

**Mobilizing for Tibet: Transnational politics and diaspora culture
in the post-cold war era**

by

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Approved

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This dissertation is a multiple-site study of the Tibet Movement, a transnational social movement comprised of diasporic Tibetans and their Western supporters around the world. In order to study the Movement, field research was conducted in a number of sites which reflect the spread of the diaspora and represent important "nodes" in the global Tibet network. Long-term fieldwork was conducted in New York City between 1990 and 1993; additional short-term research was carried out in Los Angeles (1989); Ithaca, New York (March 1991); San Francisco (December 1992), and Washington, D.C. (January 1993). In the summer of 1992, I visited a number of sites in Switzerland where Tibetan refugees have been resettled, including Zurich, Horgen, Rikon, Wintherthur, Flawil, Trogen, Jona, Heitzingen, and Geneva; in addition, I met with Swiss supporters in Lausanne, Bern, and Sargans. Between 1990 and 1993, I had the opportunity to spend time in London where I interviewed Tibetan and English activists. Finally, I spent six weeks in Dharamsala, India, home of the Dalai Lama and seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile, in February and March of 1990.

Obviously a study of this scope would not have been possible without the cooperation of Tibet activists around the world, some of whom would prefer to remain anonymous. In New York City, where the bulk of my research was conducted, I am grateful to Mr. Rinchen Dharlo, the former representative of the Dalai Lama to North America, who smoothed the way for me to participate in

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As anyone who has ever written (or lived with or been close to someone writing) a dissertation can attest, it is a long and difficult task. For figuring out quickly not to ask when it was going to be done, and for their love, patience, and faith in me, I would like to thank my parents, my friend Elaine Charnov, and especially my husband, Brian Larkin.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATIONS

Full Tibetan spellings, where appropriate, are given according to the Wylie system (1959). Tibetan words, including proper nouns, which are commonly used in their untranslated form by English speakers are rendered in the popularly romanized form and italicized only when they are not proper nouns. Sanskrit terms are transliterated according to modern conventions.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Tibetan Predicament

In March of 1990, I travelled to Dharamsala, India, home of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet (referred to by his followers as "His Holiness"), and the largest concentration of Tibetan refugees outside of Tibet. While there, I attended the "First International Contact Conference of Tibet Supporters," a meeting which brought together 231 enthusiastic Tibet supporters from 26 countries around the world. One day, towards the end of the conference, a cabinet minister from the government-in-exile, known in Tibetan as a *kalon (bka'-blon)* stood up to speak.

Addressing the Westerners¹ in the audience, he said:

You think most Tibetans must have qualities of His Holiness, but we are just ordinary humans. Basically we are good natured, but I must warn you, we are very much human beings.

The audience laughed along with their Tibetan hosts at the minister's comments and the conference proceeded. A week or so later, a well-known Tibetan activist made a similar comment to me during a videotaped interview in his office at the Tibet

Youth Congress in Dharamsala:

Sometimes when people speak about Tibetans as though they are some special thing from Shangri-La, you know, we're not special, we're just ordinary human beings; at other times, we're so totally ignored, we're not counted among the peoples of the world!

In many ways, these comments epitomize the contradictory predicament in which Tibetans living in the diaspora find themselves today. Perceived by many of their Western friends as "special beings," diasporic Tibetans at the same time feel they

are not "counted among the peoples of the world," having failed over the last three decades to win recognition from the world community for their claim to be the legitimate rulers of Tibet. This tension between Western fantasy and Tibetan political reality lies at the heart of this dissertation.

When thousands of Tibetans began flooding out of Chinese-occupied Tibet in 1959-1960, following their revered leader into exile, the West knew little about them except what was depicted in travel and adventure books and films such as James Hilton's "Lost Horizon." In these texts, Tibet is usually represented as an otherworldly place, populated by enlightened beings who devote their lives to religious pursuits and who embody a spiritual wisdom entirely lacking in the West. I argue that this history of Western representation has shaped the interaction between non-Tibetans and Tibetan refugees in ways that have had a profound impact on Tibetan life in exile. This dissertation attempts to explore several aspects of this claim and is organized around several interrelated questions: how do Western fantasies and stereotypes enter into processes of cultural and political reproduction in exile? As a diasporic people, Tibetans have had to construct a political identity across national boundaries. How do Western notions of Tibetanness mediate the production of this identity in various host societies? How is this transnational political identity used to mobilize outside support for the Tibetan struggle? In order to answer these questions, this dissertation focuses on an ethnographically rich arena in which these processes are most visible and to

which I had the most access, namely the "Tibet Movement." Comprised of diasporic Tibetans and their non-Tibetan supporters around the world, the Tibet Movement emerged in the late 1980s as a response to changing local and global conditions, most notably heightened Chinese repression in Tibet.

By focusing on the Tibet Movement as the context in which Tibetan identities are produced, this thesis engages Arjun Appadurai's call for anthropologists to study the "cosmopolitan cultural forms of the contemporary world" (1991:192).

As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic "projects," the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity—the ethnoscares—around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous. (ibid.:191)

Studying complex cultural formations, Appadurai argues, is essential if we are to understand the changing nature of contemporary production of identity.

Appadurai's call reflects a growing recognition in the discipline of the new levels of complexity and multiplicity of interactions that are shaping the world around us and the need to address them in our work. Anthropologists have not been the only ones, of course, to notice these transformations. Since the 1980s there has been an explosion of theory about the spread of global capital and its effects (e.g. Featherstone 1990; Giddens 1990; Harvey 1989; Jameson 1991), transnationalism (e.g. Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1992; see also

Kearney 1996) and nationalism (e.g. Anderson 1991), across the social sciences and the humanities. This literature argues that we have entered a new historical moment, one characterized by simultaneous displacement and fragmentation and intensified global integration and connectedness, for which there is little historical precedent (see discussion below).

The analytic challenges of making sense of the complex cultural forms of the contemporary moment, such as global grassroots activism for Tibet, are formidable. Although recently there has been much theorizing about the emergence of new transnational forms of political organization, mobilization and practice (Appadurai 1990, 1993; Hegedus 1990; Smith 1994), very little ethnographic work has been done on them. Indeed, as Michael Smith suggests, "we have yet to invent the discursive terms appropriate for representing the agencies and practices currently constituting bifocal subjects, transnational social space, and globalized political space" (1994:15). Frustrated by the lack of anthropological models to explain what I saw "on the ground," I have found myself tacking between several bodies of literature in order to make sense of my data and develop a theoretical framework in which to place them. These include work on migration and transnational processes, cultural studies on identity and representation, writing on diasporas, globalization theory, contemporary cultural theory, and social movements literature. In the last few years, exciting new work by other anthropologists has begun to appear that addresses some of the issues with which I have been preoccupied and that I have struggled to understand since I

began my research. Most of this new work is concerned with similar transnational or global movements that bring activists together across cultural and spatial boundaries, deploy "universal" discourses such as human rights, cultural survival, environmentalism, etc., and create new political spaces for themselves--like Tibet activists have--in the international arena (e.g. Brosius 1995a 1995b; Conklin and Graham 1995; Ramos 1991, 1994a, 1994b).

One example of the analytic challenges we face in exploring phenomena such as Tibet activism is the fact that increasingly the groups with whom we work are involved in complex representational activities similar to our own. Many groups now actively participate in their own objectification, deploying concepts such as "culture" that used to be the sole province of the professional ethnographer and mediating their identities in ever more sophisticated ways. This point is illustrated in chapters 8-10 where we see the centrality of image production and media management to the "Year of Tibet" campaign.

The production of the Movement: Some notes on methods

Examining complex social formations such as the Tibet Movement also presents a number of interesting methodological issues to be addressed or resolved.

Obviously, it requires tracing a cultural formation "across and within multiple sites of activity" (Marcus 1995), thereby breaking with the trope of community in the classic sense of shared values, shared identity, and shared culture (Marcus 1992:315)--a trope which for so long has organized anthropological thinking and

practice. At the same time it entails a blurring of boundaries between "us" and "them" in new and interesting ways. In the past, anthropology rested on a dualism between the anthropologist, on the one hand, and the people being described, on the other. Separated by space and culture, professional practice emphasized the distance between the two. Now this distance is being collapsed as anthropologists increasingly participate in the social and political processes they describe. During the course of my research, I was constantly confronted with the inseparability of "us" and "them," finding myself drawn into an advocacy relationship with my "informants" that blurred the boundaries between anthropologist and activist. I played a dual role, participating in demonstrations, marches, and other political activities, all the while watching, taking mental notes, and transforming my experiences into "data." The fact that I was a Western activist and that one of my main interests was the interaction between Tibetan and Western activists further blurred the boundary for me. Constantly shifting between researcher and participant, between outsider and subject, my position was simultaneously an ambiguous, productive, and frustrating one (see discussion below). Negotiating my ambiguous status was never easy. I struggled when asked to identify myself at Tibet Movement meetings, unsure how others sitting around the table would react to being subjects of my study. Some did not appreciate being observed and told me so; others, despite being reminded repeatedly, forgot that I had interests different from theirs.

In devising this study, I wanted to use a multiple-site method that addresses

the Movement's global organization without sacrificing ethnography of a local community. I adopted a two-track approach which involved long-term participant observation in the local community of Tibet activists based in New York City as well as shorter-term research in a number of other sites which reflect the spread of the Tibetan diaspora and represent important "nodes" in the global Tibet network. One of the advantages of doing research in this way is that it has enabled me to compare how Tibetans reconstitute their lives in different host societies and to see how transnational networks are established among the different diaspora communities in an effort to constitute a Tibetan identity that transcends local difference. At the same time, it has allowed me to embed the New York community in the larger transnational web of Tibet activism.

When I began spending time with Tibet activists in Manhattan, I remember being struck by two things. The first was the intense identification some Americans had with their Tibetan colleagues and/or with Tibetan culture. This observation is summed up by the same cabinet minister cited above in a speech at another Tibet support conference held in 1993:

Sometimes people ask, why is the Tibet Movement so successful? My answer is that...for all of you, it is part of your life. You don't only live with it, but you dream about it...everyone of you makes tremendous sacrifices. You all came to the conference and paid your own expenses...We have not lost a single friend, and I know all of you will stay with us until the day we go back to Tibet.

Alternately fascinated and puzzled by this phenomenon, I sought to understand it by eliciting what I call "Tibet narratives" from non-Tibetan supporters.

The other aspect of Tibet activism that I immediately found striking was the amount of "work" that went into it. Having had little experience with other grassroots political movements prior to starting the project, much of the work seemed pointless or to have little chance of effecting dramatic change in Tibet. I soon realized, however, that this "work" was the means through which the Movement was constituted. As a result, I became interested in the daily experiences of activists and the daily production of the Movement. One part of this interest in the quotidian centered on intercultural interactions and negotiations among participants. I paid particular attention to the arenas where activists come together, such as Movement meetings, where the pragmatics of the collaboration are most visible. Through this method, I gathered useful data on how Tibetans and Americans construct each other in the process of co-producing the Movement.

In addition to participating in and observing Movement activities, I attended a number of Tibetan community events such as parties, receptions, picnics, as well as tantric initiations (see chapter 9). It is important to note that not every Tibetan living in New York was an activist; in fact the number of Tibetan activists was small and limited mainly to a group that had lived in the U.S. for a long time and were comfortable interacting with non-Tibetans (see chapter 6). Given the small number of refugees living in New York, community activities and Movement activities often overlapped. I also volunteered my services and worked for several organizations once a week in 1991-92 which enabled me to observe daily activities and help out with tasks around the office. I videotaped demonstrations,

celebrations, visits by the Dalai Lama, and Buddhist teachings, copies of which I made available to anyone interested.

Although my research took place in New York City, I carried out short-term fieldwork in San Francisco and Washington, D.C., other key sites of Tibet activism in the U.S. Their significance lies in the fact that each is home to a well-funded organization whose work on behalf of Tibet has been quite professional and effective, though in very different domains of political action. One, an organization of lawyers for Tibet, has focused on helping Tibetans assert (and insert) themselves in various legal arenas, notably those associated with the United Nations, while the other focused its energies on Capitol Hill and the U.S. administration where it has met with considerable success (see chapter 7).²

I conducted short-term research in a number of sites around the world, including Switzerland, England, and India. This enabled me to think comparatively about how Tibetans reconstitute their lives in different host societies, and to "map" the Movement's larger structure. In mapping the Movement I traced the ways in which organizations in various "nodes" of the transnational Tibet network interact with one another (see Marcus 1995 on "mapping" in multi-site ethnography) which in turn helped me to explore about the shape Tibet activism takes in different national contexts. While in Switzerland, where more than 2,000 Tibetans were resettled in the 1960s and 1970s, I visited towns and cities including Zurich, Horgen, Rikon, Winterthur, Flawil, Trogen, Jona, Heitzingen, and Geneva. I interviewed Swiss Tibetan activists as well as several individuals who

were not activists but were resettled in Switzerland for two decades. I attended community meetings and participated in the annual "Democracy Day" celebration marking the Dalai Lama's promulgation of a democratic draft constitution in 1963 (see chapter 6). While in England I limited my research to interviews with a small number of London-based Tibetan intellectuals, activists, and employees of the government-in-exile, and an Englishman who runs "Tibet Information Network" (see McLagan 1996 for extended excerpts from two of these interviews). I spent six weeks in Dharamsala, India in 1990 where I interviewed exile government officials and leaders and participated in the first Tibet support conference ever organized. One of reasons I went to India was to make a video documentary on the resettlement of children smuggled out of Tibet. This piece underscored for me the harsh political realities of life under Chinese rule in Tibet and remained a poignant reminder throughout my research of what is at stake with the Tibet issue.

In order to supplement understanding of Tibet activism and to gain insight into how the Tibet issue is mediated in the West I created an archive of Tibet-related material from print journalism, electronic media, and various refugee and support organizations that ranges from 1989 to the present. The archive has proved especially valuable in helping get an overall sense of the Movement's trajectory and its shifting embrace of various discourses and strategies.

Identity, culture, and representation

The problem of producing a national or ethnic identity in the absence of a

recognized territorial base is one of the most interesting and challenging issues of contemporary life. What makes the Tibetan case interesting and important is the degree to which non-Tibetans and their fantasies are incorporated into this process. In the text I argue that it is Tibetans' "culture," specifically Tibetan Buddhism, that provides means for this incorporation. It attracts most Westerners to the Tibetans and is the medium through which they establish significant relationships with outsiders. These relationships have led not just to extensive material support that has helped the refugee community to flourish in exile, a remarkable achievement in and of itself, but more importantly, to the creation of a global political movement which has given Tibetans a presence and profile in the West and in the international arena out of all proportion to their numbers.

By foregrounding the relationship between Tibetans and Westerners in my analysis, and by tracing the interpretive frameworks through which each group constructs the other, this thesis provides grounded work on the problem of cultural translation, representation, and cultural objectification. Building on contemporary cultural theory, especially work on cultural production and performance (e.g. Appadurai 1990, 1991; Clifford 1988; Ginsburg 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Myers 1991, 1994a; T. Turner 1993), as well as postcolonial and poststructural theorizing about identity, difference, and "othering" (e.g. Hall 1990; Bhaba 1990; Mercer 1990, Said 1978), my text, rather than focusing on how Tibetans are situated by orientalist discourses produced by Westerners, traces how Tibetans productively engage Western fantasies about Tibetanness in the process of constituting

themselves in exile and mobilizing political support for their cause. This process is highlighted in Part Three of the dissertation (chapters 8-10), which explores the production of a series of cultural and religious events in New York City. My analysis reveals that it is not enough simply to critique these events for reinforcing problematic Western fantasies about Tibetanness. As self-conscious performances of cultural difference co-produced by Tibetan and Western activists, the events demonstrate that we must attend to the complex ways in which groups participate in their own objectification for political purposes. In this sense the Tibetan case is a significant example of how "culture" is increasingly becoming both the means and the ends of social action.

Tibet activism: The shape of things to come

As I noted above, recently there has been an explosion of theorizing about the current historical moment. This moment, it is suggested, is characterized by the rise of global capitalism, the spread of global communications and media networks, the breakdown of traditional cold war alliances and enmities and the concomitant surge of ethnic and identity politics, and the proliferation of institutions and communities that supercede the boundaries of the nation-state. I use the term "post-cold war era" in the title of this thesis to flag these economic and social factors as well as arguments that they have laid the foundation for a transformation in the contemporary world order (e.g. Rosenau 1990) whereby nation-states have to share the global stage with international organizations, transnational

corporations, and transnational social movements. I argue that the Tibet Movement, with its global organization and interventions, is representative of these transnational or "postnational" social formations (Appadurai 1993) and that it exemplifies a new form of political activism, one that is profoundly intercultural, dependent upon complex production and circulation of representations.

Tibetan diaspora studies

Until recently, very little anthropological research had been done on the Tibetan diaspora. That which had been done tended to focus on the resettlement of refugees in India (e.g. Calkowski 1991; Devoe 1983, 1987; Goldstein 1975; Klieger 1992; Nowak 1984). Over the last several years, however, the number of scholars writing about Tibetans in the diaspora has grown significantly (see Korom in press for a representative selection of contemporary ethnographic work on Tibetan diasporic culture). Despite the growing interest in Tibetan refugees on the part of anthropologists, very little work has been published on Tibetans in the United States, for instance, and virtually nothing is available on Tibetans in Switzerland in English (for a sample of publications in German, see chapter 2, footnote 3). This thesis is the first study of Tibet activism in any discipline. It includes the only comparative analysis of Tibetan diasporic communities written in English. As such, it makes a significant contribution to the emerging body of anthropological studies on the Tibetan diaspora and provides a preliminary baseline account or outline of the Movement's history, development, and structure on which

other scholars will be able to improve and build.

Thesis organization

This dissertation is divided into three parts. Each focuses on a different facet of the Tibetan diaspora and Tibet Movement. Part One, "Representing Tibet" (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), demonstrates the ways in which representations of Tibetan history have become part of an extended discursive space in which Tibetan identity is constructed, circulated, and contested by refugees, activists, Chinese officials, and scholars. Part Two, "Transnational Tibetans and the emergence of the Tibet Movement" (Chapters 5, 6, and 7), examines the resettlement of Tibetan refugees in three sites--India, Switzerland, and the U.S.--and traces the emergence of the Tibet Movement. Part Three, "Mobilizing "culture": The Year of Tibet" (Chapters 8, 9, and 10), analyzes the co-production of Tibetan Buddhist "culture" by activists in New York City during the Year of Tibet campaign.

Notes

1. In this thesis, "Western" is an analytic, political, and geographical category referring to members of industrialized societies in the Western hemisphere. It is in keeping with the Tibetan term *inji*, which originally referred to the English, the first non-Asian foreigners Tibetans had extensive contact with, but which today is used by Tibetans to refer to any person from the West, regardless of nationality.
2. In 1989 I also conducted preliminary research in Los Angeles where I attended a Kalachakra initiation given by the Dalai Lama. Two years later I attended several events inaugurating the "Year of Tibet" at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Part One

Representing Tibet

Chapter 2 Tibet's pre-1951 political structure

The traveller's perception of Tibet has contributed little to our understanding of Tibetan culture, but its influence has far outweighed its significance; it has sustained a popular and continuing perception of Tibet as the "hidden kingdom" and as a land of adventure and mystique. (Shakya 1994:4)

Introduction: A confrontation of representations

There is no doubt that popular writing on Tibet has contributed to the perception of Tibet as a sealed off Shangri-la--a containable ethnographic object rather than a site of complex and diverse political, cultural and social realities. In his book, The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, travel writing, and the creation of a sacred landscape (1989), Peter Bishop explores the production of Tibet as a sacred place in the Western imagination through travel accounts in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Following Said (1978), he argues that Tibet, like the Mediterranean, Greece, and the rest of the "Orient," could "be located precisely, geographically, on a map, yet at the same time was imbued with additional symbolic meaning" (Bishop 1989:13). For those who travelled to the Himalayan plateau, Tibet "promised a different order of time and space outside the strictures of European modernism" (145). Constructed as one of the last frontiers in an era of unbridled exploration, Tibet became an object of Western fantasy, a mystical Shangri-La that stood apart from--and above--the political and economic turmoil of the contemporary world, a symbol of all that the West had supposedly lost during the transformation to industrial capitalism--most notably spiritual wholeness.

This popular vision of Tibet presents a special challenge to those scholars attempting to write about Tibetan history and about the everyday lives of Tibetans in the past and present. This difficulty has been compounded by the fact that very little observation of social life on the ground, so to speak, was done by trained ethnographers before China's reorganization of the Tibetan polity.¹ Scholarship on Tibet has tended toward formal description and focused almost exclusively on visible structures of power. It has been hampered by the inaccessibility of archival records to Western researchers and by the fact that there was no secular literary tradition to speak of in pre-1951 Tibet (referred to in this text as "old Tibet" and "premodern Tibet"). Literature in Tibet consisted solely of Buddhist texts, of which there were thousands and thousands of volumes.² Indeed, Tibetans placed immense sacred value on the written word:

It is remarkable that when the refugees escaped over the Himalayas to India many of them carried on their backs heavy loads of sacred books, and one of the first activities in the diaspora was the republication of these religious texts. (Stoddard 1994:128)

One of the major activities of academic Tibetan studies today involves the translation and analysis of such Buddhist texts. This work, while important, is generally presented without a discussion of social context, rendering it less useful for those trying to reconstruct traditional Tibetan societies. To get around this problem, scholars have conducted fieldwork in the pockets of traditional Tibetan culture that exist in the Himalayas or amongst refugee populations from Tibet (e.g., Aziz 1978; Calkowski 1991; Fürer-Haimendorf 1990; Goldstein 1968, 1989;

Levine 1988; Mumford 1989; Nowak 1984; Ortner 1978; 1989).³ Despite these efforts by trained anthropologists, a large portion of our empirical knowledge of premodern Tibet comes from popular and semi-academic writing by what I call "lay ethnographers"--travellers, explorers, missionaries, soldiers, diplomats, administrators and other agents of Imperial India (see Bishop 1989; Clarke 1983).⁴

While there is a dearth of scholarship based on first-hand ethnographic research in Tibet before 1951, there is no lack of debate over how to characterize Tibet's history and its political and religious structures. In fact, since 1959, scholarship on Tibet has been mobilized in a discursive struggle between Tibetan exiles and the Chinese over the legitimacy of China's rule in Tibet.⁵ As Goldstein suggests,

After 1959, the Tibetan exiles and China competed to legitimize their own representations of recent history and current events in Tibet. The Chinese talked about the cruelty and abuses of the old feudal system and serfdom, and the Tibetans in exile accused the Chinese of committing a host of cultural and human rights violations, including genocide. This confrontation of "representations" continues to the present. (1994b:15)

In the next two chapters, I describe Tibet's political and religious culture before 1951, and at the same time, examine the role scholarship on Tibet has played in the "confrontation of representations" between Tibetan exiles and Chinese government officials.⁶ As any scholar doing work on Tibetans today knows, it is nearly impossible to avoid becoming entangled in the politicized debates over how to portray Tibet's pre-1951 economic, social, and political structures.⁷ These highly-charged debates, which rage in both academic and popular discussions of

Tibet, focus on the special nature of the Tibetan polity and its representativeness or legitimacy in outlying areas. For instance, scholars who describe the system as "feudalistic" are regularly accused by exile Tibetans of supporting China's claim to having "liberated" Tibet in 1951. Those who argue that there was no unified Tibetan state and no "nationalism" to speak of before the Chinese arrival in Tibet are accused of playing directly into China's hands. This response reveals a deep and vigorous engagement by Tibetans with their own history (and historiography). In my discussion, I suggest that the debates over representations of Tibetan history and culture are part of an extended discursive space in which the Tibet issue, and more importantly, contemporary Tibetan identities, are negotiated.

Given the lack of fine-grained ethnographic studies of old Tibet, everyday life is notably absent in the following account. Studies by Western anthropologists have been possible in Tibet only since the 1980s, and under restricted circumstances.⁸ The most well-known work has been done by Melvyn Goldstein and Cynthia Beall on a pastoral population at Phala Xiang near Lake Dangra (Goldstein and Beall 1986, 1989, 1990; Goldstein 1987).

Women are also notably absent in the literature on premodern Tibet. Barbara Aziz, in an article published in 1988, laments the lack of attention paid by scholars to the lives of Tibetan women, both past and present.⁹ She argues that while Tibet's religion is given a central place in our interpretation of its culture and history, there is not much discussion of how Buddhism shapes the lives of Tibetan women. For instance, we know very little about nuns and nunneries in

Tibet or in exile. Tibetologists have been slow to acknowledge and remedy this lack, although in recent years small steps have been taken by a younger generation of Western and Tibetan scholars eager to recuperate the contribution of women to Tibetan history and religion.¹⁰

Although the literature on Tibet is rather thin, there are several scholars whose work on the subject is very fine and from whom I draw heavily, particularly Melvyn Goldstein and Geoffrey Samuel. These anthropologists make valuable contributions to a more refined and problematized understanding of Tibetan societies, one which challenges both exaggerated popular images of Tibet, as well as the divergent representations put forward by Chinese officials and Tibetan exiles.

The rise of monasticism

Goldstein's depiction of the monastic system introduces us to some of the most fundamental aspects of Tibet's religio-political culture, and, in light of the notoriety this work has brought him within Tibetan circles, his historical narrative seems an appropriate place to begin an examination of the complex issues surrounding scholarship on old Tibet. In his book, A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State (1989), he outlines the complicated web of internal affairs and events that led to the fall of Tibet in 1951. He writes: "Tibet's commitment to the universality of religion as a core metaphor of Tibetan national identity...was a major factor underlying Tibet's inability to adapt to

changing circumstances" (1989:2). The term *chos-srid zung-'brel*, "religious and political affairs joined together," characterizes the Tibetan political structure which was governed by an incarnation, usually the Dalai Lama or his regent, and closely linked to the Gelugpa religious order of which the Dalai Lama was the most senior incarnate lama.¹¹ Beneath the ruler was a simple bureaucracy with a system of hierarchically ranked offices. The positions were filled by members of the lay aristocracy and monk officials. Lay officials were recruited from the hereditary landed aristocracy which consisted of roughly 150 to 200 families, all of whom held at least one estate, and some of whom held many estates.¹² The aristocracy had an ambiguous status: each family was required to provide one male for government service and failure to do so could result in confiscation of estates; yet since estates were hereditary, their size was not tied to the official's position in the government. Goldstein argues that while aristocratic families were clearly subordinate to the government, they saw themselves as an hereditary elite.¹³ Similarly, though the lay bureaucracy was subordinate to the government, it controlled its own recruitment (1989:8).

The majority of monk officials were recruited from the Lhasa middle class or from the families of existing monk officials, known as *shag-tshang* families. They owned property and functioned much as lay families did except that, as monk officials were celibate, they had to adopt sons either from relatives or unrelated families. Trained and educated by the head of the *shag-tshang*, the young "disciples" became part of the family with full inheritance rights.

As Goldstein points out, monk officials, though celibate, were actually more like "token monks" in that most of them had merely registered in one of the big Gelugpa monasteries and stayed from one night to a few weeks. Consequently, monk officials did not share the same devotion and loyalties to the monastery as other monks, who tended to view them with some suspicion. Unlike lay officials who relied on hereditary estates for support, monk officials depended on the government for income, a situation which led them into believing that they were the "true upholders of the interests of the government" (1989:10).

The Dalai Lama and the lay and monk officials constituted two out of the three major political forces in Tibet. The monastic system and in particular the three large Gelugpa monasteries near Lhasa--Sera, Drepung, and Ganden, known in Tibetan as the *gdan-sa gsum*, or "Three Seats"--made up the third force. Unlike the other Tibetan Buddhist lineages--Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya--the Gelugpa were reformers, committed to celibacy and scholasticism as prerequisites to advanced Tantric practice. After coming to power in 1642, they set about transforming the existing religious landscape, creating numerous monasteries and endowing them with large estates as well as reorganizing the economic support system for others by giving many large Gelugpa monasteries estates with attached peasants, or what Goldstein calls "serfs" (*mi-ser* in Tibetan) (see discussion of terminology below). The new government established subsidies for barley, butter and tea for monasteries without large estates and created funding for major ritual prayer ceremonies.

According to Goldstein and Tsarong (1985), Tibetan history after the Gelugpa rise to power can be conceptualized as the "monasticization" of a society in that "the primary goal of the polity was the production and reproduction of as many monks as possible" (17). This large scale commitment to monasticism is what differentiated Tibet's Mahayana monasticism from that of Theravadin societies. Goldstein (1989) estimates that traditionally 10 to 20%¹⁴ of the male population in Tibet were monks as opposed to 1-2% of the male population in Thailand (Tambiah 1976). Parents placed their children, usually between the ages 7-10, in the monastery where they were expected to remain for life, regardless of disposition or their own desires. Some families felt it was a deep honor and privilege; others found it a culturally valued way to reduce the number of mouths to feed. On occasion, parents made a son a monk to fulfill a promise made to a deity when the son was ill. Once accepted, many mechanisms worked to keep a monk in the monastery. Monks had a higher status than ordinary laypersons, though ex-monks did not. It was not competitive to stay: there were no exams that novices had to pass in order to remain in the monastery and monks who had no interest in pursuing higher studies were as welcome as scholarly monks (Goldstein 1989:23). The only causes for expulsion were murder or heterosexual intercourse.

This dedication to mass-scale monasticism meant that a large proportion of Tibet's resources was absorbed by monks who had to be subsidized by government grants, estates, endowments from private donors and banking activities by monasteries. Consequently, the "Three Seats" and thousands of smaller Gelugpa

monasteries scattered throughout Tibet had a vested interest in blocking any attempts at modernization, which they believed threatened both the economic base of monasticism and the religious values of the state. While there is not enough space here to explore in detail the various attempts at modernization, such as the short-lived English-language school in Gyantse (1924-26) advocated by aristocratic officials and the 13th Dalai Lama, or the proposed expansion of the army argued for by Tibet's military commander Tsarong and his supporters, it is important to note that there was a small segment of the population interested in changing Tibetan society.¹⁵ This aspect of Tibetan history is often overlooked by those who seek to portray premodern Tibet as a country completely isolated from the rest of the world, lost in its spiritual pursuits. In fact, as Goldstein's account reveals, many individuals—including the Dalai Lama, progressive aristocrats and intellectuals—recognized the necessity to modernize or create new institutions in order to be better prepared for the inevitable confrontation with China.¹⁶ Had such modernization occurred, Goldstein suggests, the outcome of Tibet's encounter with the People's Liberation Army in 1951 might have been entirely different.

In any event, however modest the proposed changes may seem in retrospect, at the time they generated a lot of controversy, with monasteries the most vehement opponents of change.

From the monastic point of view, military expansion cut right to the heart of their traditional power, draining resources that otherwise went to the monastic system and also neutralizing the coercive force of the large numbers of uneducated and fighting monks. They saw Tsarong's proposal as a shift to secularism, to the diffusion of alien

(and heathen) British ideas which would harm Buddhism by creating an aristocracy less inclined to act as patrons of the monasteries. For the monks, nothing less than Tibet's unique theocratic political system and the dominant position of the monastic segment were at stake. (Goldstein 1989:92)

Ultimately, the monasteries won--the Dalai Lama and aristocratic reformers were forced to back down, modernization efforts were stopped, and the possibility for changing the trajectory of Tibetan history was lost.

Goldstein's description of the confrontation over modernization raises several important points. First, it underlines the widespread agreement among all factions of the political structure that the Tibetan state was first and foremost the supporter and patron of religion. Second, it highlights the fact that although this was agreed upon in principle, there "was no unanimity on who was to determine what in fact was in the best interests of religion" (1989:23). For the monasteries, change meant secularization and Buddhism's loss of patronage, power, and position, while for the aristocrats, modernization meant the ability to defend Tibet and to preserve its unique religio-political structures. Finally, and most important for our purposes, the confrontation reveals the extent to which Tibetans' primary loyalty was to Buddhism rather than to any nationalistic entity called Tibet. The ramifications of this fact in terms of political consciousness and mobilization are explored throughout the rest of this dissertation. In the meantime, however, I briefly examine the Tibetan exile community's reactions to Goldstein's conclusions.

Goldstein's account of the role of monastic conservatism in twentieth century Tibetan history, however accurate, has not won him many friends. Most

of his Tibetan critics have not read his long History of Modern Tibet.¹⁷

Nonetheless, they have not hesitated to accuse him of being "pro-Chinese" and of depicting Tibetan history from the Chinese point of view.¹⁸ One of the most obvious reasons for these attacks on Goldstein stems from the fact that criticism of religious institutions and leaders was and is simply not tolerated; in the past, ordinary Tibetans both revered and were afraid of powerful monastic figures. Respect for religious persons and structures is a fundamental aspect of Tibetan society, whether in Tibet or in the diaspora. On another level, Goldstein's claim that Tibet was lost because of religion also challenges exile Tibetans' representations of old Tibet as an unified, independent nation-state with an uniquely spiritual culture.

As discussed in the previous chapter, nations are entities which are continually imagined, invented, and contested. Part of this process of imagining community, Anderson (1983) tells us, is the construction of a national history, a collectively agreed upon narrative. Inevitably, there are struggles over the constitution of an authorized past, but in the Tibetan case, these struggles have been largely hidden from non-Tibetans. In fact, as I attempt to show throughout this dissertation, exile Tibetans have been very successful in constructing a coherent and compelling version of their history which is easily digested by outsiders. It is no small irony that this history celebrates Tibet's uniqueness and depicts that uniqueness as being largely due to Buddhist monasticism. On other hand, given Buddhism's dominance, we should not be surprised at the absence of

alternative, lay versions of the past.¹⁹ Recently, however, emboldened by their leader the 14th Dalai Lama's own criticism of old Tibet, a few Tibetan intellectuals have begun to criticize openly the dominant (and sanitized) version of Tibetan history and the monasteries' devastating role in the past. By undermining the accepted exile version of history and by revealing the widespread factionalism and sectarianism which shaped events in Tibet before 1951, Goldstein threatens the refugees' most important symbolic resource on which they base their appeals for support to non-Tibetans and contest Tibet's current political status.

Goldstein's interpretation of monasticism, though it is shared by many Tibetan intellectuals, is just one of many aspects of old Tibet on which exile officials have refused to allow serious debate, preferring simplistic portrayals of Tibetan innocence to more complex discussions of historical causality and responsibility (Shakya 1994; see also J. Norbu 1994). Another one of the sensitive topics Goldstein's scholarship has broached is the so-called feudal system in old Tibet. This issue has elicited a spirited debate among scholars and Tibetans in general, which I elaborate in the next section.

Tibet's economic-political system: Goldstein's view

Many scholars have encountered difficulties in applying Western analytic categories to Tibet's religio-political system. Some have argued that it was feudal, similar to that which existed in fourteenth century Europe; others have proposed that while certain aspects of the system were feudalistic, it is better characterized as a

marginal, centralized bureaucratic state. In his doctoral dissertation on Tibet's political system, Goldstein suggests that it "moved from a type of late feudalism to an incipient form of centralized bureaucracy when the Gelugpa sect under the Dalai Lama obtained secular control over Tibet" (1968:255).

This characterization of Tibet's economic system reflects the experiences of Goldstein's informants--refugees living in Bylakuppe, Mysore, in southern India, who had been farmers from the village of Samada in the Gyantse district, Tsang province. Through formal and informal interviews, Goldstein reconstructed the various levels of political and economic organization in Central Tibet, the country's political and agricultural heartland. This part of Tibet was characterized by proximity to major rivers and long-distance trade routes as well by two types of economically productive landholdings: hereditary "manorial estates" held by lay aristocrats, monasteries and incarnate lamas, and land directly held by the government. Goldstein cites the estimate of Surkhang, a former cabinet minister, that estates accounted for well over half the total land in Central Tibet (1968:141).³⁰

The estates consisted of arable land and a "bound" labor force of "serfs" obligated to farm it and who received no wages in return for cultivating the lord's demesne fields, the yield of which went wholly to the lord (Goldstein 1989:4).

According to Goldstein,

in Tibetan social theory, serfs were obliged to provide this free labor because they held a *khral-rten* ("tax base"), consisting of their hereditary tenement fields. They had complete control over these

fields with the exception of the power of sale. They planted what and when they wanted, and they retained the entire harvest. They could also lease their fields to others. (1989:4)

Goldstein's application of "serfdom" to Tibet's productive system has been contested by both diaspora Tibetans and Western scholars, including Aziz (1978), Dargyay (1982), Michael (1982), Miller (1987), and Samuel (1993), whom Goldstein argues refuse to use the terminology for reasons of contemporary political expediency (1986:109) (see discussion below). In an article on Tibet's social system, Goldstein suggests that we treat serfdom as a "cross-culturally relevant type" of productive relations in which "an elite controls both land resources and the critical labor force (serfs) it needs to produce foodstuffs from that land" (1986:82).²¹ In the case of Tibet, Goldstein writes, serfdom provided the foundation for the manorial estate system and for the political and monastic system:

It was an efficient system of economic exploitation that guaranteed to the country's religious and secular elites a permanent and secure labor force to cultivate their landholdings without burdening them either with any direct day-to-day responsibility for the serfs' subsistence or with the need to compete for labor in a market context. (1989:5)

Goldstein is careful to point out that while he believes serfdom existed in Tibet, it did not preclude the presence of considerable social mobility and "that one of the distinctive features of the Tibetan variant of serfdom was that a large proportion of the serfs were not physically tied to an estate on which they were compelled to provide corvée labor, although they were still bound to lord and estate" (1986:85).

These were "landless serfs" permitted by their lord to leave their natal estate but who had to pay him an annual fee (*mi-bogs*) and who still were obligated to provide various labor services to the lord upon his request (1986:97). According to Goldstein, the institution of *mi-bogs* provided

a valuable escape-valve to the otherwise rigid system by allowing miser who would otherwise be tied to an estate to physically leave the estate with a legal identity. This allowed the *mi-ser* the opportunity to earn a living either there or elsewhere. (1986:96)

He concludes that the *mi-bogs* institution, along with other factors such as the opportunity for economic mobility (see Goldstein 1968, chapter 4), the shortage of labor, strong religious supports for the traditional system of ascribed inequality, the right to petition the government, and the option of running away to another part of Tibet, eased the oppressive nature of the economic system.

At the same time, serfdom "delegated substantial government rights to the lords" (1989:5). Indeed, Goldstein argues that lords of manorial estates were not mere landlords but rulers who collected taxes and *corvée* service from their *mi-ser* (peasants) and who had the authority to adjudicate disputes and punish crimes. Consequently, there was no need for the central government to maintain a police or judicial force in rural areas which in turn greatly reduced the need for a complex structure of government. Similarly, the estates generated wealth, relieving the government of the necessity of raising revenues to support the salaries of lay officials and the huge monastic system. Goldstein argues that "the combination of a centralized bureaucratic government and numerous political sub-systems

possessing considerable autonomy produced a highly viable system of government that ruled a large territorial area for centuries without any large scale disturbances" (1968:15).²²

Administrative organization

The government-maintained transportation and communication network was "one of the backbones of the central government's administration of the country" (Goldstein 1989:4). Tibet was divided into routes which were subdivided into stations (*sa-tshigs*) each of which was located one half-day's walk from the next to insure that peasants could make a round trip in a single day. Corvée service could be commanded by permits (*lam-yig*), issued by the central government and authorizing the holder to demand transportation and riding animals from *mi-ser* upon presentation at a station. Food and shelter could also be obtained at little or no cost to permit holders. There were many permanent users of the service, including those involved with transporting regular shipments of such items as paper, dried fruits, rice, and butter. Permits were also issued to government officials, messengers, and so-called "postmen." This infrastructure based on corvée labor enabled the central government to move goods and people at no expense to itself and without employing officials throughout the countryside. Goldstein points out that providing animals and shelter on demand was not easy for most peasants who were forced to maintain large numbers of carrying animals (*khal-ma*) and riding animals (*rta'u*), near their homes rather than in distant

pastures and to grow or purchase large amounts of fodder in order to feed them. The degree of participation by villagers in this form of taxation depended on the amount of land held by each household. (For a more detailed examination of corvée taxation in Central Tibet, see Goldstein 1968, chapter three.)

The basic administrative unit of the Tibetan government was the district (*rdzong*), headed by a district commissioner (*rdzong dpon*), who was appointed by the central government in Lhasa for a three-year term. In some of the more important districts, a lay and a monk official shared the position. The district commissioner was the only member of the Lhasa bureaucracy stationed in his area on a permanent basis and his functions included the collection of taxes, acting as a liaison between the central government and district residents, adjudication of disputes, and trials and punishments of those accused of wrong-doing (Goldstein 1968:20). In addition, a district commissioner validated permits related to the communication and transportation network.

As for adjudication, a district commissioner could not initiate action because he had no police force. Disputants had to seek his aid and in the case of a crime, victims had to find the offender and bring him/her before the district commissioner for punishment, which could include flogging, shackling, prison terms in the district's prison, and fines. More serious punishments, like mutilations, had to be approved by central government before being meted out (Goldstein 1968:23).

The position of district commissioner was perceived as a source of income rather than as a source for increasing personal power and influence. These

officials enriched themselves by manipulating tax collection. Like officials at other administrative levels, district commissioners also frequently received gifts from disputants in pending cases, though these were not bribes, as acceptance by the adjudicator did not necessarily guarantee a favorable judgment for the gift giver (Goldstein 1968:26).

At certain times and in certain places, larger provincial administrative units were deemed necessary. Goldstein writes that "the motivation for establishing such super-district regions (provinces), was either a result of need for higher ranking officials to deal with officials of other political units or to lessen the amount of administrative items received in Lhasa" (1968:25). In size, population, economic, and political power the provinces were of unequal importance. Provincial governors (*spyi-khyab*) mediated disputes between districts and informed district commissioners of their duties.

Goldstein identifies two sub-units in the districts in Central Tibet: the village of "landed government serfs" (*gzhung-rgyugs-pa*), and aristocratic and religious estates with serfs. It is important to note that he defines "estate" as the hereditary land of a lord and "manorial estate" as an estate divided into demesne and tenanted lands with attached serfs. Goldstein uses manorial estates mainly to refer to land held by aristocrats and religious institutions. The main government lands, on the other hand, were not really estates at all but were villages with landed serfs (1968:105).

Gzhung-rgyugs-pa villages had two levels of *mi-ser*: "taxpayers" (*khral-pa*)

and *dud-tshang*, whom Goldstein defines as day laborers or those who leased land from taxpayers (see discussion below of these strata). Although these villages were attached to government-owned estates, they were relatively autonomous internally. Government involvement was limited to the collection of taxes; Lhasa exerted no control over the behavior of village residents. For instance, the duty to deliver taxes and services to the government was imposed on the villagers collectively and the village council decided how to distribute these duties to each family.

In the village of Samada (which was a *gzhung-rgyugs-pa* village), Goldstein found that equality existed among the eight taxpayer families but that the day laborers had no part in the village's decision-making processes. Headmen (*rgan-po*), chosen by consensus by the taxpayers, were highly capable persons who could read, write, and calculate and who had verbal skills. The emphasis on verbal skills continues to be an evaluative criterion for leadership in the exile community. Wealth and access to economic resources were also important criteria and headmen usually came from the upper strata of taxpayer families. Unlike district commissioners, village headman could not expect to dominate or profit greatly from their position. They could, however, expect to be shown a high degree of respect and to gain prestige in their local community.

There is an obvious continuity between the past and present in terms of leadership and social status. The majority of exile government officials are from what Tibetans refer to (in English) as "high" backgrounds, that is, they are either

aristocrats (which by definition means they formerly lived in Central Tibet, as opposed to the other two Tibetan regions--Kham and Amdo), from wealthy *Khampa* (*Khams-pa*) families, or monks or reincarnate lamas, known as *tulkus*. Most of the Tibet-run organizations in the U.S. and Switzerland are headed by educated individuals (both men and women) from similar backgrounds. At this point, I merely want to draw attention to the role of traditional status in terms of how political leadership and structures are reconstituted in exile. These continuities, and the interrelatedness of political power, social status, and activism are examined later in the dissertation.

Social stratification in Central Tibet

As suggested earlier, one of the ongoing themes in the war of representation between Tibetan exiles and the Chinese government is the nature of social mobility and stratification in old Tibet. Tibetans and sympathetic Western scholars are very sensitive about Goldstein's use of such terms as "serf," "lord," and "feudalism" in describing pre-1951 Tibet. While most do not deny the existence of social hierarchy as depicted by Goldstein, they argue that not only does the use of this nomenclature have "obvious political overtones," in light of Chinese attempts to legitimize their overthrow of an exploitative system (Samuel 1993:117; see also Michael 1982 and Miller 1987), it also suggests to the Western reader a situation of abject poverty which "was emphatically not the case" (Samuel 1993:119).²³

The main difference between Goldstein and other scholars thus appears to

be one of emphasis. For instance, Aziz (1978), Dargyay (1982), and others stress the considerable flexibility and mobility inherent in the traditional system, whereas Goldstein (1968; 1986) emphasizes the system's determining structures. He accounts for the discrepancy by suggesting scholars have confused the difference between the jural structure of the social system, which gave lords control over their *mi-ser* and the actual operation of the system which in fact allowed for significant physical mobility (1986:104).

Despite their different emphases, all those who have studied Tibet's social structure agree that *mi-ser* were neither a homogeneous category nor inevitably poor with no opportunity for social or economic mobility. In some cases, they were quite affluent and held substantial amounts of land, making the differences between sub-categories of serfs as great as those between the aristocracy and the serfs themselves. At this point, I want to explore some of the distinctions within the category of *mi-ser* which Aziz argues are missing from Goldstein's account. Aziz bases her reconstruction on interviews with refugees from Ding-ri, a trading community located near the Tibetan-Nepalese border in Central Tibet. While her data may represent stratification in Central Tibet in general, we cannot assume that they reflect social reality in the ethnically Tibetan regions of Kham and Amdo, as we shall see in the next section.

The household formed the basic unit in the Central Tibetan villages: it was the "unit of production, the unit of taxation, the land-holding unit and the unit for political representation" (Aziz 1978:108). Households, as opposed to families,

were "named, status-ranked entities, with inherited property and economic obligations, passed on normally in the male line" (Samuel 1993:117).²⁴ Villagers initiated a series of schemes in order to retain members within the household:

These strategies included polyandrous marriage, the sending of "surplus" children to monasteries, uxori-local marriage or adoption in cases where there was no male heir, and the retirement of parents to small adjacent houses so that their children could take over the household proper...The households in a village generally also all belonged to the same estate. Each household was allocated land by the estate, and had various tax and corvée obligations towards it. In addition, the village as a whole (that is, the body of full household members) had obligations which its members were collectively responsible for fulfilling. (Samuel 1993:118)

Tibet is best known in the anthropological literature for the widespread practice of plural marriages, most notably fraternal polyandry and sororal polygyny, which are seen as ideal ways to restrict household partition, and which contributed greatly to Tibet's overall economic and social stability (Dargyay 1982:23). Indeed, polyandry is a fascinating topic which has been explored by a number of scholars, most notably Fűrér-Haimendorf (1964); Goldstein (1971); and Levine (1988). This aspect of Tibetan culture is not usually discussed outside the community by its members, and with good reason. During the course of my fieldwork in Switzerland, I was told that Tibetan refugees were advised by Swiss Red Cross officials who helped them to resettle in Switzerland to hide the practice from government officials by naming the eldest brother as the sole husband.

Not all *mi-ser* villagers were full household members. Some were from the lower status group, *dud-tshang*, defined by Aziz as sharecroppers, laborers,

servants, and artisans and whose households had no corporate identity. In other words, as a social category, *mi-ser* included *dud-tshang*, full tax-paying villagers (*grong-pa*), traders (*tshong-pa*), and tax-paying farmers who were part-time religious specialists, or cleric householders (*ser-khyim-pa*).

Aziz argues that her reconstruction of social stratification in Central Tibet is an improvement over earlier accounts that put forward a simple peasant-feudal model, and one which challenges Goldstein's rigid typologizing of the Tibetan system. She distinguishes between rural and urban contexts, the long-settled and the recent itinerant migrants, and other categories of persons who were not tied to estates, such as bandits and military officers. And contrary to Goldstein, Aziz argues that tax-payer (*khral-pa*) is not a distinctive social class but rather a term used to refer to *grong-pa* and *tshong-pa* tax-paying status. She notes that while *dud-tshang* had tax obligations to an estate, they were generally much less onerous than those of the *grong-pa*. As a result, *dud-tshang*, though often poorer than the *grong-pa*, could be socially quite mobile.

My day-to-day observations of *dud-tshang* and my many conversations with them suggest that they are a class of extremely mobile and adventurous people--far from the oppressed and pitiable image of *dud-tshang*...it is true that on the whole these people are poorer than others; they are also without many rights, as a result of having abandoned their land holdings. Some have been forced into this position through debt, others through exploitation. But many *dud-tshang* have freely chosen this status, and they find it far more preferable to remain on their land and deal with all the obligations that beset tenant farmers. (Aziz 1978:71)²⁵

Dud-tshang were an economic boon to Ding-ri as a ready and flexible labor force.

Some worked as cultivators in rural areas; others were artisans and servants to merchants and administrators in the larger towns. Aziz met some who had worked independently as inn operators and craftsmen. Freed from tax constraints and the social obligations of other classes, *dud-tshang* was a fluid social rank.

In her book, Aziz identifies two groups above *mi-ser* in status, the aristocrats (*ger-pa*), and the hereditary lama families (*ngag-pa*). Both were hereditary owners of estates, although a hereditary lama's residential estate (*bla-brang*) could be small and did not necessarily have attached *mi-ser* (Aziz 1978:53). Below the *mi-ser* were the outcastes (*rig-ngan*). This low status group was considered defiled; as butchers and hide preparers, they violated the fundamental Buddhist restriction against the taking of life. Members of other groups avoided drinking from the same cup as the outcastes, which basically prevented the group from normal social intercourse since virtually all gatherings began and ended with drinking. All of these ascribed statuses were inherited, although there was mobility between them, especially, as mentioned above, between the *mi-ser* categories of *grong-pa*, *tshong-pa*, and *dud-tshang*.²⁶

With the loss of their estates, the upper strata of Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama into exile lost their means of revenue. Like their poorer compatriots, they faced the same difficult process of resettling and the same health problems posed by going from the 12,000 feet high Tibetan plateau to the hot and humid Gangetic plain. Certainly many Tibetans from aristocratic or wealthy trading families had access to substantial resources, having spent part of each year doing

business in places like Darjeeling and Kalimpong in northeastern India.

Nevertheless, without an estate system, nor the possibility of owning land (at the time Indian law prohibited the ownership of land by foreigners), the traditional structure of social class based on property has become irrelevant in exile.

Similarly, the monastic hierarchy, sustained by property as well, lost its power. In fact, there has been a growing disenchantment with the traditional religious order "which failed to deliver the goods at the moment of crisis" (Saklani 1978:43).

Thus, although aristocrats still enjoy superior social status in exile and are highly placed in the government-in-exile, the rationale of the old status hierarchy in Tibet has been increasingly challenged, especially as the generation of young Tibetans, products of new educational system designed to eliminate status differences, reach adulthood and are employed in the government-in-exile (see Nowak 1984).

As refugees, Tibetans have experienced more opportunities for social mobility than at any time in the past. One new means is through education, as Nowak (1984) suggests. Another (classic) way to raise one's status is to emigrate. Many young Indian-educated Tibetans have done this in recent years, a development discussed later in the dissertation.²⁷

Interestingly, a form of what I call "community status" has emerged as the Tibetan diaspora has spread across the globe. During my research, I found that there is a "pecking order" of host countries with Tibetans living in Switzerland located at the top, followed by Tibetans in the U.S. and Canada, India, and at the bottom, Nepal. This hierarchy appears to be based largely on standard of living,

with the exception of Nepal, where there are many wealthy Tibetans who have made their fortunes in the carpet industry, but who are not always accorded the same status as rich Tibetans from other parts of the diaspora.²⁸ One possible reason for this is that Tibetans in Nepal are frequently accused of being too concerned with earning a living and not contributing enough to the Tibetan struggle, both financially and politically.

Thus far, this has been a normative sketch of the religio-political system and social stratification. Yet despite the elaborated governmental bureaucracy and complex monastic structure, most of Tibetan life was conducted beyond the limited scope of the Lhasa government. At this point, I turn to an argument made by Geoffrey Samuel, an anthropologist and Tibetan Buddhist practitioner, who writes against the problematic tendency to view Central Tibet as representative of all Tibetan societies.

Tibet and the galactic polity model: Samuel's view

In his book, Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan societies (1993), Samuel criticizes the Lhasa-centric view of Tibet, arguing that the Dalai Lama's regime was "only one, if in recent times the largest, of a variety of state formations within the Tibetan region" (39). As suggested earlier, the major political units have always been centered in agricultural areas like the provinces of U and Tsang in Central Tibet which provided a tax base to support the state bureaucracy. Samuel argues, however, that outlying regions, especially remote agricultural and pastoral

areas of Kham and Amdo, "have never been more than partially incorporated into the Tibetan state" (1993:44). Instead, the population in these areas owed primary allegiance to local estate-holders or were too distant from Lhasa to be under effective political control. In light of this, he proposes that we conceptualize the Tibetan state in terms of a "galactic polity" model developed in relation to Theravadin societies of Southeast Asia (see Tambiah 1976:102-131; 1985:252-286):

The galactic polity, with its mandala-type structure based on an exemplary center, and regional administrations that replicated the structure of the center, bears some relationship to the Lhasa state (and also to the relationship between the Manchu regime in China and the various Tibetan polities). Regional administrations within the galactic polity drift historically between periods of attachment to one or another center and periods of autonomy...Central rule is as much a matter of performance (as in the elaborate rituals of the Lhasa administration) as administration, and the primary focus of the whole enterprise is on the extraction of produce and the control of personnel. (Samuel 1993:62)

The analogy to traditional galactic polities of Burma or Thailand is not perfect, but Samuel suggests that a view of Tibet as characterized by fluctuating periods of greater and lesser centralization is closer to historical reality than a representation of Tibet as a centralized bureaucratic state (1993:63).

In making this argument, Samuel is debunking both popular and exile representations of Tibet as a unified independent state ruled by a central government in Lhasa. In so doing, he is in agreement with many scholars, including Goldstein, who recognize that the Tibetan world can be divided into two categories: a "political" Tibet" which refers to the polity ruled by the Dalai Lamas,

and an "ethnographic Tibet," which refers to the wider areas across which ethnic Tibetans were distributed, such as Amdo and Kham (see Figure 1). As Hugh Richardson, the well-known British diplomat and historian writes:

In "political" Tibet the Tibetan government have ruled continuously from the earliest times down to 1951. The region beyond that to the north and east [Kham and Amdo]...is its "ethnographic" extension which people of Tibetan race once inhabited exclusively and where they are still in the majority. In that wider area, "political" Tibet exercised jurisdiction only in certain places and at irregular intervals; for the most part, local lay or monastic chiefs were in control of districts of varying size. From the 18th century onwards the region was subject to sporadic Chinese infiltration. But in whatever hands actual authority might lie, the religious influence of Lhasa was a long-standing and all-pervasive force and large donations of money and valuable goods were annually sent to the Dalai Lama...(Richardson 1984:1-2)

This issue of whether or not the ethnically Tibetan sub-regions of Kham or Amdo were part of Tibet has been vigorously contested by Tibetan exiles and scholars. For instance, Goldstein and the Dalai Lama's former representative in New York, Phintso Thonden, have publicly argued over the question in the exile monthly Tibetan Review (1991) and elsewhere (Goldstein 1994a:79). Thonden and many other Tibetans claim that Kham and Amdo were part of political Tibet until 1949, when the Chinese invaded those areas. Goldstein, on the other hand, argues that the Lhasa government did not rule in these areas, and that therefore they cannot be considered part of the Tibetan state in modern times. He notes that "Thonden's article may be good politics, but it is bad history." In the same article, however, following a brief history of Kham and Amdo, Goldstein concludes his discussion with an extraordinary paragraph which I quote here at length:

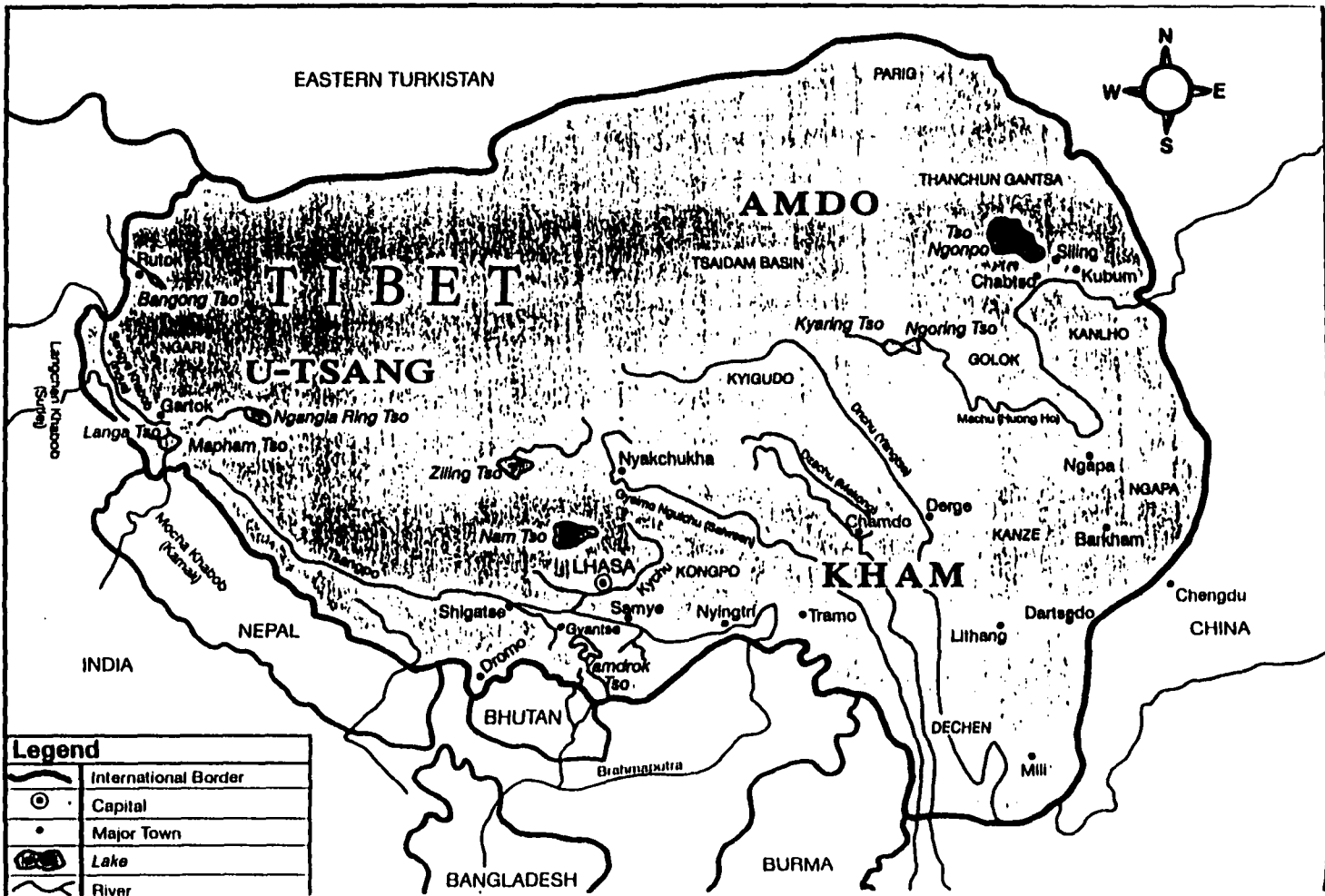


Figure 1 Map of Tibet: (pre-1951). From Cayley (1994).

Because the future re-integration of Kham and Amdo with what was political Tibet (now the TAR) appears to be a very emotional issue for many Tibetans in exile and Westerners who support them, let me add that the historical information I have outlined above does not in any way preclude Tibetan nationalists such as Thonden from today advocating and working to reunite these areas into a unified "greater" Tibet in the future. Nor does it argue against the legitimacy of creating such a 'greater' Tibet since these areas share obvious cultural characteristics and were once part of a unified Tibetan state. On the other hand, scholars such as myself did not make Tibetan history--Tibetans did--and it might be useful if they and their Western supporters tried to understand it objectively. (1994a:87)

Goldstein is right in suggesting that discussions of Kham's and Amdo's status evoke strong reactions from exile Tibetans and their Western supporters. Many Tibetans fear that if it is determined that Kham and Amdo were not part of Tibet in the past, they will not be part of an independent Tibet in the future. This concern surfaces periodically within the exile community and in Tibet Movement meetings when the possibility of negotiations with China and what the exile government is willing to settle for territorially comes up.²⁹ I come back to this discussion further on in the dissertation.

Using a galactic polity model, Samuel manages to reframe the debate over the nature of the Tibetan system in slightly less polemical terms. He attempts to account for the tendency to see Tibet as a strongly centralized state with its capital at Lhasa by reminding us that many of the best known descriptions of Tibetan society were made by colonial officials and others based in central Tibet at a time when the Lhasa government was at its strongest (for example, Bell 1924, 1928; Richardson 1962; see also Harrer 1955). Thus, Samuel argues, the picture they

paint of Tibet is "skewed" towards the Lhasa government and the "Three Seats," the Gelugpa monasteries near the capital (1993:143). He then makes an interesting observation about the unique relationship between Tibet and China, which Goldstein's work does not explicitly address:

It is unfortunately one of the realities of present-day international politics that claims to independence are afforded more recognition when stated in terms of the nineteenth-century European ideal of the nation-state under a nationally representative government. The relationship between Tibetans and Chinese can, however, scarcely be understood in terms of the relationships between two nation-states. (1993:143)

Indeed, relations between Tibet and China (specifically the Mongol and Manchu empires) were characterized by a form of patronage known as *mchod-yon*, a state-level expression of a general patron-client relationship, *sbyin-bdag*, in which spiritual guidance is exchanged for material support. This practice dates back to the thirteenth century when a famous lama, Sakya Pandita, went to the Mongol court to teach Buddhism to Ghengis Khan's grandson, Prince Godan; it was later consolidated by the Tibetan leader Phag-pa who initiated Kubilai Khan into Buddhism. Shakabpa argues that the patron-lama relationship, uniquely Central Asian, cannot be defined in Western political terms (1967:71). According to native interpretation, the Tibetan state was considered at least equal, if not superior, to those agents which supported it, and by entering into a *mchod-yon* relationship with Tibet, the Mongols and Manchus obtained no rights of sovereignty.

With the fall of the Manchu empire in 1911, the special relationship

between Tibet and China, which had been operative off and on for six centuries, ended and the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibet independent of the succeeding Republic of China.³⁰ Subsequently, Tibetan leaders tried, without success, to re-establish patron-client relationships with the Russian and British empires. Mchod-yon continues to be a fundamental category in Tibetan life in exile, with sympathetic Westerners replacing traditional Central Asian agencies of patronage. This crucial social relation and its role in the production of Tibetan identity in the diaspora are discussed at greater length in chapter 5.

As Samuel's description suggests, Tibet was not a nation-state nor was it incorporated into the Chinese empire: its political status was ambiguous, a fact which suited both Tibetans and Chinese regimes, at least until the twentieth century.³¹ The mchod-yon relationship which obtained between the two polities appears by Western political standards to have provided Tibetans (and the Chinese) with plenty of room to maneuver.³² As French points out,

Attempts at discussing acts by these two powers in modern international law terminology belies the fact that both countries worked very assiduously to keep their relations ambiguous. China's several claims of sovereignty over the Tibetans prior to 1950 were never followed by acts demonstrating that power nor were they viewed, by either Tibetans or the Chinese, as affecting the internal operations of Tibet. Similarly, Tibetan foreign policy often consisted of the avoidance of problems by not responding to letters...or fleeing advancing armies and awaiting their withdrawal. (1991:199)

This latitude ended in 1949, when the newly formed Chinese Communist Party began a military campaign to gain control of Kham and Amdo, and eventually

Central Tibet.

Since 1959, the ambiguity which once served both sides so well has become a liability: China has had to rewrite its history in order to justify its claims to legitimacy in Tibet, while Tibetan refugees have been forced to construct a Tibetan national narrative in order to have their claims taken seriously by the world community. Thus it is not surprising that history and historiography have become central issues in the discursive struggle between Tibetans and Chinese, and that scholars whose work addresses the nature of the Tibetan polity and its boundaries have been drawn into the debate.³³

Kham and Amdo

Although the provinces of U and Tsang have received the bulk of the attention in the literature, most Tibetans lived outside Central Tibet in Kham and Amdo. Kham is in the eastern part of Tibet and Amdo is the region to its north. The ethnographic information available on these areas is extremely limited, the bulk of it gathered by former missionaries Robert Ekvall and Matthias Hermanns. We must therefore also rely on reports by Western travellers and refugees to reconstruct Kham and Amdo's premodern social and political structures.³⁴

Kham's major towns grew up along the trade routes that connected China and India, Mongolia and Lhasa and which were travelled by caravans filled with tea, cigarettes, cloth, wool, musk or hides.³⁵ Although the Chinese had been present in Kham off and on for several centuries, Tibetan accounts of life in the

region in the first half of the twentieth century suggest that Chinese effectiveness was nominal, at best. Samuel writes, "It was only in the 1950s that the new Communist regime began to impinge directly on the lives of Tibetans. In other words, Kham east of the Driчу ('Bri-chu) was, during the premodern period, for all practical purposes independent of both the Lhasa government and the Chinese authorities" (1993:72). The people of Kham, called Khampas, are known for their independent nature and fighting spirit. When the People's Republic of China began to integrate part of Kham directly into its administrative structure in the 1950s, fighting broke out. The rebellion spread to Lhasa in 1959, culminating in the flight of the Dalai Lama and the fall of the Lhasa government.³⁶ Later, Khampas were the main group involved in guerrilla fighting against the Chinese on the border between Nepal and Tibet and were trained and funded by the CIA (see J. Norbu 1994). I come back to the issue of resistance and Tibet's fall in chapter 4.

Kham was known for its crafts--each district specialized in something--woodblock printing, pottery, metal work, including gold and silver. Informants told one researcher that income from crafts exceeded income from land or herds and that a large portion of the profits obtained from crafts and trade were used for religious ceremonies and services, for the upkeep of monasteries, and for the support of monks as practitioners and teachers (Michael 1982).

Very little information is available about Kham's social structure. There is, however, some information on the political structure of the region, including

Teichman's survey (1922). Teichman, a British consular official involved in the 1918 Chinese-Tibetan peace negotiations in Kham, lists twenty-six Tibetan "states" under Chinese protection in the pre-1905 period. Referring to this list, Samuel notes that

some of these might be better described as stateless areas although all had some kind of formal head...the largest of these states was the "kingdom" of Derge, which was ruled by a hereditary king or *gyelpo*. Four other states in Kham had rulers called *gyelpo*. Most of the other twenty-one states also had lay rulers, generally referred to as *depa* or *ponpo*, which are less specific titles than generic terms for lay rulers and administrators. Five had lama rulers. (1993:73-74)

Each of these semi-autonomous principalities had a distinct history and identity. Samuel points out that at any given time, the large, settled communities of Kham "normally owed clear allegiance to one state or another through their local headman and *dpon-po*, and travelers along the main roads knew when they were passing from one domain to another" (1993:82). The areas inhabited by pastoralists were not always effectively integrated into these petty states; there were also "wild bandit" regions with no authority whatsoever (Samuel 1993:82).

Although Kham provides "a bewildering variety of Tibetan polities," according to Samuel, a number of "leadership patterns" can be identified. These include hereditary lay princes, hereditary lamas and reincarnate lamas, as well as officials appointed by the Lhasa government. Many of the lay princes were affiliated with lamas and *gompa* (*dgon-pa*) in the region (Samuel 1993:83). (It is important to note that the term *gompa* can encompass many things, including

remote hermitages, residences of a hereditary lamas, communities of non-celibate practitioners, or monasteries of celibate monks.) In addition, "a particular 'state' might have subordinate status within a larger 'state'" and most states, regardless of size, included "subordinate centers of power," usually called *rdzong*, as in Central Tibet (Samuel 1993:83; see also Teichman 1922:171, 176). Another interesting feature in the Hor states in Kham was the lack of territorial boundaries; jurisdiction was over families and villages, as it was in Central Tibet, rather than over contiguous land or fixed territory. Finally, the degree of control exercised by these various polities over their inhabitants varied greatly: at one extreme were the settled village and urban populations and at the other extreme were "wild" populations described by Teichman as "unruly" and "notorious" (1922:203 n.l., 207).

Amdo, like Kham, was and continues to be an ethnically complex region. Most of the Tibetans living in Amdo were nomadic pastoralists. There were also Mongol pastoralists and other Tibetanized groups such as the Sokpo Arik (Sog-po-a-rigs) (Samuel 1993:87). Settled Tibetan agriculturalists could be found too, many of whom lived in close contact with other ethnic groups, including Hui or Chinese Muslims, Han Chinese, and a Turkic group known as the Salar, in walled towns that served as trading centers for the region (Samuel 1993:89).

Many large Gelugpa *gompa* could be found in Amdo, which must have meant that at some point Amdo had ties to the Lhasa government (which was Gelugpa). But Lhasa never had direct control over Amdo and the *gompa* in the

region were politically autonomous (Samuel 1993:90). During the Manchu period, the entire region was ruled by the Chinese amban in Xining. Amdo had a history of rebellions by the Hui against Chinese government troops. After the major rebellion of 1861-1874, the Muslims became the dominant power in the area. Fighting then broke out between the Tibetans and the Muslims in 1925, leading to a reorganization of the province in 1928. In 1949, the entire region was directly incorporated into the Chinese People's Republic.

Most of the ethnographic work done on Amdo relates to pastoralist populations (Ekvall 1939, 1952, 1968, 1981; Hermanns 1949; see also Rock 1956; N. Norbu 1983). "Tentholds"--as opposed to Central Tibetan households--formed the basic social unit (Ekvall 1968). They were grouped into encampments (*rus-kor*) which in turn were organized into tribes (*ts'o*), with an informally recognized headman. In practice, leadership was exercised by the elders (*rgan-po*) (Ekvall 1939:68). In some cases, there was a hereditary chief (*'go-pa*) whose power depended on personal attributes, though autocratic control was limited "not by any competing body of power, but by the individualism and hatred of arbitrary restraint which are very strong in the Tibetans" (Ekvall 1939:69). Ekvall mentions another form of leadership, that of king (*rgyal-po*--the same term used in Kham), which referred to chiefs who had acquired great power through the consolidation of tribes and the skillful exercise of patronage, diplomacy and military prowess (Samuel 1993:93). Hermanns offers another possibility too: that of an elected chief. Both Ekvall and Hermanns stress, however, that the authority of these various rulers

depended on the support of the *genpo*, or elders, and the population as a whole.

Ekvall (1952, 1968) has written extensively about the tradition of "feuding" in Amdo, which Samuel argues is similar to the fighting patterns found in the highlands of West Asia or the Balkans, or of African pastoralists such as the Nuer (1993:94). Hostility between long-term enemies was dealt with by mediation, since there was not an encompassing authority capable of imposing settlements. Famous lamas, chiefs, and well-known orators would gather to mediate a dispute, a process which could take a long time, as they were "in no hurry to go home for they have oratorical reputations to maintain" (Ekvall 1968:79). Formal oratory was considered an important art; in fact Ekvall devoted much of his scholarly attention to speech, formal oratory and negotiation in Amdowa pastoralist communities (1952, 1964).

As members of decentralized and nonhierarchical communities, Tibetan pastoralists negotiated for any services required from the outside world on a contractual basis (Samuel 1993:94). No regular taxes were paid to Lhasa government officials, although some nomadic communities paid "tribute" in the form of yaks, goats, sheep, salt and butter to the *gompa* estates to which they were attached. This appears to be the case more for nomads in the Changt'ang (Byangthang) (Western Tibet) than for those in Amdo or Kham (see D. Norbu 1987; Goldstein and Beall 1990).

At the same time, *gompa* played an important role in nomadic (*'brog-pa*) life. Nomads economically supported the monastery in exchange for protection

from malevolent forces and other religious services. The *gompa* provided nonreligious services as well, including "mediation of disputes, storage and trading of produce, and protection in times of conflict or external danger" (Samuel 1993:95). It is not clear to what extent *gompa* exerted administrative control over local groups. Samuel characterizes the relationship between the two as less one of permanent domination than "a series of alliances between secular and religious centers of power for mutual support" (1993:96). This kind of political style, he points out, was typical of Central Tibetan politics in a pre- and early Gelugpa period, and is a recurrent theme in exile political culture.

The other traditionally Tibetan areas included Ngari, in Western Tibet, which was and continues to be sparsely populated by pastoralists; Lho, a province bordering Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh; and Lahul, Spiti, Ladakh and Zaskar which are located in present-day India. Of course, the Himalayan region is home to many culturally Tibetan groups and is where most anthropological research on Tibetan populations has been done. The bulk of the studies have been of Sherpa society (see Adams 1989, 1992, 1996; Fisher 1986; 1990; Fürer-Haimendorf 1964, 1984; Oppitz 1968, 1974; Ortner 1978, 1989; Paul 1982). At some time most of these areas formed part of central and western Tibetan polities, but by the early twentieth century they had, with a few exceptions, been politically independent of Tibet for hundreds of years (Samuel 1993:100).

Some conclusions

In light of the fact that practically all significant anthropological research on Tibetan populations has been on communities in Nepal and Ladakh, we must ask how representative of Tibetan society is this material as a whole? Samuel addresses the issue in the following way:

Ethnic Tibet, despite the unifying effects of Buddhism, trade, and a common written language, has never been a particularly homogeneous region. The major provinces of Kham, Amdo, Central Tibet, and western Tibet have different histories and have been shaped in many ways by those histories. It requires considerable effort for Khampas, Amdowas, Lhasa people and Ladakhis to understand each others' spoken languages. Within each of those regions, there are numerous communities with different dialects, social structures, kinship systems, and ritual practices. The area of folk-religious practices is probably particularly variable, but Tibetan communities generally seem to have welcomed diversity and accepted local variation as natural, and the difficulties of communication, along with the lack of an effective centralized state through most of Tibetan history, would have done nothing to reduce this diversity. From this point of view, no one part of Tibet is going to be representative or typical. (1993:112-113)

Samuel summarizes the dangers of assuming that the Central Tibetan state was representative of Tibet as a whole: it privileges a single state when there were actually several in the region; it reinforces a view that state power was a given, rather than fragile and limited; it privileges the stratified and hierarchical segment of Tibetan society over the groups who lived in relatively egalitarian and stateless societies (e.g., Amdo pastoralists); and finally, it privileges a region of Tibet that was much more isolated than other areas and so perpetuates a myth of Tibetan society as existing in isolation, rather than in constant contact with surrounding

societies through trade (1993:145).³⁷ It is this vision of heterogeneity, diversity and equality which ultimately distinguishes Samuel's portrayal of Tibet from that of Goldstein and others.

Samuel concludes that premodern Tibet had more in common with stateless societies than states and that equality within the village (or at least particular categories of villagers) and pastoral communities was as important a theme of Tibetan politics as hierarchy outside the village (1982:226). He suggests that it may be more productive to see Tibetan structures of authority "less in terms of a command structure in which all power derives from the ultimate power of the ruler, and more in terms of the negotiation of power between more or less equal partners" (1993:151). Citing Aziz's work on the mutual aid relationship (*ganye*) in Ding-ri (1978:189-197), in which individuals become formally obligated to support one another in times of need, and the existence of other formalized friendship relationships based on equality (see also Corlin 1975, Miller 1956, and Ortner 1978:61-90), Samuel backs up his argument that "horizontal" relationships were of great importance in Tibetan communities and that even the stratified society of Central Tibet "should not be seen simply in terms of relationships between the Dalai Lama and estate lord or between estate lord and peasant (or "serf")" (1993:124).³⁸

Samuel's observations about hierarchy and equality in Tibet echo Ortner's claim about another ethnically Tibetan group, the Sherpas: "there is a fundamental contradiction in the Sherpa social and cultural order between an assumption of the

naturalness and desirability of (male) equality, and an assumption of the naturalness and desirability of hierarchy" (1989:19)? What bearing do they have on our understanding of the contradictions embedded in Tibetan efforts to transform the old hierarchical social order in exile through the embrace of discourses of democracy and human rights which assume the equality of individuals? And given Tibetans' heightened sensitivity to portrayals of their former system as feudalistic, what significance can we read into Samuel's emphasis on Tibetan equality? In this dissertation, I argue that the tension between equality and hierarchy is a central problematic in Tibetan societies, an irresolvable dilemma made more visible in the diasporic context and further heightened by the presence of non-Tibetan social actors whose assumptions and ideas challenge Tibetan formulations of order in exile.

By focusing on the tension between equality and hierarchy, Samuel lays the groundwork for his broader argument about religion in Tibet, whose development, he writes, must be understood in the context of Tibetan politics, and more specifically, in light of Tibet's fragility as a centralized state.

Had the population of Tibet been integrated into a state as effectively centralized as, for example, those of Thailand, Burma, Cambodia or Sri Lanka over the last few centuries, Tantric Buddhism would never have developed and maintained its dominant role within Tibetan society. An effectively centralized state in Tibet would never have tolerated the kind of free-ranging and autonomous power that Tantric lamas and *gompa* exercised over the centuries. Indeed...state powers in Tibet generally did their best to "domesticate" and restrict lamas. That they failed was an indication precisely of the limits of state power within Tibet, and of the inaccuracy of the Lhasa-centric view of Tibet (1993:142).

As suggested earlier, Samuel's conclusions have implications not only for the emergence of Tantric Buddhism in Tibet but also for understanding the project of constructing a unified "national" Tibetan identity in exile. They help us to understand the origins of regional and sectarian identifications and the persistent factionalism which has come to define exile politics. Together, Samuel's and Goldstein's work paint a portrait of pre-1951 Tibet which undermines its popular image as an isolated Shangri-La--an image created by Western fantasy but which, as I argue in this dissertation, is perpetuated by Tibetans themselves and their non-Tibetan supporters for political purposes. Their depictions of old Tibet also challenge the dominant exile version of history--that of a unified Tibet under Lhasa leadership. In so doing, these scholars touch on one of the most contested issues within the refugee community: the legitimacy of the exile government's claim to speak for all Tibetans, inside Tibet and across the diaspora.

The production, circulation, and contestation of representations of Tibetan history by Tibetans and scholars are central processes through which "Tibetanness" is mediated and mobilized in the diaspora. As Goldstein's and Samuel's scholarship suggests, Tibetans' primary loyalty was to Buddhism rather than to any nationalistic entity called Tibet. In the next chapter, I continue my brief sketch of Tibet's religio-political system, focusing on Tibetan Buddhism and its role in political life before 1951.

Notes

1. As Graham Clarke points out, "There have been no field-studies of the stature of Evans-Pritchard's The Nuer or Leach's Political Systems of Highland Burma in the anthropological study of Tibet. The ethnographic method of Malinowski developed from the second decade of this century onwards, a period when Tibet was largely closed to foreigners, first by the Tibetans themselves, and then, after 1959, by the Chinese" (1983:50).
2. See Stoddard's essay "Tibetan publications and national identity" in Barnett and Akiner (eds.) Resistance and Reform in Tibet, 1994: pp. 121-156. Stoddard and other scholars (e.g., Dargyay 1982, Schwartz 1994a) have noted that almost all literature in pre-1951 Tibet was religious and did not focus on "worldly" concerns. This has changed under Chinese rule, though it was not until the 1980s that a new generation of writers emerged and began publishing novels and short stories which deal with modern or secular concerns.

Interestingly enough, the "First National Conference of Tibetan Writers" was recently held in Dharamsala (March 15-17, 1995). It was the first time such a gathering had been organized. Sponsored by the Amnye Machen Institute, the conference's aim was to discuss "the role of Tibetan writers in initiating change and progress in Tibetan society and taking a lead in the freedom struggle" (Lungta 1995:30-33). Organizers invited writers from Tibet as well as writers from across the diaspora. 62 people participated, ranging from an elderly lama scholar living in Switzerland to a Nepalese editor of a Tibetan language paper. AMI introduced participants to the Institutes' facilities for research and publication and discussed its translation program of "great books of the world into Tibetan." Participants elected to join P.E.N. International and to form a Tibetan chapter with the hope of being able to "view their profession and ideals in a more global context." "Tibet's best-selling author" the Dalai Lama, was awarded the first Gedun Choephel Award.

3. Scholarly work on Tibet that deploys an historical or anthropological perspective can be grouped according to ten interrelated themes:
 - 1) The monastic-political system in Central Tibet (Goldstein 1968, 1989; Goldstein and Tsarong 1985; Carrasco 1959; Cassinelli and Ekvall 1969; Michael 1982; Samuel 1982, 1993; Shakabpa 1967; Wiley 1986)
 - 2) The institution of the Dalai Lama (Bell 1946; Klieger 1991; Mullin 1988; Thurman 1983)
 - 3) Tibetan Buddhism (Brentano n.d., 1993; Ekvall 1964; Mumford 1989; Ortner 1978, 1989; Paul 1982; Samuel 1982, 1985, 1993, 1994b; Stein 1972; Thurman 1984; Tucci 1980)

- 4) Kinship (Aziz 1978, 1988; Goldstein 1971, 1987) and polyandry (culturally Tibetan groups in Himalayas: Fürer-Haimendorf 1964; Levine 1988)
- 5) Central Tibetan village life (Aziz 1978; Dargyay 1982, Goldstein 1968; Miller 1956)
- 6) Amdo and Kham/pastoralism (Ekvall 1939, 1952, 1964, 1968; Goldstein and Beall 1990; Peissel 1972, Stoddard 1985)
- 7) The Tibetan diaspora: Nepal and India (Calkowski 1986, 1991; Corlin 1975, 1995; Devoe 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987; Forbes 1989; Goldstein 1975; Gombo 1985; Klieger 1992; Nowak 1984; N. Paljor 1986; Saklani 1978); Switzerland (Brauen and Kantowsky 1982; Marazzi 1975; Ott-Marti 1976; Sander 1984); North America (McLellan 1986; McLagan 1996, in press; Messerschmidt 1976)
- 8) Exile institutions and politics (Avedon 1984; Dixit 1991; French 1991; Monnier 1989; J. Norbu 1989; D. Norbu 1991, 1992; Nowak 1984)
- 9) Tibetan nationalism since 1959 (Barnett 1994; Klieger 1992; D. Norbu 1982; Schwartz 1989, 1994a, 1994b; Smith 1994; Sperling 1994; Stoddard 1994)
- 10) Historical relations between Tibet and China (Beckwith 1987; Goldstein 1989, 1991a, 1994a; Grunfeld 1987; Shakabpa 1967; Smith 1994; Sperling 1980).

In a recent article on Tibetan Studies in the 1990s, Samuel (1994a) points out that Tibetanists (as he calls scholars who work on Tibet-related topics) tend to "treat Tibet as an isolate and to avoid relating it to larger regional discourses" (697), thereby constructing Tibet as an autonomous and largely isolated cultural and historical region. He argues that this tendency has an obvious relation to the political situation in Tibet and scholars' desires to not undermine Tibetans' claims to autonomy and liberation from Chinese rule. Samuel also suggests that Buddhist discourse tends to dominate Tibetan studies, which results in the neglect of other important topics (698). He argues that scholars need to consider Tibet in the context of research on the Southeast Asian highlands, research conducted mainly by anthropologists (e.g., Leach 1970; Tambiah 1984, 1985).

4. Some of this literature is excellent and provides the only information available on certain communities, particularly those in Amdo and Kham (for concise summaries, see Samuel 1993, chapters 4 and 5; Goldstein 1994a).

5. Although the use of scholarship to legitimize one side's claim over the other's is relatively recent, the conflict between Tibet and China over Tibet's political status predates the creation of the PRC and its rule in Tibet. In fact, the roots of the conflict date back more than two hundred years (see Goldstein 1994b).
6. For an analysis of China's public relations strategy (from the Tibetan point of view), see the International Campaign for Tibet's report: China's Public Relations Strategy on Tibet: Classified Documents from the Beijing Propaganda Conference (1993).
7. See Samuel (1994a:697) on how the nature of the political dispute between Tibet and China affects Tibetan studies.
8. Indeed, until 1968, no academic had ever made a study of Tibetan political institutions that was based on fieldwork in Tibet or intensive interviewing among refugees in India. Since then, only a few scholars, including Melvyn Goldstein (1968, 1989) and Barbara Aziz (1978), have published material based on primary research.
9. See "Women in Tibetan Society and Tibetology" by Barbara Nimri Aziz in Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 4th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, edited by Helga Uebach and Jampa L. Panglung, 1988.
10. As far as academic studies are concerned, Barbara Nimri Aziz, an anthropologist, has written one of the only books which offers a glimpse into what daily life must have been like for Tibetan women (and men) in old Tibet (Tibetan Frontier Families, 1978). She has also published a number of articles relating to Tibetan women (see Aziz 1985; 1987). Tibet Journal published a special issue on Women and Tibet in 1987 (Winter, Vol. 12, no. 4).

For studies of famous women Buddhist practitioners, see Tsultrim Allione's Women of Wisdom (1984); Keith Dowman's Sky Dancer (1984). See also Servants of the Buddha by Anna Grimshaw (1992); Feminine Ground: Essays on Women in Tibet, (1989) edited by Janice Willis; Women in Buddhism by Diana Paul (1979); Anne Carolyn Klein's Meeting the Great Bliss Queen (1995); and Hanna Havnevik's Tibetan Buddhist Nuns: History, Cultural Norms and Social Reality (1989).

There are also a few popular autobiographies written by elite laywomen, including Princess in the Land of Snows (1990) by Jamyang Sakya, House of the Turquoise Roof (1990) by Dorje Yudon Yuthok, and Rinchen Dolma Taring's Daughter of Tibet (1970), which offer insight into the everyday lives of aristocrat women. More recently, David Patt profiled a Tibetan woman, Ama Adhe, in Strange Liberation: Tibetan lives in Chinese Hands (1992).

Since 1987, nuns in Tibet have played a leading role in demonstrations for independence. Several authors have written about this phenomena, including Carole Devine (1993), Hanna Havnevik (1994), and Ron Schwartz (1994a), but as yet no study has been done of the emergence of political activism by young nuns from rural

backgrounds in Tibet.

11. See Dung-dkar Blo bzang 'phrim-las (1991) for a discussion of *chos-srid zung-'brel*.
12. Out of 200 families, 30 were higher status *Depon Mitra* (*sde-dpon mi-drag*) families who had multiple estates. The other 120-170 lower or "common" aristocratic families usually held single estates (Goldstein 1989:6).
13. In his dissertation (1968) Goldstein notes that aristocratic families perceived their obligation to government service as a right.
14. Many writers on pre-1951 Tibet have asserted that traditionally 25% of the male population were monks. Samuel disputes this figure, arguing that while there were undoubtedly areas in premodern Tibet with high local concentrations of celibate monks, for the country as a whole, the percentage was closer to 10-12% in the centralized areas and lower in outlying regions (1993: 582).
15. See Goldstein (1989: Chapter 3) for a discussion of attempts to modernize Tibet in the early twentieth century.
16. Perhaps the most interesting example of a group who sought change in Tibet was the "Tibetan Improvement Party"—a group of Khampa and Amdowa intellectuals and nationalists who were followers of Sun Yat-Sen and who took the ideals and theories of the Kuomintang as models for a future restructured Tibet (see Goldstein 1989:449-463). This group, which included the famed monk Gedun Choephel, was largely based in the Indian border towns of Kalimpong and Darjeeling. Goldstein describes him in the following way:

When he was about thirty he went to India for a stay of twelve years during which he learned English and Sanskrit and translated and composed a wide variety of texts. While in India, he became enamored of Marxist-Leninist political philosophy and anti-colonialist ideology and came to believe that major reforms or a revolution in Tibet was necessary. He favored giving the monks salaries instead of estates and requiring them to study instead of engaging in business. He is also said to have favored land and legal reforms, and democracy. For all his brilliance, however, Gedun Choephel was hopelessly degenerate for a monk. He was a womanizer, a chain smoker, a user of opium and liquor, and physically unkempt. (1989:453)

In the end, the British caught wind of the TIP's revolutionary, pro-Chinese activities in India, and alerted the Tibetan government of its members desire or intentions to overthrow the Tibetan government. Several of them were sent to China, including the Khampa layman Ranga Pangdatsang, and the Gelugpa teacher Geshe Sherab Gyatso, from Amdo, who was to become, for many years, Chairman of the All China Buddhist Association of the PRC. Indeed, when the Chinese arrived in Lhasa

in 1951, a number of progressivist Tibetan intellectuals were already prepared to set up translation committees in order to translate Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung into Tibetan. For an interesting discussion of these individuals and this period of Tibetan history, see Heather Stoddard's doctoral thesis (1985), Le Mendiant d'Amdo. This strain of Tibetan political life has been largely written out of the historical record by exile Tibetans. However, a few Tibetan progressives have played important roles in post-1959 Tibet; I will address this issue in chapter 3.

For an interesting interview with one of Choephel's students currently living in Switzerland, see "Gedun Choephel or the loss of a sage: Interview with Rakra Tethong," published in the Swiss magazine Lungta, 1992, pp. 19-23.

17. Indeed, during the course of my research, I met only a few Tibetans who had actually read the text and formed an opinion about Goldstein's argument. Unsurprisingly, they were almost without exception intellectuals and laypersons who agreed with the author's conclusions and lamented the fact that most Tibetans are "uninterested in learning about their own history."
18. The personal nature of some of the attacks has been frustrating for the author, who in fact was married to a Tibetan at one time and with whom he had a child, and who claims to have a great deal of sympathy for Tibetans, both inside and outside of Tibet (personal communication).
19. The most well-known exception to this was Gendun Choepel's incomplete history of Tibet known as The White Annals (1978).
20. Recent Chinese estimates are that "manorial estates" accounted for 62% of the total arable land, 37% of which were religious estates, 25% of which were aristocratic estates (Epstein 1983:406).
21. Goldstein suggests that Tibet "did differ markedly from European serfdom in the absence of a class of "free peasants," in the tremendous number of "derived" landless serfs, and in the fact that Tibetan serfs had legal identities" (1986:108). This doesn't, however, "mitigate the essential isomorphism that existed between serfdom as a system of economic production in medieval Western Europe...and that which existed in Tibet" Goldstein concludes (1986:108).
22. In fact, Goldstein estimates that in 1951 there were only 400 to 500 lay and monk officials administering a country that contained at least one million inhabitants in an area almost the size of Western Europe (1989:6).
23. E.g. unlike Goldstein, who translates *mi-ser* as "serf," Aziz's translation is "commoner."
24. This was not the case in pastoral and remote agricultural communities, where kinship was lineage-based (Samuel 1993:115).

25. Dargyay disagrees with Aziz on this point. She argues that an individual would usually only seek independence from an estate to which he or she was attached if he/she had lost almost every family member and was unable to meet tax obligations. For Dargyay's informants, voluntarily seeking to change social status was unimaginable, for independence meant the loss of protection by one's patron, the estate lord, as well as the loss of what little rights one had as a taxpaying farmer (Dargyay 1982:23).

Those rare few who did seek independence from their estate had several options: they could "petition the landlord, run away, request a suspension to go on a pilgrimage or commercial venture, or join a monastery" (Dargyay 1982:21).

Goldstein takes issue with use of the word "choice" in describing decisions by *mi-ser* to leave their estate (see Miller 1987). He points out that the granting of requests for release from attachment to a lord/estate on a permanent or temporary basis was entirely the prerogative of the lord, (1986:95) reiterating that for an individual, social mobility was dependent on the good will of his or her superior.

26. Inheritance was unilateral: "sons of a father tied to landlord A would belong as tenants to A; daughters followed their mother's dependency; thus among members of each family, theoretically, the male and female members belonged to different landlords" (Dargyay 1982:19).

One of the most well-known instances of social mobility involves a man named Jensey Namgang, who was born into a peasant family but who ran away from home at an early age. He was taken on as a servant of a monk official who accompanied the 13th Dalai Lama to Mongolia. Later his military skill made him a favorite of the Dalai Lama, who ennobled him in 1913 and gave him the title of *dza-sag*. He married into an aristocratic family and took their last name—Tsarong. This practice of having a man move into his wife's household and adopt the wife's family name is known as *mag-pa*. See Taring (1970) for a lively account of her father's dramatic rise to power and fame.

Goldstein notes that if monks were originally serfs, they were freed from all obligations to their lord upon entering the monastery. If they left the monastery, however, they "reverted to the status of *mi-ser* of their original lord" (1986:110).

27. For example, in 1992-93, one thousand Tibetans emigrated to the United States through the U.S. Tibet Resettlement Program.
28. Tibetans living in Switzerland or North America are considered to be highly desirable marriage partners for obvious economic reasons.
29. See Tsering Wangyal's essay "Sino-Tibetan negotiations since 1959" in Barnett and Akiner (eds.), Resistance and Reform in Tibet (1994:197-206); see also "China's Dialogue with the Dalai Lama 1978-90: Prenegotiation stage or dead end?" by Dawa Norbu. Pacific Affairs, 64(3):351-371, 1991.

30. See Goldstein (1989) for a description of the events which immediately followed the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, including the Simla Convention of 1913 and a discussion of the complex negotiations between Britain, China and Tibet.
31. One scholar credits the ambiguity of *mchod-yon* for the long-standing conflict between Tibetans and Chinese which he describes as a "differential misunderstanding of the traditional patron/client framework" (Klieger 1992:18).
32. This aspect came up during my fieldwork in discussions with Tibetan intellectuals who pointed out the "vagueness" and tendency toward ambiguity in Tibetan political behavior, both on the individual and state level. To what extent this behavior, which at times frustrates Western supporters of Tibet, derives from a legacy of patron-client relations in the past is uncertain. However, Goldstein's (1989) examination of Tibetan diplomacy vis a vis the British and the Chinese in the 1940s reveals quite clearly Tibetan ambiguity in action.
33. See the late Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa's Tibet: A Political History (1967) New Haven: Yale University Press. This text, written by the former Minister of Finance from 1930-1950, is essentially the official Tibetan exile version of history—a history. Klieger (1992) notes, "that is utilized to present Tibetan national claims to the world" (24).
34. For a fascinating summary of the history of Christian evangelism in Tibet, see Tibet Information Network's Background Papers on Tibet, September 1992; part 1: "Evangelicals in Central Tibet."
35. One of my informants in New York came from a family of traders in Eastern Tibet who travelled to China in order to buy bricks of tea, which they would then take to Lhasa to sell. From there, the traders would travel to India where they would use the money from the tea to purchase clothing, utensils and other items which were too expensive to buy in China or Tibet. Returning to Tibet, they would sell these items to Tibetans and return home. Like many other families in this part of Tibet, my informant's family was polyandrous—he had three fathers and one mother—a form of household organization which obviously suited the needs of those engaged in seasonal trading (e.g. at least one male could stay behind with the family).
36. Since 1959, the Driчу ('Bri-chu) has remained the boundary between what is currently known as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) on the western side and the province of Sichuan on the eastern side.
37. Samuel stresses the importance of trade over and over in his book, arguing that Tibetan societies owed much of their viability to the trade routes to and from China, India, Nepal and Kashmir. Trading was "an intrinsic part of the Tibetan ecological adaptation and it brought Tibetans into constant contact with surrounding populations. Lhasa has substantial populations of Newaris, Kashmir and Chinese Muslims and the trading centers of Kham and Amdo had an equally heterogeneous character" (1993:145).

38. Very little has been written on mutual aid relationships because there is almost no documentation of them. Miller (1956) has published several articles on the subject in which she describes the practices of *ganye*. These formalized friendships were entered into by the formal presentation of a *kata* (*kha-btags*), white ceremonial scarf, and money during the observation of a life crisis, usually a death or a marriage.

An individual's *ganye* must appear during the celebration of the important events and must make a presentation of a scarf and money at the time...a written record is kept of all sums received from each *ganye* for each event. Then when the *ganye* in turn has a crisis in his family, the amount he has given, plus an additional sum, must be contributed. (1956:158)

According to Miller, the sole purpose of acquiring a large number of *ganye* "is to have lots of people at one's family's important occasions and who can also help bear the brunt of the expenses involved" (1956:160).

Another relation set up by a formal initiation ceremony is called *mitra*, a mutual friendship for trade purposes. The third form of mutual aid relationships are *kidu* - organizations designed to function as a source of aid during life crises. Typically, the *kidu* contributed as a unit toward the expenses incurred by its members (Miller 1956:160). The *kidu* studied by Miller in India had names, but were not based on region or kinship. There was no restriction on membership, but members were expected to render labor services on a rotating basis and new members paid initiation fees. Miller suggests that *kidu* existed only among the middle and lower classes, and were particularly strong in urban areas where kinship ties were weakened.

