DISSERTATIONES
FOLKLORISTICAE
UNIVERSITATIS
TARTUENSIS
35

PEMA CHOEDON

Unseen Homeland:
The Construction of Tibet in the Diaspora

DISSERTATIONES FOLKLORISTICAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS
35

DISSERTATIONES FOLKLORISTICAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS
35

PEMA CHOEDON

Unseen Homeland:
The Construction of Tibet in the Diaspora

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Press

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Institute of Cultural Research, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu, Estonia

This dissertation is accepted for the commencement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Folkloristics on 09.11.2022 by the Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu.

Supervisors: Prof. Ülo Valk, University of Tartu

Associate prof. Anastasiya Astapova, University of Tartu

Reviewer: Dr. Alevtina Solovyeva, University of Tartu

Opponent: Prof. Charles Ramble, École pratique des hautes études, Paris

Commencement: 18 January, 2023 at 13:00, Senate Hall, University of Tartu

This research and publication of the dissertation was funded by the DoRa programme of the European Regional Development Fund; by the Estonian Research Council (project PRG670 "Vernacular Interpretations of the Incomprehensible: Folkloristics Perspectives Towards Uncertainty"); and by the University of Tartu.

ISSN 1406-7366 (print)
ISBN 978-9916-27-102-5 (print)
ISSN 2806-2191 (pdf)
ISBN 978-9916-27-103-2 (pdf)

Copyright: Pema Choedon, 2022

University of Tartu Press
www.tyk.ee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 6

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS 9

INTRODUCTION 10

1. Context and aims of the research 10
2. The background and development of the Tibetan diaspora 11
3. Methods of data collection 13
   - 3.1. Interviews 13
   - 3.2. Online surveys 14
   - 3.3. Participant observation 16
4. Tibetan identity formation in the diaspora 17
   - 4.1. Cultural homogeneity 17
   - 4.2. The issue of Tibetan ethnicity 19
   - 4.3. Theoretical considerations 22
5. The role of 'tradition' 23
6. The Dalai Lama – at the core of Tibetan identity 25
   - 6.1. Historical context 25
   - 6.2. The Dalai Lama in the diaspora 27
   - 6.3. The Dalai Lama as the symbolic representation of unified Tibet ... 28
7. The role of emotion in the diasporic community 33
8. Insider and outsider polarity 38
   - 8.1. The dilemma of the dual role 38
   - 8.2. Insider-outsider: challenges and advantages 40
9. Conclusion 41
10. Summary of the articles 43
    - 10.1. Article 1. "The Nechung Oracle and the Construction of Identity in the Tibetan Diaspora" 43
    - 10. 2. Article 2. "Miss Tibet. Representing Tibet and Tibetan culture on the global stage" 44
    - 10.3. Article 3. "Political Satire: Wittily Challenging the Dominant Ideology in the Tibetan Diaspora" 45

REFERENCES 47

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN 51

PUBLICATIONS 55

CURRICULUM VITAE 138

ELULOOKIRJELDUS 139

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I was applying for a scholarship at the University of Tartu, I had to find Estonia in an atlas, and google it to see how it looked. It was November 6th 2007 when I first landed in Estonia, and it was the first time I had ever been out of Asia. I was nervous and excited at the same time, not knowing what lay ahead of me. As I was waiting for the Lux Express bus from the airport at Tallinn, I had my first communication with an Estonian, who was also waiting for the bus. He told me that the bus was the finest in the whole of Europe. Since then, I have travelled by various busses in Europe, and I could not agree more.

In the folktale Cinderella, she would not have been able to attend the ball without the help of a fairy godmother who turned a pumpkin, mice, and ducks into a chariot, horses, footmen and a charioteer. Similarly, my supervisor, Professor Ülo Valk at the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, turned out to be my 'fairy godfather'. My PhD thesis would not have been successfully completed without him. Although Estonia and its language were completely unknown to me, I felt a sense of security from the moment I entered the department. I cannot express in words his kindness, patience, thoughtfulness, and the understanding he showed all the students in the department, including me. He was the rock and foundation of my stay in Tartu. He and his colleagues initiated me not only into the study of folklore, but into the skill of writing an academic paper. I could not have had a better supervisor than Ülo.

There are many others, however, who made me feel at home in Tartu. One person who gives our department a homely feeling is Liilia Laaneman, without whose constant support I would not have been able to deal with the innumerable official and administrative matters that arose over the following four years. Her smile will make anyone feel comfortable, and I will be forever indebted to her kindness and patience. On the academic as well as the personal level I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Associate Professor Anastasiya Astapova, who was my co-supervisor during my last year at the Department. I am very thankful for her guidance and valuable feedback concerning my article on political cartoons as well as my Introduction. I also would like to thank Dr. Kristel Kivari, Professor Art Leete, Dr. Margaret Lyngdoh, Dr. Jonathan Roper, Associate Professor Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, and Lecturer Ergo-Hart Västrik for their inspiring lectures and seminars.

During my time as a PhD student in Tartu, I was able to travel to universities in other countries for seminars or extended periods of study, thanks to grants from the Dora Plus scholarship and Kristjan Jaak scholarship. These grants were extremely helpful, enriching my PhD years and offering inspiration to write the thesis articles.

I am grateful to the Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo, for welcoming me as a visiting scholar for the spring term of 2019, when I profited from classes, seminars, and guest lectures. I particularly wish to thank Professor Emerita Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen for advising me how to write the article on the Miss

Tibet pageant and Tibetan women in the diaspora. I am also grateful to Liv Sæther for taking care of the necessary administrative procedures, even providing me with my own room to study and in general making my stay easier at the Centre. I also sincerely thank Johanna Maria Hjerquist for her class, “Gender equality in the Nordic Countries”.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Professor Ulrike Roesler, George Fitzherbert, Lama Jabb, and all other teachers and students I met during my stay at the University of Oxford during Hilary and Trinity Terms in 2020 (unfortunately cut short by the pandemic and subsequent lockdown). I am particularly grateful to Professor Ulrike Roesler who as early as November 2017, soon after my arrival in Estonia, invited me to Oxford to give a talk at the Oriental Institute, my very first academic talk outside India. When I returned in 2020, she made my stay pleasant and profitable in countless ways. I am also grateful to Professor Claire Harris from the University of Oxford for her guidance, kindness and help during my stay there. I was inspired by meeting the distinguished social anthropologist Professor David Gellner, as well as by presenting my work to Professor Richard Gombrich, one of the greatest Buddhist scholars of our time. During my stay in Oxford in 2020 I met Daniel Wojahn, and I would like to thank him for organising the Tibetan Graduate Students Seminar (TGSS) as a weekly online event during lockdown, to which I was also invited to contribute. Dr. Anna Sehnalova was the key to finding out what was happening around the campus, and I cannot thank her enough for her care and support. My stay in Oxford would not have been so homely without my fellow student Darig Thokmey’s delicious Tibetan dinners.

I would like to thank Professor Daniel Berounsky from Charles University, Prague, for organising my talk on the Miss Tibet pageant in April 2018. I likewise want to express my gratitude to Professor Donatella Rossi, University of Rome *La Sapienza*, for her support, encouragement and warm welcome during my visit to her university in October in the same year, where I was invited to present a paper, as well as Associate Professor Mara Matta for organising a talk on the Tibetan diaspora during the same visit. I am indebted to Associate Professor Christopher Bell, Stetson University, Florida, not only for his encouragement but also for inviting me to give an online presentation to his class. Likewise, I am grateful to Dr. Nike-Ann Schröder, at the Humboldt University, Berlin, for giving me the opportunity to make an online presentation.

Both Dr. Nicola Schneider, Paris, and Dr. Hamsa Rajan, Oxford, provided important input during the early stages of work on my article on the Miss Tibet beauty pageant – my sincere thanks to them both. I am also grateful to Professor Carole McGranahan, University of Colorado, Boulder, Professor Tsering Sakya, University of British Colombia, Vancouver, Professor Emeritus Per Sørensen, University of Leipzig, Professor Charles Ramble, EPHE, Paris, Dr. Katia Buffetrille, Paris, and Professor Emeritus Unni Wikan, Oslo, all of whom have helped and inspired me in various ways.

I have learned and experienced more in these four and half years as a PhD student than at any other time in my life. Altogether I spent almost three years in

Estonia, and I will always remember the people I met in Tartu – from my supervisor to the kind waitress in Armastus café. I will always remember the well-cleaned cobbled streets and wooden houses, the Kissing Students statue – in short, the beautiful, friendly, and historical city of Tartu. My taste buds will never forget the delicious pizzas and pastas in *La Dolce Vita*.

Many friends have been supportive and made my life easier while living in Tartu, Oslo, and Oxford; I cannot mention them all, but would like to particularly thank Katrin Liias and her family, Yimshen Naro, Takaharu Oda, Tenzin Passang, Valentina Punzi, Jordan Quill, Dr. Alevtina Solovyeva, Darig Thokmey, and Dr. Sonam Wangmo. I will always be grateful to Gudrun Mountain (Mom) as well as her late husband John Mountain (Dad) and Gisela Staebler (Aunty Gisela). I also thank my sisters Sonam, Karma, and Tashi, and my brother Jamyang, who have helped me not only during my fieldwork, but also with my everyday life even when I have been far away from them. I also want to thank Tulku Rinpoche at Phunstok Choeling monastery, West Sikkim, who performed rituals for me at crucial points of my life. Last but not least, a person who has been the foundation of my life ever since we met, my husband, Per. I cannot even imagine having been able to complete my work without his constant love, kindness, and encouragement.

Tartu, May 2022

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Article I
Choedon, Pema. 2021. “The Nechung Oracle and the Construction of Identity in the Tibetan Diaspora”. *Asian Ethnology* 80:2, 391–412.

Article II
Choedon, Pema. 2021. “Miss Tibet. Representing Tibet and Tibetan culture on the global stage”. *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*, 52. https://journals.openedition.org/emscat/5447 [Online journal, no page numbering].

Article III
Choedon, Pema. Forthcoming. “Political Satire: Wittily Challenging the Dominant Ideology in the Tibetan Diaspora”, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali.* 95.

INTRODUCTION

1. Context and aims of the research

This thesis is the result of research carried out with regard to the contemporary Tibetan diasporic community which constitutes the overall object of my research. It is focused on three specific topics, namely, the Nechung Oracle, the Miss Tibet pageant, and Tibetan political satire. Although Tibetans are dispersed around the world, I use the term 'Tibetan community' as referring to a single entity. In fact, Tibetans in exile maintain close communication from one country to another and with the Tibetan Government in exile, usually called the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the centre where official statements and plans are made. Moreover, the election of the Sikyong (the President of the CTA) and the Members of Parliament is made by the Tibetans in the diaspora no matter where they live. In the age of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, information is shared very quickly, contributing to make Tibetans a coherent community with similar local and international goals.

The three articles support the understanding of the Tibetan diasporic community as being one rather than divided, although different ideological trends inside this community are clearly discernible and are discussed in the articles. Therefore, as my PhD work deals primarily with cultural shifts and their political aspects, the Tibetans scattered around the world may, in cultural and political terms, be viewed as a single community rather than multiple ones in spite of internal conflicts. In the same way, it is meaningful to speak of 'the Tibetan community' in a given country (India, France, Australia etc.), or even a specific city ('the Tibetan community in New York' etc.). While imagining themselves as one community with similar political and cultural goals, there is nevertheless a process among diasporic Tibetans towards cultural homogeneity, which is the main point of all three articles.

The aim of the three published articles constituting my thesis is to analyse how Tibetans in the diaspora imagine their homeland in three completely different contexts: the State Oracle, the Miss Tibet beauty pageant, and political cartoons. These contexts may seem widely divergent, but I have endeavoured to show that all three reflect how Tibetans construct an imaginary homeland: Tibet.

I approached the topics discussed in the articles with an open mind, asking myself fundamental questions such as whether the institution in question plays an important role in the Tibetan community; who support – or reject – it, and why; and, when I believed they might be relevant, I wished to consider the possible significance of variables such as age, gender, and occupation. Only after I had collected sufficient material to answer these questions, did I proceed to discuss them in the light of theoretical approaches, and, finally, to draw conclusions, which are set forth below in chap. 9, *Conclusions*, of the Introduction. In chap.10, *Summary of the articles*, I provide a more detailed presentation of each article.

In the articles contained in this volume, I have used a range of theoretical approaches to make sense of the socio-political development in the Tibetan

diaspora. My research is interdisciplinary, intersecting with folklore and social anthropology. I depend heavily on a number of social anthropologists, such as Fredrik Barth, Cora Gover, Don Handelman, Richard Jenkins, Kathrin Verdery, and Hans Vermeulen when dealing with the concepts of ethnic and national identity, while I depend on folklorists such as Brynjulf Alver, Pertti J. Anttonen, Dan Ben-Amos, Regina Bendix, Henry Glassie, Lauri Honko, Dorothy Noyes, and Elliott Oring when it comes to the concept of tradition and culture. I have also referred to a number of scholars in Tibetan studies (Christopher Bell, Hildegard Diemberger, Melvyn C. Goldstein, Donald Lopez Jr., Sam van Schaik, Peter Schwieger, René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, and Tsering Shakya) to provide my research with a wider context. I have brought together textual analysis, online and ethnographic fieldwork interviews, observation (including virtual fieldwork and observation), and online surveys. I have also referred to a number of Tibetologists as well as historians to provide my research with a wider context. Thus, my work is at the crossroads of these disciplines rather than maintaining the boundaries of folklore studies. This did not happen because I had decided in advance how to proceed, but because the subject of my study and nature of my material guided me thus. In other words, my choice of theory has been primarily guided by what seems to be *useful* to make sense of my material, and I have not prioritised engaging in current debates as such.

2. The background and development of the Tibetan diaspora

Before going further into substance of my thesis, a brief outline of the historical events that led to the existence of the Tibetan diaspora and its geographical location will be in order. In 1949, the People's Republic of China was proclaimed, and soon after, the Chinese army marched into the eastern part of Tibet. The Tibetan government in Lhasa tried to resist, but quickly capitulated. In May 1951, an agreement was signed in Beijing between the Chinese and the Tibetan governments, according to which the Tibetans agreed that Tibet was part of China, and that the Chinese government should handle foreign relationships, while at the same time the Chinese side undertook not to change the existing Tibetan administration, culture, and social practices. While attending the 2,500th birth anniversary of the Buddha in Bodh Gaya, India, in 1956, the 14th Dalai Lama requested the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to give him sanctuary in India. However, Nehru refused and instead encouraged him to return to Lhasa to negotiate with the Chinese. However, the Chinese soon started implementing social changes, including a campaign against Buddhism in the eastern part of Tibet, and gradually tightened their control of Lhasa and Central Tibet, resulting in a general uprising against the Chinese in Lhasa in March 1959. The uprising was supressed by the Chinese army, and the Dalai Lama fled to India (Shakabpa 1984, 319).

When the Dalai Lama and his entourage reached India, they formed a new temporary government on March 29, 1959 (Shakabpa 1984, 319). For many years

known as The Tibetan Government in Exile, it was later renamed The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), and is today located in Dharamsala, India. However, it is an administrative body that is not recognised as a government by India or any other state. Nevertheless, for Tibetans in the diaspora it is the apex of the transnational diaspora, and, for the majority, an unquestioned authority.

About 80,000 Tibetans came into exile soon after the Dalai Lama's flight; others came in 1976, after the Cultural Revolution, and yet others between 1986 and 1996 (MacPherson et al. 2008). There are also Tibetans who fled into exile in the early 2000s from Nepal to India. For many years, the Tibetan refugees were concentrated in India, Nepal, and Bhutan, mainly in Tibetan settlements established in India between 1960 and 1965 (Dalai Lama 1992, 188). The first wave of refugees in 1959 came from all regions of Tibet and from all walks of life including monks, nuns, whole families, and children who had lost their parents during the conflicts with the Chinese (MacPherson et al. 2008). Later waves of Tibetan refugees fled from Tibet for various reasons, but many were young people who hoped to obtain an education in India, or to pursue monastic studies. Others fled because of fear of imprisonment for political reasons, including simple expressions of loyalty to the Dalai Lama.

