神戸市外国語大学 学術情報リポジトリ

Remembering History in Amdo: Three Literary Accounts for the Years from 1956 to 1976

メタデータ	言語: English
	出版者:
	公開日: 2014-03-01
	キーワード (Ja):
	キーワード (En):
	作成者: Xaver Erhard, Franz
	メールアドレス:
	所属:
URL	https://kobe-cufs.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/1944

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 International License.

Remembering History in Amdo: Three Literary Accounts for the Years from 1956 to 1976

Franz Xaver Erhard

University of Leipzig

Unrest and fighting in eastern and north eastern Tibet in mid and late1950s posed a major threat to the Chinese project of nation building and national integration. Eventually unrest in the east led to the well documented 1959 uprising in Lhasa and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India. Given the importance of these events for Sino-Tibetan relations and history it is surprising that relatively little attention was given to the study of events in Eastern Tibet especially in Amdo.[1] The People's Republic of China (PRC) established a clear and clean master narrative of events following the theme of 'socialist liberation and modernization'. This master plot over time slowly penetrated the collective memory of Tibetans subordinating them to the PRC's nationalist project.

Nevertheless, in recent years a number of Tibetan language texts surfaced, which present a different and overall challenging view of the period: *Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug* (2007) by Nags-tshang Nus-blo, *Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur* (2009) by Tshe-ring don-grub, and the two volumes *Rin bzang mu 'brel zin bris* (2008)[2] partly authored and compiled by Bya-mdo Rin-chen bzang-po are but three examples of texts appearing between 2007 and 2009. These accounts are the result of an ongoing conflict between Tibetan Communicative Memory and Collective Memory as well as the historical master plot and thereby offer an alternative reading of historical events.

These disparate texts shed some light on the relationship between history, memory and society since these accounts are neither part of Scar Literature, as it emerged in China after Mao's death dealing with the trauma of the Cultural

---

[1] In recent years a number of studies of the 20th century histories in eastern Tibetan regions of Amdo and Kham have been published, e.g. Horlemann 2002, 2009, 2012; Makley 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012; McGranahan 2010, 2012; Tuttle 2005; Weiner 2012.

[2] The unofficial, privately published books lack any publication information. Only from the epilogue of the first volume *Nga'i pha yul dang zhi ba'i bcings grol* (Rin-chen bzang-po [2008b]) we can deduct a year of publication.

Revolution. Scar Literature was encouraged by authorities and still is an accepted literary trend.[3] Nor are these text one-dimensional narratives of suffering, as frequently presented in Tibetan autobiographical literature in English. On the contrary these texts reclaim Tibetan agency in the contested historical narrative of the 1950s, 60s and 70s by validating a Tibetan counter-memory.[4]

Research on memory in cultural and literary theory has differentiated two basic kinds of memory: (1) Communicative Memory is built through personal communication and interaction with friends or family but also through reading or films. (2) Collective Memory on the other hand is constructed through signs, symbols and institutions.[5] In Amdo the Collective Memory has been actively and heavily constructed by the Chinese state, who suppresses the memory of e.g. the Great Leap Forward and portrays the period as a success story of liberation and democratic reforms. Public unrest, resistance and war-like battles including the shelling of monasteries as well as torture, struggle sessions, executions, famine, cannibalism are deleted from the Collective Memory. The memory of these events is locked away in the silenced personal and individual memories of the people who witnessed the events or in restricted party archives where secret records are kept.

Amdo – at the Margins of History and the State

In the Tibetan counter-memories the Tibetan history of the 1950s to 1970s is described as a succession of collective and individual traumatic catastrophes. Surprisingly, the accounts radically different in literary form are extremely similar in terms of facts and events presented. Tibet was then and is nowadays far from being a homogenous society. Historians with their strong focus on political events have too long limited their perspective on the political relations of the ruling powers of Central Tibet to the outside

---

[3] For an overview on scar literature in China cf. Mostow *et al.* 2003: 527ff. The term Scar Literature or Literature of the Wounded (伤痕文学 *shanghen wenxue*) is translated in Tibetan dictionaries as *rmas rtags mtshon byed rtsom rig* (e.g. *Rgya bod shan sbyar* 1991: 1050; Goldstein *et al.* 2001: 834), however, this term does not seem to be much in use. Tshe-ring don-grub (personal communication 5.9.2013) proposed the more literal *rma shul rtsom rig* as more appropriate. The Tibetan scholar and critic Rnam-sras for instance uses (thanks to Riika Virtanen for this information) the term *sems rma'i brtsams sgrung* (2009: 3). Tibetan language examples of this rather formulaic genre would be among others *The Story of a Gesar Bard* by 'Jam-dpal rgya-mtsho (1984) or *The Bard* by Don-grub-rgyal (1997).

[4] On the concept of counter-memory cf. Gansel 2007.