Chapter 3 Tibetan Buddhism and rule by incarnation

Introduction

In order to fully grasp the nature of Tibet's political system before the Chinese occupation, it is necessary to put the development of Tibet's unique form of Buddhism into context. To do this, I begin by outlining the three vehicles of Buddhism. Then, following Samuel's argument, I briefly discuss the indigenous religious practices which existed in Tibet before Buddhism's arrival, and the subsequent encounter between the two. After outlining the development of some of the basic concepts and practices of Tibetan Buddhism--which is essential if we are to make sense of Western fascination with Tibet and with cultural production in the diaspora--I explore the emergence of rule by incarnation and the institution of the Dalai Lama. Due to the constraints on fieldwork in old Tibet described in Chapter 2, this account is more of an historical narrative than an account of everyday life. Yet its focus on the intertwined nature of Tibetan religious and political structures will serve as a useful framework for locating contemporary political and cultural processes in the diaspora described throughout the rest of the dissertation.

The three vehicles of Buddhism

Samuel's Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies (1993) is the most authoritative account to date of the evolution of religion in Tibet from the ninth century up to the Chinese occupation in 1951. It is especially useful because the

author writes from an anthropological perspective, something which is missing from most of the English-language literature on Tibetan Buddhism (for notable exceptions, see Mumford 1989; Ortner 1978, 1989; and Paul 1982).

As one of the world's major spiritual traditions, Buddhism centers on the pursuit of Enlightenment, or *bodhi* (Skt.), a goal of liberation from suffering. It originated with a historical figure who lived in what is now northern India sometime around fifth century B.C.E. Siddhartha Gautama, a member of the Sakya clan, left the comfort of his aristocratic household when he was twenty-nine and became a wandering ascetic. After six years of life as a hermit, during which time he underwent yogic austerities and studied doctrines, Gautama gave up the ascetic practices for normal life. He then spent seven weeks in the shade of a tree near the town of Bodh Gaya, in the Ganges River Valley, until finally one dawn he became "awakened." The Buddha ("enlightened one," Skt.) then began to preach; soon he had a large following.

The cornerstone of Buddha's teaching is impermanence--the absence of intrinsic self nature. It was his key insight and led to the crux of his teaching, that all trouble comes from ignorance or misknowledge (*avidya*, Skt.), from a belief that things exist in and of themselves--independently, autonomously, possessed of some intrinsic nature, some inherent existence (Lopez 1991:104). This belief is the source of suffering, according to the Buddha. The antidote to ignorance and suffering is wisdom--the realization that all things, including persons, are devoid of intrinsic nature, and are, in reality, empty (Lopez

1991:104). To achieve wisdom, one must follow the Buddhist path (*dharma*) (Skt.).

Buddha taught that selflessness means relativity, interconnectedness and that realization of this leads to freedom from suffering. These principles are summarized by the Four Noble Truths: 1) reality is permeated by suffering, 2) desire is the cause of such suffering, 3) cessation of suffering is a possibility, and 4) the Buddhist path leads to the cessation of suffering. A great emphasis was therefore put on causality which in Buddhist theory is known as the doctrine of dependent origination. It can be summarized in the following way: everything we regard as "the self" is conditioned or compounded; everything conditioned depends on causes and conditions. Nothing exists in and of itself without relation to anything else; therefore there is no absolute, permanent self-substantial thing; things only have a conventional existence.

Another way of looking at the question of causality is through the concept of karma or action. Karma was presented by the Buddha as a biological and ethical law which dictated that you become what you do. In other words, karma is the "cumulative force of previous actions, which determines present experience and will determine future existences" (Thurman 1976:140). In fact, Buddhists theorize that karmic action is the only thing that reincarnates, since there is no soul or self with intrinsic identity. The theory of karma stresses the importance of individual responsibility in determining one's future births--it is both an empowering and constraining concept in that it creates a space for change in the system and yet it

dictates that one must live the results of one's actions.¹

The Buddha's teachings, passed down orally for several centuries after his death, were codified in the *sūtras* (Skt.), texts that narrate his instructions to his disciples on various specified occasions. For the Theravadin (Hinayāna) school of Buddhism, which dominates modern Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Burma and Cambodia, these early *sūtras* form the only authentic teaching of the Buddha. For Tibetans and other Mahāyāna Buddhists, they represent only the first of several "turnings of the wheel of the Dharma"; later "turnings" revealed supplemental *sūtras* and the *tantras* (see below).

The Hinayāna ("small vehicle") was the first to become widespread. Adherents to the Hinayāna path pursue liberation for their own sake. In other words, they seek to become *arhats* (Skt.), beings liberated from suffering, its causes, and repeated rebirth into samsaric existence. The Mahāyāna ("universal vehicle") derives from Hinayāna teachings and thus the two have many basic principles and concepts in common. Yet there are large and important differences between them. Mahāyāna goes a step beyond the Hinayāna ideal of individual liberation, urging, as part of an individual practice towards liberation and enlightenment, that he/she assume responsibility for all other beings. The Mahāyāna innovation was to put forth a new form of ideal being, the *bodhisattva*, who resolves to transform not just him/herself but to seek enlightenment for all sentient beings. The career of a bodhisattva is conceived as open to any and all persons who undertake with the right resolve to become Buddhas. By rejecting the

Hinayāna belief that only as a monk was one able to achieve liberation, Mahāyāna endorsed the legitimacy of lay life as a field of religious action.

Mahāyāna is the Buddhism of multiple buddhas and bodhisattvas who reside in multiple realms, where they assist numberless beings on their way to awakening. According to its doctrines, Buddhas and bodhisattvas, through their long eons of spiritual practice, accumulate vast funds of religious merit that they can transfer to others in order to help them to salvation. They can assume a form at will in any of the realms of being and in so doing exert a beneficial effect on the inhabitants of that realm. Through its altruistic commitment to helping others and to life in the samsaric world, Mahāyāna Buddhism has a much more social orientation than Hinayāna.

Mahāyānists believe that one must not only realize selflessness of his or her own person, but also the selflessness of all phenomena, which is a necessary prerequisite for omniscience, one of the main qualities of a buddha. Using critical analytical wisdom to examine the universe, they ask whether it has intrinsic substantiality. They suggest that there is an "objective selflessness" of all phenomena; when one realizes that all objects themselves are aggregates, one realizes objective selflessness. They apply this logic to their own concepts as well, claiming that even *nirvāna* (Skt., cessation of suffering) has no intrinsic essence.

With this wisdom of selflessness comes the simultaneous recognition of the relativity and relationality of all things. This concept of non-duality is a critique of the Hinayāna conception of liberation as a religious goal outside the world of

impermanence and suffering.

The third vehicle of Buddhism is known as Vajrayāna or the "diamond vehicle," a name which suggests the indivisible union of wisdom and method, the two main categories of study and practice that must be mastered in order to become an enlightened being. Vajrayāna, a nonmonastic, noncelibate form of Buddhism, emerged in India around 500 CE. It consisted of a series of further "revelations" that became codified in texts known as tantras. A tantra is defined, however, "not by the text bearing its name but by the living tradition(s) of practice relating to the central deities and symbolic forms of that tantra" (Samuel 1993:204). These spiritual practices are distinctive, encompassing a wide range of things, from magic to subtle metaphysics. In other words, tantras are essentially lineages of practice. One of the key aspects of tantra involves interaction, and in more advanced stages, identification with various tantric deities (*yi-dam*) through visualization. Known as "deity yoga," these practices form the heart of tantra. The transformation brought about in deity yoga also involves the manipulation of subtle energy within the body. As Samuel points out, these practices "are similar to Hindu yogic practices and to some Daoist practices where the corresponding energy is referred to as *qi*" (1993:204).

Tantric methods of the Vajrayāna offer the possibility for practitioners to attain enlightenment in a single lifetime. As a result, the practices are thought to be quite powerful and even dangerous, especially if undertaken without proper guidance of a *guru* (Skt.) or teacher. Most ordinary Tibetans do not pursue tantra

in their spiritual lives but those who do are highly revered and protected by others (Brentano 1993:23).

Great importance is placed on the lineage (*rgyud*) of the teachings and on legitimate transmission from one "generation" of practitioners to the next. Unlike Christianity, spiritual knowledge is passed on through a direct personal physical connection between lama and student. This relationship is a central aspect of tantra because before students can perform tantric practice, they must receive the appropriate empowerments from their lama. As Samuel explains it,

The life of Tantric practitioners in Tibet involves a series of such empowerments, in each of which they acquire the ability to practice the *sādhana* of a particular deity or assemblage of deities. These empowerments are normally accompanied by the textual transmission of the *sādhana* and often also by a formal teaching or explanation of the practice, in which the *sādhana* text, which is usually in verse and often quite condensed, is explained in detail. (1993:245)

The lama's role in these empowerments is the "paradigmatic" situation for their central role in all tantric practice, and in Tibetan religion as a whole (Samuel 1993:245). Tibetans are encouraged to adopt a devotional and affectionate attitude towards their *tsewa* lama ("root" or "heart guru"), whose personal authority derives from being a tantric master. Thus, along with the three major tantric deities, Avalokitesvara, Tara, and Guru Rinpoche, the living lama is the chief object of devotion in Tibetan culture.

Until 1959, when thousands of lamas and monks fled Tibet, little was known about Tibetan Buddhism in the West except that which derived from accounts by "lay ethnographers" described in chapter 2, some of whom claimed to

have witnessed unusual, if not fantastic, practices by tantric adepts. For instance, the French pilgrim-traveller Alexandra David-Neel wrote many books about her experiences in Tibet which included vivid descriptions of the various tantric practices she witnessed over the years, such as speedwalking (*rlung-gom*) and the use of body heat to warm oneself (*thu-mo*).² These sorts of stories captured the imagination of Western readers, for whom they were written, and contributed to Western fascination with the esoteric practices of Tibetan Buddhism, and by extension, Tibetans themselves. Tantra continues to attract Westerners to Tibetan Buddhism, and to be one of the defining aspects of Tibetan religious culture as we shall see in chapter 9.

Pre-Buddhist religion in Tibet

The Buddhism which finally arrived in Tibet in the eighth century CE represents Indian Buddhism in its late Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna form. A flexible and adaptable tradition, it quickly developed uniquely Tibetan characteristics through its encounter with the indigenous religious ideas and practices which flourished in Tibet at the time. These customs have been misleadingly labelled "Bon" by some Tibetan and Western scholars (e.g., Hoffman 1979). By most accounts, Bon was only one of many religious traditions in Tibet before the arrival of Buddhism and bonpos were only one of a variety of priests (Stein 1972:229). Samuel suggests that it may be more appropriate to use the term "Bon" to refer to the religious order of Bon and its adherents (bonpos) which is similar in form to the orders of

Tibetan Buddhism but claims to derive from the teachings of the pre-Buddhist master Shenrab Mibo rather than from the historical Buddha Śākyamuni.³ Due to space limitations I will not explore this issue further here. The point is that Tibetan Buddhism emerged as a result of a long process of incorporation, "dialogue" (see Mumford 1989), and even outright struggle between followers of these preexisting traditions and converts to the new religion. This process was made easier by the similarities between indigenous religious elements and tantrism.

The resulting amalgam

is a whole world, embracing many aspects: a rich and subtle philosophy, with its own dialectics and metaphysics; a very advanced depth-psychology linked to techniques of meditation and the control of psycho-physiological functions (yoga); an enormous pantheon; rituals, popular practices, cosmological speculations, systems of divination. (Stein 1972:164)

To understand Tibet's unique form of Buddhism, then, an examination of a few key pre-Buddhist religious concepts is in order.

Local gods are at the center of Tibet's "folk religion" (Tucci 1980:163-212), the most important of which are the gods and goddesses of the mountains (see also Stein 1972). Tibetans believe that it is necessary to stay on good terms with these gods to secure good fortune in daily life. Although they may be benevolent, local gods can be easily offended and become dangerous. Through ritual action, they can be "induced to be helpful and to prevent misfortune" (Samuel 1993:161). This is a major function of Tibetan ritual, both folk religious and Buddhist, and corresponds to the first of three spheres of Tibetan religious

activity, identified by Samuel as the "pragmatic orientation" (1993:31). This orientation involves a focus on this-world concerns, conceived of in terms of interactions with local gods and spirits and belief that skillful management of these forces can ensure success within this world.

Anthropologists (e.g. Ekvall 1968; FÜRER-HAIMENDORF 1964) have documented ritual practices carried out by lay people in non-Buddhist settings. These include the burning of incense, especially juniper wood, and the offering of prayer flags, known as the *sang* ritual. *Sang*, as Samuel points out, "is not merely a protective practice, but an auspicious ritual, whose performance may be hoped to create positive influences for the good fortune of the participants" (1993:183). Much ritual activity is also directed to protection against malevolent spirits. For this, one needs to stay on good terms with local deities, who can protect individuals, families and villages against such malevolent spirits. The gods, however, can also choose to unleash the spirits on someone with whom they are displeased (the spirits form part of their retinue) or simply withhold their protection.

Samuel writes that "local deities were undoubtedly more important in the pre-Buddhist period, when they would have been the most powerful beings in the Tibetan scale of values. By premodern times, they had become in theory totally subject to the tantric ritual power of the lamas" (1993:190). Despite the fact that Buddhist teachings belittle local gods and spirits as not being worthy objects in whom to take refuge or seek protection, most Tibetans still believe that in the

context of this life, the gods can be helpful or harmful and relations with them must be negotiated properly. And while lamas and the tantric deities are viewed as ultimately more powerful than local gods and spirits, "that power does not perhaps have the direct and intimate relationship with the contingencies of ordinary life that the local deities themselves have" (Samuel 1993:191).

Tibetans also believe in omens, practice divination, and have a highly developed tradition of astrology. In some cases, the reading of signs, *tendrel* and divination can be performed by anyone. In other cases, Tibetans turn to their lamas for such services. The most well-studied mode of divination is through the use of spirit-mediums or "oracle-priests" as they are called in the Tibetanist literature (e.g., Fürer-Haimendorf 1964; Ekvall 1964; Prince Peter 1978, 1979; Day 1989). Although spirit-mediums are very likely part of the pre-Buddhist folk religion, they have been well integrated into the Buddhist system in Tibet, and some reside in monastic *gompa* and are ordained monks (Samuel 1993:194). These oracles are possessed by major protective deities of the monasteries. The most famous of them is the Nechung oracle, who currently resides in Dharamsala, India and who is regularly consulted by the Dalai Lama and his administration.⁴ Spirit-mediums are also lay men and women and can be found in villages throughout the Tibetan region (see Brentano n.d. for a description of her encounter with one such spirit-medium in Central Tibet in 1987). Samuel suggests that spirit possession is interesting because of its similarity to the Tibetan system of incarnate lamas:

Incarnate lamas are frequently "emanations" of particular bodhisattva (Buddhist tantric deities) and as Barbara Aziz suggests they can be regarded as having been in a sense permanently possessed by those bodhisattva (Aziz 1976). Tantric ritual also involves what could be described as a temporary "possession" by the tantric deity, although in tantric theory...one would speak rather of the deliberate and conscious assumption of the nature of that deity. (1993:196)

Despite the similarities between spirit possession and incarnation, tantric deities operate on a different plane of reality than local gods and spirits; they represent a source of transcendent power that can only be tapped by the lamas to intervene in the ordinary world.

The relation between "folk-religion" and Buddhism

Anthropological studies of lama-shaman relations in the Himalayas, where shamanist practices co-exist with Tibetan Buddhist practices in some areas, offer a potential model for understanding the encounter between indigenous religious beliefs and Buddhism in Tibet. Mumford (1989) characterizes the encounter as a process of "interillumination," which he describes as "emerging historically through unfinished dialogue between older and newer layers of culture" (ibid., 23). He bases his argument on fieldwork with Gurung shamans and Tibetan lamas in a remote Nepalese village called Gyesumdo.⁵ Shamans in this region "still seek to live out what Bakhtin calls the ancient matrix, an identity embedded within relationships of the community and the cosmos and signified in local landmarks" (ibid., 23). They offer no extrication from this world, he suggests, and no religious "truth," but rather seek to restore "a balance, or harmony, within society

and between the upper and lower worlds of their cosmos" (ibid., 23).

Tibetan Buddhist lamas, by contrast, "thrust the theme of harmony into the background and draw to the foreground a highly individuating religious destiny" (ibid., 23). Though Tibetan rituals involve a this-world concern, as suggested in the previous section, the lamas "also use their rites as an opportunity to introduce a Buddhist path of extrication from the world matrix" (ibid., 23). Yet certain aspects of Vajrayāna (Tantric) Buddhism as practiced in Tibet "may be described as shamanic, in that they are centered around communication with an alternative mode of reality (that of the tantric deities) via the alternate modes of consciousness of tantric yoga" (Samuel 1993:8). Samuel argues that it is precisely this communication which forms the basis for much of the Tibetan lama's role in relation to Tibetan society:

Lamas in Tibet function as shamans, and they do so through the techniques and practices of Vajrayāna Buddhism. The specific form that Buddhism has taken in Tibet is bound up with this nexus between the pursuit of Enlightenment by a minority and the desire for shamanic services by the majority. (1993:9)

The relation between folk religious beliefs and practices and Buddhism in Tibet is a complex one that cannot be easily summarized. While defeat and subordination of the early shamans and their gods remain a central theme of Tibetan Buddhist myth and ritual, Samuel argues it has actually appropriated shamanic forms. He outlines three distinct "orientations," the first of which (pragmatic) was discussed above. The second, the "karma orientation," relates to the sphere of death and rebirth, and past and future lives, all of which are important in Tibetan life and in Tibetan

Buddhism (1993:30). Efforts to accumulate merit and act virtuously characterize this orientation. They include "giving donations to gumpa, lamas, and monks, building and repairing gumpa, *chorten*, and *mani*-walls, and other religious objects: becoming a monk oneself, sponsoring the recitation of the scriptures...and observing the lay precepts" (Samuel 1993:209). *Sōdnam*, translated as virtuous action, which means proper treatment of all living beings, also forms an important aspect of Tibetan thought (e.g., see Fūrer-Haimendorf 1964). The third orientation, the "*bodhi* orientation," centers on the pursuit of Enlightenment, which in the Mahāyāna context is seen as having a strongly social or altruistic component, and which is carried out through tantric practice (Samuel 1993:30).

Buddhism's success in Tibet, Samuel concludes, derives from the fact that it offered a more "effective control over the order of the universe than was available from the older cults" (1993:450). This control was achieved in two ways: by the lama's ability to control local deities and demons through tantric ritual and through the moral teachings on virtuous and nonvirtuous actions.

The development of Buddhism in Tibet

According to Samuel, the development of Buddhism in Tibet makes sense only in relation to the relatively "stateless" nature of most Tibetan societies up to the premodern period (1993:39). As suggested in chapter 2, the Tibetan population was not integrated into a centralized state as were populations in Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka or Cambodia. This lack of centralized state power in Tibet enabled the

effluorescence of a type of Buddhism characterized by "shamanic" practices (which derive from pre-Buddhist traditions and from tantra), a form which by definition meant the existence of alternative sources of power and authority. As Samuel explains:

the *Samgha* [the monastic community] in Tibetan societies is far less "domesticated," in Tambiah's phrase, than in contemporary Theravadin countries...Instead of being a centralized organization of monks under state control, the Samgha consists of a number of autonomous religious orders, only partly composed of celibate monks, and based around various large teaching centers and their associated lamas. (1993:32)

Lamas and other advanced tantric practitioners had direct access to power through their ability to contact the tantric deities and other gods and spirits. This unmediated contact with power legitimated a social role for lamas that often translated into a political one.

In Tibetan society, most of the lamas who achieve this combination of other-worldly and temporal power are known as *tulkus* or "emanation bodies." These individuals are thought to be emanations of divine beings or bodhisattvas--beings who have reached a state of enlightenment but who voluntarily choose to be reborn in order to assist (out of compassion) in the liberation of all sentient beings. At the same time, *tulkus* are believed to be rebirths of previous lamas. Individuals who are recognized as *tulkus* are called *Rinpoche* in Tibetan; it is respectful term used to indicate their spiritual status. Samuel summarizes the system of recognizing *tulkus*:

When a lama who is the head of a monastery or occupies an

important monastic office is about to die he is normally expected to predict his rebirth and give some details of where it is to take place and in what family. On the basis of these indications and various divinatory procedures, the officials of the monastery go to find the child two or three years after the lama's death. The child is supposed to show certain signs, such as partial memory of his previous life. (1993:493)

The *tulku* concept, which dates back to the thirteenth century and is unique to Tibetan Buddhism, was an innovation which had important implications for the development of Tibet's religio-political structure, some of which are explored below.

Early Tibetan kings embraced Buddhism when it was introduced as part of their effort to centralize their authority and to create a larger political and social order. As we have seen, pre-eighth century Tibet had no religious organization and no organized system of religious belief. Samuel describes this period as still largely "shamanic" in its mode of operation, but suggests that the Tibetan kings, initially "shamanic-type leaders of a tribal confederacy," were attempting to "move towards a more hierarchical, politically centralized system" (1993:440). Between 625 C.E., when King Songsten Gampo of the Yarlung dynasty came to power, and 842 C.E. when the anti-Buddhist king Langdarma was assassinated (Shakabpa 1967:54), military alliances between the kings and autonomous "tribal" groups led to a geographic expansion of the Tibetan empire. During this period, conflicts between supporters of the *bon* and *shen*⁶ priests and supporters of the new Buddhist religion erupted in royal circles (Samuel 1993:443; see also Beckwith 1987). With Langdarma's murder, the long line of Tibetan kings came to an end

and the united Tibetan kingdom collapsed.

Turrell Wylie (1963) has characterized the era which followed (842 C.E. - 1247 C.E.) as the "local hegemonic period." During this time Tibet was dominated by various warring factions who competed for influence and power and who functioned as patrons to the Buddhist and Bon religious centers. It is in this general context of political fragmentation and continuous rivalry between local aristocratic families that local *gompa*, headed by hereditary lamas, got involved in the struggle for power and influence, eventually becoming an integral part of the political process in Tibet (Samuel 1993:443).

As suggested in chapter 2, by the thirteenth century, the *mchod-yon* or lama/patron relationship had emerged as a new cultural pattern and the principle of a lama as head of state had been established in Tibetan political theory (Samuel 1993:490). Although Sakya lamas nominally ruled all of Tibet as representatives of the Mongol empire, they were never able to suppress the persistence of local centers of power. By 1350, their power had largely disintegrated. For the next three hundred years, no regime was able to govern more than one of the two provinces in central Tibet, U and Tsang, and the other region became the center of opposition to the ruling regime (Samuel 1993:501).

In the meantime, five distinct religious "lineages" or "sects" had evolved. Tibetans are usually affiliated with one or another of these orders which can be distinguished according to the importance of celibate monasticism, the role of tantric practice, and what Samuel calls "a greater or lesser commitment to

hierarchy and structure" (1993:272). The Gelugpa lineage, founded by Tsongkhapa in the early fifteenth century, is the most hierarchical and clerical. As discussed in chapter 2, the largest Tibetan monasteries are Gelugpa, and celibate monasticism is most important in this tradition. Sera, Ganden and Drepung, big Gelugpa monasteries near Lhasa, furnished monk officials for the Lhasa administration before the Chinese occupation and, as has already been suggested, played a crucial role in twentieth century Tibetan history.⁷

Each of the other major orders, Sakyapa, Nyingmapa, Kagyudpa, and Bonpo, are composed of independent suborders which have a set of teaching lineages in common. While all the orders have monastic traditions and large monasteries with monks like the Gelugpa, they also emphasize lay yogic practice. Nyingmapa and Bonpo are the earliest (tenth to twelfth century), the least hierarchical and most "shamanic." Sakya and Kagyudpa date back to the tenth and eleventh century, and at different times have had political power in Tibet. Since the nineteenth century *ris-med* movement, there has been much overlap between the non-Gelugpa orders. This movement brought together the numerous diverse traditions of tantric yogic practice that had developed in Tibet over ten centuries and transmitted them as a whole. As a result, non-Gelugpa Buddhists today are presented with a wide range of methods for spiritual attainment that draw from these different lineages.⁸

The Kagyudpa order developed the system of reincarnation in the thirteenth century. This innovation spread to other lineages and by the fifteenth century,

monasteries headed by reincarnate lamas outnumbered those headed by hereditary lamas. Although they did not invent it themselves, the Gelugpas adopted the *tulku* system and used it as a means to institute their power under a structure of governance known in the literature as "rule by incarnation" (Michael 1982).

Rule by incarnation

In 1642, the Gelugpas, who dominated U province, defeated the Tsang Karmapas (a suborder of the Kagyu lineage), with Mongol military backing. This allowed them to unify Central Tibet under the rule of the 5th Dalai Lama, a Gelugpa reincarnate lama.⁹ As described in chapter 2, the Gelugpa regime transformed the religious landscape in Tibet upon coming to power. It attempted to create the perfect environment for the practice of Tibetan Buddhism and especially for the practice of its form of Buddhism, which emphasized scholasticism and celibacy over the "instantaneous" (advanced tantric) practices to achieve enlightenment advocated by the Kagyupa and Nyingma orders. The Gelugpa endowed new monasteries with estates and established subsidies for those without large land holdings. Their belief in the principle of *chos-srid-zung-'brel* (religious and political affairs joined together) found expression in the government structure which took shape in Lhasa between 1642 and 1951.

In his book Rule by incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and its role in society and state (1982), Michael describes the origin of Tibet's religio-political system as part of the struggle between the aristocrats and the Buddhist sects. When the

Kagyupa first developed the principle of incarnation, it was in the context of efforts to institutionalize their power and authority over competing clans and families. Michael argues that its genius lay in the accomplishment of several things at once, all under the auspices of religion. First, it solved the problem of legitimacy in the absence of reproducing actors (e.g., celibate monks). Second, the metaphysical transmission of authority from one incarnation to another eliminated sibling rivalry inherent to the biological lineage practiced by the aristocracy. Third, an incarnate lama devoted to monastic vows of poverty and free of family ties was not concerned with accumulating political and economic power from which he might be tempted to foment a rebellion.¹⁰ This may be true in theory, but each incarnate lama had a *labrang*, which was a private, profit-making enterprise attached to his residence and which in essence was the corporation of his line of incarnations. Sometimes these *labrang* were quite wealthy and formed a local power base from which to resist the authority of the Lhasa government, particularly over its right to levy taxes. In a few instances, open conflict broke out between these forces (see Goldstein 1989).

One of the major weaknesses of rule by incarnation appeared after the office of the Dalai Lama was created. During the years between the death of a Dalai Lama and the enthronement of his reincarnation (usually at eighteen years of age), power is held by a regent who is usually a reincarnate lama himself but who is often subject to struggles, rivalries, and intrigues. The troubles experienced during the Reting regency (1934-1941), which Goldstein describes in his history of

premodern Tibet, epitomize the flaws in the religio-political system. Guided by the inexperienced, acquisitive and vindictive Reting, the interregnum period saw the

vitality of the Tibetan government decline and its development lag. The state of the Tibetan military deteriorated, the economic surpluses vanished, and the full grain-storage bins of the 1920s emptied. Led by the excesses and abuses of Reting and his *labrang* officials, national and government interests took second place to personal gain and aggrandizement. (1989:364)

In fact, as discussed in chapter 2, Tibet lost many opportunities to shore up its military and to modernize its institutions during the Reting and Taktra regencies (1934-1950) due to internal power struggles between the monastic segment and the government. This left the country totally unprepared for the confrontation with China in 1950 which resulted in Tibet's loss of independence.

The institution of the Dalai Lama

Despite its inherent weaknesses, the Gelugpa system of rule by incarnation succeeded in unifying central Tibet to an extent not achieved before. With the creation of the office of Dalai Lama, the Gelugpa created an unassailable figure of spiritual and temporal power. In part, the Dalai Lama's power derives from the fact that he is considered to be an emanation (an incarnation) of *Chenrezig*, (Avalokiteśvara, Skt.), the great bodhisattva "who fathered the Tibetan people, introduced agriculture, returned as several of the Tibetan emperors, and takes human form as the Dalai Lama and other high lamas" (Samuel 1993:19). At the

same time, the Dalai Lama is also a direct reincarnation of his immediate predecessor. (For a description of the lives of historical Dalai Lamas, see Shakabpa 1967; Mullin 1988; Snellgrove and Richardson 1968; Stein 1972).

The institutionalized charisma of each Dalai Lama was guaranteed once he had been properly identified and legitimated as the true reincarnation (Goldstein 1968; Nowak 1984:26). The discovery process was an elaborated version of the one used to find *tulkus*:

Mere humans could not by themselves properly determine reincarnation, and the institutionalization depended on supplying the selection process with supernatural supports. The speeches and comments of a late Dalai Lama would be examined for any possible clues as to where he would be reborn. Other unusual occurrences, such as strange cloud formations or the shifting of the position of the corpse of the late Dalai Lama toward a particular direction, were analyzed by high lamas, oracles, the Regent, and high-ranking officials. The Regent and other high dignitaries also visited a holy lake in which visions were traditionally seen concerning the Dalai Lama's rebirth. All of these preliminary examinations of cryptic, supernatural signs ended in the sending out by the Regent of one or more search parties composed of government officials and high lamas to areas deemed probable places where the Dalai Lama would return to Tibet. In these areas the parties would examine the stories of wondrous or strange births of children in the proper age category and finally would administer a series of tests to the prospective candidates, the children and their parents not being forewarned that they were considering the boy for the Dalai Lama. These tests consisted of showing the candidates several pairs of articles, e.g. rosaries or walking sticks, one of which had been the personal possession of the late Dalai Lama. The child was expected to choose the late Dalai Lama's things, thereby proving that he had residual knowledge of his past life, the ability to recall the events of one's past life being a characteristic of bodhisattvas and buddhas. On the basis of the reports sent by the one or more search parties, the Regent, after consulting with high lamas and government officials, would inform the Assembly of the situation and guided by the Regent they would accept the candidate as Dalai Lama.

(Goldstein 1968:162-163)

The institution of the Dalai Lama and the discovery process are some of the most fascinating aspects of Tibetan culture for non-Tibetans.¹¹ I explore this issue in a subsequent chapter.

As the embodiment of the central formula of Tibetan politics: "religion and politics combined" (*chos-srid-zung-'brel*), the Dalai Lama is a mediating symbol of Tibetanness (Devoe 1983; Klieger 1992; Nowak 1984; Saklani 1978). He encompasses many meanings: he is both a human and a bodhisattva, mortal and immortal, a world-renouncing monk and a political leader. To most Tibetans today, the current Dalai Lama is a divine living symbol of their history and their aspirations for the future. As will become evident throughout the course of this dissertation, his ability to unify Tibetans through his own personal charisma makes him an invaluable asset to the exile community and the Tibet Movement.

Traditionally, Tibetans believe that as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, whose essence is compassion, the Dalai Lama is immune from criticism. In the same vein, in old Tibet to criticize his government or introduce new ideas was considered a refutation of the dharma (see Goldstein 1989). Yet since 1959 the Dalai Lama has sought to reform and democratize exile society. This in and of itself is not unheard of; the 13th Dalai Lama was interested in modernizing Tibet when he was alive, as mentioned in chapter 2. But his successor, the 14th Dalai Lama, has ironically **insisted** that Tibetans learn to be "democratic." He openly encourages criticism of exile government institutions and practices by Tibetans and

their Western friends as part of an attempt to foster the growth of a Tibetan public sphere.¹² More important, he frequently suggests that he would prefer to step down from his role as temporal leader in order to facilitate the democratization process and would be happy pursuing spiritual practice full-time. He has pledged that if and when Tibet regains its independence, he "will willingly and completely relinquish the power and prerogatives of a Dalai Lama to a popularly elected leader" (Nowak 1984:29).

In theory, polities are usually inscribed in some order of being higher than themselves. In the case of the Tibetans, as we have seen in this chapter, that order is Buddhism. To accomplish his goal of democratization, the Tibetan leader must pull away the polity from its inscription in the Buddhist realm, which in turn requires a transformation of his authority. For most Tibetans, the Dalai Lama is an absolute source of authority; no secular official or even lesser incarnate lama could ever claim even a tiny portion of that authority (Klieger 1992:80). Thus the Dalai Lama finds himself in the unique (and contradictory) position of having to assert his authority in order ultimately to relinquish it.

Tibetan attitudes towards the Dalai Lama's power will likely not change in the near future, but attitudes towards other authorities in the exile government have slowly changed from acquiescence to inquiry, facilitated by the introduction of democratic processes of enfranchisement, representation, and accountability (French 1991). These processes signify attempts to create new codes of conduct, e.g., "democratic" behavior, based on a radically different notion of authority; as

such, they entail a reframing of Tibetan identities. I explore this issue in chapter 5.

The Dalai Lama's efforts to democratize the hierarchical religio-political system in exile are in conflict with efforts to ensure the survival of religious and cultural traditions which are embedded in the older structures, and which, paradoxically, form the basis of Western fascination with Tibet. During the course of my research, I became fascinated with how diasporic Tibetans negotiate this contradiction. I also became interested in tracing the simultaneously conservative and progressive role Westerners play in Tibetan exile politics.

Before concluding, I briefly sketch the government bureaucracy headed by the Dalai Lama. After having gone back in time to the origins of Tibetan Buddhism, and forward in time to the diasporic years, I return to the ethnographic present of pre-1950 Tibet and to a delicately balanced polity on the brink of disaster.

The government bureaucracy

As described in chapter 2, the Dalai Lama stood at the apex of the Gelugpa government bureaucracy in Lhasa which was composed of half monk and half lay aristocratic officials.¹³ Directly beneath the Dalai Lama was the prime minister (*lonchen*). The cabinet (*Kashag*) was the next highest office and it usually was shared by four officials, three lay and one monk, called *shapes*. New *shapes* were appointed by the ruler on the cabinet's recommendation. Decision making was by

consensus and all had equal authority. The cabinet's power derived from its position as "gatekeeper"--no secular matter reached the ruler without going through it. Goldstein points out, however, that the cabinet's power was "counterbalanced" by its lack of authority over the monk officials and over the monastic system, which were controlled by the ranking monk official (*chigyab khembo*) and the *Yigtsang* (1989:16). The *Yigtsang* was headed by four monk officials (*trunyichemmo*) and its function was similar to that of the cabinet, except that it dealt with religious and monastic affairs. The most powerful lay office below the cabinet was the *Tsigang*, which was responsible for overseeing the collection of taxes and was considered a stepping stone to promotion to the cabinet.

As far as specialization goes, Goldstein notes that

no position in the government required special training, even that of army commander. Promotions were theoretically based on ability, but it was common for hopefuls to attempt to recruit support among those controlling the appointment process by giving gifts. (1989:13)

This obviously put candidates from wealthier families in a better position to win promotions.

In addition to the offices described above, there was the national assembly (*Tshogs-'du*) which met at the request of the cabinet to consider and give opinions on specific questions or issues put to it by the cabinet. There were several levels of assembly. The smallest included only the four *Yigtsang* officials (the four *trunyichemmo*) and the four *Tsigang* officials or *tsipon*. It was called *Trungtsigye*. The largest assembly was not really national at all. It consisted of all the abbots

and ex-abbots of the three major Gelugpa monasteries (Sera, Drepung and Ganden), members of the *Trunzsigye*, all lay and monk officials in Lhasa at the time, representatives from important incarnations and monasteries, all army leaders who were stationed in Lhasa, minor tax collecting officials, and and thirty clerks (Goldstein 1989:19). None of the assemblies could initiate action; they were consultative bodies which primarily represented the views of the three big monasteries and the mass of monk officials (Goldstein 1989:20).

The Tibetan political structure was delicately balanced between the monasteries, the ruler (either Dalai Lama or regent), and the bureaucracy described above. All saw religion as the top priority of the state, but, as Goldstein so convincingly argues, the definition of what benefitted Buddhism was often contested.

Religion, then, though a homogeneous force in Tibetan politics in one sense, was also a fragmenting and conflicting force. Competition among the various religious entities to increase their influence and prestige and the lack of consensus regarding which policies were in the interests of religion plagued twentieth-century Tibetan history. (1989:37)

Struggles over policies were not resolved through force. Instead, the monasteries could simply refuse to comply with the demands of the state, disrupting the state's organizational balance and hence its legitimacy.

In the late 1940s, as China was preparing to bring all of its "territory" under Chinese rule, Tibet was "hopelessly divided into pro-Reting and pro-Taktra factions" (Goldstein 1989). Nevertheless, this inward factionalism did not prevent

the Taktra administration from trying to improve Tibet's international status and from taking certain immediate steps to strengthen its internal capabilities (1989:821). These steps included attempts to enlist the support of Britain and the United States in securing international recognition of its *de facto* independent status. In a heartbreaking narrative, Goldstein describes Tibet's numerous near-misses with diplomatic recognition (see especially Chapter 16) which, had it succeeded, probably would have forced China to deal with Tibet quite differently than it ultimately did. Taktra's failed effort to establish an English language school (it was blocked by the monasteries--reminiscent of the failed effort in the 1920s) which would have provided Tibet with an English-speaking infrastructure and his foiled attempt to purchase weapons abroad, left Tibet completely unprepared for a military confrontation with China. In the end, when the Tibetan army, which was "poorly trained, poorly equipped, and pathetically led" (Goldstein 1989:822), finally faced the People's Liberation Army in Kham in 1950, it was handily defeated.

Some conclusions

Scholars dispute the applicability of the term "theocratic" to the religio-political system described above in much the same manner as they debate the characterization of Tibet as "feudal." Theocracy, defined as "government of a state by immediate divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided," is applicable to Tibet insofar as the Lhasa government was headed by an

incarnation--the Dalai Lama--considered by his followers to be an emanation of the Buddha Avalokiteśvara. However, according to Samuel and other scholars (e.g., Sperling 1994:280), Tibet's political system was far more ambiguous than the term theocratic would suggest. Both these debates over terminology reflect the heightened sensitivity to representations of old Tibet in academic and exile communities, and their role in the contemporary discursive contestation over Tibet between exile Tibetan and Chinese officials.¹⁴

In sketching out the basic principles of Tibetan Buddhism and outlining its development in Tibet, this chapter underscores the central role religion plays in Tibetan definitions of themselves as a people and a polity. It is not surprising that Buddhism is one of the main sites of cultural production in the diaspora. This is true in at least two senses. First, enormous resources and energy have been devoted to rebuilding monastic institutions in India as well as to establishing Buddhist centers in the West. Second, Vajrayāna (tantric) Buddhist practices such as ritual dance, creation of sand mandalas, and empowerments (initiations) have been performed or presented in the West to rapt audiences as part of Tibetans' efforts to mobilize support for their struggle. The process through which religious practices have become a field for political action by diasporic Tibetans and their supporters in the West is explored further in chapter 8.

Religion is also a site for cultural invention in Tibet itself, particularly in the realm of political protest (see Schwartz 1994a and Barnett 1994). From 1987 through 1992, there were some 140 demonstrations in Lhasa and other areas. Led

by monks and nuns, these non-violent demonstrations have initiated a new phase of protest against Chinese rule in Tibet that continues today. Interestingly, Tibetans have come to see political protest as religiously-sanctioned action, though it is the ethical aspects of Tibetan Buddhism rather than its magical elements that predominate in the current protests (Schwartz 1994a:22):

The demonstrations draw on traditional forms of Buddhist religious practice that ordinary Tibetans understand and value. Buddhism offers Tibetans assurance about ultimate religious ends as well as effective means to realize those ends through individual behavior. Religious discourse is one area where Tibetans retain confidence after decades of assault on their society and culture. It is not surprising, then, that political protest has come to be framed in religious idiom.

Schwartz gives one example of this process: nearly all demonstrations in Lhasa since 1987 have involved a small group of monks or nuns who assemble near the Barkhor, the traditional Tibetan market area, and then circumambulate the Jokhang temple (located in the center of the Barkhor) carrying Tibetan flags and shouting independence slogans. This continues until protesters are stopped by security forces. Circumambulation (*korra*) has a central place in Tibetan Buddhism. It is "practised universally around temples and other holy sites and is for lay Tibetans a common means of accumulating merit...*khorra* provides Tibetans with visible and obvious evidence of practice of religion" (Schwartz 1994a:27). By doing *khorra* around the Jokhang, which has symbolic status going back a thousand years before Chinese arrived in Tibet and by combining it with symbols of Tibetan nationhood, protesters have made a powerful link between Buddhist ritual and Tibetan

nationalist aspirations (Barnett 1994:245; see also Schwartz 1994b:228). In this sense, Tibetan protest reflects the traditional Tibetan theory of state--"religion and politics joined together" (*chos-srid-zung-'brel*). I come back to the subject of protest in Tibet in chapter 7. Here I underscore the huge significance and vitality of Tibetan Buddhism as a symbolic resource in the struggle against Chinese rule in Tibet.

The Tibetan government on the eve of the Chinese invasion was in disarray. What happened after the occupation in 1951 and before the Dalai Lama's final escape to India in 1959 remains highly contested in the Tibetan exile community. For some, the period is an ignoble one, a time when political principles were compromised (e.g., the "Seventeen Point" agreement, see Goldstein 1989) and personal expediency prevailed over collective interests. For others, the period represents a moment of heroic resistance and an awakening of nationalist consciousness (e.g., see J. Norbu 1994).

After the events of 1959, which are discussed in the next chapter, China imposed new forms of social, political and economic organization in Tibet, changing life irrevocably for all strata of the population. Those who remained behind after the mass exodus endured periods of extreme hardship, especially during the Cultural Revolution which lasted from 1966 to 1976. The Chinese imprisoned and killed many perceived enemies of the new society in Tibet (see Choedon 1978; D. Norbu 1974; and K. Paljor 1977 for personal accounts of life in Tibet after 1959); high lamas and monks were frequent targets, as were those from

aristocratic and wealthy merchant backgrounds.

Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama set about creating an exile administration made up of former government officials which would guide the resettlement of thousands of newly-destitute refugees in Nepal and India. Without a monastic system, the balance of power which had existed in Tibet for hundreds of years shifted in favor of the lay aristocracy as refugee lamas and monks dedicated themselves to reconstructing Buddhist institutions.

Notes

1. Tibetan Buddhism's appeal to Westerners will be discussed in chapter 9. Very little scholarly work (let alone anthropology) has been done on Tibetan Buddhism in the West (for exceptions, see Bishop 1992; Brentano 1993; and Klein 1995).
2. One of the most intriguing stories David-Neel tells in Magic and Mystery in Tibet (1929 in French; 1932 in English; reprinted in 1971) involves the sighting of a *rlung-gom-pa*, a sort of tantric speedwalker, whom she claimed to have encountered in the Changthang region of Tibet (an immense grassy region in northern Tibet sparsely inhabited by nomads). I quote from her account at length:

Towards the end of the afternoon, Yongden, our servants and I were riding leisurely across a wide tableland and I noticed, far away in front of us, a moving black spot which my field-glasses showed to be a man. I felt astonished. Meetings are not frequent in that region, for the last ten days we had not seen a human being. Moreover, men on foot and alone do not, as a rule, wander in these immense solitudes. Who could this strange traveller be?...

As I continued to observe him through the glasses, I noticed that the man proceeded at an unusual gait and, especially, with an extraordinary swiftness. Though, with the naked eyes, my men could hardly see anything but a black speck moving over the grassy ground, they too were not long in remarking the quickness of its advance. I handed them the glasses and one of them, having observed the traveller for a while, muttered "Lama lung-gom-pa chig da" (It looks like a lama lung-gom-pa).

These words "lama lung-gom-pa" at once awakened my interest. I had heard a great deal about the feats performed by such men and was acquainted with the theory of the training. I had, even, a certain experience of the practice, but I had never seen an adept of lung-gom actually accomplishing one of these prodigious tramps which are so much talked about in Tibet...

The man continued to advance towards us and his curious speed became more and more evident. What was to be done if he really was a lung-gom-pa? I wanted to observe him at close quarters, I also wished to have a talk with him, to put him some questions, to photograph him...I wanted many things. But at the very first words I said about it, the man who had recognized him as a lama lung-gom-pa exclaimed: "Your reverence will not stop the lama, nor speak to him. This would certainly kill him. These lamas when travelling must not break their meditation. The god who is in them

escapes if they cease to repeat the *ngags*, and when thus leaving them before the proper time, he shakes them so hard that they die." ...

By that time he had nearly reached us; I could clearly see his perfectly calm impassive face and wide-open eyes with their gaze fixed on some invisible far-distant object situated somewhere high up in space. The man did not run. He seemed to lift himself from the ground, proceeding by leaps. It looked as if he had been endowed with the elasticity of a ball and rebounded each time his feet touched the ground. His steps had the regularity of a pendulum. He wore the usual monastic robe and toga, both rather ragged. His left hand gripped a fold of the toga and was half hidden under the cloth. The right held a *phurba* ("magic dagger"). His right arm moved slightly at each step as if leaning on a stick, just as though the *phurba*, whose pointed extremity was far above the ground, had touched it and were actually a support.

My servants dismounted and bowed their heads to the ground as the lama passed before us, but he went his way apparently unaware of our presence (200-203).

These sorts of practices are what Tibet is renowned for in the popular imagination; *lung-gom* may actually be where the myth of levitating lamas comes from.

3. For more on this perspective, see Samuel 1993, Chapter 23. See also Karmay 1975 and Snellgrove 1961.
4. While in Dharamsala in March 1990, I attended a session at Nechung Monastery where the Nechung oracle went into trance. The monastery temple where the event took place was packed full of monks and eager lay Tibetans and Westerners (including actor/Buddhist Richard Gere). A group of monks beat drums and chanted until the oracle came out in front of the group and went into trance. A large conical hat was placed on the oracle's head. It was so heavy that it took two monks to carry it. The oracle threw down the sword he was carrying and jumped off the altar area which was elevated a few feet above the rest of the room. He then jumped back up, groaning loudly, his chest heaving. At this point the air was electric with tension. All of a sudden, people surged forward, and the Tibetans in the crowd started throwing *kata*, or prayer scarves, at the oracle. I later was told they believe getting a *kata* near the oracle brings great blessings.

Then several questions were put to the oracle, including one related to the future of Tibet and another to the future of Drepung monastery, which had initially requested the session. The questions were in Tibetan and his response, in a high pitched, squeaky voice, was incomprehensible. Everyone in the room strained forward to hear the answers, even though they couldn't understand them. Two specially trained monks listened and acted as "translators" for the oracle. Their translation was not

made publically but passed on first to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Drepung Monastery abbot. Upon answering the questions, the oracle began to come out of his trance and soon collapsed. He then was carried out of the room by his attendants.

This particular Nechung oracle was new to his job in 1990. He was discovered in 1987, two years after the death of his predecessor. I noted that he looked scared and nervous before going into trance. One Tibetan informant told me later that this young monk has a tendency to get nervous because he feels his responsibility is so great. In the recent past, Nechung oracles have played a critical role in Tibetan politics (see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Prince Peter 1978; Chime 1981; Rock 1935; and Goldstein 1989:704-707).

One of the things which most interested me about this oracular performance was the crowd's behavior. Having never been to an event such as this, and because I was holding a video camera, I was doubly sensitive to the movement and attitude of the audience. The aggressive pushing and shoving which started once the oracle went into trance took me completely by surprise; up to that point, I had only observed formal Buddhist initiations and teachings, which entail a certain degree of passivity on the part of the audience (in a physical sense). It was not until later, after I learned more about Buddhism and its incorporation of older pre-Buddhist practices such as spirit-possession, that I was able to make sense of my experience. As one of my lama friends explained it to me: "the performance has no doctrinal or philosophical significance in Buddhist terms, it's more like the President is coming and everyone crowds around trying to see him."

5. Gurungs are believed to be people of Tibetan stock who penetrated the Himalayas in pre-Buddhist times. They are of particular interest for thus having preserved some "shamanic" religious beliefs and practices which predate Tibetan Buddhism.

While "shamanism" in the anthropological literature frequently refers to the "animist-shamanist" religion which had once been widespread throughout inner Asia, including Siberia, Turkestan, Mongolia, China and Tibet, the "shamanist" practices described by Mumford and other Tibet scholars extends beyond this "Siberian shamanic complex" to include spirit-mediumship and spirit-possession.

Samuel defines shamanism as "the regulation and transformation of human life and human society through the use (or purported use) of alternate states of consciousness by means of which specialist practitioners are held to communicate with a mode of reality alternative to, and more fundamental than, the world of everyday experience" (1993:364).

6. Hoffman (1979) defines *shen* priests as practitioners of the Old Bon religion who were "shamans...very similar to their colleagues of north and central Asia" (25). According to Samuel, it is believed that they practiced soul-flight in a state of trance and undertook elaborate funerary rituals for the Tibetan kings (1993:11).

7. The intertwined nature of Tibetan religion and politics (and lineage and regional affiliation), was made evident in 1994 in a dispute over recognition of the 17th incarnation of the Karmapa (Kagyu lineage). In this dispute, a lama known as Shamar Rinpoche presented a child he claimed to be the successor to the 16th Karmapa who died in 1981. Violent protest broke out over this claim as another child had already been selected and recognized by Kagyu leaders and the Dalai Lama two years prior. Observers noted that Shamar Rinpoche's claims represent a potential challenge to the Dalai Lama's authority and might be meant to undermine his standing. They also suggested that some element of the Indian government and possibly China's government appear to have supported Shamar Rinpoche in his claim (see *TIN News Review* 26, April 1994:52-56).

The conflict demonstrates how historical conflicts between lineages in Tibet continue to manifest themselves in new forms in exile. There is a long history of conflict between the Shamar Rinpoches and the Dalai Lama, as well as with other lineages such as the Situs. In 1792, after the 9th Shamar had been instrumental in events which led to the Nepali invasion of Tibet, his estates were confiscated and a law passed by the then Dalai Lama making it a crime for the Shamars to reincarnate (see Shakabpa 1967:169).

8. Lineage "refers to continuity from teacher to student of a particular practice; each order may have hundreds of individual lineages connected with specific practices" (Samuel 1993:601)

The openness of the system to multiple interpretation is what distinguishes Tibetan Buddhism from Theravadin Buddhism. Different practices are considered appropriate to different persons at different stages of the path, depending on one's motivation and level of understanding.

9. The title of Dalai Lama was given to Sonam Gyatso in the fifteenth-century by the Mongol chief Altan Khan. Although Sonam Gyatso was the first Dalai Lama to be recognized as an incarnation, he is known as the third Dalai Lama because two previous Gelugpa masters were posthumously declared Dalai Lamas. Before he acquired political power, the Dalai Lama's incarnation series was known in Drepung monastery as Simkangwaw (Goldstein 1989:2).
10. Robert Paul argues that since the reincarnated lama is "cut off in every respect from the bonds of kinship, exchange, alliance, and obligation which characterizes the rest of society, he is able to achieve a level of autonomy which truly differentiates him from ordinary mortals and raises him to a sacred royal status" (1982:41). He further argues that this "self-generating" status has political and social benefits on the temporal level—e.g. there are not squabbles between factions in the royal family. Incarnation thus functions as an "antikinship institution, which, by undercutting traditional authority patterns based on blood, serves the interest of a centralizing bureaucratized government" (1982:41).

11. As suggested earlier, Tibetan Buddhism's magical side appeals to many in the West, including film directors such as Bernardo Bertolucci (*The Little Buddha*, 1994), and Hollywood writers such as Melissa Mathison (screenwriter for *E.T.*, married to actor Harrison Ford) whose script based on the story of the 14th Dalai Lama's discovery and early years in Tibet is currently in production.
12. I was present at one such instance in Dharamsala, India when the Dalai Lama spoke in English and then Tibetan to an audience of activists. See Chapter 5 for a description and analysis of the incident.
13. When the Gelugpas came to power, the role of the aristocracy changed. Their previous power, based on territorial authority and their own military forces, was transferred to the religious state. In the process, aristocrats became servants of the state (Michael 1982:45).
14. Extremely negative representations of Tibetans and their religious leaders have been part of Chinese government propaganda for a long time. Jigme Ngapo, a Tibetan raised in China, describes the image of Tibet in Chinese literary works as one of backwardness and brutality:

In these works about Tibet, children are buried alive, hands and feet are chopped off, daughters and nieces are raped or assaulted by their fathers and uncles, people are skinned and their eyes dug out.

Ngapo argues that mainland Chinese are indoctrinated with this distorted image; when asked about Tibet, he points out, most Chinese will say Tibetans are "savage and backward" (1992:16).

More recently, in a newspaper article attacking the Dalai Lama published in China, the author depicts the Dalai Lama as the "representative of the ruthless, feudalist, serf-owning class who, prior to 1959, still used human skulls and thighbones as ritual instruments" (WTN News 95/3/28 GMT 10:55).

Chapter 4 Flight from Tibet: Diaspora narratives

Diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and of attachment (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1989:i).

Collective histories flourish where they have a meaningful, signifying use in the present. (Malkki 1989:90)

Contestation surrounds every effort to create, define, or impose a common memory. (Tilly 1994:243)

Introduction

In chapter 2, I observed that Tibetan refugees evince a deep and vigorous engagement with their own history (and historiography), and that debates over representations of Tibetan history and culture are part of an extended discursive space in which the Tibet issue and contemporary Tibetan identities are negotiated. This chapter explores the production and performance of what I call "diaspora narratives" by Tibet-born refugees, focusing on the role these stories about leaving Tibet play in the construction of a diasporic nationalism in exile.

I first got the idea to look at diaspora narratives after attending a film screening and panel discussion on Tibet held at a trendy East Village cinema in December 1990. During the discussion, I was struck by the fact that each of the three Tibetans on the panel was presented in the program solely in terms of his or her relationship to Tibet, unlike the two American colleagues who were introduced in terms of their occupation as well as their involvement with the Tibet issue:

Losang Gyatso (moderator): Born in Lhasa, Tibet in 1951. Escaped

to India with family members during the refugee exodus of 1959.

John Ackerly: Attorney. International lawyers for Tibet. Witnessed demonstrations in Tibet in 1987. Co-authored "Forbidden Freedoms" and "Suppression of a People."

Champa Chonzom: Currently active in Tibetan Women's Association of New York (headquartered in Dharamsala). Escaped from Tibet as a child in 1958; has worked in the Tibetan settlements of Dharamsala and Bylakuppe, India; including the Tibetan Children's Village.

Joel McCleary: Former deputy assistant to the President, Carter Administration. Currently works as an international political consultant; extensive background in Asian affairs.

Tenzin Norbu: Imprisoned in solitary confinement for 3 years (from the age of 13-16). Recognized by the Dalai Lama as a reincarnate lama. Currently lives in New York after leaving Tibet in 1985.

During the panel discussion itself, each of the Tibetan speakers described the reasons they left Tibet and commented on current conditions in their homeland. At the time of this event, I had been working with the Tibetan community in New York City for several months and had noticed the tendency for refugees to constantly reiterate the story of the 1959 uprising and the Dalai Lama's flight from Tibet and the subsequent exodus of thousands of Tibetans after him. I had also become very much aware of refugees' tendency to locate themselves vis à vis this narrative at every possible opportunity, and often with great emotion. In designing this study of Tibet activism, I decided to explore this phenomena further by eliciting diaspora narratives from Tibetans in the U.S. and Switzerland during interviews, and to explore similar narratives embedded in autobiographies written by refugees (including the Dalai Lama), and those performed for Western

audiences at Tibet Movement meetings and public events.

Not surprisingly, for most Tibetans born in Tibet, fleeing their country has been the dominant event of their lives. Most of the narratives I analyze follow a similar pattern, emphasizing the physical hardships endured while crossing into exile and the profound sense of dislocation and loss experienced upon arrival in India, Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan. In this regard, they resemble the "flight narratives" elicited from Hutu refugees in Tanzania by Liisa Malkki (1995a), in which survivors stress the physical act of fleeing and the subsequent "transformation of a recognizable, familiar social landscape into an unintelligible chaos" (1995a:109).

Most diaspora narrators attribute their (or their parents') decision to flee to the unsuccessful uprising which took place in Lhasa in March 1959 and to the Dalai Lama's escape. These events have taken on a kind of epic status, so frequently are they told and re-told by Tibetans. They are part of the ur-narrative which forms the basis of collective remembering in exile. As such, the events of 1959 are the originating moment of the production of a "national" history of Tibet, and their retelling is a collective discursive practice, a form of social action which informs daily life in communities across the diaspora. By examining "diaspora narratives" we are able to explore the production of a national narrative in exile, and the production of self in relation to this narrative.

Anthropologists have fruitfully applied Anderson's (1983) notion of "imagined community" to the processes through which national-cultural narratives,

and thus identities, are constructed, such as the deployment of rituals and symbols, cultural forms and idioms that work to create a shared sense of belonging in a heterogeneous population (Fox 1990; Malkki 1990; see also Boyarin 1994). However, as the quote from Tilly in the beginning of this chapter implies, producing a national narrative is a contested process because competing interests and groups rarely agree on how best to remember the past. Competition over how to represent the "nation" is also competition over how current collective identities should be conceived (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994:38). The Tibetan case is no exception. It is not clear to what extent Tibetans shared a sense of "national" belonging before the Chinese occupation.¹ As Heather Stoddard writes:

The Tibetan people at large were aware essentially of two types of identity: religious and regional affiliation. People belonged to a particular school or monastery, looked up to a particular religious leader, and owed allegiance, often of life or death, to their own regional group, be it a valley, a confederation, or a region. At the outside they considered themselves as members of one of the three chol-ka or provinces, as khamps-pa (Khamba), or A-mdo-ba (Amdowa), or Central Tibetan, within the latter region as dBus-pa (U-pa), gTsang-pa (Tsangpa) or sDod-pa (Do-pa--those from the south-western regions)...all, however, spoke a dialect of Tibetan...and those who were literate wrote in the common language of literary Tibetan. (1994:125)

Given the lack of ethnographic research on Tibet before the Chinese occupation, it is hard to know to what extent Tibetans in the three provinces shared a larger sense of "nationness." Sperling (1994), Stoddard and other Western scholars suggest there was an awakening interest in nationalism and some knowledge of the

idea, particularly in intellectual circles, before 1951 (see Stoddard 1994:124-129).² Nevertheless, it appears that the Lhasa government made no effort to transmit a sense of a shared genealogy and history to Tibetans living in Central Tibet, Kham or Amdo. While Tibetans may have identified with each other as members of the same "ethnic" group (as opposed to the Chinese, for instance), this identification was not operationalized, as it were, or mobilized by the Lhasa government with the arrival of Chinese forces. In fact, class and other interests appear to have determined the government's response (see discussion below of "Seventeen Point Agreement").

In any event, once in exile, Tibetans were confronted with the political realities of a world of nation-states in which having a "national" identity was central to the refugees' political project of proving Tibet's independence (and thus mobilizing support against the Chinese). In the first part of this chapter I explore several key events and issues from the period of 1950-1959 in Tibet which continue to spark debates in the exile community. I argue that these debates provide insight into the contested processes of constructing what Sperling (1994:268) calls a "diaspora nationalism," and reveal deep fissures based on region and social strata which continue to be negotiated in exile.³ Having framed some of the central issues and points of contestation relating to official exile versions of Tibetan history between 1950-1959, I turn to an analysis of diaspora narratives and their role in the mediation and mobilization of this contested history.

Reform, resistance, and the "Seventeen Point Agreement"

There are a number of competing versions of what happened between 1950, when Chinese forces entered Lhasa, and 1959, when thousands of Tibetans fought unsuccessfully against Chinese troops in the streets of the capital.⁴ Differences between accounts tend to center on interpretations of several things, most important, the "Seventeen Point Agreement" and the resistance movement. While there is not space here to explore them in detail, I briefly discuss the two issues in the context of contemporary debates in exile society. I do this not to probe sensitive topics but rather to emphasize a larger point about the contested nature of the past and its continued relevance for social actors in the present.

In the last chapter, I mentioned the Tibetan army's defeat by the People's Liberation Army in Kham in 1950 (see Goldstein 1989, chapter 18). The first step China took upon its victory in Kham was to divide the country into "inner" and "outer" Tibet, inner referring to Kham and Amdo, and outer referring to "political" Tibet, the area governed continuously by the Lhasa government.⁵ By taking advantage of the pre-existing internal regional divisions, the Chinese were able to dilute and deflect nascent nationalist sentiment aroused by their presence on the Tibetan plateau (Stoddard 1994:125). China assumed that because Kham and Amdo were not directly ruled by Lhasa, they could be more easily incorporated into the People's Republic of China (PRC) (D. Norbu 1982). This, as we shall see, proved not to be the case.

After assuming control of Kham and Amdo in 1951, the Chinese began to

implement a "peaceful liberation policy." This policy, which was in effect between 1951 and 1959, entailed the implementation of new social and economic policies, known as "democratic reforms," though there was no direct attempt (at least at the beginning) to indoctrinate the Khampa or Amdowa population.⁶ These reforms included a "loan and help" campaign whereby local people were expected to give surplus grain and other foodstuffs to Chinese workers who were building roads in the area (P. Wangyal 1974). As a result of rampant inflation and shortage of essential commodities created by the reforms, local Tibetan guerrillas began to organize and resist the policies. By 1953, ordinary Tibetans had joined with guerrillas to strike at military units and Chinese convoys carrying food and ammunition for the PLA (P. Wangyal 1974). A year later, guerrilla activity sprang up all across eastern and northeastern Tibet.

Attempts at land reform and socialist collectivization further inflamed the local populace, and resistance strengthened. Some of the leaders were rounded up by the Chinese and executed publicly.⁷ The Chinese then ordered the Khampas to lay down their weapons, something which went against Khampa tradition and was ignored. For a number of reasons, including poor communication networks, lack of experience in political organization, and traditional prejudices between Khampas and the Lhasa government, the resistance movement in Kham did not immediately spread to U-Tsang. Central Tibet experienced its own hostilities as early as 1952, led by the underground resistance movement known as "*Mi-mang Tshogs-'dus*" (People's Assembly) (P. Wangyal 1974; see also D. Norbu 1982 and Avedon

1984:38).

The first big offensive which united all of eastern Tibet, what the Chinese call the "Kangding Rebellion," took place in the winter of 1955-56. At this point, the U.S. and nationalists in Taiwan began to take an interest in the situation.⁸ American aid began to flow via Taiwan; modern equipment was air-dropped in the area, including wireless operators who could help facilitate and coordinate resistance against the Chinese (P. Wangyal 1974:25).⁹ American involvement in the Tibetan resistance during this period is not well-documented in the Western literature.¹⁰ While there are Tibetans living in the U.S. who were involved in some way with the CIA, most of them do not speak openly about their participation. (For an interesting account of CIA training of Tibetan guerrillas several years later, see Avedon 1984:118-125).

Another perhaps more important reason why resistance did not immediately spread to Central Tibet is that the Lhasa government had already agreed to the "Seventeen Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet." With this agreement, reluctantly signed by a delegation of government officials in Beijing on May 23, 1951, Tibet:

formally acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in exchange for Chinese agreement to maintain the Dalai Lama and the traditional politico-economic system intact until Tibetans themselves wanted change. Chinese troops moved into Lhasa in the autumn of 1951, and have not left.

Although 1951 marked the end of what was then a *de facto* independent Tibetan polity, the Dalai Lama and his government remained in place as did the traditional Tibetan political economy. (Goldstein 1994a:92)

In other words, China treated "ethnographic" Tibet (Richardson 1984:1-2) very differently from "political" Tibet during the 1951-59 period because Kham and Amdo were not covered by the terms laid down in the Seventeen Point Agreement, which applied only to political Tibet (Goldstein 1994a:88). Many scholars have pointed out that Mao and other leaders were careful to stick to the terms outlined in the agreement, at least initially. This was part of Mao's larger plan to divide and coopt the Tibetan aristocracy by offering to protect their privileges and those of the monastic elite by deferring "democratic reforms" until the people of U-Tsang were ready for them. By approaching the occupation of Tibet in this manner, Mao hoped to avoid open revolt, bloodshed, and the international condemnation which would inevitably ensue.

The signing of the Seventeen Point Agreement continues to be the subject of endless speculation among exiles. During the early phase of my fieldwork, a member of the Tibetan delegation to Beijing in 1951 (the only one who is still alive), visited New York City, and I was invited to his "Special Address on the So-called 17 Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" at the Office of Tibet. "So-called" is the operative word here, as members of the delegation claimed to have been forced to sign under duress the agreement which some Tibetans today say constitutes the "selling-out of Tibet." I wrote the following when I got home that night:

I was invited to a talk by a member of the delegation to Beijing in 1951 where the so-called "17 Point Agreement" was signed with the Chinese. It was a select crowd of Tibet supporters and Tibetans

who attended...X translated. Y. introduced the speaker...I taped the talk which started after a thirty minute reception on the veranda. One person kept shaking his head during the talk. After the talk, which I only half-followed, a western supporter asked about the possibility of there being a conspiracy. The speaker said yes, it was possible. He also admitted to the fact that mistakes were made by the Tibetan government in the 40s and 50s in that they remained isolated and didn't seek outside support.

Afterwards, in a taxi ride home, some Tibetan friends indicated that there is a bitterness about the fact that the aristocrats and monastic hierarchy failed the Tibetan masses by signing away the nation. One said "it is better to be kept in chains by your own people than by outsiders." The other agreed, and both acknowledged that there were problems with Tibetan society before 1950, and that many young Tibetans feel that way.

The event was interesting in that this man represents an older generation's way of doing things in Tibet--why was he given a hearing? Who is responsible for arranging his speaking tour in North America? (5/30/91)

I never found out the answers to my questions, though given that this event took place one week after the fortieth anniversary of the signing of the agreement¹¹, it is possible that the former government official was touring North America in order to counter efforts by China to publicize the anniversary of the "liberation," efforts which included a screening of a film called "Tibet: Past and Present" at the Chinese consular office on 12th Avenue and 42nd Street in New York City to which the diplomatic community was invited.¹²

One of the reasons the "Seventeen Point Agreement" remains such a delicate subject in exile, more than forty years after the fact, is that it reveals the extent to which the Lhasa government was prepared to go in order to preserve the status quo.¹³ In effect, the delegates signed away Tibetan sovereignty in exchange for a promise that Central Tibet would be given a reprieve from

communist reform, and, moreover, that it could maintain its religious government and monastic system together with the estate system on which it was based (Goldstein 1989:812). This was and continues to be an especially sensitive issue for those from Kham and Amdo for whom no such dispensation was given.

Debates about the "Seventeen Point Agreement" and the delegation's motivation for signing it (e.g., a "conspiracy") reveal an ambivalence about certain aspects of the political system in old Tibet and suggest an ongoing awareness of the "profound regional separation" which contributed to Tibet's fall. These debates function as vehicles through which Tibetans criticize their own society. This is no small matter, given the strong sense of social control Tibetans appear to feel with regard to criticizing the exile government and its policies as well as the traditional social hierarchies which continue to operate in the Tibetan diaspora. Discussions of the past provide an outlet for the frustration and dissatisfaction some Tibetans feel today about contemporary exile politics and policies but dare not express openly.

The resistance movement, another issue which continues to be debated in the exile community, has been poorly documented and little understood by either Tibetans or non-Tibetans. In a recent article, Tibetan intellectual Jamyang Norbu argues that although a few published accounts exist, most of which were written by non-Tibetans and are vague about names, dates, and places, "there has been a singular lack of inquiry into the resistance movement on the part of the exile Tibetan government" (1994:186). He offers two reasons for this: first, the

resistance movement's popularity highlighted the government's failed policy of cooperation with the Chinese, and second, the traditional antagonism between Khampa leaders and the central government mitigated government officials' desire to give too much credit to their former adversaries (1994:186). Norbu admits that the resistance itself did not document its own activities very carefully, and was especially prone to secrecy once it established connections with the CIA (1994:187).¹⁴

Although the Khampa and the Amdowa may not have always seen eye to eye with the Lhasa government, in the latter half of the 1950s, Tibetans from all areas increasingly perceived the reforms implemented by the Chinese threats to Buddhism and to its associated traditional values, practices, and institutions. This perception facilitated the spread of protests, initiated by the "Kangding Rebellion." from Kham to Amdo in 1958 and finally to Lhasa in 1959. As Jamyang Norbu writes,

The traditional ideology on which the revolt was based gave it sufficient popular appeal to transcend the borders of Eastern Tibet and to ignite passions and violence even in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, where the Chinese had caused no disruption in the social system, and where the aristocracy and clergy were being actively courted by the Chinese authorities. Hence many Tibetans have considered the revolt to be national one, in the sense that the sentiment of the majority of the Tibetan people was involved. Yet the leaders and members of the resistance movement, mainly composed of Khampas and Amdowas, were too often unable to transcend narrow tribal loyalties for the movement to take on a fully national and dynamic character. (1994:194)

Norbu argues that the lack of hard information on the resistance enabled the

Tibetan exile leadership to "rewrite history, playing down the role of the armed revolt and fostering the fiction that the popular resistance was non-violent" (1994:188). Though "unhesitatingly subscribed to by many friends of Tibet, this story is patently untrue" (ibid., 188). All of the demonstrations against the Chinese between 1951 and 1959 were violent, Norbu asserts, and were a signal to the Chinese "that Tibetans were prepared to act violently to protect their leader and their religion" (ibid., 188).

According to Norbu, the non-violent interpretation of modern Tibetan history "has accorded only a minor role to the resistance movement" (ibid., 188). Such neglect by exile officials, Western supporters and intellectuals, and Buddhist followers has promoted the "preferred peace-loving image of Tibet as Shangri-la" and allowed the fact that the resistance took weapons from the CIA to be swept under the proverbial rug (ibid., 188). In this instance, Western expectations of Tibetans as non-violent and helpless victims, in conjunction with the exile government's desire to suppress information about official complicity (or inaction), conspire to produce a narrative in which these aspects of Tibetan experience are erased.

The Lhasa uprising and the Dalai Lama's escape

By 1957-58, fierce fighting in Kham produced many refugees who fled to Lhasa and other parts of nearby Central Tibet. There Khampa fighters regrouped.

Under the leadership of Lithangwa merchant Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, the loose-

knit guerrilla bands came together to form a single resistance army.¹⁵ An organization was created called the National Volunteer Defense Army or Chushi Gangdruk ("Four Rivers, Six Ranges"—an old name for Eastern Tibet) whose membership, in addition to Khampa rebels, included a few well-placed Lhasa government officials. Unlike most of their aristocratic colleagues, these ministers were sympathetic to the movement's aims and objectives. With their help, the resistance retrieved arms and ammunition from secret government arsenals which enabled them to take virtual control of the area south of Lhasa (J. Norbu 1994:194).¹⁶

The uprising in Lhasa which took place in March 1959 represents the culmination of an eight-year process of resistance to Chinese rule. It is important to remember that there was a significant Chinese presence in Central Tibet by this time and the Dalai Lama and his government were still trying to work out some sort of peaceful accommodation with them. Although accounts of the period vary and are not well-documented, most agree that by 1959, the situation in the Lhasa area had deteriorated.

As the Khampas moved their theater of operations nearer Lhasa, the simmering discontent of the local people in Central Tibet grew into open resentment and hostility against the Chinese. Under such a tense situation, the Dalai Lama and his government, whom the Chinese had so far used as an unconscious agent of their designs in Tibet, were under increasing pressures from all sides. They were in an acute dilemma. By 1957 the traditional ruling elite in Lhasa was split between those who sided with Ngapo Ngawang Jigme and the Dalai Lama, both of whom realistically thought that Tibet's future lay in collaborating with China, and those who felt, on the contrary, that Communist China and Buddhist Tibet had irreconcilable ideals.

(D. Norbu 1982:13)

An invitation to the Dalai Lama to attend a play hosted by the Chinese at one of their military camps sparked a sequence of events leading to the final confrontation in March 1959 and the Tibetan leader's flight to India. According to Shakabpa (1967), the Chinese wanted the Dalai Lama to attend the show unaccompanied by his usual entourage of bodyguards and Tibetan troops, something which was highly unusual and immediately made Tibetans suspicious of Chinese intentions. Officials also wanted the Dalai Lama's visit to the camp kept secret. Word spread quickly that such a request had been made and Lhasa people "feared that he might be kidnapped by the Communists" (318). The visit was scheduled for March 10. On that day, Shakabpa writes,

some 30,000 Tibetans from Lhasa surrounded the Norbulingka in an attempt to protect the Dalai Lama from the Chinese. The Tibetan people protested angrily and demonstrated against the Chinese...wild confusion and uncertainty reigned everywhere in Lhasa." (319)¹⁷

Later in the day a group of government officials joined with the popular leaders and members of the Dalai Lama's bodyguard in denouncing the Seventeen Point Agreement. The next morning crowd leaders posted guards around the Kashag office which was in the Norbulingka compound for fear that Tibetan officials would be forced into a compromise by the Chinese authorities.

On March 12, several thousand Tibetan women demonstrated in Lhasa against the Chinese, led by both elite laywomen and nuns. Very little documentation exists of this event, but it continues to serve as a source of

inspiration for contemporary nuns in Tibet who, along with monks, have been the principal actors involved in protests against Chinese rule since 1987 (see Havnevik 1994 and 1989; for brief mentions see also Taring 1970:226 and Sakya and Emery 1990:276-277).

After this second demonstration, Chinese authorities pressured the Dalai Lama to bring the angry crowds under control. In his second book (Gyatso 1990) (see discussion below), the Dalai Lama describes the dizzying pace of events and his anxiety. Hoping to avoid a calamity, and unsure of what to do to protect himself, the Dalai Lama consulted the Nechung oracle

Should I stay or should I try to escape? What was I to do? The oracle made it clear that I should stay and keep open the dialogue with the Chinese. For once, I was unsure of whether this really was the best course of action...I spent the afternoon performing *Mo*, another form of divination. The result was identical (Gyatso 1990:135).

After a few days, the Chinese made their intention to shell the Norbulingka clear in a letter, sent with an enclosure from Jigme Ngawang Ngapo confirming the message. The Dalai Lama replied, trying to buy time, and then consulted the oracle again. The oracle urged him to leave immediately. Having received this answer, the Dalai Lama began to prepare for his departure. He fled Lhasa late in the evening of March 17, 1959. The Tibetan leader's entourage included nearly one hundred officials and family members, as well as bodyguards. A force of three hundred and fifty soldiers accompanied the escape party. In his account, the Dalai Lama notes the presence of two "CIA operatives" in the group.

Almost everyone but myself was heavily armed, including even the man appointed as my personal cook, who carried an enormous bazooka and wore a belt hung with its deadly shells. He was one of the young men trained by the CIA...There was another of these CIA operatives amongst the party, a radio operator who was apparently in touch with his headquarters throughout the journey. Exactly who he was in contact with, I do not know to this day (Gyatso 1990:140).

One of the Tibetans I met while in Switzerland was a member of the Dalai Lama's escape party in 1959 and his account also suggests American awareness of the entourage's movements. A former monk from Eastern Tibet (I will call him Tenzin)¹⁸, he was chosen by the abbot of his monastery (Sera) to accompany the Dalai Lama and remembers being given very old, British-made weapons which he and the other guards did not know how to operate. Tenzin recounted feeling frightened when the entourage slipped out of Norbulingka which was surrounded by Chinese troops and remembers being assisted by members of Chushi Gangdruk once the party reached the nearby river, the Kyichu. He mentioned seeing planes flying overhead when the entourage reached the Lhoka area. Fires were set up in a semi-circle, illuminating a space in which the planes dropped supplies. When asked if the planes were operated by the CIA, Tenzin said yes. At night, when the party stopped to rest, the Dalai Lama's tent was in the center surrounded by bodyguards, who in turn were encircled by resistance fighters.¹⁹

The presence of individuals in the Dalai Lama's entourage with American ties and reports of air-dropping of supplies has created a lot of speculation and intrigue on the part of Tibetans as well as Western scholars and activists. Some

take it as evidence of the CIA's deep involvement in the planning and execution of the escape (see Grunfeld 1987; C. Mullin 1975; see also the flurry of correspondence to the Tibetan Review in March 1974:13-19). Many others, including the Dalai Lama, deny that the CIA engineered his escape, though as the stories above suggest, the Americans were informed of the escape plan and of the Dalai Lama's movements via radio. Jamyang Norbu argues that "accounts of the CIA engineering the Dalai Lama's escape and escorting him seem to be mostly the result of creative journalism" (1994:195). Based on discussions with one of two Tibetan CIA agents in Lhasa in 1959, Norbu argues these two individuals (via radio transmitter) merely kept "the Americans informed of developments in the escape plan, and later during the actual escape itself" (195).

Supposed CIA involvement in the Tibetan leader's escape, together with American support of the guerrillas in Mustang, Nepal in the 1960s and early 1970s has led many in the West to assume the Tibetans were reactionary anti-communists (or naive cold war pawns).²⁰ For Tibetans, the struggle between Tibet and Mao's forces was seen mainly as a struggle to preserve a way of life and to resist what they viewed as foreign intrusion. During the 1970s, one Tibetan intellectual complained that instead of framing the issue of Tibet in terms of colonialism, critics had represented it as an anti-communist struggle (D. Norbu 1974; see also Peissel 1973). He argued that the Tibet struggle "is neither anti-Chinese nor anti-Communist, but as His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, it is a national liberation movement for self-determination" (D. Norbu 1974:1). As this quote suggests,

after 1959 the issue for Tibetans was how to frame their struggle. One of the primary aims of this study is to elucidate the various strategies used by Tibetans to represent their struggle and the role played by non-Tibetans in these processes. I come back to this discussion later in the chapter, but here I highlight the disparity between how Tibetans have perceived their situation and how it has been interpreted by some in the West.²¹ As we will see, understandings of the Tibet issue have shifted over time as a new generation of refugees has come of age in exile and a new cohort of Westerner supporters have become involved, many of whom view Tibetans as victims of human rights abuses rather than as cold war proxies.

Back in Lhasa, the Chinese began shelling Norbulingka on March 20, a few days after the Dalai Lama's escape. Fighting broke out in and around the city and many Tibetans and Chinese were killed. The PLA soon consolidated its control over the city and the remaining pockets of Tibetan resistance were forced to surrender.

The Dalai Lama crossed into Indian territory on March 31, 1959. Over the next few days and months, as word spread of the Dalai Lama's successful escape, thousands of Tibetans followed their leader into exile. Sources disagree over the actual number who fled, which is not surprising given that there were several waves of exodus and Tibetans escaped through a variety of routes over a period of many months. Avedon asserts that by June 1959, 20,000 Tibetans had fled their homeland (1984:72); a few years later, an estimated 80,000 refugees had crossed

into Nepal, Bhutan and India (Gombo 1985:67). The initial wave from Tibet included those most likely to be imprisoned by the Chinese: the families of the present and past Dalai Lamas, former government officials and their families, large estate holders, important religious leaders, and resistance commanders and troops. Most of these early refugees brought with them wealth in the form of jewelry and family heirlooms which they sold when they needed money. They settled in traditional trading centers such as Kalimpong and Darjeeling, in northeastern India, although a small number with substantial resources migrated to the U.S. or Europe (e.g., Sakya and Emery 1990). Subsequent waves of refugees included mostly ordinary lay Tibetans (e.g., farmers, nomads, artisans), many from Central and Western Tibet, the regions nearest to the border from which it was easier to escape. Many crossed into Assam and Bhutan wearing their traditional Tibetan garb of heavy boots and long wool robes which were totally unsuitable for the subtropical temperatures characteristic of the region. Accustomed to the dry, high-altitude conditions of the Himalayas, they suffered severe physical effects from the new climate and became extremely susceptible to tuberculosis and other illnesses. At first, refugees were housed in two transit camps, one in Missamari near Tezpur in Assam, the other, Buxa Duar, near the Bhutanese border in West Bengal. By the summer of 1959, the Dalai Lama and the Indian government agreed on a plan to disperse the lay refugees to the cooler regions of northern India, where they would be put to work on road gangs (Avedon 1984:73).²² Thus the Tibetan diaspora was born.

Diaspora discourse and the work of narrative

In his essay, "A Revolt Long Ago," written in 1984 (and reprinted in 1989),

Jamyang Norbu observes:

In his history of California, Clavigaro, a Jesuit explorer of the eighteenth century, describes a practise of some of the Lower California Indians. They were always hungry, always partly starving. When they had meat, which was a rare thing, they tied pieces of string to every mouthful, then ate it, pulled it up and ate it again, often passing it from hand to hand. Clavigaro found this a disgusting practice.

Disgusting or not, we Tibetans have been performing a similar regurgitory exercise once every year for the last twenty-five years. A definite moral and political commitment is as rare to the Tibetans as meat was to the California Indians, and it is therefore no wonder that we have, for so many years, been living off the one memorable event of our history. (1989:56)

Norbu's analogy between a Native American group's supposed meat-eating practices and the exile community's practice of regurgitating the events of 1959 over and over again underscores the paradigmatic significance of those events in the construction of a master or ur-narrative of Tibetanness in exile. Although his cynical comments are made specifically in reference to the annual Tenth March ritual (a public commemoration of the day Tibetans rose up against Chinese forces in Lhasa in 1959),²³ Norbu's observations also encompass the way Tibetans retell the past in diaspora narratives.

In this chapter, I focus on three "genre" of diaspora narrative: oral accounts elicited in face to face encounters such as interviews; written autobiographies; and what I call "testimonials" that are performed in public and semi-public fora, such

as governmental hearings or Tibet Movement meetings. One of the points I make in this chapter is that these narratives are an exile innovation--telling stories about oneself in the way described here was not a common mode of expression in Tibet before 1959. After becoming refugees and becoming unhinged from a locatable source of self and social identity, Tibetans entered a situation in which they had to define themselves or explain themselves in relation to an interlocutor, an "other." In the process, the "self" became the thread that held their experience together. Individuals became indexical of this process of dislocation, of a shared history, and began to use their own experience to speak on behalf of the broader Tibetan experience. All of the diaspora narratives discussed in this chapter are produced in relation to an interlocutor. I have divided my discussion by "genre" of narrative, by whether the interlocutor is an anthropologist, a member of the English-speaking reading public, or, in the most dramatic cases, a live audience at a UN conference or Senate Foreign Relations hearing or Tibet support group meeting. In making this distinction, I want to make clear that the processes at work are the same in all three contexts. Before turning to the first set of narratives, I briefly explore contemporary arguments about diaspora discourse and the function of narrative.

In a recent article, Jim Clifford observed that "for better or worse, diaspora discourse is being widely appropriated. It is loose in the world, for reasons having to do with decolonization, increased immigration, global communications, and transport--a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling and travelling within and across nations" (1994:306). I have chosen to

join the crowd and frame the accounts I discuss in this chapter as "diaspora narratives" for several reasons, not least of which is the fact that exile Tibetans themselves have increasingly referred to themselves as 'diasporic.' I also use the term in order to distinguish them from an emergent genre of Tibetan-language "escape narratives" which are written by Tibetans living in Tibet (see discussion below).

As Clifford points out, the appropriation of "diasporist discourse" is a recent and increasingly widespread phenomenon, reaching even the academy where there has been a burgeoning interest in "diaspora studies" in the 1990s. The growing use of the term has been accompanied by an expansion of its meaning, as Khachig Tololyan observes in the inaugural issue of a new publication called Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies: "although diaspora once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion, it now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" (1991:3). Tololyan argues that the expansion of the meaning of diaspora to encompass these various terms reflects the fact that diasporas are "exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (1991:5), a moment defined by an unprecedented degree of movement of people, capital, ideas, and images across the globe (see Appadurai 1990).

The popularity of the term diaspora in contemporary theorizing represents a growing sensitivity to the need to revise "old localizing strategies" (Clifford

1994:303) that traditionally focused on bounded communities, cultures, or regions in order to take into account the proliferation of people who refuse to "stay put." who can be said to live at the margins of the nation-state and may have loyalties to more than one place.²⁴ Indeed, Clifford argues that the language of diaspora "is increasingly invoked by displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home" (1994:310). Diaspora cultures, he suggests, "thus mediate, in lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place" (311).

In a recent essay, Malkki observes that a new awareness has emerged of the "global social fact" that now, perhaps more than ever before

people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases--not in situ but through memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit. (1992:24)

Homelands lie at the symbolic center of all transnational national communities and serve as particularly powerful unifying symbols for displaced peoples (see Malkki 1992). As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) have pointed out, the construction of homelands play a crucial role in collective political mobilization (see Danforth 1995 for an interesting description of this process by diasporic Macedonians). In this chapter I argue that one of the primary ways in which Tibetan refugees construct Tibet as a homeland is through a retelling of the past, especially the events of 1959. By telling stories about fleeing, Tibetans not only constitute Tibet as a homeland, they also constitute themselves in relation to that homeland.

Many scholars have recognized the universal need by individuals to narratize their experience (e.g., Ochs and Capps 1996) and the fact that narratives affect and structure the way we understand the world. As J. Bruner puts it:

The heart of my argument is this--eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life. (1986:15)

According to Ochs and Capps, narratives "give rise to the selves that apprehend them" (1996:21) That is, they create coherence out of lived experience and "every telling provides narrators...with an opportunity for fragmented self-understanding" (20).

At the same time, narratives provide the link between the individual and the wider social structure as they are never created in isolation, but in relation to a listener/reader. Citing Bakhtin's dialogic model (1981), Ochs and Capps suggest that all narratives are co-constructed, that their meaning is jointly produced by those doing the telling and those listening/reading the stories. In this way, they argue, "if we develop our selves through the stories we tell and if we tell them with others, then we are a complex, fluid matrix of co-authored selves" (1996:43). I explore this point below in my discussion of the relation of Tibetan narratives to Western audiences.

Finally, narratives are framings, ways of encompassing a situation. In her work on abortion activists, Ginsburg (1987; 1989) argues that narratives emerge around a crisis and reflect efforts of social actors to constitute order and cultural

transformations at "disjunctive" historical moments (1989:142). Myerhoff, in her discussion of elderly Jews in California, suggests that their practices of storytelling

were efforts at ordering, sorting, explaining--rendering coherent their long life, finding integrating ideas and characteristics that helped them know themselves as the same person over time, despite great ruptures and shifts. No doubt their emigrant experience and the loss of their original culture made them even more prone to seek continuity and coherence. Survivors it is often noted, are strongly impelled to serve as witnesses to what has been lost. (1978:34)

Just as leaving their Eastern European homelands shaped Myerhoff's informants' desire to render coherence to their lives, so fleeing Tibet provides a central narrative turning point in the life course of the Tibetan refugees with whom I worked. The stories discussed in this chapter represent ways in which refugees attempt to make sense of the traumatic experience of becoming diasporic.

Yeshe and Pema

The first "genre" of narratives I discuss is that elicited in interviews. I interviewed Tibetans living in New York City, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and in several locales in Switzerland, including Horgen, Zurich, Geneva, Flawil, Jona, Trogen, Winterthur, Rikon, and Heitzingen. I made every effort to include individuals from a wide range of social backgrounds and different regions in Tibet and the diaspora. Due to limited space, I focus only on the stories of three individuals in this section, beginning with Yeshe and Pema.

Yeshe and Pema fled Tibet as boys. Despite the fact that both speak English relatively well, the narratives I elicited were somewhat disjointed at times.

For this reason, I decided to paraphrase sections when necessary. Yeshe is from a region near the Nepalese border. In many ways his experience represents the large number of ordinary Tibetan families from Central Tibet who left their farms and herds to make the relatively short journey to Nepal.

In 1959, before the uprising in Lhasa, when the resistance movement was gaining control in southern Tibet, meetings were convened in my town. My father and his friend led these meetings. They discussed where to collect arms and send a group of people to join the movement.

We had many people from Kham and Central Tibet who kept arms. We sent two representatives to Lhoka to ask Chushi Gangdruk where people from our town could join. Unfortunately at Tingri, they couldn't get through and the Chinese arrested one of the representatives. Immediately all the people who'd collected arms fled, leaving their family behind. Somehow my father didn't flee. There was a rumor that the Chinese were harsher on Khampas, so they all left.

After three months my father and I fled too. I was twelve years old. Every six months the local monastery had a festival of ritual dances. I was told my father was going to attend the dances and I was going with him. I was so excited! There was not so much restriction of movement at the time. My mother took me to the altar and was crying and praying. I felt uncomfortable. She put the scarf around my head and touched my forehead. I took off the scarf and said I didn't need it. Still I was excited to see the dances. We headed towards the monastery but didn't go there. My father let the horses out of the barn and said we had to sleep here. It was June and warm. A family friend came at dawn and woke us up. That morning I was told we were going to Nepal. Nepal was only two days walk but instead it took one week. We lived in Nepal, near the border, for eight months. My mother sent us meat and dried cheese.

After one year, my four sisters and mother and grandmother came out. There was a lack of medical facilities...My mother had a problem with her breast, her stomach, and she died. I was fourteen at the time.

Pema came from a different kind of community than Yeshe. He was from

Eastern Tibet and grew up in a relatively affluent, polyandrous family (he had three fathers and one mother). One of Pema's fathers took him to Lhasa in 1957 where he was put into a school for two years. Part of the growing number of Khampa and Amdowa refugees in Lhasa. Pema and his father were there when violent confrontation between Chinese forces and Tibetans broke out in March 1959. Pema, who was just eleven years old at the time, was actually at the Norbulingka with his father where the first fighting took place:

My father was in the uprising in Norbulingka, he stayed there for ten days, something like that. When the fighting started, it was March 18th I think, I woke up at 4 o'clock in the morning in the dark. I went back to sleep and woke up again at 10 o'clock. It looked something like this [draws on paper], I saw sunshine, my tent had SO many bullet holes. I slept through the whole thing! I also saw--people said he was the very first person injured in Norbulingka--I saw that person. But I'm not sure, of course, you cannot really establish if it was the real first person...

Once it became clear they were outnumbered and outarmed, many of those involved in the fighting, including Khampa and Amdowa refugees, fled.

Pema remembers running away with his father, heading north out of Lhasa. He saw thousands of Tibetans along the way, also fleeing. After running to the north for three days, Pema and his father curved around and headed south towards the Indian border. He remembers there were fifteen or twenty people in his escape party and that they crossed the Kyichu (River) near the famous Gelugpa monastery, Ganden, and evaded Chinese soldiers in the Tsedang and Lhoka areas south of Lhasa. After more than a week, they reached their destination. Pema recalls not knowing he was leaving Tibet until he saw the Indian police officers stationed at

the border. At that moment, Pema says, "I realized we had lost Tibet." Like many of their compatriots who followed the Dalai Lama out of loyalty and devotion as well as fear of Chinese repercussions, Pema and his father simply "landed in India rather than planned to leave."

Contrary to official exile representations of the events of 1959, which, as described in the first part of this chapter, tend to omit or play down the existence of organized Tibetan resistance to Chinese forces and violence on the part of Tibetans, Yeshe's and Pema's narratives reveal the presence of a strong resistance movement and Tibetan participation in fighting the PLA in Lhasa. They also highlight the central role ordinary Tibetans from outside Lhasa, i.e. non-aristocratic, non-monastic Tibetans, played in resisting Chinese forces.

Almost every Tibetan I interviewed talked about losing or being separated from family members and relatives and how hard life was in exile. Yeshe and Pema were no exception. A few months before his mother died, Yeshe told me, two representatives from the newly-formed government-in-exile visited his family in Nepal. The men told the family that if they went to India, his grandmother, who was now blind, would be taken care of. They also said there were free schools for the children and jobs for the parents. At the time of the visit, Yeshe's family had been living just over the border from Tibet for nearly two years. Yeshe remembers life being "quite hard" then. He often had to climb down the steep hillside to get water at the bottom of the valley every day; he remembers scraping his arms collecting firewood. Reluctantly, Yeshe recalls, his family

decided to follow the representatives' advice, go to India and separate from one another. Three of Yeshe's sisters went to the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) in Dharamsala, a school for orphans and young children of parents working on road gangs that was founded by the Dalai Lama's elder sister. Yeshe, along with two other siblings, joined the newly-created Tibetan school in Simla.²⁵

As for Pema, after fleeing Tibet, he and his father were separated. His father was sent to Sikkim and Pema was sent to Kalimpong where he enrolled in a refugee school. After a year and a half, Pema left, eventually ending up in New Delhi, where he got a job at a noodle factory and went to school at night. In December 1964, Pema moved again, this time enrolling in an adult education school run by American fundamentalist missionaries. Pema, a Buddhist like most other Tibetans, joked with me about having to study math, English, and the Bible. Three years later, the Indian government closed down the school and the American administrators arranged for eight Tibetans, including Pema, to continue their education in the United States.²⁶

Although their diasporic trajectories were somewhat different, Yeshe and Pema both experienced the fracturing of their families and the wrenching separation from their parents. In Pema's case, he recalls feeling "totally lost" for many years before finally settling down in New York City. Indeed, suffering and loss were things that nearly every refugee shared. I explore this point further through the narrative of a refugee from Switzerland named Sonam.

Sonam

I met Sonam during a trip in 1992 to a small town in Switzerland where a number of Tibetans had been resettled. I was accompanying my Tibetan translator (whom I will call Karma) who wanted to visit a close friend with whom he had attended school in India. Karma's friend was married and had two small children. While staying with this family, we met an older woman who had recently retired from her factory job and who looked after the children while their parents worked. She grew up in Central Tibet and was married to a man from the same area whom we also met. On the day of our interview, Sonam had just completed saying prayers at another Tibetan family's house along with eleven other women. Karma explained to me that every year these retired women go from house to house, saying prayers for the benefit of the household and for themselves.²⁷ Compared to the relatively young and middle-aged Tibetan activists I knew in New York and had met thus far in Switzerland, Sonam was from a very different stratum--she was from a poor background, was uneducated and spoke only Tibetan. Sonam's story was even more fragmented and disjointed than Pema's and Yeshe's narratives. Like the Hutu women Malkki interviewed (1995a), Sonam spoke hesitantly, "in short sentences, in the give and take of dialogue, and not in longer, more sustained narrative form" (50). I have not been able to include a transcription of her narrative and instead have paraphrased her story (as translated by Karma).

We sat on mats in the back garden in the late afternoon sun. As I began to ask Sonam about how she left Tibet, Karma interrupted, telling me that she spoke

very simple Tibetan (Sonam understood no English). At the time I was not sure what he meant by this. It was not until later that I realized what Karma was trying to communicate.

Sonam's narrative centered around the suffering she and others travelling with her experienced upon fleeing Tibet. She started by saying that she was born in southern Tibet in 1922 and that her family were farmers. She gave me her family name. Karma had a great deal of trouble figuring it out and seemed perplexed. It was at this point Sonam's husband sat down to join us. Sonam said she fled when she was 39 years old, which would have been in 1961. Carrying only five kilos of *tsampa* (roasted barley, a Tibetan staple), and a few clothes, Sonam and a friend hid in a forest for a week and then joined a larger group of Tibetans who were also leaving. As Sonam told her story, her husband began to interrupt, making lengthy interjections (in Tibetan). Soon the interview switched from a three-person discussion to a four-person interaction.

Sonam described running into Chushi Gangdruk guerrillas who told her they were "fighting for the cause of Tibet" and asked her why she was leaving. She told them the Chinese were threatening her life, but their question made her feel guilty; she felt she was "in a difficult position." Soon after this encounter, Sonam crossed over into Bhutan along with forty-five others. Many in her party died from diarrhea and other health problems.

Sonam was eventually sent to neighboring Assam, where she stayed for about two months. When asked what she remembers feeling or thinking at that

time, she replied she felt confused. Her next stop was Ladakh, a place where all the refugees wanted to go, she said, because it is like Tibet--high altitude, dry, they eat *tsampa*, and speak a dialect of Tibetan.

At this point Sonam's narrative got very confusing. Upon arriving in Ladakh, she joined many other refugees working on road gangs. At that time (in 1962) China was fighting a border war with India, and Sonam reported her friends telling her that bombs were exploding near where they were (Indian-controlled Ladakh shares a border with Tibet). So she and her husband, with many others, decided to flee to another part of India. According to Sonam, along the way the group did not have enough to eat, so they ate shoe leather.²⁸ She also said they ate their *tsampa* bags. Their route took them through Lahaul-Spiti, a very remote part of India.

Eventually the couple settled in Kulu-Manali, an area in Himachal Pradesh where many of the poorest Tibetans worked as road laborers and lived in tents.²⁹ Sonam and her husband stayed there for twelve years before going to Switzerland. She vividly recalled her encounter with one of the Dalai Lama's brothers, Lobsang Samten, who came to see them in their tent in Kulu. He was sent there, she told me, to choose people to be part of a resettlement project sponsored by the Swiss Red Cross (see chapter 6; see also Marazzi 1975). He was explicitly looking for those who were poor and "living in a wretched condition," Sonam recalled, and thus who deserved to be relocated to Switzerland.

After being selected for resettlement, Sonam said she felt uneasy leaving for

a place about which they knew nothing and leaving her husband's relatives behind in the camp (all of Sonam's family were still in Tibet). In response to my question about who came with her to Switzerland, Sonam replied that the group consisted of Tibetans from different strata. The couple found work in a factory and remained childless.

Karma seemed genuinely stumped by the couple's (Sonam and her husband were now telling the story together) account and his translating reflected this confusion; it seemed to me to "break up" or to become increasingly fragmentary.³⁰ Toward the end of the interview, when I asked her how she liked Switzerland, Sonam started to cry and said that she was materially happy, she had lots of food and clothes, but she just wanted to go back to Tibet. At this point my translator scolded me, "Don't ask those questions, can't you see she's going to cry?" I changed the subject and we soon finished the interview.

