

SEMIOTICS, HABITUS AND MUSIC IN THE TRANSMISSION OF TIBETAN CULTURE IN
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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study explores the role of music in cultural transmission in the Tibetan community of Toronto, Canada. Beginning with an integration of Peircian semiotics, Bourdieu's *habitus* and musical semiosis, I then identify certain non-Tibetan cultural elements being encountered by those in the Toronto community which are potentially creating cognitive structures foreign to those which have their generative principles in pre-exile Tibetan past, and the ways in which Tibetans are transmitting (to varying degrees) cognitive schemata which identify these non-Tibetan elements and protect against their appropriation. After exploring elements which are not Tibetan, I turn to those which are: a unified narrative of Tibetan history, an attachment to the physical land of Tibet, community, language, Tibetan Buddhism, family life and traditional music. It is argued that these Tibetan elements together constitute the conceptual core of Tibetan culture, perceived requisite for the entirety of authentic Tibetan cultural transmission to take place. Each element is examined as a representation of Tibetan culture, with the process of musical semiosis shown to correlate all elements into a conceptual whole.

Following this, the study looks at the transmission and appropriation of Tibetan music in a Tibetan student performing arts troupe. I argue that as students attend music lessons, they are in the process embodying the cultural structures of Tibet past. With the correlations produced through musical semiosis, every lesson (for the students) and every performance (for the audience) has the potential to create and reinforce Tibetan structures, and fuse together any and all of the core Tibetan cultural elements in deeply personal ways. When the same performances are framed in the Tibetan Community Cultural Centre, a space permeated by Tibetan stimuli operationalizing all five senses, they provide a mirror in which the Tibetan community might see their cultural preservation efforts reflected; and when the performance agrees with the communal sense of naturalness felt through the *habitus*, when the performance is deemed authentic, it provides the community tangible evidence that their preservation goals have been achieved.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Tibet, the Land of Snows, has long been a place of mystery to researchers, explorers and armchair adventurers, yet data regarding Tibetan music and community life outside the Asian diaspora is sparse. Toronto, one of the largest of these communities, has in the last five years seen a major increase in musical participation and performance, and while this has been recognized by the Canadian media (in public addresses by Canadian politicians at Tibetan events, in newspapers¹ and on television²), it has thus far gone unnoticed in the literature. With data collected through interviews and observations in the Tibetan community in Toronto regarding the process of music learning, this study offers an otherwise non-existent view of Tibetan musical life. Further, as no previous studies exist on the transmission of culture in Toronto, the following offers a unique perspective on both cultural transmission and music's role in that process, observed through an integration of Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* and Charles Saunders Peirce's theories on semiotics. By identifying specific cultural elements the Tibetan community considers requisite for cultural survival in exile, this study elucidates the prominent role music might play as the older generation attempts to fulfill the cultural preservation mandate and pass their culture on to the next generation in its conceptually purest form.

Until recently such a study in Toronto would have been impossible, and indeed before the second half of the nineteenth century any study of Tibetan culture proved an arduous and dangerous journey, one rarely set upon. For this reason, prior to the country's "peaceful liberation" in 1959 Tibet was largely unknown and inaccessible, conjuring up images in much of the Western world of an other-worldly

¹ Leslie Scrivener, "Tibetan Musician Finds a Home in Toronto," *The Toronto Star*, October 26, 2010. <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/dalailama/article/880914--tibetan-musician-finds-a-home-in-toronto> (accessed July 23, 2011).

² A documentary on the Tibetan community in Toronto with a large segment devoted to the performing arts was produced by Rogers OMNI Television, called "Rogers Coverage of Tibetan Community" accessible at: http://article.wn.com/view/2006/12/12/Rogers_OMNI_Television_Launches_Path_to_Enlightenment_New_13/ (accessed August 10, 2010).

Shangri-La. Since the time of China's occupation, the mass exodus from Tibet and the ensuing media attention, the unknown has become visible. Tibetans as a people have become highly politicized, and many academics and sympathizers have logged countless hours and written hundreds of books on Tibet's cultures and traditions. The majority of sociologists have been concerned with religio-cultural traditions; some have focused more on the arts. Most studies among Western academics have been conducted in Tibetan communities living in India and Nepal, with limited research occurring in ethnic Tibet (the Tibetan Autonomous Region [TAR] and the surrounding Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan). Despite the apparently broad geographic scope of the research, the vast majority has been focused on Dharamsala in North India, capital of the Tibetan exiles, seat of power of the Tibetan Government in Exile, and home of their spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It is in Dharamsala where "Tibet is 'recreated' in India,"³ even seen by some as "a temporary home preserving a historical culture in its pure form."⁴ As Axel Kristian Strom indicates, "there has been very little attempt to look at the interactive dynamics of the Tibetans' emergent culture in their new homes" and "Tibet and Tibetans have escaped the serious attention of scholars interested in the comparative social and humanistic study of diasporas and exile."⁵ Keila Diehl, whose research for *Echoes from Dharamsala* was conducted in the diasporic capital, is among the many Tibetan-minded researchers⁶ calling for research in the smaller Tibetan communities in India and Nepal.⁷ I would further suggest that, as the Tibetan diaspora now

³ Axel Kristian Strom, "Between Tibet and the West: On Traditionality, Modernity and the Development of Monastic Institutions in the Tibetan Diaspora" (Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995): 35.

⁴ Dibyesh Anand, "A guide to little Lhasa: the role of symbolic geography of Dharamsala in constituting Tibetan diasporic identity," in *Tibet, Self and the Tibetan Diaspora:Voices of Difference* ed. C Klieger (E J Brill, Leiden,(2002): 13.

⁵ Strom, 2.

⁶ Frank J. Korom, "Introduction: Place, Space and Identity: The Cultural, Economic and Aesthetic Politics of Tibetan Diaspora" (Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz, 1995); Keila Diehl, *Echoes From Dharamsala: Music in the Life of a Tibetan Refugee Community* (University of California Press, 2002); Emily T. Yeh, "Exile Meets Homeland: politics, performance, and authenticity in the Tibetan Diaspora" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 648-667; Strom.

extends far beyond the borders of South Asia, valuable insights could be drawn (and the status of cultural preservation assessed) by exploring the growing Tibetan settlements anywhere Tibetans have found refuge and forged communities.

In 1959, following a brief but bloody (and ultimately ineffective) uprising, the Dalai Lama fled Lhasa along with an estimated hundred thousand other Tibetans. Given asylum in India, the Tibetan exiles eventually took up residence on the other side of the Himalayas, in the remote north Indian town of Dharamsala (donated by Nehru's government). Outside Asia (mainly India and Nepal, where the majority of émigré Tibetans still reside), the first country of migration was Switzerland, receiving some fifteen hundred Tibetans in the early 1960s. Tibetan migration to Canada began in 1971, with two hundred and twenty-eight Tibetans being settled in various places across the country. Eventually a number of the resettled Tibetans made their way to Toronto, and about fifteen years ago the burgeoning of the Toronto population began. Between 2001 and 2006 the population tripled to four thousand two hundred and seventy-five,⁸ making the Toronto community one of the biggest outside Asia.⁹

Considered legally as refugees (a label willingly accepted and even promoted by many in the diaspora), exile Tibetans stand on commonly indeterminate ground along with any displaced peoples: a dramatic loss in the past, a desire (no matter how improbable) for return in the future, and a struggle to maintain their culture in the present. While the often subconscious passing on of cultural patterns in any human group is a natural process, for refugees cultural transmission often occurs "unnaturally." Forced into unfamiliar situations, the hitherto subconscious, unquestioned and often undefined cognitive patterns,

⁷ Diehl and had originally intended to conduct her research in the Tibetan schools around India studying the ways in which Tibetan music is passed on, thereby gaining a more comprehensive view of the diaspora.

⁸ Seonaigh MacPherson and Dawa Bhuti Ghoso, "Global Nomads: The Emergence of the Tibetan Diaspora (part I)." *Migration Information Source*, (September 2008) <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=693> (accessed April 26, 2011).

⁹ This is the most recent obtainable official statistic, but many Tibetans are now claiming a much higher number (some say ten thousand, which would make the numbers surpass New York). Regardless of the actual numbers, the thing that most Tibetans said made Toronto special was the fact that most Tibetans live in the same area, fostering a much closer sense of community.

even the “way[s] of standing, speaking, walking...feeling and thinking,”¹⁰ are now questioned and challenged, both at the conscious and subconscious levels, the articulated and unarticulated cognitive realms. These cognitive patterns, the natural way of being in the world (often defined as *culture*), are never externally objective to the agent who possesses them; they are “not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one *is*.”¹¹ Thus faced with an identity crisis and the annihilation of their very being, the group seeks its own preservation. The dangers of losing communal ties and traditions are lessened for Tibetans living in the larger communities of India and Nepal (particularly those in Dharamsala, where Tibetans are the majority); for those in settlements like Toronto, however, which happens to be in one of the most multicultural neighbourhoods in what is arguably the most multicultural city in the world, the current adult generation faces growing fears of their children assimilating into the wider cultures, resulting in the deterioration of Tibetan authenticity and ultimately the perceived destruction of Tibetan culture. Thus Toronto Tibetans strive to pass on their customs, language and religion; to maintain a distinctly Tibetan community; to instil nostalgia for the homeland; and to keep alive the hope of return.

A plethora of studies exist concerning cultural transmission in society generally¹² and refugee groups specifically,¹³ yet despite a growing number of studies proving music’s unquestionably pertinent

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1980, English translation 1990), 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, italics mine.

¹² L.L. Cavalli-Sforza et al., “A Study of Cultural Transmission in Taiwan,” *Human Ecology* 10 No. 3 (1982). Marrion Dobbert et al., “Cultural Transmission in Three Societies: Testing a Systems-Based Field Guide,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 275-311; Fred O. Gearing, “Toward a General Theory of Cultural Transmission,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 15, No.1 (Spring 1984): 29-37; Robert J. Miller, “Transmitting ‘Culture,’” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 15, No. 4 (Winter 1984): 323-326; Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies” *American Sociological Review* 51, No. 2 (April 1986): 273-286.

¹³ Anh Hua “Diaspora and Cultural Memory,” in *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search For Home*, ed. Vijay Agnew (University of Toronto Press, 2005); Ron Eyerman, “The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory,” *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 159-169; T. LaFromboise et al., “Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory,” *Psychological Bulletin* 114 (1993): 395-412; Liisa H. Malkki, “Refugees and Exile: From “Refugee Studies” to the National Order of Things,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 24 (1995): 495-523; Liisa H. Malkki, “Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11, No. 3 (Aug., 1996): 377-404; Jacqueline Mosselson, “From the Margins to the Center: A Critical

role in the process,¹⁴ musical transmission theories have rarely been employed in Tibetan cultural studies (with the exception of Keila Diehl,¹⁵ Kunga T. Lama and Emily T. Yeh,¹⁶ and Jamyang Norbu¹⁷). I hope to show how music plays a vital role in cultural transmission, able to act as a catalyst for both preservation and change, and perhaps more than any other cultural element has the power to unite community and provide the sense of “naturalness” often lost in exile. A cultural element itself, music has a unique ability to correlate other Tibetan elements (Tibet as a place, Tibetan history, religion, language, family, community) which have become spacio-temporally and conceptually separated, thus metaphorically welding the disparate aspects into a conceptual whole. It is my hope that such a sociomusicological study in the established Tibetan community of Toronto will complement not only the extant Tibetan literature but also shed light on future studies of music’s role in cultural transmission.

AUDIENCE

Examination of the Identity Constructions of Bosnian Adolescent Refugees in New York City,” *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 3, No. 4 (2009): 260-275; Christine J. Yeh and Mary Y. Hwang, “Interdependence in Ethnic Identity and Self: Implications for Theory and Practice,” *Journal of Counselling and Development* 78 (Fall 2000).

¹⁴ Patricia Shehan Campbell and Carol Scott-Kassner, *Music in Childhood: From Preschool Through the Elementary Grades* (Cengage Learning, 2009); Charles Kiel, “Applied Sociomusicology and Performance Studies,” *Ethnomusicology* 42, No. 2 (Spring-Summer 1998): 303-312; Kathryn Marsh, “Observations on a Case Study of Song Transmission and Preservation in Two Aboriginal Communities: Dilemmas of a ‘Neo-Colonialist’ in the Field,” *Callaway International Resource Centre for Music Education* 19 (2002): 4-13; Susan Rasmussen, “A Temporary Diaspora: Contested Cultural Representations in Tuareg International Musical Performance,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, No. 4 (Autumn 2005): 793-826; Adelaida Reyes Schramm, *Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free: Music and the Vietnamese Refugee* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1999); Adelaida Reyes Schramm, “Tradition in the Guise of Innovation: Music among a Refugee Population,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 18 (1986): 91-101; Adelaida Reyes Schramm, “Music and Tradition: From Native to Adopted Land through the Refugee Experience,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 21 (1989): 25-35; Kay Kaufman Shelemay, “The Ethnomusicologist and the Transmission of Tradition,” *The Journal of Musicology* 14, No.1 (Winter 1996): 35-51; Thomas Turino *Music as Social Life* (The University of Chicago Press, London, 2008); Hae-Kyung Um, “Listening patterns and identity of the Korean diaspora in the former USSR,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 9, Vol. 2 (2000): 121-142; Deborah Wong, *Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (Routledge, New York, 2004); Sara Stevens Zur, “Letting Go of Data in Aboriginal Australia: Ethnography on ‘Rubber Time,’” *The Qualitative Report* 12, No. 4 (December 2007).

¹⁵ Keila Diehl, *Echoes From Dharamsala: Music in the Life of a Tibetan Refugee Community* (University of California Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Kunga T. Lama and Emily T. Yeh, “Hip-hop gangsta or most deserving of victims? Transnational migrant identities and the paradox of Tibetan racialization in the USA,” *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 809-829.

¹⁷ Jamyang Norbu, ed., *Zlos-Gar: Performing Traditions of Tibet* (Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala, India, 1986).

This study is intended for both Tibetans and non-Tibetans. It is hoped that it will offer encouragement to Tibetans living in Toronto, to see the efforts being put forth in their community to maintain their invaluable traditions while living in a cultural narrative so different from their own. For Tibetans outside Toronto, may it provide a report of their brothers and sisters, an encouragement to those other Tibetans around the world who, like the Tibetans of Toronto, are struggling to continue their culture in an unfamiliar world.

This study looks at Tibetan music in a large Tibetan community, thus it will be of special interest to Tibetologists. As music is placed in the spectrum of many facets and multiple modes of cultural transmission (including family, language, community, religion, and music), the report will provide data for students of the same. It will be of particular value to sociologists and ethnomusicologists studying diasporic communities: for the first, may it be an encouragement not to underplay the importance of music in their studies; for the second, it will provide some methodologies not often used in music research. Implementing theories of *habitus* and semiotics, it is also hoped this study will prove useful for students of Bourdieu and semioticians alike, and for any who hope to incorporate the two methodologies (which although rarely integrated seem to me a natural fit).

CONTRIBUTIONS

Despite the references above there is a definite lack in the literature regarding music's role in the process of cultural transmission, particularly when considering its import. Dobbert et al.'s¹⁸ exhaustive study on *Cultural Transmission in Three Societies* used some four hundred sub-categories, recorded one thousand and seventy events, and made roughly twelve thousand categorical observations in an attempt to understand this process, yet in their research methodology (as valuable and informative as it is) little attention was given to music. Unlike Dobbert et al., this project (though conducted on a much smaller qualitative scale) gives music a high priority. Through my interactions I have come to believe Tibetans see music as an invaluable part of culture, and through my own studies I have come to realize music's value in the structures of that which is called "culture." Along with music, Tibetans have expressed the

¹⁸ Dobbert et al.

importance of family life, community, religion and language, and in much casual (and virtually all official) Tibetan discourse is the ever-present reference to Tibet as homeland, and the great sense of loss and nostalgia producing a desire for an eventual return (even though the majority residing in Toronto have never been there). I have therefore chosen these cultural concepts as controlling factors in understanding the importance of Tibetan music in cultural transmission.

The literature also fails to provide examples of the process of musical transmission in Tibetan communities. Diehl documents her own music learning through her experiences with the Yak Band in Dharamsala, but her experience was with modern Tibetan rock music (which closely follows Western classical rock and the blues) and I have as yet been unable to find any research documenting the process of traditional Tibetan music learning. It is my intention that this paper not only provides evidence of music's pertinent role in cultural transmission, but also that it adds to the literature documentation of the process of Tibetan music learning in Toronto.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Adelaida Reyes Schramm observed the continuation of cultural patterns among refugee populations, even despite the many roadblocks intrinsic to the refugee experience that “impede the usual channels”¹⁹ of cultural transmission. Suggesting this presupposes a sustainable system of transmission “inherent to tradition,”²⁰ Reyes calls for “an understanding of these mechanisms” that “could lead to a better understanding of tradition in general.”²¹ My purpose in this study is to look at those systems of cultural transmission, to understand what aspects of Tibetan culture are being transmitted, and to explore music's function in that process in the Tibetan community of Toronto. With these aims I conducted interviews with Tibetan music students, their parents, their teachers, and other Tibetans in the community, and examined literature on cultural transmission, music transmission, and diaspora communities. In an interplay between experience and theory, my lived experiences within the Tibetan community influenced

¹⁹ Schramm, *Tradition in the Guise of Innovation*, 91.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

me towards adopting the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, Thomas Turino, Charles Saunders Peirce and Umberto Eco, their theories in turn adjusting the lens through which I viewed my own research. Turino's theory of musical semiosis posits that music generally functions semiotically, in Peircian terms as an icon or index, producing presymbolic interpretants uniting cultural elements without the use of language or articulation thereby creating the sense of naturalness found in Bourdieu's habitus. When Tibetans listen to and perform music, they are structuring and restructuring pre-cognitive cultural correlations which, through shared experiences and like cultural conditioning (a kind of subconscious enculturation), produce collectively agreed upon judgements of what is authentically Tibetan and what is not.

Although not a comprehensive list, I offer some of the main cultural elements which have emerged as vital to the preservation of Tibetan culture: the concept of an idealized Tibetan past ("Shangri-la"); Tibet as rightful homeland; Tibetan community; the Tibetan language; Tibetan Buddhism; Tibetan family life; and traditional Tibetan music. It is my understanding that both traditional and modern Tibetan music can transmit each element and unite them as a conceptual whole. The cognitive welding of these concepts through music produce a perception of *Tibetanness*, providing the possessor the ability to make unreflexive "common-sense" judgements (*this is Tibetan, that is not Tibetan*); however, I argue that this in no way suggests "full cultural transmission" has occurred, or that the habitus of the Toronto Tibetan youth in any other way matches the habitus of the Tibetan diaspora. Rather, all these cultural conceptualizations are cognitively stored alongside manifold others in what Ann Swidler calls a kind of "toolkit,"²² the theory that every image and idea, every external stimulus, enters cognition and is subsequently appropriated, adapted or rejected for practical and functional use providing methods that can be drawn on for dealing with the world around them. For Tibetans in Toronto, this toolkit will consist of various cultural patterns, each with its own history. Some will have their roots in Tibetan memory, sharing generative principles with the Tibetan habitus of the general Tibetan collective; others will stem from other cultures. The Tibetan youth's cognitively mapped understanding of reality may well be a "hodgepodge" of these images and ideas, both Tibetan and other, but the elements which are semiotically

²² Swidler.

united (as in “all things Tibetan”) might be seen to exist in a separate compartment of the toolkit. To extend the toolkit metaphor further, any instance of a sign (any cognitively received stimuli) will open its respective cognitive compartments (provided a compartment for the sign exists), also bringing to the fore the conceptualizations of which, through semiosis, they have become iconic, indexical or symbolic signs. Thus even though “like the habitus identities are at once individual and social,”²³ and the contents of the toolkit have indeed been socially constructed, each individual still has their own unique collection.

It appears that for many the task of ensuring the continuation of Tibetan culture is to pass on the entirety of that which has been built over the past two thousand years of Tibetan history to the next generation, including: language, religion, music, the arts, costumes, community, food, the ways of thinking, acting and talking; in essence a complete transmission of both objectifiable culture and the unseen habitus as it existed in pre-1959 Tibet. In any manifestation of Tibetan culture, that which is manifest is the observable, the objectifiable, the *tip of the iceberg*. The perceiver, from the iceberg’s tip, can then suppose the cultural elements which lie beneath the surface, and thus judge by the manifestation the authenticity of its *Tibetanness*, or of the *Tibetanness* of the person or group causing the manifestation.

Music, with its ability to correlate all the valued cultural elements, is often this iceberg tip in the Tibetan community, a measuring stick of Tibetan culture²⁴ by which the goals of historic pattern transmission can be tangibly measured. When the students participate in music classes, they learn the musical structures of the past; however, when those structures have presupposed connections with other cultural phenomena, those ideas and beliefs are reinforced. When the students then perform publicly, I propose, they are not only performing Tibetan *music* but *Tibetanness*. By showing the accomplishments of the music students to the Dalai Lama, to the Tibetan community, and to the outside, Toronto Tibetans are thus demonstrating—and creating—the successful preservation of Tibetan culture.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My purpose in studying the transmission of Tibetan music was threefold: to understand the

²³ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 221.

²⁴ Diehl, 77.

meaning of culture to Tibetans; to observe and explain the process of Tibetan cultural transmission; and to understand the place of music in cultural transmission in the Tibetan community of Toronto. To study the first, interviewees (music students, parents, teachers, and others in the Tibetan community) were asked what “being Tibetan” meant to them, and what they understood to be the “rich cultural heritage of Tibet” (an oft-heard phrase in Tibetan émigré discourse), as well as questions concerning the best way for Tibetan culture to continue in Toronto. I also observed and documented events, performances and activities where the preservation of culture was said to be taking place (indeed events were often praised, particularly by Westerners, for their pertinent role in preservation). From the interview responses and my own observations, I attempt to piece together a Tibetan conceptualization of culture.

For the second, using a theory of culture and cultural transmission largely derived from the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Charles Saunders Peirce, I explore *how* Tibetan culture might inhere, the process of transmission and appropriation by Toronto émigré youth, and what effects time spent in Tibetan and non-Tibetan socialization might have. Questions include how long the interviewees have been in Toronto and other diasporic contexts outside of the Tibetan school system and Tibetan camps of India and Nepal, as well as language proficiency and use at home.