[5] The concept of Collective Memory has been invented by Maurice Halbwachs and was further developed e.g. by Aleida and Jan Assmann, especially cf. Assmann 2012; Assmann 2008, 2011a, 2011b; on memory research in the context of China for instance cf. Lee *et al.* 2007; Mueggler 2001.

world. The Lhasa-centric perspective, as Samuel (1995) called it, leads to a distorted picture of Tibetan society and history. The government in Lhasa was rarely able to extend her power beyond Central Tibet and similarly, the Mongol rulers and the Chinese emperors were not able to establish themselves as de facto rulers of the large area between Tibet and China which Tibetans traditionally refer to as Amdo and Kham. For most of the time Tibetan communities here went about their own business regardless the claims of nominal hegemonic powers. Thus the vast pastoral areas between Tibet and China are reminiscent of what recently has been described as Zomia, a non-governed area in-between centralized states that hence has escaped study.[6] Nevertheless, under Chinese Communist rule, only Central-Tibet was treated as a special case, while the regions of Amdo and Kham had been integrated into neighboring Chinese provinces. The people as a result soon had to face socialist transformation in full. Experienced by local people as cultural and social displacement socialist democratic reforms met with a great number of revolts against Chinese rule. At its earliest, open resistance took form in Kham when local revolts erupted from 1956 onwards. Khampa histories despite being described as "arrested" (McGranahan 2010) are still told and have been more thoroughly researched recently. The histories of Amdo, which are the focus of this essay, on the other hand are still virtually unknown.[7]

The memories presented emphasize the individuality of local histories, setting events in Amdo apart from the histories of Central Tibet and mainland China by presenting local and personal experience which validates recent research on the period in China and Tibet.

In China, so-called liberation was not achieved in a single instant and was launched at different times in different places. In traditionally Chinese territories socialist transformation was implemented shortly after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. In minority areas, however, a gradual approach was followed, because the ethnic groups there in general were regarded as too backward to adapt a

---

[6] Sulek tries to describe the Tibetan areas stretching along the margins of Chinese and Tibetan territory within the theoretical framework of *zomia* (Scott 2009; van Schendel 2002). And indeed the Tibetan societies of Amdo and Kham put much effort into negotiating their de facto independence from the neighboring states, while accepting some sort of nominal suzerainty to both Tibet and China. Certainly, the status of Tibetans outside of Tibetan Autonomous Region is difficult to assess and the local histories counter the historical narratives of both the Central Tibetan state and China. (Andric 2011; Sulek *in press*)

[7] Weiner's (2012) study of the early years of Chinese rule in Tse-khog depends on official material stored in local archives and as such sheds light on the events at grassroots level. However, while this reflects the party's view of events, it doesn't necessarily reflect the experiences of local people.

socialist society for the time being. In Amdo for instance during the first years up to 1958, the United Front favored the policy of accommodation of local elites and life in Amdo by and large went unaltered. To the local people the presence of Chinese Communists in the beginning did not appear to be significantly different from the Chinese Nationalist's troops. The Chinese Communist Party appropriated imperial practices, such as bestowing titles on and awarding nominal positions to local leaders in order to win over the upper classes and traditional elites of minority populations (cf. Weiner 2012: 25ff.) As a result social change did not take place or was at least obscured by the continuity of the local agents be it the Chinese empire, the republican or communist state. In the second half of the 1950s, however, this lenient approach gave way to socialist fervor and the revolutionary impatience of the Great Leap Forward, which was officially launched in 1957.[8] Land reform, communalization etc. soon led to massive resistance and fighting all over Amdo. Tibetan areas, that now were treated no more different from the rest of China, should forcibly become integrated into the new culture and society socialist China. Starting from March 1958 collectives and from August the People's Communes (人民公社 *renmin gonshe*) together with various reforms in agricultural and industrial production where introduced (cf. Manning 2011). While after liberation usually the traditional leaders (*dpon po*) were assigned party and government positions and could still rule their people, democratization (*mang gtso bcos 'gyur*) had these leaders – and everyone else educated as well – removed and subjected to class struggle in so-called struggle sessions (*thab 'dzing,* 批斗大会 *pidou dahui*). The survivors were deported to labor camps or otherwise isolated from the general public.

Already in the winter of 1958 the disastrous results of the Great Leap Forward could be felt and one of the greatest famines in world history unfolded. It is estimated that more than 35 million people died during that three-year-period in China. Officially the famine was explained by unfortunate weather conditions. Nevertheless, international scholarship frequently described the famine as "man-

[8] The Great Leap Forward (大跃进 *da yue jin*) was an economic and social campaign between roughly 1957 and 1961 that aimed at rapid industrialization and economic growth. Mao had announced in 1957 announced that China's economy would overtake both the US and Great Britain's shortly (Dikötter 2010: 14). The agrarian Chinese society was to be transformed into a communist society in only a few years. Subsequently economy was radically industrialized, property collectivized and the people became organized in communes.

made" and explains it with the faulty Maoist policies.[9]

Tibetans in Amdo, however, reacted to these new policies with resistance and armed revolt. In Amdo the terms "liberation" and "democratization" are usually associated with the year 1958, which can be seen as the watershed in the history of socialist transformation of Amdo (cf. Relyea 2013; Weiner 2012).

Published Memories

The periods of liberation and the Great Leap Forward are still rarely dealt with in the PRC.[10] The memory of the Cultural Revolution was a popular theme of Scar Literature in the late 1970s and early 1980s as well as in many autobiographies of the 1990s. (cf. Link 2000: 51ff.) However, in Amdo the first decade of Communist rule is – or better was – absolutely silenced.[11] The Chinese state and the Communist Party have intensively and successfully worked on the construction of an official version of the history of liberation in Tibetan areas. Propagated in schoolbooks and TV-drama, commemorated in monuments and public holidays, liberation since then is described as a story of unparalleled success. Alternative and dissenting voices are strictly silenced. Nevertheless, there is a vital interest by many Tibetan intellectuals, and the wish to tell the younger generation about one's own traumatic experiences led in the end to the production of such autobiographical and fictional accounts as presented in this essay.

