ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN
PHILOSOPHISCH-HISTORISCHE KLASSE
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Proceedings of the
7th Seminar of the International
Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995

General Editor: Ernst Steinkellner

Volume IV

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INTRODUCTION: PLACE, SPACE AND IDENTITY: THE CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND AESTHETIC POLITICS OF TIBETAN DIASPORA

by

Frank J. Korom, Santa Fe

Overview

In a recent review article on "refugees and exile," Liisa Malkki (1995) suggests that Europe has played a pivotal role in defining refugees and also in forming global policies towards their care. As she states (1995: 497), "it is in Europe emerging from World War II, that certain key techniques for managing displacements of people first became standardized and then globalized." One could also add the United States and Canada to the list of European countries that have served subsequently as the shapers of cultural policy concerning refugees. Malkki admits that people have always sought sanctuary and refuge in other countries, "but 'the refugee' as a specific social category and legal problem of global dimensions did not exist in its full modern form before this period" (1995: 497-498). To be sure, the period between World War II and the end of the Cold War produced the largest number of refugees due to decolonization and superpower conflict (Hein 1987: 47-48). Yet while a number of superpowers were decolonizing, some continued active policies of pulling their neighboring countries into their ideological fold. The one that interests us here – namely, the People's Republic of China (PRC) – was pursuing a colonization policy in neighboring Tibet.

The Seventeen Point Agreement signed by the PRC and Tibet in 1951 allowed Tibetans internal autonomy in exchange for Chinese suzerainty in foreign affairs. But as a resistence movement in the eastern Tibetan province of Kham became more problematic, the PRC's attempts at political ascendancy intensified, ultimately leading to the Lhasa Uprising in 1959. This is also the year that witnessed a mass exodus out of Tibet to the neighboring countries of India, Nepal and Bhutan, which followed after the fourteenth Dalai Lama, spiritual and political leader of Tibet, fled to India, where he established his government-in-exile in the Himalayan hamlet known as Dharamsala.

Now, the Department of Information and Internal Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala estimates that nearly 131,000 Tibetans have been exiled since the Chinese occupation (CTA 1995: personal communication). Of these, the majority (app. 125,777) remain close to the Tibetan border in India (110,000), Nepal (15,000) and Bhutan (1,457), while the rest are scattered in communities situated in no less than eleven nations around the world, mostly in Europe and North America (cf. Korom 1996, in press a). The fact that these figures differ slightly from those provided by Methfessel in this volume suggests that no systematic census has been carried out by the Tibetan government-in-exile.

It is true that Tibetans are only a small percentage of the overall refugee population in the Occident when compared to displaced populations closer to home. Perhaps it is this sense of distance that makes Tibet seem so insignificant on one level of meaning. On another level, however, Tibet and its people have played an important role in the Western *imaginaire* (cf. Korom in press b), occupying an exoticized mentalscape beckoning the foreigner into its midst. This exotic image, based on early travel literature and ethnic stereotypes (cf.Bishop 1989; Klieger this vol-

ume), certainly played a role in decisions to resettle Tibetan refugees in Europe (Sander 1984: 137), but the "making familiar" of the exotic through relocation has not really allowed for the total domestication or localization of the exotic, as the exhibition and book both titled *Exotische Welten – Europäische Phantasien* (Pollig 1987) seems to suggest. It would be incorrect, however, to posit that this process is simply one created solely in and by the West, as Elliot Sperling (1992) reminds us. Such exoticization is obviously not limited to Europe, for China, as well as many other Eastern nations (cf. Schwartz 1994: 201-354), also engages in presenting its own minorities – including Tibetans – in not only an exotic but also erotic light (Gladney 1994). The unhappy blending of the exotic and the familiar is further related to the sociological issues of assimilation and acculturation, one of the themes of this book.

For all of its earlier perceived exotic qualities, Tibet and Tibetans have escaped the serious attention of scholars interested in the comparative social and humanistic study of diasporas and exile. Malkki's review essay referred to above, for example, does not discuss the Tibetan diaspora at all, nor do other recent surveys of diaspora literature, such as James Clifford's 1994 overview. While it is true that a number of significant studies have been written about Tibetans in exile (cf. bibliography), there has been very little attempt to look at the interactive dynamics of the Tibetans' emergent culture in their new homes. It is also imperative to relate the Tibetan data comparatively to the experiences of other refugee communities, since, as Clifford writes, "diasporic forms of longing, memory, and (dis)identification are shared by a broad spectrum of minority and migrant populations" (1994: 304).

Writing on the subject of Tibetan lifeways in the diaspora is in its infancy, yet the dire need to theorize about population movements across national boundaries is extremely relevant to life in the modern world. The essays in this book attempt to engage a number of complex questions about diasporic culture that should be of interest to Tibetologists as well as a wide range of researchers working in and around the margins of established academic disciplines.

Place, Space and Cultural Production

The rapid dispersion of Tibetan ethnic groups gradually led to the establishment of a global communication network with Dharamsala at the hub. From this central location, Tibetan politicians attempt to maintain and project a self-perceived homogeneous culture, including not only religion and language but also traditional arts, crafts and performing traditions. The same network also serves as a passageway for the transportation of material goods across borders, creating a loosely structured transnational flow of commodities (Appadurai 1991). In India, for example, an infrastructure for the economic movement of goods along this communication network has already been well-developed, as Methfessel (1995) has shown. Moreover, all of these avenues of exchange provide an ideal case study for an analysis of the relationship between transaction and meaning (cf. Kapferer 1976).

In reality, Tibetan governmental representatives worldwide know that Tibetans must adapt in order to succeed in their newly adopted host countries. Thus a strategy of "limited acculturation" has developed over time to allow Tibetans living outside of the homeland to continue practicing their own cultural traditions, while simultaneously adjusting to local lifeways. But the balance has been difficult to achieve. Sociological studies (Brauen & Kantowsky 1987; DeVoe 1981; Goldstein 1975; Marazzi 1975; Messerschmidt 1976; Michael 1985; Nowak 1984; Ott-Marti 1971, 1976; Saklani 1978; Sander 1984) of Tibetans living abroad suggest that some refugees are having difficulties negotiating their multiple identities, and that "pure" Tibetan culture has suffered as a result (cf. Korom 1996, in press a). Realizing this, the transnational Tibetan community itself has taken steps to revive Tibetan cultural practices. Centers, cooperatives and

schools have been established in Tibetan settlements worldwide to preserve, or in some cases reintroduce, performing arts, craft traditions, language and religious instruction. Religion, of course, has played a quintessential role in keeping this global community together; that is, faith in Buddhism and in the Dalai Lama's office has provided the cohesion necessary for maintaining a form of "proto-nationalism" (Dreyfus 1994) within a broadly dispersed world society (Schwartz 1994). Of course, one must also account for the important role that Bon plays in diasporic culture, as Mona Schrempf's contribution to this volume does. The challenge that remains is to see what forms the revival will take as temporal and spatial factors continue to have an effect on Tibetan global culture.

Because Tibetan expressive traditions have become intimately associated with identity and ethnicity (Klieger 1989), arts, crafts, literature and performing traditions, both sacred and secular, stand at a critical crossroads. International supporters of Tibet and Tibetans themselves note the declining rate of artistic production by trained individuals who have gone into other fields of employment abroad. Generally, this seems to be true, since no traditional system of patronage exists in the Occident to compensate artisans for their talents (but see DeVoe 1983). As demand has decreased, artisans have turned to other occupations, producing crafted objects only on occasion. The decline is perceived as a genuine threat to cultural preservation by many policy makers. However, some exceptions do exist, for Tibetan artists and performers utilize their aesthetic skills to negotiate their identities in exile, as the essays by Calkowski, Huber, Klieger and Schrempf in this volume exemplify. For example, Karma Phuntsok, a Tibetan painter living in Australia, has combined innovatively Aboriginal themes with traditional Tibetan techniques to come up with a marketable style that suits Australian aesthetic sensibilities, and the Tibetan flute player, Nawang Khechog, combines traditional flute playing from Tibet with harmonic singing, didgeridoo, pan pipes and a number of other wind instruments to attract the lucrative New Age music audience. But at the same time, some Tibetan artisans consciously resist the syncretic tendencies of transnational culture in their attempts to keep "tradition" conservative and free from the influences of their host cultures, as Ström (this volume) suggests about Tibetan monastic practice in India.

Similar revivalist phenomena are occurring with Tibetan artisans in Europe and North America. Some have even received governmental recognition for their talents. In the United States, Karma Sherap of Salt Lake City, has received funds from the Folk Arts Apprenticeship Project to train younger Tibetan refugees in the art of rug weaving, while the Ford Foundation has supported opera artists from the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) in Dharamsala, India to spend time at American colleges and high schools giving workshops for Tibetan community members and their foreign hosts. The overall result has been a slow revitalization of artistic traditions. This has led to a fluidity of style and a redefinition of aesthetic canons. To use an example from New Mexico, a Tibetan craftsman runs a table saw to make furniture for the showroom at American Home Furnishings (Korom forthcoming). Further, a Tibetan stone mason in Massachusetts utilizes his skill in building *stupa*s to restore masonry work on state park lands (Williamson 1996: 16-17). These are some of the ways that individuals are adapting to economic and cultural circumstances in the West.

In South Asia, the scenario is somewhat different. A large bulk of the crafted objects used by Tibetans or intended for export are being produced in cooperatives and training centers in South Asia. Established to revive the arts and crafts as well as to provide a livelihood for unemployed Tibetans living in India, Nepal and Bhutan, these centers are the creative lifeline of the exilic community. The ratio of Tibetan craft centers to habitation sites clearly demonstrates the socio-economic centrality that craft production plays in Indo-Tibetan refugee communities today. Re-

search reports from Nepal (e.g., Walter 1993) also seem to suggest that craft training and production play an even larger role in the Kathmandu Valley than they do in India.

The Lower Tibetan Children's Village Arts and Crafts Centre (McLeod Ganj), the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (Dharamsala), the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (Dharamsala), the Crafts Complex at the Norbulingka Institute and the Tashi Jong Tibetan Craft Community Centre, along with the Tibetan Handicraft Charitrust Organization in New Delhi all produce and market a wide variety of Tibetan goods, as do a number of organizations in south India and the Kathmandu Valley. These items range from textiles (woven cotton aprons, appliqué work, woolen rugs and seat covers) to ceramics, jewelry and painting. Such objects have socioeconomic importance and histories of their own (Appadurai 1990a). But this is not to say that arts and crafts production is only economic, being produced for the international tourist trade alone (cf. Graburn 1984). On the contrary, many of the items have a highly symbolic value in the culture that nurtures their production.

Based on my initial impressions, place seems to be one of the central themes of Tibetan diasporic arts. Philosophers (Heidegger 1958; Bachelard 1961), geographers (Tuan 1975, 1991) and psychologists (Hallowell 1977; Zwingmann 1961) have all pointed out that the notion of place serves as a basic factor of human orientation. Moreover, studies by theorists of diaspora (Chow 1993; Clifford 1992, 1993; Malkki 1995; Hein 1993) reinforce the central importance of place as an organizing principle and as a creative key to imagination. Even though the Tibetan refugees live in a "deterritorialized" (Appadurai 1990b) state, the very fact that they may never return home creates a more intensified yearning for the homeland. This yearning becomes a major preoccupation and, in a sense, replaces the real possibility of returning home. Muhammad Anwar's study of Pakistanis in Britain, *The Myth of Return* (1979), makes a very similar point; that is, the construction of an imaginary homeland fills a necessary, nostalgic void in the lives of migrants and refugees (cf. also Seidel 1986). Thus, the longing for the homeland functions as a therapeutic for many who know that they may never return. In other words, the yearning replaces the actual phenomenon of physical repatriation, allowing the individual to remain loyal to a "stateless society" (Samuel 1982).

Unlike other displaced people who have been uprooted by war (e.g. Afghans, Hmong), Tibetans do not generally depict horrific scenes of combat in their commodified artistic productions, even though Tibetan children's art has, on occasion, shown graphic evidence of conflict and political oppression, as is the case with artwork produced in the Tibetan schools of Dharamsala and Mussoorie. This may be due in part to a Buddhist adherence to the doctrine of non-violence. Yet mainstream Tibetan arts do reflect displacement in subtle ways that are not always noticeable at first glance.

What the keen observer notices is a strong emphasis on place. In fact, a whole genre of popular song (Diehl forthcoming; cf. also Goldstein 1982: 64-65), based on the *rang btsan* or "freedom" metaphor described by Nowak (1984), has emerged to elucidate the strong nationalistic desire to return home. Place, imagined or real, thus becomes a central metaphor for the construction of identity in exile. Quite often this metaphor is expressed in and through material culture as well. The last 20 years has also witnessed a dramatic transformation of the plastic arts. Woolen rugs (cf. Denwood 1974: 77-81) and cotton textiles have slowly begun to reflect the yearning for the homeland. Weavers now incorporate motifs of geography and architecture, and religious and national symbols into their designs. The Lower Tibetan Children's Village Arts and Crafts Centre (LTCVAC), for example, is now producing showpiece rugs of the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Similarly, the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) utilizes a large painted backdrop of the Potala Palace for their Lhamo (traditional opera) performances. In the past, Lhamo

was performed just below the immense palace on festive days (Calkowski 1991; Snyder 1979). Now, however, due to exile, Tibetan performers use a painted Potala to visually frame their performance space. Contemporary Tibetan performers wish to preserve the image of the Potala's centrality by using the backdrop as an *aide memoire* for spectators. Although some impetus for producing such items has come from a marketing strategy aimed at the tourist sector (e.g., Yeshi 1985), the same sorts of objects can often be found in Tibetan homes throughout the world. Many older Tibetans living in Rikon, Switzerland, for example, hang painted and woven images of the Potala on their walls.

The last decade has also seen a rise in the number of Kalachakra mandalas (wheel of time sandpaintings) created for foreign patrons abroad (cf. McLagan this volume). Like the Navajo tradition of sandpainting (Gold 1994), the Tibetan form is intended to be destroyed after completion. Now, given the fact that this is a highly complicated ritual activity that must be performed by trained monks, the current international demand is greater than monastic personnel are able to meet. As a result, with initial impetus coming from Europe, weavers at the LTCVAC have been given permission to make a limited number of lifesized replicas of the mandala in wool. Thus far, only approximately seven are displayed abroad, since prior permission from the Private Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama is needed before a mandala rug can be commissioned.

These few examples of the power of place in Tibetan artistic traditions could be supplemented with others. For example, in addition to providing sorely needed income, the making of ornately sewn national flags has, in and of itself, become an aesthetic and social activity. Further, ethnic dolls clothed in regional costumes are produced by monks at Norbulingka with the intention of reminding refugees of their provincial traditions within Tibet (cf. Yeshi 1985). Ironically, these quaint dolls have not found an indigenous market; rather, they are consumed almost exclusively by tourists. Very few can be viewed in the homes of Tibetans living in India. Nevertheless, the intentionality behind these emergent craft forms seems to suggest a purposeful attempt to locate the homeland at the center of refugee discourse. Although Templeman (1995) disagrees with this point, arguing that images of place rather suggest the perpetuation of the romantic image of Tibet in the West, we must remember that even such romanticization is the result of ongoing negotiations between Westerners and Tibetans, as the essays included herein clearly demonstrate.

The production of such objects also allows Tibetans to draw foreign sympathizers into the realm of traditional crafts patronage. This has resulted in an ongoing dialogic (cf. Bakhtin 1981) process in which Tibetans constantly and consciously redefine themselves according to the expectations of their new patrons (DeVoe 1983; Klieger 1989: 202-275). Based on this assumption, one could still argue that all of the above examples are intended to keep the image of the homeland vivid in people's minds, not only in diasporic Tibetan minds but also in the minds of Western sympathizers, for as McLagan argues (this volume), the dynamic and highly politicized process of Tibetan identity formation is a dialectic created from the mutual interaction of hosts and guests in a process Dean McCannell (1984) has termed "reconstructed ethnicity."

The emphasis on place suggests a somewhat conservative attitude towards change in that it attempts to keep Tibetan refugees focused on the past (cf. Appadurai 1981; cf. also Lowenthal 1985). One would think that this "nostalgia for the past" would hinder acculturation and social change. Yet, as can be gleaned from the examples above, change is indeed occurring, and new styles of art and performance are emerging to reflect this change. The very idea of having to keep the notion of place alive is a clear and creative result of being displaced.

As temporal factors pose a threat to imaginings of the homeland, so too do spatial ones (cf. Anderson 1991). Tibetans living outside of the Indic subcontinent have been even more re-

moved geographically from their origins. This has resulted in a greater rate of assimilation and more drastic changes in artistic style. One *thangka* painter in Santa Fe, for example, has recently completed a painting that powerfully reflects cultural encounter: a Himalayan scene with an unidentified *bodhisattva* (enlightened being) meditating on one peak and Santa Claus riding his reindeer sleigh over another. In this example we notice an ingenious attempt to overcome a "situational incongruity" (Smith 1982); that is, a blending of legends and beliefs to reflect the East-West clash in one unified frame of reference. Similarly, Karma Phuntsok's paintings ironically juxtapose Aboriginal sacred sites with Tibetan ones in an attempt to describe visually the "hyphenated" (Brody 1995) identities of Tibetan-Australians. This sort of "cultural clash" is alluded to in Klieger's (this volume) utilization of Umberto Eco's (1990) term "hyperreality" to characterize the production of hybridized cultural artifacts at the margins of society where innovation and change occur most frequently (cf. Kapchen 1993).

Rug weaving is a good case in point to illustrate how economic patterns, rules of supply and demand and local circumstances influence styles and tastes. Most rugs produced in India and Nepal by Tibetans are entering the European and American markets through middlemen. These "culture brokers" (cf. Ioannou 1989; Steiner 1994) request pieces to be woven in certain colors and with certain geometric patterns that appeal to Western sensibilities, not necessarily Tibetan ones. Bright red medallion motifs centered on fields of green are replacing more traditional deep blues and grays and earthen tones. Color is further affected by an increase in the use of synthetic dyes and millspun New Zealand wool. Yet, as I have already suggested above, I do not wish to suggest that contemporary Tibetan crafts produced in exile are merely "tourist art," (cf. Bentor 1993) for Tibetans themselves are consumers of many products now being produced for a global marketplace. A visit to any Tibetan home in South Asia would, for example, provide the visitor with glimpses of 3' x 6' rugs being used to cover sleeping cots. The indigenous use of locally made objects as well as the commodification of material culture for economic gain abroad are both central to understanding the dynamics of craft production and aesthetic choice in exile. Moreover, these same factors contribute to the spiritual, political and ethnic image of Tibet and Tibetans in the West.

Prolegomenon to the Study of Tibetan Diaspora

Is style self-consciously manipulated for economic gain? Do Tibetan refugees intentionally utilize cultural traditions to express diaspora? Do foreign perceptions of Tibetans differ from Tibetan self-perceptions? If so, how do these foreign images influence Tibetan ideas pertaining to their own identity? How are these ideas then put into action to create distinct patterns of ethnicity? And how do Tibetans ultimately reconcile their past with their present? These are just some of the many complex questions that the papers in this volume raise.

The discourse on culture in exile that emerges from the papers in this volume suggests a number of approaches to the study of ethnic identity formation through religion, representation, performance, politics, ecology and economics. Discussing Lhamo performances, Marcia Calkowski points out that more than two groups are involved in the dialectical process; that is, the construction of culture in exile takes place on many levels and with many conversation partners as Axel Ström also points out. Meg McLagan, following Melvyn Goldstein (1994), refers to this as a "confrontation of representations." For her, the representation of culture is a collaborative process involving Western, Tibetan and Chinese, as well as exilic constructions of culture, which are all interrelated. This has led to what McLagan and Calkowski both describe as a "self-conscious objectification of culture." In his discussion of the "green identity" of Tibetans in exile, Toni Huber adds that representations must be treated as facts for anthroplogical and historical

analysis, since they are produced in specific contexts and used to "negotiate human existence." I have already pointed out that the Tibetan diaspora has led to newly emergent forms of culture. In fact, McLagan goes so far as to state that putting culture on display in new contexts itself is a contemporary mode of representation (cf. also Myers 1994). Mona Schrempf adumbrates the same argument in her discussion of *'cham* performances in India and Europe.

All of these strands of analysis raise searching questions. How does one control meaning? Is it through inscribed or embodied culture, as Calkowski, Klieger and Ström ask? The issue is who speaks for whom and with what level of authority? Huber and Ström both answer this question by suggesting that meaning is monopolized and controlled in a hierarchical manner from top to bottom.

It seems to me that with all of the essentialism of Tibetan*ness* pointed out by Klieger, the central problematic is authenticity, which Deborah Root (1996: 79) has recently discussed as "a definition imposed from the outside on a living culture so that the community will never be able to live up to the way it has been defined" (cf. also Appiah 1994; Berman 1972; Handler 1986; McCannell 1973). Does the "logic of the market," as Fabian and Szombati-Fabian (1980) term it, the economic commodification of culture for political and ideological ends, create an artificial dichotomy between the real and the hyperreal in Eco's (1990) sense? Or does it simply draw attention to the need to reexamine and perhaps expand the canon which dictates the normative dimensions of aesthetic and expressive aspects of cultural traditions?

Perhaps there is a process of "domesticating the alien" (Goody 1977) occurring in Western imaginings of Tibet. If we follow McLagan's dialogic line of reasoning, we must view this domestication as a means of intercultural adaptation and survival. For example, Ström argues that one needs to look at aspects of tradition that converge upon common points of different cultures' interests in order to map patterns of continuity and change. His utilization of indigenous Tibetan categories for determining continuity and authentic authority seems to be a good methodological starting point of departure. But it is also important to devise a transnational vocabulary to account for the types of emergent Tibetan culture that fit into broader strategies employed by displaced people worldwide.

One closing point to consider is that the joint construction of Tibetan culture in exile is a direct by-product of "modernity," broadly conceived as a public realm encompassing sites such as museums, sports arenas, restaurants and pubs, open spaces (e.g., gardens and parks) as well as social activities including television and video-viewing (Naficy 1993), music-listening (Diehl forthcoming) and internet-surfing (McLagan 1996), to name just a few (cf. Breckenridge 1995). Sites and activities such as these, while not all the result of modern or postcolonial global processes, are spaces within which modern culture is synthetically produced in the late twentieth century from an unlimited number of possible sources. Virtually all of the papers in *Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora* address issues relating to modernity.

Rinzin Thargyal's contribution to this volume, for example, argues that both the concepts of secularism and nationalism in the exiled Tibetans' worldview is linked to the ideas of progress and modernity. Moreover, Huber's analysis of the development of environmental correctness in the Tibetan refugee communities today is an ecological image clearly resulting from emerging global notions of modernity propagated via a number of media. Klieger and McLagan also suggest that mass-mediated forms of Tibetan diasporic representation must be seen as part and parcel of a transnational and intercultural process of identity construction that cuts across virtually all social boundaries, be they national, ethnic, linguistic or cultural.

A number of recent thinkers on the topic of modernity and culture frame their discussions in

terms of consumption (e.g., Breckenridge 1995; McCracken 1988) and appropriation (Root 1996), as when Tibetan shaman robes are co-opted for advertisement and sale (cf. Kamenetz 1996: 49), or when Tibetan ritual implements are marketed as New Age jewelry (Korom in press b). Root (1996) terms this sort of appropriation as a "cannibalizing" of traditional culture for the purpose of commodifying difference. In this contested realm, even religion, something so precious to Tibetans, is "sold" in the marketplace (cf. Moore 1994).

We need to keep in mind, however, as the papers in this volume aptly point out, that a reappropriation for their own purposes of such commodified goods occurs precisely by the populations being essentialized. The study of Tibetan cultural production in exile must account for the various and complex nuances of cultural encounter and historical change if we are to find a theoretical "place" (Appadurai 1988) for Tibetan diaspora studies. This would allow research on exile currently being conducted in the field of Tibetology to become relevant to the broader sociological and anthropological issues that confront diaspora studies at large. We hope that the papers presented here are a step in that direction.

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SOCIOECONOMIC ADAPTATION OF TIBETAN REFUGEES IN SOUTH ASIA OVER 35 YEARS IN EXILE

by

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The Flight from Tibet

Following the occupation of Tibet by Chinese armed forces after 1950 and the military defeat of the Tibetan resistance movement in 1959, approximately 80,000 people fled into the neighboring countries of India, Nepal and Bhutan. Many of these displaced Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama, the political and religious leader of the Tibetan people, into exile to cope with an uncertain future. He himself had managed to escape Chinese arrest and secured asylum in India, which was granted by the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

The community of refugees in India and Nepal contained members of virtually every social and ethnic group inhabitating Tibet: members of the nobility and clergy, peasants, nomads, landless laborers and artisans. Although the upper strata of Tibetan society was somewhat overrepresented among the exiled groups, the migration to India and the contiguous Himalayan kingdoms was in no way a socially selective flight of the feudal aristocracy, as some of the propagandistic literature from China seems to have suggested (Forbes 1989: 27; Subba 1990: 26). Rather, geographical factors placed constraints on who could succeed in getting to the Indian frontier. Those Tibetans living relatively close to the border had better chances of escaping when compared to communities living farther away.

According to the results of the 1991 election for the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, 70% of the Tibetan refugees in South Asia belong to former Ü-Tsang (Central Tibet), 25% to Kham (East Tibet), while only 5% belong to Amdo, (Northeast Tibet). In striking contrast, the demographic distribution in Tibet was 20% for Ü-Tsang, 53% for Kham and 27% for Amdo according to Chinese statistics for 1959 (DIIR 1994: 93). Today, under the Chinese rule, only Ü-Tsang and a smaller part of Kham belong to the so-called "Tibetan Autonomous Region" (TAR), whereas most parts of Kham were incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan and Qinghai. Thus, the majority of Tibetans live outside the TAR today.

The Rehabilitation Program

During the early years of exile, most of the Tibetan refugees chose to remain near the border, hoping to return to their home villages as soon as possible. Some made a living selling jewelry or the animals they had brought with them. Others started small-scale businesses or produced handicrafts, while the rest were dependent on international aid programs. Two larger transit camps were set up in Assam, where many refugees died from a treacherous combination of the tropical climate and its associated diseases. After the 1962 invasion of Chinese troops into Indian territory, it became clear that Tibetan refugees would have to remain in exile for a longer period. The Government of India then recruited approximately 20,000 Tibetans as wage laborers for its new road construction program in the Himalayas.

Soon after his arrival in India, the Dalai Lama successfully negotiated the establishment of a Tibetan Government-in-Exile with the Indian authorities, which has been located in Dharamsala since 1960. This arrangement proved to be of utmost importance for Tibetans in exile, since it allowed them to handle political and cultural affairs through their own central administration. It also provided a quintessential organizational link between the Indian Government, Western aid organizations and the exile community itself, thereby offering an institutional infrastructure for dealing with the crisis of displacement.

Since 1959, 54 Tibetan refugee settlements have been established in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The larger settlements provided shelter and food for up to 3,000 refugees, while the smaller ones offered accomodations for only 500 or less. The Government of India provided land, housing and the basic infrastructure necessary for daily survival. Western aid organizations financed schools, kindergartens, health centers, handicraft centers and monasteries. Today there are 85 Tibetan schools providing education to some 27,000 Tibetan children (CTA 1994: 116). Since 1959 almost 200 new monasteries have been founded in exile, housing approximately 17,000 monks and 500 nuns (CTA 1994: 173). The development of Tibetan settlements, schools, health centers and branch offices of the Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute between 1960 and 1990 is shown in figure 1.

Between 1986 and 1994 there was a gradual influx of new refugees from Tibet. This group of new refugees forms over 10% of the Tibetan diasporic community in India today. These most recent arrivees have severely complicated matters for the Tibetan Government-in-Exile because most of the existing settlements, schools and monasteries in South Asia were already overcrowded due to natural population growth.

The total number of Tibetan refugees was nearly 130,000 in 1994. Around 83% were living in India, another 12% in Nepal and 1% in Bhutan (CTA 1994: 5), whereas less than 4% of them have been admitted to Western countries. Around 1,500 Tibetans live in Switzerland, 1,000 in the United States and 400 in Canada, most of them in small scattered communities. In other countries, such as Germany, U.K., France, Norway, Japan and Australia, small numbers of Tibetans live individually and some of them are married to locals.

The Different Types of Settlements

There are three major types of refugee settlements which can be differentiated according to their main economic base: 1) agriculture, 2) handicraft and 3) business.

Around 50% of the Tibetan refugees belong to the agricultural settlements, most of which are located in south and central India. These refugees were given on average one acre of land each by the Government of India. Moreover, they received agricultural equipment such as tractors and other tools of the trade. The farmers used to grow various cash crops suited to the local climate, but maize has proven to be the most productive and economically viable product in most of the places. Each agricultural settlement now has a cooperative society to help the settlers market their goods outside the refugee enclaves. In addition, many families started to raise cattle. As the income derived from agriculture is fairly low, it is often supplemented by carpet weaving or seasonal business in Indian cities. Tibetan families thus creatively combine agricultural work in the summer with trading sweaters and other garments from Indian factories during the winter months.

More than 10% of the refugees live in handicraft centres and the so-called agro-industrial settlements. Settlements conforming to this type are located mostly in north India and Nepal. In the mountainous areas, there was much less land available as compared to the south Indian plains.

Therefore, alternative economic enterprises emerged. The most important source of income for Tibetan refugees in the Himalayan region is carpet weaving. In some places carpet weaving is supplemented by the production and sale of other "traditional" Tibetan articles such as distinctively ethnic woolen clothes, wood carvings, religious iconography, etc. In addition, tailoring fashionable garments for tourists has also emerged as an income strategy. While all these economic alternatives provide a portion of annual income necessary for survival, many families find it necessary to leave their settlements in the winter season to engage in trade on the streets of major cities.

The third type comprises all the Tibetans in scattered communities who are self-settled, independent of the rehabilitation programs. They form roughly 25% of the total refugee community, the remaining 15% being new arrivals, children, monks and the elderly who live in Tibetan social and clerical institutions outside the settlements (CTA 1994: 7,76). The majority of these "independent" settlers have shown a preference for living in neighborhood clusters together with other Tibetans. Most of them settled in small mountain towns like Darjeeling, Mussoorie and Simla, which formerly served as British hill stations during the waning years of colonialism. A number chose to reside in the proximity of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala, while the remainder opted for the opportunities abounding in the capital cities of Delhi and Kathmandu. Virtually every Tibetan living in these contexts engages in some kind of business, ranging from hawkers with only a small amount of capital to large-scale entrepreneurs dealing with Tibetan carpets or antiques. Business includes the service sector with Tibetan restaurants as well as private handicraft production. Social disparities among the refugees are more extreme in this context when compared with the agricultural and handicraft scenarios discussed above.

Looking at the process of rehabilitation between 1960 and 1990, it becomes clear that agricultural and handicraft based settlements absorbed more and more Tibetans, whereas road-work camps played a major role only in the first decade of exile (figure 2). Only 10,000 refugees coming before 1980 are still to be resettled, while a growing number have created an independent economic base for themselves (CTA 1994: 60). Figure 3 shows the employment structure for three major Tibetan exile places which are representative for the three different types of settlements. Bylakuppe has its focus on agriculture, Bir on carpet production (handicraft) – in both cases combined with seasonal trade – and Darjeeling on perennial business and services. In contrast to Bylakuppe and Bir, being official exile settlements, Darjeeling predominantly serves as home for independent settlers.

The Spatial Distribution of the Refugees

The South/Central, Northeastern and Northwestern areas of the Indian subcontinent each contain over 30% of the Tibetan refugee population. There are spatial clusters ranging from 100 to 10,000 persons scattered over many parts of India, as is shown in the map of exile settlements (figure 4). Table 1, based on 1991 statistics compiled by the CTA, gives an overview of their distribution according to states and the number of settlements.

In the Himalayan zone where Tibetans preferred to stay, it was not possible to find sufficient land or employment for subsistence. Moreover, having so many Tibetans residing along the border posed a political risk to India. The Government of India therefore resettled more than 30,000 persons in 8 larger settlements in south and central India, thus causing another forced migration of the refugees (figure 5). At first, Tibetans were not keen on moving to the hot regions so far south from the mountains. In time, however, the refugees proved their resiliency by successfully adapting to every site where they were placed.

State	population		rehabilitated	rural	settlements	
	absolut	in %	in %	in %	organized	clusters
Ladakh	7,558	6.2	100	100	2	2
Himachal Pr.	20,307	16.8	33	50	13	6
Uttar Pr. & Delhi	14,289	11.8	34	20	5	4
W.Bengal & Sikkim	12,839	10.6	18	40	4	4
Northeast India	8,622	7.1	56	75	3	5
Central India	8,436	7.0	100	100	3	3
South India	32,635	26.9	100	100	5	4
Nepal	15,000	12.4	35	25	11	2
Bhutan	1,457	1.2	90	75	7	-
Western countries	4,634	3.7	-	-	-	1
Total	**125,777**	**100.0**	**62**	**60**	**53**	**31**

Table 1: *Spatial Distribution of Tibetan Refugees in Exile* (Source: *Tibetan Review* 9, 1994, CTA-Data 1991)

The Three Stages of Socioeconomic Adaptation

Refugees who are resettled in countries having another climate and culture go through different stages of adaptation to their new environment. Generally, three stages can be observed: 1) physical survival, 2) ethnic survival and 3) economic and social integration (DeVoe 1981: 24).

The first stage is dominated by a strong "in group" orientation and separation from the social environment of the host country. Many refugees still hope to go back to their home country soon and remain largely dependent on aid programs. We often find severe health problems combined with mental apathy among refugees living in transit camps. If there is reluctance on the part of the displaced people to adapt to the changed conditions in exile, they will remain refugees for their whole life (Schechtman 1963: 370; Saklani 1984: 24). But in general, after some years in exile, the second stage begins with an active adaptation process, mostly in the economic sphere. At the same time, the refugees cultivate and nurture their traditional ethnic identity, generally rejecting certain forms of acculturation such as intermarriage or host country citizenship.

The third stage begins when a new generation has grown up in exile. Folk knowledge of the original homeland is only acquired through the oral tales of older refugees or, in some cases, more formal understandings of one's ethnic and linguistic past is disseminated in institutionalized settings (Ström this volume). As the new generation begins to accept the possibility of never being able to return home, obstacles to economic and social integration gradually give way to accomodation and change.

We also find three stages of adaptation in the Tibetan case, albeit in a slightly modified fashion (cf. Table 2). In the first stage, Tibetans were uprooted, dependent on foreign aid and many died of health problems. For a period of 3 to 10 years, they were living in transit camps, worked as road labourers in the Himalayas or had to survive in small and scattered communities. During the second stage, many refugees were absorbed by the rehabilitation program. Shifting into their

decades	1959-1969	1970-1980	1981-1991
dominant economic business activity	road-work coolie-work	agriculture handicraft	private service sector
dominant type of housing construction	temporary camps	permanent settlement	enlargements new
dominant type of income	food rations daily wage	regular wage agric. income	profits from private business

Table 2: *The three stages of socioeconomic adaptation*

own settlements, they were provided with a somewhat secure economic base to allow for the gradual development of social cohesion in exile. Tibetan schools and monasteries further aided in the process of identity maintenance by upholding cultural traditions. The third stage is marked by an increasing Tibetan engagement in private business enterprises all throughout India and Nepal. This provided them with a higher standard of living compared to the average local population. Figure 6 shows the development of sectoral employment as an indicator for the three stages of economic adaptation.

The socioeconomic success of the Tibetans in exile has not led to a great deal of cultural assimilation in the host societies of South Asia thus far. The impressive economic adaptation achieved in these new environments and a certain degree of social integration due to the establishment of their own settlements, schools and political administration, has even given Tibetans a better opportunity to maintain their national and cultural identity (Goldstein 1978: 403; Klieger 1992: 15). Thanks to their successful adaptation – especially in India – Tibetans are able to campaign for their political goals of a free Tibet on a worldwide scale today (cf. Huber; McLagan; and Schrempf this volume).

The Exile Community and its Links with the Host Countries

Contacts between the Tibetans and the local population are largely confined to the economic sphere. Cultural differences have proved difficult to transcend for closer social relations. This notwithstanding, Tibetans have found some economic niches where they are not in direct competition with Indians and Nepalis. For example, Tibetans have successfully entered the international market for oriental carpets, which has had the reciprocal effect of providing foreign currency for the economies of India and Nepal.

In the areas where the Tibetans have been resettled, employment, income and diffusion effects can also be observed. In the agricultural sector, Tibetans mix subsistence and market production, selling some of their products in the local markets. At the same time, they provide seasonal work for many local people from the villages nearby. In south India, for example, poor and landless Indians find employment working for Tibetans during the agricultural season. Some even have entered into the sweater business with the support of their Tibetan employers. In north India – and to a greater extent in Nepal – local people work in the Tibetan carpet industry. In a few cases, individuals who learned their weaving skills from Tibetan employers started their own independent carpet weaving enterprises.

In some of the more impoverished areas where Tibetans were resettled, their presence functioned as a catalyst for regional development. This might have been the initial intention of the Indian officials who were responsible for placing them in such regions. At any rate, the trade and

service sectors of the small country towns near Tibetan settlements have flourished considerably as a result (Palakshappa 1984: 109). This is partly so because Tibetans spend a portion of their income generated by their urban migratory trade at local markets. Realizing the financial significance of the Tibetan presence, some Indian tailors have even started to specialize in uniquely Tibetan articles of clothing. Conversely, Tibetan restaurants have also been welcomed by local populations. The overall effect of such economic reciprocity has been a revivication of many highly localized markets.

