

## THE PRESERVATION AND REINCARNATION OF SID-LIN MONASTERY

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### ABSTRACT

Side-lin Temple is located in the old city of Lhasa. Located 100 meter west to the intersection of East Beijing Road and Danjie-lin Road and enclosed by circumambient newer constructions, the remaining ruins is only accessible through some alleys to the yard.. The temple is believed to be relocated to the present spot from Ramoche area under the 7<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's rulership. During its 260 years of history, the temple suffered from periodic destructions and reconstruction. As a result, the main temple fell from the majestic edifice of 5<sup>th</sup> Reting Rinpoche to obsolescent ruins surrounded by a residence area. Dysfunction of religion, urbanization and transformation of districts' context all contributed to the decline of Side-lin Temple.

In 1984, peripheral underused monk dormitories were allotted to homeless citizens or families in bad dwelling condition. A unique remains-centered residential community was established. Similar transition occurred to other temples in the old city, such as Tsomon Ling and Moru Temple: parts of the sacred precincts were turned into secular places. However, with monks operating regular ceremonies and devotees continually worshipping idols, their main buildings retain the Buddhist functions. Side-lin Temple represents a different result. In order to carry on the preaching, the former Buddhist organization has to be resettled in other temple. With the demolished temple and the cease of religious practice, the site was given a completely different mission: to become to gathering place for the community life.

Dwellers tried to strike a subtle balance between their awe to the relic and their own daily convenience. Pine branches are burned each week in the antiquated stove as part of praying, but circumambience of the stove was barricaded by household garbage. Old people are garrulous about ancient taboos, while kids like to climb into the personal bedroom of Reting Rinpoche. All these conflicting phenomena prompt me to address a few questions in my paper. How can the spiritual layer of Side-lin ruins be restored and still preserve a balance between the religious and secular lives in this area? How to rejoin the temple site with the neighborhood? How can the adjustment of the site and neighborhood adapt to the city under significant transformation?

Side-lin Temple deserves better regulations instead of today's unsupervised situation. In the mean time, a simple rehabilitation would not be a great solution because of the intertwined relationship between the relic and the neighborhood

developed in the last decades. Through intensive on-site research, interview, and speculative design, I try to shed a new light on the, history, current context, and future development of Side-lin Temple, which hopefully will lead to a holistic solution for preservation and revitalization of this important historic site.

**Key words:** Sid-Lin, transformation, different perspective

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background Introduction**

Tibetan Buddhism is the leading religion in Tibetan region of today. In the long course of its preaching history, there have been several alternations of extinction and promotion of religion. As the bridge linking the spiritual world and the material world, architectures of Tibetan Buddhism will be either demolished or reconstructed, depending on the trend of religion during certain time period. The nearest destructive activities happened in the Great Cultural Revolution, 1966~1976. Then following Reform and Opening up since 1979 not only brought about economic boost, but also urged people to reflect. Consequently, there were a large number of temples being renovated or reconstructed. Some temples even begin to have a more magnificent and exquisite decoration than before. Among the renovated temples, there are many perfectly finished projects, in terms of architectural form, material selection, building technique and construction. This article focuses on Sid-Lin Monastery relics by analyzing the architecture from a new perspective, that is, from urban district to community and then back to the architecture itself. Sid-Lin Monastery is unique in every aspect. Its uniqueness is that although the main building has already been ruined, the auxiliary buildings and the courtyards have become the residence for ordinary citizens. This is accompanied by a subtle transition in terms of its relation with the urban district (fig 1). Therefore, for the protection on the relics of Sid-Lin Monastery, we should avoid the complete duplication depending on its original appearance, but to make it reborn by the merging with new environment.

## 1.2. Objectives & Methodology

How do we define the "rebirth" of Sid-Lin Monastery? What connects the "reborn" Sid-Lin Monastery and "this life" of the monastery? Is that the spirit? If the answer is yes, where does the spirit of Sid-Lin Monastery relics live? To resolve this question, we performed survey on the daily life of residents of the community and



pieced together the historical moments of residents' life. The ecology of Sid-Lin Monastery community, with Sid-Lin Monastery relics as the core, is constructed to provide some clues for the conception of these precious moments. Relying on these clues, a balance is struck between the "past" and the "present" of Sid-Lin Monastery, based on which we design the subsequent protective scheme. Through a comparison between earlier data and current data on a macroscopic scale, we can better look for a possible future of Sid-Lin Monastery.

Fig 1. A panorama from the roof of west residence, photoed by author, 2014.

## 2. SITE HISTORY

Through such comparison, we can know what has been annihilated and what has been reborn in Sid-Lin Monastery that has a history of two hundred and sixty years; we will also know what will return soon and what still dwells in this place even after the demolition of physical buildings.

### 2.1. The First Rise And Decline

Looking back on the history, it is not difficult to see why the relics still preserve its majesty. As one of the largest and the grandest architectures in the old urban district of Lhasa, Sid-Lin Monastery was incomparable in 1930s to 1940s. The history of Sid-Lin Monastery can be traced back to the 7th century AD. It remained largely unknown until the middle of 14th century when it was called Reting Monastery. In the five hundred years afterwards, this monastery was closely associated with Reting living Buddha. This was once the place of residence, enthronement, and handling with daily businesses for Reting Rinpoche in history. The third Reting living Buddha, Ngawang Yeshe Tsultrim Gyaltzen, and the fifth Reting living Buddha, Thubden Jampal Yeshe Tenpai Gyaltzen, all had a profound impact on Sid-Lin Monastery. The two living Buddha once assumed regency during the theocratic period of Tibet, assisting Dalai Lama in this young age. However, their power soon declined during their prime years due to turmoils of factions. Sid-Lin Monastery underwent its vicissitudes as the destiny of the living Buddha went up and down.

