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LIVING WITH "TIBET":
THE LOCAL, THE TRANSLOCAL, AND THE CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY OF DHARAMSALA

By

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Susan T. Chen

This dissertation pursues two interrelated objectives. First, it examines the subjectivity formations of Tibetans constructed around but sometimes also noticeably deviating from the discourse of the Tibetan nation which the Dharamsala-based Tibetan polity-in-exile has cultivated since the early 1960s. By focusing on the locally and translocally lived quotidian lives and their representation of two groups of Tibetan exiles in Dharamsala, those who often call themselves the "India-born" and those whose more recent trans-Himalayan arrival from the homeland earns them the notorious reputation of "newcomers," I explicate the ways in which the very subjective cognitive and emotional states of individual Tibetans intersect with larger sociocultural and political structural factors real to them. Second, it explores what I term "the Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala." Counter to the well known yet often reified and narrow definition of Dharamsala as the capital-in-exile of the nation-state Tibet, I argue that the diversely lived life worlds of Tibetans – as exemplified in the cases of India-born cohorts and newcomers – render the dynamics and multiplicity of the locale's Tibetan significance. By utilizing the method of ethnographic fieldwork – primarily in Dharamsala but also including intermittent travel to other South Asian Tibetan settlements and the Tibetan areas in China, my inquiry on the subjectivities of a people and the cultural geography of a place elicit domains of Tibetans' experience which are emerging but yet to be articulated. Given that "Tibet" and "Tibetans" have for decades been locked inside the competing ground of image representation participated in by the elites of the nation and their international supporters and by their Chinese adversaries, the emergent nuances of everyday thinking and practice which this dissertation emphasizes are urgently needed and meant to be interventional, presenting my attempt to broaden and complicate what has been known of the people and the exilic establishment of their nation.

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Acknowledgements

My thanks and gratitude goes foremost to Tibetans whom I have met over these years during which this project gradually grew into its current shape. In order to protect their privacy and in some cases security, I keep them anonymous here and mostly under pseudonyms throughout the dissertation. Nevertheless, it has been their trust, openness, and friendship which have made the project a rich and memorable learning experience. *Tashi Delek* to you all!

In particular, I want to dedicate this work to those inside Tibet who were willing to spell out how little they actually know about their compatriots-in-exile. In the most sincere case, I was told: "Yes, as Tibetans, we share the Dalai Lama and many other Tibetan symbols. But what are the experiences the exiles really live? Do we really know? I doubt it." Words like these have been inspirational; they are credited for the zeal that I have had to capture the nuances presented in the dissertation.

The sense of isolation and loneliness which is so often stereotypically associated with anthropologists and their fieldwork in the remote corners on earth was not quite my experience throughout the research phases of this project. In this regard, my appreciation goes to Jane, Mona, Sanal, Gabriel, Jan, Emillie, Kate, and other "foreign" pals I had in Dharamsala. Many thanks for your companionship which made my life away from home joyful and less lonesome, your generosity to share your Tibetan and Indian networks with me, and your observations of and insights on the community.

Intellectual encouragement and moral and emotional support of this project also often came from mentors and colleagues in the field of Tibetan Studies. To name only some of them whose passion and commitment has from time to time galvanized mine: Dr. Robert Barnett, the late Dr. Dawa Norbu, Dr. Maggie Hui, Dr. Losang Rabgey, Dr. Carol McGranahan, Dr. Meilin Pan, Gen Tsering Tashi, Dr. Emily Yeh, Su-jie Own, Leigh M. Sangster, and Stacy van Vleet.

At Emory, I was greatly benefited by the guidance and expectations of my academic advisor Dr. Anna Grimshaw. Also on my dissertation committee are Dr. Bruce Knauft and Dr. Robert Paul. I am equally grateful for the trust and patience they have placed in my intellectual capacity. During its proposal stage, this project was supervised by Dr. Ellen Schattschneider who is now at Brandeis University. I thank her guidance and inspiration as well. As explained in the introductory chapter of the dissertation, my interest in the Tibetan subject (and then the discipline of cultural anthropology) was largely the result of one summer internship cofunded by Emory and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. In this regard, I acknowledge the kick-off role of Dr. Ivan Karp who supervised the internship. Thanks are also due to funding for my research provided by the Vernacular Modernities Fellowship of the Ford Foundation and the Graduate Research Award of the Emory University Fund for Internationalization.

Three teachers I had prior to entering the doctoral program at Emory have been particularly influential to the kind of scholarly engagement which I hope will show through the dissertation: the late Dr. Edward T. Chien, Geshe Lhundrup Sopa, and Dr. Usha Nilsson. To the siblings and their spouses who have been the major caregivers of our aging parents, my gratitude is beyond words. To Dad and Mom, sorry for the delay, this time I am really done with schooling! Finally, for the delicious meals he always miraculously puts on the table, for his persistent support for this project, for his good humor and companionship, and for his unconditional love, I thank my husband and best friend Jim Hastings.

CONTENTS

List of Figures

Abbreviations

CTA	-	Central Tibetan Administration
CTSA	-	Central Tibetan Schools Administration (under the Ministry of Education of Indian Government)
DIIR	-	Department of Information and International Relations (under the CTA)
IIC	-	India International Center
PRC	-	People's Republic of China
TAR	-	Tibetan Autonomous Region
TCV	-	Tibetan Children's Village
TRRC	-	Tibetan Refugee Reception Center (under the CTA)
TYC	-	Tibetan Youth Congress
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

PROLOGUE:
A POST-2008 CLARIFICATION

Spring 2008 was an eventful time for Tibetans as well as their observers. In exile, several activist groups determined to seize the opportunity of the upcoming Beijing Olympic Games to draw greater international attention to the Tibetan cause dear to them. Meanwhile, monks from the monasteries adjacent to Lhasa, the capital city of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) in China, held their protests which quickly escalated into urban unrest and ethnic conflicts inside the city. News of these developments spread through shortwave radio, television, and particularly internet and cell phone communications that had in the past half decade kept the globally scattered Tibetan population more connected than before.[1] More protests erupted in multiple locations on the Tibetan Plateau in a matter of days; the crackdowns of the Chinese authorities and the anti-Tibetan sentiment of the Chinese public were also swiftly intensified. In semi-rural North Carolina where I and my husband live and work, I anxiously followed the media coverage of the unfolding incidents in the translocal world of Tibetans and soon realized the degree to which my substantially drafted dissertation could be left in a peculiar place because of what had been happening.

While the protests simultaneously took place on the Tibetan Plateau, nearly immediately both Tibetans in and outside the homeland and Tibet specialists from the

[1] While the protests were still ongoing, Tsering Shakya (2008) came up with a nuanced observation of the role which mobile phones and text messaging had played: "It is noticeable that very few protests took place in Western Tibet, where there no mobile phone network in operation, whereas many took place to the East and in regions on the borders of Sichuan and Qinghai, where the system is well developed" (18).

academic and advocacy circles agreed that the pace and scale of the unfolding 2008 episodes was unprecedented. In particular, commentators often compared the lay population's participation in the pan-Tibetan incidents in 2008 with the more or less isolated and monastic-centered Lhasa protests in the late 1980s. I have since heard my own Tibetan acquaintances in India, China, North America, and Europe stating that "nothing will be the same again."

Some of those who have grown up as ethnic minority citizens in China actually felt relieved. As the way in which they explained it, the discontent of the Tibetan people under the Chinese rule finally came to the surface and there was no longer a place for the regime to deny the failure of its Tibet policy. For others of a similar upbringing who used to be less interested in politics, the unrest in 2008 and particularly the indiscriminate searches and arrests launched by the Chinese state afterward meant the politics had now come to their door. On the exilic side, some took the widespread protests on the homeland plateau as proving the existence of "Greater Tibet" which had long been criticized as an *a*historical claim of the exiles; others saw the intensity of the events as marking the end of the era "when refugees from Tibet sat on top of their luggage waiting to go home tomorrow." In more words of the same Tibetan who told me that his childhood in Dharamsala was largely about hearing adults in the family talking about their "plan to go home next year," "we are going to have another fifty years of good fight…."

All of these perceptions were collected from Tibetans with whom I had direct contacts during and right after those intense months in Spring 2008. In one way or the other, my interlocutors often concluded that "nothing will be the same again." Although

what each of these individuals referred to was somehow varied, they were similarly overwhelmed and seemed to all suggest that a tipping point of some sort had been reached. On my part, while empathizing with them about what had recently happened and understanding their strong feeling about it, I also consider it an analytical obligation to distinguish one's experiencing and/or witnessing the immediate magnitude of these episodes from the perspectives needed to actually pin down their lasting significance. My concern on this is simple:

What happened in the Spring months of 2008 remains too contemporary; until time allows Tibetans and concerned others to manifest their ways of remembering, forgetting, and living with its aftermath, there is essentially nothing tangible which one can use to estimate alterations that the eventful 2008 might have triggered. In this regard, having heavily relied on the fieldwork I intermittently conducted between 2000 and 2005 to write about "the present state" of Tibetans' everyday life experience and its highly-patterned representation, I ponder ways in which I can possibly resituate that same presentness. On the one hand, given the fact that these most recent incidents are extraordinary, should not the present which my dissertation documents now be read as aspects of Tibetans' "pre-2008" experience? Conversely, it will take time before possible forms of the people's post-2008 reality begin to emerge; I cannot rush to any claim as though I have already recognized what is taking shape.

Such a circumstance under which the dissertation is now completed is apparently not something for which I could have asked; meanwhile, what is equally real is the unexpected explanatory gap between one moment of the experiences real to so many Tibetans whose stories enrich this dissertation and the other when Tibetans are now

overwhelmed, feeling that they are confronted with realities of a drastically varied equation. Knowing that I am not ready yet to come up with any quick fix of the gap, I choose to leave it intact. It is my way to acknowledge the seriousness of the landmark year 2008.[2]

Rather, for the time being at least, I would like to invite my readers to bear in mind that, when you read the thesis hereafter, please bear in mind that the business-as-usual Tibetan experiences which I highlight and try to put into perspective all took place prior to the eventful 2008. I would be delighted if you actually find some of my analyses prognostic. While this or that point of my assessments throughout the dissertation might sound irrelevant to or even conflicting with the Tibetan realities which you now see from a post-2008 perspective, please still try to recall that, once upon a time, Tibetans did go about their everyday lives, explore their possibilities, cope with their predicaments, and express themselves without the year 2008 serving as a reference.

[2] I am certainly not alone among Tibet anthropologist in feeling pressed by the 2008 incidents to reconsider implications of our research and writing. For an example on this, see Makley 2009a and McGranahan 2009.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO DHARAMSALA AND TIBETANS

> By subjectivity, I mean the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fears that animate acting subjects. But I always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on (Ortner 2006:105).
>
> …. a 'building perspective,' according to which worlds are made before they are lived in…. a 'dwelling perspective," according to which the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, only arise within the current of their life activities (Ingold 2000:154).

This dissertation focuses on two interrelated modes of inquiry: Firstly, it is an ethnographic account of the subjectivity formations of Tibetans constructed around and sometimes noticeably deviating from the version of Tibetan national identity which has developed along with the polity-in-exile of the nation established in north India since the early 1960s. To accomplish this, I adopt the dual definitions of "subjectivity" put forth by Ortner (cited above) and pay close attention to the zones where sociocultural formations intersect with the very subjective cognitive and emotional states of individuals, inquiring how Tibetan individuals go about their quotidian lives when "Tibet" is at once a given and an artificially manipulated identity marker in their life worlds. Secondly, the dissertation explicates what I term "the Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala," concerning ways in which the lived experiences of Tibetans attach new meanings to the place which, located on the Indian side of the Himalayan foothills, is generally referred to as the "capital" of the exilic Tibetan nation-state. In this regard, I ask how the "Tibetan" significance of Dharamsala has been evolving, who has helped complicate the Tibetan

geography of the place, and what their ways are of doing so. To pursue these questions, I follow the "phenomenological" steps which Tim Ingold and others (e.g. Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; Peteet 2005; Richardson 1982; Rodman 1992; Turton 2005) have taken to study interfacial relationships between human subjects and places where their lives unfold and cultures evolve.[3]

By keeping the subjectivities of a people and the cultural geography of a place as the dual foci of my inquiry, I am able to examine the dynamics and multiplicity of Tibetans' contemporary experience that have hitherto largely remained in an emerging state, that is, in a state which is for the most part "active and pressing but not yet fully articulated" (Williams 1990[1977]:126) to many Tibetans and their observers.[4] To unpack human experiences at such an ambivalent stage is already an intellectual challenge to the discipline of cultural anthropology in general. Moreover, given the degree to which "Tibet" and "Tibetans" have in recent decades been locked inside the narrow competing ground of image representation participated in by the elites of the nation and their international supporters and adversaries, the emergent nuances of everyday thinking and practice scrutinized throughout this dissertation are urgently needed and meant to be interventional, presenting my attempt to broaden and complicate what has been known of the people and the exilic establishment of their nation.

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[3] For a far more ambitious yet ethnographical ungrounded account of the "symbolic geography" of Dharamsala, see Anand 2002.

[4] Scholars in the field of Tibetan Studies have occasionally delineated cultural expressions and products that Tibetan exiles developed as "emergent" (e.g. Korom 1997a:2) or "emerging" (e.g. Huber 1997:103). However, the usage of these two adjectives in the Tibetan case has so far been largely descriptive. In contrast, by consciously borrowing the "emerging" state of experience which Raymond Williams theorized to pursue his sociological studies of literature and art, I try to put into perspective some aspects of the living universe of Tibetans which has not been short of its own ambivalence and contradictions, and which, as many informants of this project have said, "is too complex to be explained."

For those who are aware of the situation of "national Tibet" in modern times,[5] the mass displacement of Tibetans during the middle decades of the 20th century is a well known event. Yet, what should also be noted from the outset is that, from the 1980s onwards, the scattered population has also become increasingly interconnected – often by modes of communication and transportation that have only very recently become available.[6] According to the most recent data, there are approximately 5.4 million Tibetans who are categorized as one of the 55 ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China (PRC).[7] Meanwhile, there are about 120,000 to 130,000 of those who are commonly known as Tibetan exiles – slightly more than 90% of them can be found residing in or coming and going among various settlements on the South Asian subcontinent, and the remaining 10% in different locales worldwide (*TDS* 1998). Compared with either the total number under the Chinese governance or merely those in exile, the estimated 8,000 Tibetan dwellers in Dharamsala are proportionally small. Yet, for reasons I will later explain, Dharamsala has over time grown into a place that is universally known to but diversely understood by Tibetans whose dispersal is global in scale, who travel under various circumstances in all directions, and who maintain different degrees of virtual contact with one another. In theoretical terms, this means my

[5] To criticize the theoretical inadequacy which she found in "ethnicity" as handled by scholars of Tibetan Studies, Sara Shneiderman (2006) has recently made a seminal attempt to establish the analytical distinction "between 'Tibetan' as a dominant national identity which contains its own networks of ethnicity established through civilizing projects, and 'Tibetan' as a peripheral ethnic identity within other national contexts, such as China, Nepal and India" (10). Given the legitimacy which the Dharamsala-based Tibetan polity-in-exile perceives itself as having inherited from the Lhasa regime, the "Tibet" which serves as a constant point of reference throughout this dissertation is foremost a "national" entity according to the elementary distinction Shneiderman lays out. Conversely, as my analysis also illustrates, when it comes to their everyday lives, individuals of the Tibetan nation who are "refugees" in India and/or minority citizens in China often act and define themselves in ethnic terms.

[6] Cable TV, internet, and cell phone apparently represent the most recent phase of this development. See Chen n.d.b for my preliminary research on this subject.

[7] The number (5.4 million) is from *Chinese Census 2000*. At the time of drafting this chapter, I did not have direct access to the census but cited from the information edited and posted online by The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the PRC.

"subjectivity" and "cultural geography" inquiries have had to go "translocal," that is, "local to local" (Guarnizo and Smith 1998:13), in order to bring about the intricacy ingrained in the contemporary world Tibetans inhabit.[8]

Why "subjectivity" and "cultural geography"? How salient could they be in organizing and interpreting the empirical data that I have accumulated for this project? Far from being always certain about the foci I am here presenting, for years I have been frequently bogged down by a variety of theoretical issues that my Tibetan case study seems to embody at one moment and to which it can look completely irrelevant at another. Swinging back and forth between the excitement and the frustration that this project constantly generated, I often found myself recalling those narratives of "Tibetan tea" and "Chinese soy sauce" that I had encountered during the Tibetan Cultural Festival hosted by the Smithsonian Institution on the National Mall in Washington D.C. in summer 2000. It is the pain, the bittersweetness and, more importantly, the contradictions these narratives once captured that have from time to time helped enthuse me to carry through this project. So I cannot think of any better alternative to foreground what is ahead than revisiting those moments during the Smithsonian festival when the "nationalities" of tea and soy sauce mattered.

* * *

The Tibetan program prepared for the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in

[8] Beyond adopting its literary definition as "local to local," my usage of the concept "translocal" to pursue the Tibetan case is also derived from the more recent approach by Tom Oakes and Louisa Schein (2006) to address "a simultaneous analytical focus on nobilities and localities" (1). To elaborate what they have in mind, the coauthors state: "Translocality deliberately confuses the boundaries of the local in an effort to capture the increasingly complicated nature of spatial processes and identities, yet it insists on viewing such processes and identities as place-based rather than exclusively mobile, uprooted or 'traveling. Second, by insisting on this place-based perspective on mobility, translocality also seeks to view subject formation as a place-making process imbricated with the experience (real or imaginary) of mobility and connection across space and scale" (20).

summer 2000 was co-produced by the Smithsonian and the Dharamsala-based Tibetan Government-in-Exile.[9] As it happened, I was engaged under the aegis of the Emory-Smithsonian Folklife Fellowship to study the program – that is, to view it as an artifact of "public culture" and examine the cultural politics that its practice entailed during a six-week period before, during and after the outdoor event was staged (Chen n.d.c).

As indicated by its title "Tibetan Culture beyond the Land of Snows," and by the collaborative role played by the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and advocacy groups supporting its cause, the didactic message of the program was from the very beginning very predictable. Once the program was set in motion, there were plenty of very emotional moments like the one here that I noted in my fieldnotes:

> Introducing himself as an average Tibetan living in exile for most of his adult life, Jampa was on the "Narrative Stage" this morning to tell his life story.[10] The air was still cool and the sun and dust on the Mall were yet to reach their daily peak….To emphasize the "uprootedness" that he wanted to convey to his small audience of about twenty people, at one point of his half-hour narrative in English, the old man shouted with tears pouring down from his eyes: "Where is Tibetan tea?" "Where is the tea to be seen in the festival?" "Isn't this a Tibetan festival? Don't they know *we Tibetans have to have Tibetan tea every day*?" (Italics added)

As I later learned, the Tibetan tea that Jampa publicly cried out for that morning as something "national" usually refers, in the context of the exilic Tibetan community, to the hot beverage made out of long boiled tea churned with butter and salt. Among many other regional ways in which Tibetans prepare their tea, it is known to have originated from Lhasa and central Tibet and to have been "nationalized" in exile.

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[9] The Smithsonian Folklife Festival has been an annual event since 1967. For its history and stated mission of cultural democracy, see the information posted at http://www.folklife.si.edu/center/festival.html. For the curatorial visions and collaborations of the Tibetan program in 2000, see Borden 2000.

[10] Unless my discussion is involved with narratives and works of representation done by specific artists, writers, or other types of public figures whose name recognition I can not avoid, all of the individuals who appear in the dissertation are given pseudonyms. For the same reason of protecting their privacy and identity, when it is necessary I alter minor details of their biographies and of the contexts under which I came into contact with them.

It was not my intention to verify the claim by Jampa that "we Tibetans have to have Tibetan tea every day" when, a couple of days later, I sat and chatted with Lhamo, a visitor to the program who was taking a break from the crowd and willing to talk.[11] Within a few minutes of our conversation, I gathered that Lhamo was born in Tibet but grew up in Dharamsala. Having been married for nearly twenty years to her husband who was also a Tibetan and had left one of the refugee settlements in South India for the United States before her, Lhamo was the mother of three teens and a manager in charge of a well-staffed catering business in New England. "Tibetan tea" somehow got into our conversation and caught my attention:

> Have butter tea everyday? No. It is only for very special occasions; perhaps once a year – during the *Losar* (New Year celebration according to Tibetan calendar - *Tib.*) or when important lamas come to our house. Otherwise, I am so busy. I get up early…. and have to be at work early. Tea bag with sugar and milk, that's good enough for me….

Without me further pressing on this tea subject, Lhamo added more detail to the quotidian life she was narrating: "When I have time, I like to make Indian tea with cardamom and ginger in it. I like it."

Here I do not want to run ahead of myself. It would take me many more years to gradually understand the issues of subjectivity embedded in the very mundane remarks Lhamo was casually making. At that time, as little as I had known Tibet and its people's experience in modern times, I at least noticed that the Tibetan tea to which Jampa

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[11] As a research fellow, I was required to wear my staff tag throughout the festival. This meant that, when I approached Lhamo and others (Tibetans and non-Tibetans) on site, my official affiliation with the Smithsonian was supposedly always visible. However, it was perhaps because the idea to "study" a festival rarely rang a bell to anyone that I had an impression that people usually thought I was taking a break from my work and happened to be in a mood of chatting with them. Initially, this was very much the case. But I soon realized how revealing the kind of informal encounter that I had with Lhamo could be. Such a learning-at-the-site experience was just the beginning which gradually evolved into the methodological principles which, as detailed in Chapter 2, I consciously employed to conduct my fieldwork for the dissertation.

appeared so attached on the stage was not quite an absolute when another Tibetan was relating (yet not performing or displaying) her everyday life experience. Such an "on-and-off-stage" difference by itself might at first sound too evident to be dwelled upon. Nevertheless, it was the consistent recurrence of this same contrast throughout the entire Smithsonian Tibetan program that caused me to wonder what can be further learned regarding the "Tibetan" experience that the program had intended to have its audience take home.

For example, my attention was also drawn to a musician, introducing the song he was about to perform in the concert tent of the program: "It's a song of Tibetan nomads; the cowboys sing it when they ride on the Tibetan plateau, the home of my parents and the country I have never been to." By the time I got to know the musician off the stage, I was told that he is more used to singing in concert halls: "Singing in the open space like this (pointing to the giant concert tent standing on the dusty Mall) hurts my throat; it tires me…. I just want to return to the hotel, jumping into the pool." Singing as a pony-tailed cowboy on the Tibetan plateau yet preferring concert halls and swimming pools? Once again, while it is hard to miss the gap between the staged Tibetan persona and the young man off the stage, what could the "incoherence" that this same individual embodies possibly reveal – in terms of the state of Tibetan culture that he was supposed to represent?

Finally, "Chinese" soy sauce experienced its moment(s) of awkwardness during the festival. It so happens that, along with *tsampa* (barley flour – *Tib.*) and butter tea, *momo* was also selected to represent the Tibetan foodways to the audience. While it is not uncommon to call for soy sauce to season the dumplings' filling, the nationality of the sauce apparently disturbed the Tibetan woman who, paired with the other woman doing

the demonstration, had to narrate the *momo*-making steps in the foodways kitchen of the festival. In one of the kitchen hours I attended, her justification for the presence of the needed "Chinese" seasoning went like this: "We Tibetans also use and produce soy sauce…. Of course, today we couldn't have it here; we just have to use Chinese soy sauce." Compared with how eloquent she was in an earlier presentation when she was introducing the benefits of the "Tibetan" dairy diet (versus vinegary consumption that gives American women osteoporosis), she was apparently tongue-tied and felt obligated to clarify the discrepancy between the Tibetan foodways and its call for an ingredient that appeared to her inconveniently "Chinese." I did not get around to returning to repeated *momo* sessions to see whether she might have found other ways to go about the issue that appeared to have publicly embarrassed her. Conversely, from the recipient side of the foodways demonstration, I gathered at least one Tibetan's complaint: "I don't understand why they chose to show such simple things as *tsampa*, butter tea…. They are too simple. There is not too much to show." "What would be your idea of how to present Tibetan cuisine?" I asked and was told that "it should be a display of a buffet combining *momo* and stir-fried delicacies." Having some idea about the pan-Asian features shared by both the Tibetan and Chinese cuisines, I quietly pondered how many times soy sauce and its problematic nationality would have to be publicly acknowledged if this woman's idea were to be implemented for the program. Meanwhile, I was very sure that the awkwardness that soy sauce's nationality might represent – as I had just learned from the foodways presenter – did not occur to the other Tibetan when she brought up the buffet idea in our small chat.

* * *

From the Tibetan tea which triggered tears of Jampa telling his in-exile life story to the songs of the Tibetan home where the musician had never been and the Chinese soy sauce which disturbed the otherwise cohesive demonstration of Tibetan foodways, there was apparently a repertoire according to which "Tibetan nation" was preformed for the festival audience on the National Mall. On the other hand, given the way in which Lhamo was taken aback by the idea of making "Tibetan tea" on a daily basis, the young musician announced his expectation to jump into the pool, and the other Tibetan who appeared to be unconcerned with the hybrid features of what she saw as constitutive of Tibetan delicacies, lived Tibetan experiences and perceptions evidently exceed their collective representation. By the end of the festival, I had accumulated more anecdotes which all suggested a similar gap between ways in which ethnic Tibetans in their exilic contexts go about their everyday life and the discursively structured representation of their Tibetan nationhood.

As mundane as these contrasts were, the pattern that they seemed to have embodied impressed me: What could possibly be its larger implications? Having had my curiosity aroused, where could my further inquiry begin? More importantly, what does it mean to know about a nation – particularly a nation of displacement – lived by its small and scattered population? What should an observer do with the attributes of lived experience that are not quite included in scripts of the nation's formal self-representation?

Back in 2000, neither empirically nor analytically was I ready to respond to any of these questions.[12] However, many members of the Tibetan delegation for the festival

[12] For instance, at that time I did not realize the nationality issue of soy sauce could be understood as such a direct example of what Simon Harrison (2003) tries to theorize: "Paradoxically, it is the commonalities between groups that create conditions that make ethnic distinctions necessary….What appear as ethnic or

were from Dharamsala and other Tibetan settlements in India. The friendship we developed in Washington, D.C. and the puzzled feeling I had about the world they came from were so strong that, when it was summer again in 2001, I made my way to India to meet them. This is how this dissertation project was originally begun. It has since then led to my encounters with many other Tibetans in Dharamsala and other locales (such as Delhi, Dehra Dun, Darjeeling, Chennai, and Kathmandu in South Asia; Lhasa and other smaller urban locations in the part of China where the Tibetan population is dense; and Beijing, Taipei, Atlanta, Washington, D.C. and New York City). The complexity of the quotidian experience lived and sometimes, but not always, purposefully articulated by these people, their structures of feeling, their sense of self and collectivity have never failed to intrigue me. To bring out the richness of what they have envisioned and more often negotiated with or struggled for is my way to appreciate their generosity and openness that has allowed me the opportunity to step into their shoes. At the same time, it enables me to gradually reach a better understanding of those on-and-off-stage ways of being Tibetan which fascinated me in the first place.

What is ahead in *Living with "Tibet"* is thus a small segment of such an ethnographic exercise done by way of centering on the divergent meanings that the experiences of these Tibetans have ascribed to Dharamsala, a locale that is hard to be neglected because of what has happened in modern Tibetan history. While the locale will always be kept as the focal point of my analyses, the protagonists the dissertation features were not necessarily its residents during the first few years of the 21st century when I encountered them. Among those whose formations of subjectivity are in one way or

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national 'differences' are, at another level, more or less elaborate and effortful attempts by groups to forget, deny, or obscure their resemblances" (345).

another related to what they consider Dharamsala as having represented, some of them were physically based in the locale, others either had already moved away from it or had never been there. In this way, I set out to construct a Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala that is simultaneously local and translocal.

Modern Tibetan history and Dharamsala

Termed the "Democratic Reform," the redistribution of land ownership that the Chinese state launched nationwide in 1955 became severely intrusive to the ways of life of ethnic Tibetans residing in the borderland regions of China's Yunnan, Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces (overlapped with "Kham" and "Amdo" according to the geographic division indigenous to the Tibetan cultural world) during the second half of the 1950s.[13] The upset Tibetan population began to escape from their home areas in the east to Lhasa, the city which had long been the cultural and religious center of the Tibetan civilization.[14] In the name of protecting the Dalai Lama and Buddhism, the armed leaders among the escapees camping at the outskirts of the city began to forge a new form of collectivity that, only in retrospect, can be seen as the prototype of what was later referred to as Tibetan national identity (Dawa Tsering 2003; Dreyfus 2002 and 2005;

[13] Tibetans were not the only "ethnic minority" – categorized according to the nationality policy of the PRC – subject to the 1955 land reform. Yet, while the implementation of the policy in eastern Tibet devastated the population in Kham and Amdo, it was stopped from reaching the region of Tibet ruled by the Dalai Lama's Lhasa government primarily because the Chinese state found itself obligated to observe the Seventeen-Point Agreement that it had signed with the Lhasa regime in 1951. For the immediate and lasting impacts of the land reform policy on other minority groups, see Gladney 1991, Mueggler 2001, and Schein 2000; for the principle of exceptionalism that the Chinese state applied to its Tibetan policy in the 1950s, see Goldstein 1993:91-2 and Goldstein *et al* 2004:207-11.

[14] For the distinction between the Lhasa-based "political" Tibet and the much larger "ethnographic" or cultural Tibet that has been independent from the Lhasa regime from time to time, see Dawa Norbu 1979, Goldstein 1993, Samuel 1996, and Shneiderman 2006.

McGranahan 2001).[15] At that point, as pointed out by Tsering Shakya (1999:163-80), the arrival of these refugees from eastern Tibet was not particularly well received by the Lhasa Tibetans. Not feeling much in common, neither the uprooted ethnic Tibetans nor the statesmen in Lhasa trusted each other. Moreover, among the Lhasa aristocracy and monastic officials there was dissension about how to deal with the new situation of Chinese rule. As a result, once the tension between the refugees and the Chinese occupational force in Lhasa escalated in spring 1959, the last chance for the Lhasa regime to intervene swiftly vanished. In the midst of rumors, confusion, and chaos in his capital, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso (1935~) and his entourage fled Tibet to seek asylum in India – along with a steady flow of displaced Tibetans who had started to arrive in the northern part of the South Asian subcontinent in the late 1950s.[16] One year later, in 1960, having not changed the position of his government that refused to recognize Tibet as an independent country, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru quietly granted Dharamsala as the headquarters to the "deterritorialized" Tibetan polity headed by the young Dalai Lama, which by then had been renamed as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).[17]

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[15] Prior to this point of time, the Westernized aristocrats in Lhasa and wealthy merchants and intellectual figures from eastern Tibet had during the first half of the 20th century made several attempts to reform the country. As it turned out, none of these earlier efforts had been able to go too far before they failed. For details on the subject, see Goldstein 1989 and 2004 and McGranahan 2001.

[16] While it has rarely been acknowledged in scholarly works on modern Tibet, the journey into exile that the Fourteenth Dalai Lama took in 1959 was in a way a culturally very Tibetan practice. Prior to this most recent exile of the Dalai Lama, it had been typical for religious or political figures and even Tibetan commoners to flee home when friction or other forms of trouble were foreseen as imminent (Aziz 1978; Goldstein 1989).

[17] My description of the Tibetan polity reestablished in Dharamsala as "deterritorialized" is intended in a literal sense to reflect the territory loss of the Lhasa regime headed by the Dalai Lama. It has nothing to do with the usage of the term better known to the scholars of migration studies: "In contrast to the past, when nation-states were defined in terms of a people sharing a common culture within a bounded territory, this new concept of (deterritorialized) nation-state includes as citizens those who live physically dispersed within the boundaries of many other states, but who remain socially, politically, culturally, and often economically part of the nation-state of their ancestors" (Basch *et al* 1994: 8).

Besides serving as a military base strategically important to India's northwest frontier, approximately 500 kilometers northwest of Delhi and 100 kilometers from the Pakistani border by winding mountain roads, Dharamsala was back then a deserted hill station mostly unknown to the outside world. While needed infrastructure was yet to be planned and constructed at the site, the Dharamsala arrangement certainly helped both the Tibetan and the Indian politicians who were confronted with the task of resettling the other 80,000 refugees already in the country. On the Tibetan side, it gradually fortified the role of spokespersons for the rest of the refugee population that the Dalai Lama and his officials had, upon arriving in exile, immediately designated to themselves (Tsepon Shakabpa 1967:321). From the perspective of the Indian government, having a stabilized Tibetan leadership to coordinate the relief efforts eased its own pressure of having to directly deal with the refugee masses and their humanitarian crises (Dawa Norbu 2004:193-4).[18] Meanwhile, in the course of allocating international aid to the refugees, the CTA, which has since then been better known as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile,[19] and the elite sector of the refugee population also launched into a sequence of nation-building initiatives. Ranging from projects of cultural conservation and schools for the refugee children to what was known as the "token" tax collected among the refugees for its symbolic meaning, these initiatives were all aimed at creating a Tibetan identity essential to what the exiled leadership perceived as its continuous struggle against the Chinese invasion and occupation (Avedon 1994[1981]; Furer-Haimendorf 1990; Jetsun Pema 1997; Nowak 1984).

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[18] Exceptional to this pattern were sectarian communities whose resettlements in India in the early decades were independent from the CTA in Dharamsala (Snellgrove and Richardson 2003[1968]:275).

[19] Throughout the dissertation, the Tibetan Central Administration or Government-in-Exile will also be referred to as the Tibetan polity, state, or nation-state in exile.

This is, in the briefest terms, how Dharamsala originally came to be associated with Tibetans. Nevertheless, while this entire dissertation is in a way a study of the evolving connections between the locale and Tibetans, they have not been the only ethnic group residing in the portion of the Kangra District comprised of the townships of Upper and Lower Dharamsala (respectively also known as McLeod Ganj and Kotiwali Bazaar), perennial forests, villages, rice fields, tea plantations, and orchards scattered in the valley. In the contemporary context, with several thousand lay and monastic Tibetans highly concentrated in McLeod Ganj and, on the slope below it, the CTA compound and adjacent neighborhoods, "Dharamsala," as one of the 35 Tibetan settlements in India, is not a refugee encampment as typically envisaged. Rather, Tibetans in Dharamsala are free to come and go. While identifications issued by the Indian offices are required for Tibetans and other non-Indian nationalities to legally stay in town, door-to-door checks on the legal status of residents rarely happen. Besides underage children and elders, most of the lay and monastic Tibetans in town are employees of the exilic government and/or NGOs affiliated with it, freelance artisans, seasonal merchants, small entrepreneurs, or otherwise unemployed. They live in the midst of the district's Indian residents, who can be indigenous Gaddi shepherds, descendants of Punjabi and/or Sikh merchant and military families, or political refugees and coolies from Kashmir. Meanwhile, certain middle-class locals identify themselves as ethnic Nepalis because of their Gurkha ancestry; along with them, there are those laborers who are a part of the more recent economic migration to India from Nepal. Finally, due to religious teaching, traditional draftsmanship, and other attractions that Tibetans offer, a wide range of other foreign nationals also takes up permanent or semi-permanent residence in Dharamsala.

Moreover, Dharamsala is constantly teeming with people in transit. Besides the often reported influx of "new refugees" from Tibet since the 1980s, coinciding with the improved political and economic conditions in the PRC, certain homeland Tibetans have also been passport-holders arriving in Dharamsala for family visits and/or pilgrimage. Similarly, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s has allowed the ethnic Mongolians in Central Asia to resume their centuries-old practice of Tibetan Buddhism. As their ancestors once went to Lhasa for pilgrimage, they have recently arrived in Dharamsala for the same purpose. In McLeod Ganj particularly, these Tibetan and Mongolian pilgrims are joined by pilgrims and/or tourists of Indian and other nationalities. As a result of the intense confluence of people and their cultures, Dharamsala has grown into the kind of place where a Gaddi man can declare that he is the *momo* king in town without inviting agitations from Tibetans; where Indian shop owners in Tibetan and Tibetan customers in Hindi constantly bargain with and tease each other; where the urbanites from Delhi seek Korean food and Thai message, and those from Jerusalem or Moscow look for cures through Tibetan medicine; where the pinkish rose water the Sikh community offers to celebrate the birthday of Guru Nanak is happily accepted by others at the bus stops and in the market places; where, somehow scandalously, female visitors from Taiwan, Singapore, and other countries are often heard to be chasing young Tibetan monks around.[20]

Why does Dharamsala matter?

The move that the Dalai Lama made in 1960 to accept Dharamsala as his headquarters in

[20] On the other side of the vibrant cross-cultural encounters, tensions did occasionally burst out between Tibetans and the Indian locals. See incidents documented in Routray 2007:85.

exile marks not only the entrance of Dharamsala into modern Tibetan history but also the beginning of many decades ahead when Dharamsala, the Tibetan polity-in-exile that the locale houses, the Dalai Lama taken as the personification of the polity, and the national consciousness that the polity galvanizes would become synonymous with each other. More importantly, these four often interchangeable entities have from the early 1960s onwards gradually evolved into vital – yet not always equally received – points of reference to the lives Tibetans live under different circumstances.[21] By looking into the processes of what has happened in terms of interactivities between Tibetan subjects and the Dharamsala-centered Tibetan nation and national identity, I am able to argue for a Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala that remains in a formative state and is often multifaceted and full of translocal and other forms of dynamics. Yet, why is such an intellectual exercise necessary in the first place? Why does Dharamsala matter?

"Don't we know enough about Dharamsala?" "What difference can Dharamsala make?" "It has to be Tibetans inside Tibet who will eventually settle their relationship with the Chinese state!" In the course of developing this project in Euro-American academic settings during the first few years of the twenty-first century, I have often run into remarks of this sort made by scholars (some of them well established and influential) of various disciplines. For one thing, the fieldwork that I conducted in and about Dharamsala allows me an empirical ground to argue that the locale does matter because it

[21] In other words, the fact that the four-in-one entity is commonly known among Tibetans, variations do exist in their experiences with it. For instance, it is not unusual for Tibetans living in and around other settlements in India and Nepal to acknowledge that they have never been in Dharamsala nor have they intended to pay a visit. Some of them admitted they were still bothered by how unfair "those Dharamsala people" were in the old days when everyone depended on the allocation of charity to survive; others see no need to go to Dharamsala since the Dalai Lama, as a mobile icon, periodically descends in their neighborhoods. In contrast, for those who went through all sorts of logistical obstacles to secure permits from the Chinese government to travel, the Dalai Lama and therefore Dharamsala are usually the primary objectives of their journey. Yet, not all of the visiting Tibetans from the homeland equally enthuse about the Tibetan state based in the locale.

appears to matter to Tibetans. Moreover, it should also be taken into account that the ways in which Dharamsala matters to Tibetans are heterogeneous and sometimes can only be pinned down translocally. Thus, instead of quickly assuming that there is nothing left to be learned about the place, what is yet to be thickly described and vigorously theorized is *how* it has been the case, that is, *how* Tibetans have lived their lives by having always in the forefront of their consciousness Dharamsala and the Tibetan national discourse with which the place is frequently associated. Such an undertaking constitutes the main chapters of the dissertation. Before further pursuing it, it is necessary to clarify the larger political contexts that are at least partially responsible for the kind of intellectual disinterest that the remarks I just cited capture.

The representation and perception of Dharamsala as the hub of Tibetan national identity has been persistently contested between the Chinese state in Beijing and the deterritorialized Tibetan state in Dharamsala. For anyone who is minimally familiar with their positions on the "Tibet Question" (*Boe gyi Neidoen* in Tibetan or *Xizang Wenti* in Chinese), the rivalry between the two sides is highly rhetorical. They are equally fond of finding "evidence" in history to support the legitimacy they respectively claim (Powers 2004; Sperling 2004). Meanwhile, they are similarly selective about contemporary realities chosen to validate their own claims and to undermine the agendas of the other side. On the surface, nothing is particularly new about the phenomenon. Yet, as I explain in the paragraphs that follow, the representational warfare between Beijing and Dharamsala has over the decades substantially hindered the incentive needed for academics to even look into any research potential that the Dharamsala locale might offer. Given the long-term political standoff, the ramifications of such an intellectual blockade

are serious. For one thing, it implies a continuous dearth of knowledge production that explicates ways in which individual Tibetans actually live with and develop their understanding of the Dharamsala-based Tibetan state and its national discourse – often when they are also simultaneously engaged with other unfolding factors of the wider political economy. In my view, in order to reinvent a common ground that can help with solving the prolonged tension between Beijing and Dharamsala, what has long been overdue is an updated understanding of the ever-shifting parameters of the dispute that the kind of bottom-up inquiry I am advocating can provide.

For the Chinese side which sees itself as having successfully "liberated" Tibet from its feudal past, saved it from Western imperialism, and established a sovereign power over its people, Tibet is of course a part of China. What remains as their *Xizang Wenti* is "domestic," residual, and merely caused by the "splittist" Dalai Lama and those who rally around him to "internationalize" the problem and to lure Tibetans' loyalty away from China, the motherland.[22] In order to eliminate this final corner of the problem, the regime has consistently denigrated the Dalai Lama and tried to police within China proper any possible formation of Tibetan collectivity that the regime sees as presenting threats to its own authority (Barnett 1993; Schwartz 1993; Wang 2005). By the same principle, the regime has also been doing its best to either be completely silent about Dharamsala or to discount its significance.[23]

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[22] To be fair, there have been intellectuals in China whose assessments of the agenda challenge the official point of view. Unfortunately, while most of them are either dissidents in exile or explicitly marginalized inside China, their writings such as Cao 1996a and Wang 2009 (1998) can only be published outside China proper and their online publications are regularly blocked by the country's cyber police. On the other hand, cautious recognitions of the changing nature and seriousness of *Xizang Wenti* by the academic faculty and legal experts tolerated by the Chinese state has just begun to emerge after the Tibetan protests in 2008 (e.g. Fang *et al* 2009 and Peng 2009).

[23] There are several official websites in China that have been set up to cover Tibet-related issues. Yet, there is no result by doing keyword search of "*Da Lan Sa La* (Chinese transliteration of Dharamsala)" at such

Having other venues with which to inform themselves, the concerned readers in non-Chinese languages outside China can easily ignore the information put forth by the Chinese state. In contrast, for the highly regulated readership within China, the determination of the Chinese state to tarnish the image of the Dalai Lama and to render Tibetans' Dharamsala reality as invisible as possible in the public spheres it dominates should not be underestimated.[24] On the one hand, the understanding of the Tibet question and the Sino-Tibetan relationship among average Chinese is by and large a reflection of what they are told by the state.[25] The lack of alternative perspectives and nuanced information usually manifests through either total indifference or strong hostility of the public when the issues of Tibet begin to sound "too political" from their points of view.[26]

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sites as http://www.tibetinfor.com.cn (China Tibet Information Center) and http://www.chinatibetnews.com (*Tibet Daily*). Among state-owned media that are not particularly focused on Tibet, such a search at both http://www.news.cn (Xinhua News Agency) and http://www.people.com.cn (*People's Daily*) during summer 2007 when this chapter was first drafted took me to a single report on the locale at http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guoji/2381142.html. Compared with the typically propagated condemnation of the Dalai Lama and his separatism, this particular report (Qian 2004) is unusual in its acknowledgement of the Dharamsala/exilic experience of individual Tibetans. Moreover, its rhetoric and contents reveals the degree to which the Chinese state is willing to tolerate the visibility of Dharamsala in the public arenas it controls.

[24] For a critical post-2008 review of what a diligent Chinese reader can possibly know about Tibet from publications which are selectively translated into Chinese from European languages, see Li 2009.

[25] While traveling in the Tibetan regions in China, there were plenty of occasions for me to run into domestic backpackers who volunteered their very blunt remarks on Tibetans and/or other ethnic minorities. Also, forums and blogs specializing in Tibetan topics (such as those at http://www.tibetcul.com) are not short of visitors who jump in to express their strong reactions against views and remarks that they consider as disturbing and evident of certain Tibetans' lack of proper patriotism. Together, the voices of those backpackers and the web participants reveal a great deal of the depth to which the state's definition of Tibet as a part of the motherland China has penetrated into the collective consciousness of its citizens.

[26] On top of the information and representation that the Chinese state currently manipulates, there are also historical factors that have helped fortify the position of the state among its citizens. From the Qing dynasty to the Republic and then Communist China, the contour of the country's territory – as seen in the eyes of the ruling forces – has not changed too much (Gladney 2004; Hostetler 2001). Conversely, the blueprint of the modern Chinese state drafted by its revolutionary Han founder Sun Yat-sen included Tibetans and the other non-Han groups (Manchurians, Mongolians, and Muslims) in the yet-to-be-established republic. The blueprint was unilateral; none of the mentioned groups was at the time informed of or gave their consensus to Sun's vision. Throughout the Republic era, the Chinese discourse of Sun and maps of the country were intensely propagated in the so-called interior part of China where the Han majority was concentrated. In contrast, Tibetans – as one of the "*bianjiang minzu* (a nationality at the periphery - *Ch.*)" of the country – were for the most part not aware of the neo-Chinese collectivity into which they had been recruited. Resultantly, by the second half of the 20th century when the events and circumstances led to the outcries of

Conversely, for the Tibetans among the Chinese readership who experience, remember, and interpret the Sino-Tibetan conflict differently and who maintain different degrees of resentment against the discursive and practical domination of the Chinese state, the negative representation of the Dalai Lama by the state and its attempts to silence the other Tibet beyond the Himalayas can only make the demonized one more sacred in their eyes and the non-existent one more attractive in their imagination.[27] As a result, it is the Dalai Lama/Dharamsala representation the Chinese regime tries to tightly guard that has kept distancing one segment of its citizens from the other and constantly reminding its Tibetan minority citizens of the "*minzu maoduen*" (nationality conflicts - *Ch.*) they are confronted with in the country.[28]

To tackle these inter-ethnic problems that the Chinese state has created for itself is far beyond the scope of my work here. Yet, it is certainly crucial to keep on my analytical horizon the practical predicaments to which the highly selective Chinese representation of the "Dharamsala Tibet" contributes. They serve as constant reminders of the conceptual restraint in China that makes it essentially unthinkable to produce the kind of knowledge on Tibetans and their Dharamsala universe that I and others in the west are free to pursue. This in turn prompts me to think twice about the cognitive paradigm to which the self-representation of the Tibetan polity in exile has contributed.

Tibetans for their Tibetan (that is, versus Chinese) national identity, they had also long been ingrained in the Chinese imagination as a part of "us" rather than "them."

[27] As we shall see throughout Chapter 6 and 7 the geographic boundaries that limit alternative information for the Chinese readership within China proper have recently become less concrete to the Tibetans among the readership. First of all, nowadays Tibetans travel more frequently. It is essentially impossible for the state to thoroughly control views, ideas, and stories that return home with those who have been out of the country under various circumstances. Also, from listening to short-wave radios to communicating online and to the latest popularity of sending and receiving images and text messages via cell phones, if they choose to do so, there have been various ways for Tibetans inside China proper to obtain news and information that was once more difficult to receive.

[28] A similar yet more assertive conclusion can be found in Heberer 2001:144-7.