In the urban market places, Tibetans innovated new marketing strategies that proved successful. Today, small-scale Indian traders try to imitate Tibetan-style markets and compete against them. Nevertheless, Tibetans are highly respected as clever but fair business people. All of this is not to suggest that the social and economic relationships between Tibetans and South Asians have been completely harmonious. There have, in fact, been quite a few incidents of interethnic conflicts recorded around the settlements and in urban Tibetan markets, which, in most cases, have not escalated into major confrontations between guest and host because of the generally passive nature of the refugees. The reason for many of the violent occurrences has been a sense of jealousy among local inhabitants of the Tibetans' economic success (Saklani 1984: 422). In general, however, the lower castes of Indian society respect the refugee community because they feel that they are treated as social equals by the Tibetans, whereas they face discrimination from the higher Hindu castes.

Traditional Tibet and the Exile Community

Politically, most Tibetans in exile still emphasize their refugee status, preventing them from obtaining many common rights (e.g., the purchase of property) extended to citizens of the countries in question. Not only have they found ways to avoid the problems associated with refugee status but they have also made use of its economic and political advantages. For example, this status has allowed Tibetan diasporic communities to develop a solid base of Western patronage to secure financial assistance from Europe, North America and Australia (Klieger 1992: 16,21). In exile, most Tibetan refugees have made occupational shifts away from their traditional means of employment in Tibet. Now they are adjusting to work more suited to the host society.

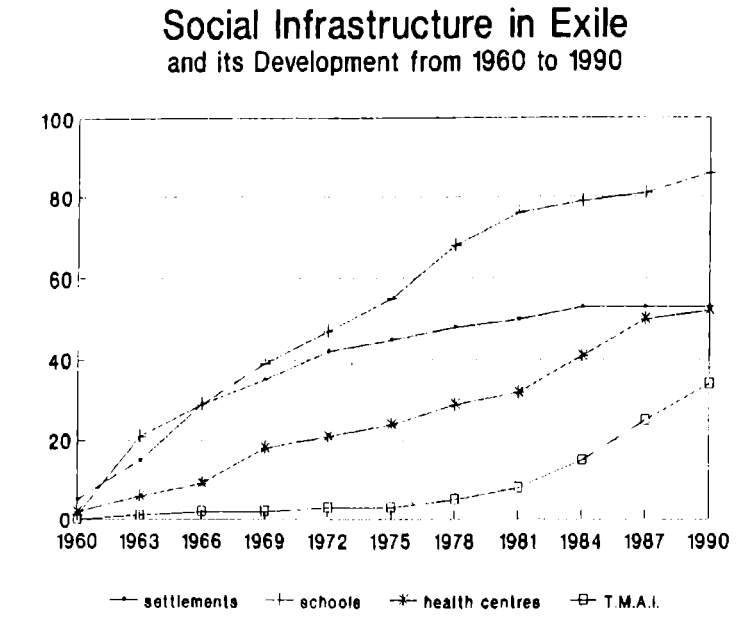
Many Tibetans, for example, used to be farmers or nomads, inhabiting the vast expanses of Tibet. Now, however, they feel spatially more restricted in India and Nepal. At the same time, refugees from Tibet increasingly participate in the economies of these same societies. Socially, the majority of Tibetan refugees declare that their status is lower in South Asia than in Tibet. But compared to the first years of exile and compared to their local neighbors, most Tibetans command a modestly dignified position in the social hierarchies of South Asia. Klieger (1992: 102) has referred to this phenomenon as a "welfare society within a state."

The most important change when compared to Tibetan society in the homeland past is the secularization (cf. Thargyal this volume) and high standard of education in exile. Whereas education in old Tibet was confined to the monasteries, many Tibetan youths finish class 12 in India and Nepal today, and some even acquire a college degree. This development has resulted in a much higher amount of social mobility, equal opportunity for women and an increase in the number of young people qualified for office jobs. On the other hand, this led to their growing "out-migration" from the refugee settlements. This is most likely due to the fact that the settlements could not provide appropriate job opportunities and income to meet their needs. At present, Tibetan officials are concerned about a social disintegration of the settlements, a growing impact of negative influences from Indian cities and a loss of traditional culture among the youth.

Tibetans in Comparison to Other Diaspora Communities

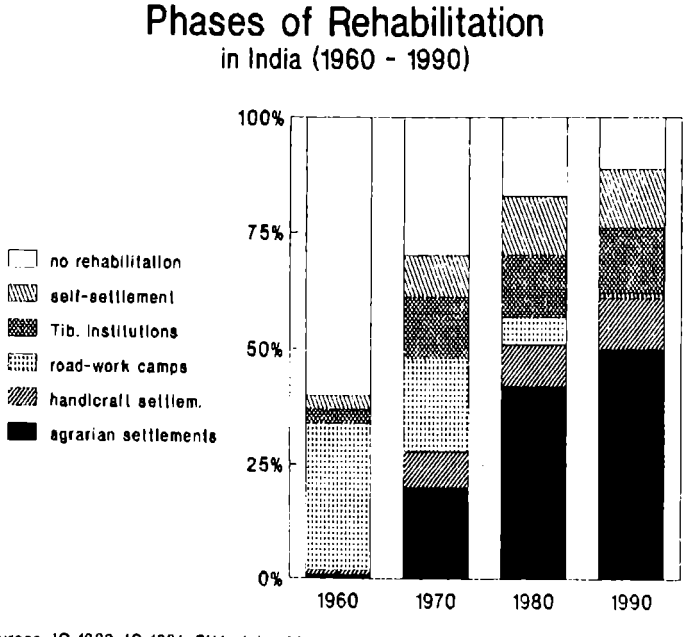
It is beyond doubt that the majority of exiled Tibetans residing in South Asia belong to a "progressive" class of refugees because of their high potential for adaptation (Keller 1975: 273). At present, they do not show the typically negative aspects of certain other diasporic groups living in a state of perpetual apathy, which has been termed the "refugee syndrome" by Goldstein (1978: 397) and other authors. Many factors may be responsible for the Tibetans' relative success in exile, but it is certain that Buddhist tenets proved to be very helpful in enabling them to participate fully in the economic activities of their host societies. Tibetans show a remarkable occupational and spatial mobility as well as the acute ability to innovate when necessary. Unlike the Bhutanese case, the Indian Government has put no pressure on the Tibetan refugees to assimilate. As a result, Tibetan national and cultural identity has had the possibility to be strengthened during the past 35 years in exile. When compared to many other refugee groups in Southeast Asia or in Africa, it seems that the Tibetans belong to those who have least suffered from the physical and psychological stress of uprooting (Colson 1987: 6).

The political reforms initiated by the Dalai Lama, especially the democratic setup of the exile administration and the secular school system, created a good base for a successful rate of adaptation with limited acculturative effects. The sympathy of individuals and organizations in the West has also led to a great amount of sponsorship and foreign funding for a variety of programs to keep Tibetan culture alive. In addition, the effective use of aid money by Tibetans increased the Western world's confidence in their ability to utilize funds properly. This opinion has led to the continual funding of various developmental, educational and cultural projects in Tibetan exile communities over the past 35 years. Consequently, foreign aid has enabled Tibetan communities to build up a solid material base and social infrastructure in exile. Nevertheless, the main political aim of the majority solidly remains repatriation to a free Tibet. The political goal of an independent homeland has kept motivation and morale high in virtually every single individual making up the Tibetan diaspora community.



Sources: IO 1981, CTE 1985, CTA 1987

Figure 1



Sources: IO 1969, IO 1981, CHA-data 1990
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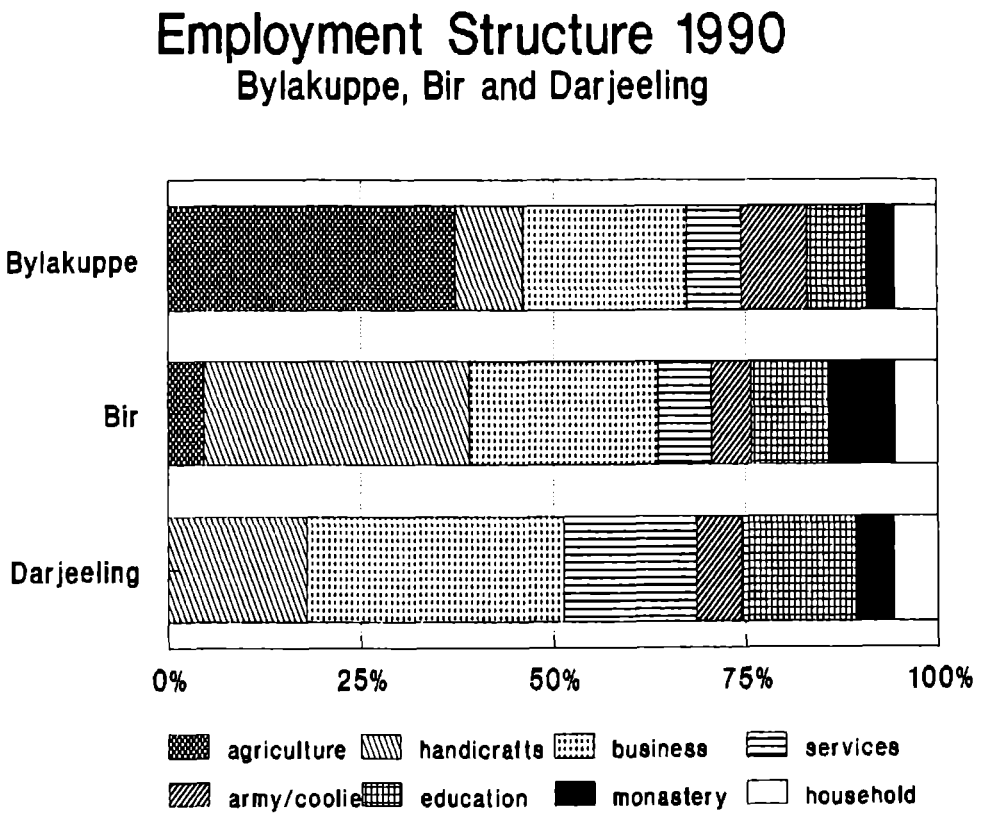
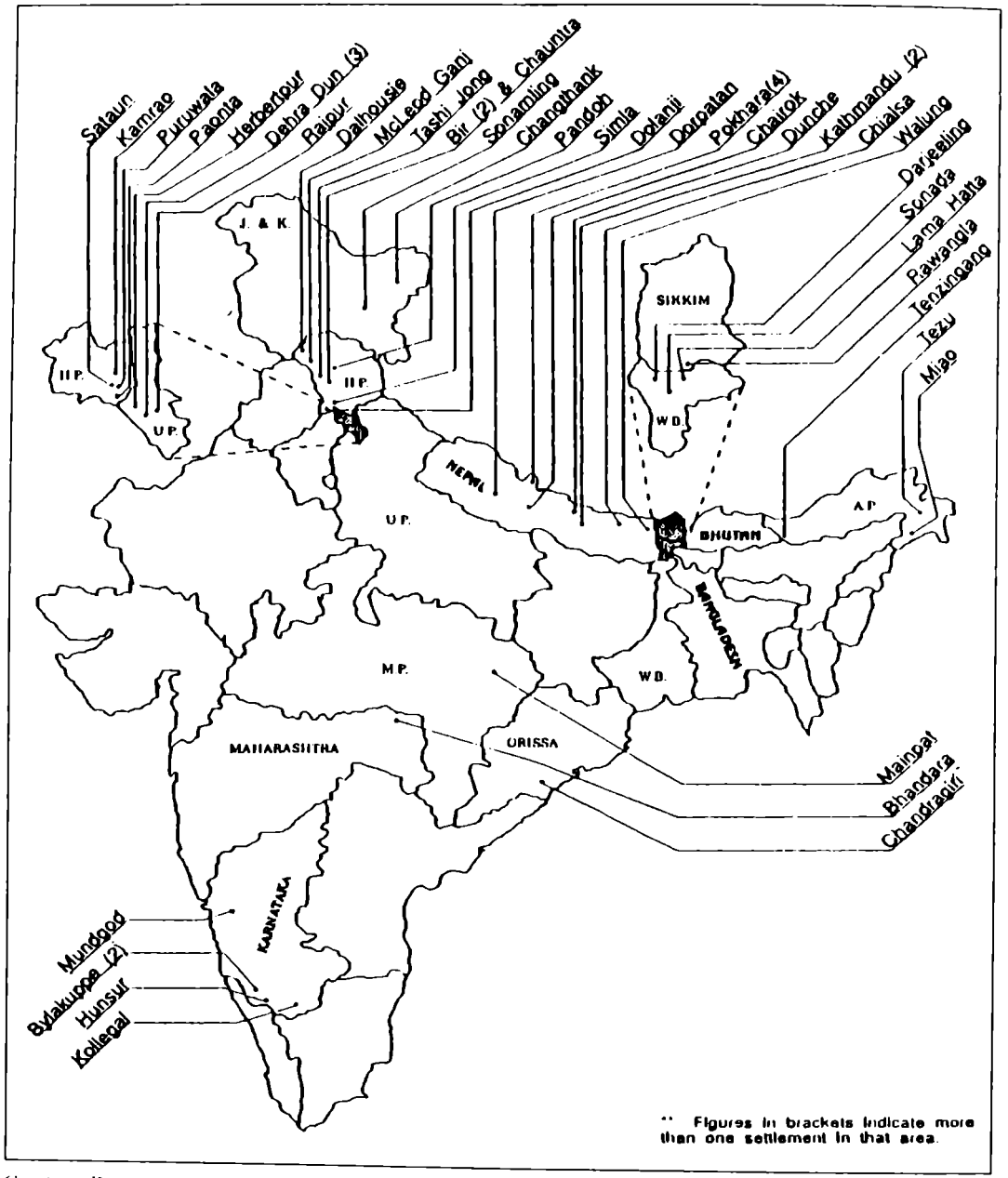
Figure 2



Source: field-work T.M.
(calculation for Tibetans over 16 years)

Figure 3

MAP OF TIBETAN SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA & NEPAL



Courtesy: Department of Home, CTA

Source: CTA 1994

Figure 4

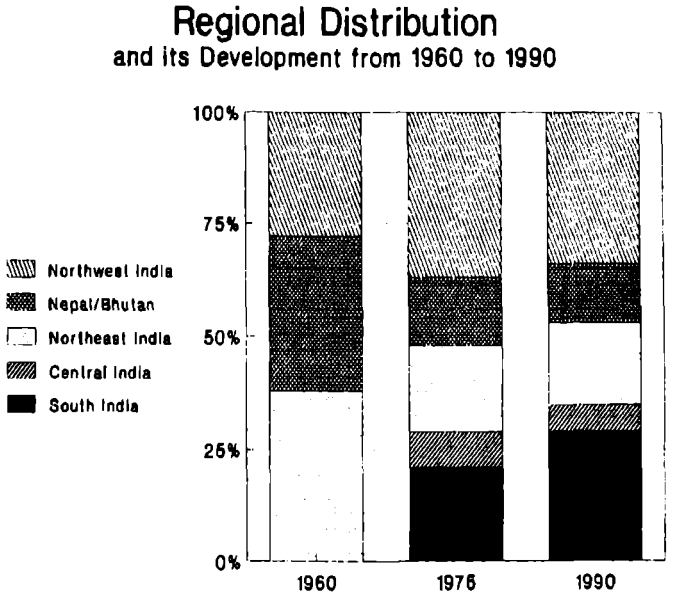


Figure 5

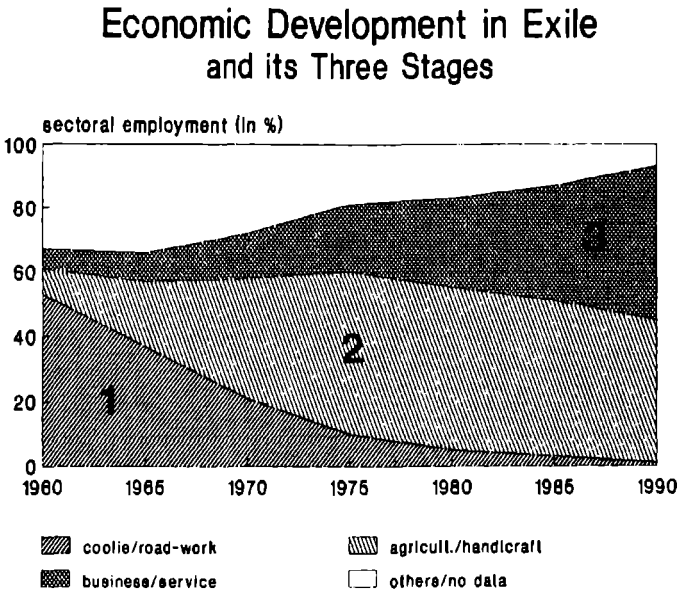


Figure 6

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IS THERE A PROCESS OF SECULARIZATION AMONG THE TIBETANS IN EXILE ?

by

Rinzin Thargyal, Osteras

Introduction

The concept of secularization has been characterized as a source of confusion and its tenability has been reassessed (Hammond 1985: 125). Students of secularization have felt it necessary to examine the subject through new lenses so that "unanticipated" religious reemergences may be discerned. This rethinking is a recognition of the inadequacy of the secularization thesis that has been considered to be uni-directional. The assumed notion of its linearity and ubiquity posits that all religions are subject to erosion in due course, but to what extent this assumption is applicable is an interesting question. Nevertheless, the emergence of secularization appears to intimidate its opponents and pleases its proponents. Though it will be premature to claim that a full-fledged process of secularization is emergent among the Tibetans in exile, it appears that some of its features have started to impinge on them. However, before proceeding further I shall briefly discuss some theoretical aspects of the secularization thesis.

The Secularization Thesis

Not unlike nationalism secularization is understood to be a societal process that will make its presence felt when the local context is ready for it. The notion of its inevitability is closely linked with the idea of progress and modernity. This reasoning entails a dichotomy between orthodoxy and modernity-cum-democracy. Is religion a passive onlooker only to be kicked out of the way or is it an active agent that either hinders or promotes secularization? Some students of secularization have claimed that Christianity has a secularizing property while immanentist religions lack it. Peter Berger (1967: 127) has said that Christianity is the digger of its own grave. We will see later where Buddhism comes in.

It appears that the causality of secularization is not amenable to any monocausal explanations. Though there is unanimity that secularization entails the reduction of an overarching and transcendent religious system into a sub-system, different paradigms have been employed to explain it. The dissolution of the traditional coherent cosmos, the decline of community, high functional differentiation of society and rationalization are some of the contending paradigms. As a methodological tool three different levels of analysis of religious change have been utilized: the societal, the organizational and the individual.

At the outset it is important to differentiate *secularization* from *secularism*. The former is a neutral study of empirical data the researcher embarks upon without any preconceived biases. However, the latter constitutes a deliberate wish or attempt to promote the decline of religion. In other words, secularization is an epiphenomenon of societal processes whereas *secularism* is a contrived ideology. However, one may confuse the analytic and the evaluative.

Chos versus Politics

Though the Dalai Lama has characterised the erstwhile Tibetan polity as anachronistic, the Tibetans in exile feel it necessary to retain the traditional combination of politics with religion to a certain extent. This state of affairs is logical because *chos* refers not only to Tibetan Buddhism but also to religion in general, so long as it is specified what kind of "faith" is the referent. Moreover, *chos* is considered as the only source of Tibetan identity, culture and otherness. It is also considered to be the source of Tibetan political and historical legitimacy and greatness. In other words, *chos* is considered as the source of Tibetan cultural heritage and sustenance for Tibetan posterity. Its legitimacy and efficacy as the bridge between the past and the future are considered salient for creating Tibetan cultural incommensurability. It also constitutes an indispensable factor for Tibetan nationalism. The viability of Tibetan nationalism hinges on three variables that are interdependent: historical-cum-cultural legitimacy, the perpetuation of Tibetan otherness and the survival of Tibetan posterity, all of which are given *chos* validation. So how can one even begin to think that a process of secularization is taking place among the Tibetans in exile?

The Tibetan Conceptualization of Secularization

Tibetans translate secularization with a pejorative connotation. It is either translated as *chos-'jig-rten-pa'i-lugs-la-sgyur-ba* or *chos-kyi-khyd-chos-snub-pa*. The former means to relegate *chos* to the conventional world and the latter means to extinguish it. The term *'jig-rten* implies ephemerality and the world that is here and now. However, defining secularization in the above manner appears to be more evaluative rather than analytic. Many Tibetans tend to regard societal mutations as a threat to the status quo. They seem to be apprehensive of the eventuality of societal differentiation which entails the emergence of subsystems. But a good deal of knowledgeable Tibetans argue for the separation of *chos* from politics in order to render the former immune from "pollution" rather than erode it. This reasoning is in tune with the argument that purging religion of its extraneous sociopolitical involvements reduces the risk of its being distracted by mundane proclivities. Whatever the case may be, the present discussion does not recommend that Tibetans should adopt secularism at the expense of their spiritually oriented polity. Our task at this juncture is to assess the Tibetan reading of the concept "secularization."

The *chos/'jig-rten* dichotomy reminds one of the two levels of truth: absolute and relative. If they operate along parallel lines and are not tangential anywhere, then the world of *saṃsāra* does not have any existential validity of its own. That is to say, the conventional world is doomed. However, they appear to be tangential somewhere to legitimize and recognize each other's purposes. Even if the conventional world is devoid of any epistemological status, it constitutes the springboard of higher spiritual realization. Without relative truth absolute truth has no relevance because the idea of that which is absolute is related to the former. They are interdependent. Moreover, given that one does not have direct access to absolute truth until the moment of its realization, the only accessible world for the populace is the conventional world, however ephemeral and fleeting it may be.

Chos and Secularization

Chos and *'jig-rten* are considered to be incompatible on one plane, but they may not be altogether antithetical at another level, as we have seen. They are two-pronged: individual and multiple. The former entity entails a paradox because the notion of self-complaisance does not rhyme with either *chos* or secularization. However, the tenability of self resides in its being an alter-oriented entity when its rights and prerogatives are considered sacrosanct. Hence, "alter"

clusters or constellations constitute the anthropocentric locus of respect and awe by virtue of their numerical dimension.

Though the idea of multitude invokes the received connotations of vulgarity and commonplaceness, its being an amalgamation of alters renders it a supreme entity that supersedes lesser social constellations. That is to say, the magnitude of the totality outweighs its parts, a notion which is consonant with the equitable tenets of Buddhism and the democratic features of secularization. But when alter manifests and when ego recedes is a relative matter because the ego/alter duality is relative and dependent on the vantage position of the given individual. In other words, what status one assumes or is ascribed to depends on the position in which one finds oneself at a particular time. However, one cannot chose to be one's own alter because one cannot assume a chameleon-like identity to suit any situation. The notion of self not only constitutes the status and roles of an individual, but it can also imply the disapproval of those who violate the sanctity of selfhood by inflicting pain and suffering on the individual. If this intersubjective knowledge of what causes suffering, pain, humiliation, exploitation, inequality, etc. is honoured, social harmony may be achieved.

Theoretically, social inequality is incompatible with Buddhism since its philosophy is based on the doctrine of universal Buddha nature and pan-human consanguinity. Honouring pan-human consanguity is antithetical to the concept of inequality, human bondage and inhumanity. Tibet can exemplify a case in point. Despite Buddhism's injunction to practise democracy, the erstwhile Tibetan polity had not been pervaded by democratic traditions in comparison with the monastic community in Tibet. One reason may be that very few farsighted leaders had the opportunity to implement reforms, whereas many myopic politicians squandered their time and energy by indulging in political rivalries and intrigues. This characterization may be relevant to much of modern Tibetan history.

The Tibetans in exile, however, are attempting to solve the problems we have seen by introducing political changes that are consonant with the Buddhist ideals of equality and the concept of democracy. Our immediate inquiry is the position of *chos* vis-à-vis the Tibetan democratic upsurge. In other words, what role it plays in the democratic process. It must be pointed out at the outset that *chos* per se is a neutral phenomenon whose main purpose is to deal with the nagging questions of life after death, the purpose of life and the like. But *chos* or any religion is exploitable for different mundane ends that engender endemic conflicts such as sectarianism and regionalism. Local or sectional ambition of power may be exercised in the cloak of feigned doctrinal differences.

Nevertheless, Tibetans consider *chos* indispensable and unique because of its legitimizing and equalizing potential. But, although the traditional lamaistic hierarchy is almost intact, the political role of *chos* has become a subject of discussion among the Tibetans in exile. Why should they separate *chos* from politics when it is perceived as the custodian of equality and justice? The system of religious lineage perpetuation in the form of successive reincarnations and society at large were so interwoven and interdependent that the expression of one presupposed the involvement of the other. This enmeshed nature of society entailed the weaving of a multistranded Tibetan way of life. But *chos* per se is not the subject of contention, since the four lineages and the Bonpos are perceived as the wealth and the ornaments of Tibetan cultural heritage. Hence, religious denominational identities are perceived to be the constituents of the Tibetan spiritual and cultural legacy, which constitute the basis of Tibetan cultural incommensurability. At the same time, the Tibetans in exile have tried to maintain a subtle balance between the importance of religious diversity and the necessity to integrate their political commitment.

On the other hand, secularization is more concerned with Tibetan religiosity as a holistic system rather than a sectarian concern. An unavoidable question is to what extent *chos* and politics should be multiplex and what the consequences will be if the two strands are separated. Committed religionists argue that they are inseparable and their apologetic opponents explain that problems will arise if they are not bifurcated. So it is important to see at what societal level changes are taking place.

The secularization process emergent among the Tibetans in exile is both structural and functional. Structural changes could already be seen in the 1963 Constitution that was revised in 1992. That document, in turn, gave birth to the *Charter of the Tibetans in Exile*. The Charter accommodates a diversified and proportional political representation that is amenable to promotion and demotion by the electorate, an unprecedented novelty in the annals of Tibetan history. To paraphrase sociologist Bryan Wilson, authority established by constitutions and social control is increasingly a matter for law rather than for a social, consensual and moral code. It is premature to assert that Tibetans have become immune to consensual authority, but the Charter constitutes a blueprint whose coverage is pan-Tibetan and binding. A tendency of laicization is also discernible among the Tibetan community in exile in the sense that traditional clerical institutions have not been reinstated and most officials are members of the laity. For instance, former ecclesiastic positions are filled by lay incumbents and gender neutrality, or the introduction of a quota system of female representatives is given priority. Promoting gender neutrality and appointing women ministers can be considered as a radical novelty by traditional Tibetan standards.

Any discussion of secularization raises the question of what societal domain is affected. That is to say, one can investigate what level of society is the object of mutation because secularization entails changes in the ethos of the affected domain. So what is the locus of religious mutation among the Tibetans in exile if there is one? One may rule out the private sphere because most Tibetans appear to be pervaded by *chos*, which is recognized as the foundation of Tibetan culture. It is the political/public domain that has undergone changes. However, the paradox is that the present Tibetan polity has been declared to be a combination of the spiritual and the temporal spheres without whose wings Tibetans feel unable to sail in the troubled waters they have to navigate. They feel apprehensive of the possibility of being deprived of the spiritual wing, which will render them decrepit, morally and culturally. Their anxiety is legitimate if it is well founded. Some Tibetans may "neglect" *chos* rather than be the victims of extraneous circumstances. At the two ends of the continuum one finds Tibetans whose religiosity ranges between profound spirituality and little propensity for it.

The epithet "Christianity is the digger of its own grave" may have some relevance when it concerns the equitable nature of *chos*. Buddhism is not a monotheistic religion as Judaism and Christianity are, but its relevance derives from its precepts of justice that are conducive to the concept of democracy. Though Buddhism is not equipped with the repertoire of legislative procedures and the technical terms of Western democracy, it appears to have the intrinsic properties of equality. The Dalai Lama paid a tribute to this legacy when he ordained the Tibetan Constitution on 10 March 1963:

> ... it is deemed desirable and necessary that the principle of justice, equality and democracy laid down by the Lord Buddha should be reinforced and strengthened in the government of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama endeavoured to abolish the notorious system of corvée labour service, the accumulated debts farmers owed to the government and the system of endowing estates to the nobility in lieu of salaries on the eve of the Chinese arrival in Tibet (Dalai Lama 1963: 64-67). His attempts to bring about reforms both in and outside Tibet are consonant with the Buddhist prin-

ciple of equality and justice. What is of special relevance is the "Ten Duties of the King" (*dasa-rāja-dhamma*) described in numerous *Jataka* texts (I, 260, 399; II, 400; III, 274, 320; V,119, 378). They were preventive mechanisms to constrain the excesses committed by the leaders of the day. For instance, the duty of *pariccaga* demanded that the ruler should sacrifice everything for the benefit of the people and the duty of *avirodha* demanded the ruler to rule in harmony with his people. These duties have universal application regardless of place, time and ideology.

However, these principles had remained largely dormant during much of Tibetan history, owing mainly to the self-interest of the leaders whose energies were spent on other spheres of life rather then on the promotion of equality. A paradox of acclaimed Tibetan religiosity is that social inequality was inevitable so long as the rhetoric of religious benevolence was seldom translated into concrete social benefit or welfare for the people, though giving alms to the poor and performing individual acts of generosity were popular. It may be too critical an evaluation of recent Tibetan social history, but social disparities and paradoxes prevailed because of a near universal proclivity for leaders to indulge in particularism rather than establish pan-national integration.

Whatever secularizing tendencies one may discern among the Tibetans in exile, they need to be understood in the context of the equitable precepts of Buddhism. So my working thesis is that Buddhism has a secularizing property that has the ability to render societies equal and viable. Trisong Detsen (755-797 A.D.), the great king and empire builder, is said to have redistributed the land of the farmers in Tibet several times to promote equality among them with little success, but the present Dalai Lama is the only Tibetan who has acquired the epithet of being the father of Tibetan democracy. It has popularly been dubbed as one man's democracy, recognizing that the Dalai Lama is the initiator of this process. There are several factors that are responsible for this process: a) the activation of Buddhism's principle of justice by agents of equality, b) endeavouring to promote social integration by employing a policy of political co-option and c) recognizing the necessity to be abreast with the democratic traditions of the modern world. This endeavour challenges Chinese rule in Tibet and constitutes a radical departure from the traditional Tibetan polity that has been characterized as atavistic and feudal. The first point is normative, whereas the second two qualities can be characterized as pragmatic. The Buddhist notion of equality, however, has an overarching principle that is relevant to each of the three factors. But the term "equality" (*'dra-myam*) does not appear to have been an integral part of the terminological repertoire of the upper social echelon, though it is inherently discernible in the notion of universal consanguinity and the Buddhist tenet that mankind shares the same Buddha nature.

These ideas contextualize man's intrinsic equality and invoke compassion, generosity and charity to dispel social disparity. But admitting concepts like "equality" in the elite parlance appears to have been difficult, as the social hierarchy was entropy resistant. For instance, the fifth article of the 16- article civil code of Songtsen Gampo (617-50 A.D.), empire builder and introducer of Buddhism in Tibet, stipulates that those who belonged to the "superior race" (*rigs-mtho-ba*) should receive special deference (*bkur-sti-che-ba*) from the populace. However, this idea did not survive in the Constitution of Tibet. Article 9 of Chapter II proclaims that all Tibetans are equal before the law, regardless of race, sex, language, religion, social origin, property, birth or other statuses. This constitutes a radical departure from the above civil code. Nonetheless, even if one type of social hierarchy becomes obsolete another may emerge.

I do not postulate that *chos* is digging its own grave, but its principles of social justice and parity demand that priority be given to the welfare of the multitude at the expense of the traditional elitism that was not conducive to proportional political representation. Secularizing tendencies among the Tibetans in exile can be comprehended only in terms of the democratic tenets of *chos* that require to be activated by staunch supporters of its anthropocentric properties. At the

same time, the morphology of *chos*' democratic potential has become sharpened and pronounced owing to its familiarization with the concepts of Western democracy. What changes has *chos* undergone? Its position among the Tibetans in exile at the private level appears to be stable, but its political domain has not remained the same; not because of a deliberate policy to erode it, but as an epiphenomenon of *chos*' potent democratic principles. In other words, the nonparticipation of the clergy in given political arenas today indicates the introduction of political changes. Other cases in point are the absence of the former ecclesiastic representation in the Tibetan polity today and the nonrevival of the two-pronged system of recruiting government officials. These changes constitute radical structural mutations by traditional Tibetan standards.

The Dalai Lama is recognized as the undisputed architect of the Tibetan democratization process in exile, though organizations like the Tibetan Youth Congress and individual Tibetans have expressed their aspiration for a secular polity. The Tibetan leader declared that he was subject to impeachment if two-thirds of the Tibetan deputies and the head of the judicial department so wished, which flabbergasted Tibetans everywhere. He has written in the *Guidelines for Future Tibet's Polity and the Basic Features of its Constitution*, promulgated in January of 1992, that he would transfer all his political responsibilities to the elected president during the transitional period when Tibet regains freedom, and that the transfer of his responsibilities would terminate the existence of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. In his 1990 reform speech the Dalai Lama told his fellow Tibetans that if Tibetans could show clear and complete documentation of their democratic efforts during their stay in exile it would not only be better understood by both outsiders and Tibetans, but it would also be easier for the Tibetans who practise it. He renounced his prerogative to appoint the *Kalons* (ministers) in the same year.

Metaphorically speaking, then, has the architect of Tibetan democracy been ousted from the house he has constructed? On the contrary, the Dalai Lama's democratic endeavour has increased Tibetan awareness that the Tibetan leader is not only an ecumenical symbol for Tibetan unity and identity, but also a source of political mutation. In other words, the status of the Dalai Lama supersedes that of other Tibetans because he occupies a *gla-na-med-pa* (incomparable) position which primarily hinges on his equidistant stand vis-à-vis the five religious denominations and the three regional constellations. The prestige and respect the Dalai Lama wields would remain the same even if Tibetans imbibe a greater dosage of secularization because Tibetans would feel that a diminution of his influence would be tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bath water. Moreover, Buddhism and politics appear to be compatible when the former contributes to promote justice and equality. The Dalai Lama wrote in 1979 that:

> Religion and politics are a useful combination for the welfare of man when tempered by correct ethical concepts with a minimum of self-interest (Dalai Lama 1986: 207-209)

Conclusion

Chos' manipulability, on the one hand, and its altruistic properties, on the other, creates a perennial paradox that seems to shroud its real nature. But its anthropocentric principles can be accentuated by committed agents of equality. I do not discern any process of secularism among the Tibetans in exile at this juncture, and the features of secularization we have seen are largely epiphenomena of *chos*' democratizing properties. However, if and when *chos* is exploited, then social disparity and disequilibrium will emerge, creating conflicts with its theoretical principle of social justice. When and if this paradox vanishes, conflicts will diminish or disappear. This seems to be the premium of Tibetan *chos*-derived democracy that wields a potent secularizing efficacy.

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BETWEEN TIBET AND THE WEST: ON TRADITIONALITY, MODERNITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONASTIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE TIBETAN DIASPORA

by

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When a group of people are displaced and transferred to a radically different natural and social environment, the threat of social disintegration and cultural discontinuity are strongly imminent, and the task of establishing new, viable communities is therefore a great challenge. The Tibetan refugees have been extraordinarily successful in dealing with this challenge, and life in the new communities is characterized by a remarkably high degree of cultural continuity. This continuity may, I believe, to a great extent be attributed to the continuity of old institutions and the founding of new ones in the diaspora. The government and administration of Tibet before 1959 have been perpetuated as The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), which has played a significant role in the establishment and development of the new communities in India and Nepal (e.g. Goldstein 1978). As Corlin has observed, "...the refugee administration is consciously endeavouring to incorporate traditional institutions in the refugee organization (this being in line with their general policy of guarding Tibetan culture)," and the political organization of the exile communities is "...largely founded on traditional customs under an apparently modern clothing" (Corlin 1975: 144). The CTA has, however, also been instrumental in the establishment of new institutions, such as the parliament, the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and the modern Tibetan school system. The latter has, as elucidated by Nowak (1984), had a profound influence on social and cultural development in the diaspora[1].

Although the CTA has facilitated the reestablishment and maintenance of traditional social institutions, its role in this process should not be overestimated. I will argue that cultural continuity in the diaspora is as much a result of the refugees' own efforts to create a Tibetan society in exile, as it is due to the policies of the CTA. As I have shown in the case of "independent" communities (that is, communities not under the administration of the CTA), these are, to a greater extent than the centrally administered settlements, organized on the basis of the regional origin of the inhabitants, and the aim of their establishment has been to create social environments where traditional interaction could be perpetuated (Ström 1995). This motivation has also been the driving force behind the reestablishment of Tibetan monastic institutions in India and Nepal. These institutions have received little scholarly attention, but have, as I see it, been crucially important for the continuity of beliefs and customs in the diaspora. They are still the foci of Tibetan society, as they have been for more than 700 years, and their development will therefore have significant social and cultural implications in the diaspora as well as in Tibet itself.

Conceptions and social institutions are interdependent and mutually supportive. Institutions may be regarded as "manifest conceptions" which are sustained by, and through their maintenance sustain, these conceptions. However, continuity necessarily implies change,[2] and this is all

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[1] On this issue, see also Ström 1995.

[2] That is, the kind of continuity which I would designate "dynamic"; namely, continuity resulting from the cybernetic

the more so in a situation where people are exposed to alternative worldviews and social forms. As cognitive and social contexts change, so does the significance of customs and institutions. Continuity is thus a process, an outcome of the interplay between conceptions and experience. The development of institutions must therefore be analyzed with reference to their past as well as their present situation; namely, their former and contemporary natural, social and cognitive context.

