7 The Origins of Disempowered Development in the Tibetan Borderlands¹

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Abstract

Recent research demonstrates that, for over fifty years, the People's Republic of China has tended to pursue development policies that disempower non-Han inhabitants of borderlands regions. Using Kham as a case study, this chapter demonstrates that the production of economic inequality, especially across ethnic lines, did not originate in the Communist period nor in actions of the state alone; instead, the sources of ethnic inequality were deeply entangled with trends in private corporate commercialization as well as with nascent statist approaches to modern economic and political development. To reevaluate the key elements of Chinese development, we must employ longer-range historical frameworks, and we must consider borderlands regions such as Kham, where diverse, and sometimes unexpected, actors have produced long-term impacts.

Keywords: borderlands, economic inequality, ethnicity, Kham, modern commerce

Introduction

In 1957, when Communist Party work teams entered Qiongsan Village in the old Khampa region of Drakteng (Danba), they were looking for links

¹ I wish to thank Stéphane Gros and Yudru Tsomu for their many fine suggestions for this chapter. Their contributions were invaluable, but any remaining mistakes are mine. The term 'disempowered development' is borrowed from the book title of Fischer (2014).

between exploitation and poverty, and they found them. One farmer, a Khampa named Peldengyel (Bandeerjia), farmed 7.5 *mu* (0.5 hectares) of land granted to him by the local Drakteng king (*gyelpo*), also known as the Badi *tusi*. In return, Peldengyel owed grain tax and corvée labour. But these burdens had proven too great at some point in the past, and, to make ends meet, Peldengyel had mortgaged three *mu* of his land, taking on the dreaded high-interest loans that helped reinforce regional hierarchies of power and subordination. To pay the interest, Peldengyel continued to farm all his assigned land, but the grain from his three mortgaged *mu* went to pay interest on his debt, leaving his family of six to subsist on a measly 400 litres (four *dan*) of grain for the year. This amount of grain provided, perhaps, just enough calories for one adult male,² and the family did what 80 per cent of their neighbours did: To make ends meet, they sought sidelines, which, in this case, was collecting plant and animal products that could be sold into China's vast herbal medicine markets ('Danbaxian Badi xiang Qiongshan cun shehui diaocha' 1958, 28-29).

In March of 1957, Peldengyel's family collected twenty kilos (forty *jin*) of *qinjiao* (*Gentiana macrophylla*), which they sold for two silver dollars (*dayang*), and in April, they dug 100 caterpillar fungi (*chongcao*), which they sold for one silver dollar. In June, they dug a half kilo of *beimu* (*Fritillaria thunbergii*), which earned them another four silver dollars, and then in August, they had their best month, digging about fifteen kilos of *qianghuo* (*Notopterygium incisum*) and 25 kilos of Chinese rhubarb (*dahuang*), for a take home of eight silver dollars. Since each silver dollar could be exchanged for ten litres of grain, the fifteen silver dollars was the equivalent of producing another 150 litres of grain. At some point during the year, the family also harvested four musk deer, and they exchanged the musk pods for about 400 litres of grain. They also hunted other wild animals, bringing in the equivalent of 200 litres of grain. Like so many Khampas in his region, then, Peldenyel relied heavily on market-oriented sidelines to survive; his land grant produced only a net of 400 litres of grain, but his sales of medicinal materials brought in the equivalent of another 750 litres of grain. This grain

2 The grain was most likely barley and/or corn. Corn has more calories than barley, so if we assume that the entire crop was corn, then we can make the following calculations: according to the U.S.D.A., there are 2561 calories per litre of white corn. Four hundred litres of corn thus contains 1.0244 million calories, providing the family with an average of a little over 2877 calories per day – or just enough for one adult male. Active adult males need at least 2800 calories per day. Active adult females need 2200 to 2400 calories per day. Sources: United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, 'National Nutrient Database'; United States Department of Agriculture, Centre for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, 'Estimated Calorie Needs per Day'.

provided up to an additional 5395 calories per day, which was still probably not enough, but got the family much closer to their caloric needs than farming alone. Thus, Peldenyel's non-farming income constituted almost two thirds of the total, a relatively large percentage in a village where the average for sideline work was about one third of total income ('Danbaxian Badi xiang Qiongsan cun shehui diaocha' 1958, 28-29).

The Party work teams used this type of information to demonstrate how people such as Peldengyel were trapped in cycles of poverty. They owed rents, taxes, labour, and interest to the powerful kings, headmen, or monasteries who granted them land, and these obligations might be associated with a loosely-defined sort of feudalism. But lying in plain sight alongside this 'feudal' exploitation were two other powerful mechanisms of economic disempowerment that the Communist Party would, ironically perhaps, find very useful to wield themselves: the market and the state. Long before collectivization, much less the post-1979 market reforms, the Sichuan provincial and national Chinese states, along with powerful merchant interests, were already limiting the financial opportunities for most Khampa families. This chapter explores how this process – usually associated with the Communist era – originated in the early twentieth century. As Stéphane Gros notes in the Introduction, the study of the borderlands allows us to challenge centrist narratives, including the cherished idea of the 1949 Revolution's heralding a radically new era. Recent scholarship has demonstrated how ideas and institutions from the Republican era influenced minority communities into the 1950s and beyond (Mullaney 2011). In the case of this chapter, our investigation into disempowered development is critical for understanding China's past and present because it suggests that the production of economic inequality, especially across ethnic lines, did not begin in the Communist period; instead, the sources of ethnic inequality were deeply integrated in Chinese institutions, both public and private, from the beginnings of modern economic and political development.