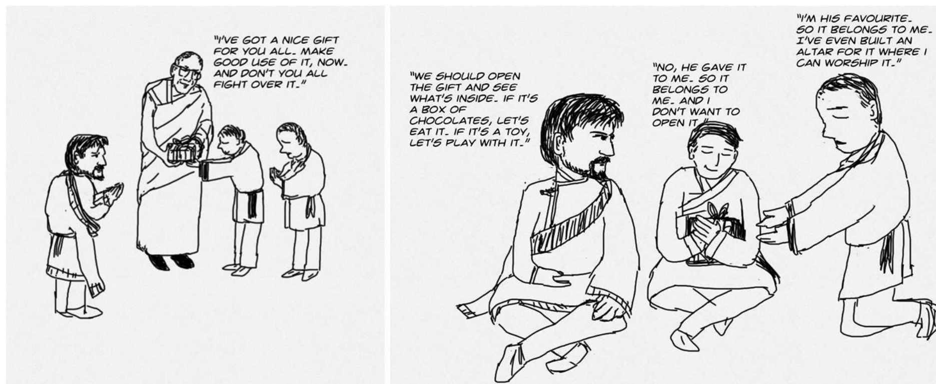
According to a demographic survey carried out by the CTA in 2009, there were 128,014 Tibetans in exile, of whom 94,203 were in India, 13,514 in Nepal, 1,298 in Bhutan, and 18,999 spread around the rest of the world (Central Tibetan Administration 2010). According to the same official document, there were 45 Tibetan settlements in these countries, with the majority located in India (ibid.). Most of the settlements are based on agriculture, others on handicraft, and there are also many Tibetans who sell winter clothes in Indian cities.

Today, however, Tibetans are also scattered in many parts of the world, with an increasing influx to the West, constituting a transnational diaspora. In fact, according to the latest report, sponsored by the CTA in 2020, the Tibetan population in Europe has increased fourfold, and in Australia threefold (Central Tibetan Administration 2020, 19) since the last census, dating from 2009. The number of Tibetans in North America is 36,098 (ibid., 42). This shows that since 2009, there has been a significant increase in the number of Tibetans outside South Asia. The Tibetan diaspora living in different parts of the world is, however, connected to the CTA in one way or another. For instance, in Norway, there is an association known as The Tibetan Community in Norway; membership fees are paid to a democratically elected board, which in turn is in contact with the CTA. The board collects the members' Green Book[1] fees which it submits to the CTA, and it also invites important Tibetan activists or representatives of the CTA, sometimes even the *Sikyong* (President of the Tibetan Government in Exile) himself.

By taking the initiative to successive reforms, the Dalai Lama has established a democratic form of government in the diasporic community, by which power has been transferred from himself to a democratically elected assembly ('Tibetan

[1] The Green Book is an identity document issued by the CTA, which all Tibetans in exile are supposed to have.

Parliament') and an administration dependent on the assembly. The goal of the Dalai Lama and the CTA is to achieve a political situation in the future making it possible for the diasporic community to return to Tibet and the establishment of a democratic self-ruled Tibet. Since the Dalai Lama took the initiative to introduce a democratic system in exile, Tibetans believe that democracy is a gift from him. "Since the gift was received from a person of highest spiritual and temporal authority, and since it is therefore always strongly associated with its splendid donor, this gift has an exceptional significance" (Brox 2008, 65). This process is discussed in greater detail in my article on Tibetan political satire. A cartoon made by Jamyang Phuntsok, provides a humorous view of this process:



"The gift", Jamyang Phunstok (2015).

Before proceeding, however, it may be useful to present the material and sources that form the basis of my research. This will, at the same time, provide further insight into aspects of social life in the Tibetan diaspora.

3. Methods of data collection

The primary sources of the articles constituting the substance of this thesis were interviews, both virtual and in-person, online surveys, and fieldwork data. Since different methods were involved in collecting the data, I will discuss them separately.

3.1. Interviews

As Johannes Fabian points out, "In much of cultural anthropology knowledge production is interactive" (Fabian 2008, 14), and more importantly, he says that listening is a source of ethnographic knowledge (ibid., 44). Interviewing is more about listening than asking questions, overtly interacting only when further

questions or comments are needed to encourage your interlocutors. The interviews were both in-person and online; they were semi-structured and in-depth, with a range of informants from different social backgrounds. Being a native researcher, during my fieldwork my main focus was to meet people I already knew would provide me with information. I chose video recording during the fieldwork as it appeared to add seriousness to my work, rather than appearing to want to chat for no reason in particular. My interviews were generally prepared, but during the interviews I endeavoured to go with the flow of the interviewee. All the interviewees were Tibetans in the diaspora.

I made interviews in connection with my articles on the Nechung Oracle and the Miss Tibet beauty pageant. After 2020 I could not go to India for fieldwork, so I relied on online interviews while writing my last article, which was on Tibetan political cartoons. I also made online interviews for the Miss Tibet article. The pageant participants were scattered around the world from India to the USA, Europe, and Australia.

If an interviewee was shy or did not want to be video recorded, I only made a voice recording; most of the interviewees, however, did not feel uncomfortable about being video recorded. In the online interviews I used Zoom and recorded only with the participant's permission. I had a phone call interview with one of the Miss Tibet participants and noted down the points as she answered my questions. The target of my interviews were the people I knew were important for the two articles – for instance, I interviewed the Miss Tibet pageant director and a few other people I knew. However, to keep the balance I also chose people who were against the pageant, for instance the director of the Tibetan Women Association, feminist women from the community, etc.

I chose the semi-structured interview in most cases in order to encourage the natural flow of conversation. I switched from English to Tibetan according to the interviewee. I obtained more interesting comments, observations, and insights when I let the interviewee talk as I gave friendly nods and smiles, and sometimes just saying "wow" and "oh, that is interesting", thus encouraging them to speak and helping them to gain self-confidence.

I transcribed all 21 interviews with mainly female participants, perhaps altogether 23 hours, whether online and face-to-face and whether in Tibetan or in English. I then translated the interviews in Tibetan into English, although to ensure accuracy I retained many Tibetan words. Finally, I assured each interlocutor that the recorded interview would not be used anywhere except for my thesis and would be anonymised when dealing with controversial issues.

3.2. Online surveys

I was not able to go to India for fieldwork in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, but this did not stop my work as people could easily be contacted online. I took the opportunity to make online surveys, first for the Nechung Oracle article, and then for the Miss Tibet pageant article. I reached the respondents through social

media such as Facebook and Instagram. Since I had more than 5,000 Tibetan followers in Instagram and more than 3,000 friends in Facebook, I didn't have to go far to look for respondents. I sent the survey in both these media to hundreds of potential respondents with a short letter saying that the information gathered would be used for academic research only and that their anonymity would be maintained if they wished. This was particularly important for the Nechung Oracle article, as the topic is highly political in the Tibetan community. Some of the respondents were among my close friends and family. I also gathered information online, especially on the criticism of the Nechung Oracle in Facebook. I found public accounts like Tibet Yak Times where Tibetans openly criticised the Nechung Oracle and also created memes on other oracles such as that of the goddess Tsering Chenga. I also sent messages to those who had voiced criticism of the oracles, asking them to participate in the survey.

During the Covid lockdown I hired local Tibetan research assistants to access people from Tibetan settlements such as Ravangla in Sikkim, Mungod in South India, and Dharamsala, especially to reach the older generation, monks and nuns. I told my assistants to record their answers so as to not lose the meaning of what the older people, who only spoke Tibetan, replied.

Although the responses to the survey reflect only a small sample of public opinion, I believe that the respondents' opinions on the Nechung Oracle and the beauty pageant were inevitably embedded in larger social contexts. I have therefore taken comfort in Michael Burawoy's argument, viz., "meaning, attitudes, and even knowledge do not reside with individuals but are constituted in social situations" (Burawoy1998, 12). He accordingly argues that a micro-level ethnographic account can be used to understand larger social structures (ibid., 5). The online surveys were important for both articles in order to obtain a better understanding of the controversy surrounding the Miss Tibet pageant and the aggressive criticism of Tenpa Yarphel.

For the Nechung Oracle article there were 68 respondents between April and October 2020. The questions I put to my survey respondents – who remain anonymous in my article – dealt with their belief in oracles in general, and the Nechung Oracle in particular, as well as the reasons for the importance of the Nechung Oracle and their reaction to Tenpa Yarphel's comments on the Oracle. The majority of the respondents filled in an online questionnaire, while the remainder were visited by research assistants in India who obtained answers to the same questionnaire in person, as explained above. For the purpose of analysis, I divided all 68 respondents according to gender, age, place of residence, and occupation. Of the 68 respondents, 33 were men and 30 women, with five respondents not providing information about gender. I divided them into three age groups: 35 and below, 36 to 50, and 51 and above.

Geographically, there were five respondents from West Europe and four from North America, the remainder, 59, being from India, with two from Nepal; of these, 12 are from settlements in India. They came from a wide range of backgrounds, including students, health workers, scholars, teachers, NGO employees, a hairdresser, a photographer, housewives, farmers, an ex-Indian army officer, a

yoga instructor, and a monk. In addition to the survey, I also made use of a few interviews made during a short fieldtrip to India from December 2019 to January 2020. Although the total number of respondents is limited, the distinctions made according to sex, age, and location, and not least the wide range of occupations, makes it possible to establish the existence of certain patterns.

I had 62 respondents for the Miss Tibet pageant survey, coming from different walks of life and from different parts of the world. Forty-four respondents were from India, four from Nepal, and 13 from Europe and North America. The respondents from India lived in Dharamsala as well as different Tibetan settlements, such as Bylakuppe, Mungod, Ravangla, and Hunsur. Of the respondents, 27 were men while 34 were women. I divided them into three age groups: 14 to 30 (34 respondents), 31 to 40 (15 respondents) and over 40 (eight respondents). It turned out that age was not really a significant factor in eliciting any distinction, as in some cases younger people were more conservative than the older people, nor could any significant difference based on gender be found. The questionnaire asked about the purpose of the Miss Tibet pageant, its contribution towards maintaining cultural traditions, and how the respondents viewed the bikini or swimsuit round of the pageant. Obtaining their opinions of the pageant through the online survey made it possible to arrive at a better understanding of patterns in outlook on the pageant and to see what other Tibetans felt about the pageant besides the participants themselves.

3.3. Participant observation

According to Danny L. Jorgensen, participant observation is an observation through which the researcher communicates with people in everyday life as a means of collecting information. Jorgensen believes it is "a unique method for investigating the enormously rich, complex, conflictual, problematic and diverse experiences, thoughts, feelings, and activities of human beings and the meanings of their existence" (Jorgensen 2015, 1). However, I regret to say that my fieldwork was not very extensive, as it halted when the pandemic started in 2020.

Nevertheless, I used information I obtained from friends and family in my articles. Among the places I chose to do ethnographic fieldwork, Dharamsala was particularly important because it is a hub where Tibetans from around the world gather; it is also the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile, also known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). I started my fieldwork by meeting friends – not only to have fun, but also to observe and interview them. Having been Miss Tibet, I also participated in small seminars organised by Students for Free Tibet, a global grassroots network of students and activists working for human rights and freedom in Tibet.

I was invited by the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI) in Dharamsala to give a talk on the subject I was working on, as the head Director of the TPI knew me. I gave a talk on gender equality in the Tibetan diaspora. A Tibetan news outlet also

wanted to cover my talk but it was never posted online – perhaps because my talk on the topic was more critical than this new media outlet expected.

My fieldwork during the time of the Covid lockdown was all done through the social media. Everything about the Tibetan community in the diaspora was being shared online, from the Sikyong's election to discussions on Tibetan issues and democracy. Moreover, the Tibetan diaspora being scattered in many parts of the world, Tibetans seem to share their thoughts more and more on social media and platforms. The image and identity of Tibet and Tibetans can be seen in all social media. I used online venues such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to find out about socio-political conditions in the diaspora. Being a Tibetan, I could access many of these platforms while at the same time being aware of the need to observe the principles of critical research. This inevitably obliged me to face the dilemmas of insider–outsider, emic–etic, subjective–objective, and native–foreign dualities. These will, however, be discussed towards the end of the Introduction. I now turn to the ideological context of the Tibetan diaspora.

4. Tibetan identity formation in the diaspora

This section deals with the contemporary Tibetan identity and on-going trend towards homogeneity in terms of cultural identity markers and political aims in the diaspora. I have attempted to show shifts in how Tibetans in the diaspora understand their identity.

4.1. Cultural homogeneity

Although all members of the diasporic community agree that the end goal is to establish a democratic Tibet, the understanding about the way to attain this goal changed in the late 1980s from working towards complete independence to adopting what is called 'the Middle Way Approach'. This approach implies resolving the Tibetan issue on the basis of a peaceful settlement between the Tibetans and the Chinese, whereby the CTA would settle for "greater autonomy" rather than striving for complete independence from China. It was first propagated by the Dalai Lama in 1988 and remains the position of the CTA, which promotes it vigorously, insisting that it is the only hopeful tool to attain a free Tibet.

Today this approach is the official position in the Tibetan diaspora, and challenging it can land one in trouble. An example of this is the fate of Lukar Jam, an activist who vigorously promoted the idea of independence when running as a candidate in the preliminary Sikyong election of 2015. Although he had been a political prisoner in Tibet before eventually fleeing to India, this did not prevent him from being demonised when propagating complete independence rather than the Middle Way Approach. He was immediately accused of being anti-Dalai Lama, and eventually had to seek refuge in Australia. I have written about this in detail in the article on Tibetan political cartoons.

Thus, there is a tension and division in the community between the few who support complete independence and the dominant group who believes in the Middle Way Approach promulgated by the Dalai Lama. However, I do see some changes in people's attitude towards the Middle Way Approach. For instance, at a recent gathering of Tibetans in Oslo, occasioned by a visit by Tenzin Tsundue, a well-known political activist, there were a few who discussed with him how the Middle Way Approach is not leading anywhere.

In my articles I repeatedly point out that the authority and status of the Dalai Lama is the decisive reason why people identify with certain symbols and values in the community. For instance, in my article on the Nechung Oracle I show that Tenpa Yarphel, a Member of Parliament in exile, was violently attacked for speaking against the Nechung Oracle at a meeting of Parliament. The fact that the Nechung Oracle has a close relationship with the Dalai Lama was the ultimate reason for the subsequent virulent attacks on Tenpa Yarphel.

Loyalty to the Dalai Lama together with the persecution of dissidents thus become extremely important phenomena, which the study of the Tibetan diaspora must endeavour to analyse. Since I did not discuss the position of the Dalai Lama among Tibetans in the diaspora in detail in my articles, an attempt will be made here to give a more focused picture of why he is the object of their intense devotion and unquestioning loyalty.

A point of departure is the immediately obvious fact that this community is characterised by an on-going trend towards homogeneity in terms of cultural identity markers and political aims. This phenomenon is discussed in all three articles contained in this dissertation, for example in my article on the Miss Tibet beauty pageant. This beauty pageant first appeared in the Tibetan diaspora in India in 2002, organised by Lobsang Wangyal, an active culture entrepreneur and journalist who once had an online English-language news journal called the *Tibet Sun*. He had also founded a beauty pageant, called Miss Himalaya. As for Miss Tibet, the title of the pageant itself speaks of a unified Tibet. Having been started as a cultural event by Lobsang Wangyal in order to make more Tibetan women appear on the public platform, cultural representation, along with women's empowerment, has become the central theme of the pageant.

Nevertheless, the pageant is also a controversial event in the diaspora, with many being against it, especially for it having a swimsuit round. Its controversial status in the community, however, helped me pursue my analysis by highlighting the homogeneity of the community. In the 1960s and 70s there were substantial regional and religious differences within the Tibetan community, but they have significantly diminished due to the personal status and religious authority of the Dalai Lama. Unity among all Tibetans in exile is now regarded as crucial to achieve the ultimate, long-term collective political aim of 'Free Tibet', which will be further discussed below. No matter which region the winner belongs to, in the pageant she receives the title Miss Tibet, thus giving the entire community the sense of being one nation.