Most of the articles in this volume (notably those of Calkowski, Klieger and McLagan) address the issue of how Tibetan culture is currently being constructed and (re)presented. Klieger sees this process as a consequence of the emergence of a self-conscious reflexivity. I have elsewhere (Ström 1994, 1995) discussed the generation of self-consciousness and the objectification and relativization of culture, which I regard as a significant factor in the current process of cultural development in the diaspora. However, my contention is that the reflexive approach to identity, culture and society, which I consider to be the essential characteristic of "modernity," is still relatively marginal in the Tibetan community in India, and that its social and cultural continuity, to a small extent, has been shaped by such reflexivity. What I consider to be fundamental to this continuity is what Bourdieu (1977) has termed *habitus*;[3] that is, "generative dispositions" which produce "regulated improvisations" of conventional practices in accordance with the situation. These "practical dispositions" are based on conceptions of a cosmological order which is naturalized and self-evident (i.e., the type of conceptions which Bourdieu refers to as *doxa*), and on the normative implications of these conceptions, what Geertz has termed *ethos*, moral, ethical and aesthetic evaluations (Geertz 1973: 126-27). I consider such a mentality (or rather "mode of being") essential to what I will refer to as "traditionality."

In the Tibetan community in India, traditionality is dominant in both settlements and monastic institutions. However, as a result of their new situation, reflexivity in relation to "tradition" is also emerging in these contexts. In the monastic institutions it is manifested, on the one hand, in new modes of legitimation of traditional social organization and ritual practices (what Bourdieu calls *orthodoxy*), and, on the other hand, as a challenge to the same (i.e., *heterodoxy*).

In this paper, I will discuss some aspects of the cognitive and social context of continuity in the Tibetan community in India generally and in monastic institutions particularly. Regarding the latter, my focus will be on the institutions for higher education and their recruitment and development.[4]

"Tibet" Represented and Embodied

I will argue that two major cognitive contexts dominate the life of Tibetans in India. These contexts, which are counterposed and mutually defined by each other, are frequently referred to with

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interplay between natural, social and cognitive circumstances, which thereby accommodates the ever-changing constellations of individual needs, interpretations and experiences. Continuity which is not dynamic' in this sense is, as I see it, not sustainable and will eventually lead to social and cultural disruption.

[3] "habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively I regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating activity of a conductor." (Bourdieu 1972: 72).

[4] The following is a presentation of some issues which are central to my forthcoming thesis; "Dynamic Continuity? The Development of Tibetan Institutions for Higher Education in India."

the terms modern and traditional, particularly by young and educated people.[5] They provide a framework for the definition and formation of identity, and much of the reflexive discourse in the diaspora is concerned with how these contexts should be defined, related and evaluated. The ways the contexts and their relationship are conceived by different groups of refugees reflect, among other things, different notions of time, space and authority.

Tradition (*lugs srol*) refers to institutionalized practices; that is, social customs, religious rituals, arts and crafts which have been transmitted through time from one generation to the next. This concept is closely associated with Tibet, and what is traditional (*yul srol gyi*) is often referred to as Tibetan. As I have argued elsewhere (Ström 1994, 1995), Tibet serves as an encompassing cognitive context for Tibetans in exile, referring to the lost territory of the Tibetan nation. I hold that the notion of being refugees is the main foundation of a Tibetan identity among the young as well as (although to a lesser extent) for its maintenance among the old. The idea of Tibet is thus a mental concept, what Anderson (1983) has designated an "imagined community," which serves as a context for an emerging national identity among all groups of refugees. Anderson's imagined community has been referred to by Corlin (1978) as the "nation in your mind." Although Corlin's thesis anticipates Anderson's very similar concept, I prefer the latter because I consider it to be more applicable to the Tibetan scenario. The "imagined" context is, however, conceptualized in different ways by those who were brought up in Tibet and those who have been born in India. The difference is related to the issues of experience, memory and *habitus* on the one hand versus reflexivity and cultural construction on the other.

The people who fled from Tibet have, as far as possible, strived to perpetuate the way of life they were living in the homeland. Although many have had to find new occupations which, as for example the widespread sweater-business (Methfessel this volume), have exposed them to an alien society and enforced new ways of social interaction which have threatened their experience of continuity, the pattern of settlement has, on the other hand, been highly conducive to the maintenance of their conceptions, praxis and social institutions. The new environment has been "domesticated" by the creation of a sacred geography, populated by a variety of spiritual beings and marked by prayer flags, stupas, sacrificial fireplaces and engraved mantras. The monasteries, built in a (more or less) traditional style, are focal points in this sacred geography; they are the abodes of lamas and Buddhist deities who are the objects of the highest veneration, expressed in a multitude of ways through the religious observances of the laity. Through the domestication of alien space, a traditional environment is established, forming a framework within which a customary way of life may, to a certain extent, be maintained. In this way, Tibet is "recreated" in India, and the painful experience of discontinuity caused by the sudden break with the "fatherland" (*phayul*) has thus been alleviated for the elders, many of whom have lived a relatively sheltered life in the settlements.

The degree to which the elders may experience their present life world as congruous with Tibet is, of course, largely determined by their social situation. Many have lost or been separated from most of their relatives, and have never experienced in India the kind of social life they had in Tibet. Even so, it seems that many of the elder generation, the "real" refugees, experience a continuity in space as well as in time. This is particularly so for the monks who were brought up in Tibet. Their motivation for leaving Tibet was to escape Chinese persecution and the destruction of their institutions. They are thus deprived of their possibilities to continue a life devoted to religious practice. The immediate concern after the arrival in India was therefore to create an en-

[5] Unlike "traditionality" and "modernity," I will here not use the terms "tradition," "traditional" and "modern" as analytical concepts, but with reference to how they are currently employed by Tibetans in India.

vironment in which they could pursue religious practice. After they were able to reestablish their monasteries, most of the refugees have been living in communities where social life has continued more or less as in Tibet. For the old people, then, Tibet is first of all a place embedded in their memory, a place associated with a locality and a way of life which, to a certain extent, has been evoked by the domestication of the environment and by the reproduction of institutions and customary (inter)action.

Nowhere is *habitus* as predominant as in the monasteries, where a strong emphasis is laid on the continuity of ritual practice and doctrinal transmission. Continuity is a core concept in the monastic traditions. It is referred to with two words, which are both pronounced *gyü* but vary in terms of spelling. *Rgyüd*, which denotes Tantra or "psychic continuum" (Tucci 1980: 68), literally means "thread," whereas *brgyüd* denotes "lineage" or "descent group" (Samuel 1993: 204). Both words thus carry the connotations of transmission and continuity through time. In the monastic context, *gyü* refers to the transmission of teachings (particularly the Tantra) through a lineage of teachers, as well as to the link between teacher and disciple. The notion of such a spiritual transmission serves as an assurance of the validity and authenticity of doctrines, social organization and ritual practice.[6]

For most monks tradition is, however, not a concept, but primarily an "embodied" experience. Monastic life is structured in accordance with a ritual schedule which, in most cases, deviates little from former praxis in Tibet. The novices are brought up by older monks, many of whom were raised in Tibet, and a dominant feature of their socialization into monastic life is the memorization (by means of song) of the ritual texts which will form the basis of their future ritual practice.

Rituals constitute a core element of monastic life. Collective prayers and recitations of texts, commissioned by sponsors or as a regular practice, are in most cases performed daily in the monastery or in the home of the sponsor. Larger rituals are performed on special occasions in honor of the protective deities and the lineage ancestors of the various orders. In the institutions for higher education, particularly those of the Gelugpa order, the traditional, ritualized debate (*rig lam*) is the major method of learning, occupying a central position in the daily schedule

Although some monks travel extensively and are well acquainted with Indian as well as Western society, the majority live a relatively secluded life, and their interaction with the external world is dominated by the performance of rituals for the laity. Their life is (in most cases) highly structured, leaving them with little free time. They are usually not encouraged to familiarize themselves with social and political issues, or to study modern subjects. For these reasons, few develop a reflexive or critical attitude towards monastic traditions. Monks are, however, not a homogenous group. Their conceptions of and attitudes to the "traditional" and the "modern" vary considerably in accordance with their background, education and the type of institution they belong to (an issue I will return to below).

Lay youth who have been brought up in India have a less experiential, more complex and often ambivalent relationship to tradition. Although manifested in the way of life of the settlements, where most spend their childhood, tradition is for this group more of a conceptual than an embodied notion. Many young people have, mainly as a consequence of their secular education, become alienated from certain aspects of the religious beliefs and practices of the older genera-

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[6] For an elaboration of this topic, see Ström 1995. It must be emphasized that this is a "traditional" concept which might (as argued by Calkowski and McLagan in this volume) be consciously exploited in the (re)presentation of 'Tibetan culture', but which has not been conceived of as a result of the recent objectification of the same.

tions as well as from monastic culture.[7] Most acknowledge, however, that the religious traditions and monastic institutions are vital elements of Tibetan culture, and that their maintenance is therefore of crucial importance to the future of Tibet.

The objectified concepts of tradition and culture are thus linked to each other and to Tibet: the Tibet prior to Chinese occupation and the future Tibet after liberation. Tibet is, as traditionally constructed and propagated in exile, a predominantly abstract category associated with the imagined community of the Tibetan nation and its lost territory.[8] This symbolic constellation is summarized in the image of the Potala palace (Bishop 1994), the former residence of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa, which appears on wall posters, in private rooms and offices everywhere, and is frequently used as a logo in publications (e.g. *Tibetan Review*) and political pamphlets. Moreover, music and dance troupes use it as a backdrop for cultural performances, as noted by Korom in the introduction to this volume.

The notion that Tibetans are refugees, that they are not where they really belong, has been fostered in the young by parents and teachers through stories, tales and legends of Tibet. This is highly constitutive to their identity as Tibetans. In the schools (even in some monastic schools) they start every day by singing the Tibetan (as well as the Indian) national anthem. The school curriculum, the political propaganda of the CTA and other political organizations, as well as speeches made by the Dalai Lama every 10th of March (National Uprising Day),[9] is aimed at fostering a national identity by focusing on issues such as the loss of Tibet, the struggle for its liberation, the suffering of its inhabitants and the unity of the Tibetan people.

The image of Tibet which is conveyed to the young consists, in fact, of two conflicting images. On the one hand, it is the paradisical and unspoilt land of the elders' memories, the land to which they hope to return and continue life as it was before. Against this romanticized, what Klieger (this volume) terms "hyperreal," image of Tibet is posed the image of a land occupied, exploited and destroyed by the Chinese; it is a land in which their fellow Tibetans are suffering under the oppression of colonial power. However, the prevailing notion has been that the inhabitants have remained uncorrupted by Chinese colonization, that they have retained their simplicity and their strong faith, and that Tibet can therefore be restored to its original, healthy state after liberation. In contrast, a common notion among the old and middle-aged is that the refugees have been spoilt by their encounter with Indian society and modern understandings of the world.

During the first two decades of exile, the border to Tibet was closed, resulting in very little communication between the refugees and the inhabitants in Tibet. After the death of Mao Tse-tung, this situation gradually changed. The refugees were allowed to visit relatives in Tibet if they applied for an "overseas Chinese" passport, something many have refused to do. The restrictions on internal travel in Tibet were also made less severe, making it easier to escape to India. Between 1985 to 1988, it was even possible, albeit difficult, for Tibetans to obtain permission to go on pilgrimage and visit relatives in India. Many who chose this option remained in

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[7] I believe that this alienation is also largely due to the fact that a large proportion of Tibetan children are sent to boarding schools, where they are isolated from "traditional" life in the settlements.

[8] It may be contested that the notion of the geographical territory of Tibet is quite concrete. This is, however, not the case. I have met very few, even among the youth, who are able to relate to a map of Tibet or locate an area according to the four directions. This indicates that their notion of the Tibetan territory is not based on geographical knowledge.

[9] The text is distributed beforehand to all communities and read simultaneaously, at the same time as the Dalai Lama delivers his speech in Dharamsala, by district officers of the CTA or other community leaders.

India. It has, however, not been easy for new lay refugees to settle, so the majority of those who have stayed are monks studying in monastic institutions.

1985 thus represented a turning point in the relationship of the refugees to Tibet. Tibet was suddenly transformed from a predominantly cognitive context to a more concrete social reality through the influx of new refugees and the possibilities of communication with relatives. Many young people had the opportunity to see their homeland for the first time, and a few of the original refugees even went back to resettle in Tibet (usually due to a lack of relatives or opportunities in India).

Liberal developments are inevitably modifying the image of Tibet. The testimonies of relatives and the new refugees of the oppression of the Tibetan people under Chinese rule have, on the one hand, served to reinforce dedication to the struggle for liberation, and the large influx of new monks to the monasteries has strenghtened the conception of the crucial significance of religious traditions and monastic institutions as instumental for their preservation. On the other hand, heightened interaction with "native" Tibetans is also challenging idealized notions of the homeland and its people as pure and unspoilt. The outcome of this process may be the emergence of a new image of the present Tibet; a Tibet which is no longer unchanged and traditional, but rather an exploited and strangely modernized society which cannot be restored to its former state. This may in turn affect the hope of return and visions of the future manifested in Tibetan political agendas.

The Modern Context

Tibet, conceived as the territory belonging to the nation of the six million Tibetans,[10] thus has three temporal aspects: past, present and future. Whereas the cultural traditions of old Tibet are predominantly perceived as valuable and essential parts of Tibetan culture which have to be maintained and restored to the future Tibet, the old social order is not regarded as unequivocally good. The need for democratic reforms has, since the early days of exile, been acknowledged by the Dalai Lama and the CTA, as well as by the Tibetan Youth Congress and later by the more recently founded Tibetan Women's Association. Democratic principles have been implemented in the establishment of the new parliament, the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies, in the recent reform of the procedure whereby the Cabinet (*Kashag*) is elected, and in *The Draft Constitution for Future Tibet*, which was first promulgated by the Dalai Lama in 1963. Although dedication to democratic ideals is voiced by most of the young and educated members of the diaspora, the understanding of what the concept implies is still poorly developed, except among a small minority of intellectuals (Thargyal this volume), and it has so far had little impact on the structure of authority in schools and monastic institutions. Nevertheless, most educated people tend to distinguish between the Tibet that was (before Chinese occupation) and the Tibet that will be (after liberation) in terms of democratic values and principles.

Democracy is a central concept of the modern (*deng rabs*) context, which is primarily associated with the West and secondarily with urban Indian society. This context is further represented by subjects such as natural sciences, mathematics, geography, history, English and Hindi, and by Western clothes, consumer goods, media and technology. The attitudes to and evaluation of this context and its manifestations differ among various groups and segments of the population. It is, in general, as can be expected, more highly valued among the young than the old, but it is not

[10] An estimate made by the CTA of the population in "Ethnic Tibet," that is, the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region and the eastern parts of Amdo and Kham, which has been incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. This estimate has become an established concept in the diaspora.

unusual to find positive attitudes toward modern education among older people or critical attitudes toward Western values and lifestyle among the young. However, although some may express an ambivalence towards the West, it is clearly associated with the "good life" among many young and middle-aged people. This was amply demonstrated by the overwhelming response from all parts of society to the announcement of the U.S. resettlement scheme in 1992, after which 1,000 of the approximately 4,500 applicants were chosen, by the drawing of lots, to settle in the USA (Korom In Press).

Whereas the West is associated with material wealth, it is, on the other hand, associated with spiritual poverty.[11] It constitutes the opposite of Tibetan society, which is materially poor and spiritually rich. The dichotomy thus forms a complementary pair. This dual aspect of the West emerges most clearly in the monastic context. Although the continuity of tradition is the prime concern of the monastic institutions, the West is nevertheless an everpresent cognitive context. On the one hand it represents, to a greater or lesser extent, their economic foundation, as "Western" benefactors (that is, from North America, Western Europe, Australia/New Zealand, East Asia and Southeast Asia) are the most significant contributors to monastic economy, mainly as sponsors of individual monks. On the other hand, the West is the major field for the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism. All of the Buddhist orders have offshoots abroad, some of which have been established by lamas who immigrated to the West shortly after the exodus from Tibet. Most, however, have been founded by lamas resident in India or Nepal upon request from their Western disciples. The two aspects of the West, as materially rich and spiritually poor, are represented by the sponsors who, in most cases, are disciples of the lamas resident in or belonging to the monastery.

The dissemination of the religious doctrines has many repercussions for monastic institutions. Apart from providing an important contribution to the monastic economy, it also greatly enlarges the institutional network, of which the monastery is a part, far beyond India, Nepal and Tibet. Even though the monastery may be located in an isolated and remote part of India, it usually has contacts worldwide. The centers abroad represent a link and entrance to the modern world for most monks through their sponsors, as well as for lamas and some educated monks by the opportunity to go abroad to teach or interpret.

The impact of Western culture on the monks depends, to a large extent, on their ability to read and write English. Those who have some knowledge of the language may correspond with their sponsors and read English literature, which many in fact do. The most common reading is books on Buddhism, Western philosophy and science, but some also read novels. The wish to learn or improve their English is frequently voiced, especially among the monks who are raised in India, and their explicit aim is often to go to the West as interpreters. This aspiration is usually linked to the fact that their teachers or lamas are, or have been, teaching abroad. Although for some, the aspiration to "go West" may be motivated by a pure and humble wish to serve their lamas and to communicate the *Dharma* to others, it is also undoubtedly motivated in many cases by curiosity, adventurousness and/or a longing for a good and comfortable life.

While many of the monks raised in India are oriented towards the West, the majority of those from Tibet (the "newcomers," as they are usually called) are oriented towards Tibet. Whereas some, for personal or political reasons, intend to remain in India, it seems that most have come

[11] The characterization of the West as spiritually poor must be qualified. Educated Tibetans, clerical and lay, with the Dalai Lama as the foremost exponent, generally acknowledge the great value of Western science (first of all natural science, and to a lesser extent, social sciences and humanities). Western science is, however, mostly perceived as this-worldly knowledge, relevant and useful in relation to the phenomenal world, but inferior to the "mind science" of Buddhism, or simply inadequate, as a means to understand the ultimate nature of reality and attain enlightenment.

with the intention to study for a shorter or longer period and then return to their local monastery in Tibet. As most are from rural areas in Tibet who have not been to school before entering the monastery, they have not had much exposure to the modern context. In India, they have few means of communication with people other than their fellow monks and therefore learn little about the world outside the monastery. Consequently, they have not (yet) developed the reflexive stance in relation to tradition that characterizes some of the young refugee monks. We must also keep in mind that such reflection is a product of an awareness of alternative conceptions and ways of life.[12] This difference in the background and experience, motivation and orientation of the two groups of monks constitutes a cleavage which, due to recent changes in the pattern of recruitment, is a significant factor in the way monastic institutions function today. It may also have important consequenses for their future development.

The Recruitment of Monks

In another paper (Ström 1994), I outlined some aspects of sociocultural change in the Tibetan diaspora and their impact on monastic institutions. The most significant impact of these changes on the monasteries is an altered pattern of recruitment, as proportionally fewer parents are sending their sons to become monks. Another seems to be an increasing defection of young monks who have been recruited as children.[13] In view of these tendencies and other aspects of the present situation, I argued that the development of Tibetan monastic institutions in India most likely will involve a gradual shift of emphasis from "local" monasteries toward the *shedra*, the "central" institutions for higher education, although this process may be tempered by the recruitment of monks from Tibet and the Himalayas. I also expected that the CIHTS, which was the first (and the only modern) institution for Buddhist studies to be established in exile, would serve as a model for the development of the *shedra*. During my subsequent fieldwork this hypothesis was largely confirmed, but the situation emerged as far more complex than I had, on the basis of previous fieldwork, expected it to be.

In the first decade after their reestablishment, the monastic institutions in India had a relatively small population, but they were still not severely affected by a decline in recruitment and defection. The reasons were that the processes of sociocultural change in the diaspora had not yet gained momentum, and that they recruited many monks from the Buddhist societies of the Himalayan region (who prior to 1959 were sent to Tibet for higher education). After "liberalization" in Tibet and the subsequent revitalization of monastic life since 1980, the situation of these institutions, and particularly the *shedra*, has been completely altered. The main problem the institutions have to face today is not a decline in recruitment, but the opposite: a massive influx of monks from Tibet, which has more than doubled the monastic population in the last decade. In this period, a number of Kagyüd and Nyingma *shedra* have been established,[14] and large proportions of the students in these come from Tibet. The greatest increase in recruitment has, however, been to the large Gelugpa monasteries of Ganden, Drepung and Sera

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[12] For an elaboration of this perspective, see Ström 1995.

[13] The cause of the latter problem has, by members of the clergy, been placed either in the attitude of the parents, who sometimes take the children back because they need them, or in the 'temptations of the modern world". As I see it, another major reason may be a lack of mutual understanding between the generations and groups of monks due to their different experience.

[14] Among these new *shedra* are the Drigung Kagyü Institute and the Ngagyur Nyingma College, both in Dehra Dun, and the *shedra* of Dzogchen monastery (of the Nyingma order) in Kollegal, of Thupten Shedrub Jangchub Ling (of the Drigung Kagyü order) in Bylakuppe and of Sang Ngag Chö Ling (of the Drukpa Kagyü order) in Darjiling.

(commonly referred to as *Densa sum*).[15] In Sera, for example, the population has increased from 650 in 1980[16] to approximately 3,000 in 1994.[17] According to the CTA, there are today 181 monasteries in India and Nepal, with a total number of 17,376 monks (and 8 nunneries with 549 nuns).[18] The same source claims that around 1/3 of the clergy in India are recent arrivals from Tibet, but according to the information I received from the various institutions, their numbers must be far greater. I would estimate that approximately 60-65% are newcomers from Tibet, 20% from the Himalayas, 10-15% from Tibetan settlements in India and 5% old monks who came from Tibet in 1959.

The new pattern of recruitment has changed the social and cultural situation of monastic institutions in a radical way. Although the recruitment has far exceeded the capacity of the institutions, most of the newcomers have still been received, and enormous practical problems regarding accommodation, food and education have had to be solved.

A less acute, but more severe, problem concerns the relationship between different groups of monks. The monks from Tibet now constitute the majority in most of the *shedra*, whereas the monks from India are (proportionally) reduced to a small and decreasing minority. The monks from Tibet are predominantly youths or adults who have chosen monastic life, as are the majority of monks who are recruited from the diaspora today.[19] The two groups embody, however, completely different sets of knowledge and experience. Whereas the latter (in most cases) have been educated in a modern (lay or monastic) school for 8-10 years and have, to varying degrees, been confronted with urban Indian culture, the former in most cases come from rural areas of Tibet. Not many of them have received even the most rudimentary education, if they have been to school at all. In general, the newcomers therefore accept the status quo of the institutions; that is, they voice no need for structural changes, the introduction of new subjects and other modifications. In this sense, they represent no challenge to the institution and its dominant elders.

In *Densa sum*, the newcomers are often described by the teachers as very diligent and good students, but they are also (by teachers and other students alike) characterized as having less respect for monastic discipline as well as being wild and unruly. Some of the young diasporic monks even voiced the suspicion that a segment of the newcomers had been sent by the Chinese in order to make trouble. The difference between the two groups is augmented by the fact that most of the newcomers are relatively old, usually in their late teens or early twenties, when they come to India. They are then too old to join the monastic schools, and are therefore rarely introduced to subjects other than Buddhist philosophy. As few of them learn Hindi, English or other modern subjects, they remain isolated from Indian society. Also, newcomers are considerably less exposed to alternative worldviews than monks born in India.

In spite of efforts to stimulate communication between the two categories of monks, through cohabitation and by giving the Indo-Tibetans responsibility for the newcomers, they still seem to

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[15] As no figures of the monastic population had been published by the Central Tibetan Administration since 1980, I was unaware of the magnitude of this increase until I arrived in the field.

[16] "Tibetans in exile 1959-1980," Department of Information and International Relations, CTA, Dharamsala 1981.

[17] This estimate is based on information given at Sera. I have not been able to obtain figures from Ganden and Drepung, but if their populations have increased proportionally as that of Sera since 1981, they should have a population today of approximately 1500 and 2500 respectively. According to this estimate (which is probably moderate), the total population of *Densa Sum* is now around 7000.

[18] "Tibetan Refugee Community: Integrated Development Plan II, 1995-2000."

[19] No statistics are available on this point, so this is an assumption inferred from the information I have received.

interact and form social groups on the basis of their origin. The situation is likely to change as the two groups gradually learn more about each other's experiences and attitudes. But integration will probably be a slow process, since their common points of reference beyond the monastic context are few. As a consequence of this situation, the monks raised in India have become marginalized, especially in the large monasteries. Many of them therefore leave the monastery in order to continue their studies elsewhere,[20] or to disrobe and lead a lay life.

The Organization of Monastic Education

The majority of Tibetan monastic instituions in India are relatively small, local[21] monasteries which are mainly devoted to ritual practice. These are, in most respects, traditional institutions where social organization and ritual performance deviate little from the praxis in Tibet prior to 1959. The majority of Tibetan monks in India are, however, living in what I have termed "central" monastic institutions. The latter are institutions devoted to higher education. These are of several kinds, which may be classified as follows:

1) The Gelugpa monasteries: Ganden, Drepung and Sera (*Densa sum*)

2) a) The Nyingmapa, Kagyüpa and Sakyapa *shedra*

b) The Institute of Buddhist Dialectics (IBD)

Apart from an obvious difference in size, what distinguishes these categories is first of all their social structure and organization. Whereas the other *shedra* are specialized schools for higher education, *Densa sum*[22] are also monasteries with particular ritual traditions, as well as communities consisting of "houses" (*khangtsen*) constituted on the basis of the regional origin of the members. Whereas the others are small (with an average of around 100 students), centrally administered and (except for the IBD) under the authority of the leading clergy of their order, *Densa sum* are large and, to a great extent, independent institutions with a highly decentralized internal structure. These are crucial differences which, as I see it, account for the surprising fact that the *shedra* of the three oldest (the "unreformed") orders have undergone much greater changes in India than *Densa sum*, particularly in terms of educational organization.

Densa sum are located in the large settlements which are situated in remote areas of Karnataka: Ganden and Drepung in the Mundgod settlement in the north, and Sera in the Bylakuppe settlement in the south. These institutions are reestablished communities which, in most respects, are organized as they were in Tibet prior to the exodus.

The education in *Densa sum* is still based on the principle that the student should choose his own teacher. The teachers most respected and sought after are the elder *Geshe*[23] who received their education in Tibet before 1959. Education progress follows a traditional, fixed curriculum, divided into five major subjects (listed below, in connection with the IBD) which are taught in a chronological order. The speed of progression is dependent upon the teacher, but the course usually takes around 13 years, after which the students have to wait, often several years, for their

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[20] Most of them go to the CIHTS, where there are at present around 25 students from Sera.

[21] On the classification of monastic institutions, see Ström 1994.

[22] *Densa sum*, the "Three Seats (of learning)," are in fact are six monasteries, since each of the three consists of two distinct "colleges" (*tratsang*) which have separate economies and (apart from a common body) administrations, as well as different curricula (as regards commentaries to the basic texts) and ritual traditions.

[23] *Geshe* is the common title of all who have attained academic degrees in the Gelugpa system, the highest of which (*Geshe Lharampa*) may be considered equivalent to a Ph.D.

turn to undergo the final examination. The students are classified according to their level of study, but actual classes are formed by their choice of teacher, of which they may have one or several. The students of a particular teacher are grouped in accordance with the scriptures they are studying, and the classes are conducted in the private quarters of the teacher. The timing of classes and their duration (usually from 1-2 hours) is decided by the teacher and fluctuates in accordance with the ritual schedules (which are set from day to day, as most rituals are commissioned by sponsors) of the monastery and the *khangtsen*, the regional houses, as well as other events. The number of students and classes, the health of the teacher and other factors are also considerations taken into account for scheduling purposes. Every evening, the students debate the text they have most recently been taught. Although they may debate with anyone on the same level, it is usually done with those who have the same teacher, since the speed of progression through the texts may vary considerably among the teachers.

In the Nyingmapa, Kagyüpa and Sakyapa *shedra*, the students are divided into classes taught by appointed teachers in classrooms according to a fixed daily schedule for a certain number of years. After completion of the (7-9 year) course, the students are awarded degrees in accordance with the Indian academic system (*Shastri* and *Acharya*).[24] The curriculum is mainly traditional, following the canon of the respective orders and lineages. In addition, most of the schools have introduced English as a regular subject (the teaching of which is, however, usually irregular, since most of the institutions depend on foreign teachers who stay for a limited period of time). The organization of these institutes or "colleges" (as they are usually called) is clearly modelled on the structure of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi. Several of them are administered by abbots (*khenpo*) who received their education at the CIHTS and who, apart from having administrative responsibility, are also the main teachers.

Although newcomers from Tibet constitute the majority in most of these *shedra*, the relationship between the two groups of monks seems to be less problematic than in *Densa sum*. This must, I believe, be attributed to the difference in size and social organization of the two categories of institutions. As the *shedra* of the unreformed orders are small and centrally administered, the students live closer together and follow the same daily schedule. Moreover, social groups based on origin are rarely formed. As a consequence, the students born in India are less marginalized in the institutions, resulting in an easier integration with the diasporic community. This implies that the latter are also more exposed to the modern context than the newcomers in *Densa sum*. In addition to these structural differences between the institutions, there are also differences in the methods of learning. Very generally, it can be said that in *Densa sum*, the emphasis is on the memorization of texts and on the traditional debate (*rig lam*), while in the other *shedra* the emphasis is more on individual study and reflection on texts.[25]

Since it serves as a reference for some of the significant developments which are currently taking place in the *shedra*, a few words about the CIHTS are necessary in this context. Founded in 1967, the CIHTS was the first modern institution for higher education to be established in the diaspora. It was initially a monastic institution intended for the education of monks who had fled from Tibet. At that time no other *shedra* had been established. Another basic objective of the CIHTS was to educate scholars who could retranslate Tibetan texts into Sanskrit. The Institute was therefore affiliated with Benares Sanskrit University, where the classes were conducted

[24] The degrees are, however, in most cases not acknowledged by the Indian educational authorities. The exception is the Nalanda Institute (the main *shedra* of the Karma Kagyü order) in Sikkim, which is affiliated with the Sanskrit University in Varanasi, where the students go to take their exams.

[25] On the traditional methods and principles of teaching, see Dungkar 1993.

during the first few years. Although its students and teachers were monks, the CIHTS was conceived of as a modern educational institution, and its organization deviated in many respects from the traditional education of the *shedra*. Since its inception, the Institute has been nonsectarian (or multisectarian), employing teachers and accommodating students from all the four Buddhist orders (and in recent years from the Bonpo order). The students are taught the basic scriptures in common classes. Commentaries on the common texts are taught according to the respective philosophical traditions. A further departure from tradition is to teach the different subjects in parallel, according to a fixed timetable. The yearly schedule, length of the courses and final degrees have been defined according to the Indian academic system, with the aim of achieving recognition from the Indian educational authorities. The CIHTS was gradually transformed into a secular college, and in 1988 it was recognized as an Indian university. A wide range of modern subjects (mainly languages and social sciences) have been introduced, and the great majority of the students today are lay (of the approximately 300 students, around 50 are monks and 50 are girls, a few of them nuns). However, the major subject is still Buddhist philosophy, and most of the teachers are monks, the elder of whom teach (as far as this is possible within the framework of the Institute) in a traditional way.

Among the *shedra*, a special case is The Institute of Buddhist Dialectics (*Rig lam lobnyer khang*) in Dharamsala, the only monastic institution which has been founded in exile. Unlike *Densa sum* and most of the other *shedra*, the IBD is situated in the midst of society. It is, in fact, located at the very hub of the Tibetan diaspora, at the entrance to Thekchen Chöling, the complex which encompasses the residence of the Dalai Lama, Namgyal monastery (the "court monastery") and the Tsuglhakhang (the "central cathedral"). All pilgrims and tourists who come to Dharamsala pass the IBD when going to the Tsuglhakhang, as well as every time they circumambulate the hill (what most of the elder pilgrims do to their full capacity, in order to gain merit). Since it lies at the crossroads between the CTA quarters below and the Tibetan town above, a large number of the inhabitants of Dharamsala also pass by the Institute daily. The students are thus exposed to the busy, cosmopolitan life of Dharamsala and meet people from all parts of the world.

The IBD was established in 1973 on the initiative of the Dalai Lama, who asked Ven. Lobsang Gyatso, a monk teacher at the Central School for Tibetans in Mussoorie (who earlier had voiced the need for such an institution) to serve as its principal. The Institute was intended to be a school of Buddhist philosophy for students coming from the Tibetan secular schools. Its criteria for admission were to have completed 8th class and to have been ordained as a monk. In recent years, some lay students and many students from Tibet (who have received little formal education) have been admitted, but it is still essentially a *shedra* for those who come from the Tibetan schools in India.

The Institute is in principle nonsectarian, but as it follows the curriculum of Drepung Loseling monastery and the tradition of religious debate (*rig lam*), the dominant method of learning in the Gelugpa school, most of the students are and have been Gelugpa. However, unlike that of *Densa sum*, the education of the IBD is not aimed at the traditional *geshe* degree (which is a prerequisite to teach in most Gelugpa institutions and requires at least 13 years of study). The basic education is a 7-year course in the Perfection of Wisdom (Skt. *prajñāpāramitā*, Tib. *sher-phyin*)[26] and logic (Skt. *pramāṇa*, Tib. *tshad-ma* [*tsä-ma*]), which are the initial two subjects in the traditional Gelugpa system of education. A small minority of the students continue with the three advanced subjects; the philosophy of the Middle Way (Skt. *mādhyamika*, Tib. *dbu-ma* [*uma*]),

[26] Which constitutes the basic expositions of Mahayana Buddhist ontology, epistemology and ethics.

Abhidharma (Tib. *chos-mngon-pa* [*ch'ö-ngön-pa*]), and the Code of Discipline (Skt. *Vinaya*, Tib. *'dul-ba* [*dül-wa*]).[27] In order to study these subjects properly and to undergo the final examinations for the *geshe* degree, it is necessary to go to Drepung monastery in Karnataka. This latter part of the traditional education system is beyond the scope and objectives of the IBD as well as the motivations of the students. So far only a few of the students have attained the *geshe* degree.[28]

The main objective of the IBD has been to educate teachers of religion for the Tibetan schools and civil servants who could work with religious matters in the CTA. To date, the majority of the graduates have been employed in these institutions, while a few serve as interpreters for lamas who are teaching Westerners in India or abroad. As most of the students come from school, they do not belong to any monastery and have never experienced ordinary monastic life. Apart from a few who wish to go into retreat after completing the seven year course, the aim of most of the students is to work in society. This coincides with the objectives of the Institute. In order to prepare the students for secular jobs, English has been incorporated as a regular subject. Some of the students follow courses at Indian universities by correspondence, something which is encouraged by the Institute. Tibetan, as well as foreign, scholars are invited to give lectures on various topics, and the students publish a magazine with Tibetan translations of articles on Western science and philosophy. Although the basic curriculum, the philosophy classes and the daily debate is strictly traditional, the attitude of the students and the administration is characterized by an openness to the modern world as represented by Western traditions of knowledge.

Since its inception, the IBD has also accommodated Western students, most of them monks ordained in the Tibetan orders, who live and study together with the Tibetan students (and participate in the debate, something which requires a high degree of mastery of the Tibetan language). Although they have not come to teach, but to study Buddhism on Tibetan premises, the foreign students may, by virtue of their different background and experience, contribute to the development of a self-conscious reflexivity among their fellow students. The presence of Westerners who are so deeply dedicated to the study of Tibetan Buddhism may also influence the attitudes of young people toward their own traditions and thereby aid in the integration of conflicting worldviews.[29]

In terms of its structure and organization, the IBD is thus an amalgam of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies and the *shedra* of the unreformed monastic orders. As in all these institutions, the education is centrally administered, and the students are organized into classes which follow a fixed schedule and are taught by appointed teachers. What distinguishes the IBD from the other *shedra* is its history, the objectives of its education and the background, motivations and future careers of its students. In these respects, the IBD is more akin to the CIHTS.

Although *Densa sum* and the IBD are all Gelugpa institutions, they represent opposite poles among the monastic institutions for higher education with regards to social organization, rituals and education. *Densa sum* are communities structured by the principle of continuity, where tra-

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[27] *Uma* comprises the more profound ontological Mahayana doctrine concerning "Voidness" (Skt. *śūnyatā*, Tib. *stong-pa-nyid* [*tong pa nyi*]), whereas Chö-ngön-pa are expositions of (essentially pan-Buddhist) metaphysics, psychology and cosmology, based on the Abhidharmakośa (Tib. *chos-mngon-mdzod* [*ch'ö-ngön-tsö*]) by Vasubandhu. *Dülwa* is the basic code of discipline for Buddhist monks (Skt. *Vinaya*), including its Tibetan interpretations and applications.

[28] On the curriculum of the Gelugpa education, see Sherpa Tulku et.al. 1977: 67-68, and Dungkar Lobsang Tinley 1993.

[29] For a more elaborate discussion of this issue, see Ström 1995.

dition reigns almost unquestioned. In the IBD, on the other hand, the starting point seems to have been the opposite, as it was clearly intended to be a monastic college suited to the needs of those who had received a secular primary and secondary education. There, the continuity of tradition is not seen as a goal in itself. As far as a traditional curriculum and methods of education are adopted, they have been chosen as the most appropriate means to develop an understanding of Buddhist philosophy. Likewise, since the IBD has no ritual tradition and does not perform rituals on request, daily prayers and other forms of practice are not performed because they have to be, but because they are perceived to be conducive to the development of the students and to the well-being of the community. Whereas *Densa sum* have been reestablished and are maintained according to the principle of *gyü* - that is, as they were organized by their founders and therefore ought to be, regardless of time and place – the IBD is a newly established institution which was conceived of and is now administered with reference to the present situation of Tibetan society.

