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Urban Fault Lines in Shangri-La: Population and Economic Foundations of Inter-ethnic Conflict in the Tibetan Areas of Western China

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Urban Fault Lines in Shangri-La: Population and economic foundations of interethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas of Western China[*]

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This paper argues that contemporary experiences of social exclusion and interethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas of Western China are interrelated and revolve around three processes – population, growth and employment – all of which centre on the urban areas. In this setting, the critical factors generating exclusion and fuelling conflict are the differentials between groups, such as urbanisation rates and education levels, rather than base line characteristics, such as population shares or poverty levels. The paper starts with a brief overview of ethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas, followed by an analysis of population issues and the economic fundamentals of exclusionary growth. It closes with some reflections on the role that ethnic conflict plays within these processes.

Introduction

> Masses of the Han race have been settled into Tibet, reducing the original Tibetans into a minority in their own land.
>
> Samdhong Rimpoche
> (Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in Exile)[1]

The subject of population generally frames popular analyses of conflict in the Tibetan areas of Western China. The reigning view in the Tibetan exile community – as well as among most western observers and even many Tibetans and Chinese within Tibet – contends that the Han, and to a lesser extent the Muslims, are quite simply overrunning Tibet, in a process that is typically referred to as 'population swamping' or 'transfer'. This view has a basis that is partially valid, but only with respect to the Tibetan urban areas, where Han and Muslim migrants mostly congregate; it is only in the main strategic cities and towns where it can be truly argued that the Han are outnumbering the Tibetans. Ironically, the perception of population swamping is essentially an urban-centric assessment of ethnic shares in the population, even though the Tibetan areas remain some of the most rural in China.

The economic foundations of immigration and exclusion in the Tibetan areas point to the legitimate concern that immigration might exacerbate economic exclusion among locals, even in the midst of rapid growth, although not because of swamping *per se*. Rather, exclusion operates through qualitative differences between migrants and locals. Out-of-province Han and Muslim migrants in the Tibetan areas emigrate from more competitive conditions and generally have much higher education and skill levels than local Tibetans. Hence, they enter

[1] Surojit Mahalanobis, 'Tibetans are a marginalised lot: The Samdhong Rimpoche Interview', *The Economic Times*, 31 May 2003.

the host economy on a higher rung of the labour hierarchy than most locals, the educated local elite aside. This differs from other Chinese settings, or even many western settings, where the bulk of immigrants have usually entered through the bottom rungs of the hierarchy, such as rural migrants in coastal China, Hispanics in the US, Turkish guest workers in Germany, and so forth. Thus the contention surrounding immigration to the Tibetan areas is derived from the fact that non-Tibetan migrants are crowding out Tibetan rural migrants and the Tibetan urban poor from limited urban employment opportunities, precisely at a moment when growth is heavily biased towards the urban areas and local rural to urban migration is becoming an imperative.

Within this perspective, the reigning views on population swamping, while probably misconceived, can be seen as a reactive lens through which locals interpret their experience of exclusion within urban growth. Indeed, the logic of peripheral development in the Tibetan areas, which are among the poorest regions of China, would tend to counter the thesis of population swamping. If anything, population outflow, particularly among the educated, is an important developmental constraint on these areas. Nonetheless, the symbiotic conflation of these two processes – migration and exclusion – provides the discursive superstructure through which Tibetans understand interethnic conflict, thereby providing a potent ground for action and for the development of nationalisms both within and outside Tibet.

This paper will tackle these issues of exclusion and ethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas from a macro perspective. The underlying theoretical approach draws upon the analytical framework of social exclusion, as reformulated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) over the past decade for application in the developing world.[2] Here, three processes are examined in terms of how they influence both exclusion and perceptions of ethnic conflict: population dynamics, which deal mainly with the confluence of local population transitions and migration flows; economic growth; and employment, assessed through the lens of education and skill levels.

The central tenet of the paper is that contemporary experiences of social exclusion and interethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas are interrelated and revolve around these three processes – population, growth and employment – all of which centre on processes of urbanisation, which in turn differentiates modern from historical confrontations. Furthermore, both exclusion and conflict are exacerbated by the nature of peripheral development and associated inequalities or structural transformations. In this setting, the critical factors generating exclusion and fuelling conflict are the differentials between groups, such as urbanisation rates and education levels, rather than base line characteristics, such as population shares or poverty levels.

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[2] For instance, Gerry Rodgers explains that "social exclusion… is seen as a way of analysing how and why individuals and groups fail to have access to or benefit from the possibilities offered by societies and economies", particularly within the context of contemporary economic transformations (Gerry Rodgers, Charles Gore & José B. Figueiredo, (eds), *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric Reality Responses*, Geneva: International Labour Organisation, 1995, p.44). The appeal of such an approach is that it ties together a variety of related issues under one rubric, such as poverty, inequality, employment, marginality, exclusion (from the Western European perspective), underclass (from the US perspective), peripherality, entitlements, and agency. In particular, the ILO-UNDP approach emphasises the central role of "citizenship rights" and how these interact with development policy, generating either inclusion or exclusion (Rodgers, *et al,,* 1995, p.18). This is a particularly interesting angle for the far western regions of China, given the contested notions and practices of citizenship in these areas. See also José B. Figueiredo & Arjan de Haan, *Social exclusion: an ILO perspective*, Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies, 1998.

Despite its popular status as an exception in the world – Shangri-La and its defilement by the Chinese Communists – the Tibetan case is actually quite typical of peripheral development in multi-ethnic situations, which refers to a context where the levers of economic and political power are centred outside the region and its dominant ethnic group. The tensions associated with development can be seen as resulting from the intensified integration of such peripheral regions into core regions, a process that is analogical to 'globalisation'. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will also provide some general lessons for other world regions.

The intention of this paper is to complement the growing wealth of related micro-level studies on the Tibetan areas. It is notable that despite the repeated invocation of population issues, very little comprehensive macro-level analysis of these dynamics and their relation to interethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas is available, both within and outside China.[3] The paper employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative is derived entirely from official and publicly available Chinese statistical sources. Interestingly, although the exiles dispute many of these statistical sources due to the fact that they do not portray a massive inflow of Han migrants, the same sources clearly illustrate an experience of social exclusion among Tibetans. This will be supplemented by qualitative insights drawn from recent field visits to all three of the major Tibetan regions in China and from a variety of secondary literature from across the social sciences.

The paper is divided into four sections. It opens with a brief historical overview of interethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas, focusing on two strands: Tibetan-Chinese and Tibetan-Muslim conflict. The second section delves into an aggregate analysis of population dynamics. The third outlines the foundations of exclusionary growth in the Tibetan areas, and then examines differential education levels as a means to understand the underlying factors influencing exclusion among both Tibetans and Muslims. The fourth section reflects on the interactions of exclusion and ethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas.

Matrices of interethnic conflict in Tibet

Historical roots

Despite its Shangri-La image, pre-communist Tibet was a region of considerable contestation and conflict. In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) – the area that was more or less under the dominion of Lhasa up to 1950 – conflict was mostly intra-ethnic, due to the fact that the area was essentially homogeneous in ethnicity up to this time. Generalised interethnic conflict in Central Tibet has therefore been new to the communist period. It relates mainly to the occupation and the consequent expansion of the Han-dominated state in this region.[4]

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[3] Two exceptions published by western Tibet Support Groups in the mid-1990s are: Anders Hojmark Andersen, Sarah Cooke & Michael Wills, *The New Majority*, London: the Tibet Support Group, 1995; and Steven D. Marshall & Susette Ternent Cooke, *Tibet Outside the TAR: Control, Exploitation and Assimilation, Development with Chinese Characteristics*, Washington, D.C.: The Alliance for Research in Tibet, 1997, p. 2560. These two studies, both of which support the thesis of population transfer, rely on data from the 1990 census and several population surveys in the early 1990s. They therefore do not deal with dynamics since the mid-1990s nor with the much higher quality population data available in the 2000 census. Several prominent Chinese scholars also produced a few population studies in the mid-1990s, such as Rong Ma, *Xizang de renkou yu shehui* (Population and Society of Tibet), Beijing: Tongxin Publishing House, 1996. Although Chinese scholars, both Tibetan and Han, are generally constrained by the political environment in China, much insight has been derived from their works and, in particular, from private conversations.

[4] For the history of Central Tibet from 1913 to 1951, see the groundbreaking work by Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. From 1947 to the 1990s, see Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows*, London: Pimlico, 1999.

On the other hand, interethnic conflict has been much more deeply rooted in East and Northeast Tibet, known to the Tibetans as *Kham* and *Amdo*. In particular, Kham remains the region where the interface between Tibetans and Han Chinese has been the most violent, particularly since the Manchu acted to consolidate their direct rule over large parts of eastern Tibet in the early eighteenth century. Ever since, Kham has played an important role in generating a psyche among successive Chinese rulers that the empire/nation was vulnerable to destabilisation via its Tibetan backyard, thus requiring forceful subjugation.[5] In the southern parts of Kham, conflicts with the neighbouring Yi minority at times may have also been an issue, particularly when the power of certain Yi warlords in Yunnan was ascendant.[6]

Conflict between Tibetans and Chinese Muslims has been most pronounced in Amdo, given that the region borders and even overlaps with important Muslim centres in the northwest of China. For instance, the Salar Muslims – a small group indigenous to Qinghai – are said to have settled as early as the thirteenth century in the Xunhua Salar Autonomous County (SAC), an area that hugs Rebkong, one of the cultural hearts of Amdo.[7] Just across the border in Gansu, the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture (HAP) is a main Hui Muslim hub that has been an important Sufi centre. Linxia town is in very close proximity to the extensive Labrang monastic complex (Ch. Xiahe), one of the main Tibetan religious centres of the region.[8]

This overlapping has involved both cooperative and conflictive dimensions. The cooperative has revolved around trade and certain specialised services in the Tibetan towns such as butchery, in which the Muslims have specialised for centuries.[9] This has been underlain by competition and violent confrontations. Attention can be drawn to the Salar rebellion in the 1860s, which the Manchu put down by using Tibetan armies.[10] The rise to power of the Muslim warlord Ma Bufang in the 1930s and 1940s was centred in the Muslim counties mentioned above, and involved many confrontations with local Amdo Tibetans, including 'ethnic cleansing' of Tibetans in several of these counties.[11] It is quite likely that the current

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[5] For instance, see the detailed historical account of the two Jinchuan wars in the 18th century by Roger Greatrex, 'A Brief Introduction to the First Jinchuan War (1747-1749)', in Per Kvaerne (ed.), *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Fagernes 1992*, Vol.1, Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994. For the first half of the 20th century, see William M. Coleman, 'The Uprising at Batang: Khams and its significance in Chinese and Tibetan history', in Lawrence Epstein (ed.), *Khams pa Histories*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp.31-55; Wim van Spengen, 'Frontier History of Southern Kham: Banditry and war in the multi-ethnic fringe lands of Chatring, Mili, and Gyethang, 1890-1940', in Epstein (2002), pp.7-29; and Peng Wenbin, 'Frontier Process, Provincial Politics and Movements for Khampa Autonomy during the Republican Period', in Epstein (2002), pp. 57-84.

[6] For some mention of this in the 1920s and 1930s, see Peng (2002).

[7] David S. G. Goodman, 'Qinghai and the Emergence of The West: Nationalities, communal interaction and national integration', *The China Quarterly*, 178 (forthcoming, June 2004).

[8] See Paul Nietupski, 'Sino-Tibetan Relations in Eighteenth-Century Labrang', in Katia Buffetrille & Hildegard Diemberger (eds.), *Territory and Identity in Tibet and the Himalayas*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp.121-133. Labrang was founded in the early 18th century as a local power centre within a nexus of Tibetan, Mongolian and Qing patronage. Interestingly, the rise of Muslim influence and territorial claims for sovereignty, with Linxia as a focal point, were more or less contemporaneous to these Tibetan developments at Labrang.

[9] Generally, Linxia Muslim influence in the Tibetan areas extends back for centuries. Their trade routes have also been an influence in the development of many Tibetan towns, such as the Longwu Township in Rebkong (Ch. Tongren), one of the main cultural centres of Amdo. See Lin Yi, 'Schooling and Cultural Citizenship in Multiethnic Northwest China: the Tibetan Case', in Rachel Murphy & Vanessa Fong (eds), *Chinese Experiences of Citizenship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2004. Even today it appears – from informal field observations – that a large share of Muslims currently migrating to Tibet originates from Linxia.

[10] Chu Wen-Chang, *The Moslem Rebellion in North-West China, 1861-1878*, Den Haag: Mouton, 1966.

