

CROSS-CURRENTS



EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

Memory Politics at Work in a Gyalrong Revolt in the Early Twentieth Century

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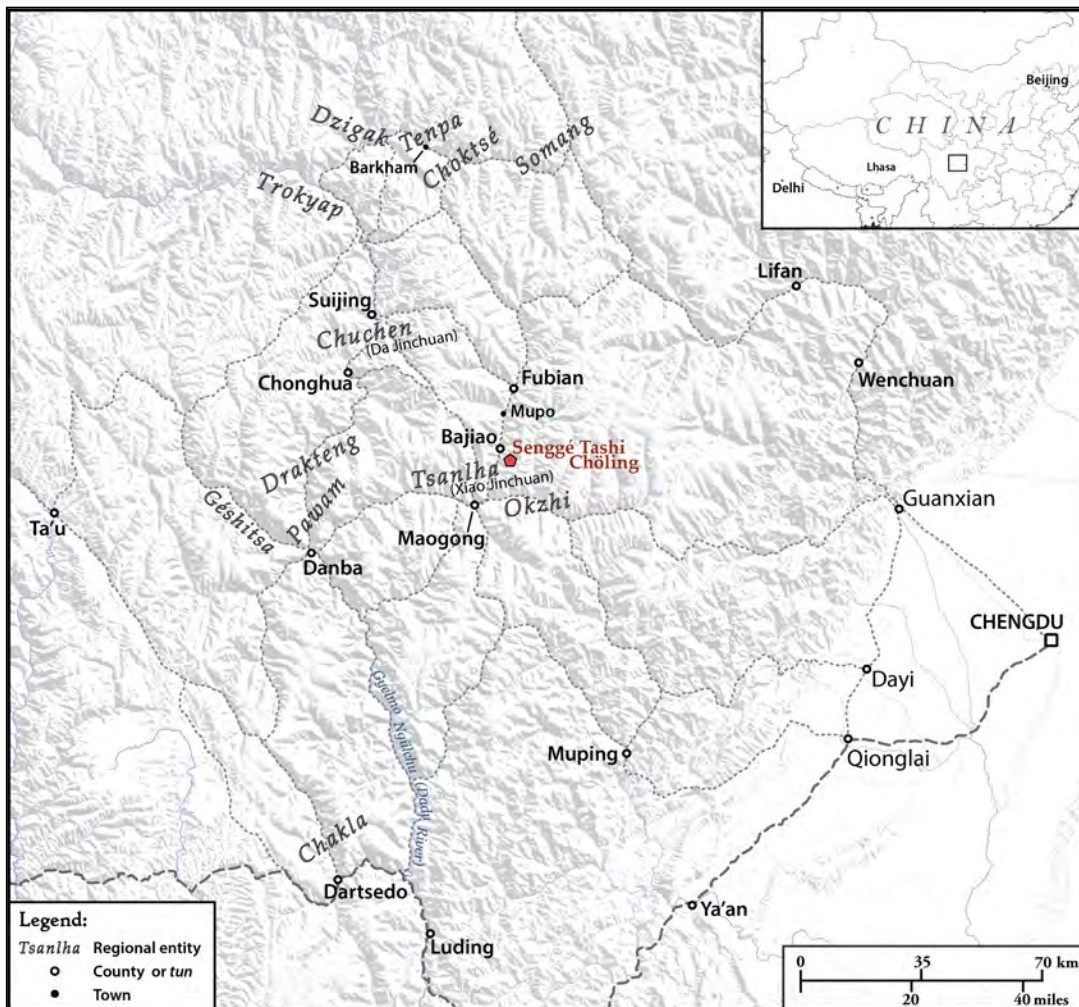
Abstract

A 1917 uprising led by Zöpa, a low-ranking monk who proclaimed himself emperor, attracted over four thousand participants in the Gyalrong region on the southeastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau. Some of the uprising's agendas and goals contradicted one another. It targeted the Han with the shout of "Crush the Great Han," even though Zöpa's two main henchmen were Han. It evoked the support of a wider Gyalrong community and claimed to avenge Qing oppression (since the Jinchuan campaigns of the eighteenth century) while attempting to establish a Qing-branded kingdom. Also, this revolt targeted foreign intrusion, as evidenced by the burning of a Catholic church in Danba. This article offers a glimpse into how this uprising was embedded in sociopolitical changes during a critical transitional period from the Qing to the Republic in Sichuan's Sino-Tibetan borderlands. It particularly examines how memories of the Qing's atrocities and subsequent reforms, as well as of the "golden past" of Gyalrong, catalyzed ethnic and religious tensions. Above all, this study exemplifies the significance of integrating historical analyses with ethnographic investigations by examining the ways in which written documents and oral histories constitute competing yet complementary interpretive narratives about sociopolitical changes.

Keywords: ethnicity, religion, memory, Jinchuan campaigns, Gyalrong

Led by Tsatö Zöpa (hereafter Zöpa), a low-ranking monk from a local monastery, a revolt broke out in 1917 in Bajiao,¹ Maogong County, in the Gyalrong region² of Sichuan's Sino-Tibetan borderlands (see map 1). This uprising attracted over four thousand participants and led to the seizure of several neighboring counties and magistratures (*C. tun*, lit. "troops station," a military-civil administrative unit of the Qing) within a few months. Arguably, this short-lived rebellion was the largest of its kind in Gyalrong against the Manchu/Chinese state since the two Jinchuan campaigns (1747–1749, 1771–1776), the costliest wars against rebellious chieftains in Qing history. These campaigns were part of the Qing's grand design of expansion to keep Gyalrong, Kham, and southwestern China under its direct administration.

This article provides a window onto the sociopolitical contexts in China, and in the Gyalrong region in particular, during the transitional period from the Qing to the Republic in the early twentieth century. These years were characterized by unprecedented political chaos and uncertainties. I investigate how religious and ethnic tensions in Gyalrong were evoked and intensified through reanimated memories of Qing atrocities (e.g., slaughter) against Gyalrong rebels. I also examine how such tensions and memories were implicated in subsequent reforms after the rebels, such as “substituting chieftains with state-appointed civilian officials” (*gaitu guiliu*) and the radical reforms by Zhao Erfeng (a former Sichuan-Yunnan frontier minister of the Qing) in Sichuan’s Sino-Tibetan borderlands (see Relyea in this issue).



Map 1. Bajiao and Maogong in Gyalrong in the early twentieth century. *Source:* Created by Tenzin Jinba and Rémi Chaix, based on data from NASA’s Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM).

Memory politics—or, specifically, memory as an ideological and political instrument—thus comprises my key angle of analysis in this article. This work is informed by theoretical insights that identify memory as a synthetic and multivalent ongoing dynamic political process linking the past, present, and future.³ It focuses, however, on how an ethnographic approach and recounted memories collected in the field enable more effective engagement with documented historical data. Hence, building on both archival research and fieldwork, this article contributes to enhanced initiatives in anthropology, history, and other disciplines that aim to advance synthetic analyses of documented local history and culture with field observations and ethnographic interpretations of locals' memories and other collected field data (see, for instance, Faure and Ho 2013, xii, and Gros in this issue).

