9 Foreign Affairs and Politics

Summary 9.1 Attitude Toward Britain. – 9.2 Attitude Toward the Chinese Government.

9.1 Attitude Toward Britain

[141] Prior to the 30th year of the Guangxu era [1904],[1] Tibet considered the British to be irredeemable enemies. The British were barred from entering Tibet, as the borders were locked down and no interactions were allowed. The Qing imperial court was the only entity to which they turned for support. In that year, as British forces invaded Tibet and reached Lhasa, the Dalai Lama and his retinue fled to the Inner Lands, where they sought refuge with the imperial court. Later, upon the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet, the court, influenced by false accusations, stripped him of his authority. As the Han troops then moved towards Lhasa, the Dalai Lama fled south to India. In the midst of this crisis, the Dalai Lama sought shelter within the land of his enemy. Still, the British did not treat him as an enemy. Rather, they looked upon him with a favorable attitude. From this point, Tibet and Britain began to establish a closer relationship, and the idea of driving out the Han gained traction between them.

In the aftermath of the [1911] Revolution, unrest in Tibet was incited by the Han troops, which were disarmed and expelled, resulting in a more solidified and intensified relationship between Britain and Tibet. However, the Dalai Lama himself showed a relative lack of interest in Britain, unlike his dealings with the Central Government. With the Dalai Lama's passing,

1 Here, Fazun identifies 1904, the year of the British Expedition to Lhasa, as "the thirtieth year of the Guangxu era". The British expedition to Tibet, also known as the Younghusband Expedition, was led by Colonel Francis Younghusband (1863-1942). It began in December 1903 and concluded in September 1904.

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his nephew, Radreng Hothokthu, now acts as regent and holds authority as both King of Dharma[2] and King of Tibet.[3] The earlier anti-British ideology of Tibetans has now shifted entirely to anti-Han sentiment, a point I touched upon earlier in the section on military equipment. While Tibetans remain uninclined to relinquish all sovereignty to Britain, their trust in Britain far exceeds that in the Central Government. While they still harbor **[142]** a certain apprehension toward the British, they adopt conciliatory measures in all engagements. Still, whether this approach can be maintained for the long term remains difficult to ascertain. Fortunately, their national sentiment and monastic ideals still lean toward the Central Government. This makes them unwilling to submit to Britain's wrong religious ideals.[4]

Beyond this, I am afraid all else seems to have long fallen under British control. The Tibetan authorities harbor fear, suspicion, and vigilance toward Britain. Yet, at the same time, they maintain profound goodwill, trust, and deference. In their diplomatic dealings, on the one hand, they assert authority by constraining arbitrary actions by the British. For example, a British official stationed in India entered Tibet last year under the pretext of a tea expedition to investigate local conditions, only to meet an ill-fated end Lhasa.[5] The British sought to retrieve the corpse by aircraft, but Tibetan authorities denied them access by aircraft, and so they were forced to repatriate the remains via mule litter. Conversely, they allow for long-term British residency in Tibet, adopt British proposals, **[143]** and comply with their instigations. To illustrate, the Tibetan authorities permitted the British to install a wireless telegraph station in Lhasa without opposing any resistance, allowing it to serve as a counterweight to the station operated by the Central Government. The Tibetan authorities' attitude toward Britain is made evident when examined through the dual lens of their mindset and method.

2 C. fawang 法王.

3 C. zangwang 藏王.

4 In this passage, it is evident that Fazun is alluding to the Christian faith. Fazun's analysis, articulated through the concept of *xiejiao sixiang* 邪教思想, meaning 'wrong religious ideals', centers around the term *xiejiao*, with *jiao* meaning "teaching" but referring to the modern term *zongjiao* 宗教, 'religion'. Conversely, the term *xie* (S. mithyā; T. log pa) is a distinctly Buddhist term that serves as a qualifier, conveying the notions of 'wrong', 'erroneous', 'fallacious', or 'misguided'. The sinograph *xie* combines with *jian* 見 (S. dṛṣṭi; T. lta) to create the compound *xiejian* 邪見 (S. mithyādṛṣṭi; T. log lta), which translates to 'wrong view', 'erroneous view', or 'perverted view'. This passage highlights Fazun's assessment of the religious beliefs in Britain, using the term *mithyādṛṣṭi* to describe a perverted understanding, especially the mistaken notion of a divine creator. *Mithyādṛṣṭi* generally pertains to misunderstandings, but it can also refer to specific philosophical mistakes, including eternalism (S. śāśvatadṛṣṭi) and nihilism (S. ucchedadṛṣṭi). In the context of Buddhist moral teachings, *mithyādṛṣṭi* is recognized as the tenth and last of the ten harmful courses of action (C. yedao 業道; S. karmapatha; P. kammapatha; T. las kyi lam), which denotes a disbelief in the law of cause and effect and the process of reincarnation. This erroneous view is considered immoral and particularly damaging because it promotes a lack of accountability by indicating that actions have no consequences.