I took a walk with Karma later that evening. We discussed the interview, and I asked him why his translating had seemed so patchy. He explained that he felt uncomfortable translating because some of her story had not made sense to him. Based on his experience (he grew up in India and had worked for the government-in-exile in Dharamsala for a number of years), he said he had never heard of any Tibetans going from Ladakh to Manali via Lahaul-Spiti, and that she seemed to be making it up. He said he wasn't sure, but he felt strange because her husband was telling her what to say. Karma revealed that her husband kept muttering things under his breath, "tell her this, tell her that..." He also said he

doubted whether they had actually eaten shoe leather or their *tsampa* bags. It was very rare, Karma said, that Tibetans starved in India. Stories of eating shoe leather had circulated in Tibet, where there is much less vegetation and the availability of food is more limited in general, and Karma surmised that maybe Sonam was confusing the two.

Karma then suggested that my presence as an *inji* (the Tibetan term which originally was used to describe the English but is now used to refer to any Westerner) played an important role in the way Sonam told her story. He suggested that Sonam's husband repeatedly suggested ways to embellish her narrative; by way of explanation Karma reminded me that they were "simple" people who did not necessarily understand my purpose in asking questions.

Sonam's story and Karma's reaction to it reveal a number of important issues that are worth unpacking, most important of which is the role I played in the way Sonam (and her husband) constructed her narrative. My first reaction to Karma's suggestion that Sonam was embellishing her story to suit my expectations was to assume that Sonam was puzzled by my presence as an outsider from another country, who asked a lot of questions, and that unlike the activists with whom I had been working in the U.S. for some time, she had no idea how to place me. If she had known me better, I told myself, she would not have made things up. Upon further reflection, I realized that it did not matter whether what she claimed happened to her actually did (see discussion below), but that I had to think more critically about what role I played as an interested "Westerner" in the story she

told.

This fact was brought home to me more clearly on another occasion during my stay in Switzerland. In this instance, a man whom I had finished interviewing (I will call him Dechen) told another Tibetan in our presence that I had flown in from the U.S. specifically to interview him. I never found out how this misunderstanding came about, but afterwards, when I thought about how Dechen had presented his story, which was a dramatic one, I realized how important (mis)perception was in shaping his narrative. Compared to almost every other Tibetan with whom I spoke, Dechen told his personal story effortlessly. He began our discussion by making a formal statement about his work on behalf of Tibet, which, he noted, was miniscule compared to that of the Dalai Lama. He then launched into a long story about his experience in Tibet. The ease and fluidity with which he spoke convinced me that Dechen had done this many times before, that he had a "rap" so to speak. I knew he had recently escaped Tibet after having been wounded in a demonstration (at one point he pulled up his shirt to show me the scar where a bullet had entered his body). In fact, he had recently been in the spotlight, touring Europe and testifying in front of international human rights bodies as part of the exile government's effort to highlight political unrest and ongoing abuses in Tibet. In light of Dechen's participation in these international meetings, it is not surprising that he would assume I wanted to hear the same story for which he was getting so much attention. I discuss the practice of "testifying" later on in this chapter.

My encounters with Sonam and Dechen underscore the fact that listeners/readers play a crucial role in the production of diaspora narratives. Instead of focusing on the narrative's "truth value" (Bauman 1986), as Karma appeared to do, it is more interesting to consider the processes by which the narratives emerged through my interaction with Sonam and Dechen.³¹ Vincent Crapanzano stresses this point in his discussion of life history and the ethnographic encounter in Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan (1980). He explores Tuhami's "rhetorical play with truth" and with his own personal history, arguing that

the Moroccan will often appear to the outsider to contradict--even to lie--as he describes a sequence of events or his goals to different interlocutors or even to the same interlocutor on different occasions. He does not seem particularly concerned about contradictions of this kind, and he does not dwell upon them with guilt or remorse. Truth is seen, rather, in a relationally determined contextual framework. Up to a certain point, a greater value is placed on the relationship that is sought than on the circumstances that surround it or even its ostensible goal. (1980:81)

In an article on an Ilongot storyteller named Tukbaw, Rosaldo (1976; 1986) points out that Tukbaw's autobiography, which Rosaldo elicited, did not emerge as a single narrative nor was it told chronologically; rather, the relationship between the two men determined the shape of the narrative. Similarly, Klieger's description of how Tibetans in Dharamsala, India, interpreted anthropological interviews and requests for life narratives as opportunities to transform the ethnographer into a patron (*sbyin-bdag*) highlights the primacy of the relational dimension of such encounters in determining narrative form:

...as direct solicitation is considered improper, Tibetans will often

tell foreigners their entire life history. They will express their wishes and desires, and speak of the hardships in their life in such a manner that it becomes evident that they are in fact requesting one's patronage...As an anthropologist collecting life histories and accounts of daily life, I naturally had many occasions wherein the "interview" I thought I had been collecting was in fact a patronage solicitation. This practice seems especially prevalent among the younger Tibetan refugees. With their basic needs for food, shelter, education, and medical care largely provided by the Tibetan government, the securing of individual patrons is a means to acquire additional material comfort, career advancement, or enhanced standing in the community. A times, the competition for securing patrons of this nature seems to be a game among young Tibetans (1992:105).

Unlike Klieger, who conducted fieldwork in Dharamsala, Kathmandu and Tibet, my interviews were conducted with Tibetans in the West where patronage solicitation is not practiced in the same way (though see section on testimonials below for a discussion of how it is used to solicit material and political support for the Movement).

Crapanzano's observation about Tuhami, Rosaldo's point about Tukbaw, and my own experience with Sonam and Dechen suggest that it is important to remember that life histories are not necessarily universal narrative forms.³² And, as I explore below, they remind us that we should problematize the notion of the "self" of life narratives/histories (see Battaglia 1995; Briggs 1986; Lynch 1996; Myers 1979, 1986; M. Rosaldo 1980; see also Langness and Frank 1981).

Another anecdote illustrates the complicated nature of intercultural interactions between Westerners and Tibetan would-be narrators. A Tibetan living in Nepal who had been hired to work on a European-produced documentary film

about Tibet told me about an incident where he was translating interviews with two recent arrivals from Tibet. Before the interview got underway, the producers informed the Tibetans that, depending on what they had to say, they might later be asked to come to Europe to testify. During the interview, the two Tibetans told stories which the translator thought were a little exaggerated. When he shared his opinion with the European producers, they got angry with him and said they did not agree. In recounting the anecdote to me, the translator pointed out, "Of course they exaggerated, they wanted to go to Europe!"

The issue of exaggerating or embellishing accounts of escape comes up regularly for the exile administration, which often finds itself having to act as mediator, translating stories of recently-arrived refugees into "facts" to be consumed by the Western media (see McLagan 1996). As one official told me, many escapees, particularly those from rural areas, "exaggerate their stories," perhaps knowing that the more harrowing their tale, the greater the chance they will have an audience with the Dalai Lama who uses meetings with new arrivals to keep abreast of developments in Tibet. Also, recent arrivals quickly learn that Western journalists are especially interested in stories involving physical torture and deprivation; over time, a premium has come to be placed on accounts which include details of this sort. I come back to this in my discussion of public narrative, or "testimonials" below.

The second point I want to make involves the translator. Many anthropologists have written about the role of assistants or translators in

ethnographic fieldwork. For instance, Crapanzano (1980) describes his assistant Lhacen as mediating the relationship between himself and Tuhami in a very complex manner (144). Gerald Berreman (1972) also discusses the crucial role played by assistant-interpreters in the fieldwork process. He rightly draws our attention to the effect such assistants have on the sort of data collected. His discussion of how his assistants' statuses affected his access to certain villagers is important and is certainly applicable to research with Tibetan communities.

In many ways, the interview with Sonam reveals as much about my relationship with Karma as it does about her. Karma repeatedly told me it bothered him to have to question his fellow Tibetans, yet at the same time, he felt frustrated when they exaggerated ("Everyone always adds and subtracts"). In fact, after the interview with Sonam, Karma told me that everyone I had interviewed upon arriving in Switzerland had added and subtracted things and that it made him so angry sometimes that he had to excuse himself and take a walk if his translating services were not needed (e.g., if the interview was being done in English or French). Scolding me, he added that even if I spoke perfect Tibetan, I would not necessarily be able to catch people's lies and exaggerations: "You must cross-examine if you are to find out the truth about what a Tibetan tells you." At the time, I assumed these embellishments offended Karma's sense of journalistic standards (he had some training in this area); later I was not so sure. In some cases I learned almost as much from Karma's reactions as I did from the individual being interviewed. It is clear that Karma functioned as a cultural mediator or

broker between the interviewees "emic" knowledge and my outsider status. That is, he took me into the "back-region" of Tibetan exile life (see Berreman 1972 on his Goffmanesque notion of "front-region/back-region"). As a friend of mine (a veteran British activist) observed, by doing this, Karma "broke a code" of what Tibetans usually talk to "injis" about and in so doing risked disapproval from fellow Tibetans if they ever found out.

Sharing suffering/sharing history

As I suggested above, the "truth value" (Bauman 1986) of narrative is only one dimension, and not an especially important one at that, of the accounts I elicited from Tibetan refugees. In the case of Sonam's story, it is more interesting, and relevant for my purposes, to consider what function it plays in the larger construction of Tibetan identity in exile. That is, Karma's assertion that Sonam could not have suffered in the way she claimed provoked me into paying more attention to the relationship between individuals' stories and the production of a master or ur-narrative (and the role of non-Tibetans in this process). What did it mean for Sonam to claim to have been starving in India and to have been forced to eat shoe leather and *tsampa* bags to survive? I wondered whether it might be possible that Sonam was "sharing history"--i.e., that she was borrowing from stories of suffering and hardship which have circulated in the exile community since 1959, and, in so doing, participating in the wider narrative of fleeing and suffering which has become one of the major tropes through which Tibetans

construct their past and present? Barbara Myerhoff describes a similar phenomenon within an elderly Jewish community in southern California. Although the individuals with whom she worked were not strictly speaking survivors of the Holocaust. "still they participated in the Holocaust with an intensity and depth and most spoke of it as though it had been their own experience as well as that of the families and peers they left behind" (1978:23).³³

Like Tibetans, the Hutu refugees about whom Malkki writes in her dissertation and recent book (1990; 1995a) frequently make references to a shared body of knowledge and belief about their past. While conducting her research in Tanzania, Malkki noticed that Hutu refugees as a collectivity are "intensively and continually engaged in a kind of historical ordering and reordering of their past" (1990:37). This "historicity" is not a form of specialized knowledge, but rather something to which every Hutu has access and is capable of invoking and discussing in great detail.

When asked to talk about their lives, the refugees slipped from the domain of personal life history into the wider field of the collective history. The wider, more collective domain seemed to help them express and interpret facts about their individual lives both in Burundi in the past and at present in the camp. **The personal and collective fused into one dynamic discourse that was recorded from different persons and in varying contexts.** [my emphasis] (1990:37)

This engagement with the past entails a "subversive recasting and reinterpretation of it in fundamentally moral, categorical terms" (1990:37). Thus the construction of a Hutu "mythico-historical" narrative, she argues, is essentially concerned with

the "reconstitution of a moral, categorical order of the world" (1990:37).

I argue that Tibetans engage in a somewhat analogous process of historical and moral ordering through the constant retelling of the suffering they have endured as a result of the events of 1959. In a sense, the Tibetan exile collectivity is located in the stories of shared suffering, that narratives entail/enable the construction of shared identity through suffering. In other words, narratives of suffering play an important role in constructing Tibetans as a moral community and as a people.³⁴

Malkki's (1995a:198) claim that the refugee camp in Tanzania, known as Mishamo, enabled a striking self-conscious historicity among its Hutu inhabitants, and that this new consciousness entailed a tremendous emphasis on the moral significance of being in exile, is equally applicable to Tibetans living in "settlements" in India. Tibetans who have spent long periods living in such enclaves exhibit similar belief in the moral purity of their displaced, refugee status. Not taking Indian citizenship and thus not allowing oneself to be incorporated into the Indian state, and holding onto one's Tibetan "identity card" (issued by the Indian government) have emerged as signs of patriotism and a major test of one's true "Tibetanness" over the years in refugee settlements across India (see Devoe 1987). At the same time, settlement life in India has contributed to a consciousness of their identity not just as Tibetans, but also as "refugees" who, because of their status, are worthy of international aid and sponsorship.

To understand the ways in which Tibetans "share history" and the processes

through which stories become both personal and collective, it is useful to examine what it means to elicit personal narratives in Tibetan culture. As suggested above, life history is not a universal narrative form. So what does it mean to tell a story about oneself in the Tibetan context? According to Devoe (1987:96), in Tibetan society, it is considered shameful to boast or to draw attention to oneself; modesty is a highly prized cultural value. Jamyang Norbu notes the traditional reticence of Tibetans when it comes to talking about their personal experiences:

When a Tibetan refugee makes his statement, he is usually prevented by his native reticence and lack of sophistication from satisfactorily putting into words a large amount of the horrors he has experienced. He further piously passes off his own tribulations with a few words and insists on relating endless instances of religious persecution, destruction of monasteries, and desecration of sacred images, books, and relics, to an audience whose religious sentiments may not be so sensitive. (1989:19)

According to Venturino (1995), Tibetans' reticence and lack of sophistication have been mitigated in recent years as Tibetans have become more willing and able to tell their stories to the international press. Jamyang Norbu's Warriors of Tibet (1986), an "autobiography" of a man from Kham told by Norbu, was one of the first English language books to detail the personal aspects of the Tibetan struggle. Since then, Venturino points out, "Tibetan periodical publications in English and French regularly feature eyewitness accounts of the trouble in and around Tibet" (1995:164).

Like Venturino, Heather Stoddard also has observed a change in traditional Tibetan reticence, noting the emergence of a written "genre" of diaspora narrative

in which ordinary Tibetans tell their stories:

An interesting development in the diaspora is that in the 1960s, for the very first time, ordinary lay men and women, as opposed to teachers and incarnate lamas, began to write their life stories, often at the behest of sympathetic Western friends. These writers give detailed personal descriptions of Tibet before and during the Chinese takeover with the aim of letting the world know the plight of the Tibetans. (1994:152-53)

Prior to this development, Stoddard writes, the closest thing to what could be construed as Tibetan biography or autobiography was the *mam-thar*, or life-story, that was used to relate the lives of enlightened beings. With the emergence of written narratives by ordinary Tibetans, Stoddard argues, "the traditional function of the *mam-thar* or life-story has been altered radically from describing the journey of a holy being towards enlightenment, where it serves as a model for others" (ibid., 152-153).

Stoddard's contention that autobiography and biography were not forms commonly used by Tibetans in the past except to tell the story of enlightened beings is interesting. What can we conclude about the emergence of such narrative forms in exile? Does it mean that whereas only the lives of great Buddhist practitioners were deemed worthy of recording in old Tibet, in exile even ordinary Tibetan lives are seen as valuable? Do these new forms represent, as Stoddard claims, "a new kind of awareness concerning Tibetan identity?" (1994:154) I argue that these new literary efforts demonstrate that the experiences of ordinary Tibetans have come to provide the basis for both the production and popular participation in Tibetan nationness or diaspora nationalism.

Interestingly, the growth of diaspora autobiographies and biographies coincides with the emergence of "escape narratives" (Moon 1992) written by Tibetans living in Tibet. These "escape narratives" have appeared regularly in Tibet since 1959 and

they stand either as narratives in their own right or as part of a longer life story. Often, the journey ends in the joy of meeting with the Dalai Lama, tempered by the memory of relatives and friends who have died or been left behind. (Moon 1992:59)

Barnett notes that these narratives are written in contemporary Tibetan literary style which differs considerably from classical Tibetan and, to some extent, from that of the Tibetan exile community.³⁵

"A Monk's Story," a modern Tibetan novella written in 1990, exemplifies this new genre. Written by a former monk from Amdo four months after his arrival in India, the story describes in vivid detail the monk's journey through Tibet. The narrative includes everything from warnings from those along the way of what to expect in India--exiles who look down on "new arrivals" (*gsar-'byor-ba*) and who are more interested in their petty rivalries than in working for independence--to negotiations with Nepalese guides to bring him across the Himalayas. These narratives are interesting as much for their critiques of exile society as for their descriptions of the physical hardships of escape.³⁶ In this sense, they are very much in keeping with political and social satire in old Tibet which took the form of street songs in Lhasa (see Goldstein 1982).³⁷

What distinguishes these escape narratives from the narratives discussed

above is that they are written in Tibetan and thus are aimed at a Tibetan audience. The diaspora narratives described by Stoddard and Venturino have been written in English or French and often with help or encouragement from Western friends, and are thus aimed largely at a non-Tibetan audience. In the next section, I discuss the most widely-read example of this new genre of diaspora narrative, the Dalai Lama's Freedom in Exile.

Narratives of escape: Freedom in Exile

The Dalai Lama was one of the first Tibetans to write what could be construed as an "autobiography" upon coming into exile (see discussion below). His first book, My Land and My People, was published in 1962 (and was written with the assistance of David Howarth). The second book, Freedom in Exile, created with help from journalist Alexander Norman, was published in the U.S. in 1990 by Harper Collins. In between the publication of these two books, a number of other Tibetans have published their life stories. Interestingly, although most of these authors are what Stoddard refers to as "ordinary" (meaning lay men and women as opposed to incarnate lamas and teachers), many (though not all) come from prominent families.³⁸ Perhaps the best known is Rinchen Dolma Taring, also known as Mary Taring, whose Daughter of Tibet (1970) was the first book written by a Tibetan woman in exile. Two other women have recently followed in Taring's footsteps, including Jamyang Sakya, whose Princess in the Land of Snows: the Life of Jamyang Sakya in Tibet was written with help from Julie

Emery in 1990, and Dorje Yudon Yuthok, whose House of the Turquoise Roof came out the same year. In addition to these, two of the resistance stories cited earlier in this chapter qualify as autobiographies that tell the story of prominent Khampas: Warriors of Tibet: The story of Aten and the Khampas' Fight for the Freedom of their Country by Jamyang Norbu (1986) and Four Rivers, Six Ranges by Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang (1973).

In the accounts by Taring, Yuthok, and Sakya, emphasis is placed on reconstructing Tibetan society through memories of their youth and early adulthood. It is somewhat paradoxical that these texts have been framed as representative accounts of life in old Tibet, given the fact that as members of the aristocracy, their authors' lives were far from representative of those of the majority of Tibet's population. Though each of these three writers fled Tibet in 1959, most travelled with servants and stayed at their own or their friends' estates along the way. Thus their experience of leaving, while no doubt frightening and difficult at times, was far different from that of Sonam, Yeshe, Pema, and countless other Tibetans. In addition, as mentioned earlier, Tibetans from this stratum brought out valuable heirlooms and jewelry; some even managed to ship out many possessions before they left. Thus they were well equipped to re-establish themselves with some degree of comfort in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, communities with longstanding Tibetan aristocratic populations.

Dawa Norbu's Red Star over Tibet (1987) is one of the most interesting and important diaspora narratives to be written by a lay person from a non-aristocratic

background. In his preface to the second edition, Norbu notes that "as all the reviews of the first edition testified, Red Star over Tibet is not an autobiography in the strict sense of the term. Who would be interested in an autobiography of an unknown person, and that too before the author had reached the age of twenty-five?" (1987:7). Norbu claims that the fact that he was "neither a lama nor an aristocrat" helped him to write what "really went on in Tibet" in 1959 (10). Although like other writers, Norbu tells the story of Tibet's fall through his family's eyes (he relied on his mother's recollections as Norbu himself was only ten when he fled in November 1959), unlike the aristocratic writers referred to above, Norbu's family actually lived through the arrival of Chinese "reformers" in his village and witnessed the destruction of the "old society." In the process of recounting this experience, Norbu strongly criticizes some aspects of Tibetan life prior to the Chinese takeover, at times appearing to agree with Chinese critiques.³⁹ These criticisms did not endear Norbu to the Tibetan government-in-exile nor to most other refugees. He was viewed as a critic of the Dalai Lama and as a result faced strong public censure.⁴⁰ Norbu's experience with Red Star over Tibet and refugees' intolerance of his account suggests the importance of a standardized history of what happened in Tibet to the exile collectivity.

At this point I turn to a brief discussion of Freedom in Exile. There are several ways to go about analyzing the Dalai Lama's text. For example, like the other diaspora narratives described in this chapter, the book can be seen as part of the ongoing "confrontation of representations" (Goldstein 1994b) between Tibetans

and Chinese officials described in chapter 2. This is suggested by the Dalai Lama's claim that he decided to write the book "to counter Chinese claims and misinformation they spread about Tibet's history, culture, and religion" (Goleman 1990:49).

Freedom in Exile may also be seen as a response to growing Western interest in the Tibetan leader. This is implied in the book's opening paragraph where the Dalai Lama attempts to describe who he is for this Western audience:

Dalai Lama means different things to different people. To some it means that I am a living Buddha, the earthly manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, Bodhisattva of Compassion. To others it means that I am a "god-king." During the late 1950s it meant that I was a Vice-President of the Steering Committee of the People's Republic of China. Then when I escaped into exile, I was called a counterrevolutionary and a parasite. But none of these are my ideas. To me "Dalai Lama" is a title that signifies the office I hold. I myself am just a human being, and incidentally a Tibetan, who chooses to be a Buddhist monk. It is as a simple monk that I offer this story of my life, though it is by no means a book about Buddhism. (Gyatso 1990:xiii)

Freedom in Exile raises a number of interesting questions, such as what does it mean to narrate a self in relation to Western expectations? To what extent is the Dalai Lama's text emblematic of a kind of "witnessing" or "testimonial" produced in relation to the demands and structures of Western autobiographical discourse? Before answering these questions, it is necessary to summarize the chapter describing the Dalai Lama's escape from Tibet.

The sequence of events precipitating the Dalai Lama's flight have already been described in the early part of this chapter. They include the invitation to visit

a Chinese military camp unaccompanied by his customary entourage of bodyguards, Tibetans' fear that such an invitation implied an intent to kidnap or do harm to the Tibetan leader, and the subsequent surrounding of Norbulingka by thousands of people. As I noted, prior to March 1959, the Dalai Lama had sought an accommodation with the Chinese, and had tried to persuade his compatriots to refrain from violence. For instance, after a successful attack by Chushi Gangdruk members on a major People's Liberation Army garrison at Tsedang in late 1958, the Dalai Lama feared the fighting would spread to nearby Lhasa and he did all he could to avoid such an eventuality, including revoking his two elder brothers' citizenship (who were out of the country at the time) at the request of Chinese officials. He writes that he acquiesced to this request in order to avoid open military confrontation with the PLA in Lhasa: "I wanted to avoid this by almost any means. I felt that if the people of Lhasa became involved in the fighting, there could be no hope of restoring peace" (ibid., 128).

Although the "freedom fighters," as the Dalai Lama describes them, sought his approval for their actions, he writes that "alas, I could not give it" (ibid., 128). Not only did the Tibetan leader believe that the Tibetan people were no match for the PLA and thus open confrontation would be devastating, but such a confrontation went against his Buddhist principles.⁴¹ This is made clear in the following description of the winter months of 1958-59 when the Dalai Lama was busy preparing for his final monastic exams.

It was hard to concentrate on my work. Almost every day I heard

new reports of Chinese outrages against the non-combatant population. Sometimes the news was favourable to Tibet--but this gave me no comfort. Only the thought of my responsibility to the six million Tibetans kept me going. That and my faith. Early every morning, as I sat in prayer in my room before the ancient altar with its clutter of statuettes standing in silent benediction, I concentrated hard on developing compassion for all sentient beings. I reminded myself constantly of the Buddha's teaching that our enemy is in a sense our greatest teacher. And if this was sometimes hard to do, I never really doubted that it was so. (ibid., 129)

The Dalai Lama's description of his anxiety and fear as tension mounted between the two sides reveals a very human side of the Tibetan leader. His uncertainty as to what to do and how to respond to the Chinese officials' mounting belligerence is poignant. The Dalai Lama writes that after being advised by the Nechung Oracle to stay and upon receiving word that the Chinese were planning to attack the crowds surrounding Norbulingka, he was at a total loss as to what to do next:

The following day, I again sought the counsel of the oracle. To my astonishment, he shouted, "Go! Go! Tonight!" The medium, still in his trance, then staggered forward and, snatching up some paper and a pen, wrote down, quite clearly and explicitly, the route that I should take out of Norbulingka, down to the last Tibetan town on the Indian border. (ibid., 136)

To confirm the oracle's decision, the Dalai Lama performed another divination. The answer agreed with the oracle and the Tibetan leader began to make preparations to flee.

One of the last things the Dalai Lama did before leaving the Norbulingka was to say some prayers:

At nightfall, I went for the last time to the shrine dedicated to Mahākāla, my personal protector divinity. As I entered the room through its heavy, creaking door, I paused for a moment to take in

what I saw before me. A number of monks sat chanting prayers at the base of a large statue of the Protector. There was no electric light in the room, only the glow of dozens of votive butter lamps set in rows of golden and silver dishes...No one looked up, although I knew that my presence must have been noticed...I went forward and presented a *kata*, a length of white silk, to the divinity. This is the traditional Tibetan gesture on departure and signifies not only propitiation, but also implies the intention of return...Before leaving the room, I sat down for a few minutes and read from the Buddha's *sūtras*, stopping at the one which talks of the need to "develop confidence and courage." (ibid., 138)

After this, the Tibetan leader disguised himself, hoping to slip out through the crowds around the Norbulingka unrecognized. This portion of the Dalai Lama's narrative is the most dramatic and thus is the part most frequently referred to by Tibetans.

At a few minutes before ten o'clock, now wearing unfamiliar trousers and a long, black coat, I threw a rifle over my right shoulder and, rolled up, an old thangka that had belonged to the Second Dalai Lama over my left. Then, slipping my glasses into my pocket, I stepped outside. I was very frightened. (ibid., 138)

Led by two soldiers, he made his way through the gate where, the Tibetan leader recalls, "I could sense the presence of a great mass of humanity as I stumbled on, but they did not take any notice of us and, after a few minutes walk, we were once again alone" (ibid., 138).

From there the Dalai Lama describes crossing the Kyichu (River), terrified that nearby PLA soldiers would hear them. The escape party eventually grew to one hundred people, who were escorted by another two hundred Tibetan soldiers. When the party reached Lhuntse Dzong, after nearly a week's travel, the Dalai Lama repudiated the Seventeen Point "Agreement" and announced the formation of

his own government, which he called "the only legally constituted authority in the land" (ibid., 141). Then the escape party set off again for the Indian border. On the way, the Tibetan leader remembers seeing a plane fly overhead; uncertain if it was a Chinese plane or not, he was now convinced that going into exile was his only option--"India was our only hope" (ibid., 142).

Not even the Dalai Lama was spared the miseries of flight, as his account of his last night in Tibet so eloquently illustrates:

I spent my last night in Tibet at a tiny village called Mangmang. No sooner had we reached this final outpost of the Land of Snows than it began to rain. This was on top of a week of appalling weather, which threw blizzards and snow glare at us by turns as we straggled along. We were all exhausted and it was the last thing that we needed, but it continued torrentially throughout the night. To make matters worse, my tent leaked and no matter where I dragged my bedding I could not escape the water which ran in rivulets down the inside. The result was that the fever I had been fighting off for the past five days developed overnight into a case of full-blown dysentary. (ibid., 142)

Freedom in Exile was very well received in the U.S. It was reviewed by all the major literary publications, including The New York Times Book Review, The New York Review of Books, as well as in daily newspapers such as Wall Street Journal. Although the coverage was extensive, most of the reviews reveal that despite the Dalai Lama's attempts to explain himself, people continue to not know what to make of him. One reviewer actually made this claim in her piece in the U.S. News and World Report. Describing a press conference given by the Dalai Lama in New York in September 1990, the reviewer wrote:

What is odd is that he smiles all the time. It is shortly after 9 a.m.

at the Mayfair Regent Hotel in New York City, and he enters the room, beaming, palms clasped beneath his chin. He has a round face above his maroon and yellow robes and eyebrows that pop up and down. For a moment, Tom Brokaw, Connie Chung and the rest of the assembled reporters and cameramen, many of whom have been busy grumbling about seats and wolfing free doughnuts, fall silent. Nobody seems to know quite what to make of him.

"Good morning," he says, sitting at a table arranged with microphones. Underneath the table, his matching maroon socks have fallen down around his clunky Dexter oxfords. "I hope everyone had a good sleep night. Me, too." He squeaks with laughter...(Rosellini 1990:94)

The reviewer continues, "You can tell by the frowns over the next 45 minutes that members of the New York press corps are having trouble grappling with the nature of this God-king. This is no author flogging a new book or politician peddling promises" (94).⁴²

The only reviewer of Freedom in Exile who appeared to know what to make of the Dalai Lama was Jonathan Mirsky, whose essay in The New York Review of Books revealed an obvious familiarity with modern Tibetan history and the exile leader. Mirsky depicts the Dalai Lama's persona in his text as "very much as he seems in person: unassuming but conscious of his special characteristics ("the simple monk" who is also spiritually connected to his thirteen predecessors and to the Buddha)" (1990:59). Mirsky comments that the Dalai Lama "can skate over difficult subjects," though he claims the problem is more one of "omission" than anything else (ibid., 59). For instance, he notes that not only does the Tibetan leader fail to mention the Reting conspiracy (see chapter 3), he also neglects to say much about his notorious father who ignored Tibetan laws,

refused to pay taxes, and interfered in legal cases. In addition, although the Dalai Lama acknowledges the CIA's involvement in getting weapons and money to Tibetan guerrillas, he fails to include anything about the "network of CIA operations stretching from several small countries in the Himalayas to Okinawa and on to Colorado" (ibid., 59). Finally, Mirsky asserts that the Dalai Lama "repeats the familiar and wonderful story" of how he was discovered by a search party at the age of two, but does not say anything about the politics behind this choice, including the fact that he was but one of several possible infant reincarnations on a list drawn up by the Panchen Lama (see Richardson 1984:150 for a discussion of the implications of this fact).

Mirsky argues that the Dalai Lama's preference for simplicity is evident throughout Freedom in Exile. Citing the monk's description of his bedroom in the Potala Palace, Mirsky writes,

...he recalls his tiny freezing bedroom, thick with dust, in the Potala, once the bedroom of the Great Fifth...the first all-powerful Dalai Lama. Its little dishes of food offerings at the altar were "plundered by mice. I became very fond of these little creatures...Sometimes they came over my bed...[which] was surrounded by long, red curtains. The mice would clamber over these too, their urine dripping down as I snuggled under my blankets below." (1990:60)

"All this is charming," Mirsky concludes, "and can easily disarm the reader into thinking that Tibet was a victim, guilty at worst of...an exotic innocence" (ibid., 60).⁴³ The charm of Freedom in Exile obviously appealed to many readers in the U.S. who bought the book in large numbers. Although it was not on the

bestsellers' list, the book did particularly well in cities on the East and West coasts.

Freedom in Exile as *testimonio*

At this point I want to return to the questions I posed earlier about the Dalai Lama's text. I suggest that it may be useful to think about Freedom in Exile in relation to a form of narrative text called *testimonio* (Sp.). In an essay in Modern Fiction Studies, John Beverley (1989) defines *testimonio* as

a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet form, told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or a significant life experience. *Testimonio* may include, but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, novela-testimonio, nonfiction novel..." (1989:12-13).

Beverley argues that while *testimonio*-like texts "have been around for a long time at the margin of literature, representing in particular those subjects--the child, the "native," the woman, the insane, the criminal, the proletarian--excluded from authorized representation" (ibid., 13), *testimonio* really coalesced as a new narrative genre in the 1960s. As the word itself suggests, *testimonio* developed most richly in Latin American where it became a popular and vital part of literary production. Soon it emerged elsewhere in the so-called Third World in relation to the spread of armed struggle movements and the Vietnam War.

Beverley observes that *testimonio* translates as testimony, "as in the act of

testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense”:

That connotation is important because it distinguishes *testimonio* from simply recorded participant narrative, as in the case of “oral history”...in *testimonio*, it is the intentionality of the narrator that is paramount. The situation of narration in *testimonio* has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on, implicated in the act of narration itself. The position of the reader of *testimonio* is akin to that of a jury member in a courtroom...(ibid., 15)

Unlike novels, which tend to be concerned with the life of what Lukacs (1971) calls the “problematic hero,” Beverley suggests that *testimonio* focuses on a “problematic collective social situation that the narrator lives with or alongside others” (1989:15). *Testimonio* narrators speak for a community or group, “approximating in this way the symbolic function of the epic hero,” he argues, “without at the same time assuming his hierarchical and patriarchal status” (ibid., 15). This metonymic function of the narrative voice is latent in the form itself, is part of its narrative convention:

Testimonio is a fundamentally democratic and egalitarian form of narrative in the sense that it implies that any life so narrated can have a kind of representational value. Each individual *testimonio* evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences. (ibid., 16)

Unlike autobiography, which is “built on the notion of a coherent, self-evident, self-conscious, commanding subject that appropriates literature precisely as a means of self-expression,” the meaning of *testimonio* “lies not in its uniqueness but in its ability to stand for the experience of a community as a whole” (ibid., 23).

Although *testimonio* represents an affirmation of the individual subject, it is in

connection with a collective situation "marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle" (ibid., 23). Without this connection, Beverley observes, "it ceases to be *testimonio* and becomes autobiography" (ibid., 23).

As texts, *testimonio* are highly mediated cultural productions. In an essay on a *testimonio* by Guatemalan Indian activist (and Nobel Prize winner) Rigoberto Menchu, Kaplan writes that

While appearing to be "authentic" oral accounts set directly into writing...most of these texts are the product of complex, hybrid authorial strategies. Thus, the *testimonio* participates in the discourse of individual autobiography while utilizing a different technology from conventional first person Western accounts (1994:147)

Because often narrators are not literate or if they are, they are not professional writers, the production of *testimonio* generally involves tape recording, transcription, and editing of an oral account by an interlocutor who is an intellectual, often a journalist or writer (Beverley 1989:15). According to Beverley, the nature of this intervention by an interlocutor is one of the most hotly debated aspects of the genre (e.g., see Kaplan 1994).

Testimonios are hybrid intercultural productions not simply in that they are co-produced by "third world" individuals and "first world" writers, editors, and in some cases, anthropologists, but also in the sense that they address readers from a wide range of cultural, national, ethnic backgrounds (see Carr 1994). As anthropologist Lynn Stephen argues, readers consume *testimonio* because they want a version of history legitimized as authentic because it is told by, for instance, a

Latin American, or an African-American, or an Asian. She writes:

A major part of their appeal lies in the differences between the lives of those in the stories and the lives of those who read them. This is part of what makes the testimonial genre different from traditions of oral history where the story is generally consumed by those who share a cultural and historical background with the teller. In testimonial literature, the communication from teller to reader is based primarily on difference. (1994:232)

Although testimonial narratives are aimed at outsiders, they nevertheless "make possible a different kind of complicity...between narrator and reader than is possible, say, in the novel" (Beverley 1989:18). By appealing to universal values of justice, for instance, *testimonios* bring people together across boundaries of difference into networks of solidarity:

The complicity a *testimonio* establishes with its readers involves their identification--by engaging their sense of ethics and justice--with a popular cause normally distant, not to say alien, from their immediate experience. *Testimonio* in this sense has been important in maintaining and developing the practice of international human rights and solidarity movements. (ibid., 19)

Freedom in Exile represents a form of *testimonio*. As we have already seen, it emerged as a result of the Dalai Lama's desire to "set the record straight" (Gyatso 1990:xiii) and combat Chinese misrepresentations of Tibetan history as opposed to his desire to tell his life story. Like other *testimonio* narrators, he speaks for his people whom he describes as having suffered greatly as a result of China's occupation. And similar to other testimonial narratives, Freedom in Exile was the product of an interaction with a journalist, in this case an Englishman named Alexander Norman "who taped the Dalai Lama for several hours at a time

and prepared a manuscript from the tapes, which they later rewrote together” (Goleman 1990:49). (In his review Mirsky suggests that the publisher should have added “as told to Alexander Norman” on the title page instead of tucking this fact away in the acknowledgments.) However, what makes the book a *testimonio*--an activist text--more than anything else is the fact that it represents an attempt to establish a connection or identification by Western readers with the predicament of Tibetan refugees and those still in Tibet, and to mobilize readers’ sympathy and sense of responsibility on their behalf.

I conclude this section by arguing that testimonial literature constitutes a viable frame through which personal suffering, collective history, and political claims are easily rendered comprehensible to cultural others and that Tibetan diaspora narratives, whether oral, written, or performed in public, can best be understood in relation to the recent availability of this discursive frame. I explore this point further below in my discussion of the third “genre” of diaspora narratives.

The story of Palden Gyatso: “Performing” diaspora narratives

Although the *testimonio* form described above is written, I suggest that we consider diaspora narratives performed in public and semi-public fora, such as governmental and non-governmental hearings (e.g., U.S. Congress; U.N. Commission on Human Rights) as well as Tibet Movement meetings, conferences and outreach events, as another form of *testimonio*. To do this, I focus on one “performance”

by a monk recently released from prison in Tibet.⁴⁴ Although these narratives generally are produced or performed by recent arrivals in exile, especially young monks and nuns who were not involved in the events of 1959, the case of Palden Gyatso is an exception. As a 64 year old man, Gyatso was in his thirties during the Lhasa uprising, the Dalai Lama's escape, and the subsequent exodus of thousands of refugees; after 1959, he spent 31 years in prison and labor camps. Because of his age and because of the fact that he was cut off from Tibet's changing society for so long, Gyatso speaks in the same way about China's occupation and the events of 1959 as the generation who fled at that time and whose narratives have been the focus of this chapter.

I first became aware of Palden Gyatso through a New York Times article on a resolution about China's record in Tibet at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva in February 1995 (see Figure 2). It mentioned testimony given by a monk which included a demonstration of "torture instruments" he had managed to procure before fleeing Tibet in 1992. A few weeks later, I received a flyer in the mail inviting me to an event sponsored by the Office of Tibet in New York City (this organization is the official representative of the interests of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in North America; see chapter 6). The flyer had a photograph of Gyatso demonstrating one of the torture instruments in the British House of Commons, accompanied by Lord Weatherill looking on sympathetically (see Figure 3). The text beneath the photo read: "Palden Gyatso: A prisoner of China for 31 years tells his story. Will Display Torture Instruments

Tibetan Torture Victim Testifies at U.N.



Palden Gyatso, a 64-year-old Tibetan monk, testifying before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in February. This was the first time that a Tibetan witness from Tibet addressed the Commission. "I spent 33 years of my life in Chinese prisons and labor camps in Tibet. All those years I yearned for a moment such as this, when I could speak to the United Nations," said Palden. Ngawang Choephel (left), from the Tibet Bureau, accompanied Palden.

Figure 2 Tibetan Torture Victim Testifies at U.N.
Tibet Press Watch, March 1995



PALDEN GYATSO: A PRISONER OF CHINA FOR 31 YEARS TELLS HIS STORY

Will Display Torture Instruments He Smuggled from Tibet

NEW YORK, March 27 - Office of Tibet will host a talk by Ven. Palden Gyatso about his prison experiences in Tibet on 7 April in New York.

Palden Gyatso is 64 years old. 31 years of his life, he spent in prison in Tibet and endured countless torture, including having an electric shock baton rammed down his throat, being hung from a ceiling and a fire lit beneath him and being beaten with a nail-studded piece of wood. In 1992, Palden Gyatso, a monk, was released from prison. With money he managed to save, he bought many of the torture instruments from a Chinese prison official.

Palden Gyatso is now in the United States and will testify before the House Sub-Committee on International Organizations and Human Rights of the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C. on 3 April.

He will be in New York from 5 to 9 April. At 6:30 P.M., Palden Gyatso will give a talk about his prison experiences in Tibet. Some of the things that happened were unbelievable," Palden Gyatso said. "When a prisoner was executed, the family was sent an invoice for the bullets used, any rope and other costs incurred during the execution. "Where else in the world could such a system exist?"

Early in March, Palden Gyatso testified before the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

VENUE: NYANA Auditorium, 1 South
17 Battery Place
NEW YORK, NY 10004

TIME: A reception at 6:30 P.M. will precede the talk

DATE: Friday 7 APRIL 1995 RSVP: Office of Tibet, tel: (212) 213-5010

Figure 3 Palden Gyatso: A Prisoner of China for 31 Years

he Smuggled from Tibet.”

The event took place at the offices of NYANA, the New York Association of New Americans, on April 7, 1995. NYANA was best known for its support of the resettlement of Russian Jews in the U.S. As the exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union began to slow in the early 1990s, NYANA became involved with organizing the resettlement of 100 Tibetan refugees in New York who were part of an emigration of 1,000 Tibetans in 1992. Later, NYANA became the headquarters of the Tibetan U.S. Resettlement Project (TUSRP) and eventually employed a number of Tibetans.

Tibetans have long been interested in the parallels between the Tibetan and Jewish experience and many admire Israel’s triumphant reclaiming of their religious homeland which “appears to them as positive proof that a tiny but tough nation can ultimately defeat and hold its own against millions of hostile neighbors” (Nowak 1984:128).⁴⁵ According to anthropologist Margaret Nowak, the one aspect of Jewish history that does draw unfavorable comment is the duration of the diaspora (“It shouldn’t take us 2,000 years to get our country back”) (1984:128). In recent years, Tibetans have acted on their admiration of the Jews, cultivating connections with American Jewish leaders, both secular and religious (see Kamenetz 1994). These contacts have coincided with the recent emergence of Tibetans’ self-conscious use of the term “diasporic” to define their condition in exile.⁴⁶ The link between NYANA and the TUSRP can thus be viewed in the context of a growing interaction between the American Jews and Tibetan exile

community.⁴⁷

In any event, when I arrived at NYANA, the room where the event was being held was packed. There were many Tibetans present, more than I usually saw at a Tibet-related event. As a narrative performance, Palden Gyatso's presentation was quite interesting. The Dalai Lama's New York-based representative began by introducing him and outlining the chronology of his imprisonment. When Gyatso, a small, bald, toothless man, took the floor, his account (in Tibetan) was organized around the various forms of torture and other indignities he and fellow political prisoners had been forced to endure.⁴⁸ The translator, a man from the Office of Tibet, appeared at first to have some trouble understanding Gyatso's speech, perhaps because he was not used to the monk's enunciation (since he had no teeth) or dialect. As Gyatso outlined his experience, the story became more and more harrowing. He began by telling us about the practice of attaching political prisoners to plows which were steered by prison guards who repeatedly struck them with metal whips. "They beat us if we fell down," Gyatso recalled, "this is something unheard of in the world." Whenever prisoners expressed their view that Tibet was not part of China, "they would start struggling us," he said. Inevitably, prison authorities would resort to torture for those who refused to say they were sorry and admit that Tibet was a part of China. Gyatso went on to describe an incident in October 1990 when he was tortured with a electric cattle prod. Using the prod he had managed to procure from corrupt prison guards after his release, Gyatso demonstrated what happened. He put the

prod in his mouth and then described fainting and waking up in a pool of blood and urine, surrounded by his teeth which had fallen out. As he spoke, many in the audience gasped and clucked their disapproval. When Gyatso recounted how Tibetan nuns regularly have their "private parts" poked by these prods--how they are raped with them by prison guards--the audience reacted even more audibly. According to Gyatso, over time, the Chinese introduced other forms of torture as well, including forcing bamboo shoots under fingernails: "The degree and brutality of torture is endless," he told us; "the authorities even charge the family of those prisoners who are executed for the bullets used." Gyatso also recalled a time when condemned prisoners were forced to sing and dance before their execution while other prisoners were forced to look on. Despite their brutality, "the Chinese treat all Tibetan prisoners the same, they don't distinguish between if a Tibetan is from Eastern Tibet or Central Tibet or northeastern Tibet," Gyatso pointed out, "there is the same suffering for all Tibetans." This and another similar comment made later on in his talk⁴⁹ underscore my point about Gyatso being caught in a kind of time capsule, for lack of a better term, a time when regionalism and sectarianism were still the most salient aspect of political life in Tibet and when people understood their identities in terms of these categories. Thus it is not surprising that a number of Tibetans, especially those representing the government-in-exile, squirmed or looked uncomfortable when Gyatso made this particular statement. The exile government has worked hard to create the appearance of unity in exile and to squelch references (at least in intercultural arenas) to the rampant factionalism in

Tibet prior to China's takeover. Gyatso's comment reminded them of what they had struggled to obscure, at least for potential Western supporters. He ended this section of his talk by saying, "This is briefly my personal experience; because of the brutality of the Chinese, many Tibetans have died. Right now remembering those who have died makes me sad."

Gyatso then shifted gears somewhat, discussing the destruction of Tibetan culture and the exploitation of Tibet's minerals and timber. When he was finished, he turned to his four torture instruments which were spread out on the table before him. One by one, he demonstrated how each was used, starting with three cattle prods (one made in China, he noted, the other two in England). The next was a set of handcuffs with a jagged edge; "I have a lot of scars up my arms because of these" Gyatso said, "and some prisoners have had their hands amputated because handcuffs were kept on too long." The third instrument was a sort of leather thong sling which was used to tie prisoners arms behind their backs in an awkward position. Finally, Gyatso showed the audience two small knives which he claimed are carried by the police and soldiers. "Except for the knife, all these torture instruments were used on my body," Gyatso said, "I testified at the UN in Geneva. The Chinese delegate was present and I was able to prove to them what local Chinese authorities are doing to Tibetan prisoners."

Gyatso's testimony and the materiality of the torture instruments appeared to be very effective in moving both Tibetans and Westerners in the audience. One Tibetan woman sitting next to me covered her ears and looked at her skirt in order

to avoid hearing or seeing any more. Other Tibetans in the audience appeared spellbound during Gyatso's demonstration, some sniffing or struggling to hold back tears, others looking angry and shocked. These reactions reveal the important role testimonials by escapees play within the Tibetan community. By hearing of the ongoing suffering inside Tibet against their fellow countrymen and women, some of whom chose not to flee in 1959 but instead decided to remain and fight, exile Tibetans' commitment to the Tibetan struggle are renewed as they are reminded of their responsibility to those still suffering in their homeland. Palden Gyatso's concluding comments to the Tibetans in the room make this clear:

So now I am a refugee and you are a refugee and I realize those Tibetans who came over years back had a much more difficult experience. Now refugees can rely on Tibetan government for support but earlier refugees had to work hard. You live with dignity in exile; I'd like to thank you for this. My hope and prayer is that Tibetan community members will work hard and support efforts of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government.

Although Gyatso's performance on this occasion may have been directed toward Tibetans in the audience, his global tour, which took him from Switzerland to England, Italy, and Portugal and then to the U.S. and was organized by the Tibetan government-in-exile, was addressed to a largely Western audience (see Figures 4-6). Not only that, it took place or was framed in Western terms. By this I mean that Gyatso's testimonial, with its emphasis on bodily suffering and Chinese atrocities, fits into an existing frame that has deep historical roots in communities that have experienced persecution, including those of the African and Jewish diasporas. This frame has been used recently with greater and greater

Reprinted Articles

The Times, London February 28, 1995



Palden Gyatso, with Lord Weatherill, displaying Chinese torture instruments in the House of Commons yesterday. "I was determined to tell the outside world what was happening in Tibet," the monk said

Tibetan monk relives jail ordeal

By MICHAEL DYDES

THIRTY-THREE years of torture, brutal beatings and ritual humiliation in Chinese prison and labour camps failed to break the spirit of Palden Gyatso, a Buddhist monk from Tibet.

Only his determination to tell the world what the Chinese were doing to the Tibetan people kept him alive, he said yesterday, in the faded splendour of the Jubilee Rooms in the House of Commons, he got his chance.

Arrested for taking part in the 1959 national uprising against the illegal Chinese occupation of 1950, Palden, 64, began an ordeal which was to leave him almost dead, mutilated, haunted by memories of pain, and aged before his time. But he survived, even resorting to eating his boots. Many of his companions, who were either beaten to death or committed suicide, were not so lucky.

For his defiance in leading a 100-man protest against the

Chinese invasion, he was imprisoned for seven years, the first two spent in chains. On one occasion, an electric baton was thrust into his mouth. He retained consciousness, having lost 20 of his teeth. The rest fell out soon afterwards.

Electric batons are favoured by the Chinese as instruments of torture. They are designed to be used on sensitive areas. The electrical discharge is excruciatingly painful and the body may be gripped by convulsions. Strips of flesh may be pulled away when the baton is removed, leaving burn marks. The high voltage is designed to maximise pain without killing, according to Helen Bamber, Director of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.

While in prison, Palden kept notes and smuggled out letters describing conditions. Such acts of defiance brought further sentences, and more

beatings. His arms are permanently bent from being chained to the ceiling. The guards liked to light fires under prisoners, he said. As if all this were not enough, families of prisoners were often sent "invoices" for the



Palden breaks down as he tells of his suffering

equipment and bullets used during the prisoners' incarceration and executions.

The Chinese word for cattle is used to describe Tibetans. Chinese claims that they respect Tibetan human rights are preposterous, he said.

One of his worst moments came in 1966, when some of his companions were made to sign confessions justifying their executions. Many were forced to dance and sing before they were shot.

Although released from Drochu prison in 1992, Palden remains a wanted man. Instead of returning to his monastery, he raised money from friends to buy instruments of torture from corrupt Chinese guards and walked for two weeks across the Himalayas to India.

He said: "I have seen the destruction of Tibetan civilisation and culture. The only drive to stay alive was that I was determined to tell the world what was happening."

Figure 4 Tibetan Monk Relives Jail Ordeal
The Times, London Feb. 28, 1995



TIBET

PRESS WATCH

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET VOLUME 21 ISSUE 11 MAY 1995

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**The Dalai Lama
Recognizes New
Panchen Lama**
(Story on page 13)

Longest Serving Tibetan Political Prisoner Testifies Before Congress

Palden Gyatso, a Tibetan monk, who spent 3 decades in prisons and labor camps in Tibet, testified at a Congressional hearing on April 3, fulfilling his dream to relate his ordeals in prison to the U.S. government. Released on August 25, 1992 from Drapchi prison in Lhasa, Palden Gyatso, age 64, has served more years behind bars in Tibet than any other surviving Tibetan who has reached the West.

The most recent tragic incident for Palden Gyatso occurred when he and fellow prisoners tried to present a petition providing details about torture to James Lilley, the U.S. Ambassador to China who visited Drapchi prison in April, 1991. The petition was snatched away from the Ambassador's hand and handed over to the head of the prison administration. After the Ambassador left, the Army was called in and political pris-



Palden Gyatso testifying to the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights about torture techniques and prison conditions in Tibet. "I am one of the lucky few who survived," he told the subcommittee.

Palden Gyatso described China's penal system in Tibet and ruthless torture practices to the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, chaired by Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ). Other witnesses addressed labor camps in China, including testimony from a Chinese student, a Christian clergyman, and others.

oners, including Palden Gyatso, were beaten. Several prominent political prisoners were wounded, beaten unconscious or put into solitary confinement.

The incident sparked a controversy about the perils and responsibilities of prison visits by diplomats. Rights organizations faulted the U.S. government for never issu-

Figure 5 Longest Serving Tibetan Political Prisoner Testifies Before Congress. Tibet Press Watch, May 1995

On My Mind

A. M. ROSENTHAL

You Are Palden Gyatso

In the elevator, somebody asked whether that was the Dalai Lama — the man in the maroon robes I had escorted to the door of the Times building after his visit.

No, he was just a plain Buddhist monk from Tibet. This is his story.

My name is Palden Gyatso. I have spent three decades of my 64-year-old life in Chinese prisons and labor camps in Tibet. I became a monk when I was 10 years old. At age 28, in 1959, after the Chinese invasion of Tibet, I was arrested, accused of being a reactionary element and sentenced to a seven-year term at a prison previously a monastery.

We prisoners were yoked to plows like animals to till prison land. When we got exhausted we were kicked and whipped from behind. Since we were never given enough to eat we were forced to steal food meant for the pigs from the Chinese pigsties. We were also driven to chewing and eating all kinds of used leather items, bones of different kinds of dead animals, mice, worms, grasses.

Political prisoners — in winter we were suspended in the air and cold water was thrown on us; during hot summer days cold water was replaced by a fire underneath the suspended prisoners. In this position we were lashed with leather belts, beaten with an electric cattle prod or iron bar. Self-tightening handcuffs and thumb screws resulted in several prisoners' hands getting cut off.

In 1962 I escaped but got caught near the India-Tibet border; my prison term was increased to 15 years. My leg shackles were not removed for more than two years.

I completed my prison terms in 1975 but was not allowed to go home. I was sent to a labor camp; prison life resumed. In 1979 I escaped; I put up posters calling for Tibetan independence. I was caught and sentenced to nine years in prison.

We had to do filthy work, including the handling of human excrement to grow vegetables. A prison official poked me with an electric cattle prod, poured boiling water over me. For 24 years I was never allowed any visits with my relatives.

Guards in Gussa Prison raped nuns who were political prisoners and sexually violated them with electric cattle prods. In another prison, the chief administrator said to me, "I will give you Tibetan independence." Then he rammed the cattle prod into my mouth. When I regained consciousness, I found myself in a pool of blood and excrement

and I had lost most of my teeth.

On Aug. 25, 1992, I finished my prison term. Thirteen days later I escaped from Tibet.

With some condensation, that was the testimony of Palden Gyatso before a House subcommittee on human rights on April 3.

Why bother to report it? The Chinese Communists are not likely to be moved to give Tibetans the simple human freedom for which Tibetan prisoners eat garbage and mice.

Obviously, a tortured monk, and his tortured country, mean nothing to foreign businessmen who provide the Chinese with trade to expand their army, build more submarines and missiles, and have plenty of money left over to provide all the gulags of China and Tibet with all the

After three decades in China's gulag.

cattle prods they will ever need.

And Tibetans must not expect the governments of the world, and the press, to pay attention unless they send out terrorist squads. Then they will get notice, an invitation to the White House lawn and an international economic development fund. But I do not think Tibetan Buddhism trains well for terror bombing.

So why do some members of Congress hold hearings, Americans around the country raise money for Tibetan freedom, and why is it so useful to listen to a monk with a bent, twisted back, scars on his body and startling clarity in his eyes?

The reason is that those who do what is within their talent, influence and means for Tibet become part of a movement for the abolition of slavery. Sooner or later abolition movements triumph; it is written.

So if you want this monk's complete testimony, or other material on what the Chinese have done in Tibet, for yourself and your friends, or to send to Americans in the China trade, write the Office of Tibet, 241 East 32d Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, maybe with a little money for costs in the envelope, or phone 212-213-5010. Your name will also be Palden Gyatso, in a way.

Figure 6 You Are Palden Gyatso. New York Times, April 11, 1995

success by human rights activists in various governmental and non-governmental contexts. The discourse of human rights, of which testimonials are now a central part, entails the construction of a moral universe of victims and victimizers, and the production of what I call a "narrative of victimization." These narratives of suffering, which often include demonstrations of physical torture (e.g., displaying scars and damaged body parts, torture instruments, etc.), are important because they demonstrate the worthiness of those doing the petitioning as credible witnesses and representatives of the larger community. As Jonathan Boyarin observes, "When the marks of torture on the bodies of its victims are displayed--for example by international human rights organizations--what was intended to terrorize the memory of the individual victim becomes a sign by which the "world" is made to remember the wrongs done that victim" (1994:22).⁵⁰

The emergence in recent years of Tibetan awareness of the value of this form of performed testimonial is reflected in the rise in number of appearances of Tibetan escapees at various fora like the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and before various committees on the Hill in Washington (see Figure 7; Gendun Rinchen is the latest escapee to make the Geneva-London-Washington-New York circuit).⁵¹ The narrated experience of torture and suffering by those who appear in these fora serves to challenge the politico-moral legitimacy of China's presence in Tibet and demonstrate the exile community's worthiness of financial and political support from the West.⁵²

The testimonial frame is not new. Western audiences have found accounts

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

PRESENTS

Escape from **TIBET**

with

Gendun Rinchen

Tibetan human rights activist and former political prisoner speaking on

- "The Current Human Rights Situation in Tibet"

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"Escape from Tibet" (30 min)

an abridged documentary film on Tibetans fleeing to India

and

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& Rinchen Dharlo, representative of HH the Dalai Lama, North America

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for more info call: Florinda Russo, Amnesty International: 617-623-0202

Greg Alling, Tibetan Studies Society: 212-531-1313



special thanks to Tibetan Studies Society, Columbia University, Southern Asian Institute, Columbia University, and friends

Figure 7 Escape from Tibet with Gendun Rinchen

of personal suffering and survival compelling for generations. Dawa Norbu's book provides evidence of mass media interest in such accounts in 1959:

Our tents were pitched on some dry paddy-fields three or four miles from Gangtok. The area was crowded with Tibetan refugees, and newspaper reporters frequented it to gather so-called "atrocities stories." One afternoon our camp was visited by one of them, a hawk-featured man with heavy spectacles. Being unused to facing reporters, our elders were extremely suspicious and afraid to speak...It took the Sikkimese interpreter some time to convince us that the reporter wanted us to "tell the world your sufferings." Finally, Nyima Tsering, with characteristic Tibetan inaccuracy, told the interpreter that thousands of Tibetans had been tortured, hanged, strangled, drowned, burnt, buried alive, and the suchlike. This was too much for the interpreter, who demanded evidence of all that Nyima had naively accused the Chinese of doing. Nima was at last compelled to come down to brass tacks, and described our own personal experience in Sakya under the Chinese occupation. Then the reporter was pleased, and gave us big sympathetic grins. (1987:241)

Over the years, the Western media's desire for "atrocities stories" has not diminished; in fact, the demand has grown exponentially. It is now commonplace to point out how images of mass suffering and atrocities are needed to mobilize governments and others into taking action in the case of political disasters (e.g., the recent genocide in Rwanda; the atrocities committed by all sides in Bosnia; see Malkki 1996). The transnational human rights movement, with which Tibetans recently have become involved, has made good use of the testimonial frame and the Western media's demand for dramatic stories of suffering and terror.

In her book on the sanctuary movement, Susan Bibler Coutin (1993) suggests that its genius was the use of testimony by Central American refugees who functioned as "ambassadors of the suffering people of Central America" and

who

in sharing their stories, would teach congregants about their faith, their struggle, and their culture...As bearers of truth, refugees were believed capable of transforming the congregations that assisted them. (119)

Like sanctuary activists, Tibetan exile officials believe in the power of testimonials by recent escapees to establish personal connections between audiences--regardless of whether they are exile Tibetans, Western officials, potential supporters, journalists, or others--and the ongoing suffering of individuals in Tibet under Chinese rule. Tibetan escapees themselves believe in the revelatory quality of their stories to transform audiences, as Palden Gyatso's claim to have "proved" to the Chinese representative at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights hearing that local authorities are violating Tibetan rights in Tibet, demonstrates. Gyatso's decision to buy torture instruments from corrupt prison officials and his use of them in his public appearances reveal a recognition of the power of their (and his) physical presence to prick the conscience of listeners and provoke them into taking action. Indeed, for many years of his imprisonment, Gyatso dreamed of telling his story to a Western audience, especially the United Nations which Tibetans in Tibet tend to construct as an impartial moral authority (see Schwartz 1994a; see also Malkki 1993 and 1995:146-152 for a discussion of this phenomenon):

I spent 33 of my 64 year old life in Chinese prisons and labour camps in Tibet. All those years I yearned for a moment such as this when I could speak to the United Nations and tell the world what is happening in Tibet.

As one of the few survivors of Chinese atrocities in Tibet ("I am only one of the

few lucky ones who survived and managed to escape”), Gyatso’s desire to tell his story is not unusual. The need to recount one’s experience of suffering is quite common, as Myerhoff suggests in her discussion of “survivor stories” (1992). She refers to concentration camp literature which:

describes inmates determination to come back and tell the living their stories. This is seldom with the expectation of bringing about reform or repentance. It is to forge a link with the listener, to retain one’s past, to find evidence of sense--above all it is an assertion of an unextinguished presence. (1992:240).

Although I cannot necessarily claim, like Coutin does (1993:125-126), that many Tibet activists (Western and Tibetan) trace their involvement to hearing a refugee testify about the suffering in Tibet (though see chapter 7 for my discussion of those who travelled to Tibet and who were transformed by their experience into activists), I can claim that testimonials represent the emergence of a new form of Tibetan consciousness in exile, one which is sophisticatedly deployed in a number of intercultural arenas.

Conclusion

Narrative is not merely the reflection of culture...but is constitutive of social life in the act of storytelling. (Bauman 1986:113)

In chapter 2, I argued that the production, circulation, and contestation of representations of Tibetan history are central processes through which “Tibetanness” is mediated and mobilized in the diaspora. The narratives discussed in this chapter exemplify this point. A new form of cultural production in exile,

diaspora narratives function simultaneously as interpretive devices through which refugees make sense of their individual predicament of displacement and come to understand themselves as refugees, as members of a diaspora, as subjects in a deterritorialized national collectivity. That such narratives are produced in relation to an interlocutor, usually a Western one, is significant, revealing the degree to which diasporic Tibetan identity is constructed dialogically. This process is explored in greater detail in chapters 8, 9, and 10.

In the next chapter, I trace the growth of diasporic nationalism in the context of the construction of an alternative Tibetan polity in exile. This entails a discussion of how Tibetan political institutions have been reframed since 1959 and the challenges such reframing poses to the exile community's efforts to sustain itself through outside support.

The various life trajectories narrated by Yeshe, Pema, Sonam, the Dalai Lama, and Palden Gyatso trace the contours of a diaspora which stretches from remote settlements in India to small villages in Switzerland to New York City. Chapters 5 and 6 will include a description of the formation of these communities and set the stage for my discussion of the emergence of the Tibet Movement in various "nodes" across the diaspora.

Notes

1. In saying this, I want to acknowledge the need to be very careful in applying categories, such as "national" or "nationalism," to situations in which they may not be appropriate. To say that Tibet was not a "nation-state" or Tibetans were not "nationalistic" is not to say they did not share a sense of peoplehood as I suggest below.

2. As Stoddard writes,

Tibetan society on the eve of the Chinese invasion was not quite as homogeneously traditional as we sometimes might like to believe. The absence of any real occupying imperial power (compared to other countries of Asia) had retarded the formation of a new intelligentsia who might have been capable of formulating and imposing Tibetan national interests in the international arena. Nevertheless, the processes of change and adaptation to the twentieth century had already quietly begun under the 13th DL. It is clear that when the Chinese arrived in Lhasa in 1951, a number of progressivist Tibetan intellectuals were already prepared to set up translation committees capable of putting into concise modern Tibetan the thoughts of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao Zedong. There is no doubt at all that these new Tibetans were inspired by the ideals of socialism and by the fundamental rights of nations as expressed in such publications as the Constitution of the PRC (Beijing 1954) and the Text of the Policy for the National Minorities (Beijing 1952). (1994:129)

3. Sperling distinguishes between the "diaspora nationalism" which has been constructed in exile and the nationalism which has emerged in recent years inside Tibet. One of the reasons for this rise of internal nationalism relates to the Marxist-oriented Chinese educational system which introduced for the first time and in a systematic manner European ideas about nations and nationalism to a Tibetan elite.

Even before the growth of Chinese education in Tibet in the 1980s, official pronouncements and policy statements often contained a measure of rhetoric about such subjects as nationality distinctions and the inevitable course of history that bound the Tibetan and Chinese peoples. Systematic Marxist education and the concomitant circulation of Marxist ideas about nations inevitably raised the question of Tibetan identity in the minds of intellectuals, students and others in a new way...In essence, then, China has consistently explained its presence in Tibet in the context of a theory of nationality. (Sperling 1994:270)

The ironic implication is that by introducing these ideas in Tibet on a wide scale, China has given Tibetans a set of theoretical tools with which to contest their occupation. See also Schwartz 1994a and 1994b and Barnett 1994 for interesting comments on this subject.

4. No exhaustive history has been produced about the years 1951-59 in Tibet. Much of what we do know comes from work by Tibetan intellectuals, some of which is published in English, including Shakabpa 1967; D. Norbu 1982; J. Norbu 1994; Shakya 1994; and P. Wangyal 1974. Two scholars are currently working on manuscripts about the period— Tsering Shakya (MacMillan, forthcoming) and Melvyn Goldstein; their work will no doubt significantly advance our understanding of this tumultuous era in Tibetan history.
5. The Chinese renamed "political" Tibet (see Richardson 1984:1-2 and Goldstein 1994:77 for discussion of the use of the term "political" versus "ethnographic" Tibet), that is the area under continuous control by the Lhasa government, "Tibetan Autonomous Region." "Ethnographic" Tibet (what Tibetans call Kham and Amdo) was carved up into separate "autonomous districts":

The former domains of the Muslim warlord of Qinghai, Ma Pufang, were transformed into the Qinghai Autonomous Region. Tibetan regions in eastern Amdo became "autonomous districts" in Gansu, while those of southern Kham were included in Yunnan with the same status. The remaining area of Kham, which had been conquered by Zhao Erfeng between 1905 and 1910 and declared the 'province' of Sikang by the Nationalist Government in 1939, but which never had actually been administered by the Chinese, remained a separated province until it was incorporated into Sichuan in 1955. (W. Smith 1994:64)

See also Goldstein (1994a) for a discussion of the significance of these divisions in terms of debate in exile community today over Chinese policies in Tibet.

6. In a recent article, Warren Smith emphasizes that in 1949, the Chinese "had an almost non-existent physical presence in any Tibetan cultural area. When the PLA vanguard units moved into the Kanze region of Kham in 1949, Chinese logistics, even in this area which China had claimed to have administered since 1900s, were so tenuous that supplies had to be air-dropped to the troops. Money in the form of silver dollars was lavishly distributed to the Tibetans, local Tibetan officials were awarded new titles and paid large salaries, and the PLA troops were paid for all transportation and food requirements; 'not even a single needle and thread' was taken from the people" (1994:63).

Indeed, while in Kham troops were instructed by their leaders to "make friends and do good deeds" while spreading propaganda about the unity of nationalities against class exploiters and foreign imperialists via mass meetings, film, drama, and the "ubiquitous loudspeakers" (Smith 1994:63). Smith writes "Tibetans from all areas

repeat the same version of the message the Chinese gave in justification for having entered Tibet: they had come to Tibet to help the Tibetans and they would leave when Tibet was 'improved'" (1994:63).

Smith's article, "The nationalities policy of the Chinese communist party and the socialist transformation of Tibet," includes an extensive discussion of Chinese policies in Kham between 1951 and the 1980s. See Barnett and Akiner (eds.), Resistance and Reform in Tibet (1994), London: Hurst and Company.

7. See the story of Ama Adhe, a Khampa woman who aided guerrillas during the 1950s and spent twenty years in prison for her resistance activities in David Patt's A Strange Liberation: Tibetan Lives in Chinese Hands (1992).
8. In some areas of Kham and Amdo, Chinese Nationalist forces had been stationed for several decades. One Khampa recalls the Nationalist army in his region of Nyarong as being addicted to opium and easily bribed by local Tibetan officials to not interfere in their affairs (see J. Norbu 1986). The history of Tibetan relations with the Nationalists, both in China and in Taiwan, remains to be written. It is clear that their presence in the area before 1949 contributes to the already complicated alliances and forces at work in Tibet at the time.
9. Given the extreme ruggedness of Kham and Amdo and parts of Central Tibet, wireless equipment was essential to the guerrilla's ability to communicate and coordinate their operations. Radio continues to play a key role in Tibet today via the Tibetan language VOA broadcasts which are produced in Washington, D.C. on a daily basis. Through these broadcasts, Tibetans are exposed to oppositional messages about the Chinese presence in Tibet and participation in protest is fostered. For a more detailed discussion of the role of small media in Tibet, see chapter 6.
10. During discussions with Tibetan intellectuals, CIA involvement in Tibetan affairs inevitably came up, though none of those with whom I spoke have published full-length analyses of the subject as of this writing (for exceptions, see D. Norbu 1982, J. Norbu 1994, and Shakya, forthcoming). The Central Intelligence Agency has not made complete records of its involvement with Tibet available to scholars or the general public, though Melvyn Goldstein has had some access to important documents and is using them in the history of Tibet from 1951-1959 he is currently preparing.
11. Chinese and Tibetan officials in Tibet marked the fortieth anniversary on May 23, 1991 with a celebration, though preparations were marred by a crackdown on Tibetan dissidents and the refusal of American, British and Italian governments to send representatives. In the end, unlike the nearly 100 members of the Chinese press brought in to cover the story, no foreign journalists were allowed into Lhasa during this period.

12. I joined a small group of Tibetans affiliated with the U.S. Tibet Committee in a demonstration in front of the consulate entrance on a rainy May evening when the film was being screened. None of those entering the consulate stopped to speak to us (most appeared to be Chinese). In addition to a bit of shouting, we held signs and flashed them for passing motorists, some of whom honked and waved.

According to press reports, many other Chinese consulates around the world staged similar events to mark China's "liberation" of Tibet (Tibet Press Watch, 3(3), July 1991).

13. In his essay "The 1959 Tibetan rebellion: An interpretation" (1982), Dawa Norbu argues that the Chinese were somewhat flexible and "dealt with elites carefully, so much so that they were attacked by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution" (9).

14. One posthumous biography of the leader of the resistance, Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang, was published in India in 1973, but, according to J. Norbu, "it was sketchy and badly translated" (1994:187). Interestingly, Andrugtsang's nephew lives in New York City where he has been both a restaurant owner and proprietor of a delicatessen. He is an example of someone whose connections to the CIA would have no doubt enabled him to settle in the United States and to be given a green card without the usual delay of several years faced by other immigrants.

Norbu also notes that "Lhamo Tsering, a leader of the Mustang guerrilla force and long-time assistant to Gyalo Thondup, one of the Dalai Lama's elder brothers (who was a kind of overall leader of the resistance for some years) has also written his memoirs" (J. Norbu 1994:187). These are not published yet (when they are it will be in Tibetan). Lhamo Tsering is currently a member of the Kashag (Tibetan cabinet in exile).

15. Interestingly, the majority of the Khampa leaders involved with Chushi Gangdruk were merchants

who had made their fortune since 'liberation' as China kept pouring silver coins called dao-yuan into Tibet to pay the Tibetan ruling class and road workers. But instead of making more money or running away to India safely with their silver fortunes, Khampas spent the Chinese money for the purchase of arms and ammunition for revolt. (D. Norbu 1982:16)

These merchants financed and coordinated the resistance, drawing on their wide social networks established through trading (for which Tibetans are renowned) in India and Central Tibet to purchase arms and mobilize support.

16. Lhoka, just south of Lhasa, became the resistance movement's headquarters. While in India in 1990, I worked with a group of children who had recently escaped from Tibet, some of whom were from this area. Lhoka continues to be an active site of

opposition to Chinese rule.

For a detailed description of Chushi Gangdruk's encounters with the PLA in the Lhoka area, see Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang's Four Rivers, Six Ranges (1973: chapters 7 -10).

17. The Norbulingka was the Dalai Lama's summer residence. During the winter, he typically resided in the Potala Palace, a mile or two away.
18. To protect the anonymity of my informants, I have given them pseudonyms.
19. After crossing into India as part of the Dalai Lama's entourage, Tenzin was sent to the transit camp Buxa Duar in West Bengal. Buxa Duar was a former British prisoner-of-war camp situated near the Bhutanese border. By August of 1959, as guerrillas and other lay people were shipped out to road camps, Buxa Duar began receiving groups of refugee monks, which was soon renamed Buxa Lama Ashram. Most of the monks, like Tenzin, were from the Gelugpa sect (those of the other three lineages more often found refuge at monasteries in Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal). Within a year, the monks set about collecting scriptures and lithographing them with stone and ink, and examinations for the Geshe degree (the highest attainment in monastic education; equivalent to a Ph.d.) continued (Avedon 1979:92). Due to the rampant spread of disease in the barracks, most often tuberculosis, many hundreds of monks died. It was not until 1968 that the large settlements such as Bylakuppe and Mundgod were ready to receive survivors. Once they were resettled in the south, the monks set about rebuilding monasteries which quickly became fully functional institutions. Over the years, these monasteries have flourished—many renamed and modelled on their home institutions in Tibet such as Sera, Drepung, and Ganden. In fact, enrollment has risen dramatically since 1987 as a result of the continuous flow of monks fleeing imprisonment for their participation in demonstrations against Chinese rule in Tibet (see chapter 7).

After spending several years in Buxa Duar, Tenzin told me he was relieved to go to Dalhousie to study at the newly-established Teachers Training Center. One of the problems faced by the new Tibetan schools was the lack of adequately trained Tibetan teachers. The first teachers were monks, who, while respected for their traditional learning, needed additional training in secular teaching methods to be fully effective in the exile educational context (see Nowak 1984:57-59). Tenzin remembers being taught by a Canadian woman known by her students as "Miss Judy." After a year, he graduated from the program but instead of teaching, he decided to go to South India to study for his Geshe degree in Sera monastery. It was not long before Tenzin got a letter requesting that he go to Nepal to teach children at a "Four Rivers, Six Ranges" school. Tenzin remembers turning down the offer because, as he put it, "I was too tired."

After a few years in the South, Tenzin was asked to go to Dharamsala to teach at the Tibetan Childrens' Village (TCV). This time he agreed, however, and he taught at TCV for ten years. In 1977 he decided to take a vacation to Switzerland to visit

relatives. Once there, he managed to stay and joined the small Tibetan monastery in Rikon which had been established a few years earlier. When asked why he decided to give up his robes and stop being a monk, Tenzin described meeting a woman in 1980 whose husband had sustained terrible injuries doing road work in Kulu-Manali. After being brought to Switzerland (much the same way Sonam and her husband were), the injured man died, leaving his wife with five young children. At that point, Tenzin recounts, he decided to move in with the woman to help her look after her family. The family currently lives in a resettled community in a town near Zurich.

20. In the years immediately following the Dalai Lama's flight to India, as Chinese counter-insurgency measures became increasingly more effective, Khampa resistance fighters and others sympathetic to Chushi Gangdruk retreated into Nepalese territory, ostensibly as refugees but actually to regroup across the border in order to continue their guerrilla activities. They were supported in this effort with American money, arms, and training. Indeed, a number of Tibetans were secretly flown to U.S. air bases (including Camp Hale, in Colorado) for high altitude guerrilla warfare training (J. Norbu 1994; Avedon 1984; Long 1981; Wise 1973; see also D. Norbu 1982). Upon completing the training, the Tibetans were parachuted back into southeastern Tibet.

CIA patronage of the Tibetan guerrillas ended abruptly prior to America's rapprochement with China in 1971. American support for Tibet has never been publicly acknowledged by government officials, and no documentation of U.S. involvement is currently available to the public. See Long (1981) for an interesting account of his encounter with Tibetan guerrillas in a Nepalese prison.

It must also be pointed out that while the Tibetans may have been used by the Americans for their own anti-communist purposes during the 1960s and early 1970s, they were also very much effected by the tensions between India, Nepal, and China at the time. For instance, the final destruction in 1974 of the Tibetan guerrillas who had retreated to Mustang, Nepal appears to have been due to concerted and pre-meditated Sino-Nepalese effort (see D. Norbu 1975). The complex history of the Tibetan resistance suggests the inadequacy of simplistic and reductive explanations of behavior. It also reveals the need for more research on the effect of inter-Asian politics on the Khampa resistance effort, particularly India's role.

21. In an article called "Tibet and the Occident: the Myth of Shangri-la" Tsering Shakya makes reference to the tendency of some western intellectuals to view the Chinese occupation of Tibet as a good thing.

For the left, Tibet was being transformed into a socialist paradise, and the Chinese actions were merely the irresistible progress of history towards modernity. (1992:14)

See Jamyang Norbu's essay "Adding Insult to Injury" in his book Illusion and Reality (1989) for further discussion and critique of what he calls "leftist sinophilia"

and its effect on how the Tibetan situation was represented in the West in the 1960s and 1970s. I will come back to this point in chapter 6.

22. Dawa Norbu describes the "feverish" activity going on in India in terms of roadbuilding in his book Red Star over Tibet:

Feverish military activities were going on in India's northern borders, including the building of roads and military barracks. Peaceful, harmless Tibet was no longer India's neighbour; instead there was aggressive China, ready to spring and strike from the roof of the world. India had been slow to realize all this. Before 1950 a similar border relationship to that of the United States and Canada had existed between India and Tibet; but that situation was over, and now India was spending millions of rupees on defending the hundreds of miles of her northern border. (1987:240)

23. One of the things Norbu argues in his essay "A Revolt Long Ago" is that the Tenth March commemoration represents the official exile version of the events of 1959:

The Tenth March is a sad occasion. Despite the flag waving, the brave speeches, and truculent slogans, it was a day when an innocent and brave people, defenceless and disorganized, took on the might of the Red Chinese Army and were slaughtered for their presumptions. Contrary to Chinese propaganda and to some official Tibetan versions of the event, the uprising was not planned by insidious "Tibetan local government and the reactionary clique of the upper social strata and rebel bandits..." but was rather the spontaneous outburst of an oppressed and harried people who feared for the life of their beloved ruler. Hag-ridden with defeatism, the Tibetan government was in no condition to organize any kind of uprising...(1989:57)

For descriptions of Tenth March celebrations in Dharamsala over the years, see J. Norbu 1989:57-59; Nowak 1984; Klieger 1992.

24. See also Alvarez (1995) for a related discussion of the emergence of an anthropology of borderlands—of people who live on borders of nation-states.
25. At fourteen, Yeshe was good in school and known for his excellent Tibetan. He remembers volunteering to help other children write letters to their parents, many of whom were working in northern India on road construction. Upon graduating, Yeshe recalls moving around a lot, translating at a road camp for a while, working in an office at a handicraft center in Simla, and eventually going to Nepal to work in a carpet factory. When he arrived, the factory had closed down and Yeshe found work as a temporary clerk in the Office of Tibet in Kathmandu. He quickly became a permanent employee of the government-in-exile and was appointed as acting representative of the Dalai Lama. Yeshe remembers it being a politically

difficult time for the Tibetans in Nepal because of the Nepalese government's imprisonment of Khampa guerrillas. He was later reassigned to the Office of Tibet in New York City, where he works today.

26. One of the least documented aspects of the Tibetan refugee experience is the role missionary institutions have played in educating Tibetans in India.

For his first two years in the U.S., Pema recalls feeling "totally lost." Gradually regaining his bearings, he finished college in Arizona in 1974 and moved to the East Coast where he began work on a doctorate in education. In 1979, on his first visit to the United States, the Dalai Lama met Pema and upon hearing of Pema's plans to return to India to teach in a Tibetan school, the Tibetan leader asked Pema to stay another year in the U.S. Well-educated and competent Tibetans were needed to run the Office of Tibet in New York City, and upon completing his Ph.d., Pema joined the office staff where he continues to work today.

27. My translator informed me that this was an innovation in Switzerland, since in Tibet (and India) this function would have been fulfilled by monks whose main duties would have included travelling to various households to say prayers. Due to the lack of monks in Switzerland, these elderly women have taken on the responsibility themselves. Swiss Tibetan communities without a similarly active retired group usually request monks from the monasteries in South India to say prayers for them. In fact, much of the money which flows from Switzerland to India, I learned, goes to the monasteries as payment for spiritual services rendered.
28. Dawa Norbu, in his book Red Star Over Tibet, reports that Tibetan imprisoned by Chinese forces in Sakya in 1959 ate their shoe leather.
29. Some of the poorest Tibetan refugees continue to do hard labor and live in tents in Kulu-Manali, more than three decades after the events described in this chapter.
30. When I mentioned this incident with a Western activist who has worked closely with a number of Tibetans inside Tibet, he claimed that "Tibetans always paraphrase when they don't like what someone is saying..."
31. A number of scholars have analyzed how various groups construct narratives and interpret storytelling differently. For some, the point is to tell a good story, whereas for others the goal is to elicit the "facts." See Heath (1983).
32. In her book on oral history, Elizabeth Tonkin (1992) reminds us that written autobiography is not universal and points out that the "comparative presence or absence of "spontaneous biography" has not been systematically examined; in Europe and the United States, its existence is presumed, although the articulacy and informativeness of tellers is found to vary..." (133)

In an essay on narrative, memory and the self, anthropologist Tom Maschio (1995) observes that autobiographical narrative "has seemed an expressive form particularly

suiting to convey a unitary notion of the self. Both autobiography and the unitary concept of self have been viewed as consummately Western culture forms..." (98). See Taylor (1989) for an analysis of how autobiography came to be seen as an expression of the unity of the self.

33. In an essay on cultural memory in the former Yugoslavia, Denich (1994) explores a related phenomenon in terms of how Serbian memories of trauma from World War II have been passed down to generations who embrace their parents' and grandparents' experiences of victimization as their own. She asks "Could the traumatic experiences of individuals be transformed into collective memory, shared by those who did not experience the actual trauma?" (381)
34. In recent years, protesters in Tibet also have attempted to assert an alternative moral order based on human rights, Buddhism, and democracy (see Schwartz 1994a). This order also involves the discursive production of historicity, though it differs somewhat from that produced by Tibetan exiles.
35. For a survey of modern Tibetan fiction, see A.A. Moon (1991a, 1991b, and 1991c). See also Lungta, Winter 1995, special issue: "Two thousand years & more of Tibetan poetry."
36. See also earlier narratives of life in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution such as Life in the Red Flag People's Commune by Dhondub Choedon (1978); Tibet: the Undying Flame by Kunsang Paljor (1970 in Tibetan, 1977 in English); and Tibet Under Chinese Communist Rule: A Compilation of Refugee Statements 1958-1975, published by the Information Office, Dharamsala (1976). These accounts tend to focus on how Tibet has been transformed by communism.
37. Another genre of exile writing which I do not have space to cover in this chapter is what I call "return narratives," accounts written by exile Tibetans of their experiences in visiting Tibet. See, for example, Tsultrim Tersey's "One month in Tibet," and Jetsun Pema Gyalpo's "Three months in Tibet: A personal viewpoint," both of which were published in From Liberation to Liberalisation: Views on "Liberalised" Tibet (1982), published by Dharamsala's Information Office.
38. One possible reason for this is that only wealthy or aristocratic individuals (in addition to monks and incarnate lamas) were educated in old Tibet and thus would have the means and confidence to express themselves in literary form.
39. At one point, Norbu recalls moving with his family to Darjeeling. He makes a scathing comparison of the treatment of impoverished Tibetans by Western volunteers and by Tibetan aristocrats:

The volunteers came to my rescue. These strangers, who had no racial, religious, or national affinities with us, only a common human bond, loved and cared for us when we most needed them. We children were skinny, pot-bellied, pale and yellow-complexioned

through malnutrition. We had sores all over our bodies, due to unhygienic conditions, and an inability to adapt quickly to our new environment. But the foreigners treated and nursed us like real parents, without a patronizing air or any sign of revulsion at our unhealthy state; whereas our own kin, the sons and daughters of Tibetan aristocrats and wealthy Tibetans, studying in colleges and working around Darjeeling, did not come to help us. Perhaps they were ashamed of us. (1987:246)

40. As he was finishing his book, Norbu became editor of the Tibetan Review, an English-language monthly publication. After one particularly "hard-hitting" editorial, Norbu recalls in his preface to the first edition of Red Star over Tibet, a huge controversy erupted over his perceived criticism of the Dalai Lama.

What angered the Tibetans most was an obvious implication of "criticism" against His Holiness the Dalai Lama...Even after the Dalai Lama's personal intervention in my favor, the controversy continued for four months, during which time I had literally to hide. Meanwhile rumors circulated freely that I was a Chinese spy (a favourite accusation made against Tibetan immigrants), a Christian convert, a Communist, an atheist, an iconoclast, and whatnot! The Tibetan inquisitors in Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama resides, accused me specifically of "criticizing" (with its Tibetan connotations of blasphemy) His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Buddha of Mercy, and of "sabotaging" Indo-Tibetan relations upon which "depended the future hope of Tibet." The innocent and wild Tibetans in India, Nepal, and Bhutan were, literally, after my blood. Mass meetings were held everywhere in Tibetan colonies to decide how to deal with me. The controversy nearly cost my life, and only the Dalai Lama's intervention saved me. (1987:11)

41. It is important to remember that at the time of invasion, the Dalai Lama was an inexperienced and politically untrained teenager (he was sixteen when the PLA entered Lhasa in 1950, twenty when he visited Beijing in 1954 and met Mao, and twenty five when he escaped in 1959). This might also have contributed to his fear of confrontation with the Chinese.
42. For an extended discussion of the relationship between the Dalai Lama, and other Tibetans, to the U.S. press corps, see chapter 10.
43. Mirsky's point is underscored by another reviewer who writes that the Dalai Lama "is confusing about his beliefs" and "a bit coy" at times (McGurn 1990:5).
44. By calling them performances, I do not wish to imply these diaspora narratives were somehow "fake" or "untrue."

45. At the first international Tibet support conference in Dharamsala (in March 1990), I remember hearing Tibetans toasting Western guests by saying "Next year in Lhasa" which I realized was a reference to the Jewish slogan "Next year in Jerusalem." In her book, Margaret Nowak (1984:128) points out that during the 1970s, many Tibetan youth leaders read Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre's book O Jerusalem!.
46. Clifford's (1994) argument that there is a "strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora" seems to be borne out by the Tibetans' self-conscious decision to cultivate relationships with American Jewish religious leaders and community organizations such as NYANA. (Though it should be pointed out that the initial idea for a meeting between the Dalai Lama and American rabbis was that of Marc Lieberman, an American Jew who practices Buddhism; see Kamenetz (1994) for a discussion of "Jubus"—Jewish Buddhists.)
47. Addressing the Jews in audience, Palden Gyatso asserted the similarities between the Tibetan experience under Chinese rule and Jewish experience during World War II in his talk: "Recently, a few days ago, I visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. I see that what Jewish people suffered equals what we Tibetans have suffered fighting for Tibet."
48. See Cutting off the serpent's head: Tightening control in Tibet, 1994-1995 (1996) by Tibet Information Network and Asia Watch for a description of current Chinese practices of political detention in Tibet. Political prisoners are defined as those arrested and in detention for opposing Chinese rule. Many are accused of advocating Tibet's independence from China either through demonstrations or other similarly illegally political activities.
49. A little bit later on, Gyatso described how young monks and nuns have been staging protests on a regular basis in front of the Jokhang in Lhasa: "The Tibetan people in spirit are united, even if they don't participate in demonstrations, they will send their children to deliver food to the prisoners. They don't make any distinctions if the prisoner is from Eastern Tibet, Central Tibet, or another place."
50. For recent work on violence, torture, and the state, see Feldman 1991, Taussig 1986, 1987, and Schirmer 1991, 1995.
51. Testimonials in Movement contexts (not in governmental or U.N. contexts) usually take the same form. They begin with an introduction of the speaker, then the presentation of his or her narrative that moves from personal experience to statements about China's destruction of Tibetan culture, religion, environment, and so on. Such performances are generally followed by a question and answer session and occasionally an appeal for funds or discussion of how to get further involved in the Tibet Movement.
52. See Malkki 1995a:92-94 for an analysis of the symbolic meaning of atrocity accounts by Hutu refugees.

Part Two

Transnational Tibetans and the emergence of the Tibet Movement

Chapter 5 Tibetans in India: Reconstruction and democratization in exile

Introduction

On March 31, 1959, nearly three weeks after escaping from Lhasa, the Dalai Lama and his entourage crossed into India, physically and emotionally exhausted from their ordeal. The Tibetan leader was warmly received by Indian officials¹ and his flight was big news, as he quickly found out.

As I left the building at Foothills [a road camp], and climbed into a big red car for the thirty-mile drive to the station, I noticed large numbers of cameramen. It was explained to me that these were representatives of the international press. They had come to report on the "story of the century." I should expect to see many more of them on arrival in the city. (Gyatso 1990:145)

With much more color and irony, John Avedon describes the international press corps frenzy to get the story on the Dalai Lama:

Since the first word of fighting in Lhasa had appeared late in March, news of a revolt in remote Tibet had leaped into the world headlines. Over a hundred correspondents flew in from Paris, London, New York, Africa, and East Asia seeking what was already billed as the "story of the year." Choosing Kalimpong as the best spot to begin their search, they converged on the Himalayan Hotel, run by David MacDonald, a former British trade agent in Tibet and an acquaintance of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. While "Daddy" MacDonald took to his bed from worry on hearing of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's flight, the press scoured the surrounding peaks with binoculars, accosted the town's more prominent Tibetan citizens, drove a hundred miles a day back and forth to Gangtok in search of leads and, under increasing pressure from their editors to provide front-page news on the whereabouts of the mysterious "God-King," began issuing fabricated reports over Kalimpong's antiquated Morse-key telegraph...With word of the Dalai Lama's crossing into the NEFA [North-East Frontier Agency], however, they could, just by looking at the map, infer that he would eventually emerge at Tezpur.

Thereupon the press corps decamped en masse, first to Shillong, the capital of Assam, and then to Tezpur itself. Sleeping on the couches and billiard tables of the local Planter's Club, they clogged the town's tiny airstrip with single-engine planes hired to race exclusive photos of the "God-King's" arrival to Calcutta's Dum Dum Airport and the presses of the world's periodicals beyond. (1984:67)

Upon arriving in Tezpur, the Dalai Lama was given "many hundreds of messages, telegrams, and letters...all sending greetings and good wishes from people the world over" (Gyatso 1990:145). Throughout the train journey to Mussoorie--a hill station not far from Delhi where a house for the Dalai Lama had been arranged--thousands of well-wishers greeted the leader.

The intense international interest in the Tibetan "God-King" reveals the fascination Tibet held for non-Tibetans, especially those from the West. This fascination helped ease the suffering of thousands of Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama into exile, most of whom appeared to be facing a grim future upon their arrival, especially those who went to India. Not only were they entering a country "already overburdened with massive poverty and unemployment," they were doing so "without language facility, without knowledge or understanding of Indian social and cultural systems, and without any potentially useful occupation skills."

With the exception of a handful (mainly aristocrats) who spoke some English and/or Hindi, the refugees spoke only Tibetan. Meat-eating Buddhists from the cold climate of the Tibetan plateau, they found themselves thrust into the sweltering heat of vegetarian Hindu India. The refugees were nomads, monks, farmers, and petty traders, none of which occupations, on the surface, offered any competitive advantages in India. Almost all had no familiarity with modern industrial technology. (Goldstein 1978:396)

Yet by all accounts Tibetans have done very well in India, overcoming these external obstacles as well as ones internal to the community, such as the fact that the refugees came from "widely disparate regions in Tibet where they spoke mutually unintelligible dialects, operated under different sociopolitical systems, and were traditionally hostile" (ibid., 396). Indeed, compared to other refugees around the world, Tibetans have been unusually successful in reconstructing their society and institutions in exile. French suggests several factors which might account for this success:

- (1) The role of the Dalai Lama as both a charismatic, unifying leader and a respected, international figure;
- (2) the Indian government's acceptance of the government-in-exile as an administrative unit and its willingness to work with the government-in-exile in setting aside special lands and schools for the Tibetans;
- (3) the cohesion and flexibility of the government-in-exile as an administrative unit;
- (4) the cohesion of the Tibetan refugees as an ethnic group and their general willingness to maintain a unified profile internationally;
- (5) their ability to garner funds in India and abroad;
- (6) the development and implementation of a detailed cultural preservation plan; and
- (7) the tremendous staying power and resiliency of the Tibetan refugees themselves. (1991:192)

In **Part One** of this chapter, I explore some of the factors French outlines, focusing in particular on rehabilitation and the reconstruction of cultural and religious institutions in India. **Part Two** examines efforts by the Dalai Lama to create an alternative polity in exile, one more "democratic" than that which existed in old Tibet. The problem the Dalai Lama's authority poses to such a transformation is considered, as are attempts to create a Tibetan public sphere in diaspora. In chapter 3, I argued that efforts by Tibetans to democratize their

hierarchical religio-political system are in conflict with efforts to ensure the survival of religious and cultural traditions which are embedded in the older structures and which form the basis of Western fascination with Tibet. **Part Two** concludes with a discussion of this contradiction which, I argue, is central to understanding the Tibetan exile community as well as the internal dynamics of Tibet activism.²

Part One

Reconstruction and rehabilitation

About a year after his arrival in Mussoorie, the Dalai Lama moved to Dharamsala, a former British hill station located on the northern edge of the Punjab, in Himachal Pradesh, 300 miles northwest of New Delhi. There he established a government-in-exile, known as the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, with ten civil service ranks (scaled up from the seven in Tibet). At the same time, a bureau was established in New Delhi to serve as a link with the Indian government and the various international relief agencies that were coming to the refugees' aid, with other offices eventually being established in Geneva, New York, Tokyo to act as unofficial embassies for the new exile government (Avedon 1984:87). Goldstein suggests that the "ready availability of a core of highly experienced and competent governmental administrators" who fled Tibet with the Dalai Lama facilitated the establishment of the CTA and provided a "ready-made organization" through which to approach the daunting task of rehabilitating, monitoring and coordinating the

activities of the approximately 80,000 refugees who arrived in India between 1959 and 1962 (ibid., 408).

Fortunately for the Tibetans, the government of India (GOI) decided from the outset to play an active role in rehabilitation efforts. Not only that, the ideological framework within which the GOI believed rehabilitation should occur was one that was not intended to discourage or destroy Tibetan cultural institutions or traditions, but rather was compatible with the Dalai Lama's and the CTA's goal of cultural preservation (Goldstein 1978:397). According to Goldstein, the most successful of the CTA's rehabilitation strategies called for the creation of a series of permanent agricultural settlements throughout India:

The idea was to resettle Tibetans then living in transit camps or working on road repair gangs and provide them assistance and resources so that within a period of five years, they could become economically self-sufficient. This, if successful, would not only permanently take care of the refugee population, but would also help India's food needs by bringing unused land under cultivation. However, considering the immense difficulty governments and agencies normally encounter in resettling populations even intraculturally, this goal for Tibetans in India was certainly of Herculean proportions. (ibid., 398)

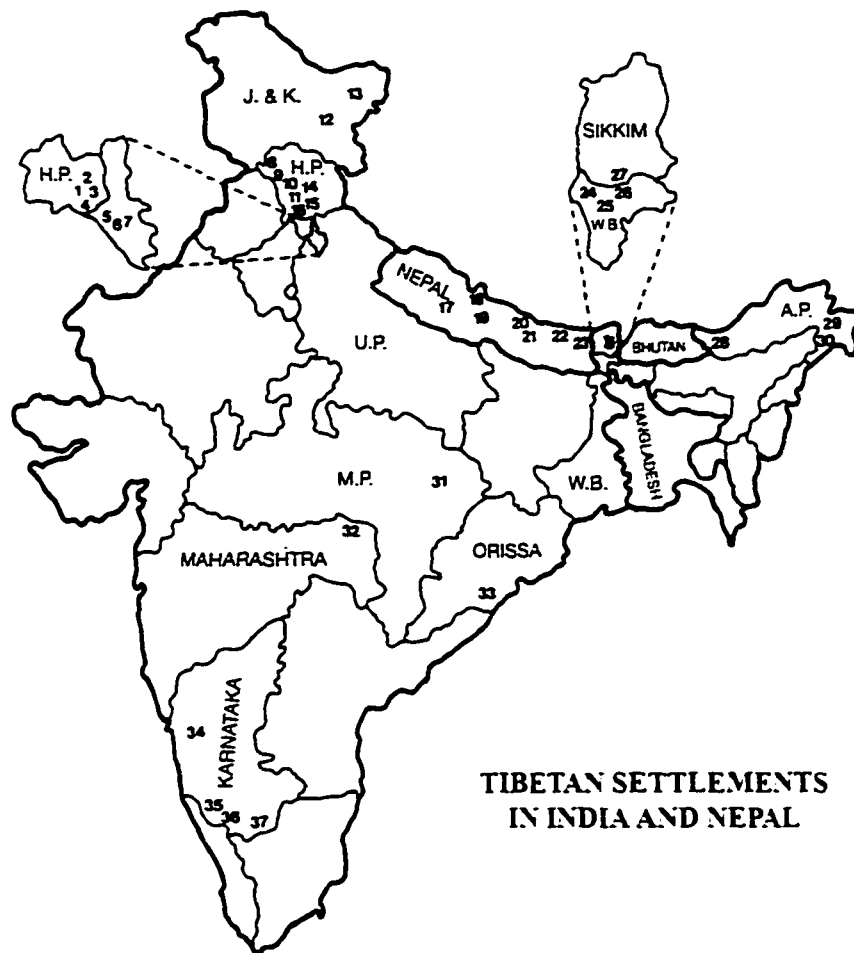
The GOI viewed the settlement plan as a kind of compromise, as it did not want to bring all the Tibetans together in one area, but also did not want to scatter them in too-small units. The envisioned size of 3,000 to 4,000 people was believed to be large enough to easily sustain Tibetan language and institutions (ibid., 398).

Nehru began by soliciting offers of unsettled land from southern Indian states which the refugees could use. The first offer came from the state of

Karnataka which was willing to provide the Tibetans with three thousand acres of uninhabited land covered with dense jungle. In December 1960, 666 Tibetans were driven to the site, located fifty-two miles west of Mysore, and left to build a settlement for themselves (Avedon 1984:87). Many refugees described feeling completely forlorn and desolate in such an alien environment so far away from the Tibetan plateau. In the process of clearing the land, Tibetans regularly encountered enraged elephants and were sometimes trampled to death (ibid., 89). After much effort, the first permanent agricultural settlement, known as Bylakuppe, was created. Over time it grew and prospered (see Goldstein 1975 and 1978 for a description of his research in this settlement; see also T. Wangyal 1977).