The third was conceptualized (for the researcher) through participation (I spent six months in an adult Tibetan music class and have been taking weekly private lessons since 2009) and observations of the Tibetan youth music classes. The methods employed during these lessons were observed, and active/passive and structured/organic pedagogical styles were identified. Looking beyond the classroom I inferred where and when the majority of music transmission was taking place, whether through music lessons, shared musical experience with family at home, personal music consumption, or attending performances. I endeavoured to ascertain not only how much of the respondents’ lives was spent hearing Tibetan music, but the contexts surrounding each instance of musical manifestation (thus determining what Tibetan music might index). Topics of interest included students’ feelings during performances, their favourite part of music class, the most interesting thing about Tibetan music, length of time studying Tibetan music, and reasons for participation (or, in the parents’ case, why they encouraged their

children's enrolment). For the teachers, I asked about their process of music learning (why they started studying music, why they have chosen to teach it now). I wanted to see how closely their current teaching methodology paralleled those of their teachers, and if the content of their lessons today was the same as what they had received as students. In most cases, I asked directly what role they believed music played in the continuation of Tibetan culture in Toronto.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms *exile*, *émigré* and *diasporic* Tibetan in this paper are seemingly used interchangeably, but retain subtle nuances in meaning.²⁵ When *exile* is used, it denotes the Tibetans' feeling of forced homelessness through political exile, whether they have personally been "exiled" by the Chinese government or not (many Tibetans were born outside Tibet, many have passports from other countries, and for many it would in fact be possible to "return"²⁶). I use this term because it is often used by Tibetans to refer to themselves, and perhaps serves to generate a feeling of homogeneity and unity across the many places Tibetans have taken up residence. Such places, communities found across the world, constitute the Tibetan diaspora, and the people therein are *diasporic* Tibetans. Where *émigré* is used, it nuances the long-term refugee experience, the fact that Tibetans, despite official and community attempts to foster a sense of liminality and hope for return, are in fact establishing their lives and setting down roots in other places. The *TAR*, or *Tibetan Autonomous Region*, is the geographic area politically assigned the label "Tibet" by the People's Republic China and is included as one of China's provinces. Where the phrase *ethnic tibet* is used in this paper, it refers to the traditionally Tibetan inhabited areas of the *PRC* (*People's Republic of China*) including the *TAR* and parts of Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunan provinces.

The process of a non-Han Chinese phenomenon (culture, language, art form) being assimilated

²⁵ I fear here that I may be guilty of what Dibyesh Anand condemned, a "Tibetanist" using the term diaspora "in an undertheorized manner, as a mere synonym or substitute for 'refugee' or 'exile'" (Anand, *A Contemporary Story of 'Diaspora,'* 211), although I hope my attempts to classify its use and note the nuanced difference will save me making this fallacy.

²⁶ During my time in ethnic Tibet I did meet a few Tibetans who had returned, although I only met one who had a more or less permanent residency there; the rest were only visiting.

into or taking on Han Chinese characteristics is called *sinicization*. Many exile Tibetans view the sinicization occurring in Tibet as a form of cultural genocide. The theoretical notion of the essence of what is truly Tibetan is defined in this study and others²⁷ as *Tibetanness*, and is defined differently by Tibetans depending on their background and experiences.

The sinicization of ethnic Tibet might be explained in part through Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' theory: they posited that the separation of humanity from animals occurs "as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence," that "by producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life," that "the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and material intercourse of men," and therefore "the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force."²⁸ According to Marxian theory then, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the hegemonic rulers of all production within their political borders, thus also indirectly controls the thought processes of the populous (the producers). This does not, however, leave the relatively economically impoverished Tibetan diasporic rulers without tools, for Bourdieu extended Marx' theory to include what he termed *cultural capital*. Countering Marx' economic material dependence, Bourdieu called for the acknowledgement of "capital in all its forms,"²⁹ (cultural capital, including "educational qualifications"³⁰ such as degrees and honours, and *social capital*,³¹ such as social connections and honorary titles). These theories of cultural production and hegemonic discourse can be extended further still to include all identifiable elements of cultural production by an identified cultural group, i.e. the entirety of the group habitus—both the historic elements existent in one group or generation's cognitive map which they

²⁷ Diehl, *Echoes from Dharamsala*; Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*; Strom, *Between Tibet and the West*.

²⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology [1845]," in *Classical Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff and Indermohan Virk. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 83, italics in original.

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu "The Forms of Capital" in *Education: Culture, Economy, and Society*, edited by A. H. Halsey, Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown, and Amy Stuart Wells. Oxford, England: (Oxford University Press, 1997): 46.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

³¹ *Ibid.*

attempt to reproduce in another group or generation, or the production in the mind through appropriation of those historic elements and whatever other cultural elements the agent chooses (or chooses not) to appropriate. All cultural and social capital is such because it has been legitimated by the dominant discourse, here the Tibetan elite and the Tibetan Government in Exile.

The *Tibetan Government in Exile*, often referring to itself outside India as the Central Tibetan Association (CTA), signifies the Tibetan political structure established in India at the time of exile and continuing today, currently based in Dharamsala. Although it “remains unrecognized as a government by any state,”³² it is nonetheless the seat of power of the Dalai Lama, considered by virtually all Tibetans (both inside and outside Tibet) to be their rightful leader. Therefore, despite a lack of official recognition, it retains cultural and religious legitimacy as the true Tibetan government through which culture is preserved in a state of *liminality* as Tibetans await an eventual return.

Coming from the Latin “limin” (meaning “threshold”), *liminality* has been popularized in recent academic discourse by Victor Turner. For Turner it is the “betwixt and between,”³³ the place outside of “normal” cultural interactions. The term is extended by Diehl (2002) to denote the “space between two worlds” experienced by Tibetan refugees, who find themselves between their socialized conceptions of “Tibet” as homeland and their places of refuge. Turner also speaks of *flow* (coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihályi), a mental state which functions “according to an inner logic which seems to need no conscious intervention,”³⁴ a concept in many ways paralleling the theory of habitus.

Both Strom³⁵ and Yeh³⁶ employ Bourdieu’s concept of habitus in understanding the socially created world which exists in Tibetan cognition, a world often wrongly presupposing that all Tibetans, regardless of their socialization, will share the same common-sense, the same ways of thinking and

³² MacPherson, *Global Nomads*.

³³ Victor Turner, “Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6, No. 4 (December 1979): 465.

³⁴ Turner, 487.

³⁵ Strom, *Between Tibet and the West*.

³⁶ Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*.

acting. Bourdieu defines habitus as “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures,”³⁷ cognitively created patterns producing a “feel for the game”³⁸ so inherent that it neither presupposes nor suggests any conscious mentality. Things are the way they are simply *because they are*. Thus the habitus buries the reasons for our behaviour beneath the level of semantic thought, labelling actions and feelings as normative beliefs which have never been articulated. When this practical belief is enacted by the meeting of the “habitus and the field to which it is attuned,” it is termed *doxic*, a “pre-verbal taking for granted of the world,” producing “the undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field which is the very definition of doxa.”³⁹ Culture shock, for example, occurs when the habitus encounters a field to which it is *not* attuned, in which case the new cultural elements are not identified as doxic, or “right practice.” Christina Hodge suggests these doxic elements of the habitus are created through semiosis, and that “through the role of interpretants, these doxas are reproduced in Peircian symbols and underlie indexes and icons.”⁴⁰

Semiotics (also called semiology) is based on *signs*, which Peirce extended to include not only every concept but also an “action or experience,” or even a “mere quality of feeling.”⁴¹ Signs for Peirce are the result of a potentially infinite triadic process whereby the sign becomes an *interpretant*, that is, how the sign comes to signify something. For Peirce, “A sign is only a sign in actu by virtue of its receiving an interpretation, that is, by virtue of its determining another sign of the same object”⁴² (essentially answering the philosophical *if a tree falls in a forest and there is no-one [or nothing] to hear it, does it make a sound* conundrum with a resounding “no,” or rather that the situation does not constitute

³⁷ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁰ Hodge, 119.

⁴¹ Charles Saunders Peirce, Lady Welby “Letter to Lady Welby,” October 12, 1904.

⁴² *Commens Peirce Dictionary*, s.v. “Truth,” <http://www.helsinki.fi/science/commens/terms/truth.html>, (accessed March 2, 2011).

a sign). He elsewhere observes that “a sign has essentially two correlates, its object and its possible Interpretant sign,”⁴³ and hence Peirce’s famous triad: *sign, object, interpretant*. This triad might also be seen as *thought-interpretation-object*: a thought enters, the thought is interpreted, and the interpretation is applied to the thing; the thing, now possessed with a new meaning, may again become a thought, and the process can be repeated *ad infinitum*.

The next layer in understanding Peircian semiotics is three trichotomies, one trichotomy for each *sign, object* and *interpretant*. The first trichotomy cannot be preceded by any other, the second is necessarily preceded by the first, and the third is necessarily preceded by the second, thus each second has an element of the first and each third an element of the first and second. The first trichotomy, existing *sui generis*, is the sign type, and signifies a nature or quality (*qualisign*), “an individual object or event” or an instance of some phenomenon (*sinsign*), or a “general type” or general conception as in a unicorn or a horse (*legisign*).⁴⁴ A qualisign is “pure,” untouched by anything else. It is an essence, the existence of a possibility, something “so tender that you cannot touch it without spoiling it.”⁴⁵ A sinsign is any single instance of a qualisign, thus for a sinsign to exist a qualisign is presupposed. In the same way, a legisign proceeds from a sinsign.

The second trichotomy concerns the relationship between the sign and the *object*, divided into *icon, index, and symbol*. These terms will be the focus in the following study, although the other elements of the triadic process should be understood as each exists in relation to another. An icon (Peirce also uses *likeness*) may be preceded by any sign from the first trichotomy but cannot be preceded by an index or symbol. It must share some quality with the object, be it real or perceived—an image of a horse is an icon of the *perception* of a horse just as much as an image of a unicorn is an icon of a unicorn—the reality of

⁴³ Charles Saunders Peirce, “Notes on Hume’s ‘Treatise of Human Nature,’” *The Manuscripts of Charles Saunders Peirce* (1905), in “76 Definitions of The Sign by C.S. Peirce,” collected and analyzed by Robert Marty. <http://perso.numericable.fr/robert.marty/semiotique/76defeng.htm> (accessed March 2, 2011).

⁴⁴ Peirce, *Letter to Lady Welby*.

⁴⁵ Charles Saunders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.358, in Umberto Eco, *Kant and the Platypus: Essays*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999, 100.

its existence is irrelevant for the sign. The sound of a violin string being bowed is an icon of a violin, if (and only if) the perceiver, through previous experience—repeated sinsigns (instances) of the qualisign (the sound) understood as proceeding *from* the violin—has come to conceive of the sound as being iconic of the instrument, sharing a quality with it. If this step in semiosis has not taken place (or has not yet taken place), the sound of the violin cannot move into this second level. An index relates to the sign by virtue of co-occurrence, is preceded by either a sinsign or a legisign, and includes an icon. The violin introduction to November Rain could be an icon for the song which in turn is an index for countless memories, for forgotten events the emotions of which are yet retained in the song, or it could never move beyond being an icon of a violin if the perceiver has never heard the song. A symbol for Peirce is a sign as a fixed understanding, generally through words, preceded (triggered) only by a legisign but necessarily inclusive of an index and an icon. There are clearly linguistic exceptions, for not all words are necessarily symbols and not all symbols are necessarily words, as with onomatopoeia (which could be seen more as icons than symbols), and conversely as in societies where drum beats can communicate fixed meanings.

The third trichotomy regards how the sign is interpreted as a sign of its object, which Peirce calls either a *rheme*, a *dicent*, or an *argument* (when used subsequently here in the Peircian sense arguments will be denoted by a capital [Argument] to distinguish them from the common meaning), and functions to mediate between the first trichotomy and the second. A rheme is neither true nor false and can present things that do or do not exist. Open to interpretation and contemplation, Turino notes the importance of rhemes in art “because they allow for the play of imagination and creativity.”⁴⁶ He further suggests that “musical icons representing 'bird calls,' 'bombs,' 'thunder,' or more abstract qualities such as a 'pastoral setting’”⁴⁷ signify at the interpretant level as rhemes. Dicents (preceded by indices and symbols) are interpretants of actual existence,⁴⁸ having real relationship with the sign. They urge an interpretation, but

⁴⁶ Turino 1999, 238.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Torkild Leo Thellefsen, “C.S. Peirce’s Evolutionary Sign: an Analysis of Depth and Complexity within Peircian Sign Types and Peircian Evolutionary Theory” *Semiotics, Evolution, Energy and Development* 1-2 (2001): 14.

do not seem to have a socially fixed meaning. Turino offers that while both rhemes and dicents are key interpretants in musical semiosis, dicents are stronger,⁴⁹ for unlike the rheme it is “*interpreted as really being affected by its object*”⁵⁰ and tends to be construed as “real, true, or natural.”⁵¹ Arguments, which can only be preceded by symbols (which can only be preceded by legisigns), are the highest level on the semiotic chain. These are generally logically deduced, socially agreed upon definitions, and as Turino observes are most often found in the “semantico-referential linguistic domain,”⁵² thus secondary in his (and my) study of musical semiosis.

The “trinitarian” aspects of Peircian semiotics are expressed in *Firstness*, *Secondness* and *Thirdness* (figures 1⁵³ and 2⁵⁴). Though initially deterred by the triune element,⁵⁵ Peirce eventually succumbed and “after only three or four years’ study” was led “to throw all ideas”⁵⁶ into the following three categories:

Firstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, positively and without reference to anything else.

Secondness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, with respect to a second but regardless of any third.

Thirdness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, in bringing a second and third into relation to each other.⁵⁷

Each mode of being produces an *interpretant*.⁵⁸ Firstness produces an *emotional interpretant* (which Turino argues is better understood as a “*sense, feeling, or sentimental interpretant*”⁵⁹); Secondness

⁴⁹ As I write this, Pacabel’s cannon is playing (a sinsign in the instance it is heard) in the coffee house. The sound of violins and all the other orchestral instruments are iconic of themselves at some level, but for me the entire piece is a dicent index of much else. Played by my friends as my wife walked down the aisle, it produces emotional (iconic) and energetic (indexical) interpretants of far more than I can even hope to cogitate, let alone write.

⁵⁰ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 229, italics in original.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 222.

⁵³ Ibid., 233.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 226.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Peirce, *Letter to Lady Welby*.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

produces an *energetic interpretant*; and Thirdness produces a *sign interpretant*, or what Turino terms a “linguistic-based concept.”⁶⁰ An emotional interpretant is any sentiment caused by a sign; an energetic interpretant is any physical or mental reaction⁶¹ caused by a sign; and a linguistic-based concept is an Argument caused by a sign. Thus music, as a sentiment-producing sign, need not be a language-producing one (and usually is not). One may not be able (in Iris Murdoch’s sense) to think without words, but one can indeed feel, and mental processes are undeniably at work beneath the semantic level.

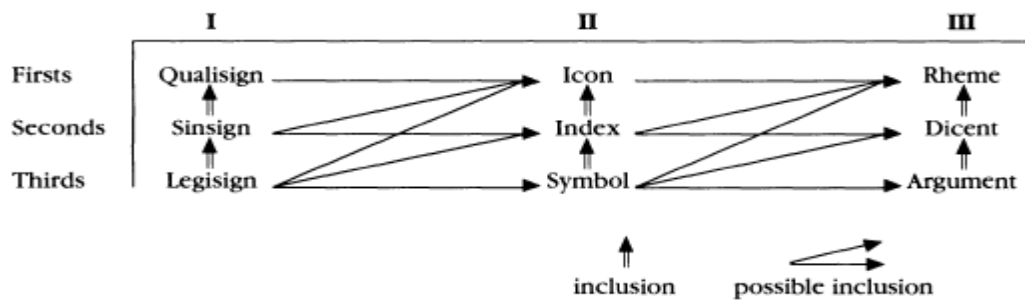


Figure 1. The three triads of the semiotic process

⁵⁸ Although the three interpretants mentioned here (emotional, energetic, sign) are commonly understood to be *the* interpretants, Eco posits “that Peirce has foreseen a great many types of interpretants but has failed to organize them in a correct categorical analysis precisely because he did not directly think of their possible classification as means of content analysis.” (Eco, *Peirce’s Notion of the Interpretant*, 1470).

⁵⁹ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 224.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Umberto Eco, “Peirce’s Notion of Interpretant” *Comparative Literature* 91, No. 6 (December 1976): 1466.

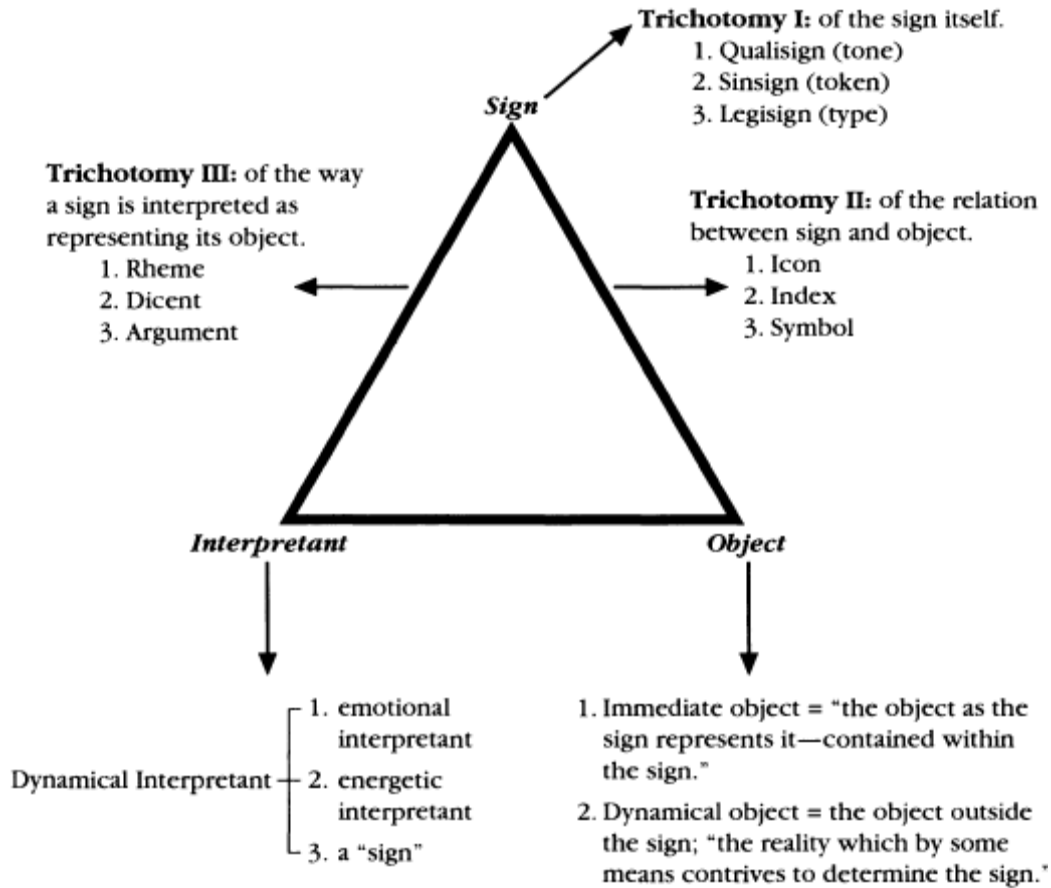


Figure 2. The relationship between the sign, object and interpretant

In order for any sign to function, it must trigger a preconditioned meaning; that is, through the process of semiosis, a mental conception must be created (arguably a legisign) to signify the object which the perceiver perceives, otherwise the object is meaningless. As a solution, Umberto Eco posits *Cognitive Types*⁶² (CTs) *Nuclear Content* (NCs), and *Molar Content* (MCs),⁶³ which bear similarly to Peirce's legisigns (for which Peirce offered the alternate synonym *type*). CTs, NTs and MCs all concern concepts of a phenomenon; in a sense they are schemata, or general information about something, tending to produce an example, through any or all of the five senses, whereby other types are *identified* or

⁶² Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 123-223.

⁶³ For NCs and MCs, *meaning* might provide a useful synonym for *content*, although due to the plethora of associations with the former Eco discarded this option for the latter.

recognized and then labelled. The difference is that the CT (and MC) is private, the NC is public:⁶⁴ “(The CT) becomes public when it is interpreted as an NC, while a public NC can provide instructions for the formation of CTs.”⁶⁵ The CT, the personal conceptualization, is intersubjective and informs others’ CTs, and when it does so it acts as an NC. The NC is the “collective interpretation”⁶⁶ of a phenomenon, such as the general type of mouse, for which most communities (i.e. social groups) have a generally accepted interpretation sufficient to produce a collective recognition/identification. The MC is simply the broadened knowledge of a type, a more complex knowledge, beyond that necessary for basic recognition: “A zoologist has an MC of a *horse*, and so does a jockey, even though the two areas of competence are not coextensive.”⁶⁷ Since CTs are personal, the CT of one individual (of any given phenomena) will invariably differ from that of another, even in the most homogeneous of societies. Thus the very concept of homogeneous culture must be called into question.

Some 40 years ago, culture was viewed by most sociologists as a single entity, or “seamless web,”⁶⁸ being understood to pass easily and unhindered through the natural socialization process.⁶⁹ More recently, culture has been seen “as fragmented across groups and inconsistent across its manifestations.”⁷⁰ In this study I adopt Marrion Dobbert et al.’s understanding that culture inheres *polyphasically*, “simultaneously through multiple modalities: visually, aurally, olfactorily, tactilely, kinesthetically, and, of course, cognitively.”⁷¹ This agrees with Swidler and DiMaggio’s notions of culture as a *toolkit*, “a

⁶⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 221.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 136.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 141.

⁶⁸ Neil Smelser in Alexander et al. *Cultural Trauma Theory and Applications* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, quoted in Eyerman, Ron “The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory,” *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 264.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Paul DiMaggio, “Culture and Cognition” *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 264.

⁷¹ Dobbert et al., 276.

grab-bag of odds and ends: a pastiche of mediated representations, a repertoire of techniques, a toolkit of strategies.”⁷² I extend this polyphasic nature of cultural inherence to account for the ability of two or more seemingly opposing views to co-exist in the *toolkit*, both felt as “true” and doxic, through the concealing nature of the habitus and the presymbolic nature of icons and indices.

Although the polyphasic nature of culture suggests no such clear binary classifications exist, for the purposes of this study I employ certain distinctions. When Tibetan culture is conceptualized as a finished (if not complete) structural whole, it is an *entity*, a term signifying both the most visible attributes of culture (language, religion, music, art, food and dress) and the unarticulated habitus, the unreflexive ways of *being* Tibetan, perceived to be the continuation (or temporary preservation) of a reified past. The objectifiably separable parts of that entity are called cultural *elements*, and include traditional Tibetan music, family, the shared historic narrative of Tibet prior to and including the Dalai Lama’s exit in 1959, Tibet as rightful homeland, Buddhism, language, and community.

That which actually makes up the “culture” of an individual is the schemata, the patterns of thought, tools to be drawn upon in any given situation. For this I borrow a term originating with Swidler⁷³ and further explored by DiMaggio,⁷⁴ the theory of *culture as toolkit*. It views culture as that which is appropriated and cognitively mapped by the receiver due to its perceived usefulness for dealing with and surviving in society. While the focus of this paper is on elements deemed to fall into the Tibetan cultural equation, other cultural aspects should not be ignored (for nowhere does cultural learning take place in a vacuum, least of all in Toronto).

DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATION

Although this study deals with theories of cultural inherence generally, it is geographically limited to cultural transmission in the Tibetan community of Toronto, further confined to music

⁷² DiMaggio, 268.

⁷³ Swidler.