The archives are made up of two major series. The first series was collected in the 1950s by the newly founded Southwest Nationalities Institute (Xinan minzu xueyuan) (1954) and by the Office of the Xiaojin County Party Committee (Xiaojin xianwei ban'gongshi) (1959). The second series was compiled in the 1980s. At that time, investigations were organized by the county's Political Consultative Conference (Zhengxie) (1985) and by the Gazette Office (Xianzhiban) (1987). However, these officially classified "archives" (*dang'an*) are often unsatisfactory, informed as they are by grand narratives with inadequate attention to local social complexities. Also, the accounts reveal the party-state's orchestrated agenda of labeling the revolt as a class-conscious "people's uprising" against repressive feudal lords. Therefore, I find that a more complete understanding of the 1917 revolt can only be gained by investigating more nuanced local perspectives.

As a result, I conducted fieldwork in Xiaojin County from December 2014 to February 2015. This was mainly in Bajiao and neighboring Mupo, the hubs of the 1917 uprising. I conducted intensive interviews with more than twenty individuals whose average age was over sixty-five. I also had many informal conversations with other local people of different ages, genders, and social statuses (monks, retired cadres, and villagers). These informants' accounts were based on their elder relatives' experiences. They illuminated previous omissions, including the source of ethnic tension and anti-missionary sentiment. Although most of these contemporary oral accounts are consistent with the existing archives, some of them contradict one another or are flawed in terms of historical rigor. Nevertheless, I argue in the following sections that factual errors do not conceal or undermine the historical veracity or symbolic value of the accounts.

These findings demonstrate how we can use and interpret ethnographic oral data for analytical purposes, beyond critiques of textual authenticity. In so doing, this study not only explores how written documents and oral histories constitute competing yet complementary interpretive narratives about sociopolitical changes, but also exemplifies the significance of integrating historical analysis with ethnographic investigation.

The Uprising: Rise and Fall

The occurrence and evolution of the Bajiao uprising were implicated in, and also epitomized, dramatic political changes and ensuing chaos in China and in this particular Sino-Tibetan borderland during the early twentieth century. As the 1911 revolution brought Qing rule to an end, China's political future was full of uncertainties. Foreign powers were increasingly encroaching. Also, heightened polarization and reconstitution of old and new political forces and regimes emerged at both the national and local (provincial and subregional) levels. In Sichuan proper, warlords of different factions had been vying for control of the province. They would soon become embroiled in battles against the Yunnan and Guizhou warlords who had invaded Sichuan in 1916. Interminable warfare and exorbitant extortion of taxes and labor for military expenditures intensified Sichuan locals' afflictions from both sides.

Gyalrong and Kham chieftains, nobles, and local populations still had fresh memories of the cruel measures of Zhao Erfeng against local chieftains and nobles who opposed his reforms (1906–1911). With these reforms, their territories were to be directly administered by the court.⁴ Thus, in assessing the fluctuating situation cautiously, chieftains and nobles wished to hold on to their remaining territory and power, if not to regain and expand their influence. To achieve that goal, they had to reconfigure their relationship with (and defend their own interests against) Han administrators, militia, gangs, and an increasing number of immigrant war refugees. As a consequence, different forces and factions in Maogong bargained and contended with one another in service of their own interests.

A notable political development in China following the demise of the Qing was that Yuan Shikai started to pave the way to becoming an absolute dictator and, indeed, a new emperor. Yuan, who had been a leading Han imperial official of the Qing, seized on the fruits of the 1911 revolution to become the president of the new republic. To fulfill this great ambition, Yuan dismissed the Kuomintang party, disbanded elected assemblies, and eventually proclaimed the

revival of the imperial monarchy in December 1915. However, he was forced to declare a return to the Republican presidency in March 1916 due to growing opposition from both domestic forces (the rivals, revolutionaries, and general public, as well as his own cabinet and allies) and foreign powers (Japan, Britain, and others). Yuan died in June 1916, probably from all the pressures and frustrations he faced.⁵ Nevertheless, dreams of restoring the Qing did not die with him.

Many previous members of the Qing elite as well as commoners continued to advocate for the revival of the Qing or a similar imperial system. Besides the fact that some of them were nostalgic about the old system, their backing of the Qing largely resulted from their resentment of the chaotic situation under Yuan's rule. This chaos was highlighted by Japan's encroachment on Chinese territory and sovereignty, constant civil strife, and a stagnant economy. The situation worsened after Yuan's death, as the absence of a strong leader gave rise to more turmoil and unrest. A number of greater and lesser warlords fought fiercely against one another for control over territories and resources. Consequently, for some people in Gyalrong and Sichuan, as in other parts of China, the old imperial system seemed a better alternative to Republicanism.

The Gyalrong uprising was merely one of many restoration attempts in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands (e.g., Gansu and Qinghai) and throughout the country, and different classes and multiple peoples (such as the Han, Manchu, Tibetans, Mongols, Hui, and many others) became involved.⁶ These revolts and ventures soon reached a climax when General Zhang Xun, Yuan's follower, proclaimed the restoration of abdicated Qing emperor Puyi on July 1, 1917.⁷

Zöpa's main Han associates and other Han participants were surely among those who missed the "good old days." Dissatisfied with the ongoing chaos, they dreamed of restoring the glory of the Qing. In Maogong, there had been such an initiative among some Han residents (including then-officials of the Qing, local militiamen, and immigrants). For instance, in 1912, 132 local Hui Muslim civilians were murdered by Han royalists as revenge against the several Hui elites who participated in the large-scale anti-Qing Railway Protection Movement. The movement, which began in Sichuan in June 1911, facilitated the downfall of the Qing (see, for instance, Rankin 2002 and Zheng 2010).⁸ Many of the same Han royalists joined Zöpa's uprising army to avenge the new Beiyang regime (1912–1927) and its supporters.

However, for Zöpa and most local Gyalrongwa, the attitude toward restoring the Qing was ambiguous and complex. In local accounts, Zöpa was little more than a naïve puppet who

had been tricked into the Han royalists' scheme. This view probably simplifies the role of Zöpa in the revolt, but this kind of account does show that the position of Zöpa and local Gyalrongwa toward the Qing was frequently at odds with that of their Han associates and supporters. I will elaborate on this point later.

Zöpa was a monk in Bajiao Monastery, the largest monastery in Maogong and also one of the largest monasteries of the Gelugpa School in Gyalrong. The Bajiao Monastery housed five hundred monks at the height of its existence toward the end of the Qing reign. By the time the rebellion broke out in 1917, it sheltered a little over three hundred monks. The Bajiao region was a traditional territory ruled by the hereditary magistrate (*shoubei*), a Qing-appointed Gyalrong native commander in charge of local affairs. According to local accounts, Zöpa did not seem to have any particular talent for learning scripture and was even regarded as dull-witted by other monks. His daily routine consisted of fetching water and cleaning the monastery. However, Zöpa was known for his magical power and martial arts skills. It was said that, by invoking a protective deity, he was able to stab himself without injury.

