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Liu Manqing: A Sino-Tibetan Adventurer and the Origin of a New Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the 1930s

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The young lady who departed from Nanjing to Lhasa in 1929 against the will of her family and who endured the hardship of a year's travel through the gorges of Khams and the snowy mountain peaks of Tibet is known by her Chinese name: Liu Manqing (1906-1941). A few decades ago, parents used to tell their children her story, and Liu Manqing's name is still on their minds many years later. Many contradictory accounts about Liu Manqing's personal life are still told, making her life a story, if not an epic, then at least an extraordinary legend.

In 1929, Liu Manqing was 23 years old. In China, the government of Nanjing, with Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) at its head, has just been founded. The era of the warlords was finished, at least in theory, and the Republican government was ready to implement its ideas about the unification of the five nationalities (Han, Manchus, Tibetans, Mongols and Muslim Turks). In Tibet, the 13th Dalai-lama (1876-1933), the spiritual and temporal head of the Tibetan government since 1895, had closed his country to foreigners including British and Chinese since the failure of his national reforms at the end of the 1920s.² In a context of the *status quo* between China and Tibet, the Sino-Tibetan margins (the Tibetan province of Khams, Eastern Tibet or the future Xikang province of China: Western China) can be considered a link, or transitional zone between the two countries and their cultures thanks to its geographic position and to its people, educated in Chinese and able to understand both cultures and both languages. The Chinese who wanted to study Tibetan religion or to travel in Tibet had understood this point well. By their travel and their dialogue with Tibetan people they were able to construct a politics of communication between Khams, Central Tibet and China proper and so between Tibet and China. The wish to renew a new dialogue came also from Tibetans. When Liu Manqing went to Lhasa, members of the Khams pa elite also went to

¹ This paper has been presented at the Xth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, St Hugh's College, University of Oxford, 6-12 September 2003. I would like to thank the Tibetans I met in Oxford who knew stories about Liu Manqing, Peng Wenbin and Peter Zarrow for their insightful comments.

² A Chinese mission came to Tibet in 1919, followed by a British one led by Charles Bell in 1920. In 1919, the Chinese government ordered the Gansu province government to send representatives to Tibet to meet the 13th Dalai-lama and the 9th Panchen-lama in order to reinforce the Chinese influence in the Tibetan capital. This mission arrived in Lhasa on 24 November 1919, and stayed there more than five months. Spencer Chapman, *Lhasa, the Holy city*. London: Readers Union Ltd. 1940. p. 2 ; Huang Yusheng, *Xizang difang yu zhongyang zhengfu guanxi shi*. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 1995, p. 226.

Nanjing searching for the Chinese government's support, as well as the Tibetans from Central Tibet who disagreed with the policies of the 13th Dalai-lama.³ Many people were then on the move, building up dynamic and negotiative features of Sino-Tibetan relations.

Liu Manqing was of Chinese nationality, although she was born in Lhasa (of a Chinese father and a Tibetan mother), and she lived in Nanjing as part of the Khams pa community there. She symbolizes the young half-Tibetan, half-Chinese generation that was able to handle the question of the China-Tibet relationship in a more objective and constructive manner. As such, Liu had to manage her beliefs in Chinese policies towards Tibet and her wishes to help Tibet as well. We will see that her first trip to Tibet revealed a kind of Chinese as well as Tibetan nationalism.

Liu's trip was considered an extraordinary one at the time: she was a young lady who left Nanjing, the Chinese capital, to go to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, with a Tibetan man as an escort. She was the first foreign lady ever to be received by the 13th Dalai-lama, not only once but twice during her first trip in 1930.⁴ Her heroic travels were noticed among her Chinese contemporaries in Republican China, and later among scholars from the People Republic of China and Western countries. No written Tibetan testimony seems available today, but Liu is remembered as a heroine by the Tibetan people. Peng Wenbin wrote: "the story of Liu Manqing can be studied in many ways and might become many stories and a few publications."⁵ This paper will focus on the politics of travel, *i.e.*, the role of Liu Manqing in Sino-Tibetan relations and the significance of her mission as part of a revival of a Tibetan international policy. Neither the literary value of her account, nor questions of identity or gender will be analyzed in this paper. Liu Manqing's own writings will be our main source to analyze her motives (the nationalism question) as well as her travel activities (the heroine legend).

Liu Manqing wrote three books. Two were related to Tibet while the third dealt with education in the Chinese borderlands. Travel accounts were fashionable at the beginning of the twentieth century and book titles had to be original to attract readers. The fashion came from the review *New Asia* (*Xinyaxiya*). In its third volume, editorial commentary called upon readers to transform their view of the peripheries from the cliché imaginary of desolation to an appreciation of their 'limitless mysteries' and 'inexhaustible treasures'. It called for photographs of the landscapes and peoples of those regions, so that readers could become more familiar to them.⁶ And we could

³ For example the case of the 9th Panchen-lama (1883-1937) who left Tibet to China in 1923. Cf. F. Jagou, *Le 9e Panchen Lama (1883-1937) Enjeu des relations sino-tibétaines*. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004.