5 In this passage, Fazun is likely alluding to the British diplomatic mission to Lhasa led by Sir Basil John Gould (1883-1956), who served as the British Political Officer in Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet from 1935 until 1945. The mission took place between 1936 and 1937 and included figures such as Frederick Spencer Chapman (1907-1971), who acted as Gould's personal secretary and photographer, and Hugh Richardson (1905-2000), who would later become the British envoy in Lhasa. I was unable to verify Fazun's specific claims that the mission was undertaken under the pretext of a tea expedition, or that a British officer died in Lhasa.

9.2 Attitude Toward the Chinese Government

In recent years, the Tibetan authorities perceived that our Central Government was incapable of unification, lacked the strength to resist foreign aggression, possessed no capacity to extend its reach to Tibet, held no intention to become involved in Tibetan affairs, and could not mediate the issue of the Panchen Lama's return. Above all, they believed that since the [1911] Revolution, our Chinese nation had become entirely Westernized and Christianized, and devoid of any trace of the Buddhadharma. – This perception was particularly entrenched in Xikang, where people deemed an emperor indispensable. How could overthrowing and even discarding the emperor not amount to a Western mistaken view?[6] Their misconceptions remain deeply ingrained. No matter how much one tries to instruct them, they persist in clinging to these views – although there has been notable improvement in recent times.

Tibetans have come to understand that the Chinese Government is neither entirely Westernized nor composed only of Christians. They now recognize that many officials in the Inner Lands still adhere to Buddhism. They acknowledge that the Chinese Government has the capacity for national unification and the ability to cultivate strength. Ultimately, they understand that once the government in the Inner Lands is properly structured, all necessary reforms and initiatives will progress effortlessly. As a result, they now observe the Chinese Government with a distant, watchful gaze, while holding on to the hope for the unification of the Inner Lands. Some now acknowledge that, even after the unification of the Inner Lands, offering allegiance to the Chinese Government would greatly outweigh the act of submitting **[144]** to the British.

First, the notion of a "single family" has been around for quite some time; it does not require any fresh cultivation or creation. Second, regardless of any changes, the Inner Lands continue to be, in essence, a Buddhist country. There will never be a scenario where the Buddhadharma and its adherents are entirely nonexistent. Third, the Han and the Tibetans, both part of the yellow race,[7] share extensive linguistic borrowings – unlike English, which remains distinctly foreign and dissonant. Fourth, the Buddhadharma embraced by the Mongolian and Manchu nations is purely Tibetan in origin. Even the scriptures they chant are entirely compiled in Tibetan script, unchanged in the slightest. Fifth, the Buddhist architecture and culture

6 C. xiejian 邪見. In this passage, Fazun more explicitly invokes a Buddhist philosophical position to frame the rejection of imperial authority as doctrinal fallacy. Fazun illustrates how the political developments following the 1911 Revolution were perceived by Tibetan officials and Xikang residents, who interpreted these changes through a Buddhist doctrinal perspective. He illustrates their stance that the dethronement of the Qing emperor – a central figure in the dynasty's Buddhist-oriented administration – constituted *xiejian*, 'mistaken views', a phrase that implies a disregard for values aligned with the Dharma. In their opinion, the lack of an emperor illustrated both a political schism and the collapse of a sacred order. Fazun points out their blending of anti-monarchist Republican sentiments with "Western mistaken views", using a rhetorical technique that suggests that secular modernity cannot coexist with Buddhist cosmology. He examines how these communities strategically used Buddhist concepts to critique the Republican government in China, drawing a parallel between loyalty to the Qing's Buddhist imperial order and fidelity to the Dharma. In Fazun's analysis, he illustrates how Tibetan and Xikang groups actively resisted Republican reforms that they considered hostile to Buddhism and rooted in Western Christian ideals.

7 C. huangse de minzu 黃色的民族; literally, 'yellow nation', but also 'yellow race'. Hence, the phrase *yizhong huangse de minzu* 一種黃色的民族 also translates to 'one kind of yellow race'.

of Mongolia, Manchuria, Qinghai, and Gansu are largely shaped by the architecture and culture of Tibet's Buddhism. Sixth, within the monastic community, both influential leaders and highly learned monks often trace their roots back to regions like Mongolia and Qinghai, and hold the notion that the Inner Lands are their homeland.

Therefore, Tibet's current stance toward the Chinese Government can be described as one that is neither too close nor too far, neither aligned nor estranged. Sometimes, orders are accepted, while at other times they are rejected. There is neither fear nor loyalty, only a quiet, detached observation. In earlier times, Tibet displayed outright disdain, a topic I discussed at length in my unpolished work, *Tibet, As I Once Passed Through*, so I will not go over it again here.