THREE MONGOLIAN-TIBETAN AUTHORS

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In this paper, I would like to give a brief overview of literary production in Tibetan by Mongolians in Henan County. Henan County lies in the southeast part of Qinghai Province, China. The original inhabitants of Henan County were Qoshot Mongolians, but nowadays the county has basically been integrated into Tibetan culture. In 1954, the Henan Mongolian Autonomous County was established.

In 2002, there were ten ethnic groups in Henan County, including the Mongolian, the Tibetan, the Han, the Tu, etc. The total population was 30,100, 93.4% of which were Mongolians, or 28,113 in number. Today, for historical, environmental, and other reasons, only a small number of people can speak Mongolian. Instead, Tibetan is commonly used, while Chinese is the official language. At the present time, only authors in Henan County can be representative of Mongolian literature in Tibetan.

Contemporary Tibetan literature, first represented by Dhondup Gyal, began in the early 1980s. In fact, the writers of Henan were born alongside contemporary Tibetan literature. In those days, several of us interested in literature in Henan County wrote novels and poems as we read Western literature. We would often meet up and talk about literature, as well as girls and wine. We organised an association called the ‘Literary Association of Henan County for Amateur’. We bought paper and cut stencils all by ourselves, and ran a literary periodical named Zequ River, publishing works by authors both of Henan County and other places. Some works later became classics in Tibetan literature, such as my novel, Ralo. In 1986, Jangbu and I (among others) shot the photographic novel, What Else Do We Have? in Lanzhou with an inexpensive camera. Due to poor conditions the novel did not get published, but it was the first photographic novel in Tibetan. It was only sixteen

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1 Translated from the Chinese by Reggie Le (Le Guobin), Yangdon Dhondup and Steven J. Venturino (eds).
years later that photographic novels were introduced as a form of art in the magazine *Sbrang char’s* second issue of the year 2003. Thus, over the past twenty years, authors of Henan County have produced two novels, five novelettes, over 100 short stories, over 1,000 poems, including long poems, nearly 100 prose articles as well as commentaries, travels notes, plays, and reportage. Twenty personal anthologies have been published. Some of the works have been selected by diverse anthologies and Tibetan college textbooks, and some of them have been translated into Mongolian, English, French, Swedish, Italian, Chinese, and other languages, and published either domestically or abroad. Scores of works by four or five of these writers have won literary awards at a provincial level or above, including the Five Provinces Award for Tibetan Literature.

Kunshok kyab, a very influential writer of works such as “On the legal scales” and “Madame Detso”, has shifted from literature to politics. Long Zhibo, author of the classic, *Journeys of the Black Horse*, has passed away. Nevertheless, the whole body of literary writers is growing all the time, from five or six people in the beginning to over twenty people at the present time. It is arguably due to mutual influence that there have sprung up so many literary amateurs in Henan County, particularly when you consider that, at the beginning of our writing careers, the poet Jangbu, the translator Gong Baojie (Gongbo ji), who made the Tibetan translation of “Jitan Jiali” (*Gitānjali*), and I all used to teach at Henan County Nationalities Middle School. Under our influence, other people became captivated by literature and began to publish works in their school days. For instance, the poet Nida is both a student of the then Nationalities Middle School and the poet Jangbu’s brother, the female poet Dickyi Dolma, is both my student and my relative. There are other factors apart from mutual influence. Firstly, like other grassland peoples, the people of Henan County are broad-minded, extroverted, and fond of cracking jokes with one another. Some jokes come in a long form, full of humour and sidesplitting hyperbole. This is of much help to literary writing, especially in the use of literary language, at least in my opinion. Secondly, grassland children go to school at a late age—normally they go to school at around the age of 10, and I myself went to school at the age of 13. We were able to ride yaks, and during winter and summer vacations we would help our families graze the cattle. Therefore we are all familiar with the life and production on the pastureland.