4.2. The issue of Tibetan ethnicity

One of the reviewers of my article “The Nechung Oracle and the construction of identity in the diaspora” asked me whom I referred to by the term ‘Tibetans in the diaspora’, and whether those populations in the Himalayas who are often known as ethnic Tibetans were included in my research. This shows that there is confusion concerning the term ‘Tibetan’, not least when talking about Tibetans in the diaspora. What is Tibet? Who are the Tibetans? And who are Tibetans in the diaspora? These questions are at the core of identity construction in the diaspora, where the terms ‘Tibet’ and ‘Tibetans’ have been continually invoked, redefined, and promoted.

The anthropologist Sara Shneiderman argues that, “‘Tibet’ and ‘Tibetan’ are particularly challenging terms because they have been used to mean so many different things within as many contexts over time” (Shneiderman 2006, 4). More specifically, the anthropologist Toni Huber has pointed out that the problem lies in the fact that when Western scholars use the term ‘Tibetans’ and ‘Tibet’, “[these terms] evoke the existence of stable or unitary social and geopolitical entities that readily gloss over an enormous actual complexity and fluidity both past and present … [and that] they are contested in various contemporary discourses” (Huber 1999, viii).

The historian and social anthropologist Melvyn C. Goldstein argues that “objective assessment of the situation in Tibet since 1950 has become entangled in the politics of the ‘Tibet Question’, that is, in the political status of Tibet *vis-à-vis* China” (Goldstein 1994, 76). This is not surprising as there are two irreconcilable versions of the modern history of Tibet. The first is the official Chinese version, according to which Tibet has always been subordinate to China and accepted the supremacy of the Chinese Emperor, even during the time of the Tibetan Emperors in the 7th–9th centuries CE. Tibet’s official incorporation into the People’s Republic of China in 1951 was therefore simply a formal recognition of what had always been a fact. Since then, Tibet has enjoyed social and economic progress in line with the rest of China (Blondeau and Buffetrille 2008). In Chinese official terminology, however, ‘Tibet’ only refers to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), which roughly corresponds to the area of the Tibetan government in Lhasa. Other areas that are inhabited by Tibetans have been incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Gansu. All Tibetans constitute one of the ‘nationalities’ of China.

The other version is that of the Tibetan exiles with their centre in Dharamsala. It maintains that although Tibet was under Mongol dominance during some periods of its history, China never exerted direct rule in Tibet until the early 1950s, and this was only possible due to China’s overwhelming military superiority. The Tibet Autonomous Region does not in any way represent Tibetan self-rule, and the Tibetan language, culture, and religion is in constant danger of disappearing due to Chinese dominance. Tibet is rich in natural resources, the diasporic community points out, but they are not exploited for the benefit of Tibetans, but for that of

the Chinese economy and business interests, while Tibetans remain among the poorest populations in China (Central Tibetan Administration 2021).

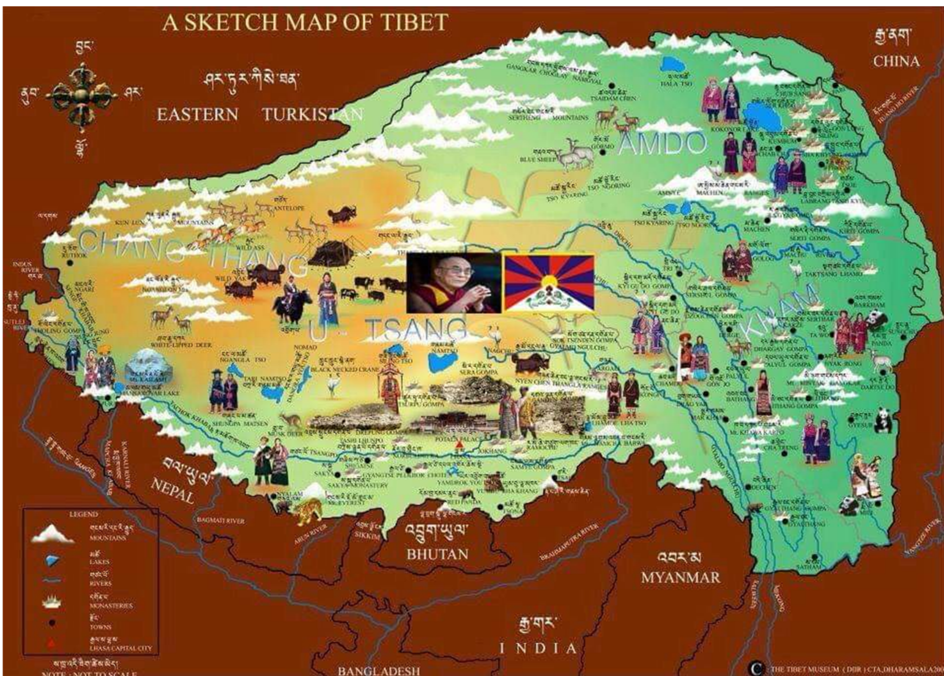
Goldstein goes on to argue that when representatives of the Tibetan, Chinese, and British Indian governments met at Shimla in British India in 1913–1914, most of the regions of Kham and Amdo (now referred to as Eastern and North-Eastern Tibet respectively, today located in the above-mentioned Chinese provinces) were not, and had never been, part of the territory ruled by the Tibetan Government of Central Tibet, called the *Ganden Phodrang*, with the Dalai Lama as its head of state. At this meeting, resulting in the Simla Convention of 1913–1914 (Goldstein 1994, 77), the Tibetan Government claimed (as it turned out, unsuccessfully) Kham and Amdo as part of Tibet. Goldstein uses the term 'political Tibet' for the polity ruled by the Dalai Lama, and 'ethnographic Tibet' for the 'ethnic border areas' Kham and Amdo which were outside that state in modern times (ibid.). 'Ethnic Tibet' included, for example, the East Tibetan kingdoms Derge, Gyarong, and Chakla, as well as other polities in earlier times, arising with the disintegration of the Tibetan Empire in the 9th century CE. He contends, however, that the term 'ethnographic Tibet' tends to be abandoned today in favour of a "political definition of Tibet" that includes the area formerly under the Tibetan Government in Lhasa as well as all of the ethnic Tibetan areas of the provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan in China under the rubric of 'Tibet'. Accordingly, he argues that, "an event said to have occurred in 'Tibet' in the 1980s (or 1940s or 1840s) may well have occurred in areas not part of 'political' Tibet but in in 'ethnographic' Tibetan areas such as Amdo" (Goldstein 1994, 79).

Tsering Shakya, a leading historian of modern Tibet, likewise argues that there was, traditionally, no indigenous term that included all the populations in the same way as the Western term 'Tibetan' (Shakya 1993, 9). Today, however, the Tibetan term *pöpa* (*bod pa*, derived from Bod, 'Tibet') has without doubt become the equivalent to 'Tibetan', although historically that term only denoted the people of Central Tibet.

In the Tibetan diaspora, 'Tibet', or what in the diasporic community is commonly known as Greater Tibet (Bod Cholka-sum, lit., 'The Three Provinces of Tibet'), is understood to encompass Kham, Amdo and Utsang, Central Tibet, i.e., what Goldstein and others refer to as 'ethnographic Tibet', and this is regarded as a political entity. As Tsering Shakya argues, "The Dalai Lama's demand for unification of the entire Tibetan-speaking area under 'Bod Cholka-sum' has become deeply imbedded in the political culture of the Tibetan diaspora, where the core of the refugees' political identity lay in the conception of Tibet as the unity of Kham, Amdo and U-tsang" (Shakya 1999, 387). This indicates that the meaning of the term 'Tibet' has gradually changed since the Chinese occupation. Be that as it may, Goldstein argues that such assertions of what constitutes Tibet are misleading (Goldstein 1994, 79), and states that "[this] may be a good politics, but it is bad history" (ibid., 80).

In the passage quoted above, Toni Huber may have had Goldstein (among other scholars) in mind, as the latter had argued, five years earlier, that 'ethnic

Tibetan' populations were found not only in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the neighbouring regions of Kham and Amdo, now part of the Chinese provinces Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan, and Xinjiang, but also within the borders of other states such as India (including Sikkim, Ladakh, and Arunachal Pradesh), Nepal, and Bhutan (Goldstein 1994, 76). In contrast to this view, Tsering Shakya maintains that unification of Tibetan-speaking areas – in the perspective of the diasporic community – applies only to regions under Chinese control. Moreover, he maintains that there has been no attempt among refugees to identify Tibetan-speaking populations in Nepal, India, and Bhutan as part of 'Greater Tibet' (Shakya 1999, 520).



Map of Tibet, produced by The Tibet Museum in Dharamsala, an institution under the CTA, highlighting the unity of the 'Three Provinces'.

Note the central position of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan flag.

When Tenzin Tsundue, a prominent Tibetan activist to whom I have referred above, recently visited the Tibetan community in Oslo I had the opportunity to observe the Tibetan audience and to hear what they themselves understood by the term 'Tibetan'. Before Tenzin Tsundue started his talk, every one of us, including myself, were engaging in small talk about our daily lives. He caught our attention, however, by saying, "We are all Tibetans (*pöpa*). We have one struggle and one goal". All of sudden everyone stopped talking and started to listen to him intently. Later, in a private conversation I asked, "Who do you think are *pöpa*? And do you think people in the Himalaya are also *pöpa*?" To this he replied, "You should

know the differences between *pöpa* and *pörig*. *Pöpa* are Tibetans like us in exile and inside Tibet, but *pörig* includes people in the Himalaya who share a culture and language similar to ours”. This view was confirmed by many other Tibetans present there as well.

Therefore, I argue that there has been a discernible change in the meaning of ‘Tibet’ and ‘Tibetans’ in the years since the Chinese occupation. When Tibetans call themselves *pöpa*, they do not include the *pörig* of the Himalayan regions who share a similar culture and religion but who do not have the same contemporary political history of occupation and exile.

4.3. Theoretical considerations

It is clear, even on the strength of this anecdotal observation, that Tibetans – at least in the diaspora – are concerned to define themselves as a group and establish certain boundaries to other groups, even if the latter are somehow regarded as cultural cousins. To understand the significance of this Tibetan perception, having recourse to some basic theoretical positions with regard to ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic boundaries’ may be helpful. Being already familiar with the work of the social anthropologist Fredrik Barth, when focusing on these concepts I found them to be useful for understanding identity creation in the Tibetan diasporic community. Barth’s fundamental approach to ethnic boundaries may have been formulated two generations ago, and it certainly has – as we shall see below – been discussed and criticised by more recent scholars, but it remains, as I believe will become clear in the following, relevant for my study of the Tibetan diaspora.

Briefly stated, in his now classic introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Barth shifted the focus of the study of the concept of ‘ethnic’ from cultural content to ‘boundary maintenance’. He argued that, “When defined as an ascriptive and exclusive group, the nature of continuity of ethnic units is clear: it depends on the maintenance of a boundary” (Barth 1969, 14). Here and in many sociological and psychological studies of ethnicity or ethnic groups, one has to be aware that emic characteristics are important, such as self-ascription (Hamer et al. 2018). Thus, if seen from a Barthian perspective, post-1959 Tibetan identity in the diaspora can been seen as ethnic identity formation based on their distinguishing themselves not only from the Chinese, but also from Indians, Bhutanese, and Nepalese, including various Tibetan-speaking people of India and Nepal. The distinctive criteria for being Tibetan, or *pöpa*, in the diaspora today is regarding the Dalai Lama as the spiritual head of the religion, and secondly, one’s ancestors having come from the ‘Tibetan’ regions under China today, in other words, those people who have been uprooted from their homeland, thus, those who are struggling for ‘Free Tibet’.

Barth maintains that, “…some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied” (Barth 1969, 14), implying that ethnic identification could be changed over time in the same way as the ‘cultural

stuff' it includes (ibid., 15). This would seem to correspond to what has happened in the Tibetan exile community over the sixty years since the first Tibetan refugees arrived in India: in the diaspora, Tibetans from different regions, regarded as belonging to different ethnic groups before 1959, have engaged in a process of becoming *one* ethnic group, known as *pöpa*, 'Tibetans'. To clarify the significance of this process, viewed from different angles, is a major concern in all three articles constituting this dissertation.

Ethnic boundary formation is, however, not sufficient to explain the shift of identity in the Tibetan diasporic community. Although Barth does not disregard 'culture' – what he calls 'cultural stuff' – it is, in his view, of secondary importance. Moving beyond Barth's theory of ethnic boundaries, however, Katherine Verdery has suggested that to clarify the relationship between the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism, one must "implicate the concept of culture" and what it is that makes culture something important to disagree about (Verdery 1994, 43). Whether it is a question of the ethnic or national identity of Tibetans in the diaspora, culture – especially 'shared' culture in the form of tradition – plays a very important role, because theirs is a community that does not have a real territory, only an imagined or social one. In the case of the Tibetans in the diaspora, culture plays a very important role in defining their identity, and this will be discussed in the following.

I shall argue below that while social anthropology has contributed the concept of 'boundary maintenance' to my study of the Tibetan diasporic community, folklore studies have contributed an equally important concept, viz. 'tradition'. It is of crucial importance for my study, however, that both these concepts should be discussed in relation to the term 'culture'. These three concepts – 'ethnic group', 'tradition', and 'culture' – run through all three chapters of this dissertation.

5. The role of 'tradition'

I believe that recognition of 'tradition' is an important tool in the nation building of any state, and this is clearly visible in the Tibetan community in the diaspora. Dorothy Noyes argues that even socialist and popular-front regimes, who initially often rejected tradition wholesale as 'feudal', nevertheless found it to be a useful tool for communicating with and mobilising the masses (Noyes 2009, 241). It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at what can be understood by the concept 'tradition'. As already mentioned, I will approach it on the basis of folklore studies, where it has been a topic of debate for a long time. 'Tradition' is a concept that is often invoked (when speaking English) by members of the Tibetan diasporic community. I shall return to what Tibetans understand by the term 'tradition' below. It is also, in an academic context, a multidisciplinary concept, and I have relied on it in all three articles of my thesis, as it serves to connect the different topics discussed in the articles.

As a point of departure, Lauri Honko argues that tradition is a "mass" or "a store of available elements" that can be selected from or added to, creating as "culture" whereby it is made relevant to the community here and now. Culture, according to Honko, is different from tradition in that it imposes order on tradition (Honko 2013, 237). A similar view is that of Henry Glassie, who maintains that tradition is "constructed by individuals and in that they are constructed by people who, as a consequence of interaction within different environments, develop ways that, being shared to a degree of mutual comprehension, serve to draw them together, while distinguishing them from others" (Glassie 1995, 399). Tibetans in exile constitute a political diaspora with an ultimate goal, expressed in the slogan 'Free Tibet'. A shared and unitary 'Tibetan culture' has been constructed as a crucial element in maintaining their identity in order to achieve their ultimate goal. In my first article I designate this as a 'neo-Tibetan identity'. This neo-Tibetan identity definitely characterises the Tibetan diaspora as an 'ethnic group', as there is an active process of construction of identity, engaged in by the great majority of members of the community.

We have seen that 'Tibetan' is a term that implies both ethnic and national identity, and in the case of the Tibetan diaspora, national identity is linked to the concept of ethnicity. In the article on the Nechung Oracle, I have written that, "Having been placed in one single ethnic category of *pöpa* or 'Tibetans', the majority of Tibetans in the diaspora now strive to define a 'shared culture' and thereby create a unified Tibetan community, even though they originate from different regions of the Tibetan plateau" (Choedon 2021, 405–6). This is evident in the case of new cultural practices like *Lhakar* ('white Wednesday'), a resilience movement that began inside Tibet and later spread to the diaspora. It is celebrated every Wednesday, when Tibetans wear their traditional clothes, speak, if possible, only Tibetan, eat traditional Tibetan food, etc. Another new cultural element is the celebration of 10 December, 1989, the day the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. These special days are today firmly established and serve the purpose of both social and imagined boundary maintenance.