[11] See Goodman (2004), p.6; Ma Bufang "established essentially a separate, and Islamic, state-with-a-state in Qinghai under the Republic," relying heavily on the Hui and Salar while marginalizing Tibetans, Tu and Mongolians from the ranks of officers and officials. Goodman does not qualify his use of the term 'ethnic

spatial divisions between Tibetans and Muslims in the northeast corner of Qinghai were moulded through such historical dynamics. Although Amdo Tibetans clearly see the Muslims as outsiders in Amdo, most of the Hui and Salar within these areas – and about half of the Han – are indigenous to the larger Qinghai-Gansu region, and many families have been residing in Tibetan towns for over a century, if not several. Intermarriage, whether forced, voluntary or political, has also been common between Tibetans and the local Muslims and Han.[12]

Recent decades

The introduction of revolutionary political ideologies into the intricate ethnic framework of Kham and Amdo seems to have created much confusion within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For instance, it seems that the Communists mistakenly believed that the Amdo Tibetans would support them because they had defeated Ma Bufang in 1949, but they were themselves faced by violent resistance from both Tibetans and Muslims throughout the 1950s in response to forced collectivisation and attacks on the traditional social order of both ethnic groups, which reneged on earlier promises made by the CCP.[13] Similar resistance also took place in Kham, whereas confrontations in Central Tibet were toned down due to the special political arrangements that were in place until 1959. Nonetheless, tensions were exacerbated in all three cases by the radicalisation of Maoism throughout the 1950s and into the 1970s.

Since the beginning of the reform period in 1978, ideological Marxism has played less and less of a role in both cultural encounters and state policy making, and Tibetan-Han conflict has gradually clarified as an issue of state control over a strategic minority region. Confrontations are invariably portrayed by the exiles and in the west as a one-sided political conflict between occupied and occupiers. Such a portrayal is more or less accurate, in that the Han maintain hegemony over state power, and most of the recent overt conflict appears to involve the well-documented repression of a variety of Tibetan activities by the Chinese state.[14] These include the politicised patriotic education campaigns in the monasteries and in various work units that started in earnest in the mid-1990s, the arrest and detention of pro-independence demonstrators, the banning of photos and worship of the Dalai Lama in the TAR as well as in sensitive counties outside the TAR, and certain localized events of religious and political repression. Predictably, Kham continues to be a site of intense contestation up to

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cleansing', but he refers to a local Chinese historical study. Presumably it refers to a process of pushing Tibetans off the lower altitude lands and up into the peripheries of the counties.

[12] Goodman (2004), p.2 estimates that about half of the Han in Qinghai are actually indigenous to the province. He describes the local Han as having "a distinct local culture and language. They are predominantly Buddhist, and in rural areas have often adopted Hui and Tibetan lifestyles and customs" (Goodman, 2004, p.5). This would refer to the lifestyles in the lower lands. I have not observed any local Han involved in high altitude plateau pastoralism.

[13] For instance, see Melvyn Goldstein, 'Introduction and The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery', in Melvyn Goldstein & Matthew Kapstein (eds), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Ethnic Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 1-45. Also Goodman (2004), p. 6.

[14] Indeed, in recent years, since the subsiding of the waves of demonstrations that centred on Lhasa and rippled throughout the Tibetan areas from 1987 to the mid-1990s, there have been few reports of Tibetans attacking Han, even though such acts could be well exploited by Beijing to justify their overwhelming security presence in the Tibetan areas, much as they have done in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Nonetheless, since the mid-1990s, Chinese officials have reported at least eight bomb explosions in Lhasa, purportedly linked to the 'Dalai clique', and at least three bomb explosions in Sichuan that were claimed to involve Tibetans, one in Chengdu and two in the Ganzi TAP. See TIN, 'Bomb blast in Chengdu', London: Tibet Information Network, 24 April 2002.

the present, with several recent high profile incidents carrying much symbolic importance to the exile community and to western Tibet Support Groups.[15]

Meanwhile, the reform period in Amdo has also witnessed the re-emergence of an anti-Muslim discourse among Tibetans, along with occasional outbreaks of violence. A higher order of tension is usually experienced in the towns that straddle the Muslim and Tibetan areas.[16] Nonetheless, even further south, where the Muslim presence is minimal, boycott campaigns against Muslim businesses, in particular restaurants, are commonly cited events. Such boycotts often succeed in causing the targeted businesses to close down and move out.[17]

Evidently, religion pervades many of the conflicts, in large part because Buddhism is deeply embedded in Tibetan culture and society. This in part reflects the historical development of political ideology in Tibet, which prescribed a dominant role to religious institutions in the traditional political economy.[18] Monasteries were also usually in command of considerable military strength in their local arenas of power, either directly or through alliances, and often acted as the centres for organised armed resistance throughout history.[19] Notably, revolts in Kham and Amdo during the first decade of Communist rule usually centred on some of the most prominent monasteries of the region.[20]

Combined with the attack on the traditional socio-religious order during the first three decades of Communist rule, it is natural that modern expressions of self-determination and dissent have found their way through religious channels, and the newfound religious space that slowly emerged in the reform period inevitably became politicised.[21] In particular, religious repression has undoubtedly left a legacy of sharply defined animosity between the majority of Tibetans and the secular Chinese state. While this has primarily been defined along religious grounds, it has been associated with Han agency.[22] In this context, ethnic identities become reinforced by Buddhist identity, in contradistinction to non-Buddhist

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[15] These include the bomb incident in Chengdu in April 2002, and the subsequent arrest and death sentence of Tenzin Deleg Rimpoche; or the demolitions at the Serthar Institute in 2001 in the Ganzi TAP of Sichuan. See TIN, 'Death sentences for "sabotaging China's unity" and "Terrorism"', London: Tibet Information Network, 27 January 2003; and TIN, 'Expulsion of nuns and students threaten survival of important Tibetan Buddhist institute', London: Tibet Information Network, 19 August 2001 (2001b). The Serthar demolitions involved the expulsion of several thousand monks and nuns, including an estimated one thousand Han Chinese monks, and the destruction of about one thousand dwellings. Certain counties, such as Ganzi and Litang, also appear to be the focus of intensive re-education campaigns.

[16] In particular, Chentsa (Ch. Jianzha) County on the northern edge of Huangnan TAP, bordering the Hualong HAC and containing a significant resident Muslim population, has been the scene of several clashes in recent years, usually involving a fight, some deaths on the Tibetan side, and then rioting Tibetans. For instance, see CNN, 'Tibetans, Muslim Huis clash in China', CNN (23 February 2003).

[17] Based on accounts from interviews with several Tibetans from the southern area of Qinghai in summer 2003.

[18] For instance, see Georges Dreyfus, 'Tibetan Religious Nationalism: Western fantasy or empowering vision?, in P. Christiaan Klieger (ed.) *Voices of Difference*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp. 37-56.

[19] For instance, see the analysis of the uprising at Batang in 1905 by Coleman (2002) or the account of the siege of Sangpiling monastery in 1906 by van Spengen (2002).

[20] Resistance to collectivisation in the 1950s in Kham and Amdo was typically organised around monasteries, exemplified by the uprisings at Litang and Batang, which resulted in the two monasteries being bombed and shelled by the PLA (Goldstein, 1998, p. 8). Also see Shakya (1999).

[21] For discussions of this, see Melvyn Goldstein, 'Introduction and The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery', in Melvyn Goldstein & Matthew Kapstein (eds), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Ethnic Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 1-45; and Ronald D. Schwartz, *Circle of Protest: political ritual in the Tibetan uprising*, London: Hurst, 1994.

[22] Nonetheless, it should also be pointed out that intra-communal or intra-ethnic conflict often blurs with interethnic conflict in the Tibetan areas, particularly given that elite co-optation by the Chinese is a legacy that predates the communist era. For instance, see Goldstein (1989), Shakya (1999), and Peng (2002).

groups, which would include Muslims as well as the Han, defined as atheist Communists. In light of their practical objectives of controlling these areas, the paranoia of the Chinese Communist Party to the blurring of religion and nationalism among Tibetans is therefore understandable.

Population on the Tibetan plateau reconsidered

These issues of ethnic conflict provide the backdrop for debates on population swamping. The popular hypothesis is clear and appealing. Recent Han and Muslim migration into the Tibetan urban areas is portrayed as a case of generalized population transfer. Such transfers are compared to similar scenarios in Inner Mongolia, which left Mongolians a small minority in their autonomous region, or else in Xinjiang, where the Han account for almost half of the 2000 census population, up from around six percent in the early 1950s. Indeed, many exile leaders have claimed that Tibetans may already be a minority in many Tibetan areas.[23]

Within this general analysis, urban growth is portrayed as an instrument of population swamping and control. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy makes one of the more subtle versions of this argument, using the vocabulary of economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to land and housing. They contend "the continuing flood of Chinese settlers into Tibet" underlies "the inequality and discrimination of both [rural] land and [urban] housing developments".[24] Top-down instituted policies that purposely discriminate against locals and encourage Han in-settlers are argued to be a continuation of a decades-long effort to sinicize the region, destroying the social and cultural fabric of Tibet. They do not reject urbanity *per se*, but focus on the discriminatory nature of Chinese-induced urbanisation in the Tibetan areas, which ultimately has a transformative impact that is anti-Tibetan.

Without disputing the well-founded convictions held by their proponents, such claims are used to create a sense of urgency. This urgency is required by the exiles in order to continuously mobilize international opinion, as this is virtually the only hand of cards that they can play against the Chinese leadership. Nonetheless, given the gravity of such claims and their influence on perceptions of ethnic conflict, they deserve to be examined under a more critical light.

The claim of population swamping is definitely true for key population centres such as Lhasa and other strategic cities and towns, although it appears to exaggerate the situation for the general population. This is simply a matter of arithmetic; the traditional Tibetan areas remain the most rural of China, and their rural dwellers are mostly Tibetan or, in some cases, several closely related indigenous ethnicities. Therefore, if the traditional Tibetan areas are properly

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[23] For example, see Mahalanobis (2003).

[24] TCHRD, *Annual Report 2002: Human Rights Situation in Tibet*, Dharamsala, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 2003. Their reference to land draws on arguments made by the Habitat International Coalition that link the right to land to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Ironically though, rural land tenure systems in China, including the Tibetan areas, have maintained one of the most equitable distributions of land assets in the developing world. For instance, see the extensive work of Azizur Rahman Khan & Carl Riskin, *Inequality and Poverty in China in the Age of Globalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Therefore, these TCHRD arguments become restricted to localised cases of unfair rural land expropriations related to urban expansion, or else to the biased enforcement of environmental protection policies.

delineated and a few exceptional or frontier cases taken out,[25] in most cases the urban Han would not compensate for the rural dominance of Tibetans, even if estimates of the Han population were underestimated. Because birth rates among rural Tibetans have been among the highest in the country since the 1980s, the combined migration and demographic dynamics are far from simple and transparent.

Migration

No doubt in-migration is an urgent issue in terms of urban employment opportunities and exclusion, although important features differentiate the Tibetan areas from Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. Population transfer to Inner Mongolia was initiated during the Republican period, such that Mongolians were already a minority in their province by the beginning of Communist rule. Furthermore, the concept of transfer *per se* (i.e. organized large-scale movements of population from one region to another), would only apply in a general sense up to the end of the Maoist period in 1978. The large transfers that turned the share of Han from around fifty percent to over sixty percent of the population in Qinghai and from six to over forty percent in Xinjiang, took place entirely during the heydays of radical Maoism in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.[26]

Population movement since the reform period, particularly since the early 1990s, has been more or less voluntary, implying that policies are based on incentives rather than command to promote migration. In this regard, the trend since the 1980s has been for a net population outflow from the impoverished western areas of China towards the coastal areas, which has been a considerable human resource drain for these western regions. The Tibetan areas, being some of the most impoverished, are not strangers to this outflow, and only the high levels of incentives for both Tibetan and Han skilled workers and professionals has counteracted this trend.

Nonetheless, net outflow was the rule in both the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Qinghai for much of the 1980s.[27] For instance, registered net migration to the TAR was negative in every year from 1981 to 1992 besides three. The greatest outflows took place in 1981 and 1982 due to a change in cadre policy, allowing many Han cadres to return home and increasing the representation of local Tibetan cadres, but registered net outflows continued at

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[25] An example of a frontier case is Kangding (Tib. Dartsedo) County in the Ganzi TAP in Sichuan, which was visited during recent fieldwork. This county would have been mostly Tibetan prior to the 20th century, but it has served as a Chinese administrative centre for what is now the Ganzi TAP for more than a century, during which it was the focus of colonisation strategies. See Coleman (2002) and Van Spengen (2002). As a result, it is now about half Han if not more, notably with a strong rural Han presence. Nonetheless, the population becomes indisputably Tibetan after the first pass west of Kangding, with almost no Han in the rural areas.

