Introduction

How on earth do all these thousands of monks spend their time? How are they supported? And what good, if any, do they do?

—SPENCER CHAPMAN [1938] 1984: 171

THE SOCIETAL ROLE OF MONKS AND MONASTERIES

Monasteries traditionally played a large role in the lives of ordinary people in Tibet. To date, however, relatively little is known about the role of these monasteries and their inhabitants in Tibetan society. Still, the impact of monastic Buddhism on other expressions of Buddhism as well as on a wide range of aspects of Tibetan culture has been tremendous. By contrast, whereas Christian monasticism is only of secondary importance to its faith,[1] Buddhist monasticism is generally seen as primary to Buddhism. Its importance is brought to the fore both in Buddhist doctrine and Buddhist practice. It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that Buddhist monastic institutions not only were a religious "driving force" but also organizations that dealt with so much more than religion alone. In Tibet, as in other countries where Buddhism was adopted as the dominant religion, monasteries came to be major players in politics, economics, culture, art, and society as a whole. This book investigates the role and position of these Buddhist monasteries in Tibetan societies.

While the Christian monastic institution, as it existed in medieval Europe, is seen as the earliest form of organization and a model for later institutions such as schools, orphanages and hospitals, the Buddhist monastic community, according to Spiro, has provided no model for the organization of lay society.[2] Although it is doubtful that this remark is applicable to all Buddhist cultures, Spiro's comment shows how this notion of religious specialists as guardians of social institutions is ingrained in the psyche of many modern (Western) thinkers and commentators— be they academically or otherwise affiliated. People who are aware of the role that Christian monasticism has played throughout history regularly associate the

clerical role with particular worldly concerns, social service, community welfare, economic justice, and charity work. Evidence for this influence is found throughout the history of the Christian church.[3] This is what raises the question of why certain other religions and non-Christian societies have *not* led to the same types of ubiquitous institutions; it is difficult not to view the other through the lens of one's own cultural and religious background. Even though this book does engage the above question—simply put: "why not Buddhism?"—it is not of primary importance. Here, the starting point is the emic position—that is to say, how (monastic) Buddhists view society and the duties and rights of individuals and institutions, and further, how monks actually put these views into practice.

The level of influence of any given religion on a society or a culture and the nature of the relationship between doctrine and reality, theory and practice, are much debated issues. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine these relationships. As Spiro contends: "It is one thing to assert that religion has a specified influence on one or another of a society's social or cultural institutions, and another to demonstrate it."[4] Until recently, it was seen as acceptable to explain social practices in societies on the basis of their religious doctrine, often with written texts as the sole source. This seems particularly to have been the case with regard to Buddhism, both within Buddhist Studies and outside of it. Such method of inquiry tends to yield the result—perhaps unsurprisingly—that reality and doctrine are often at odds with each other. Or so they seem. The dichotomies, problems, and contradictions that are blatantly obvious to the Buddhist Studies specialist are often invisible to Buddhists themselves, including the Buddhist literati. Rather than continuously looking for paradoxes, it is more useful to take the perspective of Buddhists as the point of departure. At the same time, one also should not uncritically reiterate certain "standard" Buddhist narratives that have evolved over time. Nonetheless, these narratives—and perhaps more importantly—the issues about which they remain silent, need to be tested and investigated.

Collins's *Selfless Persons* investigates "how the fact of social differences in thought and practice are taken account of *by Buddhist doctrine itself,* and how they affect it."[5] Here, I propose the inverse of this approach. In other words, I want to explore the ways in which social differences and relationships existed within a Buddhist society in practice and, subsequently, to examine whether—if at all— these differences were seen to be justified by aspects of Buddhist thinking by figures who had an active, authoritative role within monastic communities. Here the point of departure is not "Buddhist doctrine" but realities on the ground.

In this study the focus is on pre-modern Tibet, by which I mean the period before 1959.[6] When we examine pre-modern Tibetan Buddhism as interpreted and propounded by monastic authors, can we pinpoint a homogenous perception of a certain societal responsibility? Did the rules as stated in the monastic "law"

codes imported from India (the Vinaya) and in textual materials on the individual monks' vows (*prātimokṣa*)—shared by all Tibetan monastics—create a uniform set of morals that guided monks when dealing with both internal and external affairs? Or could it be that other factors were at play in the development of monastic rules and regulations and that, more generally, there existed an alternative set of standards that dictated how to treat others?

