialism and colonialism, see Osterhammel, *Colonialism*.
16. Stoler and McGranahan, this volume.
17. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World, Nation and Its Fragments*, and “Empire and Nation Revisited.”
18. Partha Chatterjee, “Empire and Nation Revisited,” 495–96: “There have been in history only two forms of imperial pedagogy—a pedagogy of violence and a pedagogy of culture. The colony must either be disciplined by force or educated (‘civilized’) by culture.”
19. See Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, for a counterargument, specifically that empire is now in service to a global, hybrid, democratic network dissociated from singular nations or territories.
20. Stoler and McGranahan, this volume.
21. On dissociated histories of empire, see also Coronil, this volume, and Stoler and McGranahan, this volume.
22. Richards, *Imperial Archive*.
23. On this period, see McGranahan, “Empire and the Status of Tibet.”
24. See G. N. Curzon’s outlining of the “forward” policy in his *Frontiers*. For a history of this British policy in the Tibetan context, see McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj*.
25. The Chinese government, however, vociferously claimed that this was a legally binding document. For a discussion of these competing claims, see Shakya, *Dragon in the Land of Snows*.
26. “Local government” is a Chinese communist term used to refer to the Tibetan government in Lhasa. Prefacing *government* with *local* is intended to displace other possible (and less desirable) modifiers, such as *national* or *state*, which might imply a Tibetan polity distinct from that of China.
27. The United States did not start a global campaign to win Tibetan hearts and minds until relatively late. The two countries first had diplomatic contact in 1942, when President Roosevelt dispatched two Office of Strategic Services (OSS) officers on a covert mission to Tibet. Strong US relations with China (i.e., Chiang Kai-shek’s Republican China) meant an acknowledgement of Chinese proprietary sentiment toward Tibet but also an awareness that (1) Chinese officials held multiple opinions on Tibet, and (2) Tibet was an independently functioning government

at the time. As President Y. P. Mei of Yenching University (and also Tibetology professor Li An-che) explained to US consular officials in Chengdu, "any attempt to extend Chinese control over Tibet by force would be bitterly resented by the Tibetans"; see "The Charge in China (Atcheson) to the Secretary of State, September 20, 1943," in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 639. Thus, while Roosevelt addressed the Dalai Lama as a religious rather than secular leader, OSS officers Ilya Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan traveled to Lhasa via India with no mediation by or discussion with the Chinese. This first contact set the tone for all future US-Tibetan relations as secretive and cautious.

28. For a discussion of the simultaneity of these events, see Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, 43

29. Rai, *Rule of Sympathy*.

30. On post-World War II decolonization, see Chamberlain, *Longman Companion to European Decolonization*; Duara, *Decolonization*; Le Sueur, *Decolonization Reader*; Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*; Louis and Robinson, "Imperialism of Decolonization"; and Springhall, *Decolonization since 1945*.

31. On China's imperial and expansionist histories (especially the Qing), see Bulag, *Mongols at China's Edge*; Cohen, *Discovering History in China*; Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*; Millward, *Beyond the Pass*; Perdue, this volume, and *China Marches West*; and Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*.

32. We would also do well to consider that capitalism has never been entirely absent from socialism; elements of capitalism flow through the socialist system, even if only in the recoil of a response in earlier decades or in a more direct current postsocialist form. Nonetheless, for both periods, we need to consider how the socialist state might also be colonial and imperial in certain places and times.

33. In Marxist-Leninist thought, the "briefest possible definition of imperialism... is the monopoly stage of capitalism," or more specifically, "imperialism is that stage of capitalism at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the divisions of the territories of the world among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed." Lenin, *Imperialism*.

34. Wang, "Tibet Facing Imperialism of Two Kinds."

35. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*; Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture*.

36. I take my inspiration here from Ulysse, "I Came of Age Colonized Now My Soul Is Tired and I Am Feeling All This Rage."

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37. Goldstein, Sherap, and Siebenshub, *Tibetan Revolutionary*.

38. On Han chauvinism, see Gladney, *Dislocating China*; Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*; and Louisa Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China."

39. Indeed, categorizing either the People's Republic of China or the United States as an empire in the present remains subject to debate. While the issues animating these debates are different, I submit that the reasons for the debates are similar, specifically issues of category and strategy. For a counterperspective on the United States as empire, see Kelly, "U.S. Power, after 9/11 and before It."