However, a group maintained through homogenised cultural traditions prevents its members from freely expressing themselves. In my first and third articles I have pointed out that this is the case in the Tibetan diasporic community. Barth argues that in an ethnic group, "role constraints" occur as a result of "adherence to group-specific values" in order to maintain the boundary to other ethnic groups (Barth 1969, 18). I would argue that a group identity, be it national or ethnic, based on homogenised cultural traditions and values, will tend to constrain individuals through the use of 'culture'. As Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin maintain, "collective units, be they nations, cultures, or ethnic groups, are envisioned as consisting of all those individual human beings, and only those, who share sufficient traits, traditions, and values both to bind them socially and to distinguish them culturally from outsiders" (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 277). Therefore, for the purpose of analysis it is possible to refer to the Tibetan diasporic community as an ethno-national community rather than just as a national or ethnic group. In the Tibetan diaspora, great value is given to what is understood by Tibetans to

constitute their traditional culture, ranging from adherence to a spiritual leader to food and clothing that distinguish them from others. This brings us to the most valued asset of Tibetan identity, the belief in the Dalai Lama as the spiritual and political leader of Tibet.

6. The Dalai Lama – at the core of Tibetan identity

6.1. Historical context

Before we proceed to discuss why the Dalai Lama is an exceedingly important figure for Tibetans, we must briefly look at the history of the institution of the Dalai Lama, for history plays a significant role in reinforcing the current ideology. The monk Gendun Drup (1391–1475) was the head of a newly established monastic reform movement, called the Gelugpa (dGe-lugs-pa). Retrospectively he is regarded as the First Dalai Lama. Influenced by the system of reincarnating lamas already adhered to by the older schools of Tibetan Buddhism, he established the same system in the Gelugpa School.

The First and the Second Dalai Lamas had exercised purely spiritual power, but with support from the Mongols, the Third Dalai Lama was able to expand the power base of the Gelugpa Order from an essentially spiritual one to a politico-religious one (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968, 183). At a historic meeting between Altan Khan, the chief of the Tumed Mongols, and the Third Dalai Lama in 1578, there was an exchange of honorific titles. The Lama received the title of Ta-le (written as 'Dalai' by westerners) which in Mongolian means 'ocean', with the implication of 'ocean of wisdom', while Altan Khan received the title 'King of Religion, Majestic Purity' (ibid., 184). In 1642, the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617–1682), wished to establish a centralised state in Tibet, in imitation of the ancient Tibetan emperors. With the military help of the Mongol chief Gushri Khan, he defeated his enemies and became the head of a state, ruling a territory that roughly corresponded to the present-day Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in China. The government, based in Lhasa, was known as the Ganden Phodrang (dGa'-ldan Pho-brang), and the Dalai Lama also remained the spiritual head of the Gelugpa School, which gradually created a large and influential network of monasteries in almost every part of the Tibetan Plateau (Ishihama 2003).

Thereafter, for more than three centuries, the Dalai Lamas were both the spiritual and political heads of the Ganden Phodrang. Among the following Dalai Lamas, the Thirteenth in particular was the most powerful. When the Thirteenth Dalai Lama returned to Tibet in 1912 after having spent two years exile in India due to a Chinese occupation of Lhasa, he made an (unsuccessful) attempt to modernise Tibet by creating a small but modern army and sending a small number of young boys to England for education. He also entertained close relations with the British representative in Lhasa, starting in 1921 (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968, 244). The present Dalai Lama, the fourteenth, remained the spiritual and secular head of this Tibetan state until 1959.

According to Tibetan belief, the Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, based on a claim put forward by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Concerning the latter's government in Lhasa, the historian Hugh Richardson writes,

> the prestige of the government at Lhasa, which was enhanced by measures to demonstrate the continuity of the new regime with the religious rule of the great kings of the seventh to ninth centuries. Court ceremonial and pageantry, the building of the magnificent palace of Potala hill underlined that theme (Richardson 2003, 559).

Yumiko Ishihama argues that the fact that the palace was built on the site of a temple dedicated to Avalokiteshvara, said to date from the time of King Songtsen Gampo (Srong-btsan sGam-po, 7th century CE), made his residence an "effective means for the Dalai Lama of impressing upon the people the idea that he was a reincarnation of Srong-btsan-sgam-po" (Ishihama 2003, 549), and therefore also of Avalokiteshvara, who Tibetans believe manifested himself in King Songtsen Gampo. Hence the Fifth Dalai Lama was "most successful in claiming the Avalokiteshvara concept for himself by embedding it, in word and deed, in a general concept of Tibetan history that presented the dominance of the Gelukpa school under his leadership as the pinnacle and logical conclusion of a continuous process of development" (ibid. 2013, 74). The cult of Avalokiteshvara in Tibet took shape in the 12th to early 14th centuries (Schwieger 2013, 74), inspired by the *Mani Kabum,* a text which is "a collection of Buddhist teachings, poetry, myths, and rituals extolling the virtues of worshipping the deity" (Kapstein 2013, 89), Avalokiteshvara being depicted in this text as the tutelary deity of Tibet. The cult links "the Indian ideal of Bodhisattva with the image of spiritual teachers who undergo reincarnation for the good of living beings, and shaping this connection in a way that affected the fields of politics and salvation history" (Schwieger 2013, 74). It is also related to the Tibetan concept of *tulku* (*sprul sku*), the belief that a deceased spiritual master may be reborn in a child, thus ensuring the continuity of a spiritual – and, not infrequently, political – lineage, a belief that arose in the 13th–14th centuries due to the increased social, religious and political prominence of lamas (Buddhist teachers) (Schwieger 2015, 9). A *tulku* has one of the highest statuses in Tibetan society and may also be regarded as the manifestation of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, as in the case of the Dalai Lama, although this is not always the case. In the *Mani Kabum,* not only the Kings of Tibet but also their direct mythological forefather, the monkey-progenitor of the Tibetan people, is represented as one of the manifestations of Avalokiteshvara (Schwieger 2013, 74).

A similar concept was not reserved for the Dalai Lama of Central Tibet, but was also applied to leaders of other newly formed states of that time, such as Bhutan and Sikkim whose rulers hailed from Tibet (Ardussi 2004, 34). However, today this cult remains in practice only in the Tibetan diasporic society. Schwieger argues that, "The particular effectiveness of the Avalokiteshvara concept is based on the idea of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara as the embodiment of infinite

compassion, thus offering points of association for a devotional cult to the broad mass of the people" (Schwieger 2013, 74). Thus, such religious historical narratives enabled "the legitimation not only of secular power but also of its spiritual counterparts" (ibid., 75).

6.2. The Dalai Lama in the diaspora

Quoting Michael Aris, Schwieger argues that the literary language of Tibet's historiographical literature "has not undergone any really significant change during the last millennium", which he believes is due to "the unchallenged position occupied by Buddhism in Tibetan society throughout the centuries" (Schwieger 2013, 65). Thus, the unquestioned status of the Dalai Lama in the diaspora is not just the product of the contemporary situation, but derives directly from the past and is even magnified by extending – retroactively – the power of the Dalai Lama to the whole of the Tibetan Plateau, for the purpose of achieving the diaspora community's collective political goal.

Although the Dalai Lama is the most prestigious traditional secular and spiritual Tibetan institution, the Dalai Lamas are also judged by their actions. As Martin Mills points out, "In the case of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in exile, personal and collective *loyalty* towards him marks, in many regards, his principal political and religious impact" (Mills 2018, 163). Although there were fourteen Dalai Lamas including the present, not all are viewed as being of the same importance as the Fifth, the Thirteenth, and the Fourteenth.

The current Dalai Lama visited all the settlements in the early period of exile as far as possible (Dalai Lama 1992, 188), and if he could not visit them, he sent voice recordings. As he says in his autobiography, he "learned at an early age who wishes to lead must remain close to the common people" (ibid., 198). Due to his activity as a leader in the early period of exile and the historical and spiritual background of the Dalai Lamas, he became the epitome of the Tibetan struggle. One cannot deny the success of the Dalai Lama, which has been referred to as "The Renaissance of Tibetan Civilization" by the anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1990). Moreover, international esteem may have influenced the Tibetans' sentiments towards him. The Dalai Lama's being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 is considered a great achievement by all Tibetans, and, as already mentioned, every year the 10th of December is celebrated in Tibetan schools and settlements, and by Tibetans around the world. Today Tibetans also celebrate the day by posting his photos on social media.

Looking at the historical background as well as the belief narratives of the Tibetans, and adding his successful role as a guide and political leader in exile, the status of the Dalai Lama has only been strengthened. Moreover, the harmony among Tibetan Buddhist schools that was lacking in pre-1959 Tibet has been made possible in exile, and the Dalai Lama is accepted as the supreme spiritual leader by the heads of the other Tibetan Buddhist schools. Furthermore, as pointed out above, 'Tibet' is no longer perceived as just Central Tibet, but also includes

Kham and Amdo, making it ‘Greater Tibet’, with the Dalai Lama as its unquestioned spiritual and political leader. Although the Dalai Lama has retired from politics and the Tibetan government in exile (CTA) is now run along democratic principles, he is still approached by the CTA in important political matters.

In fact, the Dalai Lama’s retirement as the political leader by democratising the government in exile in Dharamsala has made him even more important for Tibetans. As written in the Charter – and now generally accepted as a core social value – democracy in the Tibetan government in exile is a ‘gift’ (*gsol ras*) from the Dalai Lama rather than a human right. Trine Brox points out that because democracy is considered the “sacred gift” from the Dalai Lama to the Tibetans in the diaspora, the relationship between them has been strengthened. She argues that, “Not only it is the relationship of unequal power, but also a relationship between a spiritual guide and devoted followers, a relationship between a king and his subjects, and relationship between a divine reincarnation and his worshippers” (Brox 2008, 91). This development is discussed in my article on political satire in the Tibetan diaspora. Likewise, Mills argues with regard to the 2011 revised Charter reforms that they “served to highlight the Dalai Lama’s religious authority in far greater substance than any previous version” (Mills 2018, 158).

For instance, in 2021 the 17th Tibetan Parliament in Exile was stalemated for four months due to internal disagreement over the issue of oath administration. On 2 August 2021, the US Department of State sent a letter to the Secretary of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, Tsewang Ngodup, urging the elected members to resolve the deadlock and to proceed with the more “pressing matters that need their attention” (Dharpo 2021). It was not, however, until the Dalai Lama wrote to parliamentarians that the 17th parliamentary session began on 8 October (Central Tibetan Administration 2021). Moreover, there is now also a tradition of the newly elected head of the government having an audience with the Dalai Lama, indicating that his status is in some sense higher in the eyes of Tibetans than the elected political leader.

6.3. The Dalai Lama as the symbolic representation of unified Tibet

The Dalai Lama is believed by almost all Tibetans to be an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, the deity of compassion. He is also revered as the ‘root *lama* (spiritual preceptor)’ (*rtsa ba’i bla ma*) of most Tibetans, irrespective of what Tibetan Buddhist school they belong to. The term ‘root lama’ may also indicate the *lama* from whom one has received religious teachings, so it is strictly speaking not reserved for the Dalai Lama. The root lama is the lama from whom one has received the threefold vow of *pratimoksha*, the vow of Boddhisattva, and the Tantric vow. The threefold vow is the vow of observing the rules of conduct. There are five basic ethical rules that apply to everyone, extended to ten rules under certain circumstances for lay people. Bodhisattva It also refers to the full set of several hundred rules that apply to fully ordained monks and nuns, as well

as the bimonthly ritual of reciting these vows in the monasteries. Finally, *pratimoksha* indicates the special vows intended for those who perform rituals according to the esoteric Tantric texts.

Today the Dalai Lama has become the most important element in the concept of ‘Tibetan tradition’, being regarded by the vast majority in the diasporic community as the ancient and unitary foundation of their history, religion, and culture. One of main points of my thesis is that in the Tibetan diaspora a relatively small number of cultural elements have become fundamental in building their national identity. This position therefore corresponds to Honko’s argument that, “Of all the elements stored in culture, only a small, potent number is in use at any given time, and the effort of even a small group is significant to construct an identity and to guide its development” (2013, 336).

The selection of cultural elements is frequently political in nature, as is the identity itself. As Pertti J. Anttonen argues, “… people make goal-directed historical links as well as cuts, foreground particular aspects of the past and background others in order to appropriate a given content of tradition for given argumentative purposes. Instead of being merely received, the past is thus actively – and often narratively – produced” (Anttonen 1996, 21). In a similar vein when discussing the concept of ‘ethnic group’, Barth argues that the features ethnic groups take into account, “are not the sum of ‘objective’ differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant” (Barth 1969, 14). This is exactly what has happened in the Tibetan diasporic community, in the course of constructing their identity from what they perceive is significant.

Thus, as written above, the concept of Tibetans constituting an ethno-national community highlights certain aspects of Tibetan culture from the past, such as the Dalai Lama being regarded as the manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the Nechung Oracle being recognised as the State Oracle of Tibet, and a number of general features such as the Tibetan language, traditional dress, and Buddhist value orientation. Of all these, belief in the Dalai Lama as the spiritual leader of all Tibetans is one of the traditions that Tibetans today regard as the most important parts of their culture for the purpose of maintaining their ethno-national identity. The political power of the Dalai Lama was, as we have seen, historically applied only to the regions under the Ganden Phodrang government and in the Gelugpa monasteries in other regions. Today, however, the Dalai Lama is not just a person of spiritual authority and a retired political leader of all Tibetans, his name also carries deep symbolic power among Tibetans.

His symbolic representation of ‘Tibet’ became crucially important in exile after 1959. Although an internationally respected figure as a spokesman for peace, non-violence and tolerance, the Dalai Lama’s spiritual and secular importance renders his status in the Tibetan community unique. His significance is viewed as crucial to maintain not only their cultural identity but also their historical status, specifically the assertion that Tibet was never a part of China, having been, until 1951, a sovereign polity with its own government and head of state. Thus, the distinctiveness of Tibetans with regard to the Chinese is not only cultural, but is regarded as a political and historical reality, symbolised by the Dalai Lama. This

resonates with Honko's argument that, "a feeling of identity is expressed and emphasised precisely in relationship with others, i.e., with those outside the group" (Honko 2013, 331). For instance, Clare Harris maintains that the custom of having the Dalai Lama's icon prominently displayed in public and private places is also the result of "ideological battles fought in the visual field during the 1960s and 1970s in the Chinese-controlled Tibet" (1999, 82). Although she writes about how the situation developed in Tibet, the diaspora community has continued with this culture.

Honko also argues that 'tradition' as already discussed above is political in nature and that it facilitates the creation of group identity formation. It is worth quoting Honko at greater length:

> Part of the collective tradition is singled out and made to represent the group in cultural communication. These traditions may refer to language, geographical location, music, dance, costume, architecture, history, myth ritual, and so on. In this process of selection and added emphasis, flags, colors, and names, for example, cease to denote objects, qualities and persons or places. They become emblems, representative symbols of the group in question (Honko 1996, 20).

Honko provides what is in fact a very precise description of the process of formation of collective symbols in the Tibetan diaspora. It could therefore be argued, as Elliott Oring does, that tradition should be considered a symbolic construction – "an interpretation of the past enacted in the present" (Oring 2012, 227). In the case of the Tibetan diaspora, the symbolic concept of the Dalai Lama as the manifestation of Avalokiteshvara *and* as the head of a state is not only retained, but is extended to wider groups – practically the entire Tibetan community – than in the past.

The importance of the Dalai Lama is evidenced in the social exclusion of Lukar Jam, an exile Tibetan activist. As discussed in my article on political cartoons, not only did he face criticism from the dominant Tibetan majority, but the former Sikyong (President-Prime Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration) also started a strongly-worded written campaign along with 200 others against him. The campaign was motivated by the fact that Lukar Jam had written an epitaph to the American historian and outspoken supporter of Tibetan independence, Elliot Sperling, in which he wrote that the one who should live 113 years should be Sperling. The idea of living 113 years was generally understood to apply to the Dalai Lama as he had on several occasions publicly stated that he would live until that age. Another, and more recent, example of how sensitive the issue of perceived criticism of the Dalai Lama can be, is the open letter from the CTA appealing to Tibetans around the world to refrain from creating "rumours and fake news on social media targeted towards discrediting and defaming His Holiness the Dalai Lama" (Central Tibetan Administration 2022). This is only an example that happened in the public space but it shows the Tibetans' mentality at large.