Disempowered Development in the Borderlands

In studies of China's economic development, it is well known that the state and market have been used to disadvantage indigenous communities in their own homelands, but these studies are generally limited to the post-1949 or post-1979 eras.³ In her work on Tibet, for example, Emily Yeh (2013) describes

3 See, for instance, Bhalla and Qiu (2006); Gustafsson (2016); Shih (2007); Sturgeon (2010). One notable study of earlier eras is Kinzeley (2018).

how the Communist Party, after 1956, violently imposed state farms and communes in order to imprint Chinese authority over Tibet. In the reform era (1979-present), the state orchestrated investment projects and selective market reforms to 'gift' development to Tibetans; however, this gift has facilitated Han domination of new economic opportunities, leaving Tibetans both marginalized economically and victims of largely successful efforts to depict them as backwards and underdeveloped (Yeh 2013, 6, 21). One main cause of marginalization, Andrew Martin Fischer (2014) argues, is the Chinese state's vision of development, which removes decision-making power from the region and its inhabitants. As a result, Tibet has an economic structure, says Fischer (2014, 24), that 'is effectively very similar to that of a colonial-type economy', meaning there are high degrees of aid-dependence and political disempowerment; the control of development funds usually rests in the hands of Han Chinese-dominated institutions.

The imposition of such economies on indigenous peoples is not unique to China. While statesmen and economists have long waxed lyrically on the benefits of development, its implementation in conquered communities is at best a tricky process and, at worst, an often intentional process of disempowerment and subjugation. In the United States, for example, Native American reservations have long been notorious for their levels of economic distress. For white Americans, these conditions became naturalized. Poverty and dependency, it was believed, were the inevitable outcome of primitive lifestyles and backwards cultures (White 1983, 315). But Native American dependency was not a product of culture. Many indigenous communities had successful and stable food security in the nineteenth century. But this food security was undermined by the growth of two crucial institutions: the American state and markets. Poverty and dependence were imposed from the outside (White 1983, 315-321).

In the U.S., the advent of market economics has long been linked to the patterns of dependence among indigenous peoples, and that dependence was exacerbated by the state. As early as the 1920s, the U.S. federal government introduced economic development schemes onto Native American reservations, but policymaking and control of resources remained in the hands of outsiders. It was only in the 1980s, after a decade or more of efforts to return developmental autonomy to indigenous communities, that some tribes began to experience some economic successes. The White Mountain Apaches of Arizona, for example, developed nine tribal enterprises, including a ski resort and sawmill, that employed a mostly Apache workforce and brought in over U.S. \$46 million per year. According to work by Cornell and Kalt, the White Mountain Apaches and other successful tribes share

one crucial trait – they all gained control over economic decision-making and institutions (Cornell and Kalt 1989, 24). Those tribes who lost control to outsiders found it hard to implement successful development plans. Cornell and Kalt could not find any other factor that was as uniformly important to success as developmental autonomy – not even resource endowment or culture (in the form of governance institutions and economic organization). The most important factor was local control over firms and resources.

As did the U.S., the People's Republic of China has usually prevented local communities from gaining control over resources and development decisions. In Xinjiang since the 1950s, the Party, state, and military have dominated the institutions of development and made Xinjiang a region run by State Owned Enterprises (Becquelin 2004, 44-64). In other borderlands provinces, where non-Han indigenous populations are numerous, State Owned Enterprises also control abnormally high percentages of the economy (Batson 2015). As in the U.S., there have been some efforts to return control to local communities. In 1985, for example, the Guizhou provincial government began to use tourism as a developmental strategy in impoverished areas, and planners focused on locating tourism in poor counties and facilitating local participation in new business opportunities. The Guizhou economy did not grow as quickly as did neighbouring Yunnan Province's economy, where tourism was also being promoted as a development strategy, but in Guizhou poverty rates declined more rapidly than in Yunnan. One reason was Guizhou's decision to facilitate local participation. In contrast, Yunnan allowed outside investors and firms to dominate the growing tourism industry, thus excluding locals from many opportunities (Donaldson 2007).

Guizhou's approach to poverty reduction seems to be an outlier in the history of modern China. Overall, the Beijing and provincial governments tend to pursue development policies that disempower non-Han inhabitants of the borderlands regions. As Fischer notes,

within the context of continued political disempowerment of Tibetan locals, centrally directed development strategies since the mid-1990s have channeled massive amounts of subsidies and subsidized investments [...] through Han Chinese-dominated state structures, corporations, and other entities based outside the Tibetan areas, thereby accentuating the already highly externalized orientation of wealth flows in the local economy. (Fischer 2014, 29)

Thus, Fischer and other scholars of development in contemporary China point to state decision-making and, as with Yeh (2013), to markets controlled

by migrant Han, in order to understand the disempowerment of indigenous communities.

The Chinese Communist Party (C.C.P.) is clearly responsible for the strategies of disempowered development over the last sixty years. But if this were the end of the story, then the solution would be clear (but not simple) – note how blame lies at the feet of the C.C.P. and then reform its development ideas and strategies. However, the problem is that the story does not begin with the C.C.P.'s socialist transformation in the 1950s and continue with the market reforms of the post-Mao era. The ideas and institutions that underpin disempowered development in China emerged in the borderlands at the same time as the concepts of Chinese nation-state formation and economic development themselves.

For Peldengyel and other ordinary Khampas, disempowerment was not something lurking in the future – once the Party gained control. They had already experienced major economic, political, and social changes caused by market economics and a powerful developmentalist state. To the south of Peldengyel's Drakteng home, in the regions surrounding Dartsedo (Kangding), lay the old lands of the Chakla King. Like the king in Drakteng, the king in Chakla had owned vast swaths of farmland, which he granted out to tenants in return for labour and tax obligations. But the king did not survive the last dynasty's modernization efforts of 1895-1911. Instead, the last Chakla king was deposed and died attempting to escape from his imperial captors (IOR L PS 10 884 [1922]). After removing the king from power, the state took over his lands, and local farmers now found themselves to be tenants to a new master. As first the Qing state and then subsequent provincial and national states sought to impose new forms of sovereignty and economic change on Khampas, they came to own property and gain access to natural resources, which concentrated the power of development in state, rather than local, hands.

