

# The Tibet-Japan Relations in the Era of the 1911 Revolution

—— Tibetan Letters from the Aoki Bunkyo Archive ——

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**Abstract :** It is fairly well known that Japanese Buddhist monks approached the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and members of his administration at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recent studies have clarified how these monks played a significant intermediary role between Tibet and Japan, and that Japan was an important actor in competition over Tibet in the international arena while Britain and Russia played out their “Great Game.” However, Tibet’s policy towards Japan in this period and how Tibet placed Japan within its entire diplomatic sphere have been less studied. This article analyzes the relationship between Tibet and Japan at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by mainly focusing on valuable Tibetan letters housed in the *Aoki Bunkyo Archive* at the National Museum of Ethnology in Ōsaka. These letters, composed around the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, reveal that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and his attendants tried to seek the aid from the Japanese government to secure Tibet’s “*rang btsan*,” which is translated as “independence” in the contemporary Tibetan language. I also elucidate how the Japanese government refused to support Tibet due to its policy towards China amid the 1911 revolution as well as the Japanese alliance with Britain, while Tibet’s relationship with China deteriorated. Moreover, by comparing the letters to Japan with the letters to other countries such as Britain and Russia, I will show that Tibet recognized Japan as a potential country that could protect them while facing the difficulty to enlist the aid under the restriction of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907.

**關鍵詞 :** 十三世達賴喇嘛, 本願寺, 辛亥革命, 寺本婉雅, 青木文教

**Keywords :** The 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Hongan-ji Temple, 1911 revolution, Teramoto Enga, Aoki Bunkyo.

## Introduction

After the Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命) in 1911, as well as the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, Tibet faced a difficult task in building its relationship with the new international order in East Asia. Recent research has clarified that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (1876–1933) tried to gain support from the international community amid rising tensions with the Republic of China.<sup>1</sup>

The Dalai Lama, however, encountered significant difficulty gaining assistance from either Britain or Russia due to the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907, which led to the end of the “Great Game,” a rivalry between Russia and Britain over Central Asia. This document declared that Britain and Russia recognized the “suzerainty” of China over Tibet.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Japan became increasingly important as a country from which the Dalai Lama hoped to obtain support when he took refuge in British India to escape from the Chinese army which advanced into Lhasa in February 1910.<sup>3</sup>

Recent research has significantly clarified how Buddhist monks from Japan, which had achieved rapid growth and had rivalries with China and Russia in East Asia since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, visited Tibet and China and established close relationships with the Lhasa government and the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.<sup>4</sup> However, what has not been fully examined is the diplomatic policies of the Dalai Lama and his administration towards Japan.

In this article, I discuss Tibetan policies towards Japan at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by focusing on original Tibetan letters that are housed in the

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<sup>1</sup> The Dalai Lama tried to establish relationships or strengthen ties with many countries, including Britain, Russia, Mongolia, and the US around the time of the 1911 revolution (Jampa Samten & Tsyrempilov 2012; Knaus 2012; Kobayashi 2016a).

<sup>2</sup> Bell (1924: 289–291); Lamb (1966: 108–109); Shaumian (2000: 136–140).

<sup>3</sup> In my previous article focusing on the relationship between Tibet and Britain in 1913, I briefly mentioned the Dalai Lama’s approach to Japan during this period (Kobayashi 2016a: 301–302). I will expand this argument in the following sections; therefore, those sections partly overlap with the previous article.

<sup>4</sup> Hyer (1960), Hyer (2003), Berry (1995) are important works based on the English and Japanese materials. Recent studies have made great strides in illuminating Japanese involvement in Tibetan issues during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by using a wide range of valuable Japanese records. 秦 (2005), 篠原 (2009), 高本 (2012), 高本 (2013), 白須 (2011), 白須 (2012).

*Aoki Bunkyō Archive* at the National Museum of Ethnology in Ōsaka. These valuable letters were mainly sent from the Dalai Lama and his entourage to Aoki Bunkyō (青木文教, 1886–1956), a Japanese monk who was studying in Lhasa from 1913 to 1916, or delivered to Japanese dignitaries through Aoki Bunkyō himself.<sup>5</sup> Based on an analysis of the Tibetan letters and comparing these letters with the letters that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama sent to the other countries, I would like to explore how the Dalai Lama attempted to establish a relationship with Japan at that time, as well as what kind of role he expected Japan to play in supporting Tibet.

## **1 . The 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's First Exile and the Development of the Relationship with Japan**

First, I would like to explain briefly the historical background of the Tibet-Japan relations by focusing on the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's first exile in Mongolia and China from 1904 to 1909, and his encounter with Japanese dignitaries.

Following the advancement of the British Indian army into Lhasa in 1904, during which the British tried to establish direct communication with Tibet, the Dalai Lama fled to Ikh Khuree in Mongolia to secure Russian assistance. The person who became an important intermediary between Tibet and Russia at that time was Agvan Dorzhiev, a Buryat-Mongolian assistant tutor of the Dalai Lama in debating practice who won the Dalai Lama's trust (Snelling 1993, Kobayashi 2016a). However, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 and Russian defeat of 1905 made it difficult for the Russian government to pay attention to Tibetan issues at that time. Due to losing a beneficial diplomatic relationship with Russia, the Dalai Lama started searching for another country that could support Tibet, and Japan began to emerge as such a country in the eyes of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. Japanese Buddhist monks would go on to play remarkable roles in establishing the relationship between the Dalai Lama and Japan.