According to the *Zhongxian Gazette of the Republican Era* (Zhongxian Gazette Office [1945] 2008), a Han from Luzhou known as Liu Xiaolian (*xiaolian* is a degree in the Qing's imperial examination system) passed through Bajiao in 1916 and was amazed by Zöpa's extraordinary skills. As a royalist who dreamed of restoring the Qing, Liu tried to persuade Zöpa to lead an uprising to restore the Qing. Zöpa refused at first, with the excuse that he was not capable of such an endeavor, but was eventually persuaded to consider it. At the time, two Han migrant workers heard about this plan and started to prepare the ground for Zöpa. These two individuals, a carpenter named Fu Nanshan (hereafter Fu) and a plasterer named Feng Ziqing (hereafter Feng), were former subordinates of Zhao Erfeng. All the local informants I spoke with said that they had not learned about Liu, but had heard much about Fu and Feng. Nonetheless, the details of my informants' accounts, and of all the official, archival documents noted earlier, differ regarding how the two Han proceeded with their scheme to ennoble and sanctify Zöpa.

The general story line, however, is consistent. Fu and Feng were hired by a local noble, Jin Zhangpeng (hereafter Jin), to work on his new house. They hid a sword and a seal bearing the inscription "Universal Rule of the Great Qing" (*daqing tongzhi*) in the forest near Jin's house. When Zöpa went out walking at night, they swung a flashlight behind him. Few monks or locals had ever seen a flashlight, so they were astonished to discover that Zöpa radiated light. Delighted

by the fact that their trick had worked perfectly, Fu and Feng claimed that it was an auspicious sign heralding the emergence of an emperor. Having urged Jin and the villagers to look out for other propitious signs, the two migrants guided them to the forest, where they found the hidden sword and seal. Jin and many other nobles, as well as most locals, were convinced from that point on that Zöpa was actually born to lead them as emperor.

As news of Zöpa's miracles and his predestined role as the new ruler spread like wildfire, his two Han associates and close adherents set about preparing his enthronement. A Chinese-language tutor in Bajiao, Wang Dunmin, was appointed as his secretary or counselor to produce "imperial edicts" on his behalf. It was not long before Zöpa and his supporters found a perfect moment for his enthronement.

The head (*zhishi*) of Fubian Magistrature,⁹ Zhang Xiaodong, was hunting birds in Bajiao when he accidentally fired his gun at the top of Bajiao Monastery, enraging the monks and the public. Seeing tensions rise, Zhang quickly left for the county seat. The monastery sent out an envoy of about ten monks to confront the county mayor, Yang Zhenyu, about this incident. The mayor succeeded in reassuring them by promising to look into the event right away and have the malefactor punished. Instead, he sent orders to Okzhi chieftain (*tusi*, a native chieftain formally recognized by the Qing) Yang Quanzhong and Bajiao magistrate Mu Jiguang to arrest the principal "rioters" in Bajiao Monastery. When Zöpa and his followers heard about this, they immediately held the enthronement ceremony for Zöpa on lunar March 8, 1917. The ceremony was attended by a large crowd of nobles and commoners from Bajiao and neighboring regions. Zöpa declared that year the "First Year of the Universal Rule of the Great Qing" (*daqing tongzhi yuannian*) and appointed four major army commanders: General Amu Lama, General Jin, left-wing Minister-Marshal Fu, and right-wing Minister-Marshal Feng.

Zöpa's newly founded empire's mission is provided in a Chinese couplet¹⁰ that was posted in his monastery "palace." It says,

Either greater or lesser kings [warlords] in the eighteen provinces were no more than fiends in human shape. Without tearing apart the country, how could they stop? Among kings and rulers in the five continents, only I am qualified as a destined sovereign of the masses. I will thus become the First Emperor and rebuild the foundations from scratch.

He also issued an official statement in Chinese further explaining his motives and agenda:

China has suffered for decades. I lament the fact that warlords seek excuses to stare at each other like hawks and tigers, but heaven is not yet fed up with the Qing. Declaring themselves rulers, the warlords are engaged in warfare with each other for the cession of the [national] territory. Dismayed to discover that the surviving impoverished subjects [of the Qing] are so starved and freezing that they savor their suffering in catching lice, I defer to the will of the heaven by rescuing the public from their never-ending pain. As a result, people will be able to own land, to feed themselves, to have clothes, to share equally, and to have money at their disposal, so that various fortunes come at once and every corner of the country lives in harmony like a family. I will crush evil and retain goodness to relieve misery, hold heaven and earth in my hands to exterminate the malicious, receive three blessings from heaven to restore our national territory, establish our country by combating our rivals, make other countries succumb to our authority, empower the public as the foundation of our territory, and enable them to enjoy peace without mutual intrusions. If anyone dares to stand in the way, the vanguard of my army will take you down in no time.

This edict basically served to justify an uprising during a turbulent era in which people were suffering from endless warfare. Zöpa announced that he was chosen by the heavens to rescue those in need and in pain, and to restore peace and order. This statement was, however, overshadowed by a simplified and much better publicized slogan, “Crush the Great Han, Rebuild the Great Qing” (*mie da Han, li da Qing*). In addressing local grievances and currying favor with a wider Gyalrong community, Zöpa and his native associates asserted, “We Gyalrongwa have been bullied too long. Now we have our own emperor. It is the right time to restore our freedom and take revenge for what the Qing has done to us since the Jinchuan campaigns.”¹¹ Zöpa dispatched his army to destroy the imperial tablet at the county seat of Maogong. This tablet was inscribed with the text about the Qing’s achievement of quelling riots in the self-congratulatory tone of the great conqueror Emperor Qianlong. As this tablet forever reminded locals of their subjugation and humiliation, its destruction therefore symbolized their emancipation. What is more, a special slogan was created to target the foreign (French) missionary, “Exterminate the ‘Gourd-head’” (*shaguang hulu*).¹²

Zöpa first extradited Bajiao magistrate Mu Jiguang, who fled and sought refuge with the Okzhi chieftain (who had become his ally through marital exchanges). Zöpa also sent his emissaries to neighboring chieftains, nobles, and monasteries, ordering them to follow his lead and threatening to send his army to crush the disobedient. The Biesiman Magistrature, located

next to Bajiao, was one of the first to join his ranks after its magistrate had fled. The magistrates and/or nobles of Hanniu, Zailong, Hedong, and Hexi (in Maogong, Suijing, Chonghua, and Danba Counties) also joined Zöpa on his expedition. Moreover, one source says that chieftains including Tenpa, Choktsé, Somang, and Trokyap sent letters to Zöpa, endorsing his enthronement and referring to him as “our emperor” (Zhang Xiaozhong 2004). Altogether, these magistrates, nobles, and chieftains governed the majority of the Gyalrong region. In addition to Bajiao Monastery, another main monastery in Maogong County, Mupo Monastery, also dispatched a hundred monks, about half of its total population, to join Zöpa’s expedition.

Apart from his key Han associates, Fu and Feng, Zöpa’s expedition army was made up of other Han who saw an advantage to becoming his ally and supporting his uprising. As mentioned, many Han royalists, who were either staff from the previous county government of the Qing or local self-defense militia, joined Zöpa’s ranks. Moreover, while Fu and Feng made their way to Danba with their army, they were able to recruit about one thousand gold mine workers. In all, Zöpa mobilized nearly four thousand fighters, but his most trusted ones were those from Bajiao and Mupo Monasteries. Considering the fact that the overall population in Bajiao was likely about three thousand at that time,¹³ the four-thousand-man army was regarded as enormous.

