

Report on Religious Freedom, Preservation and Development of Tibetan Buddhist Culture

1. The mission of the China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture (CAPDTC) is to preserve and develop Tibetan culture, promote and protect human rights, enhance solidarity and harmony of all ethnic groups in Tibet, and achieve common prosperity through wide-ranging contacts and exchanges with organizations and personages home and abroad.

2. We note with appreciation that the Chinese government has been consistently implementing policies of religious freedom in Tibet, by which the religious beliefs of ethnic Tibetans are fully respected and protected. In the meanwhile, remarkable achievements have been made in preserving the Tibetan Buddhist culture.

3. Through surveys we find that Tibetan Buddhist monasteries are protected, and religious activities are normally conducted. So far there are more than 1,700 monasteries and temples in the whole Tibet Autonomous Region, which have met the need of over 46,000 monks and laymen for their normal religious activities. At present, monks of different sects of Tibetan Buddhism enjoy the freedom of preaching sermons, studying and debating sutras, and conducting other Buddhist activities. Religious followers also enjoy the freedom of participating in such Buddhist activities as taking ritual walks around monasteries, holy mountains and rivers for pilgrimage, chanting scriptures and making offerings to monks.

4. Cultural relics of Tibetan Buddhism are maintained and protected. We are encouraged that the Chinese government has listed such cultural relics under key state protection as the Potala Palace, the Jokhang Monastery, the Gaidan Monastery, the Tashilhunpo Monastery, the Drepung Monastery, the Sakya Monastery and the Samye Monastery, among which the Potala Palace and the Jokhang Monastery have been inscribed into the World Cultural Heritage list by the UNESCO. The government has altogether apportioned a huge investment and large amount of jewelry, gold and silver to maintain the Potala Palace, the Gaidan Monastery, the Jokhang Temple, the Palkor Chode Monastery, the Tashilhunpo Monastery and the Samye Monastery as well as other religious sites. In addition, the government also allocated funds to build the multi-burial memorial halls and holy stupas for the 5th to 9th Panchen Lamas entitled Tashi Namgyel and those for the 10th Panchen Lama entitled “Sisum Namgyel”.

5. Tibetan Buddhist canon is collated and published. We appreciate the continued efforts made by the Chinese government in collecting, collating, publishing and conducting research on religious scriptures. With the strong support of eminent lamas of Tibetan Buddhism, the China Tibetology Research Center, the top research institute on Tibetology has finished collating and publishing the Tibetan version of the *Chinese Tripitaka*, making it the most complete, systematic and authoritative version of the China Tibetology Research Center on the largest scale in Chinese history. The *Tripitaka* in new Tibetan version comprises a total of 4,842 volumes of Tengyur and Kangyur with 108 volumes of Tengyur and 124 volumes of Kangyur respectively. At present, the China Tibetology Research Center has started off collating the Tibetan version of the *Chinese Canon*, and it plans to take 15 years to compile the relevant works done by prominent lamas of the Tibetan Buddhism. In addition, the contemporary eminent lamas have also written a tremendous amount of religious books.

6. Tibetan Buddhist festivals are well-inherited and promoted. The traditional festivals in Tibetan Buddhism such as the Grand Summon, the Miraculous Festival, the Sagya Dawa Festival, the Immortal Descending Festival, the Butter Lamp Festival, and the Shoton Festival evolved from a religion festival, as well as the birthdays and death days of the founders and masters of each sect are all being celebrated in accordance with the rituals and customs of Tibetan Buddhism. The special and unique festivals of some particular monasteries are also celebrated as usual, such as the Buddha Painting Displaying Festival of the Drepung Monastery, the Vajrakila Festival (vajrakila: a meditational deity as the dagger of Indestructible Reality) of the Sera Monastery and the Buddha Painting Unfolding Day of the Tashilhunpo Monastery.

7. Architecture, sculptures and paintings of Tibetan Buddhism are inherited and developed. We are glad to see that the Chinese Central Government has altogether allocated over 300 million yuan (about 48.18 million US dollars) to restore and open more than 1,400 monasteries in Tibet during 1980s and 1990s. The butter sculpture has become famous home and abroad as a special art of Tibetan Buddhism. Many schools of Tibetan Buddhism Paintings and Thangka are kept intact and passed down, including the Mentang School, the Khentse School, the Karma Kartri School, the Nepalese School, the Jonang School and the Regong School, among which the Mentang School, the Khentse School and the Karma Kartri School have been included in the first batch of State-level Intangible Cultural Heritage list approved by China's State Council. The renowned frescoes of the Potala Palace, the Norbulingka, the Jokhang, Samye, Sakya, and Palkor monasteries have been well-maintained and preserved, which demonstrate the superb artist skills of contemporary Tibetan Buddhist frescoes.

8. The art of music and dance of Tibetan Buddhism are valued and developed. The Drigung Kargyu music, the Buddhist music of the Drigung Til Monastery, the

ancestral temple of the Drigung (the 8th Tsampo) Kargyu Sect of Tibetan Buddhism was inscribed into the state-level Intangible Cultural Heritage list in June, 2008. The exorcism dance of the Potala Palace, the Vajra (Buddha's warrior) dance of the Samye Monastery and the Zhigung Protector Dance of the Zhigung Til Monastery have peculiar features, unique among the contemporary Tibetan Buddhist dances.

9. The quality of worshippers' religious life is enhanced thanks to Tibet's economic development and the improved living standard of farmers and herdsmen. The well-developed transportation infrastructure in Tibet has shortened the time for worshippers to go to holy mountains or lands, and their dream of pilgrimage to Lhasa has come true by taking trains from several different directions.

It is also more convenient for Tibetan believers to worship in inland Buddhist sacred places as well, such as Mount Emei in Sichuan Province, Mount Wutai in Shanxi Province and Mount Putuo in Zhejiang Province. Some families who enjoy relatively comfortable life are able to drive their own cars for pilgrimage in various places of Tibet.

More diverse kinds of religious articles are produced and sold. Quality and high-end religious articles of daily use are becoming more and more popular in Tibetan households. For example, Buddha niches, Buddha figures, Thangka, holy water bowls and butter lamps, for which only rich families could afford in the past, are very common in ordinary Tibetan families nowadays. Thus Buddhist believers are more satisfied with their religious life.

10. We suggest that firstly more well-learned monks should be nurtured. We hope that the government can continue to support and help the Tibetan Buddhism community by making full use of Tibetan Buddhist colleges and sutra study organizations of monasteries to train monk students. Secondly, more efforts should be made to train talents. We encourage the Chinese government to further support and help the Tibetan community to nurture professionals in architecture, sculpture, art, music, dance in order to ensure the availability of talents in Tibetan Buddhist culture by taking full advantage of monastic organizations as well as universities and colleges. Thirdly, we suggest that the Chinese government should take further measures to crack down by law on the secessionist organizations and persons under the cloak of religious freedom in order to safeguard the territorial integrity and national unity.