⁴ Others women travelers went to Tibet during the first half of the twentieth century: Liu Manqing met the well-known Belgian traveler, Alexandra David-Néel, who went to the Tibetan provinces of Amdo and Khams at the very beginning of the century. Other women traveled to Khams included the American Anne R. Taylor at the end of the nineteenth century and the Chinese Feng Yunxian, who traveled to Khams in the 1930s. All of them failed to reach Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. Others ladies might have traveled in these Tibetan areas that we still do not know about.

⁵ Personal communication.

⁶ P. Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity. Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p. 199.

really speak of a frontier travel literature related to the northwest and southwest.⁷ Liu Manqing's travel diary, *Expedition in a Carriage to Xikang and Tibet (Kang Zang yaozheng)*, met the conditions for success. Its title was original but misleading since she actually traveled by foot.⁸ Indeed, she had to find a way to show that her journey was overland through Khams and not through India.⁹ This travel account is divided into two parts. The first describes her travels to Tibet *via* the Chinese province of Sichuan in 1929-1930. It is divided into sixty-two chapters that recount chronologically as well as by subject the steps of her journey. She writes about the difficulties of travel while describing what she saw and heard. The second part, a supplement or addendum (*xuji*), narrates her last trip to Tibet *via* the Chinese province of Yunnan in 1938. This part is far shorter with only nine chapters. Her aim was to describe another route to Tibet.¹⁰ Finally, she gives her opinion on the conduct of Chinese officers on the Sino-Tibetan borders, criticizing their lack of respect for the doctrine of Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925). Both parts end with details of her itineraries and information about the length of the legs of her journeys.

As a consequence, the book met with success, had gone through three editions in China by 1938, and was translated into Tibetan, Mongol, Japanese, English, Hindi and Latin during the Republican period.¹¹ More recently, it has been republished in Japan in 1986, in Taiwan in 1987 and in China in 1998.¹²

Tibet (Xizang), Liu's second book (1934), is a rather short (sixty pages) introduction to Tibetan culture. Its fourteen chapters address subjects such as geography, the real situation of Tibet, nomadic life, cuisine habits, dresses, weddings, and so forth. It does not refer to the author's own travel experience at all.

Her last publication was very different from the first two. *Education in the Chinese Border Areas (Bianjiang jiaoyu)*, published in 1937, marks the political and social influences Liu Manqing experienced after her Tibetan sojourns and her involvement in Tibetan policy discussions.

A young lady's courage

No doubt the trip that Liu Manqing made from Nanjing to Lhasa *via* Dar tse mdo from 15 July 1929 (the date of her departure from Nanjing) to 3

⁷ See for example, Peng Wenbin, "Allegorizing the Local on the Borderland: Ai Wu's *Nanxingji* and National Subjectivity." *Inner Asia*, vol.4, n°1, 2002, special issue: *Traveling cultures and histories: nation-building and frontier politics in Twentieth Century China*.

⁸ Printed by Wang Yunwu and He Bingsong in Shanghai in 1938 (3rd edition).

⁹ As Duara writes, "Indeed, to travel from China to Yunnan, it was best to take a boat to Vietnam and cross back into Yunnan on the French railroad; to travel to Xinjiang one had best take the trans-Siberian railroad and go through Soviet territory; Tibet was most accessible *via* India; and so on." *op. cit.*, p. 188-189.

¹⁰ Foreword of *Kang Zang yaozheng xuji*, p. 141.

¹¹ Huang Jingwan, foreword to *Kang Zang yaozheng*. The Japanese version is available: *Xikang Xizang ta cha ji*, Tokyo: Gaizao she, 1939.

¹² *Josei tensi chibetto wo iku*. Tokyo: Baishuishe, 1986; *Kang Zang yaozheng*, Taipei: Nantian (Yazhou minzu kaogu congkan), 1987; *Guomin zhengfu nu mi shi fu Zang jishi*, Peking: Minzu chubanshe (Minguo bianjiang youji xindu congshu), 1998.

February 1930 (the date of her arrival at Lhasa) was harsh.¹³ But her determination was high and her ability to speak Tibetan was an important advantage in the process which allowed her to think about a mission to Tibet. However, this process is quite hard to detail; there are a lot of blanks in the biographical accounts at our disposal. Most of the accounts were included in Liu's own diary or were based on it by her prefacers (Rtse dbyangs sgrol dkar, alias Jiang Weixin, and Huang Jingwan). In Chinese travel accounts, travelers most often revealed less of their personal information and travel agendas; that kind of information was considered trivial compared with such topics as encountering important persons or spectacular scenery.¹⁴

Liu Manqing's first act of heroism was to convince Chiang Kai-shek, then President of the Republic of China, to be allowed to go to Tibet. Our first tentative assessment concerns the way Liu Manqing became the interpreter of Blo bzang Pa sangs, then the abbot of one of the Wutai Shan monasteries in the Chinese province of Shanxi and envoy of the 13th Dalai-lama to the new Chinese Republican government in 1929.¹⁵ We know little about either the meeting or the Abbot's mission. But Chiang Kai-shek was very impressed by Liu's interpreting work, and he offered her a job in the government as a reward.¹⁶ Liu Manqing could have been satisfied with her fate. But, a few months later, she asked her director Gu Yingfen to allow her to go to Tibet in order to examine the situation there. With Gu's encouragement, to support her request to the government she wrote that she wanted to thank the Republican government for giving her a job and wished to see her native place again. These motives may have seemed sufficient to the Chinese government, as officials agreed and nominated Khang ltag rgyal mtshan (chin.: Kongdang Jiangcheng), a secretary of the second degree, to accompany her to Tibet. Presumably the Republican government was not so much interested in Liu's feelings as in the chance to acquire some Tibetan-speakers to give them more solid information about conditions in Tibet. Yet both Liu Manqing's initiative and the government's consent seem unexpected. Nothing had prepared Liu Manqing to become either a member of the Chinese government or an envoy of the Chinese Republican government to Tibet.