During the period of the third Reting Renboqie, Sid-Lin Monastery was changed from the monastery of Ningma School to the monastery of Gelu School. It was

during this period that Sid-Lin Monastery was renovated and expanded to the present scale. It consists of a courtyard covering 0.63 hectare, which is divided into the scripture hall in the north of the center of the courtyard, a Buddha Hall and the residence and kitchen for the monks. In 1862, which was the 7th year that the third Reting living Buddha assumed regency for the second time, he was drawn into the conflict with Drepung Monastery. The monks of Drepung Monastery and Gandan Monastery united together in their attack on Sid-Lin Monastery. Sid-Lin Monastery was seriously ruined, and Ngawang Yeshe himself was also punished because of this event. He died in the next year. It is without doubt that the early prosperity of Sid-Lin Monastery was owed to the sublimity of the third Reting living Buddha, who assumed regency twice. The Central Government at that time attached much importance to the third Reting living Buddha, praising and awarding him for several times. However, the first rising of Sid-Lin Monastery was suddenly stopped upon the death of Reting living Buddha.

## **2.2. Renaissance and Fall**

After the ruining in 1862, Sid-Lin Monastery was only carelessly repaired. The monastery was not reconstructed on a large scale until 1935. This is what we see as the combined layout of Buddha hall and the surrounding residences of the monks. The fifth Reting living Buddha, like its predecessor, assumed the regency and possessed great power. Sid-Lin Monastery also reached its prime at this time. The bedroom of Reting living Buddha had 16 pillars, which was never seen before. As recalled by an old man in Lhasa, the fifth Reting living Buddha once held a dharma assembly that lasted for one month and four days in this monastery, as the teacher of Dalai Lama. More than two thousand monks attended the assembly, which is a great testimony for the important role of the monastery in the religious life of local people. The fifth Reting living Buddha also encountered the political crisis after seven years of regency, and had to resign. Seven years later, Reting living Buddha was arrested because of a political event in April 1947. After that, he died in prison. Since the main monastery was ruined, the religions functions of Sid-Lin Monastery came to an end. The entire Sid-Lin Monastery fell back to obscurity. But whether Sid-Lin Monastery was completely ruined is uncertain.

Some say that Sid-Lin Monastery was completely ruined during this "Reting Event". After the death of Reting living Buddha, Dazha gave an order to dress up the body and transfer the body to Sid-Lin Monastery. Reting living Buddha was libeled against, which triggered the anger of the mass. Then Sid-Lin Monastery was set on fire. That is how Sid-Lin Monastery was burnt to ruins". However, this version of explanation is hardly convincing. Sid-Lin Monastery was originally the residence of Reting living Buddha. The question is: why the mass public, who admired him, instead of taking actions against those who persecuted the living Buddha, invaded the residence of living Buddha? Others believe that Sid-Lin Monastery was not ruined during this event, but was only closed. The monastery was ruined in 1959. No matter which version is correct, there is one thing for sure, i.e., the attacks by wind and rain in the following fifty years are the main reasons for the current situation of Sid-Lin Monastery (fig 2).



Fig 2. Front of present Sid-Lin Main Temple, photoed by author, 2011.

### 2.3. Current Remains

Combining the above information, we can roughly restore the process that the main monastery was changed from the magnificent Buddha Hall to the ruins we see today. Sid-Lin Monastery was closed in 1947, and the monks were driven away. Sid-Lin Monastery might be only slightly ruined, such as the windows and the doors. The damage in 1959 and Great Cultural Revolution mainly occurred to the load-bearing components, such as beams, pillars and the stone-made outer wall. After that, Sid-Lin Monastery was fully exposed to the havoc done by the nature without maintenance for nearly 50 years.

The monks' residences surrounding the main monastery were repaired twice and preserved well. They are now the main site of aggregation for the residents. The remains of the main monastery are currently in a poor state, from which we can hardly recognize the original structure of the architecture. The large building located in the northernmost section of central axis of the entire courtyard can be divided into two parts, front and back. The scripture hall in the front was initially of a two-tier structure, which is nowhere to be found currently. What is only left is the fragmented stone-made outer walls on three sides. At the entrance, the wooden structure is already rotten, with a large part fallen off. The small components such as the cornices of the window are badly mutilated. At the back was initially the storage space, the residence and three Buddha Halls. The top of the Buddha Hall no longer exists, with only the partition wall left. The private balcony of Reting living Buddha only has the large part of rooftop and the beams and pillars, all of which are deformed to some extent. The structure in the east is on the brink of collapse (fig 3).