⁷⁴ DiMaggio.

transmission amongst Tibetan youth through weekly teaching sessions at the Gangjong Choedenling (Tibetan Community Cultural Centre [TCCC]), private (personal) tutoring lessons at the home of one of the teachers, and performances conducted by the Tibetan music students throughout the city. As the scope of research has been focused on the experiences in one minority Tibetan exile community in Canada, it will not necessarily be representative of the Tibetans living in the TAR, ethnic Tibet or even perhaps to other Tibetan refugee communities living in exile. Tibetans are situated all over the world in many communities, and due to the limited scope and ethnographic research methods this study is a representation only of cultural transmission as it is currently taking place in the Tibetan community in Toronto, Canada. However, as the study involves identifying and objectifying the collectively conceptualized Tibetan culture that “should” be continued, the idealized aspects of culture being transmitted will theoretically be more or less the same in all communities (although those elements which are actually being appropriated may well be different, or may be appropriated in different ways).

ASSUMPTIONS

Before conducting interviews I had presumed questions concerning the definition of Tibetan culture would be key for this project, providing definitive (possibly patent) answers, but nevertheless detailed and useful for the purposes of this study, at least in determining the *ideal* notions of Tibetanness and the rhetoric I had assumed was “drilled-into” Tibetan children from a young age. Through the interview process my primary hypotheses were quickly disproven, the students’ variegated answers ranging from the abstract (“it has a certain aura about it”) to confused silence to more objective classifications (language, religion), but rarely were two answers the same, and practically every instance of the question produced a significant amount of hesitation and apparent perplexity. However this was in no way any indication that the Tibetan youth had some kind of lackadaisical approach to Tibetan culture, for alongside the hesitation and confusion were statements such as “Tibetan culture is to be preserved⁷⁵” and indictments against Tibetans who forget their culture. This certainly contrasted with my pre-existing conceptualization of a Tibetan version of the Apostle’s Creed; however it presented in its place a

⁷⁵ F13.

transformed view of the Tibetan perception of culture that largely became the thrust of my research, namely that of *Tibetanness*, which will hopefully become clear throughout this paper.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In the following literature review I highlight scholarly works within three fields: works conducted in the Tibetan diaspora (including Toronto), generally with a focus on music; works on non-Tibetan refugee and diasporic communities with a focus on music and cultural transmission; and works concerning the theory of culture and cultural transmission.

THE TIBETAN DIASPORA

When I began this project there was, to the best of my knowledge, no existing literature concerning Tibetans in Toronto. Since then, two significant reports have emerged⁷⁶ which have been invaluable in providing a greater pool for analysis and reference in my own project. The first, published in 2008, is by Seonaigh MacPherson and Dawa Bhuti Ghoso, who recently collaborated to produce *Multilingualism in Emerging Diasporas: A Tibetan Case Study*.⁷⁷ Their insights into multilingualism and polyculturalism⁷⁸ were immensely helpful in aiding my own understanding of the different cultural histories structuring the habitus of Tibetan youth. Also, as their study involves the same young Tibetans (or at least from the same group) my project is concerned with, interview excerpts and Ghoso's personal narrative were particularly useful.

The second report is a doctoral thesis by Jennifer Logan⁷⁹ in which she utilizes a mixed methods approach to provide a current view of the way Tibetan women in Toronto conceptualize 'home.' Her quantitative data is taken mostly from the 2006 Statistics Canada census, and her qualitative information

⁷⁶ A third is currently being written as a doctoral thesis by a fellow researcher on Tibetan family life in Toronto, but as it is not yet finished it could not be included here. I do not know of any other publications to date (though they may exist).

⁷⁷ Seonaigh MacPherson and Dawa Bhuti Ghoso, "Multilingualism in Emerging Diasporas: A Tibetan Case Study," *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 2, No. 3 (2008): 188-216.

⁷⁸ I use the prefix *poly* here to denote the ability of multiple cultures to exist in one person, differentiated from the general sense of multiculturalism pertaining to co-existence of multiple ethnicities.

⁷⁹ Jennifer J. Logan, "'There's No Place Like Home': A Snapshot of the Settlement Experiences of Newcomer Tibetan Women in Parkdale, Toronto," (PhD diss., York University, 2010).

largely derives from the method of *photovoice* (where the researcher empowers others in the focus community by providing cameras, encouraging participants to take photos, and then conducting interviews where questions are asked with the photos as subject). Logan found that Tibetan women conceptualize ‘home’ in many ways, including physical structure (house), nature, culture and spirituality, community, and people, places, activities and symbols. As the timing and actors in her research corresponded very closely with my own, Logan’s work, like MacPherson and Ghoso’s, provided interview excerpts and a much deeper understanding of ways in which Tibetans conceptualize their existence in Toronto and how they choose to represent themselves to the outside world.

Elsewhere in the diaspora, prominent writer and former Yak Band member Keila Diehl has conducted research on Tibetan music in exile in Dharamsala and creatively related her experiences through her book *Echoes From Dharamsala*. Her insights have shined new light on the ways Tibetans in exile experience music and the apparent compartmentalization of different music genres. Diehl shares how Tibetan, Chinese, Hindi and “Western” musics are understood as symbols holding very different meanings, and speaks of the struggles for modernity against the preservation of Tibetan music. Diehl’s book is an excellent resource for learning about Tibetans making music and the ways music is experienced by Tibetan youth, as well as providing a tangible example of how Tibetans wrestle between the historic (officially legitimated) culture and the right to express aspects of the multiple cultures with which they have come into contact, cultures which are also a part of them.

The struggle Diehl observed is more than just a struggle between the traditional and the modern; rather it is a result of the multiple images and ideas which have entered the cognitive structures of the actors, making up the cultural toolkit from which the agents can then draw, and also making up the actors themselves. The conflict exemplified by Diehl is therefore between the officially sanctioned culture *par excellence* which the hegemonic discourse (the Government in Exile and the “gatekeepers” of the culture) wish to be transmitted—the culture denoted in the homogenizing and controlling phrase “pure Tibetan,” which the young Tibetan actors have *in part*— and the ability to express the competing images and ideas of the world of cultures each with their own histories, which have taken up residence in their cognitive

structures alongside elements of the idealized Tibetan culture. It is the desire to act out who the actors truly are—a composite of many cultures creating their individual habitus—against the officially legitimized definition of Tibetanness.

Emily T. Yeh⁸⁰ objectifies the internal conflicts created by the homogenization of Tibetan culture, the notion of “pure Tibetan,” through her experiences and observations living in varied Tibetan settings as well as drawing from a wide literature base. Through Bourdieu’s habitus she observes how Tibetans see and present themselves to others. Yeh contrasts the cultural authority claims of three groups: Tibetans who left Tibet in 1959 at the time of the Red Army occupation and those born in exile in South Asia; Tibetans who are from Tibet but left their homeland in the 1980’s and 1990’s for India and Nepal; and Tibetans who came directly from Tibet to the United States. Yeh explores the conflicts and misunderstandings that invariably arise when any of these three share space, as well as each group’s variegated claims to Tibetan authenticity and *Tibetanness*.

Frank J. Korom’s article, *Introduction: Place, Space and Identity: The Cultural, Economic and Aesthetic Politics of Tibetan Diaspora* serves partly as an introduction to the subsequent articles in *The Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, provides valuable insights into the reinterpretation and re-creation of Tibetan culture, how and why that culture is being created and propagated in the diaspora, and the influences of Western ideals on the created diasporic culture. He stresses the need for further research in the Tibetan diaspora, as well as examining the political “attempt to maintain and project a self-perceived homogeneous culture,”⁸¹ the preservation and propagation of the notion of Tibetanness, of which the performing traditions (music and dance) are an inseparable part.

In *Between Tibet and the West: On Traditionality, Modernity and the Development of Monastic Institutions in the Tibetan Diaspora*, Axel Kristian Strom makes use of Bourdieu’s habitus to explain what is occurring amongst Tibetan communities in the West. Of particular interest are his insights on the re-

⁸⁰ Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*.

⁸¹ Korom, 2.

creation of Tibetan culture and Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined community' which aids in the transmission of Tibetanness. He observes that "tradition (*lugs rol*)" is that which has "been transmitted through time from one generation to the next,"⁸² and that "what is traditional (*lugs rol gyi*) is often referred to as Tibetan."⁸³ The performing arts are a central part of that tradition and therefore the transmission of such is key to the notion of Tibetanness.

Calkowski⁸⁴ provides a commonly held exilic view of the traditional, i.e. authentic, Tibetan music preserved outside Tibet and the sinicized, oft "unrecognizable" Tibetan music emerging from the TAR through *The Tibetan Diaspora and the Politics of Performance*. She documents the struggles of TIPA in its early visits to Western countries, and the competition with PRC-backed troupes from the TAR. With a strongly political bent, Calkowski expresses the feelings of many Tibetans regarding the sinicization of Tibetan music in Tibet. This fear of Tibetan music being "spoiled" and becoming "unrecognizable" has undoubtedly given rise to the popularity of cultural preservation and music transmission throughout the Tibetan diaspora.

Margaret Nowak takes a highly analytical approach in *Tibetan Refugees: Youth and the New Generation of Meaning*. Nowak closely examines the Tibetan Government in Exile as an intentionally homogenizing force, looking especially at the Tibetan school system. This provided valuable information on cultural transmission through the institution, and helped identify exactly what the Government in Exile desires to be continued in exile, that is, the culture *par excellence* according to the hegemonic discourse. Equally valuable was the timing of her research. Conducted in north India from September 1976 to June 1977 this now serves as a report of cultural transmission and cultural appropriation of the current adult generation, as many of the Toronto Tibetan adult generation emigrated from there. Hence it offers some insight into some of the generative principles that, having created the habitus of the current adult

⁸² Strom, 4.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Marcia S. Calkowski "The Tibetan Diaspora and the Politics of Performance" (Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995).

generation (and not necessarily sharing the same principles of the grandparents' generation), are now being transmitted through them to the next.

Non-Tibetan refugee and diasporic communities

In another refugee community, Adelaida Reyes Schramm⁸⁵ conducted research in New Jersey at various Vietnamese New Year (Tet) celebrations between 1979 and 1984. Her studies focused on the ways tradition was being passed down in the Vietnamese community through seemingly non-traditional musical forms. Like the Tibetans, these Vietnamese refugees came from numerous ethnic and regional backgrounds, as well as having varying post-Vietnam asylum experiences prior to arriving in New Jersey. However, they were able to unite under two banners: the maintenance of a Vietnamese identity and the vision of a non-communist Vietnam. In this way and others Schramm's retelling of the Vietnamese refugee experience closely parallels the Tibetan one.

In a subsequent article entitled *Music and Tradition, From Native to Adopted Land through the Refugee Experience*, Schramm (1989) argues for an ethnomusicological acknowledgement of refugee groups, which apparently had been largely ignored prior to the time of writing. While I believe most ethnomusicologists today would hardly question the importance of studying refugee music culture, this article, like the previous one, was most informative in its comparative qualities, providing an opportunity to observe the experiences of a refugee community with similar experiences to the Tibetan one. Schramm details the lives of Vietnamese refugees during their time in asylum, where she observes the interactions of refugees and their negative attitudes towards music considered "post-1975" (i.e. Communist Vietnam), even to the point of imposing social sanctions on a man for performing a post-1975 Vietnamese song for a new year's celebration. In a similar way, both Yeh and Diehl recount Tibetans being mocked in the refugee community for singing post-1959 songs from Tibet.

In *Observations on a Case Study of Song Transmission and Preservation in Two Aboriginal Communities: Dilemmas of a 'Neo-Colonialist' in the Field*, Marsh notes that many previous attempts to analyze classroom music education had been done under the guise of colonialism, appearing to view

⁸⁵ Schramm, 91-101.

localized indigenous societies as subordinate to the colonial majority. In the same vein as Shelemay⁸⁶ and Feld,⁸⁷ Marsh argues that ethnomusicologists have “an ethical obligation to work collaboratively with members of less economically powerful communities”⁸⁸ to assist in preservation and the transmission of music within the cultures in which they work. In light of this, Marsh hoped her work would assist the Aboriginal Language and Culture Centre in Australia in the development of appropriate methods of transmitting aboriginal music. Marsh’s research was conducted in the two small Australian towns of Tennant Creek and Austin, both comprised of aboriginal and non-aboriginal children. Her research was concerned with indigenous children’s games and songs, and gave insight to the degree in which outside influences (Sesame Street, non-indigenous teacher’s compositions) had on the songs and performances of the aboriginal children, while indigenous traits were still visible (similar to Schramm’s observations of seemingly Western songs identified as Vietnamese). Due to the lengthy exposure to Indian culture it appears that exile Tibetan music has been similarly altered, and the same phenomenon has certainly been occurring within Tibet. It is interesting to note that the former often passes unseen or at least tolerated, whereas the latter is labelled “sinification” and the bastardization of “pure” Tibetan culture.

Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, Hae-Kyung Um explores the act of listening, both a psychological and physical act,⁸⁹ as a type of social performance. He studies the ways in which music is selected and meanings are appropriated and reappropriated by various Korean groups spread across the former Soviet Union. Um provides a brief history of the Korean diaspora, details the ways political and social events have helped form Korean music there, and finally analyzes the quantitative and qualitative data collected in the diaspora between 1993 and 1995, looking at the various ways Koreans

⁸⁶ Shelemay.

⁸⁷ Steven Feld, “From schizophonia to schismogenesis: On the discourses and commodification practices of ‘World Music’ and ‘World Beat’” in C. Keil & S. Feld eds., *Music grooves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1994): 257-289.

⁸⁸ Marsh, 5.

⁸⁹ Um, 123.

from different regions and generations identify Korean music and how much of an influence it has on their lives.

Speaking from a (more or less) emic perspective is Deborah Wong in *Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*⁹⁰ (emic in as far as, being a second generation American from a Chinese family and having immersed herself in various Asian traditions, and also identifying as Asian American and as such having the “ins” to the Asian American community, she is endowed with the ability to speak both *of* and *as* her “subject”). Like Um, Wong sees “listening as a kind of making”⁹¹ and seeks “to call into question the most basic assumptions around music production.”⁹² Her decompartmentalising view of music, performance, listening and not listening all being part of cultural production contrasts Thomas Turino’s⁹³ (see below) four fields of participation/performance/high fidelity/studio audio art (although Turino did suggest his proposed fields would often overlap), arguing for the importance of viewing music observation/reception as a kind of cultural production/creation. Wong focused more on the function of cultural production, highly relevant for this study, and viewed various methods whereby that production might occur. Her book is a compilation of essays on, as the title suggests, Asian Americans making music—noting the necessity of studying not only those singing or playing instruments, but also the perception of music by the Asian/Asian American community, the kinds of music they listen/don’t listen to, and the ways in which music of all genres is experienced in and through the community. Reading Wong’s work, concerned with Asians in America and their struggle to find identification in a largely polarized “Black or White” world, alerted me to the importance of finding literature on Asians in Canada and paying closer attention to the ways Tibetans in Toronto experience the musics they consume.

Utilizing his own musical learning experiences in various countries and social groups, Thomas Turino strives to identify a musical taxonomy which might be cross-culturally applicable. Turino’s *Music*

⁹⁰ Wong.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Turino, *Music as Social Life*.

as Social Life is a thought provoking study of many musics, including Shona (Zimbabwe), Aymara (Peru), and Old-Time (U.S.A.). He identifies 4 different realms of music making (Studio Audio Art, High Fidelity, Performance, and Participatory). Convinced that many find something missing in the Globalized (or rather Cosmopolitan, or Capitalized) “community,” Turino calls for the formation of cultural cohorts, small groups of like-minded people. He believes and participating in a cultural cohort can fill that gap and ultimately change society for the better.

I found Turino’s writing and insights refreshing, and he drew me to question whether the very function of Tibetan music may in fact have shifted, going from Participatory to Performance. Indeed many Tibetan song styles which were once clearly Participatory (such as improvisational drinking songs, or *chang ge*) are now preserved, practiced, perfected and performed for mass audiences by professionals. Further, roof-stomping dances, which once served the function of a communal smoothing down of a roof after the construction of a house, have likewise been frozen in time, practiced and performed by specialists. While *chang ge* are still in practice by some amateurs, I have no knowledge of any roof-stomping dances still serving their original function. In attempting to preserve Tibetan music, has its core function and value been changed? In order to find an answer to this question and the many others that arose from the literature and my own thoughts about culture (Tibetan and my own), it seemed necessary to turn to studies on culture and cultural transmission theory.

CULTURAL TRANSMISSION THEORY

Five researchers from four universities (Marion Lundy Dobbert and Jan K. Gamradt, University of Minnesota; Rivka A. Eisikovits, University of Haifa; Mary Anne Pitman, Youngstown State University; and Kyung-Soo Chun, Seoul National University⁹⁴) along with 135 research students collaborated in a massive research venture covering three societies: the port of Haifa in Israel on the Mediterranean, areas settled by Scandinavian and German immigrants in Minnesota and western Wisconsin, and the Chiapas of Zinacantan in the south of Mexico. This quantitative project is concerned with testing a systems-based field guide for cultural transmission to children between the ages of six and

⁹⁴ Dobbert et al.

twelve. The report is indeed a commendable attempt at objectifying cultural transmission, and provides valuable insights into the manner in which immigrant children may be being socialized in North America, raising the question of how much their socialization mirrors their parents' culture and how much it mirrors that of the majority. Still, despite the highly inclusive field guide detailing many aspects of agriculture, religious belief, craftsmanship and a plethora of other cultural elements, the project includes little on music's role in cultural transmission. Broad categories such as dancing, singing, music-making, having a drama, composing poetry, songs, and music are placed in one sub-sub group, and actual examples of any related findings were left unmentioned in the paper. Besides the lack of musical accounts, it is also in this systems field guide's attempts to be exhaustive that some major problems may be found. Among all three field sites, researchers used three categories with some four hundred subcategories recorded events numbering one thousand and seventy and made roughly twelve thousand systems-based categorical observations.⁹⁵ The myriad categories and recording methods bring to mind Marvin Harris' analogy of the overzealous anthropologist observing his wife in the kitchen (often used by Bourdieu to contradict a mechanistic theory of practice), who during a period of twenty minutes recorded four hundred and eighty behavioural instances:

If my wife's rate of behaviour is roughly representative of that of other actors, we must be prepared to deal with an inventory of episodes produced at the rate of some 20,000 per sixteen-hour day per actor... In a population consisting of several hundred actor-types, the number of different episodes in the total repertory must amount to many millions in the course of an annual cycle.⁹⁶

And so, despite the twelve thousand instances of behavioural production documented, it is but a drop in the bucket compared to the millions necessary to fully objectify and objectively analyze any given people group. Taking the argument further (and not to belittle the value of Dobbert et al.'s exhaustive work), is it really in objectifying and recording thousands of cultural instances that we come any closer to understanding their signification? Thus an understanding of *how* culture inheres is might prove useful.

⁹⁵Ibid., 289.

⁹⁶ Marvin Harris, *The Nature of Cultural Things* (New York: Random House, 1964): 74-75.

Paul DiMaggio's work on cultural transmission, *Culture and Cognition*, focuses on "how people use culture, rather than the production of culture, ideology, or culture embedded in the physical environment."⁹⁷ He attempts to draw together studies in psychology and sociology relating to cultural cognition. Besides his development of Swidler's *toolkit*, he offers that every image and idea (thus every sign) enters a person's cognition and remains there in the cognitive toolkit "untagged as to truth value."⁹⁸ Semiotically speaking, every outside stimulus that the individual encounters becomes a sign, adding significance and correlations with every instance. When a new sign is created, one which had no pre-existing cognitive type, then the sign's authenticity is rarely questioned. This is all the more true when the sign created interprets in the precognitive realms of Firstness or Secondness. DiMaggio's claim "refutes the notion that people acquire a culture by imbibing it (and no other) through socialization,"⁹⁹ for if virtually all the images and ideas people come into contact with are cognitively stored unchecked, "with a default value of 'correct,'"¹⁰⁰ then media images and 'hearsay' may in fact have more or less as much influence on the subject's socialization as does the socializing power of the collective habitus.¹⁰¹ Therefore the habitus of the individual socialized into the Tibetan collective, but subjected to images and ideas that had no part in creating its historically structured habitus, would differ significantly from that of the historic collective.

Of the many insightful and detailed contributions to the theories of culture and cultural transmission, those of Pierre Bourdieu were perhaps the most influential in this project. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and its generative principles;¹⁰² of the errancy inherent in the temporal objectification

⁹⁷ DiMaggio, 264.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 267.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 268.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Prominently features in all Bourdieu's works, but possibly most famously quoted in: Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 29.

of society;¹⁰³ his deconstruction of the hegemonic discourse and the roles of institutions as homogenizing forces and of legitimate culture and cultural capital;¹⁰⁴ the allegory of the social world as a game and the “feel for the game” generated therein;¹⁰⁵ his call to the ethnologist to return to persons the meaning of their actions;¹⁰⁶ in short, the deconstruction of so many things I had previously thought, in many ways structured my own theorizing. Indeed, it was through this deconstruction that I was able to gain an understanding, enabling this project to be structured into something that will, to the best of my ability, be honest and honouring both to the social sciences and the Tibetan community.

Certain others emerge alongside Bourdieu who provide the rudimentary underpinnings of the generative principles structuring the habitus, which I understand to be produced through semiosis. Any study of Peirian semiotics is a messy ground, for though he died in 1914, his works, spanning multiple academic disciplines, were largely unpublished until the mid-twentieth century, and much of the hundred thousand pages of his manuscripts remain unpublished today.¹⁰⁷ His writings are further convoluted by Peirce’s view of his own theories as “a system in progress,”¹⁰⁸ for in Peirce’s search for truth he (like any good scientist) was constantly challenging his own hypotheses, remoulding, refining and redefining. Umberto Eco, one of the most noted semiologists of today, acknowledges “it is rather difficult to find two separate passages on a same topic in which (Peirce) does not contradict and re-propose what he has previously said.”¹⁰⁹ Therefore I lean on others for semiotic insight and definition: Eco, who has taken up

¹⁰³ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*; Pierre Bourdieu “Vive La Crise!” *Theory and Society* 17, 773-787.

¹⁰⁴ Pierre Bourdieu et al., “Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field” *Sociological Theory* 12, No. 1 (March 1994): 1-18.

¹⁰⁵ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*.

¹⁰⁶ Pierre Bourdieu et al., “Colonialism and Ethnography: Forward to Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘Travail et travailleurs en Algérie’” *Anthropology Today* 19, no. 2 (April 2003): 13-18.

¹⁰⁷ Eco praised Peirce as “undoubtedly the greatest unpublished writer of our century. There are writers who are unpublished because they have written practically nothing: they are frequently quoted. Peirce is mostly unpublished because he has written too much: he is never quoted except for a few basic slogans” (Eco, *Peirce’s Notion of the Interpretant*, 1457).

¹⁰⁸ Eco, *Peirce’s Notion of the Interpretant*, 1457.

the semiotic torch left by Peirce and continues to shed its light into the darkness of human cognition; and Turino, whose claim that Peircian semiotics “is nothing short of revolutionary for understanding the social effects of music” spurred me to apply it in my own work (and through its discovery I came to realize it was already present, though unacknowledged, as Eco has said of so many others who “did not think they were practicing semiotics, or were practicing it unwittingly”¹¹⁰).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 2.

