

## **REASONS, COURSES AND TRENDS: OVERSEAS TIBETANS' EMIGRATIONS AND REMIGRATIONS**

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### **Abstract**

Since the Tibetan rebellion, overseas Tibetans have always been a special group that attracts great attention from the Chinese government. Over the past nearly 60 years, after three stages of emigration from China's Tibetan area, the total number of overseas Tibetans has increased from less than 80,000 in the early years to more than 200,000 today. Meanwhile, with overseas Tibetans' continuous relocation, their range of distribution has also expanded from India, Nepal, Bhutan and other South Asian countries in early years to more than 40 countries and regions in the world. Since 1978 after the beginning of China's reform and opening up, it has gradually become a trend for overseas Tibetans to return to China to visit their relatives, to go sightseeing, or even to settle down back home. Today, because the 14th Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of exiled Tibetans, is already very advanced in age, overseas Tibetan groups are facing many uncertainties, large-scale cross-border migrations may appear again at any time. Setting the Tibetan rebellion in 1959 as the starting point of the research, this thesis focuses on study of the reasons why Tibetans have emigrated in large scales, why there are wide disparities among statistics about the total amount of overseas Tibetans, why some overseas Tibetans relocated continuously, and why some exiled Tibetans returned to return to China. Once the 14th Dalai Lama dies, what course will overseas Tibetans choose to follow, and what will they choose among three options – to be assimilated by the local culture, to follow extremism, or to return to the original native culture.

**Keywords:** Tibetans in exile; migration; causes; courses; trends

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A blanket term for those Tibetans suspended or living abroad, Overseas Tibetans comprise Tibetans who live an exiled life abroad by following the Dalai Clique after the Tibetan Rebellion in 1959, their offspring and the new legal immigrants who have settled in other countries after 1978 when the policy of reform and opening up was adopted by the Chinese government. Overseas Tibetans have always been a target of attention from Chinese government since 1959. In the past nearly 60 years, their distribution has extended from just four South Asian countries in the early times to more than 40 countries and areas across the globe. Despite their low proportion among overseas Chinese, they are targets of limelight in related international affairs, which

exerts noticeable influence on the stability and development of Chinese Tibetan regions. In light of the fact that the 14th Dalai Lama is already a nonagenarian, large-scale transnational migrations of overseas Tibetans are highly likely at any time. Therefore, it is necessary to comb through the reasons, courses and features of Tibetan's past migration in a systematic way and to make an objective judgment on its future migration trend objectively so as to provide valuable reference for related academic research and practical policy making.

From the mid-1960s, Western scholars began to study overseas Tibetan groups through a large number of fieldwork. Marriage/family and national identity were two popular topics of research. In traditional Tibetan families, polyandry was a universal form of marriage, but polygynous families were not rare. After early exile and continuous relocation, in Switzerland, the United States, Canada, and other developed countries, polyandry families have basically disappeared in Tibetan communities. But in India, Nepal and other South Asian countries, polyandry families still exist in communities of exiled Tibetans, although the number has decreased generation after generation. The marriages of exiled Tibetans are mainly influenced by economic and demographic factors (Levine 1988). Marriage forms are quite different in different social strata (Goldstein 1977). Polyandry is mainly found in relatively poorer families. Rich families are mostly monogynic, and there are also some polygynous families. On the other hand, in the maintaining of traditional concepts and forms of marriage in communities of exiled Tibetans, religion played a very important role (Saklani 1984).

For most Tibetans in exile, religion is not only a belief, but also a world view that guides their attitudes towards life (Corlin 1991). In national identity, Tibetans in exile not only have to adapt themselves to the local mainstream culture as soon as possible in order to obtain space for their living and development, but also have to maintain their own national traditions and cultures so as to avoid being assimilated by the local mainstream culture. This is rather difficult. In the United States, many Tibetans in exile conceive their hometowns as a Buddhist utopia that is separated from political and economic dilemmas, which is also their main driving force to build their new homes and reshape their national identities (Lavine 2001). In Canada, the "Tibetan government in exile" has worked very hard through various forms such as religious activities and language educations to promote local Tibetans to maintain their national identities and traditions (Logan, Mufdie 2016).