There is an one-meter-thick outer wall left in the main monastery. It is not completely made of bricks, but has stones and sand fillings in the middle, which are



exposed after the surface brickwork has shed. Rain and wind will deprive the load-bearing capacity of the fillings, thus increasing the risk of collapse. Similar situation is also found with the wooden components. Timber will be deformed under the impact of wind and sunshine. The change of the load-bearing structure will spontaneously collapse even in the absence of human factors. We have collected some photos of the remains of Sid-Lin Monastery in different periods since 1980s. The above-mentioned situation mostly occurs to the outer wall in the east, the top of the wall in the north and the entrance of the main monastery. However, natural erosion is very likely to deteriorate (fig 4).

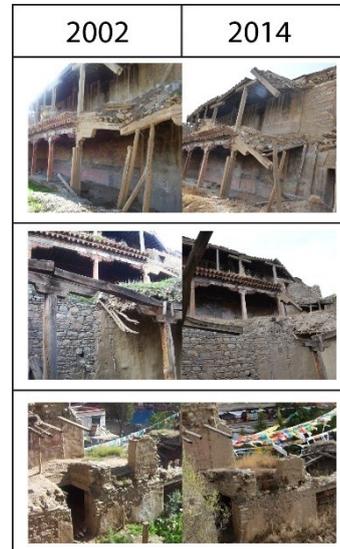


Fig 3 (left). Damages of Sid-Lin Main Temple, photoed by author, 2014.

Fig 4 (right). Deterioration in past 12 years, pics 2002 were photoed by Mao Zhonghua, pics 2014 were photoed by author, organized by author.

The dual impact of human and natural factors finally leads to the badly ruined condition of Sid-Lin Monastery, which, nevertheless, still embodies the religious spirits. The immaterial remains are spread in various pathways, which further adds to its mystique. The old people in the courtyard will remind the young generation of the taboos in the monastery. For example, the young generation are forbidden to get close to the remains, not only from safety consideration. However, the young generation have their own opinions. History has laid down the unique tone for the courtyard, which is impossible to be erased. However, along with the modernization of the urban district, this grand Buddha Hall, which was once the skyline of Lhasa together with Potala Palace, is currently the rarely known corner of the protective zone of old district.

### 3. SID-LIN IN A MODERNIZED URBAN PERSPECTIVE

The location of Sid-Lin Monastery is at the northwest margin of the old urban district of Lhasa centering around Jokhang Temple. However, there is something

interesting about the relative positions of Sid-Lin Monastery (fig 5). If a circle, with the radius of 590 meters, is drawn with Sid-Lin Monastery as the center, then the main buildings in the old urban district, such as Jokhang Temple, Ramoche Temple and Muru Temple are found along the circumference. That is to say, the working staff of Sid-Lin Monastery can reach these important sites after 6-8 minutes of walk. If the working staff of these institutes hope to visit Reting living Buddha, they can also arrive Sid-Lin Monastery within a very short time. Such a short distance not only shortens the time to arrive at different places from Sid-Lin Monastery, but also provides enough room for the formation of auxiliary plots under the influence of Sid-Lin Monastery. In its prime days, there was a relatively large area of private garden of Reting living Buddha surrounding Sid-Lin Monastery, except residences and spared land.

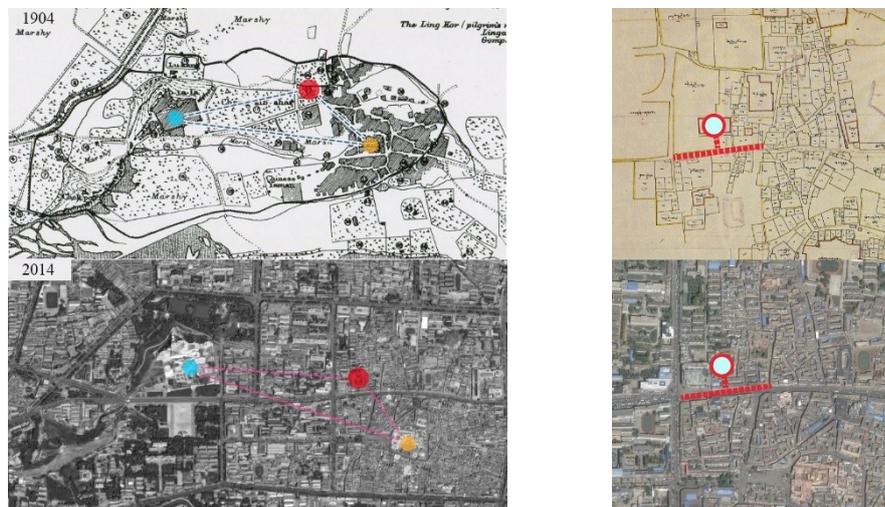


Fig 5. The context of Sid-Lin, based on satellite imagery, 1965.

### 3.1. Changes of Transportation System Around Sid-Lin

Ryder and Cowie drew the first plain view of urban district of Lhasa in modern times in 1904. This plain view is compared with the map of the present day (fig 6). It can be observed that the relative position of Sid-Lin Monastery in the urban district has not changed. Here we mean the historical continuity of urban texture constituted of the surrounding traffic routes. That is, the urban layout with blocks as the unit remains basically unchanged. However, some changes have been made to allow the vehicles to pass through. The changes are divided into two types: first, the original roads are classified by road surface and then subject to hardening treatment; second, the original roads are extended, so that they can form the transportation network.