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<sup>5</sup> Kōmoto Yasuko extensively used valuable Japanese materials in the *Aoki Bunkyō Archive* in her outstanding biography of Aoki Bunkyō, and she also attached Japanese translations of the Tibetan materials made by Tsumagari Shinichi. 高本 (2013).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern Buddhist studies, as which was developed in Europe, received increasing attention within the Japanese Buddhist circles.<sup>6</sup> By absorbing the findings of modern Buddhist studies, many Japanese Buddhists became interested in rare Buddhist canons in Tibet and in studying Tibetan Buddhism as a special esoteric Buddhism. The Hongan-ji temple, which is affiliated with Jōdo Shinshū (浄土真宗), the largest Buddhist sect in Japan, was deeply involved in the movement to approach Tibet to obtain Tibetan Buddhist canons.

Teramoto Enga (寺本婉雅, 1872–1940), a Japanese monk from the Higashi Hongan-ji Temple (東本願寺), the mother temple of Shinshū Ōtani-ha (真宗大谷派), one of the two dominant branches of Jōdo Shinshū, had extensive experience with Tibetan affairs on a practical level at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to his role as an intermediary in the relationship between Tibet and Japan.<sup>7</sup> Teramoto first learned Tibetan and Mongolian at Yonghegong (雍和宮), the most prestigious Tibetan Buddhist Temple in Beijing in 1898. Immediately after the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) broke out, Teramoto, who served as an interpreter for the Japanese Army stationed in Beijing, purchased the Tibetan Kangyur from the Yellow Temple (Huangsi, 黄寺) as well as both the Tibetan Kangyur and Tengyur from Zifuyuan Temple (資福院) in Beijing in December 1900 (寺本 1974: 299–301). He also invited Akya Hutuktu (1871–1909), who was the reincarnation of the father of Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) and the Abbot of Yonghegong to Japan from July to August 1901.<sup>8</sup> Teramoto visited Lhasa through Amdo in 1905 and returned to Japan through India. After his brief stay in Japan, he left in 1906 for Amdo again, and studied in Kumbum Monastery. Teramoto was granted an audience with the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, who took refuge

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<sup>6</sup> More information about the development of modern Buddhist studies in Japan after the Meiji Restoration, see 下田 (2006: 199–207)

<sup>7</sup> The most up-to-date research of Teramoto's engagement in Tibet issues is 篠原 (2009), 奥山 (2011), 白須 (2012). Furthermore, Miyake Shinichirō and Kōmoto Yasuko recently have been conducting remarkable research on Teramoto's original diary and records that previous research has not examined. 三宅 (2008), 高本 (2014). It sheds new light on Teramoto's life as a devout Buddhist, urging people to rethink researchers' typical description of him as a "politically minded" person (Hyer 2003: 72).

<sup>8</sup> Kōmoto 2011. Successive reincarnations of Akya Hutuktu were appointed as high-ranking positions in the hierarchy of Tibetan Buddhist monks in Dolon Nor and Beijing by the Qing Court starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. 池尻 (2013: 202–205).

in Amdo from the end of 1906, after realizing that it was difficult for him to receive support from Russia. Teramoto quickly gained the trust of the Dalai Lama, and they met with each other a few dozen times there until the beginning of 1908 (Teramoto 1974: 248).

Teramoto built a wide range of relationships within Japanese official circles in Beijing and Japan. On November 20, 1907, in his letters to Count Ōkuma Shigenobu (大隈重信), who was a former prime minister in tentative retirement at that time, Teramoto insisted that Japan needed to encourage the Dalai Lama to move to Wutaishan (五臺山) and eventually to Beijing to build a cordial relationship with the Qing court.<sup>9</sup>

According to Teramoto's letters to Ōkuma, the Tibetan Buddhist community had been divided into two groups: a "pro-Qing group" and a "pro-Russia group."<sup>10</sup> In the Dalai Lama's entourage, there were influential pro-Russian figures such as Lamden Kenpo (Bla sman mkhan po bkraś khang byams pa thub dbang, ?-1922), who was the Dalai Lama's doctor and close advisor,<sup>11</sup> as well as Dorzhiev.

Teramoto thought that a Tibet-Russia rapprochement would cause Russian penetration into Qing territory, and that it might result in a security crisis for Japan.<sup>12</sup> Alarmed by the Dalai Lama's diplomatic approach towards Russia, Teramoto had the following discussion with the pro-Qing group:

The pro-Qing group [under the Dalai Lama] said, "It would be a great happiness if we are able to change the Dalai Lama's mind, leaning towards Russia, into sharing his fate with the Royal family of Manchu, following Japanese advice." I (Teramoto) replied, "The most convenient measure would

<sup>9</sup> *Ōkuma Documnts* (大隈文書), ㄱ-14-B0298-0001, Teramoto to Ōkuma, November 20<sup>th</sup> 1907.

<sup>10</sup> *Ōkuma Documnts*, ㄱ-14-B0298-0001, Teramoto to Ōkuma, November 20<sup>th</sup> 1907; ㄱ-14-B0298-0002, Teramoto to Ōkuma, December 23<sup>rd</sup>. The political factions among Tibetan Buddhist monks, such as "Pro-Qing" and "Pro-Russia," are merely based on Teramoto's own observations, and the actual situation within the Dalai Lama's entourage will need further research.

