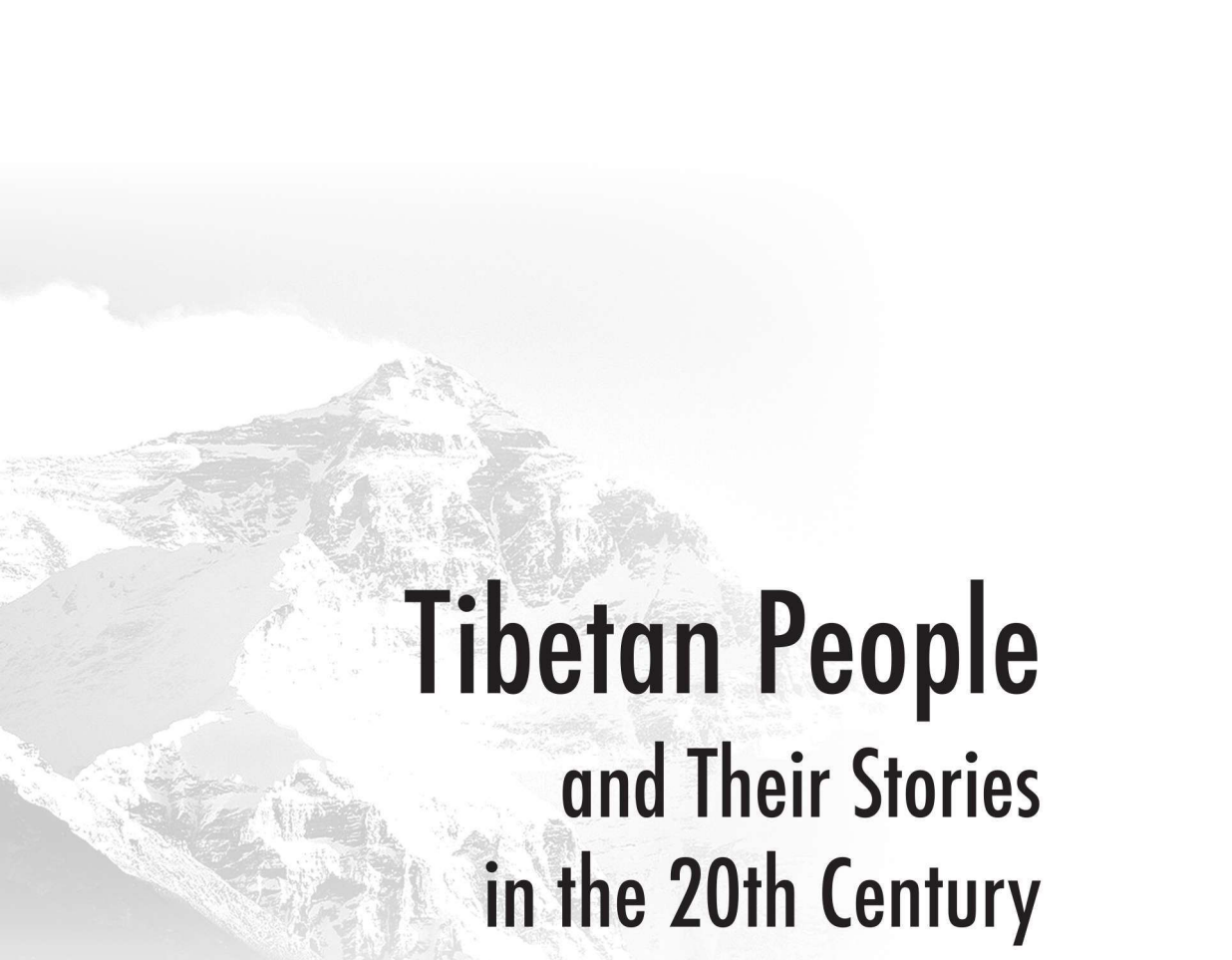


# **Tibetan People and Their Stories in the 20th Century**

Compiled by Zhang Xiaoming, Jin Zhiguo, etc



Prunus Press USA



# Tibetan People and Their Stories in the 20th Century

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Translated by Jiang Xiurong & Xiang Hongjia

*Tibetan People and Their Stories in the 20th Century*

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# The Anti-British War —the Prelude to the 20th Century

In the early 20th century, Tibet was on the eve of great social upheaval and transition. The outbreaks of the Anti-British Wars in the late 19th century and in the early 20th century became the predictive prelude to the extraordinary 100 years.

