

OKAWA KENSAKU

A REFLECTION ON THE «INVISIBLNESS» OF TIBETANS IN TAIWAN  
--CLOSE LOOK AT ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH TAIWANESE NATIONALISM--<sup>1</sup>

*Introduction: Tibetans in Taiwan and their «Invisiblness»*

There exists Tibetans in Taiwan. It sounds quite odd that those Tibetans were once treated as a minority ethnic group in Taiwan, especially for those who knows the democratization movement in recent Taiwan, as well as for those who understands the existence of the «Tibet question».

Many things have been told and wrote about the «Tibet question». People define it as a conflict between the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) and the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGE) concerning on the political status of Tibet. Ever since the well known Lhasa Uprising in 1959, Dalai Lama 14<sup>th</sup> and nearly hundred thousands Tibetans exiled to India and adjacent countries. They established the TGE and have been claiming Tibetan independence from China at first, then perfect autonomy in recent times. The concern with the «Tibet question» has been growing not only because of its international political aspect, but also of its refugee problem aspect. The generous help which was given by the Government of India, as well as the famousness of the

---

<sup>1</sup> The research which this article based on is conducted by the help of the Sasagawa Foundation, and the Toyota Foundation. I appreciate Dr. Wang Hongzen of the National Jinan University, for gave me an opportunity to read the draft of this paper at the conference held at the National Jinan University, Puli, Taiwan.

*Abstract*

This paper tries to reveal hitherto hidden group of Tibetan exiles in Taiwan. Their existence was rarely referred not only among Academia, but also within Taiwanese society too. The author categorizes this hidden-ness as «invisibleness», and decodes the structure of this invisibleness by examining both international aspect of the Tibet Question and domestic aspect of recent Taiwanese nationalism. The narrative of Tibet Question always suffered from bitter collision between Chinese Communist Party's view and the Tibetan Government in Exile's. In Taiwan domestically, on the other hand, Tibetan exiles' situation varies from minority to refugee. This change reflects the political change and the rise of new Taiwanese nationalism. From detailed investigation of these two arenas, the article points out that the narratives of the Tibetans in Taiwan is framed in binary opposition, and this structure of binaries is crucial in making today's invisibleness of the Tibetans in Taiwan. The author finally tries to suggest the importance of the idea of co-habitation in conclusion.

Okawa KENSAKU (kensaku@ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp) is an assistant professor of the Institute of Oriental Culture at the University of Tokyo. He studied anthropology, history, and Tibetology at Tokyo, Taipei, and Lhasa. His research interests include the narrative of Tibetan modern history.