

# *Research on the History of Social Development in Tibet-related Areas in China*

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**Abstract:** The history of social development in the Tibetan region of China can be traced back to the Tubo dynasty era in the 7th century AD. After the Yuan Dynasty, the Tibetan region entered the era of feudal serfdom and gradually formed a system of unity of church and state, and after 1959, the Tibetan region entered a new period of socialism through democratic reform, and its political, economic and cultural undertakings reached unprecedented heights. The history of social development in Tibetan areas is inseparable from the unique geographical and climatic environment, religious and cultural influences and production and lifestyle of Tibet.

## 1. Introduction

The Tibet-related regions of China mainly refer to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and its fringe areas where the Tibetan ethnic group is distributed. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is a unique geographical unit in the world, with a vast territory, extending from the Pamirs in the west to the Qinling Mountains in the east, starting from the southern foot of the East Himalayas in the south, and connecting with the northern foot of the western Qilian Mountains in the north. kilometers, with a total area of about 2.5 million square kilometers. Tibet-related areas are mainly inhabited by Tibetans. The administrative regions included in China include the Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai Province, Sichuan Province, Gansu Province, and Yunnan Province. The Tibetan population is about 6.5 million. At the same time, Han, Mongolian, Hui, Monba, Lhoba and other ethnic groups live in Tibet-related areas. Historically, Tibet-related areas were placed in different administrative regions, and the social differences in different historical stages were very different. Before the rise of Tubo in the 7th century AD, Tibetans were still in the stage of primitive clan communes, and their history was fragmented and discontinuous. Therefore, the history of social development in Tibet-related areas that has been clearly recorded began in the period of the Tubo Dynasty.

## 2. Tubo and Post-Tubo Period

Before the 5th century A.D., Tibetans were still in the stage of primitive clan commune. By the sixth century A.D., due to the development of production, Tibetan society gradually entered into slavery society. The Yarlung tribe, which was active in the Yarlung Valley area in the middle reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River (in the present-day Poor Knot County of Shannan, Tibet), began to rise

and grew stronger. By the early 7th century AD, Songtsen Gampo, the king of the Yarlung tribe, established the slave-holding Tubo dynasty. With Songtsen Gampo's unification of the Tibetan Plateau and the establishment of the Tubo regime, Tibetan society began to enter the heyday of slave society [1]. The Tubo dynasty was a slave military empire that lasted for more than 200 years, from Songtsen Gampo to Damo Zangpu, passing through nine generations. During this period, with the frequent contacts, alliances and affinities between Tang and Fan, the exchanges between the Tibetan people and the people of the Central Plains became increasingly frequent. Of course, there were also frequent wars between Tang and Fan.

The cultural and economic development of the Tibetan region during the Tubo period advanced by leaps and bounds [2]. First of all, the Tibetan phonetic script was created. In order for Tibetans to have their own script and the need to translate Buddhist scriptures, Songtsen Gampo sent Tunya Sambuza and other young people to India to learn the script. Tunya Sambuza studied in India for 7 years, mastered Sanskrit, grammar, poetics and Buddhist scriptures, returned to Lhasa in 641, and after 3 years of dedicated efforts, created the Tibetan phonetic script system by comparing the Indian Sanskrit alphabet and combining the characteristics of the original Tibetan language. Songtsen Gampo took the lead to learn the newly created Tibetan language, the implementation of the Tibetan language has played a great role in promoting: Tunya - Sambuza created the Tibetan language and script after improving the standardized use to date followed by the rapid development of agriculture and animal husbandry. Animal husbandry became the leading industry, the Tubo area agricultural productivity has been greatly improved, the common application of ox plowing in the field of agriculture. The agricultural production of the Tubo to the middle reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River valley and the most developed areas of the Department. Tubo production of agricultural tools are axes, sickles, cattle, plows, saws, etc. Crops are wheat, barley, buckwheat, beans, etc. Slaves are the main bearers of agricultural labor in Tubo. The Tubo Zangpu divided the slaves into nobles. Slaves were treated like land and pasture. These slaves usually lived in the diaspora to cultivate and graze, and both male and female slaves participated in agricultural work. In addition, a small number of farmers and soldiers also participated in the labor [3]. At the same time, the commercial trade flourished, and there was a marketplace trade such as Lhasa. Gold has generally become the equivalent of commodity exchange. Tubo dynasty period, the eastern region of the Tubo tribes and Tang's economic ties, the most prominent is reflected in the rise of the tea and horse trade between the two sides, when the Tubo horses and Tang in exchange for tea in China. At the same time, the Tufan livestock products leather, wool, yak tail, as well as meat, ghee, milk, etc. in addition to their own use, and neighboring tribes exchange, interchange.