Naturally, it is to be expected that Buddhist ethics, as communicated by Buddhist texts such as biographies (*rnam thar*), *Jātaka* tales, sūtras, and "introductory" works (*lam rim*), to name but a few, had some influence on the monks' sense of morality. However, it is likely that other factors were at play that, to a certain extent, were decided by cultural, economical, political, and geographical matters. Furthermore, monks were also influenced by the religious and political affiliations of the monastery and the charisma of particular spiritual leaders.

BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY

The laity are tolerant both in religious and social matters, but not the priesthood.
—BELL [1946] 1998: 21

Buddhism is often seen as a religion that contains strong expressions of morality: a religion emphasizing orthopraxy over orthodoxy.[7] This focus on "right practice," however, has not materialized in the pre-modern Buddhist societies' development of well-organized "faith-based" social institutions. This notable absence has opened up varieties of Buddhism throughout Asia—and perhaps Tibetan Buddhism in particular—to the criticism of not being (sufficiently) socially engaged. This accusation did not stem solely from the camp of those who were heavily influenced by certain Judeo-Christian notions or those who had a political or ideological axe to grind. The Japanese Buddhist monk Ekai Kawaguchi, who traveled widely in Tibet between 1900 and 1903, comments on this lack of "social engagement" by "Tibetan priests."[8] He accuses them of being entirely disengaged from societal problems. Kawaguchi sees this social aloofness as a result of the Tibetan ideal of a hermitic lifestyle, in which practitioners willingly cordon themselves off from the outside world. He explicitly did not see this as a shortcoming of Buddhism itself.[9] This is in sharp contrast with attempts by certain non-Buddhist commentators to explain the lack of pre-modern institutions that promote social equality and welfare in Buddhist countries: if the connection with religion is made at all, the finger is usually pointed at the Buddhist faith in general, and the doctrine of karma in particular. In more extreme instances, scholars portray the Buddhist religion as nothing more than a power-grabbing ploy.[10]

That Buddhist societies of old did not give rise to social institutions in the way that they existed in the Christian world does not mean that Buddhism has had no

influence on society as a whole. Rather than asking the question of why Buddhist societies have developed differently from Christian ones, it is more rewarding, at least from the outset, to examine the way in which Buddhism as practiced has affected certain societies and conceptualizations of society. In this book then, the focus is on pre-modern Tibetan societies and how monastic Buddhism has affected them.

In historical Tibetan societies, those writing about how Buddhists should behave in society were almost invariably monks. The works they produced were not directly taken from the corpus of Vinaya texts themselves. They were seen as codes of behavior that existed in parallel with the Vinaya, containing rules adapted to a specific time and place. These texts—the primary sources of this research—are monastic guidelines, *chayik* (*bca' yig*). These works were mostly written for the monk populations of specific monasteries, but they also affected the lay population, occasionally explicitly, and—as I shall argue—always implicitly. This is not to say that social norms were not also formed by other members of the "elite" in Tibet, but nevertheless the lion's share of written material to which we have access was written by monastics.

Throughout this book these monastic guidelines are used to understand where *Buddhism*—problematic though that term may be—touches on social policy and practice. From there we can explore whether and to what extent (monastic) social policy was informed by notions implicit within certain Buddhist beliefs or doctrines, at certain points in time. In the context of the study of pre-modern Tibet, even the mere *description* of societal processes is an enterprise that is rarely undertaken, let alone their analysis. One reason is that Tibetan politics on the one hand and religious doctrine on the other have historically taken center stage for most scholars involved in Tibetan Studies, Buddhist Studies, and (World) History.[11]

In addition to making sense of the role and position of monks and monasteries in Tibetan society, I endeavor to understand and analyze the underlying motivations or notions that in some way have a connection to Buddhism. In order to understand the position held and taken by monks, it then also becomes imperative to understand the structure they inhabited: the way the monastery was organized and how it functioned.