The greatest contrast is not, however, between *Densa sum* and the IBD, but between the monastic primary and secondary schools and the higher education within the *Densa sum*. It is here that the most dramatic confrontation between the traditional and the modern is taking place.

The Development of Monastic Schools

In Tibet prior to 1959, many of the larger local monasteries had schools where the novices were taught to read and memorize the scriptures. Most of the monastic schools in India serve the same purpose today. *Densa sum*, being central institutions for higher education, did not have such preparatory schools. After their reestablishment in India, however, these institutions were cut off from their institutional network and became more like local monasteries for a period, recruiting young novices from their neighboring settlements. During the early years, they were taught by their custodians, the "household teachers" (*shag gegen*), to read and memorize. However, as the number of young novices grew, the need was felt to organize their education. Schools were therefore established on the pattern of the local monasteries. The first of these was the school of the Je college in Sera monastery, first established in 1973. In 1985, a large sum was donated by the family of an Italian Buddhist monk for the develoment of the school. In 1986, during a visit to Sera, the Dalai Lama proposed that Sera Je School should serve as a pilot project for monastic schools. He therefore asked his sister Jetsun Pema, director of the Tibetan Children's Villages, to supervise its development. A monk educated at the CIHTS was chosen as its headmaster (and later as principal), and lay teachers were employed to teach so-called modern subjects.

The school was modelled on the TCV schools and basically follows the curriculum defined by the Central Tibetan Schools Administration. It has, however, a stronger emphasis on Tibetan subjects than the TCV and CTSA schools. The abbot of Sera Je is chairman of the school and selects its principal, secretary and treasurer, whereas the teachers and other members of the staff are chosen by the principal. However, since the school has to secure its own funding and the monastery is not involved in its daily administration, it functions more as a separate institution than a part of the monastery. Sera Je School is, however, not only a relatively autonomous modern school, but also a traditional school which is an integral part of the monastery. It is, in fact, a remarkable synthesis of the two worlds or contexts. These two contexts are, however, clearly demarcated in time (if not in space).

In the morning from 6: 00 to 8: 30, the children memorize the prayers which are performed in the monastery; then from 6: 00 to 8: 00 in the evening, they recite what they memorized that morning for each other and for the teachers. Both sessions take place in the old school building and its yard. The teachers at these times are *geshe* from the monastery. They monitor the disci-

pline of the children, listen to them recite individually by heart, correct errors and scold them if they have not performed properly. They also give them moderate praise if they have done well. If they fall asleep (which the youngest often do) or chatter with each other, they are given light blows with a stick.

At 9: 00 in the morning, the students assemble, according to class, in straight rows in the yard of the new school building (which was donated by the Italian sponsors). There they sing a prayer and the Tibetan and Indian national anthems. Afterwards one of the older pupils reads a newspaper article in English or Tibetan, usually on political issues. This ritual marks the transition to the modern context. From 9: 15 till Noon, and from 2: 00 to 5: 00 in the afternoon, the children learn Tibetan handwriting and grammar, English, mathematics, geography, history and "civics" (social sciences), the latter subjects in English. Tibetan language is taught by an external monk who has studied at the CIHTS and two younger monks from Sera who have been to a teacher training course at the CIHTS. The other subjects are taught by lay teachers with degrees from Indian universities. The duration of each class is 45 minutes, with only a ten minute break in the middle of each of the two sessions. From Noon till 2: 00 in the afternoon, the students eat lunch, rest, play and do homework. At 5: 00 in the afternoon, they eat dinner, sing prayers and have a short break for rest or play before they assemble in the old school yard again at 6: 00 in the evening to recite the memorized prayers. After 8: 00 at night, they go home, where the older pupils usually continue their recitation until 10 in the evening.

Reproduction and Innovation

In contrast to the traditional education of the monastery proper, the education of Sera Je School is thus (as in many of the *shedra* of the other orders) organized according to modern principles of school administration. However, as seen above, it also functions as a traditional monastic school aimed at the memorization of religious texts. The school thus represents an interface between the two contexts: the old and the new, or Tibet and the West. The question is, however, whether it serves to integrate the two or whether they should remain separated, as they are in the daily schedule of the school.

In Sera, deviation from the customary way of doing things is often met with resistance from the older generation of monks. Many lament that everything was better in Tibet; the discipline was stricter, the teachers were more erudite and the students were better motivated and had greater respect for their seniors. Most seem, however, to have resigned to the predicament of the present situation, acknowledging that things cannot function as they did in Tibet because "the times are different" and that they are "living in a modern world." Still, it seems that little effort is made to reinterpret tradition or to actively seek new solutions to organizational problems. The reasons for this inertia are complex, but basically they seem to rest on some central dogmas or, in Bourdieu's terms, "doxic" conceptions of the purpose and nature of monastic education.

When confronted with the suggestion made by the Dalai Lama to reorganize education in *Densa sum* in a modern way, the influential *geshe* often acknowledge the positive aspects of such reforms. However, most conclude that the reforms cannot be implemented due to the fact that education in Buddhist philosophy is fundamentally different from education in other subjects. Its aim is not to produce worldly knowledge, but wisdom or redemptive knowledge. In order to arrive at such insight one must have absolute faith and trust in the teacher. The fundamental and inalienable principle of monastic education is therefore, from their point of view, that the student chooses his own teacher. Only then may the "spiritual bond" which will enable the student to attain enlightenment be tied. Without this bond, the study of Buddhist philosophy is

reduced to a form of secular education. As a modern organization, it would thus violate the principle of *gyü*. In other words, the education at Sera cannot be organized as in a modern school.

In the light of these conceptions, Sera Je School emerges as an anomaly in a double sense: as a modern school in a very traditional environment, and even more so as a school intended to prepare students for higher studies in the monastery. This paradox accounts for its dual nature as a simultaneously traditional and modern school. Its two faces may, however, be experienced as incompatible and mutually exclusive. While its traditional part prepares the novices for monastic life, its modern part exposes them to a context beyond the confines of the monastery, as well as to educational principles which are in contradiction to the principles of the monastic education proper. The transition from school to monastery is therefore critical, and many students face problems of adaptation in this process. In an effort to bridge the gap between school and monastery, Buddhist philosophy has been introduced in the upper classes (from grade 7). In these classes, the students are taught basic texts and the principles of debate (*rig lam*) by *geshe* from the monastery. However, the transition from the well-ordered classroom situation and a fixed schedule with a constant alternation between subjects, to the loosely structured monastic education with its focus on a single subject and emphasis on self-study and debate is still considerable. Moreover, it involves the transition from a small community of boys with a similar experiential background to a large collectivity dominated by the newcomers from Tibet.

Since the modern part of the school is based on new principles and has incorporated many secular subjects which may seem irrelevant to monastic education, there was, as would be expected, much resistance among the elder monks to the reorganization of the school. Thus, the relevance and value of the school's secular education is still contested. The division of the school into two distinct institutions separated in time is an obvious compromise, a result of the struggle between two worldviews. On the one hand, there is the conception of tradition as absolute; that is, as a system of knowledge and practice which has been fixed *in illo tempore* by enlightened masters and transmitted through a spiritual lineage, a timeless order which one must strive to recreate in the present as well as in the future. On the other hand, there is the relative or pragmatic conception of tradition. This perspective implies a different conception of time, a notion that the times are changing; that is, that consciousness is being changed by the knowledge and experience of new social circumstances, and that social institutions must change in relation to changing consciousness.

Whereas the above view may seem distinctively "modern," it is, in fact, consonant with Buddhist doctrine, in which it may – and often does – find legitimation.[30] According to Mahayana doctrine, the Buddha presented his insight in many different ways, in accordance with the principle of *upāyakauśalya* ("skillful means" or "method"), a term equated with compassion. Although a relative conception of tradition may thus be derived from Buddhist doctrines, it requires a new reading and reinterpretation of texts and commentaries, which is usually not encouraged in the monastic institutions.

Such a perspective therefore seems, in most cases, to be generated by the exposure to alternative orders of knowledge and social organization (i.e., "traditions"), and by the acknowledgement of their relevance and their possible integration with the traditional order. Those who hold the "relative" view, and could conceivably operate as agents of change, are predominantly

[30] In this connection, I would like to emphasize that I do not regard "modernity," as defined above, as a new or an exclusively Western phenomenon, but as a mode of consciousness which (as "traditionality"), to varying degrees, has been and is still manifested in all societies at all times. As regards Buddhism, the development of such an attitude has always been an integral part of the path to Enlightenment.

monks and lamas who have received a modern education and/or have had extensive contact with Western society. Foremost among these is the Dalai Lama, who has been instrumental to the establishment and development of many monastic schools.

The modernization of Sera Je School and other *shedra*, in particular the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, shows that the concept of *gyü* may be reinterpreted. In these schools, education has been reorganized without abandoning the notion of spiritual transmission. The teacher is still the supreme authority, and education is in most cases based on the traditional canon of the particular order. The fact that most institutional reforms have been initiated by the Dalai Lama or by other high lamas indicates that the implementation of changes in monastic education still depends upon reliance on traditional authority, and that innovations must come from above; that is, from respected lamas or *geshe*. However, once introduced, the centrally administered system of the modernized institutions clearly facilitates further changes in the methods and contents of education, and it is therefore more flexible and adaptable than the traditional, decentralized system of *Densa sum*. The implementation of modern principles of education in *Densa sum* will imply a restructuring of the entire social organization of these institutions. This seems unlikely as long as the *Densa sum* are dominated by the older generation of teachers and the students from Tibet. As a generational change is drawing near, it remains to be seen whether the young *geshe* who have been raised in India will choose to remain in their monasteries, and to what extent they will be able to introduce changes in the educational system.

Since they are by far the largest Tibetan institutions for higher education, the development of *Densa sum* will have significant repercussions in Tibetan society and even far beyond it. The students who graduate from these institutions are sent to teach in all societies where Tibetan religion is established, which, apart from Tibet and the diaspora, includes Kalmykia and Buryatia in Russia, Mongolia and the entire Himalayan region (as well as Europe, the U.S.A., Australia and Southeast Asia). Given the present status and influence of educated monks and lamas in these societies, they may potentially play crucial roles in their development. Their role will, however, to a large extent depend on the relevance of the education they have received in relating to the processes of modernization which these societies will undergo. The future significance of *Densa sum* as educational institutions therefore depends, as I see it, on the extent to which they are able to apply the principle of "skillful means." In other words, they must develop their system of education in accordance with the present conditions and needs of Tibetan society. The new monastic school system represents a significant step in this direction, but so far it remains unintegrated with higher monastic education, which in *Densa sum* still operates solely in accordance with the traditional principles of the organization and transmission of knowledge.

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THE TIBETAN DIASPORA AND THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

by

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Nicholas Thomas argues that the interpretation of emblematic activities serving the construction (and/or expression) of tradition has tended to neglect the "processes of explication provoked by cross-cultural contact and contest" in shaping "the dynamic of reactive objectification" (1992: 215-216). His concern is poised in the context of Pacific Islanders' prolonged contact with European colonizers and points up an interesting product of countercolonial discourse, its opposition from neotraditionalists. Such opposition is a structural permutation of a bipolar dynamic encompassing Western colonizers and indigenous peoples, the conventional framework for discussions of postcolonial discourse. But little anthropological consideration of colonial, countercolonial and/or post-colonial discourse addresses the dynamic of a reactive objectification generated amidst multiple polarities; that is, where colonizers, the colonized and possibly others compete in objectifying the cultural activities of the colonized for consumption by at least three mutually distinct audiences – i.e., the colonizers, the colonized and others.

I propose a departure from Thomas (and a redistribution of the burden of orientalism) in considering one genre of Tibetan emblematic activities, the performing arts, which are at present contested by Tibetan refugees, "Sinicized" Tibetans from Tibet and Chinese colonials. Significant to this rivalry is the fact that only Indian and Western audiences have had the opportunity to juxtapose contested versions of these activities, audiences who have exerted an indirect and, occasionally, direct influence on the objectification of the Tibetan performing arts. This paper explores the issue of such objectification in the face of international resistance or acceptance and on the contested ground of cultural authority as it has emerged over the past forty years.

On Cultural Politics

Recent discussions of voice and place engage us to rethink many of the conventional approaches to cultural politics. Handler (1985: 211), for example, reviews these issues in his description of a nationalist's agenda:

> to meet the challenge of an outsider's denial of national existence, nationalists must claim and specify the nation's possessions; they must delineate and if possible secure a bounded territory, and they must construct an account of the unique culture and history that attaches to and emanates from the people who occupy it.

But the cultural politics of Tibetan refugees moves beyond this assessment in that the Tibetan cultural agenda is contested by two distinct social orders: that composed mainly of the Tibetan exile society in India and that structuring the lives of Tibetans inhabiting the aboriginal land. Thus, Handler's anchoring of constructed identity to bounded territory does not serve refugees facing competing historical frames generated by the more than four decades of colonization separating them from Tibetans occupying the aboriginal land.

For Tibetan nationalists, the critical task is to construct emblematic representations of the unique culture and history that attaches to and emanates from Tibet, a task complicated by many refugees' recognition that emblematic activities projected by Tibetans from Tibet are often in-

consistent with those of refugees. Tibetan cultural politics, then, pits claims to cultural authority against the pragmatics of cultural hegemony; that is, who is empowered in a given territory. Tibetan refugees have endeavored to advance their cultural authority in such domains as religion and medicine, and, more recently, in environmental issues (see Huber this volume), as signifiers of the legitimacy of their political claims. However, it has been the representation of Tibetan musical traditions that has indexed the cultural political struggle between the exile Tibetan administration of H.H. the Dalai Lama based in Dharamsala, India, and the People's Republic of China, and has served as a pivotal international arena for colonial and refugee discourse over the past twenty years.

When refugee Tibetan and Tibetan artistes sanctioned by the People's Republic of China tour internationally and perform in the same general locale before audiences who are, for the most part, unfamiliar with Tibetan performing arts, their respective agenda has been to secure audiences' acceptance of the "authenticity" of the performance. To do so, the respective dramatic troupes have drawn upon what Giddens (1984) terms the authoritative resources of competing social time-spaces. Tibetan refugees, who constitute a deterritorialized society, explicitly frame their performances as traditional, thereby advancing their authority by what Rutz (1992) would term "institutionalizing" the culturally dominant time of pre-1950 Tibet. The Chinese Tibetan musical troupes frequently describe their repertoires as both "folkloristic" and "traditional," but frame their representations to international audiences as emanating from the aboriginal land; that is, "China's Tibet." In so doing, the Chinese Tibetan musical troupes appeal to the audience's sense of spatial propriety.

Two Polarities: Exile Tibet and China

This rivalry in objectifying the Tibetan performing arts emerged in reaction to what I shall call two polarities, the nationalist agenda of Tibetans as opposed to that of the Chinese. The exile Tibetan government formally entrusted the dual agenda of the preservation and promotion of Tibetan performing arts to the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in Dharamsala, India, an institute known as "TIPA." Formerly known as the Tibetan Music, Dance, and Drama Society or *Zlos-gar*, TIPA, founded 11 August 1959 in Kalimpong under the Dalai Lama's directive, was the first new institution formed in the exile Tibetan community in India. Young children recruited for the school studied with former Tibetan opera stars, famous Lhasa musicians, individuals well versed in Tibetan folk songs and dances, and several monks expert in performing sacred monastic dances. The Tibetan performing arts in exile could be said to bridge Connerton's (1989) distinction between inscriptive and embodied cultural traditions, since tape recordings (from phonograph records) of Tibetan musical performances from the 1940s and rare film glimpses of Tibetan operas performed in the 1940s and 1950s exist in the exile community and the West, while the teachings received by TIPA students were embodied transmissions of such genres as opera, *Nang-ma* and *sTod-gzhas* from masters who had performed in the 1940s and 1950s in Tibet. Such embodied transmissions were what the exile government hoped to preserve.

The preservation of the Tibetan performing arts, as an expressly stated goal of this institution, was in itself a highly significant commentary on the exiled Tibetans' view of the fate of Tibetan performing arts under Chinese governance. Meserve and Meserve (1979), for example, recount the decision by the Communist Party of China in the early 1960s to utilize theater as the medium of choice to persuade minorities to submit to national unification. In Tibet, dramas containing politically useful subplots were reworked and played to Tibetan audiences, while other dramas and epics were ignored. For example, in his *Tales from Tibetan Opera*, Wang Yao (1986: 12-13) writes:

> since the 1950s, Tibetan opera has bloomed with a new vitality...writers and artists have studied and rearranged the traditional features of Tibetan settings and make-up by assimilating elements of the classical operas of the Han culture. Just as Tibetan opera has been influenced by the Han operas, its traditions have affected operatic forms and stories in the provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai. And in the past, Chinese operatic art has also had an effect on Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese operas, while itself borrowing from certain Indian traditions. With social progress and development of production in Tibet, economic prosperity and cultural efflorescence will inevitably affect Tibetan opera, which reflects social life and is bound to respond to the new cultural development in Tibet.

It would appear that Wang Yao's pointing up the virtues of the impact made by a modern political ideology upon an art form positively glows with postmodern, global village sentiments, since everyone is so obviously and appealingly contributing to everyone else. But a notable example of the cultural efflorescence of which Wang Yao speaks is the transformation of the libretto of the Tibetan opera *sNang-sa 'od-'bum*, the story of a pious maiden who wished to pursue religion above all and overcame the obstacles of a forced marriage and even of death to do so. In the Chinese version, the heroine, born to slave parents, curses and then murders her aristocratic relatives through marriage and thereby achieves the triumph of socialist realism. The reworking of this opera, however, is particularly memorable, since, as Norbu observes, the name of the opera, *sNang-sa*, "meaning 'one bestowed on this earth', is in the Chinese version rendered as 'Langsha' which in Tibetan means beef!"(1984: 31).

However, the Chinese assimilation of the Tibetan performing arts in Tibet incorporated far more than reworking dramatic plots. In the 1970s in Tibet, operatic instrumental accompaniment, limited traditionally to a drum and one pair of cymbals was expanded to include a veritable orchestra of non-Tibetan instruments and the unique vocalization; that is, Tibetan opera singing was Sinicized, particularly in female singers, beyond recognition (see Norbu 1984; 1986). A decade later, the extra orchestral accompaniment was eliminated from the performances of Tibetan operas in Tibet, but the Sinicized vocalizing remained and dance movements, with the exception of the hunters' dance, were altered to conform to Beijing opera style.

A Multiplication of Polarities

After the mid-1970s, the polarities shaping the dynamic of the representation of the Tibetan performing arts multiplied, since Tibetan refugees, followed by the Chinese, launched international tours of their respective troupes. This provided an unprecedented opportunity for Westerners and their governments to participate in Tibetan cultural politics. The first international tour of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in 1974-75 was fraught with international political resistance. Though TIPA had an impresario and advanced bookings, they encountered not only many cancellations but also last minute decisions to deny their visa applications. Jamyang Norbu, who had served TIPA in the early 1970s as an accountant and playwright, and later as a director, and whose knowledge of English propelled him into the role of spokesperson for the tour, recalled this tour as his initiation into international and cross-cultural diplomacy; in other words, into the challenge of counter-essentializing.

TIPA's first cancellation was Germany. Despite the fact that TIPA had bookings and advertisements in eight cities, a guarantee letter, and numerous references from people of note, Norbu, on his visit to the German embassy in the Netherlands, was told by the counsel that being Asians, TIPA people were seeking a prosperous country in which to seek employment and residence. The irony is, of course, that the Germans revoked their decision to give TIPA visas in

deference to Chinese pressure, since the Germans were seeking markets in China. In the United States, TIPA was heckled outside most of their performances, and vociferously heckled in Washington, D.C., Madison, Wisconsin, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California. At the Smithsonian Institution, a significant number of protesters included Chinese embassy personnel.

Though Australia initially denied TIPA visas to perform in 1976, the persistence of the Australian-Tibetan Friendship Society in petitioning the government on TIPA's behalf succeeded. TIPA's Australian reception was also a mixture of hostility and enthusiasm, but the hostility in Australia, unlike that in the United States, appears to have garnered official sanction. Upon TIPA's arrival in Perth, Jamyang Norbu was paged at the airport by a member of Australia's foreign ministry, who immediately admonished him with the warning, "Young man, you make one crack about the Chinese and I'll have you deported!" Norbu's reply was, "You can deport me right now. I'd rather be back in a democratic country like India where I came from. I haven't come like other Asians looking for a job here, I've come to represent Pacific Artists." Following this exchange, Norbu told me that "then he, you know how these people are, they're quite diplomatic, he left." However, although TIPA's Australian performances were well-attended and generated much enthusiasm, Nevill Maxwell sent his students to distribute pamphlets outside TIPA performances denouncing Tibetans and the Dalai Lama and to disrupt Norbu's lectures.

Western press coverage of TIPA's first international tour ranged from the *Vienna Daily* music critic's extolling TIPA's premiere Vienna performance by privileging his encounter with "a theatrical form which has maintained its purity and union with the religious roots from which all Theatre has grown" (cited in Choephel 1975: 21), and expressing his hope that the troupe would continue to avoid commercialization, to the *Australian Daily Telegraph* reporter's disdainful observation that the "choreography is limited to hopping, stepping and jumping in simple formations and spins" (cited in *Tibetan Review* 1976: 12).

A response of a different order to TIPA's first tour emerged from the People's Republic of China. TIPA's international tour concluded with the Australian performances in March 1976. Seven months later, in October 1976, the People's Republic of China announced its intention to send a dance and drama troupe known as the Lhasa Doegar of Tibet on a tour of Nepal, Japan and Switzerland. The world premiere of this troupe took place in August 1978 in Stockholm, where refugee Tibetans attending the performance observed that all the musical accompaniment was Chinese and that the songs were sung not only in Chinese style but also mostly in the Chinese language (*Tibetan Review* 1978: 6).

TIPA's second international tour was limited to Europe and did not take place until 1986. In March 1987, a performing group called the Tibetan Dance and Drama Troupe from Lhasa toured American campuses, opening at the University of California-Santa Barbara and closing, after fifteen performances, at the University of California-Santa Cruz. This second tour of a troupe from Lhasa was sponsored by the Asia Society, whose status as a *promoter* of Asian arts necessarily belies its claim to political neutrality. A farewell reception for the Lhasa troupe was given at the Asia Society by New York Tibetans whose spokesman explained to the troupe that the Tibetans picketing outside were demonstrating against political repression in Tibet, not against the troupe itself. The Asia Society responded to the New York Tibetans' statement with an apologetic official speech asserting that it was not a political institution and therefore not responsible for any statements made by Tibetans. But note that though the Asia Society hosted a reception for TIPA's 1975 tour, it never hosted a performance by an exile Tibetan performing arts troupe.

This "tag-team competition" between refugee Tibetan and Chinese Tibetan musical troupes has continued apace. In 1991 TIPA toured in Europe and the United States. While TIPA was in the United States, China's Sichuan Song and Dance Ensemble gave an aborted performance in

Delhi when their "Tibetan" item caused an immediate Tibetan protest. In 1992, the Zaxi Luge Tibetan Dance Group performed in North America. In May of 1994, the Chinese Tibet Art Troupe visited Austria and Sweden. In August 1994, the Tibetan Folk Ensemble of Kyigodo, formerly a part of Kham, performed in Japan. In September and October of 1994, TIPA toured Italy and Germany. In late October 1994, TIPA students performed in Japan.

Some Western Polar Effects

I now turn to several effects of a Western polarity on the refugee Tibetan construction of the performing arts as an emblematic activity. One most interesting response to a Western influence was that of the Dalai Lama, who advised TIPA, following their 1975-1976 tour, to slow their pace. This caution was taken up by Jamyang Norbu, a personal target of much official Western hostility during TIPA's initial tour, who became director of TIPA from 1981-1985. During his tenure, he revived several artistic traditions and advocated stylistic allegiance to the embodied performance knowledge of elder Tibetan artistes, encouraging TIPA's members to conduct research with Tibetan elders throughout the exile community. Directors following Norbu, however, have assumed the office with minimal knowledge of the performing arts, a fact contributing to the introduction, in 1986 and 1991, of non-Tibetan artistic directors for TIPA's international performances of opera. From TIPA's initial tour onward, opera performances were shortened from an eight to a two-hour production to suit Western attention spans and their stage management altered to accommodate a proscenium stage as opposed to an open-air theater. However, TIPA's performance of the Tibetan opera *gZugs-kyi nyi-ma* performed on the 1991 tour exaggerated emphasis on the animal characters and astonished a scholarly Western audience in Madison, Wisconsin when the hero and heroine embraced on stage. This unusual scripting, which was accepted under protest by the performers, was the idea of a French director who had been engaged to make the opera more appealing to Western tastes. However, the Madison audience's response to the director appears to have eliminated these revisions from current TIPA performances.

The Western polarity also affected the dynamics of the Chinese Tibetan musical troupes. In North America, the post-Tiananmen climate may have ensured that the Zaxi Luge Tibetan Dance Group's 1992 North American tour did not follow the university and Asia Society circuit of its 1987 predecessor, since its performance venues were most often centered in North American Chinese communities. The tour began infamously in June of 1992 when passive non-Tibetan protestors seated in the audience with Tibetan national flags draped over their laps were beaten by private security guards hired by the Chinese sponsors of the event. This action launched a storm of protest from Canadians and helped to secure media attention to controversy surrounding this troupe's tour (see Samdup 1992).

The Zaxi Luge Troupe wore Chinese theatrical makeup, offered Sinicized vocalizing and acrobatic maneuvers, and displayed female artistes in diaphanous pastel *chu-pa* adorned with glittering sequins. The stage-managing of several numbers measured up to the exacting standards of the old Soviet impresarios in combining balletic movements, cossack leaps and the unceasing smiles of socialist realist art. Following one performance in Canada, a Canadian Tibetan, given the opportunity to converse with some of the troupe members, asked them why they did not perform in a traditional Tibetan style. They replied that for a Tibetan performer to gain professional status and prestige, he or she had to win recognition at an important annual competition in Beijing. To perform in a style Tibetans would consider traditional would condemn the performer to perpetual obscurity. Thus, a Tibetan artiste would endeavor to be as colorful and acrobatic as possible, since such a performance would win favor with a Beijing audience. This draws our at-

tention to the fact that a significant component of the Western polarity influencing Chinese Tibetan troupes is the "overseas" Chinese audience, who are given ample evidence of "seamless" cultural ties with Tibet.

However, though the Chinese Tibet Art troupe, the largest ever cultural troupe from Tibet that toured Austria and Sweden in May 1994, was hailed by TAR chairman Gyaincain Norbu as *"a key foreign propaganda project for Tibet"* which publicizes, among other things, the *"protected Tibetan culture,"* included in the troupe's mission was the order to study and to absorb the "fine cultures of people of other nations" (*World Tibet Network News* Issue ID 94/05/17 GMT 14: 15). Thus, in addition to constructing cultural "seamlessness" between Tibetans and Chinese everywhere, the Chinese Tibetan troupe was also enjoined to "westernize" their performances where possible.

An Emergent Polarity

An additional polarity, crystallizing over the past seven years, has emerged from the encounter between long-term Tibetan refugees and recent émigrés to India from Tibet. The extent of the Sinicization of many of these new arrivals has become covert discourse in the exile community, and cultural conflicts arise. However, the music which these émigrés bring with them, the inevitable Sinicized versions of cannibalized Tibetan songs, are well-received in the exile community as not only "something new," but also "something from Tibet." This has inspired some Tibetan performers to refer to the infestation of a "Chinese virus" in Tibetan music and to express their fear that the popularity of this music may serve the function of "culturally assimilating" Tibetan children who would not be able to distinguish traditional from Sinicized Tibetan music. It has also prompted a number of discussions between those who count themselves as traditional Tibetan musicians and recently emigrated pop stars from Tibet who reflect their training in Chinese music schools while laying claim to performing "traditional" Tibetan music. This dissonance extends to the long-term exile Tibetan audience. During the 1992 North American tour of the Zaxi Luge Tibetan Dance Troupe from Lhasa, members of a North American Tibetan community engaged in a heated argument when one person, who had a relative performing in the troupe, complained that the Tibetan community should not peacefully protest the troupe's performances since the program was traditional Tibetan song and dance. Thus, although the People's Republic of China failed to demonstrate cultural authority with respect to traditional Tibetan music by launching several Lhasa music troupes on Western tours, the infusion of a Sinicized Tibetan culture through the arrival of recent immigrants from Tibet in the exile community may, in the long run, secure such cultural hegemony.

Conclusion

In his consideration of the reactive objectification of culture, Thomas (1992: 213) argues that what is important is not so much the categorical fact that difference provides a foil for identity as the actual history is of accommodation or confrontation that shape particular understandings of others and thus determine what specific practices, manners or local ethics are rendered explicit and made to carry the burden of local identity.

Although I have sought in this paper to sketch some of the processes constructing the representation of the Tibetan performing arts, I suggest that Thomas' call for a processual understanding is undermined by his failure to qualify the issue of "importance," since indifference to "difference" is a well-honed means of privileging the interests of certain "polarities" shaping the dynamic of reactive objectification over others. Cultural assimilation, a venerable colonial instrument, has, after all, been the longstanding Chinese policy in Tibet (e.g., Meserve and Me-

serve 1979). Tibetan refugees who have reflected upon the issue of advocating their cultural preservation have told me, "It's not that we are against changes in our performing arts. It's that there are so few of us and China has made a deliberate and organized effort to wipe out our cultural identity." A scholar from Tibet visiting Dharamsala in the late 1980s was asked by TIPA members if he could recommend any performers or troupes in Tibet to them. After a long pause, he was able to name one musician. He went on to observe that it was very difficult to understand an opera as it is currently performed in Tibet. When *lha-mo* is performed, he said, it appears at times to be a round dance, at other times, a Khampa dance, and, overall, as a performance having "no head nor tail."

The question as to whether Tibetan music in exile drawing upon the transmission of embodied knowledge from a lineage of Tibetan masters and, thus, appealing to a temporal authority will continue to be promoted and, thereby, preserved remains. The exile troupe Chaksam-pa, and several non-professional troupes scattered throughout the refugee community continue to be adamant about the "temporal" authority of the traditions they represent. However, contemporary tape recordings from Tibet, India, Switzerland and the United States offer conflicting examples of inscribed tradition, and various stage performances in the West mixing Tibetan artistes who embody tradition with those who pursue Eurasian pop, and with those reflecting their Chinese musical training, blur genres for uneducated Western and Tibetan audiences. The explicit acknowledgment of such differences will possibly prove significant in the Tibetan nationalist agenda.

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SHANGRI-LA AND HYPERREALITY: A COLLISION IN TIBETAN REFUGEE EXPRESSION

by

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One inescapable characteristic of a refugee experience, in comparison with many types of voluntary emigration, is the desire to hold on to one's identity and place in the world even as, in time and space, that homeland drifts away from practical reality into a state of the ideal. These behaviors inevitably leave a record through the artistic expressions of material culture. The purpose of this paper is not necessarily to show the results of change, but to examine the development of modern Tibetan material expression. To what extent is the acute, reflexive self-consciousness of Tibetan refugees expressed in contemporary material culture? Can one document assimilative or adaptational cultural change through the products of changing artistic expression in refugee culture? These are questions that seem especially important now that Tibet and the Tibetans have become a part of modern Western pop culture.

Attempting to hold tightly to a particular worldview representing a culture considered viable by some outsiders only up to the instant of its exile, often engenders a type of imminent, self-defensive, self-conscious and intensely deliberate expression. Such self-absorption may well lead to a type of hyperreality in material culture. The hyperreal world could be defined here as a rather benign caricature of the real world, a simultaneous simplification and exaggeration of prominent, usually attractive features of cultural life. Is this particular type of self-conscious reflexivity represented in contemporary Tibetan material culture? If so, what are its origins? What are the interactions, if any, between indigenous, idealized Tibetan self-presentation and the mythology of the long-enduring, Western-created paradigm of Shangri-La? Dharamsala and other refugee communities have received a certain amount of good-spirited criticism in the last few years on their promotion of "little Tibets," ideal 3/4 scale models of homeland Tibetan communities, seemingly presented to attract foreign tourism and Western patronage. Under such scrutiny, is it only a matter of time, as some scholars have argued, before Time-Warner or Disney Corporation purchases Dharamsala for a Himalayan-based theme park?

In the Tibetan exodus (like many others), cultural forms and institutions, ones that once were taken for granted, were suddenly brought into high relief by the experience of exile. This sentiment is combined with a strong commitment to survival, and is solidified with a vow for the continuation of a primary cultural identity as articulated by the Dalai Lama. As Holaday (1991: 16-18) has stated, it is a matter of physical and cultural survival for marginalized peoples to present themselves to those in the outside world who ultimately control their circumstances. In Dharamsala, as well as in other Tibetan refugee settlements throughout the world, the continuation of Tibetan culture is a carefully planned and structured system, one that is framed within various strategic and informational agendas. Goffman's "presentation of self" (1959) receives added political urgency in a situation of perceived cultural annihilation. Part of the situational gravity is based in the very necessities of day-to-day survival, while a generous segment is based on the perceived need to satisfy Western ideas of Tibetan culture and the influence that the Western view of Tibet has had upon Tibetan thought itself. There is no historic counterpoint for

Europe's quest for the exotic East (cf. Halbfass 1988: 173) among Tibetans prior to the experience of exile. As a strategic bulwark to hold back the forces of assimilation, Tibetan refugees have to present an image to the West that underscores their uniqueness.

Tibetan civilization has for years been characterized in Western literature as an ossified survival from some archaic world at the edge of our Western perceptions. Many of these notions have been assumed by Tibetan refugees themselves, who have viewed their survival in such static terms as "maintenance" of cultural identity. This sort of interaction is not unique to Tibeto-Western relations, of course. Meeting the ethnic expectations of visitors to the American West was the duty of many Native Americans hired by the railroads in the early twentieth century. The tourist industry in Hawaii and other exotic locations provide numerous examples of spurious ethnic displays provided for economic gain. The presentation of Tibet to the world is outstanding partly because of the sheer chronological length of its performance.

In the West, Tibetan culture was largely considered a living antique – it was widely felt to be especially brittle and vulnerable to the normal course of time and culture change. Common Western attitudes no doubt have added much stress to the contemporary Tibetan experience of exile and the trials of adjustment to various host societies around the world. Much attention, most of it ostensibly patronizing, has been paid in the West, portraying Tibet as the final flicker of the light of some antediluvian knowledge. The tradition has reproduced itself in the history of Western exploration and among foreign travel writers in the Himalayas for hundred of years, and is still the dominant mode of the Occident's depiction of Tibetan culture (Bishop 1989). The reasons for the perpetuation of this *genre* into modern times are perhaps economic – it sells more books, videos, and New Age paraphernalia.

Tibet cannot be real, for to present it as such would be a death sentence for both the travel writer and the culture. An unchanging Tibet is one that cannot adapt – it cannot adjust to the vicissitudes of time and space without complete and irreversible collapse. This attitude has often been adopted by the "identity management" strategists of the refugee communities, both Tibetan and non-Tibetan. The attitude that a traditional living, vibrant culture such as the Tibetan will somehow be irreversibly corrupted by the West is also expressed by tourism planners in some Himalayan areas such as Lahul and Spiti in India, Lomanthang in Nepal, and by the Bhutanese government. These socioeconomic planning models may indeed be based in rather dated Western assimilation paradigms. In this framework of archaic/modern worlds, the logic of change and continuity as bipolar elements becomes especially problematic in its application to practical situations. The hyperrealist would have to ask, for example, what particular historic periods or sequences of events should be representative of "traditional" Tibetan culture to the exclusion of others? Is the *status quo ante* occupation of the 1950s more representative of Tibet than the golden years of King Srong-brtsan sGam-po of the eighth century? A corollary to this mind set is that some scholars would seem to prefer an impossibly "pure" Tibetan culture, or none at all.

Due to the persistence of this Shangri-La view of the Tibetan world, it is therefore of little coincidence that much attention has been devoted to the subject by those who claim to be the "last" to portray Tibetan culture before it disappears from the planet. Whether a product of Tibetan self-consciousness or Western romanticism, Harris (1993: 110) has suggested that in refugee life "this sort of vision oversimplifies the story and places the Dalai Lama, as embodiment of the culture, on a life-support machine for perpetuity." One may reflect on the endless profusion of biographies portraying His Holiness as the "last Dalai Lama," an attitude that has even occasioned His Holiness to proclaim that such was not necessarily his intention.

As we have seen in Meg McLagan's paper (this volume), and ideas represented by Devoe (1987) and Klieger (1989, 1992), the modern concept of Tibetan*ness* is often mediated between

Tibetan refugees and Western supporters. Following general ideas first articulated by Barth (1969), Leach (1954) and Moerman (1965, 1968), Tibetan identity may be negotiated between actors possessing historically discrete but structurally similar ideologies. To argue against the notion that Tibetan refugee culture and its products have merely met the expectations of the Western Shangri-La image of a mysterious Tibet, however, I suggest that the phenomenon is more likely a case of ideological convergence. A collision has occurred between the Occidental paradigm of an Eastern paradise, Shangri-La, and an indigenous utopia which constructs a distanced, sacred Tibetan homeland upon established Shambhala, Mt. Meru, Mt. Potala and divine rule mythology.

