

Conventional wisdom holds that globalisation has made the world more modern, not less. But how has modernity been conceived of in colonial, postcolonial, and post-revolutionary worlds? In *Figurations of Modernity*, an international team of scholars probe how non-European worlds have become modern ones, from the perspective of a broad range of societies around the globe. From vocational education in Argentina to secular morality in Tibet, from the construction of heroes in Central Asia to historical memory in Nigeria, this comprehensive volume reckons with the legacy of empire in a globalising world.

Houben, Schrempf: Figurations of Modernity

Vincent Houben,
Mona Schrempf (eds.)

Figurations of Modernity

Global and Local Representations
in Comparative Perspective



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Planning the Modern Tibetan Family in China

Mona Schrepf

Maybe there are two quite distinct mythical origins of the ideas of ›reality‹. One is the reality of representation, the other, the idea of what affects us and what we can affect.¹

Introduction

The general question I approach in this essay is how two different realities of life in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands of China's Qinghai Province are related and have been negotiated by Tibetan women and their families since 1982. One reality is that of family planning as *the* emblematic state project of Chinese modernity with its public slogans, administrative institutions and local implementers. The other reality is a much more contested and less researched one: the experience and negotiation of family planning's biopolitical intrusion into minority families and, in particular, the private lives of targeted women. In comparison with their Han-Chinese contemporaries, Tibetan women have had to suddenly adapt to a culturally adverse idea of contraception, and one that contradicts their fundamental cosmological concepts of karma and rebirth, in particular in the case of abortion. Furthermore, previously unknown biomedical contraceptive technologies were often forcefully delivered in a condescending manner and in a language that most women did not understand, or without thorough explanation and advice. Birth control also entered Tibetan lives in an ambience of mistrust about the motives of the state, following a recent and sometimes violent colonization in Tibetan areas and the imposition of a whole range of subsequent modernizing projects. In this paper, I argue that Tibetan women's experiences with, and understandings of, family planning need to be situated as part of a more general struggle to find a Tibetan figuration of modernity in which Tibetans must negotiate their own subjectivity in relation to the greater forces of socio-cultural, economic and political transformations in China. The few academic studies on women's reproductive behaviour, childbirth and surveys on fertility rates among Tibetans in China do not deliver a comprehensive

1 Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening. Introductory topics in the philosophy of natural science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 146.

picture of family planning as an everyday life experience. They demonstrate, however, the great variety of implementation practices and experiences in different Tibetan areas (for example between TAR and Qinghai Province), sometimes even within the same township. In order to find out on what these differences depend, I primarily collected personal accounts of the experience of family planning from rural Tibetan women as part of their life stories, along with accounts by those who implement the policy at the local level.²

Everyday expressions one hears nowadays, such as »Peoples' minds have changed« (*bSam blo 'gyur song ni red*), represent a more positive contemporary Tibetan attitude towards the two (or three) child-policy for minority nationalities (*minzu*) in China. This has not always been the case; in the 1980s there was in fact a fundamental fear of family planning among women. Poor medical practices and technologies were used, and sterilisation and abortion campaigns were secretly implemented (extending into the 1990s in some cases). Today, modern amenities are only available to those rural women whose families can afford to educate them, who have a job and a salary, and who can choose between living in a new apartment or moving in with their husband's parents, if they wish so. In other words, those who have the luxury of choosing a modern lifestyle can profit from it. However, the prevalent labour-intensive farming and pastoral subsistence economies in Tibet, require strong, hard-working women and more children in order to make a living. In the end, it seems to be a battle between two different ways of life – the ›Tibetan‹ or the ›Chinese‹ way, although it is a complex issue, as I will show in this essay that cannot be separated from negotiating different figurations of modernity which are closely intertwined with asymmetric power relations and identities.

»In front of the door, there are plenty of livestock. Around the fire pit there are many sons.«³ (Local Tibetan proverb)

»Having a few children in good health means to enjoy a happy life.«⁴ (Government slogan in Tongren, Tibetan Autonomous Huangnan Prefecture, 2005–6.)

The above sayings project diametrically opposed views as to what it means to

2 I thank first and foremost my assistants and informants for their trust and effort to convey their experiences to me. Furthermore, Vincanne Adams for her comments on the oral presentation of this paper, and Stuart Blackburn, Deborah Johnson, Vincent Houben and Toni Huber for their valuable critique on the many versions of this essay.

3 Tib. *Sgo kha rgyu yis bkang yod. Go kha bu yis bkang*. Cf. a traditional Chinese saying: *Duozhi duofu* »Many sons means lots of luck.« It is clear that both traditional rural Chinese and Tibetan (farming) societies share the same ideal and in relation to modern family planning, share similar problems in terms of social pressures by other family members put on young couples to have at least one son.

4 Tib. *Nyung skye legs skye byas te tshé gang bde skyid skrum dgos*; Chin. *Shaosheng yousheng, xingfu yisheng*.



Figure 4: »To control population growth is to increase the quality of the population.« (Tib. *Mi 'bor 'phel tshad tshod 'dzin dang/ Mi 'bor spus ka je legs su giong dgos*. Chin. *Kongzhi renkou zengzhang tigao renkou suzhi*). Government slogan on road signs in Tongren, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Huangnan.

have a prosperous, happy ›quality‹ life when it comes to the size of one's family. The first saying is an orally transmitted proverb and represents traditional Tibetan cultural values and experiences, based on a subsistence economy and life as farmer and/or nomad where many sons and plenty of livestock (i.e. property or wealth) are seen as mutually advantageous and reinforcing.⁵ In addition, those families with many sons, who were able to defend their own household or the village, have always maintained a high social status. The second set of sayings are state family planning slogans which are publicly displayed on billboards and posters, sometimes including depictions of traditional icons such as Tibetan Buddhist statues, monasteries or other items linked with Tibetan culture, to attract the passer-by's attention. They are written in both Chinese and Tibetan

5 The inversion of this saying seems to have come true in that government policies are now limiting herd sizes among Tibetan pastoralists – ostensibly for environmental reasons – who thus can no longer sustain large families.

and promote economic growth, health, and quality and happiness of life by having fewer children. Yet, the state slogans also imply the opposite threat – health hazards, lower quality of life and economic hardship for big families.

The above examples belong to two different cultural productions in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands of Qinghai Province, the region which Tibetans call Amdo where a significant Tibetan population lives in what is a modern Chinese state. However, Tibetan communities in China have their own quite different means and strategies by which to engage with modernity, while also trying to maintain their socio-cultural identities. By contrast, the state media publicly represent Tibetans as being a ›poor‹ and often ›backward‹ minority, an ethnic ›Other‹ who has yet to achieve the state project of modernity. As Rabinow and Rose have pointed out, the biopolitical role taken on by state family planning through organised birth control in countries such as China, India and throughout Latin America is focused on general truth claims about enhancing economic growth by limiting the reproduction of the poor as a prerequisite to modernisation.⁶ Tibetans (and China's rural population in general) are made to believe that by adhering to family planning, socio-economic progress and ›quality‹⁷ of both the population as a whole and of individual lives – in other words the main goal of China's modernity – will occur as a consequence. In fact, some modern Tibetan couples voluntarily have only one child so as to be able to afford the high costs of a good education (connected with ›quality‹) and health services that can amount to several average salaries per year. However, the way in which Tibetans engage with the state representation of family planning by adapting to, resisting or reconfiguring it, and how they thereby create their own figurations of modernity, is conditioned by complex and inter-subjective relations.

In the area of my fieldwork, the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Huangnan (Chin. Huangnan Zangzu zizhizhou, Tib. rMa lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul), Tibetans make up about 66 per cent of the overall population, including both farming and nomadic communities who are often additionally involved in trade.⁸ Tongren (Tib. Reb gong) County is the most ›developed‹ among the four

6 Building on Foucault's concept of biopower, Rabinow and Rose identify three key elements of biopower, i.e. »knowledge of vital life processes, power relations that take humans as living beings as their object, and the modes of subjectification through which subjects work on themselves qua living beings – as well as their multiple combinations«. Cf. Paul Rabinow & Nikolas Rose, »Biopower Today«, in: *BioSocieties* 1 (2006), pp. 195–217, in particular pp. 209, 215.

7 Concerning ›quality of population‹, Sigley argues that what makes out the »strength« of the Chinese state has a lot to do with the image of China in the world, and that it been shifted to a new »emphasis on the physical, mental, and moral attributes of the citizen-subject that are necessary to ensure national survival and revival« (Gary Sigley, »Liberal Despotism: Population Planning, Subjectivity, and Government in Contemporary China«, in: *Alternatives* 29 (2004), pp. 557–575, esp. p. 565).