Over the course of the early twentieth century, moreover, in and around Dartsedo, Khampa farmers found themselves increasingly to be neighbours of Han settlers (see Relyea, this volume). Before the Communist state even began its violent and traumatic transformations, market, state, and Han migrants were already impacting the Kham regions ('Kangding xian Wazexiang diaocha baogao' 1963, 4-6). In Peldengyel's home region of Drakteng, for instance, Han were increasingly present by the early 1930s. One estimate from the early 1930s places the Han population in Drakteng at 2540; Khampas numbered 21,350 (Mei 1934, 281-285). As the Han population grew, however, Han merchants tended to gain more control over local trade, although Khampa trading companies and traders also grew in power and

reach (Galli, this volume). As this chapter will demonstrate, the growth of Chinese merchant activity reflected important changes in corporate organization, which allowed firms to gain power over resources in Kham. This, in turn, often limited ordinary Khampas' ability to profit from commercial growth.

To understand these changes, we need to reevaluate the key elements of Chinese development by using a longer-range, multi-scalar historical framework that includes careful consideration of borderlands history. This chapter is therefore designed to prompt, but not complete, the process of reevaluation, and it is organized around a simple puzzle. In the early eighteenth century in Kham, there emerged for the first time a robust commercial economy. When the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661-1722) designated Dartsedo as a trade mart, it was intended that trade benefit Khampas and central Tibetans, and there is no doubt that some were able to take advantage of trade to enrich and empower themselves (Booz 2011; Galli, this volume). In the long run, however, we know that the Chinese state and Han traders would gain control of development policy in the ways revealed by Fischer and Yeh, thus disempowering Tibetans. When did this turnaround begin?

The answer to this question is multifaceted and contingent. There was no immediate singular moment or process of change, but a series of conjunctural changes in politics and commerce that were concentrated not in the post-1949 period, but in an earlier era, the 1880s-1940s. The chapter cannot examine all of the important changes of this era, so it focuses on commercial changes, charting the ways in which Khampa communities became enmeshed in more intense networks of regional and global trade. The larger book project, of which this chapter is a part, also considers the ways in which Khampas were subjected to powerful state-building projects emanating from the national and provincial capitals of Beijing, Nanjing, and Chengdu. There are two reasons for examining these conjunctures. First, I am interested in understanding the processes by which non-Han elites were transformed rhetorically from integral and legitimate local rulers in the High Qing imperium to denigrated and often illegitimate (in the eyes of the Chinese states) competitors for formal power in the modern Chinese nation state. This was clearly an effort to disempower indigenous elites and, only by looking at the long *durée*, can we see the effectiveness of the processes. Second, I am interested in analysing how commerce – both private and state-led – contributed, sometimes inadvertently, to the processes of excluding indigenous communities from controlling local resources and trade. Both of these developments constitute, I believe, core elements of

China's particular transition to modernity. In other words, while most analysts look to coastal China and the interior to understand the most important reasons for China's modern development, I am suggesting that the borderlands provide equally important insights, in part because the repercussions of disempowered development today are dire – for borderlands communities and for China as a whole.

To understand the commercial changes of the 1880s through 1940s requires a 'kaleidoscopic view of [...] historical trajectories' (Gros, this volume) and actors, some local, some regional, and some global. I first explain the growth of commerce and powerful trade institutions, including newly powerful private corporations coming from Yunnan. These trade institutions were, in many cases, able to link more Kham producers to larger and more extensive networks of trade. Then, the chapter provides initial descriptions of the impact of the new trade institutions by examining the changing local dynamics of commodity production and sales. The lessons are these: As the Southwest borderlands became integrated into broader global markets, there emerged a contingent set of conditions that pushed for more intensive commercial development in the rugged areas of the Southwest, including Kham. Those conditions included the development of Chinese private trading firms that were well capitalized and could reach more deeply into local communities to purchase and move highland products to Chongqing, Kunming, Mandalay, and even Shanghai and Hong Kong. Demand for highland products seems to have increased worldwide as musk was shipped to Paris to be used by the burgeoning perfume industry and Chinese Traditional Medicine products, such as caterpillar fungus, were increasingly in demand in Guangdong and Hong Kong. The ability of merchant firms to extend their business in Kham was, perhaps counterintuitively, aided by the destabilization of the region by the Qing in 1905-1911. This destabilization was provoked by Qing adoption of Euro-American models of colonialism in the wake of the British invasion of Lhasa. There followed a brutal military campaign to suppress – and even eradicate – indigenous institutions of power in Kham. After the Qing regime fell in 1911-1912, Kham became an arena for competition as monasteries, former secular ruling families, merchants, and various forms of the new Republican Chinese state competed for power. While commerce was frequently interrupted by conflict, this period of competition actually allowed for new commercial entities to gain power, a process that, when combined with the political changes, laid the foundations for – but did not lead inevitably to – modern China's long-term practices of development that disempowers local – especially non-Han – communities.

The Growth of Commerce

Long-distance trade was not new in the modern era to Kham and the Qing empire's Southwest borderlands. In fact, it was in the eighteenth century that migration, population growth, urbanization, and state promotion of mining had spurred on the rise of commerce. In the more remote past, southwesterners had been incorporated into the twelfth-century tea, horse, and salt exchanges.⁴ Nevertheless, the mechanisms of trade changed dramatically from the late nineteenth century onwards. Building on earlier business developments, men from Shaanxi, Sichuan, and, later, Yunnan developed more powerful firms with the ability to reach deeper into the Southwest in general and Kham in particular, where they extracted a larger volume of goods that were in demand across a wider global geography.