[26] For the rates of net inflow to Qinghai during this period, see Qinghai Bureau of Statistics (QBS), *Qinghai Statistical Yearbook 2003*, Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2003, table 3-3. David Goodman points out that although there was a large inflow of Han to Qinghai from 1956-1959, there was a large exodus following the famine of the Great Leap Forward, and "while there was significant in-migration during the era of the Cultural Revolution, at the rate of 100-150,000 people a year, it was for the most part balanced by the numbers of those leaving over the same period" (Goodman, 2004, p. 7). Therefore, Chinese plans in the 1950s for a massive population transfer to Qinghai, with the goal to reach ten million people by 1967 (Goodman, 2004, p. 6), were singularly unsuccessful, given that the population of Qinghai had only reached 3.65 million by 1978 (QSB, table 3-1).

[27] Note that the TAR and Qinghai will serve as the reference points for most of the aggregate macro analysis of this paper. They are the only two provincial-level jurisdictions where such analysis is appropriate, given that all of the TAR and almost all of Qinghai are composed of traditional Tibetan areas (see the discussion of Qinghai below). Sichuan does not provide an appropriate analysis at the provincial level because most of the population resides in the eastern non-Tibetan half of the province. Even the provincial figures for Qinghai distract from the fact that the bulk of the urban Han and Muslim populations do not necessarily reside in the Tibetan areas.

a steady pace in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[28] A return to net inflows only restarted in the mid-1990s following the increased subsidies that accompanied the Third Tibet Work Forum in 1994. In Qinghai, registered net outflows started in 1980 and have remained consistently negative from 1986 until 2002, with peaks between 1988 and 1993.[29] It can be safely assumed that the bulk of the outflow was Han in both cases, given that they are largely urban and non-indigenous in the Tibetan areas, and with a cultural orientation directed towards the rest of China.[30] Thus by nature they are more mobile than the rural Tibetan population.

These statistics refer to officially registered moves (i.e. they are sourced from the Public Security Bureaus). In addition, as with all Chinese population statistics, they do not refer to the resident military population, which is considerable in both the TAR and Qinghai.[31] They therefore relate to changes in the non-military population with permanent or other forms of long-term residential status, whereas much of migration involves a variety of temporary statuses, especially in the Tibetan areas. Yet even this considered, the Tibetan areas do not stand out as obvious net inflow regions, in contrast to Xinjiang where this is definitely the case.

This can be illustrated by comparing population surveys with the 2000 census. The annual surveys of population change are only conducted with permanently residing households and exclude both short and long-term migrants. This introduces a bias in the surveys depending on whether the province experiences a net inflow or outflow of population. Effective populations in the inflow provinces are underestimated given that migrants are not usually registered as permanent residents and do not show up in the surveys. Populations in the outflow provinces are overestimated, given that temporary migrants usually maintain their permanent status in their source province, which in turn exaggerates the baseline residency records used for the survey estimates. In contrast, the 2000 census went to great lengths to record temporary residents and represents the most accurate portrait of effective provincial populations since the beginning of the reform period. This difference in reporting therefore provides a convenient and indirect way to track net inflows or outflows.

In several of the strategic and sparsely populated far western provinces, these two trends of inflow and outflow overlap and create a churning effect. On the one hand, temporary in-migration from other provinces takes place within the context of western development projects or military activities, alongside 'spontaneous' migration that accompanies increased government subsidies. Many of such westward in-migrants come for a short period and do not expect to set up as permanent residents. Thus, they do not necessarily change their registration status to the host province, even if residency rules are considerably more lax than in the coastal areas (military personnel do not appear in the provincial statistics in any case). On the other hand, this inward flow overlaps with the out-migration of previous temporary in-migrants and, to a lesser extent, of locals. Although out-migration receives less attention, it is

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[28] See Robin Iredale, Naran Bilik & Wang Su, *Contemporary Minority Migration, Education, and Ethnicity in China*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001, p.151.

[29] QBS (2003), table 3-3.

[30] For instance, although minority populations in China had become more mobile in the 1990s, mobility was still significantly lower and started later than the Han Chinese. See Iredale *et al.* (2001).

[31] Estimates for the military in the TAR in the 1990s ranged from anywhere between 40,000 to 200,000 or more, the upper end during military exercises and other shows of force (UNPO, *'China's Tibet': The World's Largest Remaining Colony. Report of a Fact-Finding Mission and Analyses of Colonialism and Chinese Rule in Tibet*, The Hague: Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 1997, p. 70). If a very rough guesstimate of 130,000 were taken, this would be equivalent to about one soldier for every 20 residents. Nationally, the equivalent measure would be one soldier for every 4,500 residents.

a considerable source of concern for local authorities. Because the host populations are small, the inflows potentially outweigh the outflows, particularly during a period of high government spending. In this case the surveys may underestimate the effective population.

Table 1: Selected population statistics (unit = 10,000 persons)

	A	B	C	D	Discrepancies [32]		RNPI
	1999 survey	**2000 adjusted census**	**2000 census tabulation**	**2001 survey**	**(B-A)/A**	**(B-C)/B**	**1999 survey**
Inflow provinces							
Guangdong	7270	8642	8523	7783	**18.9%**	*1.4%*	9.92
Shanghai	1474	1674	1641	1614	**13.6%**	*2.0%*	-1.10
Xinjiang	1774	1925	1846	1876	**8.5%**	*4.1%*	11.80
Fujian	3316	3471	3410	3440	**4.7%**	*1.8%*	5.21
Stable provinces							
Ningxia	543	562	548.6	563	**3.5%**	*2.4%*	12.32
TAR	256	262	261.6	263	**2.3%**	*0.2%*	15.80
Yunnan	4192	4288	4236	4287	**2.3%**	*1.2%*	11.66
Qinghai	510	518	482.3	523	**1.6%**	*6.9%*	13.90
Inner Mong.	2362	2376	2332	2377	**0.5%**	*1.9%*	7.24
Gansu	2543	2562	2512	2575	**0.7%**	*2.0%*	9.17
Outflow provinces							
Shaanxi	3618	3605	3537	3659	**-0.3%**	*1.9%*	6.13
Sichuan	8550	8329	8235	8640	**-2.6%**	*1.1%*	6.78
Guizhou	3710	3525	3525	3799	**-5.0%**	*0.0%*	14.24
National	**125909**	**126583**	**124261**	**127627**	**0.5%**	*1.8%*	**8.77**

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, *China Statistical Yearbook 2000*, Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2000, table 4-3 (hereafter, referred to as CSY); CSY 2001: table 4-3; CSY 2002: tables 4-3 and 4-8.

According to this comparison, Guangdong in the southeast stands out as the quintessential inflow province, whereas Guizhou is the most extreme case of an outflow province, both of which are intuitive results. Xinjiang also stands out as a definite inflow province, indicating that inflows have greatly exceeded outflows in recent years. On the other hand, both the TAR and Qinghai appear relatively stable. In both cases, the difference between the census and survey is less than one percent above the rate of natural population increase in 1999, much of which could be accounted for by measurement errors.[33] Despite the evident visibility of in-migration to the Tibetan areas, these observations point to the fact that such migration involves considerable churning rather than sustained inflows as in the case of Xinjiang.

The common rebuttal to this observation is that Han migrants are underestimated in the Tibetan areas due to the sensitivity of their presence, particularly in the TAR, or else due to their 'floating' character. For instance, the 2000 census only records about 160,000 Han in the

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[32] The first compares the difference between the 1999 population survey estimate and the 2000 adjusted census population, apparently estimated after the post-census survey. The second is the equivalent of the estimated census error, i.e. the difference between the population estimate adjusted by the post-census survey and the detailed tabulation of the original survey.

[33] In particular, Qinghai recorded the largest discrepancy in the country between the original census tabulation and the adjusted post-census survey estimation, represented by the second last column. It is not clear whether the census adjustment resulted from political expediency or technical evaluations, but Qinghai would definitely appear as a net outflow province if a lower population measure, more in line with the tabulation, were to be considered.

TAR, a number that is treated with incredulity by most observers. Apparently, TAR officials estimate the population of Lhasa city alone at over half Han, or more than 100,000 people according to the 2000 census.[34] Yet despite a similar sensitivity, an underestimation of the Han population in Xinjiang is not apparent in the census data, which unequivocally show a massive inflow from outside the province. Also, the TAR aside, an inflow of Han into western provinces such as Qinghai is not necessarily treated as a subject to be avoided by local officials. On the contrary, it is often interpreted as an indication of success in attempts to attract skilled labour and to stem outflow, thus supporting the developmental goal of building human resources.

In the case of the TAR, the Han census count was obviously an undershot. Arguments of statistical manipulation aside, there may be several reasons why the Han count was low. Temporary migration is not one of them *per se*.[35] However, timing is critical. The census was taken in November when most of the seasonal Han migrants would have already left for the winter. The figure of 160,000 may therefore represent a reasonable count of the number of non-military Han who were actually residing in the TAR all year round in 2000. Also, military personnel would represent a significant proportion of the visual presence of Han in Lhasa and in other cities and towns. Conversely, informal estimates made by tourists, journalists, NGO workers and researchers are mostly taken during the summer months, when the Han presence is swollen by tourism. Most Chinese tourists, numbered at close to 900,000 in 2003, visit the TAR between May and September.

In other words, although there has been a definite increase in Han migration to the TAR since the mid-1990s, particularly during the summer months, such migration is not stable. It is to be differentiated from the case of Xinjiang in that Han migrants by and large do not settle in the long term, as opposed to Tibetan migrants who tend to view their moves to the city as permanent.[36] The Han component of the churning migration would therefore be very susceptible to changes in economic conditions, and net flows probably depend on the degree

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[34] Pioneer, 'Tibetans to become minority in Lhasa: China', *The Pioneer*, 9 August 2002.

[35] There is much confusion in this regard, as many believe that the census did not record temporary migrants. For example, see TIN, 'Dramatic transformation of Lhasa planned; new railway station announced', London: *Tibet Information Network*, 13 June 2001 (2001a), at http://www.tibetinfo.net/news-updates/nu130601.htm, where they state that the census does not include the "floating population". They therefore imply that when officials report that 30 percent of the Lhasa population are temporary residents, population estimates are correspondingly underestimated. In fact, the 2000 census did attempt to record all types of migrants, down to those who had not yet resolved their residency status. The only migrants who would not have been counted were either those that had hid from the census takers – which is more of an issue in the coastal areas given official belligerence towards migrants, but less in the west where migrants are encouraged – or else the common omissions, due to the difficulties of tracking migrants versus permanent residents. Another confusion arises from the *de jure* approach to residency status stipulated by the census, which many interpret as referring to permanent or settled residency. The *de jure* approach actually refers to the fact that residency is recorded by officially registered status regardless of the amount of time spent in a location, in contrast to standard international definitions which consider *de facto* residency, i.e. usually requiring six months for a person who is making a domestic move to be considered a permanent resident in their destination. The Chinese approach is equivalent to a concept of citizenship, such that a person can reside in a place for years without being considered permanent in the census so long as they have not made an official change in status.

[36] Iredale, Bilik & Wang (2001), pp.157-158. In their two surveys of minority and Han migrants in Lhasa in 1996 and 1997, they found that most Han migrants envisage staying about five to six years, after which they return home with their savings, whereas most minority migrants coming from other parts of Tibet want to stay permanently. Note that they do not refer to the phenomenon of seasonal migration among the Han, yet in my own informal observations, many Han leave for the winter on top of having a temporary timeline for their activities in the TAR.

of subsidies entering these areas. Rapidly increasing subsidies, as has been the case since the late 1990s, would obviously encourage a trend of inflow.

However, the question remains whether such inflows could be sustained in the long term once subsidies stabilize (or even fall) after the completion of one or two mega projects, such as the Qinghai-Tibet railway. The underlying trend would suggest that inflows face an uphill battle against outflows. Net in-migration into such areas would respond to subsidies and economic incentives – such as employment and business opportunities – not to the existence of transport infrastructure *per se*.

For instance, even though the completion of the railway might increase migration to places such as Germo in Qinghai or Lhasa in the TAR, it will do so primarily because of the state-subsidised boom in these cities and not because of the easing of transport *per se*. On the other hand, the railway will also ruin many of the catering businesses that are currently stretched out along the highway that runs parallel to the railway construction. These businesses are mainly run by Hui Muslims and Han Sichuanese, and cater to both highway traffic and construction workers. Locals in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan that service the current Chengdu to Lhasa highway make similar predictions. An economic downturn caused by such structural transformations in the regional economy could exacerbate the out-migration of both Tibetans and Han from certain counties, even while increasing migration to others.