By replacing its insistence on "*Boe gyi rangjen*" (Tibetan independence - *Tib.*) with the attempts to negotiate with Beijing for a genuine "*Boe gyi rangjong*" (Tibetan self-governing or autonomy - *Tib.*) within the PRC, the polity in Dharamsala has since the late 1980s shifted to a revisionist stand on its lasting struggle against the Chinese state.[29] Having not been universally accepted among the exiles and their foreign supporters, the revised objective has since then become the point of internal tensions between the polity and its pro-independence Tibetan and non-Tibetan critics.[30] Yet both sides of the dispute commonly agree that the Tibetan cause since 1959 is not over and Tibetans are still fighting for it. The representation of a rightful Tibetan nation and its governing body in exile thus continues to be one of the most important tactics that the polity deploys to draw international sympathy and support to the cause. While the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR) under the CTA is, technically speaking, the main organ of the polity charged with implementing the tactic, the actual direct operation of the DIIR is small in scope and substantively facilitated by a variety of Dharamsala-based and/or globally operated NGOs. Because of the great unanimity between the self-representation of the polity and its positions as consistently reiterated by these organizations, my discussion that follows leaves the collaborative partners of the polity in the background but highlights the modes of thinking and articulation that the polity has homogeneously embodied.

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[29] The "Strasbourg Proposal" that the Dalai Lama presented in 1988 is commonly used to mark the shift. The text of the proposal can be found at http://www.dalailama.com/page.96.htm.

[30] The Dharamsala-based "Tibetan Youth Congress," along with its chapters in Tibetan settlements and monasteries in South Asia and in other Tibetan communities around the globe, has been the largest pro-independence NGO among Tibetans. Among international support groups, "Students for a Free Tibet," which has its headquarters in New York City and chapters scattered on college campuses worldwide, is currently most explicit about its pro-independence position. For the latest development in 2008 of these two and other pro-independence organizations' joining effort to proclaim their case, see information at http://www.tibetuprising.org.

By certain measures, the representational tactic has been working. For instance, more people around the globe now know something about the Dalai Lama and/or Tibet's conflicts with China. Meanwhile, it has nearly become a form of global subculture among various grass-roots groups to proclaim their support to "free Tibet." Nevertheless, while the polity has been fairly successful in publicizing its cause in the realm of popular culture, there is a completely different story regarding the correlation between the self-image it puts forth and the increased tendency among scholars to turn away from Dharamsala, the site that is at least potentially worthy of further research attention due to ways in which Tibetans have made it referential to their lives.

At the simplest level, the core message by the polity on the "national" plight and the tragic displacement that its refugee population has had to endure has barely been altered for nearly half of a century. In those early days when the needs to resettle the massive refugee population and to reshape their group identity were urgent, the polity's repeated plea for attention to the Tibetans' "collective" loss of their country fitted in well with the humanitarian concerns of sympathetic outsiders. Together, the well-intended but often not very sophisticated humanitarianism and the polity's national discourse on the displaced Tibetan collective have been powerful in deciding what constitutes Tibetans' post-exodus experience. Ironically, while the consistently repeated self-representation has certainly contributed to the polity's power of persuasion, it has also helped generate what I like to refer to as "reception fatigue."[31] That is, upon habitually accepting the experience of Tibetan refugees as it is officially sanctioned and routinely propagated, it

[31] When I say the self-representation of the polity has been "consistently repeated," my emphasis is on the elements core to it since the early 1960s. It does not mean that the details and tactics of the representation have been unchanged for decades. For the stages that Tibetan exiles have undergone to bring new components (such as environmentalism) into their representation package, see Huber 1997 and 2001.

can become difficult to see outside the frame of the polity's national discourse, and the chance to simply notice other forms of Tibetan experience can be slim.

Moreover, the media attention that the polity frequently directs to the Dalai Lama and hence his "exilic" dwelling and his people in Dharamsala has invited another type of complaint regarding the spotlight the locale has received. It is argued that Dharamsala has been overshadowing the issues and realities that other Tibetan settlements in the subcontinent have had to face. Since Tibetans in India are highly aware of the practical consequences caused by the representational imbalance under discussion,[32] such criticism is certainly legitimate. However, while other settlements do deserve greater attention and further study, Dharamsala and what it represents have not yet been adequately explored – particularly as suggested by the translocal framework that I rely on to comprehend the multiplicity of the place's Tibetan significance.

In Dharamsala, the articulation and display of the national discourse endorsed by the exilic nation-state is tangible and ubiquitous – certainly more so than in some of the other South Asian Tibetan communities I have visited. While its emphasis on the national tragedy of "all" Tibetans, their victimhood, and their perpetual craving for the homeland Tibet are prevalent, it has become a common practice among the Dharamsala Tibetans to deploy what is in the discourse to judge the authenticity of each other's Tibetan-ness. *In situ*, I tried not to let my research be predetermined by such a local ethos, and I explored

[32] For instance, the older refugees I met in Darjeeling were bitter about how they and their miseries had been "forgotten." Meanwhile, at least one of them proudly proclaimed the self-sufficiency that his community had accomplished: "We don't like to sit and wait for donations like others do." The elder is certainly not alone in his perception that Tibetans in Dharamsala have better access to the charity support from the outside world. Tibetan and non-Tibetan residents in Dharamsala are also aware of and like to gossip about the difference. Also, younger Tibetans are attracted to the cosmopolitan atmosphere in Dharamsala and often find the isolation and remoteness of some of the other settlements unbearable. As a civil servant in the exilic government who was reluctant to accept his transfer out of Dharamsala put it, "What am I supposed to do in Maharashtra? I don't want to just sit around and shelve paper in a place where the bus only runs once a day."

alternative approaches towards the aspects of Tibetans' Dharamsala experience that have until now largely remained undocumented. In consequence, my analyses of Dharamsala as a Tibetan place are not meant to represent the entire South Asian Tibetan refugee community.[33] On the contrary, having realized the place that Dharamsala currently occupies in the transnational sociocultural world of Tibetans that is simultaneously in and beyond the physical location of the mountain town, I concentrate on spelling out the uniqueness the locale seems to have embodied.

Finally, while insisting on the continuous nature of Tibet's national struggle, the polity in Dharamsala has also seen the strategic importance of keeping itself relevant to post-1959 Tibet. In the realm of representation, this usually means the polity's fairly selective reports on what has been going on inside "Tibet" that, according to its definition, includes U-Tsang (overlapped with China's Tibet, "Tibetan Autonomous Region," or TAR), Kham, and Amdo (sometimes referred to as the eastern Tibet which straddles across the Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai). Not too surprisingly, what the polity and its umbrella organizations are more inclined to publicize is usually the "bad" news regarding, for instance, laypeople and monastics subject to human rights abuses, the exploitation of natural resources that damages landscape and environment, and the destruction of or discrimination against Tibetan culture and religion.[34] There have always been severe cases that helped validate these charges.

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[33] It has been common for researches conducted in Dharamsala to be used to exemplify the rest of the South Asian Tibetan refugee community. For this tendency in the field, see Diehl 2002, Klieger 1992, and shorter examples in Korom 1997a and 1997b.

[34] For an exhaustive documentation of some of the most problematic claims that the polity in Dharamsala made about Tibet under the Chinese rule, see Sautman 2006. Yet, while Sautman should certainly be credited with his attempt to clarify the conceptual distortion that permeates, in his term, "the Tibet Movement," some points of his assessment are more convincing than others. I find it regrettable to see the author constantly blurring the line between his attempt to understand what the movement does and the way in which he appears so compelled to accuse it of wrongdoing.

Nevertheless, for scholars who have been able to travel and even conduct research in Tibet in the past twenty years, the Dharamsala regime's representation of situations inside Tibet has looked increasingly one-sided and obsolete and, as a result, can appear to have gradually lost the relevance that it has painstakingly tried to maintain.[35] Such a course of events has been at least partially responsible for the rapid shifts of research focus from the exilic Tibet to the homeland Tibet that many in the field of Tibetan Studies have made in recent decades.[36]

On my part, I agree with many of my colleagues that the evolving realities inside Tibet – and by and large regarding those Tibetans who now reside, work, or study in urban centers all over China – cannot be properly grasped by merely depending on the information and perspective emanating from the Dharamsala-based Tibetan nationalism. Yet, I do not completely feel comfortable with the recent tendency to denounce once and for all the relevance of the exilic Tibet to its homeland counterpart. In my view, the tendency bears its own representational bias primarily because it falls short in going back to Tibetans themselves – that is, in actually exploring the ways in which Tibetans in and outside Tibet perceive, live with, and interpret their (ir)relevance to each other. One of the challenges that this dissertation faces is to overcome this newly developed conceptual exclusion and to shed light upon structural factors and everyday practices that are real to Tibetans and that have "translocally" added new and sometimes conflicting layers of significance to Dharamsala, the deterritorialized "Tibetan" place.

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[35] Once upon a time, Dharamsala was popular among textual scholars searching for the "lost Tibet" that was believed to have been better preserved in archives outside Tibet. Such a scholarly incentive has also been in decline since going to Tibet and having access to experts and archives there became more of an option.

[36] This has been the condition before the most recent wave of civil unrest spreading across the Tibetan areas in the PRC in Spring 2008. The Chinese state has since then substantially cut back access to the Tibetan areas of foreign journalists and tourists. The long-term impact of this newest development on the discipline of Tibetan Studies is yet to be observed.

Literature review

Tibetan specialists from the field of anthropology and other disciplines have over decades produced a sizable literature on the politics, society and culture of the post-1959 Tibetan community in South Asia. However, the conceptual factors explained in the previous section have predicated an analytically more rigorous approach towards the dialogical relations between the subjectivity formations of Tibetans and the evolving Tibetan geography of Dharamsala which this dissertation seeks to understand. While works by some Tibetanists are more relevant than others to the explications I undertake, the review herein focuses on those that have helped shape the general orientation of the dissertation.[37]

Although it has not been cited often by other Tibetanists, a short journal essay by Serin Houston and Richard Wright (2003) on contemporary Tibetan refugee identities seminally spells out the analytical framework needed to understand the diasporic state of the people simultaneously as "condition" and as "process." While the Chinese intrusion and other factors that the coauthors elicit as having conditioned Tibetans' diasporic experience are commonly known, their emphasis on process(es) through which "Tibetan refugee identities and spaces" (219) are made and remade is nascent and rich in its potential to unveil the complexity and multiplicity embedded in the translocal life worlds of the population. Moreover, the same essay – along with Yeh 2007 and Yeh and Kunga Lama 2006 – has only begun to address the multilocal and transnational formations of Tibetan personhood and collectivity. The contributions made by these authors to crack open the Dharamsala-centered representation of the Tibetan nation are important.

[37] Some other important monographs will be critically cited or referred to each time when they become thematically relevant to specific issues raised in the main chapters of the dissertation.

However, in contrast with the sweeping comparisons that Houston and Wright tried to make about the Tibetans who go about their everyday lives in Dharamsala, Kathmandu, and Boston, my multi-sited ethnography is much more narrowly focused on the trans-Himalayan imagination and mobility that has kept Dharamsala and the homeland Tibet (dis)connected. Whereas their treat each of these locations as non-problematic backdrops against which Tibetans' lives take place, the trans-Himalayan framework I develop first problematizes what has been known about the Tibetan significance of Dharamsala and then tires to reach a more complex understanding of its evolving meanings as affected by Tibetans whose visions and experiences can be at the same time congruous and incongruous, similar and anomalous.

Of course, prior to the more explicit evocation of "process" as an analytical framework by these two authors, several other Tibetanists have already advanced what we know of the Tibetan polity in exile as a man-made product created over time. Authors who are particularly influential to my view on the exilic Tibetan nation-state and its version of Tibetan nationalism as ever evolving outcomes of dynamic processes include: Dawa Norbu (2004) on the early policy decisions made by Tibetan politicians and their Indian counterparts to consolidate the ruling power of the Dalai Lama and his newly exiled Lhasa regime over the rest of the refugee population; Toni Huber (1997 and 2001) on the ways in which the Dharamsala-based Tibetan polity has during recent decades reinvented Tibet's "green" tradition and in turn used the newly discovered environmentalism to update its anti-colonial cause against the sovereignty of China; Margaret Nowak (1984) on the design, invention, and implementation of the exilic state's educational policy which has been the salient force in shaping the Tibetan identity shared

by those who are exiles by birth. Having the knowledge production of these authors serve as the baseline of my argument, throughout the dissertation I explicate processes that are emerging and powerful in shaping and reshaping not only the subjectivity formations of the Tibetan "refugee" residents in Dharamsala, but also the locale's Tibetan geography to which their lived experiences contribute.

Finally, while my approach towards the in-group diversity and differences between one group of Tibetans who refer to themselves as the India-born and the other who are derogatorily designated as the newcomers is new,[38] works by Keila Diehl (2002), Carole McGranahan (2001 and 2005), Margaret Nowak (1984), Emily Yeh (2007), and Emily Yeh and Kunga Lama (2006) all present their authors' takes on ways in which the gaps and tensions between the hegemonic and the marginal are dealt with (and in some cases downplayed) from within the exilic Tibetan collective. Including my own thesis-in-progress, this scholarship is on the one hand needed in order to deepen what has been known about the drastic modern experiences of so many Tibetan individuals. At the same time, it confronts the difficult ethical question of why one should even try to tackle and elucidate the differences that Tibetans themselves often see as threatening their already vulnerable place in real international geopolitics. How should the intellectual celebration of dynamics generated through internal diversity be balanced with the Tibetans' concerns with solidarity? None of the works I just cited specifically address these issues of academic conscience. On my part, while letting my ethnographic narrative take the lead in the rest of the dissertation, I will in the concluding chapter return to this fundamental question.

[38] See Chapter 2 for my introduction of these two subgroups and their roles in advancing the dissertation's objective.

Sovereign limits vis-à-vis symbolic power

My interest in the Dharamsala-based Tibetan nation-state (and its version of Tibetan nationalism) primarily concerns the dialectical relationships between it as a significant structural factor and the practices that Tibetan "subjects" engage in with different degrees of self-consciousness, reflexivity, and/or intention (Ortner 2006:111).[39] More attributes of the nation-state and its formation of national identity will be brought into the discussion when they, in context, become constitutive of what individual Tibetans do or say and sometimes avoid doing or choose not to utter. Also, only by fully contextualizing specific practices of given individuals and groups, will it become evident that, as hegemonic as they might appear to be, the nation-state and its national discourse rarely function alone. Many ways in which they are actually relevant can only be found in zones where they intersect with other structural factors that can be equally salient to the life worlds demanding individual Tibetans' attention. For now, it must suffice to just have an overview of the sovereign limits and symbolic strength of the state – primarily as they are perceived by those Tibetans in Dharamsala who, by aging or growing up in the locale, have been the most intimate recipients of the polity's national discourse. Given the fact that there have been Tibetans from Tibet who arrived in Dharamsala with their quite different imaginations of it (Chapter 6 and 7), what is presented in the immediate overview is minimal and should only be read as a prototypical understanding of the locale.

As a deterritorialized political entity, the Tibetan state-in-exile has never received

[39] The concept of "subject" and that of "actor" are very much exchangeable in the version of practice theory that Ortner has developed in the past two decades. Thus, a subject having "different degrees of self-consciousness, reflexivity, and/or intention" can also be defined as an actor who is "loosely structured," "who is prepared – but no more than that – to find most of his or her culture intelligible and meaningful, but who does not necessarily find all parts of it equally meaningful in all times and places" (Ortner 1989:198).

any formal international recognition. Meanwhile, the state does not maintain its own military or police forces. While the polity has since the very beginning of its establishment administrated nearly all of the refugee settlements in India and fewer of them in Nepal (Dawa Norbu 2004; McGranahan 2001), its sovereign power over the ruled population is very much restricted to welfare distribution and secular education. In the Indian case that I have better studied, this means, for instance, that the polity maintains a judicial system to handle marriage registration and other civil cases among Tibetans. Otherwise, it leaves all criminal charges and civil disputes between Tibetans and their Indian counterparts to the Indian courts (*Dharamsala* 1999; Lin 2000: 85-6). Meanwhile, although to hold on to one's refugee status – instead of applying for Indian citizenship – has particularly in Dharamsala been seen as the token of one's patriotism towards the polity, it is the "Resident Certificate " and the "Identity Certificate" issued by the Indian government that respectively allow the refugees to legally stay in the country and travel abroad.[40]

In practical terms, Tibetans in Dharamsala are not unaware of the "holes" in these arrangements. For instance, being Tibetans themselves, the lawyers and judges of the state's civil court can sometimes be threatened by one side or the other of those bringing charges against each other. "What can I do? I don't have the police to protect me and I don't want to call the Indian police," said one judge when his office was once raided. On the other hand, when there is no immediate scenario involved, Tibetans rarely complain about the restraints of the exilic state's sovereign power. Rather, the ways in which the missing components of the sovereign power are pointed out – especially by those who are in the Dharamsala context known as "political activists" – are often meant to evoke the

[40] Not all Tibetans in India are legible to apply for these two documents. See details in Routray 2007:81-2.

injustice to which the Tibetan nation has been subject and to delineate the Tibetan collective born out of the injustice. From the perspective dear to these activists, the sovereign limits of the state-in-exile are arguably the first sign of its symbolic strength.

In contrast with the sovereign limits that have more or less remained static since the early 1960s, what has kept evolving is the symbolic significance of the polity as understood by Tibetans of different generations within the refugee community. The *Boe Chenbo* (Greater Tibet - *Tib.*) definition of the nation to include provinces of U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo (versus the TAR Tibet defined by the Chinese state) can probably best illustrate the changes. For those who were young adults in Dharamsala between the 1960s and 1980s, the refugee community in South Asia at that time was far from being unitary. The pre-exodus clan, regional, and sectarian loyalties remained strong among the refugees and from time to time challenged the social and political integrity that the newly established Tibetan Government-in-Exile took upon itself to construct (Epstein 1977; McGranahan 2001; Su 2005; Woodcock 1970; Zablocki 2009). Along with "culturalist" efforts (Appadurai 1996:15) subsequently made to transform the pre-1959 Lhasa customs and dialect into the culture and language of the Tibetan nation,[41] there were other devices designed to create a new pan-Tibetan consciousness. For instance, as one man who had participated in the process to build the nation recalled during our conversation in 2003:

> We wanted it to be inclusive and fair and to downplay regionalism…. That's why, for instance, it was decided that, among U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo, refugees from each of these three provinces would be given the same number of seats in the parliament we were planning.

[41] See Ekall 1961 for a rare contemporary documentation of the early era when exiles began to apply the concept of "culture" which they had newly learned to define Tibetans as a single people distinctive in religion, folkways, language, race, and land they share.

According to this anonymous informant and several others from that same era, this is how the polity had in the early 1960s attempted to formulate the nation-state Tibet that, without a territorial foundation, could only manage to have its three provinces symbolically represented in the parliament-in-exile.[42]

In retrospect, such a remembrance of how the new "political Tibet" earlier came into being reveals a great deal about the time when the leadership of the polity-in-exile was aware of the solidarity issue that challenged its legitimacy from within. Yet, this can only be my view informed by those who are now in their late fifties and even older. During the first decade of the 21st century in Dharamsala, this same view appears distinct from the perception of the younger cohorts who were born and grew up in the exilic community after the 1970s. For them, who were taught with curriculums carefully designed to enhance their national identity (Nowak 1984:65-6), "Tibet," by definition, includes U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo; the contour of *Beo Chenbo* or "Greater Tibet" is a given, a primordial entity which was only interrupted when China "invaded" and, most importantly, the premise of how they think of and feel about the nation.

On one occasion when several college students and I had a conversation on reforms they saw as needed for the Tibetan settlements in India where most of them had spent their childhood, one of them articulated his concern in these words:

> We are all Tibetans; we are able to elect the best among us (to the parliament). Telling us (that) because we are from Kham, Amdo, or U-Tsang, we can only vote for the candidates from that province…. It's to divide us…. I don't understand why they have done this to divide us.

In context, the young man was commenting that those who are elected to the parliament

[42] I am not suggesting that the parliament-in-exile was only forged to support the "Greater Tibet" idea. For different stages of the polity's efforts on democratization via building and revising its parliamentary system, see Frechette 2007, Su 2005, and Tsering Tsomo 2004.

by refugees scattered in big or small settlements all over South Asia are actually not representative of any given settlement since the votes they cast are according to their parents' and even grandparents' provincial roots in Tibet. Such a diagnosis of the electoral method has not been novel or uncommon among the exiles (Nowak 1984:142-3; Tsering Tsomo 2004:163-4), although attempts to fix it have hitherto all been hindered by parties of different interests (Frechette 2007:110-2; Su 2005:161-5). Nevertheless, compared with the same parliamentary design remembered by the older generation as having in a symbolic sense created the much needed Tibetan unity, what stands out in this student's remark is the degree to which the idea of Tibetan unity has been deeply internalized among the younger ones. Approximately forty years apart, marked by the sharp contrast between the earlier comprehension of the national unity as a man-made product of given circumstances and the more recent development of taking the unity for granted is the evolving state of the polity's symbolic strength.

As eloquently pointed out by Melvyn Goldstein (1993 and 1998) and commonly accepted by those who feel inundated with the Dharamsala "propaganda," the historical claim that the exilic polity has persistently made to back up its "Greater Tibet" vision is highly *a*historical.[43] Consequently, it is unlikely that China would in the foreseeable future accept such a scope as the basis for the renegotiation that has long been the objective of the polity. To be fair to the college student and many others who share a similar upbringing in India, they are not completely blind about this kind of pragmatic criticism. Yet, what has captured my interest, and what my work tries to address, is their

[43] Since the pretests spread on the Tibetan plateau in 2008, the Chinese government has launched its furious attack on the *Boe Chenbo* "ambition" of the exiles, accusing that the idea is designed by the "Dalai clique" to advance its separatist agenda, undermining the territorial integrality of the PRC. For Tibetans' most recent re-definition of the term to combat the backfire which "Greater Tibet" lately caught, see Sandhong Rinpoche 2008 and Sonam Dhundrup 2009.

very subjective comprehension of Greater Tibet and, by the same principle, the larger world in which they find themselves. In other words, what matters to me and, I hope, to anyone who no longer assumes that calculated feasibility can easily convince people to let go of passion, emotion, and everything else the significance of which can only be found in the realm of subjectivity, are the practices of these exiles to deal with (and sometimes without) “Tibet” as *the* given of their life world.

CHAPTER TWO

FOCAL GROUPS, METHODOLOGY, AND IMPLICATIONS

To address the diversity and intricacy which characterizes the emerging Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala, the contrasts and comparisons throughout the dissertation are derived primarily but not exclusively from my ethnographic encounters with the two focal groups of Tibetans in the locale. Namely, they are those who call themselves and/or are referred to by the rest of the community as the "India-born," and those who, upon more recently arriving from homeland Tibet, are locally notoriously designated as the "newcomers."[44]

When I came to develop close contacts with Tibetans of these two subgroups during different phases of my fieldwork for this project between 2000 and 2005, most of the individuals of either subgroup were between twenty and forty-five years old. They are all the generation of Tibetans who were born during the earliest decades after the landmark 1959 when the Dalai Lama and his Lhasa regime fled into exile. The circumstances under which the India-born individuals and their newcomer counterparts have grown up are substantially different; their understanding of and interrelationship with the Dharamsala-based Tibetan collectivity and, by extension, their expectations, imaginations, and (mis)conceptions of each other are also substantially varied. Together, the ways in which the Tibetan experience of the India-born cohorts and that of the so-called newcomers intersect in Dharamsala form a fertile field of inquiry which, as I see it,

[44] In Dharamsala, Tibetans are not alone in constantly evoking the categorical difference between the India-born and the newcomers. Non-Tibetan residents in town are equally familiar with the difference and frequently comment on it.

helps an understanding of the Tibetan nation to move beyond assertions of its homogeneity which have been commonly recycled among Tibetan and non-Tibetan politicians, activists, and scholars. By explicating the sociocultural worlds lived by individuals of these two subgroups, I identify the sites of their local and translocal networks and disconnections, arguing that the multifarious forms of Tibetan subjectivity are emerging and contributive to a Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala yet to be better understood.

Prior to further introducing the significance that everyday experiences of Tibetans of these two subgroups entail, I should make it clear that my inquiry herein is by no means an exhaustive survey of the geography under discussion. Instead, it is merely a case-study demonstration of how the dynamic contributions of more Tibetans to the geography can be analytically approached. For one thing, the dichotomy between the India-born and the newcomers is only one among many other ways in which residential Tibetans in Dharamsala perceive their in-group differences. They are equally aware of the difference by local standards between, for instance, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the activists and everyone else, the monastic and the lay status, and ones having strong NGO or governmental ties and those lacking similar connections. On the surface, claims are often made to downplay and even deny the importance of these differences; to endure various inequalities which these differences cause is seen as sacrifices individuals can and ought to make for the common cause of the nation.[45] Nevertheless, as my study exemplifies, so long as the varied subjectivity formations of the India-born and newcomer Tibetans are taken seriously, the "Tibetan experience"

[45] The practical consequences of these differences can be devastating to some individuals. On the other hand, efforts are indeed occasionally initiated by others in the community to reduce their negative impact.

which individuals of these two subgroups embody starts to look more complex than before. Following this logic, I call for more empirical explorations before we can actually determine why and how other forms of local difference might have made significant or minor contribution(s) to the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala.

Moreover, it should also be spelled out at the outset that, in ways which are often varied, what Dharamsala stands for also matters to those who are physically afar from the locale. While the diverse opinions of the scattered and highly mobile population are yet to be more systematically approached, my anecdotal findings on the subject are revealing:

In a quick sketch, Tibetans who have grown up in different locations in the South Asian subcontinent have not always set their foot in Dharamsala. While some of these Tibetans find the relevance of Dharamsala to their socioeconomic lives on the ground peripheral, others perceive efforts that one can possibly make to join the exilic government in Dharamsala to be the ultimate expression of his/her patriotism. For those who have grown up ingrained with the idea that all of their hard works in schools and colleges is to prepare them to serve the nation, failed attempts to pass the competitive civil servant exams can be devastating. To these South Asian Tibetans, Dharamsala tends to be either the repository of all they know how to hope for or the token of their disillusionment; there is very little of anything else to be found in between.

Whereas, those who have been granted citizenship in Australia, Canada, and other wealthier countries in the Western hemisphere can afford to cultivate the prospect and means that their compatriots in South Asia usually do not have to “return home” to Tibet. There, by cautiously complying with the regulations set up by the Chinese government, they are able to pursue various charitable projects at the grassroots level. I was often told

by exiles of this background that they were tired of waiting for the political solution between Dharamsala and Beijing. As indirect as they usually manage to sound, the fact that they are eager to "actually do something" suggests the idleness which these Tibetan diaspora perceive as characterizing the Dharamsala Tibetan establishment.

In the homeland context, I kept coming across urban Tibetans in Lhasa who were sensitively concerned with the possibilities and predicaments that modernity had brought to the nation. In their attempts to explain the ambivalence they feel, these Tibetans could be very blunt about the intrusions that they found in China's Tibet policy; meanwhile, it was not unusual for some of them to be equally critical about the traditionalist imagination of Tibet which, as they know, has been the major means for the exilic establishment in Dharamsala to legitimate its cause of the nation.[46]

Compared with the better known image of Dharamsala as the home-in-exile of the Dalai Lama and therefore holding some sort of universal appeal to all Tibetans, the perceptions I gathered are more nuanced and resonate with the Palestinian instance which Glenn Bowman (1993) once noted:

> ….there are several discrete locales of Palestinian life (in Israel and the Occupied Territories, in the Middle Eastern refugee camps, in the bourgeois diasporas) which do not often (if ever) come into unmediated contact, means that there is potential for the evolution of several different kinds of national identity (80).[47]

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[46] I am not denying the attraction of Dharamsala as the reservoir of "true Tibetan culture" to the population. There are indeed Tibetans inside Tibet who choose to forward their children to Dharamsala for schools "run by Tibetans." Meanwhile, Dharamsala is also the place where individuals and families arrive from France, Switzerland and other countries of their citizenship to search for their Tibetan roots. On the other hand, for my purpose of complicating what has been known about Dharamsala in the local and translocal life worlds of Tibetans, I consider it more essential to highlight the perceptions that are less heard because of their political incorrectness according to the nationalist standard so often circulated in the public sphere.

[47] Bowman goes on to articulate his speculation: "These different forms *will* have different political impacts (italics added). Some may simply serve as diacritical markers, enabling the Palestinian, in certain instances, to differentiate him/herself….from the members of other surrounding social groups….(*sic*) others may actually serve to foment nationalist movements oriented towards the creation of a Palestinian national entity" (1993:80). Reading these lines against what has happened within the Palestinian polity in recent years, the differences that concerned Bowman in the early 1990s are not a small matter. In a similar vein, I

As I have already stated, to better understand so many forms of translocal connection and imagination that all bear the potential to pluralize Dharamsala's Tibetan significance is beyond the capacity of the dissertation. However, I still hope this overview on "what will not be in the dissertation" conveys the paradigm shift which my concentrated analysis of the life worlds of the India-born Tibetans and of the newcomers is to accomplish.

India-born versus newcomers

Having become common designations in Dharamsala, neither "India-born" nor "newcomers" is simply a term of description. Instead, they connote judgments that locally prevail. In Dharamsala, "India-born" is largely a self-description of those whose upbringing is grounded in its South Asian contexts. The age and experience gap between the cohorts and their grandparent and/or parent generations who were already in their adulthood when fleeing Tibet in the middle decades of the 20th century has certainly helped create the dynamics from within the Tibetan refugee community in the subcontinent (Anand 2002; Diehl 2002; Nowak 1984). However, in its most common usage in Dharamsala, the expression "India-born" reveals more the ways in which its cohorts feel estranged from the type of recent émigrés from Tibet who are locally received as lacking politically correct reasons to show up in the place and therefore negatively referred to as *sarjor* in Tibetan and "newcomers" in English. By the norms of national culture customary to the India-born cohorts, the accents, mannerisms and, by extension, Tibetanness of the newcomers can all appear problematic. When confronted with the limited supply for housing and employment, some among the India-born cohorts

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am interested in documenting the variations of the Tibetan case – without trying to forecast if or when they might become more politically charged.

find “newcomers” to be a convenient target to vent their frustration.

From the other way around, those who are designated as the newcomers are for their part usually fully aware of the stereotypical labeling to which they are subject. As little as they can possibly appreciate the underdog place they locally occupy, “newcomers” rarely come forward to defend themselves in public. Conversely, while preoccupied with their need to survive in a community whose acceptance of them is lukewarm at best, to unlearn and relearn ways to be Tibetan, and to move on, these less welcome new arrivals can also be very reflexive, critical, and sometimes sarcastic about and even disillusioned by the gulf between the Tibetan consciousness forged in the exilic context of Dharamsala and the life worlds in Tibet that they have recently left behind.

India-born as an analytic frame

Aside from capturing the in-group divergence which sensitive observers of the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala can hardly miss, the designations of “India-born” and “newcomers” also present a categorical division of the community useful for my analytical purposes.

With regard to the “India-born” cohorts, while maintaining the literal reference of the term to those who were born and grew up in the South Asian subcontinent, my usage also includes those who were born in Tibet, sent out by their parents or guardians at a very young age, and consequently accommodated in the same boarding schools that the majority of exile-born children attend. After years of common schooling and similar processes of socialization, young adults of such a background overall do not stand out differently as the “newcomers” do in Dharamsala. For this reason, I include them in my

definition and discussion of the cohorts who actually live in Dharamsala during one or the other stages of their lives, and who are admittedly the most intended recipients of the national discourse of the exilic state.

Growing up in a community that is constantly reminded of its displacement, the India-born cohorts generally take their belonging to the exilic Tibetan collective as a given. Moreover, in a variety of contexts that rarely stop exposing them to the gaze of outsiders who often arrive in Dharamsala predisposed to believe that Tibetans are disfranchised and therefore miserable, the cohorts are the ones who tend to be extremely self-conscious about their refugee Tibetan identity. As a result, they can from time to time sound completely scripted by the exilic nation-state. At first glance through the popular lens of the "politics of identity" that has become so used to looking for tensions which, in theory, should be found between hegemony and subordination, the discrepancy between the Tibetan nation defined by the exilic state and the Tibetan identity of the India-born cohorts is not particularly evident. One can in turn be left to wonder where to find "dramas" in the life world that the cohorts experience. Yet, as Sherry Ortner pointedly puts forth, analyses preoccupied with politics of identity have their own inadequacy:

> This is not an unimportant exercise by any means, but it is different from the question of the formation of *subjectivities*, complex structures of thought, feeling, and reflection, that make social beings always more than the occupants of particular positions and the holders of particular identities (Ortner 2006: 115).

To apply Ortner's insight to the "India-born" Tibetans I study, what interests me the most is exactly "that" which makes them more than "the occupants" of their exilic position and "the holders" of their Tibetan identity. On the other hand, empirically I still

find identity to be a powerful driving force in the everyday lives the India-born cohorts live. My explication of the cohorts' subjectivity formation hence does not imply any exclusion of the Tibetan identity which does matter to them. Rather, I pay extra attention to where the Tibetan identity of the subgroup intersects with other "spatial" and "temporal" concerns that compete for the cohorts' attention. On the "space" side of their experience, while the cohorts tend to be highly articulate about the homeland Tibet they have either never been to or left when they were very young, my inquiry focuses on examining ways in which they live with and make sense out of their immediate living contexts in India (Chapter 3 and 4). As for the "time" elements significant to the cohorts, my analysis concentrates on the ways in which the prolonged attention to the cause of the nation has in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala grown into a particular style of "time-suspension" about which the cohorts are so sensitive that they are often found to try to live a life according to its demands (Chapter 5).

The newcomers

Because of their fluency in English and familiarity with the popular Tibetan nation-in-exile discourse, the India-born cohorts have often been singled out by journalists and other observers to represent the younger generation of the refugee population.[48] On the contrary, the political incorrectness which "newcomers" as a subgroup are seen to embody and their lack of a common language to communicate with predominantly English-speaking visitors to the community make them, to my knowledge, far less known beyond the Dharamsala vicinity and as yet little studied. The fact that many of the newcomers and I were able to communicate with each other in Chinese bridged the gap;

[48] For a well written example of this representational tendency, see Mishra 2005.

it allowed me to figure out their side of the story.

My engagement with individuals of the subgroup typically began with hearing why he or she had chosen to run the risk of "illegally" crossing the border to traverse the Himalayas, the landmark event of his/her life. The intentions that the newcomers recalled in hindsight tend to be diverse, ranging from seeking better economic opportunities to improving one's command in English or to satisfying one's curiosity about "the other Tibet" and/or the need of spiritual search. For the most part, the agency revealed in their self-explanations can to a great extent conflict with the refugee ethos intimate to the India-born cohorts. In other words, while the India-born cohorts and others in the Dharamsala community often find themselves uneasy with the motivation, mannerisms, style of speech, and everything else that the newcomers embody, there is indeed not always a correlation between the Dharamsala for which the newcomers embarked and that which, in the exilic context, is perceived as emblematic of Tibetan nationalism. Instead, as my study shows, the imaginations and expectations of Dharamsala that trigger the southwardly trans-Himalayan movement of the newcomers need to be found in contexts larger than the Dharamsala-based Tibetan polity and its national discourse, that is, in the contexts translocally forged out of experiences that these Tibetans have had with contemporary Tibet, China, and beyond (Chapter 6). The trans-Himalayan mobility of these Tibetans thus in multiple ways pushes the limits of state-controlled territorial boundaries and citizenship.

More importantly, the presence of the newcomers in Dharamsala attests to the reality that, having been associated with the exilic Tibetan regime for nearly half a century, the locale can no longer be narrowly defined as the hub where nationalist exiles

engineer and maneuver their set of meanings for the entire Tibetan people. Rather, the locale has also become the site of the confluence of ways in which Tibetans of different backgrounds respectively find what they might hope for in the modern world which, as they can possibly experience, is simultaneously subject to but also free from the visions sovereign states prepare for their citizens.

In time, by participating in everyday lives of the newcomers in Dharamsala, I also observed the processes of self-transformation that they underwent. What turned out to be very noticeable were the gaps between their pre-exodus anticipations for Dharamsala and the realizations afterwards that they had to deal with on a daily basis. Meanwhile, their oscillations between the self that had been left behind and the one that was yet to be invented were also evident. Together, the gaps and oscillations form a rich site to study subjectivity formations unique to the subgroup. In the end, it will become clear that the dialectical relationship between the newcomers and the exilic ethos that apparently keep them marginalized in Dharamsala is in fact a two-way street. That is, while the experience of self-transformation is prevalent among the newcomers, the lives these Tibetans live and the perspectives they develop under the Dharamsala context also in different degrees redefine the established refugee collective (Chapter 7).

Fieldwork and ethnographer

The everyday lives, representational practices, and points of view of the focal groups discussed in the dissertation are primarily the result of sixteen months of fieldwork that I conducted in the midst of Tibetans in and beyond the Dharamsala vicinity between 2003

and 2005.[49] Having thought through the mobility of Tibetans manifested in the trans-Himalayan context that I had just begun to grasp during my pilot study in Dharamsala in 2001 (see Chapter 5), I was particularly attracted to the trend of anthropological scholarship that critically examined the ways in which the concept of "field" had been conventionally used in the discipline (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1997b; Gupta and Ferguson 1997b; Marcus 1995). As a result, I designed "travel" as a built-in component of the fieldwork. The idea was that, by keeping my ethnographic research "itinerant" (Schein 1998:296) along the routes Tibetans frequently travel, venues of my participant observation would be expanded, and I would have a better chance to gain perspectives that would otherwise be harder to obtain in sites more strictly defined by their fixed vicinities.[50]

As planned, I set up my one-person household in Dharamsala for the first seven months (10/2003 – 04/2004) and then the last six months (09/2004 – 02/2005) of the fieldwork time. Given the relatively isolated location of the place, "travel" naturally became a part of local ways of life I had to learn – primarily by hopping on buses for hours and sometimes days to come and go as most of Dharamsala's multinational residents do. In summer 2004, during the interlude between these two phases, I set off from Dharamsala via Kathmandu to Lhasa where I spent two months studying modern Tibetan language at Tibet University, participating in gallery talks and other cultural

[49] See Chapter 1 for my earlier encounters with Tibetans via the Smithsonian Tibetan Festival in 2000 and the pilot study phase of the dissertation in 2001 that initially shaped this project. On the other hand, since the intensive fieldwork ended in Spring 2005, I have been keeping correspondence with some of my informants. The arguments that I am able to make throughout the dissertation are also benefited by these post-fieldwork contacts.

[50] Of course, there were limits to what I was able to do to track the ways in which Tibetans travel in the region. For one thing, it was not an option for me to "go native" by repeating the "illegal" border-crossing journey many Tibetans undertake to leave and occasionally to return to Tibet. Rather, protected by my American passport and visas issued by the states of Nepal and China, I flew from Kathmandu to Lhasa and returned to the border overland in a heavy-duty SUV.

events in the city, going about my own everyday life, and observing that of the locals. After the language program in the university was over, relying on public transportation, I traveled for a month to several more urbanized townships in eastern Tibet that had once been "home" to some of the "newcomers" I had come to know well in Dharamsala. It is by pursuing the long-term fieldwork in Dharamsala and by complicating it into a highly mobile operation that, in the end, I am able to draw out the complexity and dynamics of Tibetans' trans-Himalayan sociocultural world which from time to time converges because of the locale.

Everywhere I went for this project, I introduced myself through a similar repertoire: I am working on a book project about the modern lives and culture of Tibetans that will help me to obtain my doctoral degree; I am married but have no child; I am Taiwanese by birth but also an American citizen living in the United States. In the beginning, I did not give too much thought to the repertoire which I assumed, straightforwardly saying who I was and what I was doing. Yet, in actual settings of communication, I soon realized the half-way nature of my self-introduction. It was really up to the perceptions and interpretations of the Tibetans whom I came to contact that would decide who I might be and what sorts of cross-cultural interactions we might develop. Generally speaking, besides being seen as overly attached to my backpack and casual about dressing codes and other formalities, my being American rarely rang a bell for anyone. On the contrary, it was always my Taiwanese background that caught the attention of Tibetans. In their eyes, I could not be a foreigner or, in the Tibetan expression, an "*inji*," since I did not at any rate look English (pronounced as *inji* in Tibetan) or, by extension, Caucasian. Conversely, because I always first introduced

myself as a Taiwanese and only to those who wanted to know more explained the escapes of my “Chinese” grandparents to Taiwan during China’s Civil War in 1949, Tibetans tended to see me as simultaneously Chinese but also not Chinese. As a result of such an ambiguity I embodied in their world, from Dharamsala to Lhasa and beyond, I often found myself an object of their curiosity and observation. It was not an unpleasant experience at all. Rather, I was gratified to be approached by those who wondered why I was in their midst. This was particularly the case when I was traveling.

For instance, when I managed to try out the tedious two-day bus ride that Tibetans commonly rely on to go between Delhi and Kathmandu (mine in 2003 took three days after the monsoon had created numerous landslides and when checkpoints were set up everywhere by different parties of the civil war in Nepal), a young girl of 11 or 12 years of age (here I call her Drolma) spotted me and came forward on the bus packed with Indians, Nepalis, and Tibetans. As it turned out, Drolma was from Kham, had studied in one of the Tibetan schools nearby Dharamsala and, escorted by an uncle figure, was on her way to return home. She was bothered by a skin rash and fever throughout the journey, but she was also the only passenger on the bus who tried to read once in a while. What she had was a third-grade textbook of Chinese language and literature which, as she told me, had traveled with her to India. “School has already started, I need to review the book before I get home,” she mentioned during one of the dinner breaks when we sat and ate together.

Drolma was too young to clearly explain whose idea it had been that first brought her to India and then, no more than one or two years later, took her on the road again in a reverse direction. Yet, regardless of possible motivations behind Drolma’s travels back

and forth, the fact that she was *en route* from Dharamsala to Kathmandu and Lhasa to return to her hometown in eastern Tibet forms a noticeable contrast with the better publicized image that homeland Tibetans are so discontented that they want the "Tibetan" education available in India for their children.[51] Partially at least, it is because of the "counterthesis" that this and many other itinerant encounters suggested that I gradually came to realize the intricacy of Tibetans' translocal worlds, learning that nationalism alone cannot explain everything in the lives Tibetans live day in and day out.

In Dharamsala, where a wide range of nationalities live among its Indian and Tibetan residents, I blended in with relative ease. After all, before me, a small yet noticeable number of Taiwanese had been joining various Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the valley since the early 1990s; pilgrims, tourists, and journalists from Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and lately China, plus exiled Chinese dissidents, have all become increasingly common in the locale.[52]

By engaging with the Anglophonic India-born cohorts and the newcomers who are generally fluent in Chinese, I could often tell the subtle differences between the ways in which they received me. In the eyes of the India-born cohorts, I was one of the "overseas" Chinese whom they should make efforts to understand. Such a perception reflects the racial framework within which the exilic polity has been trying to find its solution with China, assuming that the overseas Chinese are a part of the Han race and

[51] For the sake of their propaganda, the Chinese side would likely turn such a story of Drolma into evidence that Tibetans, having been misled by the Dalai Lama's separatist propaganda, feel regret and rediscover their good fortune in being a part of the big Chinese family. See Qian 2004 for an example of such rhetoric.
[52] Tibetans in Dharamsala were not always friendly with the ethnic Chinese population of these different Asian locations. See Zablocki 2009 for the acceptance that developed after the Dalai Lama's historical visit to Taiwan in 1997.

may someday influence the Chinese state to undo its Tibetan policy.[53] In the local milieu in which we commonly lived, some of the cohorts could not help but call me the "*Gyamo"* (Chinese woman – *Tib*) behind my back; others came forward and liked to engage with me in conversations on Chinese history, politics, and everything else that, at that point of time, were seen as seriously missing from their upbringing. Together, their attitudes towards me reveal a great deal of the paradox the cohorts have been facing. On the one side, it is their habitus to perceive "Tibet" and "China" as entities in racial and other terms completely exclusive from each other; on the other, it shows their attempt to think beyond the box.

In contrast, the newcomers rarely came to me to talk about events regarding China proper, though it was common for them to draw parallels between Tibet's problem with China and the sovereignty dispute between Beijing and Taipei. Some of them followed closely the politics in Taiwan and liked to elicit my opinions on its current events about which I often knew less than they did. Others, particularly those who were about my age, could become very nostalgic when bringing into our conversations Taiwanese pop songs, movies, and best sellers of the 1980s, an era when they were young, still in Tibet, and full of curiosity about alternative cultural goods that had just been allowed to be imported from the outside world. In the eyes of these Tibetans, I could not have known too much about China, but I was a Taiwanese and my Taiwanese identity counted.

In Lhasa and several smaller urban centers in eastern Tibet I visited, bluntly talking about politics – as many Tibetans I met in Dharamsala were fond of doing – was understandably not a common practice. My explanation that I was a Taiwanese from the

[53] The Dalai Lama is probably the most enthusiastic implementer of the idea. He has been known to always go out of his way to accommodate the photo-ops and other requests of his overseas Chinese visitors (e.g., Dalai Lama and Chan 2005).

United States was usually greeted with a certain pleasure and was sufficient to satisfy the initial curiosity of homeland Tibetans I encountered; we would often go on from there to talk about art, literature, religion, and especially their lamas, friends, and relatives who had visited or were residing in Taiwan. Their silent acceptance of who I am was consistent; it formed a pronounced contrast with the assertive commentaries that the Han Chinese, upon hearing me, tended to make: "Oh, Taiwanese! Then, you must also be a Chinese!" "Taiwanese, Chinese, we are after all one people, one family, aren't we?" "Politics is just politics. Sooner or later you people will return to the arms of the motherland!" Such a contrast recurred throughout the entire "homeland Tibet" phase of my travels. In the end, it seemed to suggest that homeland Tibetans tended to show their affinity with me because of the parallels they saw between Tibet's problem with China and that of Taiwan and, by extension, between their Tibetan and my Taiwanese identity. The insights I was able to develop out of all sorts of informal settings in the PRC certainly benefited from the perceptions that local Tibetans had of me.

Methodologically casual

Besides "travel," the other two methodological decisions that I put into practice throughout the fieldwork were equally important to the final outcome of this project. Firstly, based upon my earlier encounters with Tibetans during the Smithsonian festival in 2000 and my pilot study trip to Dharamsala and other Tibetan settlements in India in 2001, I came to realize that the nuances of everyday life and their possible relevance to individual Tibetans' national consciousness – the topic that I wanted to further explore – was really not the kind of research subject that can be pursued by handing out

questionnaires or conducting formal interviews to elicit answers to predetermined questions. After all, issues related to Tibet or Tibetan identity have for decades been ideologically highly charged for not only Tibetans but also concerned observers. In the exilic context at least, an apparent tautology has been developed between what the sympathetic outsiders expect and the stories that Tibetans typically put forth to engage with them.