In the first type, the typical case is East Beijing Road running in west-to-east direction. This road is actually one of the main trunk roads in west-to-east direction in present-day Lhasa. The east section of Beijing Road, if extended towards the west, is Middle Beijing Road in front of the Potala Palace. On the map drawn by a British in early 20th century, Beijing Road can be clearly seen. So the formation time of Beijing Road should be earlier than this. The existing data inform us that the width of East Beijing Road has not greatly changed. However, the buildings on the two sides of the road were mostly built in 1950s. The earliest satellite images shot in 1965 cannot tell us whether these buildings conformed with the original texture of the roads upon their construction. Therefore, the above can be only considered as



accurate speculation. What supports this speculation is the map of the central district of Lhasa drawn by Peter Aufschnaiter in 1948. On this map, the real estate marked out on the two sides of East Beijing Road basically conform to the urban texture of the current day. Especially, the position of Sid-Lin Monastery relative to the road has not changed. Its wall in the south is still 40 meters apart from the north edge of East Beijing Road (fig 7).

Fig 6 (left). Comparison of the relative position of Sid-Lin, based on map and satellite imagery.

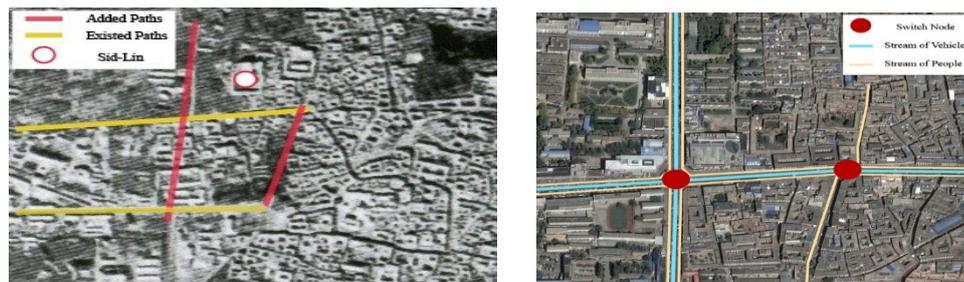
Fig 7 (right). Unchanged relationship between Sid-Lin and Beijing Road, based on map and satellite imagery

With a width of about 25 m, East Beijing Road could be called grand in the days of ox carts. However, as urban modernization is accelerating, East Beijing Road can hardly serve as the main trunk road of the city. Nowadays, East Beijing Road is divided into lanes of three types: four bidirectional vehicle lanes about 14 meters wide; non-mechanical vehicle lanes flanking the vehicle lanes with the width of about 5 meters; and pedestrian ways about 3 meters wide. But due to the large traffic flow and diversity of road traffic, East Beijing Road may not seem as wide as the figure indicates. Along the 3800-meter-wide street in west-to-east direction, there is

only Ramoche Temple Road that diverts the traffic to the south and north. East Beijing Road is more congested because of the distribution of buildings and temples on the two sides. Various forms of traffic are mixed together. We will provide explanation on how the congested traffic influences Sid-Lin Monastery.

For the second type of adjustment of urban traffic, we also take the two roads near Sid-Lin Monastery as an example. They are the middle section of Duosenge Road in the southwest and Danjielin Road in the southeast. The arrangement of the two roads directly influences the layout of west section of old urban district. Their north sides are connected with East Beijing Road; the south sides are connected with the east part of Yutuo Road in front of Jokhang Temple square (actually named as Bharkor Street, but to make a distinction from Bharkor Region of Jokhang Temple, referred to as east part of Yutuo Road). Thus, a new urban block is enclosed. The north side of Duosenge Road is a narrow dirt road, which is probably the west boundary of the garden to which Sid-Lin Monastery belongs. The south section of Duosenge Road is its extension. Early satellite images show that during the repair process, at least five large-scale courtyards were demolished. But since this region is situated on the brink, we cannot decide whether these buildings were once part of the old urban district of earlier times. The urban open space on the two sides of north section of Duosenge Road is occupied by various modern architectures. A street rich with commercial atmosphere is formed. The situation of Danjielin Road is similar to that of Duosenge Road. But the difference is that Danjielin Road is built on the original swamp. During the construction, the original buildings were not demolished in large quantity. Danjielin Road of the present day is a well-known place for purchasing souvenirs. The buildings on the two sides of the road are still being renovated. (fig 8)

The above-mentioned three roads are the closest links by which Sid-Lin Monastery are integrated into the modern urban transport. The noise and people flow do not bring substantial impact on the life in Sid-Lin Monastery. Since Sid-Lin Monastery is located in the central part of the plot, the noise is isolated by surrounding buildings. The highest buildings have four floors. They were either built or reconstructed in the 1980s to 1990s to meet the challenge of growing population density in the old urban district. The traffic flow forms the nodes of transition at the intersection between Danjielin shopping street and East Beijing Road. However, the traffic flow will not stop at the entrance of Sid-Lin Monastery, but continues by about 20 meters until reaching the next intersection between Duosenge Road and East Beijing Road. However, for the local residents of old urban district, the road with the width of about 5 meters in front of Sid-Lin Monastery is considered as the temporary parking site. The people flow is diverted by the three roads, and guided towards the Potala Palace or Jokhang Temple, rather than concentrated near the courtyard. There are sporadic visitors who come to the courtyard for its fame,



but they will soon leave within a few minutes (fig 9).

