Delayed Contention with the Chinese Marxist Scapegoat Complex: Re-membering Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC

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David Germano’s “Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet” (1998) captures the peak of the Tibetan Buddhist revival of the late 1990s, especially for the Nyingmapa outside Tibet Autonomous Region, in Kham and Golok, two cultural regions of Tibet that are currently under the administration of Sichuan and Qinghai Provinces. The peak of this revival has receded into the past after the Chinese State’s 2001 “rectification” of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok’s Larung Five Buddhist Sciences Academy, which had attracted over 8,000 monastic and lay residents. Between 2001 and 2003, I was in these regions for extended fieldwork. In Germano’s observation as well as mine, the Nyingmapa revival activity in Kham and Golok tends to be disengaged from overt political actions against governmental authority, namely the Chinese State. Yet it maximizes revitalizing opportunities by taking advantage of the Chinese State’s “liberalizing” policies on religious affairs. Germano states that the religious revival of the Nyingmapa distanced itself from “any involvement with overt political protests” (ibid. 71). This trend of non-involvement in overt politics sharply distinguishes the different sociopolitical pattern of Nyingmapa revival outside TAR from that of the Geluk revival in the Lhasa area. According to Ronald Schwartz’s Circle of Protest: Political Ritual in the Tibetan Uprising (1994), during the late 80s, Geluk monks in large monastic establishments in Lhasa, such as the Drepung, the Gandan, and the Sera monasteries, overtly involved themselves in the cause of Tibetan nationalism. While monks of the Geluk order were engaged in street demonstrations for the cause of Tibetan independence in late 1980s, Nyingma monks of Kham and Golok were quietly re-constructing the monasteries that had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and re-establishing their monastic education. Like Germano, I have also reached the same identification of this revival as a re-membering process in the sense of recounting, recollecting, re-appropriating, and renewing the past. In the meantime, I see this revival not only as a Tibetan cultural revitalization but also as a soteriological project of Tibetan Buddhism, which has gone beyond Kham and Golok. It is not exaggerating to claim that Nyingmapa, as well as pockets of Gelukpa in these regions, has become a new center of Tibetan Buddhism outside central Tibet, available not only for Tibetans but also for non-Tibetans in the political domain of the PRC. In other words, the “bodhi-orientation” (Samuel 1993) of this revival is not limited to these localities of cultural Tibet, but has well extended itself into the national sphere of the PRC and even beyond, manifesting itself as a consciousness-raising project specifically geared toward Han Chinese.
This article provides a psychological reading of this Tibetan Buddhist revival, with an emphasis on the transgressive disposition of ideology toward religion in modern China. Herein, ideology specifically refers to communism, atheism, and scientism in the socialist China. It, in the cultural context of the PRC, is understood not merely as a work of Marxist political propagation, but, more critically, as a cultural system in the Geertzian sense, in which a Marxist assessment of religion has apparently evolved into a national consciousness of modern China. This type of collective consciousness has often condoned a destructive mob-mentality toward religious traditions within the political domain of the PRC. Within this framework, this article argues that the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in Kham and Golok is not geographically limited to Tibetan regions, and that, furthermore, the expressions of this revival are found not only in the physical reconstruction of Tibetan Buddhist monastic infrastructures and the restoration of Buddhist traditional practices, but beyond Tibet, among Han Chinese populations, as a public discourse contending with Chinese Marxist political and cultural practices against religion in both the past and the present. Textually, this article progresses with two outspoken Tibetan lamas who actively engage in a consciousness-raising dialogue with the Chinese Marxist view of religion. This Tibetan Buddhist-led public discourse actively critiques the Marxist assessment of religion, and, in the meantime, is inadvertently entangled with Chinese Marxist political and scientific rhetoric as the language of the dominant in the public space of China.

**Voices of Tibetan Lamas beyond Tibet – Delayed Contention with the Perpetrator in the 21st Century**

In his “Re-membering,” Germano tangentially mentioned the presence of Han Chinese disciples of Khenpo Jigme Phunksok (1998:68), though, in fact, their presence generated broader social and political ramifications which are mostly expressed in a sizable body of discourses on religion and science in both the Chinese print media and on privately-operated Chinese websites. While I was in Kham and Golok, I met numerous Han Chinese pilgrims coming especially from cosmopolitan centers like Beijing, Xi’an, and Shanghai. Many of them had two books in their backpacks. One was Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas’s *A Scientific Treatise on Buddhism* and the other was Dorzhi Rinpoche’s *Wisdom Arising from Compassion*. Both are influential Buddhist works written in Chinese, which call for a scientific understanding of Buddhism for the general readership of contemporary China. Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas’s *A Scientific Treatise* has not been formally published in China due to censorship, but copies printed in Hong Kong are widely available in the backrooms of many private Buddhist bookstores in major cities. Dorzhi Rinpoche’s *Wisdom* has been in circulation for seven years since its first edition appeared in 1997. It maintains the status of a Buddhist best seller in China. I have not met a single Chinese Buddhist pilgrim in Kham and Golok who does not know the names of these two authors.
Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas, who is in his early forties, is an erudite Tibetan lama. He is one of the six original disciples of the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok. Since the founding of the Buddhist Five Sciences Academy in Sertar, western Sichuan Province, in the mid-1980s, Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas was in charge of instructing Chinese monastic and lay students living on campus. His *A Scientific Treatise* first appeared in 1999 on the academy’s website. It immediately spread far and wide in China, especially among Chinese intellectuals and college students who are concerned about the uncompromising feud between religion and the Marxist version of modern science in China. Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas’s main argument in the treatise is that the misnomer of Buddhism as superstition is “unobjective, unjust, and ignorant” (bSod nams dar rgyas 2001:170). He straightforwardly points out:

...Those without wisdom, particularly those who understand neither worldly nor spiritual truths, accuse Buddhism of being superstitious. This kind of thought and speech was very popular in China during the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, people all sank into an ignorant and fanatic state, and stomped both the value of modern Western civilization and the traditional Eastern cultures. The labels of “capitalism,” “feudalism,” and “superstition” were readily stuck upon Western humanistic sciences and traditional Chinese culture. There may not be many fanatics now, but the same thoughts continue to exist in the minds of many people. Those who continue to accuse Buddhism as superstition should first engage in some serious investigation. If you hastily jump to conclusions without any investigation, no matter who you are, you are wrong. Imagine, if someone, without hesitation, treats what you worship or believe in, such as a certain –ism, as superstition, I’m sure you would not agree with him. In the same manner, the accusation of Buddhism as superstition is as ludicrous as the accusation of science as superstition” (ibid. 170-171).

In Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas’s analysis, Chinese Marxists overly dichotomized Marxist materialism and Hegelian idealism, and simplistically transmuted this dichotomy into a chicken-and-egg debate between the material and the spiritual. This oversimplification of Marxist materialism failed to recognize the idealistic idiosyncrasy of Marxist thought, and turned anything ideal, especially anything of non-Marxist origin, into a political enemy. Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas remarks, “The Communist Party members think that they believe in Marxist materialism and that Buddhism is a religion of subjective idealism. As a matter of fact, the philosophy of Buddhism profoundly includes both the material and the ideal and even transcends this set of diametrical opposites” (ibid. 189). According to him, Chinese Marxists, in their search for the absolute truth of humanity, put themselves into a position of monopolizing truth and how it is sought, as though Marxism is the only vehicle for ultimate human truth. This ideological paradigm permitted the collective persecution of Buddhism as superstition in the past and continues to socially contain it as potential political disturbance.
Dorzhi Rinpoche is a generation older than Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas. He is both a tulku and a professor at one of the universities for nationalities in China, which are primarily designated to educating ethnic minorities. He was imprisoned for a total of twelve years in the ‘50s and the ‘60s. He holds the highest Tibetan monastic degree geshe. He learned Chinese when he was in prison, trading his sheep-skin coat for Chinese lessons from a Han Chinese prisoner who had been a professor from Shanghai. His mastery of Chinese surpasses many native Chinese intellectuals. The main content of Dorzhi Rinpoche’s *Wisdom* is his exegesis of several Buddhist sutras and the significance of initiations in Tibetan Buddhism. However, he devotes the first thirty-two pages to the restoration of the public image of Buddhism from the Chinese Marxist misaccusation of it as a superstition. Dorzhi Rinpoche, instead of filling up the chapter with vengeful wording, compassionately argues against Chinese Marxist scholars’ misleading accusation of Buddhism as an undesirable part of human tradition.

To him, Buddhism is not a political weapon, although the Chinese Marxist scholars frequently look upon religion, including Buddhism, as such. Instead, Dorzhi Rinpoche stressed that Buddhism is an instrument of liberation from ignorance. During my visit with him in winter 2002, he said that the first thirty-two pages were intended to consciously recognize human conditions, including those of the fanatical Party members during the Cultural Revolution. He remarked, “My argument for Buddhism is an argument against ignorance, or against speech, action, and thought based on ignorance. It is because of ignorance that many people during the Cultural Revolution committed brutalities against humanity.” The content of this chapter in his *Wisdom* is particularly revealing about how he assesses the social status of Buddhism in the PRC:

…there exist many skewed assertions in the research on religion, which do not correspond to religious reality. These wrong assertions are imposed on readers and intentionally misrepresent all religions. Society thus holds prejudice against religion without any explicable reasons…For example, publications like *Theories of Religious Studies* and *The Treatise on Religion* have so many mistaken views about religion, and yet continue to be circulated and praised by many specialists of religion. Here are some examples of erroneous assertions: “Religion postulates an illusory savior for people, and dupes people to invest their hope in gods and deities with blind faith,” “Religion is a kind of perverted worldview of idealism,” “Religion is blind belief,” “To religion, God sets the order of the world; no one can alter it. Any demand and action for alteration is violation to God. The only thing humans can do is to obey God but nothing else.” These statements might be correct if the authors had named particular religions. If these statements are treated as the regularity of all religions, they do not stand because they are full of personal bias against religion…Obviously, these irresponsible specialists do not even respect the scientific spirit of their disciplines. They are laughingstocks to serious social scientists. The purpose of my writing this chapter is to clarify
these so-called theories of religion and their erroneous judgment upon Buddhism, and to remove the bias of religion that is being circulated in society (Dorzhi 1998:5-6).

According to Dorzhi Rinpoche, all these works were written after the Cultural Revolution, not before. The same Chinese Marxist view of religion is repeating itself through these “specialists” of religion. Both Tibetan teachers emphatically point out that Chinese society holds prejudice against religion with the same mindset as that of the early stage of socialist China as seen by both the official and popular association of religion with “superstition” and with ideals antithetical to the Marxist version of modern science. This experience of Chinese society’s relation to religion confirms the unconscious operation of the systemic bigotry against religious institutions and practitioners.

In my ethnographic experience with Tibetan Buddhist teachers, I see that the revival of Tibetan Buddhism is not merely a matter of resurrecting the destroyed physical infrastructures of religious institutions and events. The imperative in the acts of this revival is the way in which Tibetan Buddhists are coping with a religious recovery from the trauma of the past due to the Chinese State’s ruthless political destruction of religion. Both voices of Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas and Dorzhi Rinpoche are obviously geared toward an intended justice, either from the Chinese state or the Chinese public, that the Marxist justification for the destruction of Tibetan Buddhism in the past was erroneous, and that Marxism bears evident cultural limitations in assessing different religious forms, especially in the contemporary era of China. In Judith Herman’s clinical experience with victims recovering from trauma, it is common that “remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims” (1992:1). The voices of both Tibetan Buddhist teachers are not simply theological arguments against the Marxist worldview of religion, but, more critically, manifest themselves as a recovery process under unfavorable social condition, in which the justification of the past destruction continues to be present. The fundamental healing process for traumatic experiences is that “The victim...asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering” (ibid. 7).

At this point, I evoke Germano’s use of “re-membering” as a heuristic pun, meaning that, on one hand, it pertains to the bodily re-membering of Tibetan religious institutions, and, on the other hand, it refers to a human mental capacity for the recollection and re-organization of the past events in traumatic terms. History is frequently written in blood. This claim is particularly relevant to modern Chinese history. The blood of both Tibetans and Han Chinese was shed in the revolutionary campaigns of the Chinese Communist Party.
However, Tibetans have crossed many more traumatic thresholds than Han Chinese as Tibet’s geographic body was cut into several pieces and allotted to different Chinese provinces, while its ultimate living cultural symbol, the Dalai Lama, went in exile, and thousands of monasteries were destroyed. This particular type of re-membering of the past in the midst of the current Tibetan religious revival is germane to the collective memory of atrocities, which is a recurring theme among many Tibetan Buddhist teachers I met. Furthermore, this process of re-membering obviously bears the post-traumatic syndrome, that is, “the result of a failure of time to heal all wounds” (van der Kolk and McFarlane 1996:7). Post-traumatic stress is often understood as a normal response to an abnormal condition (McFarlane and van der Kolk 1996:26). I want to be very clear here, that my use of post-traumatic syndrome is meant to elucidate a collective context, or a social phenomenon, more than to indicate that individual Tibetans are experiencing intense post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In other words, I understand trauma in this case in a broadest sense that “trauma may arise not only from an acute event but also from a persisting social condition” (Leydesdorff, Burchardt, and Ashplant 1999:2). Thus, using the framework provided by a psychological understanding of PTSD and recognizing that characteristics of the disorder can be manifested socially allows light to be shed on the path to recovery. Herewith, re-membering, in addition to Germano’s usage, also pertains to the returning of the traumatic emotions and memories of the past along with delayed contention with the rationale of the perpetrator, which continues to be present as one of the acute social conditions of the Tibetan Buddhist revival.