40. See US Department of State documents pertaining to Tibet in the 1960s (e.g., the Foreign Relations of the United States series).

41. Ho, "Empire through Diasporic Eyes," 228.

42. See Burnett and Marshall, *Foreign in a Domestic Sense*; Dunbar-Ortiz, "Grid of History"; Gill, *School of the Americas*; Go and Foster, *American Colonial State in the Philippines*; Joseph, Legrand, and Salvatore, *Close Encounters of Empire*; Kaplan and Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*; Ryan and Pungong, *United States and Decolonization*; and Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties," and *Haunted by Empire*.

43. Brennan, "From Development to Globalization"; Louis and Robinson, "Imperialism of Decolonization"; Lutz, "Empire Is in the Details" and *Homefront*; Steinmetz, "Return to Empire."

44. Ho, "Empire through Diasporic Eyes." On the invisibility and visibility of empires, see Stoler, "Imperial Formations and the Opacity of Rule" and "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty."

45. Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories."

46. Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*.

47. On Nepali Gurkha soldiers in the British and Indian armies, see Caplan, *Warrior Gentleman*; Mary DesChene, "Relics of Empire."

48. In keeping with Tibetan convention, I reserve the singular name Pangdatsang for Rapga's older brother, Yamphel, the family head. I refer to Rapga Pangdatsang as he was and is referred to by his contemporaries, as either Pangda Rapga or simply Rapga.

49. Goldstein, *History of Modern Tibet*.

50. In 1975 scholars Samten Karmay and Heather Stoddard interviewed Rapga at his home in Kalimpong; see Stoddard's *Le Mendiant d'Amdo*. See also McGranahan, "In Rapga's Library."

51. Stoddard *Le Mendiant d'Amdo*.
52. India Office Record, London, British Library: L/P+S/12/4211 No. 36, File 39(1) Tibet: Chinese Intrigues (Rapga), Hopkinson to Foreign New Delhi, April 29, 1946.
53. In an interesting but perhaps not surprising parallel, this in-between status under the Raj has remained the same for Tibetan refugees in India since 1959. As India has not signed any UN conventions on refugees, the status of the Tibetan community in India has remained individually negotiated between the Dalai Lama's exile government and the government of India, from the rule of Jawaharlal Nehru up to the present day. At present, the overwhelming majority of Tibetans in India are not citizens but have Indian-designated refugee status.
54. On dilemmas of residing outside the law, see Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, and Das and Poole, "State and Its Margins."
55. Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*. See also Inda, "Flexible World," for an extension of Ong's argument to nonelite or "everyday" communities.
56. India Office Records, London, British Library: L/P+S/12/4211 No. 36, File 39(1), document 41, "Pleader's advice re: my departure from India."
57. India Office Records, London, British Library: L/P+S/12/4211 no. 36, file 39(1), "G. C. L. Crichton, Joint Secretary to the Government of India to the Chinese commissioner, New Delhi."
58. See Stoler, "In Cold Blood."
59. Sources for this period in Tibetan history are erratic. Tibetan-language sources (inside and outside Tibet) are still surfacing or being approved for release, although many remain inaccessible for political reasons. Chinese-language sources are highly restricted, as are Indian archival sources (given that any documents having to do with India's borders are censored). In contrast, British colonial archives offer easy access and have thus been well trodden by scholars of Tibet.
60. On China's "civilizing mission" among non-Han Chinese peoples across time, see the collected essays in Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*.
61. On this period in China and the continuing evolution of Chinese-style socialism, see MacFarquhar, *Politics of China, 1949-1989*.
62. On these points, see Borneman, "State, Anthropological Aspects"; Hansen and Stepputat, "Introduction: States of Imagination"; Trouillot, "Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization"; and Weldes and others, *Cultures of Insecurity*.

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63. On the prescriptive nature of power under the Chinese communist state, see Anagnost, "Constructing the Civilized Community," 354.

64. On Tibet-Qing relations, see Hevia, "Lamas, Emperors, and Rituals"; Kolmas, *Tibet and Imperial China*; Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century*; and Sperling, "Awe and Submission."

65. Diamond, "Miao and Poison"; Makley, "On the Edge of Respectability"; Schein, *Minority Rules*.

66. On Mao as icon, see Hubbert, "(Re)Collecting Mao."

67. These questions have long animated colonial studies, from the early work of Taussig, "Culture of Terror," to the recent essays in Stoler's *Haunted by Empire*.