In this regard, locals in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan often complain that they are considerably underprivileged in comparison to the TAR, even while containing more than half of the national Tibetan population. They note that while the TAR 'belongs' to Beijing, which is rich, they 'belong' to their respective western provinces, which are poor. In addition, the TAR carries an added political sensitivity, with the result that this provincial-level jurisdiction receives an enormous amount of per capita central funding. In contrast, local governments in the Tibetan areas outside the TAR are often left with few means to stem an outflow of labour in the event of a collapse in a key industry. For instance, the 1998 moratorium on forestry activities declared by the national government in response to flooding on the Yangtze had a debilitating impact on many Tibetan counties in Sichuan and Yunnan, which probably resulted in increased out-migration from these counties. It cannot, therefore, be assumed that the migration scenario of the TAR represents the norm in the Tibetan areas outside the TAR, given that the former is a response to massive levels of subsidisation.

Migration versus demographics

While earlier population transfers to Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia had a strong agrarian focus, contemporary migration to the Tibetan areas has been almost entirely urban in destination. Even in Qinghai, much of the in-migration in the 1950s and 1960s was agricultural, although concentrated in the non-Tibetan areas of the province. As a result, rural populations in those provinces that experienced an earlier epoch of population transfer are of mixed ethnicity, and Han urban dominance is partially matched by their presence in the rural areas.

On the other hand, Han agrarian colonisation of the high-altitude Tibetan plateau rarely met with success and more often with disaster.[37] Therefore, the rural areas of the high-altitude plateau remain almost entirely ethnically Tibetan, along with pockets of several other closely

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[37] For a description of the failures of agrarian colonisation in Qinghai during the 1950s and 1960s, see Goodman (2004), p. 6-7. It appears that mortality rates in Qinghai were among the highest in the country during the famine of the Great Leap Forward, although this was not the case in the TAR.

related ethnicities such as the Tu, Mongolians, Qiang, Lhoba, Moinba, and so forth. Han rural presence is mostly government related, or it is restricted to certain mineral resource enclaves, suburban vegetable farming, or highway catering, all of which are often based around towns in any case; as well as seasonal business migration related to tourism, mushroom digging, and so forth. For instance, 97.6 percent of the TAR rural population in the 2000 census was Tibetan. Even if the Han population of the province were underestimated, this particular rural measure would not be affected given that the underestimation almost entirely takes place in the urban areas. Even in eastern Tibetan areas that are relatively close to large cities such as Xining, Lanzhou or Chengdu, rural populations in the decisively Tibetan areas remain predominantly Tibetan.[38]

Because fertility is considerably higher in the rural areas, this logically places the weight of population momentum with rural dwellers. In Tibetan areas, this implies Tibetans, a fact that is amplified by their low rates of urbanisation. In particular, the one-child policy, which became a two-child policy for rural dwellers, was more leniently applied in many minority areas,[39] with the result that rural Tibetans today have among the highest rates of natural population increase in the country. This is poignantly summarised by the findings of Goldstein *et al.* in their presentation of survey results in fourteen farming villages in the TAR:

> …the 141 currently married women aged 50–54 and 55–59… had, on the average, 6.9 and 7.1 live births, respectively. …currently married women aged 35–39 had… 4.1 live births, and those 40–44 had 5.7… The proportion of births that were third, fourth, or a higher birth order also indicates high fertility and is evidence for the absence of any program of systematic forced birth limits in Tibet's rural areas. Of the 131 births that occurred in 1997 to the women in our study, 45.4% were third or higher birth order, 31.5% were fourth birth order or higher, and 20.8% were fifth or higher. Similarly, 70.1% of the 1,110 women who have ever given birth… had three or more live births, 55.9% had four or more, and 41.4% had five or more.[40]

These survey results refer to the TAR, where the application of family planning has been treated with extra sensitivity. In the Tibetan regions outside the TAR, family planning policies might have been applied more stringently than in the TAR, although the rate of natural population increase in Qinghai has been consistently very close to that of the TAR up to the present, both being the highest in the country. Thus it is likely that family planning has also been lenient in the minority areas of Qinghai as well.

In other words, net in-migration to the Tibetan areas competes with these demographic factors, such that sustained net inflows of Han would be required merely to maintain their

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[38] This is confirmed by numerous informal observations and conversations with Chinese scholars. For instance, one scholar told me that in Derge County in Sichuan, just across the border from the TAR, the county population is 96 percent Tibetan. The main town is a little more than half non-Tibetan, most of which is Han, although the town accounts for less than ten percent of the county's population. These ethnic shares of the town would nonetheless dominate the observation of the casual visitor. Similarly, in Tawu (Ch. Daofu) County of Sichuan, within a one-day drive from Chengdu, locals unanimously agree that very few, if any, Chinese are engaged in agriculture in the county.

[39] For instance, see Melvyn C. Goldstein, Ben Jiao, Cynthia M. Beall & Phuntsog Tsering, 'Fertility and Family Planning in Rural Tibet', *The China Journal*, 47 (January 2002), pp.25-39.

[40] Melvyn C. Goldstein, Ben Jiao, Cynthia M. Beall & Phuntsog Tsering, 'Development and Change in Rural Tibet: Problems and Adaptations', Asian Survey 43: 5 (September/October 2003), pp.771-772.

ethnic share in the population, let alone increase it. In addition, the Han migrants are disproportionately male, of working age, and they do not tend to bring their families with them during their temporary sojourns.[41] These attributes amplify their employment impact, as well as their demand for alcohol and prostitutes, but lower considerably the rates of natural population increase among Han in the Tibetan areas. Therefore, while inflows of migration might dominate over the demographic momentum during economic boom time, the balance could quickly be reversed when boom turns to bust, reinforcing the previous analysis of inflows versus outflows.

Thus despite the visibility of in-migration, Tibetan population shares may in certain cases be increasing rather than decreasing, mainly outside the TAR. This would appear to be the case in Qinghai, where the share of Tibetans in the population has been slowly edging upwards during the reform period, from 18.5 percent in 1978 to 21.9 percent in 2002, and growing at about the same rate overall as the Hui Muslims.[42] It is not the case in the TAR from the 1990s onwards, partly because the Han have been increasing from a very small base, and partly because the high levels of subsidy overwhelm the local economy, creating distorted incentives for in-migrants. The general pattern of such changes can be seen in Table 2 below, although Tibetans are not differentiated from other minorities.[43]

Table 2: Changes in the population of Han and minority nationalities (1990 and 2000 censuses) in the five provinces with TAPs and for China as a whole

	TAR	Qinghai	Sichuan	Gansu	Yunnan	China	*Tibetans*
Annual change in population (%; non-cumulative)							
Total population (%)	1.7%	1.5%	0.6%	1.3%	1.4%	1.1%	--
Minority population (%)	1.5%	2.2%	1.9%	1.8%	1.5%	1.5%	*1.8%*
Han population (%)	6.5%	0.9%	0.5%	1.3%	1.4%	1.0%	--
Share of minorities in total population (%)							
1990 census	95.9%	42.2%	4.4%	8.3%	33.4%	8.0%	*0.41%*
2000 census	93.9%	45.6%	5.0%	8.7%	33.4%	8.4%	*0.43%*
Percentile change	-2.0%	+3.4%	+0.6%	+0.4%	0.0%	+0.4%	*0.02%*

Sources: Department of Population, Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, *China Population Statistical Yearbook 2001*, Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2001, tables 2-13, 2-14 and 2-21 (hereafter referred to as CPSY).

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[41] For instance, see the survey results of the TAR in Iredale, Bilik & Wang (2001), p.156.

[42] QBS (2003), table 3-5. Note that a major drop in the Tibetan share took place before the reform period, from 27.5 percent of the 1952 population to 18.5 percent in 1978. In contrast, the Hui Muslim share only fell from 15 to 13.1 percent, and the other smaller ethnic groups experienced almost no fall in share. In other words, the Tibetan population grew 48 percent over the 26-year period, whereas the Hui grew by 93 percent. This slow Tibetan growth may indicate some of the widespread repression, incarcerations and executions of Tibetans that were known to have taken place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, along with refugee movements to India. This appears to be confirmed by population records from this period, which show the Tibetan population of Qinghai dropping from 513,000 in 1957 to 478,000 in 1959 and 408,000 in 1963, although growing before and after these years (QSY, 1991, p. 163). Nonetheless, Goodman (2004, p. 6) points out that Muslims also underwent similar repression in the late 1950s, and also they experienced a smaller but significant drop in population between 1959 and 1963. The slow Tibetan growth might therefore also represent errors in the earlier estimates, as there would have been little knowledge of the exact number of Tibetans in the dispersed southern regions of the province, whereas the other ethnicities tend to be much more concentrated closer to the administrative core of the province. Other factors may also play a role, such as changes in registered ethnic status.

[43] In the TAR, the category of 'minorities' would be almost entirely Tibetan. In Qinghai it is about two thirds composed of Tibetans, Tu and Mongolians, with the Hui and several other Muslim ethnicities such as the Salar accounting for most of the remainder. Tibetans are about a third of minorities in Sichuan, a fifth in Gansu and a small fraction in Yunnan as well as in China.

Interestingly, the annualised population change of Tibetans in the TAR, as measured by the two censuses, is quite low in comparison to the minorities of other provinces, particularly Qinghai. The high rate of natural population increase in the TAR contrasts with this result. This may be due to the out-migration of Tibetans, including regular and refugee travel to Nepal and India over the winter months.[44] Measurement errors may have also played some role, particularly in the 1990 census.[45]

Outside the TAR, minorities have either increased or maintained their shares throughout the decade, although this includes a mix of minorities. This would not be surprising because, as discussed above, these regions are less privileged than the TAR in terms of subsidisation. Thus outflows and demographics tend to dominate over inflows, particularly among the higher skilled and more mobile urbanites, who tend to be Han rather than Tibetan or Muslim.

Hence, the changing face of Han dominance in eastern Tibet represents qualitative changes rather than quantitative proportional changes. For instance, Han arriving since the mid-1990s are much more commercially oriented than previous waves of Han migrants, whose make up was more political, ideological and administrative, and whose movement was tightly guided by the state. In an increasingly market-driven environment where self-promotion becomes the norm, the commercial orientation of current Han migrants in the Tibetan areas exaggerates their seemingly dominant population presence, particularly in the towns and cities where most commercial activity is concentrated.

Differential rates of urbanisation versus population shares

Rather than changing ethnic shares, the main population schisms between the Han, Muslims and Tibetans within these provinces are sharp differences in their urbanisation rates. Current interprovincial migration accentuates these differences given that the destination of most Han and Muslim migrants to the Tibetan areas is urban. Although the Han population share may be small in these Tibetan areas, this share is concentrated in the urban areas, precisely where it is most visible. As mentioned above, this visual presence is further reinforced by the economic dominance of the Han, which exaggerates their actual numerical presence.

For instance, in the 2000 census Tibetans were overwhelmingly rural in all of the five Chinese provinces that incorporate Tibetan areas, with 87.2 percent living in rural areas overall. Urbanisation rates among Tibetans ranged from a low of 8.6 percent in Qinghai to a high of 15.2 percent in the TAR. At the other extreme, urbanisation rates among the recorded Han were 79.5 percent in the TAR and 44.7 percent in Qinghai, both rates higher than the national average of 36.9 percent. The Hui Muslims were 79.7 percent urban in the TAR, where their presence is small, and 29.7 percent urban in Qinghai, where they account for about a sixth of

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[44] Various sources have estimated that there were net outflows of Tibetans from Tibet into Nepal and India throughout the 1990s at around 3000 people per year. These would be from across the Tibetan areas, although a large share would have come from the TAR. Also, it is quite common for central Tibetans to travel to Nepal or India during the winter months for pilgrimage or trading. Therefore, just as the November date of the 2000 census would have underestimated the Han population of the TAR, it might have also underestimated the Tibetan population. Conversely, the 1990 census was conducted in the summer.

[45] The results from the 1990 census appear to have created some confusion in the TAR with regard to population estimates. For instance, up to the 2000 *Tibet Statistical Yearbook*, two alternative population time series were provided for the 1990s. These included unrealistic downward adjustments in the demographic statistics to account for the lower of the two series. The 2000 census results confirmed the higher of the two series. Tibet Bureau of Statistics (TBS), *Tibet Statistical Yearbook 2000*, Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2000, pp. 29-30.

the population. The Hui in Qinghai were less urbanised than the Han but much more than the Qinghai Tibetans.[46] The extremely high rates in the TAR among the Han and Hui reflect the fact that they do not have an indigenous (i.e. rural) base in the province, although Muslim presence in urban Tibet dates back several centuries if not more, as discussed above.