Fig 8 (left). Reorganization of roads near Sid-Lin, based on satellite imagery, 1965.

Fig 9 (right). Analysis of traffic streams, based on satellite imagery, 2014.

### 3.2. Impacts of Modern Urban Context on SID-Lin

Comparatively, the changes of the nature of urban blocks along the traffic line bring greater and more complex influence on Sid-Lin Monastery. Especially in the block where Sid-Lin Monastery is located, extensive green lands have disappeared. In the north is the newly formed modern community. The spare land in the west is gradually occupied by hotels, hair studios, restaurants and brand stores. The most typical is one commercial complex. In terms of modern urban functions and development model, this appearance is timely and appropriate.

In the west of Sid-Lin Monastery and on the 8.5-hectare land at the intersection between Duosenge Road and East Beijing Road, the original office building of City Construction Bureau was demolished. On this land, the largest commercial complex in the central district of Lhasa was constructed in 2013. This complex, called the landmark in the promotion, achieves a balance of modern style and traditional Tibetan style in its facade, in terms of color, material and element. Thus, compared with the surrounding urban landscape, the building is not out of tune. The local residents, including those in Sid-Lin Monastery, obtain benefits from the commercial complex: the supermarket provides a great variety of food and daily commodities; the middle and high-end restaurants and drink outlets are distributed on the 3rd and 4th floor; the cinema in the top floor shows the latest movies from the US. All these conveniences are necessities for the residents of Sid-Lin Monastery. When they are only five minutes' walk from the residents, most people would go to the commercial complex from time to time, which provides such a broad range of commodities and services. The commercial complex further pushes the bustling commercial atmosphere of the central district of Lhasa to a new height.

Although the existence of the commercial complex has its practical significance, the site selection is not proper. According to the Regulations on the Protection of Old Urban District of Lhasa, the "old urban district" refers to the west to East Dongkuo Road, the north to Jiangsu Road, the east to Duosenge Road, and the north to North Linkuo Road, covering an area of 1.33 km<sup>2</sup>. The commercial complex is adjacent to Duosenge Road and within the protective buffer zone under the plan. There should be more room reserved for the ancient architectures in this zone. However, the outer wall in the east is only about 6 meters away from the west outer wall of Sid-Lin Monastery, which are the national first-level cultural relics. The limit height of the newly built architectures in the buffer zone is 12 m. But according to the published data of this architecture, the height is up to 23.95 m, which is higher by nearly one time. The catering of the facade to the local features as mentioned above is not extended to the internal space of the block. Sid-Lin Monastery is greatly influenced in such an environment.

The west outer wall of Sid-Lin Monastery is only 6 m away from the adjacent buildings, and the length of being parallel is over 30 m. Thus, a long and narrow space is created. The south of this space is used as the channel for logistics, where the vehicles delivering cargos will stop. This is also the place where the domestic garbage is carried away. The neighborhood committee in the north encloses a site for storing sundries together with the wall of Sid-Lin Monastery. Except for the working staff of the shops and the neighborhood committee, there are few other people accessing this place, let alone doing routine maintenance of the outer wall of Sid-Lin Monastery (fig 10). The outer wall, standing nearly 24 meters, nearly blocks the sunshine at noon. Although this situation is not serious at the moment, the dimness of the room is partially due to the existence of the Tibetan architecture itself, but can be remedied by artificial light source. Under the strong sunshine in plateau area, local residents may set up temporary shacks to block the parching sunlight. But the residents have complained, especially those living in the west, that the shadow of the commercial complex will cover the large part of the courtyard at about 5 in the after in winter when the solar zenith angle is low. It is about 2 hours earlier than the originally 7 in the evening. What also irritates the local residents is the vision inside and outside the courtyard. Before the commercial complex was built, one can see the Potala Palace from Sid-Lin Monastery in the west direction. From the perspective of urban landscape, the upper part of the main monastery can be visualized at the intersection between East Beijing Road and Duosenge Road. But at the present day, it is largely obstructed (fig 11).

The buildings inside and outside the blocks are apparently divergent stylistically. But the influence on the overall landscape of the old urban district is limited. One reason is that the architecture is located on the edge of old urban district. The continuity of traditional Tibetan landscape along East Beijing Road is partially interrupted before that. This region has basically completed the transition to modern commercial landscape. In addition, the streets of the old urban district are narrow. Near the east outer wall of Sid-Lin Monastery, one can hardly feel any incongruence of buildings in terms of visual effect. However, things get quite serious if one observes within the range of Sid-Lin Monastery. The west and south outer facades facing the urban roads are the combination of modern and traditional style. However, the east facade is simply the modern style, with large-area glass curtain wall decorated by deep gray strips, which poses a stark contrast to the traditional



style of Sid-Lin Monastery.

Fig 10 (left). Present situation of west exterior elevation of Sid-Lin, photoed by Lobsang Draga.

Fig 11 (right). Discordant modern elevation against Sid-Lin Courtyard, photoed by author, 2014.