It is in the past two decades that researches on overseas Tibetans have sprung up in Chinese academia. The existing studies fall into two types: macroscopic studies concerning their overall conditions of living and development and microscopic studies concerning their religious belief, marriage and family, language and culture. The former studies are mainly concerned with their population, regional distribution, living conditions and political activities, among which the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of exiled Tibetans, and the Tibetan government-in-exile are two hottest topics (Tang 2003 ; Yang 2006). Because economic competitions, cultural conflicts and differences in political orientation exist between exiled Tibetans and newly migrated Tibetans, the multi-differentiation inside overseas Tibetan communities is becoming increasingly obvious. Some researchers propose that in order to solve the Tibet issue once and for all, the Chinese government should adopt measures corresponding to realistic conditions of overseas Tibetans to rally support from most of them (You 2005; Li 2014).

Microscopic studies concerning overseas Tibetans mainly deals with changes in their ways of life and values. Since their fleeing to countries like India and Nepal in 1959, in order to survive, most of them have had to change their traditional ways of life from previous nomadic life to agriculture or urban life according to the local climate and natural conditions (Deng 2008). In the past sixty years, considerable changes have taken place in their language, clothing, rites and customs, with many elements of local culture merged into them (Wang 2009). At the same time, influenced by local mainstream culture, changes also take place in their marriage, family, belief and values, with monogamy more often practiced in families and religion beliefs more secularized (Wu 2012). The crisis of religious belief is especially salient in the second and third generations of exiled Tibetan families, who are far less devoted to Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama than the first generation (Ma 2000).

Although many fruitful researches have been done on overseas Tibetans, yet several important issues still deserve further exploration. These issues include: (1) What are the reasons for three large-scale Tibetan migrations in less than sixty years? (2) What are the reasons for the overseas Tibetans to migrate time and again? (3) What are the reasons for the huge discrepancies between the demographic data of overseas Tibetans collected respectively by the Tibetan government-in-exile, the researchers, and the Chinese central government? (4) What are the reasons for some exiled Tibetans to return to China? and (5) What choice do overseas Tibetans make in the post-Dalai Lama era: to assimilate into the culture of the residence country, to go to extremes or to return to their native culture in China? The present paper will address issues.

## **2. ORIGIN OF OVERSEAS TIBETANS AND REASONS FOR THEIR MIGRATION**

The Chinese Tibetan-populated provinces such as Tibet, Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan have long been the main origins of overseas Tibetans. Since these provinces lie close to such South Asian countries as India, Nepal and Bhutan, some Tibetans toured and inhabited these countries at a very early age. According to the archives dated 1959 from the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kalimpong, along the border between China and India, was inhabited by many Tibetan immigrants, among whom the oldest Tibetan society had a history of 255 years (MEA 1995a:230-232). After World War Two, when many South Asian countries successively gained secession, some Tibetans even acquired the nationality of the residence country (MEA 1995a:286). However, large-scale migrations did not occur until after the Tibetan rebellion. The past 60 years of Tibetans' emigration to other countries fall into the following three stages:

In the first stage spanning from the Tibetan rebellion in March, 1959 to the late 1970s, a large number of Tibetans fled Tibet for other countries. The reactionary Tibetan upper class, by annulling the Seventeen Points Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, declared the secession of Tibet and waged an armed rebellion, which ended in failure. Dalai and its followers then fled after they failed. Threatened and agitated by the Dalai Clique, many ignorant monks and ordinary folks followed in Dalai's step and fled to countries like India, Nepal and Bhutan. According to the statistics released by the Central Tibetan Administration, in the several years following the fleeing of the Dalai Clique, more than 80,000 Tibetans fled Tibet. This number was obviously exaggerated in that the Central Tibetan Administration, by deliberately obfuscating the term "exiled Tibetans", took Tibetans who toured or inhabited countries and areas outside Tibet before the rebellion as part of "exiled Tibetans". According to the statistics released by the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the number of exiled Tibetans reached the peak in the period from 1959-1965, during which the number of Tibetan "refugees" increased from 12,396 by August 11th (MEA 1995a:477), 1959 to 50,000 in 1965 (MEA 1995b:880). Despite subsequent incessant flows of Tibetans into India, the increase fell sharply after the year of 1965. Annual reports dated 1966 to 1969 from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicated that the immigrants from Tibet to South Asia increased by less than two thousand. By the end of 1969, the number of Tibetan "refugees" in India, Bhutan and Sikkim added up to about 56,000, among whom about 8,000 live in Nepal (UN 1969 : 473). The number of Tibetan refugees in the ten years following the rebellion showed little increase.