8 In Huangnan Prefecture there are 142.360 Tibetans, based on a census in 2000 (<http://>

counties of Huangnan Prefecture, bearing the prefectural seat of Tongren town as its main government administrative centre.⁹ There are winners and losers of recent modern development in the area. Some Tibetan families of near-by Rong bo village lost their houses to road construction, while Tibetan farmers from adjacent Sachi (Tib. Sa dkyil) village who owned land lying close to Tongren town have profited by selling it to the government for urbanisation purposes. Recently, Qinghai as well as other areas of the Tibetan Plateau have become the focus of the »Opening of the West« (Chin. Xibu da kaifa) campaign targeted at fostering economic progress in this comparatively poor region of China.¹⁰

Family planning has far-reaching and relational impacts on virtually all aspects of life: on individual, collective and state levels; in physical, reproductive, moral and gender terms; and, on the professional, socio-cultural, political and economic domains. Except for these latter four, most of the other aspects have not been thoroughly analysed, hence our understanding of family planning policies and their campaigns has been mostly limited to a »top-down« perspective. Moreover, locally implemented campaigns stimulate a range of responses and strategies among their targets, ranging from resistance, avoidance and trickery to compliance, with potential for social empowerment but may also result in physical suffering. This »ambivalence« of experiences needs to be contextualised ethnographically in order to understand why, and in which ways, different family planning subjectivities come about. I collected the personal, biographical accounts of Tibetan women from rural farming communities, and related them to each other as well as to accounts by family planning cadres working at the prefecture level down to those operating in individual villages. In addition, I gathered accounts by maternal and child health care doctors and public health officials

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huangnan_Tibetan_Autonomous_Prefecture). See also Huangnan Gaikuang (ed.), *Huangnan Zangzu Zhizi Zhou Gaikuang* / engl.: *A Survey of the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture* (Xining: Qinghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1985).

- 9 Since 2006, Tongren town has been connected with Xining, Qinghai's provincial capital, by a new highway requiring just two and a half hours drive. There is no doubt that distance to a county seat or prefectural town does intensify closer surveillance by and bigger exposure to Chinese state modernity. Thus, for example, the official »spirit-medium« (Tib. *lha pa*) of a village in Rebgong is married with a Chinese woman. They moved to Xining. Interethnic marriages, especially between Tibetans and Chinese, are looked down upon by Tibetans, and couples who remain in rural areas have to face quite a lot of discrimination.
- 10 Qinghai Province entails five Tibetan autonomous prefectures (TAP) and one mixed Tibetan Mongolian prefecture with Tibetans occupying over 97 % of the total land area of the province. Whereas Han (53%) and Hui (16%) are living in concentrated urban areas around Xining and Haidong, Tibetans represent the largest minority group in Qinghai with 22% of the overall population. They remain mostly rural or live in small towns. By the mid 1990s, over two thirds of Qinghai's counties were defined as »poverty stricken«, and had the worst economic performance in the whole of the PRC. (David Goodman, »Qinghai and the Emergence of the West: Nationalities, Communal Interaction and National Integration«, in: *The China Quarterly* 178 (June 2004), pp. 379–399, in particular pp. 379, 381.)

(both at county and prefecture level); by barefoot doctors in *xiang* (i.e. village level) clinics; by former and present village leaders; and, by private traditional Tibetan medicine practitioners.¹¹ The resulting representations are treated as ›social facts‹.¹² By taking family planning programs among rural Tibetan farmers in Qinghai Province as an example of the state's project of modernity, I also examine the ways in which Tibetans negotiate body, gender, place, agency and identity within the Chinese nation-state and in relation to state modernity. The main questions I ask are: what have been Tibetan women's experiences of family planning in the last 25 years and how do the women themselves represent them? What impact does family planning have on the lives of different families? What kind of agency are Tibetan women able to create through birth control; and how, in general, do they understand social change as impacting upon modern Tibetan family life?

Family Planning, Representations and Realities

Much has been written by both Western and Chinese scholars about China's controversial one-child-policy.¹³ Family planning, which is integral to the state

11 Because of the sensitive topic, I depended on local intermediaries in order to get into contact with my informants – thus I was able to interview Tibetan women and some of their family members between ages 17 and 84 in several different locations. Without their invaluable trust, patience and assistance, data gathering would have never been possible. To preserve the necessary anonymity of all my informants, their names and the exact locations of my fieldwork have to remain suppressed. My fieldwork sites encompassed two farming villages (Chin. *xiang*) close to the prefectural cum county town, and two were further removed. In this article I have focused on my material in farming areas that slightly differs from my findings in neighbouring nomadic areas in such a way as farmers tend to be more exposed to condensed places of modernity such as towns and thus be more influenced by state modernity. Household surveys were conducted to test the difference in numbers of children per couple since the 1980s in comparison to before. There is a clear change since at least 1985, in having fewer children, mostly two, max. four.

12 See Paul Rabinow, ›Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology‹, in: *Writing Culture, The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford & George E. Marais (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 234–261.

13 There is an abundant literature on family planning in China, mostly among the Han population, i.e. analysis on policies, population control, economy, education and demography. Most relevant for my own work are studies on biopolitical dynamics, gender and modernity, see, for example, Ann Anagnost, ›A Surfeit of Bodies: Population and the Rationality of the State in Post-Mao China‹, in: *Conceiving the New World Order: the Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. by Faye Ginsburg & R. Rapp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Susan Greenhalgh, ›Planned births, unplanned persons: Population in the making of Chinese modernity‹, in: *American Ethnologist* 30 (2003), 2, pp. 196–215; Susan Greenhalgh, ›Science, Moder-

project of modernity, has been criticised as »the very ground for constructing political authority in the post-Mao period«,¹⁴ and worse, as an issue of either the »genocide« or »cultural survival« of Tibetans.¹⁵ Even after more than 30 years, it continues to be a hotly debated topic of human rights and global concern because of female foeticide and the strong sex-ratio imbalance, which this has caused, as well as the future economic and social implications of the changing demographics of China's population. However, inside China, family planning is represented as a *sine qua non* for national, socio-political, economic and environmental progress and development. At the same time, the state's claimed rationale links science, population and modernity as a powerful tool for both legitimising and exercising state control through family planning. Yet, this seems not to be a process unique to China alone. According to Rabinow and Rose, from the 1970s onwards human reproduction became a national and supra-national problem worldwide, a »bio-political space par excellence«.¹⁶ Close connections between demography and economics were put forward as the prime reasons for this trend, being legitimised by 'scientific' statistics and quantitative truth claims, and made feasible through birth control technologies administered by newly created state medical institutions. Especially in densely populated countries like India and China, which in the 1970s began attempts to »catch up« economically with the West, family planning became a national concern of the utmost importance for economic progress. Whereas state control and the institutionalised implementation of birth planning in China officially began during the early 1970s, with the first »later – longer – fewer« (Chin. *wan – xi – shao*) policy, prior to 1982 it was not strictly implemented in the Tibetan areas of Qinghai.¹⁷ Greenhalgh,

nity, and the Making of China's One-Child-Policy«, in: *Population and Development Review* 29 (2003), 2, pp. 163–196. Only few works have dealt with the particular situation and reactions of minorities in that respect, and even fewer with local ethnographies of family-community-state interactions.

14 Anagnost, »A Surfeit of Bodies«, op. cit. (note 13), p. 29.

15 See the report »Tears of Silence. Tibetan Women and Population Control« from May 1995 (<http://www.tibet.com/Women/tears1.html>, retrieved 05.05.2008) by The Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) that is part of the Government of Tibet in Exile. Several arguments are brought forward on why and how China's population control is detrimental to the survival of the Tibetan population and culture as a whole. Next to an increased Chinese migration into Tibetan areas, it is argued that about 5–10% of the Tibetan population being monks and nuns is already not producing any offspring. Furthermore, abortion is represented as possibly the »most frequent form of birth prevention«, a claim, however, that my data does not verify.

16 Rabinow and Rose, »Biopower Today«, op. cit. (note 6), p. 208.

17 See Greenhalgh, »Planned births, unplanned persons«, op. cit. (note 13), p. 201. However, I have evidence that at least for cadre families in Huangnan Prefecture, Qinghai Province, family planning was already implemented in Sept/Oct 1980.

drawing on Foucault's notion of governmentality,¹⁸ has convincingly shown that China's family planning policy and its aims are not reflective of a pre-existing reality, but that it is creating a »new demographic and policy reality by shaping what is thinkable in the domain of population.«¹⁹

What has been lacking in much of the academic analysis to date, is an understanding of the ways in which family planning as a state project has impacted powerfully on rural family life, and especially on women's lives, perceptions of their bodies, gender roles and lifestyles. Few academic studies tackle the experiences of family planning at the level of implementation looking at the impacts on the people being targeted. Even fewer study the impacts on minorities in China.²⁰ Some studies have been undertaken in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) focussing on Tibetan maternal and childbirth experiences; issues of morality, religion and sexuality; on demographic change and surveying fertility rates in both rural areas and Lhasa city.²¹ However, the conclusions drawn in these studies of socio-physical suffering among Tibetan women that can be traced to their social, political and economic disadvantage as a Tibetan minority

18 Defined by Greenhalgh (»Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child-Policy«, op. cit. (note 13), p. 164) as »a combination of governing and political rationality«, being a critical analysis of governmental policies and programs.

19 Ibid., p. 164.

20 For example, survey and focus group data analysis undertaken by the China Family Planning Association and other official institutions result of course in positive outcomes of the family planning policy for women, such as being satisfied with having two children, enabling them a better education and less economic hardship. However, it is acknowledged that through family planning there is additional pressure on women to negotiate between pressures of state and society, i.e. being expected to bear at least one son to continue the family lineage (Karen Hardy, Zhenming Xie and Baochang Gu, »Family Planning and Women's Lives in Rural China«, in: *International Family Planning Perspectives* 30 (2003), 2, pp. 68–76).