Zöpa sent out four expedition squads to conquer neighboring regions: Okzhi; Danba and then Muping (in today’s Baoxin County); Suijin (in today’s Jinchuan County); and Chonghua (in today’s Jinchuan County). At first, the expedition armies succeeded in easily crushing the Republican army and local chieftains. They plundered vanquished places and killed those who resisted or refused to yield. The army that had been dispatched to Danba burned down a French Catholic church there because of the notorious reputation of foreigners and their “evil” religion, which I will discuss below.

Zöpa’s expeditions were initially successful for two main reasons. First, his slogan and agenda drew in the public, both Gyalrong locals and the Han. Second, as noted, at that time warlords in Sichuan were busy fighting against invading Yunnan and Guizhou troops, and the Sichuan provincial government became so mired that it was unable to respond effectively. However, the Sichuan government gathered together an increasing number of soldiers, and more soldiers were sent by both nobles and commoners from conquered regions. Zöpa’s expeditions then started to lose ground on each front. His troops consequently had to retreat to the Bajiao Monastery, which was soon surrounded by the Republican army sent by the provincial

government as well as soldiers dispatched by Gyalrong chieftains and nobles. Constructed out of heavy rocks, and having several huge, solid gates, the monastery was transformed into a nearly impenetrable garrison. Zöpa and his besieged soldiers were thus able to defend themselves against the invading army for about three months.

Eventually, in the lunar month of July, Zöpa and his major associate, Fu, were captured and taken to Chengdu, where they were executed. Zöpa's head was taken back to his monastery, where it was put on public display as a warning to locals in Bajiao and Maogong. The monastery was burned to the ground. Nearly a thousand imprisoned soldiers and close adherents of Zöpa were killed on the spot. Their bodies were disposed of and buried at a place below the monastery, which has since been known as the "Ten-Thousand Pit" (*wanren keng*) to emphasize that a great number of people were killed. The revolt, which lasted only about four months, was thus completely quashed.

Memory as a Rallying Cry

At the time of the revolt, except for some nobles and learned lamas who had some knowledge of political changes in China, the majority of locals believed that they were still ruled by the "Chinese emperor." Many could not even distinguish the Manchu from the Han. They continued to be ruled directly by their chieftains or magistrates, as in former times. Thus, for most of them, things did not seem to have changed much. Therefore, their support for Zöpa's uprising was related not so much to their embracing the Qing or imperial system, but more to the legacy of the two Jinchuan campaigns. The legends and folk songs about the cruelty of the Qing court in the campaigns, as well as the heroism of local warriors, remained part of the locals' "lived experiences."¹⁴

As far as the locals were concerned, the most devastating consequence of their defeat, and of subsequent reforms, was the curtailment of their autonomy, which rendered them subservient. This was seen by locals as incapacitating their own abilities to forestall the invasion and coercion of both the Han and foreign missionaries. Moreover, local societies in Maogong were highly divided. Their group allegiance was normally built on a common administrative affiliation under the jurisdiction of the same chieftain or magistrature. Therefore, Zöpa surely saw the advantage of using shared memories of the Jinchuan campaigns, and subsequent agonies, as a rallying cry to transcend such differences.

Memory of the Jinchuan Campaigns

The Jinchuan campaigns started in a climate of internal warfare among the chieftains of Da Jinchuan, Xiao Jinchuan, Mingzheng, Geshiza, Okzhi, and other Gyalrong chieftains.¹⁵ The Qing court took into account Gyalrong's strategically important location in connecting Kham, Amdo, Central Tibet, and the Han interiors. The court was also concerned about the negative implications of opposition from other unruly chieftains. Consequently, it intervened by sending a large army to quell the unrest. Yet it received unexpectedly strong resistance from the Da Jinchuan chieftain.

The first Jinchuan campaign (1747–1749) ended with the Da Jinchuan chieftain's surrender. His successors, though, continued the drive toward expansion and growth and also prepared for the court's likely revenge. Subsequent Da Jinchuan chieftains allied themselves with two of the most powerful Gyalrong chieftains, Trokyap and Xiao Jinchuan, in order to achieve their shared goal of self-preservation. According to local legends, the succeeding Da Jinchuan chieftains realized that the Qing court would not easily forgive Da Jinchuan's defiance and would therefore take revenge by completely removing this obstacle from the Qing's path to expansion. This unofficial account was credible considering the fact that the Qing saw the potential threat from hundreds of greater and lesser chieftains that it had officially recognized. The Jinchuan incidents heightened the court's anxiety over its territorial stability and effective control over border regions.

The rise in the number of invasions of other chieftains' territories by Da Jinchuan and its ally, Xiao Jinchuan, led the Qing court to launch another round of large-scale military interventions known as the second Jinchuan campaign (1771–1776). It was even more difficult for the Qing to gain the upper hand during this campaign. Although these two chieftains were eventually defeated, the court was not prepared to pay such a huge price in manpower, casualties, and financial expenses. As a consequence, Emperor Qianlong became so choleric that he ordered the extermination of the local populations. Only a small number of locals survived, by hiding or escaping. Today there are many stories about the Qing army's vengeful massacre. According to one version I gathered in the field,

Qing soldiers would ask each captured local the same question: “Will you choose the emperor [Qianlong] or your chieftain as your master?” Those who selected the emperor received the promise that their lives were to be spared. However, every

single captive answered, “I want our chieftain.” They would then be decapitated on the spot with a sword. As a result, the sword became too blunt to be used and the whole river [Da Jinchuan River in Jinchuan County, and Xiao Jinchuan River in Xiaojin County], filled with dead bodies, turned a crimson color. However, the days went by and still no one capitulated. Consequently, the executioners could no longer bear this and petitioned the court to grant mercy by arguing that the locals were so courageous and daring that they would, in the long term, serve the empire. Thus, some elderly people, women, and children survived.¹⁶

The important underlying message is that the merciless emperor had to back down because of the locals’ courage and unconditional loyalty to their chieftains. Returning to the Bajiao uprising, we can now see how Zöpa took advantage of such sentiments in two complementary ways. First, the Qing nearly wiped out the locals during the Jinchuan campaigns. To the Bajiao people, such a cruel act should not be forgotten or forgiven. Second, the locals’ fearlessness ultimately pushed the ruthless emperor to grant mercy, as he was convinced that their spirit could not be crushed.

Therefore, the strategy of using the Jinchuan campaigns as a rallying cry for the revolt seemed ideal. At the same time, Gyalrong natives believed (and still do today) that subsequent reforms after the campaigns compromised the possibility of breathing new life into Da Jinchuan and Xiao Jinchuan, and Gyalrong as a whole. Therefore, nostalgia for the “glorious” past would easily motivate the locals to embrace the ideal of restoring “our own chieftain” and the subsequent grandeur of Gyalrong.

After the campaigns, the Qing court directly administered the two Jinchuans by dispatching appointed officials and designating local representatives, a strategy known as “substituting chieftains with state-appointed civilian officials.” In these two places, only the Okzhi chieftain retained his position. He was the one who had been bullied by the two Jinchuan chieftains and thus assisted the Qing in getting the better of them. The court also established seven Han magistratures (Hantun) and six native magistratures (*tutun*), including Bajiao.¹⁷ The Han magistratures were usually headed by Han officials dispatched by the court, while native magistratures were in charge of the court-designated local nobles. The native leaders also had authority over those from other Gyalrong regions who were rewarded for assisting the Qing’s conquering of Da Jinchuan and Xiao Jinchuan.