<sup>11</sup> Lamden Kenpo was an outstanding scholar who made contributions to the development of medicine in Tibet during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and served as a personal doctor to the Dalai Lama starting in 1897. He accompanied the Dalai Lama while this Tibetan leader was in exile in Mongolia, China, and India from 1904 to 1912. Ko zhul grags pa 'byung gnas (1992: 111-113)

<sup>12</sup> *Ōkuma Documnts*, ㄱ-14-B0298-0001, Teramoto to Ōkuma, November 20<sup>th</sup> 1907.

be that [we urge the Dalai Lama] to build his friendship with influential Japanese Buddhists, and provide [him with] a motive to break off the relationship with Russia, as well as have a close relationship with Japan and the Qing due to the harmonious religious relationship [between Tibet, the Qing, and Japan]. It might contribute not only to the interests of the Qing, but also to the peace of East Asia (*tōa no heiwa* 東亞の平和).”<sup>13</sup>

Teramoto stood his ground, influenced by “Pan-Asianism,” and attempted to achieve an alliance between “Buddhist countries” in Asia—such as Japan, China, and Tibet—against the Russian Empire, and called this policy *Soro Shinshin* 疎露親清 (alienating Tibet from Russia, and allying it with the Qing).<sup>14</sup> Teramoto also asserted that this policy would be able to contribute to the interest of Japan which had signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, recognizing Russia as the common threat in East Asia.

In February 1908, the Dalai Lama decided to move from Amdo to Wutai Shan. Teramoto met the Dalai Lama two times at Wutai Shan. He asserted that the Dalai Lama should establish a relationship with Japan, and even invited him to Japan (寺本 1974: 268). During the second audience on August 8<sup>th</sup>, he arranged a formal meeting between the Dalai Lama and Ōtani Son’yu (大谷尊由) who represented his elder brother Ōtani Kōzui (大谷光瑞, 1876–1948), the 22nd Abbot of Nishi Hongan-ji Temple (西本願寺).<sup>15</sup> They discussed exchanging “students” or monks between Tibet and Japan (白須 2012: 37–38). Then, after the Dalai Lama moved to Beijing, Teramoto played a significant role in mediating between the Dalai Lama and Japanese diplomats such as Ijūin Hikokichi (伊集院彦吉), the Japanese Minister in Beijing. Since the Dalai Lama

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<sup>13</sup> *Ōkuma Documnts*, ㄨ-14-B0298-0002, Teramoto to Ōkuma, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1907.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Teramoto’s idea of the unification of Buddhist countries in Asia including Tibet against Russia is also stated in his record “西藏秘密国の事情” [The affairs of Tibet, the Secret Kingdom]. Kōmoto extrapolated the year of “publication” around 1929 (高本 2011: n 31).

<sup>15</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama’s biography briefly records that “a high-ranking Japanese Lama (*rephing bla ma che ba*)” had an audience with the Dalai Lama at Wutaishan in the fourth month of the earth-monkey year. According to the time period, most likely it refers to Teramoto’s first audience with the Dalai Lama at Wutaishan on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, but it is possible that “high-ranking Japanese Lama” might indicate Ōtani Son’yu despite the fact that his actual meeting date was much later. Thub bstan byams pa tshul khribs bstan ’dzin., kha, 46a.

was under the surveillance of Qing officials, it is difficult to suppose that the Dalai Lama was able to raise political issues in his meetings with the Japanese dignitaries at the Yellow Temple, the Dalai Lama's residence.<sup>16</sup> However, the Dalai Lama's attendants, such as Dorzhiev and Lamden Kenpo, discussed the future relationship between Tibet and Japan with the Japanese officials and Teramoto (寺本 1974: 291). Thus, the Tibet-Japan relationship rapidly developed, and the Dalai Lama and Japanese diplomats mutually promoted political and cultural exchanges in 1908.

In this period, the Dalai Lama became increasingly mistrustful of the Qing court due to its "New Policies" (新政), which were initiated by the Qing in order to transform the empire into a modern nation. Already in the summer of 1907, it seemed that the Dalai Lama had noticed that Qing officials had started discussing the establishment of a new "province" in Tibet in order to put Tibet under the direct control of the Qing,<sup>17</sup> and he had growing anxieties that this policy might undermine his authority in Tibet.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the discrepancies between the Qing and the Dalai Lama steadily increased due to the Qing's radical reforms regarding Tibet.

## 2. The Second Exile of the 13th Dalai Lama and Aoki Bunkyō

### 2.1 The "Student Exchange" between Tibet and Japan

In February 1910, a few months after the Dalai Lama's return from Beijing to Lhasa through Amdo, the Chinese army, which the Qing

<sup>16</sup> The Qing court gave an official notice on October 9<sup>th</sup> to each foreign legation through the Foreign Office (*Waiwubu* 外務部), which required any foreign representatives with whom he might wish to meet to be accompanied by Chinese officials (*WRAP*, 91, Rockhill to Theodore Roosevelt, November 8, 1908). According to the Qing's record concerning the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Ijūin, Ijūin mentioned his future expectation that the Dalai Lama would accept Japanese students to study Buddhism in Tibet, and the Dalai Lama briefly said "I will consider and deal with it when the time comes". 外務部檔案 02-16-007-02-074, December 14, 1908.