Yudhona, to give Liu her Tibetan name, was born in Lhasa in 1906 to a Tibetan mother and a Chinese (*Han*) father. Her father seems to have been a member of the Manchu *yamen* in Lhasa.¹⁷ She and her family left Tibet for Darjeeling in Sikkim when the Chinese were ordered to leave Tibet before the 13th Dalai-lama returned there from British India in 1912. Her parents

¹³ On the return trip, she went back to Nanjing *via* India and arrived in the Chinese capital on 7 August 1930.

¹⁴ Peng Wenbin, personal communication.

¹⁵ Liu Manqing, p. 1; Huang Yusheng comp., *op. cit.*, p. 230.

¹⁶ She became a secretary of the first degree at the civil office of the State Council (*xingzheng yuan wen guan chu yi deng shujiguan*). In practice, this was a low position.

¹⁷ Xirao Nima, *Guomin zhengfu nu mi shi fu Zang jishi*, Peking: Minzu chubanshe (Minguo bianjiang youji xindu congshu), 1998, introduction, p. 6: Liu Huaxuan, Liu Manqing's father, was the secretary to the Manchu commissioner in Tibet. The British thought she was the daughter of Lian Yu, the Manchu commissioner in Tibet from 1906 to 1912, begotten with his Tibetan wife; cf. IOR/L/PS/10/1088, file 1792/1930, telegram of Lieutenant-Colonel C.T. Daukes to the Foreign Secretary, 19/2/1930.

opened a shop in Darjeeling. Six years later in 1918 Liu, then twelve years old, and her family left Darjeeling for Peking. She entered a Chinese primary school (*Beiping shili di yi xiaoxue dushu*), and, according to one of her biographers, her ability was so high that while she only spoke Tibetan when she joined the school, she became fluent in Chinese in six months. She then got a diploma from a women's normal school (*Tongzhou nuzi shifan xuexiao*). Her studies could have stopped there because her father decided she should be married. She obeyed him, but then divorced and renewed her studies. She entered a medical school (Daoji Hospital) to study nursing, because, according to her biographer, she wanted to be useful to the Tibetan people.¹⁸ Liu gives no details about Tibetan medicine in her account. Actually, the emphasis on her medical schooling may have been added later to embellish Liu's own story and her willingness to go to Tibet.

The Khams pa connection

As a first hypothesis, we can argue that Liu Manqing's family helped her to become well known in China's Tibetan community. The only detail about her maternal side we get is about her grandmother whom Liu met in She'erpo near Dar rtse mdo. Liu describes her grandmother as very poor, and obviously very surprised and happy at meeting her granddaughter for the first time. The detail is important because it means that Liu Manqing was a Khams pa on her mother's side, and in all likelihood this was important for her integration into the Nanjing Khams pa community.¹⁹

As a matter of fact, many Tibetans who received an education in Chinese as well as in Tibetan circulated in the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission sphere of influence; most of them came from 'Ba' thang. Liu Manqing does not mention them much, referring to only one of them: Skal bzang tshe ring (chin.: Gesang Zeren or Wang Tianhua, 1899-1941). Skal bzang tshe ring is a representative example of the Tibetan youth of the time. From 'Ba' thang, he confronted the Tibetan and Chinese struggle over the region and its impact on the area's development. He also benefited from the opening of an American missionary school and eventually became an important member of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission. As he himself wrote, he was the first Tibetan to join the Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*) and to be a delegate on behalf of Tibet or Xikang in the Republican government's third to the sixth plenary sessions. Skal bzang tshe ring attended both the public school established by Zhao Erfeng and also the missionary-run West China Primary School (*huaxi xuexiao*). Liu Manqing became very interested in the experience of the American missionary school in the district of 'Ba' thang. She praised Dr. Shelton who first rented a piece of land and began to construct a hospital, a school and a church in the town. According to Liu, Dr. Shelton's 'Ba' thang school taught both Chinese and Tibetan, thus producing a Tibetan elite.²⁰

¹⁸ Actually, the teaching of nursing began in China in the 1930s, therefore it is quite difficult to determine whether Liu Manqing was a nurse.

¹⁹ We know little about her father. His name was Liu Huaxuan or Liu Rongguang, and his nickname was Zang.

²⁰ Liu Manqing, p. 44-45.