However, as Rin-bzang's collection repeatedly demonstrates, the witnesses

---

[9] Most recent studies agree with this interpretation (e.g. cf. Becker 1999; Bramall 2011; Dikötter 2010; Manning *et al.* 2011; Ó Gráda 2011; Wemheuer 2012; Yang *et al.* 2012), however they generally exclude Tibet and Tibetan areas for lack of available information. Jasper Becker's study of "China's great famine" is an exception in as much as he devotes a whole chapter to the developments in Tibet. However, his description of the situation in Tibet remains incomplete. His information is based on interviews conducted in Dharamsala, H.P., India and parts of the Xth Panchen Lama's secret report (cf. Becker 1999: Chapter 11, 166ff.) The Panchen Lama in his 1962 70.000 Character Petition on the situation in Tibet gave a detailed analysis of policy failures and description of their devastating consequences in Tibet and Tibetan areas of neighboring provinces which generally agrees with other studies of the Great Leap Forward and the famine cited above (cf. Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan 1997: 98ff.)

[10] Zhang Zhilong's reportage of villager Wu who built a monument to commemorate the people of his village who died from starvation during the Great Leap Forward period both documents the fears still connected with events from the Great Leap Forward and the new possibility of dealing with GLF history today still is a rare exemption (Zhang Zhilong 2012). Yang Jisheng's detailed documentation of the period for instance could not be published within the PRC (cf. Yang *et al.* 2012).

[11] The memory of this period is certainly still vivid in Communicative Memory. But it is usually not openly addressed. In short stories for example, one may find allusions to the period most often only by citing the year of 1958 in the obscured and abbreviated form of "*nga brgyad*", as Françoise Robin demonstrated at IATS 13, Mongolia.

often would prefer to leave these memories untouched and forgotten. But it is the younger generation that demands to know from those who have "heard with their [own] ears and seen with their [own] eyes" (A-ma lo-lon *et al.* [2008]: 42).

The accounts introduced here hence are special because they try to record these memories in writing in order to stop them from fading into oblivion. In doing so they activate these memories stored in the Communicative Memory and elevate them to the Collective Memory as a form of counter-memory.[12] In order to establish a powerful counter-memory the authors had to find a form of (re)presentation. They propose three different approaches: oral history, autobiography, and fiction.

Rin-bzang's collection of oral history is an unofficial publication published in 2008, but we can assume collecting the oral histories has taken several months if not years. *Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug*, the second text, was completed in 2005 and published internally (*nang khul*, 内刊 *neibu*) only in 2007. Finally the third text, *Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur*, finalized already in 2006, was eventually published in book form in early 2009. None of the three publications did qualify for the official book market and they had to be distributed through more or less private channels or in the few private book shops (mostly in Qinghai, but few also exist in Gansu and Sichuan) who until 2009 were still operating with relative freedom. In the TAR one could only get copies through personal contacts. In China the publishing industry is tightly controlled by the state. Even though there is no censoring institution, publishers need to obtain approval by the state and, in the case of Tibet, all publishing houses are state owned. In order to publish a book it is necessary to find an editor in a publishing house supporting the publication. The editors often are very careful and actually function as political censors.[13]

The oral histories collected and edited by Bya-mdo Rin-chen bzang-po, are seemingly the most direct, authentic, raw and least refined accounts of Chinese Communist rule in the small area of Bya-mdo in Mang-ra (贵南 Guinan) county in Mtsho-sngon (青海 Qinghai) from 1958 through the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Not much is known about Rin-chen bzang-po, who was a monk based at Drepung monastery in Lhasa, besides the fact that he compiled the two books, each about 200

[12] I suspect that more such counter-memory texts exist (however, they still have to be recovered and made available to a greater audience).

[13] For some general information on the Chinese publishing industry cf. Drury 1998; Yeh 1987. On censorship in the PRC cf. Link 2000: 56-96.

pages, under the series title *Rin bzang gi mu 'grel zin tho* or *Rinzang's Continuous Notes*. Both volumes present oral histories of survivors of the revolt against Democratic Reforms and Chinese Communist domination in 1958 and the subsequent leftists radicalism through 1976 in the hometown of the author-cum-editor. The interviewees have all been actively or passively involved in the events that were at the heart of this history: All members of a pastoralist community were gathered at the newly established communal seat and were to surrender both life stock and weapons. The nomads resisted the orders and violent fighting broke out. In the end the nomads had to surrender and many were deported to prison and labor camps.

Volume one is entitled *My Home and Peaceful Liberation* or *Nga'i pha yul dang zhi ba'i bcing grol* ([2008b]) and comprises of ten interviews, an introductory essay, and the Tibetan translation of the Declaration of Human Rights.[14] In the second book, *My Home, Listen Carefully* or *Nga'i pha yul dang zab nyan* ([2008a]), there are seven interviews, a travel diary and some photographs collected from the internet.[15] Rin-bzang's two compilations are unofficial publications lacking any imprimatur or ISBN; they have been produced and distributed privately. The epilogue of the first book is dated July 25, 2008; we can thus assume the book was published the same year.

Bya-mdo Rin-bzang faced dire consequences from publishing these interviews. He was arrested by the authorities in 2009. He was reportedly released due to his bad health condition and sent back to his family. He is now reported to be physically and mentally disabled (cf. Dge-rab 2009a, 2009b, ICT 2010: 56f.).

Altogether seventeen out of twenty-three chapters are based on interviews with about twenty witnesses conducted in 2003 and Rin-bzang makes the following claim in the epilogue to the first volume:

> Dear readers, this book, My Home and Peaceful Liberation, published here is a true and accurate account of history. The situations documented here constitute the living testament of the elders. This book

---

[14] Another translation appeared in the appendix to another banned book *The Line between Sky and Earth* ([2009]) by Zhogs-dung (Bkra-rgyal by his real name).