<sup>17</sup> According to Teramoto, the Dalai Lama had received news that the Qing was planning to establish a new "viceroys" in Tibet. *Ōkuma Documents*, 1-14-B0298-0001, Teramoto to Ōkuma, November 20, 1907. It is probably a reference to discussions inside the Qing government, regarding the establishment of a new province in Tibet. Cen Chunxuan (岑春煊), the Viceroy of Liangguang, proposed this policy on May 13, 1907 (四川省民族研究所1989: 921-926).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; *WRAP*: 91, Rockhill to Theodore Roosevelt, November 8, 1908.

Government dispatched in order to strengthen its control in Tibet, marched to Lhasa from Chengdu, Sichuan Province. The Dalai Lama and his entourage took flight to Darjeeling in India and were living in exile there with the permission of the British Indian authorities from February 1910 to the summer of 1912.

At this time, the Japanese government was collecting information on Tibetan issues, particularly after the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama went into exile, through its own diplomatic network in China and India as well as through its relationship with the British government.<sup>19</sup> The main actor actively engaged in contacting the Dalai Lama, however, was the Nishi Hongan-ji Temple. Based on the agreement in Beijing in 1908 about the mutual exchange of students between Japan and Tibet, Ōtani Kōzui sent his disciples, Aoki Bunkyō and Tada Tōkan (多田等觀, 1890–1967), to Lhasa via India. Aoki first met the Dalai Lama in March 1910 in India to give him a letter from Ōtani Kōzui, right after the Dalai Lama took refuge there, and developed a close relationship with the Dalai Lama before his long-term stay in Lhasa from the beginning of 1913 to the beginning of 1916 (白須 2012: 104–107, 高本 2013: 58–131). Tada followed suit in 1912 and studied at Sera Monastery in Lhasa from around the end of 1913 to the beginning of 1923 (高本 2012: 70–97).

On the Tibetan side, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama dispatched Tsha ba sprul sku ngag dbang blo bzang (1880–1957), otherwise known as Tsawa Tritul in Japan, and his two attendants to Japan in 1911, and Aoki temporarily returned to Japan together with Tsawa Tritul. In Japanese materials, he was often referred to as an “Foreign Student (*ryū gaku sei* 留學生)” from Tibet (青木 1920: 12). Just as the title implies, he studied Japanese in Kōbe during his short-term stay in Japan until January 1912, and Tada chaperoned him while learning the Tibetan language. (多田 2009: 18–19)

However, Tsawa Tritul was not just a mere “Student.” He, in fact, was a distinguished priest who received the highest scholarly degree, Geshe Lharampa, at the age of 21, after he completed his prestigious Buddhist

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<sup>19</sup> FO535/13, 6337, Memorandum communicated to the Russian and Japanese Ambassadors, February 24, 1910.

education at Sera Monastery in Lhasa (Ko zhul grags pa 'byung gnas, 1992: 1375–1376). He gained the confidence of the Dalai Lama and accompanied the Tibetan leader to Ikh Khuree, Mongolia, in 1904. According to Tada Tōkan's memoirs, it seems that Tsawa Tritul was expected not only to study the Japanese language, but also to carry out missions personally entrusted to him by the Dalai Lama as an envoy diplomat of Tibet (多田 2009: 19).

It is noteworthy that, after Tsawa Tritul was sent to Japan, in the following couple of years, the Dalai Lama dispatched Dorzhiev to Mongolia and Russia and also sent Lungshar Dorje Tsegial (Lung-shar rdo-rje tshe-rgyal), a Tibetan aristocrat who won the Dalai Lama's trust, to Britain. Lungshar, along with his diplomatic duties, acted as a chaperone to the Tibetan students who were sent for education in London, as one of the modernization projects that the Dalai Lama initiated in this period. Dorzhiev and Lungshar communicated with the governments of these countries regarding Tibetan issues (Kobayashi 2016a). These delegations showcase the Dalai Lama's diplomatic efforts towards establishing relations with foreign countries around the time of the collapse of the Qing Dynasty.

## 2.2 The Tibetan Letters to Japan from the Aoki Bukyō Archive

The Xinhai Revolution in October 1911 and the following collapse of the Qing Dynasty in February 1912 allowed the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to seek a chance to expel the Chinese army from Lhasa and return there. During this period, by strengthening the relationship with the Hongan-ji Temple, as I argued in the previous section, the Dalai Lama's trust in and expectation of Japan were growing as it was one of the countries that were not under restriction of the Anglo-Russian Convention (Kobayashi 2016b: 297–299)

We can understand the Dalai Lama's policy towards Japan more clearly during his exile in India from 1910 to 1912 by examining the Tibetan documents in the *Aoki Bunkyō Archive*. I shall focus in particular on two letters from this collection that articulate Tibet's political views and diplomatic relationship between Tibet and Japan, and I attached the transcriptions and my translation of these letters in the appendixes of this article.