Furthermore, the Han and Muslim presence is more concentrated in cities than in towns, whereas urban Tibetans are more concentrated in towns than in cities, particularly outside the TAR. This reflects the fact that most urban jurisdictions in the Tibetan areas would be classified as towns by the census, with Lhasa being the notable exception. It also indicates that rural Tibetans first tend to migrate to local towns rather than to more distant and expensive cities, except in the case of migration related to education, particularly at the tertiary level. These findings are presented in Table 3 below, focusing on the TAR and Qinghai.[47]

Table 3: Proportions of each ethnic group residing in rural, town or city, and their shares of total rural, town or city populations, the TAR and Qinghai (2000 census)

	Percent of group located in;			Share of total population in;		
	Rural	**Town**	**City**	**Rural**	**Town**	**City**
TAR						
Total population	80.6 %	11.1 %	8.3 %	--	--	--
Tibetans	84.8 %	9.4 %	5.8 %	97.6 %	78.3 %	65.0 %
Han	20.5 %	35.5 %	44.0 %	1.5 %	19.4 %	32.1 %
Hui Muslims	20.3 %	25.6 %	54.0 %	0.1 %	0.8 %	2.2 %
Qinghai						
Total population	67.7 %	11.7 %	20.7 %	--	--	--
Tibetans (+Tu & Mong.)[48]	91.4 %	6.7 %	1.9 %	37.6 %	17.4 %	3.5 %
Han	55.3 %	13.6 %	31.1 %	44.2 %	62.9 %	81.3 %
Muslims (Hui & Salar)	70.3 %	12.8 %	17.0 %	18.1 %	19.1 %	14.3 %
Tibetans in China	87.2 %	8.7 %	4.1 %	--	--	--

Source: Tabulation (2002, tables 1-6, 1-6a, 1-6b and 1-6c).

The urbanisation rates in 2000 suggest that the changes in the composition of the population in the Tibetan areas have been urban. It is clear that Tibetans have remained predominantly rural, while the Han, and to a lesser extent the Muslims in the case of Qinghai, have filled most of the rapid urban growth. Outside the TAR, such urban growth involves migration from

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[46] All data from Department of Population, Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, *Tabulation on the 2000 Population Census of the People's Republic of China*, Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2002 (hereafter referred to as Tabulation). Note that there are some logistical problems with the definition of urban in China. For instance, see Zhou Yixing & Laurence Ma, 'China's Urbanization Levels: Reconstructing a Baseline from the Fifth Population Census', *The China Quarterly*, 173 (March 2003), pp.176-196. After much reading and discussion with several scholars, including one leading Chinese demographer, it seems that the definition used by the 2000 census provides a fairly accurate portrait of the overall urban population in China, although discrepancies might exist at the local level. Nonetheless, comparisons and trends are difficult to assess because the 2000 definitions of what constitutes an urban area are quite different from the 1990 definitions. They can be estimated or adjusted on the national level, but at the local level, this would require a case-by-case study of each urban area.

[47] For comparison, the Yi in Sichuan, who share a prefecture with Tibetans in the south of the province, are even less urbanised that the Sichuan Tibetans, while the Qiang, who share a prefecture with Tibetans in northwest Sichuan, have the same rate as Tibetans.

[48] This row treats only the Tibetan population for the measure of urbanisation rates, but includes the Tu and Mongolians in the measure of their shares of total rural, town and city population.

outside the region, as well as the urbanisation of local Han and Muslims from within the region, particularly in the case of the Muslims in Qinghai and Gansu.[49]

Moreover, minority dominance in the rural areas is notable. The combined total of minority nationalities in Qinghai – predominantly Tibetan and Hui – gives them a majority in the rural areas, even before isolating the minority areas from the Han areas. Given the higher birth rates and lower urbanisation rates among both Tibetans and Muslims, this trend is likely to continue. In the TAR, the difference between the rurality of Tibetans and the urbanity of the Han and Hui is extreme. Therefore, the key issue is not whether the population balance has shifted towards the Tibetans or the Han, but that the latter have dominated urbanisation. Conversely, the urgent developmental issue for the minorities concerns access to the benefits of urban development. Because the towns and cities hold the levers of economic and political power, the relevant concern is economic and political dominance, not population dominance.

The case of Qinghai

Although the TAR receives most of the attention, the issues of population and migration are potentially more conflictive in Amdo or Kham, which are much closer to indigenous Han or Muslim population centres in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan or Yunnan. Qinghai probably represents the most complex case along this interface.

Although most of the land area of Qinghai is designated as Tibetan autonomous areas in one form or another, the majority of the provincial population is Han, although the two do not necessarily overlap. The province is divided into eight prefectures, of which five are Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (TAP) and one is a combined Tibetan-Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture (TMAP). These six account for 97.2 percent of the provincial land area.[50] Even within the remaining two prefecture-level jurisdictions in the northeast corner of the province, one of the four counties of Xining is a combined Hui-Tu Autonomous County, while four of the six counties of Haidong are similarly designated, one Hui, one combined Hui-Tu, one Salar and one Tu. All of these autonomous areas of various nationalities together account for 98.9 percent of the provincial land area.[51] Thus as expressed by Goodman, "the inherent contestation of Qinghai was and remains a significant factor… [leading] to the description of Qinghai as 'a non self governing area of self government'."[52]

Such contestation is nonetheless concentrated in pockets. Around two thirds of the provincial population lives in the 2.8 percent of the land area comprised by Xining and Haidong.[53] This region is best conceived as an extension of Gansu province, and indeed, it was part of Gansu up until the creation of Qinghai in 1928.[54] Today the region is effectively a Han and Muslim ethnic area despite several important Tibetan sites. About a fifth of Qinghai Tibetans also

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[49] From discussions with a colleague, it seems that many Muslims in Qinghai were forced out of the urban areas and into the rural areas during the population transfers of the Maoist period. These Hui would have tended to return to the urban areas as soon as population movements were liberalised from the 1980s onwards.

[50] Goodman (2004), p. 3.

[51] Marshall & Cooke (1997), p.2560.

[52] Goodman (2004), p.3.

[53] Goodman (2004), p. 3 puts this figure at 67.2 percent of the population. The detailed tabulation of Qinghai from the 2000 census was not yet available at the time of writing.

[54] Xining itself was established as a frontier town of the Chinese empire at least as early as the 12th century (Goodman, 2004, p.4). Similarly, the Gannan TAP of Gansu is best conceived as an extension of the Huangnan TAP in Qinghai, or in other words, as part of the cultural heart of *Amdo*.

reside in this area and account for close to a quarter of the population in two Muslim counties of Haidong.[55]

The other areas of contemporary Han expansion are in the northern Haibei TAP and the western Haixi TMAP. Both prefectures are very arid and largely composed of desert as well as a handsome supply of minerals and hydrocarbons, albeit difficult and expensive to access. Haixi in particular includes the mineral rich Qaidam Basin, and is well know as the location of the controversial World Bank-supported project that was cancelled by the Chinese government in 2000. Mineral resource development in these areas has resulted in the rapid expansion of several mining towns since the 1950s, populated mostly by Han, which dwarf the indigenous and extremely sparsely distributed Tibetan and Mongolian nomadic populations.

Leaving aside the historically contested northeast corner of the province and the contemporary mining towns, the rest of the province is essentially Tibetan, with pockets of closely related Mongolian and Tu minorities, both of which are Tibetan speaking, Tibetan Buddhist and rural-based. Even considering Haixi TAP and its booming mining towns, such as Germo, the combination of Tibetans, Mongolians and Tu clearly forms a majority of the third of the population stretched out across the remaining 97.2 percent of the province. Excluding Germo and a few other mining towns, Tibetan-speakers are an even larger majority, overwhelmingly so in the rural areas, similar to the TAR. Debates on population shares rarely distinguish this point, given that the northeast corner is usually claimed by the Tibetan exiles, and Germo is held out as a prime example of population swamping. Nonetheless, the former is at best contested and the latter can be considered an exceptional case with little applicability outside the highly mineralised north and west. Within the more populated Tibetan areas closer to the northeast corner there is a definite inflow of Han and Hui traders and caterers from both within and without the province, although this inflow is essentially urban and counterbalanced by the higher rates of natural increase among the indigenous rural population, as discussed previously.

Hence contemporary contestation in these areas takes place in the towns. The presence of Muslims is especially worth noting in this regard. The expansion of Muslim business networks into Tibetan towns leads to heightened competition precisely where the chances for Tibetans to integrate into the urban economy should be highest. This would explain rising tensions between Tibetans and Muslims in Qinghai, and the identification of Muslims as a particularly sharp thorn in the issue of migration to Tibetan areas. Notably, Muslims account for about thirty percent of the population of Jianzha (Tib. Chentsa) TAC, mostly concentrated in and around the main town, which in turn has been the site of some of the most violent Tibetan-Muslim confrontations in recent years, as noted in the first section.[56]

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[55] These are the Hualong Hui Autonomous County (HAC) and the Xunhua Salar Autonomous County (SAC), both of which are located along the Yellow River and border the Huangnan TAP to the south. Tibetans typically reside in the higher altitude peripheries of these Haidong counties while the Hui (and Han) dominate the valleys. Prior to the 20th century Tibetans would have been more present in this region, although their peripheralization had as much to do with the previously discussed conflicts between Muslims and Tibetans as with Chinese population transfers in the 1950s and 1960s.

[56] This share appears to have been rising since the 1990 census, although comparison between various population sources is difficult given that population definitions are different. This considerable presence of resident Muslims does not extend further south to the other counties of the Huangnan TAP. In Tongren County, with the next largest presence of Muslims, they account for little more than five percent of the registered population (Yi, 2004, p. 4).

In summary, the contemporary meeting points between ethnic ities are in the towns and cities, as they were in the past, although with important differences nonetheless. Modern demographic and economic transitions place greater pressures on such urban areas than would have historically been the case. For instance, rising population density and rapid urban expansion can give the visual impression that the more urbanised groups – Muslims or Han – are becoming more dominant even while they are only maintaining or even losing their share in the overall population. In this way, perceptions may be deceptive even while they fuel resentment.

The Economic Foundations of Exclusionary Growth [57]

Interacting with these population dynamics, recent rapid economic growth in the Tibetan areas has been polarized, focusing excessively on urban administrative expansion and a handful of large-scale construction projects to an extent not seen elsewhere in China. In addition, the resuscitation of growth rates since the mid-1990s has taken place mainly through a phenomenal increase in subsidisation.[58] As a result, urban-rural inequalities in the Tibetan areas are considerably higher than everywhere else in China, including the other western provinces.[59] This has put pressure on the few rapidly developing urban areas to fulfil expectations of local rural migrants and the urban poor, even while such rapid development remains rather exclusive, i.e. concentrated in high-wage and high-skill labour, without any significant supporting secondary productive activities to absorb lower skilled labour.

The considerable leakage and low circulation effects of investment and wages in the local economy exacerbate these exclusionary aspects, given that most of the large construction projects are contracted to out-of-province companies. Such companies use a high input of outside finance, material resources and labour, both skilled and unskilled. In this sense, much of the external funding of the Tibetan areas can be seen as a strategy to nurture and promote regional or national construction companies, subsidising the development of their expertise in complex engineering projects, rather than using such funding to nurture the development of locally owned businesses and local expertise.[60] Unfortunately, the out-of-province companies

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[57] This section is a summary of a forthcoming book by the author, Andrew Martin Fischer, *State Growth and Social Exclusion in Tibet: The challenges of recent economic growth*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2004.

[58] By 2001, subsidies were equivalent to 71 percent of GDP in the TAR and 27 percent in Qinghai, having increased by 136 and 160 percent respectively since 1998 (Sources: 2002 CSY, tables 4-3, 8-1, 8-19 and 8-20, and equivalent tables in the 1999, 2000, and 2001 CSYs). A large share of these subsidies in the TAR would be directly or indirectly destined to the railway construction and heavily concentrated in state-owned units, whereas in Qinghai, subsidisation seems to have been more successfully diversified across productive sectors and infrastructure projects, and across various forms of ownership.

[59] For instance, in the mid-1990s, when almost every province of the country managed to reverse the increase in the ratio between urban and rural household incomes that had been taking place throughout the reform period, this ratio in the TAR increased dramatically, entirely departing from the national norm. By 2001, this ratio had almost reached six in the TAR (urban incomes six times rural incomes), whereas it was just below three for China on average, and between three and four for most western provinces. The ratios are calculated from the rural per capita household income statistics and the rural consumer price indices for each province, compiled from the 1985 CSY to the 2002 CSY. This divergence between the TAR and every other Chinese province indicates that economic policy in the TAR since the mid-1990s has been heavily urban biased, even compared to the rest of China, which is usually noted for its urban bias. Questions remain whether the rural income statistics are accurate for the TAR, but the trends in the ratio, rather than the exact measure of the incomes or the ratio, are telling. See Fischer (2004) for a detailed discussion of this.