In any case, because of “some incompatibilities,” Skal bzang tshe ring left for Yunnan before being admitted into the Xikang Officers Training Institute.²¹ Like Liu Manqing after him, he was noticed by the Chinese government when he served as an interpreter during a Sino-Tibetan meeting in Nanjing and because he was very close with the 9th Panchen-lama.²² Dai Jitao, president of the Examination Yuan and close adviser to Chiang Kai-shek, was interested in frontier affairs and Tibetan Buddhism and recommended him to the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, which appointed him as Commissioner and head of the Tibetan Affairs Division in 1927. He held that post when Liu Manqing left for Tibet in July 1929. Skal bzang tshe ring’s political career became increasingly important in the Nationalist Party and his movement for the independence of Khams is well-known.²³ His political involvement could have helped Liu Manqing when she returned to Nanjing in August 1930 and became an important member of the China Tibetan community and a specialist on frontier affairs for the Chinese government.²⁴

However, Liu Manqing did at least first mention Skal bzang tshe ring’s leading role in the Khams pa community of Nanjing. She noticed that forty to fifty Tibetans from Khams province came to study in Nanjing following Skal bzang tshe ring’s example. The supplement to her book, written in 1938, gives details about the nomination of Skal bzang tshe ring as chief of the Nationalist Party branch of Xikang (*Xikang sheng dang bu*) and his propaganda work as a member of the Xikang government. She praises his work as a propaganda agent on the border, giving evidence of the welcome he received from local chiefs.²⁵ Liu Manqing and Skal bzang tshe ring did in fact work together. Liu Manqing conducted many propaganda projects after her return from Tibet. Indeed, it seems that the aftermath of her trip was much more important than the trip itself regarding her commitment to the policies of the Chinese government toward Xikang province.

Upon her return to China, Liu Manqing became the founder of and an activist in many new Tibetan or border associations.²⁶ From a practical point

²¹ Skal bzang tshe ring wrote that he ran away to Yunnan without giving any explanation. Actually after he qualified from the West China Primary School, he entered a business school which did not suit him. That is why he left for Yunnan. Gesang Zeren, “Bian ren chu yan (Humble Speeches of a Frontier Person)”. In Shen Yunlong, ed. *Jindai Zhongguo Shiliao congkan Xubian (Supplements to the Series of Historical Date of Modern China)*. N°11 (reprint). Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe (The Culture Sea Publishing House), 1974, p. 3; Ren Yimin, *Sichuan jin xian dai renwu zhuan*. Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan, 1985, p. 295.

²² When Gongdeng tashi, representative of the 9th Panchen-lama, was on a mission to Nanjing through Khams in 1926, Skal bzang tshe ring served as his interpreter and accompanied him to the capital. Cf. Gesang Zeren, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²³ Gesang Zeren, *op. cit.*; Peng Wenbin, “Frontier Process, Provincial Politics and Movements for Khampa Autonomy During the Republican Period”. In L. Epstein, ed. *Khams pa Histories. Visions of People, Place and Authority*. Leiden: Brill, 2002, p. 64.

²⁴ It is hard to determine the nature of the relationship between Skal bzang tshe ring and Liu Manqing. According to informants, Liu Manqing and Skal bzang tshe ring were married first but as they could not get a child, then Skal bzang tshe ring married Liu Manyun who gave birth to two children. Some sources mention that they were married after she joined the Chinese government, Ren Yimin, *op. cit.* p. 296.

²⁵ Liu Manqing, p. 155.

²⁶ In 1931, she and a group of scholars and officials founded the Association of the Border Areas of China (*Zhongguo bianjiang xuehui*). On 7 October 1931, she created the Nanjing

of view, the members of these associations acted as investigators for the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission. They were also propaganda agents. We have two detailed examples of Liu Manqing's actions at this time.

The first was her attempt to go to Lhasa again. In May 1932, Liu left Nanjing by way of Hong Kong. She wanted to go to Tibet to comfort the Tibetan people and to inform them about the resistance of the Chinese Republican government against the Japanese. At this time, the 'Ba' thang uprisings had just begun and the roads were closed and unsecured. The fighting between the army of Central Tibet and Skal bzang tshe ring lasted three months from mid-April to mid-July 1932, and Liu Manqing was there at the moment. We do not know how much Liu Manqing was involved in the 'Ba' thang uprising, but I doubt her presence there was an accident. In any case, she found a way to transmit a letter from the Chinese government and gifts to the 13th Dalai-lama. And when a report entitled "Report on the administration of all Tibet" (*Gao quan Zang guanmin shu*) from the 13th Dalai-lama to the Republican government just arrived in Nanjing, she received a personal letter from the Tibetan leader regretting she was not able to come to Lhasa at this time:

"Last time you came to Lhasa from far enduring hardship to praise for the cordial Sino-Tibetan relationship. I praise you for having often helped Tibet after returning to Nanjing. Unfortunately this time, I sincerely regret that fighting broke out in Khams. But, I think you understand the reasons of this conflict and that as soon as you will go back to Nanjing you will make a report to the government. Your wish to come to Lhasa has been impeded by the fighting but I hope you will be able to come again in a time of peace. I especially appointed Paizhang Dingceng to communicate with you, he is trustworthy and you can give him all the letters and things you would like him to bring back to Tibet."²⁷

The third attempt of Liu Manqing to go to Lhasa was related to "the team of Khams pas, representatives of Chiang Kai-shek, giving comfort to the front lines (*Xikang minzhong weilao qian xian Jiang shi daibiao tuan*)." The members of this team first tried to collect donations from Tibetans living in China. They went to Chongqing where their propaganda job must have been successful because they received many donations (especially gold or silver jewels) from Tibetans living in Sichuan.²⁸ Then they decided to go to Tibet to