Chapter 3

Methodology

PROCEDURES

This study is largely a qualitative attempt at understanding music's role in cultural transmission and appropriation, involving the objectification of idealized Tibetan group habitus using Peircian semiotics. I suggest what *might* make up the individual habitus of Tibetan youth, i.e. the tools of culture they have appropriated, with a focus on the historic group habitus that the older generation is attempting to transmit, the potential success of that transmission and appropriation viewed through Peircian signs and musical semiosis. To do this I first conducted interviews with Tibetan music students, parents of students, music teachers and outside observers. The research directly concerning the lived experiences in Toronto was conducted between June 2010 and May 2011, with the majority of interviews conducted during the summer of 2010 with students before and after their daily three hour music sessions. While these practices were immediately rehearsals for a public performance in Toronto and an upcoming performance in New York, important in their own right, they were particularly significant as they were ultimately in preparation for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visit to Toronto. The students worked tirelessly (indeed, in some cases, tiredly) for countless hours, some of which I had the privilege of spending with them: observing the practices, sharing the lived experience of their performances; once I was even given the honour of performing alongside some of the students, thus more fully sharing the musical experience. My *dranyen* (Tibetan lute) teacher (who is also the head teacher in all the official music lessons done through the TCCC) was particularly helpful in this, inviting me to practices and performances, setting up interviews, including me in communal gatherings. I made recordings of and transcribed all the interviews, twenty in total, lasting from ten to forty minutes, with twenty minutes being the average: fourteen music students, seven male (M1, M3, M7, M8, M9, M12, M14), seven female (F4, F5, F11, F13, F16, F19, F20); two teachers, one male, one female (MT, FT); two parents, both male (P17, P25); and two outside observers, both male (O2, O6). I also made audio recordings of some of the practices, and audio/video

recordings of some performances.

For other interviews and Tibetan opinion there were a number of useful sources. Margaret Nowak's *Tibetan Refugees: Youth and the Next Generation of Meaning*¹¹¹ included the results of a written assignment she gave her Tibetan students in India, asking them the same question I was seeking the answer to: "What do you mean when you say 'I am a Tibetan'?"¹¹² Jennifer Logan's¹¹³ doctoral thesis contained numerous excerpts of her interviews with Tibetan women in Toronto, as did the work by MacPherson and Ghoso (including a long section by Ghoso on her own experiences). Yeh (2007) also included many interview transcriptions and stories from friends compiled over her many years living in Tibetan communities. The majority of interviews and personal stories available in the literature are transcribed and selected by researchers, often non-Tibetan (save Ghoso here), who control which elements are shared and which are not. With this in mind I took to sorting through Tibetan-themed websites and blogs in search of less mediated Tibetan opinion.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was motivated by the desire to see music's role in cultural transmission in Toronto; "seeing," however, became the problem, for it raised the question of culture's objectifiability. If culture were completely unknowable from an etic perspective, as if it were a closed box into which no eye could see, then researchers would do well to heed Nietzsche's warning and not "demand of the eye an absurdity" by believing that "the *more* effects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complex will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be."¹¹⁴ However, I tend to side with Thomas Haskell, who indicts Nietzsche for 'throwing out the baby

¹¹¹ Margaret Nowak, *Tibetan Refugees: Youth and the New Generation of Meaning* (Rutgers, The State University, 1984).

¹¹² Nowak, 86.

¹¹³ Logan.

¹¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (Vintage Books, New York 1969), 119, italics in original.

with the bathwater,¹¹⁵ and reasons that making every effort to “multiply the perspectives” of any given phenomenon inevitably brings that view closer to completeness,¹¹⁶ even if never in its entirety. While I agree that culture is not completely knowable, nor do I believe it to be entirely closed; rather, much like an iceberg’s tip, culture is objectifiable but only in part. Any instances (Peirce’s sinsigns) of cultural manifestation—language, lived community, family gatherings, religious actions, re-enactments of the past, musical performances, et cetera—are objectifiable as the iceberg’s tip. All underlying structures can be inferred (but only inferred) through examining the process of their semiotic construction. Thus cultural signs might be seen as indicators, rather than determinates, of the underlying structures of the habitus.

Through the process of this study it has become clear that culture is messy; that a definition of Tibetan culture, if there is to be one, is unique to Tibetans; and that the theories and methodologies used were often refined, redefined, dropped, picked up again, and altered. Long ago Aristotle made the call for multiple methods, that “in the case of each different subject we shall have to determine the appropriate process of investigation,”¹¹⁷ and such an approach has seemed appropriate in this study. Thus I adopt a mixture of Bourdieu’s habitus theories and Peircian semiotics, adapting them to the phenomenon of Tibetan musico-cultural transmission, appropriation and production in Toronto. The arguments set forth here might at varying times imply positivist viewpoints, though that is not the intention. Rather they conceptualize the visual attributes of a culture as “the tip of an iceberg,” for while the *manifestation* (a music performance, for example) may be objectifiable, it is only possible to infer the structures below the surface, thereby offering *tendencies* concerning the preceding socio-cultural structuring but not antecedent rules.

Chapter 4 outlines the theories which have ultimately seemed most effective in dealing with the process of cultural transmission, including Bourdieu’s habitus and Peirce, Turino and Eco’s postulations

¹¹⁵ Thomas L. Haskell, “Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric Vs. Practice in Peter Novick’s *That Noble Dream*.” *History and Theory* 29, no. 2 (May, 1990):136.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Aristotle, *De Anime* [On The Soul], Translated by J.A. Smith, Book I Part I <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.1.i.html> (accessed January 25, 2011).

on semiotics, and examines the extra-Tibetan cultural elements which are no doubt creating and taking residence in the cognitive structures. Chapter 5 details the various pertinent cultural elements being preserved in exile, exploring music's role in their semiotic correlation, and chapter 6 looks at the acquisition and representation of culture to and through the music students as the students appropriate and perform Tibetanness.

THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

It has been argued that true objectivity does not exist, for social scientists after all are "human and, as such, bring along personal orientations that will colour what they observe and how they explain it."¹¹⁸ This must be especially true when implementing qualitative research and the ethnographic research design. As researcher I am the mediator in this study, therefore it is important to offer an understanding of who I am.

My first experience of Tibetan culture was in Nepal, where I spent nine months researching language groups. I felt very much at home within the Tibetan communities and Tibetan areas there, and they became a kind of shelter for me when dealing with culture shock, providing a sense of home away from home. I later lived in a Tibetan community in Toronto for a year, during which time I studied Tibetan music, played in a Tibetan band at Tibetan social events, helped out in a Tibetan restaurant and lived below a Tibetan bar owned by my now wife's relatives. My wife (who is half Tibetan and half English) and I spent two years living in Tibet, teaching at the Tibetan Kangding Nationalities Teacher's College (KDNTC). In 2007 we moved back to Canada and since then have lived in "Little Tibet" in Toronto, the largest Tibetan settlement in North America¹¹⁹ and one of the largest in the world outside Asia,¹²⁰ where a walk down the street on any given day one is met with apartment buildings dotted by

¹¹⁸ Babbie and Benaquisto, 13.

¹¹⁹ Statistics Canada places the number of Tibetans in Toronto at three thousand four hundred and seventy in 2006, with half living in Parkdale, although local Tibetan statistics are much higher (ranging from six to ten thousand), citing non-status persons, rapid increase in family sponsorship, and reluctance to fill out the government census.

¹²⁰ Logan, 42-43.

Tibetan prayer flags, women wearing *chubas*¹²¹ and occasionally elderly Tibetan women selling *tsampa*.¹²² Every Wednesday I have a music lesson on the Tibetan lute (*dranyen*) with a Tibetan music teacher living in the same area.

I also have Tibetan friends and family in the émigré community in the UK, and many Tibetan friends in Kangding (*Dartsendo* in Tibetan) and other parts of ethnic Tibet, making me all the more aware of the fact that I am not objectifying an inanimate object but people, many of whom I know well. This has constantly caused me to re-think and reorient my analyses, being careful to be honest, sensitive, and to admit that all I can offer are my observations and ponderings, and the stories (as best I can interpret them) of a community I will always feel is a part of me.

The time spent in Tibetan community, and especially time spent in music lessons, I hope has created in me some of the structuring structures of the same Tibetan habitus my teacher (consciously or not) attempts to pass on to all his students. In this perhaps I am relatively well positioned to give an account for Tibetan culture, although as Bourdieu says, “agents (and the observer too as soon as he ceases to be an observer)”¹²³ have great difficulty objectifying cultural elements as soon as they become appropriated into the habitus, for then they are conceived of as common-sense—although I am not so deceived as to think I have appropriated sufficient Tibetan elements in my limited exposure (unlike other researchers may well have done) into my own toolkit to constitute any semblance of Tibetan cultural fluency.

BOUNDING THE STUDY

Setting

¹²¹ *Chubas* are traditional Tibetan clothes. Elderly Tibetans often wear chubas as their daily clothing. Tibetan parents and the adult generation don't often wear traditional clothing on a day-to-day basis, but will commonly wear a chuba for any community event. The only time most youth seem to don the Tibetan apparel is when they are performing, or for a dress rehearsal.

¹²² *Tsampa* is roasted barley flour often mixed with dried yak cheese, a Tibetan staple, hitherto unheard of in Toronto, and besides the elderly Tibetan women peddling the good, it has also become available at a few east-Indian stores in the area where the owners have realized the sense in marketing to what is becoming the largest ethnic group in the area.

¹²³ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 18.

The Tibetan community has existed in Toronto since the 1970's, but the past fifteen years have seen a major increase in Tibetan immigration. The majority end up settling (at least for a time) in Parkdale, one of the most multicultural neighbourhoods of Toronto, and the setting of this study. Due to the high concentration of Tibetans and Tibetan restaurants, the area is sometimes referred to as "Little Tibet." I lived in this community from 2004 to 2005, and my wife and I moved back to the area and have been living here since August 2008.

Actors

The first Tibetan I ever significantly spoke with in Toronto was a member of the Tibetan band *Phayul Phu*, who then set me up with another band member for music lessons (at that time there were very few others teaching music, and none that I knew of in a formal/group capacity). From that first meeting through to the time I left, the Tibetan community grew exponentially, but there was no apparent change in the facilitation of music learning, nor did the community have any specified *space* (all the Tibetan events, of which there were many, were held in various rented venues).

When I returned from Tibet three years later, the Tibetan community had purchased a community centre (the Gangjong Choedenling, or Tibetan Community Cultural Centre), music programs both for adults and youth were in full operation, and attendance (at least for the youth) was swelling. Shortly after my return I visited the centre to enrol in adult music classes. It was then that I met *gyenla* (an honorary term meaning "teacher") whose efforts have been invaluable for the Tibetan community (it was he who revitalized the Tibetan music program from practically non-existent to a competition-winning troupe proudly presented to perform for the Dalai Lama on numerous occasions), for my own musical development (supportively pushing me to further musical complexity), and for this research project (as a 'cultural gatekeeper' he legitimated my presence in rehearsals and facilitated interviews with his music students). The participants in this study were the Tibetan students from his music classes. The following attempts to represent these actors as they appropriate Tibetan culture, transmit Tibetanness in their community, and provide the Tibetan diaspora of Toronto with a frame of self-reflection through which to judge the success of Tibetan preservation in diaspora.

Events

Many excellent ethnographic studies have made use of the term “snapshot,” a word recently added to the taxonomy of ethnology; however I opt not to use this term, for although this study is restricted to a specific time and space, it is also the study of the many histories which produced all the actions and ideas manifested and observable during the time of study; similarly it is an attempt to grasp history, or at least the collectively conceptualized and communally agreed upon history, which the agents are trying to pass on. This is what Bourdieu argues is destroyed in the novel, when “it breaks down action into a series of snapshots, destroying the design, the intention...and reduces the acts and actors to absurdity.”¹²⁴ Instead this study posits the reasons why the events, rooted in (perceived) history, take place, and how music helps propel the continuation of these events, connected to the past, into the future.

DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected in accordance with its spatio-temporal conditions: the physical and conceptual context of interviews was noted, i.e. “in the gym during an important rehearsal,” and the same was done for observations (“in the Rogers Centre performing for ten thousand people in preparation for a teaching by the Dalai Lama”). Actors were also included, and the meaning of their objectified actions inferred and documented as immediately as the situation allowed (not wanting to be overly intrusive, I often stepped out of rehearsals to write my observations and thoughts).

Data includes journal articles, newspaper articles, interviews, recordings, journals, music lessons and performances. Two journals were kept, one recording my observations, emotions and perceptions; the other recording informal conversations with Tibetan students, friends, music teachers and my wife’s relatives. I have been and continue taking part in music lessons (where I am included in the processes of music transmission and appropriation) as well as attending and occasionally participating in Tibetan performance events.

REPORTING THE FINDINGS

The term *subjects* has often been used to reference the people the researcher interacted with,

¹²⁴ Ibid., 67.

interviewed and observed (the ‘objects of study’ so to speak), although I am reticent to use this term as, at least for me, it can provide for a sense of superiority and removedness, creating a theoretical separation of the “researched” by the researcher. Such a classification can be especially dangerous terminology when employed by those of the dominant culture, those with hegemony, when speaking of those without. I opt instead to use the terms *agents*, *participants* and *actors*. I choose agents simply because such are the ones doing the actions, thinking the thoughts, feeling the feelings; participants, not only because they participated in this study, but because, as participants in Tibetan society and Canadian society, they are participating in the construction of Tibetanness within the Canadian context. The term actors, I feel, can be adequately incorporated into Bourdieu’s postulation that social worlds are “games,” but being the “products of a long, slow process of automatization...are...so to speak, games ‘in themselves’ and not ‘for themselves.’”¹²⁵ The habitus of the individual actors then serves as a “feel for the game,” provided the actors share the same group habitus. These are games ‘in themselves’ because the actors do not necessarily (or necessarily do not) realize they are playing a game, as in Shakespeare’s “all the world’s a stage” (from which Erving Goffman derived much of his dramaturgical theory). This terminology is helpful also for by it the researcher (and the reader) can see, or at least acknowledge, that we too are “so ‘carried away by the game,’”¹²⁶ our own game, that we fail to realize we are actors in a different but equally objectifiable game of our own history’s (or multiple histories’) making. For the Tibetan music students in this study, however, it is entirely probable that they are *not* so “carried away” in playing the social game as most. Gifted with Anh Hua’s *double-vision*¹²⁷ of a refugee, and due to the social training to identify cultural aspects which *are* and *aren’t* Tibetan, they are actors who, at least at times, *know* they are actors playing a pertinent role as they sustain and uphold their community’s cultural traditions.

A NOTE ON SEMIOTICS, REIFICATION, AND TIBETAN PHILOSOPHY

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Hua, 195.

Peirce's semiotic theories appear to gel fairly closely with traditional Tibetan philosophy; in Peirce's later years it is even thought he leaned more towards mysticism and Buddhist ideologies. If I understand the correlation correctly, Firstness could be understood as Nirvana: nonattachment, oneness with everything, freedom from the "monkey mind" that is always separating, differentiating, defining and compartmentalizing. Meditation might be seen as an endeavour, for a time, to be fully outside the realm of Thirdness, an attempt to "rise" from Thirdness to Secondness and even Firstness (opposite to the many semiological terms of rising from Firstness to Thirdness).

Also following Tibetan concepts, a note should be made on reification. Christopher Small criticizes the philosophical tradition that propels "the trap of reification [which] has been a besetting fault of Western thinking ever since Plato."¹²⁸ For Tibetans, traditional music (iconic and indexical of traditional culture in general) may indeed be a reified form; however, Tibetan religio-philosophical discourse more than allows for the reification of things, and while that non-corporeal label is often an eye-opening indictment to Western traditions (what I thought was real was only a reification!), to the Tibetan that may well have already been understood, and valued for it. The Tibetan Buddhist conception of reality is not the common Western conception; in fact, it could be argued that for the Buddhist *all is reification*, all but a construct of the mind, and that construct not only a perception but a physically creative force which might affect perceptual reality. One Tibetan folk tale illustrates this point: *one day a man was walking a mountain path when the wind blew his hat into a bush* (if I remember the story correctly, it was bad luck to retrieve the hat, thus the reason he left it there). *The harsh mountain weather soon altered the appearance of the hat and, a few weeks later, people walking by the same bush mistook it for some strange creature. They told others in their nearby village and everyone panicked, whispering amongst themselves that there was a monster in the bush and warning people not to journey that way.* Now at this point in the story, anyone raised in Western traditions might be able to predict the moral—something about 'not gossiping' or 'there's no such thing as monsters' and the like. However, here is where the story

¹²⁸ Christopher Small, prelude to *Musicking: The Meaning of Performing and Listening* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998): 3.

reveals its Tibetan philosophical meaning: *Later, as travellers passed by the same way, the bush started chasing them.*¹²⁹ The moral of the story? Reality is, in a very real sense, created through the mind.

ANTICIPATED ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical issues certainly exist, thus precautions must be taken in virtually any study of humans, and all potential ethical concerns must be addressed. Particularly in ethnographic research, which involves “direct interaction between researchers and study participants,”¹³⁰ considerations of voluntary participation must be made. The ethical implications are increased when the study involves minority groups, and exacerbated further still when Tibetans are the focus. Tibetans living in exile have long been the focus of researchers, journalists, scholars and filmmakers.¹³¹ The foreign community in Dharamsala (where many Tibetan refugees lived or at least spent significant time) is largely made up of individuals who, though usually with the intention of aiding Tibetans, are also there for the advancement their own careers, themselves benefiting from the Tibetans they have come to “help.” In the words of Keila Diehl:

Often I was embarrassed to join the other Westerners kneeling in the front row at the temple to get the best view, frustrated at being the tenth person to interview an old man, righteous *and* jealous when a new acquaintance boldly snapped a photograph in the face of an old toothless nun carrying a marigold in the evening light.¹³²

Tibetans who have immigrated to Toronto have not escaped this attention. In 2009 there were three researchers (myself included) living in the Tibetan community in Parkdale, conducting research, taking pictures, asking questions. Despite the temptation to deem my marital connection to the community (my wife’s cousins, cousin’s children, and sister all live here) as affording me some distance from the “typical” researcher, I must admit that any research done here will ultimately benefit my own

¹²⁹ In another Tibetan folk tale a man left Tibet to go on pilgrimage to India, to the Buddha’s birthplace. His mother, a devout Buddhist, begged her son to bring back to her the tooth of one of the saints, which he promised to do (how he was supposed to procure this I am not sure). On his return journey, upon realizing he had neglected his promise, he found a dog’s tooth on the side of the road and brought it back instead, telling his mother it was the tooth of a great holy saint. His mother, delighted, put the tooth in a prominent place and venerated it. Before long, the tooth began to glow (a sign that the tooth was holy). Since all is in the mind, the mere *belief* and veneration caused the tooth to *really* become the tooth of the saint.

¹³⁰ Babbie & Benaquisto, 107.

¹³¹ Diehl, 51.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 53, italics in the original.

career. I hope not to add to the disappointment of which Diehl speaks when she mentions the “good number of refugees in Dharamsala (who) have been deeply disappointed by unfulfilled promises of books, videos, photos, letters, or money to be sent in return for their images, words, or time.”¹³³

Conducting research in Toronto is comparatively much less risky for participants than if I were in Tibet, where the political dangers associated would necessitate the use of pseudonyms not only for the participants but also for certain specific place names and anything else that might give away the participant’s identity. Although the political dangers inherent in conducting research in the PRC are not obvious in my current research, they are still a potential risk. Many Tibetans hope to return to Tibet and some do manage the journey. Any information connecting them to participation in Tibetan exile communities could potentially create problems for their entry into China. In Toronto I have been upfront about my role and purposes in research, ensuring the participants knew of any risks there may be in associating themselves with my study and, as far as I am able, not producing anything the participants would rather not be shared.

There is something beyond the physical danger or concerns over being another abrasive foreign social scientist: the psychological factors of both the participants and the researcher. For the researcher this involves wrestling with questions of representation, of how to represent, how to share what (if anything) has been discovered. It is a question of how to tell the story of a people that is honest, avoids pander, but does not offend. This is difficult in no uncertain terms. Bourdieu strongly criticizes the “idealized” findings of a society, commenting these are found “only in folk tales and the writings of ethnographers.”¹³⁴ Indeed, the way any group presents itself to the outside world and the realities of their inner world are rarely congruent, but anything that questions a “group’s notion of self”¹³⁵ can be deeply

¹³³ Ibid., 52.

¹³⁴ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 178.

¹³⁵ Sherene H. Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1998): 11.

unsettling.¹³⁶ Is it truly, as Bourdieu infers, our duty as social scientists to find the truth, the *raison d'etre* behind a society's actions, to the point of upsetting the group's notion of self? This is something I have struggled with throughout this study, and though I admit I may not have struggled successfully, I believe what is offered here to be, to the best of my ability, both honest from an ethnographic perspective and honouring to Tibetans. It is my sincere hope that this study provides something truly useful to the Tibetan community, that it may in some way, as Bourdieu says, "restore to other men the meaning of their behaviours."¹³⁷

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study of cultural transmission through music in the Tibetan community of Toronto is significant for several reasons. Firstly it is intended to serve as an aid to Tibetans in the rest of the diaspora, especially those outside the already established communities of India and Nepal, to see music teaching in Toronto and the role it serves in cultural transmission. It will perhaps shed a little light on the *raison d'etre* of the attempts to pass on Tibetan culture, to see how that process is actualized, what of the *rich cultural heritage* is in fact being appropriated, as well as evidencing music's role in that purpose (Bourdieu's restoration of the meaning of behaviour). I hope it also provides a picture of the state of Tibetan music in a newly established Tibetan community, and the daily lives of those voluntarily and involuntarily participating in the maintenance and dissemination of Tibetan culture, where "individual users choose, appropriate and reappropriate the properties and meanings of music."¹³⁸

¹³⁶ There was significant national protest in Canada following Donovan Bailey's claim that Canadians were as racist as Americans, for "believing that a central part of Canadian identity was tolerance, many white Canadians were outraged by the suggestion that Canadians might be otherwise" (Razack, 11).

¹³⁷ Bourdieu et al., *Collonialism and Ethnography*, 14.

¹³⁸ Um, 123.

Chapter 4

Theoretical Foundations and the Tibetan Cultural Dilemma

The biggest thing is not practicing culture in daily life, not the way they live in India. It doesn't suit life here in Toronto. Culture becomes a showpiece.

-P17

Utilizing the theories of habitus and semiotics the following looks at the difficulties facing Tibetan cultural transmission in Toronto, with this chapter focussing on some of the non-Tibetan cultural elements encountered by those in the diasporic community. The primary goal of Tibetan existence in exile today remains much as it did sixty years ago: the preservation of Tibetan culture “in its pure form”¹³⁹ before an eventual return to the homeland. This should be understood not only to mean the observable manifestations of culture (language, music, dress, religious practices, festivals and the like) but the deeper significance behind them, the “essence” of culture itself, a sense of Tibetanness which might best be explained through Bourdieu’s theory of habitus: “A product of history,” habitus is “a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future.”¹⁴⁰ The historically produced habitus is also a homologous habitus,¹⁴¹ one created by and creating the group or social class, sedimented on the bodies (through shared semiosis) of those with similar social conditionings and conditions of existence (a homogeneous society), thereby being the cause of their homogenization and providing the *raison d’etre* of their collective being.