After the Opium War in 1840, the imperialists compelled China to open its door with their guns and explosives, making it gradually become a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. They forced the Qing Government to sign a series of unequal treaties, and by means of them, they stepped up their invasions of China, especially its frontier. In the second half of the 19th century, the British Government repeatedly sent disguised spies to sneak into Tibet to gather information and pave the way for its military invasion. In 1885, they once again dispatched some persons on the false pretenses of conducting commercial and mineral investigations. When they attempted to enter Gangpa Dzong from Sikkim, the local officials, soldiers and civilians held them back. The confrontation lasted for several months. The British threatened to send their armed forces to “suppress”, and in the meanwhile, it



Site of Gangju Dzong—the Battlefield of the Gyangtse Anti-British War.

Photographed by Che Gang



Two soldiers in the Gyantse Defense Battle (1904).

From Hu Yan Tibetan soldiers fought back bravely with such

primitive weapons as matchlock guns and slings. However, encountering the intense bombardment from British Maxim scatter-guns and cannons, Tibetan soldiers failed to continue to resist after several days' desperate counter-attack. They were forced to retreat to Nathang, and built stonewalls there for defense. In the meanwhile, over ten thousands of Tibetan militiamen were summoned from the Central Tibet (Ü) and the Western Tibet (Tsang) to reinforce the frontline. But, in August, supported by the reinforcements, the British troops launched another attack on Tibetan soldiers garrisoning Nathang. Though in great number, Tibetan soldiers were defeated again due to their poor weapon equipment. So they had to retreat to Mt. Tselilha. The war finally came to an end when Shengtai, Amban in Tibet, hurried to Yadong frontline from Lhasa for the negotiation with British and Indian representatives. As a result, the Qing Court sent Shengtai to Calcutta (India) to sign the Anglo-Chinese Convention Relating to Sikkim and Tibet with Lansdowne, Viceroy of British India, in February of 1890. According to the British request, the treaty agreed that Sikkim was under Britain's protection, and Mt. Tselilha was the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, which made China lose a vast expense of territory (from Rana Dzong to the southern part of Gangba Dzong).

In the 20th century, after looting part of political and economic privileges in Tibet, the British colonists went too far and acted recklessly. Curzon, Viceroy of British India, wrote several times to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, trying to put aside the Central Government of Qing so as to hold a direct negotiation with the local government of Tibet. The Dalai Lama returned all the letters with the seals intact, saying that the local government of Tibet should not contact with any foreign countries without the Central Government's consent. In order to realize the purpose to invade Tibet, Curzon began to plan a second military invasion.

imposed pressure on the Qing Court, asking the latter to withdraw its frontier guards. Afterwards, they delivered a note to the Qing Court, declaring openly that Mt. Lungtog was within the territory of sovereign Sikkim under the British protection and demanding that the Qing Court order Tibetan officials to remove the check posts and withdraw their frontier soldiers within the given time.

In February of 1888, the British troops launched a sudden attack on the Tibetan soldiers garrisoning at the defense barricade at the foot of Mt. Lungtog.



On December 12 of 1903, led by Younghusband, the British troops crossed secretly Tselilha Pass and quickly occupied Chunpei, Phali and other places. Regardless of Amban Youtai's obstruction, the local government of Tibet urgently moved Tibetan troops to the frontline and mobilized monks and laymen within the territory of Tibet to do the unpaid labor for the army and defend their homeland.