[15] The travel diaries are unrelated to the oral histories, as they want to portray the status quo in Tibetan areas. The transcript of discussions in Lhasa highlights the issue of Buddhism in contemporary Tibet. Without wanting to go into detail, these parts give the interviews some context. Rin-bzang seems to connect the past traumatic experiences with a contemporary crisis of Tibetan identity.

> is a process that flows out from the blood that comes from cut veins of a nationality's economy, society and culture.[16]

Rin-bzang further maintains, disregarding the basic qualities of his texts as memories, that they document the truth about what is commonly phrased "liberation", calling them "true and accurate". The following accounts recollect individual histories of suffering and surviving. However, the accounts maintain a personal and individual perspective on the events and never place personal experience in an historical context. Presumably, the context is regarded as common knowledge which does not need further explanation. The oral histories recall the same events from varying points of view and varying degrees of involvement. Interestingly, the events are all told in similar, almost stereotypical fashion and are largely bereft of individual experiences. The protagonists underline the personal nature of the accounts, but they quickly change from the individualistic "I" to the point of view of the group expressed by the collective "we". It is thus made explicit that even though the memories are personal they do not remember an individual but a group destiny. Similar to Speaking Bitterness techniques, the personal experience and memory is generalized and made part of a Collective Memory. And in fact, Rin-bzang's protagonists all have witnessed and maybe played their part in Speaking Bitterness performances. (Makley 2005: 46) The knowledge and internalization of the poetics of Speaking Bitterness at times had proved essential for the personal survival. It will, however, remain unclear if the elders interviewed consciously or unconsciously drew from the Speaking Bitterness accounts when they started to put their memories into narratives, however, they univocally formulated the same counter-history.

The accounts, of course, challenge the Chinese Communist Party's historical master narrative and are elevated to "constitute the will/testament of the elders". In the epilogue Rin-bzang also refers to the traumatic experiences using the term "*rlung dmar*" ([2008b]: 202) which is also used in the title of Tshe-ring don-grub's novel. The oral accounts of the arrival of the PLA, the occupation and destruction of the local monastery, the armed resistance, defeat and death are mirrored in both Nagtsang Nulo's autobiography and in Tshe-ring don-grub's fictional description of the Dranag tribe's (*sbra nag tsho ba*) ambivalent response to the arrival of the PLA

[16] Rin-chen bzang-po [2008b]: 202; all translations from Tibetan are mine.

in Tsezhung.[17]

Nags-tshang Nus-ldan blo-bzang (*1948, *sa byi lo*), a retired cadre from Golog (Mgo-log, 果洛) became popular only after the publication of his autobiography *Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug* or *The Joys and Sorrows of a Nagtsang Boy* (Nus-ldan blo-bzang 2007). The autobiographical account was originally written in a local dialect, but became later translated into Lhasa dialect in india (Nus-ldan blo-bzang 2008); an anonymous English translation has been prepared and awaits its publication (cf. Nus-ldan blo-bzang *in press*).

The book was produced and published with an official classified imprimatur by state authorities (*nang khul,* 内刊 *neibu*). The label "classified" is reserved for documentary material supposedly only to be read by Chinese citizens. Apparently, the book was ordered to be taken from the book shelves on the pretext of being pirate copies. Certainly the authorities were not pleased by the reception and popularity the book had gained. Nagtsang himself addressed the issue of the purportedly illegal status of his book in a blog, where he posted the imprimatur number of his autobiography as proof of its legal status (cf. Nus-ldan blo-bzang 2011). However, the book was extremely popular and soon many pirated copies flooded the little Tibetan book market of Xining (Qinghai province). Barnett speaks of "at least 10.000 copies [that] are said to have been sold, most of them pirated" (Barnett *in press*: 2).

The text became extremely popular in Amdo for its use of colloquial Amdo dialect and for voicing a long suppressed shared history. His memoirs detail the childhood of a Golog youth shortly before and after liberation. Events before liberation include feuding and escape of the Nags-tshang family, an extensive pilgrimage to Lhasa as well as the sights of Central Tibet (Dbus-gtsang). These episodes fulfill the author's objectives to give a detailed and vivid description of pre-liberation life in both Amdo and Central Tibet. Even though characterized by extreme hardship and an unfair system of governance,[18] the Tibetan world, however,

---

[17] Tib. *rtse gzhung*; Tsezhung is the name of a vast pasture land within the second bend of the Yellow River (Rma-chu 黄河 Huanghe) which became part of today's Malho Sokdzong (Rma lho 黄南 Huangnan,Sog-rdzong, 河南 Henan), cf. Tuttle 2011. All of Tshe-ring don-grub's novels and most of his short stories are set in this area, an instant that furthers the blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality.

[18] This is illustrated by the feuding episode, describing Tibetan vendetta or *mi sha mi stong* (Nus-ldan blo-bzang 2007: 54) and land disputes as source for infighting between neighboring communities (Nus-ldan blo-bzang 2007: 56) and the episode describing the groundless accusations and untenable beatings Nus-blo's father receives in his monastery as personal revenge of powerful monks (Nus-ldan blo-bzang 2007:

seems intact and the Tibetans content with their fate. Nus-blo's father decides to flee from the advancing PLA troops to Lhasa accompanied by a small group of family and friends. On the way they witness death and destruction brought about by the PLA soldiers and are drawn into fighting with PLA troops who finally defeat them and kill Nus-blo's father in combat. Nus-blo is taken prisoner and brought to a labor camp. Soon afterwards he is transferred to a Tibetan school where he and his younger brother barely survived the Great Leap Forward with its radical policies and resulting famine. Nus-ldan blo-bzang's detailed account contains the most grave descriptions of starvation including cannibalism:

> One day Jabey and I were collecting firewood on the far bank of the river. On our way back we stopped at the *pika* traps and removed five or six dead ones. When we went down to the river we saw two children breaking a bone and eating the marrow. We could see a human leg a short distance away. […] Looking back from the other side of the river we could still see the two boys clinging their heads together and eating the human bone. In the evening when we sat together drinking tea Wugpa came and told us: "In the second tent most people are eating human flesh, it is said."[19]

However, in his account there is no criticism of the politics and policies of the time. Surrounded by death and destruction it is the two Nags-tshang boys who ingeniously manage not only to save their own lives but also to distribute some food to their friends. In Nus-blo's memories the abundant suffering lacks agency. The persons who inflicted the suffering or who could be held responsible remain anonymous and invisible. The memories, on the contrary, are populated by friends and helpers, be it Chinese or Tibetan.

Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug differs from the oral histories of Rin-bzang first of all in scope and detail. Nus-blo chose not to simply put together his memories but to organize them into an autobiographical account (*rang rnam*) which tells the formative years of a young Tibetan boy. It is very important to keep in mind the

---

233ff.)

[19] Nus-ldan blo-bzang 2007: 442. NB: Pika or 'whistling hare' is the Tibetan A-bra; its scientific name is *ochotona curzoniae*; cf. Smith *et al.* 2008.

narrative constellation: Autobiographical writing in general represents a retrospective evaluation and a process of sense making of the authors own life. The point of view is thus that of the grown up author who looks back well knowing about the future outcome of past actions. The autodiegetic narrator resembles the author as a young boy (in the 1950s and 1960s), however, with the experience of an 60 year-old man at the time of writing in 2007. Thus the suggested naïveté of the first person narrator and the consequent absence of reflection of events or any political commentary is an artistic strategy with the ambition to create an seemingly objective or neutral representation of time and events. Nus-blo's account thus escapes the agit prop rhetoric of Rin-bzang's oral histories.

Nus-blo makes an interesting narratological decision when he strictly focalizes the narration through the innocent child. By restricting himself to the infantile perception of an innocent boy the story detaches itself from the historical incidents and political campaigns of the time. Neither are claims made as to why the father of the main protagonist engaged in fighting nor what reasons led to the catastrophic famine that took the lives of most of Nus-blo's fellow prisoners. As such the autobiography presents itself as an endless chain of uncomprehended suffering and personal survival. Certainly the seemingly high objectivity of Nus-blo's account, especially the absence of interpretation and political claims spared the text from being banned.

Tshe-ring don-grub (*1961), a state official from the archives of Sog-po district in Rma-lho prefecture, Qinghai, presented in his novel *The Red Wind Scream* or *Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur* (2009) the most comprehensive portrayal of the years of High Socialism between 1956 and 1976. *The Red Wind Scream* is a fictional reconstruction of the period and its author too young to have personal memories of the Great Leap Forward. In opposition to the above introduced autobiographical accounts, Tshe-ring don-grub does not need to limit himself to actual or felt historical truth but enjoys full artistic freedom. His novel however wants to go beyond Rin-bzang's simplistic reduction of history to a narrative of uncomprehended suffering or Nags-tshang Nus-blo's personalized survival story. *The Red Wind Scream* aims at uncovering past agendas.

Tshe-ring don-grub is both an acclaimed writer and a historian. His fame as

writer dates back to the 1980s, but after the publication of the magical-realist novel *Mes po* in 2001 and the social-critical novel *Smug pa* a year later (2002) he became a leading Tibetan novelist[20]. His third and so far last novel *The Red Wind Scream* could only be published privately in 2009 i.e. without the imprimatur of the Department of Publishing nor with one of the state-controlled publishing houses. The first edition of 2500 copies was soon reprinted or copied numerous times. No publishing house dared to publish the text for the fear of negative political implications.[21]

Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur was researched and written over many years and completed as early as 2006. The novel is clearly marked as fiction[22] but was repeatedly taken as an accurate account of historical facts. It is, for instance, being used as a historical source by other Tibetan authors e.g. in Zhogs-dung's *Gnam sa sgo 'byed* ([2009]: e.g. 90, 99) due to the accuracy of his portrayal of the time. In Chinese culture truth traditionally is less factual, thus a fictional representation of history may well count as a true historical account (cf. Plaks 1977: 312f.) The possibilities provided by the fictional form of the novel thus allows a holistic and true representation of the period. Tshe-ring don-grub's novel consequently may be the most dangerous embodiment of counter-memory. The state thus viewed the novel as factual history, ignoring the many indicators of fictionality. Following its publication, Tshe-ring don-grub was demoted from his former positions and had his passport confiscated by the authorities. Officially the authorities accused him of publishing his book outside the industry and bypassing the PRC's publication regulations. Unofficially, as it leaked from police, his book was regarded as "historical misrepresentation".

The Red Wind Scream tells the story of A-lags 'Brong, an abbot (of dubious moral qualities), and his two main disciples Blo-bzang tshul-khrims and Blo-bzang

---

[20] Both novels have been published outside the state-controlled publishing industry utilizing the Hong Kong based Gyi-ling publishing house (sometimes also spelled Then mā after 天马 *tian ma*), which only provides ISBN but doesn't provide any editorial or other publishing services. The books published through Gyi-ling can only be regarded semi-legal within the People's Republic because they escape the strict control through the General Administration of Press and Publication (Drury 1998: 112). However, in Tibetan areas of the PRC rules and regulations were not strictly implemented and Gyi-ling offered a promising possibility to authors who could not establish themselves within the state-controlled publishing industries. In the Tibet Autonomous Region of course Gyi-ling publications appear only rarely and if so only in the few private sector book stalls.