Eventually other parcels of land were made available to the Tibetans and soon small settlements dotted the subcontinent (see Figure 8). According to Strom (in press), the CTA sought to counteract Tibetan communalism by putting people from different regions together into single settlements (see also Palakshappa 1978). However there were settlements established independently of the CTA which were formed on the basis of regional origin. The fact that some of the communities were uniformly "Khampa" or "Amdowa," for instance, is significant; it helps to explain the persistence of regionalism and factionalism within the exile community. I come back this point later in the chapter.

Since 1959, a total of 54 refugee settlements have been established in India, Nepal, and Bhutan, 26 of which are agricultural, 17 are agro-industrial, and 11 are



**TIBETAN SETTLEMENTS
IN INDIA AND NEPAL**

Figures in brackets indicate more than one settlement in that area.

1. Sataun	11. Bir (2) & Chauntra	21. Kathmandu (2)	31. Mainpat
2. Kamrao	12. Sonamling	22. Chialsa	32. Bhandara
3. Puruwala	13. Changthank	23. Walung	33. Chandragin
4. Paorta	14. Pandoh	24. Darjeeling	34. Mundgod
5. Herbertpur	15. Simla	25. Sonada	35. Bylakuppe (2)
6. Dehra Dun (3)	16. Dolanji	26. Lama Hatta	36. Hunsur
7. Rajpur	17. Dorpatan	27. Rawangla	37. Kollegal
8. Dalhousie	18. Pokhara (4)	28. Tenzingang	
9. McLeod Ganj	19. Chairok	29. Tezu	
10. Tashi Jong	20. Dunche	30. Miao	

Figure 8 Tibetan Settlements in India and Nepal
From Cayley (1994)

handicraft-based (Tibetan Bulletin 1995). The CTA claims that of the 120,000 refugees living in South Asia today, almost 70,000 live in these settlements while another 50,000 live in scattered communities in India and Nepal, and four and a half thousand live outside South Asia (ibid.).³ The report estimates that thirteen percent of the total population is dependent on handicrafts, mostly carpet weaving, which it notes provides a valuable source of secondary income for many more refugees; another twenty-nine percent of the population engages in sweater selling and other petty trading⁴; and the remaining thirty percent of the population is engaged in government service or work in hotels, restaurants, or shops (for a more detailed description of rehabilitation and reconstruction in exile, see Goldstein 1975 and 1978; Avedon 1984: 83-104. See also Central Tibetan Administration 1994).

One of the things Goldstein noted during the course of his doctoral fieldwork in the Bylakuppe settlement in the 1960s was the complete lack of tension between Tibetans and local Indians. Even after the settlement surpassed surrounding villages in economic vitality, interethnic relations remained smooth. This tranquillity grew out of a concerted policy by the Tibetan leadership to avoid direct competition for resources with their Indian hosts and was applied consistently to all the resettlement communities (Goldstein 1975, 1978; Devoe 1987). In many instances, the arrival of refugees transformed local economies, as new businesses sprang up to service the needs of the Tibetans and employment opportunities evolved for poor Indians to work for the refugees on a day-wage basis (Goldstein 1975:26).

While the official policy has been to select carefully economic activity that does not compete with that of local Indians, not everyone follows the rules, as Devoe notes.

Tibetans are characterized as shrewd businessmen and women who have been able to monopolize business in certain commodities by ignoring interstate laws limiting and taxing commodity transport, and running black market goods into the country from Nepal. Their most well-known market activity is sweater-selling. Besides peddling these Indian-made sweaters from their lean-to "shops" or roadside blankets, Tibetans sell vast quantities of second-hand foreign goods, some of which they have received in donations and some of which they buy for re-sale. (1983:18)

In some instances, Tibetans seem to have become victims of their own economic success. This appears to be the case with the anti-Tibetan riots that broke out in Dharamsala in 1994 following the murder of a local Gaddi boy by a young Tibetan man. Upon hearing of the boy's death, local Indians rampaged through the Tibetan areas of Dharamsala, destroying shops and buildings and attacking Tibetans. One Tibetan commentator, K. Dhondup (1994), argued that growing economic disparities between Tibetans and local Indians created tension between the two communities and contributed to the riots. Despite this and other isolated incidents, Tibetans generally have managed to avoid serious confrontation with their Indian neighbors over the years.

As I have already suggested, the rehabilitation process, while overseen and funded by the Indian government, was guided by the Tibetan government-in-exile which was given considerable autonomy in dealing with the refugees. Although the GOI recognized the CTA's internal authority over their affairs and dealt with it

as a *de facto* administrative unit within the Indian government, it did not recognize the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile nor its claim of sovereignty over Tibet. For this reason, the Tibetans were barred from conducting political activities on Indian soil. Yet the refugees were not compelled to become Indian citizens; instead, they were issued resident cards which served as quasi-passports.

As we saw in the previous chapter, this policy, along with the fact that refugees were resettled in all-Tibetan enclaves, had profound implications on the emergence of a "refugee consciousness" in exile (Long 1993).⁵ Tibetans' awareness of themselves as being a collective body of "refugees," a categorical "we" standing apart from the "others," is linked to the production of diasporic Tibetan nationalism. As Malkki suggests in a recent essay:

It is the interstitiality and liminality of refugees in the contemporary order of nation-states that pushes issues of nationality and national identity to the forefront among refugees. For refugees, as for stateless and other "displaced" categories of people, nation-ness is problematized. (1990:55)

The link between their refugee status and Tibetans' perception of themselves as a collectivity is underscored by Devoe who argues that for the Tibetan, the yellow paper certifying his or her stateless status is "expressive of a cultural, ethnic, and national identity, an allegiance to the past and a candid avowal of dedication to Tibet's future freedom" (1987:56). Thus

Keeping refugee status is viewed as an action, an act of integrity in defense of the faith. A Tibetan who has kept refugee status is thought to have kept his Tibetan-ness, an ethos mutually understood by Tibetans around the world." (1987:63).

Over the years, the link between keeping refugee status and maintaining Tibetanness has been underscored by the Dalai Lama, who has repeatedly stated that "the purpose of refugee life is to rescue the nation, the people, and the cultural traditions of Tibet" (Devoe 1987:61). The next section explores some of the ways in which these goals have been realized in exile.

Reconstructing Tibetan culture

Other than devising strategies for the rehabilitation of refugees, the Dalai Lama's main concern upon coming into exile was cultural reconstruction. This process entailed a certain degree of self-consciousness which is evident in the Dalai Lama's description of his approach to the problem:

We divided our culture into two types. In the first category we placed that which, we determined, needed to be retained only in books as past history. The second category included whatever could bring actual benefit in the present. These things, we resolved, must be kept alive. Therefore, many of our old ceremonial traditions we discarded--no matter, I decided, let them go. However, our performing arts, our literature, science and religion as well as those crafts from which we could earn a livelihood--painting, metalcraft, architecture, woodworking and carpetmaking--these, we took special pains to safeguard. (Avedon 1984:92)

The Dalai Lama made religious preservation his highest priority. This decision reflects both the centrality of Buddhism in Tibetan life and the Dalai Lama's recognition that Buddhism formed a basis for reconstituting a collective Tibetan identity in exile.⁶

From the Dalai Lama's point of view, the small number of Tibet's

thousands of monks and lamas who managed to escape (somewhere between 5,000 and 7,000, a tiny fraction of the monastic population in Tibet) provided the key to salvaging Buddhism in exile. As embodied representatives of Tibetan Buddhist practice, not to mention repositories of knowledge of astrology, medicine, logic, philosophy, divination, art, drama, and literature, these individuals' survival was viewed as essential to the reproduction of Tibetan culture in diaspora. In the beginning, the CTA assembled monks and lamas (the majority of whom were from the Gelugpa sect) at Buxa Duar, a camp in Assam near the border of Bhutan. Though initially a transit camp for lay refugees, Buxa Duar became Buxa Duar Ashram, a kind of "lama camp," after the lay refugees were transferred to other camps and rehabilitation centers.

Financed by the Indian government, Buxa was home to more than 1,500 monks until 1968 when the first settlements in southern India were ready to begin receiving monks.⁷ In 1974, resettled monks from Buxa reestablished the three great Gelugpa monasteries (Drepung, Sera, and Ganden) amidst the refugee farming settlements in Karnataka. After six years, each monastery had temples, assembly halls, and quarters for approximately three hundred monks (Lopez 1995b:264). Over the past ten years these monasteries have grown increasingly overcrowded as China has cracked down on religion in Tibet and large numbers of monks and nuns, many involved in pro-independence demonstrations, have sought refuge in India.⁸ According to the Central Tibetan Administration, in 1994 there were 181 monasteries with a total population of 17,376 monks and 8 nunneries

housing 549 nuns.⁹

In addition to rebuilding monasteries in exile, Tibetan refugees created other cultural institutions such as the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (Dharamsala), the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (Sarnath), Tibet House (New Delhi), the Tibetan Medical Institute (Dharamsala), the Buddhist School of Dialectics (Dharamsala), and the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (Dharamsala). These efforts were financially supported by the Dalai Lama and the CTA. In fact, according to Devoe, cultural preservation and practice were the the *raison d'être* of the CTA for the first twenty years of its existence, so much so that over 30% of its annual budget was spent on institutions and training (1987:59). This figure has dropped slightly in recent years as the CTA has concentrated its resources on socio-economic development, education, and vocational training (see Central Tibetan Administration 1994).

Meanwhile, a new source of financial support emerged in the 1970s after a number of high lamas went abroad and founded Buddhist centers. Their success was due largely to the coincidence of the diaspora with a period of intense interest in Eastern religions in the West. Within a few years, the lamas were able to engender a body of Westerners committed both to supporting the continuation of the Tibetan religion and to preserving Tibetan culture (French 1991:196; for a history of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, see Fields 1986). A global network of dharma practitioners has evolved (what I call a transnational *sangha* (Skt.) or religious community) through which money is channeled back to India, Nepal and

Sikkim where it is used to help support Buddhist institutions.¹⁰

In her work on long-term gift exchange between Tibetans and donors in India, Devoe identifies sponsorship, and specifically sponsorship by Western aid agencies and individuals, as the key to Tibetans' ability to survive refugee life and successfully maintain their cultural and religious institutions in exile. Sponsorship in old Tibet was an integral part of social, economic and religious life: lay offerings were essential for the monastic community to survive and thus served an important social function. In exile, though religious patronage by lay Tibetans has continued, Western patrons have come to play a larger and larger role in cultural and religious reconstruction.

To understand this development, it is important to remember that when Tibetans left their homeland in 1959, they entered a world in which representations of Tibet as a mystical, otherworldly place hidden behind the Himalayas and ruled by a "God-king" had been circulating widely since the 1930s and before. The positive expectations created by these images of Tibet shaped the encounter between Tibetans and those Westerners who sought to help them in the early years. Gombo argues that "because Tibetans were perceived as being an exotic people--in addition to being poor, non-Westernized--a large number of governments, voluntary and international aid agencies, and individuals took a keen humanitarian interest in their welfare" (1985:83)¹¹

While doing fieldwork, Devoe (1983) explored how Western agencies and individuals constructed Tibetans as worthy recipients of donor aid. Many of those

she interviewed expressed a desire for "spiritual association with and understanding of Tibetan Buddhists" and described their experiences of working with Tibetans as "more rewarding" and "uplifting" (39) compared to work with other groups. She found evidence that most Westerners involved with Tibetans felt a strong personal and emotional commitment to the refugees. As a result, these donors have maintained a long-term involvement with Tibetans in India:

Many of the international relief agencies involved with Tibetans in the early 1960s are still administering and allocating food-for-works programs, sponsoring children's education, financing repairs on old-age homes they might have built years ago, or underwriting hospital equipment costs. (Devoe 1987:58)¹²

According to Devoe, what most donors hoped for in exchange for their aid was continued association with Tibetans and perhaps an invitation to visit them someday in Tibet (1983:51).¹³

The emergence of new patrons in exile

At the same time sympathetic Western agencies and individuals constructed Tibetans as worthy recipients of donor aid, Tibetans applied their own cultural categories to their eager benefactors. As described in chapter 2, relations between Tibet and China were characterized by a form of patronage known as *mchod-yon*, a state-level expression of a general patron-client relationship, *sbyin-bdag*, in which spiritual guidance is exchanged for material support.

In old Tibet, sponsorship was an integral part of Tibetan social, economic, and religious life. There were two main systems, feudal and patron-priest, in which giving and receiving, and returning took

place. Essentially, the Tibetan household and local economies relied on networks of exchange, "a web of interlocking claims and obligations between the giver and the recipient. (Devoe 1987:57)

Since coming into exile, Tibetans have successfully reinterpreted this social relation, substituting Western patrons for traditional Tibetan and Central Asian ones. That is, they have interpreted Western donations as compatible with traditional sponsorship practices, despite the fact that a lot of the funding has been for non-religious projects.

In exile, then, an unlikely alliance has developed between Tibetans hailing from a land long forbidden to all foreigners and literally thousands of Westerners who have in varying degrees committed themselves to help Tibetans sustain their culture and their religion while enduring the refugee context. The value of the support of Western donors extends beyond the economic: their donations have, from the Tibetan perspective, the quality of offerings *sbyin-bdag* make, given in the spirit of belief, compassion, and encouragement for all that Tibetans in their refugee circumstances represent of and for old Tibet. (Devoe 1987:59)

To Tibetans, gift-giving by Western donors in India signified "allegiance to the Tibetan 'freedom' cause, moral support and care for the survival of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government, and, most important, Buddhism" (Devoe 1983:64). (This interpretation has been reinforced in recent years by the emergence of a transnational network of Western activists committed to the Tibet Movement. During the course of my research, I often observed Tibetans use the *sbyin bdag* framework to account for Western involvement with the Tibet issue.)¹⁴

Over time a new meaning for the term *sbyin-bdag* has evolved: it now refers not only to Westerners who support religious projects or lamas (as is the

case with Western dharma students), but has been extended to refer to all Western donors, regardless of whether they support the clergy or the laity. As Devoe points out, "in exile *sbyin-bdag* is most often used as a label identifying a **Westerner** who in any way aids or supports the **ordinary** Tibetan" (1987:58).¹⁵

Klieger (1992) argues that this reinterpretation of *sbyin-bdag* to apply to sponsors of ordinary as well as to clerical Tibetans is a radical innovation which has a number of important implications. First, it means that the only qualification for aid is to be Tibetan: "As the monks of old Tibet became appropriate vessels for the bestowal of gifts by their old vows, the Tibetan laity qualify for support by their profession of Tibetanness" (Klieger 1992:100). As we saw above, Tibetanness is demonstrated by remaining a stateless refugee, by not taking Indian citizenship. With the help of Western patrons who are committed to Tibetans as Tibetans (not just as monks and nuns), even lay Tibetans have had the advantage of not having to worry about economic survival which in turn has enabled them to "devote most of their time efforts to the great task of remaining Tibetan in culture and community, and as individuals" (Devoe 1987:53).

The second implication of this innovation is that it has transformed the traditional relationship between the laity and the Buddhist hierarchy.

In refugee society, power and wealth are no longer the exclusive franchise of the clergy, but may now be acquired by any lay Tibetan individual (or organization) that successfully achieves foreign sponsorship. In many cases, this capital has contributed to the success of individual enterprise and lay entrepreneurship. (Klieger 1992:99)

This reorientation of status means that the laity is no longer politically dependent on the old structure of monastic bureaucracy.

By reinterpreting the *sbyin-bdag* relation in exile, Tibetans have been able to cultivate a steady stream of benefactors over the years.¹⁶ What is at stake for Tibetans in this process? Klieger suggests that to remain attractive recipients of Western aid requires

a certain level of Goffmanesque impression management by the refugees, including the fortification of moral codes of loyalty and the necessity of Tibetans to be Tibetans according to Western expectations. To be a "good" recipient is a reinforcement to maintain the label "refugee" and not assimilate into the host society. The opposition between Tibetans and South Asians is thus maintained by Western agency. (1992:104)

Generally, Tibetans have a positive attitude toward the donor relationship and understand it in a Buddhist context. In recent years, however, Tibetan reliance on Western patronage has generated criticism within some segments of the exile community, especially among young, educated lay Tibetans. According to Jamyang Norbu, Western fascination with Tibetan Buddhism accounts for the disproportionate concentration of attention and resources on religion in the exile community. Their influence, he argues, is basically "obscurantist." Referring to early encounters in Dharamsala between Tibetans and Western travellers (in the 1970s), Norbu claims that

they patronized everything traditional; the more magical, superstitious and primitive, the better. The forces of reaction in Tibetan society-in-exile were given a new lease on life. (1990:15).

In saying this, Norbu expresses the widespread belief among lay Tibetans that

Western patronage has had a conservative, and thus ultimately detrimental, effect on exile society through its tendency to support religious institutions at the expense of lay organizations and traditions.¹⁷ Western donors are viewed as reinforcing older structures of monastic dominance which have become increasingly contested in the exile community.

Norbu's comments underscore the ongoing tension which exists between lay Tibetans and Western Tibet supporters, particularly those interested in Tibetan Buddhism (see chapter 9). For those who wish to see Tibetan exile society transformed along more democratic lines, the cost of accommodating Western fantasies about Tibetanness in order to engage Western sponsors is too high. Norbu's remarks also point toward the broader issue of what it means to incorporate Westerners so deeply into the struggle for Tibet, a question I address throughout this dissertation.

Over the years, the Dalai Lama's and CTA's emphasis on cultural and religious reconstruction has contributed to the emergence of a self-consciousness about Tibetan culture as a potentially important resource in their struggle to regain their country (see chapter 8 for a discussion of this phenomenon).

The refugee context has provided a chance for Tibetans to experience themselves as unique, and to observe how widely sought after are the products and precepts of their religion and cultural heritage. Not only from within their community but from without, from the non-Tibetan world, Tibetans have been encouraged to build institutions which communicate aspects of Tibetan culture. (Devoe 1987:61)

The presence of thousands of Western tourists, journalists, pilgrims, academics and

others who have made the trek to Dharamsala since the 1960s hoping to experience Tibetan culture firsthand has provided refugees numerous opportunities to "reconstruct, reenact, and teach" their culture (Devoe 1987:60). The exile government's commitment to teaching young Tibetans in exile about their cultural heritage has also contributed to the emergence of a heightened self-consciousness in exile, as we will see in the next section.

Education and the cultivation of diaspora nationalism

Once in exile, the Dalai Lama viewed education as one of the most important means of achieving his goal of "keeping Tibetan culture alive." Thus in 1959, he asked Jigme and Rinchen Dolma Taring, well-known aristocrats from Lhasa, to devise a program for the education of Tibetans in India. The couple opened the first Tibetan school in Mussoorie in 1960 (see Nowak 1984; Taring 1970). Soon the Council for Tibetan Education was established which facilitated the setting up of other schools, including one in Simla and another in Darjeeling. Through discussions with Nehru, who, the Dalai Lama recalls, was a keen supporter of Tibetan education efforts, another organization under Indian jurisdiction was created called the Central Committee on the Education of Tibetan Refugees (Nowak 1984:56). Renamed the "Tibetan Schools Society" in 1961 and again the "Central Tibetan Schools Administration" in 1969, this organization was (and still is) largely subsidized by the Indian government.

One of the Tarings' innovations--a plan to place every young child in a

residential house watched over by a set of foster houseparents--was successfully implemented in all the new Tibetan boarding schools (French 1991:196). Whereas in the past, education had been limited to monks and aristocrats, for the first time in Tibetan history, secular education was made available to lay and monastic persons of both sexes from all social classes. Emphasis was placed on giving the students a "modern" education (something which, as we have seen, was vociferously resisted in old Tibet), but one which would nevertheless "keep their hearts as Tibetan as possible" (Jetsun Pema interview).¹⁸

Since their inception, these schools have played a critical role in creating a nationalist consciousness among a new generation of exile Tibetans, one that centers on the value of Tibetan culture. In her book Tibetan Refugees: Youth and the New Generation of Meaning (1984), Margaret Nowak examines some of the processes through which this consciousness is created, focusing on the transmission of key symbols of Tibetanness to Tibetan youth in the context of education. The most important of these symbols is the Dalai Lama, who embodies the central formula of Tibetan politics, *chos-srid zung-'brel*, or "religion and politics combined" and whom most Tibetans see as a divine living symbol of their history and aspirations for the future. While belief in the Dalai Lama's status was given for those refugees who came to India as adults, belief in his "sanctity and extraordinariness" and his rightful role of leader had to be enculturated into the refugee youths" (Goldstein 1978:413), particularly if his reformulated government was going to be able to sustain its legitimacy in exile. Nowak argues that this has

been very successfully accomplished. For instance, all school children start their day by singing, along with the national anthem, a prayer song composed by the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan leader's picture hangs in the front of every classroom, and children learn early on to attribute their successes to the "grace of the Dalai Lama."

Along with a belief in the Dalai Lama, Tibetan school children are taught the government-in-exile's version of Tibetan history, i.e., that Tibet was a unified, independent country before 1959; they are also taught about the universal value of Tibetan Buddhism. Through the transmission of these ideas Tibet, which is a much emptier category for young refugees, becomes concretized as a lost homeland, one that is idealized as a spiritual Shangri-la in the past but which has become a land full of suffering and destruction since China's occupation. This pedagogical strategy, Nowak argues, has an important subjective corollary:

When children are taught that their culture has such a unique potential for worldwide beneficial influence, they are also being given the most powerful reason of all to remain Tibetan: self-esteem, meaningful identity, and even a sense of mission are all intrinsic to the self-definition so carefully fostered by the supportive Tibetan environment of these schools (1984:103).

As a result of the refugee school system, for the first time, a generation of Tibetans has been produced which is strongly nationalistic and dedicated to the struggle for Tibet's independence.

As I have tried to suggest in the above discussion, the Tibetans' notable success in resettling in India has depended in part on Western largesse--from both

individuals and aid agencies--although the Indian government's policies and the resources it has made available to the refugees have also been of crucial importance. Tibetans have made sense of the keen Western interest in helping them by reinterpreting the traditional patron-client relationship and transforming these outsiders into sponsors. Western patronage has reinforced the Dalai Lama's goals of cultural reconstruction and bolstered the segment of society most affected by the transition to life in exile--the religious hierarchy and monastic community. In the next section, I explore efforts by the Dalai Lama to create an alternative polity in exile. These efforts entail the transformation of the religio-political system along more "democratic" lines and therefore are, by definition, in tension with attempts to ensure the survival of religious and cultural traditions that are embedded in these older structures and which form the basis of Western interest in (and thus support of) the exile community. I argue that the contradictions created by the divergent goals of cultural reconstruction and democratization permeate Tibetan refugee life and must constantly be negotiated and managed.

Part Two

After the revolt of 1959, it was driven home to any Tibetan with even a minimal appreciation of public affairs, that his old political system was clearly incapable of sustaining itself in a modern, and what is more relevant, hostile world. For those who escaped into exile in 1959, it was abundantly clear that we had to learn from the West--one of the most important lessons being democracy. (J. Norbu 1990:13)

Transforming the polity in exile

As I discussed in chapter 3, since coming into exile the Dalai Lama has sought to reform and democratize Tibetan society. Like his predecessor the 13th Dalai Lama, who supported various attempts at modernization before his death in 1933, the 14th Dalai Lama recognized early on the need to transform Tibetan political institutions if Tibetan society was to survive.¹⁹ However, events quickly overtook his intentions between 1950 and 1959 and it was not until after he fled to India that the Tibetan leader was able to begin the process of reform in earnest. The first step entailed eliminating much of the formal protocol which had so defined his office in Tibet. In this excerpt from Freedom in Exile (1990), the Dalai Lama's new no-nonsense attitude is apparent:

...I had a strong feeling that we should not cling to old practices that were no longer appropriate. As I often reminded people, we were now refugees. To this end, I insisted that all formality should be deliberately reduced and made clear that I no longer wanted people to perform the old courtesies. I felt this was especially important when dealing with foreigners. They would be much more likely to respond to genuine worth if they found it. It is very easy to put others off by remaining aloof. So I was determined to be entirely open, to show everything and not to hide behind etiquette. In this way I hoped that people would relate to me as one human being to another. I also stipulated that whenever I received anybody, he or she should sit on a chair of equal height, rather than one lower than mine as was customary. At first, even I found this rather difficult as I did not have much self-confidence, but it grew from then on. And despite the misgivings of some of my older advisors, I think the only people who were discomfited by these principles were occasional new arrivals from Tibet who did not know that the Dalai Lama no longer lived the way they used to. (Gyatso 1990:152)

This attempt to reduce formality was no small matter; it represented the beginning

of a process of transformation which continues to shape Tibetan communities across India and the rest of diaspora. Although this process is a worthy dissertation topic in its own right, I limit my comments here to aspects relevant to developing my larger argument about Tibet activism.

The government-in-exile

As we saw in **Part One**, the Dalai Lama established a government-in-exile (the Central Tibetan Administration or CTA) soon after he arrived in India, dividing his former Cabinet ministers and workers into several portfolios, including Home Affairs, the Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs, the Council for Tibetan Education, the Security Office. Departments of Finance, Health, and Information and International Relations were added later. In 1963, he promulgated a draft constitution as part of his aim of introducing democracy to his followers.

Among other provisions, the constitution provided for free elections of people's representatives to the Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD) (*chitu*), a Tibetan parliament-in-exile. The cabinet (*Kashag*), established at the same time, consisted of five cabinet ministers (*kalons*) who were initially appointed by the Dalai Lama but since 1990 have been elected by members of the ATPD. In addition, a National Working Committee (NWC) (*Rgyun-las thog-chung*), the highest decision making body of the administration, was created. It consisted of elected members of the ATPD, cabinet ministers and secretaries of the various portfolios. The NWC meets monthly while the General Body Meeting, which

reviews policy matters and decisions, brings together all government officials every two years (see N. Paljor 1986 for a more detailed discussion of their functions). In addition, a Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission was established in 1992 and represents the judiciary wing of the CTA. It is responsible for the settlement of cases and controversies of a purely civil nature that are internal to the exile community. Still nascent, the Commission intends to create local justice commissions in each settlement and circuit justice commissions in six different zones. Led by the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government-in-exile is thus a well-defined and highly bureaucratized structure.

Like most exile governments, the CTA's primary political goal is the reestablishment of sovereignty in the Tibetan homeland. In pursuing this end, the administration has worked hard to reinforce a sense of historic responsibility toward those who were left behind in Tibet--to instill a sense of duty or feeling of guilt to impel refugees to work for the cause and compensate their freedom by speaking up for those silenced at home. As I pointed out above, Tibetan schools in India are among the most important domains in which this process takes place, where pride in being Tibetan and commitment to Tibet as a nation are inculcated in the young.

As Yossi Shain points out in his book The Frontier of Loyalty (1989), the binding power of exile governments and their leaders is very limited and conformity to their rule depends on genuine consent by followers. In the case of the CTA, however, consent is easily obtained from Tibetans because of their

devotion to the Dalai Lama and the fact that his claim to represent Tibet is basically unquestioned and unchallenged. During the course of conducting fieldwork in India in the 1970s, one anthropologist, Antonio Marazzi (n.d.), was continually struck by how well Tibetan institutions "work" in exile. Most refugees in India live in settlements where juridical matters are settled by Tibetans themselves. This is tacitly agreed to by the Indian government. Marazzi found that with little possibility of enforcement by Indians or Tibetans of civil laws in refugee settlements, the fact that the Dalai Lama and his Private Office hold considerable sway over most settlements' internal conflicts plays a key role in maintaining the social order. He argues that this is possible because Tibetans share a commitment to a particular goal which is represented in these institutions and that although they exert indirect and unconscious control over people, they can only work if all aspects are undivided: if the political, religious, economic, social, and cultural are all perceived as being part of one system. Marazzi suggests the smooth operation of these institutions gives us an idea of how religion made the system work in old Tibet.

In terms of unity and cohesion, Tibetans are fortunate to have the Dalai Lama and Buddhism as universal principles on which all refugees agree.²⁰ Having said that, the world of political exile is anything but united, as much time must be spent negotiating internal divisions among factions of the exile community. Shain (1989) suggests a link between the enormous frustration created by exiles' limited ability to affect the political situation in their homelands and hairsplitting

factionalism: "Denied the ability to engage in meaningful political activity, exiles sublimate their frustrations in arid debates about procedures, charters, and constitutions" (44). This is certainly true in the case of the Tibetans, as the cartoon by Losang Gyatso (see Figure 9) suggests. In fact, of all the criticisms of Tibetans in exile I heard while conducting my research, complaints about regionalism and sectarianism were the ones voiced most frequently by American activists.

The tendency toward intense regionalism and sectarianism is one of the legacies of Tibet's marginally centralized state. Shakabpa (1967) has written that the transition to "democratic" exile government has been very difficult due to the persistence of older forms of political, religious, and social organization and a political style characterized by intertwined and cross-cutting religious and secular networks and alliances. At the root of Tibetan regionalism is the controversy over the Lhasa government's right to collect taxes from groups in Amdo and Kham, many of whom fought tax collectors dispatched to these regions before 1959 (Devoe 1983:10).

One sign of political allegiance to the old Tibetan central government in Lhasa was the payment of the various taxes. Historically, groups of Tibetans from Amdo and Kham refused to pay those taxes, resulting in continuing disputes with Lhasan officials, a reputation for belligerence and dissidence, and a precarious political unity until the peak of the crisis in 1959, when the Khampa warriors of Chushi Gangdruk...acted as bodyguards to escort the Dalai Lama and his entourage safely out of Tibet. (ibid., 156)

The payment of taxes continues to be a marker of political allegiance in exile; in

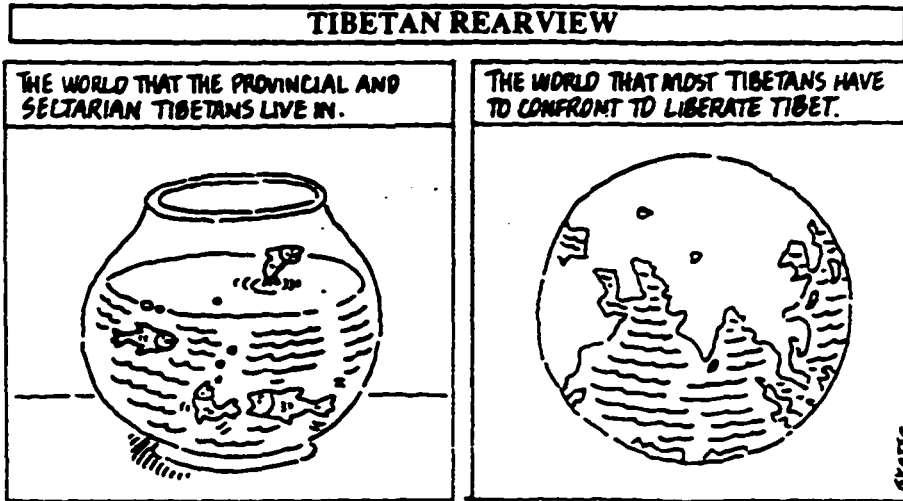


Figure 9 Tibetan Rearview by Losang Gyatso
Tibetan Review, July 1993

1972 the government started collecting one rupee per refugee per month. Known as the green book tax or *gzhan-sdeb*, (which translates as "donations"), this tax is supposedly voluntary but according to Devoe (ibid., 73), individuals and groups who do not pay it experience discrimination and a general "renegade" status in the Tibetan exile community.

One of the ways in which the exile government attempts to gain loyalty is by mediating the distribution of donor aid. According to Devoe, aid is passed on to groups in exchange for their allegiance to the government and steered away from those who fail to support the CTA. For instance, a large proportion of Khampas involved with the resistance movement in Tibet live in settlements with their own schools and social services. This tendency for settlements to be organized along regional and religious lines has helped create, in microcosm, the divisions which characterized Tibetan society before 1959. Devoe argues that these settlements have been deprived of donor aid because that aid is controlled by CTA bureaucrats who view Khampas and Amdowa as politically suspect in terms of loyalty and allegiance.²¹

That is, because of their political dissension and minority status amongst the Tibetans in power, they were discriminated against by Tibetan offices which screened them, making them invisible to the aid agencies working with Tibetan refugees. Loyalty to the government became, essentially, an unwritten criteria for an aid recommendation. (1983:10)

Aid continues to be used as a negotiating tool and control mechanism by exile government officials in India and Nepal as Tibetans are "obliged as recipients or

potential recipients to show political deference to their own government before their needs as refugees will be addressed" (ibid., 161).

Some Tibetans argue that the way in which voting for the Tibetan Assembly is organized has greatly exacerbated the problem of factionalism in exile. Both the electorate and the candidates are divided according to which of the three regions of Tibet and five religious sects they come from. At one point in the past, an experiment was tried whereby all Tibetans voted for candidates from all three regions. Khampas found this system unsatisfactory, as they constitute a minority in exile and felt that the election of their candidates would be too heavily influenced by the electorate of the other two regions (Tibetan Review September 1984). In recent years, candidates have been fielded on the basis of three regions of Tibet and the five religious orders as was the practice before the experiment. Amdo, Kham, and U-Tsang regions each have ten seats in the Assembly while each of the five religious orders (Gelug, Kagyu, Nyingma, and Sakya lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, and Bon) have two seats. In addition, three seats are reserved for Tibetans abroad (two from Europe, one from North America) and two seats from each of the three regions are reserved for women.²² See Figure 10 for a rendering of the "region and sect-wise profile of the electorate."²³

The Dalai Lama's experiment with democracy

To understand the Tibetan leader's decision to "reform" his society in exile, it is important to remember that Tibetans fled their homeland at a historical moment of

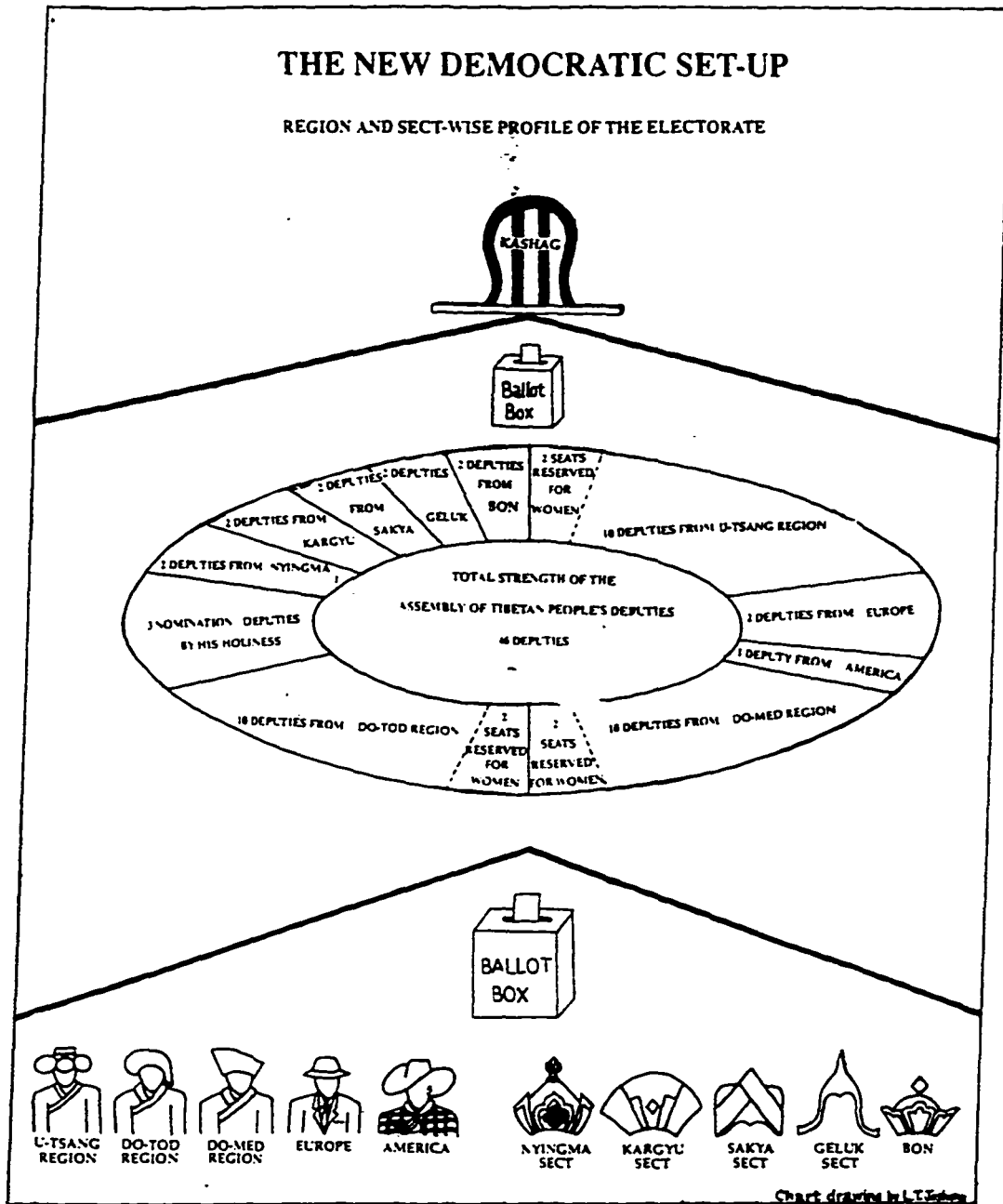


Figure 10 The New Democratic Set-Up
Tibetan Bulletin, August-September 1990

decolonization in which many newly independent societies were openly negotiating what form their political structure should take, with many embracing democratic and nationalist ideas and discourses. Although for the Tibetan political elite, the idea of Tibet as a modern nation-state gained prominence after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, as Goldstein's history (1989) suggests, the struggle to realize this new idea and to modernize Tibetan society faced formidable obstacles, most of them posed by conservative monastics. But once in exile, Tibetans encountered a world where their traditional style of politicking and alliance-making, such as the patron-lama relationship, was no longer viable and they had little choice but to adopt a new approach. Recognizing this, the need to challenge China's representation of Tibet as a feudalistic society, and the obvious necessity to engage the international community on its own terms, the Dalai Lama set about to create an alternative polity in exile.²⁴

One of the greatest paradoxes of the exile community's experiment with democracy is that the desire for reform has come not from the people, but from their revered leader. This irony is not lost on Tibetans as Gyatso's other cartoon (see Figure 11) demonstrates. The cartoon, which contrasts a crowd in Eastern Europe demanding democracy from its somewhat baffled leader with a Tibetan crowd looking on questioningly as their leader advocates democracy, pointedly notes this irony. Although Tibetans view the introduction of democracy as reflection of their attempt to "understand the modern world and deal with it on its own terms" (Tibetan Bulletin 1991), most acknowledge that they did not have to

TIBETAN REARVIEW: by Losang Gyatso

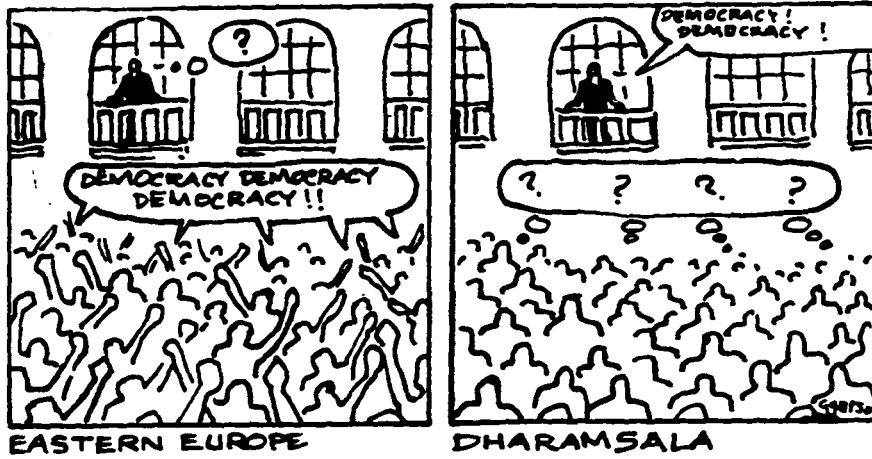


Figure 11 Tibetan Rearview by Losang Gyatso
Tibetan Review, January 1992

fight for their democracy, viewing it instead as a "gift" bestowed on them by the Dalai Lama.

The perception of democracy as a "gift" reveals the persistence with which Tibetans continue to view the Dalai Lama as primarily a spiritual figure. We see evidence of this in the early years of exile when, instead of reading and trying to understand the constitution promulgated by the Dalai Lama in 1963 and distributed to each family, refugees put copies of the text on their altars and prayed before it every day (T. Wangyal 1982:3). Another anecdote, told by Lodi Gyari, further underscores this point and illustrates that many Tibetans, until relatively recently, found the notion of democracy and its related concepts such as popular voting, to be confusing and obscure:

A lot of people go into the election tent and just pray to His Holiness: "I don't know any of these candidates, but please let me choose the right one to help the Dalai Lama and the people." Then they close their eyes, put their finger down and ask the election officer, "Would you see whose name is here." When they hear it they reply, "Oh, it's so-and-so. I'll vote for him." (Avedon 1984:108)

In addition to not understanding popular voting, Tibetans also resisted one of the fundamental prerequisites of representative government--that individuals declare themselves as candidates. As Lodi Gyari told author John Avedon in 1979:

"If I go and ask someone to vote for me," continued Lodi Gyari, "it would be considered an act of great shamelessness. It's very funny, you find this in many Oriental cultures, but we are raised to always say, "I am very unable and uneducated." If someone does not behave like this, it's considered a clear indication that he has personal motives and is not out for the common good. (1984:108)

In recent years, as a younger generation of India-educated Tibetans have come of age, these attitudes toward standing for election appear to be changing somewhat, though Tibetan popular elections are still a far cry from those found in the West.

Critics of exile society argue that most Tibetans still are ignorant about what actually constitutes democratic practice. This, some argue, is because although the Dalai Lama promulgated a draft constitution in 1963, the exile government itself does not follow democratic procedures. The Tibetan people are largely kept in the dark about governmental policies, most notably those toward China; critics frequently cite the secrecy surrounding negotiating strategies and visits by Tibetan delegations to Tibet and China as examples of how "undemocratic" the exile government remains (Tibetan Review 1979a). As for the parliament-in-exile, until 1991, it had no legislative function and could not influence cabinet appointments or removals as they were made by the Dalai Lama. Since then, however, the ATPD has elected cabinet members and been given legislative responsibilities, including revising the constitution. Nonetheless, critics claim that Tibetans continue to view it as just another department of the government rather than as a body meant to hold the government accountable to the people.

How does the Dalai Lama's insistence that Tibetans learn to be democratic play out on the ground? The following anecdote highlights some of the ironies and complexities entailed in the Tibetans' political experiment. In March of 1990, I attended an international conference of Tibet supporters held in Dharamsala, India.

At the opening session, the Dalai Lama addressed the audience, speaking first in Tibetan and then in English. While I did not follow his remarks in Tibetan, I could tell his tone was impassioned. When he switched to English, he stated frankly that he is buffered by advisors who, out of fear of offending him, often hold things back or do not reveal criticisms made by outsiders of his government and its policies. Noting Westerners' reputation for directness, the Dalai Lama appealed to us non-Tibetans in the room to feel free to make an appointment to see him in order to share our ideas and criticisms about how the exile government could improve its functioning as well as its advocacy work for the Tibetan cause. According to one long-time Dharamsala resident and activist, making these comments in English for all to hear was the Dalai Lama's way of guaranteeing that his wishes be respected and insuring that his inner circle would honor his request.

At it turned out, I videotaped the first part of the conference and thus managed to record both parts of the Dalai Lama's remarks on tape. During the coffee break, Tibetans discussed what he had said in hushed tones. Preoccupied with other matters, I paid little attention at the time to their comments. But upon my return to New York, I invited two Tibetan friends who had not been at the conference to view the tape with me. When I asked them to translate for me the Dalai Lama's Tibetan speech, they demurred, though they asked for a copy of the tape to show at an upcoming Tibetan community meeting which I gladly supplied. A few days later, one of the Tibetans called me at home and I asked him again about the speech. This time, my friend was more forthcoming. He said the

Tibetan leader reiterated his desire to set up a democratic structure for Tibet, saying that independence would be hard to gain but that maintaining it would be even harder and that the future cannot depend on one person--Tibetans must be prepared to run their government without him. Using the metaphor of mother and child, the Tibetan leader scolded his compatriots, saying that for the last thirty years Tibetans had been spoiled and relied on their kind mother--e.g., the Dalai Lama--to do everything for them. Warning the audience that he would not be around forever, the Tibetan leader urged his followers to learn to stand on their own two feet.²⁵ In addition, he emphasized that Tibetans should express their opinions and learn to speak out without fear of reprisal from people who believe such opinions contradict his own. When I asked my friend about the tone of his words, he confirmed my impression that the Dalai Lama was upset. I later asked another Tibetan friend about the tape and why my friends would have been reluctant to translate for me. He suggested they were probably embarrassed, though he noted that the Dalai Lama's behavior was not unusual as "lamas generally scold their students."

Encoded in this anecdote are a number of interesting issues, the most obvious of which are the difficulty of transforming Tibetan political culture and the role non-Tibetans play in this process; they are explored below.

Reinscribing the polity: The problem of the Dalai Lama's authority

As I suggested in chapter 3, polities are usually inscribed in an order of being

higher than themselves; in the case of the Tibetan polity that order is Buddhism. To accomplish his goal of democratization, the Dalai Lama must pull away the polity from its inscription in the Buddhist realm. This has proved to be very difficult, given that the central legitimating formula of Tibetan politics is one in which religion and politics are intertwined, expressed in the phrase *chos-srid zung-'brel*-- "religion and politics joined together." If, as many anthropologists argue, political order and cosmology are inseparable, how can the Dalai Lama transform exile society without transforming the religious beliefs which underpin it?

By the same token, just how culturally mobile are the ideas which constitute democracy?²⁶ Assumptions made in democratic theory about the importance of the individual, notions of equality, and the kind of subjects needed for widespread political participation present a profound challenge to traditional Tibetan ideas and beliefs. For instance, how can all individuals be equal when Tibetans see their universe as populated by constantly reincarnating *tulkus* (emanations bodies) or personages who have attained enlightenment but who are voluntarily reborn to assist other, less graced sentient beings? The embrace of democratic discourse entails accepting a highly un-Tibetan model of a bounded community--the nation--internally undifferentiated by hierarchy, in which people relate to each other as members of a "deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1991:16) and are presumed to be autonomous, individualized, rights-bearing citizens. By contrast, pre-1959 Tibet, a "cosmic" or "galactic" polity like the South Asian polities described by Tambiah (1976), hierarchically organized diverse cultural and

political communities around a dominant center²⁷ and thus was based on fundamentally different sociocultural concepts of political community or society, power, personhood, and representation.²⁸

The transformation to democracy in exile involves the creation and representation of new codes of conduct based on a radically different notion of authority. As I suggested in chapter 3, Tibetans view authority as embodied in living Buddhas whose power is absolute and whose words have deep religious significance. This means the Dalai Lama, who is regarded as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara (Skt.), the Buddha of compassion, and the protector deity of Tibet, has a higher ontological status than ordinary Tibetans. In addition, his actions are seen as being for the good of all Tibetans, whereas other Tibetan politicians are often perceived as doing things for themselves, their regional group (e.g., Khampa, Amdowa, or U-tsang), or their sect. Thus far, the Tibetan leader has made little headway in changing Tibetans' attitudes towards his authority, as this account of the atmosphere of Tibetan politics in the 1980s demonstrates:

Any statement that in any way could be construed to be against the Dalai Lama was pounced upon and its author denounced, and, if available, physically attacked. Intellectuals were the prime target. A well-organized and extensive official hate-mail campaign was launched against a Tibetan academic in Japan, who was alleged to have criticized the Dalai Lama in one of his books. Hundreds of death threats were sent to him and letters to the Japanese government and to university to expel him. For a couple of my plays I was also assaulted by a large Dharamsala mob (with the inevitable contingent from the Women's Association) and subjected to a "struggle" complete with experienced denunciators and the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. All these displays of embarrassingly excessive devotion to the Dalai Lama, of hysterical

patriotism, and of religious fanaticism was actively promoted by the Tibetan government and eagerly taken up by the lumpen element of the society, as a convenient means of gaining political prominence, and removing people more educated or more qualified who stood in their way. Dr. Johnson's observation about patriotism being the last refuge of the scoundrel, could, in the case of Tibetans, certainly be extended to areas of religious devotion and leader worship. (J. Norbu 1990:15-16)

The sort of atmosphere described above is hardly conducive to free and open expression of ideas and opinions, as the Dalai Lama himself recognizes.²⁹

The Tibetan leader's power is not just linked to his being regarded as an emanation of a Buddha; it is also tied to the previous system in Tibet. As a Dalai Lama, he is an emanation of Tibet's past whose charisma never dies but is constantly reincarnated and legitimated. The incident at the Dharamsala conference where he scolded Tibetans raises the important question of what happens when charisma gives away its charisma? What does it mean for the Dalai Lama to say that, after he dies, he might decide not to come back; or that he wants to step down and relinquish his power to a popularly elected leader once Tibet regains its freedom? Like the monarchy in Britain, the Dalai Lama sits at the apex of a hierarchical structure; the ultimate source of prestige, he in fact holds it up (Klieger 1992:76-80; see also Hayden 1987). For him to step down is unthinkable to most Tibetans; without him the social-political system as it currently exists would not make sense. All of which leaves the Dalai Lama in the unique and contradictory position of having to assert his authority in order to relinquish it.

Although the Dalai Lama's leadership within his own community is based

on reverence and worship rather than on identification (Aukatsang 1989)--this despite attempts to shed his office of some of its formality--his authority on the world stage is constructed differently. As Klieger argues, to the non-Tibetan public, the Dalai Lama presents contradictory images of himself:

He often refers to himself as a simple Buddhist monk, yet he is the head of the Tibetan faith and presently comes closest to the image of a Buddhist pope by his visibility on the world stage. He is both human and a god...a world-renouncing monk, yet a world-encompassing king as well, as the Buddha was often considered. (1992:77)

Whereas the Dalai Lama was practically invisible in Tibet--appearing only once or twice a year in public--he is visible to Tibetans and his supporters in exile (ibid., 79). Klieger suggests that this strategy has important ramifications for the Tibetan cause: "appearing as a simple monk deflates his opponents who would argue that the whole exile effort is nothing more than a vain-glorious attempt of a former elite to maintain its privileged position" (ibid., 79). At the same time, by making himself approachable and assuming the role of statesman, Klieger argues, the Dalai Lama "begins to chip away at the Western myth of Shangri-la, revealing to the world the reality of Tibet and Tibetan rights to self-determination" (ibid., 80). Furthermore, by reinforcing his humanity, "he reinforces the viability of his people--Tibetans exist in the modern world and they wish to exist as Tibetans" (ibid., 80).

Creating a public sphere in exile

The notion of a public sphere is tied to that of "civil society" which Craig Calhoun describes as "the realm of organized activity outside immediate control of the state but not entirely contained within the private sphere of the family" (1994:190).

Ideally, civil society includes a public sphere "in which rational-critical discourse can take place about how interests of different groups are related to each other and to actions of the state." The presence of a public sphere forms the basis for a form of authority, Calhoun points out, "that ascends from citizens rather than descending from rulers and that presents a range of different identities, interests, values, and perspectives on public affairs" (ibid., 190).

Following Calhoun's definition, it is clear that the creation of a public sphere in exile and the transformation of the Dalai Lama's authority are inextricably linked. But as Norbu's description of what happens to individuals whose opinions are construed to be critical of the Dalai Lama illustrates, these intertwined processes have been slow to take hold among refugees living in India and Nepal. The lack of institutions and mechanisms for political participation in old Tibet meant that there were very few fora for open discussion, expression of dissent, and evaluation of decision-making processes; public sentiment was expressed in communicative contexts other than those of a dialogic public sphere, such as rumor and street songs.³⁰ Street songs that parodied government officials in Lhasa are perhaps the closest thing to an outlet for the expression of political opinion which existed at that time (see Goldstein 1982). Therefore, since coming

into exile, a public sphere for political debate has had to be constructed out of whole cloth. The lack of a viable political party structure as well as the relative scarcity of secular ideologies circulating in the refugee community, as well as intelligentsia to articulate them, have made the creation of a space for open discussion and debate especially difficult.³¹

Many critics of Dharamsala argue that the government itself actively discourages the expression of alternative points of view; for instance, they claim that it does not want a truly oppositional voice or political party to emerge and challenge its power.³² It has also been accused of censoring books and writers whose views are different from its own. As Jamyang Norbu asserts:

...it is no easy thing to be a writer in Tibetan society...The chances are, if you are writing anything political in the Tibetan language, you will have to publish and distribute your own works. Even then, you will have to step wary of the Kashag censors who would not hesitate to ban your work for the most trivial of reasons. (1989:12-13)

The government's excuse for censoring books written by intellectuals on Tibetan history, to give an example, is that it does so for the sake of maintaining unity in exile.³³ Yet as one Tibetan in New York pointed out, while such actions may create the semblance of unity, in reality most people do not agree but are afraid to say what they really think, a state of affairs reinforced by the government.

Despite these problems, there are Tibetans, especially younger lay people educated in the diaspora, who recognize the need to change exile society if they are to fulfill the Dalai Lama's (and increasingly their own) vision of a democratic

future. Strides have been made to promote wider political participation in exile elections and a number of publications in English (e.g. Tibetan Review, Rangzen) and Tibetan (e.g. Mangtso) have become lively fora for political debate and discussion.³⁴ An examination of back issues of Tibetan Review, a monthly published out of Delhi, reveals that it has devoted a fair amount of space over the years to the issue of democratization in exile, through editorials, articles, and, most important, "Letters to the Editor." Since 1990-91, when the Dalai Lama expressed a renewed dedication and interest in pushing the democratization process forward, ordinary Tibetans appear to have begun to use the discourse of democracy more frequently. This in turn has led to an increased self-consciousness about internal problems of the refugee community which is expressed through debates about democracy. In other words, the introduction of democratic ideas has given Tibetans the means or tools through which to legitimately critique their society without risking the censure they might otherwise have faced in the past.

I suggest that Tibetan activism provides an arena in which Tibetans living in the diaspora learn and experiment with democratic ideas. In Switzerland, for example, Tibetan community meetings are important contexts in which the tensions engendered by attempts to "be democratic" are negotiated (see next chapter). Similarly, Tibet Movement meetings in the United States offer Tibetan activists a chance to forego the usual Tibetan political rhetoric, characterized by indirectness and obliqueness, and engage their Western counterparts in quiet debate about Movement strategy and tactics. Exposure to Western activists no doubt has helped

Tibetans to see their own society more objectively and formulate their own critiques, even if they do not voice them publically. Indeed, in interviews Tibetan activists engaged in sophisticated discussions of the exile community's problems vis à vis democratization and reform, demonstrating impressive analytic skills that they rarely displayed in public fora. Contrary to my expectations, the majority of those with whom I spoke did not criticize Westerners' tendency to voice their opinions about the exile government frankly and frequently (e.g., on its factionalism or apparent vagueness about its policies). Instead, they claimed Western activists play an important role in that they are able to say things Tibetans cannot without risking ostracism or outright hostility.

Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by arguing that the two central processes in exile described thus far--cultural reconstruction and democratic reform--are basically contradictory. Efforts to transform the hierarchical religio-political system are in tension with attempts to ensure the survival of religious and cultural traditions that are embedded in this system and which, as I argued earlier, form the basis of Western fascination with, and support of, Tibetans in exile. Tibetans are in the position of having to balance the need to attract sponsors and mobilize support based on these older (dominant) religious structures with the need to transform political institutions according to the Dalai Lama's wishes. Exiles must constantly negotiate these contradictions, which run like a thread through exile society and the Tibet

Movement. In this dissertation I suggest that one of the ways in which Tibetan and Western activists deal with this irresolvable contradiction is by trying to create a coherent representation of Tibetanness upon which everyone can agree (see chapter 8 for a discussion of narratives of Tibetanness produced during the Year of Tibet), one that is broad (or ambiguous) enough to be empty and thus allows for agreement.

As I mentioned earlier, the majority of Tibetan refugees live in India. The two largest Tibetan communities outside of Asia are in Switzerland and the United States. Though the number of individuals living in these two parts of the diaspora is relatively small, each group has made a significant contribution to the exile community back in India, both in terms of support for religious and cultural institutions and the CTA and in terms of mobilizing Western support for the Tibetan cause, making them key "nodes" in the transnational Tibet network. The Swiss Tibetan community is especially interesting in that it is actively engaged in trying to implement democratic practices advocated by the Dalai Lama. In the next chapter, I explore this and other differences between the Swiss and U.S. Tibetan communities.

Notes

1. In his autobiography, the Dalai Lama includes the text of a telegram from the Prime Minister of India.

My colleagues and I welcome you and send greetings on your safe arrival in India. We shall be happy to afford the necessary facilities to you, your family and entourage to reside in India. The people of India, who hold you in great veneration, will no doubt accord their traditional respect to your personage. Kind regards to you. Nehru (Gyatso 1990:144)

See Avedon's summary of India's position on the Tibet issue in 1959 (1984:69-71). See also the Dalai Lama's description of meeting Nehru on April 24, 1959 at which time it he made it clear to the Tibetan leader that India would not support efforts to regain Tibet's independence (Gyatso 1990:146-147).

It is worth noting also that this was not the first time the Dalai Lama had met Nehru. In 1956-57 the Dalai Lama was invited to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's birth in India and the Dalai Lama met the Indian leader on a number of occasions then. The Tibetan leader contemplated asking for political asylum at that point, but Nehru emphatically urged the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet to work with the Chinese under the terms of the Seventeen Point Agreement. Many other Tibetans associated with the Dalai Lama, including two of his elder brothers, Takster Rinpoche (Thubten Jigme Norbu) and Gyalo Thondup, tried to persuade the young leader to stay in India. Eventually the Dalai Lama decided to return to Tibet.

The political consequences of this decision, and of Nehru's unwillingness to risk relations with China by offering the Dalai Lama refuge in 1957, have yet to be satisfactorily explored. Perhaps Shakya (forthcoming) includes such an analysis.

2. This chapter attempts to build on the insights of four anthropologists who have conducted extensive fieldwork in India since the 1960s: Melvyn Goldstein, Dorsh Devoe, Margaret Nowak, and P. Christian Klieger. For descriptions of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, see Armstrong 1989, Corlin 1975, Holburn 1975, and Gombo 1985.
3. This number, 120,000, has not been confirmed; in fact, many scholars place the number of Tibetans living in exile closer to 100,000.
4. The report estimates that due to a lack of employment opportunities, many Tibetans migrate regularly in search of income, largely derived from sweater selling. In some settlements, one out of every three adults leaves; in others, the proportion is four out of five adults (Tibetan Bulletin 1995).

5. For more on refugees from an anthropological perspective, see Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Malkki 1995b, 1996.

6. Avedon notes that unlike other Asian nations to which Buddhism had spread,

Tibet alone contained the entire corpus of the Buddhist dharma; the full scope of sutras, tantras, their accompanying liturgy and most critically the guru-disciple lineages, founded on oral transmission, which served as unbroken links to the origins of the oldest of the three world faiths. (1984:92)

See Lopez 1995b for a discussion of Western scholarly attitudes towards the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism after 1959.

7. In a report on Buxa Duar Ashram published in 1968 in the Tibetan Review (1(3):10-12), an unnamed author writes that

It is estimated that there were 5,000 monks among the 50,000 Tibetan refugees in India. Out of these the ones in Buxa represent those whose studies for the Geshe degree had been interrupted. Almost 75% of the monks at Buxa are below 30 years of age and most of the remaining monks are well-known scholars who act as tutors.

Although all the sects and major monasteries in Tibet were represented in the camp, the author observes that the majority of the monks belonged to the "big Three," that is, Sera, Ganden, and Drepung monasteries. A number of monks from Nyingma, Kagyu and Sakya lineages were resettled by their followers in other locations in India, Bhutan and Nepal where they eventually built monasteries.

8. For a recent report on political and religious repression in Tibet, see Cutting off the Serpent's Head, Tibet Information Network/Asia Watch, 1996.

In a forthcoming essay, Axel Strom (in press) argues that many of the newcomer monks in south India intend to return to Tibet upon completing their religious education in exile.

9. These figures are from the "Tibetan Refugee Community: Integrated Development Plan II, 1995-2000," p. 173.

10. Strom (in press) argues that the existence of a transnational sangha enriches the institutional context of monasteries in India and is viewed by monks as link and entrance to the modern world. One consequence of the emergence of this global network is a recognition of the growing importance of English to monks' education as it enables them to connect to sponsors and religious counterparts in the West. This point is made clear in an oral history of a monk, Geshe Dakpa Topgyal, in Cayley 1994. Referring to changes in monastic education in exile, he says:

In these days also it is not sufficient just to have a proper knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism. We need to know English well for a comparative study of Tibetan Buddhism and Western philosophy as well as for learning about other religions, so that we can have closer contact between religions and religious leaders. (1994:190)

11. See Holburn (1975) for a description of the types of financial aid provided to Tibetans between 1960 and 1970. For example, the UN High Commission for Refugees donated approximately \$700,000 over a period of six years, while the European Refugee Council, with assistance from the U.S., Canadian, and European governments and voluntary relief agencies, donated more than \$3.5 million in 1966 (739).
12. Western voluntary relief agencies that came forward to help Tibetans in the 1960s include CARE, the International Red Cross, the YMCA, Catholic Relief, the Church World Service, the International Rescue Committee, and Save the Children Fund. In addition, the governments of Switzerland, Australia, Britain, the U.S., Denmark, the Netherlands, and Canada made contributions to the resettlement and rehabilitation process.
13. Devoe (1983) suggests that the return of the westerner's gift is a tacit promise for a place in Shangri-la for the donor and for intimate participation in a colorful exotic culture. Klieger adds that "many individual donors indeed wish to become part of Tibetan society. Both intentions are readily gratified by lay recipients." (1992:104).
14. This phenomenon is perhaps even more noticeable in Tibet itself where local Tibetans interpret the presence of Western tourists as evidence of their support for Tibetans' struggle against their Chinese occupiers; see Barnett (1994) and Schwartz (1994a) and Klieger (1992).
15. See Adams (1996) for a discussion of a comparable dynamic between Sherpas and Western tourists in Nepal. See also Ortner's (1989) account of Sherpa's historical practice of recruiting outside patrons to support monasteries in Solo-Khumbu.
16. For a description of how Western patronage of Tibetans works in the Indian context, see Devoe (1983) and Klieger (1992).
17. Recently efforts have been made to remedy the situation with the founding of an organization called Amnye Machen Institute (the term refers to the major mountain range in North-Eastern Tibet) is dedicated toward preserving aspects of secular Tibetan culture in exile. In its publicity, AMI is described as initiating

systematic and scientific studies into the history, culture, society, and politics of Tibet. It is also initiating studies into the external cultures, ideologies, and nations that have influenced the course of

Tibetan history; but which have been insufficiently examined until now.

Programs include the fortnightly publication of a Tibetan language magazine called Mangtso (Democracy); a translation project devoted to translating English language texts into Tibetan; the publication of a literary journal, Jang-zhon (Young Shoots), and a Women's Studies project. See Venturino (1995) for a discussion of AMI's translation project.

18. In a recent report on the exile community published by the CTA, an estimated 80% of Tibetan refugee children currently are enrolled in Tibetan schools (Tibetan Bulletin 1995).

19. As soon as the 14th Dalai Lama took over his governmental responsibilities, he established a reform committee (Legs-bcos tshags-chung) with 50 members and a standing committee with 16 members. According to Dawa Norbu (1973),

the immediate measures of the reform included the total abolition of debts with interest which were more than eight years old; and in the case of debts less than eight years old, only the original debts were to be paid without interest. Greater centralisation of administration and the centralised system of taxation were introduced in all Dzongs so that there would be no room for exploitation by individual officials. (13)

Norbu notes that opposition to these reforms came not from Tibetans but from the Chinese who, he argues, felt that if Tibetans carried out reforms in the country by themselves, the Chinese communists would have had no ideological justification for their occupation of Tibet.

20. Although the vast majority of Tibetans are Buddhist, there is a small minority who practice Islam. Constituting a prosperous merchant class in Tibet before China took over, the *Kha-che*, as they were known in Tibet, fled along with their Buddhist compatriots in 1959. Of the approximately 2,000 who escaped, half settled in Srinigar, Kashmir. The rest settled in other parts of India or emigrated to Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Nepal. For an interesting description of the history of the *Kha-che*, see "Tibetan Muslim Refugees in Kashmir: A special report" in Tibetan Review, May 1979: 15-17; "The Tibetan Muslims" by Ngawang Choephel, Tibetan Bulletin, October-November 1988: 12-13; "The Story of Tibetan Muslims," Tibetan Bulletin, May-June 1990a:28; "Muslims of Tibet" by Masood Butt, Tibetan Bulletin January-February 1994: 8-9, 16.
21. Divisions between the Khampas and the Central Tibetan Administration continue to a problem in exile. One of the most recent incidents involved a flap over the signing of a controversial agreement with Taiwan's Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission (MTAC) by an organization (*Chushi Gangdruk*, "Four Rivers, Six Ranges") which represents the nearly 12,000 Khampas in exile.

Chushi Gangdruk's agreement with the MTAC, signed in Bangalore, India in March 1994 was presented to the Dalai Lama on May 31, 1994 by Athar Norbu, the organization's head and one of the most famous guerrilla fighters. In presenting it to the Tibetan leader, Norbu claimed it was a victory because it recognized the Dalai Lama as a political as well as religious leader. The exile government reacted swiftly, accusing Chushi Gangdruk of acting unconstitutionally and negotiating power unto itself, pointing out that no foreign government has the right to confer recognition of the Dalai Lama's power on him except Tibetans themselves. The incident raised the possibility of Tibetans from different areas making separate agreements with Beijing as well as Taipei in the future, and led to small scale clashes amongst exiles in India (see Tibet Information Network 3 Sept. 1994).

Many Tibetans viewed the incident as part of a long history of Taiwanese attempts to sow discord and conflict in the exile community. Many exiled lamas, particularly from Kham, have accepted Taiwan funds for construction of monasteries and temples, and hundreds of Tibetans, particularly in Nepal, have been lured by payments to take up educational courses in Taipei, usually involving some form of indoctrination into KMT views. The MTAC openly says it supports Tibetan settlements, schools, monasteries, and technical training as well as Chushi Gangdruk itself.

22. In an interview in 1990 on the issue of reserving seats for women in the parliament, Pema Dechen, vice-president of the Tibetan Women's Association commented:

Some say it is an insult for a particular group to be given special seats. We don't take it as an insult. If this is an insult then our whole democracy is also an insult since it was given to us without our having to fight for it. His Holiness bestowed democracy on us. His Holiness gave the women special seats because he wants to encourage women to participate more actively in our political life. (Tibetan Bulletin 1990b:3)
23. In the 1996 election for the 12th Assembly, 102 candidates from across the diaspora competed for 43 seats (the Dalai Lama appoints three additional members based on scholarship). With the recent founding of the National Democratic Party of Tibet (NDPT), whose aim is to make the Parliament based on party-lines rather than regional-lines and whose candidates participated for the first time in the electoral process, the current system is likely to face its biggest challenge to date.
24. For a discussion of the embrace of nationalist and democratic discourses in contemporary Tibet, see Sperling (1994) and Schwartz (1992; 1994a).
25. This comment must also be understood against a backdrop of the Dalai Lama telling his followers on several occasions that he might not come back, e.g. he might decide not to reincarnate after he dies, and thus the institution of the Dalai Lama will come to an end.

26. For some interesting ethnographic examples of experimentation with democratic values and ideas in non-Western contexts, see Calhoun (1994); Comaroff (1994); and Mamdani (1992). See also Monshipouri (1995:15-17) for a summary of various approaches to defining democracy and the process of democratization.
27. Kapferer argues that in egalitarian societies, the individual is the fundamental unit of value whereas in hierarchical societies, the world is not constructed out of individuals so much as individuals are constructed in an encompassing cosmic process (1988).
28. Citing Dumont's contrast between "hierarchical/holistic" and "egalitarian/individualistic" societies, Richard Handler has argued that both nationalism and individualism share the same epistemology of "entivity," the presupposition that groups can be
- bounded by attributes or characteristics that each of its members possess, just as an individual is bounded by uniquely possessed characteristics. Nationalism thus posits the nation as a collective individual—an individuated being rather than a differentiated constituent of some encompassing order—itsself composed of individuated beings related to each other by their likeness" (cited in Foster 1991:253).
29. During my research, several Tibetan friends of mine on occasion observed that the Dalai Lama, while advocating democratization of exile society, nonetheless failed to condemn in the strongest of terms the sort of attacks on individuals described by Norbu.
30. As Lomnitz has recently argued vis à vis Mexico:
- Wherever civic discussion and open argument is precluded by the asymmetries of power, alternative communicative relationships emerge and rumor predominates. (1995:36)
- The fact that rumor is still important in the refugee community in another indication of the relative lack of progress made in creating a public sphere in exile.
31. A small minority of Tibetans did show a passing interest in communism in the 1970s after the Dalai Lama said that there were similarities between Marxism and Buddhism (see Tibetan Review 1980). And as the years go by, the tiny circle of Tibetan intellectuals, educated in exile, slowly expands. Nonetheless, progress in creating a more open political culture in exile is painstakingly slow.
32. See Avedon (1984:110-114) for an interesting discussion of the exile government's notably undemocratic behavior vis à vis the Tibetan Youth Congress in the late 1970s.

33. The Tibetan government has a long history of suppressing intellectuals. Perhaps the most spectacular example is Gendun Choepel, the brilliant and iconoclastic historian, philosopher, and artist who was accused of treason and imprisoned for several years in Lhasa. In recent years there has been an efflorescence of scholarship on Choepel: see Lopez 1995a; Stoddard 1985; H. Karmay 1985; Dhondup 1978.
34. Margaret Nowak argues that letters and editorials "represent a new vehicle of communication" in the exile community. She claims they are a testament to the democratizing effects brought about by a "modern" education in that so long as Tibetans are functionally literate in English, they "can use this forum to express their opinions freely, forsaking the socially obligatory honorifics" of their mother tongue (1984:62).

Chapter 6 Tibetans in the West: Switzerland and the U.S.

Introduction

One of my original goals in designing the research program on which this dissertation is based was to trace the contours of the Tibetan diaspora and to explore how national context affects the local construction of a transnational Tibetan identity and political mobilization around that identity. I decided to focus on India, Switzerland, and the United States, whose particular political and economic characteristics shape Tibetan diasporic communities in distinctly different ways. This chapter focuses on resettlement in Switzerland and the United States.

Approximately 2,400 Tibetan refugees are dispersed across Europe, including Norway (40); Sweden (27); Denmark (21); Germany (110); France (90); Britain (185); and Switzerland (2,000). By comparison, there are more than 2,500 Tibetans currently living in North America: more than 2,000 in the U.S. and 560 in Canada. In the summer of 1992, I conducted limited field research in Switzerland. My immediate aim was to gather comparative data on how the Tibetan community is organized and what form activism for Tibet takes in an European context; toward this end I visited a number of cities and towns where Tibetans live and work, including Zurich, Horgen, Wintherthur, Rikon, Flawil, Trogen, Jona, Heitzingen, and Geneva. I also spent time in Lausanne and Sargans to talk with Swiss supporters of Tibet, and in Bern, where I met with an official from the Swiss Red Cross. The following account of Tibetan migration to

Switzerland is by no means exhaustive; the goal is simply to highlight the differences among two diasporic communities and to give a sense of how they have been shaped by their host societies. This in turn helps explain the different forms activism takes across the diaspora.

Resettlement in Switzerland

There have been three waves of migration to Switzerland, all to the eastern German-speaking region of the country.¹ The first consisted of a group of 156 unaccompanied children, average age 6, who were brought to Switzerland between 1961 and 1964 through the efforts of a wealthy philanthropist and entrepreneur named Charles Aeschimann² (this group is referred henceforth as the "Aeschimann group") and adopted by Swiss families. Many were Tibetan orphans and children whose parents were not able to take care of them due to the difficult conditions in the refugee camps.³ Although their parents willingly left them in the care of the Tibetan government, most of the parents did not understand the concept of legal adoption and thought their children would come back to India after they finished school or their own economic situation improved. Unfortunately the Swiss parents thought otherwise, a fact which caused numerous problems. For the first ten years or so, the Aeschimann group had little contact with other Tibetan children in Switzerland. Raised in upper middle class Swiss families, they were encouraged to assimilate and learned to speak, read, and write German fluently. When the Tibetan Youth Association of Europe was founded in 1970, one of its goals was to

bring dispersed Tibetan youth together and to reach out to those raised in Swiss foster homes (see discussion below).

Meanwhile, the second group to be resettled in Switzerland also consisted of children. About 72 of them were accommodated at the "Kinderdorf Pestalozzi" (Children's Village)⁴ in Trogen where they lived in two "Tibetan houses" and were looked after and educated by Tibetan "house parents." In addition to learning Western skills during the classes in primary and secondary school, the children were systematically instructed in the topics relevant to their cultural heritage; e.g., religion, history, and language. During an interview, Rakra Tethong, who lived with and taught children at Pestalozzi for many years, recalled the importance he placed on teaching his charges to read and write Tibetan and to appreciate Tibetan culture. Such teaching was not available to Tibetans living in other parts of the country from 1964 until 1975, when language classes began to be taught twice a week by adult volunteers in various communities.

The Swiss Red Cross sponsored the third group of Tibetans who resettled in Switzerland. Responding to a call by the International Red Cross to aid the neediest refugees still living in India, the SRC "recruited" whole families from Kulu-Manali, such as Sonam and her husband (see chapter 4), and transported them to Switzerland.⁵ Most of the adults lived in worker's housing near factories where they worked doing unskilled labor. While this arrangement meant few learned to speak more than a few words of Swiss-German, the fact that they were resettled in *Heimstätten* or group housing, facilitated the preservation of their own

language and culture. Each *Heimstätten* had a representative of the Swiss Red Cross living nearby whose job was to look after the refugees' needs; usually the person was a woman and was referred to by Tibetans as *ama-la* (mother). The number of families varied in each settlement and changed constantly, with the arrival of new immigrants and the movement of Tibetans from out of the *Tibeter Heim* (Tibetan home) into their own quarters as they became financially independent.

According to Brauen and Kantowsky (1982), privately organized groups collected remarkable amounts of money and influenced public opinion towards generous support of the Tibetans, culminating in the demand to resettle Tibetan refugees in Switzerland. What motivated individuals to participate in this venture? Some joined out of strong anti-communist feelings, while others identified with Tibetans as fellow mountain people or as spiritual beings; still others recall being motivated by a general commitment to humanitarianism:

The "drama on the roof of the world," as the incidents were presented to the public in the Western hemisphere by the mass media, found, surprisingly, vast interest in Switzerland. Not only was the country alerted by this further example of communist expansion, as predicted by "cold war" propaganda in the late fifties, but the ideological reaction was surely reinforced by some affinity between two brave mountain peoples, both living in peace and justice, equally menaced in their independence and freedom by an atheist aggressor. Following closely upon this motivation, a vague enthusiasm for a "Shangri-La" culture of eternal peace and extraordinary spirituality may have had its impact on the mobilization for Tibet...Last but not least, the ideal of humanity, regarded in Switzerland as a genuine national virtue, had an impact on the case of the Tibetans. (Sander 1984:137)

One Swiss person I interviewed recalled that initially some sponsors, namely those "alpinists" who felt a "natural sympathy for another mountain people in need," wanted to resettle Tibetans in the Alps, import yaks, and have them farm and herd in their traditional manner. Not surprisingly, he said, the Tibetans themselves rejected this idea as they wanted to be in the valleys where the majority of Swiss people work and live.

Who migrated to Switzerland? According to Robert Ekvall who conducted research there in the 1960s,

they come from every part of Tibet: ranging from the far north to the far south and from the borders of China to Ladakh. They represent all levels of the social structure: servant sheep herders, peasants, nomads, soldiers, traders, headmen, chiefs, officials, monks, and high emanation-body lamas. Religiously, they represent all sects. (1967:114)

While this diversity may have been the case at the time, the number of individuals from the upper stratum of Tibetan society is proportionately higher in Switzerland than other refugee communities (see Gyaltag 1990).

How did the refugees fare in their new host society? According to anthropologist Antonio Marazzi (1975), the positive stereotypes which many Swiss had about Tibet helped the refugees win acceptance when they first arrived. Despite their xenophobia, culture of isolation and neutrality, and conservative protestantism, the Swiss saw Tibetans as "fellow mountain people" who were simultaneously similar to themselves yet exotically different. But since the 1980s, the situation for Tibetans has changed as Switzerland has experienced increased

ethnic and racial tension with the influx of foreign workers and asylum-seekers (Bendix 1993:16). Tibetans are no longer the only Asian presence; there are now thousands of Tamils, Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Laotians in the country as well. As a result, Tibetans told me in 1992, not only are they not greeted by their Swiss neighbors anymore, they increasingly have experienced incidents of overt discrimination and racism. On my first day in Switzerland, I witnessed one such incident. It took place at a fair in the town of Horgen, a suburb of Zurich where a large number of Tibetans live. As I sat with some Tibetans behind their stall where they were selling *momos* (steamed meat dumplings) and other traditional Tibetan food, a Swiss woman whose creperie stall stood next to the Tibetans' started making comments about a little Tibetan boy who was playing nearby with a plastic gun. The exchange quickly escalated in intensity, with the Swiss woman saying that the little boy was very bad and that all Tibetans play with guns and are bad people. Later my Tibetan hosts said that such behavior, which would never have happened in the 1960s or 1970s, reflected the increased rise in tension between "native" Swiss and foreigners which in turn is a direct result of the economic problems with which Switzerland has been confronted in recent years.

Tibetan refugees' experience in Switzerland has also been profoundly shaped by the ways in which the Swiss nation-state is constructed. As a host society, Switzerland differs remarkably from the United States, for instance, in terms of its ideology of citizenship. There are two general principles for defining the state, the people, or the nation in legal terms:

Whereas the *ius soli* principle was based on residency within the state borders, the *ius sanguinis* principle was based on a particular descent ideology which referred only to those people who were defined by a common ethnic background and thus were included in the national collectivity. While the *ius soli* paradigm stresses an inclusionary self-understanding of membership, the other model exemplifies a notion of VOLK, i.e. a seemingly homogeneous belief of a nation or community based on ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other primordial exclusionary constructions. (cf. Habermas 1992) (DeSoto and Plett 1995:109)

Because Swiss citizenship is defined in terms of *ius sanguinis*, Tibetans and other immigrants are not regarded as legally Swiss until they apply for citizenship and are accepted by the local Swiss community in which they live.⁶ Of course, the ideology of citizenship and multiculturalism in the United States is quite different, producing strikingly different experiences for immigrants and refugees. Over the years, these differences have affected Tibetans' economic opportunities in important and interesting ways. For instance, it is much more difficult to capitalize on ethnicity in Switzerland than it is in the United States. Emphasizing one's cultural and religious heritage, while commonplace in the U.S., is not something ethnic groups benefit or profit from in the Swiss context. During my time in Switzerland, I heard many Tibetans complain about the difficulty they had in getting permission to open up Tibetan shops or restaurants, whereas in the United States, the process for starting your own business and trading on your ethnic identity, as it were, is much easier.⁷ This is especially true in New York City, as demonstrated by the fact that it supports four Tibetan restaurants and nine Tibetan clothing and handicraft stores (as of 1996).

Like all refugee and immigrant groups, Tibetans in Switzerland must confront the problem of how to maintain their cultural identity in a new environment. The degree to which each group of refugees has succeeded in preserving its Tibetanness has varied widely. Unsurprisingly, Swiss scholars have observed that loss of language and the "ability to act Tibetan" have been most notable with the Aeschimann group (Sander 1984:141; Ott Marti 1976). Although the Swiss families responsible for adopting the children were asked to sign a contract with the Dalai Lama committing themselves to provide education in Tibetan language, culture, and religion, such instruction did not take place (Sander 1984:139). As a result, by the time the adopted Tibetans reached their teens (in the late 1960s and early 70s), many felt deeply alienated from both Swiss and Tibetan society. Although they seemed assimilated to Swiss society, they were unable to conceal their roots (as Swiss reaction to their exotic appearance proved) and would thus never be seen as "Swiss." At the same time, unable to speak Tibetan, they did not really feel "Tibetan" either. Torn between two worlds, these individuals experienced the greatest conflicts in defining who they were.⁸

The children who grew up in the Pestalozzi Kinderdorf, on the other hand, received a bicultural education that imparted "the ability to cope successfully with the Swiss environment and a profound Tibetan education as well" (Sander 1984: 146). When these individuals entered their late teens and early adulthood, they were much better able to cope with their hybrid status as Swiss Tibetans than the Aeschimann group.

For the Tibetans brought over by the Swiss Red Cross and resettled in communal homes, maintaining their language and cultural skills was not a problem. In fact, the problem was quite the opposite. Their lack of facility in Swiss-German combined with Swiss attitudes toward foreigners meant that they had little contact with Swiss people (see Ott-Marti 1976; see also Korom 1996). As for the children raised in these communities, Sander suggests that

The Tibetan family provides a homogenous ethnic milieu and perpetuates the traditions of Tibet in many respects, but, in general gives less incentive for their offspring to adapt optimally to conditions of the Swiss way of life. (1984:146)

This point was brought home to me during a discussion with a 28 year old Tibetan woman who said that despite the fact that she had lived in Switzerland for more than 20 years, she did not speak Swiss-German well enough to be able to get a good job; instead she cleaned houses for a living. Tibetans raised in the *kinderdorf* and in foster homes, on the other hand, tend to be well-educated and thus have found employment as adults in banks and as nurses whereas their counterparts from the *Heimstätten* tend to leave school earlier and thus have less prestigious jobs at a lower income. The young Tibetan woman also told me that her lack of fluency inhibited her ability to form friendships with Swiss people. Such isolation is particularly noticeable among the elder generation, such as Sonam and her husband, who never learned to speak Swiss-German at all.

Well-educated young women who have good jobs and earn roughly the same amount of money as their male counterparts lead much more independent

lives than their counterparts in India do. This fact causes great problems, particularly in arranged marriages (still a common practice), when these women bring Tibetan husbands over from India, most of whom have a hard time accepting female independence. As one woman observed: "Those men want us to stay home, stay in the kitchen, and most of all, not talk about politics." I was told repeatedly that such marriages often do not work out and that it is better if the men are from Switzerland and the women from India.⁹

As I argued in chapter 5, the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism has been of paramount importance to the exile community. Although Tibetans living in the Children's Village at Pestalozzi received some training about Buddhism, they did not really have a chance to put any of the ideas they learned into practice. In the case of the families dispersed in settlements, while they built altars in their homes and continued with their usual rituals, their practice was hampered by the fact that there were no local lamas or monasteries. In 1967, however, a Swiss family that owned a local kitchenware factory built a monastery in the town of Rikon. Longtime Tibet supporters, the Kuhn family was among the first to house and employ Tibetan refugees in Switzerland. After construction of the monastery was completed, the government-in-exile selected five monks (four Gelugpa, one Sakya) from India to run it. Overjoyed to have a religious center in Switzerland, many Tibetans nonetheless were disappointed to discover that they would not be able to put their children in the monastery, a customary practice in Tibet. Due to lack of resources, absorbing and educating a growing body of novice monks was simply

not possible for the Rikon Institute, as the monastery was called. Eventually the Tibetan community in Rikon started a school to teach Tibetan language, culture and religion to their offspring which was taught by monks from the Institute. While visiting Rikon in 1992, I observed one such class and interviewed one of the monk-teachers. During classes, which are held on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, children are taught to speak Tibetan and recognize the various scripts; they also learn about Tibetan history and Buddhism. When asked whether any of his students (he has taught at Rikon for more than twenty years) had ever pursued their studies of Tibetan culture or religion further, the monk said no, but that two children from other settlements had tried to become monks. They studied in India for a few years but eventually returned to Switzerland. He lamented the loss of the revered role monks played in Tibetan society, noting that most of those who seek to become monks in Switzerland are Swiss, not Tibetan. Although Tibetans could not place their children under the monks' care in Rikon, the monks did recognize an adopted child (from the Aeschimann group) as a reincarnate lama. This was very important to refugees at the time (the late 1960s) as it was a sign that their religious culture was being reproduced in Switzerland (Marazzi n.d.).

Organizing and democratizing the Swiss Tibetan community

One of the things that struck me immediately upon my arrival in Switzerland was how well organized the Tibetan community is compared to the one in the United States. When the first Tibetans arrived in Switzerland, they were accompanied by

an aristocrat named Phala who was sent to represent the Dalai Lama in Europe. The former Secretary General (*Drung-yig-chen-mo*) in Tibet, Phala played an important role in Tibetan politics during the 1950s, acting as a confidential link between the Dalai Lama and the Khampa guerrilla forces. After being sent to Switzerland, Phala formed an Office of Tibet (OOT) in Zurich which he headed until his death.¹⁰ Today the Office coordinates activities in Switzerland as well as other countries in Western Europe. One of these activities is a monthly meeting of the heads of the main Tibet organizations in Switzerland; these include the Tibetan Community of Switzerland (TCoS), the Tibetan Youth Association (TYA), the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA), and the Swiss-Tibetan Friendship Association (STFA). There are also regional organizations (based on regions in Tibet, e.g. Amdo, Kham, U-Tsang, and Ngari) which are branches of ones based in India: U-Tsang Central Executive Committee; Toepa Welfare Association, Domey Central Executive Committee, and Chushi Gangdrug. However, unlike in India, these organizations play no political role in Switzerland, serving mainly a social-cultural function.

The organization, the Tibetan Community of Switzerland (TCoS), represents the largest community of Tibetans outside the Indian subcontinent. There are 1,800 official members and another 200 unofficial members. An umbrella organization, TCoS is composed of twenty-one sections which are located in various Tibetan settlements across Switzerland. Each section holds a meeting once a month for its own members and leaders are elected to represent their

communities at TCoS meetings. These representatives, together with the heads of the TWA, TYA, OOT, and the Swiss representative to the ATPD, constitute a committee that organizes community-wide activities such as demonstrations and holiday celebrations. In an interview, the president of the TCoS stated that the organization's main aim is to "keep Tibetans together, keep the identity of Tibetan culture together." Toward this end "schools" have been started in eleven sections, taught by what he called the "new generation" (e.g., Tibetans who are approximately eighteen years old). The TCoS is supported through income earned at festivals, such as the Dalai Lama's birthday and Democracy Day (see discussion below).

The other main organizations, such as the Tibetan Women's Association, the Tibetan Youth Association, and the Swiss-Tibetan Friendship Association serve specific constituencies. For example, membership in the Tibetan Women's Association, a branch of the main organization headquartered in Dharamsala, consists entirely of married women (younger single women join the Tibetan Youth Association). The Swiss-Tibetan Friendship Association, on the other hand, is a bicultural support group geared toward educating Swiss people about Tibetan refugees and the Tibet issue.

The Tibetan Youth Association (*Verein der tibeter Jugend*) is by far the most visible and important organization in Switzerland in terms of Tibet activism. In an article published in the Tibetan Review in 1985, Kelsang Gyaltzen wrote about the lack of drive on the part of Tibetans during the 1960s in Switzerland:

the overall picture of these years is marked by a striking lack of hope, aspiration, and organization. This situation lasted until the late 1960s when gradually a process of search for one's own origin and national identity took place among growing number of Tibetan youths in their late teens and early twenties. (15)

The emergence of an interest in democracy and nationalism, facilitated by education and contacts with the outside world, inspired some enterprising young Tibetans to found a youth organization in 1970. With help from Mr. Phala and the Office of Tibet in Switzerland, Gyaltzen writes, all the groups in Switzerland and Europe were put in touch with one another and youth festival was held in April 1970. At the festival, attended by a hundred young men and women from across Europe, the Tibetan Youth Association of Europe was founded. TYA's initial goals were to raise funds to support the exile community in India, focusing on the Tibetan Youth Congress, which was headquartered in Dharamsala, and the elderly. During the 1970s, the Aeschimann group was very active in TYA. Over time their participation faded somewhat, so that by 1992 I was told only two individuals were still involved. One of the reasons the adopted Tibetans flocked to TYA was due to its language policy, which was to try to conduct meetings in Tibetan if possible, but if not, to use German. None of the other Tibet groups at the time shared this policy, ruling out participation by the non-Tibetan speaking Aeschimann youths.

Over time, TYA's agenda has evolved somewhat, with greater emphasis now placed on political activities such as organizing protesters to sit outside the U.N. Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination of Minorities in Geneva in August every year.¹¹ Lately emphasis has been placed on teaching Swiss

Tibetans about the democratic process. For example, while I was in Switzerland in 1992, a weekend seminar on democracy was organized for TYA members. The President of the TYA board, a female lawyer who had been raised in Pestalozzi Village, told me that she proposed the seminar because Tibetans "don't really know what democracy is." Her goal was to help TYA members learn something about the structures and conditions which must be fulfilled in order to have a democratic set of institutions. At the seminar, it was decided that participants would visit every section on a rotating basis in order to share with other Tibetans what they had learned.¹²

This newfound self-consciousness reflects the Swiss Tibetans' response to the Dalai Lama's challenge to Tibetans to reform their society. It is interesting to note, however, that when the Dalai Lama visited Switzerland for the first time in 1973, his attempt to put his ideas into practice shocked and dismayed his fellow refugees. In an effort to treat people less formally and more "democratically," he greeted Swiss Tibetans with handshakes and pats on the back. According to a Swiss informant, his strategy failed miserably.

You see, when the Dalai Lama came here the first time he was formally instructed, obviously. There were all his countrymen, bowing deeply and respectfully, not looking directly in his eyes as they used to do, and then it was [whispers] horrible, he not only shook their hands but also patted them...It was like an assassin, you see, they hadn't expected it at all, and they didn't want it, it was like a cold shower, they suffered. He was told that everybody is equal, democratic, and your behavior, your Holiness, should be more democratic. Nevertheless it was wrong among his own people! By the second time he came to Switzerland it was gone, absolutely gone.

Despite their initial reception to the Dalai Lama's "democratic" overtures, as a group Swiss Tibetans have vigorously embraced democratic discourse in recent years and have sought to incorporate democratic procedures in the way their community functions. The task has been made much easier by the fact that many of the current leaders are products of the Swiss educational and political system, the latter of which is notable for its commitment to procedural democracy.¹³

During the course of my research, I collected numerous anecdotes about the obstacles Swiss Tibetans face in trying to implement democratic practices. Most of the stories center on issues that Swiss Tibetans believe signify how democratic they are--e.g., how "talk" is managed in meetings.¹⁴ The notion that some Tibetans "do not know how to talk" in community meetings, especially members from the elder generation, came up repeatedly in informal conversations and interviews. As the president of the TCoS (I'll call him Thubten) lamented, "Meetings are hard to control, if someone wants to speak, they speak." The result, he observed, is that some meetings can be "endless." He cited an incident where an older man wanted to read a six-page prepared speech at a meeting devoted to debating the upcoming assembly elections in India. As president, Thubten's role was to move things along but when he tried to "wrest control away from this guy, he protested about his right to freedom of speech." Whenever Thubten, who is in his late thirties, cannot attend a meeting, the vice-president, who is much older, chairs it for him. "Afterwards," Thubten laughed, "I always hear that the meeting took much longer. So we have this problem with our older generation."

This fact became obvious to me during the annual Tibetan Community of Switzerland meeting which is held every August. The meeting lasted seven hours, with speeches by the Dalai Lama's representative, the Foreign Minister who happened to be visiting at the time, reports by the heads of all main organizations, a lunch break, and an hour and a half of questions and answers. During the q/a session, I noticed big differences between the way younger Tibetan men (all those who asked questions were male) and older Tibetan men held themselves and addressed the speakers onstage. The younger Tibetans stood with their hands on their hips whereas their elders acted quite deferentially. About half-way through the q/a session, a man who appeared to be about sixty years old stood up and asked a question. He spoke for quite some time, during which my translator, Karma, stopped making notes about what he was saying. Whispering, I asked him why he had stopped; exasperated, Karma exclaimed "because he doesn't know how to talk!" Apparently the man was complaining about having to pay Swiss taxes, an issue first raised in the 1970s but long since settled. Later I discussed the incident with a man who was president of the Tibetan Community for several years in the 1980s. When I asked about the different speakers at meetings, he said:

there are two kinds of older people speaking: some who are very religious and who believe all human beings are equal and deserve respect. We should keep this habit. Then there are those who express themselves so respectfully out of a habit of deference to aristocrats. This we should get rid of. Then there are the young people who copy stereotyped Western ways of expressing themselves. They are proud, and so on. This is good for the second group of people who are too deferential. Some people don't know how to express themselves properly, so they repeat

themselves. On the other hand, some people don't understand the agenda of the meeting, they talk outside the concrete agenda. This is a real problem. But if we interrupt them, they will feel they are being denied the right to speak.

On another occasion, I attended a meeting to plan "Democracy Day," a Tibetan holiday marking the anniversary of the establishment of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and the problem of how to control or limit the length of speeches during the "open mike" session came up. One person, representing the Office of Tibet, assuming that speakers would go on too long, suggested having participants submit their texts beforehand for approval. This idea was immediately rejected by others at the meeting who said that this would be seen as an attempt to control people's right to speak.

The issue of talk at meetings underscores the gap between different generations in Switzerland and is an example of the kind of intergenerational negotiating that takes place in contemporary Swiss Tibetan life. As Gyaltag (1990) points out in his study of Swiss Tibetan families, the hierarchical familial structure has changed in exile as younger children surpass their parents' language facility and understanding of the outside world. Unfamiliar with their parents' life experiences, children increasingly lose respect for their parents' status as elders. Taught to be critical and to question things, Tibetans educated in Swiss schools unsurprisingly have very different attitudes toward authority, a fact which is reflected in their comparatively undeferential behavior in public settings.

As would be expected, activism on behalf of Tibet takes a particular shape

which reflects certain characteristics of Swiss society. For instance, due to an intense dislike of disorder and noise that usually accompanies demonstrations, Swiss people generally do not support or like to participate in demonstrations for Tibet. Police are frequently asked to intervene in order to quiet demonstrators down; neighbors of the Chinese consulate complained so much about Tibetan protests after 1987 that demonstrators were asked to move their protests to Bern instead, a fact that made it much more difficult for Swiss Tibetans (none of whom lives in Bern) to participate. Uncomfortable with American-style grassroots activism, Swiss sympathizers instead prefer to attend cultural events and to donate money to Tibetan organizations.

Swiss Tibetans have adapted their strategies to the limitations and realities of Swiss political life in interesting and distinctive ways. For example, the community's receptivity to democratic discourse has enabled certain of its members to play an important role in Tibet activism that takes place in the global arena. By this I mean that as an emphasis on intervention in international political fora has emerged within the Tibet Movement, certain Swiss Tibetan activists, drawing on their knowledge and/or interest in democratic and related legal discourses such as that involving human rights, have become eager and skilled participants in Tibetan delegations. The fact that a number of United Nations Commission and Subcommission processes take place in Geneva (or other parts of Western Europe) has further enabled and enhanced such participation. I explore this point in the next chapter, which examines the emergence of the Tibet Movement after 1987 and

argues that the Swiss Tibetan community's size, organization, and resources have helped make Switzerland not only a key "node" in the Tibetan diaspora but in the Tibet Movement as well.

The next section introduces the Tibetan community in the United States, another important "node" in the diaspora and the Tibet Movement.

Tibetans in the United States¹⁵

The history of Tibetans in the United States is very poorly documented. This is not surprising, given the community's extremely small size (until 1992 there were only 500-600 in the entire country) and the fact that it is dispersed into small groups and community leaders have seen little reason, until recently, to document it themselves.¹⁶ However, with the arrival of one thousand new Tibetans and their families who have been allowed to emigrate to the U.S. under legislation passed by Congress, the size of the Tibetan community, and the amount of documentation, has increased dramatically (e.g., see The Tibetan U.S. Resettlement Project, Inc.: A selection of noteworthy articles, 1990-1992 (1993)).

The 500-600 Tibetans who arrived in the U.S. before 1992 were predominantly male and settled either in the New York-New Jersey area or on the West Coast. Many (though by no means all) were from high status backgrounds and well-educated. The fact that they came as refugees, largely through private means and connections, distinguishes them from the "second wave" of Tibetans who started arriving in 1992 (and continue to do so) under the auspices of the

Tibetan-U.S. Resettlement Project (TUSRP). As members of an organized resettlement effort, these second wave Tibetans have a different status from the earlier generation of refugees in that they have entered as permanent resident "green card" holders with full work authorization and have had employment and housing arranged for them by American sponsors in a number of "cluster sites" around the country (see Figure 12).