In March of 1904, 1,000 Tibetan soldiers quickly reached the vast terrain in Qoimishango to confront the British troops. At that time, the right wing of the Tibetan army built short walls as the defense fortifications along the western bank of Dochen Lake, north of Tuna while its left wing was stationed at its southern bank. General Younghusband resorted to nasty tricks. He proposed to hold negotiations, and in the meanwhile, he ordered his troops to besiege Tibetan troops with heavy machine guns and cannons. When he met Ladingser and Langserling, two Tibetan officials in charge of the Tibetan troops (Doinbin), he claimed that Tibetan troops should extinguish the fuses of their matchlock guns to show their sincerity. Being very honest and not knowing any conspiracies, the Tibetan troops did so accordingly. Just at that moment, the British troops opened the fire on them, but the Tibetans were unable to fire back because the fuses of their matchlock guns were already extinguished. Therefore, just in a few minutes, more than 500 people were shot dead, including Ladingser and three other Tibetan officers. The rest of the surviving officers and men were engaged in hand-to-hand combats with the enemies under a rain of bullets. Over 1,400 officers and men devoted their lives heroically, and the terrain became red with their

British troops  
entering Lhasa  
City (August 3 of  
1904).

From Hu Yan





Qoimishango, to the north of Yadong (British troops killed over 1,400 Tibetans with their firearms there.)

From Hu Yan

a violent attack against Tibetan troops under the cover of cannons and heavy machine guns. They invaded Gyangtse Town of strategic importance. Tibetan civilians and soldiers from all parts of Tibet gathered at Gyangtse and engaged in the fierce battle for Gyangtse against the British troops and seized the castle on Mt. Dzong, even Younghusband narrowly escaped the death during the night attacks. In the end, the British troops cut off Tibetans' water supplies, the ammunition depot was hit and exploded and the batteries fell into the hands of the British troops. The Gyangtse's Defense War against the British invaders lasted for nearly 3 months and ended up in failure.

In July 14, MacDonald with more than 4,000 soldiers left Gyangtse for Lhasa. Seeing the British troops approaching Lhasa and being unwilling to sign a treaty under coercion with the enemy, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama left Lhasa one night under the cover of darkness. On August 3, the British troops occupied Lhasa.

On September 7, a few Tibetan upper-class personnel were compelled to sign the unequal Lhasa Treaty with the British in the Potala Palace. This treaty includes: Tibet was not in a position to cede its territory or mineral resources, etc. to any foreign countries and Tibet became the sphere of influence of Britain; indemnity was to be paid to the British Government; all forts and fortifications were to be razed on the way from India to Gyangtse and Lhasa; three trade marts were to be opened at Yadong, Gyangtse and Gartok; recognizing the treaty of 1890 and delineating the boundary between Tibet and Sikkim; the British troops were to be stationed in

blood. This is the most humiliating and brutal slaughter that the British imperialists did to the Tibetan people.

Tibetan people were outraged by the massacre in Qoimishango, and the anti-British sentiments grew stronger and stronger. On April 9, Tibetan soldiers and civilians inflicted a heavy loss on a British cavalry contingent with their primitive guns, cannons, rolling woods and stones. However, the follow-up units of the British troops arrived in time and launched



Kyibuk, general governor of Phari and commander of the Tibetan army (He was grandfather of Kyibuk Phuntsok Tseten, former vice-chairman of the People's Government of Tibet Autonomous Region, and he fell in the Anti-British War in 1904.)

From Hu Yan

Yadong. This treaty turned out to be invalid on the grounds that it was not granted or signed by the Central Government. The British-Indian Government attempted every way to seek diplomatic measures to force the Qing Government to admit it. It was not until 1906 that this treaty was used as an appendix to the Convention between Great Britain and China. Later on, Britain and India's subsequent privileges in Tibet were all related to these two treaties.

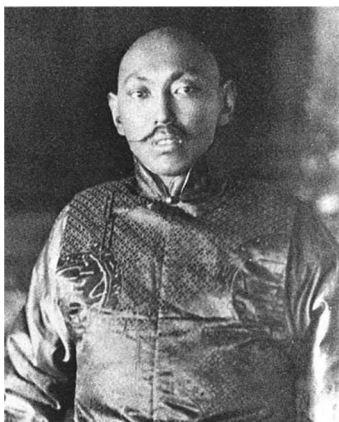
These two British invasions of Tibet (around the early 20th century) enabled the Qing Government to realize the seriousness of the problems that Tibet was seized by the two imperialist powers. In order to strengthen its rule over Tibet and defend its southwest frontier, the political, military and economic transforms were initiated in Tibet.