ON SOURCES AND LACK THEREOF

There can be no doubt that monastics played an important role in almost all aspects of Tibetan society. But the exact, or even approximate, nature of that role has been little studied. Carrasco, writing in 1959, comments that since "the church plays such an important role in Tibet, it should be examined as a whole and in its relation to the lay society."[12] To date this research has not been undertaken. Tibetan monasteries have been both lionized and demonized for their impact on

pre-modern society in Tibet. Critics chastised the Tibetan monastic institutions in particular for their economic dominance over large sections of the population and apparent lack of social engagement.[13] However, despite the existence of conflicting views on the underlying motivations of monasteries and monastics in their management of affairs, it is undeniable that Tibetan monastic Buddhism is of primary importance for understanding not merely the culture but also the history of pre-modern Tibet.

It is estimated that between 997 and 1959 over six thousand bigger and smaller monasteries were built in political Tibet alone.[14] They exerted great religious, cultural, political, and economic influence over the general populace. Although the literature these monks produced is most often utilized by academics for the study of complicated doctrinal conundrums, some of these texts contain valuable information on various aspects of pre-modern Tibetan society and how it was viewed by monastic authors. It needs to be noted, however, that the majority of the documents that bear direct witness to the role of monasteries in Tibet before the 1950s appear to be lost forever. Land deeds, contracts, monasteries' accounts, official correspondence, and the like were mostly destroyed, first when the People's Liberation Army arrived in Tibet in the 1950s and later during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76).[15] Thus, in the process of examining the monastery's position in Tibetan society, it is important to be aware of the lacunae regarding documents that contain information on social policy.

To better understand the role that monasteries played in Tibet throughout history, it is essential, first, to look at how the monasteries themselves operated and the general mind-set of the monks with regard to Tibetan (lay) society. In other words, any account of pre-modern Tibetan civilization would be incomplete without a more comprehensive appreciation of the impact of Tibetan monasticism on society as a whole. Ellingson similarly remarks upon "the need for understanding the monastic system, the most distinctive and characteristic of Tibetan sociopolitical institutions, on its own terms in order to develop a balanced and integral comprehension of Tibetan polity as a whole."[16]

The way in which scholars of contemporary Tibetan monasticism study the current state of the monastery shows that relatively little is known about the basic organizational structure of the monastery and the extent to which local and global politics, as well as "modernity," have affected this structure.[17] A complicating factor, as this study will demonstrate, is that organizational structures varied over time and place. However, when viewed comparatively, for example by looking at Christian monasticism, Tibetan monastic policies changed surprisingly little. While the political climate has now changed entirely for monks, both in exile and in Tibet, the monkhood is—for the most part—"a continuation of what came before in Tibet."[18]

This book largely deals with Tibetan religion and social history before the 1950s, and therefore, when general statements are made, they are often in the past tense.

This is not to say, however, that these policies, practices, or rationales ceased to exist after 1959. In many cases—of which I highlight only a few—they continue to the present. More research on contemporary Tibetan monasticism, both in exile and in Tibet, is needed to understand what has changed and what has remained the same.

By examining and comparing monastic guidelines, in which basic behavioral and organizational rules are set out and are seen as pivotal to the monastery for which they were written, it becomes possible to understand specific conditions prevailing at a certain monastery, which then influenced monastic behavior. Throughout the book, I supplement this information with materials that provide context: recent scholarship, monastic histories,[19] ethnographic and travelers' accounts, and oral history. The combination of these sources makes it possible to obtain a more comprehensive appreciation of the historical, economic, and political contexts. One type of source material that features in this study is oral history: interviews I conducted with elderly monks and monks in administrative positions. On the basis of the information they provide, it is possible to understand how texts were used and to determine the extent to which their contents affected monastics in daily life. The primary textual sources, the monastic guidelines written for the individual monasteries, are largely prescriptive and may paint an idealized picture of monastic life. However, close reading enables us to gain an understanding of the mainly religious, but also political, economic, and cultural ideas, that influenced the lives of the monks in the monastic institutions as well as those of laypeople.

So far, I have been able to locate more than two hundred sets of monastic guidelines. In order to obtain relatively representative results, texts were selected on the following basis: first, of course, their availability; their locality (center and periphery; historical Tibet and beyond);[20] their religious affiliation (all schools are represented); their respective economic circumstances ("state" sponsored, privately sponsored, partially self-sufficient, maintained by another monastery); and the age of the texts. It is noteworthy that the majority of the currently available *chayik* hail from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is likely due to the organizational overhaul that took place among monasteries as well as the building of new monasteries after the establishment of the Ganden Phodrang (*dGa' ldan pho brang*) government in 1642. In this year, Tibet became politically unified under one leader, the Fifth Dalai Lama, who took on both temporal and religious authority. However, texts from the twelfth to the sixteenth and from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also feature widely in this research.