In the second stage spanning from 1978, when the policy of reform and opening-up was adopted by the Chinese government, to the middle 1990s, there was a remarkable increase in the number of cross-border migrating Tibetans, in comparison with the 1970s. Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC, thanks to the overall implementation of the internal reform and opening up to the outside world as well as the relaxation of restrictions on citizens' exit and entry, many Tibetans went to South Asian countries to visit relatives, go sightseeing and worship Buddha. Some of them stayed overseas without returning and became illegal immigrants. During this period, Tibetans once again migrated to foreign countries on a large scale, not only because of loose exit control, but also because of bewitchment and incitement from the Dalai Clique and Western hostile forces. Especially after the Eastern Europe Revulsion, the Dalai Clique incited Tibetans to riot or flee home by hyping up that China would also collapse, following in the steps of Eastern European socialist countries. Meanwhile, Western countries strengthened their supports to the Dalai Clique and Tibet Secession Forces on the one hand by rigging the election to make the 14th Dalai Lama awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; on the other hand, introducing policies to provide political asylum to "Tibetans in exile" and treating them as refugees. Affected by this, there was a boom in the number of cross-border migrating Tibetans in the early 1990s. According to the statistics of MacPherson's, a scholar studying Tibet's affairs and working in University of British Columbia, India alone has accepted 25,000 Tibetan "refugees" from 1986 to 1996 (MacPherson, Bentz and Ghoso 2008a).

In the third stage from the late 1990s to the present, Tibetans' cross-border migration becomes more like that of normal international migrants. In the final years of last century, after a short boom in the previous period, more and more Tibetans started to treat propaganda and incitement from overseas forces rationally, which resulted in a quick drop in the number of migrants to South Asian countries. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Tibetans' cross-border migration has become increasingly similar to that of other migrants. Firstly, political factors were no longer the main reason for Tibetans to migrate to other countries. Instead, such factors as religion, education and economy become more important and many Tibetans migrated for higher religious practices, better education and more business opportunities. After the migration, they were rarely under control of Tibetan Government-in-exile, let alone taking part in activities of splitting the motherland. Secondly, South Asian countries were no longer their first choice of migration destination. More and more

Tibetans decided to move directly to well-developed European and Americans countries. Among the Tibetans who took South Asian countries as their first choice of migration destination, a considerable number of them would migrate again and moved ultimately to developed European and American countries after a period of stay there. Thirdly, crossing border illegally is no longer the main method of migration. With the further development of China's reform and opening-up, the methods of trans-national floating has become more diversified and more convenient. Many Tibetans are migrating in legal ways such as studying abroad, reuniting with families, marriage, skilled migration and economic migration.

### **3. TOTAL NUMBER OF OVERSEAS TIBETANS: SEVERAL DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

After decades of cross-border migration and natural population growth, the quantity of overseas Tibetans has reached a considerable scale. According to Seonaigh MacPherson's reckoning based on the statistics provided by several institutions such as the Indian government, the UN refugee agency office in Nepal and USCRI, the total number of overseas Tibetans was 149,658 by the end of 2008 (MacPherson, Bentz and Ghoso 2008b). However, the Indian scholar Rashme Sehgal claimed that there were 300,000 Tibetans in exile and their descendants in India alone (2008). During their field study from January to February 2008, Chinese scholars Wang Yun and Zhou Ta came to know that "according to some Tibetans in India and Nepal, the number of overseas Tibetans has reached 300,000" (Wang,Zhou 2009 : 86). The reliable data from Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council showed that the current number of overseas Tibetans is about 200,000(Liao, Huang 11th August,2015). Among these above numbers, even the most conservative is still far bigger than the statistics provided by the Central Tibetan Administration.