Besides the commercial complex, the spare land in the north of Sid-Lin Monastery is allocated to Tibet Daily. The north wall of the remains of Sid-Lin Monastery has become part of the outer wall of residence for family members. This structure, with an area of about 6 hectares, is a confined space, leaving only one entrance at the north section near Duosenge Road. The Summer Palace Xidezhuokang, which is attached to Sid-Lin Monastery, is hidden in this structure. Initially, the main monastery had an entrance at this side, which is currently disused. In the process of our survey, we can only access the north wall of the main monastery by passing through the gate of Tibet Daily and the southernmost section of the residence for family members. In other directions, such as the northeast, the channels are obstructed by simple barriers. The initial entrance close to the kitchen in the east has been completely obstructed by brickwork. Thus, the connection between Sid-Lin Monastery and Summer Palace is completely cut off. The connection with the channels inside this region is also weakened. But from another perspective, such closedness of Sid-Lin Monastery ensures its purity and independence. Sid-Lin Monastery is connected with the well preserved urban landscape on the east and regarded as part of the original texture. Moreover, the unnecessary relations with the surrounding are severed, so Sid-Lin Monastery can be singled out and considered as a unique element in the region.

### 3.3 A Recommended Attitude to Changes

On the macroscopic scale, Sid-Lin Monastery is subject to the vicissitudes of the surrounding environment. But these changes are irreversible within a short period of time, and may be aggravated over time. The changes are highly incompatible with the religious spirit and the splendid history of Sid-Lin Monastery. What position should we taken when talking about the protection of Sid-Lin Monastery. If we formulate and implement the plans to the restore the appearance of Sid-Lin Monastery only depending on the anger on deteriorating environment, does it mean that what we are doing to the on-going history as what we have done before.

If Sid-Lin Monastery is preserved intact, the above-mentioned problems will be ignored against our own will. The focus of this article will be also diverted to other aspects, such as restoration technique, restoration degree, demolition of illegal buildings and the relocation of the residents. For Sid-Lin Monastery remains, we can attempt to justify the irreparable mistakes done to Sid-Lin Monastery. These mistakes can be transformed as the environment changes, just like Sid-Lin Monastery itself. Instead of redressing the mistakes, we should find ways to make these mistakes more acceptable to more interest groups. As stated in Nara Declaration, we should try our best to update realistic evaluation from the perspective of values and environment in evolution. Xi'an Declaration released on

the 15th International Conference on Ancient Relics in 2005 also contained similar statements "managing the changes of ancient architectures and ancient relics and the changes of the historical environment does not necessarily mean preventing or obstructing such changes". If changes are inevitable, how to accept and utilize the good or bad changes is a more realistic subject when talking about the protection of Sid-Lin Monastery.

We should not be satisfied with managing the external environment on the city scale. The internal environment should be also viewed on the community level or even more microscopic level.

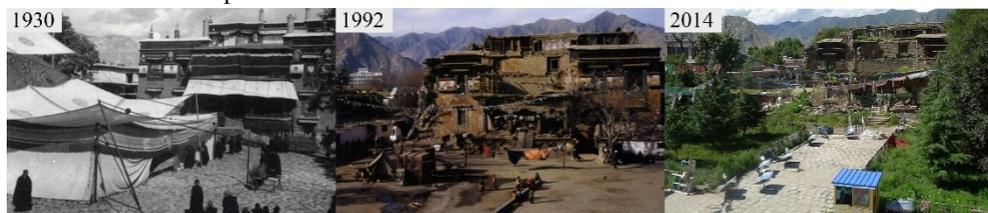


Fig 12. Sid-Lin Courtyard in 1930s,1992,2014. pics 1930s,1992 were quoted from *The temples of Lhasa Tibetan Buddhist Architecture*, pics 2014 was photoed by author.

#### 4. IN A SECULARIZED SID-LIN COURTYARD

Sid-Lin Monastery was once a spiritual place for Buddhists' practice. But now it becomes a mundane community for residents (fig 12). As mentioned before, the main monastery of Sid-Lin Monastery had been a residence of Rezhen living Buddha for a long time. Its large-scale monks' apartments in the surroundings were established under such circumstances. Such unit is called Dratsang in the organizational system of Monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism. A Dratsang is similar to a school in universities nowadays. It can be an independent unit with its complete organization and its own property as well as working capital. Those who live in a Dratsang are almost all monks in Buddhist practice. Though they are different at Buddhist accomplishments, job title and social status, they all practice religious activities of the same nature in this yard. In a particular historical period, these activities endowed Sid-Lin Monastery with a strong spiritual attribute which was beyond physical space. This spiritual attribute will not disappear along with its material carrier, but will fade with time or be covered by new attributes. It is none other than the residents who bring new attributes.

##### 4.1. The Reorganization of Sid-Lin Courtyard

Before the 1980s, Sid-Lin Monastery had always been an office-like unit which accommodated circuit teams and Tibetan opera groups. In 1984, two floors of Sid-Lin Monastery underwent a major maintenance. From then on, it started its transition to a residential community. Back then, in order to solve the increasingly

more crowded population of old districts in Lhasa, the government renovated a group of shabby yards and rented to people in need at a low price. These people were the first official residents of Sid-Lin Monastery. Some of them were homeless, some were pilgrims from Lhasa and some were residents around Sid-Lin Monastery. Their living conditions were all improved after moving here. Many of the first generation of residents have moved out or passed away. But some of their offsprings still live in here.