In eighteenth-century Kham, it had been the Shaanxi merchants who were the first outsiders to make their mark. By the 1730s, Shaanxi merchants were increasing in Dartsedo, and they held the majority of the tea permits for shipping Sichuan tea via Kham to greater Tibet (Shi and Zou 2011, 5–11). Patrick Booz reports that by the mid-Qing, eighty tea firms, many of them Shaanxi-run, were operating out of Ya'an, Sichuan, with branches in Dartsedo, where the Shaanxi merchants often dealt with the famous *achak khapa* or *guozhuang*, Khampa innkeepers with roots as hereditary nobility tied closely to the Chakla king. The *achak khapa* served to mediate exchanges between the Chinese tea merchants and Tibetan wholesalers, many of whom were merchant representatives of monasteries both in Kham and Central Tibet (Booz 2011, 152; Tsomu 2016).

At first, Shaanxi firms operated primarily in the official trade mart at Dartsedo, importing tea and cloth to trade for Kham products. By the nineteenth century, however, the geographical range of Shaanxi merchant activity was expanding. For instance, Shaanxi firms developed the ability to set up branches in other Kham trade towns and to even purchase mountain products from low-level wholesalers, who, in turn, purchased directly from producers. The apprentices at many Shaanxi firms were expected to learn Tibetan in Dartsedo before being sent out into the field, and many Shaanxi merchants also learned to dress, ride horses, and eat like Tibetans. Shi and Zou argue that the Shaanxi traders who left Dartsedo and entered smaller settlements acculturated to Tibetan ways, often intermarrying and even sending their sons into the monkhood (Shi and Zou 2011, 6, 8).

4 A number of works cover this earlier trade. To name just three of these works: Smith (1991), Ren (1997), Yang (2009).

Shaanxi merchants were crucial to developing Kham markets, but there were other Chinese who followed them into Kham, most notably Sichuanese merchants. In addition, Muslim Chinese firms worked through Chengdu, Songpan, and the northern routes to Qinghai and Gansu (Chengdu shi Yisilanjiao xiehui in Duan and Yao 2002, 277). And, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Yunnanese merchants began to extend their reach from northern Yunnan into Kham. Some travellers found Lijiang merchants in Dartsedo as early as 1890, but most Yunnanese caravans carried tea or textiles north from Dali to Gyelthang (Zhongdian) or, perhaps, to Dechen (Adunzi), where they would, without venturing further north, sell to Tibetan traders (Rockhill 1891 284-285; Hosie 2001 [1905], 76-77; Shen 2004, 260-262). This would change over the course of the early twentieth century as the Yunnanese scale of activity expanded, and the Yunnanese merchants thus provide a good case study for investigating the changing nature of Kham trade.

To trace the rise of Yunnan merchants in Kham and Tibet requires some detective work. This is because they were relatively late on the scene – at least in any numbers – and, like many merchant firms, they are relatively poorly documented. Foreign observers began to note an increase in Yunnanese activity in the 1910s. In 1915, Oliver Coales reported that Yunnan firms sold about £30,000 (200,000 taels) of opium in Dartsedo; the merchants reported that the opium was from Burma and, as a demonstration of their ties to Burma, the Yunnanese cashed checks drawn from Rangoon banks, revealing that international trade networks were helping capitalize their reach into Kham. In Dartsedo, the Yunnanese bought Indian rupees, which were imported into silver-poor Yunnan (Coales 1916).

According to Coales, the Yunnanese were able to expand into Dartsedo and challenge Shaanxi and Sichuanese merchant firms because of political instability. What Coales meant by political instability was limited to the 1911 revolution in Sichuan, which disrupted the old tea trade regime, significantly decreasing tea imports from Ya'an, Sichuan. The Shaanxi firms in Dartsedo tended to control this trade, and, as tea imports declined, their numbers dwindled, from fifty down to twenty (Coales 1916).

However, if we wish to understand commercial change in Kham, it is important to think about political instability in broader terms. In August 1905, the Qing court had created the Sichuan-Yunnan Frontier Affairs Commission (*Chuan Dian bianwu dachen*), which was a new institution designed to implement direct control over Kham. At its head was the notorious Zhao Erfeng, an activist commissioner who would seek to turn Kham upside down in his effort to transform it. As in other borderlands around the empire, a new era had dawned, an era of direct governance that imitated Euro-American

colonial practices and rejected any significant cooperation with indigenous elites (Wang 2011, Chapter 4). From 1905-1911, the Qing state committed itself to implementing European concepts of sovereignty and direct rule in many borderlands territories, including Kham (Relyea, this volume). In Kham, these new concepts were, however, introduced with a level of brutality and barbarity rarely seen elsewhere. Under the leadership of Zhao Erfeng and his military commander, Ma Weiqi, Qing troops attacked Bathang, Lithang, and Chaktreng (Xiangcheng). In each place, leading secular and religious elites were executed as the Qing, in conscious imitation of Euro-American colonial policies, sought to seize control of politics, trade, and land (Coleman 2002, 50-51; Sperling 1976, 10-36). Overall, then, the late Qing state sought to radically realign local administration, taxation, and land ownership. Whereas originally land ownership lay in the hands of secular rulers and monasteries, and those who worked the land owed rents, tax-in-kind, and labour, the state began to claim the power to rent land, to allow Han migrants to open new lands, and to encourage the monetization of rents as a way to undermine older, servile relationships. In these ways, the Qing worked to extend state power through administration, state-control of property, and the market (Wang 2011, Chapters 6 and 7).