Khams pas and Tibetan Compatriots Association for Resistance to the Japanese and National Salvation (*Kang Zang lu Jing tongxiang kang Ri jiu guo hui*). She also took part in the fourth popular assembly. In 1932, she represented Tibet at the Assembly of Reconstruction. Further studies will be done to analyze the identity of these groups and to determine if they were Guomindang or independent groups. She and Blo bzang rgyal mtshan, the representative of the 9th Panchen-lama in Nanjing, worked out a "project to improve Tibetan and Mongolian education, religion, political and military affairs in order to resist to the Japanese." In November 1937, Liu Manqing founded and became the president of the "propaganda team of Khams pas and Tibetans dedicated to the resistance against enemies *Kang Zang minzhong kangdi fu nan xuanchuan tuan*." In the summer of 1938, Liu Manqing and Khams pas like Skal bzang tshe ring, founded a new group, "The Team of Khams pas, Representative of Chiang Kai-shek, Giving Comfort to the Front Lines *Xikang minzhong weilao qian xian Jiang shi daibiao tuan*."

²⁷ Xirao Nima, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

²⁸ Gezang Zeren, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

collect other donations. In October 1938, two teams went to Tibet.²⁹ Their propaganda work was divided into three stages: first, to question the people; second, to give gifts; and third, to explain the policy of resistance against Japan first to the regent Rwa sgreng (Reting, regent from 1934 to 1941), the officials and the aristocrats, then to the clergy, and finally to the commoners. They made speeches in mosques (Liu Manqing was Muslim)³⁰ and in primary schools. They showed propaganda films three times: in the palace of Reting, in the house of Tsha rong (1886-1959), and in the residence of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission agents in Lhasa. The result of this mission is quite hard to know; apparently Liu was given no encouragement by the Tibetan government.

However, Liu's main achievement was her book, which was a 268-page report about *Education in the Border Areas*. This report, containing twenty-one chapters in three parts, includes theories about education, a statement about education in the border areas of China (Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, Chahar, Suiyuan, Mongolia, Khams and Central Tibet, and Xinjiang) and a reform project to improve education. We do not know whether the government actually used this report. At the time, the Chinese Republic was coming under full-blown Japanese attack and was about to retreat to the southwest.

Liu Manqing's audiences with the 13th Dalai-lama

Liu Manqing's stay in Lhasa gives some indication about the purposes of her trip and her goals for Sino-Tibetan relationships. While her behavior suggests that her aim was to show that she was received by the aristocratic and official segments of Tibetan society, her writings tends to embellish her role as a political envoy of the Chinese government. Her observations about the Tibetan political situation in 1930 are superficial or entirely lacking. Apparently, Liu did not notice that Tibet had just undergone a political and religious crisis. She does not refer at all to the 13th Dalai-lama's proclamation of the independence of Tibet in 1912, or to his efforts to raise an army. She also fails to mention the opposition of the religious segment of Tibetan society to the founding of the army because its members were becoming too powerful. Religious elements opposed military reform so violently that members of the Tibetan government (Tsha rong, commander in chief of the army, minister and director of finance, for example) were degraded and the 13th Dalai-lama gave up his reform project. As a matter of fact, when Liu Manqing arrived in Lhasa, the policies of the 13th Dalai-lama had become oriented toward the preservation of the traditional Tibetan Buddhist polity, and he had abandoned attempts to give Tibet a place between the two powerful countries of China and the British Imperial India.

Arriving in Lhasa on 3 February 1930, Liu Manqing was welcomed by priests and Tsha rong, the now ex-chief commander of the Tibetan army, ex-

²⁹ The first team, composed of four members (Xiao Pinzhang, Li Jianhou, Rang Zhuo, and Guo Xiangqiu) left Nanjing on 28 November 1938. They went to Lhasa through Yunnan and arrived there in January 1939. The second team, headed by Liu Manqing and Zhu Ma went through Burma and India and arrived in Lhasa on 2 February 1939. Both teams stayed there six months, until 7 June 1939. Cf. Xirao Nima, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

³⁰ Li Tieh-tseng, *Tibet, Today and Yesterday*. New York: Bookman associates, 1960, p. 161.

minister and ex-director of finance, a man who still had much influence in Lhasa. Tsha rong became her adviser during her stay there. He taught her Tibetan customs (for example, she learnt how to do traditional religious prostrations with him but finally renounced its performance in front of the dalai-lama) and rules (*e.g.*, that Tibetan aristocrats would not speak to her before she met the dalai-lama, and how to present a petition to the dalai-lama). She waited almost two months before meeting the dalai-lama. During this time she went to the Mosque to listen to teachings, concluding that the dalai-lama was still tolerant toward foreign religion, and then went to her father's Lhasa house. Liu also noticed that at the time the Tibetans were hostile to a British presence in Lhasa and concerned about the activities of Wangfel Laden La (Liandian in Chinese, 1876-1937), a Sikkimese agent for the British in Lhasa. Waiting for the 13th Dalai-lama's answer, she describes the administrative structure of the Tibetan government, the festivities for the New Year (5 March) and especially the military parade. Finally, Liu Manqing met the 13th Dalai-lama twice on 28 March and 25 May 1930.

Liu Manqing transcribed her interview with the 13th Dalai-lama in a way that embellished the aim of her mission to Tibet and her own responsibilities. We will first give the content of these interviews and then analyze them to determine if Liu's trip was an official mission and if the Chinese government had given her the responsibility to negotiate on its behalf.