[60] For instance, I was able to observe during field research that a single construction company from Chengdu, Sichuan has constructed almost all of the bridges along the Qinghai-Tibet railway. The project in general involves a consortium of construction and engineering companies from around the country, many from the coastal areas. While this situation is extreme in the TAR, even in Qinghai, Goodman quotes a leading cadre who

tend to retain and 'repatriate' their profits from the lucrative construction contracts, investing them in other national projects rather than in the local economy, whereas locally owned businesses tend to invest locally. Similarly, temporary workers also tend to repatriate their saved earnings, rather than investing or spending them in the local economy.

As a result, even in the midst of growth, the expansion of opportunities for local unskilled and semi-skilled labour has been limited. Although economic activities for the local population have increased with the boom, these have been more limited relative to comparable growth elsewhere in China and have been mostly concentrated on the lower end of construction work, and commercial and service activities, most of which are concentrated in the urban areas. This dilemma does not apply to the educated and relatively skilled Tibetans, who fit well into the administrative expansion. Notably, over 70 percent of staff and workers in state-owned units in the TAR in 1999 were ethnic Tibetans. A large share of this cohort is made up of cadres, among which ethnic Tibetans again account for a similar share.[61]

Furthermore, the residual low skill activities are precisely those which the lower skilled Han and Muslim migrants tend to occupy as they arrive to take advantage of the subsidised bonanza, as opposed to the higher skilled Han staff and workers who are mainly arriving on temporary managerial and technical postings. Thus the clash of the two lower-skilled flows – local rural migrants (together with the urban poor) and out-of-province 'spontaneous' migration – essentially takes place over the residual activities left over from the unproductive boom, which in turn reinforces the population conflicts referred to above. Competition from the incoming migrants, who generally possess higher skill levels than the local population and are emigrating from more competitive areas of China, increases the scarcity of opportunities faced by local Tibetans. This dilemma is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that urban poverty rates and urban household incomes among permanent urban residents in the TAR (mostly Tibetan) were both among the highest in the country by the end of the 1990s.[62]

Employment and migration

Urbanisation is again central to this scenario. Agriculture, as elsewhere in western China, is currently very limited in its capacity to absorb surplus rural labour, let alone to increase per capita rural incomes, and there is little scope for rural industries in the Tibetan areas given the extreme dispersion of the population. This implies that local rural to urban migration should play a central role in development.

This conundrum can be easily summarised by looking at GDP to labour share ratios. These ratios show the relative productivity of labour within each sector, in terms of its value-added contribution to GDP. This in turn illustrates the underlying economic dynamics that drive structural change within the society and economy, and in particular, urbanisation. Table 4.1 below presents the labour share of each sector in the TAR, Qinghai, and China, while Table 4.2 shows the GDP to labour share ratios. The secondary sector includes mining, industry and

admits, "In the end the eastern enterprises may benefit more from the development of Qinghai's infrastructure [than the province itself]" (Goodman, 2004, p. 12).

[61] TSY, 2000, table 4-5. Although many of these would be attached to state-owned enterprises, the very limited role of secondary industry in the TAR would imply that most of such staff and workers would be in administration, commerce, services or construction.

[62] For instance, urban TAR incomes in 2001 were the seventh highest in the country, neck and neck with coastal provinces such as Fujian and Jiangsu. The poverty measures are taken from Athar Hussain, 'Urban Poverty in China: Measurement, Patterns and Policies', *InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security*, Geneva: International Labour Office, January 2003. See Fischer (2004, pp.48-54) for more discussion on urban income and poverty in the Tibetan areas.

construction. The three last columns of Table 4.2 show the ratio of the ratios, that is, the relative difference between the GDP/labour share ratios across the three sectors.

Table 4.1: Labour shares (2001)

	Primary	Secondary (M+I+C)	Tertiary
TAR	71.8 %	6.5 %	21.7 %
Qinghai	60.0 %	13.0 %	27.0 %
China	50.0 %	22.3 %	27.7 %

Source: 2002 CSY, table 5-3

Table 4.2: GDP/Labour share ratios

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Sec/Prim.	Tert/Prim.	Sec/Tert.
TAR	0.38	3.57	2.30	9.39	6.05	1.55
Qinghai	0.24	3.39	1.55	14.13	6.46	2.19
China	0.30	2.29	1.21	7.63	4.03	1.89

Source: CSY 2002 tables 3-1 and 3-9; table 4.1 above.

Across China, the GDP/labour share ratio is highest in the secondary sector. This means that the relative GDP contribution of one worker in this sector, in money terms, is considerably higher than in the tertiary sector; more than double in Qinghai, almost double in China, and just over one and a half times in the TAR. The GDP or value-added contribution essentially includes wages and profits and thus the high secondary and tertiary ratios in the TAR in part reflect high salary levels, particularly in the tertiary sector.[63] Compared to the primary sector, the secondary sector is over seven times more productive in China, over nine times in the TAR, and over 14 times in Qinghai. Comparing the tertiary sector to the primary sector, tertiary activities are four times more productive than primary in China, six times in the TAR, and almost six and a half in Qinghai. The huge gaps with the primary sector undoubtedly drive the differences in potential remuneration across the three sectors.

These ratios demonstrate the importance of expanding employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors for local agricultural labour in the Tibetan areas, or else for the local urban unemployed. While this precedent exists throughout China, with increased relevance in the interior and western provinces, it applies even more so in the Tibetan areas, typified by the TAR and Qinghai. Productivity in the rest of China, although unbalanced, is more evenly distributed across the three sectors, even in other western provinces.

The irony is that expansion in the secondary and tertiary sectors in the Tibetan areas has tended, at least in part, to be absorbed by out-of-province in-migrants, both skilled and unskilled, rather than migrating rural labour or the urban poor. Even where in-migrants are temporary, their circular flow assures a continual replacement, and the population structure of the in-migrants, as discussed previously, amplifies considerably their employment impact,

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[63] More precisely, it is a combination of labour remuneration, depreciation on fixed assets, net taxes on production, and operating surplus. See CSY (2002), table 3-10. In the TAR average salaries and wages of staff and workers in 2001 were almost double the national average, third highest in the country and just behind those of Beijing and Shanghai (CSY, 2002, table 5-20). This reflects the enormous wage incentives that go into attracting skilled labour to the TAR, also reflected by the fact that over two thirds of the TAR GDP is composed of labour remuneration, whereas in China labour remuneration is on average no more than one half of GDP, and fifty to sixty percent in most other western provinces (CSY, 2002, table 3-10).

which is concentrated in the urban economy. This would explain why their presence is so contentious. In particular, local working Tibetans are faced with some of the highest dependency ratios in the country, whereas in-migrants have almost no dependents, at least not with them, and most are employed, because otherwise they would go home.

Thus, while the Han might only represent about six percent of the provincial population according to the 2000 census, and about one third of the city population and about twenty percent of the town population, they represent a much larger share of urban employment than their population share would suggest. For instance, assuming that 75 percent of this 2000 census Han population of the TAR was working, and that they were working mostly outside agriculture, their six percent population share becomes more than a one-third share of non-agricultural employment in the province (both urban and rural). Thus the impact of a net increase in in-migration, which appears to be the case since the mid-1990s, would have considerable reverberations in non-agricultural employment at this stage of the population transition.

In other words, the thesis that the Han are swamping the Tibetan areas is effectively an expression of the crowding out effect that such in-migration creates in the local urban economy, particularly at a stage when urban opportunities are so critical for the urbanising rural Tibetans. Undoubtedly, there is a skills deficit in the region, particularly for the current large-scale projects that dwarf the local economy, and the upper range of skilled labour is definitely required for the province, so long as such projects persist. In any case, migrating rural labour is not competing for such positions, but rather, for the low skill opportunities that are opening up in the wake of the construction and commercial boom. Therefore, the level playing field between migrants and locals becomes an issue of competition within these activities. Given that migrants enter with considerably higher education and skills, the level playing field is inevitably slanted to their side.

Education as a proxy for skill levels

Within this economic context, education and skill levels become the critical factor determining inclusion or exclusion. This is in contradistinction to the urban-rural divide that is emphasised by most authors.[64] Both the urban-rural divide and the proportion of Tibetans with secondary education and above – and thus part of the skilled labour force – slices a similar 15:85 ratio across the Tibetan population. Nonetheless, the two are not equivalent, as there are rural residents with university education and many urban residents who are illiterate. Rural Tibetan residents with secondary education and above are able to compete and integrate in the modern economy with relative ease. It does not appear that they face any particular discrimination in employment or remuneration once they have achieved such an education level, unlike many other cases of ethnic discrimination, including possibly that of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The education divide rather than the spatial divide is therefore much more relevant in determining exclusionary outcomes. Accordingly, ethnic discrimination would be best identified through differences in the provisioning of education across majority and minority ethnic groups, although such an analysis is not the scope of this current paper.[65]

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[64] For instance, see Brian Sautman & Irene Eng, 'Tibet: Development for Whom?', China Information, XV:2 (2001), pp. 20-74.

[65] Again, see Fischer (2004) for a more detailed discussion of this. Despite the push towards higher primary enrolments in the TAR, per capita education infrastructure (schools and teachers per 10,000 population) at the primary, secondary and vocational levels remains significantly undersupplied compared to other areas of western China, including Qinghai. This is most notable at the secondary and vocational levels, where skills formation is most significant for local labour competing in commerce and services. Ironically, the TAR has an above

The skills imbalance between locals and interprovincial migrants in the Tibetan areas is best portrayed by interprovincial comparisons of education levels, expressed as illiteracy rates or else as the proportion of the population with education above a certain level. Five provinces suffice for this comparison. Sichuan is the main source of immigration to the TAR and also a significant source to Qinghai. Gansu is also another important source for Qinghai, and Shaanxi represents the administrative centre of gravity for Qinghai. Education indicators in these three provinces and the national average therefore give a broad indication of the skill levels in the sources of emigration to the Tibetan areas, both urban and rural. Illiteracy or no schooling would usually imply few skills beyond subsistence agriculture, basic trades or localized commerce. The primary level is the focus of current literacy campaigns,[66] although a person with only primary education can at best be considered low or semi-skilled. Significant skills formation starts to take place at the secondary and vocational levels and beyond.

Obviously, as pointed out in much migration research, migrants often have higher levels of education than the average in their source communities. For instance, Iredale *et al.* found that education levels among both minority (mostly Tibetan) and Han migrants in Lhasa in the mid-1990s were significantly higher than their respective places of emigration, although the rates between the two groups were vastly disparate.[67] Nonetheless, the source levels of education can reflect the general culture of education and skills that the migrants have been influenced by, are leaving from, and maintain networks with throughout the course of their migration. And while there are obviously some migrants with very low or no levels of education, the rates of educational attainment should be seen as probabilities (i.e. the chance that a sampled person has such and such a level of education).

Table 5: Illiteracy rates among the population aged 15+ (2002 population survey)

	Rural	Town	City	Total	Rural/City
TAR	49.0 %	---	35.6 %	43.8 %	1.4
Qinghai	33.6 %	13.3 %	9.6 %	24.8 %	3.5
Gansu	26.4 %	9.0 %	5.5 %	21.1 %	4.8
Sichuan	18.0 %	10.8 %	6.4 %	13.6 %	2.8
Shaanxi	19.3 %	10.5 %	5.9 %	15.6 %	3.3
China	15.0 %	8.7 %	5.7 %	11.6 %	2.6

Source: CPSY 2003, tables 1-18, 1-19, 1-20, 1-21.

The exceptionally high level of urban illiteracy in the TAR is remarkable – almost three quarters the rural rate, which in turn was already exceptionally high for China. This might help to explain why urban poverty in the TAR was among the highest in the country. Everywhere else in China, including Qinghai, city rates were only a small fraction of rural rates and usually within a close range of the national average city rate. If the data were drawn

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national-average supply of tertiary education infrastructure and thus represents a classic bottleneck scenario between the primary and tertiary levels. These factors would at least partly explain the low educational attainments of Tibetans in the TAR.

[66] Current education campaigns in China aim to achieve one hundred percent primary enrolment and the eventual completion of the nine-year compulsory education, which includes the junior secondary level.