As the Okzhi chieftain was able to retain his traditional power, he and his successors had absolute power over his subjects. They drafted the militia, levied taxes, assigned various duties, punished (and even executed) perpetrators, and so on. Native Gyalrongwa who lived in places

that had suffered from the unrest, as well as “soldiers of the magistrature (*tunbing*),” were governed by magistrates. Magistrates were court-appointed officers by title, so they were formally integrated into the Qing’s administrative system. Their status, though, still resembled that of chieftains. In exchange for the loyalty of these local elites, the Qing decided that the official title of magistrate would be hereditary. Although they wielded just as much power as chieftains in their own magistratures, one distinctive difference was that magistrates were supposed to fulfill more court-appointed military and non-military administrative duties than chieftains. For instance, these magistrates were ordered by the court to send a number of local men to join the Qing. These conscripts fought the invasion of the Gurkhas from Nepal toward the end of the eighteenth century and fought against the British during the Opium Wars in the nineteenth century. Additionally, the locals ruled by magistrates were to pay taxes and fulfill duties such as farming and other kinds of labor, including corvée, for both magistrates and the county-level Qing administration. As a consequence, subjects of magistrates were usually more exploited owing to the fact that they had two masters. Many in Bajiao would contrast their own state of existence to that of the Okzhi people, whom they believed to be better off economically and in all other respects because they had a more powerful protector in their chieftain. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, for the majority of locals, the Bajiao uprising sought to restore the abolished chieftain system.

This wish was also a repercussion of late Qing and Republican policies regarding the Tibetan borderlands. Toward the end of the Qing rule, the administrative practice of “substituting chieftains with state-appointed civilian officials” became an even more popular agenda in Sichuan’s Sino-Tibetan borderlands, as evidenced by Zhao Erfeng’s series of ambitious reforms and new policies to secure this border region within China’s sovereignty. Therefore, even hereditary magistrates might be replaced by officials not from within, but from outside—not to mention the quasi-self-governing chieftain system. Given the circumstances, the nobles and most locals were more and more desperate to hold on to a more desirable political system in which they and their chieftains had greater control over their own internal affairs.

Ethnic Tensions and Beyond

The proclaimed anti-Qing agenda simultaneously reflected the conflicting attitudes of Zöpa and Bajiao locals toward the Qing. If the Qing were the enemy, why would they claim to restore the Qing? A plausible answer is that they had different agendas vis-à-vis Zöpa's Han associates. Most locals wished to restore the relinquished chieftain system. Thus, in the eyes of the locals, the Qing referred to an external dominant force that had vanquished them. This abstract entity was represented by the Han and their administrations. In a way, restoring the Qing was necessary to regain what had been taken away by this powerful Han-dominated entity. To achieve this goal, it was of crucial importance to wage a battle against the present Han regime and its representatives, including the local chieftains, magistrates, and nobles, as well as commoners who backed the Han regime.

Although this might explain why the locals' anti-Qing campaign was just as much an anti-Han one, how are we to make sense of the fact that Zöpa's key associates or advisors were actually Han themselves? First of all, we need to differentiate between, on the one hand, the Great Han (*da Han*)—as in the slogan *mie da Han*, or “Crush the Great Han”—and, on the other hand, the Han general public. “Great Han” implied the military and executive authorities at the time (Zhang Xiaozhong 2004), so the slogan referred to the agenda of overthrowing the Republic. Using the ethnic-sounding label to enlist support from Bajiao and Gyalrong natives might have been a strategy of Feng and Fu. However, it soon turned into a Han cleansing (*xi Han*) campaign targeting the Han public. This shift was inseparable from the legacy of the Jinchuan campaigns and ethnic tensions in this region.

As most locals were killed during and after the battles, the Qing encouraged the Han to immigrate to the two Jinchuans by offering them land, cattle, farming tools, grain, and other subsidies. Soon after this policy was implemented in 1776, it attracted 1,186 households of Han immigrants. They were known as “magistrature civilians” (*tunmin*), and they were under direct jurisdiction of Han magistratures. The Qing recruited 2,596 “soldiers of magistrature” who served the role of overseeing the locals while also cultivating allocated land. The majority of them were Han, but there were also Gyalrongwa, as well as other indigenous populations (whose ethnicity is now defined as “Qiangzu”) from Zagu'nao, Baoxian, and Weizhou. These “soldiers of magistrature” were administered by native magistrates, and many of them were gradually integrated into the local Gyalrongwa population. There were also some Hui Muslims among the “soldiers of magistrature,” and they became the first Hui settlers in the two Jinchuans.¹⁸

Additionally, there were still 1,969 defeated local households that were subjected to the rules of the heads (magistrates) of native magistratures.

Local accounts claim that Han immigrant officers were granted fertile land in the valley, while Han commoners occupied land on the slopes higher up the mountains. The local Gyalrongwa were relocated from these places to the mountaintops. This is in keeping with historical facts (see, for instance, Peng 2007). Nevertheless, largely because the Han and Gyalrongwa had different masters or administrators and had dissimilar languages and customs (and hence did not share much sociopolitical space in their daily lives), the two parties did not experience serious confrontations. That said, the local Gyalrongwa bore a grudge against the Han because their fertile land had been “stolen” by Han immigrants, and because the latter were also considered sly, dishonest, and therefore untrustworthy.¹⁹ According to local accounts, unless absolutely necessary, Han residents, including gangs, would not normally take the initiative to start a fight with local Gyalrongwa. If they did, a provocation often ended with the whole village, or other villages under the same magistrate or chieftain, taking collective revenge.

Native Gyalrong villagers took pride in this accord. They shared the conviction that they had a common magistrate or chieftain who would protect them against intruders. Thus, magistrates or chieftains had to prove that they were capable of defending the common interests of their subjects; otherwise, their status might be challenged by the subjects. As stated above, as far as people in Bajiao were concerned, Okzhi people were more daring and united simply because their chieftain had more authority and power and could therefore do more to safeguard local interests.

Soon after the start of the Bajiao uprising, many people from Gyalrong called for a Han-cleansing agenda through reignited memories of a “pure” Gyalrongwa state in the pre-Jinchuan campaigns period. They would randomly shoot at the Han, even their neighbors, on sight. Based on oral accounts, even Fu and Feng felt their own lives threatened by this escalating tension. Zöpa tried to act as mediator, but the situation was getting out of control. When the Han rallied together in retaliation as the Republican soldiers started to gain the upper hand and round up the rebels, the Han began to do exactly the same to the local Gyalrongwa.

If we were to regard this uprising exclusively as ethnically defined or divided, we would lose sight of a more intricate picture. A strong message was indeed conveyed through the slogans and publicized agendas calling for the Gyalrongwa to unite. However, the army of insurgents

treated all subversives and opponents as enemies to be eradicated regardless of their ethnicity. One source says that the expedition army killed over seventy Han and Gyalrongwa households in the Hedong Magistrature, Suijing. Over a thousand villagers had fled, only to find when they returned home after the rioters had left that most of their belongings had been looted (Zhang Xiaozhong 1993). However, it is undeniable that ethnic boundaries were still salient and clear-cut, which partly explains why the uprising ended so rapidly. The Han-cleansing slogan shows that many Gyalrongwa felt strong animosity toward the Han, a fact that obviously undermined the very foundations of the uprising started by Zöpa and his Han allies.