In 1998, the first census conducted by the Central Tibetan Administration reported a total of 122,078 overseas Tibetans (Gyalpo 2004). 11 years later, the second census reported a total of 128,014, which is only a 4.86 per cent increase on the first census by 5,936. Almost during the same period, Tibetan population in Tibet Autonomous Region increased from 2,427,100 of the fifth census in 2000 to 2,716,400 of the sixth census in 2010. There were 289,200 more Tibetans with an increase of 11.91 percent (Wang 2015:13). The statistics of the Central Tibetan Administration not only was different from the actual size of overseas Tibetans, but also grew slowly. The main reasons are as follow:

Firstly, Tibet secession activities are gradually losing market; thereupon, the Tibetan Government-in-exile's controls over overseas Tibetans are waning. For a long time, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-exile have been always promoting Tibetan secession and inciting ethnic hatred to blind and control overseas Tibetans; besides, they have been promoting the internationalization of Tibetan affairs to seek financial and political supports from Western countries. Since the 1980s, with the changes in international environment and the development of China's reform and opening-up, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-exile started to change their strategy. On the one hand, they propagated "the middle road", attempting to realize the Tibetan secession by "real autonomy" and "high degree of autonomy"; on the other hand, they insisted on Tibetan secession violence, provoked riots in Tibetan areas of China and created disturbances internationally. However, neither "the middle road" nor violence helped them reach their intended purposes. On the contrary, what they had done made overseas Tibetans and the international community have a more profound understanding of their hypocritical nature of maintaining fake peace and inciting true violence, conducting fake talk and instigating true separatism. An increasing number of overseas Tibetans have voluntarily severed their ties with, and broken free from the Tibetan Government-in-exile. In 2009, when it conducted a population census on overseas Tibetans, many of them refused to take the census, although it had been promoted for more than one year. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Tibetan refugees in Nepal amounted to 20,000 in 2009 (UNHCR 2009:223). According to Chinese famous Tibetan expert Tang Jiawei's estimates, by the end of last century, Tibetan "refugees" in Nepal amounted to 28,000 or 30,000(2003:199). If, as stipulated by Tibet's Charters for Tibetans in exile, those non-Tibetan people one of whose parents is Tibetan as well as who have been married to a Tibetan for over three years, and the overseas Tibetans who have acquired a new citizenship in their residence country are also regarded as overseas Tibetans, the number of "Tibetan citizens" must be much larger than this. However, the census of the Central Tibetan Administration, there are only 13,514 Tibetans living in Nepal.

Secondly, the Tibetan Government-in-exile suffered a serious loss of population because traditional communities of Exiled Tibetans gradually lost appeal. Since the 1960s, dozens of Tibetan communities have been successively formed in India, Nepal, and Bhutan, etc. to settle influxes of Tibetan refugees. Although these communities established farms, handicraft workshops, and facilities of education and medicare, their

overall conditions were relatively simple and crude, and they could only meet the basic needs of subsistence for Exiled Tibetans, who had a very limited development within. Furthermore, according to the law of India, Exiled Tibetans were only granted refugee status, and they had neither the right to vote nor the right to own land and real estate (Sircar 2006). While the Tibetan Government-in-exile had jurisdiction over Exiled Tibetans in religion, culture and other aspects, the Indian government controlled the planning, construction, and management of the Tibetan communities. Therefore, Exiled Tibetans in these communities led a quite miserable life for a long time, with most of them still struggling on the poverty line. In order to break free from the dire situation, an increasing number of Exiled Tibetans, especially the young, decided to leave the communities to pursue a better life. Among them, some went to the fast-growing cities to search for opportunities, some returned to the motherland, and some migrated to other countries (UNHCR 2000:75). The population loss of Exiled Tibetans in traditional communities became a trend in the beginning of this century, which extremely worried the Tibetan Government-in-exile, which could not come up with a good solution (ICT 2003:9).