21 The situation between rural and urban TAR is already very different, and again different from my data collected in Qinghai. Goldstein's detailed longitudinal survey shows, in contrast to my data, neither a coercive family planning practice nor the collection of fines for excess children among rural Tibetans (both farmers and nomads), nor even a general two-child-policy implementation until 2000, but rather a flexible one of advisory character (cf. Melvyn C. Goldstein et al., »Fertility and Family Planning in Rural Tibet«, in: *The China Journal* 47 (January 2002), pp. 25–39). Vincanne Adams, in contrast, has found that in urban Lhasa, TAR, between the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, family planning was clearly strict: two children for ordinary couples, and one child per couple in urban work units (Vincanne Adams, »Moral Orgasm and Productive Sex: Tantrism Faces Fertility Control in Lhasa, Tibet (China)«, in: *Sex in Development. Science, Sexuality, and Morality in Global Perspective*, ed. by Vincanne Adams & Stacy Leigh Pigg, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 207–240, in particular p. 228). On childbirth practices from Tibetan lay and a modern biomedical NGO/ Chinese public health perspective including rather positive attitudes of Tibetan women towards contraception as well as abortion, see Jennifer Chertow, »Gender, Medicine and Modernity: Childbirth in Tibet Today«, in: *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 7 (autumn 2003), 4; also Vincanne Adams et al., »Having A »Safe Delivery«: Conflicting Views from Tibet«, in: *Health Care for Women International* 26 (2005), pp. 821–851.

in China, are not apparent in my findings from Qinghai. Rather, I found that Tibetan women came under immense pressure where modern state, traditional family and individual expectations all came into collision.

Methodologically, it is difficult to quantify the situation on the ground. Rather it is necessary to do qualitative research on the different subjective experiences of individuals, families and communities. In contrast to the widely disseminated public state representations of family planning, individual as well as collective family planning experiences among Tibetans have no clearly discernable representation – they usually remain invisible and unheard. Neither secretly executed family planning campaigns nor individual experiences of birth control are publicly represented, nor can they be captured by household surveys. Also, both official implementers and targets are usually reluctant to talk about ›what really happened‹ on the ground. Therefore, personal experiences of family planning in the reported life stories of Tibetan women and families are the only method by which to approach questions about policy implementation on the ground from the point of view of different subjectivities and an understanding of agency in everyday life.²²

On the level of policy representation, there are some facts about family planning which are obvious in the area of my fieldwork. Among the rural population, Tibetan farmers are permitted to have two children, whereas since 1982 nomads may officially have three.²³ Tibetan officials living in major urban areas of China are required to have only one child, whereas other government employees or cadre couples living in minority areas are required to space the births of their two permitted children by at least four years. Additionally, annual birth quotas, that are based on local population statistics, can regulate maximum permitted births in local government units (Chin. *dan wei*), and at the level of village or nomadic encampments (Chin. *xiang*). Children born in excess of these quotas have to be paid for, usually through fines or, in some cases, with pressure for sterilisation after the third child. Local officials – family planning personnel and

22 According to De Certeau, subjectivity is a process of translation between a plurality of experiences, different versions of history, and religion in everyday life (see Valentina Napolitano & David Pratten, »Michel de Certeau: Ethnography and the Challenge of Plurality«, in: *Social Anthropology* 15 (2007), 1, pp.1–12, esp. p. 5. Whereas subaltern ›resistance‹ has been a focus in social sciences recently, I understand Tibetan women's feelings and expressions of loss or actual sickness as well as compliance and satisfaction with birth control as acts of agency vis-à-vis modernity.

23 Concerning the number of children allowed per couple, cf. Jennifer Chertow on the two-child policy in urban TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region), and for Tibetan nomads and farmers on the three-child policy (Chertow, »Gender, Medicine and Modernity«, op. cit. (note 21). According to Eric Mueggler, who did fieldwork in a rural minority area of Southwest China, a maximum of two children was the limit, with three permitted only if a previous child was classified as mentally or physically ill. See Eric Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts. Memory, Violence and Place in Southwest China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 286.

village leaders – additionally determine the urgency and strictness of implementation at the village level. Married couples need certificates from family planning personnel in order to gain permission for stopping contraception, to get medical services, and even for wanting to have a child at a certain time. Family planning policy also regulates the age of marriage; women are required to be at least 22 and men 24 years of age. Unmarried women are not supposed to have sex, let alone children. They are often denied (or are too ashamed to ask for) government sponsored contraception, which includes free abortions, thus putting them further into a socially and economically hazardous position. All this is in stark contrast to the open-ended and non-exclusive traditional household, where generally speaking even illegitimate children were living with and accepted by the main householder, and where birth control was apparently unknown and anyway rejected for moral and karmic reasons (and still is in many cases today). However, Tibetan name-giving practices for female newborns in the past reveal a certain gender bias against many daughters, as the names »Two is Enough« (Tib. gNysis chog) or »Stop« (Tib. mTshams gcod or mTshams chod) demonstrate. They indicate the wish of parents to have no more daughters after this child.²⁴ It is evident that traditionally, and in contrast to sons, to have many daughters is of no interest to parents since they leave the household and cannot continue the family lineage (at least this is true for Tibetan farming communities). In this respect, daughters are similar to sons who become monks, as this Tibetan saying demonstrates: »Daughters and monks are both outsiders.«²⁵

Today, fertile married women, and their families more generally, are the main targets of family planning. Even though they are now familiar with the different methods of family planning employed by the state, many are concerned about their health and bodily integrity because of bad experiences with birth control technologies and personnel. In particular, Tibetans are very aware of the fact that there is a big gap between the state representation of family planning with all its restrictions, fines and punishments or awards, and the actual practice of implementing family planning on the ground. Thus, since their incorporation into the Peoples' Republic of China, Tibetans seem to have created their own bifurcated view of reality. Sometimes, during moments of openness, they speak of having »two mouths« (Tib. *kha gnyis*);²⁶ one for official purposes with which

24 Geoff Childs, »Names and Nicknames in sKyid grong«, in: *The Tibet Journal* 28 (autumn 2003), 3, pp. 17–28, in particular pp. 23, 26. He also mentions two more references that show that this custom does not seem to be a specific regional issue but a phenomenon that is found across the Tibetan cultural sphere.

25 Tib. *Bu med dang grwa pa gnyis phyi mi red*. Cf. the notion of inside and outside and its positive or negative connotations in the following paragraph.

26 The opposite, *kha gcig* (»one mouth«) indicates belonging to the same group/class/community, i.e. those who share a cup together.

they say what they are expected to, and one for private opinions and thoughts, and to express personal experiences. When speaking about ›the government‹ – and sometimes, by extension, ›the Chinese‹ population in general with whom they live as neighbours – Tibetans feel strongly about what or who is ›authentic‹ or ›true‹ (Tib. *ngo ma*), and whom they can trust; and what is ›false‹ or ›fake‹ (Tib. *rdzun ma*), and whom they cannot trust. Generally, because of the state's pressures to conform in terms of thought, morality and behaviour, and because of the many past promises concerning equal treatment for minority nationalities that the state has not kept, government policies and promises are often labelled ›fake‹ by Tibetans in terms of their morality and integrity.

Who you can trust is simply a matter of survival. Trusted people are regarded as ›insiders‹ (Tib. *nang mi*). These can be family or household members and their close friends, members of the same village (Tib. *sde ba*) or one's ›homeland‹ (Tib. *pha yul*, ›fatherland‹) who often happen to be relatives, and members of the same tribal affiliations. ›Outsiders‹ (Tib. *phyi mi*) are all those who do not belong to, or are not closely affiliated with, the category of insiders. They are perceived as potentially ›polluting‹. Chinese doctors involved in family planning are regarded as outsiders, for example, but so are female Tibetan family planning officials living in the village. No wonder they are commonly referred to as ›spies‹ (Tib. *myul ma*). They are both employed by the government and intrude into the most private individual domain of reproduction. As Eric Mueggler has put it, through birth control the state transformed itself ›from [an] abstract external Other to [an] abstract internal Other‹.²⁷ Inside-outside is a major organising principle of a socio-cultural, value-laden and spatial concept that is closely connected with who one can trust and who one can not.²⁸ In this way, Tibetans perceive two different worlds or realities that are crucial for their identity construction and social behaviour.

The state representations of family planning on one hand, and that of personal experiences on the other, are connected by a ›gap‹ – as Vincanne Adams (this volume) refers to it – between different beliefs. This gap is the space where different representations and experiences – of state, ethnicity, family, gender and moral issues – are negotiated. This process of negotiating modernity coincides with Tim Oakes' notion of ›true‹ or ›authentic‹ modernity. He defines this as ›a tense and paradoxical *process* through which people produce, confront, and negotiate a particular kind of socio-economic change‹.²⁹ ›Authentic‹ moder-

27 Mueggler, *The Age of Wild Ghosts*, op. cit. (note 23), p. 287.

28 Throughout my fieldwork and on numerous occasions, I realized the huge difference it makes to know and be affiliated with an insider or not, concerning the openness and trust interviewees bring forth towards a foreigner. On this point see also: Chertow, ›Gender, Medicine and Modernity‹, op. cit. (note 21).

29 Tim Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China* (London: Routledge, 1998), in particular p. 7.

nity, according to Oakes, is also connected with issues of identity and (local) history, issues that are particularly important for Tibetans because of the associated socio-political implications. However, this is a subjectivity that needs to be understood as being bound up with a second concept – what Oakes calls ›false modernity‹, i.e. China’s national representation of modernity as a ›state to be reached‹ through modernisation. In the following, I will expound on China’s state modernity and on the processes of social change on the ground in the context of which Tibetans negotiate gender issues, ethnic identity and local history as well as ›Chinese‹ modernity.