Among the numerous symptoms of post-traumatic stress, I identify two prominent ones, namely “hyperarousal” and “intrusion.” The former refers to a mental state that is constantly on the alert for the return of the experienced danger, while the latter signifies the frequent intrusion of memories of traumatic events (1996:9). In the context of the Tibetan Buddhist revival and the persistently Marxist interpretation of things religious, hyperarousal can also be understood as what I call “legitimate fear.” This legitimate fear is especially visible when a Dharma event is held without official permission from the county or a higher administrative organ, or when non-Tibetan Buddhist practitioners request long-term monastic residence for training because migrant religious population is officially forbidden in Tibetan monasteries. After Khenpo Jigme Phunksok’s academy was suppressed by the “work team” sent by the Chinese State in the summer of 2001, several abbots of small monasteries confided with me that they felt lucky that they had maintained the principle that they transmit teachings to pilgrims but do not let them stay longer than ten days. The perceived danger from the Chinese State is indeed imminent because it strikes when it strikes with or without reason. So far, the Chinese State has never made a public announcement about why it suppressed Khenpo Jigme Phunksok’s academy, but it
continues to limit its normal activities and its communication with non-Tibetans. Pilgrims are required to leave their identification cards at the reception office, and retrieve them upon leaving.

In addition to this prevalent legitimate fear, the intrusion of traumatic events is commonplace when my conversations with Tibetan Buddhist teachers hit the subject pertaining to modern history of Tibetan Buddhism. Most Tibetan teachers above fifty-five years old, whom I met, were locked up in prison or interned in harsh labor camps between the late 1950s and the 1970s. During his time in prison, Dorzhi Rinpoche was frequently beaten, badly enough that his shirts were often soaked with blood. His memory of the atrocity of the past surfaces in his exegetical works on Tibetan Buddhist texts. His *The Dependent Co-Arising of Causes and Conditions as an Essence of Buddhадharma* (2000) is a commentary of Zongkhapa’s works; however, it is interpolated with Dorzhi Rinpoche’s memories of the religious persecution by the Chinese Communist Party. He laments that the collective sentiment of Marxist judgment of religion even cultivated “revolutionary activists” among monks. The Chinese Communist Party was not the only one to blame because the involvement of many native Tibetans who took sides with the Party voluntarily or involuntarily blurred the identification of the perpetrator. For example, Dorzhi Rinpoche mentions a “revolutionary activist” monk at his home monastery, who hacked down the main Buddha statue from head to toe with an axe. It was a horrendous scene. However, in less than two years, that monk became mentally deranged. He stopped eating food and started eating his own flesh. Nobody could stop him. He bit off his flesh wherever his teeth could reach. It was a horrible self-destruction (ibid. 184).

The memories of the horrors of the past continue to return as the Tibetan religious revival is taking place under unfavorable social conditions. Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas was a child during the Cultural Revolution. Like Dorzhi Rinpoche, his memory of the past also enters many of his writings for the Buddhist public of China. His *Questions and Answers on Tibetan Tantrism* (2002) is a verbatim record of his dialogue with Dharma Master Jiqün Henan, a Han Chinese monk based in Fujian Province, on the subject of the spiritual impact of Tibetan tantrism on Han Chinese Buddhists. Often, the past surfaces in their conversations. For instance, Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas reminisces, “In my memory, many Tibetans were forced to participate in the destruction of their monasteries at gunpoint…” (2002:150). As a matter of fact, he has experienced the same scene at Larung Buddhist Academy in the early twenty-first century when the Chinese State sent in a “work team” consisting of armed police and administrative personnel to “rectify” the academy. This recent experience also emerged in his current works published in Hong Kong and Macao, which are circulated in the mainland through private channels. In his two-volumed *The Whitecaps on the Ocean of Wisdom* (2002), which documents numerous Han Chinese Buddhists’ learning experiences at the academy,
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Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas often interjects his memory of this recent religious persecution. For instance, he confronts a cadre from the Bureau of Religious Affairs, “Now, those Han Chinese monks who are law-abiding and studying Tibetan Buddhism are not allowed to stay here. How can you let gamblers, prostitutes, and hooligans take over the land of Tibet” (2002:715)?

RECOVERING FROM A SCARED GOAT COMPLEX – RELIGION AS IDEOLOGICAL DIRT IN THE PRC

Religion in general has never had an easy time in the history of the PRC, becoming a kind of endangered species among human cultural practices. Tibetan Buddhism was no exception, as Goldstein points out, “Religion, in essence, ceased to exist in the People’s Republic of China” (1998:3). Since the late 70s and the early 1980s, religious revivals in different parts of China, including Kham and Golok, have been a visible part of the Chinese State’s reform program (Goldstein 1998, Mackerras 2003). While I was in these Tibetan regions, I also witnessed the lively daily Buddhist routines of common Tibetan folks as shown in their regular circumambulation of monasteries and devotional prostrations in front of Dharma halls. This general appearance of religious revival does suggest that the repressive past seems to have departed from the present. However, those Tibetans who are situated in the core-leadership of the current religious revival are expressing symptoms of post-traumatic stress, almost twenty-years later after they were “rehabilitated” from their “anti-revolutionary” and “separatist” status. The Chinese State’s “rehab” program was, indeed, solely focused on clearing away this all-purpose “anti-revolutionary” label from Tibetan religious figures, for the sake of preparing for global economic cooperation with the Western nations that were once denounced as the enemy of the Chinese State. In other words, this “rehab” program had not intended as a public admission of fault for the culturally ignorant and often violent assessment of religion by the Chinese Communist Party based on its Marxist atheism. The blame of the past destruction was conveniently directed to the “Gang of Four” or “extreme leftists” (Bonavia 1984, Brugger 1980), in a type of political exorcism through which the purity of the Party was supposed to be sustained.