The first Tibetans to visit the U.S. were members of a Tibetan government trade delegation led by the late Tsepon Shakabpa in 1947 (see Goldstein 1989 for a discussion of the political implications of this visit; see also Shakabpa 1967). However, the first Tibetans to become permanent U.S. residents were Telopa Rinpoche, who was invited by Johns Hopkins University in 1948, and the Dalai Lama's elder brother Thubten Jigme Norbu, his friend Dhondup Gyaltzen, and Philip Ladenla, who emigrated in 1952 (Dharlo 1994:12; see Norbu's autobiography, Tibet is My Country, 1986).¹⁷ In 1960, several members of the Sakya clan, including Sakya Dagchen Rinpoche and Dezhung Rinpoche, arrived in Seattle at the invitation of the University of Washington where they were asked to be informants for a research project. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, a project which produced a number of publications (see Tibet Studies Bulletin 1976).¹⁸

The government-in-exile opened an "Office of Tibet" in 1964 in New York City for the sole purpose of lobbying for resolutions at the UN. It was staffed by several Tibetans, including the former Foreign Secretary of Tibet, Thubten

Tibetan Communities in North America

No. Community	Population (approx.)
<i>Canada (600)</i>	
1. Alberta	100
2. British Columbia	100
3. Ontario	300
4. Quebec	75
5. Winnipeg	25
<i>United States (1,970)</i>	
1. Albuquerque, NM	40
2. Amherst, MA	50
3. Austin, TX	20
4. Boise, ID	20
5. Boston, MA	90
6. Boulder/Denver, CO	35
7. Burlington, VT	25
8. Charlottesville, VA	20
9. Chicago, IL	100
10. Connecticut	30
11. Ithaca, NY	30
12. Los Angeles, CA	150
13. Madison, WI	120
14. Minneapolis/St Paul, MN	200
15. Missoula, MT	20
16. Ohito/Michigan	20
17. New York/New Jersey	300
18. Portland, OR/SW WA	150
19. Salt Lake City, UT	80
20. San Francisco, CA	150
21. Santa Fe, NM	30
22. Seattle, WA	100
23. St Louis, MO	20
24. Washington, DC	70
Others (USA)	100
Total:	2,570

(Source: TCAP)

Figure 12

Tibetan Communities in North America
Tibetan Review, October 1994

Liushar, who represented the Dalai Lama in North America. At this time there were approximately 20 Tibetans in the country (Dharlo 1994:12). Three years later, the number grew as a group of six Tibetans were brought over to work as woodcutters for the the Great Northern Paper Company in Portage, Maine (see Dale 1969:42). Their success led to the immigration of another 21 men in 1969, followed shortly by several wives. By 1971, the community in Maine consisted of 20 bachelors, four married couples, and two infants, for a total of thirty (Messerschmidt 1976:49; see also Dharlo 1994:12).

The Tibetan lumberjacks found the work difficult and Maine's climate too cold, particularly in winter. Many were relieved when, in reaction to a business recession in 1971, Great Northern

agreed to release from their employ any Tibetans who sought and found work elsewhere. The first to leave were those with English fluency and/or contacts in other states (primarily among other Tibetans and Mongolian immigrants on the East Coast). Some others called on their few American acquaintances for help. Within a few months, all of the Tibetan loggers had gone. Seventeen moved to the West Coast, fifteen of whom settled in Washington and Oregon. (Messerschmidt 1976:65)¹⁹

Meanwhile, by the 1970s, Buddhism had caught on with Americans. Tibetan lamas started to come over to set up dharma centers, bringing with them translators and students, many of whom ended up becoming permanent residents.²⁰ Most of those Tibetans who emigrated during this period did not contact the Office of Tibet in New York; for this reason, and because they were scattered across the country, the Office did not have a proper headcount or record of addresses of Tibetans in

the U.S. until the mid-1980s (Dharlo 1994:13). By then, however, the Tibetan community became increasingly well-organized with the establishment of community organizations known as "Tibetan Associations" in New York and the Portland, Oregon area. Since 1992, with the arrival of so many new Tibetans, Tibetan social and cultural organizations have proliferated. There are now a total of twenty-four Tibetan Associations, one in each cluster site, as well as approximately fifty other Tibet-related organizations, ranging from dance troupes to NGOs dedicated to lobbying for the Tibet issue in Congress (see chapter 7).

Prior to 1992, the community was so small, dispersed, and composed of so few families that the issue of maintaining Tibetan culture in an American context had little meaning; those who were here focused their attention on regaining their homeland or just surviving.²¹ But with the influx of so many new people, including families, the community has numerically reached a critical mass such that cultural preservation has taken on much greater importance to the community at large. In fact, whereas the issue was rarely discussed in the past, there seems to be a much greater degree of self-consciousness about it today among both first wave and second wave Tibetans. In a recent paper, Marcia Calkowski (1995) points out that classical and traditional folk arts have received very little official recognition from Tibetan organizations or the exile government over the years (see discussion in chapter 8). But faced with American expectations about their being "representatives" of Tibetan culture, the new arrivals have demonstrated some anxiety about being able to perform their ethnicity appropriately. As a result, a

grant was recently given to a San Francisco-based Tibetan performing arts organization called Chaksampa that enabled its members to travel to each cluster site to teach the new immigrants Tibetan folk dances and music.²² According to Calkowski, the new arrivals view these workshops as opportunities to learn dances and songs they never learned in India, skills they hope will help them communicate their Tibetanness to American hosts. The irony of this situation is perhaps only matched by the fact that in many proposed cluster sites, Americans clamored for the opportunity to be "sponsors," a role that involved helping the new immigrants find employment, housing, and anything else that would make their transition to life in the U.S. easier. In some places there were more willing sponsors than Tibetans needing assistance. These two examples reveal how profoundly positive stereotypes and expectations attached to Tibetans have mediated their experience in the U.S. They also underscore how differently Tibetans have been received compared to other Asian refugee groups (see discussion below).

The Tibetan community in New York

In this chapter, I describe the Tibetan community in New York as I experienced it during the course of my fieldwork (1990-1993). It is important to note that with one or two exceptions, my contact was limited to Tibetan activists from the first wave of migration, the majority of whom were male. There are a number of reasons why I did not get to know many Tibetan women, not least of which is the fact that until very recently (e.g., 1994-95), there were only four or five from New

York who actively participated in the Tibet Movement.²³ Of course, many more Tibetan women attend community events such as parties, picnics, and the annual March 10 demonstration in front of the United Nations, but without a regular context in which to get to know them, I found it hard to establish the same kind of relationships with them as I had with some of the male activists.

A large proportion of Tibetans in New York (and the U.S. in general) speak English which they learned in school in India. Many speak other languages as well, including Hindi, Nepali, and in some cases, Chinese. The New York community can be divided into two groups: those here legally and those who have overstayed their tourist visas and are thus "illegal." Those who are here illegally tend to work in low wage jobs such in restaurants (e.g., bus boys, dishwashers). Those who are here legally work in a number of areas, including social services, hotels, banks, education, and health care. Some families have used their business acumen, for which Tibetans are famous, to start their own shops or restaurants. In addition, there are a number of lamas who survive by teaching the dharma to Western Buddhists and students, many of whom have come to the U.S. under the recently-established Fulbright program for Tibetan refugees.

My first exposure to the Tibetan community in New York City took place in 1989 at a March 10th demonstration commemorating the 1959 uprising in Lhasa. Before that time I had met two Tibetans through friends but had never before attended a community event. As it so happened, I was enrolled in a documentary film production course that semester and decided to videotape the

protest. When I arrived with my crew, there were already between 250 and 300 people gathered in Ralph Bunche Park across from the United Nations. People carried brightly colored Tibetan flags and posters and chanted "China out of Tibet" and "Long live Tibet." There were a few reporters sprinkled among the crowd of Tibetans and Americans as well as one celebrity--actor and Buddhist Richard Gere. At my cameraman's urging, I approached Gere and asked if I could interview him briefly. He agreed and I asked him a few questions about why he was there and what demonstrators hoped to achieve. Meanwhile, after chanting off and on for about two hours, demonstrators walked across Manhattan on 42nd Street and up Broadway to the Chinese consulate on 66th Street. They stood across the street from the large building for about half an hour (the most time NYPD would allow), shouting slogans at the top of their lungs. Many of the Tibetan women had tears streaming down their faces and some Tibetan men got dragged away for trying to burn a Chinese flag. The overall effect was one of intense emotion and frustration, made worse by the fact that Tibetans could see consulate employees peeking out from behind curtained windows, taking photographs of the crowd. Back in the editing room, as I looked at the footage, I thought about how motley the crowd was which had turned up for the demonstration. In addition to celebrities like Gere, there were long-haired hippie types rubbing shoulders with solemn-faced Tibetan monks wearing crimson robes (and hats to keep them warm), neatly combed Tibetan men in raincoats next to blond haired American women wearing traditional Tibetan hats lined with fur. This crew, which struck me as so

incongruous at first, became very familiar over the next three years.

March 10th is one of the few days of the year which brings all New York Tibetans together.²⁴ The other days on which the Tibetan community congregates include the Dalai Lama's birthday (July 6), Losar (Tibetan New Year), and December 31 (Christian New Year). Given the community's small size, there is no Tibetan enclave in the city, though journalists like to refer to the area around Third Avenue and 31st Street as "Little Tibet" because it is near a Tibetan restaurant and apartment building housing approximately twenty Tibetans. There are no monasteries in Manhattan (though there is one in Washington, New Jersey) and the small Tibetan Buddhist centers that do exist serve a Western rather than a Tibetan clientele. If the Tibetan community can be said to have a focus, it is a brownstone on East 32nd Street.

With the purchase of the brownstone in 1991, the Tibetan community acquired a place where members could formally gather and hold small meetings, parties, even religious ceremonies.²⁵ Previously, the Tibetan government-in-exile had rented a single-floor office in a small, nondescript building which was shared by the Dalai Lama's representative, the Tibet Fund (a Tibetan NGO), and Potala Publications. This was known as the Office of Tibet.²⁶ Cramped, messy, and smoke-filled, it could not easily accommodate crowds of any size. By the late 1980s, it was time to find more spacious quarters to suit the expanding local community. With help from the CTA and various Tibetan and American donors, Tibetans were eventually able to buy the recently renovated three-story building.

I became very familiar with the building, which actually served a dual purpose--as a working space for Tibet activists and representatives of the government-in-exile as well as a place for formal community gatherings. In 1991, the first floor contained a reception area/bookstore, a room suitable for meetings, receptions, or parties, a kitchen, and a veranda in the back. Office space on the second floor was shared by the Tibet Fund, the exile government's press officer, and the Dalai Lama's representative to North America. Tibet House (see chapter 8) occupied the third floor. At that time, basement offices were used by the U.S. Tibet Committee (USTC) and the U.S. Tibetan Resettlement Project.

Compared to their Swiss Tibetan counterparts, Tibetans in the U.S. are much more loosely organized. There are three main Tibetan organizations in New York: the Tibetan Association (TA), the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA), and the Tibetan Youth Association (TYA). Every refugee is automatically a member of the Tibetan Association, whether or not he or she pay dues. In New York, the Association is responsible for organizing community events such as the annual Tibetan New Year party; it is entirely self-funded and charges admission fees at each of its events to cover its costs. Finding people to serve as president and vice-president is a perpetual problem, one Tibetan man told me, with the same individuals being nominated and elected over and over again.

The Tibetan Women's Association, a branch of the main organization based in Dharamsala, faces similar problems due to the small number of Tibetan women in New York. Interestingly, the organization has much the same profile as it does

in Switzerland, meaning that it is viewed as something for older, married women to participate in. When I asked one young women about it she said:

Because the Tibetan Women's Association in India, I always thought it was for older society types, especially in the town where I come from--Kalimpong and Darjeeling--all the wealthier society type Tibetan women are members of Tibetan Women's Association.

Despite its reputation among younger women, the TWA has been in the forefront of Tibet activism in recent years through its efforts to establish links with other NGOs, namely women's organizations, in the U.S. and around the world. During the course of my research, TWA in New York co-sponsored several events with American women's groups, including NOW and New York Women in Film. In 1994 and 1995, the organization, in coordination with TWA in India and Switzerland, played a key role in organizing and sending delegations to various preparatory conferences preceding the U.N. World Conference on Women which took place in Beijing in September 1995. In fact, three Tibetan women from New York were on the delegation of exile women who attended the NGO forum held in Hairou, China.

When I asked one member to define TWA's purpose, she said its main goal is to educate people about "what is happening to Tibetan women in Tibet." She went to great lengths to make clear, however, that TWA does not see itself as "feminist" organization:

We have to be very careful to make it clear that we are not for equal rights, it's not a matter of fighting for equal rights for Tibetan women...because women in Tibet have a lot of freedom. Like my mother, she earned a lot more than my father, she was the boss, she

wore the pants in the marriage...she had some independence.

Responding to a question about Western women's expectations of TWA, she continued,

Western women always get excited when they see women from third world countries forming women's groups. I think it's a great way for Tibetans to reach out to groups like that, feminist groups, American women who are interested in women's rights, women's issues. But I think that at the same time, we have to sort of make it clear what we stand for is very different. I mean the same in certain ways but very different in that we are not fighting for women's rights, from men who are in power.

My friend then described an incident which exemplifies the sort of tensions these expectations created among Tibetan and Western women activists. In 1993, a large Tibet support conference took place in Washington, D.C. When the conference was still in the planning stages, Western activists suggested that a workshop on women and youth be included in the schedule. TWA was the obvious group to organize the workshop. At first, Tibetan women did not want to do it, my friend recalled, because they felt they did not have "the right people to do the workshop." This "upset a lot of Western women who felt we were not being responsible." In the end, under "pressure," TWA members agreed to hold the workshop. See chapter 7 for a discussion of the role Western discourses play in framing the Tibet issue (see also Russo and Mohanty 1991).

The Tibetan Youth Association was started in the late 1980s by a group of men who saw a need for an organization to serve the needs of high school and college age Tibetans, many of whom appeared quite isolated and alienated from the

larger Tibetan community. As one person told me:

Reaching the youth is hard, that is where most guidance is needed because that's where you have the most peer pressure to conform...I've seen this trend when kids are in high school they're basically isolated from other Tibetans and they're trying to be completely American. I mean they're combing their hair, they don't want their parents to come to school events, they're almost embarrassed because Tibet is so foreign. But when they go to college, from the very first year, you see a complete hundred and eighty degree turn around. Suddenly they appreciate Tibet, it's one of the most heartening experiences in New York, seeing kids grow up and go to college and become Tibetans for the first time in eighteen years.

The fact that the need for this kind of organization emerged so much later than it did in Switzerland demonstrates the demographic differences between the Swiss Tibetan and American Tibetan communities.

Early Tibet activism

In the previous chapter, I explored the role Western representations and stereotypes about Tibetans played in mediating relations between Westerners and Tibetan refugees in the early years of exile. I suggested that the positive expectations created by images of Tibet as Shangri-la and of Tibetans as mystical, otherworldly spiritual beings profoundly shaped the encounter between refugees and Western aid agencies and individual sponsors in India. I argue that Tibetans in the U.S. have benefitted from these perceptions, and not just in terms of resettlement but, more important, in terms of political support. Tibetans can boast of an impressive list of supporters in political, entertainment, and media circles, including Daniel Patrick

Moynihan, Jesse Helms, Richard Gere, Harrison Ford, and Tom Brokaw (for a discussion of Tibetans and the media, see chapter 10). As this list illustrates, the Tibet issue attracts people from across the political spectrum--from rabid anti-communists to liberals; I explore this phenomenon a bit further in the next chapter. In any event, by having so many high profile friends and by having a charismatic leader, Tibetans in America have been able to draw attention to themselves in a way that is dramatically out of proportion to the actual size of the community.

The Tibet issue has not always enjoyed the sort of visibility it has today in the U.S. Although Tibetans have received support from a very small but dedicated coterie of Americans since China's occupation in 1959, the issue remained a marginal one in this country until the mid-1980s. During the first two decades of exile, the belief persisted in diplomatic circles that Tibet was a dead issue. This despite efforts in the 1960s by exile Tibetans to convince various governments to raise the issue at the United Nations. As one former employee of the Office of Tibet in New York put it, "during the 1960s and 70s, nobody would touch us." A conjuncture of factors conspired to keep Tibet off the international community's--and America's--political agenda, including China's application and acceptance into the U.N. and America's rapprochement with the PRC in 1974. Repeated denials of the Dalai Lama's request for a visa reflects the State Department's and Congress's lack of interest in the Tibet issue during this period.

In an effort to explain why individual affinity with the Tibetan political cause has never been translated into institutional or governmental support, Tsering

Shakya suggests that the answer is both due to realpolitik regarding China but also to the way in which the issue is interpreted by the West: "The constant mythologization of Tibet has obscured and confused the real nature of the Tibetan political struggle" (1992:13).

Whereas issues like South Africa and the Palestinian problem are seen as real political concerns, Tibet is seen as a lost cause, which from time to time pricks one's conscience. The Tibetan problem is conflated with the myth of Shangri-la. Therefore issues about Tibet are often treated as a question of sentimentality versus political expediency. Tibet must be liberated from both the Western imagination and the myth of Shangri-la. (1992:16)

To understand why the Tibet issue might have been perceived this way, it is necessary to consider who supported Tibet at the time. American Tibet supporters prior to the 1980s were mainly academics, Buddhists, or individuals with an interest in Asian art, philosophy, and culture. Many came of age in the 1960s and first came into contact with Tibetans in Nepal or India. One American I interviewed (I'll call him "David"), recalling his first visit to Dharamsala in 1972, describes meeting the Dalai Lama:

The Dalai Lama did not speak, or wait for the translation of my question...he looked directly at me and in broken English, in a deep baritone, answered my question. I don't even know what he said word for word. All I know is all of sudden I was in the presence of something that I've never felt before...the sensation that I had was that the voice and the presence was originating from a place very far removed from the here and now, a sense of antiquity pervaded the moment...It was a long time ago, twenty-one years ago, but I can feel it more than I can describe it to you.

Like the majority of other American supporters in the 1970s, David had been attracted to Eastern mysticism since college, though he did not practice Buddhism

(see Roof 1993 for description of the spiritual journeys of the baby boom generation; see also Gita Mehta's Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East, 1979).

While his involvement with the Tibet issue came as a result of a transformative encounter, it was a spiritual rather than a political one. That is, unlike the Western travellers caught up in the demonstrations of 1987 in Lhasa who subsequently became Tibet activists, David represents a cohort of Americans who started working for Tibet in the 1970s in response to personal, not political, experiences, as his following comment about the Tibet Movement underscores:

I believe it's a movement but what it is, of course, is a collection, at best, of individuals who have had individual experiences on very deep and profound levels...it's introspective and one's own spiritual quest, one's own vision even.

I explore the contrast between two generations of Tibet supporters and their views of the Movement in chapter 7. The point I want to make here is that early Tibet activists, for the most part, were neither professionals nor individuals with grassroots political skills, factors that no doubt contributed to the Tibet issue's relative obscurity.

In interviews, many activists pointed out that the "real nature of the Tibetan struggle" was obscured not only by the aura of spirituality surrounding it but by the fact that it was perceived as an anti-communist, rather than an anti-colonial, issue. For every Western hippie interested in Eastern spirituality, there was a Western leftist fascinated by Maoism and the great socialist experiment in China (e.g., Neville Maxwell, Felix Greene, Chris Mullin). These individuals proved to

be effective publicists for China's claim to have transformed Tibet into a socialist paradise. Their opposition to any groups receiving aid from the CIA or involved with US adventurism abroad helped shape the terms in which the Tibet struggle was understood by the Western public.

T Tibetans in the U.S. continued to feel the political chill throughout the 1970s. The Carter administration's decision in 1977 to reject Tibetan requests to have "Tibet" rather than "China" listed as their place of birth on their new American passports angered the tiny refugee community and led to the creation of a campaign to get the policy reversed (see Akar 1978a:26; Akar 1978b:9-12; Tibetan Review 1978a:10-11; Tibetan Review 1978b:24). Spearheaded by the U.S. Tibet Committee, an organization created by several Tibetans and American volunteers (including David) in New York City in the mid-70s, the campaign succeeded with help from Congress and the policy was eventually reversed. It is important to note that other than the Office of Tibet, the USTC was the only organization in existence at the time that actively advocated on behalf of Tibet, although the Indiana-based Tibet Society, created by Thubten Jigme Norbu in 1967, played an important role in the early years of exile as a disseminator of information about Tibet through its sporadic publication of the Tibet Society Bulletin.²⁷

The Dalai Lama's first visit to North America in the fall of 1979 (after the Carter administration finally agreed to grant him a visa), represents one of the few other highpoints in the Tibet issue's dismal decades of invisibility in the U.S.

Billed as a non-political visit by both the Tibetan leader and the State Department, the Dalai Lama's trip nonetheless played an important role in educating Americans about the Tibet issue and generating new supporters. He met with religious groups, university students and faculty, and fellow Tibetans and their supporters in various cities across the country and by all accounts was extremely well-received (for a detailed description of the visit, see Andersson (1980), Nashold (1980), and Walt van Praag (1973). In fact, several American activists I interviewed traced their involvement with Tibet back to 1979 when they heard the Dalai Lama speak in public. While it would be another twelve years before the Tibetan leader was finally received in the White House by a sitting American president, this and subsequent trips to the States by the Tibetan leader were crucial in laying the groundwork for that significant moment and for the eventual emergence of the Tibet Movement.

Conclusion

Between the Dalai Lama's first visit to the U.S. in 1979, and his trip to Oslo in 1989 to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, the Tibet issue underwent an amazing transformation--from the struggle of a tiny handful of exiles and their devoted friends to a transnational movement. How and why did such a transformation occur? As I argued in chapter 1, the change can be attributed to the convergence of a number of "local" and "global" processes, including the acceleration of globalization of capital, spread of computer mediated communications and small

media technologies, the proliferation of international organizations (NGOs) and their growing ability to make interventions in the international arena, and the rise of ethnic and identity politics after the end of the cold war. These processes, along with the Dalai Lama's increasing visibility and moral authority as a religious figure on the world stage and the outbreak of demonstrations against Chinese rule in Tibet in 1987, combined to create circumstances conducive to the emergence of a global activist network.

In chapter 7, I continue to explore Tibet activism, focusing on how a series of events in Lhasa in the fall of 1987 contributed to the mobilization of Tibet supporters in the U.S. and elsewhere. I argue that China's violent suppression of Tibetan demonstrators, witnessed by Western tourists/travellers, produced a cohort of advocates who have played a key role in the formation of the transnational Tibet Movement. This process is examined through several "Tibet narratives" elicited or produced by three members of this cohort.

Notes

1. The only exception to this was Samaden, where a small number of Tibetans were resettled and where Romansch is spoken. After only a short stay in this area, most of the Tibetans left seeking better employment opportunities and the chance to learn a more useful second language such as Swiss-German.
2. See Brauen and Kantowsky 1982: 11-14.
3. In an interview with a Swiss man who sponsored a number of children in this group, I was told that a small number of the Aeschmann children were not orphans or from poor families, but were actually the children of aristocrats who wanted their offspring to be educated in Switzerland.
4. At the end of World War II, Pestalozzi Villages were established across Europe to take care of and educate orphan and refugee children. Construction began on Pestalozzi Village in Trogen in 1946. Its initial residents were children from France, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Finland, and Greece. By 1960, the European refugee problem had ended and the organization began to take in refugees from other parts of the world. Tibetan children were the first Asian group to reside in Trogen, a fact of which they were keenly aware.
5. According to sources in Switzerland, the first migration sponsored by the SRC consisted almost entirely of poor Tibetans from the Kulu-Manali area. But four years later, when a second group prepared to come over, SRC officials discovered that many of those who had been chosen to emigrate were not from the neediest families but instead were from the better-off higher strata. The SRC thus refused to bring these Tibetans over and insisted that officials in India find other, more appropriate refugees, to take their places.
6. For refugees, the process of applying for a Swiss passport must be initiated in the town or city where they live after the individual reaches age 18. The application is voted on by local residents after it has been vetted by the police and local leaders.
7. According to one informant, the Swiss regulate the formation of small businesses much more strictly than they do in the United States. Those who want to open their restaurant or shop must apply for permission and wait an average of three years before a decision is made.
8. While in Switzerland, I was told that at least two people from this group had committed suicide in recent years.
9. As for polyandry, many researchers found that as of the 1970s, it was still being practiced in Switzerland. Apparently Swiss Red Cross officials chose to look the other way, simply warning Tibetans to designate one person as their husband for official purposes.

10. Interestingly, the person who headed the Office of Tibet in 1992 when I was there was among the first group of Tibetan children raised in the Pestalozzi Children's Village.
11. In an interview, the president of TYA stated the organization's main goals are to:
 - 1) work for the independence of Tibet and inform the world about the situation there; 2) help Tibetans integrate better into the western world; 3) maintain Tibetan culture; and 4) help refugees in India, Nepal and Bhutan.
12. One of the many ironies of this idea is the fact that many (though by no means all) of those individuals interested in democratizing Swiss Tibetan society are from very high status backgrounds but who have attended Swiss schools and thus have little interest in reproducing the social hierarchies from which they come. Despite the best of intentions, however, Tibetans in Switzerland continue to respect these hierarchies and the idea that they should feel free to stand up and challenge a high status Tibetan in public debate strikes many as impossible, if not ludicrous.
13. In my interview with the lawyer who headed TYA, she told me that it seemed as though citizens in her canton voted all the time, on matters ranging from whether or not a road should be built to whether or not someone should be given a Swiss passport.
14. See Myers 1986b; Brenneis and Myers 1986, and Schwartzman 1987 for anthropological analyses of meetings and talk in both Western and non-Western settings.
15. There is also a well-established Tibetan community in Canada; see, for example, McLellan 1986.
16. Compare this figure with 1990 census figures for refugees from Southeast Asia in the U.S.: 614,547 Vietnamese, 149,014 Laotians, 147,411 Cambodians, and 90,082 Hmong (Kitano and Daniels 1995:148).
17. In an interview with Phil Ladenla at his home in San Francisco in late 1992, he described himself as coming from a family whose prominence in Tibetan terms was similar to that of the Rockefeller family in this country.
18. It is worth noting that during this same period (the late 1950s and early 1960s), a number of Khampas and Amdowa were brought to Colorado and trained by the CIA in guerrilla warfare, and then air-dropped back into Tibet (see chapter 4; footnote 20).
19. After World War II, a small number of Buriat and Kalmuk Mongols emigrated to the United States, many of them settling in the New Jersey/Pennsylvania area. One of these individuals, Geshe Wangyal, established the first Tibetan Buddhist

monastery—Labsum Shedrub Ling—in the U.S. in Washington, New Jersey in 1958. Some of the first Americans to study with him have become active in the Tibet Movement. See McCleary 1991 for a personal account of his involvement with Wangyal.

20. See Fields 1986, 1991; see also Watson 1974 for a description of the activities of the first Tibetan lamas in the United States. Tibetan Buddhism is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8.
21. In general Tibetans living in this country do not identify themselves as Asian American. Until very recently, they have been more imaginatively engaged with their Tibetan homeland than with putting down roots or assimilating. The resettlement project suggests that the exile community has reached a stage of acceptance, after more than thirty years, that the situation may not change and the present generation may not get the chance to return to a free Tibet. Despite this fact, Tibetans nonetheless still appear to see themselves as having more in common with exile East Turkestanis, Mongolians, members of the exiled Chinese democracy movement, and people from Taiwan and Hong Kong, all of whom are united by their opposition to China, than they do with Asians groups in the U.S.
22. It is no small irony that Chaksampa has been asked to take on this task, given that its members are former performers from India who have long complained about the exile government's lack of support for lay performing arts (see chapter 8).
23. There are a number of possible reasons why Tibetan men have tended to outnumber women in the Movement, including the fact that traditionally men have been seen as the main political actors in Tibetan society, and for those families with small children, it is the women who stay home to take care of them while the men go to meetings and other events. When I asked one Tibetan man why there were not more Tibetan women activists, he suggested that unlike in Switzerland, there are very few younger Tibetan women who grew up in the U.S. and who thus are fully bicultural and capable of interacting comfortably in English with Americans. He added that the older women who came to the States as adults do not speak English very well and thus tend to shy away from intercultural situations.
24. On occasion other demonstrations are held (e.g. to mark International Human Rights Day in December) and Tibetans are encouraged to attend, though turnout is usually much lower.
25. The Office of Tibet regularly sponsors presentations by exile officials or other prominent Tibetans from India to which all community members are invited. Usually these events are held in the building, unless a large crowd is expected and then leaders usually rent a local church basement. During interviews with Tibetans living in New York, several remarked that they rarely "just dropped by" the Tibet building unless invited, viewing it as a more formal space where government-related business was conducted. Instead, they tended to meet at a local Tibetan store where they would share news and just hang out together.

26. Before this space on East 31st Street, the Office was located on Second Avenue.
27. The Tibetan Studies Society at Columbia University, composed largely of graduate students, did some limited organizing in the 1970s, mostly around the granting of a visa to the Dalai Lama (see *Tibetan Review* April 1976:7).

Chapter 7 Political tourism and personal transformation: Western activists and the Tibet Movement

Introduction

In chapters 5 and 6, I outlined three key nodes in the Tibetan diaspora: India, Switzerland, and the U.S. I suggested that although Tibetans have been well-received in these host societies, very little organized political support existed in any of them for the Tibetan cause. All this changed when pro-independence demonstrations erupted in Lhasa, Tibet in September 1987. The protests, and China's violent response, witnessed and documented by Western travelers, galvanized the exile community and the latent network of Westerners who had never before actively campaigned for Tibet. Together they joined in publicizing the riots and in so doing attracted new recruits to the cause. Tibet support groups quickly sprang up in Switzerland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, England, Australia, the United States and Canada, many filled with young professionals who had no previous ties to the Tibet issue but who shared concerns about human rights, the environment, and other global issues. By the late 1980s, a transnational "Tibet Movement" had emerged.

Part One of this chapter focuses on the narratives of Western travelers to Tibet whose experiences had a profound effect on their lives, transforming their consciousnesses and turning them into committed Tibet activists. The contrast between these "Tibet narratives" and the "diaspora narratives" produced by Tibetans is instructive. While Tibet serves as an important touchstone for both

Westerners and Tibetans, the narratives of each group have a different ontological status and function. As we saw in chapter 4, diaspora narratives are not a "natural" form but represent an exile innovation produced in relation to an interlocuter for a specific political purpose. The Tibet narratives, on the other hand, are more interesting in terms of their use of a cultural other to construct a social and political identity. Through an examination of these narratives, I attempt to shed light on this process. **Part Two** chronicles the emergence of the Movement, focusing on one organization, and concludes with a discussion of its global dimensions.

I begin with a brief discussion of conditions inside and outside Tibet leading up to the events of 1987. My account of the protests in Tibet relies heavily on the work of Ronald Schwartz, a sociologist who has done extensive (and first rate) research on the demonstrations and China's response (1991; 1992; 1994a; 1994b; see also Barnett 1994).

Part One

Background to the demonstrations: 1959-1987

As described in the previous chapter, the international community took little action on Tibet's behalf between 1959 and 1987, with the exception of the passage of three resolutions at the United Nations in 1959, 1961, and 1965 (see Avedon 1984:80-82). In some ways this is not surprising, given that for many years virtually no information was available about actual conditions in Tibet. This state

of affairs lasted through the Cultural Revolution, which saw the wholesale destruction of Tibetan society and culture under the guise of "democratic reforms."

Indeed, after 1959:

All of Tibet came under direct Chinese rule for the first time, and the same "revolutionary" methods prevalent in China were applied throughout Tibet. In the years following the uprising Tibetans were subjected to endless rounds of political education and "struggle sessions" in which "class enemies" and "reactionaries" were singled out for criticism and punishment. Participants in these meetings were required to beat, torture, and sometimes execute victims who were their neighbors, friends, and kin. (Schwartz 1994a:12)

In addition to being targets of intense ideological indoctrination, Tibetans were organized into communes and all individual property was confiscated. These changes produced poverty and famine that wracked the country throughout the 1960s and 70s. Although the history of this dark period in Tibet is yet to be written, it is now well known that in 1969, armed revolt broke out in rural areas which was harshly put down by PLA troops. Underground groups sprang up, launching sporadic attacks on Chinese cadres and PLA soldiers. These lasted until well into the 1970s (Ngapo 1992; Schwartz 1994a:14; see also Avedon 1984 for a description of this period). The situation in Tibet improved only after Mao's death, the arrest of the ultra-leftist Gang of Four, and the subsequent rise of reformers in the communist party under Deng Xiaoping.

In the spirit of reform, China's government evolved a new strategy in 1977-78 which included overtures to overseas Chinese, Taiwan, and the Dalai Lama. Eventually it invited the Tibetan leader to send a fact-finding delegation to Tibet to

ascertain whether claims that Tibetans were happy living under Chinese rule and had improved standards of living were true. To the surprise of Chinese communist party leaders, the first delegation, which included Lobsang Samten, one of the Dalai Lama's brothers, was besieged by Tibetans at every stop throughout its tour in 1979, many of whom wept uncontrollably with joy and sadness. "This unexpected demonstration of support for the Dalai Lama," Schwartz points out, "prompted the fact-finding visit in May 1980 by Party general secretary Hu Yaobang" (1994a:15). What Hu found when he arrived in Tibet--extreme poverty and a crumbling infrastructure--shocked him and led to the initiation of further reform policies aimed at redressing some of the negative effects of two decades of communist rule in Tibet.¹ Meanwhile, Dharamsala's "delegation diplomacy" continued, with two more official delegations visiting Tibet in 1980. After further overwhelmingly enthusiastic receptions, which included spontaneous pro-independence and pro-Dalai Lama statements by local Tibetans, the Chinese cancelled a fourth delegation scheduled for the summer of 1981. The fourth and final delegation visited Tibet in the summer of 1985 (see Avedon 1984, D. Norbu 1991, and T. Wangyal 1994 on Sino-Tibetan negotiations since 1959).

These visits took place in the context of a period of decollectivization and relaxation of religious and cultural policies between 1980 and 1986. Not only were Tibetans allowed to resume daily religious observations, they were also allowed to begin rebuilding some of the thousands of temples and monasteries destroyed by Chinese forces.² This spontaneous and voluntary process of

monastic revitalization was extraordinarily significant, as Schwartz argues:

Though officially sanctioned, the Chinese administration has sought in a variety of ways to curtail and control this process of monastic revitalization. The monasteries represent the reappearance of a Tibetan civil society outside state control, that had lain submerged for two decades. The reforms opened a space in Tibetan society for the re-creation of the one cohesive institution that Tibetans are able to identify as their own. As such, the monasteries have come to signify Tibetan nationhood and survival, and thus have become the principal battleground for Tibetan resistance to the Chinese state. (1994a:17)³

As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, before 1959 the monastic elite went to great lengths to defend religious orthodoxy as well as its power and privileges, putting it at odds with the Dalai Lama's government, especially reform-minded aristocratic officials influenced by Western ideas. But in the Chinese-occupied Tibet of the 1980s and 90s, protest has been led mostly by young monks and nuns from rural areas and directed against the Chinese state. Such protest has had (and continues to have) an explicitly nationalist content, as Schwartz argues:

Tibetan nationalism is very much a modern phenomenon; the thinking of the young monks today has been politicized in a way that would not have been possible in pre-1959 Tibet. The articulation of Tibetan independence as a political ideology is a response to the conditions of Chinese communist rule in Tibet, which has attempted to validate the reorganization of Tibetan society along Chinese lines through communist ideology. In this regard, monks see themselves as acting for the general interests of society in a specifically political sense, allied with ordinary Tibetans against foreign invaders. They do not see themselves as acting to protect special rights or privileges. (1994a:92)⁴

In addition to making efforts to restore Tibetan culture, religion, and language during this period, Chinese officials implemented a policy of economic reform that

entailed opening Tibet up to foreign tourism, soliciting foreign aid and development funds, and actively encouraging the economic participation of exile Tibetans (Schwartz 1994a:18). Tibetan exiles were also invited to return to visit their relatives and encouraged to set up businesses. As we shall see, these new policies combined to create a unique political atmosphere that helped set the stage for pro-independence demonstrations in 1987 and thereafter.

The role of tourism⁵

Before liberalization, Tibetan society was so repressive that any political protest was labelled criminal and dealt with accordingly. At the same time, for Tibetans, no locus or conceptual framework existed with which to interpret such activities as pro-independence. Between 1980 and 1985, however, the situation changed dramatically. Monastic revitalization and the increased flow into Tibet of information into and out of Tibet via tourists and Tibetan exiles created new interpretive possibilities for Tibetans dissatisfied with Chinese rule.

Between 1980 and 1984, only group tours were allowed into Tibet. The country was opened to individual travelers in 1985 and according to one statistic, the number of visitors jumped from an average of 1,500 a year to 15,000 in 1985, and 30,000 a year in 1986 (Beijing Review 1987).⁶ The opening of Tibet to individual travelers was seen as a quick way of "cashing in on 'ethnic tourism'-- bringing large amounts of cash into a capital-starved local economy" (Schwartz 1991:600). At the same time, Chinese officials emphasized tourism's potential to

transform Tibet, perceived to be a "backward region," by exposing it to new lifestyles and patterns of consumption. Their underlying assumption was that this would undermine traditional Tibetan values and encourage Tibetans to "satisfy their economic aspirations through greater integration into the Chinese market economy" (Schwartz 1991:600), which in turn would encourage Tibetans to accept the legitimacy of Chinese rule in Tibet.

With the influx of individual travelers during 1985-87, Lhasa "assumed some of the characteristics of Kathmandu as a gathering-place for this kind of tourist in Asia" (Schwartz 1994a:39).

Prices in Lhasa for food and lodging in the cheaper Tibetan-run cooperative hotels and restaurants were comparable to Kathmandu. The opening of the relatively inexpensive road travel from the Nepali/Tibetan border made Tibet accessible to budget travelers. One of the attractions of the Tibetan-run cooperatives in Lhasa was the extent to which individual travelers were in control of tourist services--able to have parties and hold meetings, rent or borrow bicycles, make their own travel arrangements with bus and truck operators, and come and go as they pleased at all hours. (ibid., 39)

Unlike group tourists in Tibet, who follow a set itinerary, pay high rates for services, and rely on Chinese-approved guides, individual travelers make their own arrangements and "pride themselves on forming their own interpretations of what they see and experience (aided by reference books and the expertise of fellow travellers)" (Schwartz 1991:592). Self-confident and independent, individual travelers constitute a kind of subculture or "mobile community" throughout Asia. "They trade information on modes of travel, places to stay, and the local situation," Schwartz writes, often teaming up to travel together for short periods of

time (ibid., 592).

Not surprisingly, Chinese officials are extremely wary of individual travelers whose movements are hard to control and who tend to regard "bureaucratic obstacles to travel in China as so many challenges to be cleverly circumvented" (ibid., 592). Though tolerated because it brings in foreign exchange, this travel culture, with its interest in defining its own itinerary, is diametrically opposed to a government interested in maintaining security and limiting contact with foreigners. This point was made clear after the demonstrations in September-October 1987.

One of the effects of opening up Tibet to tourism by foreigners and Tibetan exiles was a sharp rise in the flow of information into Tibet on democracy, human rights, and national struggles taking place elsewhere in the world. These ideas have provided Tibetans with an alternative vocabulary and meanings, which they have taken and aligned with concepts drawn from Buddhism (Schwartz 1994b:230). Circulation of these ideas was facilitated by an influx of small media brought in by Western tourists and Tibetan exiles in the 1980s. Among them were photographs, cassette tapes, even videotapes of speeches by the Dalai Lama and pro-independence literature produced by the exile community (written in both Tibetan and English). While I do not want to overstate the importance of these small media forms, they did play a key role in the dissemination of oppositional messages. As Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi point out in their book Small Media, Big Revolution (1994), small media can create a political "public

sphere" in authoritarian societies where none existed before. They function as "channels of participation, extending preexisting cultural networks and communicative patterns" (1994:xx) and in this sense serve not simply as technologies of communication but as webs of solidarity. The introduction of these forms provided a "virtual space" connecting people and enabling them to share new or subversive ideas. At the same time, the rebuilding of monasteries produced a network of physical spaces not completely penetrated by the Chinese state (though see Schwartz 1994b). Taken together, the emergence of these virtual and actual spaces created a climate conducive to dissent and the formation of resistance.

In the fall of 1987, a new period of nonviolent protest erupted in Tibet, coinciding with a visit by the Dalai Lama to the United States.⁷ The violent suppression of the demonstrations by Chinese forces set off a cycle of protests that challenged Chinese authority. Although as we have seen protests are not new to Tibet, this was the first time they were witnessed by foreigners, specifically by Western tourists/travelers. As we will see, their presence had significant and long-lasting ramifications.

Demonstrations in Lhasa

In September 1987, the Dalai Lama traveled to the United States where he met with members of the Human Rights Caucus of the U.S. Congress. Images from the visit were broadcast on television in Lhasa on September 25. The Chinese

government condemned the visit and local authorities in Tibet suggested that

demonstrations in support of Chinese policy and against the Dalai Lama be staged. There was a great deal of discussion among ordinary Tibetans of Lhasa of the significance of the Dalai Lama's visit to the United States and speculation about whether a diplomatic breakthrough for Tibet was impending. Handprinted wall posters appeared around the Barkhor in support of the Dalai Lama. (Schwartz 1994a:22)

Two days later, on September 27, a group of twenty-one monks from Drepung monastery staged a demonstration around the Barkhor, the central market area for Tibetans which encircles the Jokhang, Tibet's most holy Buddhist temple. They carried with them a homemade Tibetan flag and shouted "Tibet is Independent" and "May the Dalai Lama Live Ten Thousand Years." Clearly this was not what local authorities intended or expected by showing the Dalai Lama on television. The monks were joined by about 100 lay people and eventually confronted by police. Twenty-one monks and five lay Tibetans were beaten, arrested and imprisoned while the remainder of the crowd dispersed with no violence.

On October 1 another demonstration took place, this time led by twenty-three monks from Sera monastery, eight from the Jokhang temple, and three from Nechung monastery.⁸ Like the previous protest, the monks were joined by a crowd of lay people. Together they circumambulated the Jokhang, carrying a Tibetan flag and shouting independence slogans. Police quickly broke the demonstration up, arrested all the monks along with thirty lay people, and took them into a nearby police station on the edge of the Square. A crowd of 2,000 or 3,000 Tibetans soon gathered around the compound. Stone throwing by women

and children forced the fifty police guarding the entrance to retreat into the building.

The crowd then overturned and set on fire a number of abandoned police vehicles in front of the police station. As fire engines and armed police reinforcements arrived, they were driven back by the crowd throwing stones. Blankets and wooden stall-tables from the market were then placed next to the wooden door of the police station and set on fire with kerosene. (Schwartz 1994a:24)

At one point, young monks from the Jokhang pushed their way through the blazing doorway and entered the station. As a result of the confusion, some of the monks held inside were able to escape through the doors and windows of the now burning building. Three were shot dead as they tried to escape. Eventually the police shot over the heads, and in some cases into the crowd, from roof of the police compound, using 7- and 9- millimeter pistols as well as AK 47s. They killed eight people and wounded many more. After several hours the shooting stopped and the police left the area. Tibetans then looted the police station, destroying files, carrying off furniture, and searching for bodies.

Over the next few days armed soldiers patrolled the streets in the Tibetan section of Lhasa and many participants in the demonstrations were arrested. Phone and telex lines were cut and buses in and out of Tibet were cancelled. On October 6, another group of monks from Drepung monastery protested in front of the building where the monks from the September 27 demonstration were being held. Shouting independence slogans, the monks were viciously beaten by police before being arrested.

Westerners as witnesses

Approximately fifty foreigners witnessed the demonstration on October 1 and were present during the violent confrontation in front of the police station (Schwartz 1994a:38). Some stood in the middle of the crowd of Tibetans, while others watched from afar. A few took photographs, urged on by Tibetans who begged them to take the images and news of the protests to the Dalai Lama.⁹ By the end of the day, police arrested five foreigners for taking photographs, confiscating their film and temporarily impounding their cameras.

In an insightful essay, "Travelers under fire: Tourists in the Tibetan uprising" (1991), Schwartz describes the role these individuals played in the protests:

Being present alongside Tibetans when the police opened fire in the square in front of the police station dramatically changed the relationship between Tibetans and foreigners. Foreigners were no longer just sightseers or customers for Tibetan handicrafts; Tibetans immediately perceived foreigners as international witnesses to "Chinese brutality" and potential political allies. The foreigners also saw the same ordinary Tibetans with whom they had been haggling in the market just hours before in new roles as angry demonstrators and victims of violence. As foreigners witnessed Tibetans, including children, being shot in the square in front of the police station, they began to discuss among themselves what to do. Some insisted on remaining within the Tibetan crowd on the assumption that this would deter the police from shooting...others argued for a role as clearly visible "witnesses" watching from the other side (who could not be accused of participating). (1991:591)

Before too long, a "runner system" was set up whereby individuals would carry exposed films back to hotels to hide from police. Others began to look for Western doctors willing to treat the wounded who for obvious reasons did not go

to government-run hospitals. By the end of day, foreigners began to organize themselves as a group.

One of the travelers who played a key role in the organizing process is Robert Barnett, an Cambridge-educated journalist and actor. His "Tibet narrative" documents the intersection of an individual life and an historical event, in this case October 1, 1987:

I walked into the square, a lot of people got shot in front of me, I got very frightened and thought the best thing to do is to watch, to be a witness, which a lot of us Westerners did at the time...other Westerners wanted to get involved, to deter shooting by standing in the middle. I'm one of the ones who wanted to organize witnesses and set up chains of people transferring film canisters. We tried to tell those taking photographs that you mustn't be left with a canister...in my case, it's a way of dealing with fear--to get bossy [laughs].

As the demonstration became more "bloody," Barnett adds, he recruited Western doctors to assist the wounded and dying. Later that night he organized one of many meetings at a Tibetan-run hotel frequented by Westerners to inform those travelers who had not witnessed the demonstration about the situation.

The first meeting, which included 40-50 travelers, focused not just on problems facing the travelers themselves, but on constructing an account of events.

Schwartz writes that

Some of the eyewitnesses to the shooting suggested that they should get together to prepare an accurate account of the events on the square for Western journalists. Many travelers feared the Chinese would give a false account of what had happened (the official Chinese version of events released to the press the next morning asserted that no police had opened fire and that Tibetans had "shot at each other"). (1991:594)

Barnett remembers "imposing" his view that only first-hand accounts be collected in an effort to avoid reproducing unsubstantiated rumors.

It was a good exercise for us and we were strict about it...we would go around a room, there's a tape of it somewhere, and just say exactly what we saw. You could piece together quite a lot from that. We wrote it up and actually smuggled that document out to the outside world, when we realized we'd been cut off.

A few hours later, the travelers reconvened again and handed over some film and notes to a reporter from Reuters who had arrived in Lhasa a day after the first demonstration. The written account produced that evening by the group, which called itself "the Committee of 45 Westerners," was eventually widely distributed (e.g., see Tibetan Bulletin 1987).

Over the next few days the travelers evolved an information gathering process through which second hand accounts and rumors were checked out. a process, Barnett suggests, they came to see as essentially political:

As I said, we realized that we'd been cut off. Nobody outside Tibet knew. Then we discovered that the Chinese had put out an account that we regarded as fabricated, that nobody had been killed by the Chinese, they had killed themselves. So it became political, if you like, it became a response to the Chinese government or the truth as opposed to the lie that was going on so there was a little bit more urgency attached.

At some point a Swedish traveler who was a member of Amnesty International suggested that the group begin to compile a list of prisoners. According to Barnett, this decision was "a turning point" in that it entailed a shift from the "Western witness experience"--tourists sitting around recounting what they saw--to relying on Tibetans as a source of knowledge:

This involved going to the Tibetans who we knew amongst us and asking "who has been imprisoned?" Here we have a switch from the Western witness experience to the Tibetans and their source of knowledge. This way Tibetans' knowledge became of value.

Ironically, he notes, nobody thought to gather the names of those Tibetans who had actually been killed: "We had spent hours recounting who we'd seen killed and everybody in the room had said, 'I'm a Westerner, I saw a Tibetan killed.' but we didn't ever ask their names." Over the next few weeks, through interviews about the treatment and condition of prisoners and careful fact-checking, the group began to prepare the kind of information human rights organizations ordinarily use (Schwartz 1991:596).

In the meantime, Barnett and others also organized medical help for wounded Tibetans who remained untreated in hiding. Travelers were encouraged to gather medical supplies, which they did, and a team of foreign doctors was assembled. One of them was Blake Kerr, an American who had been in the Tibetan crowd during the demonstration and in fact had been one of four Westerners to throw some stones at the police (see discussion below).¹⁰ In his book Sky Burial: An Eyewitness Account of China's Brutal Crackdown in Tibet (1993), Kerr describes a visit to the home of one of the wounded demonstrators:

"Thank you for coming," the woman whispered before closing the wooden shutters. "I know how dangerous the streets are after dark."..."My name is Pema. I am sorry that we have to be so secretive...There are informers in every compound," Pema whispered, "One of the neighbors will report us if they see us coming in or out." (1993:99)

Kerr and a traveler from England named "Andrew" (a thinly disguised Barnett)

were then led upstairs to the room where a wounded Tibetan named Tsering lay on a bed. He had been shot in the thigh. Without the right equipment, Kerr could not do much except clean and dress the wound and leave some antibiotics.

I cleaned the entrance and exit wounds with hydrogen peroxide, imagining the tunnel of flesh through the thickest part of Tsering's thigh. He needed intravenous antibiotics in a hospital. If an infection set in he could die, or at least need to have his leg amputated. By adding a mere squeeze of antibacterial cream, I was just putting a Band-Aid on an abyss. (1993:101)

Kerr and several other doctors continued to visit injured Tibetans for a week or so. Such close contact enabled them to gather a lot of important information, though as Kerr, Barnett, and others gradually realized, it put the Tibetans in grave danger.

We didn't realize the risk at first. There was this whole area of specialized contact which got subverted very quickly in the medical work. We figured out, Christ, it isn't like being at home. It's not like meeting someone and them telling you. The idea was who do you find to tell you, who can speak a language or give instruction. It was that we were putting them in enormous danger each time we did it. It sounds silly but it took a few days before we realized that we'd been followed...The police became much more effective and we had to give it up because we became too frightened, we didn't know how to operate without increasing the risk...it was a rather brutalizing shock to realize that what we thought was helping might just be endangering!

Although the medical work ended shortly after the team recognized the extent of risk to their Tibetan collaborators, the travelers continued to hold meetings every night for the first week, then every other night, at different hotels and at varying times. Over time the group shrank in size and became more discreet about its activities (Schwartz 1991:596).¹¹

The issue of what the proper role of foreigners should be came up at the

initial meeting. Many felt that Westerners should not take sides but remain impartial. A majority of travelers present decided to "condemn" the Westerners who had thrown stones and exclude them from the group, believing the activity could be used by the Chinese for propaganda and give all travelers a bad image. "By condemning the stone throwers," Schwartz suggests, "the travelers in attendance further clarified what they understood to be the appropriate role of foreigners to be--to act as witnesses to the events and to transmit information to the outside world" (1991:596). Some travelers, namely Western Buddhists known in local traveler parlance as "dharma freaks," condemned not only the Westerners but also the monks for demonstrating and rock throwing. According to Schwartz, these individuals felt such political violence was "out-of-character behavior for Buddhists" who are supposed to be non-violent (1991:595). Others, such as the two "hippies" who threw stones, were not interested in participating in information gathering. "This kind of group activity," demanded discipline and commitment which "lay outside the scope of their travel culture": "For the hippies--as for the Dharma freaks--travel was essentially a personal quest that did not include playing a public role as representatives of their own society" (Schwartz 1991:596).

What kind of traveler participated in the group? Schwartz observes that those who attended meetings and became involved in work with Tibetans were largely self-selecting (1991:597). Approximately twenty-four people participated in gathering information or dispensing medical care.

The group was homogeneous in terms of social background: middle-

class, university educated, working in the arts and skilled professions at home. They were mostly between the ages of 25 and 35, at the beginning of careers, both men and women. They had made travel part of their lifestyle and organized their work lives to allow extended periods of travel...These individual travelers also lacked commitments to family and children, which meant they were relatively free to take risks. In terms of politics, the members of the group probably would all describe themselves as "left-liberal," committed to environmental issues, social justice, and human rights. Shared values and shared life experiences were taken for granted and contributed to the cohesion of the group. (ibid., 597)

As professionals in medicine, law, journalism, photography and other skilled areas, individual travelers were accustomed to "exercise authority, autonomous decision making, and a sense of membership in an international community" (ibid., 594).

Although the events in Tibet forced them to improvise and perform as amateurs roles ordinarily reserved for qualified professionals, the roles these travelers played in Tibet are congruent with a generalized, rather than occupation-specific, professionalism. The confidence with which they were prepared to challenge the authority of the Chinese government, applying standards of justice and free expression learned in Western democratic societies, indicates a political dimension to this leisure culture as well. (Schwartz 1991:595)

English was the working language used by the group, enabling those travelers comfortable communicating in English, e.g. from England, the U.S., Australia, Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Israel, to participate.¹² Those who could speak Tibetan were particularly valuable.

Ultimately, the group understood its responsibility to be "mediators" between protesters and the outside world:

providing accurate information on the one hand while protecting Tibetans on the other. This required maintaining a certain amount of professional distance from both, thereby reinforcing their special

status as travelers...at the same time, it was important to be taken seriously by responsible agencies on the outside, which meant developing working relationships with diplomats, the press, and international organizations. (Schwartz 1991:597)

Motivated by the belief that high quality of information "is the only thing we can offer the Tibetans," Barnett attempted to apply Western journalistic standards of facticity to the material being passed, some of which was written in a rhetorical polemical style according to Tibetan tradition that failed to distinguish between information and commentary:

I was in a room in Lhasa and somebody brought in something that said, "Fifty babies had their hearts eaten out by Chinese for human sacrifice and were then thrown in the river." And I said, "This doesn't wash." [Laughs]. Okay, so maybe it's true, but what are the numbers and when and how do you know and who saw it?

By making this distinction, Barnett and his colleagues opposed those travelers who argued that anything written by a Tibetan should be passed on. Their emphasis on discretion and impartiality represents an implicit critique of some of the well-intentioned Westerners to see themselves as heroes, putting themselves between Chinese bullets and Tibetan bodies and perhaps enacting private fantasies of "saving Tibet." I shall come back to this point below.

Individual travelers played important roles as political actors in Tibet from 1987 onward. Once a clandestine network and information gathering routine were established, a core of committed foreigners continued to maintain contacts within Tibet. This network became a crucial channel through which information about conditions in Tibet could be disseminated abroad after the PRC restricted access to

Tibet for journalists, tourists, and human rights groups in late 1987. Although most of the original travelers had left Tibet (or been kicked out) by December 1987, new ones were recruited if and when necessary to the network by the few who did remain. According to Schwartz and others, Tibetans were grateful for the presence of Western witnesses. As we shall see, their presence brought international attention to the Tibetan cause, and in some instances protected Tibetans from "the full force of Chinese repression and brutality." "After you leave," one Tibetan warned a traveler in 1987, "they will kill us" (Schwartz 1991:599).

Travel and transformation: Tibet narratives

The fact that foreigners witnessed China's violent suppression of unarmed demonstrators in the fall of 1987 had enormous consequences for Tibetans, the Chinese government, and the witnesses themselves. As news of the demonstrations spread, accompanied by dramatic images of wounded but defiant protesters, the Tibet issue, after many years, was catapulted again into the headlines. The unprecedented American media coverage included scores of newspaper editorials in favor of the Tibetan cause and critical of the Reagan Administration's pro-China stand as well as extensive reporting by the three major television networks and national and local radio stations. On October 6, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously to pass legislation adopted by the House of Representatives in June 1987 condemning China for its human rights violations in

Tibet and encouraging President Reagan to meet with the Dalai Lama "to express United States support for his efforts for world peace and particularly his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Tibetan problem" (Nyandak 1987:14). Seizing the moment, Tibetan and their supporters also staged their own demonstrations in New York, Washington, D.C., Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver, London, and elsewhere around the world.

The experience of witnessing demonstrations in Tibet had a transformative effect on the lives of Western travelers. Upon their return home, many of the travelers involved in gathering information and treating wounded Tibetans became committed Tibet activists, founding or joining support organizations and bringing much needed energy, focus, and professional skills to the Tibet issue. This section explores these individuals' experiences, drawing on stories elicited in interviews as well as on published accounts. These "Tibet narratives" are an important context in which to examine the development of political consciousness and its translation into political action. They reveal how the Tibetan struggle became a contextual framework within which these individuals found direction and focus for their lives at a particular moment.

In her book The Culture of Protest: Religious Activism and the U.S. Sanctuary Movement (1993), Susan Coutin argues that social movement researchers have tended to "underestimate the significance of the personal transformations that occur in the process of protest" (65).¹³ Her emphasis on the role of border crossings and face to face contact with suffering of Central

Americans in raising American sanctuary activists' consciousnesses is relevant for my discussion of travelers to Tibet. Although the white middle-class travelers in Tibet did not frame their experience in terms of a religious conversion the way sanctuary activists did, their encounter with Tibetan protesters produced a similar sense of solidarity and identification with a "cultural other." This identification with Tibetans is one of the defining characteristics of the Tibet Movement.

Robert Barnett was one of the Westerners whose life was transformed by his experience in Tibet. As we have already seen, he played a crucial role in organizing information gathering and medical care for injured protesters after demonstrations broke out. When Barnett finally left Tibet several months later, he left behind a clandestine information network through which news could be smuggled out. One of the first things Barnett did upon his return to the West was visit Switzerland where he was invited by a Tibet supporter and U.N.-affiliated translator to hold a press conference and testify about his experience at an NGO-forum at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva. Back home in London in the spring of 1988, he was asked to join a new organization called "Tibet Support Group U.K." and to describe what he witnessed in Tibet to its members.

In April the Dalai Lama arrived in London and people were very pissed off that the British government wouldn't allow him to make political statements. So they formed this embryonic thing called the Tibet Support Group and they asked me to come along and give speeches and say, "I was one of these completely unimportant people who saw this event in Lhasa six months earlier." So I gave a speech and then helped set up this group.¹⁴

At the time, Barnett saw himself as the "voice of moderation and of standards" in

the group insofar as he insisted (as he had done in Tibet) that the group's value was directly proportionate to the quality of its information and presentation. He cautioned against the use of words and figures such as "genocide" and "one million killed in Tibet," arguing that supporters would lose credibility if their material were too emotional or inflammatory.

Three months later, Barnett recalls, "I unexpectedly started to get material from the contacts in Tibet I had established and left behind and forgotten." After translating and cleaning up the information, he began printing reports on a typewriter, xeroxing them, and distributing them on Tibet Support Group letterhead.

My supply of information, when it turned up the first time, I didn't know I was going to get anything else. It was only after three months on that I realized this stuff was beginning to flood in, and that we'd better set something up to deal with this, it was taking a lot of time...it was this big moral pressure, this stuff is arriving, you're ninety nine percent certain that nobody else in the world outside Tibet knows about it, they've got it out somehow to you and you can't afford to pass it on to someone because that reveals the sources and methods.

In the autumn of 1988, Barnett founded "Tibet Information Network" (TIN), an independent non-profit organization, to handle the flood of information he was receiving from Tibet. Working out of his East London flat, he soon began distributing information via fax and computer, as well as in print, to media outlets as well as human rights organization. TIN quickly gained respect for its careful reporting and detailed analysis, so much so that Barnett is now frequently asked by media such as BBC Radio to comment on current events in Tibet.¹⁵

Barnett's work with TIN represents an ongoing extension of his efforts to help Tibetans in Tibet. He sees himself as a translator, facilitator, and communicator about information for media that like to listen to Western people "who clearly patently know less about the situation than Tibetans," a phenomenon he labels "deeply racist." Careful not to take too much credit for himself, he refers to the emergence of TIN "as an evolutionary process."

There wasn't a pre-conscious attempt to set something up, there never was anything. This whole thing is a reaction to events, and the events are Tibetan events. Essentially TIN is a reaction to Tibetan initiatives which we are servicing. We are really no more than a channel--which we had to set up--for Tibetans who were trying to communicate material.

Barnett views TIN as a corrective to the trend of representing Tibetans as victims: for him, Tibetans are active agents of their own history and TIN's purpose is to document this fact. When asked about an electronic archive he set up on GreenNet (the British branch of the global computer network funded by the San Francisco-based Association for Progressive Communications), he explains:

TIN is just creating a historical monument to the statements of these people in Tibet. I wanted to build a monument, like the monument in the middle of the square in Lhasa commemorating the eighth-century Tibetan conquest of western China. I come from a monumental tradition of historians who dig up those things. I'm just marking down in stone what these Tibetans say has happened for people who want to know.

Given his interest in creating a "monument," it might initially appear somewhat paradoxical that Barnett chose electronic communication, a medium characterized by its ephemerality. Yet TIN's founder disputes this assertion, arguing that his

TIN conference on GreenNet is analagous to stone: "These conferences stay there. The conference is probably still there from when I started it. All those postings on GreenNet, you could tap into now and read."

Barnett's contribution to the Tibet Movement has been enormous, despite the fact that he does not identify himself as a Tibet activist: "I've generated a culture which is information, it is not editorial...we don't see ourselves as part of the activist thing, though we are aware that activists see us as part of their thing."

Yet he concedes that

journalists represent, by their existence, a pragmatic activist statement that information should be allowed to flow. So if you analyze it, we are being activist about saying information should be allowed to come out, but effectively, in political terms, we're not activists.

When pushed to define his reasons for continuing to work on TIN, Barnett claims that what drives him is "the dishonesty of the Chinese, the British government, and Westerners who exaggerate...I am interested in dismantling mythologies." By providing information on conditions in Tibet in a timely and accurate fashion, something never available before, Barnett and his colleagues at TIN have gone a long way toward changing Tibet's public image from a faraway Shangri-la to a country suffering human rights abuses at the hands of China. Though he remains stubbornly detached from supporters who make use of TIN in their activism, Barnett's work has helped to create a network that not only links Tibetans in Tibet to the outside world, but one which also links diasporic Tibetans and non-Tibetans together in a shared struggle.

Saving Tibet

Barnett's reaction to the demonstrations in Lhasa was to become a dispassionate witness of Chinese violence against Tibetans. By contrast, Blake Kerr, the Dartmouth-educated American doctor quoted earlier, responded much more spontaneously and emotionally. This is evident in his narrative of the 1987 demonstrations in Sky Burial: An Eyewitness Account of China's Brutal Crackdown in Tibet (1993). For example, caught in the middle of a Tibetan crowd throwing stones at Chinese soldiers in front of the Jokhang on October 1, Kerr decided to join in:

A war cry rose from a line of soldiers at the far end of the square. Their cry continued as they ran toward the Jokhang. Tibetans in front of the temple raised their fists into the air. The thought of fleeing did not occur to me. I picked up rocks along with the hundreds of Tibetans all around me. In a desperate reaction to the killing I became part of the violence myself. "Motherfuckers," I yelled at the oncoming soldiers, "Die, motherfuckers," I screamed with the first volley of rocks. (1993:98)

As discussed earlier, those Westerners who threw stones were "condemned" by travelers who shared Barnett's view that they could be of greatest service to Tibetans by watching and documenting events rather than participating in protests. The fact that Kerr had thrown stones and that he and his traveling companion John Ackerly had been briefly arrested led some Westerners to believe that Kerr might be more of a liability than an asset to the medical team. Concerns along these lines mounted after Kerr's name was mentioned on Xinhua radio and he gave interviews to correspondents who arrived in Lhasa to report on the riots.¹⁶

Unsurprisingly, Kerr puts himself at the center of his narrative. In many respects, his behavior in Tibet underscores Schwartz's observation about American travelers: "Americans also have a somewhat distinct travel style; they are more individualistic and insular, less integrated into the international community of travelers, less likely to team up with other nationalities. Those who did get involved wanted to strike off on their own, sometimes creating problems for the group" (1991:598).

Kerr's desire to act on his own is epitomized by a series of solo forays to Tibet in subsequent years to gather information on China's family planning policies.¹⁷ On one of these trips, which took place in late 1991, Kerr visited hospitals in Kham, Amdo, and Lhasa. Posing as an obstetrician (Kerr is a general practitioner based on Long Island) Kerr tried to talk to doctors (both Chinese and Tibetan) about local birth control practices. He brought with him Ackerly's video camera which he hoped to use to document sterilization or abortion procedures. In one Amdo hospital, he met a Chinese-trained Tibetan pediatrician:

He did not realize that the video camera I had placed an arm's length away from him on his desk was filming him as he explained China's two-child policy for Tibetans. I realized that filming anyone without their consent could be seen as unethical. I also felt strongly that China's coercive family-planning policy, like its oppressive occupation of Tibet, had to be exposed before it could be stopped. (1993:189)

Another time, Kerr secretly videotaped an abortion. In a graphic and somewhat strange passage, Kerr describes getting hot and sweaty during the procedure.

Shooting from the hip allowed me to capture the scene in graphic

detail as Dr. Xian did a pelvic examination. The nurse handed instruments wrapped in a stained cloth to Dr. Xian. The patient moaned when Dr. Xian inserted the speculum and sounded the uterus with a metal wire. She pinched the cervix with forceps and pulled it up to insert the curette. I began to feel hot. I had gotten so accustomed to cold weather that I now habitually wore silk underwear beneath a union suit, a wool shirt, and the jacket I wore to conceal the camera. I tried to unbutton my shirt and long underwear as discreetly as possible. Sweat beaded on my forehead as Dr. Xian scraped the inside of the uterus and the products of conception sucked through the clear plastic tubing.

When large droplets of sweat began cascading off my forehead and upper lip, I knew I was about to pass out. The woman's moaning made me think of all the women in Tibet and China, who were undergoing these mechanical, unsanitary, coerced abortions. With blood draining from my head, I staggered white and shaking out of the operating room. (1993:191)

The issue of whether or not individual travelers to Tibet should engage in the sort of activities Kerr describes is a controversial one in activist circles. On the one hand, it is often argued by people like Kerr that individual travelers can make (and have made) a difference by gathering news and images of current conditions in Tibet. On the other hand, Tibetan exiles and more cautious Westerners like Barnett claim that such activities put both Tibetans and the traveler at risk unless a very careful and systematic approach is used (such as the one used by TIN).¹⁸

This difference in opinion was underscored by an exchange at a workshop called "Networking in Tibet and China" during the "Tibet Conference of the Americas" in Washington, D.C. in early 1993. At the workshop, a number of Western activists who had recently been to Tibet were asked to share their experiences. When it was Kerr's turn to speak, he described his recent trips to Tibet, offering "tips" for those who might want to follow in his footsteps. He

suggested bringing in literature written in Chinese, short wave radios, maps with the locations of prisons on them; he also recommended traveling at night, finding a secure contact to arrange interviews with political prisoners who have been released, and asking officials for permission to bring food to political prisoners. During his presentation, I noticed a number of Tibetans in the audience shake their heads and murmur to one another. Near the end of the workshop, a Tibetan man stood up to voice his concerns: "I am worried about *injis* [Westerners] taking on responsibility; this is more of an internal Tibetan affair. It should be done in consultation with the CTA and government officials." The comment, greeted by a round of applause, seemed to sum up the feelings of many Tibetans in the audience.

Shortly after the workshop in Washington, D.C., Kerr gave a slide show on his most recent trip to Tibet at Washington Square Church in Greenwich Village, New York. During the presentation, which was attended by approximately seventy people (half of them Tibetan) and lasted an hour, I was struck by the bravado pervading his narrative. Referring to his trip as a "mission" and his female travel companion as his "decoy," Kerr spoke proudly of outsmarting his Chinese guide in order to photograph and videotape several restricted areas. When a slide of some buildings came up, Kerr described them as a prison complex in Lhasa Valley:

I got up on this hill, crawled on my belly to the ridge, and just sat there with the video and camera...You can see the prisoners lined up there. Actually there's a hundred of them...This is road between the two complexes. I witnessed a torture session here of someone being staked to a post with the dogs and the equipment...

Another slide was of a purported nuclear weapons site: "We didn't see any missiles," he told the audience, "just lots of buildings with no windows." Kerr concluded his talk with two blurry images of a room that he described as a "torture chamber":

This is a monastery, right in the heart of Lhasa, that was converted to a torture chamber. This picture was taken with candles really. But there are bullet holes and the other one, the video actually picked up the light a little better, but we found robes that, with leather tongs, were suspended from the ceiling, with what I think might be blood stains. We took some samples, they're being analyzed. I took some samples of cords too. But this was used as recently as a few years ago. So it's not a thing of the past, we're not talking about the Cultural Revolution.

Kerr continued, saying how "stressful" it was to do this kind of collecting of material and how difficult and depressing it was to hear stories of people who were tortured whom he interviewed. He ended by urging the audience if they went to Tibet to "harass local officials, let them know you don't like what they are doing."

Afterwards, I discussed the slide show with several American friends who had come at my invitation. One questioned Kerr's credibility because of his use of heroic language. Everyone agreed that the images of the "torture chamber" were too abstract to prove anything, with one person commenting that the slides' vagueness functioned as a kind of blank screen upon which the audience (and Kerr) could project their fantasies and fears. Not surprisingly, several people noticed Kerr's focus on torture, which they felt was "voyeuristic" and which made them feel somewhat uncomfortable.

While the practice of "political tourism"--exemplified by Kerr's trips to

Tibet--is not new, and can promote meaningful solidarity, it is nonetheless riddled with contradiction and irony.¹⁹ What does it mean for a "first world" traveler to go to another country, usually one that is "third world," to observe local political conditions? At what point do such trips become less about political work and more about the opportunity to have a real-life adventure--to become heroes of their own travel stories? Kerr's book and his public performances (I have attended four) raise these and other unsettling questions. While most of the issues are too complex to be explored here, I do want to suggest that Kerr personifies the Western desire to "save Tibet," to borrow a slogan adopted by Tibet support groups in the 1990s (see chapter 8 for an exploration of the relationship between this desire and the "culture strategy" deployed in the Year of Tibet campaign).

For some people, especially Tibetan intellectuals, Western fantasies about saving Tibet are deeply problematic. The following quote from Tsering Shakya, though it refers to journalists, could easily apply to individual travelers such as Kerr:

Tibet has become a Disney World for the Western bourgeois. Tibet possesses all the thrills and adventures of a customised fantasy world: danger, romance, magic, and cuddly natives. Tibet has become the most dangerous place where aspiring journalists could play out their fantasies. Journalists will tell you that reporting from Tibet meant risking their lives, that being in Tibet is to experience the edge of death, the journalists play hide-and-seek with the Chinese police. The main thrust of their reporting is: "Look how brave I am in traversing the guarded land, dodging the wrathful Chinese police." (1992:15)²⁰

At the same time that some Western journalists or travelers construct themselves as

heroes, they construct Tibetans as victims in need of their help. Shakya argues that this phenomenon is part of an all too familiar process whereby Westerners have "sought to define the Tibetan political struggle."

Tibetans are merely seen as victims who are unable to speak for themselves and, as a Westerner wrote, "we have a duty to represent the Tibetan people." After decades of being reduced to the status of mere recipients of charity and sympathy, the process of reduction of Tibetans to an endangered species of the human family is nearly complete. (1992:16)

While there can be no question that Tibetans have suffered and continue to suffer grave human rights violations under Chinese rule, there is a fine line between representing them as victims and representing them as subjects--as agents who make choices, have a critical perspective of their own situations, and think and organize collectively against the Chinese--who happen to also be victims of Chinese oppression. In chapter 4, I discussed the use of testimonial by Tibetan refugees and its role in constructing a moral universe of victims and victimizers. Through narratives of suffering, which elicit sympathy and outrage, I suggested Tibetans are able to challenge the politico-moral legitimacy of China's presence in Tibet and demonstrate their worthiness of political and material support from the West. What role, if any, do Western representations of Tibetans as victims have in this process? Are they an inevitable component of any effective transnational symbolic political action?

Kerr and Ackerly finally left Tibet in mid-October. On the flight from Lhasa to Kathmandu, Kerr recalls looking down at the Himalayas beneath him,

wondering

how many Tibetans were trying to escape across the mountains at that moment. What would happen to the burned monk? How many wounded Tibetans would die in their homes? How many people were being tortured in prisons? I felt defeated thinking of the ten-year-old boy who would die soon from infection. Up to now in my life, I had always thought that living would be better than dying, no matter what. I had never seen children slaughtered in the street. I had never met monks tortured in prison and women sterilized against their will. In a moment of despair, I wondered if the Tibetan boy would be better off dying than living under Chinese military occupation. (1993:129)

Kerr's narrative illustrates the kind of intense identification with Tibetan suffering created by personal encounters with Chinese brutality in Tibet. His mild case of what "post-traumatic stress disorder" reveals the cost of placing oneself in the position of those who are persecuted:

I cried when I described the explicit violence I had witnessed in Tibet to my family and friends. Loud noises made me duck as though I were under fire. I continued to wake up crying in the night. With patience and help from my family--and with regaining the thirty pounds I had lost--I began to recover. More than anything, writing about my experiences helped me to cope. (1993:149)

By emphasizing the dangerous and stressful aspects of his experience, Kerr indicates the degree to which his trip brought him into a Tibetan reality, however temporarily and incompletely, and how profoundly it affected him.

Upon their arrival in Kathmandu, Kerr and Ackerly were greeted by a reporter from A.P. who told them that they were "famous" and that "the whole world" was waiting for their story. A whirlwind of publicity quickly enveloped the two travelers: in his book Kerr mentions interviews with French and Dutch

television, CBS news, the BBC, and late night calls from National Public Radio. Before departing Nepal for an audience with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala and a press conference in New Delhi, the two sent a long telex about the riot and the individuals killed or wounded to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

When they finally arrived back in the United States, Kerr and Ackerly were interviewed by CNN's Bernard Shaw as well as by reporters from the Christian Science Monitor, the Washington Times, the Washington Post, and the American Medical News. They also testified before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The fact that Kerr and Ackerly were professionals as opposed to "hippies" or "Dharma freaks" appears to have opened many doors in terms of access to the media and to government officials. One Swiss activist complained to me that even though he witnessed (and photographed) demonstrations in Lhasa in March 1989, he was not taken seriously by the press when he tried to tell his story. He attributed this to having long hair, an earring, and being an artist rather than a doctor, lawyer, or journalist, like Kerr, Ackerly, or Barnett. I explore the professionalization of Tibet activism below.

Witnessing the riots and having contact with demonstrators in Tibet transformed Western travelers, giving them a new social identity.

What John and I witnessed in Tibet changed our lives. John went to work for the International Campaign for Tibet in Washington. I postponed my residency to write a narrative account of our trip. Two years went by quickly. Devoting ourselves full-time to advocacy work, we wrote a dozen articles for magazines and newspapers. We presented testimony to several congressional committees and the German Parliament, and gave fifty talks to

university and human rights groups in North America. To help foster new Tibet support groups after our talks, we developed a pamphlet with useful information for fledging activists on fundraising, literature tables, sample letters to elected representatives, and civil disobedience. (1993:157)²¹

This process of politicization was mirrored in many places as travelers returned home and became active in existing Tibet organizations or started their own.

As the narratives of Barnett and Kerr reveal, though many travelers' lives were changed in 1987, the changes were not uniformly experienced. Despite their diversity of reactions, however, Westerners in Lhasa were able to act together in contingent moments of unity. The Tibet Movement emerged out of these *ad hoc* responses to the riots. In saying this, it is important to remember that it was the actions of Tibetan protesters that mobilized travelers and galvanized the exile community and the latent network of Tibet supporters around the world. Yet without the presence of Western witnesses, it is unlikely China would have reported the events, leaving them to fade into memory as so many other protests and revolts by Tibetans over the last three decades have done. Instead, as I have illustrated, Western travelers succeeded in documenting and publicizing what transpired in the fall of 1987, and in so doing, helped initiate a political movement whose story continues to unfold.

Part Two

Mobilizing for Tibet: 1987-1990

As news of the protests spread across the Tibetan diaspora, refugee communities staged their own demonstrations in support of their brethren in Tibet. In the West, older groups, such as the U.S. Tibet Committee (USTC), joined in these efforts, as did many individuals who had been "friends of Tibet" for a long time but heretofore had not engaged in any concerted Tibet activism. Over the next few months, new organizations also began to spring up, most of them concentrated in the United States, Canada, Australia, England, Switzerland, Germany, and Scandinavia. These various organizations created structures within which old and new Tibet friends and supporters could work with Tibetan exiles on behalf of the cause. In so doing, they also formed the foundation or base of an evolving transnational Tibet network.

As I suggested in chapters 5 and 6, the social and historical contexts of each "node" of the Tibetan diaspora are different. The same is true of the "nodes" of the transnational Tibet network, many of which overlap with key sites in the diaspora. Given that outlining each node is beyond the scope of this chapter, I focus on a few organizations in order to give a sense of how the network has taken shape and make some observations about its trajectory. As I have already noted, what eventually became known as the Tibet Movement began with the establishment of non-governmental support groups (or Tibet support groups, "tsgs"). The bulk of these groups were established between 1987 and 1990. One

such organization is the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), based in Washington, D.C.

ICT was launched following the Dalai Lama's visit to Washington in September 1987. That trip, which as we have seen was one of the catalysts for riots in Lhasa, was also the context in which the Tibetan leader announced his "Five Point Peace Plan" for resolving the conflict with China. John Ackerly, the lawyer who accompanied Kerr to Tibet and on the lecture circuit upon their return to the U.S., began volunteering at ICT in the spring of 1988, helping to incorporate the organization and assist its founders, Tenzin Tethong (then the Dalai Lama's representative to North America), and Michelle Bohana (an American Buddhist and activist), with their fundraising efforts.²² Before long Ackerly joined the staff as a paid employee.

Like Barnett and Kerr, Ackerly is representative of a new cohort of actors on the Tibetan scene. In addition to having traveled to Tibet, his professional skills and age distinguish him from the earlier cohort of Tibet supporters who got involved with the issue during the 1970s. As we have seen, these early activists came of age during the 1960s; many identified themselves in interviews as "ex-hippies" with an interest in Eastern philosophy who first encountered Tibetan refugees while travelling in India. With their shared history of alternative lifestyles and anti-establishment attitudes, it is not surprising that on the whole these individuals have been more comfortable with direct action than with the more professionalized activism of organizations such as ICT. In trying to make sense of

this, one man (from the first cohort) explained that in the 1970s, "people were into Tibet for religious reasons. The difference between old timers and people involved with the Movement today is that older people have had their lives defined by it." The result of this long-term emotional investment for the older cohort produced either a reluctance, lack of interest, or inability to work within "the system"--e.g., with representatives of the establishment. Ackerly's cohort, by contrast, with its professional skills, has proved itself to be far more interested in and able to work with the media, with Congressional staffers, with government officials, as well as with other NGOs. In the process of working within "the system," this post-1987 cohort of Tibet activists has learned how to frame the Tibet issue in sophisticated new ways, using discourses of human rights, self-determination, environmentalism, and development, to make their case (see discussion of this phenomenon below).²⁵ As a consequence these new actors have profoundly influenced the shape of the Tibet Movement and its strategies.

The International Campaign for Tibet, with its staff of young professionals (American and Tibetan) and ambitious agenda, exemplifies this new energy and approach to Tibet activism. According to Ackerly, the initial plan behind the campaign was to create an organization that would provide international direction to Tibet activists around the world. In fact, founders Tethong and Bohana, along with Michael Van Walt, a Dutch lawyer who was instrumental in the planning stages, envisioned an NGO with 15-20 employees who would function as the political arm of the emerging Tibet Movement. Not surprisingly, they quickly

found out that European and Australian activists wanted to work independently on their own projects and campaigns; in addition, initial fundraising to get the then-three person organization off the ground proved to be more than enough of a challenge. In its literature, ICT describes itself as a "non-partisan, public interest group dedicated to promoting human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet." Among other things, the organization monitors human rights conditions and works with organizations (e.g., Asia Watch and Amnesty International) and government officials to publicize violations and bring pressure to bear on China; engages in various legislative activities, including responding to requests for information from members of Congress and their staff, and advocating passage of Tibet-related resolutions and legislation; conducts "fact finding" missions to Tibet, China, Nepal, and India; monitors environmental implications of development projects in Tibet; and networks with exiled Chinese "democracy" organizations and edits and translates material on Tibet into Chinese. ICT also publishes Tibet Press Watch and Tibetan Environment and Development News.

As we saw in the previous chapter, prior to 1987, the main Tibet support organizations in the U.S. focused their attention either on humanitarian aid in India and Nepal (Tibet Fund) or on grassroots education (USTC). But with the creation of ICT, Tibetans established a presence in Washington, D.C. for the first time. After only a few short years, ICT's efforts began to yield impressive results. Since 1987, Congress has passed a number of resolutions and legislative items pertaining to Tibet and the exile community. The Dalai Lama has also met with

Presidents Bush and Clinton and been hosted at a reception by the Democratic and Republican leadership in the Capitol Rotunda.²⁴ How has the organization accomplished so much so quickly? In an attempt to answer that question, Ackerly observed in an interview:

We have always tried to get as much out of Congress as we could, the most visibility in different arenas as we could, a little opportunistically...If there's a group that's interested, we've provided them with information--human rights groups, refugee organizations, church groups, labor organizations, Congressional groups.

ICT's "opportunism" is worth examining in closer detail. Compared to other Tibet support groups, the organization has been unusually responsive to shifts in international funding priorities and discourses as well as Western cultural trends.

Ackerly admits to some ambivalence about this fact:

I keep an ear to the ground in Washington...we've been branching out into development and environment. I have mixed emotions about that because it's opportunistic, that's really the West determining an agenda for Tibet. Those issues aren't necessarily of the same importance in Tibet. It's not just ICT but all support groups pushing the agenda onto Tibet and Dharamsala. Dharamsala is very open to influence, there is so much contact with the outside world and they need the outside world so they tend to adopt the trends of the outside world. Whether that's focusing on political prisoners like Amnesty does, that's a western agenda. In terms of foundations, money is driving the agenda, we have to use money for that purpose.

Recasting the Tibet struggle as a development issue, or environmental issue, or human rights issue has not only generated resources for ICT but has also enabled the organization to gain some powerful new allies in and out of Washington. For instance, ICT now routinely works closely with a range of international and

national NGOs, most of which are not single-issue organizations like the Campaign, but rather address wider themes like human rights. By building bridges to other groups in this manner, ICT has helped broaden the Tibet issue and heighten its visibility in a number of arenas. Such visibility is crucial in a political context where there are many other interest groups competing for funds, media coverage, and political space.

Not all Tibet activists approve of the International Campaign's practice of reframing the issue to suit the times. For those who are members of grassroots organizations the cost of doing business, as it were, with the U.S. government or with the United Nations can sometimes be too high in that it necessitates the use of discourses that appear to imply accommodation rather than commitment to Tibetans' original goal of independence. For instance, in its work with the U.S. State Department and in various U.N. fora, ICT uses the language of "self-determination" instead of independence to describe the Movement's goal. This is because the U.S. government currently recognizes Tibet as a part of China and UN member nations no doubt find it easier to support the concept of self-determination than that of Tibetan independence, which would force a confrontation with China. During the course of my research, the decision to frame the Tibet issue by American-based organizations such as ICT and the International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet (ICLT) in terms of self-determination came up at countless Movement meetings, dividing activists into two camps. The composition of the two sides reveals an interesting generational difference and sheds more light on the

issue of professionalism within the Movement.

For those opposed to the use of self-determination, or what some activists call "UN language," the issue functions as a sort of litmus test of loyalty to the Movement's original goals. One of the most articulate spokespersons for independence is American activist Ed Lazar. Lazar, a longtime Tibet supporter, who has spent most of his life working for social change in the U.S. (e.g., Committee for Non-Violent Action; American Friends Service Committee; Humanitas) and in India (he spent three years with the Gandhian movement in the 1960s). After 1987, Lazar became concerned about the lack of a unified articulated goal in the Movement due to the increased use of the language of "self-determination." As a consequence, he created an organization called "The Committee of 100 for Tibet," a group comprised of one hundred prestigious individuals from around the world--Nobel Prize laureates, famous statespersons, well known personalities, human rights activists, etc. Lazar's idea was that these individuals would work within their own countries to get their government to recognize Tibet or support Tibet's independence. Lazar also began to raise the issue of independence in Tibet support meetings and to write editorials for newspapers and Tibet-related publications. In one support group newsletter, Lazar argues against the emphasis on self-determination:

During some recent meetings of Tibet supporters I have heard it said that the goal of the Tibet Movement is self-determination. Self-determination is the right of all peoples and is supported by the United Nations, and accordingly, self-determination is one of the rights of the Tibetan people...I suggest that the emphasis currently

given to self-determination is misplaced and actually may harm the independence struggle by clouding the issue. Strategically, avoiding the issue of independence by using the language of self-determination contributes to Chinese control of the terms of the issue. The Chinese want the issue of Tibet to be anything but independence. (1992:11)

Lazar claims that "independence is the goal of the Tibetan struggle and acceptance of a lesser goal diminishes the independence struggle" (1992:11). Citing conversations with Tibetans he has met, pro-independence demonstrations in Lhasa, and declarations by the Tibetan parliament in exile that "the goal is full independence," Lazar argues that to settle for less than this is to sell the Movement, and the Tibetan people, thousands of whom have died for independence, short.

Lazar's perspective on the issue of independence is shaped by his years as a peace activist. His commitment to independence and his willingness to challenge those who disagree with him reflect his commitment to "struggle"--to risking much for an idea in which he believes. He observes that most Tibet activists "are very comfortable":

They feel very good about themselves if they have a meeting about Tibet. That's doesn't do a damn thing...you have to see it as part of a struggle. Most people are so comfortable and so happy with what they are doing, they don't realize that there's people in prison in Tibet now, that if you speak for independence for Tibet, you are going to have the hell beaten out of you...so we have this large movement we need to infuse it with an intensity.

Lazar adds that most Tibetans are fearful of "sticking their neck out" by voicing their opinion in public or more formal settings such as Movement meetings. Even

if they agree that independence is the goal of the Movement, they do not say so publicly (the only Tibetans that do consistently raise the issue in public are high status individuals whose backgrounds presumably protect them from criticism or ostracism).

Many Tibetan and non-Tibetan activists agree with Lazar's point of view. Some of them (all Tibetan) recently published their opinions in a book edited by Lazar titled Tibet: The Issue is Independence (1994). Interestingly, most of the authors are from the older generation who were born in Tibet and fled to India after 1959. As Lazar points out in his afterword to the volume:

There is no sure answer to how Tibet will achieve independence, but the Tibetan authors of this book point the way. Their essays represent more than words, they represent the integrity of the authors who, in several cases, have worked their entire adult lives for Tibet. One thing is certain--anything is possible if there is belief that Tibetan independence can be won, and little is possible without such belief. (1994:84)

It is significant that the only contributor to Lazar's book to disagree with the need to frame the Tibetan cause as an independence struggle is a much younger Tibetan woman named Yoden Thonden, a Harvard and NYU-educated lawyer, who is much more comfortable with the legalistic discourses adopted by ICT. In her essay, "The indigenous route: A path not yet taken," Thonden argues "Yes, the issue is independence, but in pursuit of this goal we must explore all possible routes" (1994:55). She points out that since Tibet activists have begun adopting the language of human rights, they have garnered far more support than they did in two decades of advocating for independence:

This approach has allowed us access to international forums [*sic*] from which we otherwise would have been excluded; it has provided us a space in which we have developed a voice in the international community. (1994:56)

Thonden goes on to suggest that activists must use all possible discourses, including independence, to push the Tibet issue forward in a number of arenas, arguing that one of the most productive routes could be the claim that Tibetans are an indigenous people with the right to self-determination.

Many post-1987 activists argue that negotiating a form of association with China under the auspices of "self-determination" is the only "realistic" approach to the Tibetan problem. They argue that claims for independence at this point are unrealistic because China will never willingly leave Tibet and to insist on independence only furthers the standoff between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama, which in turn enables China to continue its destructive policy of population transfer into Tibet. In the long run, they argue, Tibetans will be vastly outnumbered in their own country and Tibet will be transformed into a Chinese province. Time is of the essence, in other words, and priority should be given to entering into negotiations with China as soon as possible. These "realpolitik" activists also argue that it is not up to outsiders--either Tibetan exiles or non-Tibetans, to decide what Tibetans inside Tibet want or should strive for. They claim that self-determination can be a route to independence, but that it is up to Tibetans to make that decision when the time comes.²⁵

The debate over independence versus self-determination which appears to

divide into generational groupings highlights Mannheim's observation of the "generational distinction" (1952:381) in political activism. He argues that the "moment of intersection of the individual life cycle and rapidly changing historical and social conditions" is critical in the formation of political consciousness and new social movements (Ginsburg 1989:141). For those Tibetans who experienced the takeover of Tibet but reached adulthood in the diaspora, their lives (and hopes and fantasies) have been organized around the notion of returning to an independent Tibet. And for those non-Tibetans who came of age in the 1960s and became involved with the refugee community in the 1970s, the concept of a negotiated settlement signifies not just capitulation but a failure of will and commitment to an ideal. On the other hand, the travelers who witnessed demonstrations in Lhasa and for the post-1987 recruits to the Movement, most of whom came of age during the 1970s and early 80s are more comfortable with universal discourses of human rights, democracy, and environmentalism, than they are with the discourses of the previous generation. Instead of being steeped in left wing ideologies which are critical of CIA adventurism and American foreign policy, they are middle of the road liberals who do not distrust authority, especially U.S. governmental authority, in quite the same way. This generational difference provides important insight into the Movement's internal variation.

Conflicts between different cohorts of activists and their respective organizations are not surprising, as Brosius points out. Like the environmental campaign to protect the rainforest in Malaysia, described in his "Voices for the

Borneo Rainforest: Writing the Biography of an Environmental Campaign"

(1995b), the Tibet Movement consists of a spectrum of organizations ranging from mainstream groups to direct action groups, each end of the spectrum regarding the other with suspicion:

Mainstream groups are considered by direct action groups to be overly accommodationist, hide-bound, bloated and more concerned about institutional survival than about creating change. Direct actions groups are considered by mainstream groups to have little appreciation for long term goals and little understanding of the need to establish working relationships with opponents in order to create realistic change. (Brosius 1995b:15)

As organizations such as the International Campaign for Tibet have succeeded in reformulating the Tibet issue in new ways, Tibet activism has become increasingly professionalized, moving from consciousness-raising through direct action and letter writing to institution building, network building, and negotiation. One of the unfortunate (but perhaps inevitable) consequences of this process in the U.S.--as the debate over independence illustrates--has been a rise in tension among various groups and the relative marginalization of the earlier generation of Tibet activists.

While the International Campaign for Tibet has played a central role in getting the Tibet issue onto the U.S. government's agenda, the Tibet Movement is much larger than any single organization; indeed there are many groups that have emerged in recent years and made important contributions to the Movement's growing success. In the next section I briefly summarize four of them--Canada Tibet Committee (CTC), Tibet Support Group UK (now known as Free Tibet Campaign), the Australia Tibet Council, and Comité de Soutien au Peuple

Tibetaine. I do so to underscore the fact that the Movement is not a discrete, narratable series of events with a single coherent history, but instead is formed around a series of spatially dispersed organizational nodes, each with its own background and priorities, and linked to one another by sophisticated communications technologies.

Conclusion: the emergence of a global network

The Canada Tibet Committee came into being around the same time that ICT was taking shape in Washington, D.C. In a recent article, activist Carole Samdup recalls how the Canada Tibet Committee or CTC got its start:

The CTC was formed in 1987 in response to growing unrest inside Tibet and to create a structure within which Canadian friends and supporters could work with their Tibetan friends. Founding member Jim Sullivan had never been to Dharamsala or to Tibet, but still felt compelled to do something to help. "There were so many aspects of the issue which affected me; destruction of the environment, the violence against women, the right to self-determination. I felt that a support group in Canada would provide a venue for me to do something to help." (Samdup 1996:20)

Headquartered in Montreal and with branches in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver, CTC is a voluntary organization sustained by donations, grants, fundraising events, and membership campaigns. While the organization works on grassroots projects in local and national contexts, it has been extremely involved in networking with other Tibet support groups around the world and participating in the international arena.

With the growing trend towards globalization, and the increased

speed and accessibility of information, it is no longer possible for national NGOs to distance ourselves from the international community of NGOs and human rights mechanisms. In 1992, the CTC established a UN Working Group with the goal of demystifying the UN process and lobbying the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR). (Samdup 1996:21)

At the request of the Tibetan Women's Association in Dharamsala, the CTC agreed to be the regional coordinator for, and participate in, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women which was held in Beijing in September 1995. Most recently, CTC representatives attended the Habitat II conference in June 1996 in Istanbul, Turkey.

CTC's involvement in the international arena has been facilitated by two of its own projects--World Tibet Network (WTN)--an on-line Tibet information news service and multidirectional communication email system for Tibet support groups, and "Dharamsala on-line," a project which links the Tibetan administration in Dharamsala to various Tibetan offices and settlements across India and to refugee organizations and individuals abroad. The establishment of these networks has vastly improved international coordination of the Tibet Movement (see McLagan 1996; see also Frederich 1992).

Across the Atlantic, the Free Tibet Campaign (formerly Tibet Support Group UK) has focused the bulk of its energies on advocating for Tibet in the British context. Unlike CTC, whose staff is made up of all volunteers, the FTC has three full-time, paid staff and a pool of volunteer administrators, researchers, campaigners, and fundraisers who work out of an office in Central London. The

organization grew out of outrage at the British government's treatment of the Dalai Lama on a visit in 1988:

In April 1988, the UK Foreign Office decided to abuse the freedom of expression of His Holiness the Dalai Lama by granting him a conditional visa for entry into the UK; conditional upon him not making any political statement during the visit. The outrage created by this decision led to meetings of activists and a resolve to create a continuous and strong campaign for Tibet. (Nunn 1996:16)

As mentioned earlier, Robbie Barnett was involved in the early stages of the formation of TSG UK before his decision to create Tibet Information Network.

Free Tibet Campaign's stated goal is to "support the Tibetan people in their desire for freedom and the exercise of their right to independence," though the general secretary carefully stipulates that

we do not represent the Tibetan people. It would be wrong for us to do so and there is no need; our whole argument is based on the premise that the Tibetan people should be representing themselves. We work to create the international platform which will allow the Tibetan people to exercise the rights they have from their cultural, historical, and national identity. We do not say Tibet should be independent because that is a goal to be set by Tibetans. However, we do believe that Tibetans have the right to independence and we will do everything in our power to enable the exercise of that right. (Nunn 1996:16)

Though it recognizes the validity of the argument for an independent Tibet, FTC acknowledges the British government's position, which is similar to that of the U.S. government. Nevertheless, the organization has attempted to build public awareness through grassroots campaigns and to use that awareness to lobby British politicians to change their stand on the issue. In addition to trying to influence British policy, FTC has also been very active in pressuring China directly through

its "Urgent Campaign Scheme." This scheme is used mainly to appeal for the release of political prisoners in Tibet.²⁶

The Australia Tibet Council (ATC), established in 1988, was Australia's first Tibet support organization. With a national office in Sydney and branch offices in every state, the ATC's stated aims include raising awareness of the situation in Tibet, encouraging the government to take action on behalf of Tibet, and supporting Australian and international initiatives. Like the Canada Tibet Committee and Free Tibet Campaign, the Australia Tibet Council publishes its own newsletter, Australia Tibet Council News, and Tibet Documents, a compilation of Australian and international media clippings relating to Tibet. One of ATC's most visible projects is Eco-Tibet Australia, which works with environmental organizations to raise awareness about environmental issues in Tibet. Other ATC projects include the "Aid Group," which provides relevant information to governmental and non-governmental organizations about the provision of Australian aid to Tibet, and the "Tibetan Library Project" which provides consignments of donated books on modern China to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala. Finally, under the auspices of the ATC, a "Parliamentary Group for Tibet" was established in 1993; since that time a number of resolutions relating to Tibet have been passed by the Australian Parliament. As its various projects suggest, the Council has made a concerted effort to formulate the Tibet issue in terms of the environment, development, and human rights. The result has been impressive and has transformed Australia from a distant outpost with few Tibet

supporters to an important node in the transnational Tibet network in a relatively short period of time.

The final Tibet support organization was started in Geneva by the same graphic artist mentioned who witnessed disturbances in Lhasa in March 1989. In an interview in 1992, Christophe Besuchet shared a gripping story about taking photographs of protesters, including those who were wounded and hiding in private homes and attempting to hide the canisters of film from the police in his hotel room. Though he was able to hide one roll, the police entered his room before he had a chance to hide the other two. After searching his room and his person, they discovered the film in his socks and took it away. Upon his return to Switzerland, Besuchet decided to start a group called "Comité de Soutien au Peuple Tibétain" with several other Swiss Tibet supporters and Tibetan refugees living in Geneva. One of the main activities of the Comité is Lungta, a glossy publication which Besuchet edits and designs. The Comité also focuses its attention on the UN and on lobbying the Swiss government. One of the Comité's most innovative projects is Tibet Fax, a single page of information about events sponsored by various Tibet support groups in Europe that is collected and then distributed via fax to all active groups on the Continent every month.