[67] This becomes apparent when compared to the census and survey results. The two surveys that Iredale, Bilik & Wang (2001) analyse – one in 1996 and another in 1997 – found that 43.8 percent of the minority (Tibetan) sample was illiterate or quasi-illiterate with no schooling, while 5.1 percent of the Han sample was illiterate (p. 156). Both rates were considerably lower than the respective rates in the late 1990s, which were around 60 percent for the 15+ age group in the TAR and around 15 percent nationally for the same group. For instance, see CSY (2000), table 4-8.

from early surveys, the comparison would be even more extreme.[68] As discussed previously, the annual surveys on population changes are based on the permanently residing population, and thus this urban sample in the TAR would be mostly composed of Tibetans, given that more than half of the Han in the census were temporary residents.[69]

In the face of these local rates among Tibetans in the TAR, out-of-province migrants – who are not captured by the TAR population surveys – would be best described by the rates of Sichuan, which are very similar to those of Shaanxi and Gansu. The most extreme comparison is between the city illiteracy rates of Sichuan and the rural rates of the TAR, which is appropriate given that many of the Sichuanese emigrate from urban or peri-urban conditions while indigenous urbanisation in the Tibetan areas by definition involves Tibetan migration from the rural areas. In this case, the rural TAR rate of 49 percent contrasts appallingly with the city Sichuan rate of 6.4 percent. Interestingly, Iredale *et al.* measure a similar spread between Tibetan and Han migrants in Lhasa in the mid-1990s.[70] Yet even in the least extreme comparison, rural migrants from Sichuan are on average half as illiterate as the TAR city residents, at rates of 18 versus 36 percent illiteracy. Thus even an average rural Sichuan migrant in Lhasa would have a considerable skills advantage over the average city resident, an anomaly that is simply not observed elsewhere in China.

In Qinghai, there is a sharp difference between the rural rate, which is the second highest in the country, and the city and town rates, which are closer to the national norm.[71] This essentially reflects the contrast between the urbanised and nationally oriented northeast corner of the province and the rest of the province, which remains quite impoverished. Nonetheless, much of the immigration into the Tibetan areas of Qinghai is intraprovincial, deriving from the core cities and towns of the province. On the other hand, Qinghai Tibetans were over 91 percent rural in the 2000 census and are best captured by the rural rates. In this perspective, the disparity between urban and rural rates in Qinghai is equivalent to the comparison between Sichuan and the TAR.

This analysis corroborates more generally with the education levels among populations aged six and older. Above the primary level,[72] an additional notable feature is the sheer drop off at the secondary level in the TAR, with Qinghai and Gansu performing below the national level. This indicates that not only is the TAR highly illiterate, but skilled labour is also in extremely short supply, with only 13 percent of the TAR population having some form of secondary education or higher, versus 39 percent in Qinghai, 43 percent in Sichuan and 52 percent nationally (Table 6).

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[68] In the 2001 survey, illiteracy in the TAR was estimated at 44.2 percent in the cities and 46.2 percent in the rural areas, i.e. almost identical (CPSY, 2002, tables 1-18, 1-19, 1-20, 1-21).

[69] This can be indirectly deduced by the fact that Public Security Department sources put the non-military Han population of the TAR at about 70,000 in 1999, which has remained unchanged throughout the 1990s, whereas the 2000 census counted 160,000. The Public Security Department probably uses a definition that is similar to the surveys, i.e. permanent and long-term categories of residence (TBS, 2000, 33).

[70] For instance, Iredale, Bilik and Wang (2001) found that 43.8 percent of their minority (Tibetan) sample in Lhasa was illiterate or quasi-illiterate with no schooling, versus 5.1 percent of the Han migrant sample in Lhasa (p. 156).

[71] The rural rates in Qinghai used to be closer to the TAR rural rates, but in recent years they have been dropping more rapidly than those of the TAR, perhaps due to the much better supply of per capita education infrastructure. See Fischer (2004) for a more detailed discussion of the supply of education infrastructure.

[72] The proportion of the population with primary education and above is obviously the inverse of the no-schooling/illiteracy rates

Table 6: Education levels including and above various levels, 6+ population (2000 census)

	No-schooling[73]	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
TAR	46.4%	53.6%	12.7%	1.5%
Qinghai	23.6%	76.4%	38.6%	3.6%
Gansu	16.9%	83.1%	39.9%	2.9%
Sichuan	8.7%	91.3%	42.7%	2.7%
Shaanxi	8.1%	91.9%	53.2%	4.5%
China	7.7%	92.3%	52.3%	3.8%

Source: CSY 2002 table 4-12 (from the 2000 census). Note that primary includes the category of literacy classes, secondary includes junior and senior middle schools, and specialized secondary schools, and tertiary includes junior college, university, and post-graduates.

However, the above provincial data does not differentiate ethnicity. Fortunately, the most recent population yearbook does divulge education levels by ethnicity from the 2000 census, presented in the table below, although these data are not further subdivided by province. They nonetheless provide several additional insights (Table 7).

Table 7: Education levels including and above various levels by ethnicity, ages 6+, 2000 census

	No-schooling	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Total	7.7%	92.3%	52.3%	3.8%
Han	7.3%	92.7%	53.4%	3.9%
Tibetan	45.5%	54.5%	13.3%	1.4%
Tu	18.8%	81.2%	34.6%	3.6%
Hui	15.6%	84.4%	44.9%	4.1%
Salar	42.9%	57.1%	17.5%	1.6%
Dongxiang	58.0%	42.0%	8.4%	0.4%
Yi	21.2%	78.8%	22.3%	1.1%
Qiang	8.2%	91.8%	33.9%	2.3%
Uygur	8.8%	91.2%	35.3%	2.7%
Mongolian	7.2%	92.8%	54.8%	5.2%

Source: CPSY 2003 table 2-2.

First, the education levels of all Tibetans are almost identical to those of the TAR – slightly more at the primary and secondary levels and slightly less at the tertiary level – despite a more than doubling of the head count. This would indicate that education levels among Tibetans outside the TAR are essentially the same as inside the TAR. In terms of no-schooling rates, these education levels were the worst among the large ethnic groups in China, and the fifth worst among the entire set of 56 ethnicities.[74]

The poor education performance of Muslim groups specific to the Qinghai-Gansu region is also revealing. The national Hui Muslims recorded a medium education level compared to the other large groups despite their visible minority status (i.e. lower than the Han but higher than

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[73] Illiteracy and no schooling appear to be treated synonymously as the two terms are used interchangeably from year to year in the Yearbook sources.

[74] The Moinba and Lhoba took second and fourth last places respectively. These are two miniscule indigenous groups of the TAR that are closely related to the Tibetans, with populations of less than 10,000 people. The Baoan, an equally miniscule group indigenous to Qinghai, won third last place.

the Yi). However, the Hui are spread out over the country and these figures probably do not reflect their education levels close to the Tibetan areas.[75] On the other hand, the Salar are almost entirely concentrated in Qinghai and share much in common with the Qinghai Hui. Nationally, they were sixth worst in terms of no schooling and their education levels were only marginally higher than the Tibetans, as indicated above. These results are especially significant given that the Muslims in Qinghai are considerably more urbanised than the Tibetans, and thus in principle they should have a better and higher quality access to education. The Dongxiang, another Muslim minority concentrated mostly in Gansu had by far the worst education levels of the country.

These findings confirm the observations made by many scholars that Muslims in the Qinghai-Gansu region face significant social exclusion, despite their popular status as being crafty in commerce. Evidently, there is strong inequality within this community, such that the region produces both very successful Hui and Salar businesspeople as well as an undereducated population. These outcomes may themselves be signs of exclusion. For instance, land in the Hualong HAC in Qinghai is considerably degraded, which combined with a relatively rapid population growth among the Hui and limited off-farm employment opportunities, would put a strong downward pressure on the per capita incomes of those households that rely on solely farming. This in turn would contribute to high inequality given that the richer segments of the Hui community would nonetheless be well integrated into commercial activities in the core towns and cities of Qinghai.[76] Also, lack of publicly funded culturally sensitive education, which for the Muslims would include some form of religious education in sexually segregated classes,[77] also contributes to low education outcomes among the poorer members of the community.

Conflict between Tibetans and Muslims in the Qinghai-Gansu region therefore represents frictions between two marginalized ethno-religious groups. Tibetans nonetheless claim that they are economically disadvantaged in the towns compared to the more urban and commercial Muslims. The Muslims who do venture into the Tibetan areas are likely to hail from the wealthier sections of the Muslim community given that their activities are usually integrated into larger Muslim commercial networks. Their presence would thereby entail a more competitive pressure than the average Muslim would imply. On the other hand, Muslims complain that Tibetans are given special treatment by the authorities, especially in TAPs and TACs where Muslims represent a significant visible minority. Yet both communities possess equally miserable education levels, particularly after five decades of public education under the CCP.

As a final note, the figures above reveal an additional insight into differences between Tibetans and other ethnicities in Western China. For instance, the Uygur, almost entirely

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[75] Many of the Hui are found in Central China, and although their education indicators compare favourably to minorities concentrated in the west, they lag significantly behind Han rates in the central and coastal areas.

[76] Given the land tenure system in China, landlessness is not observed as it is in other parts of Asia, but the small size of landholdings nonetheless makes sustenance difficult for households based solely on agriculture. Thus rural inequality in China is largely determined by access to off-farm employment, with the exception of coastal or suburban farming that is specialized in certain high-value crops. For instance, see the work of Khan and Riskin (2001). This rule applies even more in the arid western areas, such as the Hualong HAC, where the land is considerably degraded and the cultivation of high-value crops limited. The same principles would apply to the Tibetan areas, except that their populations are much more dispersed than in the Muslim areas of Haidong, and less urbanised and less involved in commerce. Thus manifest extremes of inequality are less visible in the Tibetan areas.

[77] For instance, see Goodman (2004), p. 13.

concentrated in Xinjiang, face an entirely different scenario from the Tibetans. They are in fact a relatively well-educated ethnic group, with close to national average illiteracy rates, although they fall behind at the secondary level and above. Therefore, where ethnically defined exclusion of Uygurs occurs, this may result from more overt forms of discrimination, whereas given the exceptionally low levels of education among Tibetans, exclusion can easily occur without overt discrimination necessarily playing a role *per se*. On the other hand, many forms of implicit discrimination contribute to the poor education indicators in the first place.[78] This inference is similar to the observations made earlier in terms of net population inflows.

In contrast, Mongolians are among the best-educated ethnicity in China, with higher education levels than the Han, particularly at the tertiary level.[79] The Tu in Qinghai also have much better levels than other ethnicities in the province, perhaps due to the fact that their population is concentrated close to the core northeast corner of the province. For similar reasons, the Qiang in Sichuan, who mostly reside in a few counties of the Aba Tibetan-Qiang AC that are relatively close to Chengdu, also have reasonable education levels, comparable to the Uygurs. Nonetheless, all of these minority groups, with the exception of the Mongolians and possibly the national Hui, experience a significant gap with the Han at the secondary level and above, which is precisely where skills formation becomes most relevant.

Reflections on Ethnic Conflict in Light of Transition and Exclusion

In light of the experiences of Tibetans within growth and urban expansion, it is possible to see contemporary interethnic conflict, also centred on the urban areas, as in part a defensive reaction to exclusion and other ills of modernity. Ethnic nationalist discourses that identify outsiders as dominators or aggressors, be they voluntary or not, could be understood as efforts by locals to negotiate more inclusive forms of development with the state and the dominant ethnic group. This is not entirely instrumental, for it includes a normative aspect that locals consider legitimate, i.e. to counteract the perceived and actual effects of exclusion. Inversely, it also aggravates historical conflicts between groups, albeit within the entirely new context of the emerging urban space.

The ethnic nationalisms that underlie conflict therefore present a double-edged sword, given that they carry their own inclusionary and exclusionary dynamic. The inclusive relates to the integration of the dominant minority – Tibetans – into the hegemony that the Han wield over state-led development. The exclusive relates to other minority groups that are in competition for state patronage. In other words, nationalist movements under various guises or political positions can act to promote local 'ownership' of the development process while at the same time showing a repressive, sectarian or xenophobic face to other ethnic groups, or even to other competing factions of Tibetans. This danger is particularly pronounced for the Muslims

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[78] For instance, the per capita supply of education infrastructure at the primary and secondary levels in the TAR appears to be considerably lower than both national averages and other western provinces, despite the fact that the TAR has one of the youngest populations of China (2002 CSY, tables 43, 20-27/29/30/31/32; 2000 Tabulation, table 2-5). See Fischer (2004) for more detail. Other factors of implicit discrimination could include the political uses of education, culturally insensitive education policies, and so forth. For an excellent discussion of many of these issues, see Catriona Bass, Education in Tibet; Policy and Practice since 1950. London: TIN/Zed Books, 1998.