Here a problem emerges for any diaspora: the mutual understanding of culture (of ways of acting and thinking, of “common-sense” collectively shared) are mutually intelligible “in so far—and only in so far—as habitus are the incorporation of the same history,”¹⁴² for the habitus only generates itself again in the same way (thereby being mutually intelligible to two consecutive generations) when “the conditions

¹³⁹ Anand, *A guide to little Lhasa*, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 54.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 58.

in which the habitus functions have remained identical, or similar, to the conditions in which it was constituted.”¹⁴³ For the cultural durability to persist into the future, to be durable beyond one generation, the same habitus must be reconstructed in the next. In the relatively homogeneous Tibetan communities of India, this sense of group habitus¹⁴⁴ is fairly easily reproduced. As F14 said of Dharamsala, “it seems normal...you’re part of it, you’re living it.” In Toronto too, the cognitive structures of the older generation (perceived to be a continuation of the habitus of old Tibet) are indeed being transmitted to the next; however, unlike in Dharamsala, the structures produced in the Tibetan past are not the majority structuring the minds of Tibetan youth.

Simmel observed how two groups sharing space, no matter how variegated and homogeneous they had previously been, would over time “inevitably produce a gradually increasing likeness between [them]”¹⁴⁵ (and the cultural groups sharing space in Toronto are numerous). Further complicating the goal of preservation and the inevitability of change is DiMaggio’s theory, that every image and idea encountered initially enters the cognition as “correct.”¹⁴⁶ Due to the nature of Toronto life (both parents working; time spent in school; non-Tibetan media [Canadian television, the internet, movies, advertisements, music]; friends from other cultures; and English-medium interactions), the majority of a Tibetan youth’s existence is unlikely to be spent in Tibetan conditions. When Tibetan cultural elements are transmitted which have little functional use in the conditions of Toronto (where the structures are not attuned to the field), the result can be P17’s lament: “culture becomes a showpiece.” The community must therefore find ways to not only transmit the core aspects of observable Tibetan culture, but also create a sense of Tibetanness and Tibetan identity amidst the myriad other structures attempting to take root and

¹⁴³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁴⁴ Bourdieu identifies both ‘class’ and ‘individual’ habitus, which might be comparable to Eco’s *cognitive types* (individual cognitively stored ‘types’ enabling one to identify encountered stimuli such as images and ideas) and *nuclear content* (shared collective information regarding the types).

¹⁴⁵ Georg Simmel, “Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality [1908].” in *Classical Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff and Indermohan Virk. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 300.

¹⁴⁶ DiMaggio, 268.

mould young Tibetan cognitions in their image. It is argued here that through the process of semiosis such a difficult task might at least theoretically be achieved.

Turino notes how Peirce's "symbols are *signs about* other things, whereas icons and indices are *signs of* identity (resemblance, commonality) and direct connections."¹⁴⁷ Thus, although any sign is a sign of *something*, and any sign operating at the levels of Secondness or Thirdness connects two *somethings*,¹⁴⁸ signs about things (Tibetan prayer flags to a non-Tibetan) are fundamentally different from signs of identity (Tibetan prayer flags to a Tibetan). I propose that signs of identity can operate at all levels, as icons, indices, and symbols, but for a symbol to act as a sign of identity, its indexicality (which is "dependent on the experiences of the perceiver"¹⁴⁹) or iconicity would predominate in the sign.¹⁵⁰ Here Eco's CTs and nuclear content (NCs--collective information agreed upon by a group) can be seen to operate, for it would seem that any symbol which lacked emotional connection (thus lacking iconicity or indexicality) was largely created through the NC of the group, not through individual experience. This is true of the conceptualization of Tibet and Tibetanness for the majority of Toronto Tibetans: Tibet only exists as a transmitted memory, for few have ever been there. Each Tibetan possesses their own individual cognitive type (CT) of what Tibet and Tibetanness signify, and potentially broad (but variegated) molar content (broadened cognitively stored information concerning a type) of correlations with the cognitive type. "Although CTs are private, they are continuously subjected to public control, and the Community educates us step by step to match our own to those of others,"¹⁵¹ in the case of Tibet and Tibetanness, their CT has generally inhered entirely from the NC of the community. Individuals are taught to identify what is (and is not) Tibetan and, through instances of cultural manifestation (Peirce's sinsigns, such as

¹⁴⁷ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 228.

¹⁴⁸ For example, an instance (sinsign) of redness evoking feelings of romance is an index and interprets at the level of Secondness; the sinsign of the word "red" as just read here is a symbol of redness at the level of Thirdness.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Peirce at one point calls Secondness *inferior* to Thirdness due to its inability to offer explanation (Peirce, *Letter to Lady Welby*.) yet it seems to be precisely *because* of this that the most "natural" identifications can be cognitively sedimented.

¹⁵¹ Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 221.

performances, gatherings, ways of Tibetan interaction) presented to them as identifiably Tibetan, are thus taught to recognize future instances of the same.¹⁵²

Further, since icons and indices are “not capable of explanation,”¹⁵³ they are equally difficult to *un-explain*, for they are experienced as simply *being*, redundantly real, unreflexively emotive, and it is these that produce the naturalness felt in the habitus. Turino observes that while “propositions and linguistic arguments about identity may even become emotionally heated,” due to their reliance on semantics “they do not provide the feeling or direct experience *of* belonging; rather they are claims and arguments *about* belonging.”¹⁵⁴ If for example a politically-minded American were to be told that Tibet was and always had been a part of China, they might (providing their CT of Tibet includes such popular political phrases as “Free Tibet” and “Tibet is for Tibetans”) argue vehemently against it, but this would be a propositional argument *about* Tibet. When the Tibetan who had grown up in Tibet prior to 1959 hears the same, it challenges their very identity. Their CT of Tibet is drastically different from the American’s, because the semantic argument “Tibet is a country” (Thirdness) and all its correlates in their cognition are rooted in personal experience, having been presymbolically united through iconicity and indexicality. Here it is possible that the iconicity and indexicality predominate in the sign, for unlike the American, their CT of Tibet is not *about* someone or something; rather it is, in a sense, their CT of *themselves*.

This reaction is hardly surprising for Tibetans raised in an unoccupied, homogeneous land; however, how is it that an equally emotional reaction and deeply personal connection is experienced by diasporic Tibetans who have never set foot in the physical homeland? Perhaps it is through the successful transmission of core cultural elements, including: the sense of a utopian past, a sense of entitlement to

¹⁵² Eco distinguishes between *identification* and *recognition*: the first denotes the moment a previously only cognitive conception is applied to an object (the first time he saw an alligator, he was able to identify it), the second something already experienced (Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 139). In the case of the alligator, the NC had previously been communicated to him, and he was thus able to identify the object through the NC.

¹⁵³ Charles Saunders Peirce, “A Guess at the Riddle,” (1887-1888): chapter VII, at ARISBE: THE PEIRCE GATEWAY, <http://www.cspeirce.com/menu/library/bycsp/guess/guess.htm> (accessed March 3, 2011).

¹⁵⁴ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 241.

Tibet as their rightful homeland, a physical Tibetan community presence, the Tibetan language, Tibetan Buddhism, and family. Before exploring these in more detail, this study turns to musical semiotics to see how music might help create signs correlating these cultural elements, the individual/group, and the music itself.

MUSICAL SEMIOSIS

Aristotle unwittingly provided an early example of music's semiotic function. In *Poetics* (his study of the aesthetics of plays), Aristotle noted the important role of *recognition*, "a change from ignorance to knowledge,"¹⁵⁵ that upon recognition (triggered by an object or person) emotion is produced. This recognition is the manifestation of past connections, the tip of the iceberg in the imagined reality, which the audience must trace back to infer its significance. The recognition might come from *signs* (for Aristotle *objects* only, differing significantly from Peirce's definition); in other cases recognition "depends on memory," when a sign (Peirce's definition) "awakens a feeling" as is the case in the Cyprians of Dicaeogenes where "the hero breaks into tears on seeing the picture," (image iconic of someone, *iconic Argument sign*) or when "Odysseus, hearing the minstrel play the lyre, recalls the past and weeps"¹⁵⁶ (*indexical dicent sign*). These examples, it should be remembered, are of plays, imitations of reality (or idealizations of reality or hypothetical realities). The audience encountered the imitation (the actor) hearing a song that they (the character) could be identified with, *because* that song was understood by the audience to be indexing the character's personal memory—everyone, theoretically, must therefore have been able to relate the experience of the character to their own lives. The hearer at some past time heard a song in tandem with some other event and cognitively correlated the two; but is that all that happened? Did the song signify some detached mental conception? Odysseus did not hear the minstrel play a song he had heard when looking at a horse and think, "horse;" he heard it and *wept*. Key to my implementation of musical semiosis is understanding this process, the preceding structures which led

¹⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics*, Translated by S. H. Butcher, Part XI.
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html> (accessed January 23, 2011).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Odysseus to weep (or rather which led the actor playing Odysseus to weep and the audience to perceive that weeping as identifying the true character of Odysseus).

Due to its tendency to operate at the levels of Secondness, music often does not correlate two external phenomena; it joins the listener as well. Although all signs and levels of interpretation are theoretically involved in the process of semiosis, it would appear that those signs which function pre-symbolically are most likely to create the notions of common-sense, Bourdieu's "things to be done and said," the unquestioned existence of reified conceptualizations. Signs produced through music tend to function at the semantically imperceptible levels of Firstness and Secondness, the "space between," after an object is sensed but before it reaches linguistic interpretation. Turino suggests music can "prolong" semiosis in this middle realm, "postponing" the semiotic progression to the third level.¹⁵⁷ It is indeed possible that the semiotic chaining is not only postponed but "*halted* before reaching the level of Thirdness,"¹⁵⁸ with emotive and energetic interpretants being *final* interpretants. As Eco observes, "an energetic response does not need to be interpreted; it rather produces...a change of habit,"¹⁵⁹ and that new habit (or newly structured element of the habitus), that changed "way of acting within the world,"¹⁶⁰ *is* the interpretant.

If I understand Peirce, Turino and Eco correctly, any structures of the past (including musical structures) can be iconic of the past, just as the habitus, structured in the past, serves as a kind of "present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future."¹⁶¹ The structures were created in the collective group past, the semiotic process creating the cognitive structures of the habitus, and now the results of those processes are conceptualized as sharing an essence with that past.

WHAT IS NOT TIBETAN

¹⁵⁷ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 233.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 232, emphasis in original.

¹⁵⁹ Eco, *Peirce's Notion of the Interpretant*, 1465.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 54.

The next chapter will be devoted to the core cultural elements, the relics of Tibetan past, which constitute the CT of Tibetanness and are deemed most vital for its maintenance; however these are by no means the only cultural patterns presenting themselves to Tibetan youth, for identity is formed through *differentiation between* as much as *similarity with*. Thus this chapter looks at some of the things which Tibetanness is *not*. Deeply integrated with the transmission of “Tibetanness” is the intentional and unintentional transmission of cognitive mappings which delineate specifically *un*-Tibetan mental processes, things “not for Tibetans.” Bourdieu argues that “the habitus tends to ensure its own consistency and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information,”¹⁶² and that “early experiences have particular weight.”¹⁶³ While an individual is indeed capable of change, Bourdieu’s theories suggest that mental structures stratified when a person is young are stronger, and built into the structures are defences against anything that would disagree with the collective belief. One might imagine a map with dark, forbidden areas, clearly labelled but barely detailed—labelled because it is imperative that one not go there, lacking detail because there is no reason one from this culture should ever need mentally navigate within.¹⁶⁴

Tibetans are socialized to identify and appropriate sound structures which are Tibetan, and to identify, tolerate or reject sounds which are not. In Dharamsala this is achieved in part through the deliberate absence of any Chinese-influenced sounds on the radio or television¹⁶⁵ (despite many popular

¹⁶² Ibid., 60-61.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Someone from the far right politically, when interacting with someone from the far left, may know something *about* the far left (learned ways to counteract their ideas, arguments that may be true or false) but would be unlikely to *understand* them or have any reason to. The “other’s” culture, as pertaining to politics, does not exist in their toolkit, only weapons with which to attack the other and defend themselves against being ‘infected’ with the differing opinions, defences against anything that would question the habitus. This is not to say it is impossible for an opinion to change (for this of course happens), only that it takes a significant amount of individual agency, and likely multiple transactions of equivalence for someone to begin questioning the deep-seated structures of habitus that set themselves up for self-preservation.

¹⁶⁵ Diehl, 87.

recording artists coming from Tibet¹⁶⁶) and through the Tibetan schools. In the rest of the diaspora such discernment is more difficult to teach; however, an answer may exist in the structures of the collective habitus, for inherent in Tibetan culture is the perception that musical styles function as indices of physical places, with all applicable connotations. As Diehl writes, “particular musical genres are...perceived by most Tibetans as aural icons of particular places and cultures,”¹⁶⁷ and she provides the following Dharamsala-Tibetan based conceptual orientations, a “geographic mandala”¹⁶⁸ (figure 3) and “musical mandala” (figure 4)¹⁶⁹ to illustrate their orientations. The non-Tibetan indices (China, India, and “the West”) are addressed here, with chapter 5 devoted to Tibetan signs.

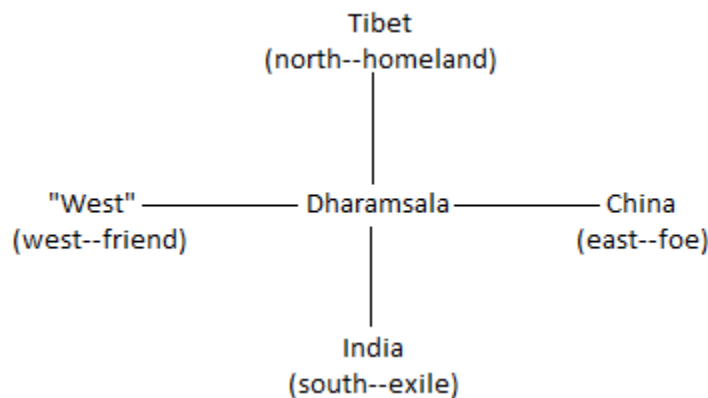


Figure 3. Diehl's Geographic Mandala

¹⁶⁶ The emergence of popular Tibetan singers from the homeland, despite the fact many of them have been jailed for their songs, is in fact a major concern for conservative Tibetans in exile, who fear a “naive ‘assimilation’” (Diehl, 87-88.) of this music by Tibetan youth, and this danger is considered greater than the assimilation of any other musics.

¹⁶⁷ Diehl, 27.

¹⁶⁸ *Mandala* comes from the Sanskrit, meaning “circle.” Generally a mandala has one centre point, encircled by four gates; this is the basis for the majority of Tibetan Buddhist art.

¹⁶⁹ Both of Diehl’s mandalas are replicated here in figures 3 and 4 (Diehl, 27).

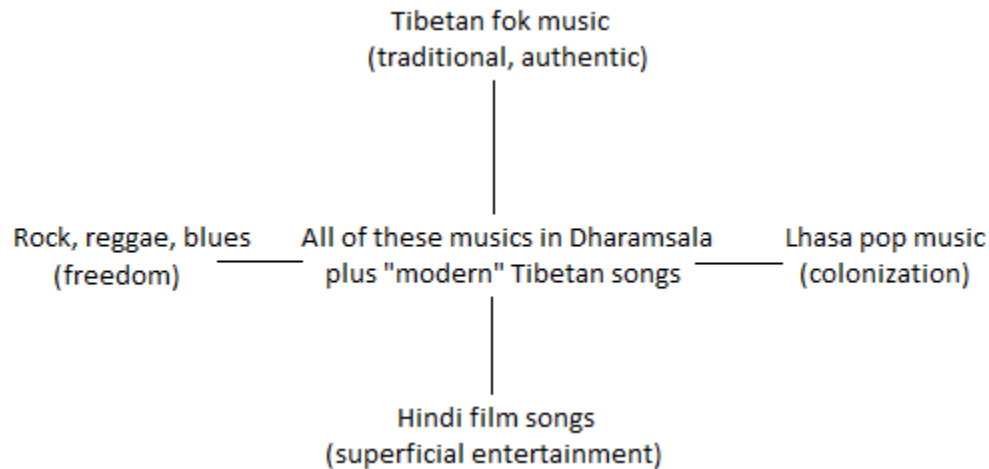


Figure 4. Diehl's Musical Mandala

China

The CCP has been accused of moulding Tibetan music “in their own image,” indexing similarity with the Han majority and devotion to modernity and China as the motherland, and casting pre-1959 Tibetan music as a negative index of feudalism and backwardness; so also the Government in Exile has done, only instead of the value of modernity, there is the value of the old, of sameness, of preservation. Thus Tibetan traditional folk music as it exists in exile, iconicizing Tibetanness and indexical of the Past, casts the Tibetan music currently propagated in Tibet as false, indexical of change and sinicization. Exposure to Han music is practically non-existent in the case of most émigré Tibetans,¹⁷⁰ and it is unlikely many have ever listened to a Chinese song; however, a cognitive type for Han music and “Chineseness” must somehow exist (likely constructed wholly through nuclear content) for Tibetans are drawing on something when they condemn the music currently coming from Tibet as being sinified. Chinese music (or anything perceived of as Chinese) is rejected not only as “other” but as pertaining to the enemy, and as “Tibetan identity in exile has been constituted in opposition to China,”¹⁷¹ the maintenance of Tibetan purity from sinicization is crucial for the diasporic identity as being sole possessors of true historic Tibetanness. Anything suspect of having Chinese roots (nasal singing,

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 87.

¹⁷¹ Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*, 653.

sweeping arm gestures, certain ways of standing, etc) is taboo, and new arrivals from Tibet are often found suspect by émigré-socialized Tibetans for their strange (therefore presumed Chinese) behaviour and mannerisms.¹⁷² Diehl writes of a time in Dharamsala during Losar (Tibetan New Year) when a group of travellers from Tibet had just arrived (who had come for the Kalachakra teachings and to be near the Dalai Lama for the Losar celebrations). They were (very) loudly singing “songs of freedom that they had probably only hummed quietly in their homes or learned from notebooks filled with lyrics written at great risk.” The lyrics they sang were indeed true to the orthodoxy posited in exile (The Dalai Lama’s rightful place on the throne, praise for His Holiness: “Upon seeing the palace of the deities and serpent gods, I remembered His Holiness’s face. Great Tenzin Gyatso, May you live long!”¹⁷³ and the eventual return: “The Dalai Lama is not without a residence. His residence is the Happy Palace [Potala]. His government is greater than before... In one or two years...A meeting time will come”¹⁷⁴). One might expect them to receive a warm welcome, these heroes who had managed to retain their religious devotion and even their desire for freedom despite living under the enemy’s heavy hand; yet when Diehl surveyed the crowd she saw no familiar Dharamsala faces. Soon after, she saw a group of Dharamsala wedding singers parodying the Lhasan singers, “(howling) with laughter like schoolchildren, letting their voices crack high and wild” (as a mockery of what would have been labelled a Chinese aspect of the Lhasan performance). Yeh reiterates a similar story of a performance in California (proof that the view of exile Tibetans being “culturally purer than Tibetans left behind in the homeland”¹⁷⁵ extends beyond the borders of Dharamsala of which it was originally said) where a Tibetan song and dance troupe from Lhasa, at first facing heavy resistance (even protests) from the community, was eventually invited to perform for the California Tibetans. While the event was absolutely euphoric for new arrivals (and fully iconic of their Tibetan CT),

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Diehl, 92.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 91.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 64.

for émigré-socialized Tibetans it was a bastardization: “strangely un-Tibetan,”¹⁷⁶ alien, “very Chinese,”¹⁷⁷ on the whole a laughable yet depressing display of the sinicization of Tibetan culture.¹⁷⁸

India

One of the conversations overheard by Yeh during the California performance was a mother and daughter (émigré-socialized). The daughter, having grown bored of the (to her) pseudo-Tibetan performance, said to her mother, “Let’s go watch a Hindi movie.”¹⁷⁹ Although the irony of this statement was left untouched by Yeh, its implication was certainly not lost on the reader: that a completely un-Tibetan genre can in fact hold more indexicality and even iconicity for émigré Tibetans than Tibetan music from Lhasa (a genre which, for the five million some Tibetans still in Tibet [vs. the two hundred thousand some in exile], would tend to fit fairly well with their nuclear content and cognitive type of that which it is a sign).

Bollywood film music (largely popular throughout the Tibetan diaspora) is perhaps the most tolerated of all non-Tibetan musics. It is iconic of India, the primary host culture (for it was India who first welcomed and offered space to the Dalai Lama and others in the 1959 exodus), and the place where many current Tibetan parents were born and raised. Further, Bollywood music permeates the landscape all over India, including Dharamsala, and for the Tibetans being raised there it “passes into memory without being ‘tagged,’”¹⁸⁰ structuring itself presymbolically in the Tibetan cognition. As these musical patterns have been heard from an early age, and as “differences between Tibetans and Indians are consciously played down,”¹⁸¹ all the cognitive schematic organizations for these Tibetans are conducive to the easy appropriation of Bollywood music, with virtually no cognitive structures to defend against it.

¹⁷⁶ Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*, 660.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ DiMaggio, 267.

¹⁸¹ Kolas, 58.

Thus Bollywood music might not only be iconic of India, but (for Tibetans who grew up in India) indexical of Tibetanness as well. The consumption of Bollywood music becomes “common-sense” behaviour (for “the habitus tends to generate all the ‘reasonable’, ‘common-sense’, behaviours”¹⁸²) and is therefore not regarded with the same “foreignness” as other non-Tibetan genres.

“The West”

For most Tibetans of Diehl’s reported world (Dharamsala), the West was a conceptual icon. A CT created by the NC of their group, the surrounding society and through the media, it was a sign iconicizing *friends, allies in the struggle, freedom*, and the potential for a better life. Practically all the *Injis*¹⁸³ they came into contact with would have been familiar with and sympathetic to the Tibetan cause, and unlikely to have been considered a danger to the goals of preservation. Western music (rock, reggae, blues) was indexical of the West, accepted and available for *consumption* without much comment (although as Diehl noted its performance by Tibetans was often fraught with accusations of “going too far”). However, this Western CT created solely through nuclear content has collided with actual experience for the Tibetans who immigrated to metropolitan cities in the West, and has since been forced to adjust significantly. For instance, where the conceptualized genres above iconicized all that was good about the West, the reality of popularized music among North American youth (such as rap and hip-hop) has for some become indexical of a suspect and stereotyped inner-city culture with which they do not wish their Tibetan children either to identify or be identified.¹⁸⁴

Further, the new Toronto arrivals come to realize that they have not entered one homogeneous “culture” in which they are the minority (as, very broadly speaking, is the case in many India and Nepali-based settlements—and in Dharamsala they are in fact the majority); instead, they find themselves in one

¹⁸² Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 55.

¹⁸³ Tibetan term meaning “English,” but a general term for all Euro-American non-Tibetans.

¹⁸⁴ For a detailed description of the cultural values and, indeed, racism inherent in the rejection of these genres, see: Lama and Yeh, *Hip-hop gansta*.

of the most multicultural neighbourhoods in one of the most multicultural cities in the world.¹⁸⁵ In such conditions, there is the perceived (and very real) danger of Tibetan customs dissolving in the sea of multiculturalism.