First, Lamden Kempo sent a letter from Darjeeling to Aoki on the

seventeenth day of the eleventh month in the Iron-Pig Year (1911), around the time when Aoki reached India as a reply to a letter from Aoki [Appendix 1].<sup>20</sup> It consists of one sheet of paper and is written in cursive writing, with no seal affixed. Lamden Kempo said, “As for the postponement of dispatching an envoy to you, not only have Russia and Britain signed a treaty on the Tibet issue before, but also recently [the Dalai Lama and the Chief Minister] have been living in the British territory, and it could cause the British to be suspicious and cautious...” This letter indicates that the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama planned to send another envoy in addition to Tsawa Tritul, but he temporarily canceled it mainly due to his concern about the relationship with British India, which had concluded the Angle-Russian Convention in 1907. Since the Dalai Lama and his followers were in India under the protection of the British government, they had to make a careful decision on their relationship with the other foreign countries.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the letter clearly mentioned that Japan could be one of the important countries able to support Tibetan “independence.” It says “ [if] each strong country including you (Japan), having conferred with each other, does not give up its concern for whatever good measures there are, as before, such that the independence (*sger btsan*)<sup>21</sup> of religious and political power in Tibet comes about, allow [us] to repay the kindness [of the countries] later.” Lamden Kempo’s expectation that foreign powers would cooperate with each other to support the “independence” of Tibet is consistent with the contents of the Dalai Lama’s letters to Britain and Russia (Kobayashi 2016a). In other words, Tibet not only attempted to build bilateral relationships with these countries, but also to form a multilateral coalition in the struggle against China.

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<sup>20</sup> According to this letter of Lamden Kempo, Aoki offered some policy suggestions divided into several items to the Tibetan government, and these suggestions were circulated among the Dalai Lama and his entourage there. Aoki’s letter has not yet been discovered, and it requires further investigation.

<sup>21</sup> *Sger btsan* was repeatedly seen in letters from Tibet to Russia in contexts similar to those of *rang btsan* (Jampa Samten & N. Tsyelompokov, 2012: 103–105, OF18617). *Rang btsan* is always translated as “independence” in contemporary Tibetan language, and I also translated *sger btsan* as “independence” here. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the British officials did not always interpret *rang btsan* as “independence” in official documents. 小林 (2016a: 295–297).

In addition to this letter to Aoki, the *Aoki Bunkyō Archive* includes a letter written in 1913 by the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to the Japanese Emperor via Aoki during the reign of Taishō Tennō (大正天皇 [Emperor Taishō], r.1912–1926)<sup>22</sup>, [Appendix 2]. It consists of one sheet of paper, is written in elegant handwriting, and the Dalai Lama’s seal (*tā la’i bla ma’i tham ka rgyal*) written in Pakpa script is affixed.<sup>23</sup>

The stated addressee was “*Nyi hong rgyal po chen po*,” which can be literally translated as “Great King of Japan.” If we compare this title with titles which the Dalai Lama used in his letters to other countries, we will find some differences. In the letter to King George V in 1913, the Dalai Lama called him “*Dbyin ci gong ma ^rgyal po chen po mchog*” (The Great and Most Excellent Emperor), as well as using “*Gong ma rgyal po chen po*” (The Excellent Emperor) to address the Russian Tsar Nikolai II in his letter in 1912. Likewise, in the Tibet-Mongolia Treaty of 1913, the 8<sup>th</sup> Jebtsundamba Khutughtu (1869–1924) was also referred to as “*Gong ma chen po*” (Great Emperor) in the Tibetan text of the treaty just as the Qing Emperors were called so in Tibetan materials.<sup>24</sup> It is still unclear if the Dalai Lama systematically changed his manner of referring to the monarchs of the countries based on whether he used “*gong ma*,” which only was applied to supreme figures, or “*rgyal po*,” which was used to refer to a wider range of monarchs in Tibetan materials. There is the possibility that the Dalai Lama recognized that the status of the Japanese Emperor was slightly lower than that of the above monarchs, but this issue remains unclear and requires further investigation.

<sup>22</sup> *The Aoki Bunkyō Archive*, 49. This valuable Tibetan record, originally housed in the Library of the University of Tokyo together with the other materials of Aoki, was briefly analyzed by Hyer (2003: n18). After these materials were transferred to the National Museum of Ethnology and classified as the *Aoki Bunkyō Archive*, Kōmoto Yasuko included a digital image of the letter and the Japanese translation of it by Tsumagari Shinichi in her book (高本2013: 117, 128 n9).

<sup>23</sup> *The Aoki Bunkyō Archive* 48 is an envelope that contains the Tibetan letter to the Emperor. It says “ [the original Tibetan letter] lent by the Imperial Household Office (宮内省御貸下).” It might signify that the Dalai Lama’s letter was sent to the Imperial Household Office once, and later “lent” or returned from the office to Aoki. 高本 (2013: 128 n9).

<sup>24</sup> The Dalai Lama was also named “*Gong ma bdag po chen po*” in the Tibetan text of this treaty, and it is most likely because the treaty states that Jebtsundamba and the Dalai Lama were of equal status. See the image of the original Tibetan text of the Tibet-Mongol treaty (*Lungta* 17, 2013).

The letter emphasizes that both Tibet and Japan are Buddhist countries, and expresses the Dalai Lama's appreciation of the Emperor and Hongan-ji Temple for its contribution to Buddhism, as well as his hope for friendship. This description of Japan as a "Buddhist" country indicates that the Dalai Lama developed his image of Japan through his interaction with the Hongan-ji monks, as well as through information about Japan provided by them. On the other hand, however, we cannot overlook the fact that the Dalai Lama's letter was not a response to the "Pan-Asianism" that Teramoto embraced. As far as I know, there are no Tibetan materials suggesting that the Dalai Lama sought a coalition of "Asian countries" and that he identified Tibet as a part of "Asia" or "East Asia."<sup>25</sup> The Dalai Lama recognized China as a primary threat to Tibet around the 1911 Revolution, and "Pan-Asianism," which asserts unification of East Asia against Western Powers, might contradict his interest.