The Gyangtse Defense Battle (oil painting).



# The Thirteenth Dalai Lama



The Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

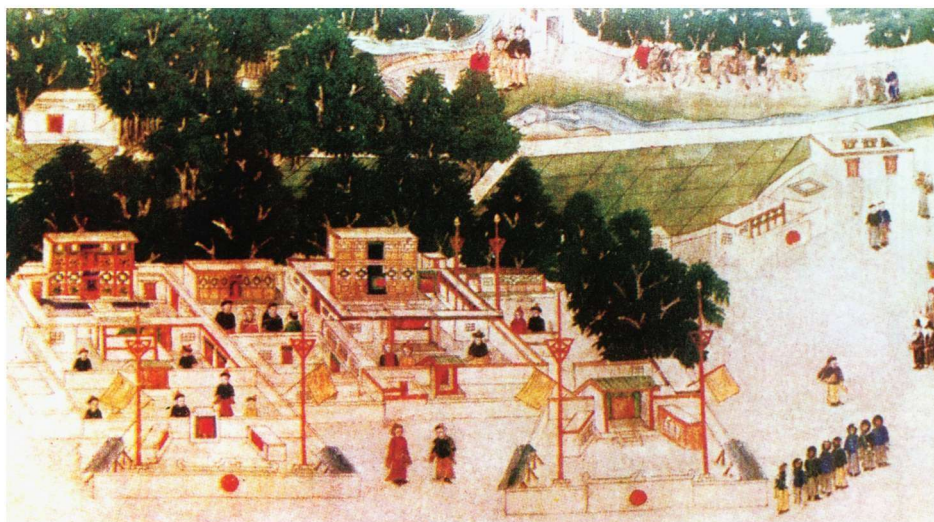
On July 30 of 1904 when the British troops were approaching Lhasa, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama left for Outer Mongolia.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876~1933) lived in a period when Tibet was in turmoil. As a political and religious leader, he arduously moved about among Britain, Russia and the Qing Central Government, trying to seek the way out for his self-supporting and development. Eventually, he “was fully inclined towards the motherland”, resuming the direct ties with the Central Government. He came to realize in his remaining years that returning to the motherland was the

only way out in such an international background that the world big powers were engaged in plundering Tibet.

On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month in the fifteenth calendrical cycle of the Fire-mouse year in Tibetan calendar (1876), a baby was born in an ordinary farmer’s family in the district of Dagpo, southeast of Lhasa. Located in front of elephant-shaped Mt. Namlinglapa, the farmer’s house was called Namdain (near the elephant).

Two years after his birth, due to his unique gifts, the boy was universally recognized as the reincarnated soul boy of the Twelfth Dalai Lama and greeted to Lhasa. All Tibetan Rinpoches (Hutuktu), cabinet ministers (Galoin), senior military officials (Daboin), the abbots from the three major monasteries and laymen held a rally and wrote a formal request for permission to the Qing emperor. After stamping their seals and signing their names, they presented it to Amban, asking him to submit it to the emperor for his approval of the confirmation without going through the procedures of drawing lots from the golden urn. In March of 1877, Emperor Guangxu approved the confirmation without going through the procedures of drawing lots from the golden urn. The imperial edict reads: “Lozang Thabkhe Gyatso, son of Kunga Rinchen, will be confirmed as the reincarnated soul boy of the Dalai Lama. There is no need to confirm him through the procedures of drawing lots from the golden urn.” On November 14 of the same year, the delegates from the Potala



Amban Office (drawn by a Tibetan painter in the Qing Dynasty).

Palace and the local government of Tibet escorted the soul boy to Tsegungtang Monastery on the southern bank of Lhasa River, where they received the imperial edict according to the old convention. The soul boy knelt down facing the east and Amban stood in front of him, reading out the imperial edict in his hands. Facing the east, the soul boy prostrated himself three times and knocked his head on the ground thrice at each prostration.