Negotiating Different Modernities

China is obsessed with planning a state modernity, calling it ›progress‹ (Chin. *jinbu*; Tib. *sngon thon*, lit. ›coming forward‹), ›development‹ (Chin. *fazhan*; Tib. *’phel rgyas*, lit. ›increased flourishing‹), and ›population quality‹ (Chin. *suzhi*; Tib. *spus tshad*, lit. ›quality rate‹). The most direct way to success in terms of these goals or ideals, at least in quantifiable terms from the state’s perspective, is via family planning.³⁰ It is socialist in its normative and structural character, calling upon all its citizens to help build a prosperous and ›civilised‹ nation, and promising a better life for all those who comply and actively participate in the restructuring process.³¹ It is a ›Chinese‹ modernity in the sense of it being based upon the propagated cultural norms, values and goals of the Han majority.³² It is modern and socialist because of its scientific manner of homogenising and standardising to ensure both economic and moral progress. In a recent campaign, even different lifestyles become homogenised in the name

30 The Tibetan equivalents for the Chinese terms of ›progress‹ etc. express the alien as well as constructed character of these modern terms.

31 Cf. Greenhalgh on the anthropology of modernity and modernist discourses of ›development‹ as a discursive construction and technology (using, for example, surveys, census and family planning programs), i.e. as a ›field of power‹. The difference between capitalist and socialist versions of modernity, even though both settle on ›progress‹ and ›development‹, she describes as follows: ›At least theoretically, socialist modernity is a comprehensively planned modernity, organized and executed by the state‹ (Greenhalgh, ›Planned births, unplanned persons‹, op. cit. (note 13), in particular p. 198).

32 According to Ong, Chinese modernity is based on notions of culture and nation that were made synonymous with the Han race, propelled forward by a type of capitalism with Chinese characteristics, yet clearly held in its boundaries by Chinese morality (Confucianism and socialism), historiography and territory. Aiwah Ong, ›Anthropology, China, and Modernities: the geopolitics of cultural knowledge‹, in: *The Future of Anthropological Knowledge*, ed. by Henrietta Moore (London [u.a.]: Routledge, 1996), pp. 60–92.

of development, progress and recently also environment: newly planned ›socialist villages‹ restructure ›chaotic‹ farming and nomadic areas into uniform rows of living units with the acclaimed goal of ensuring a better infrastructure, access to schools, health care, water and electricity. Through resettlement and governmental restructuring, ethnic groups like the Tibetans with their traditional way of life as farmers or nomads are purportedly transformed from ›backward‹ (Chin. *luohou*) into modern and civilised citizens – whether they want or not.

Family planning has been used as a vehicle to attempt to force a Chinese figuration of modernity onto Tibetans. It has, however, triggered an unintended reaction and fostered, instead, a particular view of modernity among Tibetans, one that can be called a ›Tibetan modernity‹.³³ This entails not only a reassertion as well as reinterpretation of certain traditional cultural values and meanings in the modern context. It also generates a Tibetan figuration of modernity that is based upon negotiations between self-reflective ethnic identity, local history and Chinese modernity that is quite different from that of the Han Chinese and of the urban population in general. Among Tibetans, what is often perceived as ›authentic‹ is that which is close to Tibetan values of pride, honesty, trust and their own local cultural history. The latter is a rather neglected topic in terms of the different homogenising nationalist agendas of both the Chinese and the ›Tibetans‹. However, it is crucial to understand the role of local cultural history in identity construction. Many Tibetan communities in Qinghai have revived their local traditions after Deng Xiaoping's reforms in 1980. The region of Rebgong, the main area of my research, provides a good example of this. Rebgong's inhabitants have written and published local histories in Tibetan, not just concerning important monasteries, but also detailing local folk religion and customs. Mountain god festivals with spirit possessions, famous schools of *thanka* painting and important monasteries have all been revived. These are partly supported by the government, but are mainly funded through private financing and voluntary labour investment by local communities. Furthermore, fertility rituals, such as the wearing of a charm in order to conceive – preferably a son, or circumambulating a fertility temple praying for becoming pregnant, have become increasingly popular practices. Nevertheless, I do agree with Oakes that rather than juxtaposing tradition and modernity, the insistence on ›tradition‹ and ›authenticity‹ among ethnic minorities in China ›are themselves modern sensibilities, and that (authentic) modernity is not the careening, progressive counterpoint to these ideals, but is rather the tension filled project of building a sense of iden-

33 I disagree with Chertow's economically oriented definition of Tibetan modernity that is too simplistic: ›Tibetan modernity is marked by changes introduced through commodities, technologies, movement between sites and shifts occurring with the infusion of new forms of capital into the economy combined with state regulated industries ...‹ See Chertow, ›Gender, Medicine and Modernity‹, op. cit. (note 21).

tity – that is, a truly liberating subjectivity – in a chronically unstable and ever changing world«. ³⁴

So what does ›modernity‹ mean at the local level for rural Tibetans? One seeks in vain for a colloquial term for ›modernity‹ which they might use. Instead, they speak of »fundamental change« (Tib. *'gyur ldog*), meaning a marked difference from their past, which is perceived as ›traditional‹. In terms of Tibetan thinking, modernity or ›change‹ is generally perceived as both an ongoing and a sudden thing, marking a time of »before« (Tib. *sngon chad*) and »after« (Tib. *gzbug nas*). Local history and thinking is structured along this time line. The biggest change *per se* is usually understood as the Chinese victory over rebelling Tibetans throughout Amdo in 1958, an event that radically changed the power relations between the Chinese state and the Tibetans. However, this cannot be openly mentioned because of the public discourse of ›peaceful liberation‹. ³⁵ In the perception of many Tibetans belonging to the older generation, Chinese modernity was abruptly imposed as the ›one‹ and ›only‹ modern reality after 1958. For Tibetans, to ›retrieve‹ and preserve their cultural traditions through supporting their recent revival have been a means of ethnic agency, the only one ensuring a survival of their culture. My informants over 50 years of age often expressed their feelings of having been subjected to and excluded from Chinese modernity, but also their desire for their children to take part in it so as to get a proper education which was denied their generation, mainly due to the Cultural Revolution. In their view, ›progress‹ as postulated by the state carries an ambivalence and potential threat because they have experienced the times ›before‹ and ›after‹ and still remember their experiences of the major and forceful changes induced by the Chinese state.

›Change‹ is also characterised by learning »new concepts (thoughts, ideas)« (Tib. *'du shes gzar ba*) or »new knowledge« (Tib. *shes bya gzar ba*) that was introduced through the school, work unit, public education and propaganda, which includes family planning campaigns. Among rural Tibetans, ›change‹ is generally located outside of the village (though changes are, of course, happening inside, all the time, mainly due to outside influence). As Duara has rightly pointed out, the depiction of tradition and modernity is a *discursive* representation, i.e. *a way of* thinking about the past, present and future that is crucial for identity build-

³⁴ Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, op. cit. (note 29), in particular p. 7.

³⁵ Thus, in Amdo Tibetan historical documents written after that time, ›change‹ becomes synonymous with Cultural Revolution. Politically sensitive terms such as Chinese ›occupation‹, ›take-over‹ or even Cultural Revolution are – understandably so – avoided terms inside China until today since they represent counter-narratives against the Chinese state's nationalistic historiography and propaganda and could become dangerous if mentioned in the wrong context.

ing.³⁶ This is definitely an important analytical point that differentiates Tibetan and Chinese (state) figurations of modernity. Minority nationalities in China are especially sensitive towards their own local histories and cultural traditions since these have either been neglected or misrepresented in national histories by the Han Chinese state. Nevertheless, Chinese modernity remains something to be sought after, and something that is difficult or impossible to gain access to, or engage with, while remaining ethnic ›Others‹.³⁷

These tensions are played out especially in education, which is now compulsory and free of charge until ninth grade in Tibetan areas. The school system is the site where Chinese modernity is taught to the next generation and where ›population quality‹ is purportedly reproduced.³⁸ Rural Tibetans – farmers and increasingly nomads – have thus entered condensed spaces of Chinese modernity that profoundly influence their daily lives and even lifestyles. Already the choice for either a ›Tibetan‹ or a ›Chinese‹ primary school seems to determine children's future access to modernity. Tibetan medium schools mostly lack a sufficient education in Chinese language, which means that their students will usually fail entry examinations to higher education or chances for government jobs. Sending a child to a Chinese medium school usually translates into good job opportunities, but also can result in a cultural loss of Tibetan language and identity. Young Tibetans thus grow up without learning how to read or write their own mother tongue, and, if their parents do not educate them, they will likely learn nothing of their culture and local history. Next to education it is the increasing urbanisation of both farming villages and nomadic settlements that produces condensed locations of state modernity. Rural Tibetans who visit or move to a new township enter a space of Chinese modernity with concrete and glass buildings, luxury goods, restaurants and government offices that can make their own lifestyles appear ›backward‹, and undesirable. One might argue that this is the course of global modern life and of colonial or state relations between majority and minority groups; and, it is one that is often welcomed by the poor and uneducated, seemingly giving them hope of finally gaining access to modernity and the wealth that it promises. Additionally, Western modernity has an alluring effect on young well-educated Tibetans from both rural and especially urban contexts. Access to it is gained through the acquisition of English lan-

36 Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 90.