With regard to the religious affiliation of the texts, it is striking that the majority of the *chayik* that are generally available were written for Geluk (*dGe lugs*) monasteries.[21] It is tempting then to assume that the composition of monastic guidelines was largely a Geluk enterprise and to logically conclude that rules and discipline in the monasteries must have been deemed more important in the Geluk school than in others. Taking into account, however, the Geluk school's greater access

historically to printing presses and the fact that more collected works (*gsung 'bum*) by Geluk masters have been (re-)printed and digitized, it comes as no surprise that there is a greater wealth of monastic guidelines for Geluk monasteries available at the moment. In fact, *chayik* written for monasteries of *all* other traditions exist. Paying due attention to the unevenness in the number of available materials, this study is based on a broad selection intended to be representative of the variety of monasteries that existed in greater political Tibet and its cultural spheres, thereby including Mongolia, Sikkim, Bhutan, Ladakh, Spiti, and Nepal.

Using the aforementioned sources, this book sets out to address the following questions: What was the role of the monastery and its monks in pre-modern Tibetan society? To what extent is that role a product of, or grounded in, Buddhist thought? What impact has the position of the Buddhist monks had on society as a whole? Before engaging with these issues, the problematic nature of two pivotal terms employed here—monk and monastery—needs to be addressed.

WHAT MAKES A (TIBETAN) MONK?

There does not appear to be a consensus on the definition of the term "monk" in the context of Buddhist Studies. Silk, while acknowledging that the monastery would have been populated with various kinds of Buddhists, appears to translate the word "monk" only for the term *bhikṣu* (*dge slong*).[22] Similarly, Clarke also excludes "novices" (S. *śrāmaṇera*, *dge tshul*) from the classification of monks.[23] Were we to follow such an "exclusive" definition of the term "monk" we probably would not be able to classify the majority of Tibetans living in monasteries, today and in pre-modern Tibet, as monks. While the English word itself is of course not without its own semantic problems,[24] nevertheless, in this book, the word "monk" covers a broad range of Sanskrit and Tibetan terms.

In the genre of Tibetan literature under consideration here, we come across several terms referring to (male) inhabitants of a monastery,[25] such as *ban de*,[26] *grwa pa*, *btsun pa* (S. *bhadanta*), *bla ma*,[27] and *dge 'dun pa*. This overarching group of people who have "renounced" lay life or "have gone forth" (*rab tu byung ba*, S. *pravrajyā*) is most regularly subdivided into *dge slong* and *dge tshul*.[28] Sometimes, when an author wants to include everyone in the monastery, the *dge bsnyen* (S. *upāsaka*) are also mentioned, but in this context the *dge bsnyen* refer not simply to lay practitioners but to "aspiring monks." These are usually young boys who have not yet been allowed to take *dge tshul* vows or are not (yet) able to.[29]

Although Seyfort Ruegg is right in claiming that the division between laymen and monks was not always straightforward throughout the history of Buddhism,[30] the Tibetan normative distinction between a member of the Sangha and a layperson is fairly clear-cut. Of course, there were (and are) what scholars often perceive as gray areas, such as the "yellow householders" (*ser khyim pa*), a community of

religious specialists who wore robes but married,[31] and the lay tantric practitioners,[32] who sometimes lived in "monasteries" of their own.[33] In this book, I use the term monk to refer to someone who has taken some sort of vow of celibacy and wears the monastic robes.[34]

A scholar monk at Kirti monastery, whom I interviewed in Dharamsala, remarked that for him—being from Amdo—the word *grwa pa,* which is the Central Tibetan word for "monk," appeared foreign,[35] but that *grwa* in his dialect—as it does in classical Tibetan—means "edge" or "side" (*zur*). In his analysis, this would thus make a *grwa pa,* a monk, someone who lives on the edge of society.[36] As is demonstrated in this study, while the above explanation is unlikely to be etymologically correct, it does describe the position of the Tibetan monk: not outside of society, but on the edge of it. As Collins so aptly puts it, "religious figures do not leave society, but merely exchange one social position for another."[37]

WHAT MAKES A (TIBETAN) MONASTERY?