The establishment of Shangri-La in the West was a product of the physical and political distance and inaccessibility of the Himalayas, the exploits of Occidental *conquistidores*, explorers and other summiteers over a sustained period of time, although Tibet was in fact never as isolated as imagined (cf. van Spengen 1995). For new generations of refugees born abroad, the Tibetan homeland has also become more of a mythical place, separated, isolated and coveted. Now common to the West and Tibetan refugees is a shared currency in the icon of the Dalai Lama (Klieger 1992) and the Dalai Lama's focal advocacy for various non-nationalistic causes, including world peace, environmental responsibility (Huber this volume), global indigenous sovereignty, human rights and non-violent activism. But despite similar ideologies and agendas, the creation of Tibet as a sacred place has different historical origins in the West and among refugees.

The Creation of the Shangri-La Romance and the Image of Tibetans as Other

The Shangri-La paradigm of Tibet, as critiqued by Bishop (1989), Richards (1992) and others, is one of the longest enduring geocultural myths in the West. It partly owes its inception to various late classical and Hellenic writers. Herodotus of the fifth century B.C. and Ktesias of Knidos of the fourth century B.C. were among the West's first historians. Herodotus and Megasthenes were among the first to mention the mountainous Asian region later known as Tibet, citing reports of fabulous gold digging ants. It is also long-established that sacredness of place is generated in direct proportion to distance, either in time or space. Herodotus observed that "the most distant parts of the world, as they enclose and wholly surround all other lands, should have those things which we deem best and rarest" (cited in Hodgen 1964: 27). These sentiments would remain a vital part of the Western worldview as long as there remained inaccessible regions on earth. In general, Tibet's long-enduring natural isolation from the West was enhanced by various episodes of political isolation, the most recent being enforced by the occupational forces of the People's Liberation Army of China.

Alexander the Great's physical incursions into the East provided a colossal stimulus to the acquisition of geographic and ethnographic knowledge of Asia for the West. The Alexandrian Romance of a precocious Hereclean god-king ruling the known world was inherited by Hellenistic successor states such as Ptolemaic Egypt and Syria, by Rome and the Byzantine Empires, and repeatedly recast well into the Middle Ages and beyond to the Renaissance. And the adventure carried with it enduring preconceptions and fantasies of the people and cultures of the East that would endure, in some form, right up into the Age of Discovery. Together with the exploits of Alexander, the Middle Ages perpetuated the ancient myth of various races of monsters inhabiting the central parts of Asia. This phantasmagoria included the dog-headed men of India (White 1991), the awkward Antipodes who travelled upside down on a single oversized foot, the giant Cyclopes, and bizarre acephalics with eyes, noses, and mouths embedded in their chests (figure 1). The latter, known as "Blemmyae" and looking all too much like the images of the

Indo-Buddhist god Rahula, were even depicted in battle with Alexander (e.g. the Tourmai tapestry of the fifteenth century). Of course, the iconography of Alexander himself, the resplendent solar god of inspired gaze and perfect form (figure 2), provided the opposite effect – "Us" and the "Other" had been cast.

As the Alexander myth of the East continued far into the Dark Ages and beyond, it carried with it the distorted images of the peoples of Asia. Even when confronted with factual data, the image of an East populated by monstrosities was difficult to overcome: the illustrator of Marco Polo's thirteenth century account of Asia, for example, did not adhere to the author's text but rather followed expectations of the appearance of Asian races that were over ten centuries old. As White (1991) has noted, hell is Other.

Similarly, Polo's near contemporary, Friar Odoric, witnessing sky burials in Tibet, commented on apparent cannibalistic practices of Tibetans in the early fourteenth century. Odoric mixed fact with fiction: "women of this country wear their hair plaited in over a hundred tresses, and they have two teeth in their mouths as long as the tusks of a boar" (Komroff 1928: 244). Furthermore, "many other vile and abominable things does this nation commit, which I mean not to write, because men neither can nor will believe, except they should have sight of them" (Komroff 1928: 245).

Hodgen neatly summarizes the position of pre-Renaissance European scholarship and travel writing:

> having lost touch with the classics, medieval scholarship purveyed a preposterous and fabulous sediment of what once had been a comparatively realistic antique ethnography...The pre-Columbian system of ethnological thought, if system it may be called, was composed of fragments of ancient learning and superstition, disfigured by careless repetition and invention (Hodgen 1964: 37).

Perhaps one reason such ethnographic distortions lasted so long was the effect that Eastern invasions of Europe had on collective Western sensibilities. Beginning with the assault by the Huns

Figure 1. Before Shangri-La – the West's first conceptualizations of the Eastern Other. From Wittkower 1990.

in the fifth century A.D., continuing through the Mongol aggressions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the latter westward migrations of the Turks, the men from Tatarus (Latin for "hell") truly seemed monstrous, especially for those of Eastern Europe who had to confront them directly. The hallucinogenic aspect of the distant, Asian Other represented an anti-structure existing along the eastern frontier of the West. On the liminal margin between the known world and the unknown, Tatary presented a reservoir of danger for the settled inhabitants of Europe.

One of the factors in the creation of Shangri-La and other orientalist paradigms was the transformation of the Other from an object of fear into an object of desire. In regards to the infamous "Prester John" letter to the Greek Emperor in the twelfth century, White writes:

> The historical people most closely identified with the kingdom of Prester John throughout the twelfth century were the same Ch'i-tan (now called Kara Khitai) who had been portrayed as a race of Dog-men in Manchurian two centuries before. Having lost their empire and been pushed into central Asia and converted to Nestorian Christianity, they are now made out to be the children of Paradise... As India became quite well known to the West, the monstrous races came to be located further and further afield, in Tartary, Burma, and the islands of the East and West Indies (1991: 200-201).

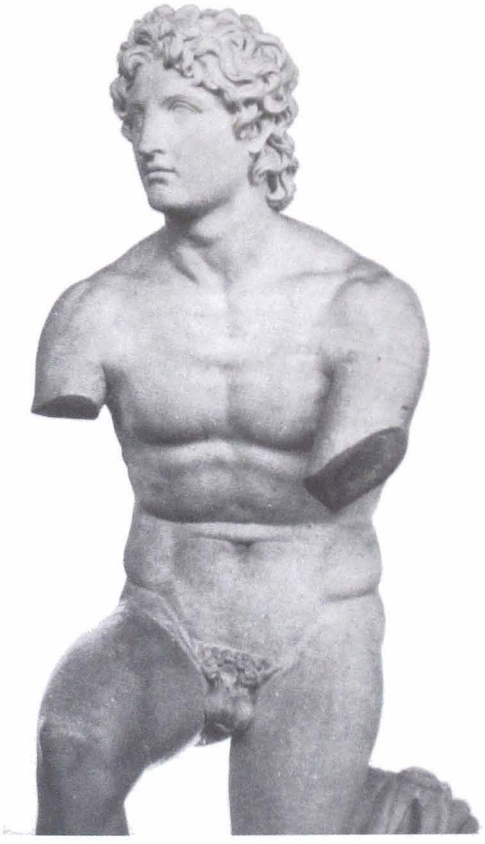

Figure 2. "Us" idealized. The Rondanini statue of Alexander of Macedonia, ca. 320 B.C. (Roman copy of Greek original, Munich) From Stewart 1993.

Accordingly, lore of the *yeti* in the Himalayas (and elsewhere) is the logical, ultimate extension of this geographical marginality.

While hatred and distrust of the peoples of Tatary remained acute for some peoples of the Central European steppes directly in the path of the Hordes, Britain and Russia, however, seem to have initiated the transformation of the mysterious East, especially as successful imperialism placed vast areas of the Orient directly under the control of these Western empires. Within a few centuries following the demise of the Mongol empire, the remote, nearly legendary Tibet appeared as an epiphany to many great powers of the West. This extraordinarily distanced locale would be a highly sought after place for exploration, soaring Western adventurism, and spiritual quests in experimental mysticism. Tibet and the Orient became places that anchored and maintained the Western fantasy of earthly paradise. Shangri-La, specifically, was essentially an Anglo, rather than European invention (Bishop 1989; Richards 1992). More than anything else, it was a product of and a sustaining metaphor which underpinned the ideology of the British Raj in Asia. It is no trivial matter that the British India Survey expended enormous amounts of energy to locate and confirm the *axis mundi*, which was quickly

given the English name Everest; nor is it a mere coincidence, that as one of the last triumphant gasps of the British Empire, such a point of earth was conquered by Hillary and Norgay on the eve of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953).

Alongside of Shangri-La, a Western paranoia of Asia based on a slowly fading memory of the Mongol hordes (what Deleuze and Guattari [1987] refer to as "nomadology") persisted in fits and starts along the old Tatar frontier of Europe right up to the days of Wilhelmine Germany and the "Yellow Peril" sentiments (figure 3). Such European nationalistic fear of various "fugitive forces" (Richards 1992: 111), including unsettled tribes and uncodified information, however, did not stop the Russian expeditions of Prejevalsky (1872), Grombtchevsky (1888-1890), Kozlov (1905), the British, and many other Europeans and Americans into Tibet and other parts of Central and Inner Asia.

Figure 3. The Yellow Peril. In the allegorical painting, "Peoples of Europe, protect your most sacred possessions," commissioned by Kaiser Wilhelm II for Tsar Nicholas II, an archangel shows Europe the menacing Buddha of the East.

While the European Age of Discovery and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century finally brought about a tardy confession by many intellectuals, at least, that Tibet and Inner Asia were indeed inhabited by beings of completely human form, the ideology of the Noble Savage persisted throughout the nineteenth century and far into the twentieth. The Other was no longer a monster, but was now a special type of humanity, who, although having not been brought full stream into the course of Western social progress, nevertheless possessed knowledge of ancient times conceivably lost in the modern world.

It was during the end of the nineteenth century when the undifferentiated fantasy of Shangri-La separated into a comparative ethnography on one hand and an utopia of never-acquired hopes and transcendental aspirations on the other.

With the advent of photography, those in the West could peruse craniometry, racial typology, and other physical surveys of the peoples of Central and Inner Asia (figures 4, 5) while others contemplated increasingly crenelated fantasies of place and practice, those perhaps most vividly constructed by Blavatsky and David-Neel. Shangri-La was not replaced by scientific knowledge, however. If anything, science provided a socially accepted means by which various Western scholars, explorers and colonials could pursue their fantasies at the limits of the known world.

While comparative ethnography and the scientific study of human diversity went their own way apart from the fantasies, the advent of the film medium, and its popular appeal, made it possible to continue depicting the Asian and diverse non-Caucasian Others as still-monstrous, but highly curious relics and survivals from some shared troglodyte past. Hence, the Italian *Mondo*

movies of the 1960s joined the repertoire represented in the Tibetan world by the novels of Dr. Lobsang Rampa (Bharati 1974). In these extremes, reality is trivialized. Sensation, whether phenomenal or noumenal, is everything. Material objects reflective of Tibetan culture, a category including tourist souvenirs from the bazaars of Kathmandu and Bodhanath, and now marketed through slick Western New Age catalogues, are divorced from their authentic referents. Instead, they retain an undifferentiated power, a dissociated *mana* if you will, by association with the hypothetical world of Shangri-La.

Tibetan Hyperreality

The Tibetan exodus of the late 1950s and early 1960s coincided with a time of great social dissatisfaction with the status quo in the West. In America, the Civil Rights movement and the development of a liberal counterculture resulted in a quest for "ethnic chic" material representations and philosophical knowledge among the younger generations. Suddenly, Third World and indigenous peoples around the world became "wanna-be" targets for usually unsolicited Western affection. Tibetan refugees became prime targets. As a result, Tibetans found marketing potential in the demand for ethnically inspired arts and crafts. Such was the beginning of the Tibetan carpet industry, for example. The ethnic movement in the West also helped preserve traditional Tibetan religious arts such as bronze casting, *thangka* painting, and to a certain extent traditional performing arts.

Appealing to a vast Western market dominated by the Shangri-La model of Tibet seems to have greatly impeded media and design experimentation and creativity among craft cooperatives in exile. As Forbes has noted:

> In the early years in exile...the refugees had tried to weave carpets as they had in Tibet. The designs were typically Tibetan: dragons, phoenixes, lotus flowers, and other auspicious religious symbols woven in vibrant colors. To sell, however, the carpets had to appeal to the taste of the non-Tibetan buyers. Because the European market, where most of the carpets are sold, stressed muted tones woven in simple patterns surrounded by a basic border, these styles have almost completely replaced the more traditional carpets. (1989: 48)

A second trend may be seen in the Tibetan refugee crafts – one that is unfortunately well known as "airport art" (Graburn 1976). Under pressure of marketing craft products with the broadest appeal, motifs and techniques are reduced to their lowest possible threshold of recognition. In recent years, some Tibetan refugee craft cooperatives have been weaving the words "Potala" or "Tibet" into rugs and bags (Klieger 1992; Korom this volume), and "tourist thangkas"(Bentor 1993) are quite common – here, the message is strictly unambiguous. Shorn of traditional and aesthetic symbolic referents, souvenir objects such as these have little or no practical function other than to serve as a mnemonic of past experience (but see Stewart 1984). But in a different dimension, such reductionistic activity represents a setting apart, a "bracketing" of a place or concept. By symbolically removing a notion from everyday experience, one places it in the realm of the sacred. The word "Tibet" alone on a mundane souvenir is evocative of Shangri-La to the buyer and the cherished lost homeland to the seller.

In the religious arts, the canon of Tibetan iconographic expression no doubt continues to restrict many spontaneous motivations of individual artists, but the endless reproduction of images in the refugee production of religious art contributes to the stasis. Harris (1993: 112) notes that many Tibetan refugees producing religious paraphernalia are involved in "a nostalgic recreation of *temps perdus*; an inevitable process of conscious archaism which could easily lead to the ossification of Tibetan art."

Far from being moribund, however, these self-conscious factors in modern Tibetan material expression have contributed in the development of an active, hyperreal style. The messages promoted outward from Tibetan refugee communities, under the active support of the Dalai Lama, his government in exile, his ecclesiastic network, and organized Western friends and patrons maintain that 1) Tibet has traditionally enjoyed an historically different past independent of China and other countries, 2) Tibet possesses an unique culture, 3) Tibet, a sacred land, is the repository of the full complement of Buddhist teachings and 4) Tibet and Tibetans still exist, and thus must be restored to their rightful place. It is a nationalistic message that affects solidarity through representations of difference. It is ironic that in the West, the formerly feared and distanced Asian is now considered one of Us, while the Tibetan refugee *raison d'être* is to *remain* the exotic Other.

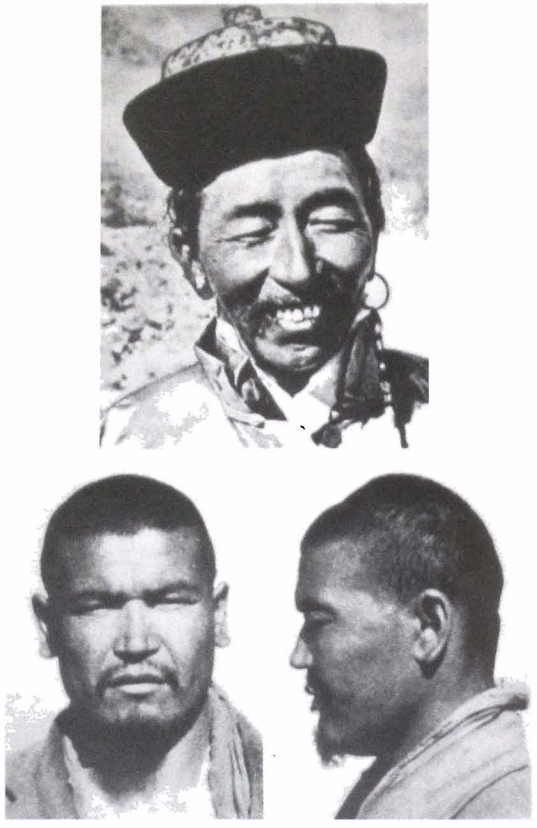

Figure 4. Racial typology of Central Asians. (Tibetan – top; Turkic – bottom). Coon, Garn and Birdsell, 1950: 136.

In modern Tibet itself, new art forms stimulated by the Chinese occupation have been evolving. Kvaerne (1994: 173) describes a hybrid of traditional *thangka* painting styles with Socialist Realism – what he refers to as "historical triumphalism." Here, historic individuals and events are portrayed with a certain heightened colorful, romantic vigor. The studied, selective, self-conscious and marketed expressions of Tibetan identity generated by the experience of exile or occupation, are elements that societies not under acute assimilative pressures rarely have to bear.

Hyperreality characteristically derails time. As such, a hyperreal state is seen to perpetually inhabit a never-never land where nothing ever changes. In this suspension of time, the indigenous hyperreal model of Tibet as homeland comes to resemble the ossified Western model of Tibet as Shangri-La. Processually, institutions and symbolic forms committed to simply reproducing themselves do not merely stagnate, they eventually disappear entirely under the centripetal forces of entropy. In the material arts, greater and greater stylistic distortions take place, to the point that the prototype is lost completely as the object becomes shorn of its symbolic referent.

Studied anachronisms and institutionalized fantasy are parts of modern Tibetan hyperreality. But it is difficult to separate those motifs that are generated from Shangri-La from those that are indigenous expressions of an idealized Tibetan culture. The Dalai Lama may appear on a modern comic book in the same manner as King Arthur or Batman might, or shared and traded as a type of sacred baseball card in Tibetan settlements in the homeland as well as in exile (Klieger 1992). *Phurpu* are released from their traditionally heavily guarded esoteric function and become letter

Figure 5. Idealized Tibetan woman from Tashilhumpo. P.A. Johnston and T. Hoffman, in Laufer 1913.

openers for New Age acolytes (cf. Korom 1996). A shaman's necklace graces the neck of an elegant fashion model, fulfilling the promise of charming accessorization. In this merging of ideologies, it is perhaps futile to attempt to separate the various strands of Western and Tibetan expression that have resulted in modern Tibetan pop-culture and Tibeto-kitsch. It is certainly possible that Tibetan refugees have simply taken Shangri-La to be their own – a most ironic assimilation.

The essential developmental difference between Shangri-La and the indigenous hyperreal model of Tibetan refugee culture is, however, that the former is an ancient Western fantasy, born of fragmentary and distorted information stretched over a time frame of two millennia, whereas the indigenous Tibetan hyperreality is created from a conscious and selective presentation of self to an audience with highly conditioned expectations. Tibetan culture as currently presented in most Tibetan cultural centers in the West is idealized, homogenated and pasteurized. It has been stripped of its dangerous potentiality, either those based in esoteric prohibition or those generated in the physical challenges of traditional Tibetan life in general, and has remarkably allowed the perpetuation of Tibetan identity despite the vicissitudes of exile.

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MYSTICAL VISIONS IN MANHATTAN: DEPLOYING CULTURE IN THE YEAR OF TIBET

by

Meg McLagan, New York

Introduction

My paper examines the strategic deployment of Tibetan "culture" in the West to mobilize political support, a process perhaps best exemplified by the events staged during the "International Year of Tibet" (March 10, 1991 – March 10, 1992). This research is part of a larger study of what American activists call the "Tibet Movement" which focuses on the various strategies used by Tibetan refugees and their non-Tibetan supporters to produce and assert a Tibetan political presence in the international arena.[1] In addition to the use of "culture" discussed below, these strategies include the embrace of universalizing discourses such as democracy, human rights and the environment (see Huber this volume), and the use of new communications technologies, such as computer networks and fax, as well as small media such as video and audio cassettes (see McLagan 1996). With its global organization and interventions, I argue that the Tibet Movement represents an emergent form of transnational, intercultural political activism, one that is dependent upon the complex production and circulation of representations of "Tibetan*ness*" in various arenas that cross cultural and national boundaries.[2]

It is impossible to talk about the representation of Tibetan culture without acknowledging the heavy semiotic load Tibetans carry in the Western imagination (see Klieger this volume). Indeed, representations of Tibet as a non-violent Shangri-La and of Tibetans as happy repositories of spiritual wisdom have mediated relations between Tibetans and the West since the early part of this century. But rather than look at how these representations construct Tibetans as "Others,"[3] my interest is in how Tibetans work within the problematic categories created about them; that is, how Tibetans engage Western discourses about Tibetan*ness* in the process of constituting themselves in exile. In fact, this paper, which is based on the premise that the act of putting cul-

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[2] In this sense, it provides a case study of what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai calls "complex postnational social formations" (1993: 420). This term refers to the proliferation of organizations, movements, ideologies and networks which are "organized around principles of finance, recruitment, coordination, communication, and reproduction that are fundamentally postnational" (420). That is, they do not depend on the nation-state. Despite the fact that the Tibet Movement transcends national boundaries, it nevertheless is very much involved with changing the policies of nation-states and with making nationalist claims to a homeland.

[3] For a sample of postcolonial and poststructuralist theorizing about representation and "cultural othering," see Bhaba 1995; Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Foucault 1980; Said 1978; Todorov 1984; Torgovnick 1990; Trinh 1989, 1991.

ture on display is a form of cultural production, goes a step further by exploring the self-conscious participation of Tibetans in their own objectification.

My decision to look at the strategic deployment of "Tibetan culture" during the Year of Tibet reflects a larger shift in anthropology toward examining how the so-called "natives" are engaged in their own representation. This research (e.g. Ginsburg 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Myers 1991, 1994a, 1994b; Turner 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1993, 1995) focuses on cultural production as sites where groups collaborate in their representation for a clear political purpose. By focusing on the social practices around representation, this work demonstrates how cultural production acquires meaning for producers, participants, and various audiences. In the Tibetan case, matters are further complicated by the fact that, as an intercultural political movement, Tibet activism entails the coproduction of representations of Tibetan*ness* by Tibetan *and* Western activists. Thus the production of Tibetan*ness* within the context of the Tibet Movement is by definition a dialogical process, something that emerges out of social relations between Tibetans and their non-Tibetan supporters.

Each of the strategies deployed by Movement activists involves the production and assertion of a particular diasporic Tibetan identity, or what I call a "narrative of Tibetan*ness*." In the case of the Year of Tibet campaign, the narrative was one of Tibetan culture as a locus of endangered spirituality and as a valuable resource for the world's future. This paper begins by examining the interpretive frameworks of Tibetan and American activists which intersected to produce this narrative. Then, through a close analysis of one of the centerpiece events of the Year of Tibet – the "Wisdom and Compassion" art exhibition and accompanying sand mandala – I attempt to demonstrate the ways in which this narrative shaped the presentation of "Tibetan culture" to the American public. The paper concludes with some observations about cultural strategies in the context of Tibet activism.

Mystical Visions in Manhattan

I first heard about the Year of Tibet at a large Tibet Movement meeting in New York City in June 1990. At that time, three months after the first international conference for Tibet supporters held in Dharamsala, India, activists were full of energy and enthusiasm. The New York conference, organized by the International Campaign for Tibet (a non-governmental organization based in Washington, D.C.) and held at the Grand Hyatt in Manhattan, attracted more than 200 people, including members of more than thirty Tibet support organizations from across the U.S., Canada and Mexico. One of the speakers at the opening plenary session was actor and Buddhist Richard Gere. An avid follower of the Dalai Lama and one of the founders of Tibet House in New York, Gere told the audience about plans to stage a series of cultural events and religious teachings around the world in 1991-1992:

> We want to create a context to make Tibet extraordinary news politically, culturally, and spiritually. We want to make Tibet cross-over...we want to bombard everyone on the planet. Almost all of us are *dharma* people, tantric people...we are talking about a new universe, a new order. We plan to hold a Kalachakra [ceremony] in New York City in October 1991, and a museum show called Wisdom and Compassion...we plan to bombard New York, which is the political and media capital of the world...

After the plenary session broke up into smaller project-oriented workshops, I decided to attend the one sponsored by Tibet House, intrigued by Gere's comments and by the opportunity to watch him pitch his ideas to a crowd of gawking activists. Not surprisingly, the conference room where the workshop was held was packed. After briefly introducing Tibet House – the organiza-

tion founded by Gere and others in 1987 – Gere launched into a rapid-fire description of his "vision" of the Year of Tibet. He described a series of proposed programs which would run throughout the year, stressing the "in your face" quality, as Gere put it. He stated his goals as follows: "We are selling Tibet...what is important about the Year of Tibet is its p.r. aspect, the awareness it raises. We want Tibet to become part of your consciousness. We want to have hundreds of events dedicated to Tibet in this country and elsewhere." He told us excitedly that he wanted to "blitz" New York City with "Tibetan spiritual energy" by bringing over the Dalai Lama and other leaders of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bon tradition to have them give initiations and teachings. Gere encouraged *dharma* groups to get involved, saying that the Dalai Lama felt strongly about Western Buddhist participation in the Year of Tibet: "Dharma groups should be involved, politics is part of it, the whole package of what Tibet represents. I have a mystical vision of this."

Gere's vision was more coherently articulated in one of the brochures circulated at the workshop which set out the basic themes of the Year of Tibet campaign:

> The purpose of the International Year of Tibet is to promote understanding and appreciation of this beautiful yet endangered culture, and to create widespread awareness of the situation in Tibet. It is the first, and possibly the last, opportunity for all of us to work together in a global effort to save the Tibetan people before they and their culture disappear.

To make sense of the brochure's discourse about Tibetan*ness*, it is necessary to locate it within a wider field of intersecting discourses about "culture" in general, and "Tibetan culture" more specifically.

Narratives of Tibetan*ness*

Since 1959, Tibetan refugees have been engaged in an ongoing "confrontation of representations" (Goldstein 1994: 15) with Chinese officials in which the two sides compete to legitimize their own representations of Tibetan history as well as current events in Tibet. In recent years, a new dimension to the confrontation has emerged, with the display of culture becoming one of the most important means through which Tibetan and Chinese claims to legitimacy are contested. Indeed, as Marcia Calkowski's paper in this volume demonstrates, from the 1970s onward, the Tibetan performing arts have been an important arena in which claims to Tibetan cultural authority, and thus political legitimacy, are contested (although as she suggests, the contest is not only between Tibetan refugees and Chinese officials, but includes "Sinicized" Tibetans as well, a point also made by Ström in this volume with reference to the dynamics of monastic education). The Year of Tibet represents another moment in this ongoing struggle, one which can be viewed as extending the arenas in which these cultural contests take place to include not only lay "folk" performances but also Buddhist rituals such as mandala-making and tantric dance, and even religious teachings and initiations.

Tibet activists' use of cultural and religious performances for political purposes reflects the global emergence of "culture" as a favored idiom of political mobilization for indigenous, minority and diasporic groups (see T. Turner 1993). At the same time, the strategic deployment of Tibetan culture can be read as yet another manifestation of the patron-lama (*mchod-yon*) relationship. As scholars of Tibetan political history have observed (e.g. Hevia 1993; Ruegg 1991; Shakabpa 1967), the use of Buddhism to secure protection from outsiders was a central component of the processes through which the Tibetan state established and maintained relations with its more powerful neighbors between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. Given the crucial role this practice continues to play in exile (see DeVoe 1983, 1987; Klieger 1992), it comes

as no surprise that it is also at the heart of Tibet activism, though, as I will show in the case of the Year of Tibet, the patrons were neither Manchu or Mongol leaders (as was the case prior to 1950), nor Western aid organizations or individuals in India or Nepal, but rather American audiences whose political support was sought in exchange for an encounter with Tibetan Buddhist culture. In other words, the Year of Tibet represents an attempt by activists to solicit an American public's patronage based on its recognition of the value of Tibetan culture.

The narrative of Tibetan culture put forward by Tibet House is congruent with this traditional Tibetan religiopolitical framework and with the diasporic self-consciousness about Tibetan*ness* which emerged after 1959. From the earliest years of exile, Tibetan refugees were aware of the need to preserve Tibetan Buddhism not only as a valued set of practices, but also as the basis for reconstituting a collective Tibetan identity in exile. China's attempt to eradicate Buddhist institutions in Tibet after the communist takeover in 1959 – a process which reached its destructive height during the Cultural Revolution – lent an added urgency to the refugees' task of cultural and religious preservation. During this period, the Dalai Lama constantly emphasized the need for refugees to maintain their traditions not only for their own sake but for the sake of Tibetans living in Tibet.

Early encounters with sympathetic aid workers in India and Nepal and with thousands of Western travellers who made the trek to the Himalayan foothills to visit and learn about Tibetan medicine, language, religion and art reinforced Tibetans' awareness of their culture as an asset and as a potentially important resource in the struggle to regain their country.[4] As one anthropologist observed, the refugee context

> has provided a chance for Tibetans to experience themselves as unique, and to observe how widely sought after are the products and precepts of their religion and cultural heritage. (Devoe 1987: 60)

In recent years, this self-consciousness has been expressed in a narrative of Tibetan*ness* which stresses the benefit of Tibetan Buddhist culture not only for Tibetan refugees or those living under Chinese rule, but for all people.[5] The narrative is best articulated by the Dalai Lama:

> For more than a thousand years Tibetans have been custodians of the full range of the Buddha's teachings. These have been analyzed, refined and most important of

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[4] Among diasporic Tibetans, this hyper-awareness of "culture" exists more strongly in Dharamsala than in any other Tibetan settlement in India. Several factors may account for this, including, as Marcia Calkowski argues, the fact that Dharamsala's economy

> has become inseparable from the presentation and promotion of "Tibetan culture." Hotels, restaurants, and shops serve an increasing influx of tourists, journalists, pilgrims, academics, and others – many of whom come to experience the "mysterious" Tibetan culture first-hand. Many Dharamsala residents have read descriptions of themselves in journalistic and academic accounts and are well aware of Dharamsala's high ratings as a tourist destination. (1991: 645)

One of the consequences of this increased self-consciousness about Tibetan "culture" has been the tendency of a few individuals to assume the role of "cultural censor" and, therefore, to judge the appropriateness of particular cultural items or events (Calkowski 1991: 648; see also Diehl forthcoming; Harris 1993, 1995).

[5] This representation is nicely encapsulated in a recent annual report published by New York-based Tibet Fund:

> Tibetan culture, although centuries old, is remarkably contemporary in the wisdom it offers with regard to our global future. Tibetan cultural beliefs teach patience in the face of inevitable human suffering, tolerance in light of our need to live together and share limited resources, universal responsibility for each other, and unceasing compassion towards all individuals and all peoples. With this quintessentially modern message coming from our ancient culture, we trust you will continue to see the value of a thriving community woven into the fabric of the modern world...and will find some means to support the Tibet Fund as it continues its mission of sustaining Tibetan culture and national identity during its second decade.

> all put into practice, becoming the mainstay of Tibetan culture. We have had a responsibility to preserve our living culture, not just to our brothers and sisters who remain in Tibet, but also to the world at large. (Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs of H.H. the Dalai Lama 1991: 5)

The only way to guarantee these practices, the Dalai Lama argues, is for Tibetans "to return to the freedom of their own land" (1991: 5).

Following this logic, the Dalai Lama has repeatedly claimed that for him, the Tibet issue is not a political matter but a spiritual struggle. For instance, when asked publicly whether or not he believes the Chinese should be punished for their actions in Tibet, the Dalai Lama has stated:

> I consider the struggle for the freedom of Tibet to be a struggle for our own right, not harming China. As a Buddhist monk, we always pray for all sentient beings...I don't consider the struggle for Tibet a political matter but a spiritual struggle. A free Tibet means more promotion of spiritual value, that can help millions of Chinese. (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1991)

Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche – the current head of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and also a monk – echoed the Dalai Lama's sentiments at a recent Tibet support conference:

> The Tibet issue is not a question of the people of Tibet, it is a question of the spiritual values which have been preserved by the people of Tibet, and whether they should have the right to survive for the benefit of humanity...Our aim is to fulfill the basic aspiration of the people of Tibet. What is that? That they would be able to lead a life which would have dignity. Full freedom and opportunity to preserve and practice our religious tradition and cultural heritage. A heritage which is also for the well-being of humanity at large. (Washington, D.C., 1993)

The Dalai Lama's and Samdong Rinpoche's claims are based on a fundamental tenet of Mahayana Buddhism: that individual practitioners should strive for liberation not solely for their own sake but for the sake of all sentient beings. This principle of universality, expressed in the figure of the *bodhisattva*, is the principle upon which Tibetans, led by the Dalai Lama, have based their claims to relevance in the modern world. Indeed, the Tibetan leader's commitment to universality is a fundamental part of his appeal and forms the ground upon which he has gained legitimacy as a spiritual leader throughout the world.[6]

By equating the Tibet issue with the preservation of Tibet's spiritual heritage, a particular construction of Tibetan culture itself becomes the object of political action.[7] While this construc-

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[6] Over the last fifteen years, the Tibetan leader has also argued for Tibetan culture's relevance to the modern world using a discourse of "science," a subject which happens to be close the Dalai Lama's heart. As he put it in an interview in 1987: "Buddhism has much to say on the nature of matter, and on the brain, mind, and nervous system. There is a basis here for cooperation and dialogue with Western sciences such as neurology, psychology, cosmology, and so on" (Mullin 1987: 22). In light of this belief, the Dalai Lama has attempted to show how Tibetan Buddhism can be recontextualized in a Western scientific paradigm. On nearly every trip he has made to the U.S. since his first in 1979, the Tibetan leader has sought to "dialogue" with various scientists in an effort to educate himself and explore the connections between Tibetan Buddhist thought and Western scientific knowledge. Indeed, one of the first official Year of Tibet events was a symposium called "MindScience: An East-West Dialogue" which was held in Cambridge, Massachusetts in March 1991. At the meeting, which was attended by the Tibetan leader and a group of Harvard University neurobiologists and psychiatrists, participants compared and contrasted Tibetan Buddhist mind/body concepts with Western biomedical concepts. For an edited version of the proceedings from this conference, see Goleman and Thurman 1991.

[7] Anthropologist Margaret Nowak suggests this intertwining of religious and political discourse reflects a process of "sacralization" in exile whereby the goal of independence (*rang btsan*) is broadened to the point of spiritual transcendence or *nirvāṇa*. As Nowak discovered during her research in India, one of the goals of the exile educational system

tion privileges a hegemonic Buddhist definition of Tibetan*ness*, it nevertheless allows Tibetans to embed their nationalistic or ethnic claims within a more universalistic framework which in turn enables them to negotiate the political necessity of having to talk about the situation in Tibet without privileging Tibetan suffering at the expense of others, something which most of the religiously-trained Tibetan leaders are loathe to do. More importantly, appeals based on Buddhism, with its enveloping rather than exclusive ideology, offer Tibetans the means through which to incorporate non-Tibetans into their struggle.

An American Twist

Richard Gere's "mystical vision" and the quasi-evangelical manner in which Tibet House framed the Year of Tibet reflects a distinctly American twist on the diasporic narrative of "Tibetan culture" described above. It also reflects his and the other American organizers' deep personal involvement with Tibetan Buddhism, a commitment neatly encapsulated in Gere's foreword to the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition catalogue:

> My history with Tibet began in 1978 in a refugee camp outside of Pokhara, Nepal, with perhaps two hundred Tibetans who had recently escaped from the killing fields of their occupied country. Although a practicing Buddhist, I was unaware of their tragic recent history. I found myself stunned by their casual yet complete otherworldiness, a quality that still moves me today. Behaving like the tourist I then was – excited and conveniently oblivious to their poverty and suffering – I bargained shamelessly with an old woman for a wooden bowl she was hesitant to part with but was forced to sell for food. I got my price and left clutching the bowl, feeling disgusted with myself. Greed and generosity are their own reward.
>
> A few years later, I arranged to be in Dharamsala, India, the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile. After a week, I was graced with an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Realizing how unequipped I was for such a moment, I offered the ceremonial scarf and made what I hoped was intelligent conversation. I now recall grinning and babbling like a twelve-year-old. But it didn't matter. I was safe and deeply happy. I had been in the presence of all that I wished to be. In many ways, my life began there in that room. (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 8)

Like many Western travellers to Tibet who were transformed into activists through their experience (see McLagan 1996), Gere too was transformed by his encounters with refugees and with the Dalai Lama. Thus it was with the zeal of a convert that Gere argued for Tibet's relevance to the non-Tibetan world:

> Prior to the invasion of Tibet in 1950, the Tibetans were unusually peaceful and happy. Isolated for centuries from a chaotic world they deeply mistrusted, they developed a wondrous, unique civilization based wholly on the practice of Buddhism's highest ideals. Theirs has been a revolutionary social experiment based on spiritual, psychological, and philosophical insights that provide us with models for achieving intimate and creative relationships with the vast and profound secrets of the human soul. Tibet's importance for our own time, and for the survival of Earth itself, is more critical than ever. Being our most vibrant link to the ancient wisdom

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is the "constantly reiterated aim of preserving and promoting Tibetan culture and tradition" which, children are reminded, "has kept intact the essential teachings of the Lord Buddha" and which "can be of benefit not only to Tibetans but to the whole world as well" (1984: 102). The desire for *rang btsan*, young Tibetans told Nowak, is "not just for independence, but freedom in an intangible sense" – that is, "freedom to reach nirvana" (Nowak 1984: 138).

> traditions, Tibet, and the sanity she represents, must not be allowed to disappear. (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 8)

Gere's description of Tibet, its people and its culture is emblematic of the stereotyped representations, albeit positive, with which Tibetans are constantly confronted. As I pointed out earlier, this heavy semiotic load is a doubled-edged sword for Tibetans and Tibet activists. By framing Tibetans as the bearers of an endangered culture ("it's like we are an endangered species, like the spotted owl" one Tibetan friend joked to me) while at the same time elevating them to the level of enlightened beings, little room is left for them to be ordinary people, much less political actors creatively responding to changing historical circumstances.[8] Thus while the myth of Shangri-La may be an attractive way of mobilizing support for the Tibetan cause, the Western fantasies on which such support is based can get in the way of Tibetans' ability to move beyond the stereotypes and to advance their political agenda in the international arena.