37 Cf. Louisa Schein, *Minority Rules: the Miao and the Feminine in China's cultural Politics* (Durham: University Press, 2000).

38 Rachel Murphy, ›Turning Peasants into Modern Chinese Citizens: ›Population Quality‹ Discourse, Demographic Transition and Primary Education‹, in: *The China Quarterly* 177 (March 2004), pp. 1–20.

guage skills and many would like to work in a Western NGO, or even better, to study abroad.³⁹

There is an important gendered aspect to Tibetan modernity transmitted through modern education, in that education can empower Tibetan women as agents where family planning matters and marriage are concerned. Many young Tibetan women feel anxious about traditional forms of virilocal marriage, in which they must leave their parents behind and move into their husband's family household where they must not only care for their in-laws but also their own new family. Better education and birth control can lead to employment and emancipatory economic independence for young Tibetan women, and allow an escape from the family expectations and heavy workload typical of married life. On the other hand, gendered modernity can also represent additional alienation for those who still live a more ›traditional‹ lifestyle. A Tibetan woman farmer with three children who recently moved her family from her husband's village to the prefecture town due to her new government job reported that she suddenly felt like an ›alien‹ (i.e. ›backward‹) among her colleagues and friends in town. This was because she had ›so many‹ children compared to them, and while she had always given birth at home in the village, this was something now perceived as unusual for a woman working and living in town where all births occur in hospitals. Such conflicts demonstrate that even within rural areas, the setting of village or town and of education/profession determines how much modernity counts as a normal, desirable or undesirable way of life.

Local History and Modernity

Since local histories are very diverse in Tibetan areas, and because they play a big role in ethnic identity construction and the way in which modernity is played out, I will briefly outline the local history of the region in which I conducted my fieldwork. Qinghai Province is a multi-ethnic border zone whose long geopolitical history is one of border wars and fluctuating shifts in power between Tibetans, Han Chinese and other ethnic groups, and thus is quite different from the history of Central Tibet, the present-day Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). During the past millennium, Qinghai or Amdo has witnessed an ebb and flow of major and minor invasions by different Mongol, Chinese and Muslim forces, while local Tibetan tribes either affiliated with or fought

39 The issue of Western modernity among Tibetans is a complex one since it is also heavily influenced by Tibetan exile politics, and the mutual fascination with the mythos of Tibet or the West.

against them. The eastern geopolitical margins of the Tibetan plateau were also an important trading zone for the exchange of Tibetan highland and Chinese lowland products, an exchange often mediated in recent centuries by the local Hui Muslim population. Until today, similar socio-economic structures continue to operate in Amdo. Local histories of warfare and alliances continuously inscribed themselves onto the landscape, culture and memories of the Tibetans living in Amdo. Thus, former Tibetan and Chinese warlords or generals became embodied as mountain gods who ritually protected Tibetan tribes settled in the area, maintaining their territory and the pre-modern political and social order. After the largely nominal Qing political presence in the region had collapsed, and the Guomindang had come to power in the new republic, a ferocious Hui Muslim warlord family ruled over much of Qinghai between 1920 and 1950. Vividly remembered until today, its most infamous representative, Ma Bufeng, is still known to the Tibetans as the ›slaughterer‹. It is not hard to imagine that, following the initial Chinese Communist invasion into Tibetan areas of Qinghai in 1950, local Tibetans who had lived under Ma Bufeng's rule might have initially felt that they had indeed been ›liberated‹ by the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA).

At the beginning of their encroachment, the Communists were friendly and helpful to local Tibetans, introducing and offering secular education and health services to ordinary people for the very first time. Thus in 1952, the first secular state school was founded in Tongren. Many of the pupils later became high-ranking communist cadres at various county and prefecture levels in Qinghai, among them were also public health and family planning personnel in Tongren, as will be further detailed in the next section. Most of them had to learn spoken Chinese from scratch, thus they now do not know how to read or write Tibetan, and some have lost their knowledge of local traditions, and never participate in religious festivals since cadres are generally discouraged from doing so. As graduates of this first modern Chinese school, they became responsible for implementing Chinese modernity in Tibetan territory. However, this image of the liberating Chinese state dramatically changed after 1955 during the period of so-called Democratic Reform. Chinese attempts to abolish the local social hierarchies and private land ownership were challenged by fierce, armed Tibetan resistance throughout Amdo between 1956 and 1958, after which the rebellions were quelled militarily. This was followed by a series of disastrous socialist campaigns. These included the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), the Anti-Superstition Campaign (during which all religious activities were banned and monasteries began to be destroyed), and the infamous Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), all of which continued to cut through the social, political and ethnic fabric of Amdo Tibetan communities. Thus, 1958 became the landmark

year for Amdo Tibetans' perception of ›before‹ and ›after‹, of an earlier time of their own ›tradition‹ versus a later period of alien and potentially hostile ›Chinese modernity‹ imposed upon them by outsiders.

This dramatic shift from local Tibetan communities leading relatively autonomous lives as farmers, nomads and traders, to having state-controls imposed upon them entailed their being defined collectively as a »nationality« (Chin. *minzu*), then as members of »communes« (Chin. *gongshe*) and then, after 1982, as official »families« (Chin. *jiating*, Tib. *khyim tshang*) in the Family Responsibility System (Chin. *Jiating lianchan chengbao zerengzhi*). Tibetans were left with a deep-seated and ongoing mistrust towards the Chinese state. Ethnically redefined and unified but administratively restructured and fragmented into various autonomous counties and prefectures that cut across former tribal borders and alliances, Tibetans were transformed into citizens of an alienating socialist motherland. Taken together, these transformations represented an ongoing homogenisation process that was being attempted by the state, with family planning campaigns being one of its more recent manifestations. Oakes concludes that, »modernity in China is thus characterized by shifting meanings that are contingent upon local histories and geographies, and the articulations of these with the state and global capitalism«. ⁴⁰

Agents and Targets

Among the first generations of Tibetan cadres from Tongren, who were educated in the 1950s or late 1970s, there are also those who are today responsible for local public health and family planning. Groups of such ›cadre‹ classmates have established new, modern social networks that now have a considerable local socio-economic and political impact in Tongren. As local Tibetans, they have become model citizens of China, rewarded with well-paid government posts but burdened with the task of locally implementing unpopular state policies. While being able to actively shape the way modernity develops in their social environment, they are also being held responsible for the success or failure of campaigns, something which can cause them to lose their positions. Caught between the local Tibetan population and Chinese state policies, they are nevertheless at the forefront of translating and implementing Chinese modernity in their local Tibetan area. Asked about the reasons for family planning, a high-ranking, male Tibetan health administrator stated, »Before we had many births, and also many

⁴⁰ Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China*, op. cit. (note 29), p. 20.

deaths of children and mothers. Now we have fewer but safer births and healthier children. So the difference lies in the fact that less people die«. This is of course a somewhat blinkered but convenient view. Among those extended Tibetan families, whom I interviewed, there was an obvious decline in birth rates from 5–7 children per couple before 1980 down to just 2–3 children today. But how was this decline actually achieved? The following example of a woman who was forced to abort shows how families were coerced into limiting the number of their children:

A mother of five children in her sixties talks to me about her forced abortion with tears in her eyes. She is the wife of a high-ranking government official, and in the mid 1980s she fell pregnant for a sixth time, despite having taken contraceptive pills. Her fifth child was born just after the implementation of the two-child-policy in August 1980, but by officially putting back his date of birth to a couple of months earlier, she was able to keep him. But then, she and her husband were put under pressure for a sixth child was out of question and would have cost her husband his government job. She was even willing to divorce her husband, she said, just in order to keep their child. She was hoping for another boy to give her two sons and three daughters another brother but then they had to make this pragmatic decision. So they »took the baby« (Tib. *sha nye len*).

There are also mobile »ambulances« in which family planning teams from the county level clinics visit – unannounced, of course – certain targeted villages and perform abortions⁴¹ and sterilisations in their vehicle »for free«. They also collect women who have already had three children and perform sterilization operations on them. While it was extremely hard to find evidence for the secret mass mobilisation campaigns for family planning at the village level which have sometimes been reported, they clearly did take place at certain times and places. Information on them is hard to come by for several reasons. Only fertile women who would have become pregnant or wished to do so in the same year as a campaign in their village, would have experienced them. These campaigns were also secret enterprises, and were never publicly announced, a striking contrast to the wide coverage given public announcements of family planning policies in general with their slogans that function like advertisements for a better quality life and population. When asked directly, family planning personnel denied outright their involvement in control programs to achieve birth quotas per year and per village; they even denied the very existence of such things, in general. Thus, the existence of secret and mass family planning campaigns was only revealed through the personal accounts of the targeted women:

Once a village woman told me that she was »lucky« in 1983 when she was pregnant with her second child – her first child was a girl and thus she was allowed to have a second

41 Since about five years, there is an abortion pill in place making operations unnecessary, it seems.

chance – she was wishing for a boy that year, she explained. The authorities had targeted her village and had allowed only five births in that particular year. Other women of her village were not so fortuitous in 1983.⁴² The same woman also stated that later on, and somewhat ironically, she had to apply for a special permit to get her IUD taken out since she did not need contraception anymore. Her husband had died the year before. Initially, the authorities refused her request, and she had to apply to the next (higher) level of administration in order to get permission to get rid of it, which was finally accepted.