Thirdly, with the improvement and reinforcement of the relationship between China and its neighboring countries, new immigrants headed for the Tibetan Government-in-exile were decreasing on a daily basis. India and Nepal, the two countries where overseas Tibetans are highly concentrated, used to be the main destination countries of cross-border migrating Tibetans. However, after the resumption of exchanging ambassadors in 1976, the bilateral relationship between China and India improved gradually. In particular, their relationship significantly improved and their political mutual trust increasingly consolidated after the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to China in 2003. The Indian government began to downplay the relationship with the Tibetan government-in-exile and strengthen the entry control of new Tibetan immigrants to maintain its overall relationship with China. In the same token, Nepal implemented a long-term diplomatic policy of equidistance with India and China by adhering to the neutrality of "Pro-Indian but not anti-China" after establishing diplomatic ties with China in 1955. The Nepalese government's attitude towards ordinary Tibetan immigrants from China used to be relatively tolerant. With the mitigation of relationship between China and Nepal, the Nepalese government gradually tightened the policy of Exiled Tibetans and strengthened the containment of, and the crackdown, on the Tibet Secession forces. In 1989, Nepal announced that it would no longer accept new Exiled Tibetans, and in 1994 (ICT 2011:35), it stopped providing a certificate of identity to Exiled Tibetans. In 2003, the Nepalese government repatriated 18 new Tibetan refugees to China (ICT 2003:3). In 2005, the Nepalese government shut down the "Dalai office in Nepal" and its subordinate "Tibetan refugee reception center" which had been in illegal existence since the 1960s (ICT 2005:8). Since then, although the "Tibet secession" forces set up the "Tibetan refugee welfare office" in Kathmandu, which was expected to undertake part of the function of "Tibetan refugee reception center", the number of Tibetans under its control showed an irreversible downward trend.

#### **4. COURSES OF REMIGRATION OF OVERSEAS TIBETANS**

After the Tibetan rebellion in 1959, such south Asian countries as India and Nepal were the first choice of cross-broader migrating Tibetans for a long period of time. However, since the first country they moved into was not their ideal destination, many Tibetans would undertake cross-border remigration, sometimes even moving between several countries. A panoramic survey of overseas Tibetans' cross-border remigration in the 1960s indicates that the remigration can be divided into four types, namely cross-border migration between south Asian countries, cross-border migration from south Asia to Western countries, cross-border migration between Western countries, and migration to the motherland from all over the world. The remigration of early overseas Tibetans was almost completely a one-way flow within the south Asian countries, that is, from Nepal or Bhutan to India, because the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-exile were located in Dharmasāla, India. After the 1980s, with the deepening of China's reform and opening up, the trade along the China-Nepal border became more and more prosperous, and thousands of overseas Tibetans migrated from India to Nepal to seek better opportunities. Nevertheless, most of the Tibetans lived as refugees in both India and Nepal, not being able to "strike roots" like normal immigrants. Therefore, from the early 1960s on, many Tibetans availed themselves of various opportunities to remigrate outside of south Asian countries and regions towards Western developed countries, in order to improve their living conditions or just to survive.

Among the Western countries, Switzerland is the first to take in the Tibetan immigrants in droves. In 1960, a large number of exiled Tibetans living in India died because of life hardships and maladjustment to the climate. After hearing of this misfortune, Charles Aeschmann, a Swiss businessman in India, began to adopt Tibetan orphans. He even lobbied vigorously the Swiss government to take in Tibetan orphans and exiled Tibetans through the Chamber of Commerce of which he was a member, and finally he made it. In April 1961, with the help of the Swiss Red Cross, the first batch of exiled Tibetans totaling 39 reached Switzerland. Between the