These four organizations are but a few of the many Tibet support groups created by activists in direct response to (or in the case of FTC, catalyzed by) the demonstrations in 1987. Just as the Westerners who witnessed the events responded in an improvisational manner while in Lhasa, so the emergence of Tibet

support groups across the globe was spontaneous, unplanned, and uncoordinated. This perspective of the Movement as a process and not a *fait accompli* stands as a critique of social movement theory that looks at social movements in terms of goal orientation (see Coutin's discussion of this point; see also McCarthy and Zald 1987 on resource mobilization theory). It does so by viewing the Movement in terms of people responding to a window of opportunity, seizing the occasion to publicize the Tibet issue based on concrete and dramatic evidence of Chinese repression in Tibet, rather than acting in a rational, strategic fashion with a premeditated goal in mind. This perspective is perhaps best summed up by Brosius' observation that political movements are often creative adaptations to political possibilities of the moment (1994b).

Between 1987 and 1990, a network or circuit of Tibet activists began to emerge, formed by Tibet support groups and Tibetan communities and organizations across the diaspora. Knit together by computer email, fax, and support group publications, and after 1990, by international conferences, the network, with its fluid ambiguous organization, took time to coalesce into an identifiable global political structure or formation. But by 1990, when the first international Tibet support conference was held in Dharamsala, India, activists began to refer to themselves as part of a "movement," and recognized themselves as sharing the same political goal (though not necessarily the same strategies). This new self-consciousness helped launch the Tibet Movement into a new phase, in which individual support groups began to work more closely together and to

coordinate their efforts. Between 1990 and 1993, activists collaborated on a set of campaigns that were characterized by their global dimensions. I examine one such campaign in Part Three of this dissertation—the "International Year of Tibet."

Although my analysis focuses on events in the U.S., it is important to remember that Year of Tibet events took place in a number of European and Asian countries and the program was conceived of as a global campaign.

Throughout this dissertation I have suggested that in the course of mobilizing for Tibet, Tibetan and Western activists construct both "Tibetanness" and each other. The next three chapters explore this process further. I ask how the intercultural alliance plays out on the ground, how Tibetans engage with Western representations of Tibetanness and at the same time, participate in their own objectification. While the Tibet Movement is a notable example of intercultural collaboration, it is not without its problems and difficulties; these are examined in some detail in the context of the Year of Tibet.

Notes

1. Barnett dates the process of liberalization in Tibet to the First Symposium on Work in Tibet which was held by the Central Government in March 1980. At the conference, it was decided that the priorities in Tibet

were to correct the excesses of ultra-leftism and to use "practice as the only yardstick for truth." In other words, it recognized both that the degradations of the Cultural Revolution had to be rolled back, as they had already begun to be in China, and that conditions in Tibet were different from those in China and required special, more conciliatory policies. (Barnett 1994:238)

Hu Yaobang's trip to Tibet, two months later, dramatically increased the pace of reform.

2. Schwartz notes that "state support for the rebuilding of monasteries has largely been limited to those perceived by the government to have high value as tourist attractions" (1994a:58).

This applies to historically important locations such as Samye and Sakya monasteries, Tashilunpo, and Drepung and Sera near Lhasa. Some other smaller monasteries have received limited funds, the extent of support varying considerably according to the attitude of local officials. (1994a:58)

3. It is important to remember, as Schwartz points out, that

the Chinese system is totalitarian. The state monopolizes every legal avenue of public expression, suppressing all dissent, while it manufactures through its own organs the official version of Tibetan reality. Whenever Tibetans question Chinese rule the whole apparatus of communist domination is brought down on them—political campaigns, arrests and torture, imprisonment and executions, intimidating displays of military force. Tibetans are subjected to endless harangues in political meetings and police interrogation sessions about foreign conspiracies and agents of subversion. In spite of overwhelming forces arrayed against them, Tibetans persist in attempting to communicate their discontent. (1994a:21)

See Schwartz 1994a:56-65 for a description of Chinese attempts to control the monasteries after 1987.

4. Schwartz explains the emergence of Tibetan nationalism in the following way:

Ideology remains a central feature of Chinese rule in Tibet. The communist party/state, obsessed with threats to its power, needs to maintain a constant

hold over people's thoughts—even more so when its authority is challenged. Thus Tibetans are locked in ideological struggle with the Chinese state. Nationalism has developed as the Tibetan response, giving form and constancy to Tibetan aspirations. Tibetan protest does not arise from a feeling of minority status. It is overtly political, targeting the Chinese state and the apparatus of social control that maintains state power. As we have seen, protest is periodically renewed in direct response to efforts by the Chinese state to suppress dissent. These are the conditions under which Tibetans assert themselves to be a nation and define themselves in political terms. (1994a:218)

See Schwartz 1994a:188-231 and 1994b for a more detailed analysis of the contradictions of China's reform policy and its response to the demonstrations between 1987-1992.

5. See Klieger (1992, chapter 7) for a discussion of tourism as patronage in Tibet.
6. I was one of the thousands of individual travellers who travelled in Tibet in 1986. While the majority of Western activists I interviewed had travelled to Tibet at some point between 1984 and 1993, most, like myself, witnessed political tensions but not actual demonstrations.
7. During this visit, the Tibetan leader met with members of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and proposed a "Five Point Peace Plan" for Tibet. The plan's five points are summarized below:
 1. Transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace (*ahimsa*, Skt.);
 2. Abandonment of China's population transfer policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a people;
 3. Respect for Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms;
 4. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and the dumping of nuclear waste;
 5. Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese people.
8. It is important to note that October 1 is Chinese National Day.
9. Barnett and Meysztowicz write that "for days afterwards, monks, children, and old men were coming up to Westerners in the Barkhor and returning the little plastic cylinders, begging us to smuggle them abroad" (1988:14).

10. Kerr had actually been placed under house (hotel) arrest, along with his fellow American John Ackerly, after police discovered a Tibetan national flag on Ackerly's backpack, a few days after the first demonstration on September 27. For a vivid description of these events, see Kerr (1993:83-89). A condensed version of the events of October 1 from Kerr and Ackerly's point of view can be found in "Reflections on a Riot," Cultural Survival Quarterly, 1988, 12(1):45-48.
11. Schwartz points out that the geographical division of Lhasa into Tibetan and Chinese communities facilitated clandestine relations between Tibetans and foreigners, all of whom stayed in Tibetan-run hotels in the Tibetan part of town. The hotels functioned as spaces where travelers could hold meetings free from Chinese interference (1991:599).
12. Schwartz notes that French, Spanish and Italian travelers frequently are not fluent in English. Thus their participation in the English-speaking international group of travelers is limited. Although non-European travelers (e.g. Japanese, Hong Kong, and Singapore Chinese) were in Lhasa and are often English-speakers, they are less likely to mix with those outside their own group (1991:598).
13. See also Calhoun 1994 who argues that Chinese activists were transformed through their involvement with the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement in 1989 and that therefore "we need to pay attention to shifting identities of participants" (21).
14. See Nunn 1996 for a description of Tibet Support Group UK, recently renamed Free Tibet Campaign.
15. Currently TIN reports are distributed around the globe to subscribers who pay to receive fax and email versions on a regular basis. Printed materials containing such things as analyses of Chinese policies in Tibet are mailed to paying subscribers as well. TIN subscribers include members of the media, print, radio, and wire services in Asia, Europe, and North America, governments, human rights organizations, Tibet support groups, and interested individuals.
16. Kerr and Ackerly were mentioned in front page stories of the New York Times two days in a row—the result of Ackerly having given their names and passport numbers to someone leaving Tibet.

Kerr recalls being interviewed in Lhasa by reporters from the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Christian Science Monitor, and the Far Eastern Economic Review (1993:108).

17. In between his first trip to Tibet in 1987 and the next one in 1991, Kerr returned to India to gather information from recently escaped refugees about torture and prison conditions in Tibet. Together he and John Ackerly wrote a report published in November 1989 by Physicians for Human Rights titled "The Suppression of a People: Accounts of Torture and Imprisonment in Tibet."

18. Although Tibetan protestors face far worse consequences than foreign travelers when trouble occurs, in recent years Westerners have lost some of the protection or "diplomatic immunity" they felt as foreigners in 1987 as the cycle of protests have continued and tensions have risen in Tibet. Indeed, the danger to Westerners during the course of unrest is increasingly very real:

One foreigner, a Dutchwoman, was hit by automatic weapon fire when security forces shot into a crowd of onlookers containing both foreigners and Tibetans during a demonstration in December 1988. Foreigners who photographed another demonstration 3 weeks later were beaten and arrested at gunpoint. (Schwartz 1991:601)

19. See Roger Lancaster's unpublished paper, "With the *Internacionalistas* in Nicaragua: Varieties of trans-cultural experience in a social revolution."
20. Barnett argues that "the history of journalism in Tibet is the history of Tibetans being put at risk by freelance journalists for a story." One of the most dramatic examples of this is a documentary produced by an Englishwoman named Vanya Kewley called "Tibet: A Case to Answer." Kewley secretly shot videotape of her trip to Tibet, interviewing monks, nuns, and a number of laypersons. While some of them covered their faces, others decided not to do so. When the documentary was broadcast in Britain, Kewley used video technology to protect the identities of those who had not covered themselves. But according to one source, the photos used to publicize the broadcast clearly showed the faces of several Tibetans. Kewley was roundly criticized for this by English human rights activists. Later it was said that back in Tibet Chinese officials had identified three of the nuns who participated in Kewley's documentary and taken action against them.
21. I was present at a talk the two gave at Columbia University in late 1987. Accompanied and introduced by John Avedon, author of *In Exile from the Land of Snows* (1984), they showed slides of demonstrating and wounded monks and described what they had seen.
22. ICT receives approximately half of its funding from large private foundations and donors such as Richard Gere; the rest is divided between money from Switzerland (which is channeled from the government-in-exile in Dharamsala); and from small donors who pay \$25 a year to be members of ICT.

The issue of whether or not ICT is an arm of the CTA is one that has come up from time to time in part because the head of the organization is simultaneously the Dalai Lama's "special envoy to North America." According to Ackerly, however, Dharamsala does not tell the Campaign what to do; if anything, the exile government does not give enough direction of what policies it wants the Campaign to pursue.

23. See also Brosius 1995b for a discussion of how embracing certain discourses entails engaging particular institutions that simultaneously create certain possibilities and preclude others.
24. For example, the following legislative items were passed between 1987 and 1991: Tibet was declared to be an occupied country under international law (1990); a bill was passed providing visas for 1,000 Tibetan refugees to immigrate to the U.S. (1990); legislation authorized creation and funding of a Tibetan-language Voice of America broadcast into Tibet (1991); a Fulbright scholarship program for Tibetans was established (1989); and legislation providing humanitarian assistance to the Tibetan community in India became law (1989, 1990, 1991).
25. See Michael van Walt van Praag 1987 on the status of Tibet and arguments about self-determination.
26. In the summer of 1992, I had the opportunity to present a video documentary at a screening organized by the then-Tibet Support Group UK in London. I was very impressed both by the number of people who turned up for the event and by the fact that organizers had managed to get the screening listed in Time Out, a weekly publication with widely-read arts and entertainment listings. The day after the screening, the London office arranged for me to screen the tape for a local TSG in Swindon, an hour outside of London. Again the screening room was packed full of people and I spent more than an hour answering questions and discussing the Tibet issue with the audience.

Part Three

Mobilizing "culture": The Year of Tibet

Chapter 8 Mystical visions in Manhattan

Introduction

Since 1959, Tibetan refugees have been engaged in an ongoing "confrontation of representations" (Goldstein 1994b:15) with Chinese officials in which the two sides compete to legitimize their own representations of Tibetan history as well as current events in Tibet. As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, scholarly and popular accounts of Tibet's religio-political system have played an important part in this struggle. In recent years, a new dimension to the confrontation has emerged, with the display of culture becoming one of the most important means through which Tibetan and Chinese claims to political legitimacy are contested. This chapter examines one of the most spectacular examples of the deployment of Tibetan culture to mobilize political support--the "International Year of Tibet" (March 10, 1991 - March 10, 1992).

In many respects, the Year of Tibet was the apotheosis of representations of Tibet. It entailed a self-conscious objectification of Tibetan culture on a massive and sustained scale, involving Tibetans and their Western supporters collaborating on a series of events throughout the course of a year in some thirty-six countries.¹ In a departure from previous public displays of Tibetan "culture," which had been limited to such things as the performing arts (Calkowski 1995)² and demonstrations of sand mandala-making by Tibetan Buddhist monks, the Year of Tibet offered a coordinated and ambitious array of events, ranging from the

spectacular--a two week-long religious teaching and tantric initiation by the Dalai Lama in Madison Square Garden--to the mundane--such as local library exhibitions of photos from Tibet. The Year of Tibet reached its climax in New York City in October 1991; my focus here is on the events produced during that month.

In the broadest sense, this chapter as well as chapters 9 and 10 are about the relationship between cultural representation and political action. As we shall see, my research on the Year of Tibet demonstrates in ethnographic terms the observation by Dirks et al that there has been "an extraordinary convergence between academic debates regarding culture and the political career of culture outside the academy" (Dirks, Eley, and Ortner 1994:24). That is, culture increasingly has been not only appropriated by scholars in fields outside of anthropology, but by the groups anthropologists typically study. While Turner (1993) and others have noted this fact, few ethnographic studies have been done of the self-conscious embrace of the concept and the processes of objectification entailed by its deployment in a political campaign.

As I have repeated throughout this dissertation, it is impossible to talk about the representation of Tibetan culture without acknowledging the heavy semiotic load Tibetans carry in the Western imagination. Representations of Tibet as a non-violent Shangri-la and of Tibetans as happy repositories of spiritual wisdom have mediated relations between Tibetans and the West since the early part of this century. Rather than look at how these representations construct Tibetans as "Others,"³ my interest is in how Tibetans work within the problematic categories

created about them. I have emphasized how Tibetans engage Western discourses about Tibetanness in the process of constituting themselves in exile (see chapters 5 and 6). This chapter, based on the premise that the act of putting culture on display is a form of cultural production, expands my argument further by exploring the self-conscious participation of Tibetans in their own objectification. Specifically, it examines the intercultural social processes around the production of Tibetan culture by Tibetan and American activists.

This chapter is divided into three sections. **Part One** briefly outlines the theoretical developments which underpin my primary concern in this chapter--the strategic deployment of "Tibetan culture." Drawing on Clifford's metaphor of the "predicament of culture" (Clifford 1988) and recent literature on cultural production by indigenous peoples (e.g., Ginsburg 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1995; Myers 1991, 1994a, 1994b; and T. Turner 1990a, 1990b, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1995), I suggest the ways in which my research builds on, and in some senses extends, this particular strand of contemporary cultural theory.

As I argued in my introduction to this dissertation, each of the strategies deployed by Tibet activists entails the production and assertion of a particular diasporic Tibetan identity.⁴ In the case of the Year of Tibet, the narrative was one of Tibetan culture as a locus of endangered spirituality and as a valuable resource for the world's future. **Part Two** explores the various intersecting interpretive frameworks through which this narrative of Tibetanness was produced and understood, including the traditional patron-client relationship and New Age

Orientalism. Focusing on four key actors--the Dalai Lama, Tibet House co-founders Richard Gere and Robert Thurman, and the media consultant hired by Tibet House to handle Year of Tibet events in October--I attempt to trace the emergence and implementation of this narrative of Tibetanness in the Year of Tibet.

Part Three focuses on the "Wisdom and Compassion" art exhibition and accompanying sand mandala. In my discussion, I attempt to show how the narrative of Tibetanness described in **Part Two** manifested itself through these "events" and those who were asked to "perform" them. I also explore some of the contradictions involved, including how, by privileging a Tibetan Buddhist definition of Tibetan "culture," these events and performances reinforced a certain Buddhist hegemony in exile. In the chapter's conclusion, I summarize my argument about the culture strategy and raise further questions to be examined in greater detail in chapter 9.

Part One

...once the representational challenge is seen to be the portrayal and understanding of local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, then one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted, native ones. (Clifford 1992:101)

Translation is the ethnographic object. (Myers 1994b:675)

The Predicament of Culture

In the beginning of his book **The Predicament of Culture** (1988), James Clifford proposes a different historical vision from that which has tended to see the world as populated by endangered authenticities. "pure products always going crazy." He argues that we need to "make a space for specific paths through modernity," that is, to rethink our narratives of culture in modernity and to view the production of culture as a "hybrid, often discontinuous inventive process" (10). The metaphor Clifford uses to characterize the current state of culture and its theorization--the "predicament of culture"--has been especially productive for anthropologists, many of whom recognize the inadequacy of their older models to account for the obvious fact of persistent cultural heterogeneity (or "off-centeredness," to borrow Clifford's phrase).⁵

Clifford's interesting work on the "predicament of culture" is part of a large body of literature in the humanities and social sciences concerned with representation and cultural difference. This literature, which views cultural difference as an artifact of colonial practice, has opened up important terrain in recent years through its analysis of the politics of representing difference in various elite and popular cultural contexts, such as museum exhibitions, cinema, and television (e.g. see Clifford 1988; Said 1978, Torgovnick 1990). Nonetheless, one of the problems with this literature's analytic approach is that it often focuses on representations of cultural others in terms that reproduce the problem of cultural domination, even as it offers trenchant critiques. That is, by focusing on "texts"

and by using frameworks and terms which rely on unidirectional models of looking such as "surveillance" or "appropriation," these authors tend to reinforce the erasure of the "other's" perspective (and therefore their agency). They also tend to view the intercultural space in which these representations (or performances) of cultural difference are produced as necessarily hierarchical (and thus moral) rather than as potentially political.

Recently anthropologists have used their skills to reframe this kind of work by examining how the so-called "natives" themselves are engaged in their own representation. For example, research on indigenous cultural production examines such encounters as arenas for collective self-fashioning, as sites where groups collaborate in their representation for a clear political purpose. The emphasis is not just on representations as texts, but as contested social processes which require an understanding of the consciousness of participants. In other words, this work focuses on the social practices around representation and how cultural production acquires meaning for producers, participants and various audiences. This turn in anthropology was presaged by the theoretical writing of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990, 1991, 1993; see also Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988), who, since the late 1980s, has argued that culture has become "an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation, with representation often being made to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences" (1990:18). Because of this, he asserts, anthropologists must focus on the complexities of representation and begin to pay attention to cosmopolitan cultural forms if they are to grasp the processes through

which late twentieth century identities are mediated. One of the implications of Appadurai's argument is that culture has become a deterritorialized sign, one that is (or can be) self-consciously and strategically deployed.

Appadurai's theoretical insights have been widely-cited (and institutionalized in the journal Public Culture, edited by Carol Breckenridge) and have contributed to a growing sensitivity in the discipline to such things as mass-mediated cultural forms. The ethnographic work on indigenous cultural production cited in this chapter provide grounded studies of some of the very processes theorized by Appadurai.

In the next section, I explore in greater detail how this recent work on indigenous cultural production expands on the literature on representation and cultural difference. My aim is to show how these studies contribute to our understanding of the emergence of culture as a vehicle through which political claims are made and collective identities are mediated.

Theorizing indigenous cultural production

In her work on the production and circulation of indigenous media (which she defines as encompassing a range of film, video and televisual practices by "First Nations" or "Fourth World" peoples), Faye Ginsburg has argued for the need to move beyond a cultural studies approach which privileges media as texts:

In order to open a new discursive space for indigenous media that respects and understands them on their own terms, it is important to attend to the processes of production and reception. Analysis needs

to focus less on the formal qualities of film and video as text and more on the cultural mediations that occur through film and video works. (1995:259)

She suggests a model that "stresses not only the text but the activities and social organization of media work as arenas of cultural production" (1994c:378).⁶ This model is particularly apropos in the context of Aboriginal societies where "people organize themselves around media production in terms of the responsibilities of specific groups for knowledge and practices associated with certain geographic areas" (ibid., 371).⁷

Ginsburg's argument acknowledges the meaningfulness of representation for Aboriginal producers who "use a language of evaluation that stresses the activities of the production and circulation of [media] work...as the basis for judging its value" (ibid., 367). That is, judgments are based on "notions of appropriate social and formal organizations of performance in ceremonial or ritual domains" (ibid., 367). Ginsburg defines this system of evaluation as one of "embedded aesthetics" in which textual production and circulation are not separated from Aboriginal media's "capacity to embody, sustain, and even revive or create certain social relations" (ibid., 368). To overlook these extratextual aspects of Aboriginal media, she argues, is to miss a crucial dimension of their function in contemporary Aboriginal society--as vehicles for mediating cultural revival, identity formation, and political assertion.

As we shall see, in making this important link between media production (representation) and political consciousness, Ginsburg theoretically sets the stage

for Turner's argument about the relationship between video technology and the objectification of "culture." Before discussing Turner, however, I briefly examine Myers' work on Aboriginal acrylic painting.

Like Ginsburg, Myers is interested in understanding Aboriginal cultural production as a form of social action. In a recent paper (1991), he argues that the production, circulation, and consumption of acrylic paintings "constitutes an important dimension of self-production of Aboriginal people and of the processes of 'representing culture'" (28). By focusing on the discourses and practices (what he calls "intercultural accountings") through which the paintings are situated as "objects" by art critics, anthropologists, Aboriginal painters, and others, Myers explores the processes through which the paintings have come to stand for "Aboriginal culture."

According to Myers, the insertion of these "objects" into the same space--the international art market--as Western cultural forms "is of considerable theoretical significance for understanding the predicament of intercultural transaction" (1994a:10). His discussion of the various accountings through which meaning is constructed around the paintings reveals the disjunctions that occur when the "appropriate sensibilities are not discursively elaborated and shared between producer and audience" (ibid., 29). What is needed, Myers points out, are new discourses for considering these emerging forms (and performances) of cultural "difference."

In his essay "Culture-making: Performing Aboriginality at the Asia Society

Gallery" (1994b). Myers attempts to demonstrate this need for new interpretive frameworks by analyzing the construction and performance of an Aboriginal sandpainting at the Asia Society in New York in 1988. The two day sandpainting "performance" accompanied a major exhibition of Aboriginal art called "Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia." According to Myers, this event (and ones similar to it which are increasingly taking place in venues ranging from art galleries to clubs) represent an important form of cultural production and "constitute salient contexts for the contemporary negotiation and circulation of indigenous peoples' identities" (1994b: 675). In fact, Myers suggests, not only are these sorts of cultural performances in Western settings central to the circulation of a collective Aboriginal identity, they are "perhaps a central context of its very production and transformation" (ibid., 677). I will come back to Myers' essay in **Part Three** when I discuss the sand mandala "performance" at the IBM Gallery.

Ginsburg's and Myers' work on Aboriginal cultural production reveals some of the innovative ways in which anthropologists have begun to approach the representation of culture across boundaries of difference. Stimulated by recent cultural studies theorizing on representation and identity (e.g., "nothing exists outside of representation," Hall 1990) and multiculturalist debates about "difference," these scholars have attempted to develop a discursive space or framework for the ethnographic appreciation of emergent forms of cultural difference.

While Ginsburg and Myers have been studying Aboriginal film, video, and

acrylic paintings, Turner has been mapping out similar processes with another indigenous group--the Kayapo in Brazil--whom he argues have developed a social and political consciousness about their "culture" through exposure to outsiders and through the introduction of video equipment (for accounts of the Kayapo Video Project, see Turner 1990a and 1990b).

Although they initially conceived of video as a means of representing their culture to themselves, the Kayapo quickly learned its value as a tool of interethnic mediation and intercultural communication, "perceiving that the presentation of themselves as culturally different and independent increased their value in the eyes of the world--value that translated into political support" (1991a:71). Thus the ability to objectify themselves through the use of video equipment was accompanied by a "new self-conscious objectification of the nature of their own culture as an object of political value and struggle" (ibid., 70). About this new-found self-consciousness Turner writes

The idea that this collection of ethnographic particularities constituted a collective entity of a sui generis nature called a "culture" was a completely new and alien idea that the Kayapo had not had when I began to work with them in the early 1960s. That this "culture" was a thing possessing value for members of the very different, alien, and more powerful "culture" of Western capitalist society, and that this very cultural difference therefore constituted a political resource in the struggle to defend Kayapo communities against expropriation and assimilation by that same society, was an even newer and more unprecedented conception. (ibid., 70)

Soon, Turner notes, the Kayapo were not merely using video to record their culture and represent it to themselves and others, they were staging events

specifically for the camera. In other words, "video media" became not just the means but the ends of social action. Eventually he realized that

these two alien and in many ways parallel modes of self-objectification, the self-conscious presentation of themselves in political confrontations with a view to how they would appear through video media, and the concept of themselves as an "ethnic" group defined by a distinct "culture," were not merely formally convergent, but causally interrelated. (ibid., 70)

By emphasizing the inextricability of representation and cultural objectification, Turner, like Ginsburg and Myers, is arguing for the theoretical necessity of treating culture not as a thing which people have but as a form of social action.

In an article on multiculturalism (1993), Turner attempts to extend his theorization of culture a bit further. Annoyed at anthropologists' feeble response to the challenge posed by multiculturalism's cooptation of the concept of culture, Turner argues that the discipline has failed to recognize or at least to adequately theorize the current historical transformation of the meaning of culture. He suggests that the "contemporary conjuncture," which is characterized by global flows of capital and information and is accompanied by the rise of ethnic and identity politics, has created a context in which culture has taken on "new meanings and connotations" (423). Among the most significant of these, Turner argues, is the idea that "culture...is a source or locus of collective rights to self-determination."

Culture, as such, becomes a source of values that can be converted into political assets, both internally as bases of group solidarity and mobilization, and externally as claims on the support of other social groups, movements, governments, and public opinion all over the

globe. Culture, in these new senses, as a universal category distinct from, but subsuming, specific cultures, can be understood as the culture form of the new global historical conjuncture: in effect, a metaculture, or "culture of cultures" (1993:423-24).

Turner's argument about the emergence of a "metacultural" framework in which culture becomes the favored idiom of political mobilization reveals how far the once-standard anthropological notion of culture has come. Liberated from its theoretical confines, culture now circulates in the world in ever more complex and elusive ways. As the Year of Tibet and similar campaigns by indigenous, minority, and other marginalized groups illustrate, culture has come to be understood as a collective human right and the legitimate goal of political struggle, as well as the means through which that goal is pursued, making it thus both the means and the end of social action.

Co-producing culture: The Tibetan example

The literature on cultural production by indigenous peoples discussed above represents one of the most significant attempts in anthropology today to account for the performance of cultural difference. As such, it forms the main theoretical basis of my discussion of the Year of Tibet. At the same time that my work builds on this literature, it also attempts to extend it in ways I hope will become evident. For instance, while Ginsburg, Myers, and Turner are each interested in the intercultural dimensions of indigenous cultural production, and all are sensitive to the dialogical interplay between these communities and outsiders, including

anthropologists, the forms which they study are not co-produced in the same manner as the Year of Tibet events discussed in this chapter. Instead of looking exclusively at the ways in which indigenous cultural forms and innovations circulate in new (inter)cultural spaces, my work focuses on an earlier stage of the representational or productive process, as it were, by considering the intercultural social processes through which Tibetanness is constructed.⁸

By focusing on the production of Tibetanness as a dialogical process--as something that emerges out of social relations between Tibetans and their Western supporters--my argument engages recent theories about the interpersonal generation of meaning by literary and postcolonial theorists, most notably Mikhail Bakhtin and Homi Bhabha. For instance, in his seminal work on discourse, Bakhtin argues for a relational "betweenness" which suggests that meaning is not contained within social groups, persons, or linguistic terms, but rather it emerges between them:

The word, directed towards its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments, and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and this may crucially shape discourse, leave a trace in all its semantic layers...the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (1981:276)

Following Bakhtin, "culture," like the "word," becomes a site of social struggle and cultural difference becomes a production (see also Bhabha 1990, 1995).⁹

My interest in the co-production of Tibetan culture also intersects with

recent literature on tourism and performed culture (e.g., Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; MacCannell 1976; see also Myers 1994b). This work asks what it means to enact culture in contexts out of those where it was historically performed. a question particularly relevant to my discussion of the Kalachakra in chapter 9. It also raises important issues about how groups construct each other in the context of performing culture. For instance, Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's essay "Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist realism in East Africa," (1994) examines a tourist site near Nairobi, focusing on how each side participates--"for their own reasons and with their own understandings" (456)--in the production of Maasai-ness for tourists. Such forms of "cultural tourism" bring tourists and the "natives" together into one performative frame, as D. Evans-Pritchard argues in an article on Native Americans and tourism in Santa Fe (1989). Within this frame, boundary lines between tourists and, for example, Indians, or the Maasai, are blurred (100). Vincanne Adams makes a similar argument about the blurring of boundaries between the Sherpa and Western tourists in Nepal in her book Tigers of the Snow and Other Virtual Sherpas: An Ethnography of Himalayan Encounters (1996).

Although many of the processes described in the tourism literature seem pertinent to the Tibetan case, there are important temporal and social distinctions that need to be made. The fact that Tibetans and Western activists are engaged in a collective effort to transform society, and that they have a long-term commitment to one another, makes the Tibetan-Western relationship less one of "seduction"--in which Tibetans are seduced by a Western othering of themselves and at the same

time are seducers who capitalize on Western desires for "difference and vulnerability." as Adams argues is the case for Sherpas (1996)--than one of collaboration. This is not to deny that Tibetans, like other groups such as the Sherpas, Aborigines, and Native Americans, are the object of a kind of "New Age Orientalism" (Lopez 1994:9) through which they are viewed as reservoirs of spiritual insight and knowledge by their Western "friends." But as this dissertation attempts to demonstrate, compared to the other groups, Tibetans have been unusually effective in transforming these romantic fantasies into material and political support.

The Tibetan patron-client framework is crucial to understanding this transformation of Western fantasy into support. As described in chapter 2, relations between Tibet and China prior to 1950 were characterized by a form of patronage known as *mchod-yon*, a state-level expression of a general patron-client relationship, *sbyin-bdag*, in which spiritual guidance was exchanged for material support.¹⁰ Upon coming into exile, Tibetans reinterpreted this social relation, substituting sympathetic Westerners for traditional Central Asian patrons. In so doing, as we saw in Chapter 5, displaced Tibetans (both lay and religiously-trained) generated much needed financial aid from interested Westerners who sought contact with Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhist culture. Given the crucial role the patron-client relation continues to play in Tibetan exile society, it comes as no surprise that it is at the heart of Tibet activism. We can see this perhaps most clearly through the Year of Tibet campaign, though in this case the patrons were

neither Chinese or Mongol leaders (as was the case prior to 1950), nor Western aid organizations or individuals travelling in India or Nepal, but American audiences whose political support was sought in exchange for an encounter with Tibetan Buddhist culture. The Year of Tibet can be read as an attempt by activists to solicit an American public's patronage based on its recognition of the value of Tibetan culture; I will explore this point further in **Part Two**.

A word about methods

In order to follow the social processes through which the Year of Tibet was co-produced, I looked at arenas where "behind-the-scenes" interactions and conflicts between Tibetan and American producers, performers, and sponsors would be most visible. Year of Tibet organizers and performers were faced with a number of thorny issues that had to be negotiated across boundaries of cultural difference, many of which centered on problems raised by the staging of religious performances in novel contexts. For instance, the propriety of the Dalai Lama giving a tantric initiation in Madison Square Garden came up repeatedly in discussions and interviews. As I discuss in the next chapter, this sort of internal debate highlights the different cultural frames each side brought to the production process.

My decision to focus on contexts where I had access to internal discussions and debates reflects both my interest in the cultural processes involved in framing Tibetan culture for Western audiences, and the impossibility of physically being

able to attend all the events in October 1991, many of which were held simultaneously in dispersed sites across New York City.

My participation took place at a number of levels. In addition to attending as many of the events as possible and continuing my ongoing conversations with Tibetan friends about what was transpiring, I worked once a week for six months as a volunteer at Tibet House, the main sponsoring organization of the Year of Tibet. Because it gave me direct and regular access to the process of organizing the Year of Tibet, this work forms the backbone of my research for this chapter. In addition, I was unexpectedly asked by a Sakya monk friend to videotape a set of religious empowerments given by Sakya Trizin, who was one of the four lineage heads invited by organizers to New York in October 1991. This gave me the chance to observe interactions between the Sakya leader, his entourage of monk attendants, and his Western disciples. I was also asked to videotape an extensive interview with Sakya Trizin and help make a "home video" of New York City for him to take back to India.

During October, when I was not at Tibet House or at various Sakya initiations, I was at other Tibet events, some of which are discussed below. I also collected press reviews and other clippings in order to gain a better sense of how these events were framed by the press and "read" by the general public. Afterwards, I interviewed key organizers and attended a "post-Year of Tibet" Movement meeting, the significance of which is discussed in chapter 10.

Part Two

Earlier in this dissertation, I described the central role Buddhism plays in how Tibetans define themselves as a people and as a polity as well as how they engage outsiders (e.g., exchange of the dharma for protection from powerful neighbors in pre-1950 Tibet). I suggested that the Dalai Lama's continuing emphasis over the years on the need to "keep Tibetan religion and culture alive" has contributed to the emergence of a self-consciousness about Tibetan culture as an object of legitimate political struggle, an awareness further reinforced by Western fascination with Tibetan Buddhism. This self-consciousness is clearly reflected in the narrative of Tibetan culture as a locus of endangered spirituality and as a valuable resource for the world's future which has come to dominate the way in which activists have represented the Tibet issue to the world in recent years. **Part Two** begins with a discussion of the intersecting frameworks--Tibetan and American--through which this narrative was produced.

A mystical vision

I first heard about the Year of Tibet at a large Tibet Movement meeting in New York City in June 1990. At that time, three months after I attended the first international conference for Tibet supporters held in Dharamsala, India, activists were full of energy and enthusiasm. The New York conference, organized by the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) and held at the Grand Hyatt in Manhattan, attracted more than 200 people, including members of more than thirty Tibet

support organizations from the U.S., Canada and Mexico. One of the speakers at the opening plenary session was actor and Buddhist Richard Gere. An avid follower of the Dalai Lama and a committed Tibet supporter, Gere told the audience about plans to stage a series of cultural events and religious teachings around the world in 1991-1992:

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

After the plenary session broke up into smaller project-oriented workshops, I decided to attend the one sponsored by Tibet House, intrigued by Gere's comments and by the opportunity to watch him pitch his ideas to a crowd of gawking activists. Not surprisingly, the conference room where the workshop was held was packed. After briefly introducing Tibet House--the organization co-founded by Gere in 1987--and its executive director, Gere launched into a rapid-fire description of his "vision" of the Year of Tibet. He described a series of proposed programs which would run throughout the year, stressing the "in your face" quality, as Gere put it, he was aiming for: "We are selling Tibet...what is important about the Year of Tibet is its p.r. aspect, the awareness it raises. We want Tibet to become part of your consciousness. We want to have hundreds of

events dedicated to Tibet in this country and elsewhere." He told us excitedly that he wanted to "blitz" New York City with "Tibetan spiritual energy" by bringing over the Dalai Lama and heads of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the Bon tradition to have them give initiations and teachings. Gere encouraged dharma groups to get involved, saying that the Dalai Lama felt strongly about Western Buddhist participation in the Year of Tibet: "Dharma groups should be involved. politics is part of it, the whole package of what Tibet represents. I have a mystical vision of this" (see Figure 13).

Tentative programs and brochures were passed around as Gere fielded questions from workshop participants. One person asked if the Dalai Lama would engage in any non-religious activities while he was in New York during October 1991. Gere replied, somewhat defensively, "I don't want to back off. We are going to present him whole." As we will see in the next chapter, the question of whether or not having the Tibetan leader conduct tantric initiations in the heart of New York City was detrimental or beneficial to the Tibet Movement's larger political goals was a hotly contested one.

Gere's "mystical vision" was more coherently articulated in the Tibet House brochure which set out the basic themes of the Year of Tibet campaign:

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



"Of course, that's just my opinion. Richard Gere's views may be somewhat different."

Figure 13

Cartoon, The New Yorker, October 9, 1995

While Tibet House's embrace of the discourse of "culture" can be understood as a reflection of the contemporary global moment described by Turner (1993) in which "culture" becomes a viable frame for political claims, it can also be understood to be the result of the intersection of Tibetan self-consciousness in exile and an emergent New Age Orientalism (Lopez 1994) in the West. I explore this argument in the next two sections.

Tibetan narratives of Tibetanness

From the earliest years of diaspora, Tibetan refugees were aware of the need to preserve Tibetan Buddhism not only as a valued set of practices, but also as basis for reconstituting a collective Tibetan identity in exile. China's attempt to eradicate Buddhist institutions in Tibet after the communist takeover in 1959--a process which reached its destructive height during the Cultural Revolution--lent an added urgency to the refugees' task of cultural and religious preservation. During this period, the Dalai Lama constantly emphasized the need for refugees to maintain their traditions not only for their own sake but for the sake of Tibetans living in Tibet.¹¹

Early encounters with sympathetic aid workers in India and Nepal and with thousands of Western travellers who made the trek to the Himalayan foothills to learn about Tibetan medicine, language, religion, and art reinforced Tibetans' awareness of their culture as an asset and as a potentially important resource in their struggle to regain their country.¹² As one anthropologist observes, the

refugee context

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

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

For more than a thousand years Tibetans have been custodians of the full range of the Buddha's teachings. These have been analyzed, refined and most important of all put into practice, becoming the mainstay of Tibetan culture. We have had a responsibility to preserve our living culture, not just to our brothers and sisters who remain in Tibet, but also to the world at large. (Gyatso 1991:5)

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

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

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

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

conference in Washington, D.C. in 1993:

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

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

By equating the Tibet issue with the preservation of Tibet's spiritual heritage, a particular construction of Tibetan culture itself becomes the object of political action.¹³ While this construction privileges a hegemonic Buddhist definition of Tibetanness, it nevertheless allows Tibetans to embed their nationalistic or ethnic claims within a more universalist framework. This in turn enables them to negotiate the political necessity of having to talk about the situation in Tibet without privileging Tibetan suffering at the expense of others, something which most of the religiously-trained Tibetan leaders are loathe to do. More

important, appeals based on Buddhism, with its enveloping rather than exclusive ideology, offer Tibetans the means through which to incorporate non-Tibetans into their struggle.

As we saw in chapter 5, the historical use of Buddhism to secure the protection of outsiders was a central component of the processes through which the Tibetan state established and maintained relations with its more powerful neighbors between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries.¹⁴ This practice and Tibetans view of their place in the world is aptly summarized in a letter sent by the Tibetan Foreign Bureau to Chinese president Chiang Kai-shek in 1946. In it, we see Tibetans trying to reassert the traditional patron-client relationship with the Nationalist government based on Tibetan spiritual power:

There are many great nations on this earth who have achieved unprecedented wealth and might, but there is only one nation which is dedicated to the well-being of humanity in the world and that is the religious land of Tibet which cherishes a joint spiritual and temporal system. If the adversaries leave Tibet unhampered and in peace and do not continue to hold those formerly seized territories, the nations of the world may not suffer disasters of war, famine, and so on by the power of the (three) Supreme Jewels and the guardians of the Buddhist faith. (Goldstein 1989:542)

The continuities between the narrative of Tibetanness from 1946 and the Dalai Lama's construction of Tibetan Buddhist culture nearly half a century later are striking. The main difference, of course, is that instead of engaging Nationalist government officials, the contemporary narrative is meant to engage a wider and more diffuse Western public.¹⁵

The narrative of Tibetanness described above and the cultural self-

consciousness on which it is based suggests that Tibetans have not been mere passive objects of Western desire upon coming into exile, as some have asserted. Instead, confronted with the realities of statelessness, Tibetan refugees have been self-consciously participating in their own objectification. Ironically, by representing themselves to the outside world as powerful spiritual beings rather than as empowered political actors, and by relying on the same idealized rhetoric as that deployed by Westerners, exile Tibetans have tended to reinforce and perpetuate rather than challenge Western stereotypes about Tibet and Tibetanness. We can see this clearly in an excerpt from a recent Tibet Fund annual report (Tibet Fund is a Tibetan-run non-governmental organization):

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

As we will see in the next section, the Tibetan claim to outside support, articulated in the quote above, plays directly into Western fantasies about Tibetanness.

An American twist

Richard Gere's "mystical vision" and the quasi-evangelical manner in which Tibet

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

My history with Tibet began in 1978 in a refugee camp outside of Pokhara, Nepal, with perhaps two hundred Tibetans who had recently escaped from the killing fields of their occupied country. Although a practicing Buddhist, I was unaware of their tragic recent history. I found myself stunned by their casual yet complete other-worldiness, a quality that still moves me today. Behaving like the tourist I then was--excited and conveniently oblivious to their poverty and suffering--I bargained shamelessly with an old woman for a wooden bowl she was hesitant to part with but was forced to sell for food. I got my price and left clutching the bowl, feeling disgusted with myself. Greed and generosity are their own reward.

A few years later, I arranged to be in Dharamsala, India, the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile. After a week, I was graced with an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Realizing how unequipped I was for such a moment, I offered the ceremonial scarf and made what I hoped was intelligent conversation. I now recall grinning and babbling like a twelve-year-old. But it didn't matter. I was safe and deeply happy. I had been in the presence of all that I wished to be. In many ways, my life began there in that room. (Rhie and Thurman 1991:8)

Like Western travellers to Tibet described in chapter 7 who were transformed by their experience, Gere too was transformed by his encounters with refugees and with the Dalai Lama.

Thus it was with the zeal of a convert that Gere argued for Tibet's relevance to the non-Tibetan world:

Prior to the invasion of Tibet in 1950, the Tibetans were unusually peaceful and happy. Isolated for centuries from a chaotic world they

deeply mistrusted, they developed a wondrous, unique civilization based wholly on the practice of Buddhism's highest ideals. Theirs has been a revolutionary social experiment based on spiritual, psychological, and philosophical insights that provide us with models for achieving intimate and creative relationships with the vast and profound secrets of the human soul. Tibet's importance for our own time, and for the survival of Earth itself, is more critical than ever. Being our most vibrant link to the ancient wisdom traditions, Tibet, and the sanity she represents, must not be allowed to disappear. (Rhie and Thurman 1991:8)

Note how Gere's representation of Tibet echoes and elaborates on standard exile history (discussed in chapters 4 and 5) as well as the idealized portrayal of "Tibetan culture" produced by Tibetans (e.g., the Tibet Fund annual report). This is not surprising, given the fact that Gere's rhetoric was no doubt shaped by the actor's affiliation with Tibet House co-founder, Prof. Robert Thurman, a Tibet activist and Buddhist scholar. Thurman is well-known in activist circles for his devotion to Tibetan Buddhism and to the Dalai Lama, both of which are the result of the years he spent as a Buddhist monk living among Tibetan refugees in India in the 1960s.¹⁶ One of the most visible popularizers of Tibetan Buddhism in the U.S., Thurman was also one of the chief architects of Tibet House's "culture" strategy, which, as we saw in Gere's quote above, depicted pre-occupation Tibet as having a society based on an "inner modernity":

This attitude--a rational, individualistic quest for the full meaningfulness and fruition of human life through the development of the unlimited powers of the human intelligence, heart, and body--created a spiritual industrial revolution whose factories were monastic universities turning out enlightened human beings. (Thurman 1990:113)

In many ways, Thurman's idealized construction of Tibetan Buddhist culture

validates Donald Lopez's argument in "Foreigners at the Lama's Feet" which suggests that in the diasporic era, Western--particularly American--scholars of Tibetan Buddhism have tended to view Tibet as a land of lamas, "endowed with ancient, sometimes secret wisdom and ruled benevolently by a buddha" (1995:284).¹⁷ This view, Lopez suggests, reveals a persistent fantasy of Tibetan Buddhist culture as

an entity existing outside of time, set in its own classical age in a lofty Himalayan keep. With the Chinese takeover of Tibet, this timeless culture was placed in profound jeopardy; there was the fear that the exposure to time would cause its contents to wither, like the bodies of those who dare to leave Shangri-la. (ibid., 252)

One consequence of this fantasy, Lopez observes, is Western scholars' belief that "their urgent task is the preservation of traditional Tibetan culture and what is regarded as its most precious legacy, Tibetan Buddhism, before its 'loss,'" a task, he notes with irony, that seemed to some too important to be left to the exiled Tibetans alone (ibid., 252).¹⁸

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

Buddhologists have tended to reinforce Tibetan Buddhist hegemony in exile.

Thurman's evangelical attitude toward Tibetan culture is perhaps best captured by his favorite mantra "liberating Tibet is liberating yourself." This quintessentially American formulation, part of what Thurman calls "the politics of enlightenment" (1992:28), personalizes and individualizes the Dalai Lama's statement that the Tibet issue is not a political matter but a spiritual struggle to preserve Tibetan Buddhist culture for the benefit of all people by equating political activism for Tibet with individual spiritual liberation. (As we will see, Thurman's vision deeply influenced the way in which the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition, which he co-curated, was framed.)

I want to argue that the narrative embodied by the Year of Tibet campaign--Tibetan culture as an endangered global spiritual resource which can only be preserved by supporting the return of Tibetans to their occupied homeland--is the product of intersecting (and intertwined) Tibetan and American discourses about Tibetanness. While I have emphasized Thurman's and Gere's romanticized visions of Tibet, I have also tried to suggest that American organizers were not the only ones responsible for the idealized way in which the Year of Tibet was framed. As I have pointed out earlier in this dissertation, Tibetan refugees have long relied on static and romanticized representations to attract Western support for their struggle. Therefore Tibetan complicity in perpetuating New Age orientalist images of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism must be acknowledged.²⁰ One of the aims of this chapter and the next is to suggest the complex reactions both within the Movement and the

exile community itself to the production and performance of this problematic narrative of Tibetanness during the Year of Tibet.

Tibet House and the "culture" strategy

From the outset, Tibet House dedicated itself to presenting aspects of Tibetan culture to the public. In an early membership brochure, Gere describes why he decided to found (and fund, at least initially) Tibet House:

February 1987 found me in Bodhgaya, India, in audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Over the years, we had spoken much of the senseless tragedy of a vanishing Tibetan culture and of his unique situation as head of a government in exile. Clearly and directly, he offered that it was the responsibility of us concerned Westerners, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, to muster our resources and make a difference...

Acting like a truly loyal dharma student, Gere followed his teacher's advice, founding Tibet House, along with Robert Thurman, Elizabeth Avedon (Buddhist, former wife of writer John Avedon and daughter-in-law of photographer Richard Avedon), and Tenzin Tethong (the Dalai Lama's representative to North America at the time), upon his return to the States. On September 28, 1987, while on a visit to this country, the Dalai Lama formally inaugurated Tibet House in New York City.

Led by Gere's vision and financial commitment, Tibet House came to life with a bang. In a sort of a rehearsal for the Year of Tibet, Tibet House sponsored an ambitious set of programs in its first year, including American tours by monks from Drepung Loseling monastery in South India and monks from Gyuto Tantric

college, the latter known for their harmonic chanting.²¹ Following their tour, some of the Gyuto monks participated in a month-long demonstration/exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History during which time visitors could watch the monks making sculptures out of colored butter. A year later, in 1990, Tibet House sponsored a dance tour by monks from Namgyal monastery²² and a tour of the Ganden Shartse monk "choir." Winning audiences over wherever they went, the monks soon earned a reputation as effective "cultural ambassadors" for Tibet.

It is worth noting that before there were any monk tours in the West, members of the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts (TIPA) had toured internationally. Formerly known as the Tibetan Music, Dance and Drama Society (referred to by Tibetans as *zlos-gar*), TIPA was founded in 1959 at the Dalai Lama's initiative and was the first new institution formed in exile. TIPA's purpose was to train young children as performers as well as future teachers for the Tibetan schools. Concerned about losing this cultural knowledge, the exile government made the "embodied transmission" of these traditions a priority: students were taught by former Tibetan opera stars, famous Lhasa musicians, individuals well versed in Tibetan folk songs and dances, and several monks expert in performing monastic dances (Calkowski 1995:4). I will come back to the issue of embodied knowledge in **Part Three**.

Preservation of cultural traditions was not the only motive behind the exile government's support of TIPA. Tibetans also saw the staged presentations of these traditions as a potential means of spreading positive propaganda, "We also needed

to acquaint the world with our unique culture which had hitherto remained a mystery to them due to our having kept aloof from the rest of the world" (quoted in Nowak 1984:115). To that end, an international tour was organized in 1975-76 in which 23 troupe members travelled to Europe, North America, Southeast Asia, and Australia.²³ Subsequent tours took TIPA to Europe in 1986, to Europe and the U.S. in 1991, and to Italy and Germany in 1994.

TIPA's first tour was "fraught with international political resistance" as the troupe encountered cancellations and last minute decisions to deny visa applications:

TIPA's first cancellation was Germany. Despite the fact that TIPA had bookings and advertisements in eight cities, a guarantee letter, and numerous references from people of note, Norbu, on his visit to the Germany embassy in the Netherlands, was told by the counsel that being Asian, TIPA people were seeking a prosperous country in which to seek employment and residence. The irony is, of course, that the Germans revoked their decision to give TIPA visas in deference to Chinese pressure, since the Germans were seeking markets in China...(Calkowski 1995:7)²⁴

Things were not much better in the U.S. where TIPA was heckled outside most of their performances, most vociferously in Washington, D.C., Madison, Wisconsin, Berkeley and Los Angeles by China sympathizers (including Chinese embassy personnel in D.C!).²⁵ As their intervention suggests, the People's Republic of China clearly recognized these cultural performances as a means through which Tibetan refugees could assert Tibetan sovereignty and draw attention to their struggle. Eventually the Chinese government responded by sending out their own Chinese Tibetan dance and music troupes on tour to the West, creating a "tag-team

competition" effect in which both sides attempted to demonstrate cultural authority with respect to traditional Tibetan performing arts. One of the most interesting aspects of this kind of cultural competition is the publics to whom these performances are addressed. While TIPA tours have been aimed mainly at a mainstream Euro-American audience, the majority of performances by Sino-Tibetan troupes take place in Chinese-dominated venues, e.g., Flushing, Queens. Chinatown restaurants, sites that attract overseas Chinese audiences more than Euro-American ones.²⁶

In any event, I bring up the TIPA tours in order to suggest that the culture strategy was not new in 1991, nor was Tibet House the first organization to use culture as a tool to mobilize political support. At the same time, however, I want to draw attention to Tibet House's innovation which was to shift the focus from lay folk performances to tantric rituals by monks. As we shall see, Tibet House's preference for monks during the Year of Tibet replicated a long-standing tendency within the exile community to privilege Buddhism at the expense of lay aspects of Tibetan society, drawing fire from some Tibet activists as a result.

Although Tibet House was a still a relatively new organization when the Year of Tibet began in 1991, it had already garnered a lot of media attention and earned a controversial reputation among Movement activists for its high profile, high budget programming. Helped by Gere's celebrity, Tibet House managed to attract both "uptown" socialites as well as a more fashionable "downtown" crowd. By 1991, Tibet House's "uptown" constituency included three Rockefellers (Diana

Rowan Rockefeller, Steven Rockefeller, and Laurence Rockefeller) as well as a number of other members of New York's moneyed elite (e.g., Leila and Henry Luce, John and Jodie Eastman, Elise Frick), all of whom have a longstanding interest in Buddhism. The "downtown" crowd included artists such as Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass, Allen Ginsberg, and Spalding Gray, all of whom have performed in Tibet House benefits over the years. Like Tibet House's "uptown" supporters, these artists are either Buddhists themselves or have a longstanding interest in Buddhist philosophy.²⁷ These glitterati members, attracted by Gere's celebrity as much as by his organization, made for great copy but as we shall see in the next chapter, the benefit of this type of publicity in terms of the Movement's long-range goals remained questionable.

Tibet House's exclusive focus on culture distinguished it from other Movement organizations, such as the International Campaign for Tibet and the U.S. Tibet Committee, who have always had more overtly political agendas. Unsurprisingly, Tibet House's high profile activities and its spiritual-cultural focus generated a certain amount of criticism, skepticism, and jealousy among other Tibet organizations, even more so after it moved into the Tibet building on East 32nd Street (see description in chapter 6). Once Tibet House had settled into its new quarters on the third floor in the spring of 1991, it was easier for employees of the older, largely Tibetan-run organizations (e.g., Tibet Fund, U.S. Tibet Committee) to observe how Tibet House operated on a daily basis. During my stint as a volunteer, I frequently heard these other employees criticize Tibet

House's large expenditures. For instance, one person complained to me. "Tibet House has outrageous budgets, fancy letterhead, health insurance, high salaries, stuff that our organization doesn't have." This disgruntled attitude reflects a grassroots orientation shared by employees in the older Tibetan-run organizations, many of whom felt that Tibet House's expenditures contradicted what they saw as the purpose of Tibet activism--to help the Tibetan cause and Tibetan refugees. Many could not understand that in order to attract the kind of donors Tibet House sought (i.e., celebrities and socialites), Tibet House had to present a polished, professional veneer. Tibet House's perceived extravagances underscored Movement organizations' growing anxieties about access to resources and competition over donors.

Faced with this sort of internal Movement criticism, Tibet House had to find a way to justify its activities in terms of the Movement's political goals. When asked in an interview how she conceptualized Tibet House's role in the Movement, the executive director said:

The way I see Tibet House is, it's like a gameboard, we pull everyone in and then we educate them and then we send them off to do the real work, which is the Office of Tibet and the Campaign for Tibet in the U.S., that's the real work. We are the froth on the cake but without that sweetness out there, you won't get the X's [refers to one of the rich donors] and those type of people.

"In the end," she added, "Tibet House is a big p.r. firm for the Tibet Movement...it presents Tibetan culture and then you get thirty thousand dollar checks from various foundations to the Tibet Movement."

This point was reiterated by another Tibet House employee at a Movement meeting:

Tibet House is the point of entry for the new American, for broadening the grassroots base of support here and perhaps internationally as well...The easiest door of entry for the regular American **with money** is the culture, is to fall in love with Tibet through seeing the beauty of Tibet's culture. You can't sell them the religion right off the bat and you can't push them into the politics right off the bat, usually. Human rights is an entry, but before they pick Tibet as a special human rights concern, they have to fall in love with Tibet. So please remember when Tibet House may seem to be a little bit of a frill, something sort of extra, some high fashion or a luxury thing, remember that in fact it is the doorway for mainstream Americans...

These comments explicitly acknowledge the skepticism some activists felt about Tibet House's "culture strategy" and the organization's claim to be "a big p.r. firm" for the Tibet Movement. Questions about the value of publicity generated by the Year of Tibet and about the strategy more generally were raised by Tibet House's own media strategist in a "post-Year of Tibet" Movement meeting and are discussed in depth in the next chapter.

The fact that Tibet House's targeted constituency was one with a lot of money caused no small amount of grumbling among activists, especially younger Tibetans and those who could not afford to attend Tibet House benefit events. The following incident, which took place one afternoon in early October at Tibet House, illustrates my point. For several weeks, Tibet House staff had been busy organizing two openings for the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition at the IBM gallery. The first was to be held on October 15 (1991) with the Dalai Lama as

honored guest. Benefit dinners for Tibet House immediately following this opening were being arranged, each of which was to be held at a major donor's apartment and co-hosted by a Tibetan. The cost of the dinner was set at \$200 per person, a fact which would obviously prevent a large proportion of the activist and Tibetan refugee community in New York from attending. There was much talk about the dinners, VIP guest lists, and which host wanted which guests, and so on.

Meanwhile, a second opening was being organized for non-VIPs.

Invitations for this event had been sent out in late September to a select list of Tibet House supporters, activists, press, and members of the New York Tibetan community. On this early October afternoon, a young Tibetan woman I knew came into the office. She asked the Tibetan receptionist for an invitation to the non-VIP opening. The receptionist, without checking the list, replied somewhat blithely, "I'm sure your invitation is in the mail." After a moment of awkward silence, the young woman, looking uncertain, left without an invitation. The incident reminded me why many ordinary Tibetans--meaning those not in positions of power in the exile community and not involved in Tibet organizations--were wary of Tibet House. They often felt excluded by its elitism, by the fact that they frequently could not afford, or were not invited to, Tibet House events which they felt, as Tibetans, they were entitled to attend. In addition, exclusive social affairs such as the VIP opening underscored Tibetans' sense of injustice at the fact that non-Tibetans often have greater access to the Dalai Lama than ordinary Tibetans

do.

Later, when I asked the executive director about charges of elitism by ordinary Tibetans who complained they were either not invited or could not afford to attend Tibet House benefits, she replied:

We're trying to bring in new blood, new money to the Tibetan Movement, we're not supposed to cater to the Tibetans. It sounds awful but the Tibetan Movement just has to have an array of components...

She continued by saying if somebody asked her about whether or not they should donate money to the "political stuff or to Tibet House," she would tell them to give it to the political organizations, to help the refugees, but that if the person was not comfortable giving money to support political action, she would recommend they donate it to Tibet House.

Her observation was underscored by another Tibet House employee who commented that

Tibet House has a place in the movement (even though people trash it saying it is a place for society types) because it's a kind of place where a certain type of person can feel very comfortable, I mean they wouldn't show up for a March 10 demonstration and take part in civil disobedience but you come for a Tibetan event. Because a lot of time those people have connections, they're able to contribute resources, and I think what the Year of Tibet did was basically educate a lot of them and bring them in an exciting and interesting way.

At first glance, Tibet House's appeal to "society types" more interested in attending fashionable openings than doing grassroots political work may seem somewhat at odds with the commitment to outreach expressed in its plan for the

Year of Tibet.²⁸ Yet Tibet House set up many "Year of Tibet committees" across the U.S. (and elsewhere), each responsible for raising its own money and initiating local events. In order to help empower these local committees, Tibet House created a starter kit which was sent to any group that requested it. A fascinating document in its own right, the 60+ page kit included such items as a description of the organizational structure for the YOT, a copy of the YOT logo, a large section on "Event ideas and How To's" (e.g., tabling, theme parties, lecture series, film festival, museum display, outreach to local schools, demonstrations), resource lists (e.g. films/videos on Tibet, spokespeople for Tibetan issues, Tibetan news resources, human rights news resources, etc.), and an extensive appendix containing samples of press releases, letters to government officials, petitions, as well as a fact sheet about Tibet, maps, and a brief biography of the Dalai Lama. In many ways the starter kit was unprecedented; up to that point, I had never seen this kind of material brought together in one document. In this regard the executive director was right when she told me:

Nobody had ever done that, we directed people, informed people about their options, nobody had done that before, you pick up any brochure from any Tibet organization and they never mention anyone else...

Tibet House's decision to empower local Year of Tibet committees and to distribute information in this manner made some Tibetans nervous:

As the number of committees grew, the Year of Tibet ran out of the Tibetans' hands...they always want to control access to information, and they were threatened by the fact that people could go directly to the starter kit and find everything they needed without having to go

through the Tibetans themselves.

For Tibet activists, Tibet House changed the power dynamics of Tibet activism in the U.S. Prior to 1991, the two main organizations through which information about Tibet, and more importantly, the Dalai Lama, was disseminated were run by Tibetans. Thus when Tibet House was started some prominent Tibetans opposed it, including some working for the Tibetan government. They did so in part because they recognized an American-run organization which was independent from the government-in-exile as an obvious threat to their control over the Tibet issue.²⁹ Indeed, with the starter kit, groups no longer would need to contact the Office of Tibet in New York or the International Campaign in Washington to get information in order to mount their own local Year of Tibet campaign. These sorts of tensions are a recurring motif in the Tibet Movement and reflect different conceptions of information and power; I explore this further in chapter 10.

Although the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans agreed to become a part of Gere's "vision" and participate in the Year of Tibet, they did so at first with some reluctance. Certainly control and power were involved, but so was a concern about Gere's vision of Tibetanness and how it would be implemented. Concerns about how to and who can represent Tibetan interests--political, cultural, and religious--in the U.S. were at the center of many internal Movement discussions and disputes during and after the Year of Tibet (see chapters 9 and 10). Thus it was with relief that Tibetan officials based in the U.S. agreed to work with a professional media strategist hired by Tibet House to handle the October events in

New York City. Their hope was that this strategist, whom I will call "Jane Kelly," would be sensitive and responsive to their specific concerns.³⁰

As it turned out, Kelly played an important role in framing Tibetan culture during the Year of Tibet, though as a media specialist, she took a very different approach than that of either Tibetan or American activists. By the time I met her in September 1991, Kelly had already been fondly nicknamed "Mama Lama" by the Tibetan employees whose offices she trudged past every day on her way up to the third floor Tibet House office.

"Mama Lama"

From my point of view, Kelly played a kind of "diagnostic" role that fall, both in terms of the Movement and my research. By this I mean that she had never worked in a professional or personal capacity with Tibetans before taking on this job.³¹ As she quickly found out, if she was to be effective, she had to familiarize herself with the cultural expectations of the Tibetans as well as grasp the internal intricacies of Movement politics. Through her effort to design a communications strategy for the October events, which, it is important to point out, included all of the Dalai Lama's activities, Kelly learned a lot about the Tibet Movement. In this sense her experience mirrored mine as an anthropologist, though her learning curve was much steeper.

My initial impression of Kelly as intelligent, perceptive, and good humored held fast throughout the Year of Tibet. Sitting at her desk, drinking endless cans

of Diet Coke, she managed the phones with consummate skill. Having worked with Amnesty and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for many years, she brought with her both credibility and impeccable contacts, ranging from television news journalists like Peter Jennings to radio personalities like Scott Simon at National Public Radio to reporters like Abe Rosenthal at the New York Times, all of whom she addressed on a first-name basis. Most of Kelly's time was spent trying to "provoke" stories about the Dalai Lama and the Tibet issue in the context of the Year of Tibet. The media strategy she designed reflected her background in serious political campaigns: she sought to use Year of Tibet events and the Dalai Lama's presence as vehicles through which to highlight the current situation in Tibet and to advance the press' understanding and coverage of the Tibet issue. For instance, following the Dalai Lama's trip to Lithuania and Estonia in September 1991, she encouraged her contacts to consider doing a story on the validity of the Dalai Lama's comparison between the Baltic states' independence and the Tibetan demand for freedom. She also suggested stories on the Dalai Lama's dual role as a statesman and monk, writing to one journalist:

Another aspect of Tibet is the role and personality of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He is both the spiritual and political leader of Tibet. I'm sure there are those at xxx who dismiss the Dalai Lama as another Guru on the Go. The prejudice misses the point--he is constantly balancing the dichotomy of his dual role: a non-violent leader-statesman and monk. I think the duality makes him remarkable. His commitment to non-violence is remarkable. I think you could explore this duality in a thoughtful and provocative piece.

As this letter suggests, Kelly was in a key mediating position, presenting Tibetan

values to the American press, many of whom know little about Tibet while simultaneously explaining American media expectations to her employers and to Tibetan leaders in New York (see chapter 10).

The week before the Dalai Lama was due to arrive in New York for the Year of Tibet events, Kelly spent a lot of time trying to drum up interest in a speech he was scheduled to deliver at Yale University. She telephoned her contacts and arranged to have press releases faxed and press kits delivered to those who expressed interest in covering the speech. Without disclosing exactly what the Dalai Lama planned to say, Kelly emphasized that his announcement would be "major." In a letter to Peter Jennings, she wrote:

I hope **World News** will cover what may be a historic initiative. I realize I am asking you to seriously consider assigning a story without fully informing you in advance what the initiative is. In all my work with Amnesty and the Lawyers Committee, I've never before tried to provoke interest without being able to offer more facts.

Because the Tibetans themselves were not sure precisely what the Dalai Lama's message would be at Yale, Kelly was not allowed to disclose anything specific prior to the event itself. This, of course, put her in an awkward position which she would occasionally acknowledge to her colleagues over the phone.

Kelly succeeded in "targeting and placing stories" about the content of the Dalai Lama's Yale speech in a number of media outlets, including the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, the Associated Press, Reuters, UPI, NBC Nightly News, National Public Radio. ABC World News Tonight and

CBS Evening News also reported briefly on the speech. On the level of basic reportage, Kelly's media strategy clearly worked. But as we shall see in the next chapter, the kind of hard political coverage she succeeded in generating was at risk of losing its meaning without an ongoing coordinated media strategy that would continue to advance the story.

In addition to generating media coverage of the Dalai Lama's more temporally-oriented activities while he was in the U.S., Kelly attempted to shape the way in which his participation in the New York Year of Tibet events was framed. She was very sensitive to Tibetan concerns that their leader be represented in a dignified and suitably respectful manner. Unfortunately her efforts in this area were somewhat undermined when, at the last minute, panicked about not selling enough tickets and making his money back, Richard Gere decided to hire a public relations firm (Livet Reichart) to handle the Kalachakra initiation publicity separately: this made Kelly and the Tibetan community unhappy as the firm did not necessarily have the Tibetans' concerns and interests at heart.

Kelly's job was thus not an easy one; she frequently expressed frustration over having to deal with an uncertain chain of command and an indefinite message, not to mention other publicists working at cross-purposes with her. I often found myself in agreement with her observations and analysis of these problems, as did many of those with whom she worked closely. In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, Kelly's running commentary on her work with Tibet activists functioned as a sort of mirror in which activists could see their reflection. In this way, she

played an integral role in the Year of Tibet in New York not only as a cultural broker between the press and the Movement but also as a sort of consciousness-raiser for activists themselves.

Having introduced the main players and sketched their roles in creating and framing the New York events, I now explore one of these events in greater detail. In **Part Three**, my aim is to examine the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition and the accompanying sand mandala in relation to the narrative of Tibetanness described above and in so doing, to further develop my argument about the strategic deployment of culture.

Part Three

The October blitz

In October 1991, Richard Gere's desire to "blitz" New York City with "Tibetan spiritual energy" was realized. More than 60 events took place, ranging from art exhibitions to lectures to film festivals to religious teachings (see Figure 14).

An eight-day Buddhist teaching and tantric initiation given by the Dalai Lama in Madison Square Garden's Paramount Theater and the "Wisdom and Compassion" Buddhist art exhibition and sand mandala creation at the IBM Gallery were the centerpiece events of the Year of Tibet in New York. Many of the other major events involved the Dalai Lama, including an interfaith concert at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a talk by the Tibetan leader at the Paramount Theater, introduced by Richard Gere, and then Mayor David Dinkins and New

Figure 14 Highlights of the Year of Tibet Program

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR OF TIBET PROGRAMS NEW YORK CITY FALL 1991

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The Year of Tibet Program in New York City...

York Congressman Benjamin Gilman; a symposium on Tibet at the Asia Society where the Dalai Lama was interviewed by the Society's president; and a "Sunrise Meditation for World Peace" in Central Park.

In addition to the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition, a number of Tibet-related photographic shows were mounted at galleries and museums. Films and videos about Tibet were screened at the Asia Society, which sponsored a two-day event focusing exclusively on films about Tibetan religion and ritual; at the American Museum of Natural History, which screened films about Tibet and the Himalayas; and at Anthology Film Archives where the "Dreams and Documents" film festival took place. Meanwhile videos relating to Tibet played hourly on the Sony Jumbotron in Times Square; and WNET, one of New York's two public television stations, screened Frank Capra's famous feature film from 1930s, "Lost Horizon," and a documentary about the Dalai Lama.

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

ballroom, and as mentioned earlier, Sakya Trizin gave several initiations, including Vajrakilaya and Amitābha Powa initiations, at the Society for Ethical Culture on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

What was it like to be a Tibet activist during this period? One active participant summed up what seemed to be the impact for many American supporters as well as for myself when she described it as a "heightened moment" for her. With the bulk of events concentrated during the two and a half weeks the Dalai Lama was in New York, people attended a lot of events in a very short period of time. I too found myself frequently running from one event to another, sometimes even going to three events in a single day. This meant that activists saw each other over and over again, a fact which contributed to a sense of solidarity and camaraderie amongst us.³²

The events in New York were successful not just in terms of the powerful cumulative effect they had on participants, but also in terms of the numbers of people they attracted and the media attention they generated. Each was a complex performance in its own right and could easily merit separate discussion. For brevity's sake, I will limit my discussion here to the "Wisdom and Compassion" and accompanying sand mandala exhibition.

Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet

Organizers at Tibet House considered the "Wisdom and Compassion" show to be the backbone of the Year of Tibet. Curated by Prof. Robert Thurman and Prof.

Marilyn Rhie, and organized by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the show included more than 150 objects, among them 31 pieces lent by the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg which had never before been shown in the U.S. The creation of a sand mandala by monks from Namgyal Monastery accompanied the show, at both its first venue in the spring of 1991--the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco--and its second venue in the fall--the IBM Gallery of Science and Art. Major funding for "Wisdom and Compassion" was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, along with several private organizations including the Luce Foundation and the Merck Foundation.

According to Rand Castile, one of the organizers who works at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, while the show was still in the early planning stages, he received a telephone call from Henry Kissinger who strongly advised him against doing the show. When Castile went public with information about Kissinger's meddling, the former Secretary of State denied to a New York Times reporter and other journalists ever having made the call. Kissinger reportedly also pressured the head of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to drop the exhibition, despite the fact the Met had already begun to work with the show's curators. In an interview with a journalist, co-curator Thurman suggested that Kissinger's attempts to block the show reflected intensive lobbying by the Chinese government which, he argued, recognized the political significance of the exhibition all too clearly. By the time "Wisdom and Compassion" travelled to London in 1992, China made its objections public, protesting so vehemently that

the Times, a conservative English newspaper (no doubt welcoming the opportunity to champion Tibet in good anti-communist fashion) ran an editorial the day the show opened at the Royal Academy of Art urging Londoners to go see the show. These behind the scenes activities by Kissinger and China help explain the institutional context of the exhibition: after being dropped by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tibet House approached the IBM Gallery of Science and Art which gladly accepted the show. It is worth mentioning here that the IBM Gallery had less at stake than the Metropolitan Museum of Art in terms of risking censure by China. Without a permanent collection such as that of the Metropolitan, it faced less of a threat of withdrawal of Chinese cooperation in future exhibitions.

In an essay titled "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," James Clifford describes two systems in which non-Western objects have usually "found a home"--either in the discourses and institutions of art or within those of anthropology, both of which "assume a primitive world in need of preservation, redemption, and representation" (1988:200).³³ Dissatisfied with this systemic opposition, Clifford declares, "We need exhibitions that question the boundaries of art and of the art world, an influx of truly indigestible "outside" artifacts" (ibid., 213). In the essay he notes one bright spot--a show at the IBM Gallery of the Northwest Coast Collection from the Museum of the American Indian--where Kwakiutl artist Calvin Hunt put finishing touches on two totem poles in the atrium and left the freshly carved wood chips scattered around the base (ibid., 213). (Note, however, that Clifford's interest remains in the signs of human presence rather than in the artist

himself.) I bring Clifford up to suggest that as a show, "Wisdom and Compassion" questioned "the boundaries of art and the art world" both in terms of its framing (e.g., catalogue and labelling) and by the fact that it appeared to introduce "truly indigestible" objects--Tibetan Buddhist paintings and sculptures whose meanings are considered "self-secret" by the tantric practitioners who use them. The key difference, however, between the "Primitivism" exhibition discussed in Clifford's essay, for instance, and "Wisdom and Compassion" is that Tibetans collaborated in their representation and did it for a very clear political end, a fact which puts the primitivism argument (e.g., Clifford 1988; Torgovnick 1990) in a new light.

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

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

In Tibetan Buddhism, mandalas are usually drawn, painted, and sometimes even built as three-dimensional structures. The mandala may be "read" and studied as a text, memorized for visualization during meditation, and interpreted; Tibetans

believe that the simple act of viewing a mandala brings special blessings. By organizing the exhibition with a mandala-like structure, the curators intended to have viewers move from the outside of the "mandala palace" to the inside, a "progressive journey" paralleling the visualization procedures of practitioners during a tantric initiation.

Thus in the show's catalogue, the curators explain how they intended for viewers to begin "with the outer halls of the mandala palace" where they encounter objects representing the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni) and the various teachers, upholders, and protectors of Buddhism. Moving inward, they enter the "middle halls of the mandala palace" where they encounter objects representing the four lineages, in historical order (Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelug), along with their eminent teachers, founders, and even archetype deities (*yidam*). Finally, in the "inner halls of the mandala palace" observers experience images of the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas in their celestial and earthly Pure Land forms (Rhie and Thurman 1991:13). By organizing the show in this fashion, the curators attempted to "demonstrate the function of this quintessentially religious art within its sacred context" (Rhie and Thurman 1994:12)--which is to encourage an atmosphere of transformation, to help believers along the path towards enlightenment. In this way the show was meant to offer not so much an aesthetic experience as a spiritual one. The Dalai Lama's brief foreword to the catalogue underscores this aim:

Art expresses the perceptions of a people. Sacred art reveals their deepest insights and their highest aspirations. So, to encounter our works of sacred art is to experience for yourself some of our most

profound visions. (1991:7)

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

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

experiential hand-in-hand walk through one of the most difficult images for Westerners to comprehend: a father-mother union manifestation of the Buddha that, on first view, is both fearsome and erotic. By confronting this image on several levels--symbolic, aesthetic, psychological, and spiritual--we hope to make the beholder aware of the possibilities inherent in all the works of art that follow.

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

Let us for a moment lay aside our ordinary perceptions of reality and follow the Tibetans in their meditation on this father-mother union image, allowing it to become an image of ourselves as the embodiment of enlightenment. If we let ourselves observe and

experience this image as Tibetans do, we can be inspired about the possibility of attaining enlightenment for ourselves. But the liberative potential of this image can be fully realized in our imagination only if we try to feel the texture of the goal state--if we imagine ourselves to be both this male and this female in union, in such an embrace, with these arms, these legs, these faces and eyes, with these adornments, and holding these symbols. This is, in fact, what Tantric adepts do. It is the inner secret of tantric meditation. (1991:18)

One way of understanding this attempt to communicate how the images work experientially lies in the exhibition's title, "Wisdom and Compassion." As we saw in Chapter 3, Mahāyāna Buddhism revolves around the *bodhisattva*, who, out of compassion for the world, takes a vow to become a Buddha in order to lead all beings out of suffering to the bliss of enlightenment. Through long eons of spiritual practice, bodhisattvas cultivate virtues such as giving and patience, as well as wisdom. Wisdom is the understanding that all things, including persons, are devoid of inherent nature, and are, in reality, empty (Lopez 1991:104). Or, as Thurman writes in the "Wisdom and Compassion" catalogue:

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

In order to become enlightened, Tibetan Buddhists believe, the bodhisattva must develop both wisdom and compassion fully--"must dedicate himself or herself to work forever for the welfare of the other while simultaneously understanding that all beings, oneself and others, do not exist ultimately, that they do not exist as they

appear" (Lopez 1991:104). According to Thurman, the quintessential Buddhist art is "the liberating of all beings from suffering; its fruition is the discovery of truth, beauty, goodness, and the capacity for bliss inherent in enlightened life" (1991:17).³⁴ While it is doubtful that the show's curators believed they could "liberate" those who viewed the exhibition, it does seem that they were attempting to evoke a nonanalytic experience, similar to the experiences of compassionate bliss which such images would presumably elicit in tantric practitioners.

In its evangelism, the exhibition clearly reflected the American curators' commitment to and vision of Tibetan Buddhist practice. Although a few Tibetans were involved in an advisory capacity and some helped with translations, Tibetan participation in "Wisdom and Compassion" was more or less limited to the actual sand mandala "performance." I shall explore this latter event later in this chapter.

Interpreting "Wisdom and Compassion"

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

mainstream American audience.

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

The various ways in which "Wisdom and Compassion" was interpreted or "read" reveal interesting struggles with the process of objectification of Tibetan "culture." As Clifford (1988) and others (e.g., Karp and Lavine 1991; Marcus and Myers 1995) have suggested, the technologies or concepts of museum "display" tend to be produced around visual appreciation--aesthetics--rather than participation. That is, objects are usually circuited through a neutral, rather than an "evangelical" discourse. Given this general practice, how did art critics react to the show's framing? In his review, New York Times writer John Russell made the point that the nonpractitioner is essentially "cut off from the experience of Tibetan

art in its fullest and most effective sense" although the imagery seduces us nonetheless.³⁵ Another critic, Amei Wallach from New York Newsday, wrote that "Wisdom and Compassion" represented "the first show I've ever seen that actually focuses on religious content, because its primary purpose is to impart a religious point of view--even, perhaps, give the viewer a religious experience."³⁶ Wallach found the wall labels to be far too long, the catalogue "too unabashedly a believer's text." She suggested that while the organizers "want to invent a new kind of exhibition that concentrates on the sacred in sacred art," the tools they choose--the "old natural-history approach of providing exhaustive context and the old art-museum reliance on esthetics"--do not work.

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

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

Eckel argues that by moving viewers from the life of the historical Buddha to the lives of sages and adepts to the vision of the Pure Lands, the structure of the exhibition moved them closer to an idealized vision of Tibet. Citing Richard Gere's contribution to the catalogue, Eckel argues that the actor's problematic framing of Tibetan culture as the "lifeboat of culture, the storehouse of ancient

wisdom, and the last great hope of civilization" reinforces the myth of Tibet as Shangri-La suggested by the exhibition itself (Eckel 1992:7). At the same, he argues, the images in "Wisdom and Compassion" were appropriated for political purposes:

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

Like Kissinger and the Chinese officials whose interests the former secretary-of-state represented, Eckels recognizes the signification of culture as a political practice and "Wisdom and Compassion" as part of a larger Tibetan strategy aimed at "transforming" the public not just spiritually but politically.

Embodying Tibetanness: Monks and mandalas

Despite the exhibition's complexity and impenetrability for those unfamiliar with Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and iconography, it managed to attract more than 250,000 New Yorkers during its ten-week run. If Gallery visitors had some difficulty fully understanding all of the show's imagery, they certainly related well

to the four monks who worked in the corner of the foyer for several weeks creating a sand mandala. Every day at lunch time, a crowd of curious New Yorkers gathered around the windows of the Gallery, noses pressed to the glass, peering in. What the crowd saw were four monks, heads shaved and wearing red robes, hunched over, painstakingly tapping colored grains of sand out of a funnel into an elaborate pattern.

Like the *thangkas*, sculptures, and tapestries discussed above, sand mandalas play an important functional role in Tibetan Buddhism as vehicles through which practitioners can achieve spiritual insight. The sand mandala created at the IBM Gallery was a Kalachakra mandala. According to Buddhist belief, the mandala represents the Kalachakra deity's abode, and serves as a

blue print for a three-dimensional visualization of an ornate structure made of jewel-light...with various levels, doors, roofs, and porticoes in which 722 exquisitely dressed subsidiary deities reside. (Brentano 1993:48)

In the past, mandalas would only have been created in the context of an initiation into a particular tantra. But in 1988, the first sand mandala to be created by monks outside a religious context was made at the American Museum of Natural History.³⁷ This public display of mandala-making proved to be so popular that mandalas were soon created in museums and galleries across the U.S.³⁸

One of the most interesting aspects of this new "genre" of public mandala-making is the elaboration of Buddhist-related activities around their creation. By this I mean that whereas in the very beginning the monk-artists would have done

their preparatory rituals on their own, the process has evolved in recent years, expanding to include, among other things, daily chanting and meditation sessions on museum/gallery premises which are open to the public and led by the monks.³⁹ For instance, when "Wisdom and Compassion" was being exhibited in San Francisco, interest was so high that the monks who made the accompanying sand mandala were asked to lead meditation sessions. Sessions were extremely popular, so much so that it became hard to find a place to put one's meditation cushion in the museum's gallery. When the same monks created a sand mandala at the Field Museum in Chicago a few months later, their schedule--published in a museum flyer--reflected this increased elaboration:

The monk's daily schedule will be:
9 - 10: Daily chanting and meditation
10 - 1: Creating the sand mandala, greeting visitors, and
answering questions
2 - 4: Creating sand mandala

The question and answer session was limited to the first half of the day, no doubt to allow the monks to get enough work done each day.⁴⁰ While no such elaboration was allowed at the IBM Gallery in New York, the positioning of the sand mandala platform in a visible corner near the entrance of the museum nevertheless provided the public an opportunity to interact with the monks. Inevitably, curious individuals would go inside where they could stand closer and perhaps ask a question or two if one of the monks happened to look up or take a break.

Like the Aboriginal artists at the Asia Society described by Myers, Tibetan

monks have been increasingly participating "as embodied representatives of their culture" (1994b:678).⁴¹ In many ways, this is an extension of the role monks typically play in Tibetan society. As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, the primary goal of the Tibetan polity before 1959 was the "production and reproduction of as many monks as possible" (Goldstein and Tsarong 1985:17). Thus monks were viewed as exemplars of Tibetan society's highest ideal--the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. While not all monks joined monasteries in Tibet for this reason alone--there were other more pragmatic advantages such as potential access to connections and resources, respect and prestige--they nevertheless were perceived in this way.

On another level, the monks who participated in Year of Tibet events were "embodied representatives of their culture" based on the fact that they were bearers of cultural knowledge which had been passed on to them. Implicit in this claim to cultural authority is the Buddhist belief in living knowledge--knowledge as embodied in persons and transmitted from a lineage master. Discussing the role of lineage (*gyud*) as a vehicle for Tibet's corporate identity via Buddhism, Lopez writes:

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

disciple as unwritten commentary on sacred text. (1995b:268)

Spiritual knowledge in Tibetan Buddhism is thus passed on through a direct personal physical connection between lama and student.⁴² In this regard, lineage operates as a kind of metaphenomenon which transcends objects, artifacts, and even the monks themselves. What becomes significant is the living knowledge the monks bring with them. On a certain level then, the knowledge materializing on a surface of a sand mandala, for example, gives the monks (or is evidence enough of) their authority to do what they are doing.⁴³

As exemplars of Tibetan "culture," the monks who have made sand mandalas, chanted, danced, or created butter sculptures in various venues across the country have been wildly popular with the American public. This popularity with American audiences has elicited some complicated feelings amongst Tibetans, particularly those who are younger and feel constrained by a Western tendency to privilege Buddhism over lay aspects of exile culture (this in spite of the fact that the government-in-exile is frequently accused of doing the same thing).⁴⁴ One incident in particular captures the sense of frustration some Tibetans feel. On an early October day in 1991, when I was volunteering at Tibet House, Richard Gere came in to do an interview and get his photograph taken for a women's fashion magazine that was doing a story on the Year of Tibet. When it was time for his picture to be taken, Gere said he wanted it taken with a monk. Unsurprisingly, there were no monks working in the Tibet building. Upon hearing Gere's request, one of the Tibetans working in the building got very annoyed, exclaiming later to

those of us in the Tibet House office, "We're not all monks you know!" In the end, Gere had to settle for the highest status layperson in the building who happened to be the Dalai Lama's representative to North America. Throughout the course of my research, I heard many Tibetans voice similar frustration over this type of Western essentialism. The anecdote demonstrates how the process of objectifying culture rearranges relationships among participants: by privileging a Buddhist definition of "Tibetanness," secular Tibetans are made to feel somehow "inauthentic" because they are not monks.⁴⁵

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

West (see Chapter 9).⁴⁶

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

...the spiritual peace of the Buddhist monks was put to the test in May. A seemingly deranged woman walked into the courtyard as the monks were completing their four weeks of work on the mandala. "She just clambered over their shoulders, jumped on top of the mandala and started shuffling her feet; yelling something about the CIA and the color black," Mr. Kohn [an expert on Tibetan art and religion who helped put the exhibition together] said.

Although museum staff and visitors who witnessed the desecration of the mandala were shaken, some to the point of tears, the monks were unperturbed. "I didn't see a flicker of annoyance," said Mr. Kohn. "One of them said, 'That poor woman--she must really be suffering.' They started praying for her that day and continued the whole time they were here."

The ruined mandala had to be ritually dismantled, then a new one created to replace it. Luckily, the monks' one suitcase of sand contained enough not only for mandalas all over the U.S. but even some sand for a few extra. (DeCarlo and Dintenfass 1991:28)

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

notes:

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

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

The recontextualization of "culture"

The "embodied" public performances of the monks, whether they involve making a sand mandala, doing a tantric dance, or creating a butter sculpture, all raise

interesting questions about the recontextualization of "culture." What exactly are the monks doing? How are events framed by organizers and how are they interpreted by audiences?

In his essay on the creation of a sandpainting by Aboriginal artists at the Asia Society, Myers (1994b) comments on the unsettled nature of the performance, pointing out that

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

Part of Myers' interest is precisely in the unfixed, contingent nature of the event and on the varying frameworks participants and audiences bring to it. Unlike many commentators, who tend to focus on the ways in which such a "performance" is read by the audience, Myers argues that we need to take into account the thoughts and motivations of the performers themselves. That to interpret the event simply as a spectacle of cultural difference, a process whereby indigenous people are "othered," is to neglect these events as forms of social action and as "important contexts for the contemporary negotiation and circulation of indigenous peoples' identities" (1994b:675).

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

constructed as part of ritual, including songs and reenactments of ancestral activities, in which all those present are essentially

participants. Sandpaintings are neither independent entities nor are they performances for an audience of spectators. Indeed, sandpaintings are ritual constructions to which, like most forms of religious knowledge in Central Australia, access is restricted...in that simple sense, the activity of constructing a sandpainting at the Asia Society was something new. (1994b:680)

Like Aboriginal sandpainting, Tibetan sandpaintings are normally "neither independent entities nor are they performances for an audience of spectators" but instead are "ritual constructions" to which access is restricted.⁴⁷ The emergence of public sandpainting since 1988 is thus something new, a Tibetan exile innovation. Given their novelty, how have mandala activities been framed by organizers? During the Year of Tibet, the two mandalas which accompanied the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition were described simultaneously as Buddhist rituals and "art."⁴⁸ In the press kit for the exhibition at the IBM Gallery, the sandpainting was described as both "artwork" and "spiritually significant work":

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

As the press kit implies, the monks appeared to have followed some of the normal Buddhist procedures such as blessing and consecrating the sand and the space where it was to be built and saying appropriate prayers in the process of making the sand mandala in New York. When asked about how he regarded the mandala, one of the main sand mandala "artists," the Venerable Lobsang Samten (from

Namgyal Monastery), said the monks considered the object to be "sacred," despite the fact they did not do all the subsidiary rituals such as those which would be done during the creation of the Kalachakra mandala for the initiation in Madison Square Garden (e.g., daily pujas, use of "wisdom thread" in laying down white lines, calling down of the deities or mantra recitation). In other words, although the sandpainting was defined in somewhat ambiguous aesthetic terms by the organizers, the participants themselves viewed the mandala in a Buddhist ritual context.

In 1988 Samten was quoted in a brochure distributed at the American Museum of Natural History as saying: "The sand mandala is an ancient tradition. Working on it manifests peace. And even a person who simply sees it may feel peace from deep inside...on many levels." Two years later, when Samten created a "Chenrezig mandala" at the New York Open Center, the brochure sent out by the center claimed: "Those who witness the creation of a mandala, who watch as a vision of sublime beauty unfolds grain by grain, will develop inner peace and transcendental wisdom." Thus like the images in the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition, the sand mandala was framed as offering a potential spiritual experience for viewers.⁴⁹

By presenting the Kalachakra mandala at the IBM gallery in this manner, exhibition organizers played on one of the frames Myers' suggests that audiences commonly bring to performances of cultural difference--the frame of "coming into contact with cultural form that is presumed to possess something of an "aura"

(Benjamin 1968), of sacred tradition or aesthetic originality" (1994b:678). No doubt the daily creation of the mandala was compelling to audiences because of the intense focus monks brought to the activity, a focus which is generally interpreted by non-Tibetans as meditative. Myers' witnessed a similar sort of silence at the Asia Society event which, ironically, "is very untypical of Aboriginal ritual events" (ibid., 685). He goes on, "silence at the Asia Society added a sense of what is to us [emphasis in original] reverential, meditational concentration that is not at all obvious, if present, in the original ritual contexts" (ibid., 685).

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

Nevertheless, audiences did not appear to respond to the live presence of Tibetans making mandalas at the IBM Gallery in the same way that some members of the audience reacted to the presence of Aboriginal artists on stage at the Asia Society. I heard no one comparing the mandala part of the exhibition to a

"diorama" as was the case for the Aboriginal sandpainting performance, this despite the fact that the monks were literally behind glass and on display for any passerby to see and watch. Maybe one reason is the fact that Tibet never came under the direct colonial domination of a Western power; instead, as we have seen, Tibet was transformed into a particular focus of European desire and fantasy (Lopez 1995b:252). Thus the ideological baggage is not one of historical conquest but that of a different sort, an obviously problematic "New Age Orientalism" which idealizes Tibetans and their "culture."

Perhaps another more important reason Western audiences did not object to the "objectification" of Tibetan "culture" in this instance stems from the other "frame" Western audiences bring to such intercultural encounters--"the performance of ethnicity, where cultural difference indexes collective and (potential) political identity" (Myers 1994b:678). In other words, the creation of mandalas by Tibetan monks was read as a demonstration of a Tibetan "ethnic" identity which is under threat from the Chinese. Tibetans were viewed as willing participants in their own representation or objectification. This interpretation no doubt would have been reinforced and further contextualized by the catalogue to the exhibition, which, as Eckels points out above, contained maps showing the boundaries claimed by the Tibetan government in 1914 as well as references to a formerly "independent Tibet."

Given the Tibetans' collaborative role in the production and "performance" of the Year of Tibet, arguments about "authenticity," "commodification," or

"spectacle" as well as "othering" seem to miss the point. Myers is right to call for a more complex understanding of the intercultural exchange between the audience and performers as he concludes:

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

As the Tibetan case so clearly illustrates, these events in novel arenas can serve more urgent purposes, such as the transformation of interested audiences into political supporters.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by asserting that each of the strategies deployed by Tibet activists entails the production and assertion of a particular diasporic identity, or what I call a "narrative of Tibetanness." In the case of the Year of Tibet, the narrative was one of Tibetan Buddhist culture as a locus of endangered spirituality and a valuable resource for the world. Part of my interest in this chapter was in tracing the emergence and deployment of this narrative of Tibetan culture which, I argued, is the product of a number of intersecting processes and complex forces including the emergence of "culture" as a valid (viable) display frame for political claims, the development of a self-consciousness about Tibetan religious and cultural practices within the exile community, the reinterpretation of the patron-client relationship, and the rise of a kind of New Age Orientalism (e.g., Richard

Gere's "mystical vision") in which Tibet is idealized as a purely sacred place.

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

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

On a different level, one of my goals in this chapter and the next is to demonstrate what a grounded ethnographic approach can bring to the performance of "culture" (cultural difference). It is not enough to simply analyze these representations as spectacles of difference which reinforce, in this case, American dominance over Tibetans. Clearly we must acknowledge the existence of

hegemonic categories which contain and constrain Tibetans, but as I have tried to suggest in this chapter, we must also attend to the complex ways in which Tibetans creatively engage these representations and produce their own narratives of Tibetan culture as part of a larger effort to sustain themselves in exile and to engage outside support (find patrons) for their struggle.

In the next chapter, I continue my exploration of the Year of Tibet by focusing on the social processes around the production of a tantric initiation in Madison Square Garden. Through this example, I hope to demonstrate more concretely both the intercultural negotiations involved with the strategic deployment of culture and the limitations of such a campaign.

Notes

1. The Year of Tibet was not the first campaign of its kind. As Brian Wallis writes in an essay titled "Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy" (1994), large-scale national cultural festivals have been the favored form in the last ten years or so, with the following celebrations staged in the U.S.: "Mexico: A Work of Art" (1990); "Turkey--The Continuing Magnificence" (1987-88); and "Festival of Indonesia" (1990-92). These festivals have functioned as huge public relations gambits, designed to "sell" the nation's image in the United States. As Wallis writes,

Their unabashed purpose is to transform negative stereotypes into positive ones and, in the process, to improve the political and economic standing of their country. These exhibitions are intricate, multilayered engines of global diplomacy, which, when staged properly, are almost indiscernible as self-promotions. (1991:86)

Like these other cultural campaigns which had large art exhibitions at their center, the Year of Tibet had "Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet" at its center. And like these other exhibitions, Wisdom and Compassion "dramatized the most conventionalized versions of their national images, asserting past glories and amplifying stereotypical differences" (1991:88). This "self-Orientalizing" mode, Wallis notes, entails the nation in question remaking its national image into the stereotype American audiences expect to see. I discuss the representation of Tibetan Buddhism in the "Wisdom and Compassion" show in the text.

While Tibet activists certainly participated in a bit of self-orientalizing during the Year of Tibet, the larger goal was not so much to use culture to attract capital as to mobilize grassroots political support for the Tibet issue. By putting Tibet in the public's eye (and therefore the press' eyes), activists hoped to use that attention to pressure American officials into changing their policies toward Tibet and China.

2. In her essay, Calkowski discusses several world tours by performers from the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts (TIPA) in the 1970s and 1980s. One of the points she makes is that in the area of performing arts, the confrontation is no longer limited to Chinese and Tibetan refugee performers but includes Sinicized Tibetans now as well, all of whom claim to represent "authentic" Tibetan culture.
3. For a sample of postcolonial- poststructural theorizing about representation and "cultural othering," see Bhaba 1995; Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fabian 1983; Foucault 1980; Said 1978; Todorov 1984; Trinh 1989, 1991).
4. In this chapter, "Tibet activists" includes both Tibetan and non-Tibetans whereas "Tibetan activists" refers specifically to Tibetan activists.

5. See Brightman 1995 for an extended discussion of current critiques of the culture concept, including Clifford's.
6. Toward this end, Ginsburg has conducted ethnographic research on media production in Central Australia, focusing on three media groups: the Warlpiri Media Association (WMA) in the Central Desert Aboriginal community of Yuendumu; the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) located outside the town of Alice Springs; and Imparja Television, based in Alice Springs but serving all of the Northern Territory. In addition, she has also studied the emergence of transnational networks of indigenous media producers, viewing film festivals (e.g. the Dreamspeakers Festival in Edmonton, Canada) and co-productions organized by and for indigenous producers from around the world as the means through which these networks are constituted.
7. For instance, as other researchers have pointed out in the case of Warlpiri media, "the ways in which the tapes are made and used reflect Warlpiri understandings of kin-based obligations for ceremonial production and control of traditional knowledge, as these index cosmological relationships to particular features in regional geography" (Michaels and Kelly 1984).
8. There are profound historical and ethnographic differences between Tibetans and so-called "fourth world" peoples which accounts, at least in part, for my particular focus. Unlike Australia or Brazil, Tibet is associated with a great civilization with a complex literary tradition and a world religion. The romance attached to this difference is significant. In addition, Tibet was never colonized by a Western power (and many people consider Tibet to have been colonized by China), and Tibetans refugees consider themselves to be exiles from a formerly independent country. As a result, they engage the West very differently—as we have seen throughout this dissertation. For indigenous groups who have suffered the most severe long-term effects of colonization like the Australian Aborigines and Native Americans, such a high degree of incorporation of Westerners into their own processes of cultural representation would most likely be viewed by many within the community as highly problematic.
9. There are provocative parallels between post-structural/post-colonial theories of identity, such as the ones described above, and Buddhism, which might explain the profoundly relational aspect of Tibetanness described in this chapter (for a discussion of Buddhism and post-structural feminism, see Klein 1995). These parallels are based on Buddhism's central philosophical tenet of selflessness—defined as the absence of a fixed, absolute, unchanging self—and on the Mahāyāna belief in the "objective selflessness" of all phenoma (see chapter 3). With the recognition of this selflessness comes the simultaneous recognition of the relativity and relationality of all beings. This view of interdependence echoes post-structuralist ideas about identities as shifting, multiple, and dependent upon context.
10. See Hevia 1993; Ruegg 1991; Shakabpa 1967 for discussions of the role of patron-lama relationship in Tibetan political history.

11. In a discussion with author John Avedon about the early years of cultural reconstruction in exile, the Dalai Lama recalled his decision-making process:

We divided our culture into two types. In the first category we placed that which, we determined, needed to be retained only in books as past history. The second category included whatever could bring actual benefit in the present. These things, we resolved, must be kept alive. Therefore, many of our old ceremonial traditions I discarded—no matter, I decided, let them go. However, our performing arts, our literature, science and religion as well as those crafts from which we could earn a livelihood—painting, metalcraft, architecture, woodworking, and carpetmaking—these, we took special pains to safeguard. To achieve this we employed modern methods although they were altogether new to us and posed many difficulties. (1984:92)

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

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

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

13. Anthropologist Margaret Nowak suggests this intertwining of religious and political discourse reflects a process of "sacralization" in exile whereby the goal of independence (*rang-brtsan*) is broadened to the point of spiritual transcendence or *nirvāna*. As Nowak discovered during her research in India, one of the goals of the exile educational system is the "constantly reiterated aim of preserving and promoting Tibetan culture and tradition" which, children are reminded, "has kept intact the essential teachings of the Lord Buddha" and which "can be of benefit not only to Tibetans but to the whole world as well" (1984:102). The desire for *rang-brtsan*, young Tibetans told Nowak, is "not just for independence, but freedom in an intangible sense"—that is, "freedom to reach nirvāna" (Nowak 1984:138). The arguments deployed by Tibetan leaders as well as the younger generation are interesting for the way in which they conflate Tibetan "culture" with Tibetan Buddhism, which in turn is conflated with political independence.