This brings us to Hobsbawm's concept of 'invented tradition', which is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, automatically implying continuity with the past (Hobsbawm 1992, 1). However, the nature of tradition may include more than that. Pertti Anttonen argues that instead of looking at traditions as either "invented" or "authentic", we must be aware of "the selected and politically and morally argumentative nature of all traditions"; whether new or old, he says, traditions as social practices have a historical origin (Anttonen 1996, 22). In the case of Tibetans, we do not see 'invention' as such, but rather reformulation or extension of what was once Central Tibetan or Gelugpa School traditions so as to encompass all Tibetan regions and all Tibetans, irrespective of their religious background and ancestral regional customs.

Brynjulf Alver argues that legends which are involved in the creation of a national identity become relevant, "not so much by virtue of their authenticity but by virtue of folk's perception of their own country"; he further argues that what was once a local history can become a national one (Alver 1989, 16). Consequently, whether the cultural traditions that I have described above are really in accordance with historical reality or not, is not of crucial importance. The important question is *why* they are emphasised. I suggest – and this is the crucial point of my articles – that they not only serve to maintain boundaries, in accordance with Barth's argument, but, as Verdery maintains, that ethnic groups use culture for this purpose. Moreover, in order to enforce boundary maintenance, members of the community also create standards according to which they judge themselves and others (Barth 1969, 15). In other words, culture and traditions are political. We can therefore conclude that the selection of Tibetan cultural elements in the diaspora is for specific political purposes.

Folklorists' theories regarding traditions and social anthropologists' theories on the 'ethnic group' together help us analyse the process of the 'cultural reproduction' of the Tibetan community in the diaspora. In this process, historical facts are subtly, perhaps even unconsciously, altered to underpin the idea of a pan-Tibetan culture for the political goal of a free Tibet. For instance, as I show in my article on the Nechung Oracle, until 1959 the Nechung Oracle was the oracle of the Lhasa-based Tibetan government, yet today it is regarded as the 'State Oracle of Tibet', Tibet being understood as a much larger area than that formerly under the control of the Lhasa government. Similarly, the Dalai Lama is revered as the spiritual and legitimate political head of Greater Tibet. This shared culture helps the diasporic community to imagine their homeland and gives meaning to their life in exile.

When such traditions gain authority, the community tends to become more conservative. Regina Bendix maintains that a community's conservative ethos hinges on the cultural expressions or artefacts that are considered to be "authentic, genuine, trustworthy, or legitimate" (Bendix 1997, 8–9). Moreover, she also argues, "The most powerful modern political movement, nationalism, builds on the essentialist notions inherent in authenticity", and the notion of uniqueness in

turn, “harbors a conservative ethos of the past” (1997, 7–8). This is clearly the case of the Tibetan diaspora, as I have shown in all three PhD articles.

In the diaspora today, the issue is not only that of having a Tibetan identity and following the ‘tradition’. As mentioned above, the question of who is a ‘pure Tibetan’ and what an ‘authentic’ Tibetan tradition also arises. Bendix argues that, “the idea of cultural authenticity has become such convenient fodder for supporting some positions in the political debates on race, ethnicity, gender, and multiculturalism” (Bendix 1997, 9). Thus, a conservative society of this kind gives little space for new ideas to germinate, and those who think differently are firmly put down. Although their homogenised culture gives them a platform on which to challenge the Chinese occupation of Tibet, at the same time it makes the Tibetan community essentialist in nature. However, the consequences for Tenpa Yarphel and Lukar Jam of having ideas that challenge the dominant ones were not only the result of essentialism pure and simple, but what I call ‘coercive essentialism’. The fact that there are very few Tibetans who speak their minds in opposition to the mainstream of the diasporic community shows that opposition is not an easy path.

Lukar Jam stood for the 2016 elections in the Tibetan diaspora, contending the position of President-Prime Minister, his platform being the goal of complete independence of Tibet rather than accepting the Middle Way Approach advocated by the Dalai Lama since the 1980s. During my interview with Lukar Jam, he said,

> I am not alone in having such ideas, there are quite a few people who have such views. However, whether they speak out openly depends on appropriateness (*thabs bde po*), opportunity (*skabs dang dus*), and usefulness. Therefore, they are not able to openly speak out like me.

Likewise, in my online survey regarding the Nechung Oracle (see above), the majority of the informants were opposed to Tenpa Yarphel for speaking openly in the parliament against the use of the Nechung Oracle in political matters. Some people even called him a Chinese spy, while others said, “This is not the way an MP should speak about oracles, especially of the Nechung Oracle”, and claimed that he was creating religious disharmony. Many Tibetans in India and in New York protested against him. This intolerance and the inability of the dominant ideological group to listen to new or opposing ideas stems from the essentialist nature of their identity. Moreover, such conservative and essentialist ideology is incompatible with the ideals of democracy that the Dalai Lama has attempted to introduce in the Tibetan diasporic community. This ironic state of affairs is one of the main themes of the (only) two political cartoonists in the diaspora. There are also many online and face-to-face discussions on the topic of democracy among young educated Tibetans, discussions that become more intense during the election period.

7. The role of emotion in the diasporic community

Another concept binding the three articles together thematically is *emotion*. I shall introduce emotion as a factor that provides a dynamic force to people's agendas and motivations. Having discussed at length the constraining nature of the collective identity through their use of the concept of a shared culture, one also needs to consider whether this diasporic ideology is not only discursive but also has an emotional component. Moreover, the concept of emotion helps one analyse *why* Tibetans have created this homogenous ethno-national identity, a crucial component of which is the Dalai Lama as their unquestioned leader.

In his article on the involvement of emotions in social movements, sociologist James M. Jasper distinguishes between emotions that are transitory responses to external events and new information, namely emotions such as anger, indignation, or fear, and emotions that have underlying and enduring positive and negative effects, such as loyalties to or fear of groups, individuals, places, symbols, and moral principles that help shape these responses (Jasper 1998, 399). He points out that a variety of key cultural concepts, including identity, have been treated entirely as cognitive, ignoring their "highly charged emotional dimensions" (ibid., 398). Likewise, the social anthropologist Brackette F. Williams, referring to Abner Cohen (1974), argues that, "As part of reality, ethnic identity labels are not merely 'neutral intellectual concepts but symbols that agitate strong feelings and emotions'" (Williams 1989, 403).

Considering that Tibetans in the diaspora are not only an ethno-national group but also individuals who were forced to flee from their homeland, it is not surprising that emotions play a significant role in their social and personal lives. Therefore, their creation of a Tibetan identity built on loyalty to one spiritual leader, a homogenous culture, and a single language, thus consolidating the idea of an imagined homeland, is not without emotion. The Tibetan scholar Lama Jabb asserts that, "Remembrances of past victories and tragedies play a crucial role in the construction of contemporary Tibetan identity" (Lama Jabb 2012, 5). He further endorses Renan's argument that grief is of greater value than triumph where national memories are concerned because "they impose duties, and require a common effort" (ibid.). The important role grief plays in unifying the community, certainly reflects the emotional dimension of the Tibetan community at large.

Lauri Honko argues that, "[tradition] carries a symbolic meaning. An air of sacredness is perceptible around these symbols. They carry meanings and emotions that cause the identity groups to unite and develop a sense of cohesion and togetherness" (Honko 1996, 20). As I have written in all three articles, Tibetan traditions are of the utmost importance for the political struggle in which diasporic Tibetans see themselves as engaged; these traditions also involve emotional values. For instance, the Dalai Lama is not just a person: the whole institution of the Dalai Lamas and its connection to the cult of Avalokiteshvara over the centuries has an important emotional dimension for Tibetans. Therefore, it is not surprising that dissenters such as Lukar Jam and Tenpa Yarphel become the victims of exclusion, fuelled by strongly felt emotions.

This process of consciously or subconsciously creating a Tibetan identity in the diaspora generates group emotions that are linked to the Dalai Lama in particular as a symbol of Tibet and Tibetans, forming the basis of their beliefs, thinking, morality, and culture. The English version of the Tibetan Charter of the CTA begins by stating precisely this:

> Article 1: Protector and Symbol of Tibet and Tibetan people.
> His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, the manifestation of Avalokiteshwara in human form, the designated deity of Tibet, is the divine lord of the Three Realms, a champion of world peace, the master of all Buddhist teachings, the protector of all Tibetans, and their supreme leader and guide. He is the objective embodiment of the Tibetan people, the symbol of their unity, and a free spokesperson for all Tibetans. He attained this status on the basis of the ardent desire of the Tibetan people with their centuries-old historical development, culture and sovereignty (Central Tibetan Administration 2021).

This unconditional loyalty is an emotion which Jasper calls positive (1998, 398). The songs in the Tibetan diaspora in praise of the Dalai Lama express this emotional element in the Tibetan collective identity. In fact, most of the singers in the diaspora have one or more songs in praise of the Dalai Lama. A tribute to the Dalai Lama by the singer Lobsang Tseten is a good example of this. The song and accompanying video eloquently summarise the feelings Tibetans have for the Dalai Lama. The video begins with the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 and continues with the suppression of the second Tibetan uprising from 1987 until 1988. In the background the Dalai Lama's voice may be heard: "We should not give up. Until today we have gone on without giving up. We must continue to work hard. And it is important that we Tibetans stay in harmony. We have no difference in our attire (*chas gos*) and religious culture (*chos lugs*) … No matter where you live, it is important to live in harmony with the host people (*yul mi*)" (Son Top 2009). The song is a tribute to the Dalai Lama for his contribution to the welfare, indeed the very survival, of the Tibetans. This example could be multiplied and serves to show that tradition should be analysed not only in cognitive terms.

Whether masterminded by a few elite Tibetans in the early exile period or formulated by the majority of Tibetans in exile, accepting a homogenous Tibetan history and traditions, especially promoted and consolidated through Tibetan schools, these chosen historical narratives and traditions have come from the emotional needs of the time – the need to infuse their lives with meaning and maintain their identity, be it national or ethnic, their need to remember their original homeland, the need to challenge the Chinese occupation of the Tibetan plateau. Thus, this "artful assembly of materials from the past" in terms of both history and tradition (Glassie 1995, 395) in the diaspora today is carried by strong emotions.

Additionally, although the homogenous ethnic group formation may well be an attempt by the CTA or the people in power to maintain and to "project a self-perceived homogenous culture" (Korom 1997, 2), this ethnic group formation

was also, and still is, a collective way of dealing with life in exile to protect what was being destroyed inside Tibet by the Chinese communists during the Cultural Revolution and even today. Here I would like to introduce Bernand Rimé's discussion of how emotion produces collective narratives to deal with unexpected events in a community, leading to social cohesion and solidarity. His work helps one to understand *why* the Tibetans created a homogenous identity in the diaspora and their unquestioned loyalty to the Dalai Lama. Rimé's main point in his work, "Emotion Elicits the Social Sharing of Emotion: Theory and Empirical Review", is that adults, like children, cope with their emotions by sharing them with others. The process of a person sharing his or her emotions in a socially shared language is called "social sharing of emotion", which he argues takes place at the interpersonal as well as at the collective level (Rimé et al. 2009, 18–19).

My interest is social sharing on the communal level. Rimé argues that, "social sharing of interactions is expected to strengthen social bonds, link the interactants and end in enhanced social integration" (ibid., 38). In his later work, he demonstrates how such sharing contributes to social cohesion, arguing that when emotions are expressed in a social setting, they tend to result in the enhancing of collective identity. The people involved, "thus end up experiencing unity and similarity. By the same token, shared beliefs and collective representations are set at the foreground, thus consolidating participants' faith in their cultural belief and confidence in collective action" (Rimé 2011, 152).

This process is particularly relevant in the case of the Tibetans in the diaspora. Many of them have gone through extreme hardship fleeing from occupied Tibet, especially the older people, who were the first generation. These Tibetans had many different reasons to flee, for example, for education, fear of being arrested by the Chinese, attack on their religion, and the brutality of the Chinese army. These stories are still shared with the younger generations and are remembered, especially in the annual protests still carried out by the Tibetans, for example on 10th of March, designated as the day of "uprising against the Chinese" in 1959.

Outrage at the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 is kept alive among Tibetans through such collective protests around the world. The 10th of March demonstrations take place everywhere in the world where Tibetans live, from India to New York to London. This is exactly in accordance with Rimé's argument that, "Collective emotional events, such as a victory, defeat, loss, or a disaster, indeed elicit collective rituals under the form of celebrations or commemorations… collective rituals involving emotional re-exposure have the power to "liquidate" the emotional impact" (Rimé 2011, 151). Thus, social sharing of emotion among the Tibetans has definitely contributed to creating and strengthening the common Tibetan identity in the diaspora and their belief in the Dalai Lama as their saviour and unquestioned leader (ibid., 154).

10th of March in London, UK, 2021. Photo: Pema Choedon.

According to Rimé, the outcome of sharing a collective trauma is "higher positivity" and "social benefits". It contributes to "the enhancement of positive shared beliefs about society", higher similarity with others, higher social cohesion, and better understanding of collective traumatic events (Rimé et al. 2011, 154). This certainly applies to Tibetans in the diaspora – including their parents or grandparents – who have suffered the trauma of losing their land or families in war, or had to flee along dangerous Himalayan tracks to exile. Moreover, having suffered these traumas, social sharing of such events would make almost all Tibetans in the diaspora a highly cohesive community. The memory of the tragedy of 1959 and the flight from their homeland are kept alive through social sharing in the course of protests by Tibetans around the world.

Relevant to my argument that diasporic Tibetans have created a 'narrative', Rimé argues that, "a negative emotional experience stimulates the production of narration" (Rimé 2009, 13). This argument is similar to Lama Jabb's argument that tragedy plays an important role in the construction of the Tibetan national identity. Rimé also makes the point that, "negative emotions stimulate social interaction in many forms: social comparison, story-telling and narration, conversation, and last but not the least, a search for emotional support contact with attachment figures, or their elective substitutes" (ibid., 15). This helps shed light on the Tibetans' loyalty to the Dalai Lama and their unquestioning reliance on him. When Tibetans were fleeing into exile, he was their last resort to maintain their political and ethnic identity. Therefore, even the elected Sikyong still seeks the Dalai Lama's guidance.

For Tibetans, then, their imagined homeland is not only cognitive, but has an important emotional side, too. In my article, “The Nechung Oracle: the Construction of Identity in the Tibetan Diaspora”, many Tibetans in my survey linked the Nechung Oracle with an incident in 1959 when the Oracle urged the Dalai Lama to flee his homeland, seeing a danger for his life if he remained in Lhasa. Value is added to a tradition by backing it with a historical event that is uppermost in the collective memory of the Tibetans. This historical event is not just an historical event, but is emotionally laden for Tibetans in the diaspora, reminding them not only of the destruction of their homeland, but also of the beginning of their struggle in exile. Henry Glassie, quoted above, argues that tradition is a resource for making a history “a key to historical knowledge” that should be understood as “a process of cultural construction” (Glassie 1995, 398). Emotions are part of this cultural construction because the traditions people choose to preserve from the past have an emotional aspect, passed on from one generation to the next, helping the younger generation to imagine their unseen homeland.

Thus, whether taken as a product or a process, tradition has an emotional side to it. Tradition is the result of emotional involvement with a culture (Glassie 1995, 409). As Glassie argues, “culture and tradition, we have come to accept, are created by individuals out of experiences” (ibid., 398), and I would suggest that those experiences involve emotions; for example, Glassie states that performers of tradition “must keep faith with themselves”, in the sense of faith being an important component of the kind of emotion that Jasper categorises as an ‘affect’ (Jasper 1998, 399). Faith is among the emotions that “spur action, maintain the group” (ibid.), just as in the Tibetan diaspora, people’s faith and loyalty in the Dalai Lama is crucial in maintaining Tibetan solidarity and cohesiveness in general and also their imagined homeland.