[21] Tsering Döndrub mentioned the unwillingness of various editors to accept the manuscript. Tsering Döndrub's version was explicitly and repeatedly confirmed by informants in the industry.

[22] It says on the cover: "*tshe ring don grub gi sgrung ring gsum pa*", Tsering Döndrub's third novel.

rgya-mtsho during the dramatic changes after the arrival of the PLA. In 1958 the PLA troops destroy A-lags ‘Brong’s monastery and his two disciples have to take sides. Blo-bzang tshul-khrims, who is less successful in his studies, sides with the Communists and enjoys his new career opportunities as well as his opportunity to take revenge. The other student keeps up his vows and has to lead a life as outlaw outside the newly established People’s Commune, vulnerable to the exploitation of the people. A-lags ‘Brong is labeled a reactionary leader and deported to a labor camp. The three protagonists represent each a separate realm of Tibetan experience during this period. Ironically, after the death of Mao the three characters are reunited as *bla ma* with his two disciples.

Similar to the other accounts, the arrival of the PLA is described as the first Tibetan encounter with Chinese people. Tibetans are portrayed as naïve, innocent and not at all having a clear understanding of the situation. Humorous mention, for example, is made of the curiosity of Tibetans to learn whether the Red Chinese would actually have red faces:

> A-lag ‘Brong had seen “white Chinese” before. They really had been absolutely white/pale, so he thought the “red Chinese” must actually, just like his first teacher, each have a face red like the bottom of a monkey. But because the people sitting in front of him were actually even whiter than the white Chinese he, extremely surprised, asked “Are you really a red Chinese?” (Tshe-ring don-grub 2009: 11)

Certainly just an anecdote, yet it gives an idea about the very limited world outlook of the Tibetans. On the other side, the narrative neglects the century old contact and exchange between China and Tibet in order to construct Tibetan society as complacent and way apart from political affairs of the time. This naiveté sharply contrasts with the violent events to follow starting with the year 1958. This year in Tshe-ring don-grub’s novel also marks the turning point in the lives of the nomads (*'brog pa tsho*). There was a sudden change in the Chinese officials attitude: Tibetans who were earlier treated as friends and compatriots were now called “robbers (*jag pa*)”. These changes resulted quickly in what became remembered as the "pathetic day (*skyi g.ya' ba'i nyin mo*)” by the people and as the "uprising (*zing 'khrug*)” by the Communist cadres and in official language (Tshe-ring don-grub 2009: 108f.): The local monastery is destroyed, high ranking monks are imprisoned

and the lower strata of Tibetan society are put in powerful positions. Tshe-ring don-grub describes the evolving Tibetan world in its heterogeneity and complexity by focalizing two ideal typical characters representing the two basic domains of experience: life in prison or labor camp and life in people's commune.

Collective Memory and Counter-Memory

In socialist countries, not exclusively but certainly most intensively, the state tends to control not only collective but also the individual, personal memory. In China during the political campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s in Speaking Bitterness performances personal memories were systematically collected by the PLA, statistically evaluated and by generalization transferred to the collective memory. Personal memory thus contributed greatly to the construction of a historical master narrative of feudal exploitation and socialist liberation.[23] Nevertheless, personal memory is also a powerful source of alternative voices challenging this very master narrative. The accounts under consideration here represent such voices and constitute the narrative genre of counter-memories. They are the result of an ongoing conflict between collective memory as well as the historical master plot and the Tibetan communicative memory, thereby offering an alternative reading of historical events.

Current research estimates the reach of Communicative Memory to last as long as three generations or about 80 years (e.g. Assmann 2008: 112). In other words, Communicative Memory disappears together with those who are able to tell their personal memories. The surfacing of Tibetan counter-memories, obviously, is largely motivated by the desire to keep these memories alive. In order to do so, however, they have to be transferred from communicative memory, which also means from orality, to collective memory and to writing. Here the interest of Tibetan writers confronts the state's interest in constructing a homogenous and harmonious version of Chinese history. The state almost naturally reacts with oppression.

In an uncertain future only this memory will be recovered as collective memory. In Tibetan areas in China there seems to exist, as Charlene Makley puts it, a "silent pact", "an unspoken agreement not to publicly address the histories and political economic implications of specifically Tibetan sources of authority". The 2008 unrest

[23] Makley 2005: 47; Makley makes the explicit point, that Tibetans unlike other Chinese villagers first encounter with Speaking Bitterness performances was in struggle sessions in 1958.

and the resulting crackdown, she argues, "unleashed the specter of the Maoist dead" (Makley 2012). In fact the first twenty years under Maoist rule from 1956 to 1976 certainly have been the most traumatic in Tibetan history. Memories of these periods, commonly labeled Democratic Reforms, the Great Leap Forward, and the Great Cultural Revolution, have been actively and systematically silenced. While the memory of the Cultural Revolution, at least within certain limits, was allowed to be addressed e.g. through the channels of Scar Literature, the militant histories of liberation in Amdo as well as the catastrophic events of the Great Leap Forward have been wiped from public or collective memory since they contradict the socialist master plot of successful liberation, democratization, and economic development.

The three accounts vary in literary form being a collection of oral histories, an autobiography and a novel (strongly relying on archival research as well as oral histories). These three literary forms take also three differing perspectives on history: Oral history as history from below claims to be a true and valid though marginalized historical account. Autobiography entails a more complicated relationship with history claiming to be true but rather on a more abstract level allowing for more fictive elements. And at last the form of novel certainly claiming some higher historical truth while clearly stating its fictive nature.