14. See Klieger 1992 for an analysis of the patron-client dyad in Tibetan history and in exile. See also Shakabpa 1967.
15. Over the last fifteen years, the Tibetan leader has also argued for Tibetan culture's relevance to the modern world using a discourse of "science," a subject which happens to be close the Dalai Lama's heart. As he put it in an interview in 1987: "Buddhism has much to say on the nature of matter, and on the brain, mind, and nervous system. There is a basis here for cooperation and dialogue with Western sciences such as neurology, psychology, cosmology, and so on" (Mullin 1987:22). In light of this belief, the Dalai Lama has attempted to show how Tibetan Buddhism can be recontextualized in a Western scientific paradigm. On nearly every trip he has made to the U.S. since his first in 1979, the Tibetan leader has sought to "dialogue" with various scientists in an effort to educate himself and explore the connections between Tibetan Buddhist thought and Western scientific knowledge. Indeed, one of the first official Year of Tibet events was a symposium called "MindScience: An East-West Dialogue" which was held in Cambridge, Massachusetts in March 1991. At the meeting, which was attended by the Tibetan leader and a group of Harvard University neurobiologists and psychiatrists, participants compared and contrasted Tibetan Buddhist mind/body concepts with Western biomedical concepts. (For an edited version of the proceedings from this conference, see MindScience: An East-West Dialogue (1991) edited by Daniel Goleman and Robert Thurman, Boston: Wisdom Publications.)
16. Thurman was the first Westerner to be ordained as a Tibetan monk. He received Upāsaka ordination in 1964 and Vajracharya ordination in 1971 in Dharamsala, India from the Dalai Lama.

Today, Thurman is a professor of religious studies at Columbia University (and the father of film actress Uma Thurman).
17. See Lopez 1995b for a description of the early years of exile in relation to the study of Buddhism and the rebuilding of monastic institutions in south India.
18. Lopez suggests that an explanation for this urgency in Western students of Tibetan Buddhism can be found in the Buddhist texts they were reading:

The story is told in a Buddhist sutra of a lone blind tortoise who dwells in the depths of a vast ocean, coming up for air only once every hundred years. On the surface of that same ocean floats a golden yoke. It is more common for that tortoise to place its head through that yoke when it takes its centennial breath, the sutra says, than it is for a being imprisoned in the cycle of rebirth to be born as a human with the good fortune to encounter the teaching of the Buddha. Human birth in a Buddhist land is compared to a rare jewel, difficult to find, and, if found, of great value, because it is in the human body that one may traverse the path that leads to liberation. (1995b:266)

Imbibing this rhetoric of urgency from such texts, Lopez argues, Western students saw Buddhism as valuable for its power to save the modern world.

19. Lopez disputes the misrepresentation of Tibet as an isolated and unarmed place full of happy peaceful people devoted to the practice of Buddhism in his recent essay on New Age Orientalism:

We often hear Tibetan society was hermetic, sealed off from outside influence. Yet reports of travellers from the early eighteenth century note Tartars, Chinese, Muscovites, Armenians, Kashmiris, and Nepalese established in Lhasa as merchants. (1994:19)

Similarly, he points out, the monasteries around Lhasa attracted monks from as far away as Kalmykia, located between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, from as Sichuan province in China, from the Buryiat region in Siberia and from Sherpaland in Nepal (1994:19).

20. This complicity is widely discussed within the exile community and is an ongoing source of tension and ambivalence between Tibetans of various generations and from different parts of the diaspora (for examples of critiques of the conservative role such representations play in Tibetan exile society, see J. Norbu 1990).
21. Mickey Hart, the drummer for the Grateful Dead, also helped to sponsor the monk tours and even participated in some of their performances. He also has made studio recordings with them which are available on the Ryko label.
22. Namgyal Monastery is known as the Dalai Lama's monastery. Before 1959 it was housed in Lhasa's Potala Palace, where the Dalai Lama lived during the winter months. It was reestablished by the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1959. The main responsibility of the Namgyal monks is to assist the Dalai Lama in the preparation and performance of ritual ceremonies. Because of their proximity to the Tibetan leader, monks from Namgyal are considered to be very fortunate and to have an especially high status among the general monastic population.

In recent years Namgyal monks have toured the U.S., performing abbreviated versions of tantric dance. In an essay called "Sacred Ritual Dance: (The Gu Tor Tradition at Namgyel Monastery), author Nanci A. Hoetzlein defines monastic tantric dance "as a rich facet of tantric practice, albeit ancillary to other more prominent functions within the overall ritual pattern" (1991:314). How to categorize these tantric "performances" in a Western context is an interesting issue which I address in the text.

23. See Calkowski 1995 for a detailed description of the tour; see also Information Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1981:233-235. See also J. Norbu 1993:15-19.

24. See also Nowak 1984:115-118 for a description of TIPA's treatment in the U.S.
25. The resistance TIPA encountered was a sort of initiation for the young performers into "international and cross-cultural diplomacy" (Calkowski 1995:6). Indeed, over the years, the tours have contributed to the Tibetan community's growing familiarity with "the public relations tactics of international politics" (Nowak 1984:118).
26. In the West, just as China sympathizers often protest exile performances, Tibetan refugees have begun to protest Chinese Tibetan events (e.g. see Calkowski 1995:13). At one U.S. Tibet Committee meeting in 1992 I remember a discussion about possible actions against a Chinese Tibetan dance troupe from Lhasa which was scheduled to perform in New York. Some Tibetans at the meeting worried about how such a protest would be interpreted by the Tibetan dancers themselves, who obviously were under the control of their Chinese "minders." In other words, their desire was to reach out and communicate with their "brothers and sisters" from Tibet rather than offend them. Various options were discussed, including the idea to invite them to a reception. Eventually it was decided that two or three people would go early to Town Hall (one of the three venues where performances were being held—the others being in a Chinese restaurant in Chinatown or in Queens in a Chinese cultural center) where they would hand out "fact sheets" on Tibet prior to the start of the show. Then at the end of the performance, activists (preferably non-Tibetan) would stand up and chant "Long Live Tibet." As one of the Tibetan activists characterized it, "the idea is not to have it be like a screaming, disruptive thing, but to be like a bravo, bravo type thing."

It was suggested that a Tibetan who had been raised in Tibet and spoke Chinese fluently would offer them \$25 each, tea money. When I asked "why?" one of the Tibetans at the meeting said "to win them over, also they probably aren't paid to perform, it's just a gift..." A long discussion ensued about the value of having non-Tibetans do the protesting, about the fact that "the Chinese behave very differently around Americans as opposed to other Asians." Although I was out of the country doing research in Switzerland when the event took place, I later heard the protest went off smoothly.

27. In an article in the New York Times, Laurie Anderson is quoted as saying, "I suppose the thing that attracts me the most to Buddhism is the sense of freedom and that's also why I'm an artist: it's one of the few things you can do where you're free. I particularly relate to the nonauthoritarian aspect of Tibetan Buddhism and the emphasis on the ability of every single person to become perfect" (Ehrlich 1995).
28. In the brochure handed out at the 1990 New York conference, Tibet House's grassroots vision for the Year of Tibet is framed in Buddhist terms:

The Plan

Like a mandala of brilliantly colored grains of sand, the International

Year of Tibet will consist of thousands of events and programs around the world, each dedicated to Tibet and its survival.

The success of this endeavor depends on the involvement of as many organizations, institutions and individuals as possible. We urge you to participate by initiating programs and activities dedicated to the International Year of Tibet.

29. I should note, however, that the Dalai Lama's representative to North America joined the board soon after Tibet House was founded and remained on it during the Year of Tibet.
30. The hiring of a media strategist in 1991 was the culmination of a long-standing discussion within the Movement for a more sophisticated approach to representing the Tibet issue to the public, which included the Dalai Lama's visits to the U.S. See chapter 9 for a discussion of media coverage and the Tibet issue.
31. Jane Kelly's extensive experience with human rights groups and her work on campaigns such as Amnesty's rock and roll world tour gave her credibility in the eyes of Tibet activists.
32. The intensity of the month deeply affected some people: I remember one friend asking me if I was "feeling depressed" when we met at yet another Tibet-related lecture in early November. I told her no, but that I felt tired. She said she felt "deflated" now that the blitz had ended.
33. For studies dealing with museums as institutional articulations of power and knowledge relations, see Bennett 1988. Interesting edited volumes on museums include Karp and Lavine 1991; Karp, Kraemer, and Lavine 1992. O'Hanlon 1993 provides an interesting case study of the collecting and exhibiting process from an anthropological perspective.
34. Thurman's description of compassion exemplifies his beatific Buddhist vision:

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

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

35. November 6, 1991, p. C23.
36. November 10, 1991, p. 21.
37. Samaya Foundation sponsored this first mandala and must credited with bringing over the monk-artist Lobsang Samten. Recently, Samaya sponsored a mandala project in the Watts section of Los Angeles. Called "Healing the Causes of Violence through Art," the program was described as an attempt to teach the children compassion and respect. Instead of the deities normally depicted in such mandalas, the children placed the names of their "protectors," including Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Frida Kahlo, Spike Lee, and Malcolm X (Tricycle Winter 1994:98).

This work by Samaya is a dramatic example of the potential flexibility of Tibetan Buddhism, which, however, does not go uncontested. Samaya has been criticized by some Tibetans and American Buddhists for taking this tantric form and recontextualizing it in distinctly non-religious venues.

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

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

39. In keeping with Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the monks would only engage in this sort of activity if requested (e.g. they do not evangelize or proselytize).
40. When I visited the Rhode Island School of Design in the spring of 1993, two monks were making a sand mandala at the school's museum. I spent some time in the room with them in order to see how they interacted with the visitors. It was towards the end of the day and the monks were not saying much. When I asked the person who was with me, who as it so happened had helped to organize the event, about the monks' silence, she said the monks had complained about how frustrating they found the constant interruptions of questions. Apparently no such boundaries had been established as in Chicago between q/a time and work-only, and the monks felt obliged to answer whatever questions were asked.
41. For an analysis of a more overtly problematic form of cultural embodiment, see Ryddell 1984 on American world fairs and the public display of non-white bodies.

42. During his doctoral research at a Tibetan monastery in south India, Lopez was struck by the powerful investment in the spoken word and the emphasis placed on hearing the words from the mouth of a teacher (1995b). He describes *lung*, a ritual in which one is granted permission to engage in a specific meditation or study a specific text through hearing the text read by a lama: "This hearing is accomplished through a form of speed-reading in which the lama races through the text at a pace that makes the apprehension of any meaning nearly impossible. But grasping the meaning does not seem to be the point, it is rather that the student hear what the teacher heard from his teacher, who heard it from his teacher" (1995b:279). It is a Tibetan convention, he writes, that "to study a text, it is not sufficient merely to read it; one must receive oral instruction upon it from a teacher who has in turn received such instruction in the past" (ibid., 279).
43. In an article titled "The guru and the conjurer: Transactions in knowledge and the shaping of culture in Southeast Asia and Melanesia," (1990) anthropologist Frederik Barth discusses knowledge in Mahāyāna/Tibetan Buddhism in Bhutan:

In the Mahāyāna/Tibetan monasticism practised in Bhutan, this highly individual path through study and meditation to salvation is bound into tight institutional regulation by a system controlling authorization: only senior lamas can give the *wang* empowerment/blessing that secures you merit from your studies; and only they provide the *lung* authorization and directives that open the path for learning, and should precede every phase of study. Thus all religious teaching, although it is based on sacred written texts, is regulated as a hierarchical process of handing knowledge down from individual Gurus to disciples. This order is embodied in the routines of teaching in every monastery: the Abbott lectures to the Head teachers, the Head teachers repeat and explain to the monks, the monks pass the message on to the monk pupils. For every segment of knowledge, the "lineage" of teachers who have passed it on must be recited and learned by the pupil, to legitimate the possession and vouch for the authenticity of the knowledge. (1990:646)

Barth observes: "There is a breathtaking lesson here: whole, complex traditions of knowledge seem to be carried by single persons." He concludes by suggesting that only through the teaching activities of Gurus could such bodies of knowledge become encapsulated, individualized, and transportable.

44. These feelings have occasionally been voiced in public by Tibetan activists. For instance, comments made at a Tibet support conference in 1993 by a former director and leading member of TIPA encapsulate the frustration many Tibetans have expressed over the lack of support given to lay cultural organizations by the government-in-exile:

When Tibetans first came into exile, my parents put me in Tibetan Children's Village. And from the Tibetan Children's Village, eight

boys and eight girls were selected to go to this institute better known as Tibetan Music, Dance and Drama Society, it is now known as the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts or TIPA. Since nine, all we did basically was to learn Tibetan music, dance and drama, from eight in the morning until ten in the evening. That's all we did...We never had the opportunity to build a school...Over the years within the Tibetan community, there's been a lack of support and I'll tell you why. The Institute gets members who couldn't get into TCV (Tibetan Children's Village), ones that were left over were sent to TIPA. We always felt that we were somehow low in the eyes of the community, we were not put on the same level as the other aspects of Tibetan culture.

But throughout the years, TIPA has done a lot of good things. For example, in India now, you will find dance organizations in Tibetan schools at various settlements because we were able to send teachers to TIPA. TIPA has also travelled very extensively throughout the world. It showed the world that Tibetans have a very unique culture, very different from the Chinese. I think in terms of the awareness of the Tibetan situation, our organization has done a tremendous job.

...We always felt that somehow the Tibetan administration-in-exile did not really think it was important enough to really look after some very talented people. On several occasions we tried to request it. We said "look, these people are important resources, it's important that we give them some sort of recognition," but still I found there was a lack of consideration and interest in really trying to sustain TIPA.

So I'd like to take this opportunity to say to those who have been supporting the Tibetan cause for a long time, please take a special interest in this institute which I think is very important and needs support, not only from Tibetans but also Tibetan supporters.

The various controversies in which TIPA has found itself embroiled over the years (e.g. Calkowski 1991; 1995; see also J. Norbu 1989 and Nowak 1984) are emblematic of ongoing tensions between lay and religious segments of exile society.

45. At the post-Year of Tibet meeting in December 1991, a Tibet House staff member acknowledged the prevailing attitude towards Tibet House's emphasis on monks in her reply to a question about whether the organization planned to continue its focus on monks:

The monks are doing very well on their own; we are thinking of focusing on a different sector of the Tibetan population in exile; we hope to work now with artists...

46. Why did the monks comply with this request? Their willingness to chant "om" for their American audience reflects a fundamentally important aspect of Tibetan Buddhism: a recognition that different practices are considered appropriate to different persons at different stages of the path, depending on one's motivation and level of understanding. That is, the monks' seeming flexibility stems from their training in an open-ended system in which teachers are expected to interpret their students' spiritual needs and respond accordingly. Despite the fact that the request did not come from a Buddhist practitioner (the person was apparently engaging in some other hybrid form of spiritual practice), I would expect the monks could easily justify chanting the phrase if they believed it would bring the person some spiritual benefit.
47. Like the tantric imagery discussed earlier, the public performances of sand mandala rituals are not believed to reveal secret information to the uninitiated.
48. Interestingly, the first mandala made at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in the summer of 1988 was described by organizer Barry Bryant as a "demonstration." As such, the entire process was videotaped by three broadcast quality video cameras by Bryant's Samaya Foundation.
49. One of the contradictions raised by this framing of the exhibition and mandala is that if we define "ritual" as a category of activity whose intention is to transform willing participants, how can viewers/participants be transformed by something they do not fully understand? How can they have a spiritual experience if they do not know how to interpret the complex symbols and iconography of the mandala or the "art" on the walls?

Chapter 9 The Occidental Buddhist

Introduction

In the last chapter, I described the "narrative of Tibetanness" formulated by the Dalai Lama which equates the Tibet issue with the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism. I argued that attempts to transform Western audiences into political supporters through a demonstration of the value of Tibetan culture represent an elaboration on the traditional Tibetan mode of engaging outsiders and securing protection based on a recognition of Buddhism's magical and mystical powers. This section focuses on what is perhaps **the** paradigmatic example of this strategy--the Kalachakra initiation given by the Dalai Lama in New York City. Despite the fact that the "Wisdom and Compassion" show and the sand mandala exhibition at the IBM Gallery were framed as potential spiritual experiences, for most ordinary viewers who could not understand the show's complex iconography and the mandala's esoteric symbols, they offered primarily aesthetic experiences. Across town, however, at the Paramount Theater in Madison Square Garden, New Yorkers were offered a direct experience of tantric practice via the Kalachakra initiation and other Buddhist teachings preceding it--e.g., the "Nature of Mind"¹ and "Path of Compassion"² teachings. (Whether or not participants understood tantric practice any better than the exhibition and mandala is discussed below.)

In keeping with my interest in the social processes through which the Year of Tibet was co-produced, my analysis focuses on several examples of thorny

issues which organizers of the ritual had to negotiate, issues which ranged from questions of sponsorship to disagreement over how to frame the initiation for a non-Buddhist public to conflict over the actual staging of the initiation.³ The tensions which arose around these issues reveal the contested processes through which religious practice became a field of political action during the Year of Tibet.

In chapter 8, I introduced several of the prominent actors involved in the Year of Tibet, including its "visionary," Richard Gere; the media consultant hired by Gere ("Jane Kelly"); the executive director of Tibet House; Lobsang Samten, a monk from Namgyal Monastery who has been involved in making sandpaintings in the U.S.; and Livet Reichart, the public relations firm hired by Gere at the last minute. Along with these individuals and organizations, other key players involved in producing the initiation include Jean and Frances Paone, the American Buddhist couple hired by Gere to organize all the religious teachings, including the Kalachakra; Khyongla Rato Rinpoche, a Tibetan lama whose Manhattan-based Buddhist organization, Tibet Center, was the Kalachakra's official sponsor; Tibetans employees of various Tibet support organizations in New York City who shall remain unnamed; and Tashi, the Dalai Lama's ritual master from Namgyal monastery who was the head of the "advance team" of monks sent over from Dharamsala to oversee preparations for the initiation. By exploring what was at stake for these actors (whether institutional or individual) in producing and performing (or protesting) the event, I emphasize the internal diversity of the Tibet Movement as well as its fluid and ambiguous organization.

Backstage politics

Richard Gere's desire to "blitz" New York City with "Tibetan spiritual energy" came true in October 1991. All told, Tibet Center sponsored fifteen days of teachings and initiations by the Dalai Lama and high lamas from the five Buddhist and Bon lineages.⁴ Though each of the events went off smoothly and was generally well-attended (the Kalachakra attracted between 3,200 and 3,300 people; the "Path of Compassion" several hundred less), things were less smooth behind the scenes.

Part of Richard Gere's vision of the Year of Tibet was to have the Dalai Lama give a Kalachakra initiation under Tibet House auspices. But when he took the issue to his organization's board of directors, his idea met with a great deal of resistance. After much discussion the board decided that Tibet House's goals were more "cultural" than "religious" and that it did not want to move in the direction of sponsoring religious teachings, especially not ones which would be so expensive. At the time, Tibet House was losing money and the board feared that Gere would not come through on his promise to cover the cost.

Tibet House's board members were not the only ones who were wary of the Kalachakra; the Dalai Lama himself reportedly told Gere that he was reluctant to give the Kalachakra in New York City during the Year of Tibet. The Tibetan leader offered to give a "serious Buddhist teaching" instead, as one insider recalled, but Gere "was just determined, it was his thing, he felt that "Wisdom and Compassion" and the Year of Tibet were all happening without him, he wanted his

thing, and the only thing he could find was the Kalachakra.” After some more back and forth between New York and India, the Dalai Lama finally relented and agreed to Gere’s request. Why did the Tibetan leader acquiesce? The most obvious reason relates to Gere’s role as a major patron to the Tibetan exile community. Indeed, the Hollywood actor is a big *sbyin-bdag* who has given far more money to the Tibet Movement than almost anyone else. Given this fact, it would have been extremely difficult for the Dalai Lama as the symbolic recipient of these donations and as one of Gere’s spiritual teachers to refuse a request from such a prominent patron and student. As one American activist rather crudely characterized the situation, “Richard had them by the balls, he still does...”

Meanwhile, in response to Tibet House’s reluctance to sponsor a Kalachakra initiation, Gere took the project to Tibet Center. A Buddhist meditation and study center located in Tribeca, Tibet Center is headed by Khyongla Rato Rinpoche, a reincarnate lama originally from Kham who came to New York in the 1960s.⁵ Rato Rinpoche agreed to Gere’s proposal that Tibet Center become the official organizational sponsor of the Kalachakra. Sponsorship of religious personages or teachings is a social act as well a spiritually meritorious one. Therefore it was probably not hard for Gere to persuade Rato Rinpoche to take on this responsibility, especially given that Gere offered to finance the event. Following Tibetan tradition, during the actual events, Gere and Rato Rinpoche got to offer *kata* (prayer scarves) and do their prostrations first--visible signs of their high donor status.⁶

Upon hearing that a tantric initiation was scheduled to take place in October in Manhattan, several so-called "advisors" to the Tibetan government-in-exile, all of them Westerners, attempted to pressure organizers into cancelling the event.⁷

In an interview, Jean Paone recalled that

their main argument was that he [the Dalai Lama] would be too visible, that it is not in His Holiness' interests to be seen as a spiritual leader, as a religious person, that it would jeopardize his credibility as a political leader on the world stage, and couldn't we do this somewhere out in the country someplace.

This effect might be further exaggerated, the "advisors" argued, by the fact that the initiation was scheduled to coincide with the opening of the UN General Assembly. Comparing the Tibetan leader to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, they told the Paones,

...although Desmond Tutu is a religious figure, you would never seem him doing a religious service. His basic persona is political. You never see him in a wierd hat or carrying a staff or doing anything strange.

In arguing against the advisors, Jean Paone pointed out:

His Holiness is a force, you can't calculate him like you can some Republican or Democratic candidate. His Holiness has good instincts, shall we say [laughing] so if His Holiness thinks it is a good thing to come to the city and do a spiritual ceremony, I'm not going to argue with him.

The Paones and the Dalai Lama's "advisors" represent two poles of a continuum of commitment within the Movement that ranges from an almost exclusive interest in Tibetan Buddhism to an equally exclusive political interest in the situation in Tibet. The tensions around the Kalachakra explored in this chapter reflect the ongoing

tension between these two orientations--dharma and political--within activist circles.

The other division within the Movement which my analysis considers is that between Tibetans and Westerners. Despite the fact that the Tibet Movement is a uniquely successful global multicultural coalition, the relationship between Tibetans and their Western supporters is nevertheless fraught with complexities and contradictions that have to be constantly negotiated. By examining the problems which arose during the planning and staging of the Kalachakra, I hope to shed light on some of the structural tensions and limitations of this intercultural alliance.⁸

Seeing that the Paones remained undeterred by their political arguments for not holding a Kalachakra in Manhattan, the "advisors" then "went over their head," as Frances put it, and attempted to persuade the Tibetan foreign minister-in-exile to intervene.⁹ While the foreign minister, Tashi Wangdi, did not try to block the Kalachakra, he and many other Tibetans did have reservations about holding a tantric initiation in Manhattan during the Year of Tibet, though as we shall see, Tibetans' concerns revolved more around the Dalai Lama and questions of propriety than the political implications of such an event. According to one activist, they felt "embarrassed to have His Holiness in Madison Square Garden in New York...it was offensive to them." When I asked the Paones for their reaction to Tibetan concerns about the Manhattan venue, they told me they had received similar criticism two years earlier when they produced a Kalachakra initiation in Los Angeles. At that time, the couple was criticized for organizing the teaching in

the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, a space where rock and roll bands play regularly (including Bob Dylan, who played a few days before the initiation and whose name was still on the marquee when Tibetans began arriving in town for the initiation). In addition to questioning the appropriateness of the venue, lay Tibetans from the Los Angeles Tibetan community challenged the Paones' ability to handle the Dalai Lama properly, reprimanding them, for instance, for failing to provide hot water for the Tibetan leader at his "birthday celebration" which took place prior to the teachings. To the Tibetans, Frances noted, "this was a major transgression."

Anticipating criticism of Madison Square Garden as a venue, Jean summarized her view of the issue in characteristic Buddhist terms:

We knew from our experience in the Civic [in Santa Monica] that His Holiness transforms the environment. It's not like you have to present him with a pure land, he creates it. And it is the essence of His Holiness' thing...taking a space that's used for even something as gross as boxing and making it into an arena where where deities come down...

The debate outlined above reveals the different stakes various actors had in the initiation. For Buddhists like Jean and Frances Paone, the initiation represented a spiritual opportunity; for some others, particularly the self-designated American "advisors" to the Dalai Lama, the initiation represented a potential obstacle to the realization of the Movement's larger political goals. In contrast, Tibetan concerns over the initiation centered on how the Dalai Lama would be treated by organizers as well as how he would be represented to and perceived by the public and the

press.

In order to understand these concerns, it is necessary to remember the intense feelings Tibetans have for the Dalai Lama. Tibetans believe there is much spiritual benefit to be gained by being near the Dalai Lama. Indeed, his very presence is why so many refugees have settled in Dharamsala. Even better than living near him, however, is to have some form of physical contact with him, e.g., through presentation of an offering scarf. (This is why, for instance, escapees from Tibet always go first to Dharamsala before doing anything else; as new arrivals, they are assured a personal audience and blessing from the Dalai Lama). The highest form of contact comes from being present at an initiation given by the Dalai Lama, such as the Kalachakra, where he "empowers" one to do certain practices associated with the Kalachakra tantra. Empowerment establishes a strong bond of attachment to him as one's "root guru" (*rtsa-ba'i lama*). Given the strong religious sentiment which surrounds the Dalai Lama under normal circumstances, it is not surprising that tantric initiations, which are, after all, important arenas for the construction and display of the Dalai Lama's spiritual authority, are often sites of internal struggle. I return to this point below in my discussion of the staging of the initiation. Here I simply suggest that to have an initiation organized largely by non-Tibetans only heightens anxieties which Tibetans may already feel over how the event "should" be handled and how the object of their devotion should be treated.

The various concerns which emerged around the decision to have an

initiation in the heart of Manhattan reveal significant divisions among Tibet activists over the role of tantric practice in political mobilization. At the same time, they underscore the ambivalence many Tibetans feel about the recontextualization of Tibetan Buddhist culture in novel arenas.

Framing the Kalachakra

Once plans to hold the Kalachakra initiation were finalized, organizers had to decide how to frame the event in the context of the Year of Tibet. In the past, Kalachakra initiations in the U.S. (in 1981 in Madison, Wisconsin; in 1989 in Santa Monica, California) had been advertised only within American Buddhist and Tibetan circles where presumably people understood what they meant. In this instance, however, the Paones were faced with the challenging task of representing a tantric initiation for a primarily non-Buddhist audience.

In deciding how to frame the Kalachakra, Jean and Frances Paone worked closely with Jane Kelly, who, as I mentioned in chapter 8, had been hired to handle publicity for all the programs in October. One of the first things Kelly did when she started working for Tibet House was to meet with representatives from Tibet House, Tibet Center, Tibet Fund, International Campaign for Tibet, and the Dalai Lama's representative to North America. The purpose of the meeting, Frances Paone recalled, was to get

a good idea of all the elements involved in the Tibet Movement and where it is going and how to move it along--what our real objectives were for the Year of Tibet...

Although no objectives were formulated (see chapter 10), the meeting gave Kelly a sense of the activists' various perspectives. In the weeks that followed, she made an effort to take the Tibetan leaders' concerns into account by consulting with them regularly. Her task was made easier by the fact that she worked in the same building with several Tibetan-run organizations: during my time as a volunteer at Tibet House, I often saw Kelly talking with the Dalai Lama's representative or getting help from the Columbia University-trained Tibetan "press officer" for the government-in-exile--both of whose offices were on the second floor.

Through these regular consultations, Kelly decided on a media strategy which would attempt to tie Tibetan culture, politics, and religion together. Although she was concerned with representing the Dalai Lama as a serious political leader, she was reluctant (as some advised) to paper over the Dalai Lama's role as a global spiritual figure. Recognizing the Dalai Lama's spirituality as the basis of his moral authority within the exile community and Tibet itself as well as with his non-Tibetan followers around the world, Kelly adopted a strategy which acknowledged the Dalai Lama's dual status as statesman and monk and emphasized Tibet's "unique culture and history." In a letter to a radio producer, she wrote:

On the one hand, the Dalai Lama meets presidents and addresses the Congress of the United States and the Parliament of Lithuania. On the other hand, he is a Buddhist teacher. You will hear the teacher at the public talk at the Paramount, Madison Square Garden, and the Path of Compassion teachings and the Kalachakra initiation for students of Buddhism.

By framing the Tibetan leader in this way, Kelly sought to improve on how the media generally represents him (see discussion in chapter 10 on framing the Dalai Lama).

In any event, Kelly's job became much more complicated after Richard Gere hired a public relations firm, Livet Reichart, to handle the Kalachakra initiation as a separate event three weeks before it was scheduled to take place. Although Jean and Frances Paone had already begun working with Kelly on media strategy for the Kalachakra, at this point they switched and started working with the new firm. When I asked Tibet House's executive director why Gere had decided to hire Livet Reichart so late in the day, she explained:

At one point Richard panicked, he put in a hell of a lot of money and they'd only sold one third of the seats and he said, we need more pre-event publicity. Jane Kelly isn't getting it, I need somebody who is going to go to the Post, to the shitty newspapers, and get publicity. So he brought in Livet Reichart, who, of course, thought they were going to be able to monopolize everything...Jane had begun all the processes, it was all ready to happen, but Richard didn't have the patience to wait.

Best known for its celebrity clients and art-world connections, Livet Reichart took a markedly different approach to the handling the Kalachakra, as we shall see.

After hiring Livet Reichart, Gere arranged for a meeting between Ann Livet (co-founder and head) and several other Livet Reichart employees, Jane Kelly, and Tibet House staff. One of the purposes of meeting was to communicate the complexity of the Tibet issue and Tibetan sensitivities regarding the Dalai Lama to Livet Reichart. As one Tibet House staff member recalls, at one point during the

meeting, Livet Reichart's manager told Kelly, "I have total respect for what you are doing but my client is Richard, and I'm going to do what Richard says and I'm going to push Richard forward." Jane Kelly replied that she would do her best to serve Tibet House's interests, which by definition meant the Dalai Lama's interests. As the executive director recalled

Jane thought that the media should focus on different aspects, not on Richard and how he loves Tibet and his career and so on, which is obviously the way we were going to get more press but Jane thought it was the wrong type of press...

After this meeting, Livet Reichart never sought approval of their plans from Kelly, Tibet House staff, nor any Tibetans. I remember one day when someone from Livet Reichart called Tibet House asking for photographs for their press kit. After hanging up the phone, the director told those of us in the room, including Jane Kelly, with evident frustration that Livet Reichart was doing its own "comprehensive press kit." This meant not only were their employees duplicating Kelly's work (she had worked closely with the Tibetan press officer to put together a Year of Tibet press kit), they were obviously going to frame the Kalachakra initiation in their own way. This and other similar incidents contributed to the mounting tension between Livet Reichart and Tibet House/Jane Kelly.

Because they were hired to publicize the Kalachakra, that is precisely what Livet Reichart did. Following Rato Rinpoche's desire to "blow out" the Kalachakra over the other teachings by the Dalai Lama and other lineage representatives,¹⁰ the firm designed a publicity campaign which described the

event as the "Kalachakra for World Peace." The half and full-page print ads which appeared in the New York Times and the Village Voice (see Figure 15) read as follows:

His Holiness the Dalai Lama will confer the highest and most profound teaching of Tibetan Buddhism--the Kalachakra. And for the first time in the West, senior representatives from all Tibetan religious traditions will be in one place at one time to offer teachings for world peace. Practitioners and non-practitioners are welcome.

Although the ads were designed professionally (and approved by the Paones), when they began to appear, Kelly and many Tibetans got upset. Kelly had decided previously not to advertise the Kalachakra in the newspaper, preferring to highlight the Tibetan leaders' less esoteric programs--including an ecumenical service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine--instead. As we shall see in the next chapter, she felt the advertisements worked against the impression she was trying to create of the Tibetan leader as a world spiritual leader and statesman; by inviting non-Buddhists to attend, she felt the Tibetan leader might appear to be proselytizing which would send a conflicting message to the media.

Many of the New York Tibetans I spoke to also disapproved of the ads though for very different reasons. In addition to feeling that the ads were in poor taste (especially the use of an old photograph of the Dalai Lama), the Tibetan community worried that the ads made the Kalachakra appear to be a sort of "show" starring the Dalai Lama. These concerns were exemplified by the comment of a Tibetan man that

the teachings are not a show, and while the Dalai Lama has to

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1991

DALAI LAMA OF TIBET

OCTOBER 10 - 24

His Holiness the Dalai Lama will confer the highest and most profound teaching of Tibetan Buddhism—the Kalachakra. And for the first time in the West, senior representatives from all Tibetan religious traditions will be in one place at one time to offer teachings for world peace.
Practitioners and non-practitioners are welcome.

October 11 - 24 THE KALACHAKRA FOR WORLD PEACE

Kalachakra Initiation
by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Monday, October 21 - Wednesday, October 23, 1:30 - 5:00 PM
and Thursday, October 24, 8:00 AM - Noon
The Paramount at Madison Square Garden

Path of Compassion
Teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Wednesday, October 16 - Friday, October 19, 1:30 - 4:30 PM
The Paramount at Madison Square Garden

Nature of Mind Teachings
Teachings by 5 Tibetan Masters
Friday, October 11 - Tuesday, October 15, 1:00 - 6:00 PM
The Ramada at Madison Square Garden
401 Seventh Avenue at 32nd Street
Pre-registration required: \$25 - \$200

OTHER APPEARANCES BY HIS HOLINESS

Visions of Perfect Worlds
Thursday, October 10, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
An Interfaith Concert to Celebrate Perfection
The Cathedral of St. John the Divine,
1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street
Tickets: \$10

Featuring musical performances from six spiritual traditions:
the Riverside Inspirational Choir, Hindu vocalist Prandip Pran Nath,
the Islamic Bahan Ensemble, Native American Dennis Banks,
Rabbi Gliner and Cantor Stahl, and the Tibetan Buddhist Namgyal
Monks. Introduced by Richard Gere, and other celebrities.

"Global Responsibility Through Compassion"
Public Address by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Sunday, October 13, 6:00 PM
The Paramount at Madison Square Garden
Tickets: \$10

Sunrise Silence for World Peace
Sunday, October 20, 7:00 AM
Central Park. Free.



For information call:

(212) 439-8086

In Celebration of the Year of Tibet 1991
Sponsored by the Tibet Center 359 Broadway New York, NY 10013

Figure 15

Advertisement for Kalachakra
New York Times, October 4, 1991

operate within this environment, here it's something that is taken out of a cultural context and put in something totally alien...for Tibetans in India or Tibet, if a lama gives a teaching, that teaching is viewed in the same way as the teacher views the teaching which is something very religious, it's not just something Hollywood. Some Americans think the Dalai Lama comes and for them it is a show, and the Dalai Lama is nothing other than a Hollywood actor doing his piece and leaving the stage. But for a Tibetan, he's not an actor. he's trying to help you attain enlightenment.

Tibetan anxieties about the way in which American audiences perceived the Dalai Lama were further heightened when Livet Reichart began planting stories and photographs linking Richard Gere to the Dalai Lama in newspapers and magazines. For example, in the October 10, 1991 "Chronicle" column of the New York Times, Nadine Brozan wrote a piece titled: "Richard Gere follows the Dalai Lama." The story quoted Gere as saying, "I have been planning this for four years...it took years to get Tibet House going and the last year to crank up for the Year of Tibet, and now it's a 20-hour-a-day gig." On that same day, William Norwich wrote a piece about the Dalai Lama in the New York Post, noting "where goes the Dalai Lama these days so goes Richard Gere...and the actor's significant other, Cindy Crawford" (1991:12). Stressing the celebrity-appeal of the Dalai Lama, the article named a number of famous artists and society figures who planned to attend Year of Tibet events in New York. Around the same time, an article appeared in another newspaper gossip column which mentioned the legal feud between John Avedon (son of photographer Richard Avedon) and his former wife, Elizabeth, who had left her husband for Richard Gere a few years earlier. The article mentioned that all three were followers of the Dalai Lama and were

involved with Tibet House. Deeply offended, one Tibetan complained: "to put the Dalai Lama in the center of that story is disgusting." Other Livet Reichart-generated stories included: "Dalai High: Richard Gere's intoxicant of choice is Tibet" in Women's Wear Daily (Ryan 1991:7); "Gere-ing Up for the Guru" in New York Live (Hays 1991); and "Tibet Festival in High Gere," New York Post (Farolino 1991). See Figures 16-22.

Sometime after the Year of Tibet ended, I asked one of the Tibetans working at Tibet House what she thought about the job Livet Reichart did in promoting the Tibet issue. She replied:

They are special events people. They should be promoting parties and gallery openings, I don't really think it is appropriate to bring people like that in, to promote something of substance and of a serious nature like the Tibet issue...Richard brought them in because he felt they needed more fluff.

The only good thing about the firm, she added, was that they managed to "make sure Bianca Jagger showed up at the Tibet Film Festival and you need that sort of stuff."

Tibetan concerns about how the Kalachakra and the Dalai Lama were represented by Livet Reichart highlight one of the problems associated with the "culture strategy," most obviously the fact that meanings of these productions often escape the circuits of their intention. That is, once you decide to objectify culture through mass culture circuits, you run the risk of losing control of your representation.

Chronicle

- Reagan cancels address to Jewish group at Oxford
- At 91, Helen Hayes is very busy
- Richard Gere follows the Dalai Lama.

Former President RONALD REAGAN mystified scholars at Oxford University in England by suddenly canceling an engagement next week to lecture to students who belong to the Lubavitch movement.

Catherine Goldberg, a spokeswoman for Mr. Reagan in Los Angeles, confirmed yesterday that he had begged off the Oct. 18 speaking date at the Oxford Union Society for the Chabad House of Oxford and its student organization, the L'Chaim Society, because of "an unavoidable schedule change."

Mr. Reagan had been asked to discuss the Jewish code of ethics and morality. Ms. Goldberg would not disclose the nature of the conflicting appointment, but said Mr. Reagan would talk to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts at the request of PRINCE CHARLES on Oct. 17. On Oct. 20, Mr. Reagan is scheduled to go to Scotland.

Mr. Reagan had not requested a speaking fee, his office said. Before the cancellation, Chabad House distributed 4,000 free tickets to Oxford students and sold another 1,000 for \$17.50 each. The European, a weekly newspaper, was to have paid for a lunch and reception after the talk, but withdrew after Mr. Reagan did. A lecture and reception will be held anyway, with Housing Minister ABIELE SHARON of Israel as the main speaker.

"We're extremely disappointed by the President's late cancellation," said Rabbi SAMUEL BOTACH of Chabad House. "We lost several thousand pounds, though we don't hold him responsible for that, and would like to maintain the close ties between the President and the Lubavitch movement."

Speculation at the university about the reason for the change includes pique possibly felt by NANCY REAGAN because KITTY KELLEY, author of an unflattering biography of Mrs. Reagan, had also been invited to speak there. Ms. Goldberg dismissed that with a laugh. "Absolutely false," she said. "He looks forward to addressing students at Oxford during a future trip."

HELEN HAYES turns 91 years old today, but that is no excuse for her to take things easy. LAST night she was scheduled to present awards at the American Celtic Ball of the Ireland Chamber of Commerce in the United States. Tonight she is to receive the



Richard Gere



Helen Hayes

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Leadership Award at a dinner of the Kennedy Child Study Center.

And tomorrow in Washington, the Washington Theater Awards Society will celebrate her birthday at a dinner dance and benefit auction. She will take with her something for the auction, "a Mickey Mouse watch with the letters of my name instead of numbers, that Walt Disney made for me," she said yesterday.

"Every year, I vow that it won't be like this again and each year is just as bad," she said. "As one by one my generation drops out of the action, I get more and more invites."

Where does she get the energy? "I don't know," she said. "I do go to mass and maybe that helps and I do rest all day long. I sit there looking bright eyed, I hope, but I'm really sound asleep." Now, that's acting talent.

RICHARD GERE may not be 91, but he has an equally grueling schedule. As chairman and a founding member of Tibet House, he was on hand at John F. Kennedy International Airport yesterday to meet the DALAI LAMA, here for the International Year of Tibet. Mr. Gere traveled with him to New Haven and is planning to attend as many of the 62 events related to Tibet between now and Oct. 28 "as my body can take," he said.

The agenda will include an interfaith service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York tonight, educational sessions, speeches, an art exhibition, a film festival, a sunrise meditation, an opera, folk dances and dinner parties.

Tibet House is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture.

"I have been planning this for four years," he said yesterday. "It took two years to get Tibet House going and the last year to crank up for the Year of Tibet, and now it's a 20-hour-a-day gig."

NADINE BROZAN

Figure 16

Chronicle, Richard Gere Follows the Dalai Lama
New York Times, October 4, 1991

12
WHILE INTERRUPTING the social scene on behalf of our inner lives, Nevada, the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who has come into our midst to celebrate the end of the International Year of Tibet.

In other words, beam us up to a higher plane. It's not a minute too soon.

And, yes, where goes the Dalai Lama these days so goes Richard Gere, the founder and chairman of Tibet House. Then there's the actor's significant other, Cindy Crawford, Naomi Fagan, writer Elia Kazan, Fionnula Flanagan, architect Moshe Safdie and his wife Treva, and Francesca Thyssen, from London.

There is an extraordinary schedule of events surrounding the Dalai Lama, including an interfaith ceremony with 10 religious leaders today at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and an exhibit at the IBM Gallery which opens Tuesday night followed by a series of private dinner parties around town hosted by folks such as Mary and Louis Loebe and William Bok.

On Oct. 21, the aforementioned Richard Gere will join George D. Langdon Jr., president of the American Museum of Natural History, in hosting a party for children. The treat? A ceremonial demonstration of doll making by Tibetan monks. Meaning they paint the dolls in living color before your eyes.

The day before, on Sunday morning, Oct. 20, there's a one-hour long silent sunrise meditation service in Central Park conducted by the Dalai Lama. I suppose somebody should tell Elia Kazan that the 2:30 a.m. screening of her CNN style show may lack a few viewers that dawn.

Among those expected for meditation are Bianca Jagger, who is



WILLIAM NORWICH

Just returned from movie making in Nicaragua, artist George Malloch, and Francesco and Alia Clemente. He has designed the poster for the ceremony.

MEANWHILE, back to our outer lives which find Vice-mayor David Linley, the future-making son of Princess Margaret, coming to town; Norman Mailer back; and Boon, Mar of US, both on and off the wall.

By which I mean Boon plays a winged thing in a video for the group's next single, "The Fly." He's all dressed in black leather and goggles and goes galumphing through London traffic. A considerable undertaking which should give his fans US's coming album, "Aching Baby" its due Oct. 14, and don't expect the group to do too much publicity, if any. They got pre-empted after "Rattle and Hum" was released in 1986.

Thank goodness Norman Mailer, whose "Hiroshima's Ghost" is the big book around town, doesn't loathe the limelight. To wit, Mailer was found the guest of honor at a dinner hosted by Abe and Shirley Mosenbath at their Park Ave. suite the other night. Guests included Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Ahmet and Mica Ertegün, Peter Brown, and Andrew and Madeline Webber. Madeline is five weeks pregnant



RED HOLENESS: The Dalai Lama has a busy schedule here.

with the couple's first child. And blue-eyed David Linley is all set to paint our town blue (as in blueblood) come December. He's coming to promote his craft and lecturing on furniture making. He's hoping to make a splash on the

lectures circuit here, although he says there's a down side to tripping through America. Which is people, especially reporters, keep wanting to talk about his first cousin-by-marriage, Diana, the Princess of

Wales, and Sarah, the Duchess of York. As a matter of fact, Lin loves telling a story about an appearance he once made on "Morning America."

If you happened to see it, you remember the interviewer commented by saying, "Don't worry; when we come back we'll get Princess Margaret's son talking about the marriage problem of Charles and Diana." Or we to that effect.

Linley wasn't amused.

SINCE Marilyn Quayle's scheduled to wing into town last night, she asked her cohort from Purdue University Bloomington's case Ann Beck and a wife incompensated dinner partner at the Bon Terminus. Mrs. Quayle asked to meet, as of the more important female in here and there who live and work here in the Big Night, Internet First Lady Barbara Bush does another meet with our shiny (she probably knows something we only suspect.)

Just kidding, gentle readers. Anyway, among those invited to A Beck's dinner for Mrs. Quayle's night were Jean Manburg Challa O'Brien; Bob Evans; Mel Beers, the president of Es Leander; columnist Edna New Vogue; Annette Green, executive director of the Fragrance Foundation; Jane Chesebrough, editor of Women's Day magazine; Alastair Penny, editor of Self; Linda Warner, CEO of Warnaco; Mel Bloomberg, president of Rud Fuchs; Aron's Kay Wright; Care Friedman; Barbara, Taber, a Mary Mallory, the executive director of the Association for a Better New York for starters.

Figure 17

Column by William Norwich
New York Post, October 10, 1991



LEFT Judith Hollister, founder of Tibet House, presenting a medallion to the Dalai Lama.



RIGHT At opera party, from left, Jo Sullivan Loesser, Don Stephenson, Emily Loesser Stephenson.

Photographs by BILL CONNINGHAM for The New York Times



ABOVE At the Studio Museum, Carmen de Lavillade and Gene Hovis.

BELOW Sybil F. Chester, left, and Claudette Griffith.



Meeting a Lama, A King, a Queen, An Ex-Mayor

The Dalai Lama was honored Thursday at a reception for 100 guests at the Cathedral House on the grounds of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. An interfaith service for 5,000 was held in the cathedral. The reception was given by Tibet House, a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture.

Later Thursday, the New York City Opera marked the opening night of "The Most Happy Fella" with a supper-dance for 300 on the State Theater promenade at Lincoln Center. Proceeds will aid the opera company.

On Tuesday, Bobby Short and Gene Hovis were hosts at a benefit dinner-dance for 100 at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Mr. Hovis, the food writer, prepared the menu, including his famous pumpkin and pecan pie, as Mr. Short, the pianist-entertainer, made sure the guests danced off the calories to Illinois Jacquet's band. Proceeds of the evening were directed toward supporting the museum.

And the Martha Graham Dance Company marked its 65th anniversary with a supper dance at the Plaza Hotel.

On Monday night, Tommy Tune, former Mayor John V. Lindsay of New York and the scenic designer Ming Cho Lee were honored by the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation with a performance and dinner in the Equitable Atrium and Theater, at Seventh Avenue at 51st Street.

Also Monday, a dinner at the Hotel Pierre honored King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia of Spain. He received the 1991 Humanitarian Award of the Elie Wiesel Foundation for introducing democracy into his native land without violence.

BELOW At Martha Graham benefit, the dancers Christine Dakin, left, and Lee L. Traub.



RIGHT The opera at Elie V. Maniarian for King Juan Carlos I of Spain.

BELOW Leif Domingo Carlos and



Figure 18

Evening Hours: Meeting a Lama...
New York Times, October 13, 1991



New York Post: Kevin Cohen

Well, hello, Dalai! That's the tone from an obviously awed Richard Gore, who as chairman of Tibet House hosted a Tibetan cultural affair at the Museum of Natural History. The special guest? The Nobel-winning Dalai Lama, who seemed to give Gore high prays.

Figure 19

Photograph, New York Post
October 1991

Dalai High

Richard Gere's intoxicant of choice is Tibet.

NEW YORK — Richard Gere has a one-track mind: He's focused on his professional, spiritual, and political career. Instead, Gere is unorthodox, Buddhist, and on the way to the Dalai Lama in New York.

At Manhattan's Tibet House, Gere was working the ad placements for the Dalai Lama's efforts for world peace, television shows and interviews he and the Tibetan wish him to take on this trip.

"They don't do the cheap stuff," said Gere, smiling. "And so he has 'Buddhism' — very much the silver-haired heartthrob in a black, gray, or black suit, black boots and a good boxer."

Gere, who became a Buddhist 18 years ago, founded Tibet House, a non-profit cultural and educational organization, in 1964. "They have never asked me for a thing," he says of his spiritual associates. "But I saw that the Tibetans weren't getting any publicity. They couldn't get their story told. They could get coverage and I was using my name."

It's still a name to contend with. At 42, Gere is back on top again after a career that's been more roller-coaster than most. In the seventies and early Eighties, he starred in a series of successful films — "Looking for Mr. Goodbar,"

The Dalai Lama of Bhutan



"One of the good things about New York is that you can't really hide from yourself. It's stimulating for your higher self and lower self."
— Richard Gere

Figure 20 Dalai High
Women's Wear Daily, November 4, 1991

3

New York Live,
Oct. 13, 1991

GERE-ING UP FOR THE GURU

By CHARLOTTE HAYS

After Richard Gere visited the 14th Dalai Lama 12 years ago in exile in Dharamsala, India, he decided to switch from Zen Buddhism to Tibetan Buddhism.

"The Tibetan approach to Buddhism has a different personality from Zen Buddhism that fit me more," he explains. "The Tibetan approach stimulates the heart and feelings of compassion — it's a juicier approach for me."

While Gere's conversion might remain a bit esoteric for many Westerners, the actor's decision to embrace the Dalai Lama has had at least one very accessible result. It was Gere and two fellow Buddhists who came up with the idea of the International Year of Tibet.

The year, as well as Gere's guru, is upon us.

"What is happening here is a first-time-only moment that may never happen again," intones Gere. He personally asked the Dalai Lama to give what Buddhists call "a teaching" (from Oct. 16-19) and to lead an initiation into the Kalachakra (Oct. 21-23) at the Paramount, Madison Square Garden's new 5,600-seat concert hall.

Gere, who will be on hand for most of the events involving the Dalai Lama, is also a founder of the four-year-old Tibet House. Elsie Walker of Philadelphia, President Bush's first cousin, is president of Tibet House. Though an Episcopalian in good standing, Walker is fascinated by Buddhist culture.

Most of the 5 million Buddhists in America are of Asian descent. There are no statistics on the number of Buddhist converts in New York, but Helen Tworok, editor of *tricycle*, a new Buddhist review published in

Chelsea, insists that New York Buddhism "is not a hippie movement."

Indeed, the city's Buddhists tend to be well-connected artistic and academic types. In addition to Gere, the Dalai Lama's local flock includes poet Allen Ginsberg, composer Philip Glass, Columbia professor Robert Thurman, author John Avedon (son of Richard) and Rudy Wurlitzer, writer and scion of the organ dynasty.

"Most people are attracted to Buddhism because of its different meditation teachings. It's applied psychology," says Thurman, who describes U.S. Buddhists as atheists who use Buddhism to calm the mind or control the emotions.

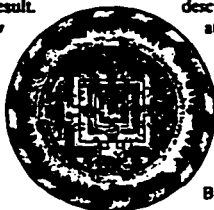
While Thurman reared his daughter, actress Uma, in a Buddhist atmosphere, he says she doesn't consider herself a Buddhist.

While many strains of Buddhism have developed over the centuries, including several in Tibet itself, almost all Buddhists admire the Dalai Lama. "The Dalai Lama is like the Pope, and everybody will go to pay respects, even though they may have a different teacher," predicts Thurman.

A sign that New York's small but chic Buddhist community may be coming of age: A mini-scandal erupted last month with reports that a nasty custody battle between John and ex-wife Elizabeth Avedon was really a conflict between John Avedon and Gere. Even the Dalai Lama's name was dragged in.

"I don't know anything about it," Gere says. Thurman irritably dismisses the whole thing as "gossip."

(Charlotte Hays is a Daily News staff writer.)



Buddhist Buddies: Actor Richard Gere (l.) greets the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

Figure 21 Gere-ing up for the Guru
New York Live, October 13, 1991

NEW YORK POST

LATE CITY FINAL

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1991 / 41

Tibet festival in high 'Gere'

By AUDREY FANQUINO

THE scenario sounds odd, at first, to put it mildly:

A Hollywood sex symbol who is also a practicing Buddhist helps organize a cultural festival in Manhattan that includes everything from teachings by the Dalai Lama to a film festival showing such diverse works as a CIA documentary and "The Abominable Snowman."

One of our purposes is to establish what a really extraordinary and unique culture this is," says the sex symbol/Buddhist in question, Richard Gere, speaking about the New York Year of Tibet festival, encompassing some 60 events in October and beyond.

Buddhist abhorring the culture and religion of that Himalayan country, the festival also aims to inform people "about what has happened to Tibet since the Chinese invasion of 1949, which hasn't been very... the Chinese lobby is largely by power," says Gere, pointing to such figures as 13 million Tibetans killed and thousands imprisoned since the occupation.

Any inspiration to devote Gere as a Dalai actor involving a passing fancy for an exotic cause remains after speaking with him. In a press interview, he was knowledgeable and eloquent, explaining that his interest in Tibet began in 1978 after visiting a refugee camp in Nepal.

"I was left with two very strong impressions," recalls Gere. One, there were such extraordinary circumstances in all eyes, and two, how desperate they were. They had little objects with them that they would try to sell for food. It was a horrendous situation, and the kids obviously had the worst of it.

To help preserve Tibet's culture and support its fight to independence, Gere founded Tibet House here in 1987. His involvement with Buddhism goes back even further.

"Buddhism sells you, begs you, to question everything, even yourself, and to take nothing at face value but to keep seeing it. That's the wisdom side of it," explains Gere. "The compassion side is Dalai Lama's kind of real altruism I'd never known before."

Gere met the Dalai Lama — Tibetan Buddhism's highest figure and the country's leader until his exile in 1989 — some 10 years ago. "I suppose I was expecting that he would look at me and I would be some religious nut," says Gere. "He doesn't see himself as a very kind of deity — he's a man. A deeply human man. I've never met anyone who was not totally charmed by him."

The Dalai Lama will lead several festival events, including four days of teaching (Oct. 18-19) at Madison Square Garden extending to the centering of the Kalachakra initiation (Oct. 21-21). Tibetan Buddhism's highest teaching.

Such sessions have never been held here before, says Gere, and there were some who felt they should be given in a more well-known setting.

"But with all the chaos here, I felt we needed it," says Gere. "These teachings, which are all about balance and harmony, are exactly what we need to balance the extraordinary, explosive forces in New York City."

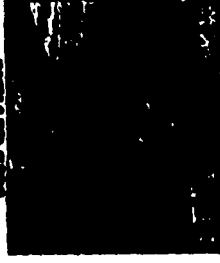
The festival includes the general opening, 12:15-1:45 p.m.

8 The Tibet Film Festival commences with "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m.

and "Empty Room for Awakening" 4:30-6:00 p.m. 12:15-1:45 p.m. and "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m. 12:15-1:45 p.m. and "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m.

8 The Tibetan House presents "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m. and "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m. 12:15-1:45 p.m. and "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m.

8 The Tibetan House presents "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m. and "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m. 12:15-1:45 p.m. and "The 13th" 2:30-4:00 p.m.



RICHARD GERE Not a flashy actor.

Figure 22

Tibet Festival in High Gere
New York Post, October 11, 1991

Negotiating ambivalence

Tibetan concerns about how the Dalai Lama and the Kalachakra were represented to and interpreted by Western audiences point to an ambivalence about the recontextualization of Tibetan Buddhist culture. Tibetans were not the only ones worried about how the initiation would be read in the West; many serious Buddhists, including the Paones and a New York-based Tibetan monk, expressed their concern as well. Myers' discussion of the "unsettled nature" of the sandpainting performance at the Asia Society by Aboriginal artists (see chapter 8) is relevant to understanding the issues which arose around the Kalachakra initiation. For instance, Myers' observation that for both participants and their audience, the staging of the sandpainting in a new context "is fraught with difficulties" in that neither the rules of production nor reception are established, is useful in helping us think about the Kalachakra. Despite the fact that the basic structure of the initiation always remains unchanged regardless of where it is conferred, the rules for its production and reception are not necessarily clearly understood when the event takes place in novel arenas. This was certainly the case for the Kalachakra in Madison Square Garden which attracted large numbers of non-Buddhists, most of whom had little idea what the initiation actually was. This section explores organizers' ambivalence about the presence of so many non-Buddhists and how they negotiated framing the Kalachakra for an audience whose understandings varied so widely. To grasp the organizers' concerns about the Kalachakra, however, it is necessary to outline briefly its unique role in tantric

practice.

Samuel identifies the key aspect of tantric practice as "interaction with, and in more advanced stages, self-identification with various visualized divine forms (tantric deities, or *yi-dam*). This is combined with practices involving the manipulation of subtle "energy" within the body" (1993:204). Before students can perform tantric practice, however, they have to receive the appropriate "empowerments" in which the student is introduced to the tantric deities and to the mandala, or divine palace, within which they reside (*ibid.*, 205). These practices, known as "deity yoga" form the heart of tantric or Vajrayāna Buddhism.¹¹

Empowerment into a particular tantra occurs through an initiation. Cozort defines initiations as rituals involving

extensive visualization, prayers, offerings, and the use of ritual implements and substances, its purpose being to purify defilements, to confer upon initiates permission to practice the tantra, to teach them the procedure of the stages of practice, and to establish in them potencies for successful practice. (1986:34)

During the initiation process, the lama takes on the identity of the tantric deity in order to empower students so that they can subsequently perform the practice and themselves identify with the deity (Samuel 1993:244). Through a series of formal "consecrations," the lama's power and blessing (*chinlab*) is transferred to the student (Samuel 1993:244). In Anuttara Yoga Tantra, the highest of the four classes of tantra, there are two stages--generation and completion. Both are concerned with the transformation of one's mind and body into the mind and body of a Buddha. In generation stage practices, one "generates a vivid imaginative

visualization of one's transformation into a deity"; then completion stage practices "complete" the transformation "by actually bringing about a new physical structure, that is, by transforming one into an actual deity, a Buddha" (Cozort 1986:27).¹² As part of the empowerment, students undertake to observe a series of vows. According to Samuel, practitioners are expected to have already taken the *Prātimoksa* vows¹³ and the *bodhicitta* vows¹⁴ before receiving a tantric empowerment (1993:205).

Tibetans believe the tantric methods of Vajrayāna Buddhism offer the possibility of a more rapid attainment of enlightenment, perhaps within a single lifetime, rather than at the end of a long sequence of lives. Samuel writes, "for the Tibetans, this is an often-repeated message; tantra is much faster than other forms of practice...tantric practice, however, is "difficult" and is also "dangerous," especially if undertaken without the proper preparation or without a competent guru" (ibid., 204). Proper preparation means an adequate understanding of the concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) or at least inferent understanding of constructedness of all identity and perception. This safeguards an individual against getting carried away with actually thinking he or she is a deity.

While tantric practice continues to be a crucial part of monastic training in most of the re-established monasteries in India and Nepal, in recent years tantric ritual has emerged as a primary site for the transmission of Buddhism to the West. Ordinarily, because the tantras involve advanced practices for the transformation of consciousness, initiation into these practices is restricted to qualified students and is

performed privately in the monasteries, and in the West, in meditation and retreat centers. However this is not the case for the Kalachakra tantra where initiations are given to the general public.

According to Geshe Lhundub Sopa, the Kalachakra, or "wheel of time," plays a unique and paradoxical role in Tibetan Buddhism. As the Tibetan scholar/lama writes,

On the one hand, most Buddhists believe it to represent the very pinnacle of Buddhist esoterism. The Kalachakra presents the Buddha's most profound and complex statement on matters both worldly and religious, and its intricacies have placed it beyond the ken of all but a specialized few scholars and practitioners who can master it only by understanding a vast range of traditional ideas. On the other hand, initiations into the meditational practices of Kalachakra are the only Anuttara Yoga tantra initiations that are offered to the general public. (Sopa, Jackson, and Newman 1985:91)

The reason the Kalachakra is given openly has to do with its eschatology; it is associated with the mythical realm of Shambhala, a "pure land" whose inhabitants live by the non-violent precepts of Buddhism. According to prophecy,

a time will come in the not-too-distant future when barbaric forces threaten to destroy all forms of civilization. Then, Raudra Cakri, the 25th king of Shambhala, will emerge to defeat them in a gigantic armageddon. This event will mark the transition from the end of our current "degenerate age" (*kaliyuga*) to a new age, which will begin with a revival of Buddhism and a period of peaceful co-existence among nations...(Brentano 1993:15)

For this reason, the Kalachakra is associated with harmony among people and world peace. (As we saw above, the 1991 initiation was framed as a "Kalachakra for World Peace"; I discuss some of the political implications of this framing below.)

Since 1981, the Dalai Lama has given the initiation numerous times. In his introductory essay to the Kalachakra "program" handed out at the 1991 empowerment in New York, Rato Rinpoche wrote,

On one occasion, when His Holiness was in Dharamsala and making preparations to confer the initiation, he had a dream in which goddesses appeared entreating him to spread the Kalachakra teachings widely. In response, he has conferred this initiation more frequently than any of his predecessors, travelling far to accomplish this. He conferred the initiation in 1981 in Madison, Wisconsin; in 1985 in Rikon, Switzerland and in Bodhgaya, India; in 1989 in Los Angeles, California; and in 1990 in Sarnath, India.

According to Sopa, presence at a Kalachakra initiation, whose blessings are believed to help one be reborn in Shambhala in the future, is considered highly auspicious: "Such initiations, particularly when offered by a Dalai Lama, usually are attended by thousands of the faithful" (Sopa, Jackson, and Newman 1985:91).

This point is underscored by Sogyal Rinpoche in the Kalachakra "program":¹⁵

In a world where change of all kinds is occurring at a dramatic pace, the holding of the Kalachakra Initiation for World Peace in New York City, along with a gathering together of all the great Tibetan traditions, is an event of great significance. What a blessing it is to receive this empowerment and these teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself; in Tibet, to receive this initiation from him would have been the life-long wish of everyone.

Despite the Tibetan tradition of giving the initiation to large crowds, Jean and Frances Paone worried about "blowing out" the Kalachakra and using Livet Reichart's public relations skills to fill seats because it meant a much larger number of non-Buddhists would be present at the initiation than would otherwise have been the case. These concerns were underscored by the numerous phone

calls after advertisements appeared in newspapers for the event, most of which were from confused or curious New Yorkers asking "what is it?" Sometimes, Frances said, he tried to explain over the phone that you don't find out what the initiation entails until you receive it: "I went through the Tibetan method of training or at least what I've been exposed to, that is, you get the initiation first and then you find out what you've gotten yourself into afterwards."

Given the secret nature of tantric teachings and the belief that keeping the pledges and vows one takes during an initiation is extremely important, Jean and Frances initially felt ambivalent about the presence of non-Buddhists at the Kalachakra, many of whom obviously would not realize the significance of the commitments to practice their participation might produce. Eventually, however, they decided that it was better to encourage people to attend so they might "get the blessing on whatever level they could rather than discourage them because they were not Buddhist." To ensure that these individuals understood the implications of their presence at the Kalachakra, Jean and Frances made sure the flyer announcing the event contained a clear description of the motivation required for attendance. It read:

Although the Kalachakra Tantra is meant for practitioners of the highest faculty, it also has a special connection with all the people of this planet. For that reason, the initiation is traditionally given openly, giving ordinary people the opportunity to establish a karmic link with Kalachakra. His Holiness has explained that the initiation is a powerful force for the realization of world peace.

Of those who wish to receive the initiation for practice, the best disciples have the actual experience of bodhicitta and emptiness; the medium-level disciples have at least a slight experience of

bodhicitta in meditation and a correct understanding of reality from study and reasoning; the lowest-level disciples should have at least an intense appreciation for and interest in developing bodhicitta and understanding the true nature of reality.

Those who wish to receive the initiation as a blessing, to establish a karmic relationship with Kalachakra, may attend. The initiation can be conferred on this basis to those who sincerely appreciate the opportunity.

According to the flyer, "teachings are given prior to tantric initiations such as the Kalachakra to develop the prerequisite qualities of bodhicitta, or the wish to become enlightened for the sake of others, and the understanding of the true nature of reality" (see Figure 23). Thus another way in which the Paones tried to make sure non-Buddhists had the correct motivation vis á vis the Kalachakra was to encourage them to attend the "Path of Compassion" teachings which preceded the Kalachakra so that they could see "if they had any connection, if it sparked anything inside them to really continue." As Frances recalls, "We felt that if they came to the "Path of Compassion" and sat there for two days or a day and felt that there was some connection, then they should certainly come to the Kalachakra."

Lobsang Samten, one of the monks responsible for creating a sand mandala at the IBM Gallery, shared the Paones' concerns. In an interview with Robyn Brentano, he revealed his own ambivalence about the transmission of tantric practice to the uninitiated:

Both Tibetans and Westerners lack a basic foundation of understanding tantric practice, and they just take initiations without knowing what the commitments are; they then realize after having done it that they can't keep up with the difficulties of daily practice, i.e. reciting mantras. The initiation should be taken because of a desire for practice, not just for meeting His Holiness or taking the



Figure 23

Kalachakra Initiation Flyer

**His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso
The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet**

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. He is revered as the very embodiment of compassion and is acknowledged as one of the greatest living Buddhist teachers. His Holiness considers himself "a simple Buddhist monk" whose "true religion is kindness." Compassion and kindness have characterized His Holiness's life and work as a Buddhist monk, Tibetan statesman, champion of human rights, lifelong advocate of non-violence and justice, spokesman for world peace.

In 1987 His Holiness was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his continued advocacy of "peaceful solutions based upon tolerance and mutual respect in order to preserve the historical and cultural heritage of his people." (Nobel Committee, 1987)

Kalachakra Initiation for World Peace

His Holiness the Dalai Lama will conduct the Kalachakra initiation at The Forum in Madison Square Garden.

Although the Kalachakra Tantra is meant for practitioners of the highest faculty, it also has a special connection with all the people of this planet. For that reason, the initiation is traditionally given openly, giving ordinary people the opportunity to establish a karmic link with Kalachakra. His Holiness has explained that the initiation is a powerful force for the realization of world peace.

Of those who wish to receive the initiation for practice, the best disciples have the actual experience of bodhicitta and emptiness; the medium level disciples have at least a slight experience of bodhicitta in meditation and a correct understanding of reality from study and reasoning; the lowest level disciples should have at least an intuitive appreciation for and interest in developing bodhicitta and understanding the true nature of reality.

Those who wish to receive the initiation as a blessing to establish a karmic relationship with Kalachakra, may attend. The initiation can be considered on this basis to those who sincerely appreciate the opportunity.

Path of Compassion

Teachings are given prior to tantric initiations such as the Kalachakra to develop the prerequisite qualities of bodhicitta, or the wish to become enlightened for the sake of others, and the understanding of the true nature of reality.

In four evenings preceding the initiation, His Holiness will give teachings based on Shantideva's *Bodhicaryavatara*, the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. It is considered "the most complete and authoritative text ever written on how to engage in the practices of a bodhisattva, one who is solely motivated by the desire to attain full enlightenment for the benefit of others." This text is studied by all students of Tibetan Buddhism.

Schedule

- October 16-19 Path of Compassion Teachings 1:00-5:00pm
- October 20th Blessing the Mindful Training 2:00-4:00pm
- October 21-23 Kalachakra Initiation 1:00-5:00pm
- October 24th Blessing the Sand Mandala Long Life Ceremony 9:00-11:00am

Registration

The registration fee is \$200 per person for the entire program that is, the Kalachakra initiation, the Path of Compassion teachings, and the Nature of Mind teachings. In order for the complete program, a deposit of \$100 will be accepted, with the remaining balance to be paid by August 1, 1991. We ask those who can't to send the full amount with the registration form.

Separate registration is available for the Nature of Mind teachings only. The registration fee for the entire Nature of Mind series is \$100, and a deposit of \$50 is requested. Registration on a per diem basis for the Nature of Mind teachings is available for \$25 per day.

Whether registering for the entire program on the Nature of Mind teachings only, please indicate on the registration form which of the days you plan to attend.

Early registration is recommended because the initiation will take place indoors, and, though the hall will accommodate several thousand people, seating is limited. In addition, seating will be assigned according to the date the deposit is received.

	Total Program	Nature of Mind only
Registration	\$200.00	\$100.00
Non-refundable deposit	\$100.00	\$50.00

blowing...¹⁶

Tibetans believe that to take an initiation and not do the practice shortens the life of the lama who gives the initiation (e.g. "hurts their karma"). In the case of the Kalachakra, however, because the Dalai Lama usually explains to the audience that those who are not prepared to do the practices should not participate in visualizations and take the vows during the empowerment, it is believed to be less of a problem. During the "Path of Compassion" teachings, which were geared toward helping the audience to generate "bodhicitta," the Dalai Lama specifically addressed the non-Buddhists in the auditorium, telling them they did not have to take the pledge to "enhance generated bodhicitta mind" but instead should just try to "generate admiration for a good heart and kindness and say prayers."¹⁷

Another danger of transmitting tantra to the uninitiated, Samten told Brentano, is that teachers and students will not "examine" one another long enough before engaging in tantric practice. In the past, he noted, once a connection was made between a teacher and student, it usually took an average of twelve years of examination of one another before the giving and receiving of tantric initiations. During this time teacher and student would get to know and build their trust in one another.¹⁸ As Roger Jackson has observed

Successful tantric practice--far more than other Buddhist practices--requires a very close working relationship between disciple and master. A tantric master must be both knowledgeable and skillful in the various meditative techniques, and must be sensitive to the various problems the disciple may encounter. A tantric disciple must be confident of the master's qualifications, and unquestioning in the fulfillment of the instructions that the master has given--for

the subtlety and danger of tantra is such that capriciousness or disobedience can lead to dire results. (Sopa, Jackson, and Newman 1985:21)

"Nowadays," Samten lamented, "we are not examined by anyone, we just saw the flyer and we go there and take the initiation."¹⁹

Samten's concern was brought home to me during the Kalachakra when an American man sitting in the row ahead of me began to act bizarrely. I had seen this person before at many Tibet-related events; he usually wore a white tuxedo and tennis shoes, tied his long hair back, and had a glazed expression which convinced me and others that he was mentally unstable. At one stage of the initiation, when consecrated water was distributed to the audience, the man refused to pass it down the row and handed it instead to a woman sitting directly in front of him. The next day, after a distribution of yoghurt in small plastic cups, he refused to give the cups to the person collecting them and also threw a book at someone sitting behind him for no apparent reason. On the last day of the initiation, without provocation, he shouted angrily at an individual sitting near him. The man's erratic behavior demonstrates why it might be dangerous for uninitiated individuals to be taught how to visualize themselves as deities. Without careful supervision and a strong foundation of mental stability, such tantric practices could potentially be destructive to vulnerable people.²⁰

The Occidental Buddhist

Up to this point, I have focused on Americans who knew little about the

Kalachakra but who attended anyway. Organizers did not have to worry about framing the initiation for Tibetans or for Western Buddhists. In this section, I explore some of the differences between Tibetans and Western Buddhists in terms of how they engaged the initiation.

For Tibetans, an initiation is a social as well as a religious occasion. At the Kalachakra initiation in 1989, I interviewed a young Tibetan man from Canada and asked him why he had driven all the way from Calgary to Los Angeles to be present at the event. For us, he said, the initiation is "a social gathering," a chance to meet and catch up with old friends. "At the same time," he added, "we come to take the blessing." The accounts I have read about Kalachakra initiations given by the Dalai Lama in India underscore the young man's point about the profoundly social nature of such events for Tibetans. In her book on refugees in Nepal, Ann Forbes writes:

In December of 1985, the Dalai Lama traveled to Bodh Gaya, the site where the Buddha achieved enlightenment in 500 B.C. to bestow the Kalachakra initiation. More than 300,000 people had traveled for days, crammed between boxes and people, to reach this sacred site in time, to attend the largest Buddhist gathering of the century and to receive the blessing of the 14th reincarnation of Chenrezig, the Tibetan god of compassion—the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

...On this occasion, video tents, magic shows, and sidewalk stalls crowd into the normally sleepy roadway. Everything from Indian toilet paper to silver artifacts carried down from the Tibetan plateau could be found in the markets. The tea shops were jammed with people: carpet sellers, yak herders, restaurant owners, beggars, monks, Western dharma bums, and world travelers. There were Bhutanese with barely enough money to get to the border of Bhutan, Ladakhis who had been walking for weeks, Germans, Sherpas, and Americans. Most prominent, however, were the Tibetans. (1989:1)

Like all Kalachakras in India, this one was held in the open-air and people camped out for the twelve day initiatory period. The atmosphere was quite festive; there was a lot of trading, visiting with friends and relatives, as well as dancing and singing by Tibetans from Tibet who had been allowed to leave under temporary relaxation of Chinese religious policies in Tibet and who were celebrating their joy at seeing the Dalai Lama for the first (and possibly last) time in their lives.

In a recent paper, ethnomusicologist Keila Diehl analyzes the "sonic offerings" provided for more than 50,000 Tibetan pilgrims who travelled to Mundgod, a Tibetan settlement in Karnataka State in south India, for a Kalachakra initiation given by the Dalai Lama in December 1994. Her description suggests the essentially social nature of the Kalachakra experience:

As soon as the first pilgrims began to arrive at Mundgod and settle themselves into their relatives' homes or in the temporary tent village that had been erected for the event, the Yaks started selling their cassettes from roadside table equipped with speakers blaring their songs. Several other Tibetan music groups from southern India had had the same idea, rendering the main thoroughfare of the camp into a festive, but cacophonous, zone of sonic marketing. The band...set up an enormous tent and stage made of rented bamboo poles and colorful expanses of canvas. Across the road, just beyond the makeshift bazaar that had sprung up to serve the event, the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts set up a similar tent and stage for their planned nightly performances of traditional Tibetan song and dances....most pilgrims attended both performances, even several times over, since there was nothing else to do after the teachings ended each afternoon. (n.d.:10)

In addition to viewing the Kalachakra as an important social gathering, which it obviously is for those in diaspora (and, in some instances, for Tibetans from Tibet), Tibetans see the initiation as an opportunity to be blessed by the Dalai

Lama. As we shall see, this belief contrasts greatly with those of Western Buddhists.

When I asked the young Tibetan-Canadian man in Los Angeles what he thought about the Western Buddhist approach to the Kalachakra, he laughed, saying he noticed many of them taking notes and trying hard to understand everything the Dalai Lama was saying. "They want to achieve enlightenment in this lifetime," whereas for Tibetans, "we come, we don't try too hard to understand, we just take it as it comes..." Or as another New York-based Tibetan said to me, "...when you Westerners study Buddhism, it's not the fact that you believe in Buddhism, you sort of study it very systematically, read texts, but for Tibetans it's just belief."

These observations highlight an important distinction between lay Tibetans and American Buddhists: whereas ordinary Tibetans do not presume to be able to make sense of tantric teachings, Western Buddhists approach the dharma as serious would-be tantric practitioners. With convert-like zeal, Western Buddhists have embraced tantric Buddhist practice in ways that are quite similar to those of monks and nuns. For example, in recent years, hundreds of lay Westerners have done the traditional three-year retreat, which is considered to be a prerequisite to serious tantric practice and is usually done only by a select group of Tibetan monks, nuns, and laypersons who seek to become tantric yogis (see Samuel 1993:576).²¹ The fact that there are many more lay tantric practitioners than monastic tantric practitioners in Western Buddhism is perhaps the most innovative aspect of the

transmission of Tibetan Buddhism to the West.²²

At the same time that Western Buddhists approach tantric practice with the seriousness of Tibetan monks, nuns, and other would-be yogis, taking notes and practicing the meditations they are empowered to do, they nevertheless do so in a manner that is distinctly un-Tibetan. This difference is most manifest in the ways in which Westerners interact with their Tibetan teachers. For instance, an older lama named Kirti Rinpoche told Brentano that he gives Western students much more detailed explanation: "They cannot be taught the way Tibetans are taught...They expect "scientific" proof, they grew up in society with logical explanation." One of my own friends, a Tibetan lama living in New York City, told me that when he teaches, he is constantly interrupted by his American students, who ask questions and push for more information. He commented more than once on how exhausting and exhilarating such classes are for him and how radically different his experience of teaching non-Tibetans is from teaching Tibetans, who would never dream of interrupting the lama to ask a question.

Although my ethnographic data on who actually attended the initiation, other than Tibetans and some Western activists, are rather limited, Brentano (1993) has observed that many of the Western Buddhists who participated were already involved with Tibetan, Zen, and Theravadin practices. Others who came, including Christians and Sufis, were interested in the meditational practices of Buddhism. Their orientations

ranged from the intellectual to devotional, and from professional

(academic) involvement to involvement for social reasons. Some held traditionalist views, while others were experimentalists, synthesizers, or spiritual tourists. (1993:72)

Of those Brentano interviewed, most were in their 30s and 40s and

linked their spiritual aspirations to experimentalism and idealism of the 1960s and early 70s...Quite a few said they had become disillusioned with their original (mostly Christian and Jewish)²³ faith because of its philosophical inconsistencies, or lack of satisfying answers to the problem of suffering, or because they wanted a more personally engaging spiritual discipline. Nearly everyone said that they were attracted to Buddhism because its meditational system provides a pragmatic and progressive framework for personal change. Whether they were responding to a life crisis, a sense of alienation, or spiritual yearnings, people found the structured discipline as it is presented in a logical framework amenable to their need for an intellectually rigorous spiritual program. (1993:73)²⁴

The individuals Brentano interviewed reflect Buddhism's largely upper middle and middle class, white, college-educated constituency in this country.²⁵

Staging the initiation

At this point, I turn to some of the pragmatic issues surrounding the actual production of the event. Through my discussion, I draw attention to some of the problems posed when those staging the event have varying understandings of the rules of production for such a ritual.

I begin by exploring some of the consequences of holding the initiation in an expensive space in the heart of Manhattan with limited seating and set hours of access. To offset the high cost of renting the Paramount Theater for twelve days, the Paones decided to charge the following registration fees: \$200 for the "full

program" ("Nature of Mind," "Path of Compassion," and the Kalachakra initiation), \$100 for the entire "Nature of Mind" series, and \$25 per day for a single "Nature of Mind" teaching. The decision by organizers to charge these rather large fees disturbed members of the Tibetan community in New York and some Western Buddhists who viewed it as a violation of a basic Buddhist tenet-- that teachings should be offered for free and be accessible to everyone. The fact that organizers decided to sell tickets for single-day admissions further appalled the Tibetans, some of whom felt the decision represented a blatant "commercialization" of what should be a personal relationship to the lama giving the teaching. The charging of fees for Buddhist functions in the West, which is a common practice, routinely offends Tibetans who believe it is not possible to ascribe a value to sacred teachings. Yet, as one anthropologist has pointed out,

for the practical circumstances of rebuilding the Tibetan religious system, supporting the monks, flying high lamas around world to visit their missions, the patron-client relationship with the West has become monetized. Payment by cash of services rendered is a successful way of generating funds, as it is compatible with western economic practice and expectations, it is readily accepted into the West. (Klieger 1992:94)

One of the Tibetans I interviewed in New York complained that this "monetization" of the relationship between Tibetan lamas and Western students has created a situation in which Tibetan lamas are "corrupted." By this he meant that because Western Buddhists are able to sponsor teachings in the West more readily than Tibetans in India, due to their relative affluence, lamas are spending more time in the West than ever before. The problem with this, he told me, is that "if

you wish to maintain the viability of your culture, it should be Tibetans who know more about Buddhism...otherwise then after this whole generation goes it will be like a vacuum." My friend's comments suggest one of the contradictory roles Western Buddhists play in exile society (for a discussion of role Western Buddhists play in the Tibet Movement, see conclusion). On the one hand, donations by members of the Western Buddhist community have enabled Tibetans to rebuild their religious institutions in India and Nepal and to preserve a wide range of spiritual practices.²⁶ On the other hand, Western interest in Tibetan Buddhism has been a crucial factor in the permanent resettlement of some of the exile community's most knowledgeable and experienced lamas in the West.

The relatively small size of the Paramount Theater necessitated a smaller number of participants at the Kalachakra compared to the Kalachakras given in India which are held in the open-air and are attended by thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people. Moreover, the bureaucratized nature of Madison Square Garden entailed a much more limited schedule than would otherwise have been the case. Tashi's (the ritual assistant sent over from Dharamsala) comments to Robyn Brentano underscore this point:

In India, whenever we are doing the Kalachakra initiation, the time totally depends on us. We have the freedom...to start whenever we want, to stay as long as we want. In New York, in Madison Square Garden, we have no real freedom like that because they open at a certain time, they close at a certain time, so time is very limited here. Madison Square Garden doesn't open before 8 o'clock so we have to wait until 8 o'clock to start.²⁷

The artificial aspect of the Manhattan venue posed a third problem as well, one

that involved an adjustment of a preliminary ritual procedure. As Tashi told Brentano:

In traditional Tibet, in natural places, we have to dig and we also have to do a special preparation ritual to ask permission [to hold initiation]. In the West, in a place like Madison Square Garden, there's no ground to dig. So in this case, we do the ground ritual, ask permission, but this time there is no direct action of our digging the ground. There's just visualization of the ritual...digging and asking permission. It's very equivalent to real digging, but in Madison Square Garden we can't dig.

From what I could tell, the monks and lamas who participated in the teachings ironically tended to be more flexible and relaxed about the accommodations necessitated by the performance of the ritual in the Paramount Theater than anyone else. As I described earlier, many lay Tibetans worried about the appropriateness of the venue, as did the more politically-oriented American activists. Likewise, Western Buddhists like Jean and Frances worried about the sanctity of the initiation and the effect non-Buddhists would have on the event.

The monks' flexibility was demonstrated in another incident which the Paones recounted in our interview. On the day after the Kalachakra initiation was finished, participants were invited to "view the mandala" onstage. That is, they were invited to look at the Kalachakra sand mandala which had been created prior to the initiation and which housed the Kalachakra deities. Jean and Frances arranged for the audience to view the mandala in a counterclockwise, rather than clockwise direction. Several prominent lay Tibetans who were onstage criticized the Paones for not having the audience view the mandala in a clockwise direction,

as would be done if they were circumambulating. As Frances explained:

But they weren't circumambulating. They were going to view it. I mean viewing something and circumambulating something are two different things in my mind. And so the issue wasn't circumambulation, the issue was viewing the mandala. Well, a couple of lay Tibetans on the stage hit the ceiling...Now I had three thousand people lined up and I had this dilemma of, their talking about tradition, and they were freaking out, because we were making a major blunder.

When the Paones asked some monks what to do, they told him "they can go anyway you want them to, it's really viewing the mandala..." Unlike the lay Tibetans, Frances added, "the monks were cool." The Paones concluded from this incident that lay Tibetans "do not really understand that we really practice Buddhism." Instead

they basically see us like...dilettantes, not really serious Buddhists, we're just sort of dabbling in this fine culture but they are the repository of Buddhism and culture, and they know how to treat the Dalai Lama.

The Paones comments underscore the tension which exists between lay Tibetans and Western Buddhists.

The unprecedented presence of so many high lamas in one place at one time created additional logistical challenges for Jean and Frances. Due to space limitations and the high cost of providing for the lamas while they were in New York, the Paones tried to limit the size of each lama's entourage. The task was not easy, as the Paones soon discovered:

We invited the lamas and asked them to bring one attendant. We had a budget for where they were staying, travel arrangements,

seating, and so on. Sakya Trizin immediately needed to have two attendants. Well, okay, so we understood that, again, he is the head of a lineage and he was travelling with a quite large entourage because he was doing the Vajrakilaya in the U.S. and he travels business class [laughs]. Then we were asked by the cultural affairs office [in Dharamsala] if the Nyingma Rinpoche could bring an extra person and we said no, it's not okay because we're providing transportation. And then the Rinpoche wrote to us directly and so there was no way to say no, so he got his two attendants. We told him, don't tell anybody we're paying for this...[laughing]²⁸

As the numbers of lamas and attendants grew, so did the Paones responsibilities. As Frances pointed out, "We just thought we'd bring five lamas, you put them here, you get them to the hall, and they give a teaching. But it **BALLOONED** into a whole lot." Indeed, the Paones had to figure out how to distribute resources to each lineage, e.g., who got which dressing rooms, how many telephone lines would they get, where would they be housed, how would they get around the city? Jean and Frances' difficulties in trying to limit entourage size underscores the fact that not only is the Kalachakra a social and spiritual occasion for Tibetans, it is also a profoundly political one. Nowhere was this more evident than in discussions about seating.

Where one sits at a Tibetan Buddhist ceremony is an important sign of one's social and religious status. For example, the closer one sits to the throne of the lama giving the teaching or initiation, the higher one is presumed to be in the Buddhist hierarchy. Eager to avoid getting drawn any deeper into the intricate machinations over Tibetan Buddhist power than necessary, Jean and Frances decided to delegate the task of deciding who would sit where on stage to Tashi, a

monk whose job as a member of the Dalai Lama's "advance team" from India was to handle precisely these kinds of problems. According to the Paones, Tashi was a bit concerned about making the decisions himself because he usually deferred to his superior at Namgyal Monastery: "this was the first time he was the person who had to make the decisions, so he was faxing back and forth to his office to get it straight!" In his interview with Brentano, Tashi confirmed that he frequently faxed the General Secretary to the Dalai Lama, who was a very old monk and one of the few experts alive on official protocol involving the five lineages. Tashi's goal was to avoid insulting anyone or creating conflicts between lineages over seating.

In a recent essay on ritual and resistance, Nicholas Dirks argues that ritual constitutes "a tremendously important arena for the cultural construction of authority and the dramatic display of the social lineaments of power" (1994:487). Because of the centrality of authority to the ritual process, he writes, "ritual has always been a crucial site of struggle...while rituals provide critical moments for the definition of collectivities and the articulation of rank and power, they often occasion more conflict than consensus" (ibid., 488). As perhaps the most important arena for the construction and assertion of spiritual authority in Tibetan Buddhism--which, as we have seen in previous chapters, often translates into political power--it is not surprising that tantric initiations such as the Kalachakra are often marked by the sorts of disputes which Tashi sought to avoid. These disputes, Tibetans are careful to point out, are usually not generated by the lamas themselves (who are supposedly unconcerned about their status in this world), but

rather by the people just under them, e.g., their secretaries and assistants, who have a vested interest in enhancing their own lama's social prestige and political power. In any event, after much negotiation and consultation with people in Dharamsala, Tashi decided that all the high lamas would sit flanking the left and right side of the Dalai Lama's throne, which was center stage, and that they would choose seats for themselves. The only rule was that Sakya Trizin, as the only actual lineage head present at the initiation (other than the Dalai Lama), got to sit elevated above the rest on his own small throne. Other people who got to sit close to the throne included the event's sponsors, Rato Rinpoche and Richard Gere, a number of high status laymen who were *tulkus* (recognized reincarnations of previous lamas), and Robert Thurman, who was the first Western man to take monastic vows in 1964 but who has long since disrobed. All of these individuals were regarded as deserving special treatment, though for different reasons.

If the lamas' high status could be read from their proximity to the Dalai Lama onstage, the Tibetan and Western nuns' low status likewise could be read from their distance from the throne. With only one exception, the female practitioners were relegated to the edge of the stage, where they sat behind the eighty or so Tibetan and Western monks who filled out the rows behind the lamas and other special guests. The women's position on the outskirts of the stage reflects the traditional low position of women in Buddhism.²⁹ While there is not enough space here to explore the issue further, it is important to note that due to the large number of Western women practitioners, traditional gender hierarchies

increasingly are being challenged in the Western Buddhist context.³⁰

Just as the Paones had to deal with the presence of a lot of high lamas and attendants, they also had to make arrangements to handle a large number of American "VIPs", including Cindy Crawford (Gere's then-wife), Uma Thurman, Melissa Mathison (Hollywood screenwriter and wife of actor Harrison Ford) as well as "celebrity Buddhists" such as Phillip Glass, Laurie Anderson, Spalding Gray, Allen Ginsberg, and John Avedon (to name just a few).³¹ In an interesting parallel, the celebrities, like the lamas, were given special treatment, including the best seats in the house. In fact, the entire front section of the auditorium (closest to the stage) was cordoned off to form a VIP section.³² During the initiation, Madison Square Garden security personnel guarded access to the area; if you did not have a ticket indicating you were sitting in this section, you were not allowed in. This procedure created a great deal of grumbling and frustration among the non-VIP participants at the initiation, many of whom wanted to go to the edge of the stage to greet their lamas and others seated onstage. At the Kalachakra in Los Angeles, although the VIPs sat in front close to the stage, no one was denied access to the stage during breaks. Just as the seating of the high lamas onstage reveals their position in the social and religious hierarchies of the Tibetan community, so the preferential treatment of the American VIPs and "celebrity Buddhists" reflects these individuals privileged position in American social structure.

Conclusion

...His Holiness [the Dalai Lama] said there is no difference between Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan politics, and Tibetan culture. They're all the same. He went further than that. He said that in fact there'd be no point in preserving Tibetan culture if it were not for the Buddhadharmā being so integrated into the culture. He came to the point: well, what do we have to offer the world? His answer was Tibetan Buddhism, our practice is what we have to offer the world. If we don't have that, what's the use of saving our culture? (Frances Paone, 11/5/91)³³

When I began this chapter, I suggested that the performance of the Kalachakra during the Year of Tibet was a paradigmatic example of a distinctly Tibetan mode of engaging outsiders based on their recognition of the value and power of Tibetan Buddhism. As we have seen, this mode of engagement dates back several centuries and is based on a lama-patron relationship (*mchod-yon*) in which Tibetan (and Mongol) hierarchs gave Buddhist teachings and tantric initiations in exchange for protection and support from Manchu and Chinese sovereigns. In a recent essay, James Hevia (1993) argues that the relationship between Tibetan lamas and Manchu emperors involved attempts by both parties to "encompass and include others in their own cosmologies through joint participation in rituals of inclusion and transformation" (246). For the Manchus, this entailed efforts to assert their superiority through audience rituals; for Tibetans, this meant attempts to transform the emperor, through Buddhist instruction and tantric initiations, into a patron who, having received such teachings, would accept the lama's intellectual and spiritual superiority as well as a responsibility to "protect the lama and his teachings, and promote Buddhism in the patron's domain" (*ibid.*, 247). Following Hevia's

analysis, the Kalachakra described in this chapter can be said to represent an effort by Tibetans to encompass and include non-Tibetans in their own cosmology. It embodies Tibetan attempts to create a more binding relationship between themselves and non-Tibetans through ritual participation and, presumably, transformation.

To what extent were audiences transformed? To what extent was the event understood as constitutive of political relations between the participants and the Dalai Lama? The answers to these questions are far from clear and I shall not attempt to answer them here. What I do want to do is suggest that the tensions which arose between Tibetans and Westerners as well as between politicians and serious dharma practitioners during the planning stages of the initiation reveal the contested processes through which Tibetan religious practice became a field of political action in the Year of Tibet.

When asked whether or not they felt the Kalachakra was "political," the Paones argued that the initiation was implicitly political. As Jean put it,

The whole thing is a political statement. It's political that His Holiness is giving the Kalachakra initiation, that Tibetan Buddhist teachings can be given and are being given is a political statement...From our side, look at what these remarkable people have done. They have preserved centuries of Buddhadharma in exile, without their country, under extremely adverse conditions, and preserved it in such a way that they can now bring it to other countries...their art, their religion, their philosophy, their science of mind, it's incredible. So I guess...it's political and it's good.

At the same time that the Paones saw the initiation as implicitly political, they did nothing that was "overtly political as we know it in America. We did not ask

people to sign petitions, we did not hand out postcards, we did not do anything.” According to Jean, the couple was not approached by any Tibet support organization to do anything political, so they decided to keep the event “spiritual...The fact that it was the Year of Tibet, the fact that it was to promote awareness about the plight of Tibet...we didn’t do anything, and nobody did anything else either.” (I come back to this point again in chapter 10.)

It is not surprising that the Paones chose not to emphasize the political dimensions of the Kalachakra. In many ways, their approach is in keeping with the stereotype within the Movement about Western Buddhists--that they prefer spiritual practice to political activism. While this is not true of all practitioners, it characterizes the attitude of a majority of American Buddhists with whom I have come in contact. It would therefore be a mistake to assume, as some have done, that Western Buddhists play an important role in transnational Tibet activism. At almost every Tibet Movement meeting, the issue of how to get the relatively large but quiescent American Buddhist community involved in activism for Tibet comes up. Lay Tibetans often express their frustration openly in such situations with both American dharma students and their Tibetan teachers. The fact that lay Tibetans do much of the grassroots organizing in the Tibet struggle while monks are recognized and revered by the Western public as embodiments of Tibetanness only increases the existing tension between the two groups in the Movement context.³⁴

Western Buddhists claim the reasons why Tibetan lamas are not more active in the Tibetan political cause relates to their religious training. They argue that

lamas are caught in the dilemma of wanting both to support the Dalai Lama's (and Buddhism's) universal message as well as express their nationalistic desires. As one Western nun put it in an interview with Brentano, "the old geshees are not very nationalistic; they love Tibet but they want peace everywhere as much as they want it in Tibet."³⁵ This religious explanation, while it may be accurate up to a point, does not entirely account for the phenomenon.

To understand why many religious figures in the Tibetan community shy away from political involvement, it is useful to remember that the non-Gelugpa lineages generally were not central actors in the Tibetan polity. Instead, they operated autonomously, living far away from Lhasa, the seat of the Dalai Lama's Gelugpa government. As a result, Nyingma, Sakya, and Kagyu lamas' regional and religious affiliations far outweighed any potential nationalist loyalties. Upon coming into exile, lamas and lineages were scattered across the subcontinent; most operated independently of Dharamsala and the Tibetan government-in-exile and thus did not share the commitment to Tibet as a state with those who participated in governing Tibet in the past (e.g., Gelugpa monastics and aristocrats). Klieger makes this point in his book on Tibetan nationalism. He argues that despite the fact that great efforts have been made by the exile government to display unity and that all the sects generally acknowledge the Dalai Lama as the leader of Tibet,

...many of these lineages have their own intricate networks of missions abroad and are not necessarily dependent upon the Dharamsala establishment or the Dalai Lama's own Gelugpa lineage. This is essentially as it was in the past, characteristic of those twin forces of centralization and decentralization which competed at the

expense of the unification of the Tibetan state. (Klieger 1992:89-90)

The Kagyu lineage's success in exile demonstrates Klieger's point. Kagyu lamas resettled in Sikkim where they repossessed Rumtek monastery which they had built much earlier and received the generous patronage of the kings of Bhutan and Sikkim: "Having perhaps the widest network of centers abroad, the Kagyupa seem to be quite economically autonomous from Dharamsala" (Klieger 1992:90). Given the history of sectarian division in Tibet, that representatives from all the lineages, including Bon, came to New York to give "Nature of Mind" teachings and participate in those given by the Dalai Lama was no small achievement. It enabled Year of Tibet organizers to reinforce an impression of wholeness and to smooth over the persistent tensions in exile between lineages and institutions.

Due to China's suppression of religion in Tibet, there have been no public initiations in that country since 1959. For this reason, as the Paones suggest, the very act of performing a religious ritual such as the Kalachakra has political implications. These implications have been recognized by the Chinese government, especially when initiations have been given in India. For example, classified documents leaked from Beijing indicate that the Chinese saw the Kalachakra initiation held in Sikkim in April 1993 as a political threat. Analysts at the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) summarized the Chinese fears in a recent publication devoted to the documents:

Holding a religious ceremony presided over by the Dalai Lama so close to the Tibetan border is politically much more sensitive than Western observers have believed. It is likely that thousands of

Tibetans applied for exit permits, or left without them, causing both political embarrassment for Chinese authorities and destabilization from the return of Tibetans. The initiation itself, and the public activities surrounding it have no overt political content in a Western sense, but for Tibetans--and Chinese authorities--anything to do with the Dalai Lama has major political ramifications. Moreover, Tibetans attending the Kalachakra from Tibet could easily have read, and be in possession of, literature banned inside Tibet such as speeches by the Dalai Lama, or political tracts originating in Dharamsala or the West. (1993:7)

Despite Chinese accusations that the Dalai Lama uses events such as the Kalachakra to stir up trouble, the Tibetan leader has consistently maintained that he gives the initiation in order to "give some insight into the Tibetan way of life and thinking" as well as to "make an effort, on an inner level, in favour of world peace" (Gyatso 1991:204).

As I wrote in the previous chapter, the Dalai Lama's commitment to Buddhist universality has led him to claim that the Tibet issue is not a political matter but a spiritual struggle. While this intertwining makes sense in a Tibetan context, for non-Buddhist Tibet activists in the West, such a formulation is often confusing or frustrating. If this is true for activists, it is even more so for members of the mainstream media. In the next chapter, I explore the Tibet Movement's encounter with the press during the Year of Tibet.

Notes

1. The heads of each of the four Buddhist and Bon lineages gave teachings which collectively were referred to as "Nature of Mind." Running from October 11 through October 15 (one per day), the teachings consisted of the following talks:
 - "Nature of Mind" by Ven. Lopon Tenzin Namdhak Rinpoche, Bon tradition
 - "Dzog Chen" by Ven. Trulshik Rinpoche, Nyingma tradition
 - "Mahāmudrā by Ven. Tenga Rinpoche, Kagyu tradition
 - "Inseparability of Samsāra and Nirvāna" by Kyabje Sakya Trizin Rinpoche, Sakya tradition
 - "Union of Bliss and Emptiness" by Ven. Lati Rinpoche, Gelug tradition.
2. The Path of Compassion teachings (given by the Dalai Lama) were based on the famous Buddhist text: Bodhisattvacharyavatara, A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life. The main subject of Shantideva's book is the generation of *bodhicitta* and the conduct of the *bodhisattva*. In the program handed out at the teachings, Khyongla Rato Rinpoche writes:

Bodhicitta is the altruistic motivation to achieve enlightenment in order to free all sentient beings from their suffering and lead them to liberation. The conduct of the *bodhisattva* is to engage in developing and perfecting six types of practices known as the six perfections: generosity, ethics, patience, joyous effort, concentration, and wisdom. The final result of these practices is complete liberation from the mental afflictions and the attainment of Buddhahood.
3. For an analysis of the actual performance of the 1991 Kalachakra initiation, see Brentano 1993. For a brief definition of tantric initiations, see Cozort 1986:34.