Now, in the twenty-first century, China scholars in the West have begun to pronounce the demise of Marxist ideology (Dirlik 1994) and to seek fresh neologisms such as “late socialism” to mark a new historical era of China in relation to its rapid global economic development, and to indicate the crumbling Marxist superstructure of the Chinese State. Li Zhang states that late socialism signifies “the historical moment in which Chinese society is undergoing a profound transformation under multiple socioeconomic forces: accelerating marketization and privatization, entrenchment of global capital, and lingering socialist institutions and practices” (Zhang 2001:2). The
emphasis is mine because my understanding of “late socialism” does not suggest the ending or near-ending of Chinese socialism as an “entrenched” or “lingering” ideology as Zhang suggests. Instead, “late,” in my discourse of Tibetan Buddhism, is evoked in relation to “early” as a temporal reference embedded with varying political practices of Chinese socialism in different political eras. Thus, “late” is synonymous with the recent or contemporary development of Chinese socialism into an ever more complex force, especially in its continuous effort to socially contain religion with the same Marxist ideological disposition. No matter in whatever rhetorical garment, this disposition, in my ethnographic understanding, is the abnormal social condition that creates the post traumatic responses of Tibetan lamas in contemporary Chinese society.

Li Chongfu, a leading Marxist scholar at the Institute of Marxism and Leninism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences vehemently promotes a Marxist scientific worldview against religion, saying, “Scientific atheism fundamentally opposes vulgar theism. The Marxist scientific worldview is both thorough materialism and scientific atheism. It truthfully points out that the material world is the only reality in which humans live. It does not recognize the world of spirits and supernatural powers” (Li 2003). To make an ethnographic remark here, most Chinese Marxist scholars of religion I have met are fine individuals in their day-to-day life. However, when religion emerges in their personal conversations and research, it is most likely turned into a kind of “chew-toy” that a dog never tires of: it gets drooled on, pounced on, and gnawed on. The current guiding principle for the Chinese State’s policy on religion is based on Jiang Zeming’s “three sentences” spoken at a national conference for the directors of regional bureaus of religious affairs in February 1999. Jiang said, “On the question of religion, I also want to emphasize three sentences: the first is to thoroughly, correctly implement the Party’s policy on religion, the second is to strengthen the administration of religious affairs by relying on law, and the third is to actively guide religion to conform to socialist society” (Wang and Liu 2000:5). The essence of Jiang’s three sentences is found in the last one. Since his speech at the conference, the Chinese government administers religious affairs essentially as a long-term conversion project, meaning that, on the one hand, it attempts to continue its Marxist atheist education of the young generation, and, on the other hand, it uses whatever means necessary to lead religious institutions and persons toward a total conformity with Chinese socialist ideology.

My ethnographic reading of Chinese early or late socialism, from the perspective of religion as an ancient human cultural form, shares the same sentiment found in R. N. Berki’s Insight and Vision: the Problem of Communism in Marx’s Thought (1983). According to Berki, the essence of Marxism is not the analyses of class and the capitalist mode of production, but is rather Marx’s vision of Communism. This reading of Marxism sharply
differentiates itself from the academic deployment of Marxism in such theoretical paradigms as Wallerstein’s world system theory (1974) and Andre Gunder Frank’s dependency theory (1966). Instead, when Marxism is exercised as an instrument of politics in the actual social context of China, everything it publicly advocates bears this *a priori* vision of Marx’s communism. Historically speaking, the series of political campaigns of the Chinese Communist Party, whether they were “class struggles” or “democratic reforms,” were mostly done with the backdrop of this communist vision. As Berki points out, “Communism in this visionary understanding is defined essentially by its purity, its transcendent distance and untroubled totality, its moral quality and its ideality; communism is another world but it is that which this world should become” (Berki 1983:4, emphasis added). This has been the palliative measure of the CCP in its attempts to abolish non-communist cultural systems including various religious traditions. The enactment of this communist vision has turned modern China into a realm of “shoulds,” in which human social actions and thought activities have been bifurcated into polarizing extremes – the real vs. the ideal, communism vs. capitalism, revolutionary vs. anti-revolutionary, the material vs. the spiritual, and present vs. future, etc. This collective split personality of the CCP is an example of neurosis that is intrinsically a phenomenon of modern civilization, as Freud remarks, “The neurotic creates substitutive satisfactions for himself in his symptoms, and these either cause him suffering in themselves or become sources of suffering for him by raising difficulties in his relations with his environment and the society he belongs to” (1961:64). In other words, anything and anyone that does not conform to the projected ideals of the neurotic become the source of his frustration and are given the subversive credit that they most likely do not deserve.

This is what happened to the many religious traditions in China in the first thirty years of the PRC. They were readily identified as a tool of the ruling class based on Marx’s assessment of religion in the history of Europe; thus, they should be gotten rid of. In the face of Chinese socialist neurosis, religion became a scapegoat, deserving of violent political cleansing. In its original Hebraic sense, scapegoat is related to Azazel, a goat god, biblically known as “the goat that departs” and “hard rock,” or “strong one of God” who carried the collective sin of the Hebrews (Perera 1986:19). *Tizuiyang* or “scapegoat” is a modern Chinese neologism resulting from Chinese Christians’ biblical exegetic effort, and it literally means the goat who surrogates the crime of others based on biblical stories of Hebraic style of atonement. However, the type of scapegoating that the Chinese Communist Party committed against religion resembles a riddance ceremony in which “the evil is treated concretely, as if it were a contagion that could be drawn off into a material object which then becomes – on the concrete, literalistic level of magic consciousness – an incarnate pollution that can be disposed of” (ibid. 11). In other words, the
Chinese communist version of scapegoating against religion was literally a process of anal rejection during which scapegoats, the targeted social “evils,” are excreted much as feces (ibid. 13). China’s Cultural Revolution is a revealing example of scapegoating as a riddance ceremony in relation to how religion was treated as an arbitrarily selected victim.