No matter what relationship with historical truth they engage, the three books add significantly to our knowledge concerning the events taking part shortly after the arrival of the PLA. It is important to always keep in mind that these accounts provide us with memories of the period filtered by some sort of personal agenda. They are memories which have been suppressed for most of the time but have been haunting Tibetans just as others in China through the "age of wild ghosts" (Mueggler 2001).

Nevertheless, the violent and traumatic memories of these early encounters with the PLA and the Chinese Communist state's representatives have lived on in the memories contained in private conversations, stories told by grandfathers to their grandchildren, and so forth. Memories embedded in day to day conversations and stories, but also in vocabulary and phraseology make up the living Communicative Memory. In the three accounts presented in this essay this memory is organized into consistent narratives, printed and thus stored in the vast archives of Tibetan cultural memory for the reference of later generations. For the immediate presence, however, the counter memories want to put a finger into the wounds of cultural displacement inflicted over the past 60 years.

Bibliography

Rgya bod shan sbyar gyi tshig mdzod 漢藏詞匯

1991. [*Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary]* Pe cin: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.

A-ma lo-lon and Bya-mdo Rin-chen bzang-po

[2008] A ma lo lon zhig gi kha brda. [Conversation with an Old Mother] In: Bya-mdo Rin-chen bzang-po (ed.), *Nga'i pha yul dang zhi ba'i bcings grol. [My Home and Peaceful Liberation]*; pp. 42–60. (Rin-bzang gi mu 'brel zin tho, 1).

Andric, Niko

2011 Nagtsang Boy's Joys and Sorrows, or How China Liberated the Tibetan Grasslands. *IIAS Newsletter* (57): 12–13.

Assmann, Aleida

2012 *Introduction to Cultural Studies. Topics, Concepts, Issues*. Berlin: Schmidt. (EVS basics, 36).

Assmann, Jan

2008 Communicative and Cultural Memory. In: Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*; pp. 109–118. Berlin: Walter de Grueyter. (Media and Cultural Memory/ Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung, 8).

2011a Communicative and Cultural Memory. In: Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, and Edgar Wunder (eds.), *Cultural Memories. The Geographical Point of View*; pp. 15–27. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media B.V. (Knowledge and Space, Klaus Tschira Symposia, 4).

2011b *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barnett, Robert

in press Introduction to Naktsang Nulo's Joys and Sorrows. In: Nus-ldan blo-bzang (in press) *Nagtsang Boy's Joys and Sorrows.* Anonymous, Unpublished Translation of Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug (2007).

Becker, Jasper

1999 *Hungry Ghosts. China's Secret Famine*. London: John Murray.

Bkra-rgyal (Zhogs-dung)

[2009] *Gnam sa go 'byed. Sa byi zhi ba'i gsar brje la bris pa. [Opening the Door Between Sky and Earth: Written for the Peaceful Revolution of the Earth Mouse Year 2008]* [Zi ling]

Bramall, Chris

2011 Agency and Famine in China's Sichuan Province. 1958-1962. *The China Quarterly*. 28: 990–1008.

Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan

1997 *A Poisoned Arrow. The Secret Report of the 10th Panchen Lama The Full Text of the Panchen Lama's 70000 Character Petition of 1962, Together with a Selection of Supporting Historical Documents*. London: Tibet Information Network.

Dge-rab

2009a Rin-bzang bor 'dug zer [Rumors Say Rinzang has Disappeared] http://www.khabdha.org/?p=3232. Accessed 20 August 2012.

2009b *Rin-bzang smyon par btang 'dug* [Rinzang Insane After Beating] http://www.khabdha.org/?p=4334/. Accessed 20 August 2012.

Dikötter, Frank

2010 *Mao's Great Famine. The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962*. New York: Walker & Co.

Don-grub-rgyal

1997 Sgrung pa [The Bard] In: Ban-kho and Bkra-rgyal (eds.), *Dpal don grub rgyal gyi gsung 'bum* [*Collected Works of Döndrub Gyel*], vol. 2; pp. 318–328. Pe cin: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.

Drury, Russel

1998 Publishing in China. Developments since 1992. *Asian Libraries*. 7 (5): 111–118.

Gansel, Carsten

2007 Zwischen offiziellem Gedächtnis und Gegen-Erinnerung. Literatur und kollektives Gedächtnis in der DDR. In: Carsten Gansel (ed.), *Gedächtnis und Literatur in den "geschlossenen Gesellschaften" des Real-Sozialismus zwischen 1945 und 1989*. Göttingen: V & R Unipress. (Formen der Erinnerung, 29).

Goldstein, Melvyn C., Shelling, T. N., and J. T. Surkhang

2001 *The New Tibetan English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.

Horlemann, Bianca

2002 Modernization Efforts in Mgo-log. A Chronicle 1970-2000. In: Toni Huber (ed.), *Amdo Tibetans in Transition. Society and Culture in the Post-Mao-Era*; pp. 241–269. Leiden: Brill.

2009 The Divine Word Missionaries in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang, 1922–1953. A Bibliographic Note. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. 19 (01): 59–82.

2012 Tibetan Nomadic Trade, the Chinese 'Xiejia' System and the Sino-Tibetan Border Market in Stong-'khor/ Dang'gaer in 19th/ 20th Century A-mdo. In: Roberto Vitali (ed.), *Studies on the History and Literature of Tibet and the Himalaya*. Kathmandu: Vajra Publications.

