



Mongolian-Tibetan authors and contemporary Tibetan literature

Tsering Dhondup

The paper will examine the writings of contemporary authors who are ethnically Mongolians but write only in Tibetan. The relationship between the Mongols and Tibetans can be traced back many centuries when the Mongolians adopted Tibetan Buddhism as their state religion. As a consequence, many Mongolians came to study in Tibetan monasteries and later became great masters of Buddhism. Thus, throughout the history many Mongolians were fluent in Tibetan.

Henan or rMa lho is a Mongolian autonomous county located in Qinghai province. The people from Henan gradually assimilated into Tibetan culture and nowadays most of the inhabitants from this county speak only Tibetan. The paper will show this assimilation by looking at the works of Jangbu, Deckyi Dolma and Tsering Dhondup. They were all born in Henan and are considered as ethnically Mongolian. However, their writings deal only with Tibetan subjects. The paper will examine why so many writers emerged from this county and how they identify themselves within the Tibetan, Chinese and Mongolian community.

Jangbu was born in 1963 and graduated from the North-west Nationalities University (*Xibei minzu xueyuan*) in Lanzhou in 1988. Like most of the students from Henan, he was enrolled in the Tibetan language department. After some travelling across Tibetan areas, he finally settled down in Lhasa and became a member of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Writers' Association (*Xizang zizhiqu zuojia shehui*). Since then, he has been the editor of the Tibetan literary journal *Bod kyi rtsom rig sgyul rtsal* (Tibetan Literature and Art) and works also as a researcher and consultant for various enterprises.

Jangbu published his first poem, "Return", in the Tibetan version of Qinghai Daily in 1980. Since then he has published his works in various journals and four anthologies of his works are in print. He has also won numerous prizes for his poems and short stories, including the first prize for poetry for the Tibetan Literature Prize of the Five Provinces in

1985, first prize for “Decade of Literary Achievement”, a prize awarded in 1992 by the literary journal *sBrang char* (Light Rain), first prize for TAR short story competition of 1994 and a prize in the “TAR Decade of Literary Achievement Prize” in 1995.

Tsering Dhondup was born in 1961 and graduated from the Huangnan Prefecture Teacher’s Training School in 1982. The same year, he published his first work and has since then written numerous short stories and novellas. He has received numerous literary prizes, including the Tibetan Literature Prize of the Five Provinces (*Wuzhengqu zangzu wenxue chuangzuo*) in 1985. Two full-length novels, *Mes-po* (Ancestors) and *sMug pa* (Fog), were published in 2002 in Xining, Qinghai province.

Deckyi Dolma was born in 1967 and graduated from the North-west Nationalities University (*Xibei minzu xueyuan*) in Lanzhou in 1990. She has published numerous poems and her first anthology of poems was published in 2002 by Tianma Book Company, Xining, Qinghai province. She is one of the few women poets who regularly publishes her works.

The works of Tsering Dhondup and Jangbu are included in anthologies of Tibetan literature as well as in a few Mongolian anthologies. Tsering Dhondup was told that a short story of his had been translated into Mongolian but did not receive much attention from the Mongolian readership. The explanation for this rejection was that his works revolve entirely around a Tibetan lifestyle and was therefore too remote for the Mongolian speaking readership. This is hardly surprising since most of the people in Henan have adopted the Tibetan culture as their own.

Tibetan literature faces many challenges such as ethnically Tibetans writing in Chinese or ethnically Mongolians writing in Tibetan. Likewise, it is known that in the Tibetan communities abroad, many Tibetans write in English. How do we define Tibetan literature and does ethnicity play an importance when defining literature?