For Tibetan youth in Toronto, however, the consumption of popular Western music and the appropriation of other Western cultural aspects (ways of thinking and acting, language, tastes, et cetera) appears to be a ‘non-issue,’ much like the appropriation of Bollywood music and Indian food for those socialized in India. Not only do they possess an experiential CT (for indeed any Tibetans of the older generation who are now surrounded by the music have the same), but the Western music they hear and the ways they are socialized through school, non-Tibetan interactions, and the media all have a hand in producing the structures of their habitus, who they *are*.¹⁸⁶ In most cases the habitus is sedimented on the body through lived experiences, without conscious thought or intention, including “taken-for-granted dispositions such as intonation, gestures, and ‘taste’, appreciation for or reaction against particular styles, such as of dress, food, and staged performances of ‘authentic’ song and dance.”¹⁸⁷ This is true of Tibetan bodies, their individual habitus being comprised of multiple lived experiences sedimented unconsciously on the body. If one identifies themselves as one thing (Tibetan) then all the experiences and sensations (those existing at the unarticulated levels of Firstness and Secondness) are also theoretically *felt* as Tibetan. The ways in which Tibetans in India have become “Indianized” are difficult (but not impossible)

¹⁸⁵ The school where I conducted interviews, directly across from my apartment, is home to one hundred and twenty different nationalities, many of whom are first generation.

¹⁸⁶ In an interview in Minneapolis, one Tibetan is quoted as saying “The Chinese [destroyed] our culture in Tibet, and the Tibetans living in India have been Indianized.” (Paul Levy, “Home Away From Home,” *Star Tribune*, January 12, 1997. http://www.greatestplaces.org/book_pages/tibet/homeaway.htm (accessed January 7, 2011.)) This Tibetan went on to say the United States was the only place where their culture was encouraged, although I propose that this attitude is born out of the nature of the habitus to create feelings of naturalness and normality. The myriad ways the interviewee had *not* appropriated the Tibetan ways of the past were hidden to them, for in self-identifying as *Tibetan*, all the feelings they felt, their bodily hexis, their doxic beliefs (who they *are*) co-existed with a sense of normalcy. The same attitude might potentially be found among Tibetans living in India or any other diasporic community: that they are the only ones preserving the true Tibetan culture. Tibetans in India eat *dhalbhat* (rice and dhal), enjoy spicy foods, and are often addicted to Bollywood movies and songs, following after India’s tastes. These foods and entertainment did not traditionally exist in Tibet, and yet they are a mainstay at Tibetan gatherings outside Asia. They are rarely recognized as being deviations from historic practices, because they are not *felt* to be deviations.

¹⁸⁷ Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*, 651.

to see for those who have themselves become so, although they are clear for Tibetans now raised in Tibet (and vice-versa regarding the sinicization of Tibetans currently in Tibet). For parents in the West, it is easy to see (or at least sense) the ways their children are becoming westernized and deviating from the concept of Tibetanness, but difficult for the children themselves.

Due to the polyphasic and inclusive nature of signs, the power of group habitus among Tibetans in Toronto, although indeed substantial, is not the only outside force creating the individual habitus, nor the sole source agents are drawing from and appropriating into their cognitive toolkits. Apart from barring all non-Tibetan media and confining their children to their home in Toronto, it is impossible to even postulate a hegemonic Tibetan culture, and it alone, being appropriated into the youth's cognitive toolkit. Korom notes how the Tibetan government "in reality" knows Tibetans must adapt to some degree to their host cultures. With this in mind, "a strategy of 'limited acculturation' has developed over time to allow Tibetans living outside of the homeland to continue practicing their own cultural traditions, while simultaneously adjusting to local lifeways."¹⁸⁸ Thus while partial integration into host society is not discouraged and is at times even praised,¹⁸⁹ full integration would be highly frowned upon and perceptually un-Tibetan.¹⁹⁰

Depending on exposure to transmitted patterns and signs, there is a potential to create bi-culturality, poly-culturality, or a filling of the cognitive toolkit with bits of cultural structures from a plethora of societies ("we all know more culture than we use"), in a linguistic sense filling the toolkit with phrases from various languages and dialects, but not necessarily to a level of fluency. This final *jack-of-*

¹⁸⁸ Korom, 2.

¹⁸⁹ Tibetan friends and acquaintances on different occasions have both boasted of the intentional participation of the Tibetan community in local multicultural events and conversely complained of the lack of Tibetan involvement in such intercultural activities.

¹⁹⁰ One Toronto parent suggested integration to the point of marriage was going too far, and that its common instances in Toronto indicated a lack of concern for the community at large (P17). Comments by two music students accord, one in ardent agreement: "now there are interracial marriages, and I think that could actually really really hurt us, because our population is already low as it is;" (F5) and one, despite an air of frustration, offering the rationale of preservation for the reason "parents try to keep us from mixing, push us to date Tibetan girls" (M9).

all-cultures example may well be happening in the Tibetan community in Toronto,¹⁹¹ although I believe the question of cultural transmission need not be “either/or;” just as the learning of a new language usually results in bilingualism and does not necessitate the dismissal of the old, the potential for biculturalism also exists.

Regardless of what perceptually Tibetan cultural elements are inhering in the Tibetans’ cognition, the polyphasic nature of cultural learning remains. In Toronto then, the challenge the Tibetan community faces is finding a means whereby the collectively agreed upon past, the nuclear content of the group, might not only be transmitted to the next generation but also differentiated from the other stimuli co-existing in the individual’s cognition. One parent articulated the diasporic problem: “When we are in our own country, every day we see what our culture is, but here, every day we have to show them, teach them ‘this is our culture.’”¹⁹² The yak, for example, is considered the most Tibetan of animals, but for the naive zoo-goer they are certainly more iconic of the Highland Cow than the ancient Himalayan culture. Tibetan cultural elements are identified as such through spacio-temporal association, but what if a person generally sees chopsticks in Tibetan restaurants (which are indeed common)? Do chopsticks then become part of Tibetan culture? This necessitates the creation of CTs for the identification of non-Tibetan and Tibetan cultural elements, as well as a means for the cognitive correlation of Tibetan elements both to each other and to the individual. Music, perhaps the most polyphasic of all signs, more than suffices to fill this role. The following chapter identifies the core Tibetan elements deemed integral to the successful perpetuation of doxic Tibetanness, and music’s propensity to correlate each element.

¹⁹¹ This may in fact be what is happening, on some level, to virtually every resident in Toronto. Due to the multiplicity of cultures, the high number of newcomers, and the strong existence of ethnic “pockets” dotting the city (sparking the term “salad” rather than “melting pot”), I have often thought the metaphor of “pigeon languages” more fitting for the state of general Toronto culture. No-one’s first language, one with a severely limited lexicon which has enough vocabulary for daily survival but little else, pigeon languages developed in areas where variegated cultures were “thrown in the mix” together, notably through slavery and indenture. Often self-prized as *not* being a melting pot, the “pigeon” culture of Toronto suffices for daily activities but does not seem to allow for deeper relationships or complex social interactions.

¹⁹² P17.

Chapter 5

Tibetanness through Music

How charming it is that there are words and tones; are not words and tones rainbows and seeming bridges
'twixt the eternally separated?¹⁹³

-Nietzsche

The questions of the youth of the Land of Snows,
How can you let a poet's horse suffer from thirst?
How can you let composition's elephant suffer from heat?
How can you let metaphor's snow lion be covered in dirt?
How can you not nurture the orphan of dance and music?

- Tsering Shakya

Bourdieu has called music the “‘pure’ art par excellence” claiming “it says nothing and has nothing to say.” Such a statement, however, must be challenged, for while music may *say* nothing, it usually signifies much. When music operates at the presymbolic levels of Firstness and Secondness, absent from the dependence on semantics and thus “saying nothing,” the correlations created there become more a part of our sense of self, our sense of the world, and less our conscious creation of it. The greatest import of music may lay in its inherent semiotic tendency towards iconic and indexical interpretation, and its ability to, in a single sinsign, activate every sign level, instantaneously triggering multiple interpretants.¹⁹⁴ It can at once be iconic, indexical and symbolic; it can reference the past, the present, the future; it can (and arguably always does) function spacio-temporally, thus correlating immediately present signs, welding past experiences to immediate ones, and creating multifarious interpretants depending on the spacio-temporal context. /

TIBETAN CULTURAL RELICS

Diehl relates a conversation with Tibetan scholar Dawa Norbu in which he identified a “‘core of sacred things,’ which includes the Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibetan Language, and a devotion

¹⁹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Thomas Common translation, 1891), 172.

¹⁹⁴ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 235.

to the physical landscape deemed to be the rightful home to them all.”¹⁹⁵ These and a few other elements are added here which, though perhaps not in Norbu’s conceptual “core” of sacredness, nevertheless seem requisite for the successful maintenance of Tibetan culture in diaspora: the idealized conceptualization of a pre-1959 Tibetan past; the physical land of Tibet as homeland and rightful inheritance; Tibetan community; the Tibetan language; Tibetan Buddhism; family life; and traditional music. Every element of Tibetan culture which is genuinely believed to have its origin in pre-1959 Tibetan culture might also be conceptualized as a *relic*, particularly when its iconicity dominates in the sign interpretant (an icon of the idealized Tibetanness of the past). Other cultural elements, ones which are not believed to have their generative principles in the past, are more likely to function as icons of the present or indices of the past (such as modern Tibetan music, the yearning for return, and commemorative ceremonies such as His Holiness’ Nobel Peace Prize ceremony).

Despite their immense importance, these cultural elements are rarely articulated, as evidenced in the Toronto music students’ responses when asked to define Tibet:

When I hear ‘Tibet,’ it feels like someone’s saying ‘peace’¹⁹⁶

I guess Tibetan culture is the lifestyle, the way we live¹⁹⁷

I guess tradition¹⁹⁸

Something we’re all connected to¹⁹⁹

The reading, writing...the music, the language... Tibetan community, getting together²⁰⁰

I guess language²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ Diehl, 65.

¹⁹⁶ M1.

¹⁹⁷ M9.

¹⁹⁸ M12.

¹⁹⁹ M3.

²⁰⁰ M14.

²⁰¹ F5.

...we know who we are, we know where we're from, we know our values and beliefs, and we're together. The whole Tibetan population is a family²⁰²

It's a very rich culture, we have our own dresses, our own guitar²⁰³

Dancing, music, language²⁰⁴

Tibetan culture is to be preserved... It has a certain type of aura about it²⁰⁵

This furthers the argument that Tibetanness exists in the pre-symbolic, pre-Argument habitus of Secondness (a positive indication of Tibetan cultural preservation). Perhaps in using the abstract classification of *aura*, F13 linguistically places the essence of Tibetanness in its pre-linguistic realm, suggesting it is precisely through its indefinableness that it is precious. The fact that it does not exist at the level of argument but of 'sense' nullifies the need for semantic debate as to whether or not a musical performance, singing style, or a person's mannerisms or bodily hexis (their manner of "standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking"²⁰⁶) is Tibetan; in its iconicity, it is simply felt. If the experience does not fit the CT, the cognitive perception of Tibetanness, it must not be Tibetan. This is reinforced by conversations with other Tibetans where the nuclear content of the performance is of something else, thereby labelling it sinicized (as in DVD performances from Lhasa) or 'too *inji*' (if it shares too much content with perceived Westernness).

The instance of anything deemed Tibetan music (both traditional and modern) is at once potentially an index of any or all cultural elements and an icon of non-musical relics. This chapter first provides a synopsis of modern and traditional Tibetan music, then offers each fundamental element of Tibetan culture and music's role in the process of semiosis.

MODERN TIBETAN MUSIC

²⁰² F20.

²⁰³ F19.

²⁰⁴ F4.

²⁰⁵ F13.

²⁰⁶ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 70.

In Tibetan history music has long been used to pass on information, being of particular use in a largely non-literate society: “until recently, and arguably still, much of Tibetan secular and lay culture was transmitted and experienced orally through poetry and especially ‘song,’ which offered a way to represent events and experiences in condensed, rhythmic patterns easy to memorize and recall.”²⁰⁷ Macpherson notes how although the motivations for Tibetans may have changed, the function has remained more or less the same. It is still used to disseminate agreed upon cultural and political values, and has an “ability to facilitate both remembrance and emotional expression,”²⁰⁸ even when the remembrance (as in the case of Baroque music for Western audiences²⁰⁹) is not of a place ever physically visited by the listener. With this in mind, the current use of imported music structures to transmit culture is not a deviation from historic function, only an implementation of different musical styles, and a growing number of Tibetans appear to be adopting this philosophy.²¹⁰ Figure 5 shows the Tibetan cultural elements which might be correlated through any instance of modern Tibetan music, thus offering a picture of how modern music might operate in the traditional sense of transmitting culture.

²⁰⁷ Macpherson, *A Genre To Remember*, 3.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁰⁹ See the next section, *The Relic of Traditional Tibetan Music*.

²¹⁰ Some such Tibetans (though it is by no means an exhaustive list) include: Shawn, a Tibetan and lead singer of the heavy-metal band *Shangri-La-Rocks* (whose lyrics are often Tibetan-focussed—one song in particular is dedicated to praising the Dalai Lama—but whose music style is far removed from the traditional); Phurbu T. Namgyal, who utilizes pop/hip-hop-influenced music laced with traditional Tibetan lyrics; and the Yak Band (of whom Keila Diehl was once a member), a Tibetan rock and roll band whose founder is credited with being the founder of modern Tibetan music.

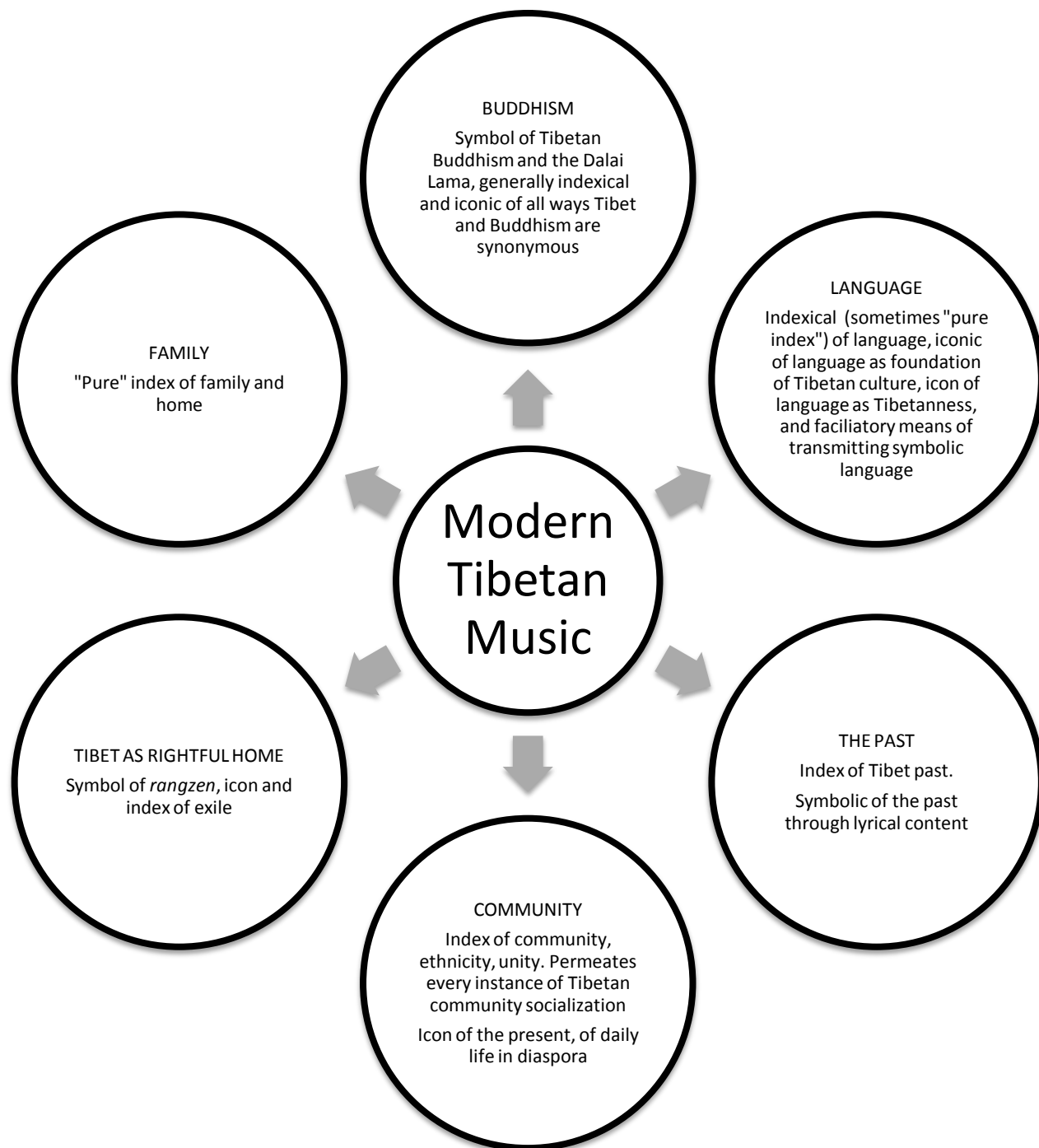


Figure 5. Cultural elements potentially correlated through modern Tibetan music.

Modern Tibetan music, sharing many structural elements iconic of Western rock (beat, harmonic chords and chord progression, electric guitars, bass and drums) can signify as an icon of present-day Tibetan émigré culture, for these are the conditions in which it has been created, and parents often

encourage the aural consumption of these modern Tibetan artists.²¹¹ Western-influenced modern Tibetan music, according to Peirce's theory, would tend to function indexically rather than iconically regarding pastness, for unlike traditional Tibetan music, it cannot function as a relic of pre-1959 Tibet. Its iconicity lies in its vocal and instrumental qualities as it correlates the musicians' emotions through vocal and instrumental timbre, and in its recognition as being a truly Tibetan art form (indeed the very labelling of the genre *modern Tibetan music* implies a correlation with the traditional, suggesting it has somehow emerged from the old, therefore sharing at least some attributes). Through lyrical content, the bodily hexis of performers and the expected emotional quality of the voice, listeners can judge any given instance as to its authenticity, dependent upon its ability to produce feelings of naturalness in accordance with the collectively agreed upon NC.

Indexically, modern Tibetan music correlates signs spacio-temporally, as might any music; the possible uniqueness of modern Tibetan music (at least compared to Western musical functions) is its tendency to occur in fairly bounded Tibetan settings, especially when heard by Tibetan youth, for despite parents' possible encouragement of personal Tibetan musical consumption the reality finds Tibetan songs low on the youths' lists. No more than five out of the fourteen students interviewed claimed to listen to Tibetan music on their own, with only one offering a definitive "yes."²¹² Two out of the five prefaced this admission with "sometimes,"²¹³ and the other two specified they listened to it "when there was nothing (else) to do."²¹⁴ As it is impossible to ascertain the instances of traditional Tibetan music compared to modern Tibetan from the qualitative information, and as it is appropriate to discourse on home life, it has been included in the *Relic of Family* section.

THE RELIC OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

²¹¹ I see this in a similar light to some North American Evangelical parents who, though they might prefer their children listened to hymns, would still rather they listened to CCM (Contemporary Christian Music) rather than "secular" music, for CCM artists would at least be structuring the shared values of the parents' habitus, even if not their musical taste.

²¹² F4.

²¹³ F16 and F13.

²¹⁴ M1 and M7.

Music as Interactive Museum Piece

All of Peirce's signs might be in operation in any given instance of traditional music, correlating each of the core cultural elements as seen in figure 6; however, the iconicity of traditional music will be the focus here, particularly pertaining to music as a relic of the past. My understanding is an adaptation of Douglas Anderson's interpretation in *Peirce on Metaphor*, who (inferring from Peirce) sees that any symbol in which one stage predominates can be called by its predominating stage.²¹⁵ Though traditional music might be a symbol (also possessing indexicality) of Tibetan cultural pastness, it may here be called an icon since it is conceptualized as having been structured through the same structures which structured the relic of Tibetan cultural past, thus capable of being a symbol in which the iconicity predominates.²¹⁶ Taking this view, Tibetan traditional music is symbolic of perceived Tibetanness in general (for indeed a person with any knowledge whatsoever of Tibetans might glance at a music performance and say "ah, that's Tibetan music"), and indexical in the ways it spacio-temporally correlates the performers and listeners, the listeners and setting. However ultimately it is its iconicity, its essence, its embodiment and place in the content of the past cultural equation, which comes to the fore and presents the past as an interpretable relic. It is as an icon that traditional music is understood as having a shared essence with history, thus essentially *being* Tibetanness, adhering through the belief that the iconic musical structures both created and were created by the conditions structuring the idealized past. As Eco observed, "the way that artistic forms are structured reflects the way in which science or contemporary culture views reality."²¹⁷ This observation is evidenced by numerous other studies: Turino's observation of "wide tuning" commonly found in the participatory musics of Indonesia, Peru, Shona et al. (allowing participation by musicians of diverse skill, iconic of broader group participatory values);²¹⁸ Feld's study

²¹⁵ Douglas Anderson, "Peirce on Metaphor" *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 20 No. 4 (Fall 1984): 486.

²¹⁶ Anderson, 456.

²¹⁷ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 13.

²¹⁸ Turino, *Music as Social Life*, 45.

of how the Kaluli overlapping “*lift-up-over sounding*” singing style iconicized Kaluli speech and the sounds of the forest (Feld’s “the music of nature becomes the nature of music”²¹⁹); and Judith and Alton Becker’s²²⁰ famous Javanese musical study where they found the Gamelan iconicized time conceptions in Javanese society. Certainly arguments have been raised over the Beckers’ findings, indictments of promoting musico-cultural elitism and of ignoring other genres,²²¹ however instead of negating music’s socio-iconicity these indictments can be seen to reinforce Eco’s observation that musical structures do indeed *reflect the ways culture views reality*. Structures which no longer function in the same way, or those which are not seen to be a part of the larger group, can now be seen as *relics*. To rephrase Eco, music structures reflect the way culture *once viewed* reality. Traditional music can thus be understood as a relic embodying the past, with the transmission of its original structures key as they contain the essence of the past that created them.

²¹⁹ Feld, *Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style*, 102.

²²⁰ Judith Becker and Alton Becker, "A Musical Icon: Power and Meaning in Javanese Gamelan Music," in *The Sign in Music and Literature*, ed. Wendy Steiner, Austin: University of Texas Press (1981), 203- 215.

²²¹ Pamela Moro, “Constructions of Nations and the Classification of Music: Comparative Perspectives from Southeast and South Asia,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 35, No. 2 (June 2004): 187-211.