An Anti-Missionary Agenda

By 1917, Bajiao and Maogong Counties harbored a strong anti-missionary sentiment. Before the uprising, there had been no systematic missionary activities in Maogong, but the locals had heard exaggerated accounts of misdeeds by foreign explorers and/or missionaries. For example, it was widely believed among locals that foreigners came there to steal gold or treasure. As this treasure was usually “hidden” in a sacred mountain, foreign explorers would deprive the locals of their rare gemstones and their “good luck and prosperity,” such as great harvests and their well-being.²⁰ Such a message was often conveyed to the public through religious figures. A story I heard in Mupo recounted how a foreign passerby pretended to make friends with a distinguished *geshe* (a degree holder in the Gelugpa religious system) in order to solicit information regarding the treasure in the monastery and the region. This may not sound much different from the rumors or misgivings in Batang and elsewhere in Kham. There, anti-missionary activities became a common scene (see Deng 2006; Wang Xiao 2013). Nevertheless, the Bajiao case was quite unique. Although anti-foreigner sentiment had long existed in this region, it was not at first associated with the repercussions of missionary activities. Rather, this sentiment derived from locals’ memories of “evil” foreigners. Many of these relevant accounts, however, were empirically unfounded or distorted.

According to Qing official records, such as the *Veritable Records of the Great Qing in the Reign of Daoguang* (Daqing xuanzong chenghuangdi daoguang shilu), Magistrate Ashen was ordered by the Qing, in 1841, to send his militiamen to join the campaign against the British invasion of Ningbo, Zhejiang Province. Magistrate Ashen and his soldiers all died in an ambush laid by the British army on March 10, 1842. Ashen had been dispatched simply to fulfill his

obligations as court-appointed magistrate. However, according to the legend in Bajiao, Ashen went into battle mainly to avenge the act of sorcery committed by foreigners (British) while burying his predecessor, Druktar. As the first Bajiao magistrate, Druktar had been sent by the Qing to defend Tibet against the invading Gurkhas army at the end of the nineteenth century. His heroic act and military talents were said to have intimidated the foreigners to the extent that they resorted to “black magic” to remove the threat once and for all. According to the story,

Druktar died in Qinghai after the Tibet campaign. While his body was sent back to Bajiao, the foreigners forced the [Qing] officials to allow them to bury him without the locals’ interference. They chained his body to his tomb so that it hung in mid-air, touching neither the ground nor the ceiling, to prevent him [his body] from reaching either the earth or heaven. This course of action forestalled his resuscitation and the rise of his descendants to undermine their [foreigners’] “good cause” [invasions]. Even so, they were still worried about his possible resurrection, and so one night they came to empty the tomb and to remove the body without the locals’ knowledge. Later, Ashen was also killed by the British in battles in Ningbo. Since the [Bajiao] locals were outraged at the craftiness and cruelty of these foreigners, they would follow Zöpa’s call to oust the foreigners completely.... The revolt was doomed at the very outset because the foreigners’ behavior had transformed the flow of energy in Bajiao.²¹

This account is full of historical errors and inaccuracies. For instance, Druktar did not die in Qinghai. Nor was there corroborating evidence of any British revenge. On the whole, Bajiao locals tend to confuse the names and deeds of Ashen with those of Druktar. My informants debated among themselves as to whether it was the tomb of Ashen or Druktar that was emptied by the British. However, this confusion does nothing to dilute the Bajiao rebels’ anti-foreigner sentiment. More specifically, the sorcery was said to have been practiced by priests or missionaries with mystical powers “just like our lamas.” The foreigners, though, represented evil forces that would induce bad luck or even disasters, in contrast to “our” well-disposed and altruistic lamas.

The anxiety over foreign sorcery derived from a backlash against the increasing infiltration of assumed heresy from overseas. There was also a backlash against the total failure of the Qing, and the subsequent Republic, to protect local monasteries and communities from such encroachment. Therefore, by appropriating locals’ sentimental memories and images of “evil” foreigners and missionaries, Zöpa’s expedition army justified its burning of a church in Danba. However, based on the logic of the abovementioned account, foreigners’ misdeeds not

only were the cause of the rebels' attack but also served to bring down the uprising. For that reason, foreigners, especially missionaries, were considered inexcusable devils. Since Zöpa and his closest followers and allies were from Bajiao and Mupo Monasteries, this uprising was essentially religious. This means that a war against foreign cults was both sanctioned by local religious establishments and endorsed by most local populations.

Conclusion

Despite the somewhat messianic role played by Zöpa, it may seem implausible that this low-ranking monk was able to lead a revolt, or that this uprising could break out in the first place. The archives and ethnographic data I gathered are inadequate to fully address these questions. Nor do they provide a more comprehensive picture of the sociopolitical contexts of the local society. For instance, accounts about the three Han behind Zöpa (Liu, Feng, and Fu) are always too sketchy. It is not quite clear who they really were, why they went to Bajiao, how they convinced Zöpa to lead, and so on. There are even fewer records or anecdotes about Han participants in Zöpa's uprising, or about the role and deeds of local Han royalists.

Moreover, to some extent informed by Marxist-scientific notions, the locals I interviewed liked to say that the elder generations were so "dumb," "backward," and "superstitious" that even a flashlight would fool and convince them that Zöpa was the heaven-sent emperor. At the same time, many locals interpreted the defeat of the uprising as the result of the calculating Han's dirty tricks, which had duped Zöpa into the revolt in the beginning. Above all, Zöpa is remembered as no more than a figurehead. His personal experiences, as well as his concerns and interests, occupy little place in local accounts. Consequently, Zöpa is still an ambiguous, or nearly mysterious, figure in locals' oral accounts of the revolt. At the same time, both archival and ethnographic data provide only fragmentary or unverifiable data regarding how historical connections between Lhasa and local religious establishments played out in the revolt. Nor do the data indicate how other monasteries, chieftains, and the general Gyalrongwa actually responded to the revolt.

Such flaws in available data obscure the nature, purpose, agendas, tactics, internal politics, external forces, and broader implications of the revolt. Therefore, with only the available data to build on, this article is limited to contextualizing this uprising only in an inconclusive, and not

fully satisfactory, way. I argue, though, that these data do offer some promising clues for more substantial interpretations in the future.

The uprising was both local and extra-local. When considered from a broad perspective, it was deeply implicated in the repercussions of and backlashes against the Qing's downfall and the new Republican state's rise. To be specific, it was caught in the maelstrom of conflicts between revolutionaries and conservatives (including royalists). Simultaneously, the uprising was entangled not only in rivalries between central and local states and the "dog fights" between greater and lesser warlords, but also in the dynamic relations between heightened Chinese nationalism and aggravated foreign encroachment. Hence, the revolt was a localized exemplification of the macroscopic social landscape of China in its transition from the feudal Qing era to the Republic. More precisely, embedded in memories of the Jinchuan campaigns, as well as in the status quo of early twentieth-century Bajiao and Maogong, the Bajiao uprising was an incentive for its Gyalrong followers to pursue and advance ethnic and religious agendas to negotiate both micro- and macropolitics in which they were deeply entangled.