It is not only the targeted women but also village family planning personnel, all of whom are female, who are in a difficult position. They are the main agents, and at the same time targets, of family planning programs at the village level and are regarded as local – and the only tangible – embodiments of state power over women's bodies, especially in the village where they themselves live. They have to become models of family planning by undergoing their own sterilisation and bear the frustrations and anger of targeted women and their families on a daily basis. Physically intruding into the houses of those families who transgress quotas, and equipped with the law as part of state power or accompanied by county medical or administrative personnel responsible for family planning, they can force women to go to clinics for procedures or to the local government offices in order to pay fines for their transgressions. In the beginning of the 1980s, their only job other than giving out free contraception (condoms and the ›pill‹ – both methods not preferred and little used by Tibetans), was to count and report pregnancies and births – a task now increasingly taken over by *xiang* and higher level clinics if women choose to, or need to, give birth at a clinic. Village family planning personnel are not medically trained, and are not trusted by their neighbours to give out ›medicine‹ (the pill is locally called ›medicine‹, Tib. *zman*) since they are regarded as ›spies‹. On top of this, they are lowly paid compared to all the higher-ranking family planning personnel at *xiang*, county and prefecture levels. Between 1985 and 1988, their salary was about 150 Yuan per annum. It doubled in the following years, and since 2003 they earn 1000 Yuan annually, which is about two-thirds of an average farmer's annual cash income.

In addition, these village family planning women are looked down upon because their job is one intimately connected with what are considered to be very private matters of sex and reproduction. Also, everyone knows that they have to report excess births in their village and thus ensure that fines are collected by the *xiang* government, or that abortions of illegitimate (unregistered) children are performed. Nowadays, the salaries of female village family planning personnel depend upon the amount of fines collected. Most of these women come from a communist party background, and belonged to, or continue to belong to, the party's Women's Federation collective from where they were recruited, many of

42 Thus, I guess, abortions or postponements of pregnancies must have been the consequence.

them in the 1970s. Often they are of low socio-economic background, have no husbands and were more or less coerced to take on this unpopular job. Their first task as models of ideal birth control practice was to be sterilised after having had two or more children themselves – if those children were born before 1980.

In contrast to such village family planning personnel, family planning cadres at the *xiang* (village cluster) administrative level are actually official government employees who are not only better paid, but are further removed from the implementation process at the village level. They are often not local inhabitants, which makes less likely corruption or favouritism for those in local social networks or those with whom one has family ties. This is because they usually do not stay very long in a particular position – least in family planning jobs – at any given place. Subsequent transfers to a different administrative unit are common, but depend upon cadres being able to meet set targets per district for birth limits. A good performance might mean a quicker rise to higher and better positions in another department of their preference. Even though being a family planning cadre is a much-despised job, it can also in many cases be a stepping-stone towards a better government career.

Like village family planning women, village leaders are directly involved in ensuring proper implementation of government policies at the village level, which includes family planning policies. However, they are – in contrast to the former – neither appointed by the government nor socially stigmatised, but are voted into their office by the village members every three years. What follows is a personal experience with family planning related by a village leader:

The village leader, 61 years old, welcomes me to his house. After we drink tea and chat about his job and responsibilities in the village, I ask him what he thinks about family planning and how – if at all – he has had to take on any responsibilities in terms of policy implementation in his village. All of a sudden he gets very upset, talking about a recent incident caused by the local family planning woman in his village – whom he pejoratively calls a 'government spy'. The year before (2005), this woman forced 18 village women who already had given birth to two children to go together to be sterilised. If they did not comply (meaning that the family planning woman and the village were to be punished for not fulfilling the set quota of sterilisations), they were threatened with harsh punishments, such as loss of their husbands' government jobs or high fines of several thousand Yuan for non-government workers and farmers. I asked him what exactly had made him so angry about it. He replied that this family planning woman – in contrast to himself as an elected leader of the community – didn't do her job properly, since the local government had given orders to collect 18 women not just from his village (Tib. *sde ba*) but from the much larger area of several villages which together make up the smallest administrative unit, a *xiang*. He bemoaned her unprofessional and ignorant behaviour in neither consulting him nor complying properly with the orders – which would have targeted women in a locally less focused way. He did not complain about the general fact

that she had done it at all, since that was her job. Although they are supposed to work together, the family planning woman had not informed him about her manoeuvre at all. Afterwards, upset families from his village complained to him about this even though he had not been personally involved. He pointed out that he even went to complain to the local government, trying to stop this unjustly targeted campaign. Yet, his efforts were in vain.

Only later did I hear that my village leader informant was himself a victim. The village leader's own daughter-in-law, living with him in the same household, was among the women targeted, and since she had previously given birth to only two girls, her sterilisation meant a terrible personal loss for him and his son – it meant that the patrilineal family lineage (Tib. *pha rgyud*) would be 'cut', i.e. not continue to the next generation.

In addition to family planning personnel and village leaders, the so-called barefoot doctors (Tib. *rkang rjen sman pa*) employed by the government at *xiang* level must also become involved in family planning. They must confirm statistics on the numbers of children per household when doing home visits for immunising young children. In fact, all doctors employed by the government are supposed to report the number of children their patients have, something many do not follow up on properly or strictly comply with. Whereas in the 1960s and 70s, barefoot doctors seem to have worked mainly at township (Chin. *xian*) level, from the 1980s onwards they only worked at the *xiang* level. It did not seem to matter what kind of medical training – whether in Tibetan or Western medicine – they previously had. Their tasks included keeping records of the number of women using IUDs or being sterilised. Until the 1990s, they also helped women giving birth when requested. This task was then taken over by both maternal and child health care centres and family planning doctors at the county level. This clearly shows how the responsibility for dealing with birthing has been shifted to more centralised family planning, maternal and child health care centres and bureaucratic structures, eliminating the (more personal) involvement of *xiang* doctors from the birth process.

The Economics of Reproduction or the Costs of and for Life

In contrast to traditional views on having children (and especially sons, as illustrated in the example given above), the state's perspective is one of rational calculation of costs and of efficient administrative implementation. State family planning must be seen as part of larger institutions and projects, such as the public health sector, and of revised policies since the 1980s to do with education

and economic development. In China as well as in Tibetan minority areas, family planning has become closely linked with the delivery of general public health services and with population statistics offices. For example, home visits by local barefoot doctors who immunise officially registered children under three years of age free of charge, also involve these health workers in reporting back the number of children per household to local statistics and family planning offices. On the other hand, a recently promoted ›biomedicalisation‹ of birth practices through their representation as ›safe delivery‹ and client-oriented quality health services has facilitated and legitimised family planning and birth control measures since about the mid 1990s, making them more popular. Yet, prices for reliable contraception – better quality IUDs and contraceptives with fewer health risks – as well as the costs of birthing in hospitals have increased and have widened the gap between rich and poor, making it increasingly difficult for poor women to control their fertility and have a safe childbirth.

Poorer families are under heavier pressure than richer ones concerning the number and maintenance of their children, unless they find other strategies, such as giving surplus children to relatives. Richer families are able to pay the state-imposed fines for excess children as well as cover the costs for a quality birth in a safe (but more expensive) prefectural or provincial hospital.⁴³ If necessary, they will be able to afford the transport to the hospital, in contrast to their poorer neighbours whose delivery might be hindered by not being able to afford these facilities with possible fatal consequences. A minimum of about 300 Yuan has to be paid to a local village clinic for a birth. Once in a public doctor's hands, a Tibetan family might be advised to go to a larger hospital with better equipment, but which will also be more expensive and further away. A minimum of about 800 Yuan must be handed over before being admitted into such hospitals; if not, admission will be refused. While Chertow highlights the pragmatic choices made by women concerning childbirth when it comes to the use of either biomedicine or traditional Tibetan medicine,⁴⁴ this is not my concern here, since many rural women do not have these choices. Most of the rural Tibetan women I questioned preferred to have children at home if the pregnancy and the previous birth were normal. It seemed to be primarily a matter of whom to trust – one's own health and strength, a local doctor or a hospital – and of money as well as access to

43 Village clinics and county hospitals have fewer facilities and would refer a mother in childbirth to higher level hospitals if complications that make a cesarian necessary occur. The costs for the latter can amount to about 3–4000 Yuan, a horrendous sum of money that can financially ruin a family. Some children are even named after the costs the parents had to pay as fines. Thus, one child that I heard about was called the ›golden son‹ (Tib. *gser bu*).

44 See Chertow, ›Gender, Medicine and Modernity‹, op. cit. (note 21).

health facilities, rather than it being a conscious choice of a modern versus a traditional way of going about childbirth.⁴⁵

I summarise below the fines and approximate expenses for health care and education versus the financial awards or advantages if one has less children. Such figures also depend upon fluctuations in prices over time, upon personal relations that a family may have with officials, the medical standard of clinics and hospitals, and the strictness with which fines are levied and collected. One can usefully compare the costs below with the average annual cash income of farmers in Huangnan Prefecture, which is around 1.700 Yuan.⁴⁶

- a) high fees or punishments in cases of excess children (more than two children among farmers, more than three for nomads), between 1.000 – 4.000 Yuan⁴⁷
- b) rising costs for education since 1989⁴⁸
- c) rising costs for IUDs, while sterilisation and oral contraception remain free⁴⁹
- d) rising costs for births and general health care in hospitals⁵⁰
- e) awards of money and food stuffs for voluntary early sterilisation after the first child

45 Also, it is common that Tibetans will wait quite long until they go and search for a doctor which means that a complication in pregnancy or childbirth (or other life-threatening ailments in general) are then already quite serious and more difficult to be helped with. Sometimes, hospitals can't help much then, and so it happens that still some women die in childbed. This does not add to the reputation of hospitals.