In order to overcome the cognitive hurdle created by the tautology, I devoted most of my fieldwork time and energy to cultivating settings proper for "participant observation" and informal communications. In the case of Dharamsala, for instance, by being involved in voluntary teaching and translation, sharing my passion for art and literature with certain Tibetans, and seeking logistical assistance from my neighbors, I established my own daily routine and close social circles. Other than that, I remained "methodologically casual" by, for example, keeping my schedule flexible just in case someone was in a mood to go for tea and chat or when a one-hour English tutorial turned into hours of conversation about someone's family history.[54] As a result, while I indeed also developed more structured engagements with people, most of the anecdotes that enrich this project are the fruits of encounters that were *in situ* mundane and

[54] This did not mean that I had tried to conceal the agendas of my research from my "informants." To either those whom I came to know better through lasting relationships, or others with whom I met no more than one or twice, I never skipped the introduction of my scholarly purpose which tended to be diversely received. Some of them considered what I was doing important and started to suggest people I ought to meet, events I ought to attend, etc; others, after knowing me for months, would not mind telling me bluntly that they thought I was wasting my time on trivial things that, as Tibetans, they themselves did not care about at all. I often told these Tibetan friends not to worry about the time and energy I was wasting since my writing would not be for them but could become a record for those in the future wanting to know what happened to Tibetans during the first few years of the 21st century. Of course, back then I could not have known that the very present experiences of Tibetans I tried to document would soon be left on the crossroads of history because of the intense events in 2008.

spontaneous.[55]

Being methodologically casual also meant that I made a conscious choice to work without interpreters throughout all phases of the fieldwork. To compensate for my limited command of oral Tibetan, I utilized English to engage with the India-born cohorts who are commonly multilingual in Tibetan, English, Hindi, and perhaps another one or two Indian languages. Meanwhile, I communicated in Chinese with the newcomers and the homeland Tibetans who are bilingual in Tibetan and Chinese.[56] On occasions when Tibetans talked among themselves in Tibetan, I did my best to listen. Unless someone at the site volunteered him or herself to translate for me, I generally let go of the parts of verbal communication I had missed. In this way, I was able to keep a coherent linguistic quality to my field data. That is, all of the sayings, remarks, and narratives used in the dissertation were generated when individual Tibetans were willing to interact with me through their second language.[57] From the other way around, I should also at the outset make it clear that language barriers did rule out my opportunity to have more intimate contacts with certain segments of the population. Similarly, the assessment and analysis developed throughout the dissertation does not reflect the views and experiences of those in Dharamsala who were aware of but somehow determined to ignore my inquisitive appearance in the community.

Moreover, while the linguistic decisions I had to make were originally largely for

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[55] I did not like to carry video or sound recorders around to damage the spontaneity of given encounters. Instead, all I commonly had were a pen, a mini notebook, and a lot of eye contact with my interlocutors. Yet, I stuck with the discipline of immediately noting down details of settings, people, words, and everything else as soon as a gathering or conversation was over.

[56] While English and Chinese were equally used for verbal communication, as soon as I had a chance to note down those Chinese-mediated conversations, I instantly translated them into English.

[57] It would be wrong to assume different Tibetan dialects are necessarily individual Tibetans' first language. Not infrequently, I did run into newcomers and homeland Tibetans who were literate and more fluent in Chinese but had learned Tibetan as a second language.

tactical concerns, I soon learned to recognize two sets of communicative boundaries that Tibetans in Dharamsala tend to maintain. First, regardless of how formal or casual given settings might be, Tibetans generally do not feel apologetic about switching back and forth between multilingual engagements to include non-Tibetan-speakers at the scene and Tibetan-only communications to exclude them. Second, in a community where the weight of uniformity and solidarity is commonly felt and where jealousy and enmity induced by competition for limited resources is prevalent, it is not unusual to hear individuals pronouncing their preference to talk with foreigners – rather than to have to deal with the fellow Tibetans they do not trust. As a result, not only my own linguistic (in)ability but also the sociolinguistic fences meaningful to Tibetans predetermined my access to the life worlds I intended to understand. Conversely, the outcomes of my data collection indeed reflect the linguistic, ethnic, and cultural hybridity that, though not necessarily perceived as a positive development by every Tibetan, has become an authentic component of contemporary Tibetan experience which this project is designed to chronicle.[58]

Reading and visual data collection

My ability to read Tibetan was limited when I entered the fieldwork phase of this project. Nevertheless, reading materials published in English and Chinese was a part of my everyday activity in Dharamsala. By collecting and on a regular basis reading recently published community newspapers, tourist pamphlets, and other publicity materials, I

[58] My fluency and literacy in Hindi facilitated my own daily life during the Dharamsala phase of the fieldwork. Also, by trying to communicate in Hindi, I was often taken as a Tibetan by shopkeepers, vegetable vendors, and bus conductors who would then respond to me in Tibetan. As confusing as these encounters sometimes became, they did allow me to have a glimpse of ways in which inter-ethnic contacts were ordinarily played out in the locale.

became familiar with the standard exilic discourse of the nation-state Tibet. In order to establish a baseline of comparison between the present manifestation of the discourse and its earlier incarnations, I spent time reading earlier publications of similar types from the collections in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, the major research facility located inside the compound of the government-in-exile.[59]

More importantly, reading facilitated the ethnographic engagement which I respectively had with my India-born and newcomer informants. As much as possible, I read published and unpublished works by writers among each group. While only very few poems by these Dharamsala-based authors are cited in the dissertation to draw out the analytical points I want to make, *in situ*, our discussions and even debates on their writing and thoughts were frequent and intense. After a while, I came to know more than just their literary personae, learning to appreciate not only what they articulate but also what they do not write. Also, to enlarge the common ground of daily encounters I had with many well-educated young Tibetans, I tried to read what they read. In this regard, one readership in English with Anglophonic India-born cohorts and the other in Chinese with the newcomers were both a part of my participant observation in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala.

Because of the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan attractions, Dharamsala has been a vibrant tourist spot frequented by Indian and international journalists. As a result, Tibetan and non-Tibetan locals rarely pay attention to anyone who walks around town with cameras and/or heavy-duty video recording equipment. To a great deal, such a character of the township helped the casual approach which I purposefully maintained for the

[59] In this regard, I should particularly acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Pema Yeshi and his staff in the Foreign Language Reference Section of the Library.

fieldwork. As much as I wanted to keep my human contacts improvisational, I was also able to rely on constant snapshots to record my impressions of given locations, events and/or images on public display without feeling my camera intrusive. Visual clues provided by these snapshots have been in two ways important to this project: First, when the fieldwork was ongoing, they enhanced my attention to details and frequently inspired follow-up questions and engagements. Second, during the writing-up phase, they facilitated the long process though which the otherwise scattered ethnographic data was gradually woven into cohesive theses. As we shall see, some of these snapshots indeed made their way into the dissertation – not merely as visual references of what I argue but also serving as integral components of analysis.

Aside from my own photographic documentation, postcards, posters stickers, and other publicly circulated visual materials which Tibetans in Dharamsala design, produce, and/or consume were also collected for this project. It is through these materials that I gained insights into the self-image(s) which individual Tibetans and their Dharamsala community as a whole prefer for various reasons. Then, similar to the kind of reading engagements which I had with the literary figures among the India-born cohorts and the newcomers, I also sought out those in the community who were talented visual artists. Once again, limited by the scope of the dissertation, only the works and life stories of a few among them are featured herein – even though my encounters with many others have been equally interesting and deserving to be explicated through a future project.

Implications

Each of the five chapters (Chapter 3 to 7) that constitute the main body of the dissertation

can be read as an independent case study. By telling thematically grouped experiences and stories of individual Tibetans in each of these chapters, I zoom in from different angles to highlight the interwoven dynamics between formations of Tibetan subjectivity and the cultural geography of Dharamsala, which has hitherto largely gotten lost in all sorts of generalizations and stereotypes about the nation. In the meantime time, I have also designed each of these chapters to be engaged with specific sets of theoretical issues that have recently interested anthropologists of other world areas:

By focusing on the quotidian life worlds of the India-born cohorts, Chapter 3 joins two branches of more updated scholarship on diaspora. First, upon accepting the argument Susanne Schwalgin (2004) and others have made that sentiment for a lost homeland alone cannot completely explain the very subjective experiences of populations who call themselves or are referred to as exiles, I explore ways in which the locality of Dharamsala becomes meaningful to the cohorts. Second, among a wide range of the cohorts' local/Indian experience which constitutes the exilic/Tibetan state of their self-consciousness, I have found the sensory realm of these Tibetans' everyday lives particularly revelatory. As a result, Chapter 3 also follows the trend of ethnographic inquiry which has just begun to deal with ways in which taste, vision, and other sensorially based practices have played their parts in constituting human experiences that are often referred to as displacement and migration (Wise and Chapman 2005).

Also on the India-born cohorts, Chapter 4 presents a critical application of Tim Ingold's phenomenological approach towards people's "practical engagement with their surroundings" (2000:186); it examines subtle and varied ways in which this segment of the Tibetan population in Dharamsala manages the affinity they often feel about the

locale where they are simultaneously in exile but also native.

From the cognitive scheme dear to the India-born subgroup, Chapter 5 explores roles that "Tibetan history" has been playing in shaping ways time is perceived, everyday life is lived, and ethos is absorbed from within the Tibetan community in Dharamsala. The chapter is a result of inspiration from case studies done in different world areas that all suggest the fertile research potential opened up by viewing history and time as culturally grounded and socially and politically mediated practices (e.g. Authors in Hirsch and Stewart 2005; Malkki 1995a; Mueggler 2001; Peteet 2007).

Along with a detailed introduction of the trans-Himalayan mobility and its contemporary predicaments for Tibetans from the homeland, Chapter 6 concentrates on the translocal agency and intentionality that the segment of Tibetans who are in Dharamsala stigmatized as "newcomers" have embodied before they set foot in the place. The intricacy of the Tibetan case presented in the chapter is meant to complicate what has been known about territorially unbounded formations of nationhood, global flows of imagination, and other issues that anthropologists of transnationalism and ethnicity have intensely debated during the recent decades (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Markowitz and Stefansson 2004; Ong 1999; Yeh 2007).

Chapter 7 addresses the day-to-day living experiences of the newcomer subgroup in Dharamsala. Tackled throughout the chapter are two sets of comparative theses with their larger theoretical implications. On the one hand, by comparing the subgroup's local experience in Dharamsala with the imaginations of the place which are meaningful to individuals of the subgroup prior to their departure from the homeland, this chapter presses a scholarship which will be more serious than before in its consideration of the

lived consequences of globally flowing imaginations. Conversely, the thematic foci that have run through my analyses of the India-born cohorts in Chapters 3 and 4 will be brought forth again in Chapter 7. By doing so, I am able to conclude that, in Dharamsala, to understand Tibetan experience is to fathom its multiplicity which is not only about Tibetans' perceptions of their significant Indian and/or Chinese others, but also regards the in-group references Tibetans make among themselves. Moreover, since the ways for the newcomers to be Tibetan in Dharamsala tend to vary from those of their India-born counterparts, their experiences add different threads to processes that allow the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala to be constantly woven and rewoven.

Beyond its evident contributions to the field of Tibetan Studies and the current anthropological dialogues on personhood, human geography, ethnicity, and forms of transnationalism, this dissertation also partakes of efforts made by Dru Gladney (2003), Louisa Schein (2000), Aihwa Ong (1993), and others who have utilized their studies of ethnicity in the Chinese context to problematize the very reified concept of a monolithic, timeless, and territorially bounded China. As often as such a perception of China seems to have been perpetually recycled in not only political but also intellectual terms, the multidimensional existence of Dharamsala as a Tibetan place outside the reign of China documented in this dissertation suggests a very different reality. For this reason, I expect this dissertation to be an interesting undertaking for readers who are seeking an alternative understanding of contemporary China, in particular, as China lived and experienced by Tibetans who are in legal terms defined by the Chinese state one of the country's *shaoshu minzu* (minority nationalities).

Finally, reflected in the narratives and analyses which have gone into this

dissertation is also the inner communication which I have constantly carried out with imagined readers of two linguistic groups. For those who have already sided with Tibetans and have means, freedom, and linguistic ability to access Tibet-related information in English, I hope my ways to depoliticize Tibetan subjectivity are refreshing and can allow us to think twice about the complexity embedded in Tibetans' modern and contemporary experiences. On the other hand, by having the linguistic capacity in Chinese to know the contents and limits of the kind of Tibetan information that the Chinese state fabricates for its citizens who form a good percentage of Chinese readership around the globe, I am aware that the composition of the dissertation, though in English by requirement, has been partially about my desire to convey to the readership what has been missing from their understanding of Tibetans and their life worlds. It has been my wish to soon convert this dissertation into a Chinese publication. Only when this project can one day become accessible to those who do not have many options but to take whatever the Chinese state says about Tibet and its people as facts and truth, will I then feel it has been completed.

CHAPTER THREE

TIBETANS WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE INDIA-BORN (1): EXILE AS A SEDENTARY EXPERIENCE

Waltraud Kokot and his associates have recently called for a paradigm shift in the anthropological studies of diaspora, transnationalism, and other interrelated phenomena:

> ….despite a necessary focus on transnational networks and movement, ethnographic studies of diaspora must also not neglect the realities of sedentary diasporic life. They must critically take into account…. the political discourse of uprootedness and dispersal among diaspora elites. This 'official' model of a 'pure' diasporic identity, permanently endangered by threats of assimilation, must be contrasted with studies of the day-to-day experience of individual actors, balancing the various claims brought to them by diasporic elites, society of residence, and personal situation alike (Kokot *et al* 2004:5-6).

Summarized in these words is, on the one hand, the attempt of their coauthors to move beyond the notion of mobility and fluidity that has preoccupied earlier scholars of the field.[60] Conversely, what is articulated is also a caution that ethnographers' research interest in given groups of people who are known for their voluntary or forced migration should not be limited by "threats of assimilation" and other official models of diasporic identity that elites of these groups tend to highlight.

Given the contrast between the often simplified representations of the Tibetan nation and the very observable nuances and intricacies of the Tibetan life worlds in and beyond the Dharamsala vicinity, the call of Kokot *et al* for more attention towards the

[60] For the earlier phase of the excitement about the mobility and fluidity which academics perceive as having been embodied by refugees, migrant workers and other kinds of "diasporic" populations, see Clifford 1997a; Kearney1995; Safran 1991; Schnapper 1999; Tololyan 1991 and 1996.

less acknowledged and studied "sedentary diasporic life" makes sense. Yet, what does it actually entail to pursue "studies of the day-to-day experience" of individual Tibetan actors, and to balance "the various claims brought to them" by the exilic Tibetan nation-state, the Dharamsala locale, and other factors? How would such a shifted analytical focus modify – if not completely alter – what has been known about the cohort of Tibetans in Dharamsala who constantly refer to themselves as the "India-born"?[61] Which aspect of the day-to-day experience of the subgroup can help better draw out the intricacy and dynamics which has hitherto largely been overshadowed by the contentious Sino-Tibetan relationship? Throughout the research and writing-up phases of this project, I have insisted on the open-endedness of questions of this sort. This means that my empirical observation and documentation usually took the lead in deepening and complicating interpretations I was able to advance. The homecoming saga I am herein relating thus serves as an example of the way in which my fieldwork data begins to meet with the ongoing analytical reorientation of Diasporic Studies.

A homecoming saga

November, 2003. Three weeks into my fieldwork stay in Dharamsala, I had just visited a friend living next to the CTA compound and was hiking along the paved main road up to McLeod Ganj on a sunny morning. From a distance, I spotted a young man who, with his backpack dropped on the slope below the main road, was clicking his camera. No one

[61] These same questions are equally relevant to the often notoriously acknowledged "newcomer" population in Dharamsala, whose sedentarily lived diasporic experiences do not always resonate with that of the India-born cohorts and hence deserve a separate explication which Chapter 7 of the dissertation provides. In this regard, my inquiries into the life worlds and subjectivity formations of the India-born cohorts throughout this and the next two chapters will later serve as a baseline of comparison to draw out the attributes of Tibetan experience in Dharamsala that are unique to the newcomer subgroup.

was with him or posing for his camera at the moment, and I thus had the impression that he was photographing the mountain views right in front of him. I stopped, greeted him, and asked whether he was a journalist or photographer. The young man (here I call him Lobsang) replied: "No, I am not. I am on my vacation, and I just love the view from here." In the next few minutes, Lobsang and I exchanged our reasons for being in Dharamsala—a common manner of socializing with strangers in this small yet cosmopolitan hill station where highly mobile Tibetans, Indians, and other nationals frequently come and go, and where, as I would gradually realize in the many months ahead, people always have their travel stories to share.

Lobsang told me that he had just "returned" to Dharamsala a few hours before on the overnight bus from Delhi. As an orphan who grew up in and graduated from the Upper Dharamsala branch of the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV), one of the major boarding school systems set up to accommodate the underage population (pre-K to 12) among Tibetans in South Asia,[62] Lobsang had migrated to America four years earlier to join his sister and her husband. "How about you? Have you gotten married?" I asked. "No, I have worked so hard in the past four years for this trip. I mean, to come back. I have missed this place (with a noticeable pause) and India so much!" Lobsang continued: "I hope to feel more settled after this trip. After returning to America this time, maybe I can settle down and start my own family."

While chatting about all of this, Lobsang had put away his camera, picked up his backpack, and was about to walk away. He told me in passing that he was heading to Lower Dharamsala to try his luck: "This morning, from the bus stop, I went door to door

[62] Regarding the school setting that is important to the upbringing that Lobsang and many other young exiles commonly have, see my overview later in the chapter.

in McLeod looking for my friends. I could not find any; everyone is gone. McLeod now only has those newcomers." By the way in which Lobsang introduced himself as an orphan growing up in Dharamsala and referred to those who had just disappointed him as "newcomers," Lobsang's self-perception as an "India-born" was clear on the spot. Meanwhile, I was left to contemplate the homecoming saga that I had just serendipitously witnessed.[63]

Inquiries

Against the backdrop of Dharamsala as the "capital" of the exilic Tibetan nation-state saturated with discourses and visual symbols that constantly remind its residents and visitors of the lost homeland Tibet which is often presented as the focal point of the refugee population's emotional attachment (Figure 3.1-3.3),[64] it was hard to neglect the expression of Lobsang regarding "this place and *India*" that he had been missing. Prompted by this initial observation of the apparent contrast between the publicly emphasized "home" orientation of the nation towards "Tibet" and the incident when a Tibetan indeed acknowledged his feeling for the place which is supposedly the token of his and the nation's exilic reality, this and the next two chapters explore ways in which the exilic Tibetan nation has been lived by the India-born cohorts who are too young to be responsible for the earlier processes of building the nation in exile, but who have long

[63] For the attention of migration research which has recently turned to "homecomings" of displaced people, see the anthology edited by Markowitz and Stefansson (2004). While the anthology is intended to be cutting-edge, its "categorization of homecomers" is largely "based on the extent of 'temporal distance' from the homeland" (4). The commonly asserted dichotomy between exile and homeland remains. In contrast, Lobsang's homecoming to Dharamsala, the place which is otherwise a well-known token of the plight of Tibet becoming a nation-in-exile, certainly suggests the further ambivalence of the concept of "going home" that the anthology highlights.

[64] See Anand 2002 for names of shops, hotels, and other establishments in McLeod Ganj that are made to evoke the association of Dharamsala with the lost "Tibet."

been made to stand for the hope and discipline that the exilic leadership anticipates (Figure 3.4 and 3.5).

Moreover, in contrast with the "refugee" identity of Tibetans that often dominates the perception of their observers, Lobsang and his homecoming moment on that autumn morning powerfully reminded me of the simple fact that, after all, Dharamsala was the place where he had until 2003 lived longest and which was known to him probably better than anywhere else on earth. In light of the "sedentary diasporic life" to which Kokot and his associates have called for analytical attention, what should be first scrutinized is perhaps not so much the fact that Lobsang had a feeling for Dharamsala and India, but my own immediate surprise about it. As Margaret C. Rodman (1992) once stated:

> The physical, emotional, and experiential realities places hold for their inhabitants at particular times need to be understood apart from their creation as the locales of ethnography (641).

Through this unexpected encounter with Lobsang during the earliest stage of my fieldwork in Dharamsala, the place ceased to be a still backdrop against which everything else takes place. Rather, to my inquisitive gaze, it began to exist in ways in which its residents (Tibetans in particular) live and feel on a daily basis, challenging all sorts of presumptions I had had. In retrospect, if not because I had arrived in Dharamsala for my fieldwork with a string of asserted ideas on "exile," "refugee," "diaspora," and/or "displacement," and had taken for granted the often unexamined association of Tibetans with them, the entire homecoming saga of Lobsang would have not been as impressive as I first received it. From the other way around, it is the saga that initially freed me from the popular impression of homeland Tibet as the monolithic center of the lived experience and emotion of the population who perceive themselves as exiles; it brought

my attention towards the Indian, that is, sedentary aspect of exilic Tibetan experience which deserves intellectually more rigorous exploration.[65]

On top of the general reorientation of my curiosity, the following inquiry about the processes through which the lived experiences of the India-born cohorts add substance to the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala is more specifically modeled after the framework that Susanne Schwalgin (2004) develops to study the experience of Armenian exiles who have resettled in modern Greece since the 1920s.

According to Schwalgin, both the theory of diaspora in general and the dominant diasporic Armenian discourse emphasize the importance of homeland imagination and attachment and, at the same time, equally downplay the significance of Armenians' local experience in Greece. Yet, as her research discovers, Armenians in Greece "seem to place a higher value on the lived experience of locality" when they "are confronted with making personal decisions" (74). To take into account this "local" dimension of the diasporic experience, Schwalgin (*ibid.*) argues:

> It is analytically useful to distinguish between two interrelated processes of place-making (among the populations displaced from their homelands): the process of imagined place-making and of experienced place-making.

She goes on to explain that "for the (*sic*) most Armenians living in Greece today…. the process of an experienced place-making is central for their identifications as Armenians" (*ibid.*). Conversely, she also points out that the way in which the Armenians experience their Greek locality "is partially shaped by their attachments to the imagined homeland

[65] The concept of "hybridity" has been used to examine the Indian components of representational works by South-Asia based Tibetan musicians in Diehl 2002 and visual artists in Harris 1999. While the insights that these two path-breaking works offer are important, I do find the foci of their authors too narrow on "cultures" extracted from Tibetans' engagements with formal representational genres, leaving out layers and dimensions of Tibetan quotidian experience that, as this and other chapters of the dissertation demonstrate, are at least as revelatory as what is in the songs Tibetans sing and/or paintings they draw.

Armenia" (75). "The two interrelated processes" that Schwalgin summarizes are important. Once they are taken seriously, "exile" ceases to be a form of experience exclusively dominated by either the place of dwelling or that perceived as the homeland. Rather, it is the dynamics which these processes generate that demands further explication.[66]

Schwalgin's criticism of the emphasis on the imagined homeland Armenia over lived diasporic reality in Greece is particularly applicable to the Tibetan case of my study:

Up to this point in time, what has been more widely circulated through the advocacy and journalist literature and scholarly publications is often the sentiment of exiles towards their Tibetan homeland that is at least partially responsible for Dharamsala to have been frequently referred to as "Little Lhasa" (*Dharamsala* 1999).[67] The designation emphasizes the role of Dharamsala as a substitute for that which Lhasa would have played if the polity had not been forced into exile. Meanwhile, it downplays other aspects of Dharamsala's (in)significance that derive from experiences lived by the diverse and globally scattered Tibetan population. What is yet to be given sufficient attention is thus, for instance, the kind of experience of and feeling for Dharamsala itself that a Tibetan person like Lobsang has. In this regard, I explore meanings that Dharamsala has been obtaining because of the ways in which the India-born cohorts go about their quotidian lives in and sometimes outside the vicinity of the locale.

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[66] See Mason 2007 for a similar account of the dual sense of belonging which the Palestinian diaspora has developed for the lost homeland and places of lived experience.

[67] As the long-term Tibetan and even non-Tibetan residents in Dharamsala remember it, Dharamsala did not become Little Lhasa overnight. Rather, such recognition of the place has been accumulative through processes and involved with players of different parties. While a detailed investigation on the subject is yet to be pursued, the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution inside Tibet is, according to the oral accounts I have collected, one of the most often cited turning points when the polity-in-exile became more confident about its legitimacy to represent the political continuity passed down from Lhasa to Dharamsala.

Finally, I have often felt intrigued – not only by what Lobsang said to me that morning, but also by what he was "doing" at the moment when I first spotted him from a distance. After all, I happened to pass by when Lobsang was photographing the landscape which shortly before had caught his attention. The entire homecoming saga was not there for any audience to watch. With or without me to distract him, Losang, accompanied by his camera, was experiencing the moment of homecoming, preceded by other things that he had done because of the same desire to "return." Based upon what Lobsang briefly mentioned to me, a total stranger, this desire had meant several years of saving and planning for the trip, and it led to his anxious but disappointing search for old acquaintances that morning. Different components of Lobsang's everyday life – despite having been located in the United States for several years – appeared to be in a constant practical and emotional relation with his very subjective feeling for Dharamsala, the place which is supposedly *the* reminder of the Tibetan nation's alienation and uprootedness. In comparison with the emotional attachment to the place which Lobsang lived, the narrative which he came up with when unexpectedly encountering a bystander was secondary. How much more of his life world and that of others who also call themselves the India-born are equally lived and real but have not fully entered the terrain of representational practices of Tibetans and their observers? My attention to the moment when Lobsang alone operated his camera thus forecasts the ways in which I in this and next chapter approach the interrelationship between experiences lived by the India-born cohorts and the locality of Dharamsala (and India by and large):

First, I identify everyday practices that are particularly revelatory of the sociocultural world the cohorts inhabit; second, I sort through experiences the cohorts

verbalize and/or put into other modes of "representational" practice; third, I examine settings and dynamics of social interactions that are revealing of manifold and often very subtle ways in which the cohorts constantly negotiate between their "everyday" and "representational" practices.

Upbringing

In spite of the partial sovereign power that the Dharamsala-based Tibetan polity-in-exile has had over its people (see my explanation in Chapter 1), the schooling that it has over the decades provided to those who grew up as a part of the exilic collective in India is unique in its formation and powerful in passing down its vision of a Tibetan nation composed of a proper religious ethos and particular cultural, historical, and geographic dispositions. Two policy decisions that the polity made in the early era of its exile were crucial to the development and outcome of its educational system.

On the ideological side, it decided from the very beginning that the modern and secular education received by children among the refugee population must be simultaneously "Tibetan." This first meant that, instead of having Tibetan children be absorbed into regular Indian schools as Prime Minister Nehru initially suggested, the Dalai Lama convinced him to set aside a separate school system for the displaced Tibetan children.[68] Moreover, while the Tibetan Government-in-Exile has directly funded only a small percentage of Tibetan schools in South Asia, its Department of Education,

[68] The immediate result of the agreement between Nehru and the Dalai Lama was the establishment of the Tibetan School Society, renamed as the Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA) since 1969, under the Ministry of Education of the Indian Government to oversee the budgets and personnel support of the early boarding and day schools set aside for the refugee children (Nowak 1984:55-6). Nowadays, among the 84 Tibetan schools in South Asia, slightly more than one third of them are operated through the CTSA system, close to one fifth of them are financed by the CTA, and all of others are funded by international organizations and individual donors (Tsepak Rigzin 2004: 267-8).

collaborating with the autonomous TCV,[69] controls the curriculum and textbooks on Tibetan subjects used in all of the Tibetan schools in the subcontinent (Tsepak Rigzin 2004: 272-3). Such an investment in national education reached its zenith in the late 1980s when it was decided to further "Tibetanize" the curriculum used at the primary school level. Tibetan has from that point on replaced English, becoming the main language of instruction for all subjects that pupils are required to study up to the fifth grade. As envisioned by the engineers of the Tibetanization project, it has the mission to "strengthen interest and love for the Tibetan language and culture" among "Tibetans born in exile" (Jetsun Pema 2004: 292).[70]

On the pragmatic side, the initial impoverished living conditions with which the adult refugees struggled made situations for children in their midst devastating. Nurseries and schools equipped with free boarding facilities – in the forms of dormitories and/or foster households – were designed to ease the crisis. As a result, it is not uncommon for Tibetans who grew up in South Asia to have lived the first ten to eighteen years of their lives in schools in which they were enrolled. [71] Nearly all of the India-born cohorts whom I came to contact for this project had once attended these boarding schools.[72] When their childhood experience came into our conversation, many of them were particularly fond of talking about the foster family they used to have while in school. Typically, each foster

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[69] For the development of TCV from a temporary nursery in Dharamsala in the early 1960s to the largest school system which remains extremely popular and influential, see Jetsun Pema 2004.

[70] For varied post-implementation evaluations of the "Tibetanisation" project by educators in these schools, see Tsepak Rigzin 2004 and Tsering Yeshi 2001.

[71] While schools with free boarding facilities were originally employed to cope with the immediate crisis faced by the refugee population, over time and for reasons that are yet to be examined, Tibetans have received the system so well that it has grown into a popular preference among parents. Some of them are now well established and live within daily commuting distance from available schools, but rather choose those providing boarding for their children. School administrators sometimes have to come up with stipend programs for the parents to encourage enrollment in day schools (Jetsun Pema 2004:288-9).

[72] Exceptions to this pattern are those whose parents made the pragmatic decision to send them to prestigious Indian boarding schools.

family is staffed with a "house mother" to look after a score of and sometimes more children of different ages and sexes who are used to the idea of living with their "house brothers and sisters." Behavioral discipline is regularly addressed in these on-campus residential households, ranging from being mindful in helping your house mother and siblings (a practice to reinforce the Buddhist and therefore Tibetan ethos of altruism that is a part of the formal curriculum) to prayers and dedications recited before each mealtime (another marker of one's religionational identity). In context, this makes "schools" more than just sites for formal learning. Rather, while it was started as a pragmatic device, the "home" feature of residential schools has over time made the institution and its vision become extremely intimate to the intended recipients of the national education in exile.[73]

Embodiments of the nation

Given the degree to which the India-born cohorts often at first sound extremely univocal about their nationalist Tibetan refugee identity, the uniqueness of their upbringing through the school system and educational policy engineered by the exilic nation-state is evident. However, based upon my own participant observation in the midst of the cohorts, I argue that the most explicitly articulated Tibetan identity by the subgroup is merely a very small segment of what that their life worlds entail. Beyond it, their day-to-day living experience tends to be at once more subtly intertwined with but also exceeding the

[73] Schools that the India-born cohorts once attended have also helped form foundations for their post-graduate social networking and sense of community in and beyond the Tibetan settlements in South Asia. There is always an extra layer of affinity when one India-born refers to the other as his or her "house brother" or "house sister." When one "India-born" is introduced to another, they often first ask about each other's alumni affiliations. Instead of the settlements where the families of many of them reside or the pre-1959 clan, sectarian, or provincial backgrounds of one's family that remain important to the elders in the exilic community, it is usually names of their schools and years of their graduation that are initially exchanged.

conventionally perceived Tibetan collective. Taking into account the less documented components of their quotidian life world thus bears the potential to complicate what has been known about that world.

My further elaboration of the intricacy under discussion herein begins with a close reading of the writing, the form of activist practice, and the community reception of Tenzin Tsundue (hereafter only Tsundue), an outspoken India-born in his thirties.

Based in Dharamsala, Tsundue is a published writer and currently an activist celebrity to the Tibetan youths in exile and international journalists. In his widely circulated prize-winning essay "My Kind of Exile," Tsundue has these words regarding the refugee/Tibetan identity that he once learned in school:

> ….our teachers used to regale us with tales of Tibetans suffering in Tibet. We were often told that we were refugees and that we all bore a big "R" on our foreheads. It didn't make much sense to us, we only wished the teacher would hurry up and finish his talk and not keep us standing in the hot sun, with our oiled hair. For a very long time I sincerely believed that we were a special kind of people with an "R" on our foreheads. We did look different from the local Indian families who lived around our school campus…. (Tenzin Tsundue 2002: 23).

On a superficial level, the invisible "R" on one's forehead that puzzled the school boy Tsundue captures the basic process through which the idea of "refugee" sank in and dominated the formation of self-consciousness of Tsundue and his like. This much of one's grasping of these printed words by the widely read English-writing Tibetan writer becomes more interesting when they are placed against the ways in which the grown-up Tsundue and others have frequently converted the "R on the forehead" that school teachers metaphorically evoked into more "visible" emblems of their patriotism.

The inscription of "save Tibet" on the face of the boy (Figure 3.6) and the

symbolism of the Tibetan flag painted on the faces of the protestors (Figure 3.7) are straightforward signs of young Tibetan males embodying their nation.[74] Such a practice which renders one's body the site where the cause of the exilic nation is propagated – along with the more controversial practice of tattooing the national symbols – has in recent decades become a common scene when exilic Tibetans gather for protests in Dharamsala and beyond.[75] It attests to the shift of political culture in Dharamsala from the kind of refugee identity that, as Tsundue's writing captures, the elite sector of the exilic nation has tried to engrain upon its citizens, to the latter's voluntary commitment to the nation. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake if one hence misses the degree to which patriotism – as the most acknowledged Tibetan experience – has been an unsettled issue in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala. For instance, while the headband which Tsundue has adapted to make his political statements (Figure 3.8) might first look like just one more patriotic gesture of another nationalistic exile, it does in at least three ways suggest that, far from being a homogeneous entity, patriotism among those who have a similar "India-born" upbringing in Dharamsala bears its own load of dialogical difference from within the Tibetan collective:

In contrast with the facial and body painting and inscriptions which others ceremonially apply to themselves when marches, demonstrations, hunger strikes, and other public gatherings take place, Tsundue has for years made it publicly known that he would never remove the headband until Tibet (for him that means *Boe Chenbo,* Greater

[74] A further exploration of reasons for which the practice has been overwhelmingly masculine is beyond the scope of the present chapter. Meanwhile, for quotidian practices that are particular to women among the India-born cohorts, see my later discussion in this chapter.

[75] In Dharamsala and beyond, tattooing is often singled out when the exilic Tibetan youth population debate about whether the practice is a form of self-harm and therefore, in an Anglophonic expression common to them, "violates the nonviolence teaching of His Holiness."

Tibet) is freed from China's occupation. While marking his determination to struggle, the headband is also a subtle expression of Tsundue's discontent with the extent to which others' activist engagements – in his view – have become occasional and lukewarm.

Moreover, the same shade of red that Tsundue wears on his forehead is, in the eyes of Tibetan youths growing up in Dharamsala, a riveting reminder of "Red" China and its intrusion (Figure 3.9). By choosing the same color for his headband, Tsundue appropriates its symbolic meaning. The color which, by the local standard in Dharamsala, is supposed to signal the vulnerability and victimhood of Tibetans is remade to convey the intensity of activism he has in mind.

From the other way around, while Tsundue always makes it clear that he has no desire to violate the nonviolent principle for struggle which the Dalai Lama and the polity-in-exile embrace, the association that he sometimes makes between the bright red of his headband and the blood that he is ready to shed for Tibet is, by the Dharamsala standard, fairly provocative. As a result, while Tsundue has been a widely admired figure among Tibetan youngsters in Dharamsala, some other Tibetan settlements in South Asia and the cyberspace, so far it has not become a fashion for others to mimic his headband practice.[76]

By means of these three ways at least, the headband suggests that to neither Tsundue nor his admirers is "living with Tibet" a political culture without its in-group pressure and complexity. Rather, while the headband conveys Tsundue's frustration with what he sees as the decreased commitment which others have to the nation, and while the same object states his symbolic appropriation of the power of "Red" China, others do not

[76] Conversely, according to Tsundue himself, the Dalai Lama is the one who often disarmingly teases him about the headband: "Isn't it too hot to always have a cloth tied around your head?"

always completely feel comfortable with his style of activism. My elementary clarification here is that dissension indeed exists from within the Tibetan collective in the Dharamsala locale and around its highly politicized symbolic meaning. Given that even patriotism – as the most pronounced sentiment in the Tibetan case under discussion – contains the kind of collision and convergence of meanings which one can find in Tsundue's headband practice, other ways in which lived experiences and perceptions of the India-cohorts complicate the Tibetan geography of the locale should be fully expected.

The Indian Other

More can be extracted from Tsundue's account of the capital letter "R" told in school as having been engraved on the foreheads of the uprooted Tibetan population. My attention this time is on the way in which the otherwise incomprehensible "R" lesson began to make sense when the young Tsundue(s) could see and then compare their own appearance with that of "the local Indian families" neighboring the school.

In contrast with the teaching of the invisible "R" on their foreheads that was by designed to cultivate the youngsters' translocal identity with the Tibet which the Lhasa regime lost to the Chinese state in the 1950s, the visual comparison that assisted the schoolboy Tsundue(s) to grasp the idea that they are "a special kind of people" was remarkably local. Such a convergence of the translocal with the local immediately resonates with the interrelated processes "of imagined place-making" and "of experienced place-making" that I have earlier cited from Schwalgin.

Moreover, rather than the often evoked Chinese Other of the modern Tibetan nation, captured in the childhood experience which the adult Tsundue reiterates is the role

which the Indian Other has had in shaping the sense of Tibetan Self developed among many others who share the South Asian exilic upbringing of the activist author. While the commonly accepted thesis has been that ethnicity and/or national identity are relational in nature, that is, they exist only when a given group senses its difference from others (e.g. Gladney 2004; Harrison 2003), it is still worth an effort to pin down ways in which the Indian Other specifically becomes the point of reference to the quotidian experiences and representational practices of the Tibetans who are now grown up and constantly refer to themselves as the India-born. Besides their self-reference of being different from the derogatorily labeled "newcomers" from the homeland, what is actually "Indian" about the cohorts? Most importantly, in what ways can the Indian attributes of their Tibetan experience complicate what has been known of Dharamsala because of the locale's association with the Tibetan nation?

There are certainly different ways in which one can pursue the significance of the Indian Other to the subgroup of Tibetans in Dharamsala who call themselves the India-born. In my case, having chosen to conduct a style of fieldwork which I describe as methodologically casual (see Chapter 2), I often found meaningful intricacies lying in the least eventful routines of the cohorts' quotidian lives – for instance, in ways in which the cohorts see things and taste foods. In this regard, my exploration of the Indian Other significant to the cohorts joins the efforts of some Australia-based researchers who have recently turned to the "sensuous scholarship" pioneered by Paul Stoller (1989) to advance their understanding of people whose lives are marked by their migratory movements. As the coeditors of a special issue of *Journal of Intercultural Studies* dedicated to the subject,

Amanda Wise and Adam Chapman (2005) summarize what matters to the "sensuous scholarship":

> ….the crucial ways in which we experience and respond to the world not just at the level of representation but through the very nerve fibres of the body. Through our synapses, through our skins and our blood, through hot and cold, sound and resonance, smell and touch, in our proprioceptive and kinaesthetic modes of being, through emotions that register as bodily affects: hope, fear, disgust or visceral pleasure (2).[77]

Venues that the scholarship possibly opens up are exciting! For now, I pay close attention to the visual and gustatory aspects of the quotidian lives of the India-born cohorts, hoping to draw out of them the subtlety and complexity which have been previously little noted.

Visibility and visual segregation in practice

Thus far into the sedentary end of the India-born cohorts' exilic Tibetan experience which this chapter explicates, the multiple roles which visuality plays have already been hinted at in the childhood account of Tsundue, the outspoken activist writer, and in the homecoming saga of Lobsang which first taught me to problematize the place which Dharamsala holds in the life worlds of Tibetans. In the case of Tsundue, "seeing" Indian neighbors next to his school once facilitated his understanding of the otherwise incomprehensible "R" lesson from his teacher. More recently, by way of persistently wearing his headband, the activist has wanted to be seen as embodying the determination which is to him inadequate but seriously needed for the nation to continue its struggle. As for Lobsang, having finally "returned" to the place which he had missed, Lobsang "saw" and pulled his camera out to capture the image of the landscape which appealed to

[77] Also, see Classen 1997 for a useful overview of the concept of "anthropology of the senses" and of the range of scholarship which treats sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell as sites for sociocultural inquiries.

him. What Lobsang saw at the moment when I spotted him with his camera presents a form of Dharamsala's Tibetan significance which varies from the trademark identity of the place as signifying the plight of the deterritorialized nation and its displaced population. The kind of understanding of the Tibetan "sedentary diasporic life" in Dharamsala which the seeing experiences of these two "India-born" protagonists enrich can be further found in other visually based practices and remarks of the cohorts.

Visibility put in practice. As a polity surviving through its exilic establishment without any formal international recognition, the Dharamsala-based Tibetan nation-state has been heavily relying on the "visibility" of the nation it can maneuver to keep its cause-in-exile alive. While visibility is instrumental and strategically important to the regime's efforts to engage with its regional and international sympathizers, the India-born cohorts have grown up used to the gazes and various Tibetan imaginations of foreign humanitarian workers, tourists, journalists, and seekers of the Tibetan "tradition" which is known to have been severely damaged inside Tibet under Chinese rule. As a result, "ways of being seen" are more than just a strategy to the national agenda of the polity and its umbrella institutions. It has over time also evolved into practices and ways of thinking and feeling that are habitual to the India-born cohorts.[78]

As a young housewife once commented to me on the appearance of old Tibetan women which is in Dharamsala commonly featured on all sorts of publicity materials (Figure 3.10):

> They look more Tibetan (pointing to the postcards and posters spread on my bed)! Look at me, if we all dress like this (referring to the short-sleeved blouse and the khaki trousers she dressed in), no one would see where we are and Tibetans would disappear.

[78] For a comparison with the newcomers who tend to be much less sensitive about "ways of being seen" which concern the India-born cohorts, see my discussion in Chapter 7.

Similarly, while the female employees by the CTA and its umbrella organizations are required to dress in *chuba* (robe – *Tib.)* in their working places,[79] those among the India-born cohorts who are subject to the mandated dress code generally agree that the nation needs the kind of visibility which their compliance with the regulation can provide.[80]

At the pragmatic end, for instance, there is no secret in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala that children sitting for photographs sent out to seek international sponsorship should look shabby and somber, living up with potential sponsors' perceptions of "refugee child."[81] Not everyone in the community appreciates the careful manipulation used to produce images of Tibetan refugee children for their international recipients. Nevertheless, compared with their newcomer counterparts who are less experienced with the intricacy involved, those among the India-born who choose to take advantage of the "refugee" reputation of the population are certainly much more adept at controlling settings, lights and props to produce photographs with specific visual effects. Tibetan and non-Tibetan residents in Dharamsala rarely run out of material to gossip about the practical gains that this and other calculated visual practices can generate. The visibility which Tibetans in Dharamsala recognize as properly corresponding to what

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[79] Legislation which would have made *chuba* equally mandatory for the male workers in the government could not gain a majority vote in the Parliament-in-Exile in 2001. Considering *chuba* as having originated from the Tibetan plateau and therefore being impractical for the tropical climate in India, those who opposed the bill insisted on the merit of flexibility and addressed Tibetans' ability to adapt to the conditions in their host country. This leaves men's *chuba* by and large only for ceremonial functions in Dharamsala. Also, see Klieger 2002 for a survey which discovers that the majority of male Tibetans in Majnu Ka Tilla, one of the major Tibetan neighborhoods in Delhi, considers *chuba* the most important female ethnic marker but see "action rather than passive display" as conveying their own Tibetanness.

[80] I don't want to run ahead of the newcomer analysis which Chapter 7 of this dissertation carries. However, because of my observation that the newcomer subgroup interprets the same dress code differently, here I am comfortable to say that the kind of self-regulated visibility discussed here is more or less a phenomenon unique to the India-born cohorts.

[81] From the other way around, there are always foreigners who, upon arriving in Dharamsala with their best intention to "help Tibetan refugees," find themselves perturbed by their observation that Tibetans in the township do not all "look" or "behave" like refugees.

others want to see from them is apparently ideological and pragmatic at once.

Visual segregation from the Indian Other. On the opposite side of the India-born cohorts' understanding of, contribution to, and sometimes appropriation of the properly presented Tibetan visibility is their tendency of self-distancing from signs and images that are locally understood as "looking too Indian." In this regard, while the Indian Other does occupy a place of affinity which we have encountered in the case of Tsundue as a schoolboy trying to understand the otherwise abstract "R" lesson and in that of the homecoming excitement for Lobsang, its importance to the sense of boundary that the India-born cohorts commonly take upon themselves to maintain deserves some equal attention.

For instance, contrary to the critical observation of Partha Chatterjee (1993) and others that women and their proper codes of dressing are in many incidences of nationalist movements made to represent what is seen as the essence of a nation, the India-born females who dutifully observe the mandated dress code usually do not perceive themselves as completely embodying the Tibetan essence loaded in their working garb. Instead, their wardrobes typically include *chuba*s categorically referred to as "Tibetan," Panjabi suits as "Indian," and jeans, sweaters and blouses as "Western." Changes from one style of clothing to the other are by and large situational, depending on given visual environments in which these women find themselves:

As soon as a work day is over, these women have the habit of immediately changing from their day-wear *chuba* into "Panjabi suits." The small routine is evidently different from the habit of older Tibetan women in the community who perennially dress in their woolen *chuba*; it suggests that, as understood by these Tibetan women of the

younger generation, “off from work” also means that one is off from the obligation to be the visual marker of the community’s Tibetan identity. Conversely, since the scarf, long shirt and trousers that are together referred to the Panjabi suit look, to the eyes of Dharamsala Tibetans, too “Indian,” the India-born females typically treat the suit as their house dress which has to be replaced by jeans topped with sweater or blouse even when one only leaves the village for a quick produce shopping in the market nearby. Parallel to the *chuba* and hence the Tibetan appearance mandated for these young Tibetan women is what they do to avoid being seen in apparel that is by the local “Tibetan” standard overtly Indian.[82]

The same principle of ensuring the distance between one’s Tibetan self and the Indian surroundings can also be found in the vibrant poster culture in which Tibetan residents in Dharamsala – the India-born cohorts in particular – partake. Judged according to what they purchase in the marketplace and tape on the walls of their residential flats, bakery shops and other small commercial outlets, the cohorts are highly systematic about choosing from particular genres of available posters. For example, images of Switzerland’s mountain landscape – popularized through Bombay cinema to represent exoticism attractive to the *nouveaux riche* Indian middle class – are a favorite of the India-born cohorts because, as many of them claim, images of this particular genre remind them of the landscape of Tibet in their imagination. Such a visual aesthetic preference contrasts with that of their newcomer counterparts who usually do not find the need of the genre to remind them of the homeland from which they have recently arrived. Additionally, glossy images of rich continental breakfasts, chubby Caucasian babies, or

[82] In contrast, Tibetan men can occasionally be seen in their *kurta pajama* (shirt and pants - *Hindi*) in Dharamsala. Typically, they are seen as eccentric but left alone by the rest of the community.

popular Hindi film stars are all fine décor. Whereas posters with images of Hindu deities, legendary saints, or historical or semi-historical figures from Indian history (except Gandhi or Nehru who have long been borrowed by the polity-in-exile to exemplify its own policy of nonviolence) are always shunted aside when potential Tibetan buyers go over the collections of local vendors in lower Dharamsala.[83] The subtle difference here is that while these Indian images simply look alien and therefore fail to attract the so-called newcomers, the India-born cohorts can be very knowledgeable about the historical and religious contents of these images but, at the same time, have the habit to rule them out from their choices. I will in Chapter 7 further discuss the extent to which the Indian Other has not existed in the meaningful life worlds of the newcomer subgroup. Here suffice it to note the power that the Indian Other intimately has over the India-born – so much so that quotidian practices developed to distance oneself from it become a culture and a politics unique to the cohorts.