To be noted here, modern scapegoating has little to do with its biblical origin in which the scapegoat was an atoning medium pertaining to “purgation, purification, confession” (ibid. 11) in the sense that the departure of the scapegoat with the collective transgression of a community could heal and reunite the community. The sacred dimension is lost in the vulgar usage of scapegoat in the modern societies in which scapegoats do not possess this noble quality to begin with. René Girard points out that the modern usage of scapegoat is a generative process of collective psychology in which scapegoats are “blamed or punished not merely for the ‘sin’ of others…but for tensions, conflicts, and difficulties of all kinds” (1987:74). This generative process can, indeed, be identified as a scapegoat complex in which “reality is perceived through a distorting rigidity that equates consciousness and judgmentalism” (ibid. 36), and, thus, everything is arbitrated in black and white terms. In other words, this scapegoat complex in modern societies like the PRC tends to monopolize the public understanding of collective morality in oversimplified judgmental terms. What does not conform to the “shoulds” and “ideals” of this scapegoat complex is destroyed as an enemy or purged as poison.

Moreover, the generative process of modern scapegoating is, more often than not, fantastic and unconscious in nature. On the surface, the Chinese Communist Party, as a scapegoater, had an explicit Marxist rationale in the process of its persecution of religion with “orgies of violence” (Germano 1998:90). However, like Girard, I also discern the non-conscious dimension of this scapegoat complex, meaning that “…the choice of the victim is arbitrary, that the causal link between the victim and whatever disaster is ascribed to him is not real” (1987:88). When religion was given the credit of being an instrument of the ruling class in the Chinese Communist revolution, it was, indeed, being looked upon as something more powerful than what it actually was. For instance, all the Tibetan tulkus I met, especially those of Nyingmapa in the mountains of Kham and the grassland of Golok, who were persecuted between the 1950s and the 1970s, could hardly be associated with the so called “ruling class” in the Marxist sense. Those religious individuals, outside of their lineages of Buddhist teachings transmitted from their predecessors, were mostly born of common nomadic origin and hardly controlled any means of production, and yet they were severely punished for crimes that they did not commit.

What this type of scapegoating generated was collective violence with a mob mentality (Girard 1986:16) against arbitrarily chosen enemies like
religious institutions and practitioners. This is a pattern of Marxist socialism
the world over, as Terry Pickett points out, “Socialism is obsessed with greed,
however, though it generally assigns that vice to a class of human beings
rather than to general human nature. By externalizing its chief vice, it is able
to vilify an outsider group as a pariah ‘class’ that must be eliminated” (Pickett,
1996:19). The Cultural Revolution was the heightened example of this mob
mentality, with which the majority of the Chinese citizens were involved in
persecuting “social poisons” like religion. Marxist ideology, as the initial
belief system of the Chinese Communist Party members, became the
quintessence of this mob mentality. The majority, as the collective persecutor,
was often possessed with a fantastic conviction that “a small number of people,
or even a single individual, despite his relative weakness, is extremely harmful
to the whole of society” (1986:15). If I use Mary Douglas’ expression, the
mob mentality in this scapegoating process is an obsession in “chasing dirt,”
as she notes, “Dirt…is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt
there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and
classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate
elements” (Douglas 1969:35). In the social realm, dirt thus bears more
symbolic meanings and implications than those derived from its physical
presence. It essentially mirrors the symbolic system of purity. Religion has
been spotted as a type of “dirt” that cannot co-exist with Communist “shoulds.”
Thus, religion, regardless of the diversity of forms and soteriological goals,
began to be purged like a piece of dirt in the political domain of the PRC.
Needless to say, religion, as dirt, was looked upon as a defilement threatening
the purity of the Chinese Communist vision. Douglas notes, “Defilement is
never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering
of ideas” (Douglas 1969:41).

Without exception, Chinese Marxism in relation to religion relies on a
scapegoat complex that has manifested itself as a cultural system, possessing
boundaries, margins, and internal mechanisms to repel reflexively what it
considers defiling elements. In retrospect, the iconoclastic mob mentality of
this complex against religion could be understood as a collective obsessional
neurosis – a process of transference of the weaknesses and deficiencies of a
new Communist nation-state onto its imagined enemies. According to Karen
Horney’s psychoanalysis, the obsessional neurotic –

must be the center of attention, must be the most attractive, the most intelligent,
the most original – whether or not the situation calls for it…He must come out
victorious in any argument, regardless of where the truth lies…The
compulsiveness of the neurotic person’s need for indiscriminate supremacy makes
him indifferent to truth, whether concerning himself, others, or facts (Horny
1950: 30).
The pathology of the Chinese Communist Party’s obsessional neurosis has repeatedly occurred with a series of mimetic frenzies in its conflicting relationship with the West. When the cultural outcomes of Chinese Communist political campaigns are scrutinized, it is not difficult to recognize that modern China has been caught in a series of political and economic mimeses in light of the Chinese Communist Party’s desire to ape the material achievements of the West as shown in the “Great Leap Forward” of the 1950s and the recent modernization program emphatically pronounced as the socialist material civilization (MacInnis 1989:420) by the Chinese Communist leadership. Again, this type of desire is an inherent property of Marx’s communist vision that is delusional in nature because what is desired is actually an illusory world rather than a possible future. What this Communist delusion introduced to modern China is a chain reaction of mimetic desire, mimetic frenzy, and mimetic rivalry (Girard 1972:147-148). The simultaneous imitation of the West’s material achievements and the rivalry against the West’s ideologies have resulted in collective violence that would erase the decadent past and the miseries of the present. In a word, these mimetic frenzies further contributed to the unconscious dichotomization of the world of “shoulds” and the world as is. The Party literally represented itself as the “savior” of China in a most one-sided and sadistic fashion. Jung points out, “If heroism becomes chronic, it ends in a cramp, and the cramp leads to catastrophe or to neurosis or both” (Jung 1977:33). The noticeable symptom of the CCP’s “heroic cramp” is repression, indifference, aggression, and near-zero tolerance for differences. This heroic cramp has been justified with the Marxist worldview, and is indeed an ideological sclerosis due to the obsessive and hardened efforts to harness power. Paul Ricoeur commented on this type of sclerosis:

Just as religion is accused of having justified the power of the dominant class, so too Marxism functions as a system of justification for the power of the Party as the avant-garde of the working class and for the power of the ruling group within the Party. This justificatory function with respect to the power of a dominant group explains why the sclerosis of Marxism provides the most striking example of ideology in modern times (Ricoeur 1991:246).