The locals at the time believed that, during the "golden age," "our chieftains" were able to keep the Qing at arm's length by paying ritualistic tribute to the court while maintaining their *de facto* sovereignty. Such yearning for, and memory of, the idealized past was so strong that Zöpa was able to use this situation to his own advantage. While amplifying the locals' sense of the humiliation and injustice inflicted on them by the Qing, Zöpa managed to promise hope that such suffering could end. Therefore, most local adherents were not really interested in restoring the Qing. Instead, they longed for the return of the "glorious past." For this endeavor, locals were convinced that Han immigrants and vicious foreigners, both of whom precipitated memories of locals' agony and mortification, should be removed from local political and social realms once and for all. In a word, locals' memories of the Jinchuan campaigns and subsequent pains and shames were instrumental in their support of the revolt. However, this may still be insufficient in explaining why the revolt was endorsed by the majority of the local Bajiao population.

The oral anecdotes and accounts I collected suggest that tensions between the (Bajiao) monastery and local ruler (magistrate) may have contributed to Zöpa's initial commitment to the revolt and to the locals' backing. According to my informants, especially Tsalha Ngawang, the present reincarnate lama of Bajiao Monastery, the magistrates of different times endeavored to contain the impact and growth of the monastery. As a result, the monastery had a grudge against

the interference of the Bajiao magistrate in its affairs. Therefore, to some extent, this revolt was the revenge of Zöpa and the monastery against the magistrate. Since locals would easily follow a call in the name of defending their religion, they helped Zöpa extradite Magistrate Mu Jiguang at the start of the revolt.

It is true that the field accounts I collected were quite confusing and even spurious, due in large part to forgotten or blurred details. After all, the revolt happened almost one hundred years ago. The inaccuracies are also inseparable from ideologically charged inculcations. For instance, my informants called the Kuomintang “the reactionary,” foreigners “foreign ghosts,” and the people’s worship of Zöpa “feudal beliefs.” Moreover, I realize that it was sometimes quite difficult, if not impossible, to discern informants’ own agendas in these accounts and to determine their actual sources. For instance, I sensed that a few informants’ accounts might have derived from some of the archived accounts of the revolt they had read or heard about.

Despite these problems, these oral narratives are valuable in offering new insights into the multifarious sides and layers of the revolt, including sources of ethnic tensions and anti-foreigner sentiment, that had been ignored in archives. The question then is: why were these aspects ignored in the archived accounts in the first place? The burning of the church by rebels is portrayed in official documents as a consequence of the missionaries’ avarice and extortions and, above all, a consequence of Western colonization. This standard official statement, which is to be found in almost all accounts of anti-missionary activities throughout the country, obscures or conceals the particularity of this uprising regarding the roots of locals’ anti-missionary sentiments. More noteworthy, ethnic conflicts before 1949 are largely defined by the party-state as a deliberate action of the “reactionary” Kuomintang and feudal lords in juxtaposition with the present so-called harmonious ethnic relations in China. Therefore, the locals’ accounts of the tensions between the Han and themselves would have been deliberately omitted by state-sent investigators.

I do not, though, intend to assert that all ignored aspects of the revolt were the result of political manipulation. As a matter of fact, such exclusions have much to do with the different perspectives and agendas of researchers. As a present-day anthropologist, I have cultivated more or less “standard” (many-sided and actor-oriented) perspectives on the research subject and on people’s concerns and interests. Therefore, while previous investigators and researchers were accustomed to a grand narrative approach, I attach much more importance to the divergent forces

and heterogeneous interests involved in the revolt. In so doing, I have been able to retrieve some of the accounts to which other researchers may not have attended.

In a nutshell, I argue that my ethnographic research, and the recounted local memories I collected, make up for some of the deficiencies of previous archival research. In so doing, this work offers an inquiry into the locals' own concerns and interests. It also investigates intricate and multifaceted particulars of the 1917 Bajiao revolt, including heterogeneity and divisions within Gyalrong, ethnic conflicts, and representations of foreigners and missionaries. By showing how written documents and oral histories constitute contending, but complementary, narratives about social transformations, this article demonstrates how archival research and ethnographic work can be integrated for a more nuanced and multidimensional understanding of a recent historical event.

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Glossary

In-Text Vocabulary

Chinese Characters

Tibetan Transliteration

Amu	阿穆	a dmu
Ashen	阿木鑲	a gshen
Bajiao	八角	bsod noms yag
Bajiao Monastery	八角喇嘛寺	seng ge bkra shis chos gling
Baoxian	保县	
Baoxing	宝兴	
Biesiman	别斯满	byes smad
Chinese Emperor		rgya nag gong ma
Choktsé	卓克基	cog tse
Chonghua	崇化	
Da Han	大汉	
Da Jinchuan	大金川	chu chen

Danba	丹巴	rong brag
Dang'an	档案	
Daqing xuanzong chenghuangdi	大清宣宗成皇帝 (道光) 实录	
Daoguang shilu	大清通治	
Daqing tongzhi	大清通治元年	
Daqing tongzhi yuannian		
Druktar	穆塔尔	'brug thar
Eighteen kingdoms of Gyalrong		rgyal rong rgyal khab bco brgyad
Shaguang hulu	杀光葫芦	
Feng Ziqing	冯子卿	
Fubian	抚边	
Fu Nanshan	傅南山	
Gaitu guiliu	改土归流	
Geshiza	革什杂	dge shis tsa
Pao ge	袍哥	
Hanniu	汗牛	hwa nyong
Hantun	汉屯	
Hedong	河东	li wer
Hexi	河西	spo gdong
Jin Zhangpeng	金张鹏	
Lixian	理县	rgyal kha
Luzhou	泸州	
Lü Guang	吕光	
Maogong	懋功	tsan lha
Miedahan, lidaqing	灭大汉, 立大清	
Mingzheng	明正	lcags la
Mu Jiguang	穆济光	
Mudo	墨尔多	dmu rdo
Muping	穆坪	mu phyi
Mupo	木坡	mi pham
Mupo Monastery	木坡喇嘛寺	byes smad mi pham dgon
Okzhi	沃日	'og gzhi
Rilong	日隆	bzhi lung
Shiquan wugong	十全武功	
Shoubei	守备	
Somang	梭磨	so mang
Suijing	绥靖	

Tenpa	党坝	bstan pa
Trokyap	绰斯甲	khro skyabs
Tsatö Zöpa	察都·若巴	tsha stod bzod pa
Tun	屯	
Tunbing	屯兵	
Tunmin	屯民	
Tusi	土司	rgyal po
Tutun	土屯	
Wang Dunmin	王遁民	
Wanren keng	万人坑	
Weizhou	维州	khri tshang
Xianzhiban	县志办	
Xiaojin/Xiao Jinchuan	小金 (川)	tsan lha
Xiaojin xianwei ban'gongshi	小金县委办公室	
Xiaolian	孝廉	
Xi Han	洗汉	
Xinan minzu xueyuan	西南民族学院	
Yang Quanzhong	杨全忠	
Yang Zhenyu	杨震宇	
Yuan Shikai	袁世凯	
Zagu nao	杂谷脑	brag sgam nang
Zailong	宅垄	gter mdal
Zhang Xiaodong	张晓东	
Zhao Erfeng	赵尔丰	
Zhengxie	政协	
Zhishi	知事	