When sensually lived experience becomes more fluid

Given the fact that diverse ethnicities and cultural forms coexist in Dharamsala, and that the Dharamsala-based exilic state is nowhere close to being an authoritarian ruling force over its local Tibetan subjects, the habit among the India-born females to keep their Panjabi suits out of sight in public and the cohorts' consistent neglect of specific "Indian"

[83] There are not always exactly the same ideological or practical reasons for Tibetans elsewhere to draw the lines between themselves and cultural influences from South Asia as the India-born cohorts in Dharamsala tend to do. For instance, it is relatively more common to see women in Panjabi suits on the streets of the Tibetan settlements in Delhi, Dehra Dun and Kathmandu. Under a very different political climate in Nepal, Tibetan households and small business often keep side by side their display of the Dalai Lama image, statuses of Buddha, and photographs of Nepali politicians. Also, I did in Lhasa encounter a poster image of Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of good fortune and wealth, taped on the wall in a small Tibetan-run tea shop outside one of the major monasteries at the outskirts of the city. These examples attest to the simple reality that certain domains of the Tibetan experience in Dharamsala – such as the visual segregation under discussion – are by and large unique to the locale.

images are impressive. Nevertheless, once one accepts the premise of “sensuous scholarship” that visuality is only one among many other sensory ways in which humans experience their life worlds (Stoller 1989:37-55), the visually based segregations which the cohorts take upon themselves to guard between the Tibetan Self and the Indian Other should be taken as significant yet not exhausting everything else in the experience they live on a daily basis. This means that, rather than swiftly generalizing my findings in the visual domain of everyday life of the cohorts, I take a more fruitful approach to further examine how the Indian Other also manifests in, for example, foods tasting right to the cohorts. Elicited from numerous meals, tea times, and food talks I was included both in Dharamsala and beyond are thus the layers of the fleshly lived sedentary exilic experience of the cohorts which is, however, usually left untouched by Tibetan discourse spelled out by and sometimes for them.

* * *

In his early forties, Tashi grew up in Dharamsala, went to Delhi for college, and afterwards returned to Dharamsala to join the CTA. Then, when a chance for a scholarship came, he arrived in the United States for postgraduate study and subsequently settled in New York City. Such a trajectory makes Tashi the kind of India-born whose “good fortune” others in Dharamsala often envy. When Tashi came to Atlanta for a convention in 2002, we went together for breakfast. Returning to our table from the buffet with a plate of cheese omelet, toast, fruit, and yogurt, I and others on the table talked and ate without paying too much attention to what was on our plates, whereas Tashi had to sprinkle extra salt and pepper over the omelet which was apparently unpalatable to him. While looking for a waiter to bring him badly needed chili sauce,

Tashi came up with this remark:

> I am a Tibetan, but I guess my taste for food has been completely Indianized…. Sometimes I really miss *masala* omelet, the kind, you know, with a lot of onion, pepper, and spices in it.

The "Tibetan versus Indian" dichotomy remains in the remark Tashi was making while waiting for the chili sauce to rescue the disappointing omelet. Yet, listen to what Tashi was saying more carefully! Noticeably, it was not him, "a Tibetan," but only "his taste for food" that had been "Indianized." Tashi proclaimed his integral Tibetan Self first before acknowledging the "partial" modification that the Self had undergone in its Indian/exilic context. In comparison with the more consciously guarded visual demarcation between the Tibetan Self and the Indian Other, Tashi here sounds fairly relaxed about the India lingering on his taste buds.

Tashi had been in U.S. for years. There was certainly some nostalgic emotion involved when he longingly described the *masala* omelet he sometimes really misses. This much of the breakfast episode that morning is reminiscent of Lobsang's desire and expectation to return to the Dharamsala to which he felt attached. In both cases, the affinity which the protagonists feel for their lived Indian location and experience is evident. It markedly varies from the sense of alienation which exile literature by and about Tibetans often emphasizes.[84]

Tashi is not alone in preferring the Indian elements of what he eats. The *masala* way of making the kind of omelet which Tashi could not have that morning in Atlanta can be found in Dharamsala belonging to an entire set of everyday practices common to

[84] I should also acknowledge how uneasy individuals among the cohort could sometimes become when I brought into our conversation the lived affinity of this kind. Upon listening to the stories of Tashi and Lobsang, a thoughtful India-born simply insisted that he "had never felt at home" in one of the settlements in South India where his parents had raised their children and grandchildren, because "home is a sacred feeling; it's for Tibet only."

the India-born women and men. To them and local Indians as well, a variety of *masala* mixes sold in stores are meant to be used for cooking different dishes. While knowing which mix complements which dish in what quantities could be a lesson that the newcomers from homeland Tibet and I, the newly arrived anthropologist, did not always learn well, the India-born cohorts are the ones who can always get it right and make local everyday foods delicious.

Moreover, beyond their habitual application of the commercially packaged *masala* mixes to foods they consume, some India-born Tibetan residents in Dharamsala are so passionate about the refinement of the *masala* art that they have to methodically shop for herbs and spices, send their purchase to local mills for grinding, and then try different combinations of the powdered ingredients to create their own mixes. Each step which these Tibetans take to make *masala*s right to their taste does not only suggest the wide range of local botanical knowledge they master in culinary terms, it also calls for extra attention to fathom the sensual depth of their sedentary exilic experiences and in turn to figure out the relative place of these experiences to the Tibetan identity which the cohorts rarely question. In this regard, the insights I have been able to develop should be credited to Sonam's above-average passion for creating his own *masala* mixes and his life history narrative which I gathered over delicacies he prepared for me and his family to share.

In Sonam's life history narrative, one can find nearly every element which is frequently featured in many of the humanitarian reports on "Tibetan refugees": He has a vague impression that he was born in central Tibet in the late 1970s and trusted to a middleman by his parents to be brought to India in the early 1980s. He consequently

grew up in the Upper Dharamsala TCV, went to South India for college, and afterwards returned to the hill station to teach in one of the TCV schools in the district. As many of his cohorts do, Sonam has no ambivalence about his refugee status in India, considering his post-graduate service to the Tibetan community the token of his patriotism towards the nation. When debates on Tibet's future became heated on given occasions – including those during which we all enjoyed masala tea and dishes he came up with, Sonam would not hesitate to utter his passionate support for Independence. While these are all parts of Sonam's Tibetan identity grounded in its unique Dharamsala context, they do not exclude the subtle ways in which the sedentary aspect of Sonam's life in exile is sensually experienced.

Rather, his passion to perfect the *masala* art is extraordinary even among other masala experts from the cohorts. Usually he would not find the quality of herbs and spices in Dharamsala satisfying. Instead of compromising with what he could get locally, Sonam would periodically hop on the overnight bus bound for Delhi in order to go to the famous Old Delhi spice market to stock up on his supplies.[85] By the ways in which he described the smell, the crowd, the noise, and the top-class spices he was able to choose from in the market, Sonam apparently maneuvered this segment of his everyday life reality with a sense of joy and accomplishment.

From my observer's perspective, the sensory experiences that Sonam had in the spice market in Delhi reveal the level of affinity between the cohorts and the "Indian"

[85] As I will explain in the next chapter, finding their ways around is another important indicator of the kind of affinity with their Indian/exilic surroundings unique to the India-born cohorts. Long hours of bumpy rides on not very comfortable public or private buses to travel back and forth between Dharamsala and Delhi, Manali, Shimla, Amritsar, Patankot or Dehra Dun are rarely given a thought. In contrast, when they have to go on the same bus rides, many newcomers, including those who have already been in India for years and particularly those who are troubled by motion sickness, heat at the lower altitudes, and other physical discomforts, consider it an ordeal.

components of their lives which is usually given no place in "identity" accounts of Tibetans. On the other hand, I want to caution that, since the cohorts are far from letting go of their Tibetan identity, the kind of comfort and familiarity that the *masala* cuisine supplies is not to prove that these exiles-by-birth are hence assimilated by the Indian Other. Conversely, while seemingly trivial, minor and too evident, meals to be prepared and consumed are also about the physical well being and sense of dis(satisfaction) that the cohorts experience day in and day out.[86] Why should it be left out if we are serious about grasping the multiplicity which the cohorts' sedentary exilic experience entails? Instead of allowing politics of identity to precondition what we can possibly know about the cohorts and their Tibetan/exilic life worlds, what is yet to be cultivated is thus the analytical frame through which we are able to see the sedentary exilic experience of the cohorts at once in, for instance, the Tibetan flag which some ceremonially paint over their faces and/or tattoo on their bodies; the headband which suggests Tsundue's frustration with his fellow Tibetans who, according to his evaluation, have increasingly become less committed to the nation's struggle; the Dharamsala which Lobsang has been missing from afar; the *masala* preference for omelet which prompted Tashi to confess about his "Indianized" palate; and young women who are highly conscious about their own *chuba* versus Panjabi-suit appearances.[87]

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[86] As we have seen in Tashi's case, the pleasure and satisfaction which a *masala* taste can bring becomes more evident when that taste is not really available. In a somehow different twist, there are always India-born individuals in Dharamsala who consider a Puritan principle towards quotidian life as essential to the morale of the nation's struggle (see my elaboration on this in Chapter 5). In order to make sure that that they have not become too comfortable with where they are, some of them are very conscious about cutting back from the "unnecessary extravagance" of ginger, cardamom and other spices which are otherwise typical for making the "Indian"/*masala* tea, locally the most common everyday drink. My observation here is that these Tibetans must be first familiar with the sensual pleasure that the spiced Indian tea bring before the *masala* ingredients going into the beverage can be singled out as unnecessary and even threatening.

[87] The sedentary exilic model which this chapter establishes can be applied to other domains of Tibetans' quotidian lives in their South Asian context. For instance, see Childs and Barkin 2006 for the ways in

Rather than settle with predetermined ideas on Tibetan refugees and exiles, throughout the present chapter I document the small things that I was able to observe and even to taste in the quotidian lives of the India-born cohorts. As a result, my approach towards their Tibetan/exilic experience is to confront the components of the experience that are lived yet have until now been given little to no place in the existing discourse of the Tibetan nation. In a narrow scope, it should deflate the common impression of Tibetanists that the exiles of the younger generation in India are indoctrinated, highly homogeneous, and hence only capable of thinking and acting out nationalistic ideologies in simplistic terms. By extension, it also breaks away from the representational tradition shared among humanitarian agencies, advocacy groups and sympathetic media which stresses the victimhood and passivity of "Tibetan refugees"; it exemplifies the feasibility of understanding the living Dharamsala worlds and the larger world of Tibetans without being bogged down by various monolithic ideologies about them.

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which contraception and other reproductive concerns and practices have at once spoken to the population's local reality and their translocal perception of what is going on in homeland Tibet.

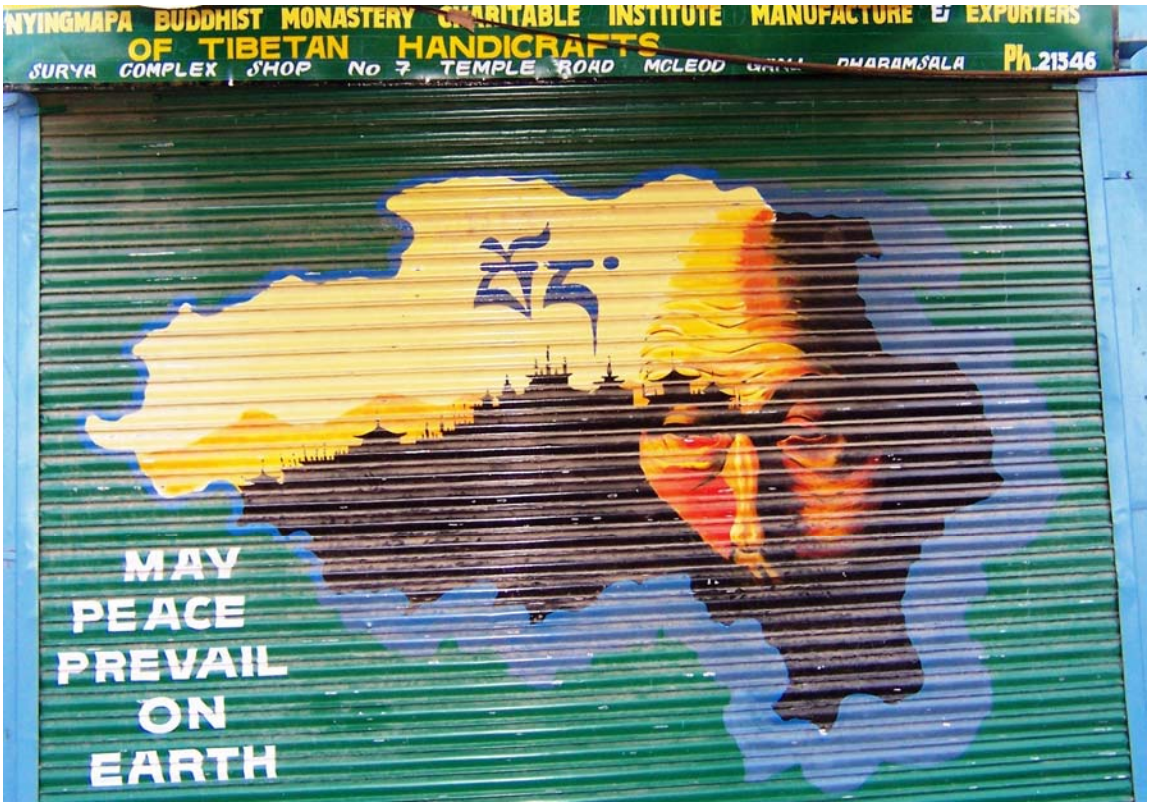

Figure 3.1 *"Greater Tibet" painted on the retractable gate of a shop in McLeod Ganj.* Such a practice to fill the visual space inside the map with images and emblems to signal the lost "homeland Tibet" is very common in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala.

Figure 3.2 *Oil painting of the Dalai Lama's Potala Palace displayed outside the prayer hall of the Tsulhaskang in McLeod Ganj*. The temple compound itself stands as a duplicate of the Lhasa Tsulhaskang.

Figure 3.3 *Identical posters displayed for the permanent exhibition "A Long Look Homeward" of the state-affiliated Tibet Museum in McLeod Ganj.*

Figure 3.4 *Monument inside Tibet Museum to commemorate the tragedy of the nation* (on the left); *crying child at the bottom of the monument know as representing the hope of the nation for its future* (close-up on the right).

Figure 3.5 *Neatly assembled Tibetan students.* Pan-shots like this one have been frequently included in publicity materials published by or on behalf of the exilic state.

Figure 3.6 *Facial inscriptions.*

Figure 3.7 *Facial painting of the Tibetan flag.* It has been a common practice among young exiles who partake demonstrations for the cause of their nation.

Figure 3.8 *Tenzin Tsundue wearing his red headband.*

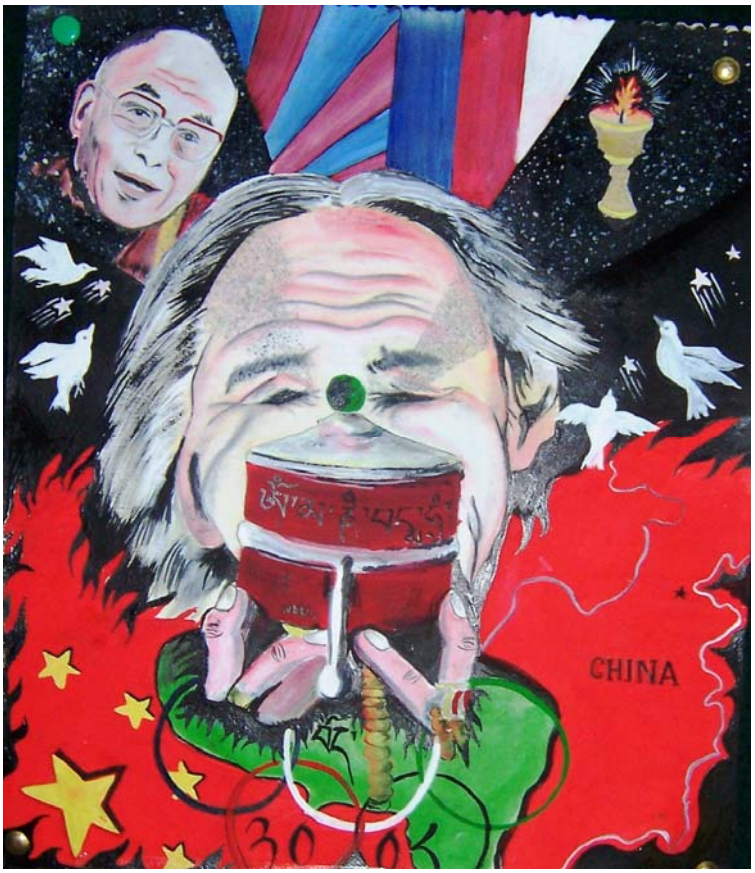

Figure 3.9 *Watercolor painting of red China engulfing green Tibet by a 10th grader in a school work exhibition in McLeod Ganj in 2004.*

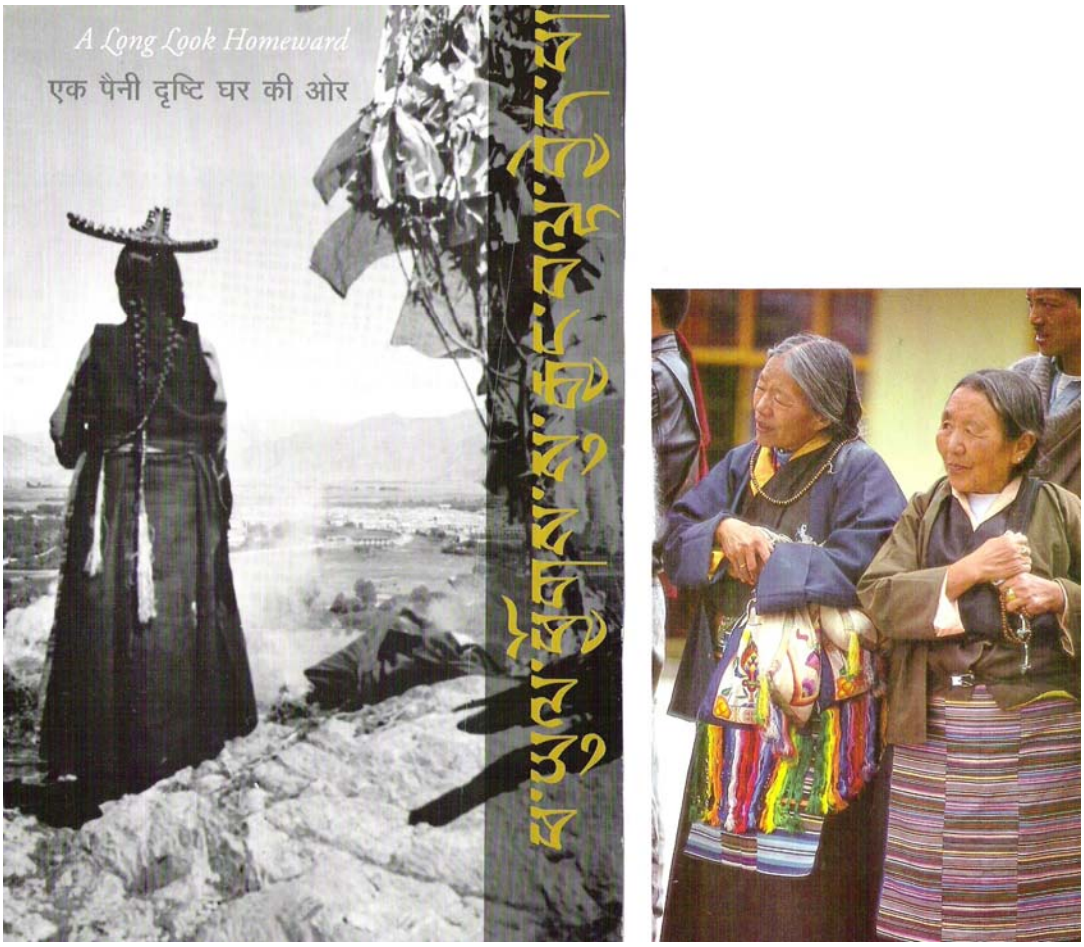

Figure 3.10 *Images of Tibetan women in chuba.*

CHAPTER FOUR

TIBETANS WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE INDIA-BORN (2): WAYFINDING AND LANDSCAPE REPRESENTATIONS

This chapter furthers the exploration which I started in Chapter 3 of the sedentary exilic experiences of the India-born cohorts. This time around my analytical attention is on the cohorts' feeling for their dwelling in Dharamsala and, by extension, India which one can note in the ways in which these Tibetans find their way around in the locale and other familiar locations in the subcontinent.

Moreover, while the cohorts' mobility, geo-familiarity, and emotional attachment at the "local" scale are all real, what also constitutes the cohorts' structure of feeling is their concomitant "translocal" identity with Tibet and their exilic self-consciousness. The ways in which individuals among the cohort experience these two sets of emotion and reality raise issues of representation and communication: What does the dual emotion and reality mean to the cohorts themselves? My inquiry on this is simple: Assuming that meaning(s) indeed derive from emotions and realities lived by the cohorts, before pinning down what they are, one must determine what the settings are under which observers can begin to locate them. In other words, when and how have the emotions and realities lived by the cohorts been communicated – particularly by individuals among them who are outspoken and/or talented at particular representational genres? To pursue questions of this sort forms the second objective of the present chapter and, at the end, provides a case-study illustration of how salient "representation" could be an analytical issue to anthropologists and Tibetanists who are concerned with the knowledge production of the

lived Tibetan experiences which encompasses dynamics, ambiguity, and contradictions that the people's agency entails.

The dwelling perspective

By highlighting visual and gustatory ways in which the cohorts experience things that they perceive as "Indian," I have in Chapter 3 demonstrated that, in spite of the translocal identification with the "lost" homeland Tibet which they typically proclaim without ambiguity, the cohorts' sense of affinity towards the Dharamsala locale is real and tangible. I argue that the strong national identity of the cohorts is a part of, but cannot exhaust, their very subjectively lived experience.

Moreover, by spelling out the affinity under discussion, I complicate what has been known about the cultural geography of Dharamsala which, as this entire dissertation is designed to demonstrate, simultaneously evolves along with the diverse ways in which Tibetans experience their life worlds. In this regard, my view on the contributions of the cohorts to the geography can be read as an elementary application of the "dwelling perspective" which Tim Ingold (2000) uses to theorize the phenomenological relations between people and the environment of their living:

> What it means is that the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings (186).[88]

From this dwelling perspective, Dharamsala can no longer be seen as merely a pre-existing site for Tibetan "refugees" to stay put and wait to go home – as the typical

[88] In contrast with the dwelling perspective Ingold establishes is the conventional mode of thought which Ingold terms "the building perspective." From the building perspective, "worlds are made before they are lived" and "acts of dwelling are preceded by acts of worldmaking" (2000:179). For the longer interdisciplinary intellectual tradition with which the dwelling perspective is in dialogue, see Ingold 2000:157-88.

introduction of the place and its Tibetan residents implies. I am not here to downplay this popular view of Dharamsala's Tibetan significance, and I should immediately acknowledge that, as a matter of fact, some Tibetans in Dharamsala (regardless of their ages and/or different upbringings) do live lives saturated with the pains and aches of still waiting in the locale. Nevertheless, having had the opportunity to participate in Tibetans' everyday lives in Dharamsala, I do want to argue that any simplified association of the locale with Tibetans is inadequate in grasping its ever evolving Tibetan significance(s). As my approach towards the sedentary exilic experience of the India-born cohorts has begun to demonstrate, even the most mundane, personal, and idiosyncratic practices of these Tibetans add to what can be learned about the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala.[89] It gives me reason to further explicate other forms of the geography's dynamics which the cohorts embody – this time, by way of a more critical application of Ingold's dwelling perspective.

As a part of his effort to establish the validity of the dwelling perspective, Ingold calls for an analytical distinction between "travelers" (also referred to as "strangers") who rely on the "locations" marked on their cartographically produced maps to orient themselves in places they have not been and "native inhabitants" or, also in his terminology, "countrymen" who need no map of the traveler's kind to find their way around in places of their habitation (2000: 219). According to Ingold, this is because "countrymen" possess the "knowledge of the region" and are capable of situating their

[89] I am not here claiming that my kind of effort to complicate what has been known about Dharamsala as a place of Tibetans can result in any immediate alteration of the existing Sino-Tibetan politics. Nevertheless, I do argue that, by and perhaps only by taking into account the less noted yet manifold attributes of the lived experience of the globally scattered Tibetan population, might many of the current perceptions of Dharamsala which have been severely politicized by the both sides of the conflict be gradually replaced by ones that are more attentive to the complex contemporary realities of the nation.

"current position within the historical context of journeys previously made – journeys to, from and around places." Ingold thus argues that "wayfinding," as an ordinary thing that "countrymen" do, "more closely resembles storytelling than map-using (of travelers)" (*ibid*).

The contrast Ingold makes is evident – between the richness of his countrymen's wayfinding/storytelling experiences and the cognitive limit emblematized by the maps of his travelers. On my part, the analogy Ingold establishes between "wayfinding" as a form of everyday practice and "storytelling" as another is particularly inspirational: What are the wayfinding experiences of the India-born cohorts who, in comparison with their compatriots arriving from the homeland more recently and with tourists, dharma seekers and anthropologists of various nationalities passing through Dharamsala, resemble the "countrymen" Ingold has in mind? In what way does the wayfinding of the cohorts bear the storytelling quality which Ingold ascribes to his countrymen? Conversely, I do find that the sedentary experience of the India-born Tibetans under discussion is at least in two ways challenging to the dichotomy which Ingold sets up between the wayfinding realities of his countrymen and the cartographic cognition of his travelers:

Firstly, countrymen under Ingold's model are a non-problematical category of people – who reside and find their way around in and among given locations. What concerns Ingold less is the very subjective self-perception of his countrymen. It is not clear, for instance, whether countrymen would always perceive themselves as the "native" whom Ingold describes. Even so, one can still be left to wonder how countrymen feel and interpret their nativity. In contrast, the India-born Tibetans I study can live an everyday life which embodies the kind of "countrymen" affinity with the Dharamsala

locale and, at the same time, not cease perceiving their association with the place as "exilic." What Ingold's model does not address thus becomes the core of my inquiry regarding ways in which the cohorts – as countrymen who are highly conscious about their exilic identity – go about their wayfinding experience on a daily basis.

Secondly, Ingold's primary attention is on the prototypical dichotomy between the lived experiences of "countrymen" and the cognitive scheme of "travelers." Meanwhile, he is not particularly interested in ways in which the two sides might come to have contact with each other – despite his underlying assumption that "travelers" enter and attempt to explore the habitats of "countrymen." In contrast, the kinds of encounters which are left unexamined by Ingold are common to the India-born Tibetans under discussion. As the present chapter is to demonstrate, these Tibetan "natives" of Dharamsala are constantly engaged with the visitors and observers of their community – to the degree that the encounters can from time to time modify the storytelling quality of their wayfinding and, by extension, sedentarily lived exilic experience. In other words, rather than the division between countrymen and strangers which Ingold's model projects, the intense contact which the Dharamsala Tibetan community frequently has with its "travelers" is an integral part of the storytelling attributes of the India-born cohorts' life world. A critical application of Ingold's dwelling perspective hence needs to take into account ways in which the dialogical contacts of the cohorts with the "travelers" to the community have been evolving.

Wayfinding and childhood memory

Hidden within Dharamsala's rugged terrain are many shortcuts created by the foot traffic

of humans and herd animals. When I was new to the place, the existence of those shortcuts seemed purely functional – in shortening the distance of walking and allowing one to avoid traffic pollution and reckless taxi drivers on those winding mountain roads. Otherwise, I was the "stranger" in Ingold's depiction who possessed no "history" of the region, could not see anything but the randomness of this or that shortcut, and constantly got lost from one slope of the valley to the other.

To make the situation worse, landmarks that local Tibetans and Indians rely on to keep themselves and their visitors oriented are not always identical;[90] given locations which are equally the landmarks to the Indian and Tibetan residents of the place can sometimes have their respective Indian and Tibetan names;[91] meanwhile, tourist maps of the district sold in local bookstores largely only reflect what the local Indian government considers significant. Since most of my contacts in Dharamsala were with Tibetans, not being able to mark locations I was learning from them in those commercially produced district maps was frustrating. As a "traveler" to the place who was back then not particularly reflexive about the Ingoldian dichotomy between countrymen's wayfinding capacity and her own map-dependency, I was at one point preoccupied with the seemingly straightforward idea that a "Tibetan" map of Dharamsala would help me overcome the troublesome discrepancies. Believing that Tibetans local to Dharamsala must be able to draw such a map, I sought out Tenzin Jamyang (hereafter Jamyang), an

[90] When providing directions in McLeod Ganj, residential Tibetans often use, for instance, the compound of Tibetan Institute of Performance Arts or the Reception Center for the New Refugees as the landmarks; whereas Indian locals tend to use, for example, Bhagsu Hotel run by the Himachal Pradesh Tourist Bureau or St. John's Church established in the 19th century.

[91] For instance, "*Gangchen Kyishong*," a Tibetan expression spelled in Roman letters, is the formal postal address for the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) compound. Tibetans in Dharamsala commonly use "*Gangkyi*," the short form of *Gangchen Kyishong* to refer to the neighborhoods adjacent to the compound. In contrast, for reasons that are still unclear to me, local Indians tend to single out the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives inside the compound to refer to the same neighborhoods as "*Library ke pas*" (nearby the Library – *Hindi*).

"India-born" whose life history and landscape paintings will be detailed in the later sections of the chapter, for the task.

Being a "native" to Dharamsala, it took some time for Jamyang to grasp my kind of confusion. First of all, it had not occurred to him that the landmarks referred to differently by the township's Tibetan and Indian residents could be a problem. Jamyang also acknowledged that he had not paid attention to those tourist maps which he did not need. Nevertheless, when Jamyang finally agreed to help, he completed the "Tibetan" map I had wanted within a short half hour while we were at the same time talking, sipping milk tea, and munching on *momos* in a busy diner in McLeod Ganj (Figure 4.1). His ink pen moved fast, and he needed no pause to figure out proportions, relative locations, and other details that he kept adding to the page in my spiral notebook. The quick virtual tour which Jamyang uttered while effortlessly drawing the map made it impossible to miss the degree to which he was familiar with the physical layout of Dharamsala. Moreover, by associating his own life experience with the lines and dots which he was using to represent the Dharamsala he apparently knew very well, Jamyang added to the map a storytelling quality I had not expected. In other words, while the Tibetan map of Dharamsala which I originally had in mind was by and large of the cartographic kind utilized by strangers which Ingold conceptualizes, the one which Jamyang actually drew was beyond the Ingoldian expectation for cartography, rich in its storytelling quality, and revelatory of the wayfinding life world he and other India-born cohorts share.

The climax of Jamyang's narration regards the dotted lines on the upper left hand corner of the page which were used to represent the shortcuts nearby the TCV campus he

had once attended. While swiftly adding those lines to the map, Jamyang was also animated by his own explanation that these shortcuts were once the “secret paths” that he and his schoolmates took to escape from the campus for wandering, fishing, and swimming. As Jamyang sounded very amused by his own narrative of being fetched along those secret paths, herded back to the campus, and eventually punished by their teachers and house mothers, I was (and still am) confronted with the new realization that, after the decades of resettlement, Dharamsala (or some corners of it at least) has indeed been experienced and remembered as a playground by the generations of Tibetans whose formative years were spent there. Compared with the popular representation of Dharamsala as the emblem of the Tibetan nation’s grief, its salience and everything else frequently brought up in the arena of its geopolitics, the image of the place as a playground to Tibetans might at first sound trivial and even politically incorrect. Moreover, what is special about children finding their favorite places to play or grownups remembering locations where they once had good times? What is the point of singling out the kind of childhood memory of Dharamsala which Jamyang possesses? Most importantly, where is the place for the kind of memory which Jamyang has of the terrain beyond those secret paths in the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala this dissertation explores? What are the contributions of the playground Dharamsala experienced by Jamyang and his schoolmates to the locale’s Tibetan geography pursued from the dwelling perspective Ingold suggests?

For one thing, Jamyang is certainly not alone in fondly remembering his field of wandering in Dharamsala. In contrast with the apparent indifference to their Indian surroundings of the newcomer Tibetans which I detail in Chapter 7, the India-born

cohorts always have their episodes of "those school days" to relate. For instance, one day when Karma Sichoe (hereafter Karma; whose life story and activist thangka-painting will be detailed in Chapter 5) and I were in a hurry to cut through a dirt path tucked away behind the public parking lot of McLeod Ganj, the forest we were passing by reminded him of the "hippies' market" which had once taken place every Sunday at the location:

> We would come down from the TCV to look around. Those backpackers had everything on sale--their sleeping bags, Swiss knives, tents, and other stuff. Of course, everything was secondhand and we had no money to buy anything. But we learned brand names like Timberland and Jansports, and we watched the hippies smoking hashish….

At the moment, our goal was to get to the other side of the forest in time to meet with someone waiting for us. What Karma was vividly describing conveyed the charm of the place – as it was experienced by a schoolboy who was fascinated with the periodical transformation of the forest into the wonderland brought in by outsiders.[92]

The childhood experiences which emerge from Karma's casual acknowledgement of the hippies' market and Jamyang's of his secret paths are noticeably different from the one documented in the printed words by the activist writer Tsundue which I have cited in Chapter 3:

> We were often told that we were refugees and that we all bore a big "R" on our foreheads. It did not make much sense to us, we only wished the teacher would hurry up and finish his talk and not keep us standing in the hot sun, with our oiled hair (Tenzin Tsundue 2002:23).

Besides the obvious difference in content between the narrative of Tsundue and those of Karma and Jamyang, Tsundue's is part of a carefully crafted statement of his

[92] International sponsorship channeled through the TCV and other Tibetan schools has been another major venue for this kind of excitement created by external contacts. As another TCV graduate remembers, "not all of us were always sponsored by foreigners. Some of us could go for two or three years without a fixed sponsorship and not receiving a single gift sent to our name. But our house mothers always made us share the toys, clothes, and stationery when the parcels came. So we were familiar with things made in America, Canada, Sweden, and other countries."

exilic/Tibetan identity. By way of the formal composition and publication of "My Kind of Exile," one particular formation of the India-born Tibetans' childhood memory is made to carry the weight of representation, that is, to obtain its power of shaping *the* Tibetan experience circulated in the public sphere.[93] Whereas, the experiences which surfaced when Jamyang's focus was on drawing the map for me, the stranger traveler, or when Karma was leading our way for the appointment we did not want to miss, were in one sense representational, that is, of reality mediated via verbal communication.[94] On the other hand, neither Jamyang nor Karma was *in situ* intending to designate any "Tibetan" attribute to what they happened to remember. Then, what would the contrast between these different versions of childhood experience leave to our understanding of Dharamsala constituted by the lived experience and consciousness of the cohorts?

Having participated in the everyday lives of Tibetans of different walks of life in Dharamsala, I can understand but do not always feel comfortable with judgments that Tibetans in and beyond the locale sometimes make about whose mind and heart is more Tibetan than others' and, by extension, about what kind of experience and sentiment matters more to the nation's cause.[95] It hence does not interest me to determine whose childhood experience – that documented in the printed words by Tsundue or the ones mentioned in passing by Jamyang and Karma – might be more authentic, typical,

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[93] People usually read "My Kind of Exile" from *Kora*, a small self-publication by Tsundue. During those months between 2003 and 2005 when I was based in Dharamsala, *Kora* went into its third printing and was available in souvenir shops, bookstores, and even hotels and restaurants frequented by Indian and international tourists in McLeod Ganj. My estimation of the representational power of the printed words by someone like Tsundue is based upon the fact that the small yet steady income the booklet-size anthology generates has actually helped the writer and full-time activist pay for the living costs of his meager one-man household, allowing him the pride of self-reliance.

[94] For an introduction to the concept of "representational" I am applying, see Hall 2003 (1997): 15-26.

[95] For readers who are at this point curious about my particular concerns with the judgmental attitudes that Tibetans in Dharamsala sometimes have with each other, please see my concluding remarks of the dissertation in Chapter 8.

meaningful, or “Tibetan.” The more frequently circulated words and images of Tibetan experience do have their power to structure the feelings and perceptions of Tibetans and their sympathizers. However, by singling out the contrast under discussion, I simply want to remind the readers that they do not exhaust the forms of experience which are lived, remembered, but not quite articulated by the people. According to this logic, the familiarity that allows Jamyang, Karma, and other India-born Tibetans – Tsundue included – to easily find their way around in Dharamsala is also about these protagonists’ remembrance and emotion and therefore bears the kind of storytelling quality which Ingold would appreciate. The rarity of their emergence in the public sphere does not mean that they do not exist, nor is it the same as saying that certain emotions and experiences are less important, irrelevant, or non-Tibetan. Rather, it allows me to argue that an analytically sound understanding of given aspects of Tibetan experience must take into account simultaneously: (1) what Tibetans consider as worthy of their writing, painting and other formal modes of representational practice; (2) experiences which are lived but stay peripheral to the “Tibetan” consciousness of the people; and (3) the boundaries between (1) and (2) meaningful to Tibetans case by case.

From wayfinding to landscape representation

The generalization I am making is broad. To illustrate its analytical potential, my explication herein focuses on ways in which the wayfinding experiences of the India-born cohorts become integral parts of representational works produced by some talented ones among them. In other words, I am interested in when and how their everyday wayfinding practice begins to merge with the cohorts’ engagement with different representational

genres. Two specific cases on which I rely to advance my thesis are the passion of the previously mentioned Jamyang for painting landscapes and that of Penpa Drolma, another India-born in her late twenties, for photographing.

Between late 2003 and early 2005 when I mostly dwelled in Dharamsala for this project, Jamyang and Penpa Drolma (hereafter Penma) were not the only Tibetan practitioners of visual art genres in town. From middle-school students who actively participate in the photography club at the TCV to thangka painters of the younger generation who are keen to make their genre in tune with the contemporary world and trained artists from homeland Tibet who find themselves constantly attempting to balance their artistic aspirations with the commercial and ideological demands for their works, the more recent development of visual art expressions in the Tibetan community in Dharamsala certainly deserves to be updated from the documentation done by Clare Harris (1999) over a decade ago. Nevertheless, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of the present chapter and not the goal of this dissertation project. Instead, the task I have in hand is narrow in its scale: Given the ways in which Jamyang and Penma found inspiration for their works of art from the landscapes and environments within their physical reach, I pursue those aspects of the exilic sedentary experiences of the India-born Tibetans which their nascent artistic careers entail.

Both Jamyang's preference for the landscapes he can actually visit before painting them and Penma's photographic engagement with her sitters in urban slums in Delhi set the visual images they produced aside from the images of homeland Tibet which have long in a translocal fashion dominated the public and not-so-public visual environments

in Dharamsala.[96] As a result, Jamyang and his oil paintings, and Penma and her black-and-white photographs as well, occupy a unique place in the sociocultural and political milieu of Dharamsala. What is ahead is thus a study of the ways in which they go about and explain their representational works which, I hope, will shed new light on the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala I have been trying to grasp from the dwelling perspective theorized by Ingold.

Jamyang and his landscape paintings exhibited in Dharamsala

When I was first introduced to Jamyang in 2003, he was by the Dharamsala standard unusually busy and lucky: He remained engaged in the student activism with which he had been involved since his days in college; having passed the fairly competitive entry exams, he held a low-ranking civil service position in the CTA that many of his cohorts consider to be prestigious, allowing their most direct contribution to the cause of the nation; in the meantime, Jamyang was passionate about painting and eager to become an artist, an inclination that is not uncommon among the bohemian youths in the community who are attracted to poetry, music, and other genres of artistic expression. These encompass most prospects that the cohort of Tibetan exiles who grew up in South Asia can envision for themselves – particularly if one has no means or intention to live a life away from the Tibetan community. While Jamyang's engagement in all of them at once was extraordinary, this stage of his young adult life did not last long.

Upon deepening his commitment to art, he began to feel short of time for his activist participation and ultimately decided to withdraw from it, despite peer criticism of

[96] By "not-so-public" visual environments, I mean the sitting areas in houses and flats occupied by Tibetans in Dharamsala. Along with the Buddhist statues, photographs of the Dalai Lama, Tibetan flags and maps, displayed in their living quarters can also be the images of the Potala and other landmark places in Tibet.

his abandonment of the cause. Conversely, his devotion to art also alienated him from his co-workers in government. Being viewed as unwilling to get along, Jamyang was first marginalized and eventually chose to resign from the post. It is out of these circumstances that Jamyang created several dozen oil paintings and held his first one-man exhibition in Dharamsala in early 2004 while he remained busy in the activist circle and working for the government and a second one in New Delhi in the spring of 2005 after he had left both.

With a few exceptions, the majority of Jamyang's paintings during this period were of landscapes. Typically, he would take off from Dharamsala to seek inspirations. Out of his longer travels to Ladakh and Spiti (a mountain region between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh) and shorter ones in valleys nearby, Jamyang usually returned to town with landscape photos he had taken. He would then base his paintings upon his own photographs. During those months between 2003 and 2005 when we were neighbors in Dharamsala, Jamyang's passion to turn the landscapes he had personally experienced into the object of his painting practice was to my knowledge an isolated case. However, the mobility which he embodies and the degree to which he feels easy coming and going in a local context larger than Dharamsala are on the other hand a shared property of the India-born cohorts: We have in the previous chapter encountered Sonam and his enthusiasm to hop on buses bound for Delhi for the exciting spice market. Like Sonam, Tsundue and his comrades do not mind traveling on cheap and often packed transportation for their activist work, and other India-born individuals similarly feel comfortable traveling for their schooling, holidays, family visits and other everyday business. I am not suggesting that other Tibetans in Dharamsala are encamped or immobile, but there is always a subtle

difference between the storytelling quality of the India-born Tibetans' wayfinding experience and that of the others in the community.

For instance, those who were part of the refugee wave in the late 1950s and who are now aged in exile often perceive their seasonal migration away from the settlements to sell sweaters in different parts of India to be one more sign of the hardship which they, as refugees, have to endure. In their remarks, moving around in India – as the place of their exile – is for the sake of necessity; it bears little to no sense of the energy, pleasure, or accomplishment which one can often feel from the mobility which the India-born cohorts tend to utilize without a second thought.

Also, there are those recent arrivals from Tibet who often complain about motion sickness and other physical discomforts which the bumpy rides to leave and return to Dharamsala can trigger. When this segment of the locale's Tibetan population does travel, other Tibetan settlements are usually their destinations. Otherwise, they generally lack incentives to travel to places in the subcontinent where no Tibetan community exists. In relatively rare cases, when they do go out of their way for places not part of the Tibetan network in the subcontinent, these Tibetans tend to perceiving themselves as touring the place. The self-perception of their guest-like wayfinding practice forms a sharp contrast with the kind of "native" affinity which the wayfinding experience of the India-born cohorts reveals.

Against the backdrop of these in-group comparisons, more can be learned from Jamyang's painting practice and his discursive engagements with his audience. To forecast what is ahead, the style of the paintings displayed in Jamyang's first exhibition in Dharamsala is noticeably different from that of those which the artist prepared for the

second one in New Delhi. Meanwhile, the discursive frames which Jamyang used to interpret his works of art were varied each time. By paying close attention to what he was saying and how he said it within different contexts, it will become clear that one component of Jamyang's sedentary exilic experience is his habitus to meet the expectations of curious "travelers" who pass through his life world.

* * *

Most of the paintings displayed for Jamyang's first exhibition held in the spring months of 2004 in Moonpeak, the only commercial gallery in Dharamsala, were either of barren plateaus or of steep mountain ranges that the artist dramatized through contrasting bright colors. According to the gallery talk that Jamyang gave in Dharamsala during the opening reception of the exhibition, these landscape paintings depict his impressions of locales in Ladakh and Spiti where he loved to hike around with his camera. He explained that he had painted these views because they reminded him of Tibet, "the country of mine that I have not been to nor seen with my own eyes." In this regard, Jamyang's preference for the Ladakhi vista resonates with the logic that directs the kind of consumption of the Switzerland posters among the India-born cohorts which I discussed in Chapter 3. While many of them associate the Alpine landscape on the posters with that of the Tibet that exists in their imagination, by means of painting the landscapes to which he had had physical access, Jamyang created a visual juxtaposition between one place of his living and the other of his imagination (Figure 4.2).

For readers who remember my introduction in Chapter 3 of the process of "imagined place-making" and that of "experienced place-making" which Schwalgin (2004) considers as working together to shape a people's diasporic experience,

Jamyang's paintings of the Ladakhi landscape present a striking case of these two processes' merging with each other. On the other hand, to me and other visitors to his studio and then the Moonpeak exhibition, Jamyang liked to single out "the eagle from Tibet" which appears in more than one painting of this batch (Figure 4.3). In this regard, Jamyang shares the enthusiasm which bird watching can generate among Tibetans in Dharamsala who are sincere about spotting the species seasonally arriving from Tibet. By being specific about the trajectory of flight of the eagle on his canvas, Jamyang made it clear that his paintings are representational of the locale on the Indian side of the Himalayan range. While reminding him of Tibet, the vistas he paints do not replace the Tibet of his translocal imagination. Because of the angle, the merged place-making processes remain marked with their separation.

This much of Jamyang's interpretation of his own paintings during the gallery talk in Dharamsala resonates with the emotional attachment for the homeland Tibet which the Dharamsala-centered Tibetan discourse emphasizes.[97] A similar correspondence can also be noted in the life history narrative that Jamyang, as a self-taught artist, came out with for the same gallery talk. Without sounding disempowered at all, the artist related to the public his unsuccessful attempts to receive formal training in art. What was highlighted in the context was the "cultural alienation" that he, being a Tibetan exile in India, had undergone:

> Every time I passed exams on sketch and watercolor but not the oral interview…. They asked questions on Hindu iconography. I am not an

[97] Jamyang himself would be likely to reject the political implications I am suggesting. In a one-on-one interview we did prior to the Moonpeak exhibition, Jamyang elaborated on his view on the aesthetic distinction between impressionism and expressionism, insisting that his paintings are merely about his absorption into and impression of what landscapes offer, and that he has no intention to express anything beyond how he feels about the landscapes he wants to paint.

> Indian; how can I tell the differences among those gods and goddesses, who is who, who is Shiva, who is Vishnu?[98]

By itself, this segment of Jamyang's public speech should remind one of the visual segregation which, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the India-born Tibetans in Dharamsala commonly observe to disassociate themselves from things looking to them "too Indian." The fact that Jamyang found himself an alien in the iconic web of Hinduism once more illustrates the ethnic boundaries within the Indian context that Jamyang and many others of his cohort take upon themselves to guard. However, while his story of failure was meant to attest to the disadvantage of being an exile, *in situ*, Jamyang was not motivated to be self-pitying. Rather, by bringing out the experience of those failed interviews, Jamyang was in command of his repertoire which fed well the expectation of his audience which, on the occasion of the Moonpeak reception, was multinational but supposedly homogenous in knowing about and supporting Tibet's cause (Figure 4.4).[99]

From the way in which Jamyang related his personal experiences and interpreted his landscape paintings, the Tibetan/exilic identity of the artist was brought to the forefront for his Moonpeak exhibition – particularly by way of his gallery talk. In contrast, what appeared to be missing from the gallery talk was the sedentary aspect of his exilic life world – aside from a quick mention of his hiking trips in search of mountain landscapes. I was left to wonder how the artist might perceive the connection(s) of his passion for painting landscapes with the kind of familiarity he had with the land in which he lives. Having witnessed the sense of affinity towards places of living which

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[98] After failing the same oral three times, Jamyang did enroll in an art certificate program in a Muslim college in Delhi for one year before he had to head back to Dharamsala to look after his family after the sudden death of his father.