ICT (International Campaign for Tibet)

2010 *A Raging Storm. The Crackdown on Tibetan Writers and Artists after Tibet's Spring 2008 Protests*. http://savetibet.de/fileadmin/user_upload/content/berichte/Raging_Storm.pdf. Accessed 17 October 2013.

'Jam-dpal rgya-mtsho

1984 *Sgrung mkhan zhig gi gtam rgyud. [The story of a Gesar bard]* Lan-kru'u: Kan-su'u mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.

Lee, Ching K. and Guobin Yang (eds.)

2007 *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution. The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Link, Eugene Perry

2000 *The Uses of Literature. Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press. (Princeton paperbacks).

Makley, Charlene E.

2005 “Speaking Bitterness”. Autobiography, History, and Mnemonic Politics on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 47 (1): 40–78.

2007 *The Violence of Liberation. Gender and Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

2008 The Politics of Memory. Gender, Autobiography and Maoist Violence in Amdo. In: Fernanda Pirie and Toni Huber (eds.), *Conflict and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia*; pp. 113–133. Leiden, Boston: Brill. (Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, 21).

2012 *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*. http://culanth.org/?q=node/538. Accessed 17 October 2013.

Manning, Kimberley E. (ed.)

2011 *Eating Bitterness. New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Manning, Kimberley Ens and Wemheuer, Felix

2011 Introduction. In: Kimberley E. Manning (ed.), *Eating Bitterness. New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine*; pp. 1–27. Vancouver: UBC Press.

McGranahan, Carole

2010 *Arrested Histories. Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War*. Durham: Duke University Press.

2012 Mao in Tibetan Disguise. History, Ethnography, and Excess. *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. 2 (1): 213–245.

Mostow, Joshua S. and Kirk A. Denton (eds.)

2003 *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian literature*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

Mueggler, Erik

2001 *The Age of Wild Ghosts. Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nags-tshang Nus-ldan blo-bzang

2007 *Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug. [Joy and Sorrow of a Nagtsang Boy]* Chu dmar leb.

2008 *Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug*. [rewritten in standard Tibetan by Gser-rta Tshul-khrims] Dharamsala: Khawa Karpo Tibet Cultural Centre.

2011 «Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug» dang 'brel nas mgo log bsam tshe la springs pa'i yi ge [A Letter to Golog Samtse Regarding «Joys and Sorrows of a Nagtsang Boy»] http://www.bodrigs.com/special/nagtsang/2011-12-30/23.html. Accessed 23 August 2012.

in press Nagtsang Boy's Joys and Sorrows. Anonymous, Unpublished Translation of Nags tshang zhi lu'i skyid sdug (2007).

Ó Gráda, Cormac

2011 Great Leap into Famine. A Review Essay. *Population & Development Review*. 37 (1): 191–202.

Plaks, Andrew H.

1977 Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative. In: Andrew H. Plaks (ed.), *Chinese Narrative. Critical and Theoretical Essays*; pp. 309–352. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

Relyea, Scott

2013 [Review] Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier. http://dissertationreviews.org/archives/3578. Accessed 6 June 2013.

Bya-mdo Rin-chen bzang-po (ed.)

[2008a] *Nga'i pha yul dang gzab nyan* [*My Home - Listen Carefully*] (Rin-bzang gi mu 'brel zin tho, 2).

[2008b] *Nga'i pha yul dang zhi ba'i bcings grol* [*My Home and Peaceful Liberation*] (Rin-bzang gi mu 'brel zin tho, 1).

Rnam-sras

2009 *Bod kyi deng rabs rtsom rig zhib 'jug*. Pe-cin: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang.

Samuel, Geoffrey

1995 *Civilized shamans. Buddhism in Tibetan societies*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Inst. Press.

Scott, James C.

2009 *The Art of Not Being Governed. An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Smith, A. T. and C. H. Johnston

2008 Ochotona curzoniae (Black-lipped Pika, Plateau Pika). http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/full/41258/0. Accessed 15 October 2013.

Sulek, Emilia

in press *Like an Old Tent at Night. Nagtsang Boy's Joys and Sorrows or a personal history of the years 1948-1959 in Tibet*. Berlin.

Tshe-ring don-grub

2001 *Mes po. [Forefather]* Zhang kang: Zhang-kang gyi-ling dpe-skrun-khang.

2002 *Smug pa. Tshe ring don grub kyi sgrung ring gnyis pa. [Fog]* Zhang-kang:Zhang-kang gyi-ling dpe-skrun-khang.

2009 *Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur. Tshe ring don grub kyi sgrung ring gsum pa. [The Red Wind Scream]* No place: No publisher.

Tuttle, Gray

2005 *Tibetan Buddhists in the Making of Modern China*. New York: Columbia University Press.

2011 *The Mongolian Kings of Tsezhung*. http://places.thlib.org/features/23750/ descriptions/1221. Accessed 23 February 2012.

van Schendel, Willem

2002 Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: jumping scale in Southeast Asia. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 20 (6): 647–668.

Weiner, Benno Ryan

2012 *The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier. State Building, National Integration and Socialist Transformation, Zeku (Tsékhok) County, 1953-1958*. New York.

Wemheuer, Felix

2012 *Der Große Hunger. Hungersnöte unter Stalin und Mao*. Berlin: Rotbuch-Verl.

Yang, Jisheng*, et al.*

2012 *Tombstone. The Great Chinese Famine, 1958 - 1962*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.

Yeh, Thomas Y.

1987 Government Publications of the People's Republic of China. *Government Publications Review*. 14 (4): 405–410.

Zhang Zhilong

2012 Starved of memories. http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/731589.shtml. Accessed 7 September 2012.