Now, late socialist China no longer engages in class struggle; however, it has inherited the basic ideological tenets of Marxism, especially in its treatment of religion as potential and/or actual subversion to the Chinese Communist Party. Since the Chinese State’s “reform and opening” in the early 1980s, its fear of religion continues with the same rigidity though it is externalized in perceived dangers other than class. Journals on religious studies issued by government research institutions are an official platform to consistently signal the message that religion is a political disturbance if it is
not “well” administered. For instance, Tong Taijing and Zhang Rui, two young Communist scholars at the Central Chinese Communist Academy, reiterated the CCP’s rhetoric of the 1950s and 1960s by making an emphatic point – “It is still a daunting task to resist foreign hostile infiltration into our country through religion” (2002:6). In recent writings of other Chinese scholars, religion is also looked upon as a medium of foreign hostile filtration (Guan 1999, Zhou 2000, Pu and Can 2001). The logic of the Chinese State’s suppression of late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok’s academy lies in the CCP’s fear of and low tolerance for religion. Thus, it is not surprising that Jiang Zemin urges the Party to maintain its Marxist position on religion in the twenty-first century:

> Along with the development of socialist material and spiritual civilizations, people will continually grasp the secret of the natural world and their destiny, and lean toward science and rational thinking for the understanding of the objective world, the motion of life, and the essence of religion. This will help religion walk to its final demise. (UFD 2003, emphasis added).

To put it simply, the current abnormal social condition of the Tibetan Buddhist revival is such that religion is tolerated but is placed on an indefinite death row.

**BUDDHISM IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE POWERFUL – A RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY?**  
Besides the label of the “anti-revolutionary,” the word “superstition” was a highly animated, all-purpose political weapon against religion in the modern history of China. It is an encompassing legal, ideological, and popular term including “a range of activities such as fortune telling, shamanistic trances, casting horoscopes, exorcising evil spirits, geomancy, and physiognomy…” (Goldstein 1998:2). It bears twofold presence in contemporary China. On the governmental level, it continues to be operative in the Chinese State’s regulatory activities over religion. On the other hand, it has become a reflexive response among common Chinese citizens in relation to religion. I would further identify it as a sort of Foucultaian panopticon (1995) implanted in the minds of countless individual Chinese. This collective mechanism of surveillance seems to relieve the Chinese government’s direct responsibility for numerous current cases of religious persecution on *jicheng* or the “ground level,” a term referring to the lowest strata of the Chinese State’s administration.

In my travels with Tibetan and non-Tibetan pilgrims, I often heard personal stories on how the reflexivity of “superstition” functions as a collective surveillance over normal religious activities. For instance, stories of spousal conflicts are common among Buddhist pilgrims because one spouse newly embraced Tibetan Buddhism, while the other reflexively disapproved of religion as superstition. One Han Chinese Buddhist, a disciple of Khenpo
Jigme Phuntsok, divorced her husband because he held a cleaver at her throat in front of her five-year-old daughter, demanding that she renounce her Buddhist faith. According to her, the violent rhetoric of his harassment was a series of talks on religion as superstition. In another case, a Tibetan yogin from Golok was invited to his Han Chinese friend’s house in Shanghai in order to share his knowledge of an exorcism ritual. As the sound of the bells and the drums went beyond the small apartment of his friend, one of the neighbors reported it to the local police station as a suspicious activity of the Falungong. Both of them had to relentlessly explain their innocence for hours at the police station before being released. Two Han Chinese brothers, ordained as Tibetan monks at the Larung Buddhist academy, were raided by a team of armed police while they were performing an empowerment ritual for a group of twelve individuals, aged between seven and seventy-five. The charge was that they had violated the rule that religious activities be held only within the perimeters of officially registered religious institutions. Everyone was handcuffed, including the seven-year-old. They were deliberately locked up in a cell with homicide suspects and robbers. Soon, every single one of them was severely beaten by the inmates. Although the wardens could hear their crying for help, they not only ignored it, but were overheard to say, “Teach these superstitious people a lesson…”

My juxtaposition of these “ground level” experiences of “superstition” with Tibetan Buddhist teachers’ discourse on religion and science is meant to point out that, in spite of the positive effect of the recent Chinese policy adjustment, these incidents clearly show that the association of religion with “superstition” has become an aspect of collective unconscious in modern China. In the past, the political deployment of “superstition” by the Chinese Communist Party provided coarsely oversimplified but effective justification to the mob mentality for the popular destruction of religion. Now, the cultural embeddedness of “superstition” on the unconscious level, in essence, bears no difference from this collective mentality of scapegoat complex discussed earlier except that it is in a dormant state. It can be activated anytime under any circumstances on both a governmental and a popular level. Tibetan teachers like Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas and Dorzhi Rinpoche are apparently conscientiously raising this collective unconscious back to the conscious level for a healing and critical purpose. This dimension of “re-membering” Buddhism is more challenging than the re-membering of the physical infrastructures of Buddhist monasteries. Both Tibetan teachers’ re-visiting of “superstition” is obviously intended to distance Buddhism from this all-purpose political tool, and, in the meantime, to salvage the Chinese public from this destructive (un)conscious mentality toward religion in general and Buddhism in particular. After all, the modern historical destructive force against Tibetan Buddhism originated uniformly from the Han Chinese
population with the clear systematic scapegoat complex justified with the Marxist worldview.

Marxism, as a matter of fact, is the focal point of Tibetan Buddhist teachers’ public discourse on religion. Dorzhi Rinpoche begins his *Wisdom* with seven points:

1. Buddhism opposes blind faith but advocates the faith of knowledge and wisdom.
2. The goal of Buddhist faith is not necessarily to enter paradise after death.
3. Buddhism fundamentally negates the existence of a creator that rules over the universe.
4. The philosophy of Buddhism is not completely idealistic but realistic as well.
5. Buddhism is not indifferent to social realities.
6. Buddhist ethics do not serve the morals of the ruling class.
7. Buddhism does not oppose science (Dorzhi 1998:1).