[99] Tibetans in Dharamsala can be troubled by the drug, alcohol, and other social problems that tourists bring into the community. Yet, since the rightfulness of the cause is so natural to the township inundated by activists and advocacy groups, local Tibetans usually do not question the stand of their visitors, assuming whoever shows up in town must already support the cause.

divulged itself when Jamyang was drawing the Dharamsala map I asked for, when Karma appeared amused by his own memory of the Hippies' market, when Sonam explained what is in the spice market in Delhi which he loves, and when Tsundue made his "matter-of-fact" announcement that he was heading out again for another protest, I found it hard to accept that Jamyang's landscape painting was only an expression of his overt Tibetan identity. On the other hand, despite my curiosity, it would still be up to Jamyang to determine the relationship between his landscape paintings and the environment which is local, accessible, familiar, and intimate to him. After all, he is the "native" to the landscapes which inspired his painting practice; only he (rather than I, the stranger to his sedentary exilic life world) can render his own wayfinding experience with the kind of storytelling attribute Ingold has in mind. To attend the Moonpeak exhibition which Jamyang held to display the oil paintings he had produced by Spring 2004 was thus one of those ethnographic moments I had when events on the ground were thought-provoking but provided no finite or simple answer to questions they raised

Asian Tsunami, 2004: an unexpected interlude

Following the attention that Jamyang's Moonpeak exhibition received in the spring of 2004, there came an invitation from Charkha, a Delhi-based developmental NGO, to present another one-man show in the art gallery of India International Center (IIC) in New Delhi. The new exhibition was scheduled for the late spring of 2005. By autumn 2004, Jamyang was often found in his studio, simultaneously working on several new pieces. They were predominantly pastoral landscapes based upon the more recent photographs that Jamyang had taken in various valleys in Himachal Pradesh. The more

delicate brushwork and usage of pastel colors made these new paintings stylistically very different from the Ladakh/Spiti phase of his work (Figure 4.5).

Also, in contrast with how articulate Jamyang had been in making the association between his Ladakh/Spiti landscapes and Tibet in his imagination, he now only occasionally acknowledged how peaceful a location was or the beauty of a view that had originally attracted his attention. As Jamyang's neighbor, I frequently strolled by to see the progress of his work, watching him concentrating on maneuvering the proportion, perspective, color, and light on his canvas. Rather than the "Tibetan" impression that was explicit in most of his Moonpeak pieces and about which the artist would not forget to remind his visitors, Jamyang now quietly worked on "auras" that were pastoral and tranquil in his studio. The thread left in this batch of new paintings for his Tibetan background was limited to the artist's signature in Tibetan script (Figure 4.6).

While having the opportunity to observe frequently the stylistic changes Jamyang brought to his paintings during the intermittent months between the earlier exhibition in Dharamsala and the upcoming one in Delhi, my understanding of the implications of those changes might have gone into very different directions – if not because of the devastation caused by the 2004 Asian tsunami. As it happened, a couple of weeks after the tsunami hit, during one of my drop-by visits, Jamyang suddenly put down his palette and began to talk about how he wished he had not committed to the IIC exhibition:

> If I don't have to work on the exhibition, I can now go down to the south to see the aftermath. I want to see it and perhaps to paint it. After all, so many people were killed, *and I was born here, this is also my country.* (Italics added)

More than one year had gone by since I first learned from the homecoming saga of Lobsang about the geo-affinity which the India-born segment of the Tibetan population in

Dharamsala could possibly feel for the "local" surroundings of their life world. Many aspects of Tibetans' quotidian lives in Dharamsala did not seem to me as novel as they used to be. Yet, I was still amazed by the sentiment that Jamyang was uttering. What a contrast it was with what Jamyang had said during his gallery talk in Moonpeak: "I am not an Indian; how can I tell the differences among those gods and goddesses, who is who, who is Shiva, who is Vishnu?"

It became apparent that, although Jamyang himself, in the context of his Moonpeak exhibition in Dharamsala, had consistently addressed the referential importance of the imagined Tibet to his artistic expression, painting landscapes was also a way in which he engages with "the country" where his life has been locally lived. Between one context under which Jamyang announced that "I am not an Indian" and the other in which he referred to India as "my country," the fact that the tsunami disaster pushed Jamyang to the edge of nearly discarding his work-in-progress for the upcoming exhibition highlighted the subliminal ambivalence between the "native" substance of his life and his Tibetan/exilic identity.

In addition, Jamyang's strong emotion towards the casualties the tsunami had caused also formed a sharp contrast with the debate sparked by the incident within the activist circle in Dharamsala – regarding whether Tibetans who were, in the words of someone within the circle, "already burdened by their own national plight" should divide their energy to worry about the tragedy of others. As a result, a prayer session was finally organized. A small number of monastic novices in the Dharamsala vicinity were summoned for it. Otherwise, most of the participants were foreign tourists in town because the publicity material was only printed in English and circulated in hotels at the

last minute. Compared with the way in which the activist collective in Dharamsala is able and willing to think (Douglas 1986), the sentiment of Jamyang induced by the incident could only remain "private" in the locale.[100] I am not here to decide which side of the dichotomy – the collective or the private – is more representational of what goes on in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala. While neither of the two sides can omit the other, it is the private, the collective, and the difference between them which together constitute a local manifestation of Tibetan experience.

Presenting the "aura" paintings in Delhi

As much as Jamyang's post-Moonpeak "aura" paintings might signal the part of the emotional world that the artist kept to himself, they were also from the very beginning intended for public display – through the IIC venue which has no direct tie with the Dharamsala Tibetan community and which, by catering to the cultural elites and the diplomatic circles in Delhi, is regarded as prestigious. Given his shift in style and the likely difference between his Moonpeak visitors in Dharamsala and the cosmopolitan gallery goers in Delhi who might not particularly care about the Tibetan issue, how would Jamyang "narrate" his art, his life, and his Tibetan identity this time? With the expiration date of my research visa approaching, I left India before the IIC exhibition

[100] As many phenomena documented in this dissertation are unique to the Tibetan community in Dharamsala, its lukewarm reaction toward the tsunami aftermath should not be generalized. Conversely, the passionate concerns which Jamyang expressed were indeed utilized in other Tibetan communities in India. For example, in a later workshop with a group of Tibetan college students in Chennai, I met many of them who had just returned from relief work in the affected coastal areas in South India. Without forgetting to mention that "even many young monks got on buses and trains to join in," these students appeared to be proud of what they had just achieved. As one of them put it: "Because we are Tibetans, we don't have a problem with people's castes. We treated everyone equally. Some high-caste people in the village got upset because they thought we had given too much to the untouchables. But for the most part, people liked us because we were fair." Being Tibetan and different in this case appeared to have galvanized, rather than hindered, the collective engagement of these students.

took place. Yet, based upon a pack of assorted publicity material for the IIC event that arrived in my mail months later, one can still have a glimpse of what Jamyang had come up with to situate the show which its organizers described as "the first exhibition of paintings outside Dharamsala for any Tibetan" (*Charkha Newsletter* 2005).

In the news clippings sent by Jamyang, his Tibetan/exilic background was often introduced by either the coordinators of the exhibition or the correspondents who filed the news releases of the IIC exhibition. Jamyang himself, in the parts of interviews that were published in the newspapers, did not particularly make Tibet a point of reference for his paintings – as he had done during the Moonpeak exhibition – although several Ladakh/Spiti landscapes did appear in the IIC show. Meanwhile, the Moonpeak narrative on the cultural alienation that Jamyang had experienced through those failed oral exam questions on the Hindu pantheon was nowhere to be found in those news clippings. Although there was no way for me to know from a distance the details of the settings or entire contents of these interviews, I was still surprised to learn from their excerpts the "environmental sensitivity" that Jamyang employed to interpret his works of art:

> Our fight [referring to the long standing Sino-Tibetan conflict] is political but painting for me is to show my inner feelings and my concern for environment. In fact, degrading environment is a universal problem – be it China, Tibet or India. Environment belongs to everyone. The state of Himachal Pradesh, of which Dharamsala is a part, is facing the same problem (*Financial Express*; April 26, 2005).

Or, as he stated during another interview:

> The idea of painting landscapes is to spread the idea of environmental conservation. The civilized world has stopped valuing the pollution-free environment of the hills (*Real Page*; April, 24 2005).

Instead of drawing the attention of the potential beholders to his being Tibetan and exilic as he did in Dharamsala, these statements suggest Jamyang's attempt to find a different

common ground of communication outside the hub of his Tibetan community. Compared to the way in which "my inner feelings" were swiftly acknowledged but left without further explanation (in the first quotation only), the environmental awareness that Jamyang perceived as universal in its appeal was obviously the thematic focus in these interviews.[101] What appeared to have completely vanished from Jamyang's environmentalist introduction of his own works of art was their relevance to his personal biography. The alteration of the artist's interpretive framework is drastic; it attests to the fact that, when the issue comes to Tibetan identity, what the India-born Tibetans actually deal with is a locally grounded field of their ethnic difference – despite the frequent and more dominant representation of the lost homeland Tibet and its reclamation as the sole agenda for Tibetans envisaged as a single homogeneous nation.

To recapitulate Jamyang's passion for the landscape genre of oil painting that I have just chronicled: Foremost, as a "native" to the places where he has physically lived with a great sense of affinity, Jamyang transformed his impressions of these places into his landscape paintings. This in turn makes "painting" another practice which testifies to the sedentary domain of his "Tibetan" experience. Secondly, as exemplified through the ways in which Jamyang presented one exhibition in Dharamsala and the other in New Delhi, to bring his works of art into the public arena was to keep recasting these works and, by extension, reinventing the self of the artist. Between the Tibetan/exilic attributes that Jamyang highlighted in Dharamsala and the universal approach towards

[101] Given that the exilic Tibetan polity has since the middle 1980s incorporated environmentalism as a part of its strategy in confronting China's "exploitation" in Tibet, Jamyang's familiarity with the discourse is not particularly surprising. Yet, the official appropriation of the idea has created a highly essentialized environmentalist Tibetan identity – by claiming that environmentalism has been deeply rooted in Buddhism, thus making Tibetans inherently eco-sensitive (Huber 2001). Compared with such a Tibetanization of the discourse, what stands out is the emphasis which Jamyang placed on its universal appealing

environmentalism that he adopted to orient the IIC exhibition, what was largely left unexpressed in these two venues was the level of locally grounded intimacy that once made him feel so connected with the victims of the tsunami. In other words, there is the human and social aspect of the sedentary affinity which exists but is rarely articulated and mostly imperceptible to outsiders (or strangers in Ingold's terms) of that world. Trying to comprehend the lived and often emotionally engaged experience of the India-born Tibetans at this level brings to mind the classic insights of Raymond Williams on "understanding emergent culture":

> ….what we have to observe is in effect a *pre-emergence*, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be more confidently named (1990:126).

While Jamyang and his practice of landscape painting allowed me a glance of the subtle state of "pre-emergence," its further intricacies are yet to be found in the photographs that Penma was willing to present to the public in Dharamsala.

Penma and her photographs of the urban poor

Supported by a small private sponsorship, Penma went to Delhi to study photography between 2003 and 2004 and consequently earned her reputation in Dharamsala as the first Tibetan woman photographer. Upon finishing her coursework, Penma returned to Dharamsala to hold her first solo exhibition in Moonpeak in fall 2004.[102] For many Tibetan and non-Tibetan locals I interviewed when Penma's exhibition was ongoing, what Penma had accomplished deserved celebration. However, some first-time visitors to Dharamsala did gossip, questioning the extravagance involved in a "refugee girl" picking

[102] At the time of the exhibition in Dharamsala, Penma had already secured a position as an assistant photographer in the New Delhi bureau of *Vogue* magazine.

up the costly medium of photography. Compared with the “Tibetan” elements which Jamyang provided to his audience in Dharamsala, it is evident that the life-history narrative of Penma did not quite meet the expectations of strangers who arrive in Dharamsala with their own stereotypical ideas about the category of people referred to as “Tibetans” and/or “refugees.” As assertive as the remarks of these strangers sounded, they were revealing, engendering my extra attention to the “Tibetan” significance of the photographs which Penma debuted through her Moonpeak exhibition.

The majority of the photographs that Penma selected for her Moonpeak exhibition were portraits and snapshots of socially and economically marginalized Indians living in urban slums (Figure 4.7). The dominant “Indian” theme of the exhibition was unconventional in the Tibetan part of Dharamsala where the visual and discursive representation of “Tibet” and “Tibetans” was the habitus. According to Penma herself in our one-on-one interview, her photography had not been exclusively about Indians. She did sometimes take photos in Dharamsala and other Tibetan settlements but deliberately withheld most of her Tibetan images from the exhibition – primarily because she thought she was too young to speak about the community and she was afraid that some of those photographs might harm the solidarity that, in her words, “we Tibetans need.”

Neither the pressure that Penma felt from the dominant national discourse nor the self-censorship that she underwent was locally atypical. As a result, Penma put forth her photographs of the urban poor in the larger Indian context to express her impulse for articulation. This domain of Penma’s representational practice, including the silent component of it, already makes her Moonpeak exhibition as a whole an interesting artifact that captures the dialogical relationship between the subjectivity formation of a

Tibetan individual and the hegemony of the exilic collectivity in which she partakes – along with the strangers to Dharamsala who see themselves as supporting Tibet's cause but who are also surprised by Penma's lack of the refugee attributes they expect. Yet, there is more to be contemplated, once one pays closer attention to individual photographs that Penma presented through the Moonpeak venue.

Most of the photographs on display in Moonpeak in 2004 suggested Penma's physical and emotional closeness with the subjects of her camera. Such a feature was particularly evident among the close-ups of slum children which Penma referred to as "my favorites." In these close-ups, her sitters often look very relaxed about making direct eye contact with the camera lens. The communication exchanged between the empathetic photographer and her subjects makes these images recognizably humanist. In her own words, Penma intended to have her photography "bring out from the faces of street children the beauty and purity of their hearts that are often neglected because of their shabby appearances" (Figure 4.8).

As for the practice that she actually enacted to produce these images, Penma explained:

> I usually talked with people first before I took their pictures. With some of these children, I would find them to deliver the photos that I had taken earlier. I sat, played with them, and took more photos.

For Penma, these are things that she, as a student of photography, ordinarily does to complete her assignment. These words of hers – to respond to my curiosity – were descriptively uttered; they provided no sign that Penma herself might have perceived her "homework" practice of photography as bearing any profound implication. Nevertheless, against Penma's Tibetan background and her India-born upbringing, her interest in this

particular genre of photography provide me with an important site of observation where the "pre-emergent" culture of the cohorts reveals itself.

Foremost, by taking it upon herself to engage with the vulnerable ones beyond the Tibetan community through her camera work, Penma becomes the one who sees with her sympathetic eyes. Compared with the way in which the refugee reality and status has for decades rendered the exilic collective in Dharamsala habitually positioning itself as the recipient of others' sympathy, the reversal of the give-and-take relationship that one can note from Penma's Moonpeak photographs suggests a very different Tibetan agency (Figure 4.9). While "refugee" remains the legal status of many Tibetans in India, and while the continuous arrival of "new refugees" from Tibet remains a chronic reality (see Chapter 6), the hegemonic representation of the exilic Tibetan nation as that of refugees exposed to others' humanitarian gaze leaves out the kind of evolving subjectivity that Penma's humanistic photography embodies.

Moreover, compared with Jamyang's preference for panorama from a distance and his tendency to leave no human figure in his landscapes, Penma's photography is all about people and their everyday lives to which she steps close with her camera. As a whole, the quality of Penma's photographs of the urban poor quietly conveys her ability and willingness to go across boundaries of communication that, at sites where most of the exhibited images were taken, could be at once social, cultural, and linguistic. Having realized the India-born cohorts' sense of affinity with places where their lives actually unfold through their wayfinding, childhood memory, and voluntary utilization of their mobility, one should by now recognize the social dynamics of the affinity that Penma's photographic practice in urban slums amplifies.

At last, while there is certainly a sense of interethnic intimacy that permeates Penma's humanistic photographs exhibited in Dharamsala, it had not been her intention to articulate it. The intimacy which beholders can find in the camera works of the photographer largely remains at the "pre-emergent" moment of her structure of feeling; it is real and reveals one socially interactive way to live one's sedentary exilic life which is different from, for instance, Tsundue's depiction of that life in his "The Tibetan in Mumbai" (Tenzin Tsundue 2002:16-7):[103]

> The Tibetan in Mumbai
> is not a foreigner.
>
> He is a cook
> at a Chinese takeaway
> They think he is Chinese
> run away from Beijing.
>
> He sells sweaters in summer
> in shade of the Parel Bridge.
> They think he is some retired Bahadur.
>
> The Tibetan in Mumbai
> abuses in Bambaya Hindi,
> with a slight Tibetan accent
> and during vocabulary emergencies
> he naturally runs into Tibetan.
> That's when the Parsis laugh.
>
> The Tibetan in Mumbai
> likes to flip through the MID-DAY,
> loves FM, but doesn't expect
> a Tibetan song.
>
> He catches the bus at a signal,
> jumps into a running train,
> walks into a long dark gully
> and nestles in his *kholi*.
>
> He gets angry

[103] The poem is in the activist writer's *Kora* anthology. The poet himself often chooses to recite it in public functions and to visitors to his makeshift home/office in Dharamsala.

When they laugh at him
'ching-chong-ping-pong'.

The Tibetan in Mumbai
is now tired,
wants some sleep and a dream.
On the 11 pm Virar Fast,
he goes to the Himalayas.
The 8.05 am Fast Local
brings him back to Churchgate
into the Metro: a New Empire.

The Tibetan in Mumbai under Tsundue's depiction is pressed by not only others' misperception of whom he is but also the invisibility and alienation he sensitively feels. As I have been arguing throughout the chapter, the issue here is not so much about which experience – the interethnic closeness which is revealing but peripheral and even extraperipheral to Penma's photographic intention or the sense of loss and loneliness which Tsundue's "Tibetan in Mumbai" personifies – is more "Tibetan" than the other. Rather, they are different components of the lived sedentary exilic reality. On the one hand, there are the attributes of that reality which Tsundue consciously utilizes to express his Tibetan identity while on the other are those attributes which are experienced by someone like Penma (via her interethnic practice of photography) but currently left in a pre-emergent state of their representation. As a stranger who passed through their life world, my understanding of it encompasses both sides of the dichotomy as well as the spectrum of experiences between them which we earlier witnessed in the varied discursive engagements which Jamyang had with his audience when his landscape paintings were presented in Dharamsala in 2004 and Delhi in 2005.

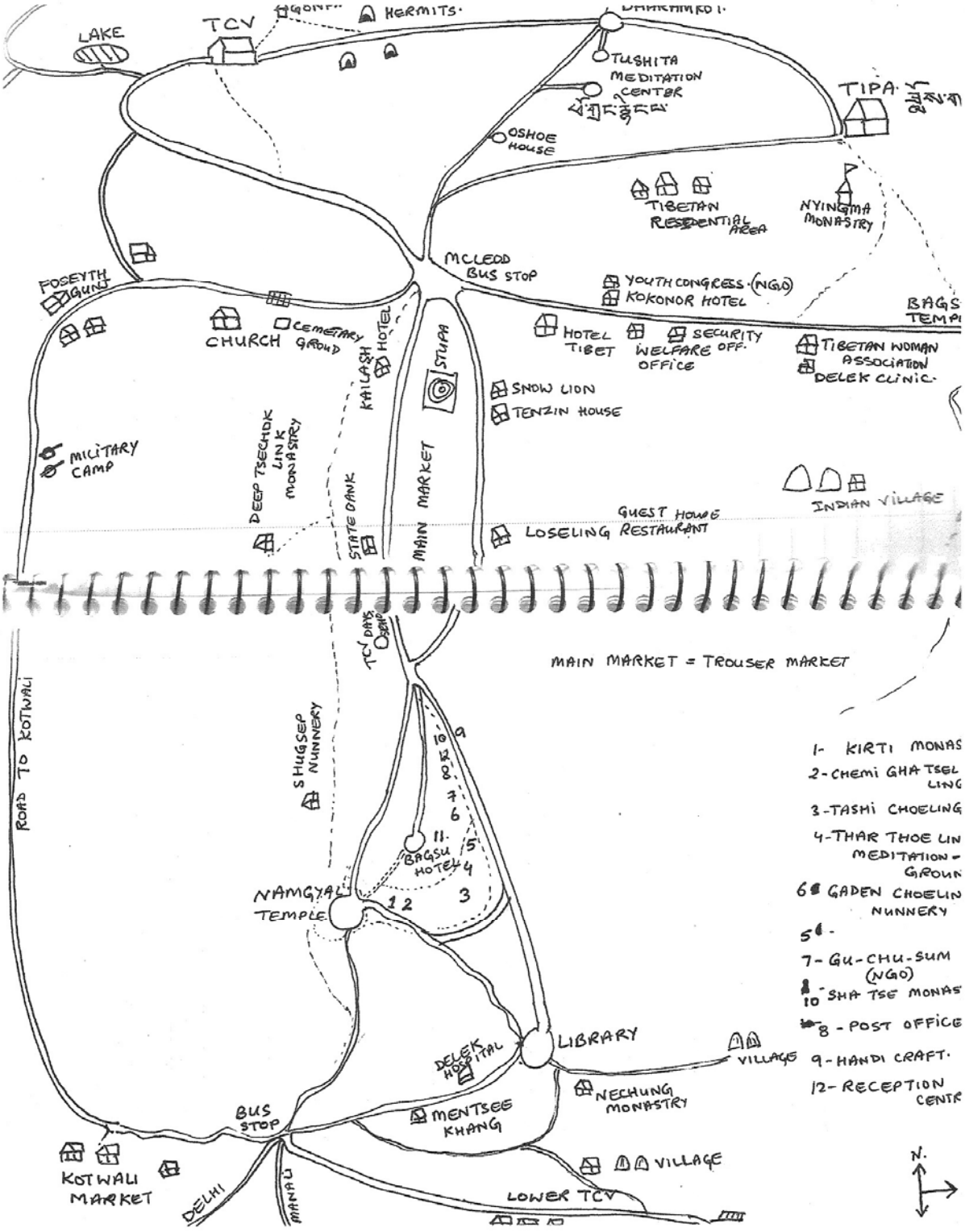

Figure 4.1 *The Dharamsala map which Jamyang drew for the author in 2003.* The dotted lines on the map represent "shortcuts" about which Jamyang thought the author should know.

Figure 4.2 *Landscape of Ladakh; oil painting by Tenzin Jamyang.* The artist sees it as reminding him of the homeland where he has not been.

Figure 4.3 *Eagle from Tibet; oil painting by Tenzin Jamyang.*

Figure 4.4 *Escape; oil painting by Tenzin Jamyang.* This is the only completely imaginary landscape that the artist painted without basing it on any of his traveling experience. As Jamyang explained, *Escape* depicts a snow-covered plateau with his "fellow Tibetans who have fled Tibet for freedom." The fact that the painting was already bought by a Southeast Asian tourist before the opening reception even began best demonstrates the exilic consciousness that foreigners to Dharamsala often expect to find among Tibetans.

Figure 4.5 *Jamyang working on paintings that would go into his IIC exhibition.* The stylistic difference between the Moonpeak phase of Jamyang's work and that after can be seen in the contrast between the scene of the monastery on the wall and the unfinished one of a Himachal village sitting on the easel.

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Figure 4.6 *Spring; oil painting by Tenzin Jamyang.* His signature in Tibetan script is at the bottom on the left.

Figure 4.8 *Photographs by Penpa Drolma in display.*

Figure 4.8 *"Inner beauty I want to draw out!"* The image that Penma kept referring to when she talked about the inner beauty that she wanted her photographic work to extract.

Figure 4.9 *Life-sized group photo of refugee women and children displayed at the entrance of Tibet Museum.* The comparison I am able to make derives from contextualizing Penma's photographs of the urban poor with this permanently installed large image.

CHAPTER FIVE

TIBETANS WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE INDIA-BORN (3): WHEN THE HISTORY OF THE NATION BECOMES QUOTIDIAN

Living in the midst of Tibetans in Dharamsala, one can hardly miss the role which "Tibetan history" has been given in shaping the collective identity of the community. Foremost, it is common for history to be seen as providing evidence that prior to the Chinese "invasion" in the 1950s Tibet was an independent and therefore "free" country.[104] As popular as such a perception of history currently is among residential Tibetans in the locale whose trajectories of life in exile are diverse, to retrieve the different stages of development and multiple processes through which the perception has been shaped and fortified is beyond the scope of the present project. On the other hand, in terms of the very subjective life experiences of the India-born cohorts in Dharamsala with which I am here more interested, "history" – as a common gloss for the period during the 1950s when the territory and sovereign state of Tibet was lost to the PRC – is locally also a site of frequent remembrance and a focal point of emotion. An exploration of the emotional strength which "history" appears to have over the cohorts and, to varying degrees, the rest of the community, thus constitutes the primary objective of the present chapter. It sets my ethnographic approach towards "Tibetan history" aside from that of political science and history.

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[104] "Tibet" and "Tibetan history" used in this chapter connotes the mental picture of the Greater Tibet (*Boechenbo*) developed in the exilic context of the nation. As I have acknowledged in Chapter 1, while scholars can be critical about the elements of the imagined Tibet that they consider as lacking historical basis, its power over the cognitive and emotional schemes of the India-born cohorts is tangible and hence requires the kind of further exploration I am pursuing.

“History” by way of ethnographic inquiries

Parallel to the Tibetan tendency to minimize the tie that Tibet “historically” had with China is the equally persistent claim of the PRC that, “historically,” Tibet has always been a part of China. Such a contest of the two sides over “history” in order to gain an upper hand in their dispute has been going on for decades. With their best intention to restore the history which has been so caught up in the political deadlock, some scholars have taken a deconstructionist approach to unwind the man-made threads of these claims (Powers 2004; Sperling 2004) while others painstakingly discern the dynamics and periodical variations that the long history of Tibetan-Chinese relations entails (e.g. Dawa Norbu 2001; Goldstein 1989 and 2007; Lin 2006; Tuttle 2005; Wang 2008.). The archival materials on which these authors have relied to make their cases might vary; they do, however, share the premise that, once “history” is thoroughly studied and properly understood, Dharamsala and Beijing will somehow find the much needed common ground to end their lasting tension.

My own understanding of modern Tibetan history has been greatly benefited by this scholarship. Conversely, the fieldwork in Dharamsala has taught me not to underestimate the degree to which “history” is an “emotional” entity intertwined with the everyday lives of Tibetans there. I do have some reservations regarding the often implicit expectation of these authors that an “objectively” pursued knowledge of history can lead to practical solutions of historical problems. This chapter thus presents my analytical shift that explicates the subjective ways in which the India-born cohorts and the rest of the Tibetan community in Dharamsala actually live with and through what they understand as the most recent history of the Tibetan nation. It articulates the evident yet often

neglected fact that, while it is nearly an impulse for historians and politicians to "return to history" to find answers and solutions to the present conflicts, history is always more than something that people accept because they properly understand it or reject because they do not have a correct comprehension of it. Rather, it is not unusual for feelings and lived experiences to lend history its weight. To settle the problems that history triggers – such as the Dharamsala-Beijing standoff and its consequences – thus requires inquisitive attention to the sphere where history and life in its present state meet.[105]

Throughout the course of fieldwork in Dharamsala, I found it relatively easy to notice the way in which Tibetans in the locale understand the correlation of the nation's exilic present with the recent past when the nation was lost. In contrast, it has been more challenging to recognize and then put into perspective the ways in which individual Tibetans in the place subtly live with the correlation. Highlighted in the pages that follow is hence an analysis of how "history" and, by extension, "time" complicate everyday lives in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala. Within the discipline of Tibetan Studies, my inquiry into the social lives of history and time in the Dharamsala Tibetan society is meant to unsettle the stereotypical impression of the society as a homogeneous whole. The task I have in hand is preceded by but also different from the study that Carole McGranahan (2001 and 2005) has done to show the processes through which certain events in Tibet's recent past have been officially downplayed in order to support the nonviolence position of the Tibetan state-in-exile.[106]

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[105] To be fair, works examining the Chinese side of emotion on the Tibetan issue are seriously needed. For my further explanation of why history has not been a helpful tool to settle the disagreement between Dharamsala and Beijing, see Chen n.d.d.

[106] During the years when McGranahan used the official silencing of the armed Khampa/Mustang resistance movement as a primary example to develop her thesis on "historical arrest" as a cultural practice important to the exilic formation of the Tibetan nation (2005:574-6), several other authors also turned their attention to the same historical event and its swiftly aging participants (Conboy and Morrison 2002; Dawa

While sharing McGranahan's insight on history and its silencing as a social field where the Tibetan refugee collective is confronted with its internal differences, my approach differs from hers in two ways. First, McGranahan carried out her oral history interviews with the veterans and their family members of the long neglected Khampa resistance movement in the exilic community of Tibetans in and beyond South Asia.[107] The result of her research is meant to represent the community as a whole. In contrast, my observation of what has been going on in Dharamsala bears no intention to reach a similar generalization. Second, foundational to McGranahan's analysis is the dichotomy of one narrative of the Tibetan nation's history and its hegemony among the exiles versus the other which, while mattering to certain individuals in private, is by and large left unseen and unheard of in the public arena. In comparison, from Tibetans of the post-1959 generation in Dharamsala whose life worlds I documented, I did not often sense the salience of the dichotomy which McGranahan extracted from the veterans of the Khampa resistance movement she worked with. Rather, what has stood out in my fieldwork data are the ways in which the India-born cohorts in particular actually allow their quotidian lives to be dominated by the official history of the nation. I use them to draw out one more aspect of the Dharamsala Tibetan culture to which the cohorts contribute.

Beyond the field of Tibetan Studies, my inquiry joins the growing trend of

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Tsering 2003; Knaus 1999; Lin 1999). Because of these newer publications and an earlier account by Jamyang Norbu 1986[1979], this piece of once "arrested" history is now certainly more accessible than before. What is yet to be observed is when and how Tibetans of the younger generation in various locales might begin to make explicit connections of the present(s) they live with to the aspect of the nation's past which was under arrest not too long ago.

[107] The discrepancy between the leaders of the resistance movement and the Tibetan government-in-exile has its quotidian consequence which is yet to be further explored. For instance, while pro-Dharamsala refugees in the 1960s and 1970s would want their children to be educated in TCV or other Tibetan schools, the controversial connections that the movement back then had with the nationalist government in Taiwan have helped created a generation of Tibetans – though small in number – whose exilic experience took shape in the Taiwanese context and therefore can be in different degrees varied from that of the India-born cohorts. For a glimpse of the ways these exiles explain their Tibetan identity, see *Tibet, Taipei*, a recent documentary at http://www.ch5.tv/VOD/content.php?sublevel_id=603.

anthropological scholarship which Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart have recently termed the "ethnography of historicity" (2005:261); it will shed new light on the temporal dynamics of experiences which are categorically often referred to as of exiles and/or refugees.

According to Hirsch and Stewart, through investigating the ways in which individuals and groups in different societies experience "time" and live with what is understood as "the past" and/or "history," anthropologists have been able to discern that none of these temporal concepts is as elementary or universally defined as they are often assumed. Rather, these concepts have been found to belong to the realm of diverse human practices and reflexivity. They bear markers of cultural and/or political specificity and often are simultaneously concerned with cognition, emotion, social relationship, and different modes of representational practice (e.g. Authors in Hirsch and Stewart 2005; Malkki 1995a; Mueggler 2001; Peteet 2007; Ochs 2006; Stewart 2005). To further theorize the approach that has derived from studies conducted in various world areas and which they consider as bearing rich analytical potential, Hirsch and Stewart deploy the concept of "historicity" to sum up inquiries that are concerned with time and history as tangibly lived experiences in given societies:

> …. "historicity" describes a human situation in flow, where versions of the past and future (of persons, collectives or things) assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions…. Historicity in this sense is the manner in which persons operating under the constraints of social ideologies make sense of the past, while anticipating the future. Historicity is a dynamic social situation open to ethnographic investigation (Hirsch and Stewart 2005: 262).[108]

[108] Hirsch and Stewart acknowledge the impact of phenomenology on the "ethnography-of-historicity" approach about which they write (2005:262-3). What these two authors address can certainly be seen as the

Taking the ethnographic approach toward "historicity" cited above as the point of my departure, this chapter explores the temporal attributes of the India-born Tibetans' life world and its expression (and sometimes its lack of articulation) in Dharamsala.

In terms of drawing "historicity" specifically out of instances of given nationalities who are known as political refugees, the study I undertake is inspired by the classic insight of Liisa Malkki into the "mythico-history" of their nation significant to the Hutu refugees from Burundi encamped in Tanzania during the 1970s and 1980s (1995a: 52-152).

According to Malkki, the ways in which the Hutu refugees constructed the pre-exile history of themselves as a people and allegorically understood the relevance of that history to their everyday lives in exile were deeply influenced by the encampment and other domains of refugee policy controlled by the hosting state of Tanzania and to which they were collectively subject. By comparison, the settlement of Tibetans in Dharamsala is not at any rate close to an enclosed refugee camp and the exiles are more or less autonomous in dealing with internal affairs of their own community. As it accordingly turns out, places which "history" occupies in the consciousness, practices, and social relations of my Tibetan informants in Dharamsala do not quite share the unitary attributes which Malkki's study of the Hutu case highlights. Instead, as I will argue, while commonly acknowledging the very standardized national discourse of Tibetan history, Tibetans in Dharamsala also tend to be coping with the weight of that history on a highly individualized basis; some of the ways in which they do so consequentially speak to the idiosyncrasies of the community.

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most recent development within the long lasting subfield of "cultural anthropology of time" which Nancy Munn (1992) critically reviewed earlier.

Narrating the history of one's Tibetan nation

Despite the difference between the official position taken by the Tibetan state-in-exile to pursue what the Dalai Lama has since the 1980s promoted as "a genuine autonomy" of the nation within the framework of the PRC and the independent Tibet which various activist groups have been advocating, the feeling that Tibetans are "entitled" to undo and redo the status quo of "Tibet under Chinese occupation" is hardly to be missed in Dharamsala. In the multinational neighborhood in which I intermittently lived between 2003 and 2005, it was not unusual for social gatherings of all sorts to end up with debates about the prospect of Tibetan independence versus autonomy joined in by Tibetans and other nationalities. The tendency was that the stronger one considered him/herself as pro-independence, the more he or she would stress "the rights of Tibetans" to struggle while downplaying the means and feasibility to achieve such an objective. Parallel to such a sturdy sense of entitlement is also the very specific narrative of Tibetan history which the eloquent ones among the India-born cohorts in particular tend to extract in order to defend the cause of the nation with which they have grown up.

Typically, their narration would start with the Chinese "invasion" in 1950, followed by the Seventeen Point Agreement (SPA) between Lhasa and Beijing in 1951 which at the time signed away Tibet's independence;[109] the escalating tension between the Tibetan people and the Chinese ruling force during the intermittent years which led to the flight of the Dalai Lama; and, more importantly, the decision of "His Holiness" to

[109] For the intricacy involved with the *de facto* independence of Tibet represented by the Lhasa regime before the 1950s and with the nominal rule over Tibet of nationalist China during the same era which the India-born cohorts often neglect, see Goldstein 1989 and Lin 2006. Also, see Tsering Shakya 1994 for a detailed account of the Sino-Tibetan affairs which led to the signing of the SPA.

denounce the SPA on his way into exile in 1959.[110] While these are all landmark events well documented in publications on the modern history of Tibet that are commonly available in Dharamsala (e.g. Avedon 1994[1981]; Goldstein 1989 and 1997; Grunfeld 1996; Tsering Shakya 1999), more often than not given narrators would cite *My Land and My People*, an autobiographical account of the Dalai Lama originally published in 1962, as the source of what they know. The denunciation of the SPA by their leader is apparently seen as having well legitimized the cause of their struggle; it renders legitimate their perspective from which the Tibetan-Chinese relation remains an open-ended affair between two states.[111]

This much of the India-born cohorts' appropriation of historical knowledge to reassure their political identity certainly reveals the cognitive scheme of their thinking and judgment. However, the very standardized way in which they relate the specific episodes of the nation's past to its present is neither merely a functionalist issue on how history is utilized to serve the objective of the exilic nation, nor can it be properly understood until one takes into account the emotional power that history tends to have over the cohorts. In order to do just so, I borrow the concept of "collective memory" from

[110] Memories of fleeing Tibet passed on within one's family were occasionally added with a great deal of emotion. Also, given narrators might cite "bad things" that happened in post-1959 Tibet to stress the homeland relevance of the cause. Yet, these tended to be supplementary elements to the core narrative of modern Tibetan history which, in views dear to the India-born cohorts, fundamentally legitimizes the cause. Comparatively speaking, it is the degree to which the India-born cohorts cling to the national history narrative which sets them apart from refugees of the earlier generation who have left behind not only "homeland" but also "home" and personal lives in Tibet and therefore do not always rely on the same narrative to orient their experience thereafter. Similarly, as my discussion in Chapter 7 will illustrate, those who have recently arrived in Dharamsala from homeland Tibet and are locally referred to as the newcomers tend to be less absolute about the validity of the narrative and its relevance to the present moment of their life worlds.

[111] It is worth noting that, in contrast with the Dalai Lama's abandonment of the SPA which the India-born cohorts regard as having a great significance, they rarely acknowledge the Chinese cancellation of the SPA in the same year which consequently led to the total domination of the Chinese regime over Tibet. Being on the subaltern side of the confrontation, the cohorts apparently prefer to find inspiration from a history of Tibetan resistance than from that of its defeat.

Maurice Halbwachs (1992)[112] to argue that what is conveyed through the renunciation of the SPA by the Dalai Lama which the India-born cohorts constantly put forth is also their "collective refusal" of a closure over history, their "intention" to repair the unfavorable outcome of history, and their "vision" of how the continuous course of history ought to take place in the future.[113]

As we shall see, the refusal, intentionality, and vision I am eliciting are all the manifestations of "the national sense of time" that Tibetans in Dharamsala are commonly aware of, feel about, but differently live with. Far from being left as the intact backdrop against which everything else takes place, in the sociopolitical milieu unique to Dharamsala, "time" often stays in the foreground, tangible and decisive to other practices that Tibetans there engage in with different degrees of reflexivity. Nevertheless, before further relating episodes of everyday life that have taught me this lesson, in terms of having a basic grasp of the national sense of time under discussion, I consider one particular piece of thangka work by Karma Sichoe (hereafter Karma only), a somehow heterodox practitioner of the genre, as particularly revelatory.

Painting the national sense of time

Karma was mentioned previously in Chapter 4. There he is the one who remembered the

[112] At the core of his thesis, Halbwachs argues: "To be sure, everyone has a capacity for memory that is unlike that of anyone else, given the variety of temperaments and life circumstances. But individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact…. leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over – to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu" (1992:53).

[113] The Dalai Lama is probably the most noticeable exception of this tendency. In the commemorative speech he gave on the Tibetan Uprising Day in 2000, the leader said to his people: "History is history; no one can change what happened in the past. It would be fruitless if we all only accept what we want and ignore the rest. So it is wiser to leave research and judgment to neutral and fair historians and legal scholars. Historical problems should not be manipulated by political realities. It is to the future I pay more attention" (Lin 2000:186).

good times that he and his TCV siblings used to have in the Hippies' Marker which once periodically materialized at the outskirts of McLeod Ganj. Having grown up as an orphan in one of the TCV campuses in Dharamsala, Karma guessed that he was around thirty years old in 2004. Unmarried and living on commissions he could earn from painting thangkas, Karma was also an activist constantly involved in organizing and participating in hunger strikes, protest marches, and other public functions in Dharamsala.[114] As a thangka painter or *lhatriwa* (the one who draws images of the divine - *Tib*), Karma considered himself as gifted, admitting that sometimes he might be a little bit more proud of his excellence than the craft traditionally expects from its practitioners. In the meantime, he often felt that his patriotism or, in his own words, "very obsessive mind on Tibet" was so powerful that it constantly pulled him away from tranquility, altruism, and other spiritual attributes that, as a *lhatriwa*, he was supposed to cultivate.[115] Thus, while coming up with the idea of his "Futurist Thangka" in summer 2004, Karma was excited, believing that, rather than having painting and activism constantly compete for his commitment, he had finally found a way to attend to his two passions at the same time. On my part, being Karma's next-door neighbor allowed me to observe steps Karma took to turn "time" as understood through his activist logic into a visual artifact.

At first glance of the completed Futurist Thangka, one can immediately recognize

[114] Counter to the pitifulness conventionally associated with orphaned children in the midst of the refugee population, the adult Karma remembers that, by the fourth grade in school, he had realized that being an orphan means no one has a right to tell him what to do. From that point on, the self-designated autonomy contributed to Karma's decision to drop out of school in the eighth grade in order to join the special Tibetan border force in the Indian Army. When that idea was impeded because he did not have a birth record to prove that he was old enough for recruitment, he settled on an apprenticeship to learn thangka painting which, in his understanding, was "a Tibetan thing to do." Also, in terms of committing to the cause of the nation which concerns him so much, Karma sees himself as "luckier" than many of his friends who often struggle between what is important to them and the expectations of their parents.

[115] Karma is not alone among thangka painters of his generation I have met – in exile or inside Tibet – who are sensitive and sometimes even sarcastic about the gap between the aesthetic canons, behavior restrictions, and mental states they are supposed to observe and the "modern distractions" with which they are surrounded.

those symbols of the Tibetan nation that are ubiquitous in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala (Figure 5.1): the Fourteenth Dalai Lama sitting in the center of the painting, a space typically reserved for the main deity of a given thangka pantheon; Nechung Oracle on the Dalai Lama's left and Palden Lhamo on his right at the bottom of the canvas, the two deified protective figures of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan state that he personifies; Potala above Nechung Oracle and Norbulingka above Palden Lhamo behind the shoulders of the Dalai Lama, two palaces of his in Lhasa prior to the 1959 journey into exile; and, finally, a small Tibetan flag standing on the end table next to the Dalai Lama's right arm. As prevalent as these emblems of Tibetan nationalism are in Dharamsala, what Karma did went beyond a simplistic collation of them into the typical thangka symmetry. Rather, articulated in the Futurist Thangka by the young thangka painter is the way in which he wishes the past, present and future of his nation to be connected.

While following the thangka convention to situate the present Dalai Lama as the central figure of the Futurist Thangka, Karma adopted the style known as "photographic realism" of the genre (Harris 1997; Wen 2002) to capture the current likeness of the Dalai Lama and, in turn, to establish the presentness which the painting registers. In other words, by means of a realist depiction of the Dalai Lama marked with his aging appearance, Karma conveyed that the Futurist Thangka was made at and about the present time which he and his fellow Tibetans experience. Conversely, during those months when Karma was often found in his bungalow busy with the Futurist Thangka, he would frequently direct the attention of me and other curious visitors to the throne occupied by the Dalai Lama in the painting, wanting to make sure that we recognized

"the history of the Tibetan nation" which the throne in his painting signals.

To indicate that the throne he drew had belonged to the reincarnated Dalai Lamas and was more recently sat upon by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama during his enthronement ceremony in 1940, Karma was very particular about making the graphic design on the drapery covering the throne in his painting identical with that shown on the visual references he was able to find in Dharamsala (Figure 5.2 and 5.3). To him, the throne once partook in an important state ritual and therefore witnessed the era when Tibet was an independent country controlling its own affairs.[116] While that ceremonial occasion was gone and the Dalai Lama had to leave the throne behind in Lhasa in 1959, on his canvas Karma neglects both the spatial and the temporal distance and reunites the throne and the leader who has grown old in exile. According to the thangka painter himself, this particular piece of historical reference represented by the throne was meant to be a reminder of the past which is so crucial to the ongoing struggle of the nation that he felt obligated to ensure its visibility.

Beyond this much of the interpretation which Karma seemed to never tire of reiterating, there was always something else in the connection of the nation's past with its present which the throne depicted in the Futurist Thangka captures; it might not have been a part of Karma's conscious decision but prompted my realization of the way in which the nation's past is "felt" in Dharamsala. Specifically, I was attracted by the rich golden and bright orange colors which Karma diligently applied to the drapery covering the throne in the Futurist Thangka – in accordance with the genre convention that demands settings in which benevolent deities are situated to be perfectly depicted, that is,

[116] To Karma, who firmly accepts that Tibet was back then an independent country, the lasting controversy on China's role in "supervising" the ceremony and hence "ruling" Tibet (Cao 1996:167-8; Lin 2006: 115-7; Goldstein 1989: 325-330; Tsepon Tsepon Shakabpa 1967:285-6) is essentially not an issue at all.

to be made to transcend aging, gravity, and other forms of physical deterioration or imperfection. Whereas the "age" shown through the faded historical photo which Karma held for reference, the silk-woven drapery was made to look completely new and brilliant in the Futurist Thangka.[117] The throne which the drapery covers in turn serves as an indexical object of history which is, however, free from the impact of time. Most importantly, the lapse of time between the past of the nation and its present appears suspended.

Finally, by arranging the Dalai Lama to be "reseated" on the throne in front of a highly politicized Lhasa landscape, Karma wanted his visual composition to represent the homecoming moment of the nation which, in the real physical world, could possibly take place only in the future.

As many other Tibetans in Dharamsala do, Karma dislikes the fact that the homecoming future he grew up waiting for seems to have become indefinitely postponed. To compensate for the discontent, Karma relied on the presentness which the Dalai Lama image conveys to supply the immediacy to the future which he desires. Compared with his canonical treatment of the throne in the Futurist Thangka which somehow results in erasing one temporal gap between the past and the present, what Karma more consciously did was to minimize the other gap between the prolonged present of the nation-in-exile and its future when exile finally comes to an end according to terms his "Tibetan" mind can imagine. Together, although the past, present, and future components of time remain distinguishable in the Futurist Thangka, it is the highly subjective compression of the present with the past on one side and with the future on the other that Karma spent

[117] Karma's intense effort to represent the textile quality of the drapery becomes even more evident when compared with the treatment of the same object by Amdo Jampa, the founding figure of the photo-realism style of the thangka genre, in Wen 2002.

months maneuvering on his canvas.

Larger implications one can extract from the production stories of the Futurist Thangka are yet to be clarified. For now, suffice it to say that its contents alone provide a useful summary of the national sense of time which, as we shall see, runs deeply through the ways in which Tibetans in Dharamsala go about their everyday life and in-group relation.