1960s and the 1980s, Switzerland took in about 1500 exiled Tibetans and nearly 200 Tibetan orphans. Since the beginning of the 21st century, under the double influence of natural population growth and the continuing arrival of new Tibetan immigrants, Switzerland has become a country with the largest Tibetan community in Europe. According to an informant's estimate, at least 3,000 to 4,000 exiled Tibetans live in Switzerland, with most of them living in German-speaking regions (Guo 2009:53). At the same time when it took in exiled Tibetans, the Swiss government, through the Red Cross headquartered in Geneva and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, urged other member states to accept Tibetan "refugees". Thus, since the 1960s, Germany, Italy, the UK and other countries have taken in a small number of exiled Tibetans successively, with the UK being the top recipient country. According to the statistics from the London office of the Central Tibetan Administration in 2008, the UK is the country with the second largest Tibetan community in Europe, with about 650 Tibetans living there (MacPherson et al 2008a). Switzerland and other European countries' willingness in taking in and settling exiled Tibetans brought some opportunities for the Dalai Clique to exploit. To further extend its influence in Western countries and relieve exiled Tibetans' survival pressure in south Asia, the Dalai Lama called in the late 1960s for the US and Canadian governments to follow the practice of the Swiss government to take in Tibetan refugees.

As early as World War II, the US government made contact with the upper class of Tibet. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the US began to interfere in Tibet's affairs in politics, military and many other aspects. The main reason why the US took a keen interest in Tibet is that its policy then focused on containing communism (Goldstein 2009:124). The failure of the Korean War forced the US to forego a direct military confrontation with China. Instead, the US turned to win over various hostile forces neighboring China to conduct a strategic envelopment to China. After the signing of the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty, the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security (ANZUS) Treaty and the US-Japan Security Treaty, the US further strengthened its containment of China by signing another series of treaties such as the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the Mutual Defense Treaty between the USA and the Republic of China, and so on. Meanwhile, the US instigated the upper class of Tibet to stage a rebellion through the CIA and the secret channels of its consulates in India, aiming to undermine China's unity and stability. After the failure of Tibetan rebellion, the US, on the one hand, continuously provided economic and military aid to the Dalai Clique to support harassment and disruptive activities near the Chinese border carried out by Chushi Gangdrug. On the other hand, it took advantage of its strong position in the United Nations to make the United Nations General Assembly pass the resolutions concerning Tibet three times in 1959, 1961 and 1965, with an intention to promote the internationalization of the Tibet issue and to exert pressure of international public opinion on China. However, faced with the issue of exiled Tibetans resulting from the Tibetan rebellion, the US did not consent to taking in these Tibetan "refugees". The Dalai Lama's call for taking in Tibetan refugees met the response from the Canadian government only, but it was totally ignored by the US government. From 1971 to 1972, Canada for the first time took in 228 Tibetan immigrants from India and Nepal, and that figure increased to more than 600 in the ensuing several years.

In the late 1980s, with the thawing of the US-Soviet relations and the reawakening of America's Anti-China forces, the US government began to adjust its policies on the Dalai Clique and Exiled Tibetans. In 1987, the US invited the Dalai Lama to deliver a speech on Capitol Hill, in which the Dalai Lama presented five peace proposals on solving Tibet issue to the whole world. In 1989, the US accepted the Dalai Lama's visit three times in less than four months, and helped him to win the Wallenberg Human Rights Award and the Nobel Peace Prize by means of direct conferment or indirect manipulation. In 1990, the US added the Tibetan United States Resettlement Project (TUSRAP) to the revised American Immigration Law, providing 1000 immigration quotas to Exiled Tibetans who lived in India and Nepal. In 1992, the US took in the first 1000 Tibetan immigrants and placed them into 6 settlements. In 1993, the US increased the Tibetan settlements to 21, distributed in 18 states. Afterwards, more and more Tibetans entered the US by means of family reunion and political asylum. According to the census of the Central Tibetan Administration in 1998, the total number of Tibetans in the US reached 5500. In the 2000's demographic data of the US, 5147 chose to register as Tibetans. The data from Wikipedia suggest that by 2002 the total number of Tibetans in the US was about 8650. In 2008, the New York office of the Central Tibetan Administration estimated that the total number of Tibetans in the US is about 9,000 (MacPherson et al 2008a). As a matter of fact, since many Tibetans neither lived in the designated settlements nor had any connection with the Tibet secession organization, the actual figure of Tibetans living in the US is much larger than 9,000. According to some Tibetan-run non-governmental organizations, the number of Tibetans living in New York alone reached as many as 5,000-6,000 (Brudzińska, Choquier and Keller 2008).