It is apparent that the subtext of these seven points is both a practical disclaimer and a negation of the extra-textual political and cultural misperception of religion as something “blind,” “dark,” and “anti-science.” Words like “science” and “scientific” frequently appear in the writings of both Dorzhi Rinpoche and Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas. Both of them represent Buddhism as a human science and a spiritual science (Dorzhi 1998, bSod nams dar rgyas 2001). Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas goes further to declare Buddhism as the religion of humankind, quoting former Sri Lanka prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s remark on Buddhism – “As long as the sun and the moon continues to shine and as long as humankind continues to live on this planet, Buddhism will also prevail because Buddhism is the religion of humankind” (2001:167). However, this painstaking effort of both Tibetan teachers and their Buddhist fans in China is often bogged down by what Marxist dichotomy of the material and the spiritual. Participants in websites like “The Great Perfection” and “Science-Philosophy-Buddhist Studies” would often have lengthy discussions on what Marxism has to say about Buddhism. The first chapter of Dorzhi Rinpoche’s *wisdom* is often a topic for heated discussion. One participant in the Great Perfection’s discussion forum opined, “In my view, one of the biggest achievements of Buddhist studies in the 20th-century China is the exposure of the essence of Buddhist dialectics due to the influence of Marxism. Also, Marxism should deserve the credit for the advocacy of the Buddhist pragmatic spirit…I think that the development of Buddhism toward social engagement and rational thinking in the contemporary China bears the influence of Marxism” (GP 2001). Another participant cited Ren Jiyu, a leading Marxist scholar of religion, to make a point, “It [Buddhism] was a part of the superstructure in India and meant to serve the classes of slave owners and feudal landlords. Its
theories were used to numb the people of India and exterminate the will of their resistance. The harm of Buddhism in China was that it practically blurred the boundaries of classes and weakened the will of the resistance of the oppressed class... The slogan ‘all sentient beings have Buddha Nature’ is the opium for all oppressed people, and its anti-revolutionary nature has far surpassed its literal meaning...” (SPB 2002). The gist of these Marxist voices is centered on the diametrical opposition of the material and the spiritual as if Marxism is solely this worldly, while Buddhism other worldly. There is of course the assumption that Marxism is the culmination of all human thought and that it alone answers all questions about human existence due to its reliance on materialist understanding and exclusion of the spiritual.

In the West, materialism and idealism are just two –isms among the many. However, in the PRC, the juxtaposition of these two words often automatically teases out the uncompromising opposition embedded in the minds of Chinese readers who have completed the public secondary education or beyond in which this uncompromising Marxist dichotomy saturates the yearly curriculum. Both words, as a matter of fact, are equally existentially threatening because of the obvious either-or relationship between the two as if choosing one would totally lose the other. In my assessment, besides the Chinese Communist Party’s persistent “thought-reform” for this either-or choice imposed on the Chinese public since the middle of the last century, the Party also adopted translations of these two words from either English or German, which linguistically shows their one-sidedness to native Chinese. Materialism is officially translated as \textit{weiwu zhuyi} or “material-only-ism,” while idealism as \textit{weixin zhuyi} or “mind (or heart) -only-ism.” To be further noted, both neologisms are derived from a Chinese Mahayana Buddhist term known as \textit{weishi} or “consciousness-only” that is a branch of Buddhist thought established by the Tang Dynasty tripitika monk Xüanzhuang. Besides the ideological one-sidedness of Marxist materialism in modern China, this unconscious linguistic one-sidedness further reinforces the unbridgeable chasm between Marxist materialism and whatever idealisms it opposes. Thus, according to Chinese Marxist worldview, what is real is only sought in material terms, and religion is a defilement to the Marxist vision of communism because of its spiritual and ideal orientation.

Historically, in chasing religion as a piece of ideological dirt, out of the socialist sphere, the CCP doggedly extolled Marxist materialism as the truth of all truths via a rigidly Marxist version of modern science. Shiping Hua identifies this representation of modern science as scientism, that is, a political ideology that treats science as “omniscient, omnipotent, and the bearer of man’s salvation” (1995:15). The apparition of this scientism was actively violent in the past, and continues to exert its ultimate authority over religion in China as shown in the CCP’s prophecy for the inevitable death of religion. In essence, this scientism has little to do with the spirit of modern science
that the CCP advocates, but is a representation of the dominating power of
the CCP using Marxist scientific terms. Furthermore, the conflation as well
as the confusion of this scientism with the authority of the Chinese State
among the Chinese populace reinforces the Chinese Marxist worldview as
an operative cultural matrix permitting the social marginalization, if not a
complete extermination, of religion. This is the primary sociocultural condition
under which the Tibetan Buddhist revival is taking place, and with which
numerous Tibetan teachers are painstakingly negotiating and contending
for the full restoration of Buddhism as a legitimate cultural practice.

Thus, it is inevitable that, in the process of reclaiming the public legitimacy
of Buddhism, both Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas and Dorzhi Rinpoche
frequently cite the texts of Marx, Engels, and others to argue for the positive
social value of Buddhism. To be noted here, the passages cited are rather
counterpoints to the statements against religion found in the works of Marx
and others which Chinese Marxist specialists of religion frequently quote,
such as “religion is the opium of the masses.” For instance, both Tibetan
teachers cite what Engels says about Buddhism, “Buddhists are at the higher
stage of rational thinking” (bSod nams dar rgyas 2001:190, Dorzhi 1998:405).
In fact, they have developed a textual strategy of citing Marx’s and Marxist
texts to affirm the social and cultural legitimacy of Buddhism under the
political and cultural circumstances of the PRC. Here are some examples
that are translated from both Tibetan teachers’ writings in Chinese:

Marx –
“Dialectic materialism in Buddhism has reached a fine degree” (bSod nams
dar rgyas 2001:166).
“Religion is a theory about the totality of the world, and includes principles of
all sorts” (ibid. 190).
“Everyone should have the possibility to realize his religious needs just as one
has to fulfill his corporal needs without the interference of police” (ibid. 195).
Engles –
“The human’s dialectic thinking reached its maturity at the Buddha Sakyamuni’s
time” (ibid. 191).
“Great philosophies like that of Hegel, which have contributed to their national
spirits, cannot be erased by our indifference” (Dorzhi 1998:4)

Dorzhi Rinpoche went a step further to represent Buddhism as a type of
atheism that shares some commonality with Marxist science, as he writes in
his The Dependent Co-Arising, “As soon as science appears, generic religions
perish with the exception of Buddhism. The development of science is in the
process of proving the validity of the Buddhist worldview. Other religions
usually accept the existence of ‘god,’ but Buddhism criticizes this ‘god’ to
start with; thus, its death has utterly no impact on Buddhism” (2000:110).
This observation may be true to other traditions of Buddhism. However, in my ethnographic experience, Tibetan Buddhism is dynamically polytheistic with a complex pantheon of Buddhist deities and bodhisattvas with supernatural capacities. In addition, the historical Buddha himself was never an atheist in the modern sense but emphasized the sacred dimension of life with the language of Buddhist enlightenment. His contemporary disciples regarded him as “the teacher of both gods and humans” (Ñanamoli and Bodhi 1995:88). On the political level, the death of “god” pronounced by Chinese Marxists between the 1950s and the 1970s, in fact, had a destructive impact upon Tibetan Buddhism, as discussed earlier.