Notes

- 1 In this article, the names of local places are usually spelled in Chinese (*pinyin*); their original Tibetan spellings can be found in the glossary. The reason for this is that Chinese transliterations have become the official administrative names of these places. They not only appear in Chinese-language archives and official documents, but are also currently used by the people of Gyalrong. As there are often multiple Chinese transliterations for a single Tibetan proper name, I chose the most common term as its “standard” spelling.
- 2 Gyalrong is situated on the southeastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau. This region used to be ruled by eighteen local chieftains or kings and is therefore often referred to as the “eighteen kingdoms of Gyalrong.” The Gyalrong region is not only inhabited by the Gyalrongwa (people from Gyalrong), but also by Tibetans from two other subgroups: Amdo and Khampa Tibetans. There are also populations of Qiangzu, Han, Hui, and

- others. The overall population of Gyalrongwa is about 300,000. A comprehensive study of Gyalrong history and culture can be found in works by Tsalha Ngawang and his collaborators (Btsan lha, rDorje, and Hongyin 2003; Zanla and Xiawa 2009), as well as by others (Quedan 1990; Li and Li 1995; Baiwan 2009).
- 3 Memory has been an increasingly popular topic in history, anthropology, and other disciplines since the 1980s, but especially in the last decade. One of the fundamental lines of inquiry focuses on the politics of memory, which involve dynamic interactions between memory and history, and between the present and the past. More specifically, this kind of inquiry addresses the use of memory and history for ideological and political agendas, and for identity reconstruction (see, for instance, Halbwachs 1980; Roth 1995; Fabian 1996; Nora and Kritzman 1996; Samuel 2012). In the fields of Chinese and Tibetan studies, an extensive scholarship contributes to the study of memories of revolutions and trauma since the late Qing period. Much of this research focuses on political turmoil during the socialist era and post-Mao period nostalgia for a great and “uncontaminated” (by modernity) past (e.g., Jing 1996; Litzinger 1998; Mueggler 2001; McGranahan 2010; and Hershatter 2011, among others).
- 4 Zhao Erfeng’s reform, as part of the late Qing policy regarding the Tibetan borderlands, is thoroughly discussed by Wang Xiuyu (2011), among others.
- 5 The political role of Yuan Shikai in late imperial China and during the early Republican era has been discussed thoroughly in academia, including by Stephen R. MacKinnon (1980), John K. Fairbank (1980, 1983), and Zhang Xianwen (2005).
- 6 For instance, the restoration activities (1915–1917) by Lü Guang, a self-proclaimed prince of the Qing, were ratified or sponsored by many nobles and monks of Mongolian, Tibetan, and other ethnicities in Qinghai and Gansu (Zhou 1993).
- 7 Zhang’s royalist army was soon defeated by Republican troops. This farce only lasted about ten days, after which Zhang had to take refuge at the Dutch legation. Xu Zhiyan (2007) and Zhang Ming (2014), among others, have studied this incident.
- 8 By opposing the Qing’s agenda to nationalize local railway projects and transfer construction rights to foreign banks, this movement appealed to a large number of participants from all walks of life in Sichuan and other provinces. It further undermined the already shaky foundation of the Qing. However, I would like to point out that the massacre of the Hui civilians should be understood within a more complex and broader sociopolitical and ethnic context. As David G. Atwill (2005) points out, often with the Qing court and local officials’ collusion and tolerance, violence against the Hui, including massacre predominantly by Han perpetrators, has not been unusual in southwest China since the late Qing period. Such violence normally arose with the influx of Han settlers in these border regions, where the Hui dominated the same occupations (trade, agriculture, and mining) that the Han sought (Atwill 2005, 6).
- 9 *Zhishi* is the official title for the head of the Han magistrature, and hence it essentially means “magistrate.” However, to avoid confusion, the term “magistrate” is reserved specifically for *shoubei*, the native (Gyalrong) head of the magistrature.
- 10 This couplet, as well as the edict below it, is seen in Zhang Liming (1988).
- 11 Based on an interview with Tsalha Ngawang, aged eighty-five, in Maerkang on February 28, 2015. A similar account is found in Jiamuyang (2009, 386).

- 12 “Gourd-head” refers to Catholic converts, as their heads were said (mostly imagined) to
have been shaved to resemble a gourd.
- 13 This estimation is based on historical accounts and various interviews.
- 14 The ferocity of these battles can be verified by taking a look at the Qing’s colossal
expenses. The two campaigns cost the Qing about 100 million taels of silver, which
constituted two-thirds of the overall expenditure on the so-called “Ten Great Campaigns”
(*shiquan wugong*) by Qianlong (Peng 2004). They probably became the most expensive
wars that took place on imperial territory in Qing history.
- 15 The extensive research that has been carried out on the two campaigns usually focuses on
the reason why they occurred, their repercussions in the form of local political and social
change, and the Qing’s policy adjustments toward its borderlands and chieftains (see, for
instance, Martin 1990; Greatrex 1994; Peng 2004, 2007; Karmay 2005; Qi and Wang
2008; Xu Fayan 2011, 2012; Ryosuke 2014). Some works have focused on more specific
aspects of these campaigns, e.g., military labor (Dai Yingcong 2001), underlying cultural
politics (Waley-Cohen 2006), and logistics and finances (Theobald 2013).
- 16 This was based on an interview with Yang Zonggui, aged seventy-five, in Mupo on
February 7, 2015. I have personally heard a similar story several times in Dao Jinchuan
and Xiao Jinchuan.
- 17 Bajiao’s first magistrate, Druktar, a Gyalrong noble from today’s Lixian, was relocated
by the Qing.
- 18 It is said that there were a few Manchu and Mongol “soldiers of magistrature” as well,
but I have not yet seen any direct sources confirming this claim.
- 19 The local Hui residents (some two hundred households with a population of about one
thousand by the first decade of the twentieth century) were generally believed to be
cunning and even more unreliable compared to the Han, largely due to Gyalrong natives’
disapproval of Islamic practices. The Hui did not, however, become a direct target of the
uprising, since they were not considered to have contributed significantly to Gyalrong
locals’ suffering.
- 20 It is a widespread belief in Gyalrong and other Tibetan cultural regions that a holy
mountain is normally rich in various types of gemstones and (other) treasure as they are
considered to embody and generate sacred power. Such treasures are “hidden” in the deep
mountain in the sense that they are not easily accessible to people. If such treasures are
stolen or taken away, this is believed to affect the well-being of the local society. For
instance, in a religious text presumably written in the eighteenth century—*Gyalrong’s
Holy Land—Mt. Mudo* (Tib. rgyal mo rong gi gnas chen dmu rdo) (Danba County
Political Consultative Conference 1992)—we can see the direct connection between the
sacredness of this most holy mountain in Gyalrong, or the power of its mountain deity,
and the abundance of its rare treasure.
- 21 Collected in Bajiao, Xiaojin on February 6, 2015, this story was collectively told by four
major informants: Yang Bokang, Zheng Yonghe, Zhong Yuquan, and Dong Kewu. In
native beliefs, a person’s well-being is inseparable from their *rlung*, or “flow of energy.”
If the regular flow of energy is interrupted through human intervention, this produces
negative impacts on climate, harvest, health, social relations, and every other aspect of
individual and/or collective lives in the local society.

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