In the second half of the 9th century, the Tufan slave riots that swept across the territory, dismantled the foundation of the Tufan slave society, since then the Tibetan region into a period of division, that is, after the Tufan period, spanning from 842 to 1264 AD, lasting a total of 422 years. The disintegration of the Tubo dynasty brought about a major change in Tibetan society, which was marked by two major changes: the first was the fierce struggle for the succession to the throne after the death of Rangdama, which lasted for more than 30 years. The second sign was the great civilian slave revolts that occurred throughout the Tubo region. The storm of slave revolts lasted for decades, causing the already shaky Tubo dynasty to collapse and completely disintegrate, resulting in a period of disintegration of Tibetan society. In the course of this 400-year history, numerous local factional powers were formed [4]. In the post-Tubo period, four divided and weak kingdoms emerged within the territory of the Tubo dynasty, plunging into a four-century-long period of chaos. At the same time, Tubo gradually transitioned to a feudal society, and Buddhism emerged, developed, and became widespread in Tibetan society. The Tubo dynasty thus collapsed, and Tibetan Buddhism combined with regional feudal groups to form numerous sects that became new and decentralized fragmented forces.

### 3. Yuan Dynasty Period

The 13th century was an important period when Tibetan society underwent significant changes and a historic turnaround. The feudal serfdom system was generally established in Tibetan society at this time. In the middle of the thirteenth century, the Yuan dynasty unified China. As the central dynasty of Yuan and the Mongolian forces began to intervene, the Tibetan society, with the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism as the core, began to take shape and Tibetan society entered a period of relative stability. Kublai, the founder of the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism, entrusted the head of the Sakya sect to manage the political and religious affairs in Tibet and formed the Sakya regime. The Yuan dynasty also stationed troops in Tibet, set up post stations, appointed officials, inventoried households, collected taxes and fully exercised its authority.

After the Yuan Dynasty unified the management of Tibet-related areas, it put an end to the fragmentation of various regions and promoted the development of production and exchange within the Tibetan region. In the field of economic production and commercial trade, slaves and subordinate people were given land and livestock, which produced the development of individual economic production and promoted the development of commercial exchange. With the establishment of feudal serfdom and the formation of political and religious forces of different sects in different places, some political, economic and cultural centers appeared in each place. The regularization of exchange demand and the formation of exchange distribution centers promoted the emergence of towns and markets. The establishment of post stations in Tibetan areas during the Yuan Dynasty brought Tibet closer to the Han areas of China, promoted the flourishing of commercial exchanges in Tibet, and boosted the development of trade between Tibet and various parts of the Han areas of China. There was also a new development of mutual trade on the border between Tibet and neighboring countries.

The monastic economy of Tibetan society began to take shape during the Yuan Dynasty. It is well known that the various sects of Tibetan Buddhism, including the Nyingma, Kadam, Sakya, and Kagyu sects, were basically formed in the early 13th century, and the monastery set closed and the noble families joined or combined to form a political and religious group. In the development of the Tibetan lord estate system, the monastery religious leaders also gathered considerable wealth, stable possession of the estate and the people. A distinctive feature of the Sakya regime under the auspices of the Yuan dynasty was that the Sakya monks were not only leaders who enjoyed authority in the religious pantheon, but also lords in possession of estates, pastures, serfs and livestock, and the combination of these two factors greatly promoted the development of the monastic economy. By the end of the Yuan and early Ming dynasties, the Palmyra Drukpa regime was strong and stable, the key to inheritance and development of several generations of leaders of the management and accumulation of the family form of monastic religious power and local lords of power combined [5].

### 4. Ming and Qing Dynasties

After the establishment of the Ming dynasty, the court took over the Yuan chamber and still maintained a stepped feudal system from the central government to the Tibetan localities. In short, a policy of political tolerance in the form of tribute was implemented to maintain feudal relations between the central government and local Tibetan monks and lay lords, while also strengthening economic exchanges and consolidating interdependence. During the Ming Dynasty, the entire Tibetan region maintained normal subordinate relations with the central government. Tibetan society was relatively stable, and the feudal serfdom was able to develop significantly. At the same time, the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism emerged in Tibetan areas, from which the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni two living Buddha reincarnation system, and gradually occupy the mainstream of Tibetan Buddhism, for the subsequent Tibetan society, has had a profound impact. The Ming Dynasty set up the Dogan and Ushizang line commanders in Tibet, overseeing the military administrative affairs of

Tibet. Local military officials at all levels, from the commanders down to the thousands of households, village officials and inspectors, were directly appointed and dismissed by the Ming court [6]. The Ming government also repaired post roads, developed tribute relations between Tibetan localities and the central government, exchanged tea and horse markets, attached importance to Tibetan culture, and maintained and developed political subordination between Tibetan localities and the central government. During the 200 years of the Ming Dynasty's rule over the Tibetan areas, the Tibetan areas were always attached to the central government, and they did not fight against the central government, and the Tibetan-Chinese relations were harmonious, and the Tibetan areas had a close relationship with the Chinese areas. In fact, the Ming Dynasty's strategy to govern Tibetan areas with multiple religious grants and local leaders was mild and effective [7].