The heart of Tibetan Buddhist teachers’ discursive activities is not so much about the philosophical tenets of Marxist scientism and materialism, or what have you, but pertains to the unfavorable social condition under which the current Tibetan Buddhist revival takes place. Again, this is a post-traumatic issue in the guise of a benign public Buddhist discourse. In contemporary late socialist China, the Marxist worldview continues to be the guiding principle of the CCP in its administration of the religious affairs of its subjects and, in the meantime, the dominant cultural matrix of the PRC. By the latter, I mean that the Marxist ideology toward religion is a cultural system in the Geertzian sense, meaning that “The function of ideology is to make an autonomous politics possible by providing the authoritative concepts that render it meaningful, the suasive images by means of which it can be sensibly grasped” (Geertz 1973:218). In the context of religion in China, the suasion of Marxist ideology has been the type of scientism mentioned earlier, which has simultaneously borne some salvational hope for those who live a wretched life, and the provision of political justification for the Marxist ruling class to “manage” those who do not wish to renounce the spiritual dimension of humankind.

In this regard, Marxism is far from dead in late socialist China when religion re-emerges in the social space of common Chinese. It, in fact, appears like Bourdieu’s habitus that “produces individual and collective practices…” (1992:82). In particular, the Marxist habitus toward religion in modern China possesses some dispositions that are best expressed in Bourdieuan terms, “The dispositions are inculcated in a durable way: the body is literally moulded into certain forms, so that the habitus is reflected in the whole way that one carries oneself in the world, the way that one walks, speaks, acts, eats. The dispositions are ‘transferable’ in the sense that they are capable of generating practices in fields other than that in which they were originally acquired” (Thompson 1984:53). In other words, the Chinese Marxist habitus has engendered its own social language with a set of modern scientific glossaries, which, in fact, dominates the thought-activities of the Chinese populace in relation to religion. This social language, more often than not, operates in an unconscious fashion, and resembles what Bourdieu calls doxa as the “universe
of the undisputed” (1992:168). It gave justification to extensive mob violence in the physical sense in the past, and is still capable of repeating the past if needed. In its current physically dormant state, it rather effectively exercises its symbolic violence through public communications such as Tibetan teachers’ social representation of Buddhism in scientific terms. This type of symbolic violence is, indeed, a form of *reconnaissance sans connaissance*, as John Thompson points out, “…the reproduction of symbolic domination presupposes that speakers dispossessed of the dominant language collaborate in their dispossession, accepting that the dominant language is the ‘legitimate’ one…the recognition or acceptance of dominant values or norms as legitimate is rarely a free and fully conscious act on the part of the agent” (1984:61).

Thus, in my ethnographic understanding, it is unavoidable that Tibetan teachers like Khenpo bSod nams dar rgyas and Dorzhi Rinpoche are undergoing the intrusion of past traumatic experiences while they speak of Buddhism in the Marxist scientific language that is, in essence, the language of a Chinese Marxist scapegoat complex in relation to religion. I suspect that the current Tibetan teachers’ “scientific” representation of Buddhism may inadvertently transfigure Buddhism into an ideology in defense of the ancient religion. Based on my empirical experience in numerous Tibetan Buddhist events in Kham and Golok, Marxism, modern science, socialism, or whatever jargon the CCP uses, vanish when sounds of mantras, bells, and drums arise as participants are ritually blessed and empowered to go forward in life. In the sense of religious spirituality, Marxism and modern science are too insignificant in the ritualized space of Tibetan Buddhism, but could certainly be looked upon as an expression of discontent. From the soteriological perspective of Buddhism, Chinese Marxism or socialism is a global sigh in the midst of sentient beings’ miseries. In this respect, my reading of it coincides with Durkheim’s observation of the early development of socialism in Europe:

Socialism is not a science…it is a cry of grief, sometimes of anger, uttered by men who feel most keenly our collective *malaise*. Socialism is to the facts which produce it what the groans of a sick man are to the illness with which he is afflicted, to the needs that torment him…It is highly material to determine the epoch when socialism began to appear. It is a cry of collective anguish, let us say (Durkheim 1958:7-8).

In the most colloquial fashion of Chinese peasants, this type of socialism is about *chidahu* or “consuming the wealthy” in a frenzied manner when hunger strikes. When its collective emotion is articulated in the rational language of Marxist class analysis and scientific prophecy of Marx’s communist vision, it effectively camouflages the underlying mob mentality of its scapegoat complex in facing differences. In this respect, Tibetan Buddhism in the
political domain of the PRC is reviving but has to be ultra-careful with the one-sidedness of the Marxist neurosis in what is perhaps one of the most unpredictable political agencies on earth.

As a final note, Zuguo or nation, in modern Chinese history, has increasingly been portrayed as a mother figure. Although zuguo etymologically means the ancestral land, its common association in the political consciousness of the Chinese is a figurative mother whose image, in the contemporary socialist era of China, very much accords with the archetype of the “Terrible Mother” in Jungian psychoanalysis. In Anthony Stevens’ analysis, the Terrible Mother is “destructive and hateful” and “the bloodstained goddess of death and destruction” (Stevens 2002:109). Stevens writes, “…should the Terrible Mother be activated pandemonium is the result – inconsolable screaming in the child, fury, even battering, in the mother” (ibid. 110). Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party has taken itself as the full representation of the motherland, and, thus, assumed itself as the “mother” of the motherland. No matter what benign Marxist utopian ideals the Party might have promulgated to its subjects, it has proved itself as a “Terrible Mother” in the political campaigns instigated in the name of re-construction and modernization. The Cultural Revolution between the mid-sixties and late seventies, the bloody suppression of student movement in the late twentieth century, and the recent destruction of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok’s academy all reveal the dark side of this mother. In the Jungian sense, this Terrible Mother begins and ends the pandemonium at her will as the tool to control her “child.” It is apparent that the Chinese Communist Party, as a Terrible Mother, frequently activates “parental threats of abandonment used as sanctions to coerce or discipline the child” (ibid. 140). Here the Chinese subjects are threatened with the loss of their Marxist utopia. This, I assert, is a social reality of late socialist China as an inauspicious social environment in which the memories of a traumatic past frequently intrude a present laced with its own threats. Thus, Tibetan Buddhism is reviving and re-membering, but continues to be subjugated by the neurosis of this Terrible Mother.
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