In this study, I delimit the monastery as an institution that demands celibacy of its members. By so defining the monastery, I exclude certain types of hermitages (*ri khrod*) and religious encampments (*chos sgar*), to name but a few, within which a commitment to celibacy—although common—was not, and is not, a prerequisite for admittance. The reason for excluding those religious institutions in which celibacy tended to be optional is not because the various religious groups consisting of noncelibate practitioners or a mixture of lay and monk members do not merit scholarly attention, but because one of the objectives of this book is to explore the connections between Tibetan monastic policy and organization and the Vinaya. This approach, furthermore, facilitates comparison with various kinds of Vinaya materials and procedures in place at monastic establishments in other Buddhist cultures that are similarly defined. Thus, despite the fact that there are a number of scholars working in different fields who call places inhabited by noncelibate religious practitioners "monasteries," I define the monastic institution in a narrower fashion. Considering that celibacy is "the *raison d'être* of Buddhist monasticism,"[38] the monastery is the very center of that celibacy.

So far, the English word "monastery" has been used to describe a (Tibetan) Buddhist phenomenon. There is a danger of confusing a number of terms here, however. According to Vinayic texts,[39] a physical establishment of the Sangha was only created by putting down a *sīmā*, a monastic "border,"[40] after which certain essential ritual practices could be performed. To be counted as a place where a Sangha lives, a set of three monastic rituals described in the Vinaya need to be performed (*gzhi gsum cho ga*): the fortnightly confession for *bhikṣu*s (*gso sbyong,* S. *poṣadha*), the ritual start of the summer retreat (*dbyar gnas,* S. *varṣā*), and the ritual closing of that retreat (*dgag dbye,* S. *pravāraṇa*).[41] In practice, this does not

mean, however, that each individual monastic community is required to have its own *sīmā*. In Dharamsala in India, the established ritual border is so large as to include at least fifteen monasteries and nunneries, all belonging to different schools. The fortnightly confession ritual is performed in the main temple there.[42] Thus, practically, a *sīmā* does *not* define a monastery or a monastic community, at least not in terms of a distinct institutional identity of any kind.

Scholars of Indian Buddhism often translate the Sanskrit *vihāra* as "monastery," introducing another set of problems. *Vihāra*s often refer to the (potential) living spaces for monks, but according to Schopen, in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*—the sole Vinaya in use in Tibet—they are not "presented here primarily as residences for monks to live in, but rather as potential and permanent sources of merit for their donors."[43] *Vihāra,* translated in Tibetan as *gtsug lag khang,* thus does not represent the "intentional" celibate communities we see in Tibetan Buddhism. There are a number of Tibetan terms, however, that *can* denote these monastic communities that live in well-defined physical spaces, which I choose to translate with the word "monastery": *gdan sa, grwa sa, dgon sde, chos sde, grwa tshang,* and *dgon pa.* In these places, the three rituals mentioned above may or may not be performed.[44]

The word *dgon pa* does not necessarily cover what Tibetans understand to be a living community of monks, for it refers more to a physical space than to a community. The contemporary Tibetan author and monk Rendo Senggé considers the primary meaning of this term to be a secluded place, although more generally Tibetans do not identify remote places of practice as such: "It is more common to understand *dgon pa* to be an institution where there is an organized community of ordained people who maintain the three rituals."[45] This author further emphasizes the educational aspects of the *dgon pa,* but it needs to be noted that this learning does not necessarily imply scholastic knowledge but may also include, or even solely refer to, ritual education.

The word *grwa tshang,* often glossed as "college" although this translation does not apply to all instances, has a stronger communal aspect, even though in contemporary Tibet many monks will primarily refer to their *dgon pa,* and only to their *grwa tshang*[46] when they, for example, belong to one of the Three Great Seats[47] and want to specify the subdivision within the large institution to which they belong, i.e., their college. The sources discussed in this study are selected on the basis of their representation of Tibetan Buddhist monastic communities before the 1950s, but also on the basis of the information they contain. Occasionally, the names of the geographical places mentioned in these works may suggest that they were hermitages (*ri khrod / nags khrod*) or temples (*gtsug lag khang*). However, the texts written for these institutions clearly suggest that they were seen, or saw themselves, as monastic celibate communities, using the word *grwa tshang.*[48]

Although there may be crossovers, monastic communities often have different primary functions, such as education, ritual practice, and meditational retreats.[49]

Tibetan monasteries can be characterized as monastic residencies, as communities organized around the performance of rituals, and as corporate entities.[50] While the specific ritual functions of monasteries are not explicitly examined in this study, the sense of community and identity, strengthened by shared vows, shared spiritual teachers, and shared geographical location—eventually amounting to the whole of the monastery—plays an important role in this study.