In 2003, the government organized another large-scale renovation on Sid-Lin Monastery. This renovation still focused on the improvement of its living condition so that no repair was done on the ruins of the main monastery. However, this renovation aimed not only at renovating monks' apartments which were today's residential houses but also at reconstructing the yard's layout. Shanties built in the yard by residents without permission were torn down. To fulfill residents' request of increasing the actual useable area of their houses, the original porticoes of the first floor were joined by walls but with the building elevation of monks' apartment basically reserved. In terms of the landscape, two public green fields surrounded by railings were added around the original arbors in the yard, while the rest of it was equipped with rigid material. In terms of infrastructure, a washing room was added in the east side of the residency and a new outdoor public toilets was build in the west side. In 2014, a relevant department set up railing around the main monastery to forbid unrelated persons from approaching in order to avoid accidents. The original wide public area was reduced by 43.7% due to the unreachable function of public green fields and the enclosed buffer space around the main monastery (fig 13). But the residents did not mind. It was widely believed that these measures made the original cluttered yard more organized.



Fig 13. New organization of Sid-Lin courtyard reduces the accessible public area.

#### 4.2. Current Residents of Sid-Lin

The residents currently living in Sid-Lin Monastery were all normal Tibetans. A total of 77 households (5 of which were uninhabited), including about 300 people, lived in the original monks' apartment and servants' room attached to the west side of buddha hall. The earliest residents in Sid-Lin Monastery were both owners and tenants: they could rent their properties to others at market price as landlords. At same time, they had to pay the administrative department 0.5 Yuan per square meter

each month as rent. The price was extremely low. In the Lhasa housing rental market, a less than 15 square meters house at the same area cost hundreds and even thousands each month. Therefore, the former poverty-driven families could receive a handsome extra income by renting their houses at Sid-Lin Monastery.

There are over 40 short-term tenants in the yard, who regularly pay rent to earlier owners at market price. They have a high mobility. Some of them stay for one or two years. Some only live for a few months. These people are mostly youngsters from places outside Lhasa living on commercial activities. With no families, they work in the day and return at nights, regarding this place simply as a temporary shelter. During the author's actual research process, never had I encountered this kind of residents. Their doors were shut closely and not much communication between neighbours. To Sid-Lin Monastery, they are even nonexistent.

The other over 30 permanent residents are the real owner of Sid-Lin Monastery. A small number of permanent residents, appointed as administrators, are responsible for the maintenance of the yard's hygiene and the coordination of neighbor conflicts. They also receive appropriate payment. Most of them have lived here over 10 years. A few of them even stayed for 40 years. Some inherited their parents' property and some moved in with their spouses. They have families in this yard and even some relatives. (fig 14)



Fig 14. Residents's modifications on Sid-Lin, photoed by author, 2014.

Fig 15. Four examples of living condition of the residents, photoed by author, 2014.

#### 4.3. Current Residents of Sid-Lin

The resident nature and demographic structure of Sid-Lin Monastery were changed due to the abolishment of the main monastery, which weakened its religious characteristic of the place. When Sid-Lin Monastery was still a Dratsang, most of the activities happened in here had a group feature, which could be divided into three classifications: the first was purely religious activity, such as collective

learning of Buddhist classics and holding religious ceremonies, etc. This kind comprised primary activities of Sid-Lin Monastery's spiritual place back then; the second was rather mundane activities to keep the Dratsang running, such as financial procurement from outside and reception of visiting followers, etc; the third was some purely mundane but necessary activities like daily dining, sleeping and human communication, etc.

Now the first and second kind activities no long exist as religious organization moved out. Now public activities with religious features happened in here, such as burning aromatic plant on Wednesday and changing suspended prayer flags on New Year's Day, were more reasonably cataloged into folk custom. Pilgrimage and consecration are routines for residents. Nearly every family has its own Buddhist prayer room in a separate compartment or as part of sitting room. But these are just common features in Tibetans' daily life. They should not be considered as continuation of original Sid-Lin Monastery's religious characteristic. The third mundane activities become main activities happened in Sid-Lin Monastery with a wider variety. These activities add new place characteristics for Sid-Lin Monastery. Unlike the monks before, nowadays residents live with family as unit rather than organized group living. Children shuttle through families and play around; the young sometimes gather around the tables and chairs near the registration room at their door to play a particular Tibetan dice game; the old watch them on the side and chat with each others. These mundane scenes of life could not be seen when Sid-Lin Monastery was a Dratsang.

Besides changing the scenes of life, residents of Sid-Lin Monastery also respectively transformed their private areas basing on their needs, especially within the limited area before their door. Some families showed affection for plants. They set up a pergola in front of their house to put various plot plants on; some put things that could not fit indoor, like washing machine and abandoned old furniture. Second floor residents between the vertical and horizontal aisles could not utilize public areas in the yard like first floor residents so they use simple board to close the second floor aisles. There are also families who extend their means of sustenance to the wider public area within yard. These reconstructions mentioned above may be too random some times and leave the yard in disorder but they have added strong smack of everyday life for Sid-Lin Monastery and become normal state of it. (fig 15)

#### **4.4. New Residential Pattern in Sid-Lin**

In order to establish the residential environment formed in Sid-Lin Monastery, the author performed household surveys on 12 long-term residents. During the survey, apart from rising questions specific to real situations, 4 questions designed before surveys were asked as follows. When and why did they move in? Are they satisfied with current living condition and do they want move out? How is the relationship between the neighbours? Do they always participate activities in the yard and what kinds of activities?