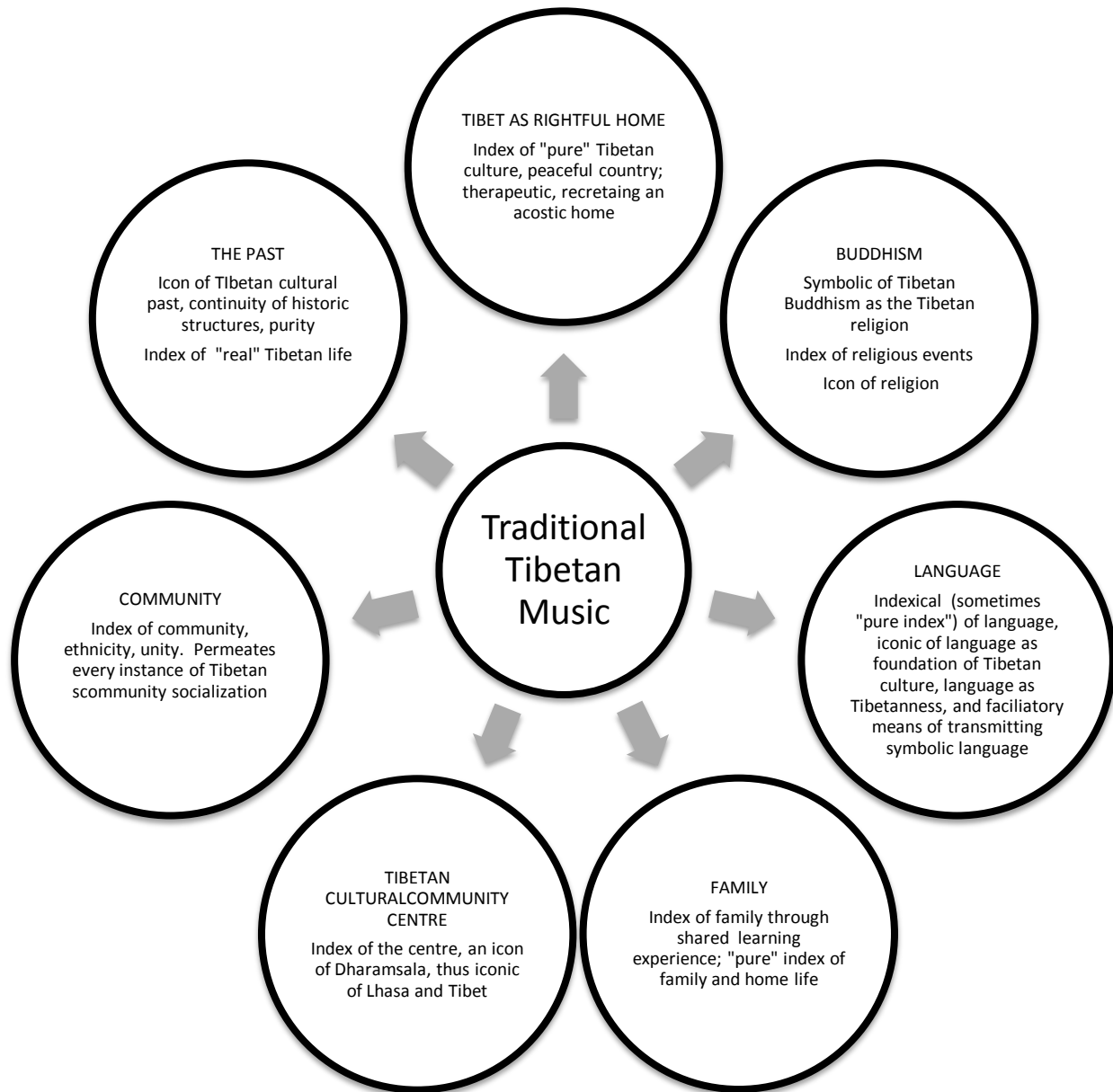


Figure 6. Cultural elements potentially correlated through Traditional Tibetan music.

Music structures were created (or perceived to have been created) in the same conditions which also created the habitus of a people at one time, and as such they are iconic of those conditions, sharing in their essence. Every instance of that music is also indexical of the past, and when experienced unquestioningly as part of “my cultural heritage,” it is semiotically identified not only as pastness, but *my* pastness. If the structures of the habitus are durable (sedimented in the body), the patterns of music (though not necessarily the meanings) are all the more so as they are in fact capable of being transmitted

from one generation to the next, even when the conditions in which they were created no longer exist. Such (supposedly) eternally preserved cultural elements can act like interactive museum pieces, and are indeed considered precious by those who value their historic symbolism. An example can be found in the resurgence of classical European music traditions visible through Toronto's increasingly popular Tafelmusik, a baroque orchestra and chamber choir, where centuries old instruments have been recreated, appropriated by musicians, and are performed and enjoyed by those wishing to "enter" into a musical world long past. The very re-creation of these historic structures played on recreated instruments of old has a transformational effect on the players and the audience, symbolically and aurally transporting them to an imagined time and place, a place which no longer exists anywhere but in the mind, yet somehow becomes tangible. As one review illustrates (and as Tafelmusik wishes to present itself, for this review comes from the official website), Tafelmusik functions as a "time-machine...sweeping the audience out of its seats and back to that magic²²² period between 1650 and 1750."²²³ It seems Canadians, at least those with a European background, are drawn to these events not because the music follows familiar patterns (for indeed the musical structures have changed so much since then that their generative principles at work in more recent music are barely distinguishable from any "foreign" music) but because of the belief that it is somehow a part of their, to borrow the oft-used Tibetan phrase, "rich cultural heritage."

The Relic of Tibetan Music

The first institution set up in exile under the leadership of the Dalai Lama was The Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts (TIPA), as has been proudly relayed to me numerous times by Tibetans both inside and outside the arts. Founded August 11, 1959, TIPA's goal was to preserve the purity of Tibetan music and dance under fears they would be destroyed or marred beyond recognition under Chinese rule. As TIPA's website boasts, it "is the premiere exile institute entrusted with the responsibility of preserving

²²² This "magic period," of course, was far from magical. It was a time of slavery, wars, revolutions (political and industrial), mass poverty, a seemingly insurmountable gap between rich and poor, and untold atrocities. Yet still we "remember" the time with nostalgia, a created world of magic and beauty that never existed.

²²³ The Royal Gazette, Bermuda, January 1999, quoted in "About us" Tafelmusik. <http://www.tafelmusik.org/about/index.htm> (accessed November 23, 2010).

and promoting Tibet's unique tradition of performing arts" created to "preserve the traditional Tibetan arts before it was lost forever."²²⁴ These traditional arts (and related aspects thereof), considered requisite for cultural preservation, are (as listed on the website): Lhamo (Tibetan Opera), "dance," "music," research, and crafts. Traditional vocal and instrumental music appears to be given the strictest requirements regarding the maintenance of its structural purity. In the accompanying dances there appears to be some room for modification, at least a permissibility to create new dances to old songs if the songs are unknown (i.e. songs found through the research segment of TIPA), suggested by F13 in response to a query on new traditional music creation: "the people in TIPA, they research stuff from Tibet, they get songs that were really old I guess, and they make the dances for those songs." The label "crafts" pertains to the construction and re-creation of props necessary for performances, including regionally appropriate dress (clothing denoting regional distinctions, to be worn during performances from each regional genre), costumes and masks for Lhamo, and musical instruments.²²⁵

That which is conceptualized as traditional Tibetan music incorporates a number of styles and genres, including: *nangma*, *toeshe* (Western songs, i.e. songs from the Western region of Tibet), drinking songs, love songs, and a number of other regional musics. Numerous songs from each genre are now preserved and constitute much of the traditional music repertoire, existing in written form in a music book produced by TIPA, a copy of which most Tibetans who have ever studied the music possess (see chapter 6).

Nangma was first brought to Tibet in 1645 by a group of Muslims from Ladakh and presented to the fifth Dalai Lama. According to my teacher, the songs were then adapted by Tibetan musicians to a "light, classical style" and became popular in central Tibet. The following are two popular nangma songs:

Nangma Dzompa Nam Sum ('Dzoms pa rnam gsum)

²²⁴ Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts "Homepage." <http://www.tibetanarts.org/> (accessed May 15, 2011).

²²⁵ Those elements which might not be commonly conceptualized as performative (research, crafts) are yet involved in the end result (Christopher Small verbalizes such contributive action as *musicking*). In a similar act of musicking, FT related how her first year in TIPA was spent working offstage: "When I joined TIPA, I can't dance on the stage. First you have to work and everything. And I sold bread, and...shapale [Tibetan meat patty]...stuff like that (at the performances)." After she started practicing dranyen more, and two months later she was on stage.

The meadow is ornamented
By an abundance of white meadow-flowers.
Do not change the meadow;
Karma will bring the bees circling around

Nangma Ama le ho (Ama le ho'o)
White crane,
Lend me your wings.
I will not go far;
When I've circled Lithang, I'll return²²⁶

For the second nangma, *Ama le ho*, the symbology is fairly easily explained. The fifth Dalai Lama wrote this song, according to Tibetan tradition, to indicate that he would be reincarnated in Litang (which is indeed where the sixth Dalai Lama was found). Thus the song is a fulfilled prophecy, evidence for Buddhist truth, legitimatization for the seat of the Dalai Lama, and has no doubt been politicized in exile to indicate the future return of the Dalai Lama to his rightful home in Lhasa. The lyrics of *dzompa nam sum*²²⁷ are less clear, and at a cursory glance might appear as instructions for sustainable nomadic living (which indeed they may initially have been). Yet the song has maintained popularity, and was noted by my teacher as “very meaningful.” Geoffrey Samuel noted that in certain contexts these lyrics are “veiled messages,”²²⁸ which in his example related to traditional romantic singing between groups of boys and girls, but might be extended to current contexts in exile. Modern songs coming from Tibet have become highly politicized in exile,²²⁹ and the same has happened for music produced pre-1959. As the interpretation of songs is traditionally relatively open, it seems that a song might be given any meaning deemed appropriate by the listener. Thus the lyrics of Tibetan music, while functioning on a semantic

²²⁶ Lyrics from Geoffrey Samuel, “Music of the Lhasa Minstrels,” in *Zlos-Gar: Performing Traditions of Tibet*, ed. Jamyang Norbu (Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala, India, 1986), 16-17.

²²⁷ Dzompa Nam Sum was one of the first Tibetan songs I ever heard, which instantly produced an emotive response (in [semiotic] theory due to the iconicity of the instrumental and vocal timbre, and its indexing of my own [then vague] idealized conceptualizations of Tibet). It was not until recently that I learned the song in a music lesson.

²²⁸ Ibid., 17.

²²⁹ Tracy Ellwanger, “‘Oh Uncle Pema!’ The Role of Musical Agency in the Creation of a Modern Tibetan Identity,” *ISP Collection Paper 415* (2005) http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/415/ (accessed May 1, 2011).

level, have a greater tendency to interpret at the levels of Secondness and Firstness (discussed in more detail under *The Relic of Language*).

My teacher suggested nangma might be considered more “highly” than other regional musics, having its origins in the aristocratic music of Lhasa. As Samuel notes, nangma is “cultivated and sophisticated art music,” and the songs can create the same temporal cognitive transportation (for the one to whom it is iconic) as listening to tafelmusik: “In listening to them we can momentarily re-enter the elegant and leisured way of life of the old Lhasa aristocracy, now only a distant memory.”²³⁰ It is argued here that any instance of traditional Tibetan music has the power to “sweep the listener” out of their spacio-temporal reality, back into that “magic” time of the past; or rather that the “time-warping” power of music cognitively places the listener in the spacio-temporal world which correlates to their iconicity/indexicality of the song. Thus if, as Samuel suggests, nangma songs are indexical of Lhasan aristocratic life, then any instance of it will transport the listener to *whatever they conceptualize that world to be*. Each instance of music, each new (to the listener) song heard, might assist in the cognitive mappings of that world, adding depth to the CT of aristocratic life, or, for the person who recognizes the nangma song as Tibetan but does not further differentiate it from other traditional music, it might simply add to their general CT of Tibet past.

The same can be said for toeshe (originating in the early twentieth century, considerably more recently than nangma), commonly accompanying circle-dances which are still recreationally common among the older generation in Toronto²³¹ and a mainstay following most major festivals. These too serve as cognitive transporters, signs which index conceptualizations of the past and also immerse the sign perceiver (interpreter) in the actual aural surroundings of history. Such a potentially entire reconstruction of at least one of the senses (and indeed at times all five, as in many Tibetan performances) is an immensely powerful sign, not only indexing what *was* but creating new meanings with every

²³⁰Samuel, *Music of the Lhasa Minstrels*, 17.

²³¹ Every weekend in the summer, a group of Tibetans (mostly older adults) congregates by the lake with a dranyen to play, sing and dance.

manifestation. While all instances of traditional music (particularly performative ones) can operate this way, it is possible that toeshey (or any other songs used for circle dances), with their participatory role, tend to create indices and icons relative to community *now*, through their co-occurrence with Tibetan social experience. Wendy James speaks of how playing music and dancing is a “re-creation of a sensed link with a particular, and shared, past;” and as Turino suggests, “Through moving and sounding together in synchrony, people can experience a feeling of oneness with others. The signs of this social intimacy are experienced directly—body to body—and thus in the moment are felt to be true.”²³² For those who often participate in them (which is not inclusive of the entire Tibetan populous), circle dances and their accompanying songs are communal activities, producing interpretants through (and of) spacio-temporally shared experience. When the participatory element is low (speaking specifically of physical movement²³³—dancing, singing, playing—not to ignore Small’s all-inclusive *musiciking*),²³⁴ as it appears to be for the majority of Tibetans in Toronto during a staged performance (which does not generally include circle dances), this might create a more contemplative atmosphere. Thus the icons and indices created through observed performance might be more individual, less connected to spacio-temporal social experience, and more directly connected to the imagined past from whence they came.

However, this cognitive realm seems to be well beneath the objectifiable iceberg tip of manifest culture. It is equally plausible that the arguments just set forth are indicative more of Tibetan musical semiosis *in old Tibet* and thus apply mostly to the current Tibetan elders who actively participate in circle dances at both official community-organized events as well as informal get-togethers. For the younger generations, there may in reality be little cognitive differentiation between the sounds received during a nangma performance and the songs produced at circle dances. It may indeed be that the very instances of the traditional instruments alone, producing conceptually Tibetan melodic sounds, are similarly iconic and indexical of all cultural elements pertaining to traditional Tibetan music.

²³² Turino, *Music as Social Life*, 2-3.

²³³ Turino, *Signs of Imaginatio*, 241.

²³⁴ Small.

Despite the plethora of Tibetan musical instruments, very few are used outside monastic practice. The dichotomy between monastic and lay music (unlike that between *toeshe* and *nangma*), although perhaps lessening with TIPA performances incorporating both styles (though not simultaneously), remains fairly fixed. In traditional/folk music, the main instruments are the *lingbu* (transverse flute), *piwang* (two-stringed fiddle), *yangchin* (hammer dulcimer), mandolin, and *dranyen* (lute). Each instrument (save the *yangchin*) is generally indexical of Tibetan regions/groups. The *lingbu* is considered the instrument of the nomads (situated all over Tibet); the *piwang* belongs to the Kham of eastern Tibet; the mandolin is utilized in Amdo (northwest), and although it indexes Amdo (at least in ethnic Tibet and for those who have watched DVDs of music currently produced in the region) it is not a part of the TIPA (and therefore the official exilic) repertoire; and the *dranyen*, while played in Western Tibet as well, is mostly indexical of Utsang (Central Tibet) and therefore of the capital Lhasa. The Lhasa minstrels (pre-1959) appropriated all these instruments into the Lhasa *nangma* ensemble, and the songs reproduced in exile (when the performer and instrumental availability allow) often follow this Lhasan method.

As Samuel writes and indeed is apparent in exile, the six-stringed *dranyen* is “the most ‘Tibetan’ of all the Lhasa minstrel instruments.”²³⁵ It is considered by many to be unique to the Himalayas, with five-string and seven-string variations played in Nepal and Bhutan,²³⁶ and bears little resemblance to instruments elsewhere (perhaps the closest resemblances can be found in the lutes of Tadjiks and Kazakhs²³⁷). Diehl notes now the majority of Tibetans perceive the timbre of the *dranyen* (and certain vocal styles) as iconic, “the (musical) sound of traditional Tibet,” at once *nyenpo*, *nyingpa* and *yakpo*.²³⁸ The *dranyen* is *nyenpo* (the best translation for which is “sweet-sounding” or aesthetically pleasing to the ear), iconic of Tibet’s richness and beauty, indexing (as will be seen) all things considered Tibetan. It is *yakpo*, “good,” indicating correctness and producing a sense that “all is well.” It is *yakpo* perhaps in large

²³⁵ Norbu, 14.

²³⁶ Geoffrey Samuel, “Songs of Lhasa” *Ethnomusicology* 20, No. 3 (September 1976): 414.

²³⁷ Samuel, *Songs of Lhasa*, 414.

²³⁸ Diehl, 81-82.

part because it is *nyinpa*, “old,” a continuation of Tibetanness in exile and a sonic connection to the past.

The iconicity and indexicality of the dranyen to Tibetanness is further seen in the popular traditional song

Dranyen Tamding Wangyel:

First verse:

Dranyen la ni tamding wangyal
Mi goe go goe la gu gi
Dranyen tamding wangyal
Mi goe go goe la gu gi
Pho shing tak pa la goe gi tak pae don po la goe gi
Mo shing la ni lang ma la goe i lang mae yae ka la goe gi
Yang kar mar moe goe gi wa moe pak pa la goe gi
Tsi tsi rampala goe gi rampae gu ku la goe gi

Dranyen Tamding Wangyal
Many things are needed to make you
Dranyen Tamding Wangyal
Many things are needed to make you
Wood from a male tree is needed
Wood from a female tree is needed
Sheep skin is needed
The cartilage from a big mountain rat is needed

Chorus

Dranyen khe kyi soong dae
La ni ama la kyi soong dhang dra la
La moe gyab nae tang yang
La moe dhu nae ghorjung

The sound of the dranyen
Is like the sound of my mother’s voice
When you play it on one side of the mountain,
You can hear it on the other side

Second verse:

Dranyen la ni tamding wangyal
Mi goe go goe la gu gi
Dranyen tamding wangyal
Mi goe go goe la gu gi
Tong khen khe pa la goe gi tak shar shoepala goe gi
Sung kae la ni nyen pala goe gi
Menchoong bho mo la goe gi
Serkhen mang po goe gi shug drel lhen gae la goe gi
Wo tsi tamding wangyal la ni
Mi goe go goe la gu gi

Dranyen Tamding Wangyal
Many things are needed to make you
Dranyen Tamding Wangyal
Many things are needed to make you
A good male player is needed, not too young, not too old
A good female singer is needed,
With a beautiful voice
Many people are needed, sitting
Wow, Tamding Wangyal,
Many things are needed to make you

The first verse consists of general material necessities: you need two types of trees, a male tree and a female tree (one type of wood for the body of the dranyen and one for the tuning pegs), sheep skin to be stretched over the base, and cartilage from a “big mountain rat” for the strings (now often replaced by synthetic nylon). This verse can be seen to connect to the physical landscape, making the dranyen iconic of the geographic home of Tibetans and their rightful inheritance. The chorus relates to the iconicity of identity and familiarity, its sound as natural and beautiful, tied to one’s roots and lineage. The dranyen is equated with the first sound generally heard by a child, the sound of one’s mother (in my teacher’s description “the sound is like my mother’s voice”), a sound that carries over the mountains. The second verse iconicizes and indexes community, calling for a good male player with a good voice, a good female player, and an audience of “lots of people sitting.” Both verses note the co-dependence of gender

(both in nature and humanity), with the second verse iconicizing and indexing community by calling for “many people.”

The dranyen, like all traditional music, is fused with Tibetan identity in general. Thus, capable of being not only observed but *experienced*, traditional music serves both as a relic and a powerful tool for cultural preservation, for the patterns are not only durable but have the remarkable trait of subconsciously arranging and rearranging the cognitive map. Ultimately then, music is a sign of Tibetanness, and a powerful medium for transmitting cultural knowledge and values and *because it is* a historically patterned element of the habitus.

THE RELIC OF TIBETAN CULTURAL PAST (SHANGRI-LA)

Cognitive types can be constructed in different ways, and new objects may either adapt an existing cognitive type or necessitate the construction of a new one. Eco offers two means of CT creation: through nuclear content (information from the collective group) and through retrieval.²³⁹ The most encyclopedic (detailed) CTs will theoretically come from direct experience (retrieval), with those formed from nuclear content being perhaps less detailed and physically based. Significantly, evidence for the most encyclopedic CT of the real Tibetan life, indicating experiential structuring, came from the only Tibetan interviewed who had in fact been born in Tibet (though he left when he was very young):

Music is something (amazing), it's a part of life's civilization, people used to...when they were working, they had their own, they go and sing, they had different kinds of songs they do when working, farmers have different kinds of songs. And people, when they have a full moon, they gather all together outside, they have a bonfire, play the dranyen, they have a circle dance. This is their own ancient lifestyles in Tibet.²⁴⁰

His cognitive type of Tibetan life, actual descriptions of what people did and how they lived, was vastly different from other Tibetans' CT's, which generally produced a “sense” of idealized life but not an immediately articulated depiction.

²³⁹ Eco offers that, for Montezuma, his CT of “horse” (upon the arrival of the Spaniards and prior to seeing one) may have been initially constructed either by nuclear content (a tall deer with long hair in the middle and men ride them) or through information for retrieval (go down to the ocean and see) (Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 127-141).

²⁴⁰ MT.

For Tibetans born in exile, offering instructions for retrieval is impossible (‘just go to Tibet and see for yourself’) for the object is no longer there; or, if they went, they would be shocked, for all the information provided them on what Tibet “is” would be so different that they would conclude Tibet was no longer Tibet. This would be vastly different from the encounter between a newly arriving Tibetan’s CT of “white” Canadians with the reality they see in Parkdale (arguably the most multicultural neighbourhood in the most multicultural city in the world). In this case, it is likely the Tibetan simply assumes their CT was incorrect and reforms their image of Canadians. Due to the deep emotional investment and personal identification in the CT of Tibet (unlike a comparatively weaker investment in and identification with the pre-existing CT of Canadians as white) their reification of the object is more powerful than the current reality of the same. Thus in the case of an encounter with the reality of Tibet, it is probable that instead of seeing something new, identifying it with a pre-existing schema, and assuming the schema was incorrect, they would instead see something new, identify it with a pre-existing schema, and assume the new thing they saw was marred.

Diehl claims this reification, often termed Shangri-La, “is a literary, cultural, and experiential legacy with which anyone writing about Tibetans today must grapple.”²⁴¹ The Tibetan cultural past of popular memory is conceptualized (whether articulated or simply felt) by many exile Tibetans and Western supporters to have reached a stage of cultural significance sometime prior to the mass exodus of 1959, when the natural evolution of culture was effectively ended. Many Western Tibetologists and Tibetan academics point to the fallacies in and dangers of the idealization of Tibetan culture as it existed just prior to the Dalai Lama’s escape to India. It has been argued that this view of Tibetan culture is a disservice to Tibetans and connotes an impossibly stagnant culture, one which is neither a viable nor positive representation for any society, and also can create an exclusive and excluding situation. As Diehl puts it, “the paradigm of preservation has contributed (along with romantic Western accounts) to the development of essentialist notions of what and who is ‘really Tibetan.’”²⁴² Prior to the mass exodus of

²⁴¹ Diehl, 21.