Since the Indian and the Nepalese governments issue refugee certificates only to those Tibetans who entered India and Nepal before 1979 and 1989 respectively, some overseas Tibetans only have "Green Book" issued

by the Central Tibetan Administration, and some even have no valid identity certificates. When they remigrate to other countries, these Tibetans find it very hard to obtain the same rights to work and live as the normal people do due to the restriction on their identity. To gain better chances of survival and development, many Tibetans would risk everything to remigrate time and again. For example, from the late 1990s to the beginning of this century, many Tibetans in the US took their families to Canada because compared with living in the US, it was easier for them to acquire refugee status in Canada and they could obtain most of civil rights including all social welfare. During the single period between 2001 and 2006, the number of Tibetans in Canada soared to 4725 from less than 1,000 (MacPherson et al 2008a). Although Canada strengthened its border control afterwards and refused to grant refugee status to immigrants entering Canada through a third country, many Tibetans still migrated to Canada by all means because they are convinced that Canadians are a nation in possession of a deep compassion in their traditional culture (Black 2016). At the same time, many Tibetans chose to migrate to Australia, New Zealand and other countries. After decades of migration and remigration, overseas Tibetans are widely distributed over 40 countries and regions in the world.

## **5. RETURN TO MOTHERLAND AND OTHER FUTURE TRENDS**

As regards the attitude towards overseas Tibetans, the Chinese Government, by adhering to the fundamental political standard of opposing nationality separation and safeguarding national unity, upholds the policies that “All patriots belong to one family”, “It is never too late to join the ranks of patriots”, and “All patriots have the freedom to come and go” with the purpose to distinguish patriotic overseas Tibetans from separatists, to unite all the forces that can be united and to win the hearts of most overseas Tibetans. Even the overseas Tibetans who once joined, led or organized separatist activities will be pardoned and welcomed by Chinese government and can return to China for sightseeing and settling down as long as they stop Tibet secession stance. In March 1978, when talking about the Dalai Lama and overseas Tibetans, Deng Xiaoping pointed out: We have but one requirement—be patriotic, and our attitude is that it is never too late to join the ranks of patriots. In January 1979, in the spirit of Deng Xiaoping’s speech and under the direction of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Tibet Autonomous Region set up the Commission of Returned Tibetans Reception. Since then, overseas Tibetan reception institutions of different ranks have been set up across Tibet, Sichuan, and Qinghai to provide accommodation for overseas Tibetans who return for sightseeing or family reunions. At the same time, the central and local governments appropriate large sums of fund annually to help and facilitate their return. The money was mainly for two purposes: reception and relocation, with the former covering boarding, accommodation, transportation, personal expenses, recreation, medical expenses and the latter covering returned tickets, living allowance, housing subsidy, private-owned livestock subsidy, medical subsidy, etc. Those returned Tibetans who are in straitened circumstances are provided settlement housing and offered living subsidy and medical subsidy for one year and a half according to the local living standards.

Moreover, after its reform and opening up, China has witnessed rapid economic and social developments, not only narrowing its difference from developed countries but also even leading international community in some areas. Against this backdrop, earthshaking changes have also taken place in Tibetan-populated regions in China, with Tibet Autonomous Region being a case in point. From 1980 to 2015, the central government held successively six symposiums on Tibet-related issues, during which a series of preferential policies were formulated in order to support its development. Under Central Government’s Special Care and Support, Tibet has achieved a great leap forward in its economic and social development. When it was liberated in peace in 1951, its GDP was only 129,000,000 RMB yuan, with a population of 1,140,900, whose average life span was 35.5. At the end of 2012, these numbers were respectively increased to 70,100,000,000; 3,080,000; and 68.17. The per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen reached 5718 RMB yuan, and their per capita housing reached 28.77 square meters. The per capita disposable income of urban residents reached 18,028 RMB yuan, and their per capita housing reached 36.14 square meters (SCIO 2013:10,37,38).

