

FEATURE

Tibet: Serenity Returns

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Edited by T. C. Peng



LHASA, TIBET - I have been in Lhasa, Tibet, for three days, arriving under special permission from the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government as the first foreigner to be allowed into the TAR since the March 14 riots shook the city and drew the attention of the world. While the situation in Lhasa can be described as sensitive — and destruction of property and loss of life from the riots significant — the city, two months later, appears to me to have a sense of normalcy and ease...

The purpose of my trip [was] to ... discover for myself what is meant by the term “Tibetan culture” and its current welfare. His Holiness the Dalai Lama for many years has said that “cultural genocide” is taking place within Tibet as the result of modernization and the settlement of Han Chinese...

Just 58 years ago, before Tibet became governed by the Chinese, it maintained one of the most repressive systems of feudal serfdom in history. This system was based on a harsh disparity between the ruling religious-aristocratic class—of which successive Dalai Lamas were at the head—and the serfs, who were viewed as subhuman and sold or traded as slaves by a regime that exercised stringent and barbaric modes of punishment in order to maintain social control. If this system, existing from the 1600s until the late 1950s, wasn't a crime against humanity, I don't know what is...

To help with this effort of cultural preservation of Tibet and of China's many cultures, our LTB Foundation will be launching an international platform with the support of the

Chinese government and the TAR party. This platform has been developed with the recognition that the problems facing China and the TAR, as well as the lack of understanding and communication with the Western world, require a cultural solution. This platform will also be launched in order to address and further facilitate China's integration into the global system. We will announce this platform to draw international support, and we will also use it as an opportunity to welcome and invite His Holiness to be a part of this process...

Investment in Health and Education by the Chinese Government in Tibet

Year	1950	2005
Population	1.18 million	2.8 million
Life Expectancy	35	67
Literacy Rate	5%	94%
Ethnic Make-up of Region	95% Tibetan	5% Han Chinese and other ethnicities
Internet Subscribers	n/a	160,000

Investment in Culture by the Chinese Government in Tibet

- Since 1980, 1.8 billion RMB (approx. \$160 million) has been invested in cultural preservation projects inside of Tibet.
- \$50 million has been spent over the last decade on the restoration of monasteries and cultural relics throughout the TAR.
- \$10 million has been allocated by the Chinese government and the TAR Party for further restoration of monasteries and relics.
- In 1999 the TAR opened its first major museum containing many cultural relics from the

monasteries and from the region, which we visited and saw.

- The TAR has three sites as part of the Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace, Lhasa (1994, 2000, 2001).

- The TAR government is working to preserve over 2,300 ancient religious and cultural sites throughout the region.

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