46 This does not take into account the biggest cash generator in the region through the collection of the Caterpillar Fungus (*Cordyceps Sinensis* or »Jatsa Gumbu«, tib. *dbyar riswa dgun 'bu*, »(in) summer (it is) grass, (in) winter (it is an) insect / caterpillar«) that can amount – if lucky – to several thousand, sometimes several ten thousands of Yuan.

47 It seems that it depends on the local family planning personnel how and whether the fines are negotiable. The highest fees that I recorded were until 2000 for 3rd child 1000 Yuan (more than half of an average annual cash income), and since then 3–4000 Yuan, so only affordable for rich persons.

48 According to my informants in Rebgong, primary school remained for free. However, between 1989 and ca. 2004, for the middle school until 9th grade, around 40 Yuan per year had to be paid; for high school, 500 – 600 Yuan have to be paid per year, including fees for books, computer usage, heating. The government helps with students' food allowance. College fees, however, remain very high, they amount to 5–7000 Yuan per year and are a pre-condition to get a much sought-after government job. Only since 2004 are primary and middle school until grade 9 free of charge. Loans at local banks for paying the educational fees are difficult to get, especially if one is a farmer or nomad without guaranteed annual cash income.

49 Whereas at the *xiang* level, the cost for IUD remain rather low (around 15 to 40 Yuan), many women prefer to go to county or even prefecture hospitals for »safety« reasons (since those are better equipped) but where they need to pay much more. Since 1993, private doctors are allowed to open up clinics, so they, too, insert and take out IUDs.

50 To give birth at a (presumably better equipped) prefecture level peoples' hospital, it would cost a minimum of 800–1500 Yuan for a normal birth, approx. half an annual income. For a cesarian or a complicated birth, 3000 to 4000 Yuan would be necessary to be paid. In a *xiang* clinic, however, the cost for a normal birth are around 50 to 200 Yuan – still a lot of money for poorer people and nomads, coming from remote places, even more so.

- f) awards for couples without any children: annual old-age pension of between 1.000–1.500 Yuan

According to my interviews with maternal health personnel, in Tongren County about 50 per cent of Tibetan village women go to a county or prefecture clinic to give birth. Yet, only rarely do they visit the doctors at the county Maternal Health and Child Care centre who are able to ensure safe pregnancies and deliveries, as well as child healthcare including immunisation. The Maternal Health and Child Care centre's connection with family planning and statistics offices (and thus potential to impose fines and punishments for transgressors) makes women's contact with them a hazardous affair. In summary, the costs for safe contraception, for giving birth under medical supervision, of fines for having additional children, as well as the costs of higher education for children have all risen dramatically since the end of the 1980s, making having children an extremely expensive affair compared to the recent past. Additionally, and in contrast to the 1980s and 1990s, investment in expensive secondary education for children no longer ensures a secure government job, and the unemployment level among well-educated Tibetans has risen in recent years. As stated by many of my informants, this is one of the reasons why the governments' 'less is more' formula regarding family size and the quality of life is not just taken for granted anymore.

Childbirth and Birth Control

Birth control is closely connected with matters of childbirth wherein both state and public health services work hand-in-hand, implementing modern biotechnologies for limiting the number of births. Next to birth control, childbirth is the second major area where the gap between Tibetan traditional beliefs or practices and modern technologies of biomedicine and state health institutions puts Tibetan women into a very vulnerable position. As mentioned above, the relationship of inside to outside is crucial when it comes to matters of the body, family and state (or outsiders in general). The following sketch from my 2006 visit to an Amdo Tibetan farming household may illustrate this point:

I enter the family house through a big wooden gate adorned with a juniper branch, a sign that a woman in this house has just given birth and is staying at home to rest. High sand-brown adobe walls protect the inside of the courtyard and the inside of the house from any outsider's eyes. This construction is similar to that of most of the houses in the Tibetan farming villages of the rather fertile Rebgong, valley in Qinghai Province.

Before entering the house, however, I have to jump over a coal-fire next to the gate to purify myself; the young mother needs special protection from any outsiders who could – unintentionally and unknowingly – introduce malevolent spirits into the house, spirits that Tibetans believe might be sitting upon their backs. They could threaten the health of both the mother and the newborn. My assistant, a young local Tibetan woman from the same village, also jumps over the fire and introduces me to the family. I automatically feel like an intruder and imagine how it must be, as a family planning official, to knock upon such a door in order to tell the family that they need to pay a fine for their excess child, or worse, to accompany them to the local government office or clinic for sterilisation.⁵¹

The potential ›danger‹ posed by outsiders to childbirth is so strong that already during pregnancy women avoid contact with them. Traditionally, and possibly for the same reason, there have been no professional midwives who have specialised in helping Tibetan women to give birth. Instead, knowledgeable mothers or older sisters, and sometimes an experienced and trusted female neighbour would take care of the mother during childbirth. Doctors of Tibetan medicine do not seem to have been heavily involved in childbirth. Rather, lamas could be called upon in difficult cases and would roll their rosaries on the expectant mother's belly, pronounce mantras and offer prayers to facilitate the birthing process. Disquieted husbands would walk to the top of the local protector mountain to make a fumigation offering by burning juniper branches and flour for the mountain god. A woman in the bed in which she will give birth and her family must obey many rules if conditions permit. They must keep very warm, eat and drink only warm nourishing food, and avoid outsiders' visits for a certain length of time, etc. More often than not, Tibetan women – especially nomads – used to give birth all by themselves, often having to continue working immediately afterwards.⁵²

Another aspect of traditional Tibetan reproductive practices, which stands in stark contrast with modern birth control policies, is the complete lack of birth control. According to Tibetan Buddhism (and Bon religion), preventing and taking a human life⁵³ runs completely contrary to the moral cosmology of karma and rebirth. To be born human – rather than an alternative birth as an animal, hungry ghost or demi-god – represents the best of the six possible rebirth

51 Excerpt from my fieldnote book, 2006.

52 While blood, especially birth blood, is generally believed among Tibetan (and other societies) to be polluting (Tib. *sgrib*), i.e. dangerous for health and also morally contagious, I could not find evidence for this kind of belief among present-day Tibetan farming women. Instead, they pointed out to me that to give birth in a physically ›lower place‹, i.e. one that lies closer to the ground than the usual living area or the bed, would facilitate and fasten the birth process. Furthermore, to hold a newborn under an animal or name it for example ›dog‹ is believed to avert evil spirits (who like to attack vulnerable human beings) and thus protect the child.

53 Tibetans calculate human age from conception onwards, hence newborns are already one year old. Also, each Tibetan New Year (Tib. *lo gsar*) everybody gets one year older.

states, and the only one through which enlightenment or ›liberation‹ from the inherent suffering of existence is possible. For the same reason, abortion is still commonly thought of as a ›sin‹ (Tib. *sdig pa*).⁵⁴ Also, from the point of view of traditional Tibetan medicine, sterilisation (locally called ›*tshe*‹) hinders the flow of bodily substances whose free circulation is crucial for general wellbeing.⁵⁵

›I will not die from that‹ (Tib. *Da nga du gi shi thug ni ma red*)⁵⁶ was an oft-heard comment by Tibetan women speaking about their modern birth control experiences. Many of the older (40+) generation of women informants, however, reported temporary or long-term physical problems with contraception. This might have been for several reasons: the foreignness of newly imposed ideas and intrusive bodily practices of contraception in general in the 1980s; the fact that birth control was initially conducted by Chinese government officials and work units; the less well-developed contraception technology of the 1980s; and local sterilisation campaigns that these women may have been the targets of. Other younger female informants, mostly in their 20s and 30s, seemed to experience either no physical problems with contraception – usually IUDs or sterilisation – or, if they experienced them, they were reported as rather common or trivial issues. Yet, abortion always remained an extremely sensitive subject among my informants of all ages, and one that was only talked about indirectly. Its existence as part of the state's birth control regime was only rarely mentioned in interviews and sometimes denied, although certain accounts leave no doubt about its occurrence. More often nowadays, abortion appears to be the option for young unmarried women who have an unwanted pregnancy. During my fieldwork I heard of three cases during the past five years where young women died due to birth complications either because they could not afford medical treatment or could not be transported to clinics in time. Even though the issue of a ›safe delivery‹ is now a recognised part of maternal and child health care services, having a safe birth is not supported by health insurance and thus must be paid for privately, something that is not within the reach of a large proportion of the Tibetan population. Furthermore, Tibetan women expressed their concern or contempt for the often mechanical, insensitive and denigrating ways in which

54 However, especially young unmarried women have no choice but to abort because of today's social and political stigma of illegitimate children – contrary to the former Tibetan society!

