

Scholars come to China so they can research Tibet

More overseas scholars now seek to come to China to study Tibetan history and culture, a senior researcher said on Thursday.

These people have received higher education in their home countries, but lack on-site studies in the Tibet autonomous region and traditional Tibetology research, said Zheng Dui, secretary-general of the China Tibetology Research Center, China's top academic research institute on the topic.

At a news conference, Zheng made the remarks in response to questions from overseas reporters on whether monasteries and schools built by the Dalai Lama's followers in India would attract more Tibetan people from China to accept education there.

"I'm not worried at all, because the roots of traditional Tibetan culture is in China," he said.

Zheng said there are 6 million Tibetan people in China, comprising the vast majority of the ethnic group around the world, so "the mainstream of Tibetology is thus right here".

The center estimates about 150,000 Tibetan people live in South Asia.

"On the contrary, we've noticed that more Tibetan scholars living overseas now begin to seek opportunities studying Tibetan history and culture back in China," Zheng said.

"It's not a question how the mainstream adapts to tributaries, but how tributaries get merged into the mainstream."

Nevertheless, Zheng said more communication between Tibetology institutes in China and their overseas counterparts is crucial to develop more fruitful academic results and train experts in other countries.

For instance, starting from joint efforts with Austrian Academy of Sciences in 2004 on studies of ancient Tibetan Buddhism manuscripts in Sanskrit, cooperation with Zheng's institute has expanded to more countries' including the United States, Italy and Japan.

Founded in 1986, China Tibetology Research Center has nearly 200 scholars covering history, economy, traditional medicine and many more fields. There are more than 50 research institutes focused on Tibetology in China.

Zheng said some large-scale Tibetological projects can only be done by China. For example, the editing of The General History of Tibet, which includes 9 million characters in eight volumes, was completed in 2015 after 18 years of work, which he said clarified some misleading theories on Tibet's history.

And, the ongoing editing of the Tibetan language volume of Zhonghua Dadian (Chinese Encyclopedia) is estimated to include more than 1,000 types of ancient books in Tibetan. The estimated 15-year project began in 2013.