On 28 March 1930, during her first interview with the dalai-lama, the Tibetan leader was surprised to learn that they could communicate without the help of an interpreter and asked her several times if she could converse in Tibetan. Their exchange was rather informal: the dalai-lama asked about her stay and accommodations in Lhasa and her family. They also discussed her education, and the dalai-lama questioned Liu about education in China, wanting to know if many Tibetans got into Chinese schools. For her part, Liu informed the dalai-lama about the creation of the new Republican government in Nanjing, emphasizing that government policy followed the Three Principles of the People of Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Chinese Revolution of 1911, and the pacific coexistence of the five nationalities.³¹

On 25 May 1930, Liu Manqing went again to Nor bu gling kha, the summer palace of the dalai-lama, to say farewell to the dalai-lama and wanting him to determine the date of her departure from Lhasa. Apparently this time, the 13th Dalai-lama had greater confidence in Liu and gave her the responsibility of transmitting an oral message to Chiang Kai-shek.³² It appears that the 13th Dalai-lama freely gave Liu his opinion on various important matters of Tibetan politics. He began by claiming that the relationship between China and Tibet had been deadlocked until Liu's trip. He told her that he had been pleased to see that China wanted to renew good relations with Tibet by nominating Liu as an envoy to convey the salutations of the new Chinese government. The dalai-lama also showed that he was aware of the Chinese situation and said he prayed everyday for peace in China. Then, he made some requests on various subjects. First, he hoped that the Chinese government would appoint an official to negotiate with the Khams pas because he was afraid of the reactions of the Tibetan

³¹ Liu Manqing, p. 44-47.

³² In Tibet, oral messages are more important than written ones.

armies based on the border if China sent soldiers. Second, he vowed that Tibet could restore good relationships with Nepal without the interference of China. Third, he expressed his anxiety about the 9th Panchen-lama's peregrinations in Mongolia. Fourth, he felt threatened by the British occupation of India. Fifth, he asked China to send an other representative to explain its policies to the Tibetan people as Liu Manqing had to go back to China. Finally, the 13th Dalai-lama promised to choose both a representative with full authority to negotiate with China and young Tibetans to go to China and study there.³³ He also asked that China send to Tibet craftsman with tools such as looms for weaving cloth.³⁴

Do these political difficulties exposed by the Tibetan leader also emerge in the observations made by Liu during her stay in Lhasa? Between her two audiences, Liu met high officials of the Tibetan government. She met two men who were at the peak of their power: Lung shar (1880-1938) and Tsha rong, who were then favorites of the 13th Dalai-lama and had once held high positions in the Tibetan government. There were rivalries between them. Lung shar precipitated the end of Tsha rong's career and became commander-in-chief of the Tibetan army in his place. Kun 'phel lags, the third favorite of the 13th Dalai-lama also benefited from the destruction of Tsha rong. He became sole director of the mint, paper currency and ammunitions factory Grwa bzhi las khungs (from 1925 to 1927 Tsha rong and Kun 'phe lags had headed it). Nonetheless, Tsha rong remained a man with much influence in Lhasa. Liu Manqing did not meet Kun 'phe lags. In fact, she made no observations of any political significance, although she took many pictures of the members of the government she met. She did have insights into which Tibetan officers were pro-British or pro-Chinese, as it was usual at the time to categorize people as soon as the question of Tibet was raised. She noticed that while Tsha rong had adopted the English style of furniture, food, and tea, his relations with Laden la were not good.³⁵ Liu was astonished at having Lung shar receive her dressed in Manchu robes and with the old Manchu manners.³⁶ This contrasts with the British view, which expected that Lung shar would be pro-British because of his travels in England and Europe;³⁷ in fact, his political opinions were more complicated and he became the founder of the Tibetan Republican party.

³³ On the orders of the 13th Dalai-lama, the ministers submitted the names of seven monks and seven laymen officers for selection to be deputed to China. Ultimately, however, the idea to dispatch representatives to China was abandoned. IOR/L/PS/10/1088, file 3942/1930, telegram from C.T. Daukes, British envoy at the Court of Nepal to the Foreign Secretary of His Majesty's Government in India, 21/5/1930.

³⁴ Liu Manqing, p. 119-120.

³⁵ Liu Manqing, p. 98-99.

³⁶ Liu Manqing, p. 101-102.

³⁷ Lung shar accompanied the four Tibetan students who went to England supported by the British government in 1914. He was received by the King George V and Queen Mary during his stay there. He traveled to France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. T.W. Shakabpa, *Tibet, a Political History*. New York: Potala, 1976, p. 249-250; H. Stoddard, *Le mendiant de l'Amdo*. Nanterre: Société d'ethnographie, 1985, p. 381-382.