55 In Tibetan medicine, as expounded in the classical Tibetan medical book of the Four Tantras (*Rgyud bzhi*), the bodily substances are: starting with the nutritive essence of food and drink (chyle), that nourishes the blood, that nourishes flesh, building up fat, bone, marrow and finally sperm and ovum. Since birth control is not part of Tibetan medicine, yet Tibetan doctors have collected experiences with patients who were sterilised since more than 25 years, there seems to be a danger of attracting wind disorders, especially of the heart wind type (*snying rlung*) that can cause madness (conversation with a doctor of Tibetan medicine, April 23, 2007).

56 Colloquial expression when people talk about past illnesses or health problems. Tibetans have a high tolerance for pain and look down on people who complain a lot about their ailments.

the state implements its birth control policy through its doctors, most of whom only speak Chinese. Tibetan women report being treated in disrespectful ways, such as being shouted at, or receiving no explanation about what was or will be happening to them, how they should care for their health following procedures, and so on. This is also reported of childbirth experiences in clinics or hospitals, where Chinese doctors usually outnumber Tibetans. Most informants are very aware that as women they are caught between strict state controls, unfriendly doctors, and male ignorance concerning contraception.⁵⁷ Additionally, at least in Tibetan farming areas, husbands, parents and parents-in-laws all wish for, and expect to have, at least one son or grandson. This strong social expectation only adds additional pressure on women when it comes to the issue of childbirth, as will be shown below.

Depending upon their personal experiences with state-imposed (as opposed to voluntary) birth control, Tibetan women who had health problems expressed them through idioms of physical pain, such as backaches, and a general loss of physical power.⁵⁸ Many reported a weakness of their bodies, such as constantly feeling tired or not being able to carry heavy loads for a long time (often several years) following, or ever since, their sterilisation.⁵⁹ Apart from their own health problems, this confronts them with another dilemma; that of socially-mediated gender discrimination. It is crucial here to understand that in Amdo Tibetan communities, women's ability to work hard and carry heavy loads is an impor-

57 A so-called 'barefoot' doctor from a small village clinic told me that she as a Tibetan women's doctor was the most popular and sought-after doctor of the whole area because women trusted her much more, partly because they could communicate in Tibetan. According to my interviewees, condoms are rarely used on the countryside, while family planning women in the village, theoretically at least, hand condoms out for free. Nobody takes up their service, however, since they are regarded as 'government spies', and the whole issue of sex is a 'shameful' one.

58 Biomedical doctors whom I interviewed generally claimed that IUD and sterilisation are safe and unproblematic methods for birth control. However, several female doctors did admit that the quality of contraception has not been good until recently, many women getting pregnant anyway or having health problems after their use. Doctors of Tibetan medicine pointed to the many female patients that they try to treat who do have actual pain and physical problems caused by modern contraception. Many of them oppose these methods since they are seen to interrupt the natural flows in the body, or causing 'cold' disorders (IUDs are made from metal), a Tibetan medical illness category. In any case, the idea of cutting or loosing body strength, in particular through sterilization, seems to be a very common one among Tibetan as well as Chinese women. According to Yunxiang Yan, rural Chinese women explained this as a 'flowing out' of their life force or *qi*. This loss was then remedied by new gift rituals (Yunxiang Yan, *Private Life Under Socialism. Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village 1949–1999* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 194).

59 The report 'Tears of Silence...« (see note 15) summarises women's health problems because of sterilisation and abortion in China as follows: »The symptoms described are remarkably consistent and include most commonly, backache, loss of appetite with attendant gastric problems, weakness and tiredness. Some report fever and headaches. There are even reports that some women have died or suffered chronic problems as a result of such operations«.

tant gender marker for social status. A Tibetan woman who is considered »lazy« – because she can't or worse, doesn't want to work hard, does not get up early etc. – is regarded as the worst social disgrace imaginable for a family and in a community. This is especially true for the »naama«, the young wife who marries into and resides in her parents-in-law's household. Thus, physically weak and »lazy« Tibetan women become socially stigmatised. They are teased with the name *rgya mo* meaning »Chinese« or »foreign« woman, who are believed not to work hard.

There are local examples of the testing of women's physical and moral strength. One is the annual village ritual of *chos skor*, literally »circling [with] the [religious] law/ *dharmas*«. This a public rite enacted by mostly young and still unmarried women who have to carry extremely heavy loads of Buddhist scriptures upon their backs while walking around a sacred mountain. On one occasion I accompanied them around the mountain and chatted with some of the female participants about gender relations. Two young girls reported their back pain from carrying the heavy, block-printed scriptures. However, they assured me that they would never complain about this in front of any Tibetan man, even when asked about it. Nor did they show any expression of pain when later on one of the accompanying young men tried to »test« them by hitting them on their backs. Complaints about physical weakness between men and women is something that is a total taboo, and appeared to young Tibetan women as something which might narrow the chances of finding a good marriage partner.

The official limit of only two children per farming family puts additional pressure on rural couples who commonly also want to have at least one son. Especially among Tibetan farmers, sons are clearly more valued in terms of continuing the family lineage (i.e. »paternal lineage«, Tib. *pha rgyud*), and ensuring parental care in old age.⁶⁰ Also, several older Tibetan men and the parents of young couples, expressed their concerns about Tibetans as a »nationality« going into demographic decline, especially vis-à-vis the Chinese population.⁶¹ Village

60 Among Tibetan nomads, women can also inherit and continue the lineage. A young father in a farming area of a little three-year-old boy whose wife was pregnant again expressed his strong wish for a second boy, so that his son could have a real »friend« to play with. Friendship seems culturally only sanctioned among same-sexed siblings since there are many tabus between sisters and brothers. Before this birth, he was eager to explain to me the signs that surely, this second child would be a son – explaining the shape of the belly of his wife, analysing his and her dreams and her eating habits, moods and so on. He was bitterly disappointed when the baby turned out to be a girl. He strongly believed that his second sons' sex was switched into that of a girl – a very common belief still today, and even among well-educated young Tibetans.

61 However, as Geoff Childs has now demonstrated, fertility decline among both exile Tibetans and those living in China is a complex issue. It depends not only upon political agendas, but also on social, economic and cultural changes, as well as re-emerging patterns of the past, such as low fertility through polyandrous marriages and the existence of a celibate clerical

fertility rituals in which young boys are showcased as a kind of ›lucky charm‹ are now booming in the region. Tantrists (Tib. *sngags pa*) are busy producing specific charms for pregnant women to ensure the birth of a son, and visits to local fertility temples are also very popular for the same reason. Having many sons defined – and still defines – the strong Amdo Tibetan family; sons have always been highly valued for defending the family during disputes. Thus, a strong family, that is, one with many sons, had a high status in the community, and even today this is still the case. Sons are proudly put forward as members of the village community and are presented to the public in the manifold, annual community rituals celebrated in the farming areas of Rebgong, or in the horse riding festivals on the nomadic plains of Amdo. Families comprised of two or three daughters, feel ›doomed‹ by contrast, and perceive that they are additionally punished by the state for being denied another chance to have a son. But beyond gender preference, children – whether boys or girls – are never viewed as a burden by Tibetans, who merely say, »Where there is a mouth, there is a portion« (Tib. *Kha zhig yod na, skal zhig yod*). Rather, not being able to have children, not wanting them or simply being in a state of ›not having‹ children carries a social stigma.

Conclusion

We have seen how family planning through childbirth and birth control is strictly controlled by the state through health care institutions and statistics offices, doctors, family planning personnel, and a system of fines and punishments. Caught between Tibetan socio-cultural issues and the amenities of Chinese modernity such as health services for a safe delivery and an education that might give them more independence, Tibetan women, as explicit family planning targets *and* as traditional ›culture holders‹, are in a precarious situation. As Tibetans, whether in a self-reflective manner or not, they are having to renegotiate Tibetan and Chinese modernities in various contexts and at different times, and, additionally, they have to juggle culturally implicit gender issues that circumscribe their mobility and choices between these two poles. Tibetan modernity, which is impinged upon by ethnic gender expectations, the local community and state institutions, scrutinises Tibetan women even more than other women in China in terms of their moral as well as sexual and reproductive behaviour and bodily functions.

population. See Geoff Childs, *Tibetan Transitions. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Fertility, Family Planning, and Demographic Change* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2008).



Figure 5: A modern Tibetan two-child family on their way to a village festival.

The tension-filled gap in modern family planning between ›the system‹ and individual human action or agency; between official, publicly displayed written and individual oral ›invisible‹ representation; between state and community and personal goals or experience only becomes clearly defined when examined through the experiences of the various actors involved. The implementers, models and targets of family planning have different collective and individual subjectivities and agencies, while local history shapes the way in which modernity is played out more generally on a local level. From a more philosophical stance, whichever general understanding and different types or figuration of modernity we try to define or juxtapose as realities being negotiated in China, they are also culturally constructed representations that are closely entangled with identity issues. Figurations of modernity are thus fragmented, constructed and negotiated differently by different peoples' subjectivities. Therefore, it is important to take an actor-centred approach to figurations of modernity – one that is sensitive to power and gender relations, looking at specific space and time frames in which ›authentic‹ modernity is an issue to be negotiated in particularly intensified and conflicted ways.

In the final analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of family planning depend upon access to a state modernity and on having the financial means. This clearly disadvantages poor rural families and especially women who are

dependent upon labour-intensive, traditional subsistence economies. Thus, the government's implementation of strict birth control regulations for poor rural Tibetan families may also result in the gradual extinction of a Tibetan way of life, making way for a Chinese modernity with fewer possibilities for negotiating multiple Tibetan modernities.