Living through the national sense of time in Dharamsala

From the very beginning when Karma came up with the idea in 2004, the Futurist Thangka was not an ordinary work of the genre. It was neither commissioned by any patron nor for the religious purposes with which the genre is usually associated. Instead, the piece was meant to be secular and political; Karma used his own savings to cover the cost of its production; and he planned to convert the completed thangka image into posters for "a wider spread of the political awareness."[118] I first took the "wider spread" about which Karma enthused to mean that he wants the Futurist Thangka posters to be an attraction to the international tourists and pilgrims passing through Dharamsala – like many other entrepreneurs in the locale had already claimed doing. I was not completely wrong but only gradually came to the realization that the didactic mission which Karma took upon himself to carry out was also and foremost for his fellow Tibetans who, in his opinion, could use some of the energy the Futurist Thangka image boosts.

What did Karma have in mind? Why did he feel that his compatriots needed to be

[118] The issue of aura essential to original works of art and its damage by modern forms of mass production (Benjamin 1968[1936]) which often bothers Tibetologists and the collectors of the thangka genre did not appear to have troubled Karma at all. Rather, his enthusiasm to turn the Futurist Thangka into posters can be read as one recent example of ways in which duplicate images are believed to emit their religiopolitical power in the much older Tibetan context. See my further discussion of this subject in Chen n.d.a.

reminded of the political vision which the Futurist Thangka articulates, implying that they were unaware of or neglecting it? Moreover, while the in-group criticism subtly embedded in Karma's thangka project apparently resonates with the one conveyed by Tsundue vowing not to remove the headband tied around his forehead until Tibet is freed from Chinese rule (see Chapter 3), what is the larger ethnographic significance of the view of these two India-born activists on their fellow citizens?

For one thing, Karma and Tsundue are not alone in holding the judgment that Tibetans in exile ought to be more committed to the cause of the nation. Rather, underlying the concern which Karma expresses through his Futurist Thangka project and Tsundue through his headband application is a perception of the exilic collective which Tibetans in Dharamsala – the outspoken ones and the in-group audience they have in mind – usually share. According to the perception, exiles have been losing their salience and become less concerned with the nation's struggle because of the distractions of what goes on in their personal lives. Given my own outsider's observation that McLeod Ganj and other Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala are saturated with symbols and images revealing the exilic sensitivity of their residents, that there are always volunteers who come forward when hunger strikes, candle vigils and demonstration marches are called, and that the youngsters in the community often make service to the government-in-exile a top goal of their career choice, the perception did not immediately make any sense. Yet, at the point of time when the major fieldwork of this dissertation was conducted in Dharamsala, the local hegemony which the perception enjoyed was evident. On the one hand, senior statesmen and women and self-appointed opinion leaders of the younger generation equally utilized it to preach to their fellow citizens in the community;

conversely, everyday Tibetans were also found frequently evaluating their own Tibetanness and/or accusing each other of a lack of patriotism according to the same perception. What has been going on? As intense as the political life of Tibetans in Dharamsala appears to be, why do Tibetans themselves seem to only notice its inadequacy?[119] While the judgment that everyday life weakens Tibetans' determination to struggle is in Dharamsala typically articulated in moral terms, what are the other ways to place its local significance? In other words, why has everyday life been perceived as a threat in the first place, that is, before it becomes a constant target of moral discourse and a site where exiles appear to have tirelessly scrutinized their loyalty to the nation?

Quotidian life versus the national sense of time

In the representational space of his Futurist Thangka, Karma depicts his vision of the ways in which the exilic present he has grown up with ought to be connected to Tibet's past and its future. From his present-centered perspective, Karma resents the idea that the past (marked by the "independence" which, as he rightly believes, the nation once had) can no longer be properly remembered. Painted according to the aesthetic standard of the genre, the Futurist Thangka leaves an impression that time has not worn out the throne which symbolizes the sovereign power of the Dalai Lama institution, and it fortifies Karma's attempt to keep the past visible and therefore alive in the present. At the same time, Karma is by no means ambivalent about the future of the nation in a specific

[119] Margret Novak (1984) highlights the creativity which observers can elicit through Tibetan exiles' utilization of symbols and rituals to cope with the unsettled political state they are in. Karma's thangka project and Tsundue's headband application can certainly be read as the most recent manifestation of the creativity which Novak emphasizes. However, what has not particularly concerned Novak is the way in which the result of the (re)invented rites and symbols have been understood and lived with by Tibetans whose socioeconomic and political places within their refugee settlements are varied. In the case I have in hand, aside from recognizing the creative energy which Karma and Tsundue embody, what is yet to be explored are the social ramifications of their style of activist intervention in Dharamsala.

formation which he wants to see unfolding. With the help of his thangka brush, the *lhatriwa* creates a vision in which the Dalai Lama in his present appearance sits against the Lhasa landscape to which the aging leader is yet to return from his exile, allowing the immediate realization of the future he desires to take place – though only symbolically – in the present.

While the artistic expression via the Futurist Thangka is of Karma, one India-born who happens to be an activist and a thangka practitioner at the same time, the visual effect which he creates to compress the temporal distance of the nation's present from its past on the one hand and its future on the other captures the way in which "time" – in its relation to what has happened to Tibetan history – is commonly felt in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala.[120] In other words, while Karma – to my knowledge – was alone in painting the sense of time real to him in 2004, there have always been other Tibetans in the locale who are not active practitioners of any representational genre, but who are equally sensitive to the temporal logic of the nation which Karma depicts. As we shall see, the quotidian lives of these exiles are often intimately interwoven with the temporal concerns which the Futurist Thangka reveals. Compared with the great deal of cohesiveness one can find in Karma's visual representation of the ways in which he wants to see the past, present and future of the Tibetan nation linked, the contradiction and ambiguity which the same sense of time generates in the arena of everyday life is

[120] In Dharamsala and other South Asian Tibetan settlements, it is not uncommon to encounter older exiles (those who came of age right before or around the crucial time of Tibetan history in 1950s) who believe in a karmic cause of what had happened to them and the Tibetan nation as a whole. As these aging Tibetans see it, the refugee state which they have to endure in the current lifetime is a manifestation of what they must have done during the previous ones. The temporal frame which supports such a karmic thinking is different from the compressive model of time which the Futurist Thangka by Karma summarizes. In contrast, the younger ones in the community have a strong tendency to refer to the karmic interpretation of Tibetan history as belonging to their grandparents and parents. It suggests that they are aware of the karmic structure of time but more than often not persuaded by it. More ethnographic research is yet to be conducted before I can better explain why it is seemingly the case.

immense and therefore rich in its potential to deepen our understanding of the Dharamsala geography made out of the living experience of its Tibetan population.

To sort through the entanglement between everyday life and the national sense of time under discussion, first of all, while the determination to revise the unfavorable outcome of Tibetan history has been an essential concern for the exilic establishment of the nation, Tibetans in Dharamsala have also increasingly perceived "time" as a force running against their cause. What have become intertwined are two different conceptualizations of time. On the one hand, the exiles believe in human engineering to (re)shape the "Tibetan" course of unfolding reality; time is in this sense plastic and subject to maneuvering. Conversely, while also experiencing "time" as being punctuated by seasons, reproductivity, and other "natural" courses, the exiles feel intimidated by its power to shape the course of events which is not always subject to human intervention. In Dharamsala, these two conflicting perceptions are most noticeably embodied by the India-born cohorts who have grown up engrained with the idea that history can be undone and the Tibetan nation is yet to be rebuilt, but who also find themselves constantly disappointed by the lack of progress which their state elders have made through their actions to renegotiate with China.[121]

For example, on the flipside of Karma's thangka attempt to deny the distance between the past and the present is the often heard anxiety that time lapses and the nation's struggle – as *the* legacy from its past – is being forgotten. All sorts of publicity

[121] I am not suggesting that others in the community do not feel the same disappointment. The aging ones do. Yet, in a relative sense, they also perceive themselves as getting too old to stay active and doubt that they will ever see things turn around. On the other hand, there are the newcomers from the homeland who share the prospect of the nation reconstructed from its past but tend to be more realistic about what can possibly be accomplished under the status quo. As a result, when individuals among the newcomer subgroup do talk about their disillusion, they tend to remain philosophical about it.

projects generated in and beyond the exiles' stronghold in Dharamsala have in one way or the other been designed to combat against the chance that the rest of the world might one day no longer remember the nation's plight. Internally, while there are always Karma(s) and Tsundue(s) who have, at least in the Dharamsala context, frequently put forth warnings with the intention to keep their compatriots on high alert, I am often more intrigued by those (predominately the India-born males) who insist on living lives which articulate their resistance against the power of time to wash away the open-ended struggle of their nation. Because the cases which these exiles try to make largely regard what they can and mostly cannot do in their own everyday lives, I refer to them as "quotidian activists."[122] Most noticeably, these quotidian activists are the ones who routinely withhold themselves from participating in the Tibetan New Year celebration in which others in the community partake. Some of them make it known to their families and social circles that they are too somber about what has happened to Tibet to join any festivities for the occasion; others persistently refuse to utter the common greeting phrase "*Losar Tashi Delek*" (Happy New Year – *Tib*).[123] To these individuals, they act so because each *Losar* (New Year – *Tib*) only marks the further distance between the present state of the nation and the reversal of history which is yet to be accomplished. Accordingly, they do not find the occasion celebratory. By withholding themselves from activities associated with the time-marker event of *Losar*, these quotidian activists make

[122] Some but not all of the quotidian activists are active members or formally employed workers of various Dharamsala based advocacy organizations. Conversely, individuals who are professional activists do not necessarily turn their own everyday life into the arena of struggle as the quotidian activists tend to do.
[123] I was in Dharamsala for the Tibetan New Year for the first time in February 2004 and the second time in January 2005, learning my lesson that *Losar Tashi Delek* was not always a well received greeting in the community. On the other hand, majority of my India-born and newcomer informants – better-off or poor – made their attempt to include me for their New Year preparations, rituals, and feasts.

their symbolical gesture to keep the intimidating flow of time at bay.[124]

From the other way around, while Karma can on the canvas he paints miraculously smash the gulf between the exilic present in which he lives and the homecoming future which he has grown up expecting, in the real world the gap remains, constantly challenging the patience and faith which the polity-in-exile instructs its citizens to maintain. To cope with the frustration and disappointment which the lasting temporal gap brings, Tibetans in Dharamsala typically feel that what they have been doing in exile is to wait. Moreover, as *the* mechanism on which the exiles rely to make sense out of their immediate reality, "waiting" in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala often connotes a sense of idleness, implying that one is unable to do anything but watch time go by and feel disillusioned. In the township, the ordinary Tibetans can often be heard describing their exilic life history in these terms. Conversely, such a perception of waiting is also often found to be unbearable and hence reinterpreted – by the quotidian activists in particular – as a form of action one ought to take to remain devoted to the cause.

To convince themselves that their waiting differs from that which others passively embody, the quotidian activists make their conscious decision to live meagerly, resenting

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[124] The New Year refusal under discussion was, in 2004 and 2005, by and large a decision made on an individual basis. My description of those who made their personal decision not to celebrate the *Losar* as activists is to emphasize the gestures these individuals came up with to express their concerns. Back then, the refusal was for the most part not coordinated. In contrast, while the first anniversary for the 2008 protests was approaching, Tibetans inside Tibet were reported to have quietly chosen not to celebrate the upcoming Losar in 2009 (ICT 2009; Tsering Woeser 2009). Meanwhile, several activist groups in exile launched their "Say No to Losar" campaign and nearly immediately invited debates on its necessity in the cyber space Tibetans around the globe share. For the mission statement of the campaign, see http://www.saynotolosar.net; for samples of the debate surrounding the campaign, see http://forums.phayul.com/lofiversion/index.php?t10283.html and http://tibettalk.wordpress.com/2009/02/05/talking-back-our-losar-2009%E2%80%8F/. Without support from further ethnographic research, I do not want to jump into any conclusion of the possible (dis)continuity between this latest development and the pre-2008 Dharamsala milieu this chapter documents.

ideas of improving one's living condition when the ordeal of the nation is not over. Meanwhile, they like to envision that, in days to come, Tibet is to be "freed" and they will return to the homeland to build and live in spacious houses surrounded by pleasant gardens. Based on a similar logic, the quotidian activists are also the ones who show a strong tendency to avoid commitment to romantic involvement, marital relationships and the reproductivity that follows. Not only do they perceive intimacy, marriage and family life as bearing the power of distraction, but, by voluntarily postponing these milestone events in life, these Dharamsala Tibetans see their way of waiting as proactive, free from being trapped by the damaging idleness.[125]

Burdens the national sense of time generates

To live with and through the national sense has not been an easy task for anyone in Dharamsala – neither for the India-born cohorts who are apparently activism-minded nor everyone else in the community who are subject to direct and indirect criticisms that they have become too contented with where they are and less concerned with the cause.

For those in Dharamsala who are after all the majority and do celebrate *Losar*, get married, produce children, and go about their everyday lives, the accusation that life – as frequently interrupted by mundane routines and unavoidably punctuated by cyclic rhythm of time – weakens exiles' strength to struggle renders quotidian normalcy something to be apologized. Rhetorically, all of these mundane practices are carried out for their

[125] As documented in Childs and Barkin 2006, reproductivity has long been a part of the national discourse which the exilic polity constructs and maintains. The guideline which exiles are given is twofold: First, it is a patriot act to produce children, bringing up the total Tibetan population; second, it is important to pass on the Tibetan blood by marring with Tibetan. My finding that certain exiles of the younger generation now see reproductivity as conflicting with the interest of the nation forms a sharp contrast with what is in the nation-state's population policy.

patriotic purposes. To cite some of the most often elicited justifications, *Losar* is for the sake of preserving Tibetan tradition; marriage helps the overall well being of the exilic nation; and reproductivity contributes to an increase in the national population. In the life world of these Tibetan residents in Dharamsala, everything they put into practice has to have its "Tibetan" meaning. In terms of compensating for what they ought to contribute to the nation, these exiles give donations to the advocacy organizations and, once in a while, halt shops and other businesses they operate to join marches, protests, and/or hunger strikes. I am not here suggesting that these exiles are less sincere about the ongoing struggle of the nation, or that their contribution to the nation's cause is merely a reactive gesture towards the hegemonic force of the national sense of time which permeates the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala. Rather, when we, from an analytical point of view, take into account the fact that these everyday Tibetans are sensitive to the national sense of time and find their ways to live with it, the complexity embedded in their kind of exilic experience begins to emerge.

As for those India-born cohorts who have political activism as the center of their life world and who are more articulate, to live in accordance with the national sense of time they embrace always regards their deeper uncertainty about the strength of the same sense of time to compete with other concerns in life that, in their eyes, increasingly lure away their fellow exiles. As manifested in Karma's case, the artist took upon himself to create the visual representation of the specific connections of the nation's past, present and future in which he wholeheartedly believes; meanwhile, the completed Futurist Thangka and its poster production revealed the activist anxiety of the artist that the same density of time is losing its magnetic power in the community. Similarly, underlying the

headband which Tsundue uses to express his commitment to the desired trajectory of the nation is also his dissatisfaction with others who have not been able to live up to the level of devotion and commitment to the nation he expects.

From the perspective dear to Dharamsala Tibetans like Tsundue and Karma, the dichotomy between the felt national sense of time and its losing ground in the community is real, problematic, but at least distinguishable and salvageable. In contrast, the most drastic clash between the national sense of time and quotidian life usually takes place when a given quotidian activist perceives himself as having to abandon the waiting mode of his living to get married, to pursue careers which are locally judged to be irrelevant to the nation's struggle, or to migrate to wealthier countries in other parts of the world. While making decisions of these sorts, some among the quotidian activists feel compelled to find their self-justification and others are not bothered to do so.[126] Nevertheless, what is common and devastating is the sense of failure, defeat, and guilt adherent to these exiles. On the surface, they internalize the ethos of the nation-in-exile and become doubtful of their own patriotism. Yet, from what I have been able to observe, the ways in which they participate or refuse to participate in everyday life once more attest to the penetration of the national sense of time into the life world of Tibetans in Dharamsala.

[126] After spending years resenting the idea of joining others in his family who had since the 1980s resettled in the UK, Rinchen cried in a farewell party which Jeff and other *Inji*s threw for him: "I am close to forty now. My entire life is about waiting. From the day I was born, I was told to wait. I have never lived. I am getting old, I want to know what it takes to live, not just waiting and waiting…."

Figure 5.1 Futurist Thangka by Karma Sichoe.

Figure 5.2 *Photograph taken during the enthronement in 1940.* Karma relied on a tinted reprint of this photographic image to recreate the graphic design and textural quality of the drapery depicted in the Futurist Thangka.

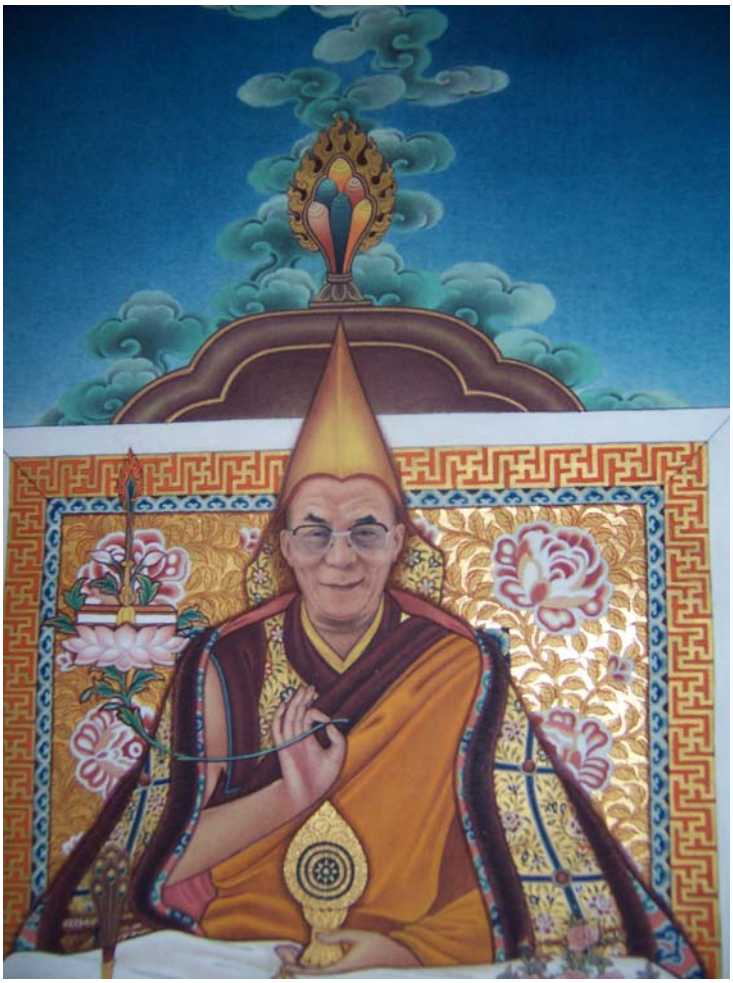

Figure 5.3 *Close-up of the Futurist Thangka.* The refurbishing effort Karma made through the drapery of the throne is vivid.

AN INTERLUDE

The cohort of Tibetans in Dharamsala who often refer to themselves as the "India-born" is the focal group of my analysis throughout Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Joining scholars of Diaspora Studies who have recently called for a shift of research attention from the more frequently focused "homeland" of displaced people to the "sedentary" aspects of their "away-from-home" experience, I take into account nuances of the cohorts' local/Indian experience while not losing sight of "Tibet" as the focal point of their self and collective identity. By concentrating on the "local" attributes of their life-world and its expression, I am able to argue that, for the India-born Tibetans, "being in exile" or "being a Tibetan" is more than just their "translocal" identification with homeland Tibet – although such a Tibetan identity that prioritizes the significance of homeland has been essential to the self-representation of the exilic Tibetan nation. The analytical move that I have made to spell out the subjectivity formation of the India-born Tibetans is thus a shift from "translocal" to "local."

Having done so, I now in Chapters 6 and 7 move on to discussing those recent émigrés from Tibet who are pejoratively referred to as the "newcomers" in Dharamsala. To discern subjectivity formations unique to this subgroup of Tibetans and to address their contributions to the emergent Tibetan cultural geography of the locale, the analytical move I make for this portion of the dissertation is from "local" to "translocal." By clarifying and moving away the "local" prejudice to which the newcomer Tibetans are frequently subject in Dharamsala, I will in Chapter 6 take a "translocal" step to pin down

"contexts back in Tibet" of these Tibetans that have made "illegal" and often risky trans-Himalayan journeys to leave Tibet considerable and even appealing. I will then in Chapter 7 examine the ways in which the experience that the newcomers have left behind at home is "translocally" intertwined with their new lives and identities in Dharamsala. What will eventually become clear is the sharp contrast between the life-world of the India-born cohorts that is intimately local and that of the newcomers that is by and large translocal. While the lived experiences of these two groups equally contribute to the evolving "Tibetan" cultural geography of Dharamsala, each in their own way they also help complicate it.

* * *

Before continuing my ethnographic narrative on the newcomer segment of the Tibetan population whose life worlds are yet to be given the deserved analytical attention, it helps to first read *Exile,* a long poem posted by an anonymous author online. The poem is originally composed in Chinese and its English translation herein is mine. As you will soon notice from your own reading of *Exile,* perspectives captured in this breath-taking poem do not quite coincide with the India-born experiences we have encountered in the earlier chapters. Moreover, what is in the poem and the ways in which the sensitive poet (or poetess) comments the ambivalent homeland and "in-exile" realities of the Tibetan nation greatly resonate with the visions and perceptions of many newcomers I have encountered for this project. For this reason, I borrow *Exile* to forecast nuances and intricacies that the next two chapters explore.

Exile[127]

Exile is a miserable tragedy and an unbelievable comedy

Exile is our failure and the victory of the CCP
Exile declares Tibetans' victory of ceasing isolation, of joining the world and, seriously, of no compromise with autocracy
Exile gives a fertile ground for one Tibetan culture disappearing from Tibet and the other gone global
Exile is the Dalai Lama stepping down from the altar of Tibet, successful in becoming a spiritual leader in the world

Exile is dispersed commoners remembering with their blood and tears
Exile is the fire, in a second, engulfing relics and antiques thousands of years old
Exile is serfs liberated and the beginning of blind obedience
Exile is when autocracy ended and….days when people woke up

Exile is you going to India, scorching hot, to have a life of daily march and demonstration
Exile is me going to school in *Gyanag*,[128] hot, sweaty, feeling homesick
Exile is your reluctance and joy to speak Hindi and other foreign languages
Exile is my reluctance and joy to speak *Gyaghe*[129] and Sichuanese

Exile is the drama of Ragdhik becoming the party secretary and of Sandhong Rinpoche the prime minister[130]
Exile is our craving and passion to traverse the Himalayas for India
Exile is another day for us drinking, bullshitting, and venting nonsense
Exile is me getting drunk, crying, and talking loudly

Exile is their beautiful dreams everyday of going to see Kundun[131]
Exile is their joyful tears when meeting with Kundun
Exile is the boredom of sitting through those meandering meetings targeted on splittism
Exile is the pain of feeling the separation of our dignity from our soul
Exile is prosperities the CCP guarantees to the obedient and is the absolute cracking-down on its challengers

Exile is feeling disheartened when our children sound like foreigners speaking Tibetan
Exile is having convenient access to commercially produced *khatas*

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[127] The poem was posted by an anonymous author at http://www.midway.net/woeser on Feb 25, 2008.
[128] China is called *Gyanag* in Tibetan.
[129] *Gyaghe* is the Tibetan word for Chinese language; to speak *Gyaghe* literally means to talk in Chinese tongue.
[130] Ragdhik has made his political career and family power in the TAR. Sandhong Rinpoche is the first democratically elected prime minister in Dharamsala.
[131] Kundun is one of several intimate ways in which Tibetans refer to the Dalai Lama.

Exile is statues of Buddha on sale, adding décor to living rooms and kitchens
Exile is holy mountains and sacred lakes given to tourist development
Exile is countless *Gyami*[132] everywhere in Tibet

Exile is Secretary Yin, Secretary Hu, Secretary Chen, Secretary Zhang, their talent in speech, and their impressive careers[133]
Exile is Tibetans fully enjoying their right to fart inside their own homes

Exile is singing and dancing that goes on in Lhasa and Dharamsala
Exile is Dharamsala claiming daily "the great success it has achieved" (propaganda)…. and Lhasa announcing every day the miracle of historical progress

Exile is the out-of-touch call for independence by Tibetan Youth Congress
Exile is inseparable Tibet exhausting the brain energy of the CCP

Exile is the gold medals to the Dalai Lama….despite the loneliness of him unable to return to the Potala
Exile is the unending revolutions and victories of the CCP….despite its trouble to win over people's hearts

Exile is Woeser's courage to speak out….and my looking around, hesitation, and cowardice[134]

Exile is one day when one experiences freedom
Exile is a season when one can think
Exile is a vision one can hope for
Exile is a life one can dream of
Exile is prayers of those who want to end their lingering
Exile is my wish to wander

When will the exile be over?
Nobody can clearly tell; 400 years? I guess….

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[132] *Gyami* is the Tibetan word for ethnic Chinese.
[133] These have been the four party secretaries of the TAR since 1959 who are all ethnic Chinese.
[134] Woeser (*aka* Weise) is at the current moment the most outspoken Tibetan writer writing in Chinese. Her influence among Tibetans of the younger generation in China and in exile has been an ongoing phenomenon since 2004. For a preliminary introduction of her literature works and her role as a Beijing-based dissent and public intellectual, go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsdvukeCPQU for the panel discussion *Woeser: Voice of Tibet* (2008).

CHAPTER SIX

"THEY ARE THE NEWCOMERS" (1): TRANS-HIMALAYAN MOBILITY OR ONE ASPECT OF HOMELAND TIBETANS' AGENCY

In the modern era when the world is continuously dominated by "a national order of things" (Malkki 1995a:5),[135] "Palestinians," "Croatians," "Armenians," and "Tibetans" are just a few among many other peoples particularly known for their collective refugee and diasporic experience. Anthropological studies of these and more "nations" of displacement in different parts of the globe, while booming, have since the early 1990s developed into two trends of analytical emphasis. The slightly earlier of the two has been strong in its ambition to theorize virtual and long-distance venues through which individuals of a diasporic nation are in socioeconomic, cultural, and sometimes ideological terms interconnected (Anderson 1998; Appadurai 1996; Basch *et al* 1994; Bernal 2004; Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Despite the tone of their interpretations that might vary from being critical to celebratory, these authors commonly stress the role of "co-ethnicity" in shaping collective consciousness which is unbound by sovereign territories. Meanwhile, the second trend has consistently shown that nations of dispersal are often also societies confronted with forms of internal difference, inequality, and power struggle (Anthias 1998; Bisharat 1997; Frykman 2002; Malkki 1995a; authors in Markowitz and Stefansson 2004; Novak 2007; Sokefeld and Schwalgin 2000; Sorensen 1998; and particularly Yeh 2007 on the Tibetan community in North America). On being

[135] For the ongoing debate on the relevance of nation-state and nationalism in the era when the world seems to have been increasingly dominated by the unbounded flows of late capitalism and globalization, see Cunningham and Heyman 2004; Kearney 1995; Ong 1999; Schiller *et al* 1995.

carefully scrutinized, what often emerge are the complex sociocultural dynamics and politics of identity that these territorially unbounded nations and/or ethnicities entail from within; the collectivities they possibly embody have proven to be far more intricate than they were previously projected.

In light of these two trends of scholarship, this and the next chapter explore the experiences of the segment of Tibetans who in Dharamsala are designated as the "newcomers" by the rest of the community. The simple fact that they have recently arrived from the TAR and other Tibetan areas in the PRC signals the apparent connection between the Tibetan establishment in India and the homeland – in spite of the censorship and other ruling tactics that the Chinese regime persistently employs to hinder it.[136] Conversely, having on a daily basis learned about the resentment with which the so-called newcomers are confronted in Dharamsala, I am more drawn into the subtlety and implications of in-group differences to which the authors of the second trend have been paying attention, arguing that to pin down the often overlooked internal dynamics is crucial to a more refined comprehension of the Dharamsala-based Tibetan nation. Through explicating "the national structural of time" with which Tibetans in Dharamsala divergently wrestle, I have already made such an analytical move in Chapter 5. The newcomer phenomenon I am pursuing is meant to further exemplify the configurative complexity of the community to which differences from within contribute.

Herein I begin with a clarification of the "newcomer" stereotype that one segment

[136] In the contemporary PRC, Tibetans are certainly not the sole "ethnic minority" interested in their co-religio/ethnic connections outside China proper. For the connections that the Hui and the Uyghur have been interested in cultivating in the Muslim world, see Gladney 2004; the ties of the Korean minority in northeast China to Korea, Luova 2006; the cultural projects that are intended to bridge the Miao in China and the Hmong resettled in the Unites States, Schein 1998 and 2008; the cultural and economic exchanges between the Dai in Yunnan Province and other "Tai" groups in Myanmar, Laos, and northern Thailand, McCarthy 2000.

of the Tibetan community in Dharamsala uses to characterize the other. By foregrounding at the outset the stereotype, I unwind the moral discourse that has hitherto dominated what has been known about the so-called newcomers in Dharamsala. The goal of my undertaking is twofold. Firstly, the lived and envisioned life worlds and hence subjectivity formations of those who are labeled as newcomers are empirically far more complicated than what is said about them in the moral discourse. To have a better grasp of the complexity, I will in this chapter focus on establishing an alternative understanding of the pre-exodus life trajectories that led up to the trans-Himalayan arrivals in Dharamsala of certain homeland Tibetans, and in the next chapter extend my analytical attention to their post-arrival experiences.

Secondly, the stereotypical perception of the newcomers is more than just an issue of one group of Tibetans' discursive power over the other. Rather, it overshadows meanings of Dharamsala that have kept evolving because of visions and experiences of this particular subgroup of Tibetans from the homeland. By putting the newcomer stereotype into perspective, I make room to pursue the primary task of the current chapter, that is, to elicit the aspects of the Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala that are constitutive of "newcomers," and their mobility to traverse the Himalayas. Yet, before further exploring the newcomer phenomenon which activists of Tibetan solidarity often furiously deny,[137] and which has been largely glossed over by the scholarship, it helps to have an overview of the trans-Himalayan context under which the phenomenon has taken

[137] To be fair, equally often I have encountered those who acknowledged the stereotype's existence and appreciated my attempt to study it. Moreover, several exilic Tibetan cultural workers have begun to bring about the in-group prejudice which "newcomers" generate in their community. A separate project is needed in order to further examine portraits of "newcomers" in, for instance, Tenam (n.d.), *Dreaming Lhasa* by filmmakers Tenzin Sonam and Ritu Sarin (2005), and *We Are No Monks* by Pema Dhondup (made in 2004, date of commercial release undecided).

place since the late 1980s.

Trans-Himalayan mobility

Relatively speaking, the modern formation of sovereign states demarcated through their territorial boundaries arrived late in the Himalayan region. Before the Chinese state began to seal its borders with Nepal and India in the early 1960s, Tibetans and other ethnic groups residing at the two sides of the mountain range had for centuries moved back and forth, involved in trade, pilgrimage, and other forms of trans-Himalayan exchange (Childs 2004; Ehrhard 1999a and 1999b; Furer-Haimendorf 1990; Ortner 1989; Samuel 1993).[138] By the turn of the twentieth century, Lhasa in central Tibet and Kalimpong and Darjeeling in northeast India were respectively the northern and the southern centers of the pan-Himalayan world. Compared with the more rigid border controls that respective states would have implemented in the region since the second half of twentieth century, the regulation that the British Raj and the Lhasa-based Tibetan regime back then tried to impose was relatively loose – while imperial (and then republican) China was at that time too weak to guard the sovereignty it claimed over Tibet. From Lhasa in the north, the religious and trading networks extended to eastern Tibet despite the fact that the Lhasa regime did not rule the region in political terms. Meanwhile, from Kalimpong and Darjeeling in the south, the cultural and commercial

[138] Given the territorial borders along the Himalayas guarded by the states of Bhutan, China, India, and Nepal in the modern era, one can certainly use the more fashionable expression of "transnational" (Basch *et al* 1994; Kearney 1995) to describe the mobility utilized by contemporary Tibetans to leave and to return to Tibet via the mountain range. Nevertheless, I refer to the mobility and practices associated with it as "trans-Himalayan" throughout the dissertation for two reasons: 1. Developed more recently, "transnational" is a young concept and therefore weak in capturing the pre-modern backdrop of human movements and cultural exchanges in the region. 2. Compared with the problem of overgeneralization inherent to the term "transnational," "trans-Himalayan" is more helpful in reminding one of the ecological, geographic, and political conditions specific to the Tibetan case under discussion.

ties of Tibetans (including those from eastern Tibet) with South Asia extended to Calcutta and the northern heartland of the British Raj (Goldstein 1997; Goldstein *et al* 2004; McGranahan 2001).

As it happened, the once vibrant trans-Himalayan cultural world among ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse peoples in and beyond the immediate region was seriously interrupted for a period of nearly twenty years (Aziz 1978; Furer-Haimendorf 1990) – first due to the Chinese state's reaction to the flight of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and Tibetan masses in the late 1950s, and then because of the Sino-Indian War in the early 1960s and the isolationism associated with the Cultural Revolution throughout the PRC between 1966 and 1976. During this period of time, the sealed borders rendered ground travel of people and their livestock impossible and any attempt to do so fatally dangerous. When ordinary Tibetans inside Tibet were prohibited contact with the outside world, communications initiated from outside (at the time, primarily through postal mail, telegram, or short wave radio) could bring homeland Tibetans severe political troubles (e.g. Tsering Woeser 2006: 306).

Such restriction and segregation did not come to an end until the PRC entered its reform era in the late 1970s. As the regime in relative terms became more relaxed about its border control and Tibetan policy (Goldstein *et al* 2004), various trans-Himalayan exchanges gradually resumed, and Tibetans who had survived different degrees of political persecution started to arrive in South Asia seeking asylum in the Tibetan refugee community. At the same time, Tibetans from both sides of the Himalayas began to locate members of their families, villages, or religious communities. After initial reconnections through letters and photos mailed to each other, some homeland Tibetans eventually

secured passports and visas to travel across the mountain range to meet with those in exile, and some of the exiles went the opposite direction to return to Tibet. Such an immediate development after the political climate in China was altered in the late 1970s marked the beginning of the following decades when lives of more homeland Tibetans were to various degrees touched by the possibilities and predicaments that the reestablished trans-Himalayan framework presents. In this regard, two conditions of the restored mobility in the region are new and particularly relevant to the newcomer phenomenon that this chapter tackles.

Firstly, in contrast with the lessened regional importance of Kalimpong and Darjeeling during the era when China and India sealed each other off from their respective borders, Lhasa-Kathmandu-Dharamsala has over time evolved into the major trajectory of the more recent trans-Himalayan movement among Tibetans. From the vantage point of homeland Tibetans who are heading south, air or overland travel along the major highway from Lhasa would take those who hold passports and visas to Kathmandu – while there has not been a similar update on transportation along the older Lhasa-Kalimpong route until very recently. For those who intend to traverse the Tibetan-Nepali border without travel documents, after being recruited and organized into groups in Lhasa by human smugglers who themselves are usually Tibetans, the foot journey they have to pay for (and hide-and-seek with the armed border forces) typically starts at Shigatse, the south end of public transportation and zone of permission-free travel from Lhasa.[139] On the Nepal side, their chance to be caught and deported usually ends at the Tibetan Refugee Reception Center (TRRC) that the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)

[139] Southward from Shigatse is defined as the area sensitive to national security where special permits to travel are required.

operates in Kathmandu with the collaboration of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

As for the Kathmandu-Dharamsala stretch of the trajectory, those sheltered by the TRRC in Kathmandu are usually transferred to its facility in Dharamsala where their chance to partake in a public audience with the Dalai Lama will be arranged, further background checks conducted, and logistics for their resettlement processed (Routray 2007). Meanwhile, what are commonly included on the itineraries of the "legal travelers" are usually Dharamsala plus sites of pilgrimage historically associated with the Shakyamuni Buddha. Otherwise, depending on where their relatives-in-exile dwell or sectarian affiliations they might have with certain monastic orders reestablished in South Asia, places around which these visitors tour can be varied. Comparatively speaking, these visitors tend to be well versed with the Buddhist geography of India but care less precise locations and names of other "Tibetan" places in India they are taken for visits. In other words, while Tibetan refugees and their exile-born offspring have in the context of South Asia resettled in numerous locations, Dharamsala is very much alone in representing the national geography of the deterritorialized Tibet to these visitors

Secondly, compared with the relative fluidity of the pre-modern trans-Himalayan exchange, the resumed mobility has been more than ever "enjoined" with new forms of its "enclosure" (Cunningham and Heyman 2004:293) manifested in the neighboring states' attempt to guard their borders, to regulate the movement of people through the mechanism of passports and visas, and to control the flow of goods through interstate taxation. In order to retain the mobility that allows them to move across the mountain range, homeland Tibetans are certainly not alone in their subordination to the new

restrictions seized upon by the respective states. Yet, compared with the relatively standardized procedures that allow other indigenous groups in the region and international tourists to secure delimited yet accessible mobility, the hurdle that homeland Tibetans (as citizens of a politically sensitive minority group in the PRC) often encounter in the course of gaining the same mobility is unique – primarily because the Chinese state has seldom been consistent about its rule over the Tibetan population.[140]

The Chinese state has during the post-Mao era gradually loosened its tight control over the destination and purpose of its citizens' international travel. Whereas, its attempt to monitor the border-crossing movements of Tibetans remains – in ways which have not ceased fluctuating between the poles of the state's sometimes relatively beneficent, sometimes more repressive Tibetan policy.[141] As a result, regulations that homeland Tibetans have to deal with to leave the country (and to go to South Asia particularly) in a "legal" manner are themselves highly irregular. Often circulated among them are in turn the stories concerned with one individual's travel permit and passport applications that were handled as business as usual and the other's which invited unexpected interrogation and even further political troubles.

Such a collective impression that the state power is disturbing yet arbitrary is accumulative and prevalent; the subaltern position of homeland Tibetans on the issue is therefore obvious. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that China's Tibetan citizens are in turn homogeneous in ways of wrestling with the discriminatory restrictions of their movement that the state persistently imposes. For one thing, while small in size,

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[140] See Barnett 2005 for an updated report on the most recent ways of the state's penetration into the everyday lives of homeland Tibetans.

[141] For a similar kind of double standard to which Chinese Muslims sometimes feel they are subject, see McCarthy 2000:111.

the segment of elites among homeland Tibetans actually comply when they have often-admired chances to "go abroad" for destinations outside the sensitive South Asian context. Within the trans-Himalayan context, while Tibetans are not universally eligible for the passport application to visit South Asian countries,[142] some among the eligible ones choose to go through the process, while others consciously decide to run the risk of "illegal" border-crossing. From those who had taken such a path and ended up being a part of the newcomer crowd in Dharamsala, I often heard that they had been intimidated by others' experiences in having to deal with the government, determining to avoid it at any cost. Conversely, there were others who simply shrugged away the ruling authority of the state. As one of them put it:

> In Lhasa, we knew how to seek each other out – I mean among Tibetans who decide to sneak out. We paid the guides. They had the experience and told us that the travel would be safe. No one thought of passports, travel papers etc. "They must not be very important," we thought, "since many have gone without them."

Moreover, there were also those whose departures were completely improvisational. Some of them had just finished school, others had happened to be in Lhasa for a pilgrimage, a honeymoon, or a vacation when they heard that a group was leaving and thought, as they often recounted, that "it doesn't hurt to go and take a look." Compared with the chances to be arrested at the border and other life-threatening conditions on their way, these light-hearted remarks – though from hindsight when they were made – can at first sound not very creditable. Yet, they reoccurred in the course of my participant observation in the midst of the newcomers – so often that I did not feel it right to simply

[142] As things stood between 2003 and 2004, passports to South Asia were essentially out of the question for Tibetans who were governmental employees or who had been persecuted because of their "anti-governmental" conduct or speeches. Those who were not bound by these provisions could apply, but the passports they were granted would only allow them to enter Nepal. To continue their travel to India which from this point on is usually accompanied by their relatives or friends who have already resettled in South Asia, they would still have to rely on all sorts of compromises that custom personnel at the Nepali-Indian border were willing to make.

dismiss them. While having no intention to downplay the discriminatory regulations of their movement to which homeland Tibetans are subject, I indeed wondered what could be further learned from remarks of these kinds. What sort of life world and agency do they signal? How should one, as a researcher, go about assessing the connotation of these remarks which sounds very different from those regarding the miseries of homeland Tibetans and their being left no choice but "fleeing into exile" to "seek asylum" that the CTA and its supporters are more willing to publicize?[143]

After all, who are the "newcomers"?

To receive the ongoing flows of Tibetan "émigrés" who make their trans-Himalayan journeys from Tibet via Nepal to India without travel documents is a sensitive issue to the involved entities of the exilic Tibetan government, the Nepali and Indian states, and the UNHCR operation stationed in Kathmandu.[144] According to the estimations that these institutions have been willing to declassify (Moynihan 2004:317-8; Tsewang Phuntso 2004:142-4), from the late 1980s onward there have been two to five thousand Tibetans per year who left Tibet in this fashion. They arrived in South Asia with the intention for long-term stays and hence needed to be granted the refugee status that the Nepali and

[143] The analytical move I am taking is similar to that taken by Junka (2006) to explicate the aspects of Palestinian agency that exist beyond the narrow representational parameters of Islamic militancy and the people's victimhood.

[144] My usage of the term "émigrés" to refer to the outflowing Tibetan population as a whole is a threefold compromise. Firstly, the outflow has been a steady trend for nearly one quarter of a century, which does not have the urgency and magnitude that is classically used to define the "refugee" state of given peoples of displacement. Secondly, having left Tibet on a voluntary basis, not all of individuals among the population perceive themselves as having been "driven out." This makes it not quite appropriate to generalize the population as "exiles." Thirdly, and as I have just explained in the previous section of the main text, the regulations that homeland Tibetans are required to comply with in order to leave the country have been unpredictable, often threatening their chance of legally traversing the border. As a result, it would be naïve to picture them as "emigrants," since they have to a large degree been deprived of the right to procedures that "emigrants" can expect in settings that are more conventional.

Indian governments, under pressure to normalize and maintain their relationships with China, have been increasingly reluctant to issue. In the arena of public representation to fortify the Tibetan cause, the physical hardship and dangers that these émigrés once endured to leave Tibet are often taken as the emblems of homeland Tibetans' discontent with Chinese rule, rendering the impression that the émigrés are homogeneously the result of victimhood. Yet, while the production and consumption of such an impression has been global in scale, locally in Dharamsala, it does not reflect the acceptance of certain kinds of recent émigrés and the resentment towards others that the aged "original" refugees and their "India-born" offspring in the community (hereafter generically referred to as the community of settlers or simply the settlers or the settler population) dearly hold.

For the CTA and the rest of the settlers' community in Dharamsala, to receive and accommodate those among the recent émigrés who were back in Tibet subject to severe religious or political persecution is a matter of moral obligation and political correctness. In Dharamsala, this small portion of homeland Tibetans is heroically referred to as the "ex-political prisoners." Besides living allowance, housing stipend, job placement, medical care, and other benefits that they are qualified to receive from the CTA, there is also the NGO establishment of Gu Chu Sum specializing in promoting the welfare of the group. Otherwise, while most of the remaining émigrés do not fall into the honored category of the ex-political prisoners, some of them are socially better received than others by the settlers.

On the acceptable side, approximately one third of annual émigrés are monks, nuns, and lay men and women who express interest in pursuing monastic education. Many of them would only be in Dharamsala for a short while before being allocated to

monasteries and nunneries in various South Asian locations. The religious motivation pronounced by this segment of the émigrés is apparently in accordance with the mainstream concerns of Tibetan cultural survival in exile. Meanwhile, well patronized by their international donors, religious institutions typically absorb the living costs of those they recruit. By staying or becoming monastic, a sizeable number of émigrés from Tibet thus find their niche in the South Asian Tibetan community – ideologically and materially as well.

The second third of the outflow population is underage children who were traveling along with or sent by adults in their families. From the headquarters of the TRRC in Dharamsala, these minors are usually redistributed to various boarding schools in India as their parents or guardians have expected.[145] While there are certainly different ways to interpret the decision that these homeland parents make for their children, the nationalist elites among the settlers tend to read it as another evidence of homeland Tibetans' loyalty towards the Tibetan nation free from China's occupation (e.g. Jesun Pema 2004).[146] Thus, as the ex-political prisoners and adults aiming at monasticism do, children delivered for schooling also serve the function of legitimizing the Tibetan state-

[145] Schools absorbing these children are to different degrees affiliated with the CTA and largely funded by international donations (see more detailed introduction in Chapter 3).

[146] Information circulated among Tibetans around the globe has in the past decades conveyed the widespread impression among homeland Tibetans that the Tibetan schools in India are the work of the Dalai Lama and therefore free of tuition. Given that the Dalai Lama, on top of his secular leadership of the nation, is also the divine manifestation of Chenregzi, the beloved Bodhisattva of Compassion, the popularity of these schools appears – as certain intellectual figures in Dharamsala put it – to reflect the older Tibetan belief in accumulating one's religious merit through giving the offspring away to the trusted religious teacher and his monastery. Yet, such an interpretation of the current practice through the lens of "tradition" is rarely articulated in public arenas. It should also be noted that homeland Tibetans do not necessarily undergo illegal border-crossing to drop off minors of their extensive families; some do manage to secure passports and visas to accomplish the task. It is not atypical for passport-holding Tibetans to include in their travel plan an audience with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, time to visit other pilgrimage sites and spend with their relatives, some exploration of chances to start trading businesses through these relatives and, at the end, leaving to them their sons, daughters, nephews, nieces or grandchildren who would be arranged to attend one of those "schools of the Dalai Lama."

in-exile and its lasting cause.

In contrast with these three subgroups of the recent émigrés, the remaining one third of them tends to be received with suspicion and resentment in Dharamsala. Lumped together are those who have no drastic victimhood to declare, whose pre-exodus political troubles are seen as too minor to meet the "ex-political prisoner" qualification, and who are not interested in joining monastic orders.[147] As a whole, this portion of the recent émigrés is derogatorily referred to as *sarjor* in Tibetan or "newcomers" in English – primarily because their departure from Tibet and subsequent stay in the community appear problematic to the settlers.[148] As I was often told by those who identify themselves as India-born, "We were born and are still in exile without a choice; I have no idea why those newcomers want to come." For them, who have been so used to perceive their own exilic state and that of their nation as involuntary in nature, the free will which individual newcomers have utilized to leave Tibet is fundamentally strange and constantly called into question.

To make such a prejudice worse, it has nearly become a pattern for many newcomers to find chances to go abroad – usually within a few years of their arrival in Dharamsala where they linger and/or drift from one Tibetan settlement to the other in

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[147] For a comparison between this very localized internal categorization of recent émigrés and the one which advocacy groups typically adopt to publicize the Tibetan cause, see *Dangerous Crossing* 2005: "Between 2,000 and 3,000 Tibetans make the dangerous crossing….each year….Many are children sent to study in Tibetan exile schools by parents….Most of the adult Tibetans who arrive in Nepal are monks and nuns, seeking a religious education….Others leave because they have been relocated from their land to make way to development projects or as a result of intensified urbanization in Tibetan areas….Many Tibetans simply aim to see their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama for the first time" (2).