Again, the Dalai Lama explained that Tibet was struggling with China in Eastern Tibet (Chamdo and Drayab) and asked Japan to exert its influence on China for the withdrawal of the Chinese army and to bring "independence" (*rang btsan*) to Tibet.<sup>26</sup> When the Dalai Lama composed this letter, Tibet was about to participate in the conference in Simla, India to negotiate with China by accepting the mediation of the British. This letter also referred to the Tibetan delegation, mentioning that Shatra Penjor Dorje was the plenipotentiary. While the Tibetan army was attempting to expel the Sichuan army from Lhasa in 1912, the Chinese military launched another campaign towards Eastern Tibet from Chengdu in the summer of 1912, an imminent threat to the Lhasa government, and the border dispute there eventually became the most controversial question in the Simla Conference of 1913–1914. Even though he does not fully make a detailed request in his letter, the Dalai Lama might have expected to gain Japan's diplomatic or even possibly military pressure on China to defend Eastern Tibet and Lhasa from the Chinese military advances as

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<sup>25</sup> When and how the Tibetan people started realizing the concept of "Asia" and recognizing Tibet as one of the countries or regions of it needs further study. The infiltration of "Asia" as a geographical or a geopolitical notion among Japanese intellectuals since the 18<sup>th</sup> century are concisely examined by Yamamuro Shinichi (山室 2001: 31–53, 580–593).

<sup>26</sup> Aoki translated this "*rang btsan*" into 自主獨立 (Jishu Dokuritsu) in Japanese, which means "independence." Aoki Bunkyo Archive, 16.

I will argue in the next section.

### 2.3 The Japanese Reaction to the Letters

The Dalai Lama's effort to enlist Japan's support for Tibet was, ultimately, not successful in this period. Even though I have not discovered any replies from Japan to the above two Tibetan letters of Lamden Kenpo and the Dalai Lama, the following Japanese materials indicate that the Japanese government did not have intention to fulfill the Dalai Lama's requests.

After the 1911 Revolution broke out, the Japanese government received the letter and the statue of Buddha, which had been housed in the Potala Palace, from the Dalai Lama to Meiji Tennō (明治天皇 [Emperor Meiji]) in April 1912 through Shibata Yōjirō (柴田要治郎), the acting General Consul in Calcutta. Uchida Yasuya (内田康哉), the Japanese Foreign Minister, however, declined to present them to the Emperor, most likely because he was concerned that the acceptance of the letter and gifts from the Dalai Lama would conflict with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance renewed in 1905 and re-extended in 1911, which obliged Japan to defend British India if it faced a security threat.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to this, according to Shibata's report to Uchida, Shibata received a visit from a Tibetan envoy on May 12, 1912, called "Niijan (ニイジャン)," who was "a merchant officially in service to the government" (*goyō shōnin* 御用商人), "managing the government's financial issues and providing advice to the government on important state affairs."<sup>28</sup> I am certain that he was Panda Nyima Gyeltsen (Spang mda'nyi ma rgyal mtshan), an influential merchant from the Kham region.<sup>29</sup> He escorted the Dalai Lama with his armed subordinates when the Tibetan leader went into exile in Darjeeling.<sup>30</sup> In his

<sup>27</sup> On the second and third Anglo-Japanese Alliance, see 寺本 (1999: 53–115, 499–526) and 千葉 (2008: 159–163, 219–227). Shirasu carefully examined the Japanese and English translated versions of the letter and pointed out the possibility that the original Tibetan documents were still housed in the Foreign Ministry; it requires further exploration (白須 2011: 363–364). However, this does not mean there is no correspondence between the Dalai Lama and the Imperial Household in Japan. According to Aoki's account, when the Emperor Meiji passed away, the Dalai Lama sent a telegram of condolence to the Imperial Household via Ōtani Kōzui on August 7, 1912, and the Imperial Household also sent back correspondence to the Dalai Lama through Hongan-ji Temple. 青木 (1920: 22, 31–32).

<sup>28</sup> 外務省記録, Series 1, Category 4, Section 1, Full set of documents on the negotiation between Britain and the Qing about Tibet, Vol. 1, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1912, Shibata to Uchida.

meeting with Shibata, he said that Tibet had decided to declare “independence,” but it was seriously concerned about retaliation from China. He asked Shibata if Japan could put Tibet under its protectorate and sell arms to Tibet through Manchuria and Mongolia. He emphasized that Tibet was desperately lacking weapons against the Chinese advancement towards Tibet and also complained that Britain and Russia could not support the Tibetan military because of the restriction imposed by the agreement between the two governments.