On the eleventh day of the first lunar month in 1878, the Eighth Panchen Lama tonsured the soul boy, helping him to change monk costume and giving him a religious name Ngawang Lozang Thubten Gyatso Jigdral Chokley Namgyal (Thubten Gyatso for short). On June 13 of 1879, the 3-year-old Dalai Lama was officially enthroned in the Potala Palace, and he succeeded the Dalai's legally constituted authority. In accordance with the convention, the Dalai's father Gonggar Rinchen was conferred upon the title of "Duke", and the local government of Tibet allocated him manors and serfs. As a result, he became one of the major nobles in Tibet, known as "Langdun".

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama was initiated into the junior stage of monkhood at the age of 7. And in 1886 when he was 11 years old, Regent Jilung Rinpoche passed away. Recommended by numerous monks and laymen, the Qing Court appointed the Eighth Demo Rinpoche Ngawang Lozang Trinley Rabgye as the Regent. In 1894 when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama reached 19 years old, Regent Demo Rinpoche resigned his position, so the Dalai Lama held power. In the following years, the political situation in Tibet was rather complicated and the British imperialist lust for Tibet became more and more inflating. In addition, the high-ranking officials, taking advantage of the Dalai's insufficient



experiences, were engaged in the internal fights for power. In 1899, the conflicts between the Dalai Lama and the trusted followers of the Regent relieved of his office broke out, known as “Demo Rinpoche Incident.” Demo and his followers were arrested and Demo Rinpoche died in prison. His manors, monasteries and subjects in his residence Dangyailing Monastery were all confiscated, and the search for his reincarnated soul boy was forbidden. Thereafter, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama’s power became stabilized, and he gradually became a mature political leader.

After the failure of the Anti-British War in 1904, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama went to Outer Mongolia, trying to seek help from Russia so as to continue to resist the British. However, at that time, the Russia had just been defeated by Japan, so it was unable to provide any substantial support. Besides, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had conflicts with Jetsun Dampa Rinpoche in his dwelling place, so he had no alternative but to turn to the Qing Court. In 1906, at the request of the Qing Court, he started on his journey back to Tibet from Urga, and on his way back, he temporarily resided in Kunbum Monastery by imperial order. In November of 1907, the Qing Court granted his request to go to Beijing to pay homage to the emperor. He went on a pilgrimage to Mt. Wutai, waiting for the permission to Beijing. In the end of September, Empress Dowager Cixi and Emperor Guangxu had several interviews with him and entertained him, bestowing upon him a



Group photo of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the British personages. From China Tibet Information Website

golden album and a gold seal and restoring his title of “Dalai Lama” and conferring upon him the title of “Loyal and Submissive Great Benevolent Self-Subsisting Buddha of Western Paradise.” However, he was very much dissatisfied with the Qing Court, for it didn’t approve his request that he could report to the Emperor directly without telling Amban, and he had to prostrate himself on the ground in the interviews.

At the end of 1908, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama left Beijing for Tibet. In 1910, the Sichuan army commanded by Zhong Ying reached Lhasa. They had some occasional conflicts with Tibetan troops, which made the Thirteenth Dalai Lama who had intense relations with Amban Lian Yu become even

more restless. Immediately, he appointed Cemoingling Rinpoche as the Regent and ordered him to stay in Lhasa. And he, together with Lonchen Shatra and other officials, left for India. In India, they were “given a warm reception” by Bell and other British officials.

On October 10 of 1911, the breakout of the Revolution of 1911 overthrew the Qing Dynasty, and put an end to the autocratic monarchy of over 2,000 years. As a result, the Republic of China was founded. On January 1 of 1912, Sun Yat-sen assumed his post as the provisional president of the Republic of China. He stated in his inaugural speech: “The foundation of the country lies in the people, and the unification of territories inhabited by Han, Manchurian, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan people into one country means the unification of Han, Manchurian, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan races, called the national unification.” In March, Sun Yat-sen took charge of drawing up and promulgating the Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China. It is clearly stipulated that the sovereign territory of the Republic of China covers 22 provinces, Inner and Outer Mongolia, Tibet and Qinghai. And it is also specified that, as for the senators of the National Government, just like in other provinces, Inner and Outer Mongolia, 5 delegates should be elected in Tibet, and the election method is to be decided by the local governments.