AUTHORITY, THE STATE, AND THE MONASTERY

Had it not been for the Buddhist dictum of humility . . . the monks could have considered themselves as the ruling elite of Tibet.
—MICHAEL 1982: 57

While it is unlikely that the "Buddhist dictum of humility"—a highly problematic notion to begin with—had any impact whatsoever, it is important to appreciate the nature of the Tibetan government in order to understand the role of the monasteries in Tibetan society and the extent of their authority. It is a common misconception—particularly from the start of the Ganden Phodrang government in 1642 onward—that the Tibetan state was a single unity, with a high level of control and influence.[51] In fact, the Tibetan government always had a predisposition toward loose government. In other words, it controlled certain aspects of Tibetan society, but it certainly never attempted to govern at a local level. Power vacuums were thus filled by local landlords, chieftains, nobility, *and* monasteries.

At least conceptually, from the mid-seventeenth century onward, all land belonged to the Dalai Lama and his government, which meant that local leaders ultimately answered to the state. The position of monasteries was different from that of other ruling parties, because their authority was regularly both political and religious. This both facilitated and complicated relations with the government. The networks of Geluk monasteries were seen as safeguarding the ultimate authority of the state, whereas the larger monasteries of certain other schools were less likely to eagerly accept the influence of the state. At the same time, it was the influence of the large Geluk monasteries in Central Tibet that occasionally destabilized and undermined the authority of the government. The sheer number of monks living in these institutions was a force to be reckoned with: at one point, the Three Great Seats alone housed up to twenty-five thousand monks.

The broader question has yet to be satisfactorily answered: Why, compared to other countries where Buddhist monasticism thrived, was the number of monks so much higher in Tibet? Various sources give estimates of the monastic population that range from ten to as high as twenty-five percent of the Tibetan male population.[52] I suspect that while these numbers may have been accurate at certain times, from a demographical point of view they are open to misinterpretation. In particular, it is often not taken into account that at the largest monasteries in

Central Tibet (for usually the percentages of monks only pertain to that area), the number of "immigrant monks," e.g., people from Mongolia, Kham, Amdo, and beyond, must have been very high. Most of these monks were not permanent residents at these monasteries. Thus, even though one in four males residing in Central Tibet may indeed have been a monk, this does not mean that a quarter of all boys born in Central Tibet would eventually be sent to the monastery. The percentages—however high or low the estimates—are therefore nearly *always* misrepresentations, for these numbers would not necessarily have a direct effect on Central Tibetan society and its taxable workforce. Immigration and semipermanent residence thus are issues that need to be taken into account when making umbrella statements about the state of Tibet's societal composition.[53]

On a local level, the monastery was a crucial agent in Tibetan society. Taken as a whole, it had more influence on the day-to-day life of ordinary people than the state ever had. Usually, in examining issues of social welfare in a given society, the starting point is the main authority in place, which, in most cases in the modern Western context, is the state. This is taken as the point of departure when scrutinizing how authority deals with the general populace. In the Tibetan context, however, the direct authority was often, though by no means always, the monastic institution. It is for this reason that, while state involvement must be taken into account, the role of the government is not the starting point of this study. In the *longue durée* of Tibet's history, monasteries have been more influential in shaping the government than the government has been in shaping monasteries. Thus, the focus must be placed on these monasteries as *de facto* loci of influence and power.

A PREVIEW

In order to contextualize the primary sources that form the backbone of this study, Chapter 1 focuses on the genre of the *chayik* as a whole and the way in which these texts relate to the larger corpora of both Indic and Tibetan Vinaya texts. In this chapter, I demonstrate that the *chayik* were often written in reaction to realities on the ground—that is, they deal with issues that were seen to be in need of attention. They thus contain mention of corruption, bribery, nepotism, maltreatment of lay servants, and political scheming. The texts furthermore give us insight into the internal hierarchy and organization of the monastery, its judicial role, monastic economics, and the social stratification within the monastery. For this reason, I argue in this chapter that these works are rich sources for monastic social history. This chapter also explores the parallels of the genre with other Buddhist traditions.