Shibata expressed his concern that making Tibet a protected state under Japan might contradict Japan’s non-intervention policy towards the revolution in China, as well as its alliance with Britain; likewise, providing arms and ammunition also could violate the neutral position of Japan, even though Shibata did not deny the potential that “private companies” might commit to an arms trade with Tibet<sup>31</sup>. Uchida, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, declined the requests from Nyima Gyeltsen in the confidential documents to Ijūin, the Minister in Beijing.<sup>32</sup> The Japanese government’s foreign policy approach towards China during the 1911 revolution was cooperation with other powers such as Britain and Russia,<sup>33</sup> and so it was very difficult for the Japanese government to provide Tibet with diplomatic and military support without recognition from these neighboring powers.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, newly-emerging Tibetan specialists in

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<sup>29</sup> Carole McGranahan concisely explains the growth of the Pandatsang family (Spa mda’ tshang), the Tibetan merchant’s family in Kham, including Nyima Gyeltsen. McGranahan (2002: 105–112).

<sup>30</sup> Foreign Department, Secret-External, Proceedings, June 1910 Nos. 276–550, Part A, No. 480, Achoons Sering, Traffic Mohurir to W.M. Crawford, Esq., Deputy Commissioner, February 25, 1910.

<sup>31</sup> 外務省記録, Series 1, Category 4, Section 1, Full set of documents on the negotiation between Britain and the Qing about Tibet, Vol. 1, May 14, 1912, Shibata to Uchida.

<sup>32</sup> 外務省記録, Series 1, Category 4, Section 1, Full set of documents on the negotiation between Britain and the Qing about Tibet, Vol. 1, May 17, 1912, Uchida to Ijūin.

<sup>33</sup> Among policy-makers in the Japanese government, this policy was almost identical to that toward other regions apart from Tibet, including Manchuria, in which Japan had a vital interest. The Office of the General Staff of the Army (*rikugun sanbō honbu* 陸軍参謀本部) was once planning to put “Manchuria and Mongolia” under the protectorate of Japan, but it was not approved by the government. 中見 (2013: 113–124).

Japan, such as Teramoto Enga and Aoki Bunkyō, played a significant role in mediating between Tibet and Japan, by establishing relationships with the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama developed his understanding of Japan as a “Buddhist” country mainly through his contacts with these Hongan-ji temple monks. Moreover, due to the restrictions of the Anglo-Russian Convention, Japan became one of the potential countries that the Dalai Lama hoped to gain support from, in order to confront the Chinese military encroachment.

The Dalai Lama eventually failed to obtain aid from the Japanese government in the era of the 1911 revolution. Nevertheless, the analysis of Tibet’s relationship with Japan during this period will offer new insight into how the Dalai Lama developed his diplomacy towards foreign countries. He dispatched fitting envoys according to the specificities of each country: monks such as Tsawa Tritul and Dorzhiev to the countries of Japan, Mongolia, and Russia, which the Dalai Lama perceived as supporting Buddhism; as well as the secular aristocrat, Lungshar, to Britain, in hopes of developing future modernization projects for Tibet. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama’s letters to Japan, Britain, and Russia indicate that he not only attempted to establish bilateral relationships with these countries, but also tried to form a multilateral coalition to implement effective pressure on China and to assist Tibet. All of these policies constituted important components of the Dalai Lama’s entire strategy to participate in the international community around the time of the collapse of the Qing Dynasty.

## Appendix 1

Lamen Kempo's letter to Aoki Bunkyo

(*Aoki Bunkyo Archive*, No. 23)

mkhyen brtse'i spyan stong bkra ba phyag mdzad mi si sar 'a o kyi rin po cher / stabs 'bul / sngon du de nas gsung bris don mtshan zhib 'khod gnang 'byor don gsal ^gong sa srid blon lhan rgyas su ^snyan sgron zhu 'os de 'phral zhus zin cing / sku nyid kyis rang cag nang bstan la rgya gcig bzung gi bod mi las lhag pa'i bstan srid skor 'phral yun bde skyid 'byung thabs [d]gong[s] bzhed rgya che gting gzab kyi 'char gzhis don mtshan rim gnang legs byus zol med dngos 'brel stabs ^gong blon rnams kyang thugs kyi dgyes pa che cher bltas shing / kho bo yang dga' gus spro gsum gyi gnas su 'gyur / phyogs der mi drag ched rdzong brkyang rgyu bod don skor de snga ru dbyin ching[s] yig sngon bzhag khar/ deng skabs dbyin ji'i khongs bzhugs mus la dbyin ji dwogs 'dregs yong gzhir gnas skabs mi drag mngags rdzong mdzad bder ma 'gyur cing / 'on kyang de ga sogs rgyal khag che btsan khag nas 'phyar ba gru 'degs kyis don snying bod kyi bstan srid dbang byus sger btsan zhig rang yong ba'i thabs tshul legs byus ci mchis sngar bzhin thugs 'khur 'dor med nas / slar drin gso zhus 'thus dang / de phyogs rigs gnas slob spel du zho drung bsod nams ji phebs ltar gtong rtsis kyang / kho pa deng dus bsdad min la ring min 'byor rgyur de mtshams ched rdzong zhus chog pa ma zad / sku zhabs khrid sprul mchog la sngon chas(chad) kyang / nyid nas phan grogs gang zab nang gcig mi ltar gnang 'dug pa da dung yang gang cir phan 'gyur rogs ram mdzad 'os ci mchis dam don zhu rgyu bcas zab 'jags mkhyen mkhyen mkhyen / rten lha rdzas dbang gis mdangs ldan bcas rdor gling nang khang nas bla sman mkhan pos zla 11 tshes 17 la 'bul /

### Translation

Dear Mr. Aoki Rinpoche, trustee, who has 1,000 eyes of wisdom and compassion.