68. On this point, see the collected essays in Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*.

69. For a skillful analysis of Tibetan interpretations of Chinese truths, see Makley, "Speaking Bitterness."

70. Three first-person exile narratives of this period are Jamyang Norbu, *Warriors of Tibet*; Pachen and Donnelly, *Sorrow Mountain*; and Tapontsang, *Ama Adhe*.

71. For a history of the founding of the Tibetan guerrilla army, see McGranahan, "Tibet's Cold War."

72. *Rebirth of the Tibetan People* does not have page numbers, but this stock phrase is found throughout the text. For one representative example, see the "Editor's Comment" at the beginning of the text.

73. Louis and Robinson, "Empire Preserv'd," 161.

74. Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 16.

75. Interview with Tony Poe, San Francisco, December 17, 1999.

76. Indeed, as many veterans have explained to me, some resistance members considered the resistance army, the Tibetan government in exile, and the US government to be equal partners in the struggle for Tibet in the 1960s.

77. Histories of the CIA and Tibetan resistance army include Conboy and Morrison, *CIA's Secret War in Tibet*; Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War*; McGranahan, "Truth, Fear, and Lies" and "Tibet's Cold War"; and Tsering, *bsTan rgol rgyal skyob*.

78. In 1961 a Tibetan resistance team captured a PLA commander's pouch. It contained invaluable and otherwise unavailable classified information about the successes and failures of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet and throughout the PRC. I tell the story of the documents in McGranahan, *Tibet's Cold War*.

79. *Questions Pertaining to Tibet*, 337. Memorandum for the Special Group

CAROLE MCGRANAHAN

(January 9, 1964), 731 (from Department of State, INR Historical Files, Special Group Files, S.G. 112, February 20, 1964. Secret; Eyes Only).

80. One scholar who has repeatedly directed attention to this connection is A. Tom Grunfeld in, for example, *Making of Modern Tibet*. Grunfeld's argument, however, is not congruent with mine: where he contends that the US-Tibetan connection reveals the compromised position of the Tibetan exile government, my argument is that we must understand this relationship as part of broader US geopolitical imperial policies that complicate and influence but do not necessarily compromise Tibetan governmental decision making.

81. To be clear, the issue for the soldiers at the time (and for many of them at present) was independence from China, not genuine autonomy within China. While the Dalai Lama currently supports autonomy rather than independence, many (if not most) Tibetans in exile continue to desire independence.

82. I am unaware if any of these texts are extant (or perhaps, more accurately, remain hidden) in Tibet or in the veterans' community in India and Nepal. At present, none of the texts are in the public domain. For access to these texts, I am grateful to a retired CIA officer.

83. "A Pleasure Garden," 1.

84. "A Pleasure Garden," 6-7.

85. "A Pleasure Garden," 7-8.

86. "A Pleasure Garden," 8.

87. "A Pleasure Garden," 9-11.

88. "A Pleasure Garden," 11-12.

89. "A Pleasure Garden," 13-14.

90. On the United States and "circuits of knowledge production" in its imperial domains, see the collected essays in Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*.

91. On public secrets, see Taussig, *Defacement*. See also McGranahan, "Truth, Fear, and Lies."

92. Steel, *Pax Americana*, quoted in Foster and McChesney, *Pox Americana*, 7.

93. Foster, "New Age of Imperialism," 165.

94. From President Sukarno's opening address at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955, as cited in Chatterjee, "Empire and Nation Revisited," 487.

95. I borrow the term "wide-angle view of empire" from Morillo-Alicea, "Uncharted Landscapes of 'Latin America,'" 27.

96. For similar approaches that also extend beyond European empires, see the collected essays in Stoler's *Haunted by Empire*, and Ballantyne and Burton, *Bodies in Contact*.

97. William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life*.

98. Kaplan, "Left Alone with America," 14. See also Lutz, *Homefront*, for an

excellent treatment of the domestic side of US military imperialism.

99. Wang, "Tibet Facing Imperialism of Two Kinds."

100. Hillman, "Paradise under Construction."

101. For a range of arguments on this point, see Barlow, "Colonialism's Career in Postwar China Studies"; Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism"; Hevia, *English Lessons*; and Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.

102. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 37. See also Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World and Nation and Its Fragments*.

103. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 44.

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