By the Qing Dynasty, the relationship between the central government and the local Tibetan government had further developed. In 1653, during the reign of Shunzhi, the Qing dynasty granted the Dalai title. In 1713, during the Kangxi reign, the Qing dynasty named Panchen as "Panchen Erdeni" and gave him control over the local Tibetan government. At this point, Gelugpa formally became the mainstream of Tibetan Buddhism and took a central position in the system of secularism. Later, in order to strengthen the rule of Tibet, the Qing Dynasty set up the Tibetan Minister's Office in Tibet and directly dispatched the minister to supervise Tibetan affairs.

In order to strengthen the management of Tibetan localities, the Qing government officially promulgated the "Tibetan Regulations" in 1793, stipulating that "the minister in Tibet shall be equal to the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni in supervising Tibetan affairs". The administration, finance, military and foreign relations of the local government in Tibet were to be handled by the minister in Tibet. The statute also specially stipulates that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni must be determined by the minister in Tibet to monitor and use the golden vase to make a sincere signature decision, and the bed-sitting ceremony of the Dalai and Panchen is also presided over by the minister in Tibet [8]. These provisions make the central government of the Qing dynasty and Tibetan local relations closer, the Tibetan people and the motherland of all the brotherly nations of the links more strengthened.

## 5. Republic of China Period

The situation in China as a whole during the Republican period was in a state of frequent wars and continuous turmoil, thus leaving the relationship between Tibetan localities and successive Republican governments in an extremely abnormal state. After the establishment of the Nationalist Government in Nanjing in 1927, the political relationship between Tibetan localities and the central government was gradually restored with the frequent exchange of personnel and the mutual establishment of offices between the two sides. During this period, the 13th Dalai Lama under the system of secularism introduced new policies and reform measures in 1916, which involved various aspects of politics, economy, education and science and technology. However, the New Deal was invariably used and controlled by the British imperialists, which led to the disagreement between the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the Ninth Panchen.

During the Republican period and before the democratic reform, Tibet was a feudal serfdom society under semi-colonial conditions, and the serfs were deeply oppressed and exploited by the three major lords. They lived in extreme poverty and were not motivated to produce, thus creating a very backward situation in agricultural production, mainly reflected in the inadequate use of land; low technology and low yields; and long-term failure to provide food and other major agricultural products for themselves [9].

## 6. People's Republic of China Period

On May 23, 1951, the Chinese government and the local government of Tibet signed the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (referred to as the Seventeen Articles Agreement), and Tibet was peacefully liberated. Taking the peaceful liberation as the starting point, the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have united and strived to implement the Seventeen Agreements, vigorously safeguarding national sovereignty, the unity of the motherland and territorial integrity. The People's Liberation Army peacefully entered the border forts in Tibet, achieving the peaceful liberation of Tibet and the complete reunification of the motherland.

In 1959, the Central People's Government and the Preparatory Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region led the Tibetan people to carry out democratic reforms to completely abolish the feudal serfdom, which was a unity of church and state, so that millions of serfs were liberated and became masters of their own house, and the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups were safeguarded. With the establishment of the socialist system and the implementation of regional ethnic autonomy, the Tibetan social system has made a historic leap forward; the solid promotion of reform, opening up and modernization has greatly liberated and developed the social productive forces and greatly improved the production and living conditions of the Tibetan people of all ethnic groups [10].

Over the past 70 years since the peaceful liberation of Tibet, it has made achievements that have attracted worldwide attention [11]. First of all, the social and economic development has continued at a fast pace; the gross regional product of Tibet was only 129 million yuan in 1951, but in 2020 it exceeded 190 billion yuan, with obvious improvement in economic strength and continuous optimization of economic structure. Secondly, people's living standard has improved significantly. 2019, Tibet's urbanization rate reached 31.5%. 2020 Tibetan rural residents' per capita disposable income of 14,598 yuan, maintaining double-digit growth for 18 consecutive years, with the growth rate ranking first in the country. The per capita disposable income of urban residents reaches RMB 41,156. At the same time, basic public services have been comprehensively advanced, poverty eradication has been comprehensively won, and excellent traditional culture has been promoted and developed on the basis of effective protection.

## 7. Conclusions

Tibet-related areas have unique plateau geography and climate, mysterious Tibetan Buddhism and a long history of social and cultural traditions. The history of social development in this region is inseparable from Tibet's unique geographical and climate environment, religious and cultural influence, and production and lifestyle. The governance of Tibet-related areas by the rulers of the past dynasties generally followed the principle of adapting measures to local conditions and achieved good governance performance. These governance experiences and lessons are worth learning from.

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