

## **Leadership and Reincarnation of the Dalai Lamas: A Research Network on Succession, Institution, and Community (LEAD)**

### **Hybrid Seminar 1: The Legacy of the Dalai Lama: Innovation and Possible Futures**

We will discuss the Dalai Lama's innovations. For example, what has been the impact of the Dalai Lama's devolution of political power to an elected executive branch? What role has he played in the fight for equal rights for Tibetan nuns? What is the future of the Mind and Life project? What has been his impact on Tibetan life in Tibet? What influence has the Dalai Lama played on communal relations in Ladakh? How have Tibetan and Himalayan societies in exile reorganized themselves around his patronage and support? What role has the Dalai Lama played in the Tibetan school system? What perceptions do Chinese Buddhists in the PRC have of the Dalai Lama?

Date: September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

Time: 18:30-22:30 IST/**15:00-19:00 CET**/14:00-18:00 BST/9:00-13:00 EDT/7:00-12:00 MDT

### **Schedule**

**Session #1:** 15:00-15:50, Chair Cameron David Warner

15:00 Welcome by the Steering Committee

15:10 Fiona McConnell, University of Oxford

#### ***The Dalai Lama's Devolution of Political Power: Impacts, Opportunities and Challenges***

Twelve years since the Dalai Lama stood down as head of state and head of government and devolved political power to the elected leadership in exile, this presentation assess the impacts of this innovation. Focusing on how Tibetan political leadership is perceived from the 'outside', the presentation examines the opportunities and challenges in constructing and maintaining legitimacy, and the extent to which this devolution of political power can be read through the lens of self-determination.

15:20 Lobsang Sangay, Harvard Law School

#### ***The Dalai Lama's Legacy: Envisioning Democracy Without Borders***

With over 150 million refugees worldwide, the issue of displacement persists in tandem with political upheavals and repressive regimes. Amidst this backdrop, the concept of an exiled Tibetan democratic government emerges as a beacon of hope. Is it feasible for political refugees and exiles from diverse backgrounds to adopt this model? Can the global refugee community transition from a state of dependency to become independent agents of political change? The narrative need not be limited to viewing refugees as victims of authoritarian leadership, be it Afghans, Venezuelans, Syrians, Mongolians, Hong Kongers, or Uyghurs. Instead, envisioning them as potential advocates and practitioners of democracy may be transformative. For 64 years, the Tibetan democratic establishment in exile has been an exemplar of resistance and resilience, demonstrating continuous growth and fortitude. It stands as a paradigm, positing its potential for other exiled communities globally to emulate.

15:30-15:50 Discussion

15:50-16:00 Break

**Session #2:** 16:00-16:50, Chair Lobsang Sangay

16:00 Carole McGranahan, University of Colorado-Boulder

***Service and Activism: The Dalai Lama's Legacy in Exile***

As the political and religious leader of Tibet, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama greatly influenced the Tibetan community in numerous ways. Historically this is evident over different time periods in exile, from the early years of exile (1959-1970s), the second generation era (1980s-90s), the migration to the West era (1990s-2000s), and the period following his devolution of political power in 2011. With his intention to retire as Dalai Lama in 2025, how will his legacy continue to influence Tibetan community service and activism? This presentation will specifically focus on activist and community groups in the exile community.

16:10 Martijn van Beek, Aarhus University

***The Dalai Lama in Ladakh: His Legacy and the Limits of Spiritual Authority***

Since 1966, when he first toured the region at the invitation of the 19<sup>th</sup> Bakula Rinpoche, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has been a frequent visitor to Ladakh, the former Himalayan kingdom with a historically Buddhist majority population. Especially since 1999, the Dalai Lama has visited almost every year, often staying for a month or more at the summer residence built for him on the banks of the Indus, spending time in retreat, teaching, and visiting different monasteries and villages around the region. This presentation will discuss key elements of the Dalai Lama's legacy in Ladakh, which includes his campaigning against caste discrimination, for harmony between religious communities, and against the introduction of *phal skad*, vernacular Ladakhi, in educational contexts in the region. While the Dalai Lama is held in high esteem, his pronouncements about Ladakhi affairs have at times created challenges for local political leaders and activists, especially during the campaigns for Ladakh's independence from Kashmir. Exploring these negotiations of the landscape constituted by the inextricably interwoven secular and spiritual offers insights into the limits of spiritual authority on the Western edge of the Tibetan Buddhist world.

16:20 Tenzin Dorjee, Columbia University

***The Dalai Lama's Reincarnation Scenarios: A Mini Survey of Tibetan Public Opinion***

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has formulated three possible scenarios for his succession. In scenario one, his reincarnation is found and recognized in the conventional way after his demise. In scenario two, he appoints a successor during his lifetime, known as a *maday tulku*. In scenario three, he decides that he will be the last of the Dalai Lamas and there will be no fifteenth incarnation. This project surveys the opinions and sentiments of a small sample of Tibetan exile population on the topic of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation.