The two-part interview with Jean and Frances Paone which is cited in this chapter was conducted jointly by Robyn Brentano and me in November 1991. In addition, Robyn Brentano generously shared transcripts of interviews with Lobsang Samten, Tashi, Kirti Rinpoche, and Lozang Trinlae whom she interviewed for her master's thesis in performance studies at New York University (see Brentano 1993).
4. This number does not include the separate initiations and talks given by individual lineage heads through their own local dharma centers in New York. For instance, Sakya Trizin gave a number of tantric initiations to his Western students at various venues on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

5. See Rato Rinpoche's autobiography, My Life and Lives: The Story of a Tibetan Incarnation (1977). See also Samuel (1993, pp. 339-341) for a comparative analysis of Rato Rinpoche's Buddhist training.
6. As anthropologist Dorsh Devoe notes, although Tibetans usually lived with rigidly defined, ascribed social status,

there is some evidence that great donors achieved social recognition for their generosity. Even in exile, the public is witness to gifts given. Every religious puja or festival must be underwritten by the devout. A wealthy Tibetan may sponsor the entire event; or, each of several families may contribute to it. In the latter case, donors' names are listed and read in order of amount given. The most generous donor is in return given the privilege of receiving the first blessing bestowed by the presiding lama. (1987:57-58)
7. The term "so-called" is used because the individuals I am referring to here were unofficial advisors to the Tibetan government-in-exile and the Dalai Lama. Except for a Dutch lawyer, the rest were Americans who worked behind the scenes in various capacities on strategizing and promoting the Tibet issue in Washington, D.C.
8. For an interesting discussion of another kind of intercultural alliance, see Landsman and Krasniewicz 1990.
9. One of the ironies of the situation, Jean Paone pointed out, was that while these individuals argued against the wisdom of having an initiation in Manhattan during the Year of Tibet, once the initiation was scheduled, those same individuals "made sure they got good seats!"
10. According to the Paones, Rato Rinpoche had two reasons for wanting to headline the Kalachakra: he felt it would be a bigger draw and he thought that people would benefit just by coming into contact with the word Kalachakra—that it would have some positive effect on them (this despite the fact that most of those coming into contact with the word would not know what it meant). Rato Rinpoche's argument reflects Tibetan Buddhist belief in the efficacy of particular words to induce certain states of mind (see Lopez 1995b for a discussion of Tibetan Buddhist investment in the spoken word).
11. My synopsis of tantric practice is by necessity over-simplified. Vajrayāna is hard to grasp for a number of reasons, including, as Geoffrey Samuel observes, the self-presentation of Tibetan lamas which has a historic depth that we cannot even begin to understand (1993). Elizabeth Stutchbury's work on the complex processes through which Tibetan lamas construct their identities reinforces Samuel's point (see Stutchbury 1994). She argues that identities are constructed in relation to genealogical lineages, reincarnation, and transmission and teaching.

12. In his class on Buddhism at Columbia University (fall 1989), Robert Thurman identified four distinct stages of tantra:
1. The establishment of a goal vehicle orientation. Goal vehicle orientation refers to the desire to reach enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings (see discussion of bodhicitta in note 4).
 2. In the second stage, practitioners envision the world as a perfected world of the mandala. This involves a withdrawal from a "perception of ordinariness to one of extraordinariness."
 3. The third stage entails meditation on "Buddha pride"—a process wherein one constructs a self-image of oneself as a Buddha. This process is based on a view of emptiness which Thurman describes as a kind of "melting of the subject being isolatedly there, and coming into being relatedly, interconnected to everything and everyone else."
 4. The fourth stage involves the "perfection stage yogas" in which tantric adepts, through meditation, become isolated from physical, verbal and mental "ordinariness." As Thurman describes it, "yogis do this, they die and are reborn in a subjective way many times; they can arise and go to other universes, then return to themselves and reanimate their coarse body and ordinary self."

According to Thurman, the yogis who mastered all four stages of tantric practice were considered extremely powerful people in old Tibet. Often they "lived in cemeteries, wore bones as jewelry to show that death didn't bother them." As I suggested in chapter 3, revered and protected by all, yogic adepts had a sort of "culture hero" status in Tibetan society.

13. These vows are associated with the various Vinaya grades common to Hinayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna (Samuel 1993:205).
14. Samuel writes that "these vows are the defining characteristic of the Mahāyāna practitioner and a prerequisite for tantric practice" (1993:205).
15. The program, a fascinating artifact of the process of representing and transmitting Tibetan Buddhism to the West, was a slickly-produced eighteen page booklet with black and white photographs of the Dalai Lama, the five heads of the Buddhist and Bon lineages, and Rato Rinpoche. In addition to a short biography of each of the lamas giving teachings, the booklet contained a prayer by the late Ling Rinpoche, one of the Dalai Lama's tutors, an "Introduction to Kalachakra" and "Introduction to Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life" by Rato Rinpoche, and an essay by the best-selling Tibetan Buddhist author Sogyal Rinpoche called "Taking to Heart." By including the spiritual biographies of each of the teachers, the organizers were following Tibetan Buddhist tradition whereby lamas are described in terms of their

lineage and the various empowerments they have received and transmitted. But by explicating in Buddhist terms some aspects of Kalachakra and including Sogyal Rinpoche's instruction on how to receive (or "take to heart") the initiation, organizers broke new ground.

Interestingly, at the previous Kalachakra, which was held in Santa Monica in 1989, I did not see any evidence of attempts to make the initiation comprehensible in this way—participants were given a book which was essentially a translation of some aspects of the initiation (but not the secret parts) and various prayers; most of this book therefore did not make sense without the Dalai Lama's verbal instructions. Fortunately, The Wheel of Time: The Kalachakra in Context (published by Deer Park Books in 1985) was available at the time of the 1989 Kalachakra initiation. It is one of the few books which attempts to describe the Kalachakra tantra in terms comprehensible to a non-practitioner.

16. After the Kalachakra in 1989, the Dalai Lama reportedly observed that despite the presence of some 3,000 people in the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, "only 25 people really got the initiation." "This," he is quoted as saying, "is because most of them didn't understand emptiness and compassion and renunciation."

In order to actually "receive" an initiation, Tibetans believe a student must have three prerequisites: 1) renunciation, or the strong desire to abandon the causes of cyclic existence; 2) bodhicitta, or the compassionate motivation to become enlightened for the benefit of others; and 3) insight into emptiness. As Brentano notes, "it is assumed that students take many years to develop these understandings and motivations, so they are encouraged to take initiations many times, in order to experience the transmission with greater and greater insight" (1993:45).

17. In another instance, on the first day of the Kalachakra, the Dalai Lama acknowledged the presence of non-Buddhists and implied they should not worry about participating. Laughing, he said "It is possible in the audience today there may be non-Buddhists. Those of you who are here, you can be alert and when nothing is happening, you can occasionally doze off!"
18. The issue of trust between student and lama came up during a question and answer session following the second day of the Dalai Lama's "Path on Compassion" teachings. I recorded the exchange as follows:

Q: If our guru contradicts another guru's teachings, what attitude should we take to maintain respect?

DL: Personally, I should suggest one to be cautious right from the beginning so as to not get caught relying on a teacher who is unreliable. Although the guru's instruction and transmission is crucial, it should accord with the general structure of the Buddhist path...In the Vinaya [monastic code], the procedure of how to relate to the guru is explained. If the guru gives advice that does not

accord with the dharma, it should be opposed. Similarly, in Mahayana sutras, instructions which do not accord with the dharma should be disregarded. In tantra, if instruction is beyond your personal ability, explain to your teacher why you cannot carry out that instruction. However, what I have said is general, it doesn't rule out extreme cases like Milarepa where both teacher and disciple are extremely exceptional. Yet in some cases can be extremely skillful means on the part of the teacher to help student accomplish particular ends.

19. Samten's concerns are not unwarranted. Indeed, there have been incidents in the West in recent years involving sexual harrasment and endangerment by Tibetan Buddhist teachers (both Tibetan and American), some of whom clearly did not have the best interests of their students at heart. For a discussion of one such (allegedly) problematic guru-student relationship, see a recent article on the suit brought by "Janice Doe" against best-selling author Sogyal Rinpoche for sexual harrasment, coercion and abuse ("Sexual healing" by Mary Finnigan, The Guardian (1995). See also Fields 1991.

20. When I asked an American man sitting near me what he thought about the man's strange behavior, he suggested that

lots of really wierd, dark things come up when people are gathered together and taking a teaching like this. Obstacles and defilements arise, stuff that he has probably kept a lid on come up and interfere, karma comes up, but I think it will be okay. Some people's practice is more ferocious than others...

This response, framed in Buddhist terms, fails to acknowledge that the man might be mentally ill. Although the man in question no doubt considered himself to be a Buddhist (I had seen him at numerous Buddhist teachings and meditating in front of the UN after a demonstration), his behavior, if interpreted in non-Buddhist terms, indicated that he had a serious psychological problem.

21. See "Tenzin Palmo in Conversation" for a fascinating interview with an Englishwoman who became a Tibetan Buddhist nun in 1964 and spent twelve years in retreat in India (Cho Yang No. 6, 1994:91-98).
22. One of the many ironies entailed in the Western embrace of Tibetan Buddhism is the fact that Westerners often misunderstand traditional lama status hierarchies. In his book, Klieger describes an incident involving the discovery of a reincarnation of a Tibetan lama named Lama Yeshe in Spain. The discovery of Lama Osel attracted world wide media attention and created quite a stir in certain Western Buddhist circles. Many exile Tibetans were surprised and dismayed by the inaccurate representation of Lama Osel as the reincarnation of one of the most important lamas in the diaspora. As Klieger writes, "Westerners were blamed for not seeing beyond Shangri-la; not appreciating or understanding the traditional order..." (1992:88).

Indeed, Klieger observes,

In the West, Buddhist students often do not have the opportunity to know the position of their teacher in regards to the traditional (or re-established) hierarchy. There is sometimes a tendency to presume that one's preceptor is a more important personage than they actually are within Tibetan society. (1992:88)

23. For an interesting discussion of American Jews who become Buddhists, see Kamenetz's The Jew in the Lotus (1995).
24. In examining the reasons why Westerners are attracted to Buddhism, Robyn Brentano argues that the discourse of enlightenment

resonates with Western ideals of self-perfection and Judeo-Christian notions of salvation...The Buddhist goal of self-realization finds ready acceptance in an individualistic society, but its compassion-driven ethos based on the idea of selflessness challenges Western ego-centered notions of human purpose. (1993:72)

In her book Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating a New Buddhism (1988: reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1993) Sandy Boucher suggests that

Another aspect of Buddhism's appeal in the West has arguably been its optimistic views of what is humanly possible. The Theravada, Tibetan, Pure Land, Soka Gakkai, Zen, and other Tibetan forms of Buddhism, which have been among the most well received in this country, promise the possibility of superior mental states or even enlightenment in this lifetime. Such emphasis on personal achievement maps well onto a capitalistic mentality, even as it appears to offer spiritual respite from materialistic goals (Boucher 1993:49).

In a recent book on Buddhism and feminism, Anne Klein cautions against easy comparisons and offers her own interpretation:

It seems natural to suppose that dilemmas of self-hood peculiar to our time and place are part of what brings Americans and other Westerners to Buddhism. Buddhist thought and practice does, in some measure, speak to these issues, but in order to make best use of its resources, it is important to be clear on the ways it does NOT explicitly address them. The Buddhist spiritual journey is very different from the Western psychological journey, to which it is often too swiftly compared. "Finding oneself" in the contemporary Western sense means identifying one's unique talents, limitations, and place in the world so as to make choices consistent with this identity. Buddhist practices, by contrast, are celebrated for their

ability to access universal faculties such as clarity, focus, or an experience of the unconditioned. Unless this difference is clear, one is in danger of recreating the experience of a California woman who after many years of Zen practice observed, "My concern now is that I used Buddhism as an escape from growing up." (1995:59)

25. For a discussion of tension between white (or Euro-American) and black and Asian-American Buddhists, see "Waking up to Racism" by bell hooks; "Confessions of a White Buddhist" by Rick Fields; and "Buddhists in America: A short, biased view" by Addie Foye, all of which are to be found in the fall 1994 issue of Tricycle (pages 42-57).
26. Given that Buddhism is about practices which must be transmitted from teacher to student, it is important to recognize the role Western students, as a receptive audience for tantric teachings, play in sustaining lineages of practice in exile.
27. Compared to Madison Square Garden, the Civic Auditorium in Santa Monica was much more flexible in its scheduling. As a member of the film crew documenting the 1989 initiation for archival purposes, I remember filming monks from Namgyal doing *pujas* every morning at 6 am for several hours before the Dalai Lama arrived.
28. For Tibetan Buddhists, it would be considered extremely disrespectful to deny a very high lama's request for a second attendant.
29. For analyses of the role of women in Tibetan Buddhism, see Havnevik's Tibetan Buddhist Nuns: History, Cultural Norms, and Social Reality (1989), Paul's Women in Buddhism (1979), and Willis's Feminine Ground: Essays on Women in Tibet (1989).
30. In a recent article in the Buddhist magazine Tricycle (Fall 1994), Rick Fields observes that American Buddhism, as it is being defined by white Buddhists, is "based on a strenuous, if not athletic, practice of meditation and is becoming increasingly democratized, psychologized, and socially engaged. There is also a growing concern with moral standards and norms, as well as a receptiveness to feminist critique."
31. I first encountered "celebrity Buddhists" at the Kalachakra in Santa Monica. At that time, working as a volunteer member of a film crew documenting the event, I operated the camera located on the front left-hand side of the stage. Thus I was quite close to the front of the auditorium where all the "VIPs" sat, among them Barbra Streisand, Uma Thurman, Gary Busey, and Richard Gere.
32. According to Jean and Frances, they decided to limit access to the stage and VIP section in New York for security reasons.

33. The Dalai Lama made the statement quoted above in response to a question about the relationship between culture, politics and religion at a public talk in New York in October 1991.
34. It is important, however, not to forget that monks and nuns have been at the forefront of independence demonstrations in Lhasa and elsewhere in Tibet since 1987 (see Schwartz 1994 and Barnett and Akiner 1994).
35. Lozang Trinlae, an ordained nun interviewed by Robyn Brentano in 1991.

Chapter 10 Mediating "Tibetanness"

Introduction

Much has been written in recent years about "global cultural flows" (Appadurai 1990:3) and the accelerated circulation of representations as defining characteristics of late twentieth century life. One of the most important aspects of this contemporary condition is that increasingly the groups represented by academics, journalists, and others share the same social space with the words and images intended to represent them. As I have emphasized throughout this dissertation, representations of Tibet as "Shangri-la" and of Tibetans as spiritual beings have mediated relations between Tibetans and Westerns for many years. What makes the Tibetan case so interesting is how successfully Tibetans have engaged these Western fantasies in order to reproduce themselves in exile and mobilize support for their struggle. Chapters 8 and 9 offer ethnographic examples of this process and, in so doing, reveal how Tibetans self-consciously participate in their own objectification through the co-production (with American activists) of representations of Tibetan culture as well as through the creation and enactment of their own narratives of Tibetanness.

In my examination of the "Wisdom and Compassion" exhibition in chapter 8, I used the anecdote about Kissinger trying to persuade museums to drop the show to make a point about the inextricability of representation and political action. Today, anyone with a political agenda, from the Chinese government to

the Tibet Movement, must confront the importance of Western mainstream media, as they have become increasingly central to all political activity in the global arena. For most, however, the process of representing themselves to the media does not come easily; instead, it must be learned. This chapter explores the Tibet Movement's experience with this process, focusing on activists' encounter with Jane Kelly (a pseudonym), the media strategist hired by Tibet House to handle the Year of Tibet events in New York. Kelly represents a class of information managers who play a crucial role in contemporary American society but who have received surprisingly little anthropological attention. By examining Kelly's work with Tibet activists, I offer an ethnographic account of the complex mediations entailed in the strategic deployment of culture.

Instead of focusing on Kelly's participation on a day-to-day level in the Year of Tibet, this chapter explores two presentations made by Kelly after the campaign had ended. The first took place at a "post-Year of Tibet" strategy meeting in New York in December 1991; the second presentation took place in a workshop on media at a large Tibet support conference in Washington, D.C. in January 1993. The purpose of the "post-Year of Tibet" meeting, which was held at the Office of Tibet, was to develop strategies aimed at taking advantage of the "worldwide energy, support, and goodwill" the Year of Tibet had generated up to that point.¹ It became the first in a series of post-Year of Tibet strategy sessions that ran through September 1992 and which were attended by the heads of each of the main Tibet support organizations. Although this particular cycle of meetings

played a crucial role in creating a structure for the Tibet Movement in the post-Year of Tibet period, my focus in this chapter is on Kelly's presentations and activists' responses rather than on the larger role meetings play as forms of organization through which the Movement is constituted.

Jane Kelly as mediator

Although Jane Kelly was hired to "represent" Tibetans to American journalists, in the process of trying to do her job, Kelly found herself representing American journalistic "culture" back to the activists, many of whom had little or no understanding of how media actually operate. I attempt to demonstrate this point by exploring Kelly's detailed description of press practices and reactions to her suggestion that activists learn "how to talk to that culture"--the culture of print and electronic journalism. At the same time that Kelly tried to enlighten activists about the structural demands of the mass media, she took pains to represent the Tibet issue to her colleagues in the press in as sensitive a manner as possible. By meeting regularly with Tibetan leaders in New York in order to inform them of her strategy as it developed and give them the opportunity to voice their concerns, Kelly quickly gained a good understanding of their concerns about the media, which she in turn tried to address in her strategizing. Although the job of media strategist by definition necessitates a degree of mediating between the client and the press, through her work with the Tibet Movement, Kelly became a mediator of cultural values.

In this role, Kelly served an important "diagnostic" function for me and for the activists with whom she worked. Because there were so many different Year of Tibet events in New York telescoped into the period of a single month and because Kelly was responsible for devising a media strategy that encompassed them all, her immersion in the Movement was intense. As someone who had worked with a range of organizations and political campaigns such as Lawyers Committee for Human Rights and Amnesty International, Kelly brought a seasoned media professional's perspective to the weaknesses of the Movement and how they shaped the kind of coverage she was able to generate during the Year of Tibet. Part of her job was to communicate her insights and suggestions to those who had hired her. During the course of my research on the Year of Tibet, activists cited Jane Kelly frequently. Clearly she played a crucial role in bringing certain issues into their consciousness. I argue that this process reached its height during the "post-Year of Tibet" meeting when Kelly made her presentation. Indeed, as we will see, for those who had not come in contact with Kelly before this point, the meeting was an important learning experience, if not a transformative one.

Kelly's actual analysis of the Year of Tibet from a media perspective forms the heart of this chapter. At the more exclusive "post-Year of Tibet" meeting, she told activists that there was not a coordinated media strategy behind the campaign. Despite her best efforts to coax a coherent message out of them, the activists with whom she worked failed to articulate a goal or set of goals for the Year of Tibet. Kelly also spent a lot of time discussing how the Dalai Lama should be framed or

"packaged" for a press corps that understands little about his dual status as spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. The issues Kelly raised touch on some fundamental problems at the core of the Tibet Movement and thus it is not surprising that they elicited strong reactions from activists at the meeting.

Thirteen months later, at the "Tibet conference of the Americas" in Washington, D.C., Kelly spoke more generally about how the U.S. press works and what it expects. Although she reiterated her argument about the Tibet Movement's need to develop a long-term media strategy, she concentrated on outlining some of the basics about media strategizing for a roomful of eager Tibetan and American activists. In exploring these two different presentations, I demonstrate the actual process through which Tibet activists became conscious of their role as mediators of Tibetanness and in the process came to see themselves as members of a social formation engaged in collective action with a shared purpose.

A confrontation of representations

As I have noted in previous chapters, since 1959, Tibetan refugees have been engaged in an ongoing "confrontation of representations" (Goldstein 1994b:15) with Chinese officials in which the two sides compete to legitimize their own representations of the situation in Tibet. In recent years, the display of culture has become one of the most important means through which Tibetan and Chinese claims to political legitimacy are contested. At the same time that the confrontation between the PRC and Tibet activists in exile has moved into the

arena of cultural performance, both sides have become increasingly aware of the need to make their case in the media. While each side recognizes the centrality of media to political struggle, neither has mastered the art of media manipulation yet. Despite the fact that the PRC is represented by nineteen different public relations firms in the U.S. alone² (most of which deal with trade, development and related issues), the Chinese government is not always successful in generating the kind of positive coverage it desires. One reason for this is that the PRC is often its own worst enemy, behaving in ways that do not endear it to Western governments or press corps. For instance, China has repeatedly tried to block the Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees from participating in various U.N. conferences. From a Western media perspective, such blatant obstructionism has been disastrous, drawing criticism from Western governments and journalists, and, if anything, creating even more sympathy and support for Tibetans than existed before.

Tibetans, on the other hand, have had quite a different experience with the Western press. As Jane Kelly pointed out at the "post-Year of Tibet" meeting:

You have wonderful friends in the press. There's a basic rightness of your cause which opens up wonderful channels of communication to the U.S. media. First of all, you're a great story and any reporter wants a great story. But there's something about the rightness of this cause that makes them not just interested in covering you, but interested in getting close to you.

As I pointed out in chapter 6, Tibetans have been overwhelmingly well received in the U.S., particularly in comparison to other refugee and diasporic groups from Asia. The stereotype of Tibetans as special beings from "Shangri-la" that many

Americans hold and the lack of guilt about Tibet due to the fact that it was never colonized by the U.S. are both factors that have influenced the unusually positive interaction between Tibetans and Americans. Because of these factors, Tibetans have a remarkably different relationship to dominant American society, including the mainstream media, compared to other groups. Just as such diverse figures as Richard Gere, Jesse Helms, Barbra Streisand, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, (to name just a few) support and admire the Dalai Lama, so do important individuals in electronic and print journalism such as Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, and Abe Rosenthal. By having friends such as these, Tibetans have been able to draw attention to their struggle in a way that is dramatically out of proportion to the actual size of the community here.

At the same time, Tibetans are in the paradoxical position of never having had to generate interest in their "culture," but of having that interest be focused too much on the Dalai Lama or Tibetan's spirituality rather than on the hard political realities of the Tibetan situation. Indeed, representations of Tibet and Tibetans that circulate in the international public sphere tend to be generic stereotypes which misrepresent the complexity of the Tibet issue as well as Tibetan priorities, a process of which Tibet activists are well aware. One Tibetan intellectual attributes this to the "constant mythologization of Tibet" which has "obscured and confused the real nature of the Tibetan political struggle":

A myth has a power and reality of its own. In the case of Tibet, the myth of Shangri-la has influenced the Western perception of the Tibetan political struggle...If the Tibet issue is to be taken seriously,

Tibet must be liberated from both the Western imagination and the myth of Shangri-la. (Shakya 1992:15-16)

Even though the Western media "give extensive coverage to Tibetan issues," Shakya claims, "not a single government or institution has taken the Tibetan political issue seriously" (1992:13). This has changed in recent years, in part through the efforts of the Tibet Movement and human rights organizations, both of which have succeeded in making the Tibet issue an important factor in U.S.-China relations (e.g., linking the renewal of China's most-favored nation trading (MFN) status, to improvements in human rights in China and Tibet). Despite the fact that Tibet activists have accomplished a great deal in terms of influencing American governmental attitudes toward Tibet since 1987--e.g., a number of Congressional resolutions on Tibet have been passed calling for the end of China's occupation of Tibet, and the Dalai Lama has met with two sitting American presidents (Bush and Clinton)--activists have been slow to seize the initiative in learning how to shape media coverage so as to consolidate these gains and make further progress.³

Having said that, Tibet activists, like the Chinese government, recognize the need to use the media more effectively; that media strategists have been hired on short-term bases to handle events such as the Year of Tibet in 1991 and the Kalachakra in Los Angeles in 1989 demonstrate this fact. Nonetheless, during the course of my fieldwork, the issue of needing to hire a media coordinator on a permanent basis came up at a majority of the Movement meetings I attended. Tibetan and American activists generally reacted to these suggestions (which were always made

by non-Tibetans) with ambivalence, expressing one of two views: that engagement with the media is a mysterious process and thus somewhat beyond their ken, or that hiring someone to help them "package" their story for media consumption is not a good or desirable thing.⁴

In many ways, activists' resistance to the media is not surprising. Learning how to work with the media is a time consuming and expensive process, one that many overworked, understaffed and underfunded support organizations are reluctant to pursue. In addition, public relations and media coordination are complex, sophisticated practices which are grounded in certain requirements and assumptions and which demand certain interpretations. Most Tibet activists (both American and Tibetan) know little about these practices and the discourse on which they are based and find the prospect of intervening in the media arena daunting. Yet Tibet activists do not resist engaging the media for these reasons alone. As we shall see, most have an ambivalent attitude toward the media.

A paradoxical profile

First of all, I want to say that I've seldom ever worked with a media campaign that is as complicated and interesting as this Year of Tibet campaign was. So with all the positive things that happened, all the structural complications, all the personalities...it's a very interesting issue, with very interesting people...this issue is so pregnant with possibilities that it is very, very exciting. Then it gets depressing because you have some things in your structure, in your set of unique personalities, in the relationship of national support groups to international celebrity in the form of the Dalai Lama to a government-in-exile, that present you with rather unique opportunities but at the same time are crippling and confusing your

overall media message.⁵

Jane Kelly's opening statement to activists neatly encapsulates the Tibet Movement's paradoxical position vis á vis the media: while there are many things that make the Tibet issue compelling, including the presence of the Dalai Lama and celebrities like Richard Gere, these very same elements make for a complex, as opposed to simple, Movement structure and, as Kelly puts it, "profile." "For good or for bad," she told the activists,

a lot of the profile is in one person who is an international media figure, who is a very complicated figure for a press corps like the U.S. press corps to understand because of his unique role as a political and spiritual leader.

Kelly's point about the Dalai Lama's complicated "profile" is underscored by many journalists' tendency to refer erroneously to him as a "god-king" instead of the Tibetans' spiritual and political leader. In part it was this inability of the press to understand the Dalai Lama that prompted some of the Dalai Lama's "advisors" to argue against the wisdom of holding a Kalachakra initiation in New York City in the first place; they worried that the political side of the Dalai Lama's "profile" would be obscured by media attention on the more exotic spiritual side of his persona.

Given the complexity of the Movement's profile, Kelly told activists that they did not define their message as "definitively" as they should have during the Year of Tibet. Acknowledging that many of her colleagues in the press corps as well as in the U.S. government are generally uncomfortable with the combination

of dharma and politics which characterizes the Tibet issue, Kelly tried in her media strategy to present the Dalai Lama in as substantive and un-exoticizing a manner as possible.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Livet Reichart, the public relations firm hired by Gere to handle the Kalachakra, did not share Kelly's approach. Instead, they focused on generating publicity through whatever means possible, which meant a lot of stories about Richard Gere and his friendship with the Dalai Lama in the society pages of newspapers and magazines such as Women's Wear Daily, the New York Post, New York magazine, and so on. By presenting the issue through celebrity Buddhists, Kelly argued,

...you have potential media conflict. You have Tibetan Buddhism which in fact in a U.S. mainstream context is viewed as a fringe religion, as something alien, as something of a practice of the young, of the rich and famous, of the people who gave up smoking dope but continue to meditate. You are dealing with all sorts of stereotypical perceptions of what Buddhism might be that gets attached to a people whose religion is Buddhism, as they continue their own political agenda. So that's a negative projection floating out there.

Kelly criticized activists for not taking advantage of the positive aspect of his profile, which she claimed derives from his status "as a political leader whose political vision is rooted in his moral authority." Because internal Movement discussions happen in such a chaotic, seat-of-the-pants way, Kelly observed, activists end up allowing themselves to be defined in terms of the negative stereotypes attached to Western Buddhists. Referring to Livet Reichart's decision to run full- and half-page advertisements for the Kalachakra in the New York

Times and Village Voice, Kelly argued that the ads made it appear as if Tibetans were proselytizing:

...you have a very well coordinated media strategy where we are going to the religion editor at the New York Times rather than the foreign desk to understand what the Kalachakra might be, or we're going to the foreign editor at Newsweek who has a long-term interest in the institution of the Dalai Lama. Then we're putting ads simultaneously in the New York Times that say come to the revival meeting and become a Buddhist. They didn't say that, but I'm saying that there are conflicting themes that we're complicating by not having a coherent message.

Apparently missing her point, several activists' responded to Kelly's criticism by protesting that they thought the Year of Tibet campaign was "terrific" and that it received a lot of media coverage. Kelly argued back that the Year of Tibet's success was due to luck rather than any real strategy on the Movement's part. Reiterating her explanation of the difference between publicity and media strategy, she told activists: "Publicity is insignificant and useful only so far as it sells out events" whereas "a media strategy is meant to help an organization or movement develop long-term relationships with the press which in turn can be used to further ongoing objectives." Kelly argued that publicity based on celebrity "hooks" leads to superficial coverage of the Tibet issue and undermines activists' efforts to appear to be credible, serious political actors. To demonstrate her point, Kelly imagined a scenario in which Gere's celebrity could work against activists:

...for example, if you have a Frank Mankiewicz in Washington who is representing China with the MFN debate...he is one of the most skilled information-spreading people I've ever had the pleasure to work with...without ever saying a word about Tibet or the rightness or wrongness of it, if Frank goes out to lunch with Jack so-and-so or

whoever from the New York Times and says, gosh, isn't that a funny picture of Richard Gere with that funny Kalachakra hat on? Who is that Richard Gere anyway?...

Through subtle insinuation, Kelly implied, a public relations person like Mankiewicz could turn Gere's presence at Kalachakra into a negative thing for the Movement. In other words, by not putting out their own message. Kelly warned activists, "there are lots of p.r. agendas that can use what could be perceived as weakness to begin to put some questions in people's minds about what you do." Drawing on her own experience working with Sting and Peter Gabriel (among others) during Amnesty's rock and roll tour for human rights, Kelly asserted the double-edged nature of celebrity involvement in a political issue or campaign. Although "personalities" such as Richard Gere "have brought you access to the media and people into your world," at the same time they carry with them a certain amount of "baggage" which must be carefully "presented and handled" so that they are "useful rather than detrimental" to the cause with which they are associated.

Faced with a disparate array of Year of Tibet events--from lectures to dance performances to tantric initiations--Kelly suggested activists include "one single coordinated action" to tie them all together and to make clear why they were being held:

Now, I wrote a paper, I laid out a plan, I talked to pretty much everybody before I wrote the paper, it seemed agreed to that we were going forward with the plan to develop these long-term profiles. I said some things needed to be considered. One was, putting out this much activity, 62, or 97, or 114 events that you

were doing in one city, New York, which happens to be the national media capital, means that this question of **what do I do now** is part of your story. The issue of having one coordinated action, that would happen at every single event. That never happened and it created a weakness in your overall media strategy.

At this point, Kelly was interrupted by an American who said he did not understand what she meant. Annoyed, Kelly replied:

It's real simple. You talked to two million people in New York City over a four week period in your events and another, potentially, 25 million people nationally and locally through the media coverage. To have that kind of audience and not have one little postcard that said "Join Tibet Committees" or "Write a letter to blah blah blah," a sort of coordinated thing. I'm not talking about a heavily politicized action, I'm talking about a very generic thing that showed the press why you were doing this.

By not including this sort of coordinated action, Kelly suggested, activists failed to indicate what they were trying to do to remedy the situation in Tibet and what they wanted others to do about it; from a media perspective, this failure made their "story" incomplete.

The reason there was no coordinated action, the Paones told me in our interview, was that there were no clear objectives for the Year of Tibet. Although Kelly met with representatives from Tibet House, Tibet Center, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), as well as with officials from the Tibetan government-in-exile (TGIE) in order to find out "where the Movement is going and how to move it along, what our real objectives were for the Year of Tibet," Frances recalled, "one of the things that did not happen is any real objectives being formulated." When asked why not, Frances surmised: "the groups are so diverse

and everyone had different interests, in addition to the Tibetan government-in-exile not having clear objectives as to what they wanted to obtain." With no substantive goals forthcoming, activists thus were forced to take a fallback position of viewing the Year of Tibet as an educational process to broaden awareness of the situation in Tibet.

Opening the kimono

The issue of Dharamsala not having clear objectives was a recurring motif throughout my research on the Tibet Movement. On numerous occasions, I heard activists complain that when they looked to the government-in-exile for direction in terms of policy and where the Movement should put its energies, guidance was rarely forthcoming. Some blamed it on Dharamsala's political naivete, isolation, or preoccupation with managing refugee communities across the Indian subcontinent; others, however, took a more skeptical view, especially Tibetans from India who were more familiar with the workings of the government-in-exile. They argued that it was not that the TGIE has no clear objectives, but that they were not divulging them to anyone, including other Tibetans. This observation reflects on a central issue of Tibetan culture--the importance of secret knowledge in the constitution of political power.

In old Tibet, where religion and government were intertwined and the head of state was considered to be an emanation of the Buddha Avalokiteśvara, the most prized knowledge was spiritual in nature and was regulated through a hierarchical

process whereby a guru handed down his (in rare cases her) knowledge to a disciple. Obviously there was no "civil society" in the Western sense because Tibet was not democratic; there was no concept of the public's "right to know" or equal access to information. In refugee communities, especially those in India, information still has a different currency than it does in the West. Like many other non-Western societies that operate in what Michaels and Kelly (1984) call an "economy of oral information," Tibetan hierarchies in exile continue to be based on differential access to information. These hierarchies endure and distinguish the ways in which Tibetans understand media and, for that matter, grassroots activism.

I first became aware of these issues at the first international Tibet support conference in Dharamsala in 1990 where a session was held to discuss the importance of media. One of the panelists, a Dutch journalist, asked the audience somewhat rhetorically, "are Tibetans willing or capable of adapting to Western media?" Noting that the Tibetan community "does not want to be packaged and do not know the mechanisms of the media," the Dutchman observed, "you have to open up your kimono every once in a while." For those of us in the audience who were relatively new to the Movement at the time, the kimono comment was confusing. After several years of participant observation, however, I came to understand all too well what the Dutchman meant. By saying that Tibetans have to "open their kimono" every once in a while, the journalist implied that the Tibetan government-in-exile needs to be less secretive, more open, about its political objectives and plans. Otherwise, how can it expect to achieve its goals and

communicate its message to the press?

Dharamsala's tendency to be enigmatic about its activities was a favorite topic of discussion among the American activists with whom I worked. Many felt that traditional Tibetan methods of behind-the-scenes politicking and secret deal-making, coupled with a typically Asian style of diplomacy which prizes saving "face" through indirectness over more confrontational tactics, foster a vagueness that makes it hard to discern exactly what Dharamsala wants to have happen. The Tibetan government's tendency toward secrecy is well-known and well-documented, not just by would-be media strategists, but also by Tibetan intellectuals in exile. For example, a recent editorial in the Tibetan Review questioned the TGIE's silence on a possible visit by the Dalai Lama to Israel:

So the question arises again: why the secrecy? The answer is that this is how the Tibetan government always likes to function, even if there has been a generational change in its composition since coming into exile. I remember that a long time ago in Dharamsala, the cabinet office locked up a copy of Time magazine because it contained an article on Tibet. There was no reason except that they seemed to believe that ordinary people--again, for some unfathomable reason--should be kept out of anything they considered important. This method of running a government pretty much seems to have survived the vicitudes [*sic*] of time. (1994:3)

I argue that Tibetan officials' predilection for secrecy and control over information made them wary not just of the grassroots Year of Tibet campaign (in which local groups were given access to information that Tibetans usually controlled; see chapter 8), but also of the mass media whose demands challenge many of the basic premises of Tibetan political culture. For instance, many Tibetans are

uncomfortable with the necessity of articulating a specific, concrete objective in order to design a media strategy; the concept of putting forward a single message for media consumption runs contrary to the way they conduct their diplomacy. In a previous chapter, I noted the government-in-exile's tendency to assert both Tibet's historical independence from China and at the same time leave the door open for a negotiated settlement in which Tibet remains associated with the PRC but handles some of its own affairs. This diplomatic vagueness, while very much in keeping with the way Tibetans traditionally handled relations with China, often annoys more outspoken Tibetans and Western activists who argue Tibetans should hold out for complete independence and should make this claim publicly in the media.

Tibetans are also extremely cautious about exposing their leader to ridicule or criticism; as I described earlier, Tibetans do not tolerate criticism of the Dalai Lama by other Tibetans (despite the fact that the Tibetan leader himself has urged Tibetans to express their opinions, including ones about his policies). This is particularly true in India where those who dare to say anything are often ostracized, if not verbally and at times physically threatened by fellow refugees. A desire to shield their revered leader from such treatment, while it contradicts efforts to create a democratic polity in exile, may be behind Tibetans' reluctance to subject him to the rough and tumble of Western media practices.⁶ Jean and Frances Paone implied as much when asked to describe Tibetan attitudes toward the press:

It's gotten to become a resistance over time...it has to do with Eastern and Western approaches to things. Because His Holiness is the key to the whole movement, from the Western side there's always this soundbite-packaging-handling approach. It's not going to work with His Holiness...whether that's coming directly from His Holiness or from the ministers in the government, they're not going to let it happen, they're not even gonna let anybody get close to His Holiness to start anything like that...and they themselves don't seem to be able to come up with an alternative so there isn't a media strategy...the attitude is just keep those reporters outta here!

At the second international support conference in New York City in 1990, a media professional who had worked with the Paones on publicizing the Kalachakra in Los Angeles reiterated this point, telling participants in a workshop on media that Tibetans (and some Western activists) view the press as if it were the "bad guy." Tibetans' ambivalent attitude toward the press is ironic given the fact that they have very powerful friends in the press and, if anything, have been much better treated than many other interest groups/social movements who face an up-hill struggle for access to mainstream media.⁷

Finally, on a more practical level, media require specialization which challenges Tibetan generalism. That is, in old Tibet, those who worked in the bureaucracy were all generalists (the main criterion for a government post, other than coming from the right social category, was excellent penmanship and knowledge of various Tibetan scripts). At every large Movement meeting I attended where media were discussed, media professionals suggested that a group of government-in-exile employees be trained as specialists in dealing with the media. Only recently has this suggestion been implemented; two Tibetan men who

studied at Columbia School of Journalism now work for the exile government in London and in Dharamsala as "press officers" (see McLagan 1996 for a portrait of one of them).

The Yale incident: Raising the ante

Of all his activities during the Year of Tibet, the Dalai Lama's visit to Yale University was perhaps the most important one from a political standpoint. The invitation to speak in New Haven was viewed by the Dalai Lama's staff as an opportunity for him to engage in a bit of political symbolism by presenting his policy toward China at then-President George Bush's alma mater where he had outlined his China policy some months before. To prepare for the visit, several of the Dalai Lama's American "advisors," in consultation with Tibetan officials, drafted a speech which was then given to the Dalai Lama when he arrived in the United States. At the press conference, the Tibetan leader appealed to the world community to put pressure on China to allow his return to Tibet for a fact-finding mission.⁸ His conditions included the right to travel at will and the freedom to speak to all citizens, without reprisals against them. He also asked that the world press be present as well as officials of the Chinese government. After making his statement, the Dalai Lama took questions from newspaper and television journalists. For my purposes, what is most interesting about the press conference and speech in New Haven is how it was read by Kelly and by activists who accompanied the Dalai Lama to New Haven. As we shall see, what I am calling

the "Yale incident" exemplifies the Tibetans' distinctive style of politics described in the section above. In her analysis of the incident, Kelly (unwittingly) put her finger on a central tension in Tibet activism: the lack of clear communication between the government-in-exile and Tibet support groups, which, I argue, is rooted in Tibetans' and Western supporters' different approaches to information.

Jane Kelly worked hard to "provoke" stories on the Dalai Lama and the Year of Tibet. Without disclosing what the Dalai Lama would say at Yale, she described the announcement he planned to make as "major" and wrote to colleagues such as Peter Jennings that she hoped he would cover "what may be an historic initiative." Much to her credit, Kelly succeeded in generating interest and coverage of the Dalai Lama's speech in a number of media outlets, including the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, the Associated Press, Reuters, UPI, NBC Nightly News, ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, and National Public Radio (see Figures 24-27). In her remarks at the post-Year of Tibet meeting, however, Kelly seemed less than pleased about the outcome of the Yale event. She told activists there were a lot of complications she did not fully understand when she began working on the Year of Tibet:

I was very frustrated, for example, when I went and read every clipping, everything that had ever been done, and I kept finding a softness when the Dalai Lama spoke about the political message of Tibet.

Much to her dismay, this "softness" was evident at the Yale press conference where, according to Kelly, the Dalai Lama failed to take full advantage of the

Dalai Lama Appeals for Help in Going Home

By ARI L. GOLDMAN
Special to The New York Times

NEW HAVEN, Oct. 9 — The Dalai Lama, the exiled leader of Tibet, today renewed his efforts to visit his homeland by appealing to the world to put pressure on China to allow his return for a fact-finding mission.

In remarks at Yale University, the Tibetan leader expressed frustration with the protracted negotiations between his representatives and China, stating that he was ready to go "as soon as possible."

A visit to Tibet, which would require Chinese approval, would be the first by the spiritual leader since his exile in

1959. The Chinese Government had no immediate response today, its embassy in Washington said.

The Dalai Lama, who is in the United States for the second time this year to mark a yearlong international celebration of Tibet, said the time was right for a visit to his homeland.

"The world has changed dramatically in the last few years," he said. He mentioned the revolutions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, adding, "The human desire for freedom will ultimately prevail no matter the length nor the severity of any repression."

The Dalai Lama, who lives in India, set several conditions for a visit to

Tibet. He asked for the right to travel at will and the freedom to speak to all citizens, without reprisals against them. He also asked that the world press be present as well as officials of the Chinese Government.

Chinese Accord Called Unlikely

Chinese experts in the United States and Beijing said that it was unlikely that China would agree to such conditions, since it would further what the Chinese regard as the Dalai Lama's efforts to separate Tibet from the People's Republic.

Over a decade of contacts, the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama

have inched toward an agreement that would allow for a visit and eventual return of the spiritual leader. The Chinese, who had insisted that the Dalai Lama end his advocacy of independence for Tibet and live in Beijing, dropped the residency requirement.

In turn, the Dalai Lama began to speak of a free democratic Tibet associated with China rather than an independent Tibet.

At Yale today, the Dalai Lama said that the negotiations had nowhere. Pointing to his ears, he said of the Chinese: "It seemed that one of their organs, their listening organ, was missing."

In a written statement issued on Sept. 23, the Chinese Embassy in Washington blamed the Dalai Lama for the failure of the talks. The root cause, the statement said, "lies in the fact that the

Dalai Lama has not given up his position of independence for Tibet."

In the past, the Chinese Government has belittled the standing of the Dalai Lama. It has accused him of being an outcast and a troublemaker who is encouraging other countries to meddle in China's affairs.

Nobel Prize Increased Status

The Dalai Lama's world stature has increased, however, especially since he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Last April, over the objections of China, President Bush met with the Tibetan, becoming the first President to grant him such recognition.

In his remarks here, the Dalai Lama recounted the reports of human rights organizations that the Chinese have attacked Buddhist monks, destroyed temples and moved millions of Chinese

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into Tibet. As a result, he said, Tibetans are a minority, with 6 million as opposed to 7.5 million Chinese.

In answer to a question at Yale today, the Buddhist teacher demonstrated that his nationalistic hope was different from those who romanticize about a homeland. His attachment to Tibet has more to do with the people than the land, he said.

"I consider all this world the same home of humanity," he said. "Wherever I receive human smiles, that is going home."

Figure 24

Dalai Lama Appeals for Help in Going Home
New York Times, October 10, 1991

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1991

Dalai Lama Says He'll Return Soon to Tibet

Buddhism: The spiritual leader's announcement sees a new political challenge for China.

JIM MANN
STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON—The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, announced Wednesday his intention to return to the first time to the homeland led as a young ruler during her's abortive rebellion against Chinese rule in 1959.

In a speech at Yale University, the Tibetan leader said he wants to sit Tibet as soon as possible to communicate directly with my people. His announcement poses a new political challenge for China, linking the prospect that it could ease along its western borders one of the nationalist pressures that forced the breakup of the great Union.

Over the last decade, the more rival of the Dalai Lama's critics in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, the display of pictures of the exiled leader has been enough to court out public outpourings of support fervor. One U.S. analyst of Wednesday that any return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet "would be tantamount to say the least."

The Tibetan leader, 56, who now lives in exile in India, left unexplained how he might go back once—particularly if, as is likely, his own objects.

Hao Guoteng, a spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, declined to comment. He referred a reporter to a policy statement by the Chinese government, two weeks ago demanding that the Dalai Lama "stop his activities aimed at splitting the country and abandon his position for the independence of Tibet."

Wednesday's speech represents new, tougher and more confrontational stance by the Dalai Lama, who had been trying for more than a decade to negotiate some form of official accommodation with the Chinese leadership.

Three years ago, during an address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, the Dalai Lama proposed that Tibet become autonomous under Chinese rule, with a democratic Tibetan govern-

ment and the Chinese regime in Beijing responsible for foreign policy.

Now, the Tibetan leader said, he has decided to abandon this conciliatory approach—thus implicitly ruling the possibility that in the future he could advocate Tibetan independence.

Chinese leaders rejected the plan for Tibetan autonomy and refused to enter into negotiations," he said Wednesday, speaking from a prepared text. "Moreover, many Tibetans, in exile and in Tibet, were strongly opposed to the proposal, which they felt constituted unnecessary concessions to the Chinese. It is therefore clear that the Strasbourg proposal can no longer serve any useful purpose."

However, the Dalai Lama, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, also complained in his speech Wednesday that he still suffers nonviolence and refuses open to talks with China. Once before, during the early 1980s, representatives of the Dalai Lama visited China and tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a political deal with the Chinese regime that would have allowed the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet.

"My ability to talk to my own people can be a key factor in bringing about a peaceful solution," he declared. "My visit could be a new opportunity to promote understanding and create a basis for negotiated solution."

The government in Beijing contends that Tibet has always been part of Chinese territory. But the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans maintain that never throughout the last 2,000 years have Tibetans acknowledged Chinese sovereignty.

After the downfall of China's Qing Dynasty in 1911, Tibet enjoyed *de facto* independence (but not international diplomatic recognition) for nearly four decades, until China's Communist revolution of 1949. The following year, Chinese troops occupied Tibet. On March 21, 1959, disgraced in peasant's garb, the Dalai Lama left his summer palace outside Lhasa and, with the help of the CIA, fled to India.

There are more than 6 million



The Dalai Lama will reportedly be able to return soon to Tibet.

Tibetan Buddhists. Many of them now live outside the borders of China's Tibet Autonomous Region because China has incorporated some of the land inhabited by Tibetans into the neighboring provinces of Sichuan and Qinghai.

Unlike the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, Tibet has never been recognized by the United States as an independent country. Last April, President Bush became the first American President to meet the Dalai Lama, inviting him to a private White House session that spokesman Martin Ravert said was held because of his role as a religious leader.

China's statement two weeks ago said the government in Beijing hopes that the Dalai Lama will return from exile to China at an early date. However, in the past, Chinese authorities reportedly have insisted that the Dalai Lama should return to Beijing, not the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, and that any visit to Tibet should be made under conditions carefully controlled by China.

On Wednesday, however, the Dalai Lama said his visit to Tibet "can, of course, only take place if Tibetans are permitted to meet with me and speak freely with me without fear of retaliation. For my part, I must be free to travel wherever I want and to meet with any Tibetan I wish to meet." And he added: "It would be important... for senior Chinese leaders to accompany me on each visit and that outside observers including the press, be present to see and report the findings."

Figure 25

Dalai Lama Says He'll Return Soon to Tibet
Los Angeles Times, October 10, 1991

The New Haven Advocate
Oct, 17, 1991

BUDDHA TALK

By Howard Altman

Hello Dalai

Reporter's Notebook: His Holiness rubs shoulders with the press

The short, squat woman in the thick glasses points frantically skyward.

"He's coming," she blurts. "He's coming."

The *He* she refers to is His Holiness, Tenzin Gyatso, better known as the Dalai Lama.

"What's he gonna do?" asks one wisecracker in the crowd. "Walk on air?"

The dozens of reporters who cram the stage at Woolsey Hall for the Media Event of the Week last Wednesday let out a collective sigh of disappointment. The Dalai, followed closely by His Other Holiness, Yale President Benno C. Schmidt, takes a more mundane route toward the stage.

They walk across the balcony, not thin air, to meet the press. Reporters and TV types are gathered to hear the Dalai Lama—who is wearing a traditional maroon robe and something resembling a *tallis*—announce plans to return to his native Tibet. He hasn't seen his homeland since the Chinese, who occupied the country in 1949, drove him out 10 years later.

Schmidt, never one to miss an opportunity to milk any and all Yale connections, announces that the blue and white scarf worn by the Dalai is not a *tallis*, traditional prayer shawl of Orthodox Jews. It is, says His Other Holiness, a Yale Scarf.

Still, the connection between the Dalai and Jews is vivid.

There are six million Tibetans living under the harsh rule of the Chinese. Hundreds of thousands of Tibetans have been tortured and murdered. Just for being Tibetans.

The Dalai is here to tell reporters that he wants to go home.

To see if he can change that.

...

The Dalai is cool.
The physical embodiment of Buddha smiles.
He jokes
He laughs.

He is much more fun than the Pope. And the Ayatollah, who rarely smiled, was never given to random displays of good humor and warmth like the Dalai.

The Dalai is the perfect contrast to the bespectacled woman—dubbed the Mama Lama—who barks orders at photographers gathered to shoot His Holiness. It must be some sort of Buddhist conundrum: the happy-go-lucky Dalai having such a surly messenger to warm up the crowd. Maybe that dichotomy is what attracts actor Richard Gere, who is watching the events from the wings, to follow the Dalai so closely.

The woman, of course, should not be faulted.

The Dalai is a tough act to open for.

...

The Dalai is also tough act for many of the reporters, who know little about His Holiness and even less about Tibet, a mystical land nestled among the high peaks and deep valleys of the Himalayas.

"Jeez, what should I ask him?" asks one TV-type, whose limited knowledge of Tibet comes from watching old reruns of *Shogun-La*.

"I don't know," responds a print reporter. "Why don't you ask him if his smile is the result of divine guidance, or from smoking too much Tibetan hash."

The media's collective ignorance is not accidental. Who knew much about Iraq before the "heroes of Desert Storm" blew the hell out of the place?

Tibet has no oil and we are never likely to use the place as a base of strategic operations.

So why bother with the plight of millions living under the iron fist of the Chinese? There are more important parts of the world to worry about. Places that have armies far less troublesome than China.

Places like Panama and Grenada.

...

"That is a very complicated question," says the Dalai, when asked if he is disappointed that the Bush administration punished the Chinese for the Tiananmen Square massacre by offering them Most Favored Nation trade status.

Again, he smiles. He shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders.

"It would not be wise to isolate the Chinese," says the Dalai, who, though anxious to rid his home of foreign occupation is no naïf. "They are the most populous nation."

Given the Bush administration's reaction to Beijing, and given the U.S. government's refusal to recognize his government-in-exile, the Dalai Lama is the model of politeness when asked if he expects any support from Washington in his effort to return to Tibet.

"The attitude of the administration has been more and more favorable," he says politely. "I think that certain people, no matter what they express outwardly, are sympathetic."

Sympathy, however, will not get the Chinese out of Tibet.

And the Dalai knows it.

"Political and economic pressures are appropriate incentives for inducing necessary change," says the Dalai.

"The same response must be applied to China which the international community invoked in response to colonialism and human rights in other parts of the world."

...

Though he has an outer calmness that befits a man who can trace his ancestry back to the 14th century, when the first Dalai Lama appeared on the scene, this Dalai Lama—the 14th Dalai Lama—is no shrinking violet when it comes to making a point.

"They are missing an organ," he says of the Chinese leaders who have refused to let him back in the country. "The listening organ is missing. They are not hearing what we have to say."

Figure 26

Hello Dalai

New Haven Advocate, October 17, 1991

The New Haven Advocate,
Oct 17, 91



Maybe His Holiness has heard the hotdog vendor joke.

They are not listening to world opinion."

The Dalai exhibits this same straightforwardness when asked why the U.S. should support him, given that Tibet was hardly an outpost of democracy when he was there (even though he was only 14 when the Chinese invaded).

His Holiness responds by saying his government-in-exile is working on a democratic constitution, which will be enacted as soon as he comes home.

"And I won't take part in the government if the people of Tibet do not want me to," he says, adding with a wink and a smile that, from what he hears, Tibetans by and large do want him back.

...

A trip back home would not be without great risk, something else the Dalai Lama knows all too well.

For he, as leader of an increasingly militant nation of occupied people, is way up there on the Beijing list parade. Nothing would make the wheezing old plutocrats who run China smile as widely as the Dalai than having the Dalai rubbed out.

Because he is a symbol of hope and salvation for a nation oppressed.

"Would I be in danger?" he asks me

as he begins to massage my shoulder.

"Yes, of course I would be in danger. But that is the risk I have to take. My people have been suffering so long. They have been taking many risks."

The Dalai smiles and continues to rub my shoulder. He kneads my muscles like dough.

I am surprised, but not threatened. After all, it is not every day that the physical embodiment of Buddha takes the time to give me a rubdown.

Of course, if I had my choice, I would have asked him to do the right arm—my throwing arm. Then, after being touched by His Holiness, I would try out for the Mets, who need pitching desperately.

As the Dalai is whisked away by the Mama Lama and a bevy of monks—under the watchful eye of a government security agent who looks suspiciously like Hunter S. Thompson—I am tempted to ask him if he had ever heard the one about the Dalai Lama and the hotdog vendor.

As the mass of media maniacs surges forward to press flesh with the Dalai, I decide not to. With everything going on back home, I figure he has better things to do than hear a stupid joke that has the Dalai asking the hotdog vendor to "make me one with everything." ■

Figure 27

Hello Dalai...continued
New Haven Advocate, October 17, 1991

opportunity to put forward a clear message:

I put the US national press corps in front of his face, for him to totally and completely exploit their media outlets with his message about this trip, and he presented it as a more equivocal kind of trip that doesn't serve him or the Movement well.

One of the Americans in the room seconded Kelly's point, arguing that the Tibetan leader departed from the "very fine speech about the announcement of the trip back to Tibet" and "gave a dharma talk instead."

As Kelly noted, the Dalai Lama's tendency to equivocate runs like a thread throughout his public appearances in the West. According to the Paones, the Dalai Lama did much the same thing at a press conference held in Los Angeles in 1989 prior to the Kalachakra. Although the audience of reporters wanted to discuss the political situation in Tibet, Frances recalled, "he gave them teachings on compassion, to the press conference...it was wonderful to listen to...but it's hard for a journalist to walk away with a substantive story, if they can convince their editors that this is the story." Marvelling at the Dalai Lama's reluctance to make the most of his media opportunities, Frances cited his appearance on CBS's "Sixty Minutes" where

they were handing him the questions--"don't you think China's been a little bit harsh on Tibet?" and His Holiness took the question and went somewhere else with it. He didn't say, "they're sons of bitches, they have sterilization programs, they have forced abortions, they have torture." He didn't go into this whole litany of things, I mean it was handed to him!⁹

The Dalai Lama's determined optimism and jovial manner often confuse reporters. audiences, even his fellow Tibetans, who expect him to stress the victimization of

Tibetans by China over the last four decades. In trying to make sense of why the Tibetan leader is cautious in his public statements on Tibet, Kelly suggested it is because of the impact his words might have on the lives of Tibetans inside Tibet whom she called "virtual hostages." However, as I argued above and in previous chapters, there are other reasons which might better explain the Dalai Lama's seeming reticence, including the tendency in Tibetan political culture toward "vagueness" and the tension between his commitment to Buddhist universalism and Tibetan nationalism.

Kelly's analysis of the Yale press conference elicited strong reactions from people at the meeting, including two Tibetan government employees who up to this point had kept silent during her presentation. Their story of what "really happened" at Yale was fascinating and revealing, both of the inner workings of the exile administration and the way in which the Dalai Lama makes decisions. With frustration in his voice, one Tibetan official (I'll call him "Namgyal") who participated in the planning of the event began by saying that everyone agreed Yale was a "wonderful place for him to make a speech; he agreed, he prepared, and then finally his own staff people said that no, this is not the first point to give that message." Blaming conflicting advice on the Dalai Lama's friends and staff members who traveled with him from India for the Dalai Lama's equivocation, Namgyal recalled:

So what happens, the very last moment, just one hour before he delivered his message, he becomes indecisive. Because he gets different feeling. For many months we've been saying that Bush

went to Yale to give his China policy statement...you should go and give your China policy at Yale. He said, alright, I'll do it! I'm going to say it. Then he lands here in the United States, and I do not worry but some of his advisors tell him no, you should not talk politics at Yale, that's not the right place. You are misusing the hospitality. He backed out!

At this point of the narrative, an American activist chimed in: "I was there. At 11 am he was ready to go with the speech in a modified form; by 2 o'clock he'd changed, by 4 o'clock he changed again, 6 o'clock it was down to..." Looking at Kelly, Namgyal added "he should do it! Because we have already circulated your statement" [referring to Kelly's press release].

To prove his point, Namgyal mentioned another incident that also took place during the Year of Tibet in which the Dalai Lama's susceptibility to advice is well illustrated:

For months together many of you have been telling us this organization, the Council on Foreign Relations, is the most important and most prestigious forum for him to go and talk. All right! We worked very hard arranging it...and then someone goes and tells His Holiness that it's a bunch of retired people, that they're not important!

At this point everyone in the room asked Namgyal who were the people giving the Dalai Lama this sort of advice. Saying it was not important and refusing to divulge any names, Namgyal's candid remarks suggest the existence of a group of senior advisors in the Dalai Lama's entourage who appear to have a somewhat different agenda from other exile officials, including those working in the West, and whose influence over the Tibetan leader's decision-making processes is considerable. What is important, Namgyal stressed, "is that those of us must give

him clear message, must give him consistent advice, because if we tell him all kind of different things..." He continued his discussion of the issue by remarking that what was needed was a clear hierarchy of access to the Tibetan leader so that when he comes to the U.S., for example, he speaks to only the most important mainstream reporters and activists pass information through his representative rather than demand a private audience with him. He lamented that generally people, including members of the press, want "direct access" to the Dalai Lama and feel that if they have to go through his representative, it reflects negatively on their status.¹⁰

Although Kelly criticized the equivocal manner in which the Dalai Lama presented his desire to go back to Tibet, she argued that from a media perspective the idea of wanting to go home was "wonderful":

"I am going to Tibet"--that was, on a media level, a fantastic opening. It framed the coverage...in a rather exciting way... You got lots of coverage of this announcement...The idea of this trip, that the Dalai Lama wants to go home to talk to his people about non-violence, it is a provocative idea.

What made the idea especially provocative, she told activists, is that the Dalai Lama invited the world press to accompany him. In doing so, he played "right into the middle of their self-interest in a very clever way."

Now, every reporter who has an interest in Tibet knows that this would be a big deal to be standing at the border with Nepal, with His Holiness while he was turned back, and they would all want to be standing there to get that picture. I can only tell you what it was like when Kim Il Jong went home and he put out a call saying I'll let the press ride on the plane with me. I mean people were trampling all over each other to get on that plane!

Kelly then asked activists "What happened after the Dalai Lama announced the trip?" "Nothing" was her answer. What should have been done to maintain a coherent media campaign, according to Kelly, was that five or six days later, when news of riots in Lhasa came over the wire services in mid-October (1991), there should have been another press release using the events in Tibet to justify the Dalai Lama's desire to return to his homeland. In this way, the idea "continues to be provoked." At the same time, Kelly added, the idea needs to be "endorsed" by people in the press in the United States; in this way, the story becomes not a news story but an editorial story. To make this transition, activists were told they should have pressured newspaper columnists and scheduled editorial briefings soon after the Dalai Lama's announcement in order to "keep the story moving." By doing so, it "allows the press to continue to talk about you."

Kelly then outlined the next stage of what should have been done to further the Tibetans' media strategy: the Dalai Lama should have taken some kind of very public action through which he reiterates, again, his desire to go home to talk to his people. By doing some visible action which is covered by the press, she suggested, the world media "which are essentially on your side, is used to provoke government response." If the request to go home was not a serious one, "if it was just like everybody yelling at all the Tibetans that you had to do something" and they came up with this idea, Kelly encouraged activists to be honest with each other and create a media strategy to modify the press' expectations.

Kelly warned activists that they were now playing for very high stakes, that

by raising the ante so much, they could "screw up really, really badly" by not following through.

On a political level, you've taken the U.S. government to the point where you have resolutions in Congress that call China's occupation illegal, you have the President of the United States meeting with the Dalai Lama...you are not just support groups who know some of the facts. You are participating in the most complex bilateral foreign policy debate of the United States, in terms of your role in the discussion with China. It means that your spokespersons, your press releases, everything you publish, your informal relationships with the press, have to be rooted in opportunities to put forward expertise and analysis.

Kelly acknowledged her role in helping Tibetans to "raise the ante" by being so successful at generating media coverage of the Dalai Lama's Yale announcement:

Remember that I've been beating myself, like, oh my god, why did I take it so seriously, because I've now put you on the line with Jim Mann who is the Los Angeles Times' China expert; I put you on the line when I got Mark Cousins, foreign editor at NBC and Tom Brokaw on the phone and said "look something's gonna happen at Yale, His Holiness is making the most significant announcement he's made to date, if you're not there, you're going to kick yourself"...and then I gave them enough little teases to let them know that it was important so that they were there and did a story...they're waiting now to see what happens.

By putting Tibetans on the line, Kelly had also put her own credibility on the line with her colleagues in the press. After all, when her job on the Year of Tibet ended, Kelly would move on to help the Croats, among other groups. In order to do for them what she did for the Tibetans, her credibility would be crucial. Kelly concluded her comments on the Dalai Lama's Yale appearance by suggesting activists think more seriously about "packaging" for the media. Having raised the ante so high, she argued, they could no longer afford not to do so.

Packaging the Dalai Lama

Kelly: I guess what I'm suggesting is that you need to think a little bit more about packaging to the media...I think the role of the Dalai Lama, as an internationally known personality, using that perception of who he is, the relationships he establishes, what people project onto him and accept from him, he could be using that more to communicate a media message if in fact it got back to some very basic themes that I think come from who he is, a simple Buddhist monk.

American activist: So you're suggesting that His Holiness adopt a media strategy?

Kelly: Yes. I would suggest, and forgive me for being arrogant enough to say this, but I have to—I would suggest that the government-in-exile adopt a media strategy also.

American activist: Well, that's different.

Kelly: I said also!

American Activist: I think it's a problem asking His Holiness to adopt a media strategy.

Kelly: I know.

American Activist: I just think it is a problem asking His Holiness to adopt a media strategy that packages his message in a certain way.

By suggesting that the Dalai Lama adopt a media strategy, Kelly touched a nerve.

as the above exchange between Kelly and an American activist demonstrates.

Indeed, despite the fact that activists acknowledged the Dalai Lama's

indecisiveness, particularly with regard to the Yale incident, they nevertheless expressed a deep sensitivity to suggestions that somehow the fault might lie with the Tibetan leader himself. As I have already argued, Tibetans worship the Dalai Lama with a faith both devout and nationalist. Therefore it is not surprising that Kelly's critique of his performance at Yale, in addition to claims that he was "over-exposed" during the Year of Tibet and that he is not considered a good interview by members of the American press, rankled and puzzled his supporters at the meeting.

Kelly's role as mediator was evident in her discussion of the need for the Dalai Lama to adopt a media strategy in that she spent a lot of time explaining the mechanics of media, most importantly the fact that "media do not understand through explanation, they understand through pictures." That is, the Tibetan leader's actions "have to express more simply and clearly what he believes." One of the problems about "a personage like His Holiness," Kelly told activists, "is that when you have to keep talking and talking, the media messes up what you say, they contradict what you say, they over-evaluate, they over-explain it, and they get bored with it." Her point was that "someone like His Holiness has to appear more and more in the press with what he does, not what he says." Arguing that the Tibetan leader needs to have an "active presence" in order to generate substantive media coverage, Kelly suggested he consider presenting himself as the "most famous refugee in the world," and that he begin to do things that connect him to other refugees and their suffering. If he did this, it would dovetail well with what

Tibetans might want to accomplish at the U.N. and vis á vis China:

China's hold on the world is its hold on the third world, in many ways...His Holiness starts popping up in Africa to experience a camp of refugees in the Sudan, or Ethiopia, or Ghana, the Chinese go ape-shit!...it puts him in a forum where he has things to talk about that are new...

Kelly suggested that the Tibetan leader, "just for the sake of who he is, is overexposed." Perplexed, one of the activists in the room asked "over-exposed or over-extended?" When Kelly replied, the American man asked what she meant. She claimed that the Dalai Lama had been in the press too much recently just for being a Nobel Prize winner; that there had not been enough about what he does on a substantive level. She told activists "He should never open his mouth with nothing to say." To this, several people in the room responded defensively, "but he always has something to say!" Referring again to the Livet Reichart involvement in the Kalachakra, Kelly also pointed out that there were too many pictures of the Dalai Lama "appearing in too many newspapers of too much confusion." She urged activists to control photographers' access next time the Tibetan leader came to the U.S. in order to guard against a blizzard of contradictory images.

When someone asked Kelly why the Dalai Lama had not yet had the "one-on-one half hour or hour with Tom Brokaw, like Anwar Sadat," she quickly replied, "because he doesn't deserve it," plus, she added, "many in the press feel that His Holiness is a BAD interview." She described the process through which decisions to do such interviews are made:

It has to be someone who has something to say that is so provocative and so interesting within the context of what the media judges as interesting...now, the Dalai Lama is infinitely interesting, has a very provocative and important message but based on the way the press makes its judgment, he doesn't have the actions or the hook to make that framework right now. Sadat wouldn't have had it before the Camp David experience; Gandhi wouldn't have had it before the salt march.

Kelly's comments took many people in the room aback, including one prominent American activist who defended the Dalai Lama, arguing "It is the failure of his staff and the people working with him, but not his failure." At the same, however, the man admitted that in the past, the Dalai Lama had not always been encouraged to "take a more powerful tone as a world moral leader and be more blunt and straightforward and outspoken." As a result, he observed,

he seems to temporize on issues, when Tom Brokaw asks him a question and he goes, "well I don't know, and maybe this and it's not for me to say"...he's full of all this self-doubt. That's where the message doesn't come across. Whereas when he talks as an aside during a dharma lecture or to friends during a personal interview, he is incredibly dynamic and his message is incredibly inspiring.

Another activist suggested that it was Kelly's choice of the word "deserved" that "has put everybody on edge as it means that he's not done something he should be doing," adding that the Tibetan leader

has a certain way of presenting things which is his very individual and personal way of doing things. Nothing is going to change that.

At this point one of the Dalai Lama's representatives to North America told the group two anecdotes that illustrate the Dalai Lama's distinctive way of doing things:

Like for instance, when he was invited to Washington, he also accepted an invitation from a college in Findlay, Ohio. The people in Findlay, they were shocked to find out, why's His Holiness visiting here, a small town, and someone from Findlay called me to say "why is His Holiness choosing Findlay as part of his visit?" ...He visits Washington, Boston, New York, not a really small town in Ohio. What does he want to accomplish by visiting a small town?

The group of activists sitting around the table laughed heartily as he continued:

I'm telling you His Holiness does not judge what he can accomplish by coming to a place, of course we do have several invitations, and out of several, he just picks one. And he thinks that perhaps by visiting this particular university, he can benefit those who have invited him. Of course, we try to make recommendations, but then he doesn't go through the recommendations, he has his own choices.

This anecdote reflects the Dalai Lama's Buddhist conviction that his primary purpose is to provide spiritual "benefit" to those with whom he comes into contact.

His deep commitment and unconventional ways were further underscored by the representative's second anecdote:

When the Nobel Peace Prize was announced...we were in Newport Beach. And we had calls from all the media networks, including Diane Sawyer, she wanted to interview His Holiness. We went to His Holiness and explained that we have a lot of demand for the interview. Then he said there is no time. Just bring the schedule. And we got the schedule and there was some unimportant meetings and then we suggested that we could cancel a few of them. He said, "Look, no matter whether these are important or not, we have committed to meet these people three months back. Now how could I say that I have more important work to do and cancel these and give an interview? I can't do that." He said that if there is any time left over after meeting these people, we are free to schedule. But of course after meeting these people there was no time...

Kelly's response to the representative's evident exasperation was to suggest that he and other activists view the Dalai Lama's difference from other people as a

potential strength:

The frustration of dealing with somebody who would rather keep a three month commitment than have lunch with Diane Sawyer is, of course, mind-boggling. But the other part is that it sends out a strong image that this is a person who will control their message. So that has to be used as a strength...that's something that everybody who deals with media around him has to understand. It's a characteristic about him that is strong...you accept that as a reality and you plan on how you are going to get the Diane Sawyer interview...but it's you being in control, not reacting.

Kelly recalled that when she had been offered the job working on the Year of Tibet, she hesitated because her colleagues in the press said that it was "too confusing dealing with the Tibet Movement, you never know who you are talking to." The story I had heard about Diane Sawyer underscores Kelly's point: when the Nobel Peace Prize was announced, the Office of Tibet in New York was practically empty as the entire staff had gone with the Tibetan leader to California. With only one young person left in charge of the phones (who in fact had trouble reaching the Tibetans after the announcement herself), many press requests, including Sawyer's, went unanswered.

Kelly said her solution to the Sawyer interview dilemma would have been to tell her office that the Tibetan leader was already committed but to invite her to go to Dharamsala in a month to interview him. She urged activists to learn to take control of their representation and their relationships with the press, stressing that the key is being in control of their agenda and the press' access to their main spokesperson. For Tibetans to take control of their representation, they need to have some degree of control over the Dalai Lama in terms of where he goes and

whom he talks to. However, as the anecdotes about Findlay, Ohio and Diane Sawyer demonstrate, the Tibetan leader is not necessarily controllable and rarely sticks to his own "script," much less that of his handlers.

In an introductory speech to the media workshop at the "Tibet Conference of the Americas" thirteen months after the post-Year of Tibet meeting, Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's special envoy to Washington, D.C. and president of the International Campaign for Tibet, expressed his reservations about trying to "package" the Dalai Lama and the Tibet issue.

Some people say that the Tibetan government and me are conservative, but everything in the U.S. is so commercialized, everything is packaged, everything is sold, like a commercial product. This is how you sell your president, this is how you sell your senators, congressmen, your products, everything is sold as an item. Now with Tibet, the strength of the Tibetan Movement is very unique, there's something different, there's something which I think we should never package. For example, I don't think we should ever try to package and sell His Holiness the Dalai Lama because he is a great man, because he's specialized precisely at being the opposite.

At the same time, I do agree that we have to refine our approach, I myself have been trying to find a kind of middle path, a middle way, while maintaining our unique characteristic way of doing things, at the same time make it effective by adopting some of the specialized tactics. For example, as I said the other day, everywhere, particularly in this town, Washington, D.C., all the governments, all the major corporations hire very highly qualified and skilled public relations firms to promote their cause with the government, with the Congress. There have been many suggestions ...that we should try to hire a qualified person to help promote the cause of Tibet and somehow I have always had hesitations, I have always resisted the idea because as I said earlier, I'm not just saying it because she's here but Jane Kelly has been an exceptional person in this field. I have had experience with others and to be frank, you are almost told to redefine your goals so that they can sell you...now that is something I find not acceptable because I think that for us the

most important thing is our goals, our principles. Now if you have to redefine them or redesign them...or compromise or replace them...they are really not worth it. Therefore I have been very resistant to that.

Gyari's remarks about the media's tendency to sell politicians, along with just about everything else, are representative of the attitudes most other Tibetans have toward the press. I suggest that in addition to wanting not to compromise the principles on which the Dalai Lama's leadership of the Movement is based, the issue of control is one of the reasons Tibetan officials have resisted "packaging" the Tibet issue and the Dalai Lama. As we saw in chapter 8, Tibetan officials were unhappy with the fact that Tibet House made it possible for activists across the country to not have to go to them for information, in that the "Year of Tibet starter kit" gave Americans the means to create their own event without first calling the Office of Tibet or the International Campaign for Tibet. By resisting suggestions about how to "frame" their message, Tibetans in effect resist Western influence which, as we have already seen, is substantial in a number of arenas of Tibet activism. In other words, by holding back information and not conforming to the requirements of the mainstream media, Tibetan officials believe (on some level) they can hold onto their power and continue to control the way the Tibet issue is handled and represented.

Despite his criticism of Western-style "packaging" of issues and people, Lodi Gyari revealed that he had nevertheless learned something through the process of working with Jane Kelly on the Year of Tibet. He demonstrated this fact by

mentioning two instances in which he and his colleagues failed to frame the importance of two things which were consequently misinterpreted by the press as well as the general public. The first instance was the announcement of the Strasbourg proposal by the Dalai Lama at a visit to the European Parliament in June 1988. (According to the proposal, Tibet would relinquish its right to conduct its own foreign policy in exchange for "total and real autonomy within the whole of traditional Tibet.") According to Gyari, who was in charge of the International Relations and Information Office in the government-in-exile at the time, he failed to see that it was framed properly so that the media understood its significance and value. As a result,

all the media came out with bad headlines, such as "the Dalai Lama compromises," "Dalai Lama gives up on independence," very negative headlines...the fact is that many people, including some our own people, immediately jumped to the conclusion that it really was a sellout. Then it became impossible to do any damage control and people didn't even want to read it!

The other incident which was misinterpreted by the press was the Tibetan attempt to get China's record on human rights in Tibet condemned at the 1992 session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Proud of his and others' efforts, Gyari told the audience that they did very well at the Commission, despite the fact that they ultimately lost the resolution on China. Unfortunately, they were so busy that they forgot to think about how their efforts should be projected:

Word went out that Tibetans were defeated, that we lost...I think that if we had had someone like Jane Kelly helping us, it would have made it an entirely different story. The whole idea of going was not just to get the resolution through, it was to create awareness, to raise

the issue at the highest level.

By acknowledging that having a media strategist involved could have helped in these instances, Gyari demonstrated a new level of consciousness about the role media strategizing can play in communicating political messages.

The discourse of information management

In my discussion of representation and cultural difference in chapter 8, I cited Ginsburg's argument about the importance of looking at the activities and social organization of media work as arenas of cultural production (1994c:378). I extend her point by exploring public relations/media coordination as a related form of cultural production worthy of ethnographic attention.

Many scholars have written about the defining power of the mainstream media. Nowhere is this more evident than in the domain of politics. In her book "Prime Time Activism," (1991), Ryan argues that mainstream media tend to reinforce the political views of the powerful by promoting insiders' "framing" of events and by employing notions of "newsworthiness" that reinforce the *status quo* (ibid., 5). In this way, she writes, "media help set the social and political agenda by deciding what's news and who's news" (ibid., 7). Because of the central role media play in assigning importance to issues facing the public, media framing (or "packaging") has become a fundamentally political activity.

As the sheer amount of information and media outlets has proliferated, media professionals who specialize in "framing"--defined by Ryan as the "ordering

of information into a coherent story"—have come to play a crucial role in the production of media. These individuals, whose titles range from "publicist" to "communications coordinator" to "media strategist," are essentially intermediaries in the creation process of media; their basic goal is twofold: to represent their client's interpretation or "point of view" to the press and to present his or her client as a credible and regular source of information. (As Kelly's comment about the press' view of the Tibet Movement ("you never know who you are talking to") reveals, Tibetans are not regarded as reliable sources by mainstream media and thus are not regularly contacted in routine newsgathering processes. For this reason, Kelly urged activists to develop long-term relationships with reporters and to improve the quality of their press materials so that they might eventually become valued sources.)

In the process of representing their client's point of view, media strategists must compete with other "sources," including newsmakers such as government and corporate figures, informed commentators, as well as other publicists, all of whom are busy putting forward their own interpretation of events or issues. As a result, not only is news not an objective mirror of the day's happenings, it is profoundly shaped by these outside "sponsors" who seek to intervene in the decision-making processes of editors and reporters:

In the process of story-making, reporters and editors do not necessarily search out raw happenings, since deadlines and short-staffing severely curb the investigative urge. Instead, they are bombarded by prepared, pre-packaged events aggressively marketed by sponsors who, be they establishment institutions or social

movements, hope these events will carry their frames in media coverage. (Ryan 1991:75)

During my fieldwork at Tibet House, I observed Jane Kelly preparing press releases and press kits on the Year of Tibet to be delivered to major news organizations such as the New York Times and NBC. After these were sent, she followed up with telephone calls in order to suggest potential "angles" through which her "story" might be covered. In listening to her talk on the phone, it became clear that she had close contacts with several individuals at each organization and that her access enabled her to "pitch" stories with relative ease to important journalists. The fact that Kelly was largely successful in generating news coverage of the Dalai Lama's visit to Yale as well as several feature stories on the Year of Tibet, most of which carried her "frame"—e.g., the "remarkable duality" of the Dalai Lama as a Buddhist monk and statesman—underscores the fact that media organizations exist in a complex, interdependent relationship with "sources," including publicists/media strategists.

Tibetans have a distinctively different approach to information from their Western counterparts, which, as I argued earlier, accounts in part for their wariness of the practices of public relations/media coordination. In her public presentation at the "Tibet Conference of the Americas" in 1993, Jane Kelly revealed some of the basic assumptions of public relations as she tried to explain the role of information and the press in American society to activists:

Within our culture, we view open information as something which is the grease that makes the system work, if in fact you have a whole

country of people who have information and who can participate in decisions based on the information they have. So the press is a very important part of society here, it's a part of the society that both creates the culture and reflects the culture.

Although Kelly asserts that the circulation of information is key to an open society.

public relations discourse also assumes that information has to be managed:

My work is basically in how you communicate information, my primary interest has always been once people have information, what they can do with it, so my starting point is working with the information itself, finding ways to get it into vehicles, and get it to people.

As information managers, publicists/media strategists are very self-conscious about their audiences. Kelly demonstrated this fact in her presentation when she urged activists to learn how to "segment" the press into different categories and approach them in the appropriate way:

There are newspapers, there's television, there's magazines, I think more and more we have to look at the alternative sources of information that go beyond the Washington Post editorial, Nightline, or a New York Times front page story...It's important in defining your communication goals to have a strong sense of who your audience is. That audience again is multi-tiered, and is different at different times...

One of the goals of a good media strategist then is to generate media coverage that is in dialogue with specific audiences.

In a recent essay, Ginsburg noted the various ways in which mass media "are contributing to the mediation and construction of cultural difference within and across societies" (1994a). Following her point, I argue that public relations/media strategizing practices represent a powerful and far-reaching form of

cultural mediation that parallels and extends the mediation that takes place through the display of culture described in the two previous chapters.

As I have tried to demonstrate, Kelly played an important mediating role between the press and activists during the Year of Tibet. In the process of initiating activists into the culture of the American mainstream media, she herself was initiated, so to speak, into the culture of the Movement. For me, Kelly served a crucial diagnostic function in that she identified a fundamental problem at the heart of the Movement--the lack of a unified goal and hence "message" from Dharamsala. During my research, I realized that the lack of communication between groups and between activists and Dharamsala, about which American activists constantly complain, was not simply a practical problem but rather that it represented a central dynamic permeating all levels of the Movement and reaching all the way to the top to the Dalai Lama himself. Less emotionally invested than her clients, Kelly was the first person to articulate the problem in such direct terms.

Kelly served a similar purpose for Tibetan and American activists who clearly had their consciousnesses raised through her presence. This was especially evident during my interviews with the people with whom she worked most closely at Tibet House and Tibet Center, who referred to and quoted her frequently. In the process of working with Kelly and then seeing their actions reflected through her eyes at the post-Year of Tibet meeting, activists gained a certain self-consciousness about their roles as mediators of Tibetanness to the general public.

Though activists clearly negotiated these roles in relation to different stakes and toward a number of different commitments (as we saw in chapters 8 and 9), in this moment they overcame their differences and saw themselves as engaged in a collective action with a shared purpose.

Conclusion

One of the larger points that can be drawn from my analysis is the fact that to understand the Tibet Movement's encounter with the American press in 1991, it is necessary to understand the degree to which it was profoundly shaped by Tibetan cultural values and attitudes. Tibetans' reluctance to relinquish control of their image/representation to mass culture circuits they could not control, as I argued, stemmed from a distrust and ambivalence toward the press and a different approach to information. In making this argument, I engage Escobar's call (1992) for an anthropology of social movements that takes into account the intertwined nature of culture and political practice. Because the discipline has tended to ignore social movement theory, Escobar suggests, a gap has arisen recently in anthropology between "the link between the cultural and the political," and "the nature and modes of political practice" (ibid., 401). My focus on the social processes through which media representations of Tibetanness were produced during the Year of Tibet enabled me to address this gap by allowing me to look at the "micro-level of everyday practices and their imbrication with larger processes" (ibid., 420) and in so doing, to move toward "a more dynamic understanding of culture, a new

theorization of the political and of otherness and difference" (ibid., 419). At the same time, my examination of the role of media and mediation involved in political campaigns such as the Year of Tibet suggests a fruitful arena for future anthropological research, one that is largely unexamined but extremely important to understanding contemporary social movements.

Notes

1. The quote is from an internal memorandum circulated prior to the meeting. Although the Year of Tibet did not officially end until March 1992 and events continued up to that date, the meeting was held to take advantage of the support generated by the high profile events in New York City.
2. This figure is from 1991; the source is Jane Kelly.
3. Before 1987, relatively little was written about the Tibet issue; that which was written was often inaccurate or ill-informed. To a large extent, China's tight control over information coming out of Tibet accounts for this gap, though the lack of an organized "lobby" or movement in the West is also an important factor.

For an analysis of the coverage of Tibetan refugee and Chinese perspectives on Tibet based on a year-long survey of the U.S. media (June 1987-June 1988), see Carlson 1992.

4. In a report to her Tibetan clients, a media strategist hired to handle the Kalachakra in Los Angeles wrote: "I discovered that opinions about media messages, print materials, spokespeople, and planning strategy varied greatly among the people providing me direction and felt at least one media planning meeting with all key decision makers would have greatly reduced the confusion."
5. In this chapter, I have used quotes to highlight certain key words in Kelly's public relations/media strategy discourse, e.g. "provoke," "story," and so on.
6. Tibetans are not only sensitive to tough political criticism or questioning by the media. They are also sensitive to what they deem to be disrespectful treatment of the Dalai Lama by members of the press. One such example of this latter point took place at a press conference prior to the Year of Tibet in late September 1991 where the Dalai Lama was treated very disrespectfully by a reporter from the "Howard Stern Show" who stood up and asked him if people ever say "hello Dolly" to him (or something along those lines). The Dalai Lama did not understand the question and it had to be translated into Tibetan and the joke explained. The Tibetans in the room reacted immediately to this affront to their leader's dignity, glaring and glowering at the young man who was the only person to laugh at his joke.
7. Kelly reiterated this point in her talk at the Washington, D.C. conference in 1993:

I have never worked before with a movement or group of people who had more friends in the press than this community. You have some of the most powerful friends in the press that I've ever encountered in any group I've worked with. Your message is interesting and important on a personal level to managing editors of major network television programs, to managing editors of

newspapers, editorial page editors, foreign editors...

8. The staging of press conferences prior to events such as this one are a standard public relations procedure. They allow reporters to hear the gist of what someone is going to say without necessarily having to sit through an entire event and it provides them the opportunity to ask questions. Often reporters cobble together stories from what they hear at a press conference and from press releases which contain excerpts, if not entire copies, of the statements made in person.
9. In an article in the New Republic, Jim Holt (1991) made the following observation about the Dalai Lama's public talk at the Paramount Theater during the Year of Tibet:

Politically, the Dalai Lama's message was oddly quietistic. "If you want to cultivate inner serenity, we were told, "the external environment cannot harm you." What about the long suffering people of Tibet, someone in the audience wanted to know? How can we help them? "We'll talk about that some other time" was the response.

According to my fieldnotes, when asked this question, the Tibetan leader said quite a bit about Tibet, including the fact that Tibet is occupied; "human rights violations in Tibet are immeasurable" and so on. He concluded by saying that what is being done is still inadequate "but we'll talk about that later." The point is that the press is also at fault sometimes, misquoting the Dalai Lama in order to show him in an unfavorable light.

10. In her presentation, Kelly urged Tibetans to set aside enough time for the Dalai Lama to meet one on one with the more important journalists, such as Tom Brokaw and Peter Jennings.

The other issue is that you HAVE to allow time in his schedule not for interviews only that are going to result in coverage, but for the appropriate background briefings with the most influential media who want to be briefed and have occasional meetings with him. Unfortunately, those have to be one on one. You know, Tom Brokaw doesn't want to have breakfast with the Dalai Lama and with Peter Jennings; it just isn't going to work!

Chapter 11 Conclusion

Introduction

In chapter 1, I observed that the issue of producing a collective identity in the absence of a politically recognized territorial base is one of the most interesting and challenging problems of contemporary life, where large-scale migrations and displacement have disrupted any presumed balance between space and cultural identity. Tibetan refugees represent an unusual and virtually undocumented group whose relative success in producing a transnational Tibetan identity is deserving of scholarly attention. In this dissertation, I have focused on the processes through which "Tibetanness" is produced in exile and how that identity is used to mobilize support for the Tibet cause. The degree to which Tibetans incorporate non-Tibetans into these processes has been my starting point; I have found the most fruitful context in which to examine this phenomenon to be the "Tibet Movement"-an ethnographically rich nexus of people and activities, discourses and representations, and as such an important domain in which understandings of what it means to be Tibetan are formulated, circulated and contested by both Tibetans and their Western supporters.

Representations of Tibetanness

This dissertation is based on the assertion that unlike most other refugee groups, Tibetans have a set of religious and cultural traditions which are deeply appealing

to some Westerners. For these individuals, Tibet--as "Shangri-la"--represents spiritual values that have been lost in the dominant rational cultures of the industrialized world. In the beginning of the thesis, I suggested that these representations of and fantasies about Tibetanness have mediated relations between Tibetans and Westerners for most of this century, leading me to pose the questions: how have these representations shaped the production of a collective Tibetan identity in diaspora? How are they used by activists to produce an exotic Tibetanness for a particular political end?

To answer the first question entails consideration of the role Westerners played in the early years of refugee life in exile. When the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959, he was followed by thousands of people, many of whom literally dropped what they were doing when they heard news of their leader's flight and walked out of Tibet with only the clothes and valuables they could carry on their backs. Within a very short period of time, the Dalai Lama and his newly formed government-in-exile found themselves confronted with the monumental task of resettling and rehabilitating a flood of destitute refugees. Having few resources of their own, the Tibetans turned to the government of India and to Western aid agencies for help. As we saw in chapter 5, assistance was immediately forthcoming from both sources. Although no doubt some of the Western aid agencies responded to requests for help out of a sense of humanitarian duty, many were quite eager to provide support for other reasons as well, including fascination with Tibet and a desire for interaction with Tibetan people. Compared to other

groups in similar situations, Tibetans have received a steady and substantial flow of aid which in the case of some agencies has continued for more than thirty years. Drawing on work by anthropologists in India (e.g., Devoe 1983, 1987; Goldstein 1975; Klieger 1992; and Nowak 1984), I argued that this aid, combined with resources provided by the Indian government, has formed the basis upon which Tibetans have been able to not just rehabilitate themselves, but more important, to reconstruct their religious and cultural institutions. Through the support of Western aid agencies and individuals, which was (and still is) based on certain ideas about Tibetanness, Tibetans have been able to maintain their Buddhist culture in exile. And as we have seen, it is Tibetan Buddhism which has proved to be the link and key to constructing a communal identity that subsumes regional and sectarian differences among refugees. By making this argument, I in no way mean to diminish or devalue either the important contributions the Indian government has made over the years to Tibetans' survival in exile, nor the perseverance and adaptability demonstrated by the Tibetans' themselves in the face of considerable hardship and dislocation. However, the degree and nature of Western support for Tibetans as Tibetans is unusual and clearly crucial to their ability to flourish outside their homeland.

To fully understand the role Westerners and their representations play in the exile community's ability to reproduce itself in exile, one must also look at how Tibetans have responded to outside interest and aid. I argue that just as Western donors construct Tibetans as worthy recipients of aid based on their spirituality

(see Devoe 1983; 1987), so Tibetans construct Westerners as sponsors, or *sbyin-bdag*, patrons of religion. Since coming into exile, Tibetans have construed support from Western donors in terms of this traditional social relation, and in so doing transformed them from interested outsiders into patrons. What makes the use of this cultural construct so interesting is that Tibetans apply it both to Western Buddhists, whose patronage of lamas and their monasteries in India are a classic example of *sbyin-bdag* principles at work, as well as to non-Tibetans whose funds go to support the basic needs of **ordinary** Tibetans. The larger point is that Tibetans have not remained simply passive objects of Westerners' desires but have actively engaged these fantasies, entering into exchange relationships with donors which in turn have enabled them to reconstruct monasteries, establish schools, and basically "remain Tibetan" in exile.

In chapters 8, 9, and 10, I extended my analysis to explore the part representations play in the process of political mobilization. I argued that in the Year of Tibet campaign, Tibetan and Western activists productively engaged the first world fantasies of their audiences, framing Tibetans as inheritors and preservers of a vital spiritual tradition in need of protection by the rest of the world. Far from being constrained by Western expectations or desires for an exotic otherness, the Year of Tibet events suggest that Tibetans' power, to the extent that they have any, derives from their ability to transform Westerners' ideas about Tibetanness into political support. Yet we have to ask whether the exiles' reliance on the culture strategy, as I call it, and its mode of engaging outsiders

based on Tibetan Buddhism, merely reproduces the *status quo* (as some lay Tibetans argue) and inhibits progress in other, more explicitly political, arenas. Further work needs to be done on this question (see discussion below) and on the basic contradiction between the exile community's dependence on a form of Western sponsorship that is based on a fascination with traditional Tibetan culture, and the desire/need to reform exile society along more democratic lines. As chapter 5 reveals, unless or until the underlying lay/religious division of Tibetan society itself changes, the contradiction will not be easily resolved.

The "middle ground" of Tibet activism

As the above discussion suggests, the degree to which non-Tibetans (and their representations of Tibetanness) are incorporated into Tibetans' own processes of reproduction and political mobilization is without doubt the Tibetan diaspora's most distinctive characteristic. One of my goals in focusing on the social processes around the display of Tibetan "culture" during the Year of Tibet was to illustrate what was at stake in these cultural productions for Tibetan and American activists. This question reflects my larger theoretical interest in how intercultural alliances actually work "on the ground." However, as I stated in my introduction, when I set out to do this project, I found few models in the anthropological literature to explain the kind of intercultural phenomena I was witnessing in the field. Although the parallels between Tibet activism and other forms of activism which bring so-called "first world" and "third" or "fourth world" peoples together are

obvious and abundant, the number of ethnographic studies on how such alliances actually work remains relatively limited. Recently, Beth Conklin and Laura Graham published an article on Amazonian Indians in Brazil and transnational "eco-politics" (1995), which offers an interesting analysis of how such collaborations might be understood and which is relevant to the Tibetan case.

In their discussion of Amazonian Indians and environmental activism, the authors use the concept of a "middle ground" (borrowed from historian Richard White) to characterize the relationship which has emerged between the Indians and first world activists in the course of working together. This middle ground involves "the construction of a mutually comprehensible world characterized by new systems of meaning and exchange" (White 1991:ix). As Conklin and Graham explain:

White developed the middle ground concept to describe Indian-white relations in North America's Great Lakes region in the 17th to 19th centuries. Through processes of confrontation, negotiation, and creative innovation, Indians and non-Indians developed systems of communication and exchange through which both sides perceived their goals could be achieved. White argues that these middle grounds were pragmatic, mutually constructed accommodations that do not fit a simple rubric of domination, subordination, and acculturation. (Conklin and Graham 1995:695)

Revising White's concept somewhat, the authors conclude that the contemporary middle ground they have discerned "is neither a geographic territory nor a social space where neighbors meet face-to-face. Instead, it is a political space, an arena of intercultural communication, exchange, and joint political action" (1995:696).

The middle ground concept is useful in that it offers a way of understanding

how groups from different cultures, with different histories and commitments, can come together and form, however temporarily, an alliance which both sides perceive to be mutually beneficial. Conklin's and Graham's key insight is that the politics of the middle ground is a "symbolic politics" wherein "ideas and images, not common identity or economic interests," are what mobilize political actors across wide gulfs of distance, language, and culture (1995:696). In the case of the Tibet Movement, Tibetan and non-Tibetan activists share an attachment to a set of ideas about Tibet and Tibetan Buddhist culture which unites them across numerous boundaries. The alliance is enhanced by the unusually close "fit" between Westerners' and Tibetans' goals in terms of the former's desire for interaction and the latter's need for material and political support.

One of the methods I used to discover the various attachments people have to Tibet and their involvement in the Movement was to analyze narratives by Tibetans who fled Tibet in 1959 and Westerners who visited Tibet nearly thirty years later. As I argued in chapter 4, Tibetan narrators tell stories of fleeing and suffering as a means of constituting Tibet as a lost homeland and constructing a Tibetan collectivity in exile. Western travellers to Tibet, on the other hand, produce narratives that frame their experience in more individual terms, reflecting personal desires and identifications and the formation of each narrator's political consciousness. Although these "diaspora narratives" and "Tibet narratives" reveal that activists do not necessarily share the same motivation for participating in Tibet activism, the Year of Tibet campaign illustrates that they still manage to come

together in contingent moments of unity. Having said that, joint political action is not accomplished effortlessly. Indeed, as Conklin and Graham--and the controversies around Year of Tibet events in New York--suggest, the middle ground of cross-cultural collaboration is forged through ongoing processes of confrontation, negotiation, and innovation.

Conclusion

In a recent essay, George Marcus notes a "hypersensitivity to emergent phenomena" in anthropology, the result of a growing realization that contemporary processes and events cannot be adequately apprehended, much less theorized, by our given categories of analysis (1994:7). I want to conclude my discussion of the Tibet Movement by making the case that it represents an emergent form of political activism, one that requires rethinking current social movement theory and adjusting our traditional methods in order to encompass its full complexity.

As we have seen, the Tibet Movement is comprised of a heterogeneous set of actors with diverse agendas and varying stakes in the issue. Together these actors produce and circulate representations of Tibetanness. While none of this is especially new or unusual, the Movement is distinguished by its global organization which I argue elsewhere (see McLagan 1996) is greatly facilitated by the use of computer mediated communication to link various "nodes" of the diaspora and foster solidarity among Tibet supporters and organizations dispersed around the world. It is also distinguished by its embrace of several "transnational

metropolitan discourses" (Brosius 1995b) such as human rights, democracy, cultural survival, and the environment. While I was able to focus only on the use of the discourse of cultural survival in this thesis, Tibet activists have become increasingly adept at framing and reframing their struggle in terms of other discourses as well, thereby appealing to different publics and attracting resources and attention across a wider spectrum than would otherwise be the case. Tibetan participation in all five of the recent UN World Conferences, ranging from the "Earth Summit" in Rio (1992) to the NGO forum at the Women's conference in Beijing (1995), exemplifies this point. Each of these conferences was based around a particular universal discourse and provided unparalleled opportunities for diasporic, exile, and other "marginal" groups to make their case before the world community. Taken together, these various dimensions of the Tibet Movement reveal a multilevel mode of political practice, one in which various strategies are deployed simultaneously, and which operate in a variety of institutional and geographical arenas.¹ Through this emergent form of "transnational grassroots politics" (Smith 1994:15), Tibetans (with help from their Western supporters) have been able to create a new political space for themselves on the international stage.

As my description of the Movement implies, Tibet activism is a dynamic, ongoing process and this dissertation is merely a snapshot of a particular moment during which I happened to be carrying out research. Indeed, since 1993 Tibet activism has continued to evolve, becoming ever more sophisticated, especially in terms of its work in the international arena. In the future, I hope to expand and

develop arguments in my thesis regarding this dimension of the Movement. Specifically, I want to explore Tibetans' embrace of human rights discourse and their engagement with international legal structures and processes relating to human rights as this is an area where they have been particularly successful in recent years. By examining how Tibetans insert themselves in this particular field of political action, I hope to broaden our understanding of how these fields are constituted and the role the transnational forms of political organization, mobilization, and practice they engender play in the rearticulation of political, social and cultural spaces in the post-cold war era.

Notes

1. See Ghosh 1994 and Malkki 1995 for discussions of the need to look more closely at complex transnational institutions and organizations and transitory social contexts.

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