Zhao Erfeng's influence in Kham lasted for six years, and he met his end in December 1911 when he was executed by Sichuanese revolutionaries. That same year, the remnants of Qing troops in Kham were reorganized into the Sichuan-Kham Defence Force (*Chuan Kang bianfang jun*) and gained financial support from the Sichuan provincial government (Lawson 2013, 300-302). In 1912, the newly autonomous Sichuan military government created the Office for Managing the Frontier (*choubianchu*), which, as Scott Relyea (2015, 996-1000) notes, was designed to continue implementing policies for transforming Kham. But the Sichuanese government faced two major challengers. First, the Ganden Phodrang sent troops into Kham, extending Lhasa's control in western parts of the region (*ibid.*). And, second, the Yunnan Army invaded Sichuan proper and began extending their influence into eastern Kham as well (Lawson 2013, 300-302; Relyea 2015, 1006-1009). By 1916, the Yunnanese had gained control of the Frontier Commissioner position, appointing Yin Chenghuan, who had been trained in the Yunnan military college. Yin reached into the Yunnan Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy for help, bringing a leading monk from Lijiang to help oversee the Buddhist communities in Dartsedo (IOR L PS 10 435 [1916]; IOR L PS 10 435 [1917]). At the same time, Yunnanese troops were gaining control of the remains of the Defence Force, and, by 1917, there were Yunnanese officers and troops controlling Bathang and Chamdo.

Although the Yunnan Army's influence in Kham did not last long, its short foray into Kham seems to have helped Yunnanese firms, which were gaining the capacity to project their trade further afield at this time. To accomplish this, Yunnanese firms were developing the organizational means to raise sufficient capital, orchestrate trade across vast distances, and ensure profits for their investors (Giersch 2014). Founded in 1903, the Yunnan firm Yongchangxiang is an archetypical example. By the 1910s, the firm was beginning its growth from a small partnership, with three managing partners, five investors, and approximately 11,000 taels in share capital, to a limited liability firm with an estimated 32 billion (RMB) in fixed and liquid assets distributed among its import/export businesses, its stake in silk-reeling workshops, and its investment in tin mines and refineries (Yang 1989, 50-52). Although founded at a later date, the Maoheng firm shared a similar trajectory of growth from simple trading partnership to large, limited liability trading and holding company with interests in everything from transport to cotton textiles. What made these companies different from earlier, simple trading partnerships were their numerous permanent outposts in trading centres large and small. These outposts, in turn, provided these firms with access to raw materials, finished goods, whole-sale markets, financial capital, and currency remittance services that allowed them to cover remarkable distances throughout East and Southeast Asia. Part of their expansion included Kham and Tibet.

The Yunnan firms' expansion into Kham seems to have filled part of the void left as Shaanxi merchants and the Sichuan-Kham tea trade declined. As Booz notes, the Yunnanese were busy becoming the largest supplier of brick tea to Lhasa and southern Kham – something that they would accomplish for the first time ever in the 1920s and 1930s (Booz 2011, 163-164). This was made possible by firms such as Yongchangxiang, which developed the infrastructure to reach into Kham. Yongchangxiang's managers, for example, learned to process southern Yunnan tea for the Tibet market in Xiaguan, Yunnan, as did a number of other Yunnan firms, including Maoheng (Yang 1989, 64-65; Huang 1991, 38).

From Xiaguan and Lijiang, the firms began to project further north. If we examine the available company archives, we can begin to reconstruct these firms' major expansion into Kham, though it is still unclear when they first established permanent outposts. By the 1920s at the latest, Yongchangxiang was exporting from Kham thousands of ounces of silver worth medicines. We can tell this by examining the Yongchangxiang General Ledger (for the Kunming headquarters) in 1930. Among the commodities that were in stock by the end of this fiscal year were over 1300 kilos (2699 *jin*) of *beimu*,

worth 23,353.06 yuan silver and smaller amounts of *zhimu* and caterpillar fungus worth a total of 1576.87 yuan (YPA 132-4-93, 2-15). In other words, Yongchangxiang was tapping into the growing medicinal materials trade and relying on its extensive distribution networks in China proper in order to profit from Kham products. Evidence from Maoheng's company books reveals the firm to have been a major importer of tea and cloth into Kham. With growing access to the traditional Yunnan tea production as well as imported yarns and textiles from India and Europe, Maoheng developed trading outposts and warehousing to distribute these goods into Kham from Jianchang (Xichang), to the southwest of Ya'an. Based on records from the 1940 trading season, the company imported over 30,000 spools of yarn to sell in Sichuan and Kham; they also brought in over 3000 Indian piece-goods (YPA 132-4-17, 51-57). Meanwhile, the Xiaguan, Yunnan branch of Maoheng managed the tea trade into Kham (YPA 132-4-17, 51-57).

In all of these endeavours, Yongchangxiang and Maoheng were not alone. Merchants from some of the northern Yunnan (Lijiang and Heqing) firms came to specialize in the Kham trade (Shu and Su 1988, 273). This specialization came to include the establishment of permanent branches in northernmost Yunnan and in Dartsedo, Bathang, and Lithang (Zhou 2006, 226-228). Throughout the 1930s and into the wartime and post-war periods, the Heqing firm of Hengshenggong maintained branches at Dechen and Dartsedo. These branches frequently shipped Kham exports via Lijiang to Kunming and beyond. To do so, they contracted with individual caravan companies and their leaders (*ma guotou*) (YPA 132-4-71, 43-51).