Liu Manqing's political activities

Upon her return to China, Liu Manqing received a warm welcome from her contemporaries. She was considered "an extraordinary women who showed great courage" (*xin wei jinguo zhi xiong ye*) because of the difficulties of travel that she faced on her trip and because of her meetings with the 13th Dalai-lama. She was also qualified as "an eminent woman" (*yun wei nu zhong qiaochu*),³⁸ and was regarded as a reincarnation of the two Tang princesses Wencheng and Jincheng³⁹ or "a Chinese Hero".⁴⁰ Lin Sen (1868-1943), then president of the Chinese Republic, praised her by giving her a reward which said:

"This is a certificate of merit bestowed on Liu Manqing, who, upon approval of the Civil Office of this government, traveled ten of thousands of *li* to and from Tibet in one year, earnestly spreading the government's concern and care and who, without shame, had the ability to face conditions during her trip. The government gives her this reward and expresses its encouragement."⁴¹

Although Huang Jingwan, who wrote the preface to one of her books, emphasized the results of her trip, writing that "thanks to Liu Manqing, Tibet and China became closer after ten years without active relations," these flattering terms emphasized her behavior as a traveler more than her actions as an envoy of the Republican government. No one at the time judged the mission of Liu Manqing to be an official one. Of course, as we can see in her writings, she was a member of the Republican government and worked as an observer and an investigator in Khams and in Lhasa. But the way she exchanged letters with the Chinese government prove that she was not on an official mission: she wrote to her superior in the Civil Office in the Republican government, Gu Yingfen, but neither to the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission nor to Chiang Kai-shek. This point was also expressed by Lung shar, who was, with the dalai-lama, one of the addressees of the letter that Liu Manqing brought from China. Lung shar asked her for information about this unknown Gu Yingfen, who had signed the letter.⁴² Actually, it appears that Liu Manqing herself helped to maintain a certain ambiguity about her mission: for example, she told the *Yul phyogs so so'i gсар 'gyur me long*, Tibetan newspaper printed in Kalimpong, that she was the bearer of a dispatch from Chiang Kai-shek and then specified that she was not the bearer of a reply.⁴³ Also, on her way back to China when Liu

³⁸ Huang Jinwan, preface. 1933.

³⁹ Liu Manqing, 1933, foreword. Chinese historiography considers that the weddings of the Chinese Tang princesses Wencheng and Jincheng to the Tibetan kings Srong btsan sgam po in 641 and Khri lde gtsug btsan in 710 respectively marked the beginnings of Sino-Tibetan relationships.

⁴⁰ C.Y.W. Meng, "Miss Liu's Mission to Tibet." *China Weekly Review*, LIV (Sept. 6, 1930), p. 22, subtitled "Miss Liu—China's Hero." Wu Zhongxin, the president of the Mongol-Tibetan Affairs Commission from 1936 to 1954, thought otherwise, arguing that the comparison of Liu to Wencheng and Jincheng was a bit exaggerated as Liu "after all, is a romantic lady." Xirao Nyima, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Xeirab Nyima, « A Special Envoy of the Nanjing Regime », *China's Tibet*, 1991, p. 42.

⁴² Liu Manqing, p. 102.

⁴³ IOR/L/PS/10/1088, file P938/23, telegram from J.L.R. Weir to the Foreign Secretary of His Majesty in India, dated Camp Lhasa, 16/8/1930: transmission of an interview given

stayed in Kalimpong and Calcutta she visited the British Consul-General several times; he knew nothing of the nature of her travels. For this reason the British Consul-General became suspicious and believed that she was on a secret mission for the Chinese government's Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission.⁴⁴ In fact, as we have noted above, Liu Manqing asked to go to Tibet on her own and the Chinese Republican government allowed her to leave her official duty to fulfill this wish. However, as she was an official, she benefited from a five thousand *yuan* donation and military security from the government. It seems that she had no power to enter into negotiations.

However, Liu Manqing's trip to Lhasa may have prompted the official mission of Dkon mchog 'byung gnas (1883-1944), Tibetan abbot of the Yonghegong temple in Peking. Dkon mchog 'byung gnas was entrusted to discuss political questions, including Tibet's status, with the Lhasa authorities. As such, he went on an official mission from 7 November 1929 (almost four months after Liu Manqing's departure from Nanjing) to 16 January 1930 (three weeks before Liu arrived in Lhasa). He traveled to Lhasa by way of India. They met in Lhasa, but Liu Manqing gives no details about him except that he was from the same family as Tsha rong.

It was Chiang Kai-shek who initiated the mission. He entrusted Dkon mchog 'byung gnas with the mission of transmitting a letter on his behalf to the 13th Dalai-lama. In this letter, Chiang made proposals to the 13th Dalai-lama that would have permitted China to control Tibet. These included the payment of salaries by China to the dalai-lama, the Tibetan ministers and to soldiers; China's helping Tibet in case of foreign invasion; that the 13th Dalai-lama should become a member of the Republican Party and that he should establish representative offices in China.⁴⁵ This last point was agreeable; the 13th Dalai-lama entrusted Dkon mchog 'byung gnas with the mission of creating an Office of Tibet in Nanjing. In this way, the Chinese Republican government representative became the 13th Dalai-lama's representative as well. Tibet had now a representative in China with full authority.

Broadly speaking, Liu Manqing's trip also prompted a new British mission to Lhasa, just as the Gansu mission had made the Bell Mission a virtual inevitability in 1919 and 1920 respectively. Liu Manqing's stay in Lhasa was carefully watched by Laden La, the Sikkimese agent for the British in Tibet, who was in the Tibetan capital throughout the first half of 1930. As a matter of fact, after many years of deterioration in Tibeto-British relationships, the dalai-lama invited Lt. Colonel Weir (1883-1950), the British Political Officer in Sikkim, to visit Lhasa in 1930.⁴⁶ Moreover, perhaps to

by Liu Manqing to the editor of the Tibetan newspaper *Yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long*, dated 27/6/1930.