This emotional attachment to the imagined homeland reveals that the majority of Tibetans in the diaspora are still, with a twist on Donald Lopez’ expression (intended by him to refer to the imagined Tibet created in the minds of many Westerners), “Prisoners of Shangri-La” (Lopez 1998). Their discussion of the concept of the ‘pure Tibetan’, which I have written about in the article on political satire, is grounded on this very idea. One of the very few Tibetan political cartoonists, Tenzin Dorjee, made a cartoon poking fun at the serious discussion that was taking place about this concept in the community in 2017. The criticism of his humour by one of the commentators on social media was based on the idea of *pöpa tsangma* (‘pure Tibetans’), akin to the myth of Shangri-La, an idealisation of Tibet and Tibetans. According to the commentator, ‘pure Tibetans’ are those who have loyalty to the Dalai Lama, who cherish unity among the Tibetans, who speak ‘pure’ Tibetan, and who respect Tibetan culture and spirituality. Such idealisation comes, according Donald Lopez, from the unhistorical, but widely accepted perception of Tibetans as “a happy, peaceful people devoted to the practice of Buddhism, whose remote and ecologically enlightened land, ruled by a god-king, was invaded by the forces of evil” (Lopez 1998, 11).

8. Insider and outsider polarity

This section will discuss my experience of being both a researcher as well as a Tibetan living in exile. I will consider the advantages and disadvantages of being a researcher studying her own community and culture.

8.1. The dilemma of the dual role

I would certainly characterise my work as qualitative research, although I have to some extent made use of quantitative methods. According to Pamela Maykut and Richard E. Morehouse, the qualitative researcher's perspective is rather a paradoxical one, because

> it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others – to indwell – and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand (1994, 123).

However, when it comes to native researchers, there is a dual identity that is harder to separate unless someone is well versed in academic research practice. Michael Jackson points out that because an insider researcher is close to the subject and his interlocutors and therefore has an emotional bond with them, there is a risk of losing objectivity when collecting data (Jackson 1989, 51), and also in the analysis of data. This, I believe, is true when writing about one's own cultural traditions and ethnic and national identity like the Tibetan diaspora. Many young Tibetan scholars find it difficult to put emotions regarding the oppression of their homeland to one side. I, too, initially faced this problem, but slowly I learned to look critically at my community and thus my own spiritual and political beliefs, ideology, and narratives, and indeed the very process of our identity formation.

However, Marcia Herndon argues that it is no longer clear whether a conceptualised dichotomy of emic/etic or a continuum from total insider and complete outsider is useful. Instead, she argues for a wider range of overlapping possibilities, in which the degree of being an insider, gender partiality, being included but only marginally, and the scholar's own feelings of not being included are taken into account. Many other possibilities and diverse degrees of acceptance, depending on status, intentions, actions, context, and timing should be considered (Herndon 1993, 67–68).

Kirin Narayan argues that sometimes such factors could override the cultural identity that is associated with being an insider or an outsider (Narayan 1993, 672). Therefore, Herndon believes that as scholars, we must be particularly self-reflexive (Herndon 1993, 68). For example, I am an academic, a researcher, and a woman with a different life situation from most of the interviewees and respondents. Moreover, although I am Tibetan, I did not grow up in a Tibetan community until 2004, and my mother was Bhutanese. I therefore had to struggle with

learning Tibetan at school, as before that I only knew Nepali and English. Moreover, I knew very little about Tibetan history and culture except Buddhism, and did not know the Dalai Lama was at the centre of Tibetan identity.

My step-father, who was a Tibetan lama, was revered for his mediational practices, yoga, and healing. He was amazed when my sisters and I came home to Sikkim for school holidays and were singing songs mainly in praise of the Dalai Lama. He was from Eastern Tibet and belonged to a different, older school of Tibetan Buddhism than the Gelugpa School, therefore he had little connection with the larger Tibetan diasporic community and its politics. Hence, although he respected the Dalai Lama, he was not influenced by the neo-Tibetan essentialist views of Tibetan culture and spirituality that we had absorbed at school. Therefore, to some extent I was an insider due to my father's ethnic background and what I had learned at school, but I was still an outsider due to my upbringing and family background in Sikkim. My mother, who, as mentioned, was Bhutanese, was very religious, and had fully adopted Tibetan culture and language. However, although she was very religious, she never said that the Dalai Lama was the most important spiritual lama – instead, she revered the great lamas from the Nyingma School. This background helped me to question the status of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan identity that has been created in the diaspora, which I had adopted from my schooling in a Tibetan school and living with my aunt who was from the diasporic community. Therefore, I would never be fully an 'insider' – nor, perhaps, a 'pure Tibetan' – for the insiders, the Tibetans in the diaspora, but neither am I a complete 'outsider'.

Generally, when a scholar performs fieldwork, she wishes to learn new things about the people she is going to study. However, I went to unlearn what I had learned before about my community, and to start to see my family, relatives, friends, and community from a new critical perspective. This was, in the end, achievable, as Kenneth Pike (1990), who coined the terms 'emic' and 'etic', argues that just as the outsider can learn to act like an insider, so can the insider learn to analyse like an outsider (Herndon 1993, 63). Therefore, both 'outsider' and 'insider' can exchange roles in order to collect data in the field. However, when analysing I became an outsider, or in other words, my analysis was, to the best of my ability, critical and objective.

Marvin Harris (1990) complicates the emic/etic perspective by arguing that science is in itself a special emic system in dealing with both physical and cultural realities. Marcia Herdon maintains, referring to Harris, that the etic perspective should be "a goal in the understanding of native systems, an entry point into the study of a cultural system" (Herndon 1993, 64). These ideas from two of the most important scholars of these concepts show that the emic/etic perspective and outsider/insider duality are situational, in other words, these concepts can have different meanings in different contexts and scholars need to navigate between them. This navigation is what I have endeavoured to achieve when writing the articles.

8.2. Insider-outsider: challenges and advantages

Let me begin with what is for me the positive side of being an insider-outsider. As Herndon points out, "In fact, as anyone who has done field work knows very viscerally, we mostly come into a new field situation both powerless and uniformed" (Herndon 1993, 67). However, being Tibetan myself, and moreover, being known by many people in the community, I did not have to learn the language and build networks of informants. I also already knew who were the people I should interview. These people in turn called me to participate in many small seminars and gatherings. Having been part of the community, I could see it from the native's perspective, which as Narayan says, "reveal[s] the society from within… with an insider eye" (Narayan 1993, 672).

Although being a native scholar, I could easily get much vital information, ranging from the Tibetan language itself to societal codes, but nevertheless I faced a number of challenges. As mentioned above, my first challenge was to train myself to write in an etic or neutral perspective on a society that I am part of. In fact, the article on the Miss Tibet beauty pageant was the hardest to write, because not only am I a feminist, but I am also part of the social context of diasporic Tibetan feminism. Initially, I thought to write the article with a slant towards a Western feminist viewpoint; however, when I had conducted interviews and the survey, I realised that the participants and respondents who favoured the pageant (as the majority in fact did) had their own version of feminism. This took me by surprise, because although I had participated in the Miss Tibet pageant and later in an international pageant, I eventually had the feeling that it objectified women's bodies in one way or other. When gathering material for my article, I therefore chose to stay in the background because I wanted to give the former pageant participants as well as the survey respondents a voice. To include my own views on the pageant would have made it complicated to write the article.

One of the reviewers of my article on the beauty pageant commented that because I was a former Miss Tibet, I might not have written enough about the feminist perspective, and that the research was biased. However, the truth was I began the work with a feminist perspective, having studied for one semester at the Centre for Gender Research at the University of Oslo. As I began talking to other participants and collecting information from the survey, I had to change my view of the pageant. Thus, the conclusion was that most of the respondents view the pageant positively, stating, for instance, that the bikini round was an expression of "empowering and liberal thinking".

The challenge I faced in writing the article on the Nechung Oracle was that of writing neutrally on the deity and on His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in whom I have strong faith. The conflicts surrounding Tenpa Yaphel and Lukar Jam are still present in our community, and to write the article, dealing as it does with issues which are highly charged, was a daunting task. Thus, in this case being an insider did not help me.

The other challenge was to interview Tibetans whose knowledge and personal experience were important for my work. In the case of the pageant, some participants never responded when contacted, perhaps because I had once competed with them, while others kept on postponing the time for the interview. Other interviewees took a long time to respond, and only did so after being reminded of my request. The fact that in many cases they already knew me made it more difficult to obtain their agreement to be interviewed. Therefore, my being part of the community did not make it easier for me – rather the contrary. However, knowing my interviewees personally made it easier to conduct the interview once it had started. Moreover, deconstructing Tibetan identity and beliefs for the purpose of analysis made me question my own identity and belief, which I think made it easier to conduct my research.

The most difficult part of being a researcher of my own community was to learn to critically observe the things and people I already knew. My friends with whom I discussed our politics and culture were, suddenly, my research 'objects'. When I questioned them about serious matters, my friends started to joke. They could not take me seriously until I came with a video camera or a voice recorder and explained my affiliation to a university in Europe.

I would like to relate an anecdotal observation I recently made in Oslo. I went to the launch of a book by my husband's sister, who is a well-known folk musician. Her book was a study of a Norwegian folk music instrument called the *langeleik*. I found that the whole book launch programme from the rehearsal to the end was intriguing, and I focused on even the small details of the musical instrument. I could see the importance of small details, such as the dancing dolls of men and women in local traditional costume, even a goat, attached by a string to the plectrum that strikes the beat, and that all this was related to the concept of tradition. I could see how traditions in Norway are links to the past and the country's history. However, such details in the Tibetan diaspora sometimes escaped me because I had been taking them for granted. Thus, curiosity about details went missing while I was in the field. Only when I sat down to analyse my material, did I see how important details were, from small talk with my friends about the gender inequality in our community to posters on the walls of private homes.

9. Conclusion

As pointed out above, my thesis attempts to reveal the dynamics of the Tibetan diaspora, which in recent years has become a transnational diaspora. Instead of only analysing the community from the perspective of a 'nation', I have preferred to regard it in terms of 'ethnic group' in the sense defined by the social anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969). This comparison shows that Tibetans in the diaspora could be seen as constituting an 'ethno-national' group, rather than just a national or ethnic group. As an ethno-national unit, the diasporic community has created and reinforced their identity in order to mark a difference especially to the

Chinese, but also to the peoples of the host countries as well as the ethnic groups in the Himalayas that are culturally and linguistically related to Tibetans.

In order to maintain this boundary, Tibetans in the diaspora resort to their culture, some elements of which are emphasised while others are completely forgotten or supressed. Above all, the tradition of the Dalai Lama as both spiritual and political leader has become crucial. Being away from their geographical homeland, 'tradition' in the form of culture takes centre stage among Tibetans in the diaspora. Therefore, the concept of 'tradition' – as understood by Tibetans – plays a crucial role. With regard to ethnic and national boundaries, whether social or geographical, culture assists in filling the idea of 'nation' or 'ethnic group' with content. Thus, in the context of claiming a 'Free Tibet', culture is perceived by Tibetans as the essential means by which their striving for the imagined homeland can be fulfilled. Therefore, as I have attempted to show, cultural traditions are not neutral concepts but highly political in nature.

This process of maintaining boundaries, sustained by various narratives, simultaneously involves the homogenisation of culture. This, however, entails a deeply essentialist society. Those who put forward counter-narratives are suppressed and ostracised, indeed even expelled, from the community. Thus, there are social alignments in the Tibetan diasporic community, with the majority on one side and various minorities, which are more open to change and alternative narratives, on the other. The dominant ideology does not allow space to accommodate those who have different ideas concerning society and politics, potentially with the result that the intellectual well-being of the Tibetan community will suffer. The dominant group constructs its homeland as a homogenous Tibet with no significant regional differences, and with the different Tibetan Buddhist schools overshadowed by the Gelugpa School.

I have attempted to bring these dynamic and sometimes controversial phenomena of the Tibetan diasporic community to the fore rather than looking at the community and its commitment to Buddhism from a sympathetic angle. Moreover, I have tried to explore topics such as political satire and the beauty pageant, which have not been explored academically to bring forth the dynamism of the community. The articles also enable us see the dominant section of the diasporic community not only as political victims of the Chinese occupation of their homeland, but also as suppressors of those members of their own group who do not share the idea of the majority. Thus, all three articles as well as the present Introduction deal with the same issues, specifically the dilemmas and choices made in the Tibetan diasporic community in their effort to create a unitary ethnonational identity. In order to analyse and understand this process I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach involving concepts and theories from folklore studies as well as social anthropology.

10. Summary of the articles

10.1. Article 1. "The Nechung Oracle and the Construction of Identity in the Tibetan Diaspora"

Scholars have long studied oracular practices inside and outside Tibet. Many have also been interested in whether the Tibetan oracles, characterised by spirit possession, can be linked to the concept of shamanism and also whether it is a pre-Buddhist or a Buddhist phenomenon. However, these are questions that will not be discussed in this article. Instead, it discusses what oracles signify to Tibetans in the global diaspora today, focusing in particular on the Nechung Oracle, who takes his name from the monastery of Nechung (gNas-chung), in which he resides. The tradition of consulting oracles goes back a long time in Tibetan history and scholars such as René Nebesky-Wojkowitz and Hildegard Diemberger suggest that it goes back to pre-Buddhist times. Be that as it may, the relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Nechung Oracles goes back to the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682).

The authority and position of the Nechung Oracle was not questioned until 2017, when Tenpa Yarphel, a member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, not only lambasted the practice of the Tibetan government in exile, known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), of consulting the Nechung Oracle, but also mimicked the contorted voice of the possessed Oracle. This sparked passionate attacks from many diasporic Tibetans in India as well as New York and Toronto, especially from older or middle-aged women. However, he was not the first to speak out against the practice of consulting the oracles in the diaspora (see article Choedon 2021a). Today, the Nechung Oracle has a dual function in the Tibetan community: one is that of oracular practice in the form of ritualistic consultation, the other being its symbolic meaning to Tibetans as part of their identity building. Hence, apart from being part of a religious belief system, the Oracle is also one of several cultural elements that mould the Tibetan diasporic identity. This is the main topic of my article, i.e., how the Nechung Oracle has become an element of Tibetan diasporic identity building.

This article throws light on how the dominant Tibetan narrative in exile regarding the Oracle is changing and why it is important for them. This has been analysed on the basis of an online survey of 68 respondents aged 14 to 84, living in North America, Europe, India, and, Nepal. I further grouped them according to the criteria of gender, age, and occupation.

Using the theoretical approach of the folkloristic concept of 'tradition' and the concept of 'ethnicity' from social anthropology, I have tried to make sense of how cultural traditions are used to define the group's ethnic boundary and identity. By selecting certain cultural elements, among them the Nechung Oracle, the Tibetan diasporic community has created what might be called a 'neo-Tibetan identity': a homogenous ethnic Tibetan national identity based on what Tibetans believe is a continuation of the old (pre-1959) Tibet. Thus, just as the Dalai Lama is regarded as "the political and spiritual leader of Tibet", according to my survey

many Tibetans also maintain that the Nechung Oracle is “the State Oracle of Tibet”. Finally, I discuss how Tibetans in the diaspora use what I call ‘coercive essentialism’ in maintaining this identity.

10. 2. Article 2. “Miss Tibet. Representing Tibet and Tibetan culture on the global stage”

Beauty pageants have long been regarded as low-brow culture and deemed to be a site of women’s oppression – and thus antifeminist. However, beauty pageants are now widely studied from different perspectives and within different academic disciplines. Some scholars have argued that beauty pageants are multifaceted arenas linked to issues of nation, ethnicity, culture, gender, and race. With this as a general theoretical background, this article explores how the Miss Tibet pageant integrates different cultural meanings in the transnational Tibetan diasporic community, in particular with regard to the Tibetan political struggle and Tibetan women’s empowerment. Thereby the Miss Tibet pageant becomes more than just an arena of entertainment, it is also a reflection of larger social forces in the community.