In December of 1912, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama returned Lhasa. Though he punished the monks from Demo Rinpoche’s Dangyailing Monastery, who had supported Amban



Dowager Cixi receiving the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in his audience with her in 1908 (the thirty-fourth year of Emperor Guangxu’s reign) (mural in the Potala Palace).





Pearls-stringed Mandala bestowed upon the Thirteenth Dalai Lama by Dowager Cixi (now preserved in the Potala Palace).

and the Sichuan army, he was still in a hesitated position about the relations between Tibet and the Central Government. Nevertheless, he dared not to make up his mind to separate Tibet from China and exercise complete “Tibetan Independence”.

Though the British Government resorted to various means to plot “Tibetan Independence” by taking advantage of chaotic situations in Tibet after the Revolution of 1911, the flesh-and-blood ties between Tibet and its motherland formed in history could never be severed. In 1919, according to the order from the Central Government, Gansu Province sent Commissioner Zhu Xiu to Tibet to meet the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, who indicated, “It is not my true intention to be a pro-British element. It is only because Amban went too far and I had no alternative but to do so. I’m very thankful for your coming to Tibet. And I do hope that the Grand President can send a plenipotentiary as soon as possible to resolve the unsettled issues. I promise that I’m fully inclined towards the motherland, striving for the happiness of the five races. As regards the draft treaty on the Simla Conference, it can also be modified.” In 1928, he sent his trusted follower Gongjor Zhongnyi to Nanjing to present his letter to the Nationalist Government, expressing his hope to resume the ties with the Central Government. The Nationalist Government asked Gongjor Zhongnyi to return to Tibet with Chiang Kai-shek’s autograph and sought his opinion on the relationship between Tibet and the Central Government. In 1930, Gongjor Zhongnyi went back to Nanjing with the Dalai Lama’s letter in reply. The Dalai Lama appointed Gongjor Zhongnyi the general representative of the Tibet Office in Nanjing and set up the Tibet Office in Nanjing, which became the official agency connecting the local government of Tibet and the Central Government.

On October 30 of 1933 (Tibetan calendar), the Thirteenth Dalai Lama died of illness in Lhasa. According to the historical convention, the local government of Tibet cabled this matter to the Nationalist Government and notified the Ninth Panchen. The Nationalist Government issued an order to posthumously confer upon him the title of “Master of Enlightenment, Benevolence, Perfection and Awareness, and the Defender of the Nation”, held a mourning ceremony in Nanjing and sent Huang Musong, the deputy chief of staff of the Nationalist Government, to Tibet to attend the mourning ceremony.

# Zhang Yintang, Investigating and Dealing with the Tibetan Affairs and His Reforms

Zhang Yintang, a native of Nanhai of Guangdong, was a senior official of Han Chinese in the late Qing Dynasty. He was appointed as a secretary in the Cabinet in 1892 (the eighteenth year of Qing Emperor Guangxu's reign). In the following year, he was admitted to the Navy Office as a secretary. From 1896 on, he successively acted as the consular of the third-rate in the Chinese Embassy in the United States and then the consul of the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco. Later on, he was transferred to be the Charge d'Affaires in the Chinese Embassy in Spain. In 1905, he accompanied Tang Shaoyi, an official of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Qing Court, to India to hold negotiations with the British on the issues on Tibet. Since then, he became attached to Tibet.



Zhang Yintang, the last envoy in the United States in the late Qing Dynasty (taken on May 15 of 1905).

In the following year, Tang Shaoyi resigned his post due to illness. The Qing Court authorized Zhang Yintang to take his post. In the process of handling the issues on Tibet and attending to the affairs concerning Tibet, Zhang found the insufficiency of the Qing Government in its administration of Tibet. So, after signing and issuing the Beijing Treaty with six items about the issues on Tibet, he telegraphed the Ministry of External Affairs, posing a proposal entitled Tackle the Political Affairs in Tibet As Soon As Possible and Take back the Political Power.

In his proposal, Zhang Yintang analyzed the serious situation that Tibet was facing, pointing out that it was caused by the British wedges and threats and the Qing Government's loose administration over Tibet must be changed because of Tibet's geographic position of great strategic importance. As for this, he pointed out: 1) In order to defend the territory and stabilize the whole situation so as to solve the matter of extreme