In the next section, I want to explore how this salvific narrative of Tibetan culture influenced the way in which Year of Tibet events were framed.

Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet

In October 1991, Richard Gere's desire to "blitz" New York City with "Tibetan spiritual energy" came true. More than 60 events took place, ranging from art exhibitions to lectures to film festivals to religious teachings.[9] The events in New York were successful both in terms of the powerful cumulative effect they had on participants as well as in terms of the numbers of people they attracted and the media attention they generated. Each were complex performances in their own right and could easily merit separate discussion. For brevity's sake, however, I will limit my dis-

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[8] In an effort to debunk the "New Age Orientalism" which permeates Western Buddhist representations of Tibet and Tibetans, Lopez reminds us that Tibet was not an ideal society, that its system of incarnation was not a kind of "cosmic meritocracy above a mundane world of power and politics" but rather that "traditional Tibet, like any complex society, had great inequalities, with power monopolized by an elite composed of a small aristocracy, the hierarchs of various sects (including incarnate lamas), and the great Gelugpa monasteries" (1994: 19).

[9] An eight-day Buddhist teaching and tantric initiation given by the Dalai Lama in Madison Square Garden's Paramount Theater and the "Wisdom and Compassion" Buddhist art exhibition and sand mandala creation at the IBM Gallery were the centerpiece events of the Year of Tibet in New York. Many of the other major events involved the Dalai Lama, including an interfaith concert at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a talk by the Tibetan leader at the Paramount Theater, introduced by Richard Gere, then Mayor David Dinkins and New York Congressman Benjamin Gilman; a symposium on Tibet at the Asia Society where the Dalai Lama was interviewed by the Society's president; and a "Sunrise Meditation for World Peace" in Central Park.

In addition to the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition, a number of Tibet-related photographic shows were mounted at galleries and museums. Films and videos about Tibet were screened at the Asia Society, which sponsored a two-day event focusing exclusively on films about Tibetan religion and ritual; at the American Museum of Natural History, which screened films about Tibet and the Himalayas; and at Anthology Film Archives where the "Dreams and Documents" film festival took place. Meanwhile videos relating to Tibet played hourly on the Sony Jumbotron in Times Square; and WNET, one of New York's two public television stations, screened Frank Capra's film Lost Horizon and a documentary about the Dalai Lama.

As for live performances, the American Museum of Natural History was host to Sakya monks who performed tantric dances as well as monks from Drepung Loseling monastery who participated in a month-long demonstration of doll-making. The Gyuto monks chanted at Town Hall and members of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) performed traditional Tibetan opera and folk dances at Symphony Space. Several non-Tibetans gave slide lectures on Tibet, including explorer Heinrich Harrer. Finally, lamas representing the heads of each of the five Tibetan traditions (Gelugpa, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu and Bon) presented teachings in a series called "The Nature of Mind" in a midtown hotel ballroom, and as mentioned earlier, Sakya Trizin gave several initiations, including Vajrakilaya and Amitabha Powa initiations, at the Society for Ethical Culture on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

cussion to the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition and the accompanying sand mandala display.

Organizers at Tibet House considered Wisdom and Compassion to be the backbone of the Year of Tibet. Curated by Prof. Robert Thurman and Prof. Marilyn Rhie, and organized by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the show included more than 150 objects, among them 31 pieces lent by the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg which had never been shown in the United States. The creation of a sand mandala by monks from Namgyal monastery accompanied the show, at both its first venue in the spring of 1991 – the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco – and its second venue in the fall – the IBM Gallery of Science and Art. Major funding for Wisdom and Compassion was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, along with several private organizations including the Luce Foundation and the Merck Foundation.

According to Rand Castile, one of the organizers who works at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, while the show was still in the early planning stages, he received a telephone call from Henry Kissinger who strongly advised him against doing the exhibition. When Castile went public with information about Kissinger's meddling, the former Secretary of State denied to a *New York Times* reporter and other journalists ever having made the call. Kissinger reportedly also pressured the head of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to drop the exhibition, despite the fact that the Met had already begun to work with the show's curators. In an interview with a journalist, co-curator Thurman suggested that Kissinger's attempts to block the show reflected intensive lobbying by the Chinese government which, he argued, recognized all too clearly the significance of the exhibition and the Year of Tibet in the ongoing "confrontation of representations" (Goldstein 1994: 15) between Tibetan exiles and the PRC. By the time "Wisdom and Compassion" travelled to London in 1992, China made its objections public, protesting so vehemently that the *Times*, a conservative English newspaper (no doubt welcoming the opportunity to champion Tibet in good anti-communist fashion), ran an editorial the day the show opened at the Royal Academy of Art urging Londoners to go see the show. These behind the scenes activities by Kissinger and China help to explain the institutional context of the exhibition: after being dropped by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tibet House approached the IBM Gallery of Science and Art which gladly accepted the show.[10]

In an essay titled "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," James Clifford (1988) discusses the show "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern" which was held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984. He identifies two systems in which non-Western objects have usually "found a home" – either in the discourses and institutions of art or within those of anthropology, both of which "assume a primitive world in need of preservation, redemption, and representation" (200). Dissatisfied with this systemic opposition, Clifford declares, "We need exhibitions that question the boundaries of art and of the art world, an influx of truly indigestible outside artifacts" (213). In the essay he notes one bright spot – a show at the IBM Gallery of the Northwest Coast Collection from the Museum of the American Indian – where Kwakiutl artist Calvin Hunt put finishing touches on two totem poles in the atrium and left the freshly carved wood chips scattered around the base (213).

I bring Clifford up to suggest that as a show, "Wisdom and Compassion" questioned "the boundaries of art and the art world" both in terms of its framing (e.g. catalogue and labelling) and by the fact that it appeared to introduce "truly indigestible" objects – Tibetan Buddhist paintings and sculptures whose meanings are considered "self-secret" by the tantric practitioners

[10] The IBM Gallery had less at stake than the Metropolitan Museum of Art in terms of risking censure by China. Without a permanent collection such as that of the Metropolitan, it faced less of a threat of withdrawal of Chinese cooperation in future exhibitions.

who use them. The key difference, however, between the "Primitivism" exhibition discussed in Clifford's essay, for instance, and "Wisdom and Compassion" is that Tibetans collaborated in their representation and did it for a very clear political end, a fact which puts the primitivism argument (e.g. Clifford 1988; Torgovnick 1990) in a new light.

"Wisdom and Compassion" consisted of *thangkas* (gouache paintings on cotton, many mounted on silk brocade scrolls), sculptures in brass, bronze, silver or wood, and a few tapestries. In the beautifully produced catalogue published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., a well-known art book firm, the curators describe the plan of "Wisdom and Compassion" as "symbolically meaningful" in that a mandala structure was built into the exhibition's form:

> The exhibition is inspired by the concept of the mandala. On a simple level, the mandala represents a paradise, a divine universe, the home of a god. Seen more deeply, it symbolizes the divine nature of our own world. (Castile in Rhie and Thurman 1991: 9)

In Tibetan Buddhism, mandalas are usually drawn, painted, and sometimes even built as three-dimensional structures. The mandala may be "read" and studied as a text, memorized for visualization during meditation, and interpreted; Tibetans believe that the simple act of viewing a mandala brings special blessings. By organizing the exhibition with a mandala-like structure, the curators intended to have viewers move from the outside of the "mandala palace" to the inside, a "progressive journey" parallelling the visualization procedures of practitioners during a tantric initiation.

Thus in the show's catalogue, the curators explain how they intended for viewers to begin "with the outer halls of the mandala palace" where they encounter objects representing the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni) and the various teachers, upholders and protectors of Buddhism. Moving inward, they enter the "middle halls of the mandala palace" where they encounter objects representating the four lineages, in historical order (Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu and Gelug), along with their eminent teachers, founders and even archetype deities (*yidam*). Finally, in the "inner halls of the mandala palace" observers experience images of the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas in their celestial and earthy Pure Land forms (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 13). By organizing the show in this fashion, the curators attempted to "demonstrate the function of this quintessentially religious art within its sacred context" (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 12) – which is to encourage an atmosphere of transformation, to help believers along the path towards enlightenment. In this way the show was meant to offer not so much an aesthetic experience as a spiritual one. The Dalai Lama's brief foreword to the catalogue underscores this aim:

> Art expresses the perceptions of a people. Sacred art reveals their deepest insights and their highest aspirations. So, to encounter our works of sacred art is to experience for yourself some of our most profound visions. (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 7)

In one of their catalogue essays, curators Rhie and Thurman write that the goal of the exhibition and catalogue is two-fold: "to introduce Tibet's compelling and mysterious art *on its own terms* [emphasis in original] to those with little or no background in either Buddhism or Tibetan Buddhist art, and to add new scholarship on the subject of Tibetan art that reveals its independent tradition, rich imagination, high refinement and profound and universal significance" (1991: 12).

By emphasizing the interpretation of these objects on their own terms, the curators basically eschewed the usual "art history" discourse in the catalogue text (with the exception of an essay by Marilyn Rhie). Their unorthodox approach is perhaps best exemplified by Thurman's essay "Wisdom and Compassion: The Heart of Tibetan Culture," which he describes as a kind of

> experiential hand-in-hand walk through one of the most difficult images for West-

> erners to comprehend: a father-mother union manifestation of the Buddha that, on first view, is both fearsome and erotic. By confronting this image on several levels – symbolic, aesthetic, psychological, and spiritual – we hope to make the beholder aware of the possibilities inherent in all the works of art that follow. (1991: 12)

Using the provocative image of "Paramasukha-Chakrasamvara Father-Mother" as an example, Thurman talks us through the image's significance not only on an iconographic level, but on a practical level, in terms of how the image is actually used for meditative practice:

> Let us for a moment lay aside our ordinary perceptions of reality and follow the Tibetans in their meditation on this father-mother union image, allowing it to become an image of ourselves as the embodiment of enlightenment. If we let ourselves observe and experience this image as Tibetans do, we can be inspired about the possibility of attaining enlightenment for ourselves. But the liberative potential of this image can be fully realized in our imagination only if we try to feel the texture of the goal state – if we imagine ourselves to be both this male and this female in union, in such an embrace, with these arms, these legs, these faces and eyes, with these adornments, and holding these symbols. This is, in fact, what Tantric adepts do. It is the inner secret of tantric meditation. (1991: 18)

One way of understanding this attempt to communicate how the images work experientially lies in the exhibition's title, "Wisdom and Compassion." Mahayana Buddhism revolves around the *bodhisattva*, who, out of compassion for the world, takes a vow to become a Buddha in order to lead all beings out of suffering to the bliss of enlightenment. Through long eons of spiritual practice, *bodhisattvas* cultivate virtues such as giving and patience, as well as wisdom. Wisdom is the understanding that all things, including persons, are devoid of inherent nature, and are, in reality, empty (Lopez 1991: 104). Or, as Thurman writes in the "Wisdom and Compassion" catalogue:

> To Buddhists, the "root of all evil" is our desperate clinging to self-image and self-satisfaction. Wisdom comes through experiencing the perfect "transparency" of the self, which leads to utter freedom from self-concern...Wisdom is the bliss of seeing through the delusion of self-preoccupation to reveal the underlying dimension of freedom. Compassion is the expression of such bliss to others. (Rhie and Thurman 1991: 17)

In order to become enlightened, Tibetan Buddhists believe, the *bodhisattva* must develop both wisdom and compassion fully – "must dedicate himself or herself to work forever for the welfare of the other while simultaneously understanding that all beings, oneself and others, do not exist ultimately, that they do not exist as they appear" (Lopez 1991: 104). According to Thurman, the quintessential Buddhist art is "the liberating of all beings from suffering; its fruition is the discovery of truth, beauty, goodness, and the capacity for bliss inherent in enlightened life" (1991: 17).[11] While it seems unlikely that the show's curators seriously believed they could "liberate"

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[11] Thurman's description of compassion exemplifies his distinctive Buddhist vision:

> It is all too often forgotten by students of the central way [Madhyamaka], with their rigorous philosophical attention to metaphysical and epistemological questions, that, as Nagarjuna says, "emptiness is essentially compassion"...Nagarjuna's fundamental central way work is called Wisdom, and so he confines himself therein to the pathways of critical reason. At no moment, however, is he, or should the student, be unaware that wisdom is but the doorway for the energy of compassion. The razor-sharp sword of critical wisdom cuts through the fetters of conceptual excuses that obstruct the open dynamic flow of compassion, full sensitivity to the sufferings of other beings who are the fabric of relativity, and overflowing love that radiates happiness to them, once all self-concern has melted in

those who viewed the exhibition, it does seem that they were attempting to evoke a nonanalytic experience, similar to the experiences of compassionate bliss which such images would presumably elicit in tantric practitioners.

Interpreting "Wisdom and Compassion"

Given the aims of the exhibition and the complexity of the objects' iconography, it is no wonder that many who viewed the exhibition found it beautiful but baffling. The show's framing appeared to assume an empathetic or intuitive understanding of Tibetan Buddhism as a practice, and as a universal one at that, on the part of audience. Such an assumption proved problematic, as did the curators' failure to acknowledge and explore the cultural dimensions of Tibetan Buddhism. In other words, the curators choose to write from the inside, as it were, and to not "translate" the terminology and concepts into terms easily understood by a mainstream American audience.

Perhaps one reason why the curators may have decided not to over-explain relates to the nature of tantric imagery and language. Many of the tantric images presented in the exhibition would traditionally have been considered out of bounds for ordinary viewers, including monks and nuns not initiated into the particular tantric practice represented. Their exhibition in the West was justified by a convention frequently invoked by Tibetan lamas – that the actual secret tantric knowledge encoded in images and words remains hidden to the uninitiated. Indeed, tantric texts employ a kind of "enigmatic language that is called 'intentional language' in which ordinary words are given an esoteric meaning, making it impossible for the ordinary practitioner to make use of a tantric text (whether in Tibetan or another language) without oral instructions of a qualified teacher" (Brentano 1993: 43).

The various ways in which "Wisdom and Compassion" was interpreted or "read" reveal interesting struggles with the process of objectification of Tibetan "culture." As Clifford (1988) and others (e.g. Karp and Lavine 1991; Marcus and Myers 1995) have suggested, the technologies or concepts of museum "display" tend to be produced around visual appreciation – aesthetics – rather than participation. That is, objects are usually circuited through a neutral, rather than an evangelical discourse. Given this general practice, how did art critics react to the show's framing? In his review, *New York Times* writer John Russell made the point that the nonpractitioner is essentially "cut off from the experience of Tibetan art in its fullest and most effective sense" although the imagery seduces us nonetheless. Another critic, Amei Wallach from *New York Newsday*, wrote that "Wisdom and Compassion" represented "the first show I've ever seen that actually focuses on religious content, because its primary purpose is to impart a religious point of view – even, perhaps, give the viewer a religious experience." Wallach found the wall labels to be far too long, the catalogue "too unabashedly a believer's text." She suggested that while the organizers "want to invent a new kind of exhibition that concentrates on the sacred in sacred art," the tools they choose – the "old natural-history approach of providing exhaustive context and the old art-museum reliance on esthetics" – do not work.

The only reviewer (San Francisco-based) who seemed to approach the exhibition on its own terms was Kenneth Baker, who wrote in *ARTnews*:

> ...in the traditional Buddhist view, not even the most outlandish religious image is an imaginative or esthetic end in itself. Rather, all art is for the self-transformation

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the bliss of self-fulfillment in the great emptiness of selflessness. Wisdom smashes the hard atoms of intrinsic identities; compassion is the all-powerful energy released to reshape relativity into the gentle jewelline forms of pure lands of bliss (Thurman 1984: 171, cited in Samuel 1993: 399).

> – and ultimate world-transformation through wisdom and compassion – that is the fulfillment of Buddhism.
>
> One reason Tibetan Buddhist art seems so bafflingly complex, even in the fine introduction this and its catalogue provide, is that some of the images' esthetic variety reflect the fact that they are tailored to address specific stages of spiritual progress that can have little or no meaning to the uninitiated. (1991: 158)

While most of those who wrote about the show focused on its aesthetic value or interest, only Malcolm David Eckel paid much attention to the political motivation behind the exhibition:

> In their original contexts, these objects served a purpose similar to that of the icon of St. Irene to draw believers into a realm of sacred reality. But taken out of context and assembled in a major exhibition, these objects take on new layers of visual meaning, lending themselves to new rhetorical purposes. (1992: 3)

Eckel argues that by moving viewers from the life of the historical Buddha to the lives of sages and adepts to the vision of the Pure Lands, the structure of the exhibition moved them closer to an idealized vision of Tibet. Citing Richard Gere's contribution to the catalogue, Eckel argues that the actor's problematic framing of Tibetan "culture" as the "lifeboat of culture, the storehouse of ancient wisdom, and the last great hope of civilization" reinforces the myth of Tibet as Shangri-La suggested by the exhibition itself (Eckel 1992: 7). At the same time, however, the images in "Wisdom and Compassion" were "appropriated for political purposes":

> Tibet may have been a bastion of rarefied Buddhist practice, but it was also familiar with the very worldly struggle for political power. Even the most naive image of Tibet's "wondrous civilization" carries a political message, and an exhibition that leads a viewer by stages into a vision of Tibet as a sacred land is more than a tool for meditation: it is a marketing device for a political platform and a tool for political persuasion. The catalogue of the exhibition opens and closes with maps showing the boundaries claimed by the Tibetan government at the Simla Conference in 1914, and the Dalai Lama opens his introductory message with a reference to "independent Tibet"...The organizers of this exhibition would hardly have been offended if someone had stood in front of the great painting of Shambhala and thought that this vision called "Tibet" needed to move a few blocks east from a temporary seat at the IBM Gallery to a permanent seat in the United Nations. (1992: 8)

Eckel clearly recognized "Wisdom and Compassion" and the way in which it was framed as part of a larger strategy aimed at "transforming" the public not just spiritually but politically.

Embodying Tibetan*ness*: Monks and Mandalas

Despite the exhibition's complexity and impenetrability for those unfamiliar with Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and iconography, it managed to attract more than 250,000 New Yorkers during its ten-week run. If Gallery visitors had some difficulty fully understanding all of the show's imagery, they certainly related well to the four monks who worked in the corner of the foyer for several weeks creating a sand mandala. Indeed, every day at lunch time, a crowd of curious New Yorkers gathered around the windows of the Gallery, noses pressed to the glass, peering in. What the crowd saw were four monks, heads shaved and wearing red robes, hunched over, painstakingly tapping colored grains of sand out of a funnel into an elaborate pattern.

Like the *thangka*s, sculptures, and tapestries discussed above, sand mandalas play an important functional role in Tibetan Buddhism as vehicles through which practitioners can achieve

spiritual insight. The sand mandala created at the IBM Gallery was a Kalachakra mandala. According to Buddhist belief, the mandala represents the Kalachakra deity's abode, and serves as a

> blue print for a three-dimensional visualization of an ornate structure made of jewel-light...with various levels, doors, roofs, and porticoes in which any number of exquisitely dressed subsidiary deities reside. (Brentano 1993: 48)

In the past, mandalas would only have been created in the context of an initiation into a particular school of *tantra*. But in 1988, the first sand mandala to be created by monks outside a religious context was made at the American Museum of Natural History.[12] This public display of mandala-making proved to be so popular that mandalas were soon created in museums and galleries across the U.S.[13]

One of the most interesting aspects of this new "genre" of public mandala-making is the elaboration of Buddhist-related activities around their creation. By this I mean that whereas in the very beginning the monk-artists would have done their preparatory rituals on their own, the process has evolved in recent years, expanding to include, among other things, daily chanting and meditation sessions on museum/gallery premises which are open to the public and led by the monks. For instance, when "Wisdom and Compassion" was being exhibited in San Francisco, interest was so high that the monks who made the accompanying sand mandala were asked to lead meditation sessions. Sessions were so popular that it became hard to find a place to put one's meditation cushion in the museum's gallery. When the same monks created a sand mandala at the Field Museum in Chicago a few months later, their schedule – published in a museum flyer – reflected this increased elaboration:

The monk's daily schedule will be:

9–10: Daily chanting and meditation

10–1: Creating the sand mandala, greeting visitors, and answering questions

2–4: Creating sand mandala

The question and answer session was limited to the first half of the day, no doubt to allow the monks to actually get enough work done each day.[14] While no such elaboration was allowed at the IBM Gallery in New York, the positioning of the sand mandala platform in a visible corner near the entrance of the museum nevertheless provided the public an opportunity to interact with the monks. Inevitably, curious individuals would go inside where they could stand closer and perhaps ask a question or two if one of the monks happened to look up or take a break.

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[12] Samaya Foundation sponsored this first mandala and is credited with bringing over the Namgyal monk-artist Lobsang Samten. Recently, Samaya sponsored a mandala project in the Watts section of Los Angeles. Called "Healing the Causes of Violence through Art," the program was described as an attempt to teach the children compassion and respect. Instead of the deities normally depicted in such mandalas, the children placed the names of their "protectors," including Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Frida Kahlo, Spike Lee, and Malcolm X (*Tricycle* 1994: 98).

[13] The cities in which mandalas have been created include San Francisco, Chicago, Providence, Ithaca, Miami, Houston, Buffalo, La Jolla and St. Louis (to name just a few). Tibet House has been a co-sponsor (along with local institutions) for most of these productions.

In more recent years mandalas also have been created in Europe and Australia (e.g. Graz, Austria 1995 and Canberra 1994).

[14] When I visited the Rhode Island School of Design in the spring of 1993, two monks were making a sand mandala at the school's museum. I spent some time in the room with them in order to see how they interacted with the visitors. It was towards the end of the day and the monks were not saying much. When I asked the person about their silence, she suggested that the monks were concerned about finishing the mandala on schedule. Apparently no such boundaries had been established as in Chicago between q/a time and work-only, and the monks felt obliged to answer what-

As these sand mandala performances suggest, Tibetan monks have been increasingly participating as embodied representatives of their culture. In many ways, this is an extension of the role monks typically play in Tibetan society as exemplars of its highest ideal – the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.

On another level, the monks who participated in Year of Tibet events were "embodied representatives of their culture" based on the fact that they were bearers of cultural knowledge which had been passed on to them. Implicit in this claim to cultural authority is the Buddhist belief in living knowledge – knowledge as embodied in persons and transmitted by a lineage master. In this regard, lineage operates as a kind of metaphenomenon which transcends objects, artifacts and even the monks themselves.[15] What becomes significant is the knowledge the monks bring with them. On a certain level then, the knowledge materializing on a surface of a sand mandala, for example, gives the monks (or is evidence enough of) their authority to do what they are doing.

As exemplars of Tibetan "culture," the monks who have made sand mandalas, chanted, danced or created butter sculptures in various venues across the country have been wildly popular with the American public. This popularity with American audiences has elicited some complicated feelings among Tibetans, particularly those who are younger and feel constrained by a Western tendency to privilege Buddhism over lay aspects of exile culture (this in spite of the fact that the government-in-exile is frequently accused of doing the same thing).[16] One incident in

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ever questions were asked.

[15] Discussing the role of lineage (*gyud*) as a vehicle for Tibet's corporate identity via Buddhism, Lopez (1995) writes:

> Like other Buddhist traditions, the Tibetans based claims to authority largely on lineage, and in their case, they claimed that the Buddhism taught in Tibet in 1959 could be traced backward in an unbroken line to the eleventh century, when the founders of the major Tibetan sects made the perilous journey to India to receive the dharma from the great masters of Bengal, Bihar and Kashmir, who were themselves direct recipients of teachings that could be traced back to the Buddha himself. Moreover, this lineage was represented as essentially oral, with instructions being passed down from master to disciple as unwritten commentary on sacred text. (268)

[16] These feelings have occasionally been voiced in public by Tibetan activists. For instance, at a Tibet support conference in Washington, D.C. in 1993, Thubten Samdup, a Tibetan leader from Canada and a former director and leading member of TIPA described his frustration with the lack of support given to TIPA by the exile government and by Tibet supporters:

> When Tibetans first came into exile, my parents put me in Tibetan Children's Village. And from the Tibetan Children's Village, eight boys and eight girls were selected to go to this institute better known as Tibetan Music, Dance and Drama Society, it is now known as the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts or TIPA. Since nine, all we did basically was to learn Tibetan music, dance and drama, from eight in the morning until ten in the evening. That's all we did. ...Over the years within the Tibetan community, there's been a lack of support and I'll tell you why. The Institute gets members who couldn't get into TCV (Tibetan Children's Village), ones that were left over were sent to TIPA. We always felt that we were somehow low in the eyes of the community, we were not put on the same level as the other aspects of Tibetan culture...We always felt that somehow the Tibetan administration-in-exile did not really think it was important enough to really look after some very talented people. On several occasions we tried to request it. We said "look, these people are important resources, it's important that we give them some sort of recognition," but still I found there was a lack of consideration and interest in really trying to sustain TIPA.
>
> So I'd like to take this opportunity to say to those who have been supporting the Tibetan cause for a long time, please take a special interest in this institute which I think is very important and needs support, not only from Tibetans but also Tibetan supporters.

The various controversies in which TIPA has found itself embroiled over the years (e.g. Calkowski 1991, this volume; see also Norbu 1986 and Nowak 1984) are emblematic of ongoing tensions between lay and religious segments of exile society.

particular captures the sense of frustration some Tibetans feel. On an early October day in 1991, when I was volunteering at Tibet House, Richard Gere came in to do an interview and get his photograph taken for a women's fashion magazine that was doing a story on the Year of Tibet. When it was time for his picture to be taken, Gere said he wanted it taken with a monk. Not surprisingly, there were no monks on the premises. Upon hearing Gere's request, one of the Tibetans working in the building got very annoyed, exclaiming later to those of us in the Tibet House office, "We're not all monks you know!" In the end, Gere had to settle for the highest status layperson in the building who happened to be the Dalai Lama's representative to North America. Throughout the course of my research, I heard many Tibetans voice similar frustration over this type of Western essentialism. The anecdote demonstrates how the process of objectifying culture rearranges relationships among participants: by privileging a Buddhist definition of "Tibetan-*ness*," secular Tibetans are made to feel somehow "inauthentic" because they are not monks.

While younger Tibetans express resentment at this phenomenon, they are at the same time often protective of the monks and the "culture" they represent. One story, recounted by the same Tibetan who complained about Gere's demand for a monk, reveals this contradiction. She described accompanying several monks to the Open Center, a New Age-style spiritual center in lower Manhattan, where an American man asked the monks to chant "Om" while he did what she called a "healing ritual." This sort of chant is not something monks would ordinarily do as part of their practice; my friend was so disturbed by what she saw as an "inappropriate" request that she left during the "performance," leaving the monks to fend for themselves. "The monks just do what they're told," my friend grumbled, "I told them not to participate but they went ahead." If the monks were willing to comply with the request, I was puzzled that my friend, who is after all a layperson, reacted so negatively. I later viewed her reaction as an expression of Tibetan ambivalence about the recontextualization of Buddhism in the West.[17]

Another anecdote, reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, gives us some insight into the qualities upon which the monks' appeal is based. Referring to an incident at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco where a mandala was being made to accompany "Wisdom and Compassion," the authors wrote that:

> ...the spiritual peace of the Buddhist monks was put to the test in May. A seemingly deranged woman walked into the courtyard as the monks were completing their four weeks of work on the mandala. "She just clambered over their shoulders, jumped on top of the mandala and started shuffling her feet; yelling something about the CIA and the color black," Mr. Kohn [an expert on Tibetan art and religion who helped put the exhibition together] said.
>
> Although museum staff and visitors who witnessed the desecration of the mandala were shaken, some to the point of tears, the monks were unperturbed. "I didn't see a flicker of annoyance," said Mr. Kohn. "One of them said, `That poor woman – she must really be suffering.' They started praying for her that day and continued the whole time they were here."

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[17] It is worth asking, however, why did the monks comply with this request? It is very likely that the monks felt compelled to do as they were asked out of a characteristically Tibetan Buddhist sense of obligation to their hosts in which they view themselves as responding to a request for spiritual guidance that they cannot deny. On the other hand, some Tibetan monks do have critiques of New Age spirituality. As one monk told Robin Brentano during an interview, "The other day, I saw a sort of New Age performance, one gentleman said he was doing a ritual dance, a secret dance, he was wearing a Tibetan robe and chanting Gyuto style, then using a singing bowl. For me, in a way, it's good, but in a way, it's also strange. I don't know. What is the tradition?" He then added, "there's no ultimate goal, beside that of being happy." Not surprisingly, for him, the focus should be on the long-term, not just "this life."

> The ruined mandala had to be ritually dismantled, then a new one created to replace it. Luckily, the monks' one suitcase of sand contained enough not only for mandalas all over the U.S. but even some sand for a few extra. (DeCarlo and Dintenfass 1991: 21)

The contrast in reactions to the ruined mandala by non-Tibetan museum staff members and visitors and the monks is at the heart of the monks' appeal to Western audiences. The Tibetans' reaction to the deranged woman and lack of concern over the destruction of several weeks of their own hard labor is a testament to their religious training. As mentioned earlier, compassion (*snying-rje*) is a fundamental tenet of Tibetan Buddhism. It is also a core cultural value or ideal presented and nurtured in exile society. Referring to compassion, Nowak notes:

> This word has an extensive range of usages in Tibetan. It is intimately associated with Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of mercy, and it figures prominently in Jataka stories (tales of the Buddha in his previous lives), which stress the supreme importance of taking pity on suffering beings. It is a part of Buddhist reverence for all forms of life, animal as well as human...this kind of cultivated sensitivity – an openness to "being moved by compassion" (a stock scriptural phrase), an ability to identify with sympathy and feeling, with all sentient creatures – lies at the heart of Tibetan values, and as such it figures strongly in the socialization of Tibetan children. (1984: 92)

In many ways, the monks response to the destruction of their mandala epitomizes this Buddhist sense of compassion. By reacting as they did, the monks clearly demonstrated the value of Tibetan Buddhism to a shocked and outraged Western audience. In fact, this kind of teaching by example has come up on other occasions during mandala-making; for instance, I remember viewers expressing surprise and dismay at the fact that a mandala being created at the Rhode Island School of Design Gallery in 1993 would be "dismantled" and dispersed into the local river upon completion. When questioned about this, the monks took it as an opportunity to teach their non-Tibetan friends something about impermanence, telling them the mandala is made in sand and then destroyed to stress the transience of all earthly things.

Deploying Culture

The "embodied" public performances of the monks, whether they involve making a sand mandala, doing a tantric dance or creating a butter sculpture, all raise interesting questions about the strategic deployment of culture. What exactly are the monks doing? How are events framed by organizers and how are they interpreted by audiences?

In a recent essay on the creation of a sandpainting by Australian Aboriginal artists at the Asia Society in New York City, Myers comments on the unsettled nature of the performance, pointing out that

> For both indigenous performers and their audience-participants, this kind of "culture making" – in which neither the rules of production nor reception are established – is fraught with difficulties. (1994b: 675)

Part of Myers' interest is precisely in the unfixed, contingent nature of the event and on the varying frameworks participants and audiences bring to it. Unlike many commentators, however, who tend to focus on the ways in which such a "performance" is read by the audience, Myers argues that we need to take into account the thoughts and motivations of the performers themselves. That to interpret the event simply as a spectacle of cultural difference, a process whereby

a group is "othered," is to neglect these events as forms of social action and as important contexts for the contemporary negotiation and circulation of collective identities.

In order to make sense of the sandpainting event, it is useful to know the circumstances in which sandpaintings are ordinarily produced in Aboriginal society. Typically, Myers writes, sandpaintings are

> constructed as part of ritual, including songs and reenactments of ancestral activities, in which all those present are essentially participants. Sandpaintings are neither independent entities nor are they performances for an audience of spectators. Indeed, sandpaintings are ritual constructions to which, like most forms of religious knowledge in Central Australia, access is restricted...in that simple sense, the activity of constructing a sandpainting at the Asia Society was something new. (1994b: 680)

Like Aborginal sandpainting, Tibetan sandpaintings are normally "neither independent entities nor are they performances for an audience of spectators" but instead are "ritual constructions" to which access is restricted.[18] The emergence of public sandpainting since 1988 is thus something new, a Tibetan exile innovation. Given their novelty, how have mandala activities been framed by organizers? During the Year of Tibet, the two mandalas which accompanied the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition were described simultaneously as Buddhist rituals and "art." For instance, in the press kit for the exhibition at the IBM Gallery, the sandpainting was described as both "artwork" and "spiritually significant work":

> During the first three weeks of the exhibition, monks from Namgyal, the personal monastery of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India, will create an intricate sand mandala. The seven-foot wide circular artwork will display thousands of Buddhist symbols. The ritual of consecration for this spiritually significant work will inaugurate a series of performances, lectures, panels and films that will highlight the richness of Tibetan culture.

As the press kit implies, the monks appeared to have followed some of the normal Buddhist procedures such as blessing and consecrating the sand and the space where it was to be built and saying appropriate prayers in the process of making the sand mandala in New York. When asked about how he regarded the mandala, one of the main sand mandala "artists," the Venerable Lobsang Samten (from Namgyal Monastery) said the monks considered the object to be "sacred," despite the fact they did not do all the subsidiary rituals such as those which would be done during the creation of the Kalachakra mandala for the initiation in Madison Square Garden (e.g. daily *pūjā*s, use of "wisdom thread" in laying down white lines, calling down of the deities or *mantra* recitation). In other words, although the sandpainting was defined in somewhat ambiguous aesthetic terms by the organizers, the participants themselves viewed the mandala in a Buddhist ritual context.

In 1988 Samten was quoted in a brochure distributed at the American Museum of Natural History as saying: "The sand mandala is an ancient tradition. Working on it manifests peace. And even a person who simply sees it may feel peace from deep inside...on many levels." Two years later, when Samten created a Chenrezig mandala at the New York Open Center, the brochure sent out by the center claimed: "Those who witness the creation of a mandala, who watch as a vision of sublime beauty unfolds grain by grain, will develop inner peace and transcendental

[18] Like the tantric imagery discussed earlier, the public performances of sand mandala rituals are not believed to reveal secret information to the uninitiated.

wisdom." Thus like the images in the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition, the sand mandala was framed as offering a potential spiritual experience for viewers.[19]

By presenting the Kalachakra mandala at the IBM gallery in this manner, exhibition organizers played on one of the frames Myers' aforementioned article suggests. Audiences commonly bring to performances of cultural difference the frame of "coming into contact with cultural form that is presumed to possess something of an aura (Benjamin 1968), of sacred tradition or aesthetic originality" (1994b: 678). No doubt the daily creation of the mandala was compelling to audiences because of the intense focus monks brought to the activity, a focus which is generally interpreted by non-Tibetans as meditative. Myers witnessed a similar sort of silence at the Asia Society event which, ironically, "is very untypical of Aboriginal ritual events" (685). He goes on, "silence at the Asia Society added a sense of what is to *us* [emphasis in original] reverential, meditational concentration that is not at all obvious, if present, in the original ritual contexts" (685).

In another essay on Aboriginal art, Myers suggests that how various audiences respond to acrylic paintings depend on their historical relationship vis à vis Aboriginal society. For instance, critics in Australia "read" the paintings and the presence of the painters differently than those in the U.S.: "For an audience at the Asia Society, the presence of Aborginals and their paintings is far less defined by a sense of the European conquest as constituting the relations between them: the painters are not America's victims!" (1994a: 25). Acrylic paintings were not understood by American audiences in the same way as they were by conscience-stricken white Australians; American audiences' accountability was not drawn into the frame of the intercultural exchange (Myers 1994a).

Nevertheless, audiences did not appear to respond to the live presence of Tibetans making mandalas at the IBM Gallery in the same way that some members of the audience reacted to the presence of Aboriginal artists on stage at the Asia Society. I heard no one comparing the mandala part of the exhibition to a "diorama" as was the case for the Aboriginal sandpainting performance, this despite the fact that the monks were literally behind glass and on display for any passerby to see and watch. One reason might be the fact that Tibet never came under the direct colonial domination of a Western power; instead, as we have seen, Tibet was transformed into a particular focus of European desire and fantasy (Lopez 1995: 252). Thus the baggage is not one of historical conquest but that of a different sort, an obviously problematic "New Age Orientalism" which idealizes Tibetans and their culture.

Perhaps another more important reason Western audiences did not resist the objectification of Tibetan culture in this instance stems from the other frame Western audiences bring to such intercultural encounters – "the performance of ethnicity, where cultural difference indexes collective and (potential) political identity" (Myers 1994b: 678). In other words, the creation of mandalas by Tibetan monks was read as a demonstration of a Tibetan "ethnic" identity which, it so happens, is under threat from the Chinese. Tibetans were thus viewed as willing participants in their own representation or objectification.

Given the Tibetans' central role in the production and "performance" of the Year of Tibet, arguments about "authenticity," "commodification" or "spectacle" as well as "othering" seem to miss the point. Myers correctly calls for a more complex understanding of the intercultural ex-

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[19] One of the contradictions raised by this framing of the exhibition and mandala is that if we define "ritual" as a category of activity whose intention is to transform willing participants, how can viewers/participants be transformed by something they do not fully understand? How can they have a spiritual experience if they do not know how to interpret the complex symbols and iconography of the mandala or the "art" on the walls?

change between the audience and performers. As he concludes:

> We need to consider these events as forms of communicative action in which the rules of production and reception are not established and to realize that participants take these venues seriously as opportunities to "objectify" themselves not just as a type of people but as worthy of international attention and respect. (1994b: 690).