16:30-16:50 Discussion

16:50-17:00 Break

**Session #3:** 17:00-17:50, Chair Carole McGranahan

17:00 Allen Carlson, Cornell University

***Who's Next? Reincarnates (ལྷན་སྲིད་འཛོམས་) and the Past, Present and Future of Tibet-China Relations***

Recognizing and confirming reincarnates (ལྷན་སྲིད་འཛོམས་), particularly in prominent lineages, was one of the most important religious and political processes in historic Tibet. It was also often the site of much intrigue and debate. Yet, whatever difficulties Tibetans encountered in this regard prior to Tibet's incorporation into the PRC have since been dwarfed by recurring tensions between the Tibetans and Chinese over who has authority over making such decisions. Moreover, this issue all but inevitably will grow in significance and import in the years to come. This brief talk touched upon the development of this tradition within Tibetan Buddhism, considers a few of the most recent and consequential standoffs over who comes next, but primarily looks at the present situation, and how Dharamshala and Beijing are preparing for the future.

17:10 Gyal Lo, University of Toronto

***The Legacy of Bridged Knowledge between Buddhist Traditions and Modern Science: How and Who will continue it***

This talk is based on my academic experience in both diaspora and inside Tibet communities. I will be focusing on inside intellectual thinking of it and who will be able to continue it in diaspora.

17:20 John Osburg, University of Rochester

***Han Chinese Practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC: Familiar Tropes, New Potentials***

Based on an ethnographic study of a group of affluent, urban Han Chinese who have become devotees and patrons of Tibetan Buddhism, this presentation briefly examines the sources for the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in urban China over the past few decades, the various forms Chinese engagement has taken, and the impact of the growing number of Han followers on the regulation of Tibetan Buddhism in the PRC. I consider the ways in which Chinese encounters with Tibetan Buddhism have and have not reconfigured their understandings of Tibet and the politics of reincarnation. While Chinese patronage of Tibetan Buddhism has undoubtedly generated greater awareness (and sometimes direct experience) of the harsh regulation of Tibetan religious institutions, the political implications of shifting Chinese attitudes and understandings are difficult to predict.

17:30-17:50 Discussion

17:50-18:00 Break

**Session #4:** 18:00-18.50, Chair Martijn van Beek

18:00 Cameron Warner, Aarhus University

***Entering the Temple: Long-life Ceremonies as an Index of the Dalai Lama's Impact***

In the past nine months ago, the Dalai Lama has received at least 14 large, public long-life ceremonies (བརྟན་བཞུགས།) at the Tsuklakhang in McCleod Ganj and in Ladakh. A close reading of the groups that have offered long-life ceremonies and the content of speeches made by devotees and the Dalai Lama himself can provide an empirical ground for beginning to map out his significance for various Himalayan communities. In these ceremonies, how is the Dalai Lama heralded for upholding his lineage? How do his devotees articulate the impact he has had on their community and how does the Dalai Lama respond to their devotion? In a wider study, tracing the sponsors (ཐུན་བདག།) of particular teachings and the tulkus the Dalai Lama has selected or confirmed will further contextualize his network of supporters and his efforts to cultivate those relationships.

18:10 Dawa Lokyitsang, University of Colorado-Boulder

***Generating a New Beginning: Tibetan Schools and the Nation in Exile by the Dalai Lama***

How does one survive a cataclysmic apocalypse? The invasion of Tibet under Communist China ended Tibet's national status as a sovereign country. The clash between Tibetans who rose up against Chinese occupation of Tibet on March 10th 1959 resulted in devastating loss for Tibetans and led to policies that eradicated not only the traditional worlds of Tibetans but of Tibetans themselves. Under such apocalyptic conditions that caused the deaths of many, the Dalai Lama generated a new beginning for Tibetans in exile through his innovative leadership. My presentation will focus on the founding of schools in India by the Dalai Lama as one such innovative initiative. In addition to ensuring and sustaining the lives of children, who are the most vulnerable, this presentation will also highlight how the type of education such schools provided helped Tibetans reproduce themselves, their worlds, and their national struggle against colonial developments in Tibet under China in exile. This presentation argues that it is through the regeneration of a Tibetan nation in exile—in this case through the founding of schools by the Dalai Lama—that Tibetans in exile reproduce themselves into national communities in exile. It is through the production of such national communities that Tibetans survived and thrive in exile as a political collective whose national identity continually challenges China's legitimacy in Tibet. Tibetan schools in exile, thus become an important legacy of the Dalai Lama's innovative leadership in generating continuity for Tibetans as a collective.

18:20 Nicola Schneider, Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie

***Empowering Female Religious Practitioners in Tibetan Buddhism***

In September 2016, His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced at a conference at INALCO in Paris the upcoming graduation ceremony at Drepung Monastery for Tibet's first historical *geshemas*. He modestly added: "I feel this is my small contribution." In fact, he was one of the major initiators in opening up religious education for nuns. This presentation will trace the Dalai Lama's contributions to improving the intellectual life of nuns (from Tibet, but also from Nepal, India, Bhutan, Mongolia, from Western countries, as well as from the Chinese tradition) and to acknowledging the wider role of women in Tibetan Buddhism by supporting the recognition of female reincarnations.

18:30-18:50 Discussion

18:50-19:00 Brief closing remarks and announcement of next steps