[148] *Sarjor* is a compound Tibetan word. The prefix *sar* means new, and the suffix *jor* literally means one or ones who have arrived or come. In the most updated Tibetan-English dictionary (Goldstein 1997 *et al*), *sarjor* is translated as the new arrivals. Yet, the everyday usage of the expression in Dharamsala is rarely as neutral as "new arrival(s)" sounds in English; meanwhile, it is mostly uttered as "newcomers" in Anglo-phonic contexts.

South Asia.[149] While some of the newcomers (typically those who manage to stay employed or are financially supported by relatives in exile and/or families in Tibet) can afford to choose between leaving and stay put, others usually consider their attempts for remigration as having been driven by necessity and/or disillusion – after finding no means to survive or no sense of meaning to embrace in the locale.[150] Yet, these subtle differentiations among the newcomer subgroup matter least to the rest of the community. By the patriotic standard that the India-born cohorts have deeply internalized, the remigration pattern itself presents the evidence that newcomers are "opportunistic" and fall short of genuine loyalty towards the nation (Figure 6.1).[151]

Moreover, from the state policy of cultural conservation to the vibrant monastic revival movement and to the visual codes that, as I have described in Chapter 3, Tibetans in Dharamsala commonly observe between themselves and their Indian surroundings, the ethos of cultural purity ensures the authenticity and superiority that exiles in Dharamsala and sometimes other South Asian Tibetan settlements feel they have over homeland Tibetans (Germano 1998:90; McMillin 2002:157; Moynihan 2004:318-9).[152] The

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[149] The other and less criticized option for the newcomers is, as the CTA has encouraged, returning to Tibet. Besides receiving free accommodation and language training (Tibetan, English, and even Chinese) courses in the "Transit School" set up by the CTA, a travel allowance for those who decide to return to Tibet is the only other form of institutional support that newcomers are provided.

[150] While it is a widespread impression that "newcomers" all want to go abroad, I have not been able to locate the statistics that can verify the number or percentage of those who actually went on the second round of their migration. From the other way around, while newcomers constantly acknowledge those among them who have returned to Tibet, it requires further research to pin down the scope of such journeys-in-reverse.

[151] Some among the newcomers have indeed arrived in Dharamsala with the idea in mind of using the locale as their point of transition for somewhere else. Yet, as my analysis in the later part of the chapter will demonstrate, besides being judgmental about what they have been doing, there are certainly other ways to interpret the logic of their intention and practice.

[152] Although this aspect of the settlers' uneasiness with newcomers has been repeatedly documented, it is not static. For those among the India-born cohorts who are particularly sensitive about the rising global power of China and have just begun to consider its implication for their personal futures and the future of their nation, the negative attitude towards forms of hybridity that the newcomers embody – including their command in Chinese – have sometimes been reevaluated, presenting an ongoing challenge to the dominant ethos of cultural purity and conservation.

newcomers "look," "sound," and "behave" differently from the norms of national culture customary to the settlers in Dharamsala. The "strangeness" of their appearance, mannerisms, and/or utterance of various Tibetan dialects is not only the token of negative "Chinese" impacts on them; it also often engenders the settlers' serious doubts about their Tibetanness.[153] "Are they really Tibetans?" or "How can we know they are not here to spy for the Chinese?" are just a few of the ways in which the settlers voice their uneasiness with the differences they find among the so-called newcomers. In at least one case, one man in his twenties was unable to make his way to Dharamsala in the late 1990s until his second try to enter Nepal from Tibet. According to his friend who related his story to me, the young man was unable to prove that he was a Tibetan when he showed up for the first time in the TRRC facility in Kathmandu – "because he spoke Chinese but no Tibetan, the reception staff told him to go back."[154]

Finally, while the newcomers do not seemingly in any way reinforce "a single, essential, transhistorical refugee experience" (Malkki 1995b:511) of the Tibetan nation-in-exile as ex-political prisoners, underage children, and monks and nuns from the homeland do, the practical needs for their rehabilitation are in turn considered as burdensome to the available resources and limited living space in Dharamsala. Many of the complaints are particularly from the India-born cohorts among the settlers. With the linguistic and other barriers that the majority of the newcomers encounter, their

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[153] The settlers' problem with newcomers' Tibetanness does not stop in its Dharamsala context. For the ways in which the same agenda is played out again when the emigrants from the two groups encounter each other in North America, see Yeh 2007. Moreover, as documented in O'Donnell 2001, having resettled in Dharamsala for a while, some of those who themselves were once looked down upon as a newcomers can sound similar with the settlers in their remarks regarding the "atheistic" and "materialistic" Chinese impact over the more recent arrivals.

[154] From the other way around, it is not uncommon for individuals of other ethnic groups in the Kham and Amdo areas to be culturally and linguistically highly Tibetanized. Occasionally, cases happened that non-Tibetans of such a background took the same risk as Tibetans do to arrive in Nepal and were able to pass as Tibetan while reporting to the TRRC.

unemployment is very visible in Dharamsala. Yet, it is a common perception among the India-born cohorts that the newcomers have created much of the competition which hinders their job opportunities in the community. To worsen such an impression, while jobless newcomers tend to live on meager personal loans circulated within their own small social networks, some of them see romantic involvements with *inji* tourists or dharma seekers in town a means to at least meet their immediate needs for room and board, and perhaps to open up their chances for the desired remigration. As a result, regarding this kind of international romance which can sometimes evolve into scenarios of date rape, housebreaking, or stealing committed by individual newcomers, gossip about them as a group rarely stops in Dharamsala. Having been highly stereotyped for other reasons, "the newcomers" thus also absorb all aspects of social life that the Dharamsala community (including local Indian police and residents of Indian and other nationalities) perceives as pathological.

"Dharamsala looks a paradise!" and other newcomer stories

As stereotypes usually do, the remarks that the settlers are able to make about the newcomers reveal a great deal of the "web of meaning" significant to themselves, whilst conveying little regarding the life worlds and lived experiences of the latter. On the ground in Dharamsala, once I began to pay attention to the first-person narratives of my "newcomer" informants, it soon became evident that the prospects that had brought them to Dharamsala in the first place were often entangled with a wide range of structural factors and therefore exceed the horizon and "politics of victimhood" (Jeffery and Candea 2006) customary to the rest of the community. In accordance with the Tibetan

cultural geography of Dharamsala that this dissertation is designed to explicate, it is at once challenging and necessary to understand what these newcomers had in mind that has time and again inspired their decisions on "illegal" border-crossing to traverse the Himalayas. Hereafter, I rely on some of the newcomers' travel stories that I collected throughout various phases of my field research to advance my analysis.[155]

Given the extremely diverse economical, social, and cultural backgrounds among a relatively small number of newcomers whom I have encountered, the stories I choose for the chapter are neither meant to represent the newcomer phenomenon as a whole nor to imply any exhaustion of what can be further learned about the phenomenon. Rather, my objective is to start a paradigmatic exploration, a shifting-away from the ethos of the settlers upon which the so-called newcomers have been judged, and which has hitherto largely dominated popular and scholarly writings on the subject of Tibetan exiles. From the other way around, while nuances in each of these stories might be varied, the perceptions and experiences they respectively capture are by no means exceptional. I hence choose them to highlight tendencies that I repeatedly found among Tibetans who were, by the Dharamsala definition, newcomers.

Moreover, presented in these stories are the intentions and experiences of their protagonists that are not easily definable in terms of subaltern "resistance" or "oppositional agency" (Ahearn 2001 cited in Ortner 2006: 137) that nationalist exiles and sympathetic outsiders have tirelessly spelled out for homeland Tibetans as a whole. I am

[155] Over different phases of my fieldwork, I came to know several scores of Tibetans who were by the mainstream standard in Dharamsala the newcomers. They were at least in their late teens and fewer were already in their forties. The majority of them were males from their mid-twenties to late thirties with extremely diverse educational and class backgrounds. In contrast, among a smaller number of the female ones I encountered, I found it was relatively easy to engage with those who had a higher level of formal education before leaving Tibet. Meanwhile, for reasons not completely clear to myself, I did experience difficulty to really reach out to those who perceived themselves as poorly educated.

not here to deflect the existence and importance of the resistant mode of agency to Tibetans under the Chinese rule;[156] nevertheless, my selection is meant to draw out concerns and forms of agency that would otherwise be missed because of their lack of an often expected nationalist motif.

Finally, all of the stories are meant to demonstrate ways in which "imagination' as defined by Arjun Appadurai (1996:31) as a form of "social practice" actually works, rendering the charm of Dharamsala from perspectives based upon homeland realities.[157] As we shall see, it is always the socially constructed imaginations that the protagonists of these newcomer stories developed during the pre-exodus stage of their lives that impart to Dharamsala the value and significance that has been largely left outside the discursive terrain of the Tibetan nation-in-exile.

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"Dharamsala looks a paradise" to Kelsang

> Kelsang was about twenty-five years old in 2001 and had left Tibet four years earlier. Being jobless and having no single place to stay for more than one or two weeks at a time, Kelsang was introduced to me by a well-intended *inji* resident in Dharamsala who heard about my research and thought I might be able to help Kelsang by hiring him as my research assistant. I had not planned to have one for my pilot study but agreed to pay Kelsang for some short newspaper articles in

[156] On the contrary, I have learned its salience from some among the newcomers who consider themselves to be patriotic and their arrival in Dharamsala as an action taken to combat China's "unjust" rule over Tibet. The ideological gap between the nationalist motivation of these newcomers and the Tibetan nationalism developed in exile is relatively narrower and less dramatic. I thus leave their cases out at this point of my analysis. On the other hand, after resettling in Dharamsala, these patriots among the newcomers tend to have more struggle than the rest of the subgroup in redefining their Tibetanness. See Chapter 7 for my close look at their post-exodus experience.

[157] Arguing for the role that mass media have in the most recent decades played in rendering "more persons in more parts of the world" to become aware of "a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before" (1996:53), Appadurai addresses the new power in social life that "imagination" has acquired: "No longer fantasy…. no longer simple escape…. no longer elite pastime…. and no longer mere contemplation…. [T]he imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work…. and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (31). It is this last phrase of Appadurai's redefinition of imagination as "a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility," that is most relevant to the newcomer stories I relate hereafter.

Tibetan that he could translate for me, hoping the practice would help him find other clients after I left.

During the course of this encounter, I gradually realized that Kelsang was from a semi-nomadic family in Kham. After finishing the eighth grade in the township nearby the grassland where he had grown up, he went to work in lumbering until the local and state governments, responding to the criticism of international environmentalist groups, suddenly shut down the entire industry in the region. Unwilling to return to the grassland, Kelsang and his friends from the timber mill went to Lhasa and shortly after decided to come to India together.[158]

Not until I returned to Dharamsala for a longer fieldwork stay between 2003 and 2005 did I begin to realize how common Kelsang's trajectory was among many other newcomers who share his class and educational backgrounds back home in Tibet. In 2001, I was particularly impressed by the contrast between Kelsang's meager living condition in Dharamsala and these words he uttered when I asked what had originally brought him to India:

> I came because of someone from my village who returned home with a photo of Dharamsala. In the photo, Dharamsala was so greenish; it looked [like] a paradise. It's attractive.[159]

"Can a photo hold such a power over individuals?" "What kind of imagination did the returnee and the photo with him generate?" I pondered.

The option of "going to India" for Dawa

Dawa was in his early thirties when I first came to know him in Lhasa in the late summer, 2004. Several months later we accidentally ran into each other again, but in Dharamsala this time.[160]

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[158] In a survey conducted by *Gongmeng* or Open Constitution Initiative (Fang *et al* 2009), a Beijing-based Chinese NGO, to figure out the socioeconomic causes behind the Tibetan unrest in 2008 which the Chinese government has so far been reluctant to acknowledge, its authors state (translation hereafter is mine): "When we interviewed teachers in the Tibetan areas, they often mentioned that many educated Tibetan children are either unwilling to return home for farming and herding animals or incapable of doing so. Through education and other media they become aware of the outside world. They long for the outside world but have no means to leave or have access to it. Many of these youngsters hang out in townships where they see what they cannot afford, realize that in it there is no share for them, feel helpless, and experience discrimination – language and opportunity wise – of different degrees."

[159] The four years that Kelsang had spent in India helped him gain functional English and lose some of his oral command in Chinese. The conversations we had were primarily in English, and Kelsang would occasionally switch codes between the two languages. Yet, he was speaking entirely in English when describing Dharamsala as greenish and looking like a paradise.

[160] Being aware of the surveillance to which Tibetans and foreign nationals were subject in Lhasa, I had no intention to peep into Tibetans' "going-to-Dharamsala" business in the city. Yet, the kind of unexpected encounter I had with Dawa happened more than once. On occasions of sharing tables in crowded restaurants and tea houses, riding on buses, and walking in the midst of pilgrims along the circumambulation paths, it was not unusual for me to be approached by locals who volunteered their opinions on Dharamsala and other sensitive or not-so-sensitive issues.

As it so happened, I was a bystander outside one of the hotels in Lhasa in which foreigners are allowed when Dawa was quarreling with his *inji* client who refused to pay for the thangka which she had earlier commissioned from him. Neither I nor others who were at the site trying to intervene could help resolve the dispute. The lady pushed the thangka back to Dawa and took off. Stunned by what had happened Dawa began to relate to me the hard work he had put into the completed but now unwanted painting while we were walking through the crowded market in the old part of the city. We soon arrived in the studio Dawa shared with several other painters from his village in Amdo and I was invited to go inside.

Over the tea we had in the flat-converted studio, others smiled and, once in a while, nodded their heads while Dawa did most of the talking:

> Our village is too remote; no one will go there to find us…. But to find commissions in Lhasa has not been as easy as I imagined. There are too many of us doing thangka in the city. It is particularly difficult if you don't have English to strike deals.

At that point of my stay in Lhasa, chores such as getting my watch and camera fixed by repairmen running their stalls on the streets and routines of taking taxis, finding myself meals in diners and cafes of different scales, or buying fruit from street vendors had allowed me to have many encounters with migrant workers of various ethnicities in the city. It was thus *in situ* obvious to me that Dawa and others in the workshop were a part of the larger migration picture in the city. Meanwhile, my attention particularly went to the way in which Dawa situated his craftsmanship against the metropolitan backdrop of the city. Despite the setback on the street earlier, Dawa's sense of a better option that Lhasa offers still set him, a self-employed Tibetan, apart from those migratory Han and Hui workers who feel trapped in the city which they frequently refer to as a "ghost place."[161]

Having calmed down a little bit while refilling everyone's tea cup, Dawa mentioned in passing that he, along with his wife and child, was about to leave for India, because he had heard that "in India, many new temples are being built, monasteries are becoming bigger, and more thangka painters are always needed." "Others from our village have already gone there," a younger man in the tea gathering helped explain.

"Have you gotten passports to do this?" I cautioned, while Dawa simply shook his head and no one else in the room was seemingly excited by what he was saying. Imagining the difference between my way of exit and that of Dawa and his family, I found the normality in the air was completely unfamiliar and, when it was time for me to leave the studio, my best wishes to Dawa sounded badly superficial to

[161] Along with concerned Tibetan and non-Tibetan residents in Lhasa, progressive intellectuals in China and foreign critics commonly acknowledge the economic threat which the unregulated influx of non-Tibetan workers into the city has brought to local Tibetans. Also, it is not unusual for the non-Tibetan economic migrants to be blamed for prostitution and other forms of cultural deterioration in the city. In contrast, observers are yet to give more attention to the very subjective perceptions of these migrants, which include their complaints of the high altitude, of the remoteness of the place, of the suspicious local population and, fundamentally, of their lack of needed socioeconomic capital to go somewhere else.

myself. By the same token, it felt very surreal when months later Dawa and his wife, with sunburns remaining all over their faces, stopped me in a crowded general store in Lower Dharamsala. They made it! Once again, the emotion was largely on my side. As though he was talking about some business as usual, Dawa told me that the trip was fine, everyone in his group survived, and he was now waiting for a friend of his to arrange some work for him in a monastery in south India. “And the boy will be in school next year,” added his wife.

Nyima’s departure from Lhasa that surprised everyone back home afterwards

Neither Kelsang nor Dawa had back home finished their study in secondary schools. In the Chinese term used to describe the rural population in the country who have since the reform era been left on their own to manage their livelihood, they were all the *getihu* or self-employed in contemporary China.

In contrast, Nyima, in his early thirties in 2004, was a college graduate in the 1990s. Benefited by the allocation policy that, back then, remained applicable to the post-graduates of the targeted minorities in the country (such as Tibetans), he had a low-ranking position in the government of his home county in Kham. As Nyima himself described it, “my life went smooth, and I did not have too much to complain about.”

One day when we were discussing the sentiment of Tibetan nationalism that prevails in Dharamsala, Nyima reflected upon his own experience:

> I was influenced by my professor of Tibetan history in college. His lectures – given in Tibetan and therefore harder to be decoded by censors on campus – were inspiring.
>
> Also, everyone in China grows up learning to read what is in the media upside-down. We usually know very little about details, but it doesn’t matter…. I remember that, since the government constantly condemned the Dalai Lama, we concluded his greatness. Remember the time when the Dalai Lama was awarded with the Nobel Prize for Peace? When the news came, we did not quite know what the prize was about. Yet, while the media kept presenting the prize as evidence of the compliance between Tibetan splittism and the imperialist West, we (I mean within my family and in our township) quietly thought we should be proud of it….
>
> Yes, I had some ideas on what happened in 1959; I knew that Tibetans are refugees in India; I cared about poverty and other problems my fellow Tibetans and particularly the rural youths had.... But most of my best friends were Chinese; Tibetans in the office I worked in didn’t always get along with each other…. I was fine with where I was.

This was all changed when one of Nyima’s nephews ran away from home in 2000. The family heard that their teenage boy had gone to Lhasa. Nyima was thus on a family mission to fetch him. He did find the boy in the city. Yet, instead of

persuading the youngster to go home with him, the young uncle was talked into the teen's idea of leaving for India together – without thinking too much of the ramifications of their departure. It took their group four weeks to arrive in Kathmandu. As Nyima recalled, "When we called home from Nepal, no one could believe that we had gone. They thought we were making a bad joke."

Dharamsala as an English school to Sangjey

Sangjey, in his late twenties, was already in Dharamsala for two years in 2004 – after his brief post-college career in the private sector in eastern Tibet. Financially supported by his parents back home, and by a relative of his working in the government-in-exile, Sangjey devoted all of his time to studying English.

As a well-read young intellectual, Sangjey took a great interest in my project and agreed to talk about his experience under the condition that I would not press him on issues that are, in his words, "too political." "I don't want to go there – politics of the exiles or of the Chinese. They demand your loyalty, but I don't like to take sides." Under the premise Sangjey had determined, we sat down one afternoon and he did most of the talking:

> I went to a minority university – not too far from the neighborhood in the city where I had grown up. By the time I graduated [in 1999], the old job allocation policy had already stopped in our province. Like everyone else did, I had to find jobs on my own. I was hired as a salesperson in a big food company. The position involved too much drinking and socializing; it wasn't a profession and would not guarantee anything – I mean the kinds of housing from one's work unit, health insurance, and pension that people used to receive. I wanted to study more, getting a master's degree or something like that….
>
> Coming to India? It was originally my dad's idea. He thought an advanced degree from a foreign country would be more valuable. There are too many young people in China, and too many degrees are handed out. They are not very useful. My father and I decided that I should first come to Dharamsala to improve my English before finding my way to go overseas….
>
> Impact of my coming to India on my father? I don't think so. He had already retired from his post in the party….
>
> My next step? I am not sure yet. My uncle here has some NGO connections. They might be able to find for me some sponsorship to go to the West…. Or, I might return home, trying to apply to graduate schools in foreign countries from there. I can still go abroad; otherwise, my English is getting better, it should help me find better jobs in big cities….[162]

[162] Whenever newcomer Tibetans in Dharamsala mentioned the feasibility for them to "go back to Tibet" such as Sangjey did here, I was immediately concerned with the consequences they might have to face. In response, they would acknowledge the insults one might receive by showing up in the Chinese embassy in Delhi, the chances of being arrested at the borders if one decided to go without legal papers, or surveillance

Dharamsala is also an English school to Tsomo

Tsomo was nineteen years old in 2004. She and I happened to sit next to each other on one of the overnight buses to return to Dharamsala. We chatted about why we had been residing in Dharamsala. Tsomo told me that she had not done well in the college entrance exam in China in the previous year. One of her cousins who had left home for India came up with the idea that she should come to Dharamsala to improve her English. It would supposedly help her do better next time around for the exam. Coherent with the strategic goal that Tsomo and her family had, her father managed to drive her all way from their hometown in northeast Tibet to Nyalam (or Zhangmu in *Ch.*), the last township on the Tibetan/Chinese side of the border with Nepal. From there a guide was hired, and in Tsomo's own words, "It only took me three days of walking to avoid border patrols, I was then on my way to Kathmandu…." "Was it a good idea to you? Did you want to do this?" I asked, and Tsomo responded:

> I had to. I really want to do well in the exam and to go to college. My mom is a doctor in the headquarters of our county, and my younger sister is already in medical school…. And one day I want to study in America, in one of those famous universities.

The high achievements of others in her family apparently mattered a lot to Tsomo. They were repeatedly brought up in several other conversations we had after the bus ride.

On my part, I was curious about the cousin figure Tsomo frequently mentioned; I suggested that three of us should sometime gather together, but only found out that he was no longer in Dharamsala:

> He left Dharamsala a long time ago. I think he now lives in California. Once in a while, he would call his grandma, one of my grandma's sisters. When he heard that I had failed the entrance exam, he phoned my parents several times, guaranteeing that his friends in India would look after me and find me English tutors.

I was not horribly disappointed by missing the cousin. Rather, I found his absence from Dharamsala revealing – as a story of someone who has moved away from the "newcomer" stage of his own life but virtually forwarded his Dharamsala experience and connections back home to Tibet to influence steps others (such as Tsomo) might take to go on their trans-Himalayan journey. The translocal network which Tsomo and members of her family had been utilizing to shape her future was apparently larger and more complex than I had earlier envisioned.

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How should these newcomer stories be interpreted – beyond the "illegal" way of

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once one would get closer to home. Yet, these Tibetans also tended to perceive these disadvantages as short-term in nature and did not necessarily paint what was ahead for them as completely hopeless.

their protagonists' border-crossing that concerns the involved sovereign states, and apart from their lack of tragic elements that sympathizers of the Tibetan cause often expect to find in testimonies given by recent émigrés? What can be gleaned from these stories if one stops judging their protagonists according to the highly moralized criticism to which the newcomers are frequently subject in Dharamsala? For instance, the idea that Tsomo and Sangjey shared on Dharamsala as the place to improve their English can certainly gain them the local reputation of being opportunistic.[163] Yet, what might be other ways to contextualize differently the mobility that Tsomo, Sangjey, and others in similar shoes have utilized to arrive in Dharamsala? How about Nyima who was not ambivalent about his pre-exodus Tibetan identity but, at the same time, did not perceive himself as having chosen a nationalist path into exile? Other than simply seeing him as another newcomer whose resettlement burdens the Tibetan community in Dharamsala, what can be further elicited from his experience and self-perception?

By the same token, while the case of Kelsang losing the livelihood which his grassland home once supplied and that of Dawa struggling to make a living out of his handicraft can certainly be seen as extra evidence to the kind of environmental and economic disadvantage which Tibetans and other ethnic minorities in China are left to face (Fischer 2005a and 2005b). Concerns subsequently raised on what have been deprived from homeland Tibetans like Kelsang and Dawa are abundant. Nevertheless, I do find it an inadequate approach to conclude that Kelsang(s), Dawa(s), and their kind of trans-Himalayan movement attest to nothing but misery and victimhood of homeland

[163] On the tangible side, the cosmopolitan environment of Dharamsala that demands one's better command in English, the adult school set aside by the Tibetan Government-in-exile to accommodate the adult arrivals from the homeland, privately-funded institutions, and tutorials supplied by foreign volunteers are the major venues in Dharamsala that meet the expectation of newcomers like Sangjey and Tsomo.

Tibetans. Rather, the paradise impression that Kelsang held about Dharamsala and the option that Dawa saw for himself in leaving for India demand different explanations of the agency which their stories and first-person narratives capture.

Reconsidering the agency that newcomers embody

Because of the criteria of my selection, none of the protagonists from the newcomer stories we have just gone over appears particularly nationalistic about the trajectory that has brought them to the Tibetan community in Dharamsala. Rather than perceive themselves as taking part in the Tibetan collective agitated by the ruling force of the Chinese state and thus finding Dharamsala significant to their Tibetan identity, the concerns of these "small-scale actors" (Schein 2008:103) are more about their search for ways under the status quo to ease constraints that they as individuals immediately feel. To further illustrate the complexity of their life worlds in Tibet that led to their "journeys of choice" to leave, I rely on "the two fields of meaning" that Ortner (2006) has theorized to grasp "the concept of agency":

> In one field of meaning "agency" is about intentionality and the pursuit of (culturally defined) projects. In the other field of meaning agency is about power, about acting within relations of social inequality, asymmetry, and force. In fact "agency" is never merely one or the other. Its two "faces" – as (the pursuit of) "project" or as (the exercise of or against) power – either blend or bleed into one another…. (139)

At first glance, the agency that Ortner sees as regarding individuals' "intentionality" and their "pursuit of projects" can certainly be found in Kelsang's assessment of Dharamsala as a "paradise," Dawa's hope to make a living out of the expansion of monastic institutions in India, sufficient curiosity in Nyima's case, and the English-school function of Dharamsala which appealed to Sangjey and Tsomo. In terms of the cultural geography

of Dharamsala into which Tibetans from different locales have participated – because of the ways in which these protagonists think, feel, evaluate, and take action – it should no longer be a question that the Dharamsala where they have arrived is not quite the same one where the deterritorialized Tibetan nation-state has been based and its national discourse has been cultivated.[164]

At a more subtle level, all of these stories suggest the "blending" and "bleeding" relationship between the "project" face of the newcomer agency and the "power" face of it.[165] What are yet to be explored are other forms of "inequality" or "asymmetry" with which these protagonists wrestle, and that shape their pre-exodus expectations of Dharamsala. In contrast with the fairly reified association of Dharamsala with the post-1959 Tibetan nation-in-exile and its cause, how have elements of blending that we can find in these exemplary stories contribute different sets of contextual significance to the locale? As we shall see, in spite of the widely circulated impression that Tibetans from the homeland are drawn to Dharamsala because of their desire to see the Dalai Lama and their resentment against the ruling force of the PRC, traceable in these stories are also some parallel and less politicized ways in which the newcomers find themselves attracted to Dharamsala.

Firstly, remember Nyima, the college graduate who did not consider his own

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[164] See Chapter 7 for further comparisons between one Dharamsala with which newcomers learn to live and the other which the India-born cohorts experience. Also, while Dharamsala is often taken as a monolithic token of Tibetans' displacement, the convergence in the place of meanings that are not always in accordance with each other makes it bear more resemblance to the *homeland* case of "Palestine differently imagined by Palestinians in different situations" (Bowman 1993:82) and that of Croatia differently understood by Croatians whose passages into exile have varied from each other (Frykman 2002).

[165] It is also useful to bear in mind the analytical caution that Schein (1998:293) makes regarding simply taking all sorts of trans-border practices as signs of people's "resistance" against the power of territorially based states. Since such practices cannot always be subverting, she calls for equal attention to the scenarios in which they stand as the "effect," rather than the cause, of "oppositionality." Taking into consideration the distinction that Schein makes, the way in which the protagonists in my newcomer stories have transgressed the border guarded by respective states in the Himalayan region is certainly closer to the "effect" end of the spectrum.

passage to India as having been motivated by reasons that were particularly pragmatic or ideological? As revealed in his description of the way in which he grew up learning to read officially sanctioned information upside-down, the attraction of Dharamsala to homeland Tibetans is partially at least a result of the distrust of the state authority which prevails in post-Mao China. Yet, while Tibetans under the rule of the PRC are not alone in being cynical about the credibility of the sovereign state, the specific style of governing which the Chinese state embraces and its particular form of weakness certainly help elicit the kind of trans-Himalayan Tibetan affinity that Nyima remembers.

Secondly, structural factors with which homeland Tibetans are confronted in contemporary China can certainly be powerful in shaping the courses of their lives – including providing some of them with the incentive to leave for Dharamsala. For instance, the fact that Kelsang and others who had a similar upbringing were once sent away from the grassland for schooling speaks about the blending of their lives with the modernity project invested in by the Chinese state to transform Tibetans and other "backward" nationalities in the country (Kolas and Thowsen 2005:93-131; Upton 1996). As a partial result of the project, when the living they could possibly make through staying at the bottom of the local economy in nearby townships was halted due to the clash between the timber industry encouraged by the Chinese state and the international campaign to halt it, Lhasa, Dharamsala and beyond were seen as options to be reached.[166]

[166] Some analytical caution should be added here. Through my travels in Tibet 2004, I have learned not to presume too quickly that deprived Tibetans in the homeland are universal in finding the Lhasa-Dharamsala trajectory a solution to the circumstances they confront. Besides the Lhasa-Dharamsala route, Tibetans in situations similar to Kelsang's also leave home to explore alternatives in other urban centers in different parts of China. Also, as the available statistics (Iredale *et al* 2001: 153-55) show, the number of ethnic Tibetans living in other provinces in China has been increasing since the 1980s. Further comparison is thus needed before one can better assess the scope of the correlation between the conditions of modernity Kelsang(s) have been facing and the trans-Himalayan reach of Dharamsala that some of them see as worth pursuing.

Furthermore, Kelsang's "paradise" impression of Dharamsala is reminiscent of the way in which the outside world is generally craved in post-Mao China. In particular, it signals a "global ethnoscape" (Appadurai 1996:33-4 and 48-50) constituted of cyclical movements between one set of Tibetans who return home from different parts of the globe with ideas, experiences, cash, and often admired objects, and the other set who at home are inspired by what the former seem to represent and begin to see their own chance to have access to it by going away.[167]

Many among my newcomer informants acknowledged the power of imagination that the cycle embodies, recalling its relevance to their own departures from Tibet. As this conversation between me and Nyima captures, usually on a transcontinental scale the cycle has been working:

> ***Nyima:*** …. Those from America were to us particularly exciting. People watch movies and television; they know that America is a rich country. They also like to know how much one can make in New York City. The number always sounds big to us.
> ***Susan:*** But isn't the living cost in New York also much higher?
> ***Nyima:*** That's the problem. People only hear the number converted from US dollars to *renminbi* (RMB – *Ch.*). Standard of living and other differences usually don't occur to us.

[167] While extremely small in number and not completely free from ethnicity-based scrutiny and discrimination, diplomats, artists, and other professionals among homeland Tibetans nowadays do travel internationally. Besides them, messengers of cross cultural imagination for those at home include Tibetans who were a part of the refugee waves in the 1959s, their exile-born children and grandchildren, or those who themselves were once newcomers to the Dharamsala Tibetan community. Upon securing passports from a third country, these diasporic Tibetans usually return home to Tibet for visits and, in fewer cases, for permanent or semi-permanent resettlement. These returnees can be hotel janitors, dishwashers, businessmen and women, academics and other professionals and often make a point to keep their homecoming "apolitical" in nature. From small sums of cash and gifts to one's relatives to sponsorships for building schools, setting up charitable organizations, rebuilding once destroyed monasteries, establishing scholarships, or updating medical and other local facilities, there are certainly practical reasons for lay and monastic returnees to be well received by their fellow Tibetans at home. On the other hand, I am not here to suggest that the fanfare generated by the returnees is always rosy. According to oral accounts I was able to gather, it is not uncommon for returnees to be strictly watched by the local security forces and their families and social circles to be repeatedly interrogated. The very arbitrary local implementation of the often fluctuating Tibetan policy and the local politics fired by jealousy and rivalry among Tibetans themselves and/or between them and their neighbors of other ethnicities are the most cited downside effects that returnees sometimes trigger.

> ***Susan:*** What else did those returnees talk about? How about their lives in exile, places of other people? Would there be any mention of difficult times in the refugee camps?
> ***Nyima*:** No, not often. No one likes to dwell too much on their hardship. In my impression, it was always glamorous…. *and people began to imagine the good things they could have access to by going abroad*.
> ***Susan*:** But going abroad would not necessarily mean that one would come to Dharamsala!
> ***Nyima*:** It isn't the same. Yet, back home the difference was not always clear. *We figured out that they, those returning from abroad, were earlier in India and then from there they went to New York, Switzerland…. We thought that's the route to take.*

Emerging here is the combined impact of two factors on the kind of romanticized perception of Dharamsala which Kelsang and some among other newcomers possessed. On the one hand, Tibetans living in contemporary China are not exceptional in developing their imagination of the outside world because of the available information and representation of things foreign (Appadurai 1996; Yang 1996). Conversely, while "Tibet" remains the nation-in-exile to those who have not ceased struggling for its cause, individual Tibetans in diaspora who have resettled or grown up in different parts of the globe make their way home anyway or, as the California-dwelling cousin in Tsomo's story did, maintain close connections with home by virtual means. Although it is largely an unintended consequence, these repatriates indeed exemplify to those at home a more tangible reach of the places afar that would otherwise remain media-projected images. Together, these two factors form a "globally-woven" backdrop against which those who are yet to become "newcomers" in Dharamsala designate to the locale its role in mediating one outside world they positively imagine and the other in which they can possibly partake – an understanding that apparently diverts from the customary association of Dharamsala with the exilic Tibetan nationalism which has made the place internationally famous. Nevertheless, because of the journey Kelsang(s) undergo to

traverse the Himalayas, their politically not so correct imagination of the locale continues to form lived experience, complicating what supposedly constitutes the Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala.

Thirdly, Dharamsala is not only about where certain Tibetans from the homeland want to be; it also regards the kind of self-to-become they envision. The best elucidation of this point of my argument is the parallel running between the way in which Dawa, the thangka painter from rural Tibet, was frustrated by not having a sufficient command of English to "strike deals" in the internationalized market of Tibetan handicrafts in Lhasa, and that in which their middle-class upbringing spurred the determination of Sangjey and Tsomo to utilize the English education available in Dharamsala to better themselves. Despite the difference between the linguistic constraints by which Dawa felt hindered and the acquisition of foreign language skills that Sangjey, Tsomo, and others in their families value, all of these homeland Tibetans were a part of, rather than exempted from, the larger milieu in post-Mao China where prestige has been increasingly attached to fluency in foreign languages and other international credentials that individuals can possibly secure.[168] Similarly, parallel to the zeal and anxiety for upward social mobility which prevails in contemporary China is the pressure felt by Sangjey to pursue an advanced degree and by Tsomo to perform better in college entrance exams. These are not only structural factors that constitute the "power face" of these protagonists' pre-exodus agency, they also lead to the way in which Sangjey, Tsomo, and others of their cohort from the homeland perceive the relevance of Dharamsala to the life-world realities

[168] While the standardized modern Chinese has always been a part of the civilization project which the Chinese state persistently imposes upon its Tibetan and other ethnic minority citizens, Tibetans in contemporary China are similar to the Mongolian and Uyghur populations documented by Bilik (2005: 217 and 224) in that they find English to be "an international language" more appealing than Chinese.

they are maneuvering. A part of the intention of Sangjey and Tsomo to study English in Dharamsala is their vision to create a self equipped with the potential to go cosmopolitan.[169]

In their recent remarks on "privatization" and "micro freedoms" that have allowed the Chinese state to pursue "market reforms without political liberalism," Aihwa Ong and Li Zhang (2008) write:

> In the 1990s [Chinese] citizens were urged to "free up" (*jiefang*) their individual capacities to confront dynamic conditions in all areas of life…. There were calls for people to shift from "relying on the state" (*kao guojia*) to "relying on yourself" (*kaoziji*)….Increasingly individuals are obligated to exercise diligence, cunning, talents, and social skills to navigate ever-shifting networks of goods, relationships, knowledge, and institutions in the competition for wealth and personal advantage. At the same time, the promotion of self-care has also induced an enforced sense of autonomy in the midst of bewildering changes, conditions that spurred many to turn to varied sources of guidance, whether from the marketplace, religion, or the internet…. (7-8)

In light of the "relying on yourself" principle, of the obligation of individuals to "navigate ever-shifting networks," and of their turning to "varied sources," one should be able to see why Dharamsala has been incorporated into such an order of things larger than its trade-mark association with Tibetan nationalism developed in the exilic context, and why the moral judgments of the settler population in Dharamsala about the

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[169] Compared with the way in which Sangjey and Tsomo were highly conscious about the cosmopolitan milieu they wanted from Dharamsala, the data I have is not sufficient in discerning Dawa's prospects in the Tibetan community in India which he took his family to join. Was the thangka painter simply inspired by the employment opportunities in monasteries that others from his village projected? Was his attempt to find work in India merely a manifestation of Tibetan tradition at work that associates thangka painters with monastic institutions? Can it be possible that the intentionality that Dawa's border-crossing entails is more complicated than these questions imply? To be more specific, I wonder to what extent Dawa might have been aware of the global popularity of Tibetan Buddhism that, while contributing to the expansion of monasticism outside Tibet (Zablocki 2005), also increased the kind of need for craftsmanship he was counting on. Further research is needed before I can advance this aspect of my inquiry. Nevertheless, Dawa's case remains a valuable reminder that, while émigrés from the homeland might consider themselves as having arrived in Dharamsala and other "Tibetan" places in India, the Tibetan attributes of these locales can sometimes already be the outcome of the cross-cultural encounter between values and practices important to Tibetans-in-exile and forms of imagined and often romanticized Tibetanness brought in by other nationals from around the globe (Dreyfus 2005; Klieger 1992).

newcomers fall short of explaining the agency of these less welcome compatriots from the homeland.

Figure 6.1 *Pencil drawing by an 8th grader in a school work exhibition in McLeod Ganj in 2004.* It captures the locale's popular moral discourse on "newcomers."

CHAPTER SEVEN

"THEY ARE THE NEWCOMERS" (2): LIVING WITH "TIBET" IN DHARAMSALA

It was December 2004 and the upcoming *Losar* (Tibetan New Year holiday – *Tib*) was still several weeks away when Wangmo told me that this time she and her husband were going to join another newcomer family to tour Delhi during the holiday. Her decision surprised me since she had mentioned often how much she hated to ride on the bus or any other vehicles in India – because motion sickness and other physical discomforts bothered her each time. "Aren't you afraid of throwing up again this time?" I asked and heard these words in which Wangmo explained what had helped make up her mind:

> …. Life has been hard since we came to India, and I have not seen any of those monuments in Delhi. I want to take pictures in those famous places. They are for my parents. When they receive those photos in the mail, my parents will be glad to see that we are doing fine in India.

While pouring more tea into our cups and flipping TV channels to pacify her toddler son, Wangmo added:

> Also, I don't like to spend the *Losar* time in Dharamsala. Everyone is leaving; after all, they all have their families in the south. They are going home, and we are the ones who don't have a home to return to. It makes me feel sad…[170]

Regarding the Dharamsala experience unique to the newcomer subgroup which this chapter pursues, this much of what Wangmo brought up in one of our chats over her household chores is revelatory:

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[170] The "they" to whom Wangmo here referred are the Tibetan residents in Dharamsala who work for the CTA and/or its umbrella organizations but still have their parents and relatives living in various Tibetan settlements in South India. This segment of the Tibetan population there often heads for these settlements or, in Wangmo's words, "goes home" when offices are all closed during the *Losar* holiday.

First, Wangmo had to make up her mind to travel outside her Indian dwelling in Dharamsala. The expected physical discomfort and the determination she came up with to ignore it are typical of newcomers; they set her kind of wayfinding experience apart from that of the India-born cohorts discussed in Chapter 4. Second, the idea of a New Year trip to tour Delhi reveals the way in which Wangmo, her husband and the other newcomer couple perceive themselves as "visiting" India. The legal definition of their refugee status in the country apparently cannot completely define who they are or what they do on a daily basis. Third, photographs that Wangmo planned to take in Delhi and to send to her parents in Tibet suggest the form of translocal Tibetan experience particular to the newcomers. They have family and connections back home in Tibet; the tangible homeland contacts which they can at least try to maintain are mostly not the case for their India-born counterparts. Fourth, I am most intrigued by the contrast between Wangmo perceiving herself as having no home to return to for the *Losar* holiday and her interpretation that those who head to the settlements in South India for the occasion are on their way to "go home." The subtlety here lies in the fact that Wangmo is no longer just a passive recipient of the dominant social division in Dharamsala which determines that someone like her is a "newcomer." Rather, in the experiential scheme real to Wangmo, home is beyond reach for her and her young family but available for others who have the settlements in South India to return to. Embedded in the contrast Wangmo makes is a newcomer perception which quietly redefines the refugee configurations of the community.[171] Given these implications which one can draw from the first New Year

[171] When Wangmo in the context of planning her upcoming holiday mentioned how she felt about the chance of "others" in Dharamsala to "go home" for Losar, she was not turning her observation of the contrast between her everyday life reality and that of "others" into an agenda of in-group politics of identity. Nevertheless, some of my other newcomer informants did come up with the argument, though largely in

travel plan Wangmo had after having been in India for five years, more on the complexities which the life worlds of the newcomers entail is yet to be explored.

Inquiries

As we have begun to see in Chapter 6, those who are in Dharamsala negatively referred to as *sarjor* or newcomers from homeland Tibet have their share in complicating the evolving Tibetan cultural geography of the locale which this dissertation explores. At the most obvious level, the varied motivations of the so-called newcomers to traverse the Himalayas and their mannerisms that often confuse their compatriots-in-exile are certainly reminders that the Tibetan ethos which has made Dharamsala renowned is less monolithic than is often asserted. As a result, newcomers as a subgroup in Dharamsala logically invites an analytical approach toward the Tibetan significance of the place that, once more, moves beyond any simple definition of it as the abode of the Dalai Lama and/or, in more politicized terms, the exilic hub of Tibetan nationalism.[172] To do just so, I have paid close attention to the practices and remarks of those Tibetans from and of the homeland whose intentions in leaving Tibet fall short of the political correctness expected by their compatriots in Dharamsala. Based upon their experiences and from their perspective, I am able to argue that, because of the intimate ways in which the subgroup's pre-exodus reality and imagination are connected with the larger political economy of contemporary China and beyond, the trans-Himalayan mobility utilized by Tibetans from

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private, that the settler Tibetans have put down their roots in India and become less "refugee-like." On the contrary, they themselves are the "new refugees" from the homeland who have kept the cause of the nation alive.

[172] As often reported in advocacy publications, new arrivals do flee Tibet because of their craving to see the Dalai Lama. Nevertheless, given the resentment which newcomers typically face in Dharamsala and the complexity of the life worlds from which they have often arrived, the faith of Tibetans in the Dalai Lama also needs to be understood as a reductionist explanation of the far more intricate Tibetan geography of the locale.

the homeland to arrive in Dharamsala attests to the ongoing translocal processes through which the place has been obtaining layers of its Tibetan yet, at the same time, globally situated significance.

This chapter in two ways presents my expanded explication of the multifaceted Tibetan cultural geography of Dharamsala constituted of the very subjective experiences of those Tibetans whose arrival from the homeland and subsequent stay in the place are often called into question by the settler Tibetans in town who see themselves as having long endured the exilic state of their nation. Firstly, it deals with everyday realities in Dharamsala which result in the "post-exodus" experiences of my newcomer informants. Secondly, in order to highlight the aspects of Dharamsala's "Tibetan" meaning that no simple concept of national loyalty and/or co(religio)ethnicity can sufficiently explain, the newcomer experiences and perceptions featured in the previous chapter are selected from those among my newcomer informants who were less enthused about relating their trans-Himalayan arrivals in Dharamsala to any higher cause of the nation. In contrast, also included in my discussion throughout the present chapter are those among the newcomer subgroup who considered their own trajectory in fleeing Tibet as having been for reasons that are "spiritual," "idealistic," "romantic," or "patriotic."

In Dharamsala, all of these self-ascribed attributes by certain newcomers are meant to be positive. Typically, they connote one's desire to stay above the social prejudice with which the subgroup is locally associated. Specific local practices have been developed among these recent arrivals from the homeland to distance themselves from the stereotypical idea that the newcomers are only intent upon in taking advantage of what Dharamsala offers. For instance, while some of them feel it necessary to exhibit a

lack of interest in studying English, others are very particular about avoiding romantic involvement with foreigners or, in words used by some of them, "keeping the very painful celibacy."[173] For the few who are able to find their economic niche in the community, it is always important to let it be known that they are self-reliant and therefore different from those who cannot make ends meet without the support of charities. The culture of struggling in order to establish one's rightful place in the Tibetan neighborhoods of the locale has not been a small matter to this segment of the newcomer subgroup in Dharamsala. Nevertheless, I have not found these Tibetans – despite their sincerity in deflating the stereotype and maintaining a positive self-image – exempted from the post-exodus perceptions of Dharamsala common to other newcomers. Meanwhile, they largely share the patterned ways in which other newcomers make sense of the local daily life. For these reasons, my discussion from here onwards does include individuals from the homeland who, while more or less equally subject to the same newcomer stereotype, do not always appreciate the motivations of others in departing from Tibet in the first place.

In a context larger than Tibetan Studies, my approach towards the post-exodus everyday life experience of newcomers in Dharamsala is meant to amplify the way in which "exile" – as a concept which is often loosely deployed to refer to a range of very different politics and/or emotions – ought to be understood in terms that are ethnographically and historically specific.[174] Less ambitiously, it is also an attempt to

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[173] According to a group of unmarried newcomers who saw me as their sister, there was a difference between the kind of celibacy which monks take to advance their spirituality and that which they, as laymen, had to observe in order to "prove" that they had not arrived in Dharamsala for any selfish reason. Aside from the contrast to which these newcomers wanted to draw my attention, I also noticed that the motivation behind their celibacy diverges from the reasons for the India-born quotidian activists to reject marriage and family life which I discuss in Chapter 5.

[174] See Clifford 1997a for a similar plead to study "diaspora."

problematize the simplistic perception which the worldwide advocacy organizations of the Tibetan cause have long been propagating. From the position which these organizations commonly take, the fact that steady streams of Tibetans risk their lives to flee the homeland every year is quite sufficient to attest to the legitimacy of the cause. Typically, narratives produced to support the cause stop at describing the trans-Himalayan émigrés as having "come into exile." Parallel to the strong tendency among these organizations to downplay the nuance and diversity behind the motivations of the émigrés to depart from the homeland is also their understanding that the recent émigrés arrive in and consequently stay in exile. Such a scheme of imagination treats exile as a static state of being and is less concerned with what happens when exile becomes the everyday experience of these individuals. In contrast, on top of the complexity of the translocal life worlds unique to the newcomer subgroup explored in Chapter 6, I find it a necessary and more challenging approach to question the ways in which newcomers – aside from being recipients of minimum support from the government-in-exile for their initial survival – actually undergo their exilic experience in Dharamsala.[175] To unpack "exile" as a form of newcomer experience is hence also to argue that "coming into exile" is not the end or closure of the newcomers' exodus experiences and that "staying in exile" is far from being a form of living without its own dynamics. In order to have a tangible grasp of the post-exodus life world of the newcomers, I raise and pursue the questions that follow: What does exile mean to newcomers on a daily basis? In what ways is it at once a local and translocal experience? In particular, how has their exilic experience varied from that embodied and sometimes elaborately acted out by the India-

[175] By the same principle, my approach also challenges the one-sided claim by the Chinese state that Tibetans become disloyal and dare to transgress its border regulation only because of the "deceitful" propaganda of the "Dalai clique."

born cohorts? In what ways have their everyday lives in Dharamsala made unique contributions to the locale's Tibetan geography?