Conclusion

As I stated at the beginning of this essay, each of the strategies deployed by Tibet activists entails the production and assertion of a particular diasporic Tibetan identity, or what I call a "narrative of Tibetan*ness*." In the case of the Year of Tibet, the narrative was one of Tibetan Buddhist culture as a locus of endangered spirituality and a valuable resource for the world. My interest in this paper was in tracing the deployment of this narrative, which, I argued, is the product of a number of intersecting processes and complex forces including the emergence of "culture" as a valid (viable) display frame for political claims, the development of a self-consciousness about Tibetan religious and cultural practices within the exile community, the reinterpretation of the patron-lama relationship, and the rise of a kind of New Age Orientalism (Lopez 1994) which idealizes Tibet as a sacred space.

The Year of Tibet campaign, based on Buddhist universalism, appealed to Tibetans because it comports well with their religious beliefs and offers them a means through which to incorporate outsiders into their struggle. At the same time, however, by privileging Tibetan monks as embodiments of Tibetan culture, the Year of Tibet ended up reproducing a persistent (but increasingly contested) Buddhist hegemony in exile, a fact made evident through some lay Tibetans' contradictory reactions to Western interest in the monks.

The deployment of culture raised other issues as well. Although motivated by the desire to draw attention to the current situation in Tibet, Tibet House, by depicting Tibet as a "storehouse of ancient wisdom and the last great hope of civilization" (Eckel 1992: 7), ended up playing on Western fantasies and in so doing, reinforcing an impression of Tibet as otherworldly and of Tibetans as spiritual beings rather than serious actors with legitimate political claims. The paradox of this strategy, then, is that while the deployment of Tibetan culture attracts outsiders, its problematic appeal presents an obstacle to Tibetan attempts to represent their struggle and be taken seriously in other arenas.

Finally, however, it is not enough to simply critique culture strategy for the reasons outlined above. While we must acknowledge its role in reproducing hegemonic categories and stereotypes which contain and constrain Tibetan refugees, I have attempted in this paper to attend to the complex ways in which Tibetans creatively engage these categories and produce their own narratives of Tibetan*ness* as part of a larger effort to sustain themselves in exile and mobilize support for their struggle.

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FROM "DEVIL DANCE" TO "WORLD HEALING": SOME REPRESENTATIONS, PERCEPTIONS AND INNOVATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY TIBETAN RITUAL DANCES*

by

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Introduction

At the beginning of this century Western scholars and travelers often referred to Tibetan ritual dances (*'cham*) as "devil dances" because of the fierce appearance of some of the masked characters.[1] Until the 1960s such dances were also designated as "mystery plays," thereby comparing them with ancient Greek phenomena.[2] From the 1970s they began to be called "secret" or "magic" dances, while nowadays they are more simply described by scholars as "masked ritual dances."[3] Nevertheless, in recent American popular representations Tibetan ritual dances seem to have regained their mystical character, being portrayed not only as "sacred" but also as contributing to "world healing." *'Cham* is commonly described as a public form of Tibetan ritual dance, performed for a lay audience by monks dressed in colorful costumes and masks mainly representing the protectors of religion (*chos-skyong/bon-skyong*) and their assistants, as well as the figures of the "Black Hats" or "Tantrists" (*zhva-nag* or *sngags-pa*). Such ritual dances are usually a public and culminating part of bigger religious rituals or festivals, especially during the Tibetan New Year.[4] With the advent of the Tibetan diaspora, not only *'cham* but various Tibetan religious and secular performance traditions have increasingly been staged in, and modified according to, a range of new settings that are very different from the premodern context of ethno-

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[1] See, for example, Combe (1989); Waddell (1959); Pott (1958); Howell-Smith (1941).

[2] See, for example, Rock (1928) and Hermanns (1956).

[3] See Norbu (1984) and Olschak (1972).

[4] Generally, it is up to a monastery's finances, the availability of a lay sponsor and other conditions whether a ritual dance is performed for the community or not. It can also depend on the availability of dance books and/or experienced ritual dance masters and dancers as well as on the general orientation and interest of the abbot of a monastery. The content and purpose of a *'cham* depends first upon the tradition of a sect, then on the performing monastery's history and importance, the location (village or city), the date of performance and the ritual cycle of which it is a part. The usual statements about the general purpose of a *'cham* for a lay audience represent the viewpoint of the clergy; that is, *'cham* is performed for the edification or religious education of the lay people, for accumulating merit and foremost for the exorcism of evil forces. While this is true, it neglects other aspects that are important for the lay audience as individuals and the community as a whole.

graphic Tibet. These include ritual dance and music, sand mandala construction, folk dance as well as opera and monastic chanting.

Performance traditions such as ritual dances are a powerful vehicle for the objectification and representation of culture. They can convey constructions of identity and notions of "tradition." Performances can also serve to demonstrate cultural authenticity. Moreover, they can even be used in subtle ways for political legitimation. The relatively portable nature of performance genres can also be conveniently adapted to different contexts. As representatives of particular cultural and national identities, dancers or dance troupes have long been dispatched out to the rest of the world by various organizations or states. Throughout the world, particularly but not exclusively in larger cities, there now exists a global performance marketplace for the display and consumption of "world culture," in which dance traditions figure prominently in a growing network of "events": tours, exhibitions, concerts, staged religious rituals, and so on. Over approximately the last decade Tibetan ritual dance troupes have entered this cultural marketplace. Monks from Tibetan monasteries in exile have started to present their dance traditions on the global stage to Western audiences in order to display their culture, promote their religious traditions and to raise funds for their monasteries. Virtually all of these new contexts for performance have arisen out necessity; namely, the fundamental changes in the economic strategies of exiled monastic communities.[5] In Tibetan exile communities, as well as in regions inhabited by ethnic Tibetans like Ladakh, some *'cham* performances are also explicitly staged for tourists or the performers' Indian hosts.

Such performances are not the first time ritual dances from the Tibetan-speaking world have been used as objects of display in encounters with foreign audiences. In 1924 a British filmmaker and Everest explorer secretly organized a „devil dance" performance by Tibetan lamas for a British audience in London against the explicit wishes of Tibetan authorities not to stage religious dances abroad. While the British Press reacted with orientalist stereotypes – such as "Bishop to Dance on Stage ... Music from Skulls" and "Tom-Tom Ceremonies from the Himalayas" (Hansen 1996: 729) – the Dalai Lama considered it a direct affront to Tibetan religion. The event had severe repercussions for Anglo-Tibetan relations during the period. Visiting British colonial officials were received and honored with specially staged dances in Bhutan during the 1930s and 1940s. Michael Aris has noted that on such occasions the main teacher (*dpon-slob*) was capable of "easily adjusting their originally divine or military purpose into that of secular display" (1994: 130).[6] In our consideration of Tibetan dances in such a context, we need to rethink the value normally placed upon notions of "authenticity" and "culture" as objectified, structured totalities. Instead, we need to examine such "intercultural transactions" as social events and as distinct forms of cultural mediation (Myers 1994: 693). I therefore intend to focus mainly upon representations, motivations and perceptions of organizers, actors and audiences in this essay. I will discuss aspects of the performance of ritual dances as they now occur in the recently established Tibetan refugee communities of north India and in other new global contexts. In so doing, I wish to draw mostly upon two bodies of data: 1) my observations of a so-called "Guest *'Cham*," which is explicitly performed for the local Indian population living around the Tibetan exile Bonpo community established at Dolanji, and 2)

[5] This is my field consultant's consensus concerning the purpose of staging *'cham* in the West. It is also stated as such in the promotional materials of Tibetan exile ritual dance troupes. As far as I know, no Tibetan monks from China have performed ritual dances in the West to date.

[6] In 1980 the Bhutanese royal dancers and musicians presented for the first time a tour in the United States, five years after the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts (TIPA) from Dharamsala, India had made the initial step of performing Tibetan folk opera and traditional dances in the West.

materials concerning tours of Tibetan ritual dance troupes in the global arena. In addition, I will also include some notes about perceptions of Tibetan ritual dance performances in contemporary Tibet as they are represented in Chinese media.[7]

The Guest *'Cham* in Dolanji

The need to modify traditional performance schedules in the staging of ritual dances at new venues for foreign audiences has become a recurrent theme for Tibetan exile dance troupes. Sometimes in Tibetan exile communities as well, *'cham* is staged according to the intended audience's schedule of free time. For example, the Bonpo monks from the exile monastery of Menri (*sMan-ri*) located in Dolanji,[8] perform a Guest *'Cham* for the local Indian community on the first or second Sunday of the first Tibetan month. New Year is considered to be a "great time" (*dus chen*) for communal celebrations and important rituals, including ritual dances.[9] It is also one of the rare occasions on which the Bonpo exile community gathers together for a communal event. The Tibetan lay population of Dolanji fluctuates greatly throughout the year, mainly due to economic reasons. The villagers usually spend their time away from Dolanji for occupational reasons. A good portion of the residents are scattered throughout India's cities, where they study or sell sweaters to make an income. Many of them thus return around New Year to visit their families and celebrate the holiday together. At such festive times Dolanji's monastery acts as the pivot for the whole Bonpo community. As the head Bon monastery, it is at the same time a guarantor of the maintenance and reinforcement of the Bon religious tradition. By extension, the monastery anchors Bon identity for all Bonpos in India, Nepal and even Tibet.

Most of the dances of the Guest *'Cham* are very entertaining and lively. Although I am not certain, the ones I have witnessed were most likely selected specifically for presentation to outsiders. Many different figures take part in it: stags (*sha-ba*), skeletons (*ging*), *A-tsa-ra* and deities like the animal headed twenty-seven sisters belonging to the Bon cosmology (*gZe-ma dgu*, *Gyad-mo dgu* and *sPar-ma dgu*). High ranking deities were represented in dances such as the *Sri-rgyal dus-drug 'cham*, *Ma-rgyud tshog-'cham* and *gShen-rab dgu-'cham*. The dances are all based upon ritual texts.[10] However, their performances during the Guest *'Cham* are not embedded in a wider ritual context. The only rituals involved are rites of invocation and veneration for the deities involved in the performance. In a sense, even though this type of *'cham* performance might have become secularized, a modern, "invented" tradition resulting from the dramatic social, cultural and economic changes of Tibetans in exile, it still contains religious significance for Bon practitioners in the audience. Some of the Tibetans in attendance venerated the higher ranking deities dancing in the courtyard with incense and ceremonial silk scarves (*kha-btags*), while elder villagers recited ritual formulae with their rosaries during the performance. The entire Tibetan audience circumambulated the temple (*dgon-pa*) during the pauses. Tibetan women

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[7] These notes will be very preliminary, however, because I have no first-hand experience of the conditions and contexts of Tibetan ritual dances as they are now performed in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Tibetan populated areas of China. This is partly the object of my forthcoming fieldwork in East Tibet during 1996.

[8] Following a valuable suggestion by Per Kvaerne, I did fieldwork during February/March of 1995 in this community to document the New Year celebrations and the performances of *'cham*.

[9] In Dolanji, besides the Guest *'Cham*, another ritual dance is performed at the time of New Year as part of the *dGu-gtor* ritual on the 29th of the 12th Tibetan month. The main purpose is an expulsion of evil forces accumulated throughout the year. On that occasion complex purification rituals are also performed in which the audience takes an active part.

[10] For a short description of some of these dances, see Karmay (1986).

from the village of Dolanji sold *momos* (homemade dumplings) and other snacks on behalf of the monastery to the audience.

Unlike similar situations in Tibet prior to 1959, the monastery at which I observed the performance payed for the expenses associated with the staging of the Guest *'Cham*. Monastic officials also arranged for the distribution of free tea and traditional New Year cakes (*kha-zes*). Although the refreshments were provided for everyone's consumption, the intention was to feed the poorer class of Indians in attendance.[11] The latter were seated separately in one of the corners of the monastic courtyard and the Tibetan villagers at the performance were gathered in small groups apart from the monks who were not directly engaged in the ritual. While the highest ranking monks of the monastery sat on the veranda of the abbot's house, some specially invited Indian guests from a nearby university and others from the Himalayan region of Kinnaur (who are popularly believed to share a common and ancient history with the Bonpos), were given honorary seats on a high balcony above the abbot's house overlooking the dance ground. Some of them were invited to drink tea in the abbot's house during the pauses. At the end of the dance performance, to the amusement of the audience, some yak and tiger dancers tried to escape masked herders waving whips or provoked attending dogs to run after them. The Kinnauri guests then performed a local row dance (*Shon*) in the monastery's courtyard to the accompaniment of recorded Kinnauri folk music broadcast over a loudspeaker. The abbot explained to me that these interval dances are associated with Bon history, since they are mentioned in the biography of *sTon-pa gShen-rab Mi-bo*, the founder of the Bon religious tradition.

These aspects of the "politics of performance" demonstrate the importance of this special kind of *'cham* as a social and cultural event, a link established by a refugee community with its hosts in order to maintain a good relationship with the local population and reinforce historical bonds between their religion and the local Indian context. As a community event for the Bonpos, the event reiterates their religious identity within a specific cosmology. This communal aspect is quite an important one, considering the marginalized position of the Tibetan Bonpos within the Tibetan exile community both in terms of religious and regional differences as well as in their marginal situation as Tibetans in exile.[12] In addition to the Indian guests, a few tourists and an organized group of American "guests" also attended the *'cham* performed in 1995. The latter were American converts to Bon, and they were guided by a monk from the local monastery who is now living and teaching in the United States.[13] During their stay, they received Bon teachings and also acted as sponsors to the monastery. Throughout the dance performance they (like a senior monk from the monastery and myself) actively photographed the event with expensive camera equipment. This contrasted markedly with the other Indian "guests" viewing from the exclusive balcony or grouped in a corner waiting for their free tea and cakes.

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[11] However, lay donations were given during the time of New Year at various other occasions. Lay people from Amdo told me in interviews that some of the wealthier families used to sponsor a whole *'cham* in the past. They were therefore acknowledged at the time of the performance with victory banners and special escorts.

[12] On this issue see the works of Cech (1987) and Richmond (1992).

[13] Interestingly, as part of the current representation of missionary Bon in the United States, the traditional "shamanic" tasks of healing and purifying associated with the ancient Tibetan priests termed Bon, as recorded in the Dunhuang texts, for example, seem to have been highlighted and reinterpreted today for a Western audience. See the Voice of Clear Light (1995).

'Cham in the West

Initially invited to a festival of ritual and liturgy in France in 1983, a group of 15 Bonpo monks from the same monastery left their community in Dolanji to perform their ritual dances for the first time in Europe. The organization of their performance tour seems to be quite representative of the staging and modifications required of Tibetan ritual dances in the West.[14] The Menri monks were explicitly requested by the French organizers to perform the dances as they did in their monastery, as "authentically" as possible. Nevertheless, the European expectations of normal performance duration for entertainment (such as movies, theater and dance pieces) necessitated a radical reduction of the usually day-long *'cham* performance down to about two hours. The abbot Ven. Sangye Tenzin Jongdong, himself a former dance master (*'cham-dpon*), had edited the program specifically for a Western audience; that is, certain dance sequences were shortened and put together in a new order. The broader ritual context had therefore to be ommitted as well.[15] After the troupe's arrival in France the organizers wanted them to change their program again. As many varieties of monastic life as possible were to be shown now, including chanting, instrumental music and debating. The reason given by them was the assumption "that a Western audience would find it hard to follow dances which, by nature, are long and slow" (Cech 1984: 7). On their tour through Europe the monks from Dolanji were further invited to perform their traditional arts in churches, museums and concert halls. They also had the chance to live in Christian monasteries. This provided an opportunity for intercultural spiritual exchange. According to the abbot of Dolanji, the exchange was not only appreciated by the Bon monks but also by their Christian counterparts. The group was later invited to Canada in 1993. The organizers once again asked the monks to perform only short passages of music, dance, chanting and debate. The dancemaster stated that the dance pieces became so short that even the audience requested longer sequences. The tour appears to have been successful; ceremonial scarves and incense were sold, as were a set of *'cham* masks.[16]

In contrast to the above example, the recent (1994) performance of another group of Tibetan Buddhist exiled monks from Nepal was squeezed in between two Free Jazz groups for a one hour performance as part of the Berlin Jazz Festival.[17] The dancers were given no idea of the context in which they would have to perform prior to the actual dancing. The alienation they experienced became clear when a radio journalist asked them in a live interview why they would perform at a jazz festival. They felt very embarrassed because they had never even heard of jazz prior to their engagement in Berlin. Nevertheless, for the organizers it seemed completely logical in terms of the Western classification of "brass music" to invite a Tibetan "brass band" to this festival. The officially declared "missing link" had been created by citing the inspiration from Tibetan ritual music received by Don Cherry, an innovative jazz musician who was billed to appear at the festival. Accompanying them, as well as being part of the audience, I had the impres-

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[14] As per my interviews with monks from different performing exile monasteries. For a description of the 1983 tour, see Cech (1984).

[15] A participating monk told me that on another occasion they did not have any time for doing most of the preliminary invocation rituals because the audience was already waiting for them.

[16] The abbot of Menri Monastery, who was not accompanying the dance group at that time, regretted the incident deeply. "Those masks were made by a good artist who died and were irreplaceable," he told me. He did not like the newly made ones so much, which are now used for their performances.

[17] I was employed as a guide to accompany the troupe during their one day visit to Berlin. They performed on June 17th, 1994 during a program called "Jazz Across the Border" at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

sion that the dancers themselves, in addition to most of the viewers, were also not capable of fitting these two incongruous genres – Free Jazz and Tibetan ritual dance and music – together.

The performance consisted of ten minute segments of various dances. Some chants were intoned by the attending musicians during pauses created to allow the performing monks to change their costumes and masks. While the monks were changing, a German Tibetan Buddhist nun and the secretary of the monastery explained the sacred character of the dances to the audience. The senior monastic scholar accompanying the group stated that none of the rituals associated with the dance could be performed anymore because it would require days to do them properly. Improperly performed rituals would also create obstacles.[18] Nowadays the troupe also dances faster because "the people want more action."[19] After the performance was over, the German secretary managing the group concluded that they would have to become more "professional" in order to really make a financial benefit.

Despite all of the modifications, and even the complete lack of ritual context, *'cham* dances in the West are still represented as "authentic" and "ancient" traditions. The promoters generally stress their sacred character and the spiritual benefits for the audience. Program leaflets emphasize the traditional origin and purpose of the dances, which results in a generally receptive response from the audience.[20] For instance, a French newspaper wrote: "The liturgical ceremony...possessed an intensity, an emotional power which mysteriously moved the foreign audience even though it was a ceremony of which the rules, the symbols and practices completely escaped us" (Cech 1984: 15). One common European public discourse on Tibetan religious culture reveals itself at such moments. Romantic phrases such as "archaic rites of a time when man was not completely isolated from the rest of creation," or "all this evoked a lost or forgotten world" (ibid.) are representative of how Westerners still tend to essentialize and mystify Tibetan culture.

'Cham for "World Healing"

The following example of the "world tour" by a group of Buddhist monks from one of the biggest Gelugpa monasteries in Indian exile, Drepung Loseling, indicates the increase of *'cham* performances for Western audiences. It also suggests a changing representation of Tibetan ritual dance in the United States. On their first tour in 1988/89 the monks had already performed in 130 North American and European cities. Sponsored by the Canada Tibet Friendship Society and Tibet House in New York, their tour was officially billed as "Sacred Music Sacred Dance for World Peace." Six years later their fifth "world tour" was announced as follows: "Once again they will visit over a hundred cities, drawing from their traditional temple music and dances to create an arrangement of pieces believed to generate energies conducive to world healing" (*Snow Lion Newsletter* 1995: 10). Likewise, the World Tibetan News Network on the Internet in April 1995 provided the following announcement: "Tibetan Monks in Ohio to Heal the

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[18] These ritual actions are, for example, the consecration of a sacred space for the dance-ground. On this issue, see Schrempf (1994). Myers (1994: 684) states a similar problem encountered by two Australian aboriginal artists performing ritual sandpainting for a Western audience. There was a "spiritual danger of misperformance" for them because usually only initiated men would take part in these ritual activities. According to them, it would have caused a violation of the rules of display, the sacred nature of the ritual.

[19] This happens also with *'cham* performed in exile communities, according to him. Tethong (1979: 21) observed this tendency already in Tibet before 1959.

[20] See, for example, a program leaflet published by the Tibet Foundation called Sacred Dance and Sacred Music. UK Tour of Sera Med Monastery in May 1995.

World." Other American promotions cite Tibetan ritual dance performances in the West more generally as contributing to the world healing and peace movement, generating a greater awareness of the "endangered" Tibetan civilization, and raising support for the refugee community in India. Interestingly, these purposes are all mentioned together as if they would condition each other.

Tibetan sacred dance as a healing ritual is actually not a cultural "invention" designed solely for American audiences, as one might be tempted to think. Next to being a meditational practice for the monk dancers, one of the traditional purposes of a *'cham* is a general purification from and destruction of evil forces threatening the community. The 5th Dalai Lama had also once commented that *'cham* has the ability to completely transform the mind of the onlooker. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976: 227). Additionally, it is an invocation of good fortune and well-being, a notion which can be easily reinterpreted to suit any audience's taste. The *Tibet House Drum* wrote, for example, "this sacred dance performance is said to contribute to healing in the listener and planetary harmony" (1993: 7). It seems that since the mid 1980s performances of Tibetan rituals in the West have been represented in connection with the themes of global peace and healing. Another well-known example, and perhaps the precursor of this label, is the representation of the *Dus-'khor dbang-chen* (Great Kālacakra Initiation) ritual given by the present Dalai Lama as "Kālacakra for World Peace," which was apparently announced as such for the first time in 1985 (Dorjee 1985). What used to be exclusively a higher Tibetan tantric initiation, became, in fact, the biggest Buddhist tantric ritual for a public audience, all in the name of "world peace."[21] It seems that one of the traditional roles of the lama as healer and balancer of supernatural forces has shifted from a rather locally based community to an embodiment of Tibetan spirituality in a global arena of performance spaces encompassing the West. Therefore, the monk's self-proclaimed assertion of "tradition," through an uninterrupted lineage of masters and disciples, also serves as their legitimation and fits together well with the romanticized Western images of Tibet.

'Cham in Contemporary Tibet[22]

In contrast to these representations we can compare current Chinese statements on Tibetan ritual dances in English publications promoting the Chinese state's version of Tibetan life and culture. For example, regarding the appearance of one of the general figures in *'cham, Hva shang* (Chin. monk), in a Tibetan ritual dance at Tashilhunpo, he is described as "an old monk in Han costume followed by six smaller monks" (Dongfan 1993: 23). According to the report, "The portrayal of these Han monks in the Cham dance signified that their enduring contribution is not forgotten in Tibet and the desire that all ethnic groups live in "unity" (ibid.). While in Tibetan exile and in the West representations of Tibetan dance and music center on "authenticity" and "unbroken traditions" said to contribute to global healing and peace, in Tibet itself performing arts appear to be officially claimed by the Chinese state as a part of cultural "development."

The Tibetan Song and Dance Ensemble and the Tibetan Traditional Music Art Troupe from Lhasa, for example, promote themselves as follows: " While taking traditional origin of art as its rich resources, the Ensemble adheres [sic] the *principle of development*, putting the traditional

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[21] The 14th Dalai Lama has made various statements in an interview about the effects of the Kalachakra initiation, such as "We believe that Kalachakra Tantra reduces tension, is good for mental peace and through that way for world peace" (Information Office 1986: 154).

[22] Here I can only give a small glimpse of the vast and largely unresearched field of Tibetan ritual dance in the context of modern Tibet.

music onto the stage. The goal is to pursue a more profound, more expressive and more typical Tibetan sound of music" (emphasis added, Ministry for Culture of the PRC 1989: 1). In the promotional leaflet one sees a conductor dressed in a monk's robe conducting a "suite" in front of a monastic orchestra.[23] Yet unlike Tibetan traditional theater, opera and folk songs, ritual dance seems to have escaped former Chinese policies of "assimilation" (Meserve & Meserve 1979: 106).[24] Instead, in some monasteries *'cham* performances now appear to be part of a state controlled and sponsored "ethnic tourism." As T.S. Oakes has stated, there is a revival of rituals and festivals taking place in Tibetan populated areas of present-day China. He argues that this can be seen as an actual expression of a reconstruction of localized identity which serves as a link "between local society and the wider world" (1993: 63). Dru Gladney, however, stresses that the objectification of minority culture through the majority media only seldom allows the minority people to exploit this for their own benefit. Chinese discourse about the construction of minority and "Han" majority identities centers on "difference" and "exoticism" of the "Other"; that is, the minorities. "Minority" dances and music play a major role in this process. According to him, this representation of minorities as "backward exotics" is used to create a majority nation of imagined "Han people representing progressive modernity" (Gladney 1994).

Outlook

Changing political, economic and social interests, as well as radical transformations in the living conditions of the actors and the audience, all necessitate innovations of publicly performed Tibetan ritual dances. In Tibetan exile and in Tibet itself, as well as in the West, *'cham* performances – as rituals in general – have been shortened in a process of adaptation. In Tibet, prior to 1959, many rituals, including *'cham*, were performed for one week or more. Now they are reduced to half that time. They also seem to be currently staged faster and less frequently. In a recent issue of the magazine *China's Tibet*, a Chinese commentator stated that the reduction of a festival with *'cham* at Tashilhunpo monastery from two weeks to three days was needed "to fit in with the tight living and workings [sic] rhythm of contemporary people" (Dongfan 1993: 22). But ritual traditions have also been modified in terms of their performance time in exile.[25] Some of the reasons given by my informants are the immense costs required for the performance of large rituals and the lack of patience on the part of young monks. In addition, numerous dance manuals appear to have been lost or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and the diasporic process. Thus, many of the performed *'cham* dances in exile are mainly based on reconstructions from the memory of aging dance masters from Tibet. It remains in their hands to reestablish the dances and correct the mostly young and generally inexperienced monk dancers.

Besides a general reduction of performance time, some *'cham* schedules have been modified according to the audience's availability or to local tourist seasons.[26] It appears that the performances are no longer embedded in a wider ritual context on such occasions. In any case, with or without the ritual context, most ritual dance performances are community events, creating ethnic

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[23] It is impossible to say whether they are actually monks or not. I would guess though that they are not monks.

[24] For a description of the ideological impact on Tibetan opera as it is performed today in Eastern Tibet, see Kvaerne (1994).

[25] For example, the current three day long ritual of *dGu-gtor* in Dolanji (*khro-phu dgu-gtor*) used to be traditionally performed for at least seven days at the end of each month for the purpose of expulsion of evil forces (interview with Ven. Sangye Tenzin Jongdong).

[26] However, most ritual masked dances performed in Tibetan exile communities and Tibetan Buddhist regions of the Himalayas are still staged according to the local calendars.

identities which, depending on the region, might be termed Ladakhi, Bhutanese, Sikkimese, Tibetan. Distinct forms of Tibetan*ness* are thus constructed in the sociopolitical contexts of Tibetans as refugees in exile and as colonized people in Tibet. However, it must be pointed out that "Tibetan*ness*" is perceived differently according to local conditions and the cultural politics of the participating groups. It is therefore a contested and pluralistic category of identity.[27]

Nevertheless, *'cham* performances were already being modified along some of the lines noted above before 1959 in Tibet. Among others, Rakra Tethong observed that dancers in the 1950s danced considerably faster than they used to earlier. The same happened with the performance speed of monastic vocal music (*dbyang*) (Tethong 1979: 21). Reasons for such changes might be located partially in the beginnings of modernity's influence in Tibet at the time, as we have already seen with the example of a Bhutanese *'cham* explicitly staged for British officials in the 1930s. It would, however, be naive to think that the early influences of modernity alone could cause such changes. Traditions and the performance of ritual were not fixed in a static sense in the past, and still continue to change in the present. They are, rather, reinvented and shaped according to the cultural politics involved. The interesting factor here is that Tibetan monks themselves stress that their religious knowledge is handed down unchanged from master to pupil in uninterrupted lineages which are often recalled and venerated as part of the actual ritual. By linking it to its origin the ritual (and its performers) is legitimized, ensuring success.

The Gelugpa tradition was also famous for emphasizing the "correctness" of their ritual performances in the past. The Gelugpa tradition was so concerned about ritual accuracy that they even accused others of making "shows" out of ritual on occasion. This already happened, for example, in the 17th century in terms of a political strategy against their rivals. After the 5th Dalai Lama composed a *Phur-pa 'cham* (which was probably already based on a Sakyapa model) and inserted a ritual dance of the Nyingma tradition into it, an orthodox faction among the Gelugpas rejected the innovation by stating that Nyingmapa dances were purely shows created to "spin the heads of the people of the marketplace" (Ellingson 1979: 171). Nowadays this Tibetan religious school is the major performer of public Tantric ritual displays in the West, as we have seen, for example, with the "world tour" *'cham* performances by the exile Gelugpa monastery of Drepung Loseling.

Another controversy arises in contemporary Ladakh concerning the appropriateness of staging *'cham* outside the monastic context. Schedules for the performance of ritual dances had already been moved to the summer tourist season as early as 1985. In August/ September 1995, a *'cham* was performed for the first time during a secular folklore festival known as the Ladakh Festival. This one hour dance was held in the courtyard of the Leh Gonpa Soma, located in the main bazaar of the city. The Student's Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) reacted with a strong protest against this "profanization," asking other organizations to join the protest. The monastery's association and a tourist official tried to justify this case by stating that the selected dances were "less sacred" and had therefore been chosen carefully for the event. Such "neo-puritan" voices like those of SECMOL concerning "cultural correctness" are characteristic signs of an upsurge in recent displays of local nationalism among politicized Ladakhi Buddhists. Such modifications of space and time, or the selection of "less sacred" *'cham* performances (like the yak and lion dances), do not appear as problematic in the West as they do in Ladakh. However, monastic dancers from Tibetan exile communities staging *'cham* in the West are conscious of this problem, even though they might not be outspoken on the topic.

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[27] However, most ritual masked dances performed in Tibetan exile communities and Tibetan Buddhist regions of the Himalayas are still staged according to the local calendars.

'Cham in the West is staged in order to raise funds for the monastery, propagate religious traditions, and to create an awareness of a Tibetan culture endangered by Chinese colonization and restrictions. While the ritual dance is performed traditionally for a variety of explicit purposes – the expulsion of evil forces, the procurement of blessings, empowerment or for the spiritual cultivation of those attending and participating – in the West the audience members sit in their chairs expecting a most "authentic" presentation of "sacred dance," merely watching the monks performing segments of complex movements stripped of their ritual context. The transformation which is said to happen during performance has to be imagined completely out of its original context and within the confines of a different worldview. Therefore the advertised effects of a "peaceful mind" or even of "world healing" seem rather to rest upon mystified Western representations of superior Tibetan spirituality.

Despite these different representations of and innovations in Tibetan ritual dances performed in a range of new cultural contexts and for different purposes, *'cham* traditions have continued to be actively revived in the last ten years. In exile, for example, the Schechen monastery in Kathmandu invited two dance masters from their tradition in Tibet to reestablish traditional ritual dances at their exile monastery in 1992. I have heard from visitors to Tibetan populated areas in contemporary China that since the early 1980s many *'cham* traditions were reestablished and are now attended by a significant number of Tibetans.[28] Also, *'cham* performances have been staged increasingly during the last ten years in the West. Tibetan lamas now even give classes to teach ritual dance or create new dances as a meditational practice for their Western followers.[29] This revitalization of Tibetan ritual dances shows on one hand their importance as a popular vehicle for religious culture inside Tibetan communities. It also suggests their significance for potential sponsors, guests and others. The need for some Tibetan monasteries in exile to objectify and display their "culture" in portable and spectacular forms for economic and political reasons in the West belongs to this category. On the other hand, it demonstrates an increasing demand in the West for a marketable and consumable version of "Tibetan culture" which is shaped by both sides, dialectically adapting to new contexts. Regarding the final performance version, however, it seems to be the case that Western organizers have the greater decision-making power.

The monks do not have an easy task. They have to legitimize their role as keepers of a religious culture and as ritual specialists inside their own communities, communities which often have a high rate of mobility but still support the clerics as much as possible. The monks in question are also well-aware that they must deal with a growing need for Western sponsors. Foreign supporters, of course, have their own particular interests and agendas, nurturing specific perceptions of Tibet. The Bon and Buddhist clergy are acutely aware of this, and have consciously incorporated *'cham* performances in the West as part of their ongoing process to cultivate awareness for the multifaceted cause that brought them to the Occident in the first place. Will it ultimately lead from village lama to global healer?

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[28] Dongfan confirms this in his article and speaks of "tens of thousands of followers and pilgrims" and "hundreds of monks" in the context of a *'cham* performance at Tashilhunpo (1993: 22, 26). See also Mackley (1994: 74) who states "In China today, Tibetans participate in the "tourist gaze"..., and eagerly consume "Tibetan*ness*" objectified in educational videos, dances, and music."

[29] See, for example, Norbu (1992).

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GREEN TIBETANS: A BRIEF SOCIAL HISTORY*

by

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In the literature written about Tibetan life in exile one frequently finds references which link the pre-diaspora past with the present. Such statements or phrases often serve as a sort of polemical or analytical framework for accounts. They range from the essentialisms promoted by nationalists on the one hand through to more critical attempts to reflect upon and account for social change on the other hand. In the popular literature (both Tibetan and Western) the relationship between past and present is often represented in terms of "unbroken continuity," "maintenance of ancient traditions," and the like. On the other hand, in the scholarly literature we read of "continuity and change," or the innovative uses and "adaptations" of "traditional culture" to a new or modern context. The present account will resort to no such statements or claims because it deals with an aspect of Tibetan exilic life which is unprecedented and entirely a feature of the contemporary world system: the representation of reflexive, politicized notions of culture and identity which are dependent upon the globalized production of institutions and the flow of cultural resources made possible through the onslaught of modernity. The "Green Tibetans" of my title refers to just one example of new representations pertaining to cultural identity recently produced within this newly emerging context by Tibetans in exile. The appearance of such identities over the last decade, and their acceptance or elaboration by increasingly cosmopolitan Tibetans in South Asia, the United States, China, Switzerland and elsewhere is a clear indication of the analytical perspective we must adopt towards this small diaspora community: fundamentally, it now has to be viewed in terms of the cultural dynamics of deterritorialization, one of the central forces shaping the contemporary world (cf. Appadurai 1991).

Representations as Social Facts

The appellation "green" is commonly in use nowadays to designate certain groups, institutions and social movements identified with such things as ecological awareness, environmentalism, and the protection and preservation of nature. My use of Green Tibetans in the present discussion refers specifically to a set of essentialist representations of Tibetan peoples, their culture and lifestyle which depicts them as being in harmony with nature, non-exploitative of the natural world and its resources, and consciously sensitive to the complex ecological processes inherent in the physical environment. Religious identity figures prominently in these images, with Buddhism and less frequently the indigenous "folk traditions" being attributed as the source of a Green Tibetan culture. However, Bon, the other major Tibetan religion, does not feature in the narratives describing Green Tibetans. Although these representations were produced by a very small circle of persons in exile, they claim to represent all Tibetans across space and time.

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Within the course of less than a decade such images have been disseminated successfully around the globe.

It is not my present interest to attempt to verify or negate the validity of the actual claims made about Green Tibetan Buddhist cultural identity[1] in the materials I will analyze. However, some comparison with alternative sources of information from other cultures is necessary for determining the styles and strategies used within the general "green" movement. Having said this, let me state at the outset that I am interested in treating particular representations as "social facts." Representations are socially produced in particular historical and political circumstances; they have a history or "genealogy," to use Foucault's term. Representations are generated and used to negotiate human existence, and even though they do not have a life of their own, they are part of life *in* society. In these senses representations are "real." For this reason, they can be thought of and treated as social facts (cf. Rabinow 1986). Herein I will briefly consider why a specific set of Green Tibetan representations suddenly came into being when it did, and what sort of context enabled their production. I will also address aspects of representational content and deployment.

What are Green Tibetans Like?

During the past decade invoking the image of Green Tibetan identity has virtually become an obligatory aspect of presenting the Tibet issue in popular world media and in pro-Tibetan political literature, but especially in a range of publications issued by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (hereafter GIE) in Dharamsala, India. This last fact is hardly surprising since the image of Green Tibetans was largely created in Dharamsala and has continued to be disseminated from there to the rest of the world. This is an issue to which I shall return below. But first, what are these Green Tibetans like? Opening the morning paper recently in Berlin I was informed in the following manner of a Tibet where,

> Buddhist faith dominated everyday life...Plants, animals and "inanimate" nature were as important and valuable as human beings to the Tibetans. The Tibetans always tried to preserve the ecological balance upon which they felt they depended, so forests were not allowed to be cut and animals were not allowed to be killed. Since we [Tibetans] have lived like that for many centuries it has become difficult for us to distinguish between religious practice and concern for the environment. (Anon. 1995: 3; my translation from the German)

This excerpt contains most of the fundamental elements found in other statements concerning Green Tibetan identity,[2] although every account expands upon them in different ways. For example, some stress the preeminence in space and time of Green Tibetans:

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[1] Serious critical scholarship concerning both Buddhist and Tibetan attitudes and practices relating to the natural environment has only recently appeared. For instance, on philosophical issues see Harris (1991, 1994), on claims about Tibetan environmental behaviour see Huber (1991) and on ethics see Schmithausen (1991). See also Kapleau (1983: 46-51) on whaling in Buddhist Japan, a related article on Buddhist China by Yi-Fu Tuan (1971) and essays in the volume edited by Bruun and Kalland (1995). Beyond the level of general (and often sympathetic) surveys few detailed critical studies of Tibetan cultural ecology have been attempted, but see Goldstein and Beall (1990), Stevens (1993) and Huber (forthcoming) for exceptions.