[79] However, this would not necessarily apply to the Mongolians of Qinghai. Nonetheless, it appears that the Henan MAC in Qinghai has a fairly strong primary and secondary education policy, as observed during a field visit in the summer 2003. For instance, they have apparently convinced most pastoralists to send their children to boarding schools in the county town, whereas this remains a problem in many Tibetan pastoral areas.

in Qinghai given their vulnerability. Because they do not represent the agency of the state, they can become easy targets of aggression.

Scepticism might be raised about the possibilities for a Tibetan-led push towards more inclusive forms of development within the Tibetan areas given the Han-dominated one-party framework of Chinese politics. Yet in light of the fact that over 70 percent of the staff and workers in state-owned units in the TAR are ethnic Tibetans, including government cadres, it is possible to conceive that such an ethnic elite could play a similar role within a 'corporatist'[80] or 'topocratic'[81] Chinese setting that nationalist political parties play within procedurally democratic settings. This would particularly be the case where Tibetans and related Mongolians and Tu increasingly manage to jostle themselves into a position of junior partner in the local prefectural and county governments of their autonomous areas.[82]

From this perspective, the Han in the Tibetan areas are not necessarily the targets most in danger from emergent Tibetan nationalism. This is not only because the Han maintain hegemony of state power and represent an overwhelming adversary in terms of both economic and military strength. It also relates to the fact that, beyond the high profile animosity of recent history, there is a certain common ground between the two cultures that ultimately provides a fertile soil for mutually beneficially interaction. This has become more apparent as the religious and cultural traditions of the Han also re-emerge in the reform period. In their interface with Tibetan Buddhism, there is increasingly more space for consensual forms of cooperation between Tibetans and Han based on mutually understood symbols and practices. Accordingly, many conflicts within the Tibetan areas increasingly tend to revolve around competition between groups of Tibetans vying for state or patron favour, or else disagreements among Tibetans over the degree and nature of cooperation with the Han or

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[80] A variety of different political economy theories of a corporatist lineage have been developed to explain localized developmentalism within the Chinese polity. For instance, for some of the most prominent, see Marc J. Blecher, 'Developmental State, Entrepreneurial State: The Political Economy of Socialist Reform in Xinji Municipality and Guanghan County' in G. White (ed.), *The Road to Crisis: The Chinese State in the Era of Economic Reform*, London: Macmillan, 1991; Marc J. Blecher & Vivienne Shue, *Tethered deer: government and economy in a Chinese county*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996; Jean C. Oi, 'Fiscal reform and the economic foundations of local state corporatism in China', *World Politics*, 45:1 (1992), pp. 99-126; Victor Nee, 'Organizational dynamics of market transition: hybrid forms, property rights and mixed economy in China', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 37 (1992), pp. 1-27; Dorothy J. Solinger, *China's transition from socialism: statist legacies and market reforms, 1980-1990*, Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1993; Susan H. Whiting, *Power and wealth in rural China: the political economy of institutional change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[81] See Terry Canon, 'Introduction: The Economic Reforms, Demographic Processes and Environmental Problems', in Terry Cannon (ed.), *China's Economic Growth: The Impact on Regions, Migration, and the Environment*, London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000, pp. 1-29. Drawing off the corporatist theories, he innovates the terms 'topocracy' or 'bounded localized development' to describe the crucial role played by locally bound jurisdictions in the processes of decentralization and devolution that underlie the Chinese growth experience of more than two decades. He differentiates his concept from corporatism in that his embraces various hierarchies of locality-bound jurisdictions and applies to both successful and unsuccessful cases. The former corporatist analyses tend to only consider the county levels of government, mostly in the successful coastal counties.

[82] From discussions with one researcher working in the area, it seems that the Hui were the favoured junior partner in the in late-Maoist years and early reform years. The Hui, with networks throughout northwest China, were more integrated into national politics and offered no separatist threat, unlike the Tibetans or Uyghurs. Since the 1990s, it seems that this favouring may have reversed, with suspicion of Islam counterbalancing a newfound popularity for Tibetans among the Han.

the extent to which Han outsiders may interfere with the internal affaires of the Tibetan community.[83]

In contrast to this somewhat strained potential for co-existence, both Tibetans and Han sit comfortably with similar prejudices towards the Muslims, who are scapegoated for a variety of social problems, such as increasing crime. Even a successful Muslim businessperson may be typically characterised as tricky or a cheater.[84] The trend seems to point in the direction of increased ostracism of Muslims from both sides, leaving them much more vulnerable than the Han to outbursts of Tibetan violence. An apparently local Amdo Tibetan saying bears evidence of this prospect – *mie hui qu han* – which means "kill the Hui and kick out the Han".[85]

Again, there are two possible strands to such a conflict. One is straightforward historical enmity. The second is the defensive social reaction in response to disadvantaged competition faced in the towns. In this respect, the Muslims again attract attention because they compete in the same low-skill commercial and service activities that, in principle, would be the key entry points into the urban economy for urbanising Tibetans. Yet ironically, local Muslims also find themselves sandwiched between the Han and Tibetans. Despite their often-noted success and craftiness in business,[86] it appears that many of the poorer Hui and Salar are bearing the brunt of social exclusion in the lowlands as well as increased reticence in the highlands.

In this sense, contemporary conflict in the Tibetan areas can be viewed in terms of the position of each group within the intensified integration of these peripheral regions into a national framework. Conflicts between Tibetans and Han generally revolve around related consolidation efforts. Conflicts between Tibetans and Muslims deal with competition between two marginalized local groups over the residual spoils of this peripheral integration, and with the struggles to manage exclusion within the context of social and economic transformations. Both types of conflict include historical and modern aspects. Local conflicts that were rooted in the past have transmuted alongside modernity, responding to tensions that are entirely contemporary to the post-1950s, such as rapid population growth, urbanisation, urban-centred growth or consolidation of state hegemony over 'frontier' regions.

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[83] This carries a very interesting parallel to conflicts within aboriginal communities in Canada and the US between modernisers and traditionalists, although the associations of co-optation are not necessarily identical in each case.

[84] Derived from conversations with a variety of Tibetans and Han along with several other scholars working in the area. A similar scapegoating of the Yi takes place in Sichuan, where both Tibetans and Han typically characterize them as thieves without religion, in contradistinction to the Tibetans, a noble civilisation possessing religion. When I countered that there were many renowned bandits among the Khampa Tibetans, both Tibetan and Han interlocutors argued that when a Khampa robs you, he does so facing you in an act of bravery, whereas the Yi do so in a sneaky way from behind.

[85] One scholar working in Qinghai quoted this saying to me in Chinese. I have not yet had the chance to find it in Tibetan. From my own side, I have come across many surprisingly racist attitudes towards Muslims among both Tibetans and Mongolians, whether newcomers in the exile community or residents in the Tibetan areas in China.

[86] For instance, Goodman (2004) points out that two of Qinghai's wealthiest entrepreneurs are Muslims, one a Salar from Xunhua County, and another a Hui from Hualong County (p.13). Interestingly, Goodman concentrates on this common perception that Muslims in the region have been successful and appears to overlook the issue of social exclusion, despite much evidence pointing to the wider Muslim experience of marginalisation.

Conclusion

Tibet is a society in transition, as are all developing societies. Yet symbols of the political debate become transfixed in a perpetual image of an old pre-transitional time (Shangri-La). Ironically, the exile discourse is basically urban-centric in its analysis of the Tibetan areas, although it rests on the conviction that Tibetans are essentially a rural people. While this process of identifying rurality with Tibetans and urbanity with Chinese is an accurate portrayal of the current population status quo on the plateau, it nonetheless overlooks important developmental issues faced by Tibetans during the course of their population and economic transitions. These revolve around issues of exclusion from urban development and the urgent need to improve the integration of Tibetans into their urban areas, despite the fact that this might dilute their more traditional characteristics. Tibetan urban areas are the focus of inter-ethnic contestation precisely because of their centrality to contemporary social and economic developments.

More generally, although the Shangri-La imagery emphasises the more exceptional and unique aspects of the Tibetan areas, they nonetheless exhibit a fairly normal pattern in terms of social exclusion and ethnic conflict in peripheral regions. In particular, this study draws attention to the centrality of population transitions, especially with regard to differential rates of urbanisation, and their interactions with growth, employment and differential skill levels in determining group-based exclusion as well as interethnic conflict. These insights could be applied to many comparable peripheral multi-ethnic settings of the developing world, thereby serving as a valuable contribution to the ongoing research agendas of exclusion and conflict.

Furthermore, these dynamics appear to be related to the intensified integration of peripheral regions into core regions, in a process that is analogous to 'globalisation', defined in a similar manner. During such intensified integration, peripheral growth is increasingly driven by levers that are based outside the local economy, which in turn creates a centripetal dynamic that diverts the benefits of growth to the core regions, such as Chengdu, Chongqing or the coastal areas. Economic activity becomes concentrated in larger regional or national entities that are not based in the local economy and that are unresponsive to local skill levels, local networks, and so forth. Smallholder agriculturalists and the urban poor become marginalized as they face increasingly high hurdles to participate in the dynamic sectors of the economy, which are dominated by the logistical and strategic priorities of the core areas. Polarised growth therefore tends to generate exclusionary outcomes, most manifest in the urban areas. This would explain the emergence of high urban poverty even in the midst of rapid growth rates.

In this context, ethno-nationalist discourses evolve in both a normative and instrumental manner. The normative responds to the manifestations of exclusion and potentially serves as an organisational basis around which palliative and inclusive strategies can be advocated. This works in tandem with the instrumental as a means used by the ethnic elite to at least partially re-appropriate the economic levers of the local economy. Yet such discourses also carry an exclusionary element, based on reinforcing ethnic divisions. This aspect is accentuated by the exclusionary nature of growth in such peripheral regions, which leads to increased tension between groups, particular between minority groups that compete over the residual lower-skill activities in the economy. These groups bear the brunt of exclusion due to their lower education and skill levels and their marginalisation from political and economic power. The potential for both exclusion and conflict is heightened when migration is added to this setting, by exacerbating competition over lower-skilled work among the marginalized groups.

The danger arising from such a scenario is that one minority group may scapegoat another in their struggle to adjust to the changing nature of political and economic power in these regions. This represents the conundrum faced by Muslims in the Tibetan areas, who have some of the poorest social indicators in the country, comparable to the Tibetans, yet are faced by comfortably shared prejudices from both the mainstream Han Chinese society and the dominant Tibetan Buddhist minority communities. In other words, even Shangri-La has its own share of modern social hazards.

Glossary

Amdo   The indigenously defined region of northeast Tibet, which is currently subdivided between Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan.

Chinese Muslims (i.e. *Hui, Salar, etc.*)

    The term 'Chinese Muslims' is often used to differentiate these Muslims, who are racially close to the Han Chinese, from the Turkic Uyghur Muslims of Xinjiang. The dominant group among the Chinese Muslims are the Hui, who are spread throughout the country and are actually quite diverse. Nonetheless, an important concentration of Hui is based in the region that surrounds Amdo, split into three northwest provinces – the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Gansu, and the northeast corner of Qinghai. The Hui population in this northwest region is supplemented by several other small Chinese Muslim groups, such as the Dongxiang in Gansu and the Salar in Qinghai. This paper will refer to Chinese Muslims as Muslims and the Uyghur Muslims as Uyghurs.

Han   This paper uses the official terminology for ethnicity in China. Thus Han are the ethnicity commonly referred to as Chinese, whereas Chinese is accepted as a term that designates citizenship within the Chinese nation. It is acknowledged that this definition is sensitive among minorities because it implies that Tibetans or Uyghurs are Chinese. Nonetheless, here Tibetans will be simply referred to as Tibetans, and for clarification, sometimes the Han will be referred to as Han Chinese.

Kham   The indigenously defined region of eastern Tibet, which is currently subdivided between the TAR, Sichuan, Yunnan and Qinghai.

TAC   Tibetan Autonomous County, the lower level of autonomous status, incorporated into prefectures. Other minority autonomous areas are similarly designated, such as HAC for Hui Autonomous County, TMAP for Tibetan-Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, and so forth.

TAP   Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the higher level of autonomous status given to Tibetan (and other ethnic) areas outside the TAR and incorporated into the other four provinces containing Tibetan areas, namely Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan.

TAR   Tibet Autonomous Region, the provincial-level jurisdiction that the Chinese often refer to as 'Tibet' but that encompasses less than half of the traditional Tibetan areas. The boundaries of this region were more or less determined by the territory controlled by Lhasa in the first half of the 20th century.

Utsang   The indigenously defined region of Central Tibet. U is the area around Lhasa and Lhoka, the main seat of the Dalai Lamas, whereas Tsang is the area around Shigatse, the main seat of the Panchen Lamas.

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