This article suggests that in the Tibetan diaspora, the Miss Tibet pageant is a medium for promoting the Tibetan national struggle on the global stage by showcasing Tibet’s traditional culture in the form of dance, song, appearance, deportment, and dress. The Miss Tibet beauty pageant is not only about choosing a winner by looking at their physical appearances and deportment, these performances also highlight their national and ethnic identity. The pageant becomes a medium not only to advocate women’s empowerment, but also to reinforce a homogenous Tibetan identity, transcending regional differences. For instance, the title of Miss Tibet can be carried by the winner irrespective of which region she comes from.

Being a pageant within a community of political refugees, the Miss Tibet pageant has a political agenda somewhat similar to that of the Hoa Hau Dai Contest, by means of which the Vietnamese diasporic community attempts to promote its ‘imagined nation’ and political identity. The Miss Tibet pageant likewise has a deeper and more complex cultural and political meaning than one might believe at first glance.

The empirical material for this article has two main sources. The first source are the opinions of the ‘viewed subjects’, the participants, based on online interviews with ten former participants and also the director of the pageant. The second is the ‘viewing subjects’, the community in which the pageant takes place. The material was collected by means of an online questionnaire asking about the purpose of the Miss Tibet pageant, its contribution towards maintaining cultural traditions, and how the respondents viewed the bikini or swimsuit round. The online survey, to which 62 Tibetans from different walks of life and living in different parts of the world responded, was made from August to December 2020.

This article answers the question of why young Tibetan women still participate in the pageant despite the backlash from the community. The answer is that the pageant deals with more than just showing the contestants' beauty – it deals with women's empowerment and also the Tibetan political struggle in the diaspora. Like many other local beauty pageants around the world, the Miss Tibet pageant has become a means to assert a collective identity, in this case an imagined ethno-national identity; in other words, Miss Tibet has become a political statement. The pageant helps Tibetans imagine their nation through women's bodies.

10.3. Article 3. "Political Satire: Wittily Challenging the Dominant Ideology in the Tibetan Diaspora"

Both Jamyang Phuntsok's and Tenzin Dorjee's cartoons critique a wide range of ongoing socio-political incidents and narratives, such as cultural and language policing, political conflicts among the leaders of the CTA as well as in Parliament, unquestioning adherence to The Middle Way Approach (the Dalai Lama's proposal for the struggle for an 'autonomous' as distinct from an independent Tibet), discourses on Tibetan identity, women's empowerment, the contested views on Tibetan oracles, etc. From this wide range of topics, it is the practice of democracy in the diaspora that has been critiqued most consistently by both cartoonists, and secondly, squabbles among politicians. Their cartoons also have unique features, such as the use of both Tibetan and English languages, Tibetan characters, and use of animals such as sheep, wolf, and fox, akin to Tibetan folktales, motifs that echo those found in the traditional Tibetan Street songs sung on the streets of Lhasa before 1959.

I focus on political cartoons produced by the two artists, which shine a critical light on politics and social conventions in their community and the Tibetan diasporic authorities by means of artistic and well-thought-out political satire. The article explores the meaning and context of a selection of their cartoons, followed by a discussion of how essentialist narratives promoted by the Tibetan diasporic majority are challenged by the cartoonists by highlighting and ridiculing what is perceived as the follies of the dominant group and of politicians who accept – and exploit – these narratives. The political satire in the Tibetan diaspora becomes what James Scott (1985) calls "weapons for the weak"; in other words, humour becomes an important tool for those who are engaged in political protest from below or from the periphery.

The main focus of the cartoons is how democracy does not function properly in the diaspora. According to both cartoonists, there was and still is an inconsistency in how the principle of democracy functions in the diaspora. This article relies on two major sets of data. First, I have collected cartoons drawn by the two Tibetan artists from their respective Facebook accounts. Secondly, I conducted online interviews with them, and also a long interview with Lukar Jam, a prominent dissident who was featured in their cartoons.

Although functionalist scholars of humour emphasise that humour maintains and supports the social order, in the context of the Tibetan diaspora, political humour is without doubt used as a medium to contest what is perceived as the follies, squabbles, and injustice of the current dominant socio-political scenario. I argue that the cartoonists Jamyang Phunstok and Tenzin Dorjee are trying to challenge the dominant narrative in the Tibetan diaspora. Thus, these cartoons act as a counter-narrative in the diasporic community, where the overriding concern of the majority is not just the consolidation of a socially unified and homogenous identity and ideology, but the translation of this concern into practical politics.

REFERENCES

Alver, Brynjulf. 1989. "Folklore and National Identity", in *Nordic Folklore: Recent Studies*, eds. Reimund Kvideland and Henning Sehmsdorf. Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 12–20.

Anttonen, Pertti J. 1996. "Introduction: Tradition and Political Identity", in *Making Europe in Nordic Contexts*, ed. Pertti J. Anttonen. Turku: Nordic Institute of Folklore, 7–40.

Ardussi, John A. 2004. "Formation of the State of Bhutan (*'Brug gzhung*) in the 17th century and its Tibetan Antecedents", in *The Relationship Between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'brel) In Traditional Tibet*, ed. Christoph Cüppers. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 33–48.

Barth, Fredrik. 1969. "Introduction", in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 9–37.

Ben-Amos, Dan. 1985. "The Seven Strands of Tradition: Varieties in its Meaning in American Folklore Studies", *Journal of Folklore Research*, 21, 2–3: 97–131.

Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity.* Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Blondeau, Anne-Marie, and Katia Buffetrille. 2008. "Introduction", in *Authenticating Tibet. Answers to China's 100 Questions*, Anne-Marie Blondeau and Katia Buffetrille eds. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Brox, Trine. 2008. "Democracy in the Words of the Dalai Lama", *The Tibet Journal*, 33:2, 65–90.

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "Extended Case Method", *Sociological Theory*, 16:1. 4–33.

Central Tibetan Administration. 2010. *Demographic Survey of Tibetans in Exile, 2009*. Dharamsala: Planning Commission, Central Tibetan Administration.

Central Tibetan Administration. 2020. *Baseline Study of the Tibetan Diaspora Community Outside South Asia.* Dharamsala: Central Tibetan Administration.

Central Tibetan Administration. 2021. "The Charter of Tibetans-in-Exile", The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. https://tibet.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/English-Charter-final.doc.pdf

Central Tibetan Administration. 2022. "Important Reminder from the Kashag", https://tibet.net/important-reminder-from-the-kashag/

Choedon, Pema. 2021a. "The Nechung Oracle and the Construction of Identity in the Diaspora", *Asian Ethnology*, 80:2, 391–411.

Choedon, Pema. 2021b. "Miss Tibet. Representing Tibet and Tibetan culture on the global stage", *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*, 52. https://journals.openedition.org/emscat/5447

Choedon, Pema. Forthcoming. "Political Satire: Wittily Challenging the Dominant Ideology in the Tibetan Diaspora", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*. 95.

Chow, F.Y. 2011. "Moving, Sensing Intersectionality. A Case Study of Miss China Europe", *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 36:21, 411–435.

Cohen, Abner. 1974. *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Dalai Lama. 1992 (1990). *Freedom in Exile. The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama in Exile*. London: Abacus.

Dharpo, Tenzin. 2021. "Dalai Lama expresses "disappointment", guides elected members to take oath as per Charter", *Phayul* 07.10.202, https://www.phayul.com/2021/10/07/46205/.

Dharpo, Tenzin. 2021. “Resolve the Parliamentary deadlock ‘in accordance with the rule of law’: US State Department”, *Phayul* 24.08.2021. https://www.phayul.com/2021/08/24/46017/¨

Dung-dkar Blo-bzang ’phrin-las. 2002. *Bod rig pa’i tshig mdzod chen mo*. Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House.

Fabian, Johannes. 2008. *Ethnography as Commentary. Writing from the Virtual Archive*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Fürer-Haimendorf, Christoph von. 1990. *The Renaissance of Tibetan Civilization*, Oracle, Arizona: Synergetic Press.

Glassie, Henry. 1995. “Tradition”, *The Journal of American Folklore*. *Special Issue: Common Ground: Keywords for the Study of Expressive Culture*, 108:430, 395–412.

Goldstein, Melvyn C. 1994. “Change, Conflict and Continuity Among a Community of Nomadic Pastoralists. A Case Study from Western Tibet, 1950–1990”, in *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, ed. Robert Barnett. London: C. Hurst, 76–111.

Hamer, Katarzyna et al. 2018. “What is an “Ethnic Group” in Ordinary People’s Eyes? Different Ways of Understanding it Among American, British, Mexican, and Polish Respondents”, *Cross-Cultural Research*, 54:1.

Harris, Clare. 1999. *In the Image of Tibet: Tibetan Painting after 1959*. London: Reaktion Books.

Harris, Marvin. 1990. “Emics and Etics Revisited”, in *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*, eds. Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, and Marvin Harris. London: Sage Publications, 48–61.

Handler, Richard, and Jocelyn Linnekin 1984. “Tradition, Genuine or Spurious”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 97:385, 273–290.

Herndon, Marcia. 1993. “Insiders, Outsiders: Knowing Our Limits, Limiting Our Knowing”, *The World of Music*, 35:1, 63–80.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1992 [1983]. “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–14.

Honko, Lauri.1996. “Epic and Identity: National, Regional, Communal, Individual”, *Oral Tradition*, 11:1, 18–36.

Honko, Lauri. 2013. “Traditions in the Construction of Cultural Identity”, in *Theoretical Milestones. Selected Writings of Lauri Honko*, eds. Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 322–338.

Huber, Toni. 1999. *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain. Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Experience*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ishihama, Yumiko. 2003. “On the Dissemination of the Belief in the Dalai Lama as a Manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara”, in *The History of Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, Vol. 2, 538–553.

Jackson, Michael. 1989. *Paths towards a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Jasper, James M. 1998. “The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements”, *Sociological Forum*, 13:3, 397–424.

Jorgensen, Danny L. 2015. “Participants Observation”, in *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, website, DOI 10.1002/9781118900772, eds. Robert A. Scott, Stephen Michael Kosslyn, and Marlis C. Buchmann. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.

Kapstein, Matthew T. 2013. "Remarks on the *Maṇi Kabum* and the Cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet", in *The Tibetan History Reader*, eds. Gray Tuttle and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. New York: Columbia University Press, 89–107.

Korom, Frank J. 1997. "Introduction", in *Constructing Tibetan Cultures: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Frank J. Korom. Quebec: World Heritage Press, 1–18.

Lama Jabb. 2012. "Singing the Nation: Modern Tibetan Music and National identity", in *Revisiting Tibetan Culture and History*, eds. Tim Myatt, Kelsang Norbu Gurung, Nicola Schneider, and Alice Travers. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, Vol 1, 1–29.

Lokyitsang, Dawa T. 2018. "Who is a Pure Tibetan? Identity, Intergenerational History, and Trauma in Exile", in *Tibetan Subjectivities on the Global Stage. Negotiating Dispossession*, eds. Shelly Bhoil and Enrique Galvan-Alvarez. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 195–211.

Lopez Jr., Donald S. 1998. *Prisoners of Shangri-La. Tibetan Buddhism and the West*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Maykut, Pamela and Richard E. Morehouse. 1994. *Beginning Qualitative Research: A Philosophic and Practical Guide*. Washington DC: Falmer Press/Taylor & Francis Inc.

MacPherson, Seonaigh, Anne-Sophie Bentz, and Dawa Bhuti Ghoso. 2008. "Global Nomads: The Emergence of the Tibetan Diaspora (Part I)". *Migration Policy Institute*. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/global-nomads-emergence-tibetan-diaspora-part-i.

Mills, Martin. 2018. "The Last Gift of the God-King: Narrating the Dalai Lama's Resignation", in *Tibetan Subjectivities on the Global Stage. Negotiating Dispossession*, eds. Shelly Bhoil and Enrique Galvan-Alvarez. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 155–174.

Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist*, 95:3, 671–686.

Noyes, Dorothy. 2009. "Tradition: Three Traditions", *Journal of Folklore Research*, 46:3, 233–268.

Noyes, Dorothy. 2016. *Humble Theory. Folklore's Grasp on Social life*. Bloomington and Indianapolis. Indiana University Press.

Oring, Elliott. 2012. *Just Folklore: Analysis, Interpretation, Critique*. Los Angeles: Cantilever Press.

Pike, Kenneth L. 1990. "On the Emic and Etics of Pike and Harris", in *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*, eds. Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, and Marvin Harris. London: Sage Publications, 28–47.

Richardson, Hugh. 2003. "The Dalai Lamas", in *The History of Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, Vol. 2, 554–566.

Rimé, Bernard. 2009. "Emotion Elicits the Social Sharing of Emotion: Theory and Empirical Review", *Emotion Review* 1:1, 60–85.

Rimé, Bernard, Dario Paez, Patrick Kanyangara, and Vincent Yzerbyt. 2011. "The Social Sharing of Emotions in Interpersonal and in Collective Situations: Common Psychosocial Consequences", in *Emotion Regulation and Well-Being*, eds. Ivan Nyklíček, Ad Vingerhoets, and Marcel Zeelenberg. New York: Springer, 147–163.

Schwieger, Peter. 2013. "History as Myth. On the Appropriation of the Past in Tibetan Culture. An Essay in Cultural Studies", in *The Tibetan History Reader*, eds. Gray Tuttle and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. New York, Columbia University Press, 64–85.

Schwieger, Peter. 2015. *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China*. New York: Columbia University Press
Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
Shakabpa.W.D. 1984. *Tibet:A Political History*. New York: Potala Publications.
Shakya, Tsering. 1993. "Whither the Tsampa Eaters?", *Himal*, 6:5, 8–11.
Shakya, Tsering. 1999. *The Dragon in the Land of Snows. A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*, London: Pimlico.
Shneiderman, Sara. 2006. "Barbarians at the Border and Civilizing Projects: Analysing Ethnic and National Identities in the Tibetan Context", in *Tibetan Borderlands*, ed. P. Christian Klieger. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 9–34.
Snellgrove, David, and Hugh Richardson. 1968. *A Cultural History of Tibet.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
Son Top. 2009. "Our Great Leader His Holiness: 'The Dalai Lama'". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aQSNfweojY
Summers-Effler, Erika. 2007. "Ritual Theory", in *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, eds. Jan E. Stets and Jonathan H. Turner. Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, 135–154.
Verdery, Katherine. 1994. "Ethnicity, Nationalism, and State-Making. Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: Past and Future", in *The Anthropology of Ethnicity. Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'*, eds. Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 33–58.
Williams, Brackette. F.1989. "A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18, 401–444.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Tundmatu kodumaa: välistiibetlaste ettekujutused Tiibetist

Kokkuvõte

Sissejuhatusest ja kolmest artiklist koosnev väitekiri analüüsib Indias, läänemaailmas ja mujal elavate välistiibetlaste ettekujutusi oma kodumaast kolmel erineval näitel: miss Tiibeti iludusvõistlus, riigioraakel ja poliitilised karikatuurid. Pärast 1949. aastal alanud Hiina okupatsiooni siirdus enam kui sada tuhat tiibetlast pagulusse Indias, Bhutanis ja Nepalis. 1959. aastal põgenes dalai-laama koos kaaskonnaga Indiasse, kus moodustati ajutine valitsus, mida tänapäeval tuntakse Tiibeti Keskvalitsusena. See on tänapäevalgi peamine institutsioon, mis vastustab Hiina okupatsiooni. Dalai-laama algatatud põhjalikud reformid panid välistiibetlaste seas aluse demokraatlikule valitsemisele, kui dalai-laama andis võimu üle demokraatlikult valitud esinduskogule (Tiibeti parlament) ja sellest sõltuvale Tiibeti Keskvalitsusele.