Writing in brief. A letter, with items written in detail, arrived from your side the other day. It clearly mentions that it is right to report [this letter to] both the Dalai Lama and the Minister of State, and I did so immediately. We [Tibetans and Aoki] share devotion to Buddhism, [and on top of this,] so that peace and happiness will be brought to religions and politics in the present and future, you revealed, one by one, the detail of a plan that [you] extensively and deeply considered more than the Tibetan people did. Since [those] great strategies [which you suggested] are sincere and true, I saw that everyone including the Dalai Lama and the Minister has become more and more pleased. I also came to have the three states of mind: love, respect, and happiness.

As for the postponement of dispatching an envoy to you, not only have Russia and Britain signed a treaty on the Tibet issue before, but also recently [the Dalai Lama and the Minister] have been living in the British territory, and it could cause the British to be suspicious and cautious [if we send the envoy] . [Therefore] it would be difficult to dispatch the envoy presently. However, [if] each strong country including you (Japan), having conferred with each other, does not give up its concern for whatever good measures there are, as before, such that the “independence” of religious and political power in Tibet comes about, allow [us] to repay the kindness [of the countries] later.

[We] plan to send Shodrung Sonam [to Japan] as soon as [he] reaches here for the sake of developing the study and education [of Tibetan Buddhism in Japan] . He is absent now, but nevertheless expected here soon, so allow us to send him at that time. Moreover, you have given [Lama] Tritrul maximum support and treated him like family so far. Please keep in mind that I sincerely expect [you] will continue doing your best in terms of assistance which minds [his] welfare in the future. [Together with this] Katag [scarf] that shines with power, Lamden Khenpo sends [this letter] from the place where attendants [of the Dalai Lama] reside in Darjeeling on the 17<sup>th</sup> of the 11<sup>th</sup> month [in the Tibetan calendar] .

## Appendix 2

The 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to the Japanese Emperor via Aoki Bunkyō

(*Aoki Bunkyō Archive*, No. 49)

bsod nams stobs kyi mngon mtho nyi hong rgyal po chen po mchog gi drung  
du / deng / rgyal po chen po bar der sku gzugs bde min dkon mchog gi thugs  
rjes da cha sing dwangs thub pa ngos kyang blo bder gyur / bod dang / nyi  
hong gnyis nang bstan gcig gyur la brten snga lo 'di ga'i slob ma sprul sku  
ngag dbang blo bzang po'o 'byo de phyogs bskyod skabs hong 'gan ji dang /  
rgyal po chen pos nang bstan lar rgyar dgongs pa'i rogs phan gang drag gngang  
'dug pa thugs rje che / deng skabs bod rgya lab rtsod skor rdo gling du dbyin  
bod rgya gsum gyi dpon rigs 'dzoms gtan stabs 'di nas srid 'dzin nang blon  
bshad sgra ba phebs rgyu yin rung / rgya phyogs nas bod sa dngos gnas khams  
chab brag khul dmag mi btang te khrims 'gal byed mus la rgya dmag phyir  
'then gyi bod ljongs rang btsan yong thabs 'phral phug bod don 'jog bzo legs  
thon 'byung ba'i rgya phyogs su shugs bskyed rogs mgon gang zab gngang lugs  
ma zad / mthun lam gsung bris phebs 'os yang yang yod pa zhu / rten kha btags  
dang / sangs rgyas kyi sku brnyan bcas ^tā la'i bla mas bod lugs chu glang zla  
5 tshes 22 la phul / seal (tā la'i bla ma'i tham ka rgyal)

### Translation

Dear His Majesty the Great King of Japan who has the highest power of merit,  
[It seems that] recently, the Great King was under the weather for a while, but  
it is comforting to me as well to know that currently you have completely  
gotten well thanks to the three jewels.

I express gratitude that, since both Tibet and Japan are Buddhist  
[countries], a few years ago, when the “student” Trulku Lozang Pujio from our  
side (Tibet) visited your side (Japan), Honganji Temple and the Great King [in  
Japan] assisted him as best as possible out of devotion to Buddhism.

Currently, as for the dispute between Tibet and China, because it was

decided that the representatives from the three, Tibet, China and Britain, would gather in Darjeeling, the Minister of State Shatra Penjor Dorje from our side plans to visit [there]. However, China sent an army to Chamdo and Drayap in Kham region where our territory truly is, and continues to commit illegal actions (illegal occupation). If it pleases you, you might support [Tibet] by [having Japan] exert pressure on China as best as it can, such that “independence” will be brought to Tibet through the evacuation of the Chinese army, and such that a good outcome will be obtained for Tibetan affairs in the present and future. [As such, we are] looking forward to continuously receiving letters of [our] friendship.

[I send this letter] together with presents such as [this] Katag [scarf] and [this] statue of Buddha. The Dalai Lama sent [this letter] on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the Water-Ox year in the Tibetan calendar.

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Thub bstan byams pa tshul khriims bstan 'dzin. *Lhar bcas srid zhi'i gtsug rgyan gong sa rgyal ba'i dbang po bka' drin mtshungs med sku phreng bcu gsum pa chen po'i rnam par thar pa rgya mtsho lta bu las mdo tsam brjod pa ngo mtshar rin po che'i phreng ba.* In *The Collected Works of the 13th Dalai Lama*. (Śata-piṭaka Series, vols. 287–288). NewDelhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1982.

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