[2] For a range of alternative versions in both English and Tibetan, see the relevant passages in Anon. (1994a: 7), Atisha (1991), bsTan-'dzin Phun-tshogs A-ti-sha (1995), Department of Information and International Relations (1992: section 1.9), Fink (1991: 257), Geslie Damdul Nanigyal (1994: 29), Rowell (1990a: II), Vigoda (1989), Yeshi (1991) and Yuthok (1992).

> The Tibetan traditional heritage, which is known to be over three thousand years old, can be distinguished as one of [sic] foremost traditions of the world in which the [sic] humankind and its natural environment have persistently remained in perfect harmony. (Yuthok 1992: 1)

Others feel compelled to demonstrate that Green Tibetans have a systematic and reflexive "ecological" consciousness akin to that developed recently in modern scientific thought. Moreover, this consciousness is one which Tibetans have applied to large-scale regional ecosystems for quite some time:

> [W]e Tibetans have always been aware of the interdependent nature of this world. We know that our large country, with its diverse flora and fauna, its primal forest cover, and above all the many great rivers which rise in Tibet, is a source of life to an area many times larger that Tibet itself. For most of Asia, Tibet's environment has always been of crucial importance. And so for centuries Tibet's ecosystem was kept in balance and alive out of a common concern for all humanity. (Atisha 1991: 9)[3]

While Buddhism is invariably included as the basis of Green Tibetan culture and identity, and is linked directly with everything from consumption habits (Tenzin Gyatso 1990: 80) and mining policy (Geshe Damdul Natugyal 1994: 29) to modern[4] science, other secondary factors are sometimes cited. For instance, the Dalai Lama often espouses a simple form of circular logic to elucidate an environmental determinism in which Green Tibetans are seen as a product of the essentially "unique" natural world of the Tibetan plateau (Tenzin Gyatso 1990: 87; cf. Rowell 1990a: 11). In a more recent development, one which is ocurring in Dharamsala alongside the official rehabilitation of interest in Tibetan "folk religion"[5] after decades of indifference, "ancient customs" are now also cited as factors necessary for the development of ecological awareness. Thus, in the introduction to a recent work titled *Bod kyi gna' bo'i zhing 'brog lam lugs* [*The Ways of Farmers and Nomads of Ancient Tibet*], we find the GIE editors stressing the importance of older lifeways precisely because "There is a specific connection between the customs of ancient Tibet and contemporary environmental protection."[6]

The critical (or cynical) observer may be tempted to readily dismiss much of the content of Green Tibetan representations as anachronistic, exaggerated, romanticized, inaccurate, and so on.

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[3] Such a far-fetched statement is nicely countered by a more realistic one from the Dalai Lama: "Most people in the distant marches of Tibet had never been to Lhasa, or even perhaps met anyone who had been there. From year to year they tilled the earth and bred their yaks and other animals, and neither heard nor saw what happened in the world beyond their own horizon" (Tenzin Gyatso 1990: 87). See also the critique in Räther (1994: 673).

[4] For example, "Both science and the teachings of the Buddha tell us of the fundamental unity of all things. This understanding is crucial if we are to take positive and decisive action on the pressing global concern with the environment" (Tenzin Gyatso 1990: 81). On the modern Buddhist equation of science and Buddhism in the context of Green Buddhist representations, see the comments in Harris (1991: 110-111).

[5] With, of course, the exception of spirit mediumship and other forms directly challenging the Lamaistic monopoly over claims of access to alternative realities and powers.

[6] *Bod kyi gna' bo'i rig gzhung dang deng kyi khor yug srung skyobs dbar 'brel ba gang zhig yod pa* (Bya-dur bSod-nams bZang-po 1994: *gleng-brdzod*). This work is also of interest as it was written by a Bonpo who is an official representative of Bon in the exile parliament following the rehabilitation of the position of the Bonpos in Dharamsala. Perhaps it signals the future inclusion of Bon in Green Tibetan identity images? To date Yuthok (1992), who was apparently quite disillusioned with some of the specifically "Buddhist" Green Tibetan identity projects in Dharamsala (to be discussed below), has been the only Tibetan writer to even mention Bon in relation to the Green Tibetan image.

However, Green Tibetan images now circulate both globally and within the Tibetan exile community, apparently accepted on face value by many who consume them. They thus deserve our serious attention as a focus of critical enquiry because of the social currency they have attained.

While the particular features of Green Tibetan images may be interesting in and of themselves, Green Tibetans belong, in fact, to a general class of identity representations which have become commonplace throughout the world. Green Tibetans now take their place in a long list of ecologically aware, environmentally sensitive and so-called in-harmony-with-nature identities promoted by and on behalf of a wide range of non-Western populations (e.g., Amazon forest peoples, Polynesians, Australian Aborigines, native North Americans, etc.), many of whom were formerly colonized and oppressed. In addition, a number of these groups are now ethnic minorities within larger states or maintain particular religious identities. Such essential "green" identities are far less common in modern, industrialized or post- industrial nation-states whose populations cannot so readily be linked to nature by living materially simple lifestyles in uncultivated environments. However, in the modern world, local and transnational commercial or industrial groups, political parties and politicians, world religions and many other social movements are all actively cultivating and disseminating specific green identities. With the formation of a strong global environmentalist *Zeitgeist* during the 1980s and 1990s, promoting a green identity is no longer just a signal of concern about a commitment to care for nature. It also has much to do with strategic positioning for social, economic and political advantages, as well as competition for scarce resources within the contemporary world system. Not surprisingly, green identities are now frequently contested. It is against the background of this broader development of the global "greening" of identities that we can begin to trace some of the important factors leading to the appearance of Green Tibetans.

How did Tibetans become Green?

There is no doubt that the Green Tibetan identity came about by way of a complex of intersecting social forces and discourses mediated through the agency of a variety of individuals and institutions. While I do not claim to present anything resembling a complete picture of this process, I will nevertheless provide some evidence indicative of what was involved in the greening process. Further, I will relate this to two main conclusions. First, it can be demonstrated that a great deal of the impetus and cultural resources required for the appearance of Green Tibetans came from outside the Tibetan community in exile. Second, the widely distributed Green Tibetan image, which claims to represent all Tibetans, can be traced back to a few institutions and a very small circle of individuals that constitute a part of the exiled Tibetan political, religious and intellectual elite in Dharamsala. The elite of Dharamsala did not only generate the images in question, but they also continue to manipulate and disseminate them.

Green Tibetans had their genesis in the mid-1980s, with 1985-1986 being particularly crucial years. However, the development of certain important preconditions for this birth reaches back into the 1960s. First, during the early days of environmentalism in the late 1960s, "premodern" or indigenous peoples with materially simple cultures began to be represented as "ecological." The earliest example is probably the "ecological Indian" of North America (Martin 1978: 157). Second, and more importantly, there was also a creative linking of religion with the idea of ecological crisis. This connection was first made forcefully by Lynn White Jr. in 1967. In his well-received article, White (1967) proposed, among other things, that the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition allowed for the exploitation of nature. With particular reference to Zen Buddhism, he then contrasted the Judeo-Christian position with the more positive attitudes towards the environment fostered by Asian religions. In an important article Poul Pedersen (1995) has given us a

summary of this "classic in the environmentalist literature with a global audience" and the foundation it provided for the later formation of what he aptly calls the "religious environmentalist paradigm," which spread so thoroughly during the last two decades to many parts of the world, including Asia. It is within this general framework that some early Western environmentalist thinkers became specifically interested in connecting Buddhism with ecology (e.g. Kvaloy 1987; Schumacher 1973; Spretnak 1986). Some environmentalists also transmitted these ideas to Asia where they were in any case beginning to circulate gradually among a limited group of Asian intellectuals, for example in India, as a result of "countercultural drift" to the subcontinent from the late 1960s onwards.

We know for certain that the elite of the Tibetan community in exile received inspiration from this direction, although its arrival appears to have been rather late in comparison to other Buddhist societies in South Asia,[7] or at least it was not publicly responded to until the mid- to late 1980s. Before turning to look at some of these influences it is worth noting an interesting polemic built into various Green Tibetan statements which appears specifically intended to excuse the relative lateness of the appearance of environmental concern. For example, some writers state that their Tibetan "culture" was so environmentalist already that it was a given aspect of life. Thus, "For the same reason, the contemporary Tibetan scholars also did not find it necessary to produce exclusive works on the subject" (Yuthok 1992: 4). Such statements raise interesting and complex questions. For instance, can there be a discreet, modern conception of "nature" (as invoked in Green Tibetan narratives) before a coherent concept of "culture" exists? In other words, we must assume that exiled Tibetans first had to learn (from the West and in the context of modernity) to objectify their "unique culture" before they could think about their "unique nature." This, then, would allow them to later begin casting themselves reflexively as "natural-born" environmentalists. Thinking along these lines can help explain the rather late "greening" of Tibetan exile identity, although the issues it raises merit an in-depth discussion which I can not attempt herein (although cf. comments by Calkowski 1991; Huber and Pedersen forthcoming; Pedersen 1995).

In specific relation to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is generally acknowledged (and with good reason) as the leading light of all liberal developments in the Tibetan diaspora and as a well-known religious environmental advocate since the late 1980s, it was recently stated by one of his cabinet ministers that "The Dalai Lama was interested in the environment long before it became a popular issue."[8] This statement may well be correct, but we are presented with a very different picture when we turn to look for evidence of this in the Dalai Lama's prodigious literary output and recorded public statements since the beginning of the exile in 1960. The Dalai Lama had published at least seven full-length books prior to 1985, but none of them makes any specific mention of environmental issues, Buddhism and nature or ecology.[9] Similarly, in his pub-

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[7] Here one might compare the foundation of the Ladakh Project in 1978 and the Ladakh Ecological Development Group in 1982 (Norberg-Hodge 1991, 1992), or the long-running Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka (Kantowsky 1980; Macy 1985; Ariyaratne and Macy 1992) and intellectual interest there in Buddhism and nature in the 1970s (Samartha and de Silva 1979).

[8] Press statement by the then Tibetan GIE Minister for Information and International Affairs, Kalon Tashi Wangdi (reported in Anon. 1992).

[9] An interesting minor exception is found in his first autobiography of 1962, *My Land My People*, in which he talks about the teachings of Buddhism and Tibetan life at length. On the issue of mining and the Chinese in Tibet, he states "Our country is certainly rich in minerals. We never exploited them because we had not enough desire for worldly riches" (Tenzin Gyatso 1983: 224). This contrasts markedly with the current (i.e., post-1986) Green Tibetan image, which repeatedly insists that mining was not practiced in Tibet precisely because of specific religious beliefs

lished collected public statements to Tibetans, press interviews and articles which cover a great many subjects and issues of all kinds, there is not a single mention of any topic related to Green Tibetans until the year 1986 (Tenzin Gyatso 1984, 1986). The reason for stressing this point here is not to imply any criticism of the Dalai Lama, but rather because it provides us with a solid date for the appearance of Green Tibetan representations, and one which is confirmed by other Tibetan media operating in the diaspora. The widely read Tibetan language newspaper *Shes bya*, the official organ of the exile government, for example, carried no articles on Buddhism and ecology or Tibetan environmentalism before 1986.[10] After that year they began to grow steadily in both frequency and length. The same can be said of the English language *Tibetan Bulletin*, which is also published by the GIE, as well as the more independent *Tibetan Review*. Also relevant to the appearance of Green Tibetans in the exile community's print media during the period was the appearance of a number of Tibetan neologisms to help convey the new concepts of modern ecology and environmentalism.[11]

How then did Dharamsala get prompted to become green by the mid-1980s? One preliminary motivating factor was certainly the reports of ecological damage in Tibet under Chinese occupation, which began appearing with loosening restrictions of access to Tibet during the late 1970s. Fact finding delegations from Dharamsala were permitted to visit Tibet in 1979, 1980 (twice), 1982 and 1985. I was in Dharamsala at the time of the early delegations and clearly remember that the news their members carried back about the disappearance of indigenous wildlife stocks in particular shocked and saddened many people in the exile community. At first, Tibetan exile groups and their supporters just reproduced such reports of environmental catastrophe as further evidence of Chinese mismanagement in Tibet. Even up until 1986 the reports were still not being linked in any way to the politicized Green Tibetan image (e.g. Tibetan Young Buddhist Association 1986: 25-6; Wangyal 1986). I have heard privately voiced suggestions from both Tibetan exiled intellectuals and Western scholars that the Tibetan GIE in Dharamsala was advised by various well-meaning foreign supporters to become "green" at that particular time as that would greatly add to international sympathy for their cause. This is especially true when coupled with the reports of ecological damage in Tibet under Chinese occupation.

1985-1986: Dharamsala's Early Green Years

By far the most important single factor in "greening" Tibetans was the beginning of participation by the Dharamsala elite in institutions designed to promote the religious environmentalist paradigm, and their exposure to all the new cultural resources and global networking this offered. The first of such events that I am aware of took place in 1985. First, there was Tibetan attendance at one of the early international ecology and religion conferences.[12] During October 1985

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and prohibitions, both Buddhist and animist, associated with the land and its divine inhabitants.

[10] But *Shes bya* reported other local "environmental" stories very occasionally before Green Tibetans appeared. For example, in early 1986 (no.4, p.26) there was an article concerning rubbish around the environs of the Buddhist reliquary shrines visited by Tibetan pilgrims at Bodh Gayā.

[11] See, for example, *rang-byung khams* = "nature"; *rang-byung khor-yug* = "natural environment"; *rang-bzhin 'byung-khams* = "natural environment"; *rang-byung khams-kyi thon-khungs* = "natural resources"; *khams srung-skyob* = "nature "conservation"; *khor-yug srung-skyob* = "environmental protection"; *snod-bcud rten-'byung* = "ecology" (cf. to the traditional idea of *snod-bcud: phyi snod kyi 'jig rten dang bcud kyi sems can*); and even e-ko-lo-jī = "ecology." Compare these to the English entries (where they exist) in the English-Tibetan dictionaries by Chophel (1985), Dhongthog (1988) and Goldstein and Narkyid (1984).

[12] To my present knowledge Tibetan exiles did not participate in the earlier World Council of Churches programs on science and religion, humanity and nature in the late 1970s, which involved Theravada Buddhists from Sri Lanka.

a meeting of various religious and political representatives was convened near New York to discuss human survival issues (with conservation, nature protection, etc., high on the agenda). The Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders on Human Survival was founded at the conference. The Dalai Lama sent his clerical representative Doboom Tulku to this foundation meeting (Anon. 1993b). Later in 1988 both of them attended the first major international meeting organized by the Global Forum, the Global Survival Conference held at Oxford on April 11th-15th (Side 1988: 2-3).

More importantly, in October 1985 a meeting was held between an international team and representatives of the Tibetan GIE in order to initiate a joint project whose preliminary "research stage" was to be called Buddhist Perception of Nature: A New Perspective for Conservation. The project was funded by the World Wildlife Fund's (hereafter WWF) U.S. and Hong Kong branches and the New York Zoological Society. It was to be coordinated by Hong Kong based journalist and activist Nancy Nash, herself a former WWF consultant. Nash claims she was originally inspired to establish the Buddhist Perception of Nature project by the general philosophy of the Dalai Lama, whom she first met in 1979.[13] The Dalai Lama himself endorsed the project when it was finally established. The Asian members of the project team included both Thais and Tibetans, with research to take place both in Bangkok and Dharamsala respectively. The Tibetan side was directed by the Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs and the Information Office of the GIE, with involvement by both clerical and secular political representatives.[14] A follow-up meeting was to take place a year later in October 1986.

The aims of the Buddhist Perception of Nature project, as recorded by the Tibetan exile media at the time, were: "...comprehensive study and assembly of traditional Buddhist literature regarding human independence [sic] with the responsibilities to the earth and living things; design and production of efficient teaching tools; and use of the material in Buddhist-influenced communities to achieve better conservation of nature" (Anon. 1985: 9). Their success in fulfilling these specific aims is now difficult to judge, although the chief Tibetan scholar for the project later remarked "after a year's intensive research through the Buddhist sources on environment protection...[the group]...finally found a single stanza worth quoting from a Sutra...[andl...To be accurate, this single stanza was also quoted out of the context" (Yuthok 1992: 6). The resulting publication of the project, a short booklet titled *Tree of Life. Buddhism and Protection of Nature*, included hardly any published Tibetan input, although the whole text was also reproduced in Tibetan and Thai translations.

There were, however, other significant "results" to come out of the project. Not only did participation in Buddhist Perception of Nature give the Tibetan GIE full exposure to the religious environmentalist paradigm in institutional operation, it also brought Dharamsala firmly within the orbit of the WWF, the world's largest private conservation organization. Through this connection the GIE was invited to join a newly formed global network in 1986. Pedersen has de-

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[13] See Davies (1987: 31), where the exact statement from which she took her inspiration is recorded. Note that it contains no references to ecology, the environment, nature or Buddhism.

[14] A list of those involved in 1986 was reported in Shes bya (Anon. 1986: 15): Deputy Minister of Education rGya-ri Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan, the Publicity Secretary bSod-nams sTobs-rgyas, Assistant Private Secretary bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal, Junior Secretary for Religious Affairs g.Yu-thog Karma dGe-legs (a monk), Nancy Nash, Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (lecturer in religion and philosophy, Thammasat University, Bangkok, collaborator in Buddhist Perception of Nature project) and Sirajit Waramontari (Board of Trustees Wildlife Fund Thailand, collaborator in Buddhist Perception of Nature project). Bruce Bunting, director of WWF (U.S.) Asia Program, was also present for the initial meetings (Anon. 1985: 9).

scribed this network as "the most wideranging alliance between conservation and religion."[15] I will have more to say about this shortly.

The green build-up that had begun in 1985 carried on through 1986. On June 5th, 1986 the Dalai Lama produced his landmark statement, "An Ethical Approach to Environmental Protectionism," to commemorate World Environment Day and the special theme for the year, "Peace and the Environment." The appearance and wide circulation of this short (one page) statement helped put the Dalai Lama "on the map," as it were, as a global religious-environmental advocate. Its reprinting (often at the beginning) in many volumes concerning Tibet and the environment or Buddhism and ecology[16] came to serve as a sort of legitimation device, one which has only recently started to be replaced with his elegant Green Tibetan poem "The Sheltering Tree of Interdependence".[17]

From September 2nd-4th, 1986 the conference "Ecology and Principles for Sustainable Development" was held in Leh, Ladakh. It was hosted by the Ladakh Project and the Ladakh Ecological Development Group, whose members had already begun to creatively link Tibetan Buddhism and ecology prior to interest generated in Dharamsala. After the meeting the Dalai Lama, who did not attend, wrote a strong message of support (dated November 12th, 1986) for the project which is published as the frontispiece of the group's proceedings volume (and ahead of a similar message by the Indian Prime Minister of the day, Rajiv Gandhi). One section of the conference concerned Ecology and Buddhism, with a paper by the Ladakhi scholar and Buddhist eco-philosopher, Tashi Rabgyas, titled "Ecology and the Buddhist World View." In this work (and elsewhere) he emphasizes the importance of the Buddhist theory of interdependence (which he refers to as *rten-'brel)* for ecology, and quotes from the Tibetan Gelugpa reformer Tsongkhapa as well as other Buddhist texts (Tashi Rabgyas 1986).[18] The works of Tashi Rabgyas are significant because they appear to be one of the first modern efforts to systematically relate Buddhist teachings to ecology by a native Tibetan Buddhist. Exactly what influence his works may have had upon the Dharamsala elite is impossible to say, although one could note that the Buddhist components of most Green Tibetan statements place stress on the doctrine of interdependence.

The Tibetan community in exile-WWF global connection became activated again on September 29, 1986, when there was a special interfaith ceremony held at Assisi, Italy to mark the 25th anniversary of the WWF. At this huge meeting representatives from different world relig-

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[15] On which, see his account (1995: 270-71). An impression of the potential network of related organizations, institutions and individuals opened up to the Tibetan GIE through their participation in Buddhist Perception of Nature is found listed on the Acknowledgments page of *Tree of Life* (see Davies 1987).

[16] The statement was reprinted at the beginning of one of the first published collections of studies on Buddhism and ecology, *Buddhist Perspectives on the Ecocrisis* (ed. Sandell 1987), and as the first chapter of another early book on Buddhism and nature, *Tree of Life. Buddhism and Protection of Nature* (ed. Davies 1987). An edited version of it also reappeared quoted in the Buddhist position statement in the *Assisi Declarations* (World Wildlife Fund 1986), and it was further reprinted in Tibetan, English and various other European languages; e.g. see International Campaign for Tibet (1990: 57), Department of Information and International Relations (1992: v) and Tenzin Gyatso (1994: 1-2). The statement's fundamental appeal is that it is universal in character, and does not refer to Buddhism or Tibetans in any way; those specific identity references were to start appearing in 1987.

[17] It has recently appeared at the beginning of *Tibet Environment & Development News*, 1 (1994) and in Tenzin Gyatso (1994: 57-63). The poem is quite evocative in the original Tibetan (a significant point considering its Tibetan readers), but it has unfortunately lost its fine literary quality in the published English translations.

[18] He also composed a small booklet, titled *rTen 'brel*, in Tibetan (i.e., written Ladakhi) on the same topic. Aris (1990: 99) has also cited a 1984 Ladakhi publication which deals with environmental themes in a popular narrative form.

ions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam) were invited to make declarations on religion and nature both to their own adherents and to the rest of the world. A high ranking Tibetan exile cleric of the Gelugpa sect, Lungrig Namgyal Rinpoche, the abbot of the Higher Tantric College (i.e., rGyud-stod Grwatshang) was sent to participate at Assisi by the Tibetan administration. He contributed a statement intended to represent the Buddhist point of view, incorporating quotes from the Dalai Lama. His statement was then published in the now well-known *Assisi Declarations*(World Wildlife Fund 1986: 3-7).

All these events and connections during 1985-1986 provided graphic examples to the GIE in Dharamsala of how a Buddhist identity could be powerfully linked to the major global discourses of our time, such as environmentalism. It also showed that the whole world was a potential audience for such messages. It is from this point onwards that a politicized identity became linked with what had mainly been talk about Buddhism and nature, but which then was transformed into talk about Green Tibetans. Proof of this soon appeared on September 21st, 1987, when the Dalai Lama announced his acclaimed Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet, for which he was awarded the Noble Peace Prize two years later. Point Four of the plan was specifically dedicated to environmental protection, and this itself was no surprise after all the documented hard evidence of environmental damage in Tibet under Chinese occupation. It was the appearance of Green Tibetans in the text of the fourth point that is of interest to my concerns here: "Tibetans have a great respect for all forms of life. This inherent feeling is enhanced by the Buddhist faith, which prohibits the harming of all sentient beings, whether human or animal. Prior to the Chinese invasion, Tibet was an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment" (International Campaign for Tibet 1990: 50). Green Tibetans were now in Dharamsala to stay.

Marketing Green Tibetans

The late 1980s witnessed the beginning of a series of elaborations on the Green Tibetan image. These began to appear in all the major print and electronic media controlled by the GIE and disseminated from Dharamsala.[19] The same material was also distributed within its international network of supporting organizations.[20] It is significant that many of the Green Tibetan texts in GIE literature appeared in English and other Western languages before they got translated and edited for later publication in Tibetan versions, indicating clearly the priority target audience. In 1992 the production and dissemination of all environmental materials became institutionalized with the establishment of the so-called Environment Desk (which became the Environment & Development Desk in 1994) within the GIE's Department of Information and International Relations (hereafter DIIR). The DIIR itself was formerly the Information Office which was involved in running the original Buddhist Perception of Nature project in 1985. The DIIR also be-

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[19] Since the late 1980s Green Tibetan representations have appeared in the monthly *Shes bya* (in Tibetan), the bi-monthly *Tibetan Bulletin* (in English both as paper and electronic copy on the Internet, and also in French, Hindi and Marathi paper versions), all of which are produced by the Department of Information and International Relations of the GIE. Related materials have also appeared in English in other GIE organs, including *The Tibet Journal*, published quarterly by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and the annual *Chö Yang*, published by the Council of Religious and Cultural Affairs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In marked contrast to GIE media, that produced over the same period by the independent exile intellectual elite, in particular *Zla gsar* and the now popular *dMang gtso*, contain virtually no relevant material.

[20] The most significant exception to this is the handsome coffee table book *My Tibet* (see Tenzin Gyatso 1990) filled with evocative photographs by Galen Rowell and accompanying text by the Dalai Lama. To date this is the most impressive medium for conveying the Green Tibetan image, and one designed specifically to reach into the living-rooms of a wealthy Western readership.

gan publishing a series of books on environmental topics in 1992, first in English and later also in Tibetan, under the auspices of its newly created Environment Desk.[21]

When comparing this new material with the content of publications issued by the earlier Information Office, a radical turnaround in the image of the exile community projected by the GIE is quite apparent. The full-page photographs of Tibetans spraying pesticides around agricultural settlements or accounts of the large expenditures on deforestation for clearing settlement lands which appeared in GIE publications in the recent past[22] are now completely unimaginable and have given way to photos of tree planting ceremonies and stories of strong Tibetan Buddhist resistance to pesticide use.

One striking feature of all the output of the new Environment & Development Desk is the high production standards of its publications compared to other exile media. When contrasting GIE publications with their Chinese government counterparts recently, Kevin Garratt (1995: 65-67) commented on the generally low or modest standards of GIE production compared to the high quality Chinese finish. He correctly concluded that this reflects the budget the two governments are willing (or able) to allocate to the marketing of their respective messages. Judging by the high quality paper, full color photos on glossy covers and the layouts of the Environment & Development Desk's booklets and journals, the GIE has clearly decided to allot a significant budget to market the environment issue along with Green Tibetans themselves. In passing, we might also note that green GIE productions are not printed on recycled paper, the use of which is a strong symbolic indicator of ecological commitment that has become almost obligatory in the production of environmentalist literature over the last decade.

As is the case with other globally contextualized green identity representations, there has also always been a significant input made by well-intentioned Western supporters and interested non-Tibetan parties in elaborating and spreading versions of Green Tibetan*ness* as an integral part of an effort to fight both environmental degradation and Chinese colonial oppression in Tibet.[23] Getting the Green Tibetan image to do its work within this politicized framework has required a number of strategies on the part of both its Tibetan and Western presenters. The most obvious of these, and one in play right from the outset, has been simultaneously constructing a negative, ecologically destructive Chinese "Other," something which has, of course, never been difficult in light of the supporting contemporary evidence. The political subtext here is that Green Tibetans should gain their independence because they would "obviously" do a better job of maintaining the environment than the Chinese have in the past.[24]

An interesting variation of the above theme recently promoted by the GIE are the green economic and development policies proposed as alternatives to those implemented by the Chinese

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[21] The titles include (with first date of publication): *Environment and Development Issues 1992* (1992), 124pp.; *Tibet Environment & Development News*, 1 (1994), 36pp.; *His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama on the Environment. Collected Statements* (1994), 66pp.; *Bod kyi gna' bo'i zhing 'brog lam lugs* (1994), 21pp.; *Bod kyi rang byung khor yug ngo sprod dang / da lta'i gnas stangs / srung skyob skor* (1994), 97pp.; *Bod gangs ljongs kyi rtsa che'i srog chags ngo sprod* (1995), 75pp.

[22] See, for example, Information Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1981), plate between p.176-177, with the caption "Spraying insecticide in a maize field in south India." See also the text of pp. 155, 159, 169.

[23] On this issue see the comments by Huber (1991), Lohmann (1993) and Lopez (1994).

[24] All Tibetan-style Buddhist elites currently promoting Green Buddhist identities refer to an environmentally negative "Other," with attendant political subtexts. For the Bhutanese government and its supporters, it is Hindu Nepal, and, by extension, its own ethnic Nepali Hindu "Southern Bhutanese" population which it has troubles incorporating within its nationalist vision of an ethnic Bhutanese Buddhist state. For Ladakhi Buddhist nationalists it is the Muslim population of Ladakh and Kashmir from whom they would like to gain increased political and economic autonomy.

government in Tibet. Green Tibetans as a whole are strategically deployed as a kind of "foundation image" just before the main body of the long and detailed GIE alternative economy and development position paper (Department of Information and International Relations 1992: 28-29; cf. also Chapela 1992). Part of the political subtext of this document is that the now "green" Tibetan GIE in particular has the cultural authority to lead the vast majority of Tibetans still living in Tibet if independence were to be gained in the future. In order to publicly address and contest the same issues of economy, development and environment China has also recently represented its own very different "species" of Green Tibetans, one apparently "greened" by enlightened modern Chinese government policy initiatives and controls (Anon. 1994b),

Within this increasingly complex field Green Tibetans have come to serve competing agendas. These derive partly from features of the religious environmentalist paradigm, partly from the desire to present a "modern" image of Buddhism to the world and also from the polemics of the GIE political position. On the one hand, Green Tibetans are shown to have something akin to modern environmental knowledge and links, via Buddhism, to modern scientific ideas, as I have suggested above. On the other hand, we also find appeals to green "primitivism" (Ellen 1986; Sackett 1991) which have been a standard feature of environmentalist portrayals of non-Western peoples. The appeals have been designed to distance these people from the "evils" of modern society, its industrialized material culture and worldview, all of which are thought to be at the root of the environmental crisis. This latter end is sometimes achieved by invoking the Shangri-La image of a Tibetan society which was isolated, spiritually oriented and materially contented, an image which has long been a part of Western fantasies about Tibet.

In the process of creating such Green Tibetans, attempts at achieving any historical accuracy have been (perhaps intentionally) abandoned, and the suppression of all forms of negative evidence has become pervasive. It is worth giving a few typical examples here to demonstrate the audaciousness of this approach. In a recent effort to evoke Green Tibetan primitivism it was stated that "Tibet is mountainous and much of the terrain is very steep, so that many rivers have enormous drops in elevation. The potential hydroelectric power was *never harnessed*" (Atisha 1991: 14; emphasis added). Yet, as any educated Tibetan can tell you, hydroelectric power was established near Lhasa by the Tibetan government itself in 1924 in order to electrify the city (Dhondup 1984: 53-56). In fact, this development occurred much earlier in Tibet than in many other "pre-modern" parts of the world.

All Green Tibetan representations claim direct links between abstract religious values and positive environmental behaviour, which conforms to the norm established earlier by the religious environmentalist paradigm. In order to demonstrate the apparent results of religious values, highly positive descriptions of the Tibetan environment and Tibetan behavior from pre-1959 European travelogues are commonly quoted in the Green Tibetan sources. Many of the quotations are often recycled into multiple accounts, as has happened with one describing abundant wildlife in East Tibet during the 1940s taken from Leonard Clark's *The Marching Wind*, "...every few minutes we would spot a bear, a hunting wolf, herds of musk deer, kyangs, gazelles, bighorn sheep, or foxes. This must be one of the last unspoiled big-game paradises..." (1955: 283).[25] In Green Tibetan accounts such quotes are presented without exception as representative descriptions of the pristine state of Tibet's natural environment which resulted from the Tibetan's "perfect harmony with nature," despite ample negative evidence in the same original sources. For example, some pages earlier in Clark's *The Marching Wind* we read of how his

[25] For quotings of this passage see Atisha (1991: 10), Department of Information and International Relations (1992: 28) and Rowell (1990b: 6).

travelling party in East Tibet had scared vast herds of wild sheep such that, "...the country was so spooked now that Tibetans and Ngoloks [hunting here] would have a hard time getting any. This might seem ungenerous; but when they locate such herds – as proved by the hundreds if not thousands of old sheep skulls we had passed *en route* – Tibetans practically eliminate them. Strangely, they have no conception of game preservation, which would ensure never-ending bags" (1955: 154), and further "...there were few wild yaks due to the importation of repeating rifles. Scattered over the plains and mountains of Tibet, we had already seen hundreds, if not thousands, of the enormous white skulls of wild yaks, the fate of the herds written in bone and horn, as was that of the American bison a century ago" (1955: 253-4).[26] This is, unfortunately, merely one example among many.

Those who have critically read a wide range of environmentalist literature will know that such distorted approaches as outlined above are commonplace. In some cases they might be excused because of deep and genuine sentiments to stop environmental destruction on the part of their authors. In the Tibetan GIE case there is certainly (and tragically) enough contemporary evidence of ecological damage in Tibet to employ in its international appeals without needing to invent a particular Green Tibetan past. Such a past is required not because of environmental concerns (although it can be used to address them) but to construct a modern politicized and globally valid Tibetan identity. The sometimes distorted strategies for such a process are firmly established in Dharamsala, and as Heather Stoddard recently reminded us, within the ambit of the Tibetan GIE "The positive role of critical historiography in the forging of national consciousness is not yet tolerated" (1994: 152).[27] Jamyang Norbu's contemporary example of the GIE's representation of "Peaceful Tibetans" by rewriting history to fit the "preferred peace-loving image of Tibet as a Shangri-la" (1994: 198, 195-6) is another case of modern Tibetan identity tailored to current international discourse (nonviolence, world peace, etc.), which parallels Green Tibetans in many respects.

It would be a distortion on our part to view Green Tibetans as a completely specious tradition. However, to ask whether Green Tibetans are "myth or reality" is a distraction from a more important analytical insight. Instead, we should recognize the Green Tibetan image as the modern, reflexive and politicized identity that it is. We should also view it as an assertive expression of cultural creativity from Tibetan agents now operating successfully in a new global context, using the vast possibilities offered by the cultural resources of modernity.

Do Green Tibetans have a Future?

There is every indication that Green Tibetans are here to stay, at least as long as environmentalism strongly influences transnational discourse. After working with younger Tibetan exiles recently it has struck me how much a part of their present self-image the green identity has started to become, especially compared to the impressions gained only a decade ago. Others have noted this too. Before the advent of Green Tibetans, Margaret Nowak already thoughtfully observed that this generation was "Brought up deliberately to put their Tibetan national identity ahead of regional or sectarian considerations and schooled by the global village in the tactics and

[26] The reports of mass Tibetan hunting expeditions in Combe (1975: 108), Schäfer (1937: 28-29) and Tsering (1985: 205) confirm Clark's statements.

[27] The problems of critical historiography and censorship for Tibetan intellectuals is well-known in both exile and Western scholarly circles. At a more popular level in the exile community, a parallel and related phenomenon is also encountered in a range of attitudes which observers have variously discussed as "neopuritanism" (Nowak 1984), cultural propriety and cultural censorship (Calkowski 1991) or in terms of a keen sense of image management (Klieger 1992; Schrader 1990).

workings of effective international power ploys today" (1984: 150). Such an upbringing has come to fruition, according to Dawa Norbu, as "It is this new generation that under the Dalai Lama's influence, is projecting democracy, human rights and environmentalism as constitutive of the new Tibetan identity" (1994: 38). Research by Heinz Räther (1994) has revealed the relative "environmentalist" fluency attained recently by more senior members of the Dharamsala political and intellectual elite as well.

By way of an ending I would like to cite two specific examples of the ingenious re-presentations of Tibetan traditions currently taking place in the context of Green Tibetan*ness*, and which are offered to the rest of the world as an aid for troubled environmental times. The setting for the first was a large Tibetan Buddhist ritual event recently staged in a remote mountain valley in Bhutan. The area is said to be a *beyül (sbas-yul)* or "sacred hidden land resembling a sort of paradise on earth accessible only to the faithful," according to the Tibetan and Bhutanese tradition. The presiding lama, Dzongsar Jamyang Khentse, is reported to have explained to all present at the time that "...the main purpose of a *Beyul* was conservation of natural resources." He pointed out that the main difference between the mundane world and *Beyul* life is that while the former live lavishly, the latter follow subsistence living. They farm and grow just enough to survive, and there is no commerce at all. "In this way, the concept of *Beyul* should be popularized, even in the West, to conserve the environment"(Tenzin Rigden 1994: 2).[28]

My second example is an advertisement published in an American newsletter with an international readership. The ad concerns the marketing of certain Tibetan ritual vases that are constructed and empowered by exiled lamas then deposited outdoors to help bring about various desired positive effects: "The Earth Treasure Vase *(sa-bcumd* [sic] *bum-pa)* is meant to bless and empower the earth where it is placed. It is a way of putting positive mind energy into the natural environment. The secret nature of the Vase is the increase of goodness and the elimination of evil... In this time of environmental crisis we need whatever help we can find to bless and empower ourselves and the earth for future life and nourishment for all sentient beings" (Anon. 1993a).[29] According to the sales pitch in the text, these traditional environmental aids are now available to modern users for a "donation" of only US$45.

Whatever we may think about their effectiveness or otherwise, the offer of such green traditions is an assertion by some modern Tibetan peoples that their own "unique culture" is a valid and even important one for the contemporary world, rather than merely a curious product of a bygone age.

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[28] In the Tibetan textual accounts of *beyül* the agriculture in such "hidden lands" is usually described with crops that require no cultivation but grow by themselves, or as having a full range of grains and legumes as might be found on the plains of India rather than the high Himalaya, or yielding barley with phenomenal nutrient values, and so on. Agricultural tools are either hidden in these places, or guides instruct one to carry them in at the time of entry; see, for instance, Brauen-Dolma (1985: 249) and Reinhard (1978: 23-26).

[29] Namkhai Norbu's interesting explanation (in Tibetan and English) of this tradition as it existed in pre-modern Tibet is recorded in Tucci (1966: 157-162, 187-8).

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