The followings are three typical examples as the limitation of pages.

Nima Ciren lives in the bigger house with about 30 square meters on the first floor of the yard's southeast side. This area is enough for his wife, two kids and himself to live in, even with surplus. Therefore he transformed the part at back into a clothing studio. His wife and him were introduced to here in 2004. They make clothes and sell them on the near markets for a living, with an income of about 2000 to 3000 Yuan each month now. They were quite satisfied with current living condition and never have the thought of moving out. His wife sell their ready-made clothes at Barkhor Street Mall with 850 meters from Sid-Lin Monastery at the crossing of Linkuo East Road and Beijing East Road and himself stay working at the clothing studio. Since Nima Ciren spends most time in the yard, he was appointed as householder in charge of coordination for 10 families. When it comes to traditional festivals, he also organized public recreational activities with other householders. He was so familiar with residents near the area and get along with them well. He often basked in the yard's sunshine but seldom move about the ruins of the main monastery.

Duola is one of Cizong's neighbors. In the courtyard of Sid-Lin Monastery at least two households are his relatives. His mother has been living in Sid-Lin Monastery for more than 40 years. She lived here since the time of Tibetan Opera Troupe. During her residence here, she moved for several times, mostly within the courtyard. Currently, Duola's mother and her sisters' family (totaling 9 people) are living on the second floor of the largest room in the west. This was once the kitchen for the monks, whose structure differs from other rooms. One part of the room extends outwards, making the room more spacious. Dola himself is a carpenter, and he moved back to the courtyard in 1983. Like Cizong, he made various types of traditional Tibetan furniture using the space on one side. One household on the east side is a painter, who works with Dola and draws patterns on the furniture. He does not want to move out of the courtyard, because this courtyard provides the working space for him. If he has to move out, he hopes to live with his neighbors.

The family of Cangqiong in his young age lives on the floor above Nima Ciren. He moved into Sid-Lin Monastery in 2009, because his parents lived in this courtyard. When she told the authorities that she wanted to move back, she soon obtained the approval. At present, she lives with her husband, children and brothers in a crowded room less than 30 square meters. Cangqiong's brother works in a cleaning company, and her husband works as a security nearby. Since she lives on the second floor, she rarely goes out to the courtyard, but looks after children in the house. She does not want her children to play near the remains, because she thinks it is unsafe. She does not think too much of the convenient transportation here or her easy access to a courtyard. She wants to move out to a new-style community.

The three examples mentioned above are the representatives of over 30 long-term households living in Sid-Lin Monastery. They have been long accustomed to the life of the courtyard and the relations between the neighbors are harmonious. These

people's life is already integrated into the changing environment near Sid-Lin Monastery. As to the remains of the main monastery, they only hope that it will be soon recovered. But when it comes to the question of how it should be restored and what problems will ensue after restoration, they do not give too much consideration. If Sid-Lin Monastery is to be restored in a conventional way, the interests of the residents here will be the first to be compromised. The residents of Sid-Lin Monastery have been living here for more than 30 years, and they are already accustomed to the living environment. In fact, whatever protective measures to be adopted for Sid-Lin Monastery, the tranquil life of the residents here will be disturbed. If that is to happen, we have to adopt certain measures to ensure that the changes are constructive. Sid-Lin Monastery should not be only the object of these changes.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

From an urban perspective, Sid-Lin Monastery is squarely embedded into the new urban system. The surrounding of Sid-Lin Monastery is enveloped in an increasingly strong commercial atmosphere. This is the hard truth. In this context, it is unrealistic to restore its position as Dratsang. If the internal microscopic structure of Sid-Lin Monastery is not renovated, the monastery can hardly fit the traditional religious institution. From the standpoint of sustainability, the protection of Sid-Lin Monastery should highlight the return of the spirits, rather than the reconstruction of a physical entity.

Probably we can utilize the existing conditions to restore part, if not all, of the religious functions of Sid-Lin Monastery on a community level. This practice not only conforms to the wish of the public, but also produces no major influence on the existing urban pattern, thus causing no conflicts. The place for religious activities is confined to the small domain where the main monastery is located. Thus the religious activities can be performed without invading the life space of the residents. As some of the religious functions are restored, some adjustments can be made to the public layout to accommodate two life styles, the life of the monks and the life of the worldly people. The originally closed public greenspace can be opened. The remains of the main monastery may not be completely restored and be cleaned up, consolidated and renovated locally. While preserving its historical value as a relic, the main monastery may be restored into a religious place. A few monks can reside in this place for routine management. Then more work can be done to strengthen its religious and spiritual nature and to pinpoint its significance in the courtyard of Sid-Lin Monastery. Next, the restored religious attributes and the worldly life will coexist and develop together in mutual benefits.

The above conception will be refined in subsequent design. This article has made some preliminary discussions on the issues centering around the courtyard of Sid-Lin Monastery. To be "reborn" in a real sense, Sid-Lin Monastery should resemble

the living Buddha in the unique incarnation system of Tibetan Buddhism: no matter how profound the preceding life, he should start the next life like an infant, adapting to the new environment and obtaining recognition from a new start.

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