Artiklite algallikad on nii veebis kui silmast silma kohtumistel tehtud intervjuud, veebis toimunud küsitlused ja välitööde materjal. Miss Tiibeti artikli jaoks transkribeerisin kakskümmend üks intervjuud, mille kogupikkus on umbes kakskümmend kolm tundi. Tegin need valdavalt naissoost informantidega nii tiibeti kui inglise keeles. Seejärel tõlkisin tiibetikeelsed intervjuud inglise keelde, kuid säilitasin täpsuse huvides hulgaliselt tiibeti sõnu. Kõigil vajalikel juhtudel jätsin intervjuud ja küsitlustel saadud andmed anonüümseks. Korraldasin kaks veebiküsitlust, millest esimene käsitles Nechungi oraaklit ja teine miss Tiibeti iludusvõistlust. Esimesele vastas 68 inimest ja teisele 62 inimest, kelle vastused jätsin anonüümseks. Vastajad elavad mitmel pool maailmas, kuid enamasti Indias, ja esindavad erinevaid elualasid. Eristasin vastajaid vanuse järgi, kuid mulle üllatuslikult selgus, et see polnudki nii oluline tegur, sest vastupidiselt mu ootustele on noored inimesed mõnikord vanematest konservatiivsemad.

Väitekiri käsitleb ainult välistiibetlasi, mitte tiibetlastega suguluses olevaid Himaalaja rahvaid Indias ja Nepalis, kes on elanud oma praegustel asustusaladel sajandeid. See on vastavuses välisiibetlaste enesemääratlusega. Kuigi seoses sõnadega „Tiibet“ ja „tiibetlane“ on teatud segadusi, on tiibetlaste identiteedi kujunemise alus üheselt selge ja kindel. Paguluses elavate tiibetlaste jaoks moodustavad Kham (Ida-Tiibet), Amdo (Kirde-Tiibet) ja Utsang (Kesk-Tiibet) Suur-Tiibeti, mis hõlmab suurema osa Tiibeti kiltmaast. See on väga suur territoorium, mida mõned uurijad nimetavad „etnograafiliseks Tiibetiks“. Välistiibetlaste jaoks moodustab see ühtse poliitilise ja kultuurilise terviku.

Miss Tiibeti iludusvõistlus, mis on aastate vältel toimunud Dharamsalas, Indias, annab tunnistust protsessist, mille sisuks on kujutluse loomine ühtse ajaloo, kultuuri ning identiteediga Tiibetist. Mulle vastanud tiibetlaste arvates pole see sündmus ainult iludusvõistlus, vaid näitelava tutvustamaks maailmale Tiibeti ideed. Just võistluse finaalis avaldub kõige selgemalt tiibeti rahvusluse idee, mida esindab

valdav enamik välistiibetlasi. Tiibetlaste vahelised regionaalsed ja usulised erinevused kaovad, kui noored naised etendavad ideed ühtsest Tiibetist, mis on rahvusliku müüdi keskmes. Oma artiklis uurin, kuidas see iga-aastane sündmus üheltpoolt peegeldab kujutluste Tiibetit ja teisalt aitab kaasa selle loomisele.

Riigioraaklit ehk Nechungi oraaklit käsitlevas artiklis jõudsin järeldusele, et kunagisest kohalikust oraaklist, kellega dalai-laama sajandite vältel nõu pidas, on nüüdseks saanud kõigi välistiibetlaste oraakel, sõltumata nende usulisest või regionaalsest kuuluvusest. „Traditsioon" on saanud välistiibetlaste enamuse vahendiks, mille abil vähemust alla suruda. Valdav osa tiibetlasi usub, et nende ideoloogiline ja poliitiline ühtsus aitab viia lõppeesmärgile, milleks on vaba Tiibet. Seejuures tuleb tähele panna, et vähemus, kes enamiku vaadetega ei nõustu, ei moodusta üheselt määratletavat kogukonda.

Saades innustust jagamatu Tiibeti ideaalist, püüdlevad tiibetlased kultuurilise ja ideoloogilise ühtsuse poole. Ometi tekitab see pingeid, sest kõik tiibetlased pole sellise ideega nõus. Enamiku välistiibetlaste ja nende identiteedi keskmes on dalai-laama, kes on sedavõrd oluline, et kõik need, kes vastustavad tema soove ja poliitikat, riskivad sellega, et nad võidakse kogukonnast välja heita. Dalai-laama ise pole selliste aktsioonidega kuidagi seotud, sest rahva enamik, sealhulgas poliitikud, astuvad vastavaid samme, et dalai-laama kriitikuid korrale kutsuda. Välistiibetlaste poliitilise satiiri teerajajate puhul näeme neid protsesse eriti selgelt. Kolmanda artikli keskmes ongi aktivist ja kirjanik Lukar Jam ning Tiibeti parlamendi liige Tempa Yarphel, keda välistiibetlased hakkasid tõrjuma ja häbivääristama, sest nende vaated ei sobinud kokku enamuse poliitiliste arusaamadega. Lukas Jam oli sunnitud koos perega Austraaliasse kolima. Enamiku ideoloogia ja arusaamad omandavad seega suure mõjuvõimu, mis vähemuse vaated maha surub.

Kolmes artiklis tuginen mitmesugustele teoreetilistele lähenemistele, et mõtestada välistiibeti ühiskondlik-poliitilisi arenguid. Mu uurimus on interdistsiplinaarne, sidudes folkloristika ja sotsiaalantropoloogia valdkondi. Fredrick Barthi, Cora Goveri, Don Handelmani, Richard Jenkinsi, Kathrin Verdery ja teiste sotsiaalantropoloogide töödel põhineb etnilise ja rahvusliku identiteedi käsitus selles väitekirjas. Brynjulf Alveri, Pertti J. Anttoneni, Dan Ben-Amose, Regina Bendixi, Henry Glassie, Lauri Honko, Dorothy Noyes'i, Elliott Oringi ja teiste folkloristide uurimustest olen saanud inspiratsiooni traditsiooni ja kultuuri mõtestamisel. Ühendan oma töös tekstianalüüsi, etnograafilised välitööd ja intervjuud (sealhulgas veebikeskkonnas), osaleva vaatluse ja veebiküsitlused. Olen viidanud Christopher Belli, Hildegard Diembergeri, Melvyn C. Goldsteini, Donald Lopez juniori, Sam van Schaiki, Peter Schwiegeri, René de Nebesky-Wojkowitzi, Tsering Shakya ja teiste tibetoloogide töödele, kes on pakkunud mu uurimuse jaoks avaramat konteksti. Töö teema ja materjal ise juhatasid mind interdistsiplinaarsuse suunas. Mu teoreetilisi valikuid määras paljuski see, mis tundus otstarbeks kogutud materjali mõtestamiseks, mitte lähtumine kõige uuematest debattidest ning märksõnadest.

Kokkuvõttes näitab mu väitekiri, et välistiibetlaste enamik usub, et nende ideoloogiline ühtsus aitab neil Hiinale vastu seista. Iroonilisel kombel õõnestab

selline mõtteviis kogukonna demokraatialiku süsteemi aluseid. Pealegi sünnib selline kultuurilist ja poliitilist homogeensust taotlev ideoloogiline ühtsus oma rahva esindajate vabaduse arvelt, kes sellega ei nõustu. Üks välistiibeti karikaturiste on pilanud sedalaadi piiranguid, võrreldes neid Hiina Kommunustliku Partei poliitikaga. Igatsus kaotatud kodumaa järele ja soov tagasi pöörduda on tiibetlaste hulgas tänapäevalgi tugev, kuid selline emotsionaalselt laetud konservatism on viinud mõtteviisini, mida võiks nimetada sunniviisiliseks essentsialismiks. Välistiibetlaste omavahelisi konflikte uurides võib jõuda järelduseni, et nad pole ainult vägeva Hiina riigi ohvrid, vaid rakendavad ka oma kogukonnas sunnimeetmeid, et marginaliseerida neid, kes moodustavad hääleka, kuid suuresti väeti vähemuse.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Pema Choedon
Date of Birth: 22 July 1991
Citizenship: (stateless) Tibetan born in India
E-mail: happypemalak@gmail.com

Education:

2017–2022 Ph.D. student, University of Tartu, Institute of Cultural Research, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore

2015–2017 Master in Philosophy in Tibetan studies, Center for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. M.Phil. thesis: "Tibetan Settlements: Nepal's Approach and Policy, 1989–2015", Supervisor: Prof. Sangeeta Thapliyal.

2012–2014 Master in English Literature, School of Language, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

2009–2012 Bachelor in English Literature, Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University.

2004–2009 Tibetan Homes School, Mussoorie, Uttarkhand, India.

Visiting Scholarships:

12 February – 20 June 2020 The Oriental Institute, University of Oxford (Kristjan Jaak Grant)

13 February – 20 June 2019 Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo (Dora Plus Scholarship)

Publications:

Choedon, Pema. 2021. The Nechung Oracle and the Construction of Identity in the Tibetan Diaspora. *Asian Ethnology* 80:2, 391–412.

Choedon, Pema. 2021. "Miss Tibet. Representing Tibet and Tibetan culture on the global stage". *Études mongoles et sibéreiennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*, 52:2021.

Choedon, Pema. Forthcoming. "Political Satire: Wittily Challenging the Dominant Ideology in the Tibetan Diaspora", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*.

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi:	Pema Choedon
Sünniaeg:	22. juuli, 1991
Kodakondsus:	Indias sündinud tiibetlanna (kodakondsusetu)
E-post:	happypemalak@gmail.com

Haridus:

2017–2022	doktorant, Eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule osakond, kultuuriteaduste instituut, Tartu Ülikool
2015–2017	M.Phil. õpingud tibetoloogias, Sise-Aasa Uuringute Keskus, Rahvusvaheliste Uuringute Instituut, Jawaharlal Nehru Ülikool, New Delhi. M.Phil. väitekiri: „Tiibeti asulad: Nepaali perspektiiv ja poliitika 1989–2015", juhendaja: Prof. Sangeeta Thapliyal.
2012–2014	MA õpingud inglise kirjanduses, Keelte Instituut, Jawaharlal Nehru Ülikool, New Delhi.
2009–2012	BA õpingud inglise kirjanduses, Pr Shri Rami kolledž (Lady Shri Ram College), Delhi Ülikool
2004–2009	Tiibeti keskkool (Tibetan Homes School), Mussoorie, Uttarkhand, India

Välisstipendiumid:

12. veebr. – 20. juuni 2020	Orientalistika Instituut, Oxfordi Ülikool (Kristjan Jaagu stipendium)
13. veebr. – 20. juuni 2019	Sugupoole-Uuringute Keskus (Centre for Gender Research), Oslo Ülikool (Dora Pluss stipendium)

Publikatsioonid:

Choedon, Pema. 2021. The Nechung Oracle and the Construction of Identity in the Tibetan Diaspora. *Asian Ethnology* 80:2, 391–412.

Choedon, Pema. 2021. "Miss Tibet. Representing Tibet and Tibetan culture on the global stage". *Études mongoles et sibéreiennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*, 52:2021.

Choedon, Pema. Forthcoming. "Political Satire: Wittily Challenging the Dominant Ideology in the Tibetan Diaspora", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*.

DISSERTATIONES FOLKLORISTICAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

1. **Anzori Barkalaja.** Sketches towards a Theory of Shamanism: Associating the Belief System of the Pim River Khanties with the Western World View. Tartu, 2002. 184 p.
2. **Татьяна Миннияхметова.** Традиционные обряды закамских удмуртов: Структура. Семантика. Фольклор. Tartu, 2003. 258 p.
3. **Madis Arukask.** Jutustava regilaulu aspektid. 19. sajandi lõpu setu lüroeepiliste regilaulude žanr ja struktuur. Tartu, 2003. 305 lk.
4. **Tiia Ristolainen.** Aspekte surmakultuuri muutustest Eestis. Tartu, 2004. 180 lk.
5. **Liina Saarlo.** Eesti regilaulude stereotüüpiast. Teooria, meetod ja tähendus. Tartu, 2005. 257 lk.
6. **Taive Särg.** Eesti keele prosoodia ning teksti ja viisi seosed regilaulus. Tartu, 2005. 264 lk.
7. **Risto Järv.** Eesti imemuinasjuttude tekstid ja tekstuur. Arhiivikeskne vaatlus. Tartu, 2005. 226 lk.
8. **Anu Korb.** Siberi eesti kogukonnad folkloristliku uurimisallikana. Tartu, 2007. 430 lk.
9. **Ergo-Hart Västrik.** Vadjalaste ja isurite usundi kirjeldamine keskajast 20. sajandi esimese pooleni. Tartu, 2007. 231 lk.
10. **Merili Metsvahi.** Indiviid, mälu ja loovus: Ksenia Müürsepa mõttemaailm folkloristi pilgu läbi. Tartu, 2007. 171 lk.
11. **Mari Sarv.** Loomiseks loodud: regivärsimõõt traditsiooniprotsessis. Tartu, 2008. 183 lk.
12. **Liisi Laineste.** Post-socialist jokes in Estonia: continuity and change. Tartu, 2008. 199 lk.
13. **Ave Tupits.** Käsitlusi rahvameditsiinist: mõiste kujunemine, kogumis- ja uurimistöö kulg Eestis 20. sajandil. Tartu, 2009. 222 lk.
14. **Anneli Baran.** Fraseologismide semantika uurimisvõimalused. Tartu, 2011. 172 lk.
15. **Mare Kalda.** Rahvajutud peidetud varandustest: tegude saamine lugudeks. Tartu, 2011. 272 lk.
16. **Piret Voolaid.** Eesti mõistatused kui pärimusliik muutuvas kultuurikontekstis. Tartu, 2011. 238 lk.
17. **Liina Paales.** Kurtide nimepärimuse aspekte: puudelisuse ja kurdiksolemise folkloristlik uurimus. Tartu, 2011. 209 lk.
18. **Andreas Kalkun.** Seto laul eesti folkloristika ajaloos. Lisandusi representatsiooniloole. Tartu, 2011. 284 lk.
19. **Toms Ķencis.** A disciplinary history of Latvian mythology. Tartu, 2012. 222 p.
20. **Jinseok Seo.** The role of shamanism in korean society in its inter- and intra-cultural contacts. Tartu, 2013. 202 p.

21. **Tiina Sepp**. Pilgrims' reflections on the Camino de Santiago and Glastonbury as expressions of vernacular religion: fieldworker's perspective. Tartu, 2014. 158 p.
22. **Anastasiya Astapova**. Negotiating Belarusianness: Political folklore betwixt and between. Tartu, 2015. 215 p.
23. **Margaret Lyngdoh.** Transformation, Tradition, and Lived Realities: Vernacular Belief Worlds of the Khasis of Northeastern India. Tartu, 2016. 168 p.
24. **Kristel Kivari.** Dowsing as a link between natural and supernatural. Folkloristic reflections on water veins, Earth radiation and dowsing practice. Tartu, 2016. 318 p.
25. **Reet Hiiemäe.** Folkloor kui mentaalse enesekaitse vahend: usundilise pärimuse pragmaatikast. Tartu, 2016. 175 lk.
26. **Николай Анисимов.** «Диалог миров» в матрице коммуникативного поведения удмуртов. Тарту, 2017. 386 с.
27. **Siim Sorokin.** Character Engagement and Digital Community Practice: A Multidisciplinary Study of "Breaking Bad". Tartu, 2018. 263 p.
28. **Irina Sadovina.** In Search of Vedic Wisdom: Forms of Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary Russia. Tartu, 2020. 230 p.
29. **Anastasiya Fiadotava.** Family Humour in Contemporary Belarus: Forms, Practices and Vernacular Reflections. Tartu, 2020. 174 p.
30. **Alevtina Solovyeva.** Reawakening Spirits in Post-Socialist Mongolia: Vernacular Theories and Practices. Tartu, 2021. 203 p.
31. **Kaisa Langer.** Estonian folklore collections in the context of Late Stalinist folkloristics. Tartu, 2021. 182 p.
32. **Kikee Doma Bhutia**. Mythic History, Belief Narratives and Vernacular Buddhism among the Lhopos of Sikkim. Tartu, 2022. 158 p.
33. **Baburam Saikia**. Contradictions In(side) the Tradition: Lived Religion, Ritual and Change with Reference to Majuli Sattras. Tartu, 2022. 150 p.
34. **Christiana Holsapple.** Narratives of Positionality in Contemporary Gagauzia: Complexity and National Normativity. Tartu, 2022. 158 p.