In addition, Hengshenggong was also doing business in Lhasa; however, they were not shipping goods via Kham but instead shipping Yunnan tea via Burma and India into Tibet from Kalimpong (Waijiaobu to Meng Zang weiyuanhui 1940). One 1943 government report claimed that Hengshenggong had been doing this since the early 1920s – and that a competitor, Hongsheng, had been doing it since the early 1910s (Liu and Cao 2005, 423-424). During the wartime period, moreover, when the Burma-India export route was blocked, both Maoheng and Yongchangxiang extended from Kham to engage directly in trade through Lhasa to Kalimpong and Kolkata (YPA 132-2-10, 4-7). Through the correspondence of Maoheng managers, we can also know that the Yunnan firms of Renhechang and Hongxingyuan were operating in Kham and Tibet during wartime years (YPA 132-2-10, 4-7, 8).

Based on company and state archival evidence, then, Yunnan firms were increasingly active in Kham, suggesting that they had built their networks into the region from approximately 1910 onward. But why were there such opportunities for extending directly into Kham? If we look to understand

why these firms were becoming more active in Kham, especially by the 1920s and 30s, then we must understand political changes taking place. This was an era of tremendous disruption, a period when power was being reconfigured, and yet, despite periodic disruptions of trade, the instability seems to have provided opportunities for businesses to gain more commercial power. These opportunities corresponded with a period in which Yunnan businesses were becoming better institutionalized and capitalized.

The Differential Impact of Commerce

The growth of Yunnanese firms corresponded with increased Han Chinese involvement in the Kham economy. In the industry and commerce section of the Republican-era Kham Gazetteer, Zhou Taixuan argued that the late Qing and early Republican periods brought a major change in government interference in trade, which, in turn, led to greater support for Han merchants in Kham. Zhou is vague about what policies were introduced, but he credits an early Sichuan officer, Yin Changheng, with promoting migration, which led to more Han merchants and their spread into places such as Tawu (Daofu), Drakteng, and Yerkalo (Yanjing) (Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 220-223).⁵ Their roles and impact can be explained by discussing the process by which medicinal materials were collected and exported.

In Kham, medicines could be collected from three different sources: vegetable, animal, and mineral. Plant-based medicinal materials included *zhimu* (Anemarrhena asphodeloides), *beimu*, *qinjiao*, Chinese rhubarb (*dahuang*), and *huanglian* (Chinese goldthread). The most expensive animal product was musk (*shexiang*), but other important animal products included pilose antler (*lurong*), deer antler (*lujiao*), bear gall bladder (*xiongdan*), leopard bones (*baogu*), and, of course, the famous caterpillar fungus. Mineral-based medicinal materials included sulfur, sodium borate, and mica (Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 227).

In one of the increasingly numerous surveys of the Kham economy, investigators found in the late 1930s that these products were widely dispersed in terms of geography and ecology. Wild *huanglian* grew on the precipitous sides of the mountains, while *beimu* flourished in the alpine meadows. *Zhimu* could be found among the debris in rocky crags ('Xikangsheng yaocao diaocha baogaoshu' 1939/2005, 407-410). The best musk, some said, came

5 The original copy of this gazetteer is stored in the Sichuan archives, but there is no date of publication. It was probably published in the 1940s.

from Kham's river gorges and forests, not from the grasslands, and it was in demand in Shanghai and European markets (Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 227).⁶

The medicinal materials trade was worth a great deal of money. In the 1940s, *beimu* might sell for about 250 yuan per *liang* (31.25 grams) or about half the price of musk. *Zhimu* sold for about one-third the price of musk, and, in the 1940s, the compilers of the Kham Gazetteer reported that exports might total 30,000 to 40,000 *liang* for each product, meaning that about a metric ton of each product was being exported (Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 227). If a *liang* of *beimu* was worth 250 yuan, then a kilo was worth 8000 yuan, and a metric ton was worth 80 million yuan. A metric ton of musk was worth 160 million. If Khampa families collected all of the *beimu* to be exported and each family collected roughly the same amount as Peldengyel's half kilo, then 2000 families might be involved in the harvest and, theoretically, they might each earn 4000 yuan. This was not how it worked, of course. Khampas hunted musk deer, mostly likely in the spring and fall, when the bucks' musk was considered to be strongest. Or they collected caterpillar fungus and *beimu* during the slack seasons, when they were not herding or tending their crops. They would then trade their medicines in return for tea and cloth, though they sometimes sold their products for money (*Xikang tongzhigao, nongmupian* 1990 (n.d.), 231-232; 'Xikangsheng yaocaidiaocha baogaoshu' 2005 (1939), 410).

If we wish to understand who controlled the profits of production in Kham, then we need to understand the variety and hierarchy of commercial institutions. If individual Khampa households occupied the bottom of the hierarchy, then the next level was occupied by the petty merchants. These small-time peddlers were called *bachong*, and they specialized in dealing with the primary producers. While there is no doubt that these *bachong* travelled widely in agricultural and pastoral areas, there is some doubt as to who they were. Most Chinese language reports list them as Han who lived among the Khampas, but at least one report notes that the *bachong* came from among the Khampas themselves ('Xikangsheng yaocai diaocha baogaoshu' 2005 (1939), 410; Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 221). Most likely there were some *bachong* who were Khampas, which the Communist noted in their surveys, but most were probably descendants of Shaanxi merchants who had, in some cases, acculturated to Khampa ways (Shi and Zou 2011, 7). The *bachong*, then, were permanent residents in Khampa areas, and they wandered among the large and small farming villages – or in the yak herding grounds – buying medicinal materials.

6 For a good listing of the markets that medicinal materials were shipped to, see 'Xikangsheng yaocaidiaocha baogaoshu' 2005 (1939), 413-414.

The *bachong* made it easier for Khampas who did not live near markets to sell or trade goods, thus broadening the net of commercialization throughout the region. In one government investigation in 1947, for example, researchers found that itinerant merchants gathered animal products in grassland areas far from the nearest markets. In Sershül (Shiqu County), for example, there was no regular market, but the *bachong* facilitated the export of about 12,500 pieces of cattle hide and 1000 kilos (2000 *dan*) of sheep wool to Dartsedo each year (ASIMH 20-00-63-016-03 1947). In selling their medicines or other products, however, local Khampas were often restricted to the prices that *bachong* offered, meaning that they rarely could earn high prices or make lucrative trades.