Chapter 2 provides a background of the monastic system that was prevalent in pre-modern Tibet. It looks at the development of monastic Buddhism in Tibet by tracing its history and compares the way the monastery was organized to that of a modern-day corporation. In this chapter the status of both monastery and monk

in Tibetan society and how each has influenced monastic attitudes toward social issues is examined. The chapter also explores the extent to which these monastic attitudes are grounded in Buddhist thought.

Chapter 3 looks at the ways in which entrance to the monastery was restricted. Contrary to what is often thought, the monastery was not open to all. The monastic guidelines provide information on who was and was not allowed to become a monk. The works give reasons that are economic, geographical, or that have to do with (ritual) purity. This chapter explores both Vinayic and local justifications for barring certain people from entering the monastery and thereby—potentially— preventing them from social advancement.

Chapter 4 focuses on the organization of the Tibetan monastery, how the community was formed, and how monastic official and administrative roles were divided. Informed by the monastic guidelines, this chapter considers the internal hierarchy and social stratification within the monastery and argues that the monastic institution was two-tiered, in which religious authority and managerial power were often carefully kept separated.

Chapter 5 explores monastic economy: how the monastery balanced the Vinaya-based need for limited possessions and the upkeep of the monastic institution. In this chapter I discuss the issue of an individual monk's commercial enterprises, trade conducted by the monasteries, monastic property in general, the monasteries' function as banks, and the theoretical economic separation of the individual and the institutional as featured in the monastic guidelines and the Vinaya.

Chapter 6 deals with the relations between the monastery and the laity. Here particular attention is given to issues of charity and to the relationship between sponsors and their monastic beneficiaries. The rules regarding monks not just receiving but also *giving* alms are examined, assessing the types of reciprocity that took place. It further considers family ties, the role of the monastery as an educational facility, and issues regarding healthcare in and around the monastic institutions, as featured in the monastic guidelines.

Chapter 7 examines the judicial position of the monasteries in Tibet. It looks at the extent to which these institutions were legally allowed and even *obligated* to punish both laypeople and monks, paying some attention to what kind of punishments were given. The chapter further explores cases in which monks were to be tried according to state law and looks at what happened to monks who broke their vows.

In addition to summing up the main points and arguments made throughout the study, the final chapter discusses the central position of the Tibetan monastery in society and the role of Buddhist monasticism on societal change. The monastic reluctance to change is connected to the Buddhist idea of "the age of decline" (*kaliyuga*), as well as to the position of the Sangha as the guardian of Buddhism. It is argued that monastic perceptions of what is just or morally right are intimately connected to the monk's duty to bring about the happiness of all, but not in the

way that most people would presume: monks promote the welfare of others by maintaining order and discipline.

Throughout this study some references to other Buddhist cultures and even to other types of monasticism are offered. This is done in order to emphasize that Tibetan monastic Buddhism cannot and should not be viewed in (geographical) isolation, as has been a general tendency of previous scholarly works. In contemporary academia, the mystification and idealization of the Tibetan monkhood—and more broadly, Buddhist monasticism in its entirety—continues. Ellingson, writing in 1990, notes: "Tibetan monasteries are still widely characterized as mysterious enclaves of 'priests,' Rasputin-like powers behind thrones, and hordes of ignorant fanatics who periodically and inexplicably march forth to topple governments."[54] This depiction is still current, although it alternates with the equally persistent cliché of monasteries filled with enlightened beings, all striving to bring happiness to this world.

Aware that to represent past Tibetan societies is an undertaking "permeated with uncertainty and subjectivity,"[55] this study aims to present a picture of Tibetan monks and monasteries that remains close to the Tibetan sources, without taking them at face value and without the need to pay lip service to any political agenda or theory. Monastic policy and ideology are the focal points of this book, although all assertions are made with the understanding that "to categorize human actions as ideal or material is philosophically absurd, they are always both."[56] The monastic guidelines are works that contain both the ideal and the material, to which I now turn.