To capture the dynamics that I found very observable in Dharamsala, I once again employ "difference" within the Tibetan community in Dharamsala as the thematic focus of the chapter. Whereas my earlier summary of *sarjor* situated them on the receiving end of differences defined by settler Tibetans in Dharamsala, this chapter relates the forms of difference which my newcomer interlocutors often articulated, singling out the distinctions between the exilic life world of the India-born cohorts and that of the newcomers. Moreover, I pay extra attention in the last section of the chapter to those among newcomers whose post-exodus life worlds in and out of the Dharamsala vicinity demands an understanding which deviates from thinking flatly of newcomers in Dharamsala as opportunistic, of "Tibetans-in-exile" as non-discriminatorily nationalistic, and of refugees as a category of people who are devastated, vulnerable, and therefore easily to be taken as naïve about defending their self-interest.

When Dharamsala is no longer merely in one's imagination

I have in Chapter 6 borrowed Appadurai's concept of imagination as "a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (1996:31) to stress the power of imagination in shaping the kind of trans-Himalayan trajectory undertaken by newcomers to reach their Dharamsala destination. Nevertheless, the same theorization – as influential as it has been among students of cultural anthropology and cultural studies – is less helpful to my further concern with the ways in which the everyday lives of newcomers in Dharamsala can been understood as

the consequence of their imagination, From the other way around, I have reasons that follow to take the issue of the result of imagination more seriously than Appadurai's original thesis seems to imply.

Immediately, it reflects my ethnographic finding that, aside from their sometimes pragmatic, sometimes nationalistic, and sometimes highly mixed and ambivalent motivations for leaving Tibet, newcomers in Dharamsala constantly make all sorts of comparisons and emotional adjustments between one Dharamsala world and its appeal that they once imagined from afar and the other in which they now physically live. To pin down the comparative schemes real to the newcomer Tibetans in Dharamsala is in turn basic to a more nuanced understanding of the translocal experience unique to them. In the meantime, it paves the way for a further disclosure of the complexity which the day-to-day living in Dharamsala of the newcomers can add to the Tibetan cultural geography of the place. Comparatively speaking, while Appadurai emphasizes the fluidity, that is, the way in which imagination has become a salient "deterritorialized" factor (1996:37-8) to life worlds of people residing in different parts of the globe, I am more interested in refocusing on "locality" as an ever evolving product of their imaginations at work with other factors.

While telling their life stories, my newcomer interlocutors often recalled their earliest post-exodus realization that *Dharamsala was not quite "a place of Tibetans" as they had once imagined.*[176] This was sometimes explained by the fact that they had not been completely aware of or particularly cared about the kind of *sarjor* prejudice to

[176] "A place of Tibetans" is my translation from Chinese of "*Xizangren ziji de difang*," which Chinese-speaking newcomers often spelled out. Literally, the phrase says "a place of their own for Tibetans."

which they were to be subjected in Dharamsala;[177] it could also regard their surprise that the Tibetan community in Dharamsala (and by and large in South Asia if one had visited different Tibetan settlements in the subcontinent before we had conversation) was not short of political rivalries, social hierarchies, and economic inequality.[178] As for those who considered themselves as having arrived in the place to join its struggle for the nation against Chinese rule, on top of the missing egalitarianism, their major disenchantment usually also derived from witnessing how "normal" life seemed to have become for many of their compatriots in India.[179]

Also, it was equally common for these newcomer narrators to acknowledge that, back in Tibet, they had rarely thought of what the idea of "refugee" or "exile" might actually entail. The impression that they were heading to "a place of Tibetans" was comforting; it inspired their confidence that accommodation and protection would be readily available once they made their way to Dharamsala. As a result, it was often referred to as *the* shocking moment when one, upon arriving in Dharamsala, first found out that he/she was not even a refugee unless such a legal status was applied for and

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[177] Upon hearing me remark on how often my kind of Taiwanese background can be called into question in Taiwan because my grandparents happened to be Civil War refugees from China, two of my Tibetan friends in a small social gathering in Lhasa looked at each other and agreed that I am a *sarjor* in Taiwan – "just like people here who head out for Dharamsala." Apparently, *sarjor* as a demeaning social category in Dharamsala is not unfamiliar to Tibetans inside Tibet. Yet, according to the hindsight of many newcomers I encountered in Dharamsala, such an in-group prejudice can simply be overlooked when one's pre-exodus attention is largely on the expectation to meet with the Dalai Lama, on the chance to study English, and on other attractions that make the place look promising from a distance.

[178] By the standard in Dharamsala, remarks of this sort are politically incorrect and therefore usually would not come up in larger gatherings or when I tried to conduct pre-arranged interviews with individuals. On the other hand, perhaps because newcomers are quite aware that they are the less heard ones in the community, when given settings of our conversation were unfiltered and participated in by no more than one or two people, my newcomer interlocutors could have a lot to say about themselves and their observations of what goes on in the locale.

[179] Relatively speaking, the disappointment of these Tibetans from the homeland resonates with that of the foreigners who arrive in Dharamsala to search for the "refugee" Tibetans who pre-exist in their imagination. Conversely, while their surprise about the normalcy found in the everyday lives of their compatriots-in-exile might first look similar to the anxiety which quotidian life generates among the India-born cohorts, these newcomers usually do not approach their own post-exodus life in accordance with the logic of quotidian activism discussed in Chapter 5.

granted with a great deal of reluctance by the Indian rather than the Tibetan government. In contrast with the way in which activism-minded Tibetans in Dharamsala sometimes evoke the limited sovereign power of the Tibetan state-in-exile to legitimate the struggle of the nation (see Chapter 1), newcomers there are often left to realize that neither the exilic nation-state nor Dharamsala as a Tibetan place is as glamorous as they had anticipated. This much of their revised understanding of Dharamsala helps draw out my analytical point that, because of the lived expectation and experience specific to the newcomers, different layers of dynamics are added to the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala. Given the shift which takes place from the newcomers' pre-exodus imagination of the place to their post-exodus realization of it, the multiplicity which I address is no longer merely about one group of Tibetans' cultural geography of Dharamsala differing form that of the other; rather, it also regards individual Tibetans' understanding of Dharamsala which evolves along with their changing circumstances.

"Tibet" now plus "Tibet" back then

The tendency among the newcomers – upon arriving in Dharamsala from Tibet for the first time – to find themselves surprised by "what Dharamsala is not" only captures the more evident half of the dialogical relationship between the lived experience of the subgroup and meanings that the place (dis)possesses. The more subtle half of the relationship is concerned with the day-to-day contacts that newcomers have with the version of the Tibetan discourse developed around the nation-state establishment in Dharamsala. As demonstrated in the examples I am about to give, the Dharamsala-based Tibetan nation and its ideology do affect the ways in which newcomers shape and

reshape their self-understanding once Dharamsala becomes the physical location of their quotidian lives. From the other way around, the processes through which newcomers try to make sense of their Dharamsala experience can be found constantly intersecting with the cognitive scheme they have already developed back home in Tibet. As a result, both the stereotype of the newcomers and any reified idea on the "Tibetan" significance of Dharamsala can be refuted.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Tibetan women employed by the CTA and its umbrella institutions in Dharamsala are required to dress in *chuba,* their "Tibetan" garb, while working. For those who were born and raised in the Indian context, the style adopted for their *chuba* uniforms is "national," and their compliance with the dressing regulation is their contribution to maintaining the visibility needed for the deterritorialized nation. In contrast, while dutifully observing the same dress code at work and intellectually understanding the symbolic meaning loaded in their *chuba* outfits, women of the newcomer subgroup – those who are from the Amdo and Kham parts of Tibet in particular – do not always take the national definition of the *chuba* for granted. Rather, their everyday experience with the garb includes a constantly lived remembrance of its regional character. "This is the style of the Lhasa people"; "Back home we don't dress like this"; or "*Chuba* in my hometown is different" are just some of the most common articulations I gathered in the midst the newcomer households in Dharamsala. Moreover, remarks of this sort were often highly circumstantial, popping up when one newcomer woman was trying to keep the long skirt of her *chuba* off the muddy ground during the monsoon season or when one or the other became enthused about dressing me up in the garb. The fact that women of the newcomer subgroup commonly comply with the dress

code and are even excited by applying it to a non-Tibetan like me has some larger implications:

First, on the surface, the similarity might be evident between the compliance of the newcomers with the hegemony of the exilic nation-state and that of their India-born counterparts. Yet, as shown in this comparison, beneath the dress code which women of the two groups equally observe is the variation of their very subjective experiences with it. In this regard, though the common portrait of Tibetans in Dharamsala as a highly homogeneous population is not completely wrong, it apparently does not have the capacity to capture the heterogeneity which exists on every occasion when Tibetan women in town become conscious about the *chuba* they are wrapped in.

Second, although the style of *chuba* made into the stature of national dress in Dharamsala is a learned Tibetan experience to the newcomer women, it is also the perception and experience embodied by these same women on a daily basis which constantly provincializes the national definition of a form of "traditional" Tibetan dress. While it is subtle, the dynamics which newcomers as a social group and Dharamsala as a Tibetan place mutually generate for each other is discernible.

Third, the fact that the newcomer women constantly notice the difference between the styles of *chuba* they had back home and the one they have had to adopt in Dharamsala makes it obvious that what the newcomers leave behind is merely the homeland Tibet as a physical location. Otherwise, "homeland" in terms of experiences which the newcomers have already embodied before their exodus continuously partakes in the processes which shape their post-exodus perceptions of reality. Whereas the homeland imagination which, along with other factors, plays a role in supplying

meanings to the life world of the India-born cohorts (discussed in Chapter 3, 4 and 5), what is yet to be elaborated is the "homeland comparison" which holds the key to a deepened comprehension of the ways in which the newcomers make sense of their Dharamsala-based Tibetan/exilic reality.

Homeland comparison as a mode of living

While the newcomers are usually well aware of the Tibetan-versus-Chinese dichotomy which dominates the national order of things in Dharamsala, they do not always completely rely on it to construct their own Tibetan identity. When issues of our conversation came to what it means to be a Tibetan, my newcomer interlocutors, though with different degrees of reflexivity, often acknowledged the difference which they experienced between one Tibetan world from which they had departed and the other where they had resettled for the time being. In terms of their sensitivity towards the demarcation between attributes that are commonly referred to in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala as Tibetan and those referred to as Chinese there, individuals of the newcomer subgroup know every well how to mock their own foodways, mannerisms, and/or views on Tibet's future and other issues as "too Chinese" or "not Tibetan."[180] Some of the self-accusations of the newcomers are meant to be sarcastic about the Tibetan purity which the hardliner settlers often demand from them.

For instance, the code-switching between various Tibetan dialects and Mandarin Chinese is often used as evidence by the settler Tibetans and even foreign tourists in Dharamsala to determine that the newcomers have lost their Tibetan essence. As a part of

[180] Readers of this dissertation should at this point recall my discussion in Chapter 3 of the division between the Indian Other and the Tibetan Self and its sensory fluidity which the India-born cohorts experience.

their strategy to respond to these accusations, the newcomers, some of them at least, would simply admit the hybrid nature of their own speech, interpreting it as their way of self-strengthening to combat the threat posed by China. At the same time, it is not unusual for these newcomers to acknowledge that their Tibetan is not any worse than that of those exiles who are so fluent in Hindi and other Indian languages as well. On the other hand, individuals of the subgroup are sometimes indeed devastated by realizing the huddles they are confronted with in order to become the kind of Tibetan they want to remake out of their pre-exodus self. As one of them once said to me:

> To me, the Dalai Lama is the political leader of our nation. I just cannot worship him as other Tibetans do – as though he is a god, a Buddha, or a Bodhisattva…. I have become too Chinese to believe in anything which Marxism cannot explain; I guess I will never become a Tibetan completely.

This kind of self-doubt is not uncommon among the newcomer individuals; it reinforces the local stereotype that the newcomers are so deeply brainwashed by the Chinese that they can no longer be truly Tibetan. Nevertheless, as soon as one begins to pick up the newcomer life stories about which the rest of the local Tibetan community less concerns, it becomes more evident that the Tibetan-versus-Chinese dichotomy is for the most part just one among other frameworks through which the newcomers have experienced their everyday realities back home.[181] Otherwise, while the pre-exodus life world of the newcomers apparently does not fall short of its own intricacies, it continues to shape the post-exodus cognitive scheme of the subgroup.

For example, in his attempt to explain why he thinks the Tibet which his India-born counterpart understands is nowhere close to what he experienced before coming to India, Tseden from Kham (in his early thirties in 2004) related:

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[181] Typically, the dichotomy was mentioned when one recalled his/her experience with Han chauvinism back home.

> In the part of the city I grew up in, many of our neighbors were Han Chinese. My parents and parents of my friends were colleagues in their work units. I had not particularly seen myself as different until I went to the minority college. There, they arranged all of the Tibetan students to live on one floor and all of the Muslim students on the other in the same dorm. One time when we got into a fight with the Uyghur students, I was reminded so strongly that I am a Tibetan.

This narrative of Tseden and several other similar ones I was able to collect reveal elements important to our understanding of the Tibetan experience which is, in the Dharamsala context, unique to the newcomers.

Most evidently, incarnated in the neighborhood where Tseden used to live and in the working environment which his parents used to have is the policy of the Chinese state to downplay the ethnic differences among its citizens.[182] On the other hand, the minority college which Tseden attended and the ethnically divided living space on his campus reflect the other set of policies implemented by the state which in a way highlights the difference which the first set of the policies wants to erase.[183] As a result, Tseden during the formative stage of his life was conditioned to ignore his difference from the Chinese Other. At the same time, his Tibetan experience back then was also forged by encountering other ethnic minorities with whom he came into contact. By acknowledging that his Tibetan identity was once provoked by the Muslim and Uyghur students on the same campus, Tseden articulates the multiethnicity of his Tibetan world which is hitherto rarely taken seriously by those who, having grown up in exile, are more used to think and make judgments in accordance with the more rigidly defined Tibetan-versus-Chinese dichotomy.

Tseden was not alone in bringing out the multiethnic nuances he once experienced

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[182] See Yeh 2008 for the implementation of the same policy in Lhasa.
[183] See Gladney 2004 for the contradiction which is inherent to the ethnic policy of the Chinese state; see Fischer 2005a and Makley 2009 b for tensions which multiethnicity can incite in the Tibetan areas in China.

to evaluate the Tibetan order of things in Dharamsala which for him was too simple to encompass the complexity of the Tibetan world from which he had come. Others of the subgroup remembered the scenarios back home during which jealous Tibetans accused each other of plotting anti-government activities and, from the other way around, when Tibetans were rescued from "political troubles" by their neighbors of Tibetan, Han, and other ethnicities. Interethnic marriages between Tibetans they knew of and their Hui, Qiang, Naxi, and Mongolian neighbors were also acknowledged.

As things stood in Dharamsala during the first few years of the new millennium, the newcomers who were in rare cases able to secure a livelihood in the CTA and other institutions did not necessarily retain their post for long. Instead, it has been not unusual for at least some of them to pay the price of forced resignation or further marginalization because they dared to question the validity of the dominant Tibetan-versus-Chinese dichotomy. The incidents of this nature were admittedly scarce and locally often attributed to the idiosyncrasies or strong egos of particular individuals. However, I have found that, while the direct and indirect confrontations which the newcomers have with their India-born counterparts might not be frequent, others of the subgroup simply keep in the background of their everyday lives the cognitive space between one Tibet which dominates the national discourse in Dharamsala and the other which has forged their pre-exodus life worlds. As I picture it, the post-exodus life world which the newcomers live, and which we, as the observers, can possibly comprehend, is always a composite of one image of them against the homeland background overlapped with another image of them against their surroundings in Dharamsala. While these two images are indeed conflicting in some isolated cases, mostly they remain a non-confrontational double framing through

which the newcomers make sense of the post-exodus reality with which they are surrounded.

The dispute over whose Tibetan experience counts has long seized the imagination of the Tibetan community in Dharamsala. Compared with the tendency among the settler Tibetans in Dharamsala to first neglect the nuances of the newcomers' homeland past and then to complain about the latter's lack of authentic Tibetan-ness, my approach enables us to move beyond and to appreciate the form of Tibetan experience which is uniquely of the newcomers. To accept who the newcomers are from this vantage point is in turn to recognize that Dharamsala is experienced and hence imbued with extra layers of its Tibetan significance by the most problematic segment of its population, a lesson which I took a slightly different angle to address in the previous chapter.

Homeland access versus sedentarily lived indifference

Other attributes of the Dharamsala-based Tibetan experience which are unique to the newcomers are yet to be elaborated. Given the richness which I am able to extract from the Tibetan experience of the India-born cohorts which is at once exilic but sedentary (Chapter 3 and 4), I am particularly interested in elucidating what has gone into the locally lived experience in Dharamsala of the newcomer subgroup. Once again, rather than treat Dharamsala as a given and a background against which people reside and events take place, I search for the (trans)locality of the place which the post-exodus phase of the newcomers' quotidian lives generates.

In Dharamsala, the statement that "I have never been in Tibet" is often put forth when given India-born Tibetans feel compelled to spell out their exilic/Tibetan identity.

While the irony embedded in the configuration of the cohorts' Tibetan identity is unintended, it indeed implies a subtle sense of segregation between the Tibetan self and the Tibetan homeland. In contrast, once they look around, observers of the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala should begin to notice how frequently homeland Tibet actually finds ways to partake in the daily lives of the newcomers there.

For instance, though it is usually a fair costly spending for most of the newcomers to make an international phone call from Dharamsala, nowadays they do call home occasionally;[184] while there is no guarantee that mail dropped in the post office in Dharamsala will eventually be delivered in Tibet, the newcomers do try to send home letters and photographs (such as those which Wangmo planned to take in Delhi);[185] while it does not occur often nor easily, the newcomers do receive messages, special treats, and even financial support forwarded from home; while the cyber censorship imposed by the Chinese state is real, it is not unusual for the newcomers to maintain internet correspondence with their friends and siblings back home; while the regulations of the Chinese state with which homeland Tibetans have to comply for legal travel to India are rarely regular, once in a while family members of the newcomers do arrive in Dharamsala for family reunions, to explore business opportunities, and/or to help out newlyweds and their newborn children; while consumption of goods with a "made in China" label on them remains a politically incorrect practice in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala, itinerant vendors (usually of Tibetan and/or Nepali nationality from the Kathmandu valley) do show up in Dharamsala periodically to cater

[184] Sharing the cost to maintain one mobile phone account, borrowing a mobile phone from each other, or setting aside a budget to make annual or monthly phone calls home are all very common among newcomers.
[185] It is widely believed that mail without a postmark from Dharamsala will have a better chance to reach its recipients in Tibet. So it is not unusual for mail from newcomers to their family to first be sent to South India, Nepal, USA, etc. before finally arriving in Tibet.

to the newcomers' demand for not only brands of chili sauce, instant noodles, and candies popular in China but also sneakers and winter outfits which they believe are better made there. Finally, while the recently available cable reception of television programs broadcast from the Tibetan areas in China often helps the India-born Tibetans reinforce their impression of the Chinese propaganda and colonial intrusion in their homeland, it is not atypical for the newcomers to watch these programs with a sentiment of nostalgia – particularly when they spot old acquaintances in various live broadcasts.

Compared with the homeland to which "I have never been" of the India-born cohorts, these quotidian activities which keep the newcomers virtually connected with the homeland attest to the coexistence of different forms of Tibetan exilic experience among the nation's post-1959 population. The comparison can also be made between the means of translocal communication and transportation integral to the exilic experience of the newcomer kind and the lack of their feasibility when large numbers of Tibetans fled from their homeland a half century ago. What has become available and allowed the newcomers to maintain homeland connections of different degrees reminds us that neither "Tibetans-in-exile" nor "Tibetan refugees" is or should be conceptualized as an entity free of the imprints of time. Rather, the early refugees are aging (or already deceased); their offspring are born in exile and raised to identity themselves as the exile-by-birth; and steady streams of Tibetans of the younger generation have kept arriving in exile. As a result, changes and evolutions – as here signaled by the forms of often pricy, uncertain, partial yet possible homeland contact which the newcomers experience from their Dharamsala dwelling – do occur to the exilic collective to which these subgroups all make their contribution.

How about the sedentary end of the life-in-exile for the newcomers? Compared with the local affinity which the India-born cohorts experience with different degrees of reflexivity, what can be expected from the "Indian" experience of the newcomers? What can it add to our grasp of the multiplicity which this project is designed to explore? Once again, I find it helpful to wander back to the households of my female informants in Dharamsala where I was privileged to peep into their wardrobes.

As explained in Chapter 3, the India-born women are often very conscious about properly displaying their Tibetan and non-Indian appearance in public places. Their concerns usually result in three categories of clothing stocked in their wardrobes – *chuba* for the offices and ceremonial occasions, so-called Panjabi suits when one stays home, and Western clothes for going to the market or holiday outings. In comparison, the newcomer women – if employed by the CTA or other organizations – also need to get used to dress in *chuba* to work. For the occasions when *chuba* is not a requirement, their preference goes to jeans and blouses which these women, while speaking in Chinese on my behalf, describe as the *putong* (ordinary) clothes. Between their *chuba* and *putong* outfits, the newcomer women do not have the habit to possess or dress in Panjabi suits as their India-born counterparts do. The subtle difference in this is that, while women of the India-born cohort feel obligated to switch back and forth between their indoor wearing of the Panjabi suit and putting on something else to go out in order to avoid a too-Indian appearance, women of the newcomer subgroup are simply uninterested in the particular style and therefore are not confronted with the same visual taboo which their India-born counterparts take upon themselves to observe.

Along with the obvious contrast just made, it is easy to interpret the absence of

Panjabi suit from the closets (or tin trunks borrowed from or passed on by other newcomers in most cases) of the newcomer women as a symptom that the Indian surroundings are new and therefore less appealing to the subgroup to which these women belong. In this regard, one particular style of outfit of which the newcomer women are not particularly fond resonates with the concept of cultural alienation long associated with peoples of displacement. Yet, while this much of my observation of what is not in these women's wardrobe is useful, it is only a beginning to the task of grasping the sensory depth and imaginative scope which the alienation entails.

Aside from the not-so-easy procedure through which the newcomers often have to maneuver in order to secure the needed refugee status, from the less expected realities of the Tibetan nation in Dharamsala to which they often have to acclimate, and from the Tibetan identity which they tend to reshape against one backdrop of the newly realized exilic ethos and the other of the experienced homeland, the post-exodus experience of the newcomers also regards the ways in which their senses work to cope with the "Indian" world they now live in on a daily basis. For instance, while the India-born cohorts' sense of comfort with and even passion for Indian cuisine has in Chapter 3 helped us recognize the sedentary domain of the subgroup's exilic experience, it is equally common to see the newcomers being constantly reminded of their reality of "being in exile" by one after another gustatory problems. On the one hand, much of the diet homey and comforting to them is no longer available; on the other, the local options do not always suit their palates and, in some extreme cases, are simply unrecognizable to their body.

Similarly, the physical discomfort and even illness caused by India's tropical climate creates no illusion of the fact that they are now far away from home. As

mentioned earlier, Wangmo and many other of my newcomer informants found it particularly tedious to be on the road in India when the heat and humidity associated with the country's lower altitude, as they felt, were just not right. This leads to the noticeable wayfinding contrast between the sedentarily lived exilic experience of the newcomers and that of their India-born counterparts: As detailed in Chapter 4, coming and going between Dharamsala and other locations in India is a practice which the India-born cohorts engage in with such a sense of geo-affinity that they rarely consider it to be a big deal. Whereas, the unpleasant trips one previously had, the major decisions one had to make to travel somewhere else in India, and the motion sickness which one is going to suffer for the next bus ride were all exciting topics to many of my male and female newcomer informants. The concerns and even anxiety which the everyday practice of finding one's way around in India can engender among the newcomers reveal the degree to which "India" feels strange to them. This much of the comparison should make it clear that, beneath the means of transportation and routes and durations of ground travel which the newcomers in Dharamsala share with the India-born cohorts and everyone else in the township, there are aspects of the sedentarily lived exilic experience which the subgroup alone embodies, and which attest to the sensuous depth of the alienation the newcomers experience.

Nevertheless, while alienation as an analytical concept can explain a wide range of "Indian" experiences of the newcomers, I am not completely satisfied with the passiveness which the concept, when applied to the displaced populations, connotes. Rather, given the tendency among the newcomers to consciously neglect options they can seize in India, I find it necessary to further argue that the Indian world which the

newcomers experience is at least partially also a result of their own preference and judgment. A more careful understanding of the sedentary end of the newcomers' everyday lives in Dharamsala needs to inquire where "India" is placed in the order of things meaningful to these Tibetans who have recently traversed the sovereign boundaries along the Himalayan range to arrive in the hill station. In other words, while these Tibetans often envision that their itinerary to Dharamsala is to arrive in "a place of Tibetans," what do they think of the Indian terrain they are entering?

Reviewed from this line of my intellectual curiosity, the Panjabi suit which does not appear attractive to the newcomer women in Dharamsala ceases to be merely a symptom of uprooted "refugees" feeling alienated from the surroundings unfamiliar to them. Instead, it is also a reminiscence of the pattern among the newcomers to remain indifferent to what they can access in India. For instance, whereas they enthusiastic about chances to study English in Dharamsala, the newcomers usually do not find an incentive to study Hindi, the most commonly used Indian language in the part of the country where they reside. For the relative few whose previous education qualifies them to enroll in a variety of college programs in India, the idea itself, even when attached to paid fellowship opportunities, is rarely attractive.[186] On the contrary, these same individuals usually do not mind to investing in promising or not so promising sponsorships and/or authentic or fake travel documents to leave the subcontinent for somewhere else. As I was repeatedly told, particularly by those who felt disillusioned by what went on in the

[186] I am not denying that the newcomers are often out of necessity and even desperation to move away from India. However, it is exactly because the opportunities for individuals of the subgroup to have a fresh start in the larger Indian context are scarce that those who decline them to pursue uncertain venues of remigration draw my attention to the fine line between thinking of the newcomers as total victims left with no option but to go somewhere else in the world and cautiously acknowledging (and therefore respecting) their fragile yet real agency.

Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala, “I have gone this far, why do I want to stay in India?” It cannot be clearer that, upon reaching Dharamsala, “a place of Tibetans,” many newcomers have also arrived in the locale with a hierarchical global map in mind. According to the value system which supports that map, some of these homeland-born exiles of the post-1959 generation find their material niches, spiritual inspirations, and/or political fulfillment in Dharamsala, while others contemplate their chances to either go to selected countries somewhere else or return to Tibet and even China to continue their lives there (see the featured accounts of Sangjey and Tsomo in Chapter 6). India where they physically live is simply unmarked on the same map. Compared with the intricate ways in which the Indian Other has been playing its role in shaping the subjectivity formations of the India-born cohorts, the sedentary end of the newcomers’ quotidian lives in Dharamsala is characterized by their indifference towards the same Other. In other words, the exilic experience specific to the newcomers is in a way built upon their tendency to be oblivious of the Indian land under their foot. Once again, the Dharamsala-based Tibetan experience of these two subgroups diverges; their respective contributions to the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala need to be equally acknowledged.

Translocal living continues

This much of my emphasis on the agency of the newcomers should provide an evident and useful distinction between one representation of the subgroup as incarnating the morally downgraded concept of opportunism and the other of it as constitutive of individuals whose quotidian lives encompasses visions, fantasies, and preferences, who are active in utilizing available yet often partial and deflected information to evaluate the

national, regional and global circumstances they are in, and who are certainly capable of making decisions and/or miscalculating consequences. By making the painstaking effort to unpack the possibilities and predicaments significant to the newcomers before and after their voluntary yet "illegal" and risky trans-Himalayan journey to reach Dharamsala, I hope to convince concerned observers of the Tibetan community in Dharamsala that the newcomers are far from being the expatriates from the homeland whose presence and (mis)conduct in town embarrass the rest in the community. Instead, the intentionality and imaginations which lead to the newcomers' adventurous arrival in Dharamsala, their often temporary dwelling in the place and their optional and/or necessary re-departure from it all make the subgroup valuably testify to the emerging translocal realities with which both Tibetans as a modern nation and Dharamsala as a deterritorialized Tibetan place have constantly confronted.

Having said that, I want to end my newcomer story in the dissertation with an account of the multi-sited life worlds and imaginations managed by Norbu and Drolga, a young newcomer couple, during the phase of their lives when neither of them was based in Dharamsala anymore and yet when Dharamsala remained a location where they came and went for various sociocultural and economical reasons. To be clear, the way in which Norbu and Drolga work as a team to synchronically cultivate several options they could possibly have is to my knowledge not particularly common among the newcomers.[187] However, the range of possibilities which the couple tried to maneuver all at once indeed

[187] As a matter of fact, it is more common for both newcomer men and women to believe that staying single helps increase their chance to find sponsorship from the foreigners passing through the township. On the other hand, the newcomers (men in particular) are fully aware that they are not attractive marital mates to their India-born counterparts and their parents. As a result, for those among the newcomers who actually commit to their intra-ethnic marriage, their spouses are usually also newcomers from areas in Tibet adjacent to their own home town or village.

covers every trajectory out there shared by many newcomer individuals who, after more practically realizing what Dharamsala's limits are, remain there only in order to find other places to go. This makes a close look of what kept Norbu and Drolga preoccupied during the first few years of the 21st century an economic summary of the post post-exodus experiences of others who are in shoes similar to theirs:

Both Norbu and Drolga came to Dharamsala from the Kham part of Tibet in the late 1990s. Back then, they were single and classmates in one of those private institutions in McLeod Ganj where the newcomers typically study English, Tibetan, and computer operation. When I first met the couple in 2003, they were no longer residing in Dharamsala. Rather, at that point of time, Drolga had returned to Tibet to be with her own parents. There, she gave birth to their baby, left the baby to be looked after by the extended family of Norbu, and secured herself a passport which allowed her to periodically travel to Kathmandu to meet with Norbu and deliver the goods which he knew how to sell in the Tibetan settlements in Nepal and India. In this way, according to Norbu, the more talkative one of the duo, Drolga helped their young family to maintain a footing in China – "just in case we are unable to go anywhere else," Norbu explained.

As for Norbu himself, having sent his wife and trusted their new-born to his family, he was mostly alone traveling back and forth among Dharamsala, Delhi, Kathmandu, and occasionally other Tibetan strongholds in India to sell the "Chinese" goods Drolga brought down from Lhasa, to buy the "Tibetan" stuff which Drolga could retail in Lhasa, and most seriously "to process papers" needed for migrating to Australia where some of his acquaintances had already resettled. During those months between 2003 and 2005 when I was stationed in Dharamsala, each time when he showed up in

town to trade, to meet friends and to attend dharma teachings, we would meet and he would report on his work-in-progress to obtain the long-waited travel documents. Given the fact that Norbu had no record of political persecution which would otherwise grant him the opportunity to apply for asylum from the Australian and/or other governments, all he was doing was to finding one after another Tibetan or non-Tibetan sponsor willing to write him a letter of invitation. Having such a letter in hand, each time he went to the Australian embassy in Delhi or Kathmandu to apply for a tourist visa. Each time, after his application was rejected, Norbu would start all over again, hoping that his next try would generate a better result which, in his own words, means:

> Eventually, I am going to get the visa. Once I get to Australia, I can find jobs and I can pay lawyers to help me apply for asylum…. I am not sure how long it will take. But, after my case is legalized, I can get Drolga and my daughter out of Tibet that way and my parents can come to Australia to visit us.

What Norbu was counting on is certainly a long shot. He and Drolga were aware of it. Yet, as many other newcomers did, they felt inspired by "successful" precedents of which they had known, insisting that they were also going to make it.

Aside from their homeland-based back-up plan which fell on the shoulders of Drolga and their ultimate goal of transnational migration which Norbu tirelessly carried out, what the couple was engaged in was also an enlargement of the trans-Himalayan framework of their immediate living. Once again, as Norbu put it:

> It was the right thing to do for Drolga to go home. With a Chinese passport, she can now come and go freely between Lhasa and Kathmandu when I can't. On the other hand, if we don't have my refugee ID and enough cash to pay the bribes at the check points in Nepal and customs at the Indian-Nepali borders, Drolga's passport could not get her to India. She would no longer be able to return to Dharamsala to see the Dalai Lama….

I have not known other newcomer men and women to form the kind of marital team which Norbu and Drolga had to expand one translocal life world which they currently live and anticipate the other which they diligently work for. Yet, while these have all started in Dharamsala for Norbu and Drolga and vice versa when Dharamsala is still very much a part of their translocally lived dream and reality, what they try to do from the resettlement of Drolga in the homeland and from the persistent attempts of Norbu to get himself a visa to his dream place on earth are far from extraordinary among the newcomers. In most cases, newcomer individuals in Dharamsala either realize it is not a sustainable idea to stay put or do not find the same idea appealing. The options which they constantly weigh in are between turning around to reestablish their home base in Tibet and doing whatever it takes to go somewhere else.

Depending on how one wants to judge the calculations and practices with which individuals of the subgroup often engage, "newcomers" can be seen as disloyal to the Dharamsala-centered Tibetan nation. Or, for those who are willing to tolerate and even appreciate the "opportunism" of the newcomers, possibilities which this segment of Tibetan residents in Dharamsala can see for themselves should resonate with the "flexible citizenship" Aihwa Ong (1999) puts forth to theorize her study of the transnational business world which middle class Chinese in Hong Kong and other locations maneuver for security and prosperity:

> "Flexible citizenship" refers to the cultural logic of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. In their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize….practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes (6).

The circumstances under which Norbu, Drolga, and other newcomers live on the limited

flexibility and agency they have are admittedly no where close to the ways in which Ong's Chinese subjects act upon their flexible citizenship. Nevertheless, rather than hinder their participation in the flexible citizenship which, according to Ong, characterizes the evolving phenomenon of globalization and transnationalism, what the newcomer Tibetans do not have actually motivates their engagement with it. Further comparison is needed to draw out larger implications of flexible citizenship appropriated by the less privileged populations. For now, suffice it to recognize that the flexibility the newcomer subgroup embodies amplifies the simple yet often neglected reality that, despite the twists and turns and the myth of timeless Shangri-la Tibet (Lopez 1998), Tibetans (even the most problematic ones among them) are a part of what modernity can possibly offer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: DIFFERENCES MATTER

The lasting political standoff between Dharamsala and Beijing is powerful. It dominates – over not only the ways in which the life worlds of Tibetan people in Dharamsala and elsewhere are frequently reduced into tropes of representation that the Tibetan polity-in-exile and the Chinese state frequently use to advance their competing agendas but also the tendency among individual Tibetans to determine which aspects of their own lived experience are "Tibetan" and hence meaningful and which others are "non-Tibetan" and therefore less significant and even irrelevant. From the observer's perspective I can possibly have, there has always been a gap between the highly patterned representation of Tibetan experience and every other practice which I cannot but think of as "Tibetan" because they are so grounded in the geopolitical circumstances unique to the people.

While the discrepancies of this kind between representation and experience can occur in any given community or society which anthropologists try to study, they tend to be more challenging to those of us whose research interests are on refugees and other underprivileged populations. The problem lies in the fact that even the best-intentioned media, humanitarian organizations, and advocacy groups are in general limited in their formulas for reporting on the "plight" and "misfortune" of these people. What is repeatedly filmed, photographed, and/or framed into narratives by these institutions can over time be taken as total and real. The pressing issue is then in what way the genre of ethnography can deal differently with the discrepancies under discussion – particularly in an era when information technology has allowed products of other representational

professions to circulate much faster and more broadly than before. More specifically, how should the domains of Tibetan experience left out by Tibetans themselves be brought to light? Why is such an intellectual undertaking important and necessary? What kind of difference can an approach which encompasses "trivial" and/or "irrelevant" experiences possibly make – for instance, in advancing what has been known of the ways in which the India-born and newcomer Tibetans live with the Dharamsala-based nation Tibet, experiencing their forms of exile?

I have in one way or the other wrestled with these open-ended questions throughout the dissertation. The further my explication has gone, the less I am concerned with finding any swift and/or finite answers. On the other hand, the potential implications of these questions have not ceased to be intriguing. My inquiries – from either the perspective of subjectivity or that of cultural geography – are far from exhausting the intricacy and dynamics which the often unexamined concepts of Tibet, Tibetan experience, and Tibetan exiles entail. Herein, I only hope to flesh out some of my further thoughts on these questions and thus tentatively conclude *Living with "Tibet"* for now. To do just so, let us consider "Scattered Broomsticks" by Bhuchung Sonam (2002:8) who has been another literary figure among the India-born cohorts in Dharamsala:

> Are they red?
> Yes.
> Are they many?
> Yes.
> Are they strong?
> Yes.
> Are they brave?
> Yes.
> Are they invincible?
> No.
> Can we beat them?
> Yes.

Are we going to beat them?
How are [we] going to beat them?
Let's negotiate peacefully
Let's wait for history to repeat,
Let's wait till they go weak
Let's march in with guns,
Let's do this
Let's do that
Scattered broomsticks
Sweep no dirt.

What is in this short English poem is illuminating. It not only tells us that Tibetans from their exilic dwelling and position are knowingly aware of the in-group differences among themselves; but, more importantly, it reveals the way in which China or the "they" in the poem predetermines the kind of difference with which the Tibetan "we" is concerned. In other words, "difference" as lived experience in the life world of the poet is apparently something having its structure and boundaries. Within the boundaries is *the* form of difference which matters and about which the poet writes.

On my part, I have throughout this dissertation project searched for an understanding of Tibetan experience in and about Dharamsala which acknowledges but is not confined by the Tibetan versus non-Tibetan judgment which the people often make about themselves and each other. My primary training in cultural anthropology and the secondary one in cultural studies contributed to the interdisciplinary approach I was able to take to cross-examine practices individual Tibetans engage with, words they utter, narratives they construct, and images they produce and consume. I have thus explored forms of experience which, for example, the India-born cohorts live without thinking too much about or even denying their "Tibetan" implications. In the meantime, I have disclosed the intricacies embedded in the varied Tibetan experience of the newcomers – before and after their more recent trans-Himalayan exodus from the homeland – which is

often not quite in accordance with the national norms and ethos customary to the settlers in the community. Emerging from this project are thus some aspects of these subgroups' Dharamsala Tibetan experience which have been extremely mundane, discernible, but until now largely peripheral and even extraperipheral to this or that conceptual frame which Tibetans and their observers habitually adapt to imagine the "nation-in-exile":

It is a historical fact that the Tibetan nation-in-exile would not have come into being if the homeland Tibet had not been lost to China's sovereign ambition in the 1950s. Nevertheless, as I first highlight in Chapter 3 and 4 and then re-emphasize in Chapter 7, in the more contemporary context the lost homeland Tibet alone cannot exhaust what constitutes the "in-exile" experiences of the Tibetans whose lives have at one or the other point in time been intimately connected with the Dharamsala establishment of the nation. Rather, exile as a form of living now has its very recognizable sedentary domain, and the sedentary domain diverges. In the case of the India-born cohorts, it regards their embodiment of geo-familiarity with and emotional attachment to Dharamsala – as not only a place marked by its Tibetan association but also a part of the local Indian context of their everyday living. In contrast, "India" is typically off the global scale of worthy-to-go places to the newcomers. As oblivious as Tibetans of this subgroup tend to be about components of their post-exodus reality which they perceive as "Indian" in the first place, "indifference" characterizes the sedentary end of their "in-exile" experience.

Extended throughout Chapter 3, 4 and 5 is also my case study of the India-born cohorts to demonstrate that "exile" lived by Tibetans in and/or moving away from Dharamsala is more than just the non-ambivalent claim which is often made about their Tibetan identity. Instead, exile is also about the ways in which quotidian life is

sensorially experienced and circumstantially articulated and/or silenced by individuals. Moreover, in the Tibetan neighborhoods in Dharamsala exile also means a version of commonly remembered history of the nation and, in accordance with it, a shared "national sense of time." According to the national sense of time, the "in-exile" present of the nation ought to be invested in reversing its once-gone-wrong past, and such a human intervention in history should bear immediate rather than future fruit. As explained in Chapter 5, some among the India-born cohorts are self-determined to live a life-in-exile which is absolutely in tune with the national sense of time; other Tibetans in Dharamsala find themselves caught between its demands and those of other temporal frames of life. It is apparent that a shared national sense of time has not meant any monolithic way in which Tibetans in Dharamsala practically live with it. Instead, beneath the often asserted homogeneity of the Tibetan collective-in-exile, the commonly felt national sense of time actually triggers social pressures from within the collective.

Compared with the in-group difference which the national sense of time subtly impresses upon the Tibetan residents in Dharamsala, the stereotypical opinions which the settler segment of the population tends to have of the so-called newcomers are explicit and direct. In revealing the contours of Tibetanness which dominate the preferred self-image of the Tibetan community in Dharamsala, these local opinions are important. Conversely, they tell us little regarding the translocal complexity of the life world unique to the newcomers and which I explicate in Chapter 6 and 7.

As detailed in Chapter 6, the motivation behind given homeland Tibetans' risky trans-Himalayan departure for Dharamsala is often their romanticized imagination of the place mixed with concerns that are pragmatic in nature. Ranging from the vague pre-

exodus impression of some newcomers that Dharamsala is a heaven on earth to the very specific goal of others to study English in Dharamsala, it emerges that the attraction which the locale has over these Tibetans from the homeland is often a result of globally transmitted imagination which the earlier expatriates bring home and which the newcomers-to-be take action to pursue. The cosmopolitan value which many among the newcomer subgroup thus attach to Dharamsala noticeably differs from the classic definition of the place as the dwelling-in-exile of the Dalai Lama and therefore a place appealing to the pious homeland Tibetans. To my kind of concerns with the cultural geography of Dharamsala constitutive of experiences real to Tibetans of varied upbringings, there is no argument on which understanding of the place is more authentic or, so to speak, "Tibetan" than another. Rather, what matters is our cognitive ability and willingness to grasp the divergent meanings of the place which the lived visions and everyday realities of Tibetans engender.

Finally, as analyzed in Chapter 7, my newcomer informants were often conscious about the difference between one Dharamsala which had earlier provided them with incentives to leave home and the other which stood for the post-exodus predicaments and possibilities they encountered. In this regard, aside from the cross-group diversity which the lived experiences of the newcomers bring into what constitutes the Tibetan community in Dharamsala, the subgroup also exemplifies the ways in which the "Tibetan" significance of the locale shifts along with the evolving circumstances of individual Tibetans. Once again, what I am concerned with is *not* which Dharamsala – the one envisioned before one's departure from the homeland or the other which is often described as "not quite the Tibetan place I had imagined" – matters more. Instead, what

this dissertation delivers is an understanding and appreciation of the continuous dynamics which the different phases of individual Tibetans' life worlds add to the ever evolving Tibetan geography of Dharamsala.

* * *

In the course of developing his dwelling perspective "according to which the forms people build….only arise within the current of their life activities (Ingold 2000: 154), Tim Ingold is first inspired by and subsequently revises the oak tree imagined by Jacob von Uexkull. In Ingold's words:

> …. von Uexkull invites his readers to imagine the manifold inhabitants of an oak tree. There is the fox, who has built its lair between the roots; the owl, who perches in the crotch of its mighty limbs; the squirrel, for whom it provides a veritable maze of ladders and springboards; the ant, who forages in the furrow and crags of its bark; the wood-boring beetle who feeds and lays its eggs in passages beneath the bark, and hundred of others…. Each creature, through the sheer fact of its presence, confers on the tree – or on some portion of it – a particular quality or 'functional tone': shelter and protection for the fox, support for the owl…. (176).

The oak tree begins to look different when Ingold observes it from his dwelling perspective:

> Recall the many inhabitants of the tree: the fox, the owl, the squirrel, the ant, the beetle, among countless others. All, through their various activities of dwelling, have played their part in creating the conditions under which the tree, over the centuries, has grown to assume its particular form and proportions. And so, too, have human beings, in tending the tree's surroundings (187).

Both the original oak tree which von Uexkull invites his readers to contemplate and the revised image of the tree put forth by Ingold help draw out the importance for us to be able to envisage the Tibetan geography of Dharamsala as constantly evolving processes participated in by the diverse Tibetan subjects.

The tree image of Uexkull reminds one of the evident fact that different Tibetans

are attracted to and/or disengage themselves from Dharamsala for different reasons; that of Ingold pushes the realization that Tibetans, along with the experiences they divergently live, "have played their part" in shaping Dharamsala's Tibetan character(s). Of course, Dharamsala – as a Tibetan place – is certainly a young phenomenon; nationalism-minded Tibetans might be upset by my comparison of their "uprooted" nation with the tree which, in Ingold's description, "over the centuries, has grown to assume its particular form and proportions." Nevertheless, I still consider it important to actually spell out the distinction between the often articulated preference of Tibetans to only accept their nation's Dharamsala establishment as a temporary condition and the reality that, through half a century of the temporary arrangement, the Tibetan place Dharamsala has continuously developed its own distinctive shape. At this point in time, while the better propagated image of the place as "Little Lhasa" remains significant to many among the globally scattered Tibetan population, the drastically diversified life worlds of Tibetans have not ceased adding new local and translocal meanings to the place.

* * *

Throughout the different phases of this project, I have always felt the weight on my back of ethical questions of this sort: Can it just be an entertaining intellectual exercise of my own to write about the internal differences which some Tibetans consider to be secondary and of little importance to the integrity of their nation and which others consider threatening to the solidarity crucial to its survival? Is it truly a right thing to do to write about what Tibetans downplay and what they would rather not confront? These questions have become even more pressing since protests participated in by lay and monastic Tibetans erupted on the Tibetan plateau in the Spring of 2008: Are the

differences which I have painstakingly written about still meaningful – while indiscriminant crackdowns executed by the Chinese state seem to have made the external threat to the people become so daunting overnight? Is my writing going to damage the image of solidarity which seems to have become more pivotal than before to the people?

Though I still do not have any decisive answer to these concerns, the Tibetan story which I have been eager to tell is now coming to a tentative end, and I do gradually make peace with my own obsession with the intriguing intra-ethnic differences which I have time and again found among the Tibetans I encountered due to this project. Once I can see it, the logic behind my analytically cultivated sympathy is simple: Tibetans are not alone in finding themselves perpetually struggling for a more desirable political outcome of their nation on the playing field of international politics which has not been particularly friendly towards its cause. Palestinians and Taiwanese are just another two examples with which I am more familiar. People who are a part of these nations without desired international recognition are often deprived of many things which others – particularly we, the citizens of democratic countries with clearly defined territorial and sovereign boundaries – take for granted. Among these things is the luxury to deal with the kinds of in-group differences which this dissertation highlights. In the Tibetan case, it is clear that the collective energy of the people has been heavily invested in the nation's incomplete conflict with China. Resultantly, the psychological room needed for Tibetans to channel – if not to celebrate – the differences among themselves has been severely restricted. While understanding and feeling empathetic for such a limit with which Tibetans are confronted, finally, I am convinced that to write an engaging ethnography on the subject is a responsible way to deepen my observer's sympathy with the people.

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