The *bachong* were, in turn, subject to the next layer of the collection hierarchy. The *bachong* (and sometimes producers who lived near markets) sold to the shopkeepers in the nearest market towns. An alternative was to sell to family-based or monastery-sponsored merchants. These shopkeepers then dealt with the larger merchant firms based in Dartsedo and other big towns (Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 227-230). As we will see below, the shopkeepers in parts of Kham were increasingly Han.

As the twentieth century unfolded, the collection of medicines became professionalized. This was done by Han migrants, usually Sichuanese, who, in contrast to the Khampa agriculturalists and herders, could be classified as medicine workers (*yaofu* or *yaofuzi*). They formed teams called medicine sheds (*yaopeng*) and set out into the mountains each summer to harvest wild medicines under the oversight of their shed heads (*pengzhang*). The shed heads funded the venture, purchasing food and supplies. The shed heads also paid a mountain rent (*shanzu*) to whomever had rights to the land on which they gathered. Usually, however, they were not gathering in areas that were claimed. These independent harvesters did not work through the *bachong*, but had the autonomy to transport their goods to larger markets, something that the Khampa gatherers often could not do ('Xikangsheng yaocai diaocha baogaoshu' 2005 (1939), 410-411). Some of these Han medicine workers, moreover, were hired and capitalized by larger merchant firms, who then were paid with the medicines after the *yaofu* came out of the hills at the end of the season (*Xikang tongzhigao, nongmupian* 1990 (n.d.), 231). As medicine gathering was professionalized, Chinese firms developed direct access to raw materials, thus bypassing the *bachong* and Khampa producers. While this did not eradicate the role of Khampa gatherers, it did provide them with competition.

Once goods arrived in Dartsedo or other larger trade towns like Bathang – whether through the *bachong* and shopkeepers or through the medicine

workers – the larger firms gained control of them. While these larger firms continued to include Tibetan and Khampa groups (monastic and secular) (Booz 2011, 299–304; Galli, this volume), the percentage of Chinese firms increased over time, as did their absolute numbers. In 1890, notes Booz, Chinese controlled about 60 per cent of the business capital in Dartsedo, while Tibetan merchants controlled about 40 per cent (Booz 2011, 305). As the Sichuan tea trade declined after the 1911 Revolution, however, local Khampa businesses – including the famous *achak khapa* or *guozhuang*, went into decline (Tsomu 2016; Ren 1990 (1936), 258–259). Into their place came new Chinese firms, including the Yunnanese firms like Maoheng, which might bypass Dartsedo altogether.

Thus, Han Chinese merchants were increasingly influential in the importing and exporting Kham's commercial goods. This does not mean that Han Chinese firms took over Kham. The important firms were managed by people of several backgrounds – Shaanxi, Sichuanese, Yunnanese, specific monasteries, and particular Khampa families ('Xikangsheng yaocao diaocha baogaoshu' 2005 (1939), 411; Galli, this volume). In some areas, the large monasteries were among the largest traders and controllers of production (*Xikang tongzhigao, nongmupian* 1990 (n.d.), 231–232). Still, the trend was that Chinese merchant firms were making greater inroads into Kham. The point is, moreover, that commerce, while opening opportunities for families like Peldengyel's to supplement their livelihoods with the collection of medicines, was also limiting the possibilities that Khampa families might gain real economic leverage through the market.

If we expand our investigation to include other products, including minerals and metals, we see revealed yet another important transformation: various forms of the Republican state were gaining control over Kham's resources (Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 226–227). We have already seen how the state, from Zhao Erfeng's time, was increasingly involved in claiming rights to land. This process was supplemented by new mining policies which furthered state inroads into Kham. For example, the state promoted the creation of a number of large and small-scale companies that sought to develop Kham's gold-mining areas. Some companies were well-capitalized, such as the Puyi gongsi or the Qunxing gongsi, and some were smaller-scale operations, but all were subject to new state claims on land and resources. The state itself put efforts into developing state-private mining concerns, including a gold-mining company in the Muli areas that was under the Ministry of Finance's Xikang Gold Mining Bureau. In order to begin its operations in Muli, moreover, the Bureau wrested control of mining from the local monastic elite, a development that occurred in conjunction with efforts to

pursue the Red Army into the region in 1935 (ASIMH 18-24-05-63-001-01, 1939). In Muli and other parts of Kham, the mining techniques remained traditional and production outputs low, and miners might be Sichuanese or Khampa, but clearly the state was extending its claims so that companies often petitioned the state for mining rights (Zhou 1990 (n.d.), 226-227).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explain all the changes throughout Kham, but we return to Peldengyel's home of Drakteng to help us evaluate the increasing power of commercial firms and the state. In 1913, Drakteng had been transformed into a directly-ruled county, and over the decades the state undermined the power of local indigenous elites. By the early 1930s, the old hereditary elite still wielded some power, but the Republican state was able to implement some of its developmental policies. The state collected local taxes, enforced compulsory transport *corvée* service, and even created an experimental agricultural station. Locally, commerce came to be concentrated in the hands of Han shopkeepers in the county seat, who imported tea, cloth, and European products. They also exported to Dartsedo musk, *beimu*, and other medicines that had been collected by Khampas and bartered in return for tea, cloth, tools, and salt. For the most part, then, it was the shopkeepers and Han firms that mediated Drakteng's interaction with the larger commercial world. Locally, Han dominated commerce and the skilled professions (carpentry, wine making, silversmithing) despite the fact that, in the mid-1930s, there were only one Han for ten Khampas. Khampas farmed, herded, hunted, and collected medicines (Mei 1934, 281-285; Zhang 2010 [1939]).