⁴⁴ IOR/L/PS/10/1088, file P5626, note from the 7/8/1930.

⁴⁵ Dong Shufan, *Minguo shi san nian yilai zhi Zhongguo guomindang yu Xizang*. Taipei: Mongolian and Tibetan affairs commission, 1985. p. 16-18; Thub bstan sangs rgyas, *rGya nag tu Bod kyi sku tshab don gcod skabs dang gnyis tshugs stangs skor gyi lo rgyus thabs bral zur lam* History of the Tibet representative office in China, 1982, p. 17-18.

⁴⁶ Since F.M. Bailey, the British Political Officer in Sikkim, had come to Lhasa in 1924, no British officer went on a mission to Lhasa. After the crisis in Lhasa in 1925, the British influence there declined because the British failed to obtain Chinese agreement to the 1914 Simla Convention. They failed to supply arms and ammunitions to the Tibetan army,

counter some of the impact of Liu Manqing's feminity, the dalai-lama allowed Mrs. Weir to accompany her husband.⁴⁷ Although it did not entirely eradicate Tibetan suspicions about British intentions, Weir's 1930 Lhasa mission was successful in at least restoring a dialogue between British India and Tibet.

Liu Manqing's trips to Lhasa paved the way for a new Sino-Tibetan relationship by demonstrating that it was possible to go to Tibet and be received by the dalai-lama. Liu acted as a kind of unofficial *de facto* spokesman for the Republican government, as she believed in its policies, Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, and wanted to present this view to the dalai-lama. However, the fact remains that her mission was a personal one and no one in China had entrusted her with the duty of transmitting any official messages from head officials of the Chinese state. However, after her trip she did indeed engage in the kind of official propaganda work that she wanted her readers to think she had been doing all along. Liu was convinced that the Three Principles of Sun Yat-sen could be of help to the Tibetan people.

The claim for dialogue and *channels* for such dialogue have been part of the rhetoric of present-day Sino-Tibetan relations, as well as the tactics employed by both sides in the politics of image management, in order to promote openness and a will to negotiate or reconcile. Liu Manqing's story reminds us of the multiplicity of the means of communication and the interconnectedness of the personal with the official, giving us a glimpse of the then-volatile relations between China and Tibet.

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bringing an end to the reform movement in Tibet. A. McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj. The Frontier Cadre 1904-1947*. London: Curzon Press, 1997, p. 110.

⁴⁷ A. McKay, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

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Glossary

Beiping shili di yi xiaoxue dushu 北京市立第一小學讀書
 Bianjiang jiaoyu 邊疆教育
 Chahar 察哈爾
 Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石
 Chongqing 重慶
 Dai Jitao 戴季陶
 Daoji yiyuan 道濟醫院
 Feng Yunxian 馮雲賢
 Gansu 甘肅
 Gao quan Zang guanmin shu 高勸藏官民書
 Gesang Zeren 格桑澤仁
 Gongdeng tashi 貢等塔什
 Gu Yingfen 古應芬
 Guomintang 國民黨
 Guo Xiangqiu 郭祥秋
 Han 漢
 Hong Kong 香港
 huaxi xuexiao 華西學校
 Huang Jingwan 黃警頑
 Jiang Weixin 蔣唯心
 Jincheng 金成
 Kang Zang lu Jing tongxiang kang Ri jiuguo hui 康藏旅京同鄉抗日救國會
 Kang Zang minzhong kangdi fu nan xuanchuan tuan 康藏民眾抗敵赴難宣傳團
 Kang Zang yaozheng 康藏輶征
 Kongdang Jiangcheng 孔黨江稱
 li 里
 Liandian 連典
 Lian Yu 聯預
 Li Jianhou 李劍侯
 Lin Sen 林森
 Liu Huaxuan 劉華軒
 Liu Manqing 劉曼卿
 Nanjing 南京
 Ningxia 寧夏

Paichang Dingceng 排長丁曾
 Qinghai 青海
 Rang Zhuo 讓卓
 Sichuan 四川
 Suiyuan 綏遠
 Sun Yat-sen 孫中山
 Tang 唐
 Tongzhou nuzi shifan xuexiao 通州女子师范学校
 Wang Tianhua 王天華
 Wencheng 文成
 Wutai Shan 五台山
 Wu Zhongxin 吳忠信
 Xiao Pinzhang 蕭品璋
 Xikang 西康
 Xikang minzhong weilao qian xian Jiang shi daibiao tuan 西康民眾慰勞前
 線蔣士代表團
 Xikang sheng dang bu 西康省黨部
 Xingzheng yuan wen guan chu yi deng shujiguan 行政院文官處一等書記官
 Xinjiang 新疆
 xin wei jinguo zhi xiong ye 新為巾幗之雄也
 Xinyaxiya 新亞西亞
 Xizang 西藏
 xuji 續記
 Yonghegong 永和宮
 yuan 元
 Yunnan 雲南
 yun wei nu zhong qiaochu 允為女中翹楚
 Zhongguo bianjiang xuehui 中國邊疆學會
 Zhu Ma 竺瑪