Inspired by preferential policies of the Chinese government and attracted by the improvement in economy, society and people’s living standards in the Tibet Autonomous Region, many overseas Tibetans come back to China for sightseeing, family reunion and settling down. Since the late 1970s, the cross-border migration of Tibetans has reached a new stage of “bidirectional flowing”. Even in the late 1980s, when the Tibetan Secession activities ran rampant, a large number of Tibetans returned home for traveling and settling down. In 1987, the Tibet Autonomous Region alone received 3800 returned Tibetans person-times, among whom 30 settled down. By 1996, the number of overseas Tibetans who returned and settled down had reached over 2000 (Long, Duo 1996:44). Among these returned Tibetans are not only the masses of middle classes and underclasses but also senior staff in the Central Tibetan Administration and living Buddhas and lamas of various sects of Tibetan Buddhism, such as Danba Chilie, who was secretary of the security department of

the Central Tibetan Administration before returning and settling down in China in 1985; and the living Buddha Anqu, who was the director of Tibetan hospital in the Central Tibetan Administration before settling down in China in 2015, etc.

In fact, the returning of overseas Tibetans is not only their own willingness, but also the general trend of the times. As the older generation of exiled Tibetans fade away into history, and the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama walks into his late years, the overseas Tibetans are faced with several choices. The first choice is to gradually assimilate into the society of the residence countries, risking losing their own culture; the second choice is to continue to follow the Tibetan Secession forces, thus becoming marginalized and antagonized; the third choice is to return to the motherland and to their genuine culture, pursuing the normal track of development. Since the majority of the second, third, and fourth generations of overseas Tibetans were brought up in foreign countries and have no experience of living in Tibet, it will be difficult for them to keep and pass on the Tibetan language, culture, history, and religion (O'Donnell 2001). If things continue this way, they are sure to be assimilated by the culture of their residence countries. On the other hand, the Central Tibetan Administration is controlled by the Tibetan Secession forces represented by the Tibetan Youth Congress, whose radicalization tendency have been completely unmasked in the series of events they concocted sabotaging the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Once the Tibetan Secession forces lose their spiritual leader—the 14th Dalai Lama, they are very likely to split from within and become further radicalized. If a handful of overseas Tibetans choose to continue to follow the Tibetan Secession forces, they will inevitably become the sworn enemy of the whole world. In light of this, it will be a general trend for the overseas Tibetans, especially those who find it hard to survive in their residence countries, to come back to China (Wu 1993 : 20).

## 6. CONCLUSION

To sum up, since the Tibetan rebellion in March 1959, the total number of overseas Tibetans has grown significantly through three stages of migration from Chinese Tibetan-populated regions. Meanwhile, with their continuous remigration, their distribution has extended from the four south Asian countries in the beginning to over 40 countries and regions at present. Since 1978, when the policy of reform and opening-up was adopted by the Chinese government, China has witnessed significant social and economic developments, so have the Tibetan-populated regions. With many overseas Tibetans returning to China for sightseeing, family reunions or settling down, Tibetans' cross-border migrations gradually become a bidirectional flow. In the 21st century, the cross-border migrations of Tibetans and other nationalities are sharing more and more commonalities, and overseas Tibetans have been transformed into part of overseas Chinese from original community of exiled Tibetans. However, compared with overseas Chinese in a general sense, the cross-border migration of overseas Tibetans appear to be more distinctive: First, the earlier migrations of Tibetans were mainly conducted by mass exodus; second, the first choice of many fled Tibetans is south Asian countries such as India, Nepal, etc. Third, the proportion of double or multiple migrations is relatively high. Fourth, there is a great possibility of mass cross-border migrations in the future. As the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama steps into his late years, overseas Tibetan communities are confronted with many uncertainties. Therefore, their future is especially noteworthy.

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