Thus, the outlines of Peldengyel's life in the 1950s had already been put in place by the 1930s. The commercial economy was a powerful factor, and, though the C.C.P. work team did not emphasize it, Han merchants were some of the most powerful commercial forces in Drakteng. And, though this was not the case in Peldengyel's village, Han settlers were increasingly prevalent, which the C.C.P. found in other parts of Drakteng. And the state was a powerful economic force, too.

It is important to clarify that not all of Kham was like Drakteng. In contrast, He Yong (1989) has detailed how the major Lithang monastery, Jamchen Chokhorling, continued its economic dominance of its region into the early 1950s. Various institutions within the monastery might invest in and manage trade, and the monastery extended its trade networks through Lhasa into India, as well as into Sichuan and Yunnan. The monastery's basic approach was to collect local goods, especially medicinal materials and export them for sale. They then would import salt, tea, cloth, and daily-use items. The power of the monastery rested in its local status as both political

and religious authority, a power that was rebuilt in the wake of the Qing attacks in 1905 (He 1989, 13-14). There were some Han merchant firms active in Lithang, but it is clear that the most powerful trade institution was monastic.

Lithang was not unique, but neither was Drakteng, and when we consider both together, we begin to gain a kaleidoscopic picture of Kham in which larger-scale institutions were increasingly in control of commerce – and thus of people's livelihoods. And these larger-scale institutions were often in conflict with each other long before the Communist Party arrived on the scene. In the early 1940s, Lu Yuxin worked for the Republican state as it sought to extend its cooperative loans programme into northern Kham (Gartar, Tawu, Drango, Kandzé, and Nyarong). Lu was, however, frustrated by the structures of the local economy in which headmen and monastic officials exercised tremendous power. In terms of commerce and finance, the monasteries dominated trade and moneylending. When the author went to Nyarong (Zhanhua) to disburse loans to the Cooperative (*hezuo she*), he found that the chair of the coop was a former headman and lama, and this raised Lu's suspicions. He investigated and learned that before the coop was organized, this area of Dake (Dagai) had over 200 impoverished residents who were exploited through usury. Many wanted to join the coop but the lamas continued to try to prevent this. Only through decisive actions by the state was the coop established, but it was still difficult to overcome local elite resistance (Lu 1942, 115-120).

While it is certainly accurate to note how monastic officials, monasteries, and Khampa traders remained influential in trade networks (Galli, this volume), it is also important to recognize elsewhere the growing power of Han Chinese merchant firms and the state. Based on this initial work, it is clear that outside forces, including both private firms and state institutions, were making inroads into Kham and gaining control over resources. The power to make decisions about local economies was slowly being removed from these locales, although this was a process that, given a different set of conjunctural developments, might have been reversed. But, even in areas such as Lithang, where local influence was still strong, it has to be noted that the growing Han Chinese discourses on nation and development cast local secular and religious elites as opponents, as backwards figures who were imagined to be obstacles to the development of both political and economic modernity. Thus, from the early twentieth century forward there were two crucial trends of exclusion and disempowerment at work in the borderlands of Kham, one in the realm of actual economic and political relationships and one in the ongoing evolution of the Chinese national imaginary. While neither trend was yet at the stage where it guaranteed

the levels of marginalization and disempowerment that manifested in the People's Republic, both would come to shape the Sino-Tibetan borderlands for decades to come. To understand how these trends originated and developed, we need to develop multi-scalar, kaleidoscopic borderlands histories.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

Adunzi	阿敦子
<i>bachong</i>	壩充
Bandeerjia	板得尔家
<i>Baogu</i>	豹骨
<i>beimu</i>	貝母
<i>chongcao</i>	虫草
<i>Chuan Dian bianwu dachen</i>	川滇邊務大臣
<i>Chuan Kang bianfang jun</i>	川康邊防軍
<i>dahuang</i>	大黃
<i>dan</i>	石
Danba	丹巴
<i>Dan</i>	擔
Daofu	道浮
<i>dayang</i>	大洋
<i>guozhuang</i>	鍋莊
Hengshenggong	恆盛公
<i>hezuo she</i>	合作社
<i>huanglian</i>	黃連
Jianchang	建昌
<i>jin</i>	斤
Kangding	康定
<i>lujiao</i>	鹿角
<i>lurong</i>	鹿茸
<i>maguotou</i>	馬鍋頭
<i>pengzhang</i>	棚長
<i>qianghuo</i>	羌活
<i>qinjiao</i>	秦艽
<i>shanzu</i>	山租
<i>shexiang</i>	麝香
Shiquxian	石渠縣
<i>tusi</i>	土司
Xiangcheng	鄉稱

<i>xiongdan</i>	熊膽
Yanjing	鹽井
<i>yaofu</i> (<i>zi</i>)	藥夫, 藥夫子
<i>yaopeng</i>	藥棚
Yin Changheng	尹昌衡
Yin Chenghuan	殷承瓚
Zhanhua	瞻化
Zhao Erfeng	趙爾豐
<i>zhimu</i>	知母
Zhongdian	中甸

Glossary of Tibetan Terms

<i>achak khapa</i>	a lcags kha pa
Bathang	'Ba' thang
Chakla	Lcags la
Chamdo	Chab mdo
Chaktreng	Phya phreng
Dartsedo	Dar rtse mdo
Dechen	Bde chen
Drakteng	Brag steng
Gyelthang	Rgyal thang
Jamchen Chokhorling	Byams chen chos 'khor gling
Nyarong	Nyag rong
Peldengyel	Dpal ldan rgyal
Sershül	Ser shul
Tawu	Rta'u
Yerkalo	Yar kha logs, var. Tsha kha logs

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