1959, however, Tibet was hardly unified,²⁴³ nor was its culture static. Diehl notes how the intense focus on preservation “does little to account for (or respect) the rich diversity of *pre-1950* Tibetan culture either and is closely related to the attachment (by many non-Tibetans and Tibetans) to the image of Tibet as an unchanging, medieval ‘Shangri-La’.”²⁴⁴

It should be noted here that the Tibetan culture of common exilic memory and the actual culture of pre-1959 Tibet are not entirely congruent, nor need they be. For “the source or model of the recreated tradition need never have existed in the form in which the seeker alleges; what is significant is that he believes that it did so exist.”²⁴⁵ As Yeh writes, exile Tibetans’ “relationship to Tibet as homeland is based on tradition, and on the claim that they have preserved the authentic Tibetan culture that existed before it was destroyed in Tibet.”²⁴⁶ Structures need not actually be ‘traditional’ to pass on tradition, nor to have actually existed in history to be iconic of the past. “In order for a sign to be an icon the interpretant must know that it exhibits its object.”²⁴⁷ If an agent is unaware of the iconicity of the structures, the iconicity is lost. Equally, if the agent *believes* the iconicity of an object, it *is* iconic. Therefore in the propagation of a shared homogenizing narrative (with the goal of unifying and homogenizing all Tibetans), it is imperative that people believe in the reality and sacredness of the historic culture so intrinsically that its preservation becomes unquestioned common-sense.

The sense of Tibetan culture as ‘unchanging, medieval Shangri-La,’ an entity containing an ancient purity, seemed to emerge during interviews, often appearing in what *wasn't* said as much as what was:

F13: Tibetan culture is...to be preserved. There aren't many...real Tibetans...alive in this world, I guess.

²⁴² Ibid., 63.

²⁴³ Melvyn Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama* (University of California Press, 1997).

²⁴⁴ Diehl, 67, italics in original.

²⁴⁵ Edward Shils “Tradition” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13, no. 2 (April 1971): 133.

²⁴⁶ Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*, 661.

²⁴⁷ W. Burks “Icon, Index and Symbol” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 9, No. 4 (June 1949): 676.

And I think, if we don't preserve it, and maintain it, and enjoy it or cherish it, I think it's gonna get lost. (and that'd be really sad). So, I don't know...Tibetan culture...I'm a Tibetan, so of course I want my culture to survive...and it's just that it...has a certain (?), a certain type of aura about it.

Her response included many reasons *why* Tibetan culture should be preserved, and even personal motivations and identification with the culture, but no definition per se (save that it has a certain aura). Indeed it is doubtful any Euro-Canadian would be able to articulate their sense of culture even to the level of these Tibetan youth, yet most Euro-Canadians have never been provided the opportunity to realize their culture that exile provides. For émigré Tibetans, for many of whom cultural preservation is their *raison d'être*, it seems they would possess a ready-made semantic argument for what it is.

Two reasons for this hesitation (and the hesitation in many Tibetan students' responses) stand out in light of information found in this study. One is the idea that habitus creates common-sense, that is, it makes cultural processes "obscure to the eyes of their producers."²⁴⁸ Culture that is a part of people is never thought about, for it simply *is*. As Bourdieu says, "It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know."²⁴⁹ This would relate to the toolkit, the actual habitus of the Tibetans in Toronto—culture here is difficult precisely because it makes sense, because the need never arises to define it. The second possibility would produce the same end (the difficulty in answering the question posed) but generating from different principles: it adheres to the idea of culture as an *entity*. If Tibetans view culture as completable and completed, the question may simply have seemed odd, or too self-explanatory, like asking someone to define a physical structure. It would, for example, be on the level of speaking to a group of protestors trying to protect a historic building from being demolished, and asking them to define the building. Answers would probably include the history of the building (Tibetans responded with the two-thousand-year history of Tibet), the value of aspects of the building (respondents noted the importance of Tibetan Buddhism as a science, the value of Tibetan culture to the world) and the impending demolition (Tibetan culture is being destroyed in Tibet). To define the building seems unnecessary: it has walls, it is made of stones, there is furniture inside, some

²⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 69.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

paintings hang on the walls... and similarly Tibetan respondents would not describe the physicality of the 'building' (religion, music, art, language), but rather relate why they think the building deserves to be preserved for posterity, perhaps even say it has a certain aura about it.

One parent²⁵⁰ interviewed evidenced this view of Tibetan culture, saying it has been passed on for two thousand years, and thus "what's happening in Tibet is pretty sad" as once a "culture is gone...it's gone." Such a view gives the exile Tibetans the role of the sole bearers of this great entity called Tibetan Culture, something very valuable indeed as it took some two thousand years to build, precious because it is in danger of destruction, and more valuable still because it is in the hands (literally written on the minds) of so few. This sense of responsibility can indeed place great pressure on Tibetans, not only to pass on their culture, but to appropriate the culture (especially the perceived fundamental aspects) themselves. P25 also offered a telling observation of his view on culture: "Canada is still forming a culture, we don't have an exact culture here, we are forming a culture" whereas Tibetans "have our own culture, in terms of language, writing, music, religion."²⁵¹ For Tibetans, perhaps, culture is in fact a very clear semblance of things: language, religion, music, dress, food. Note here also that music is seen not as a tool for welding other concepts together and transmitting Tibetanness but, alongside language and religion, is identified as a necessary cultural element.

Music and the Transmission of the Past

Traditional Tibetan music is an index of "pure" Tibetan culture, and as such must be kept free from change. As Samuel observed, "the songs of the Lhasa minstrels are in a way a microcosm of Tibetan culture."²⁵² As evidenced in the language used by Samuel and others, these songs are not empirically a microcosm of all Tibetan culture from that time, but rather iconic of that specific bounded culture which

²⁵⁰ P25.

²⁵¹ Here P25 indicates that culture is not seen as that which is accumulated through life, but is in fact a fairly set pattern of living which is connected to a long history, having through a long historic process developed a 'completed' language, a 'completed' religion, 'completed' music—for if in Canada we're still developing a culture (and note that he identified himself as having a role in that process: "We don't have an exact culture here"), and Tibet *has* a culture, culture must be capable of reaching a level of completion.

²⁵² Samuel, *Music of the Lhasa Minstrels*, 14.

has in exile come to be considered *the* Tibetan culture. One student interviewed agreed that the creation of a new traditional Tibetan song would be an “oxy-moron,” and that “the Tibetan artists, they’re singing new songs, like modern songs, but traditional Tibetan dances are all passed down.”²⁵³ MT claimed his own musical learning came from his teacher, “a famous dranyen player in Lhasa” who was “born in Tibet and escaped into India,” and that the music teaching to students in Toronto thus (generally) follows the historic (legitimate cultural) pattern. This sentiment is echoed by others in the community. Regarding the same students and teacher, O2 boasted “they’re getting taught as close as you can possibly get to a teacher from Tibet” (indeed at least one teacher is from Tibet, but he cannot be the archetype of a “teacher from Tibet” as he was not trained in the homeland—he is, however, “as close as you can get”). The same teacher (MT) claimed music’s role in cultural preservation (preserving the relic of Tibetan cultural past) as being:

...very important for the younger generations. One thing, our culture is going to almost die in Tibet, due to the Chinese, more Chinese coming into Tibet, settle there, and everything—their culture, music...there are lots of changes in Tibet. The real Tibetan music gets mixed with the Chinese influence, you know, so this is very important for the students. When I teach...we usually teach the real Tibetan songs, the real way of Tibetan life which we had before, in ancient Tibet, not mixed with Chinese influence.

He cited the common argument that Tibetan culture is being bastardized in Tibet, and made the claim that the music they were teaching in Toronto was the real music, that what they teach through music actually *is* the real past Tibetan life (notably not just the music of the past). Thus traditional Tibetan music is often understood to be iconic of Tibetan cultural past.

If Tibetans see their culture as such an entity, it is only natural that they use all their efforts to preserve that which existed pre-1959. No new classical music can be written, because it is already complete, already there, thus any attempt to create more would be meaningless, like trying to add a puzzle piece to a puzzle already completed. Here can be seen the cultural legitimacy in MT’s claim of continuity with the cultural past: if he learned from his teacher, who performed (and was famous for doing so) in the *real* historic Lhasa, then he (MT) is an embodiment of the legitimate culture, which he in turn passes on

²⁵³ F13.

to his students, and what he teaches is not only musical techniques but “the real Tibetan songs, the real way of Tibetan life which we had before.”

TIBET AS LOST, RIGHTFUL HOMELAND (*THE CONCEPT OF RANGZEN AND CREATED NOSTALGIA*)

Rangzen (Tibetan for *freedom*, although its significance is better translated as *independence*) is the proliferating cultural symbolic-Argument for every sense of loss mentioned here. Due to the term itself functioning as a symbol, I have opted to objectify the *reasons* for the symbolic production, those from which the term reaches the semantic level, although the term itself is highly operational as a sign of the current Tibetan purpose, for many the *raison d'être* of their existence in exile. Its dissemination as a symbol has been global, with the words “Free Tibet!” familiar even to those who know nothing of the situation.

The majority of Tibetans in the diaspora were born outside Tibet, and many now are even second generation. There would be no nostalgia, no sense of loss, no reason to desire a return if that sense were not instilled in youth, in the “childhood learning that treats the body as a living memory pad, an automaton that ‘leads the mind unconsciously along with it.’”²⁵⁴ Indeed, “the notion that Tibetans are refugees, that they are not where they really belong, has been fostered in the young by parents and teachers” and is “highly constitutive to their identity as Tibetans.”²⁵⁵ To be Tibetan is to share in the loss of the homeland and to yearn for a return. Provided this sense is a part of a child’s cognitive development, there will be no need to ‘prove’ the desire later in life, no need to question ‘why’ they should consider themselves refugees or desire to return somewhere they have never been. It is “the form *par excellence* of ‘blind or symbolic thought.’”²⁵⁶ Hodge calls nostalgia “a kind of prospective memory uniting visions of the *future* based on *present* perceptions of *past* conditions (experienced or imagined). It is a structuring element of cultural logics, therefore, a component of habitus and the icons, indexes and symbols it

²⁵⁴ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 68.

²⁵⁵ Strom, 37.

²⁵⁶ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 68.

informs.²⁵⁷ Thus it is imperative to create the nostalgia necessary to produce the yearnings propelling a continuation of *Tibetanness* in those who would otherwise experience no such feelings.

Music and the Transmission of Loss, Nostalgia and Home

Diehl notes how traditional Tibetan music serves to “help heal the wounds of exile,” providing “old, familiar sounds, images, and feelings fleetingly coalesce to create an acoustic ‘place’ that feels like home.”²⁵⁸ This sense of continuity is particularly therapeutic for Tibetans who were born in Tibet and still feel the pain of personal, experiential loss. For these Tibetans of the older generation (whose numbers are dwindling) there is no reason to create and little need to retain the nostalgic memory, for it is a constant reality, a constant dream of a former life, a life which was theirs and was taken from them. For the generations born in exile, this is not the case. To continue the fight for *rangzen*, the desire for the same must be created in the new generation.

The manufacturing of nostalgia is accomplished through multiple methods, including imagery of old Tibet (available in a plethora of books) alongside stories of the happy, peacefully simplistic lives of Tibetans, instilling a sense of home and peacefulness, combined with a constant barrage of video and stories of China’s brutal 1959 massacre and footage of subsequent “crackdowns” in Tibet (including torture victims, monks and nuns forced to commit unmentionable [yet often mentioned] acts). Traditional music virtually always co-exists with many of these images and narratives, particularly when performed publicly or on video. While for the older generation traditional music can be therapeutic, for the younger generation it is presented as having continuity with the past: to hear Tibetan music from the past is to tangibly experience the past. When presented alongside peaceful images of Tibet, this iconicity is reinforced and the music becomes an index for the geographic scenery and the imagined way of life. Contemporaneously it produces nostalgia, for all the beauty envisaged is not purely objective (as with a non-Tibetan watching Michael Palin’s *Himalaya* and marvelling at the scenery) but is rather presented as their rightful land, their rightful life, unfairly and violently stolen. Each further concomitant sign

²⁵⁷ Hodge, 120.

²⁵⁸ Diehl, 82.

reinforces the music's indexicality to these objects, and eventually every instance of the music alone indexes the sense of Tibet, belonging, ownership, loss and nostalgia.

Modern Tibetan music also operates here, although unlike Traditional music which iconicizes continuity, modern music largely iconicizes and indexes loss, its structures having been created in the conditions of exile (save modern songs from Lhasa, which are notably gaining popularity particularly among the younger émigré community). As Diehl writes it is “displacement and separation [which] modern songs tend to foreground and keep alive.”²⁵⁹ Peirce calls iconic “the sentiment excited by a piece of music considered as representing what the composer intended.”²⁶⁰ Since much of the modern lyrical repertoire concerns Tibet as rightful homeland and its destruction at the hands of the Chinese, it easily interprets (for any who can understand the words) as a symbolic-argument of the same at the level of Thirdness. At Tibetan concerts the concept of *rangzen* is ever present, with the term often interjected in songs and speeches. Diehl notes how rock music indexes the West which in turn indexes freedom, and as modern Tibetan music shares structures with rock, it is highly indexical (even iconic and symbolic) of *rangzen*. Further it can be assumed that in modern songs the singer's voice and the composer's intention (both of whom have [generally] been socialized in exile) conform to their musical choice (a genre iconic and indexical of *rangzen*) and lyrical content. Thus following Peirce, when a modern song signifies this loss (and this signification is what the producer intended), it does so as an icon.

Some evidence for the successful instilment of these values was seen through the interviews in Toronto. Besides numerous references to the destruction of Tibetan culture in the homeland, M1 said that whenever he hears the word Tibet, “it feels like someone's saying ‘peace’...Tibet's a peaceful country, I always think of that” (indicating the successful transmission of the conceptualization of Tibet as a peaceful nation). When asked if he had ever been to Tibet, O6 replied, “I'd love to, but I don't know when. I'd really love to go back.” *To go back* to a place he had never been. For O2's definition of Tibetan culture, he included “our way of life when Tibet was a free country,” further adding:

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Peirce, *Letter to Lady Welby*.

I guess since I've never lived or had any real life experience, mine is more a dreamland of Tibet, I envision Tibet to be a certain way, but it seems like it's centuries ago, it's too...too peaceful, too serene, it seems like the opposite of the life I'm living now. You have to get up, you have to work. I'm sure you'd have to do the same thing in the Tibet I'm thinking about, but it seems like more about living off the land, daily chores.

His articulation and rationalization of his "imagined homeland" is particularly interesting. Cognitively he acknowledges that his idea of Tibet is a dreamland, an impossible utopia, yet it exists in his cognition. He also acknowledges that daily responsibilities would remain even in Tibet, although his perception of such is more idyllic than the life he is now living (or likely than what the reality of old Tibetan life would have been).

Even with the instilment of Tibet as a rightful home, only one interviewee mentioned the potential of an eventual return (and even then only in passing). It is indeed uncertain whether many would return if the calls for a "free Tibet" were ever answered. When asked by the Toronto Star if he would take the opportunity should it arise, seventy-four-year-old Lektsog, a Canadian citizen, was unhesitating in responding "of course;" his daughter, however, was less sure: "I would want to take my daughter there. But could I live there? ... I don't know. Canada is our home."²⁶¹ With their exile beginning in 1959 Tibetans have lived for over 50 years outside the homeland, and few remain for whom the historic habitus they strive to transmit ever lived in the same social conditions which produced it. The production of nostalgia alone may not be enough, and the dream for home may well have been replaced by the dream for community. As F20 said, "If we get Tibet back one day, and we're not together, that's not going to matter."

THE RELIC OF COMMUNITY

For the Government in Exile, community is perhaps the key ingredient in cultivating cultural preservation, as shown by the ongoing rehabilitation of Tibetans in diaspora. The *Tibetan Refugee Community Integrated Development Planning Summary* of 1995-2000 (conducted in 1994 by the CTA [Central Tibetan Administration]) planning council, concerning settlements throughout the entire Tibetan

²⁶¹ Sandro Contenta, "For Tibetan Refugees, Canada Was Literally the New World," *Toronto Star*, October 23, 2010. <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/dalailama/article/880294--for-tibetan-refugees-canada-was-literally-the-new-world> (accessed January 6, 2011).

diaspora) speaks of the “rehabilitation program,” which is tellingly defined as a “long term rehabilitation program that would serve to bring all the Tibetan refugees into homogenous Tibetan communities large enough to allow them to perpetuate their language, traditions and thus preserve their national identity.”²⁶² “Rehabilitation” therefore suggests no explicit interest in adapting and entering the majority community (as rehabilitation programs generally propose to do) but rather consists of a re-habitation (a re-creation of the supposed Tibetan habitat) in the midst of non-Tibetan cultures. The program is intentionally and overtly homogenizing (“homogeneous Tibetan communities”) and vaguely outlines what is to be preserved (“language and traditions”).

In *There’s No Place Like Home*, Logan notes how “community is an important aspect of ‘home.’”²⁶³ In one of Logan’s interviews, Pasang speaks of the sense of community entailed in the prayer flags seen along the heavily Tibetan populated street of Jameson: “I suppose growing up in [the United Kingdom] I felt a bit alone in the sense that there weren’t other Tibetans living close to me and there wasn’t the sense of community as such, whereas here, I think that to me represents community and home... It also ties in with my memories back home in India.”²⁶⁴ Logan identifies how the large number of Tibetans concentrated in Parkdale “provides a ‘close-knit’ feeling and sense of community”²⁶⁵ and shares an interview excerpt identifying the everyday opportunities for community and shared nostalgia this facilitates:

Where the children [are] playing is where I can meet other Tibetan people. My children can mingle with other Tibetans and talk in the Tibetan language and...make friends with them. Sometimes...the ladies I meet in the park...talk about back home... Sometimes you meet people from back home and old memories come back²⁶⁶

Speaking of Toronto, one music student who had lived in many diasporic communities around the world noted:

²⁶² *Tibetan Community Integrated Development Planning Summary 1995-2000*, 1.

²⁶³ Logan, 115.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 116.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

I guess because everyone lives so close together, we're forced to speak Tibetan, to see each other. It's like living back in India, everyone's close together. But in New York, Madison Wisconsin, yeah, everyone lives far apart. They end up forgetting how to speak Tibetan, which is very sad. I guess they don't have as many Tibetans as we do.²⁶⁷

Another student, comparing the Tibetan community in Toronto and the one in New Delhi, cited no difference between the two communities.²⁶⁸ One only said there were more Tibetans in New Delhi.²⁶⁹

Another noted "The Tibetan community here is more modern. The community in Dharamsala, it's a bit more...cultured?...there,"²⁷⁰ likely referring to the idealized Tibetan cultural heritage which is to be preserved. This adheres to the common belief that Tibetans from Dharamsala are "somehow more Tibetan"²⁷¹ than those outside. One student, however, held Toronto to be "more Tibetan" than their community in India:

F20: When I was in Kalimpong I kind of lost touch with my Tibetan culture, because there was like Nepali people and Indian people, fitting in with the Indian people and the Nepali people, so even when I was in my house I'd speak Nepali with my grandmother and my grandparents. So I kinda lost touch with that. So I think when I came to Toronto my Tibetan started getting better. Cause in Toronto I think they try harder to keep in touch with Tibetan (culture), there's a massive community here.

John: Would you say there's a bigger Tibetan community here than in Kalimpong?

F20: Here it's more together.²⁷²

She observed that, although the community in Kalimpong was perhaps larger in number, the one in Toronto was "more together," more focused on preserving and passing on culture. She also shared one of the times she felt most connected to her culture in Toronto:

We had the protest downtown. Everyone was there, and we were all like, "Free Tibet, Free Tibet," and we had all these chants, and poems and whatever, and it was really (Tibetan? *hard to hear on recording*) because it was lots of young people too, and that was kinda fun for me, (cause there's always just) old people there, but there were teenagers, and little kids. That's when I felt most Tibetan, cause everyone was there. People of all ages were there.

²⁶⁷ F5.

²⁶⁸ F4.

²⁶⁹ F11.

²⁷⁰ F13.

²⁷¹ Diehl, 64.

²⁷² F20.

Her experience suggests a moment of high iconicity and indexicality, everyone being in sync, united in purpose.

While many of the students seemed to think of the Tibetan community in Toronto as quite strong, the adults mostly recalled India as a place of much “richer” Tibetan culture. P17 reminisced how “in our own country, every day we see what our culture is, but here, every day we have to show them, teach them this is our culture, this is our... it’s difficult for them to understand also. They have a few different things. One our culture, one the new culture.” It is uncertain whether he was referring here to “our own country” as the surrogate Dharamsala or Tibet proper, although later he speaks of the community in India “practicing culture in daily life”²⁷³ contrasted with Toronto where “(Tibetan culture) doesn’t suit life.” In suggesting that in Toronto (as opposed to Dharamsala) Tibetan children have two cultures, he implies a common, perhaps subconscious, opinion by his generation that in Dharamsala they only had one culture, the Tibetan culture, and the qualification of the two cultures as *our culture* and *the new culture* underlines the importance of the Tibetan culture (ours) and the otherness of the new (to them) cultures. It also conceptually positions Dharamsala as an icon of pure Tibetan community. Regardless of whether “our country” referred to Tibet or Dharamsala, there were other indications in P17’s interview (and others) to suggest Dharamsala’s significantly larger preponderance of Tibetan culture.

Music and the Transmission of Community

The role of music to facilitate this separation is paramount, as it (perhaps more than any other cultural element) welds the valued Tibetan objects together. Diehl observes that the dranyen (the most Tibetan of instruments, used in both traditional and modern music) is heard at most Tibetan gatherings and “is deeply associated, therefore, with community-level celebrations of friendship and ethnicity,”²⁷⁴ and the same can certainly be said for Toronto. Every summer in Toronto, a group of Tibetan elders gathers by the lake, playing dranyen and singing folk songs, highly participatory²⁷⁵ events which clearly

²⁷³ P17.

²⁷⁴ Diehl, 82.

index and iconicize community. Tibetan restaurants, foci of communal gatherings, usually play Tibetan music (modern and traditional), at least one has a dranyen hanging on the wall, and another restaurant owner told me “I play different Tibetan music (recordings) in the restaurant all the time.” All kinds of Tibetan music is played at dinner parties, birthdays, community events, and homes, permeating practically every aspect of Tibetanness recreated in Toronto. As music accompanies each instance of cultural manifestation, its indexicality is constantly reinforced, and each time music is heard, it has the potentiality of bringing to the fore all the accumulated communal memories upon the existence of which are placed such importance for the continuity of Tibetan culture in exile.

Regardless of the community’s recent exponential growth (visually reflected in the opening of two new Tibetan establishments²⁷⁶ in Parkdale in the past few months, adding to the eight which were already in operation within a three-hundred-metre section of Queen Street West), Toronto is not Dharamsala. Tibetan music may permeate the signs of Tibetanness in Toronto but, unlike the exilic capital, the signs do not dominate in the densely populated multicultural city (and likely never will). The individual’s encounters with Tibetan culture are still, to some degree, a choice. One student who had often visited Dharamsala posited a functional difference from Toronto: “When I was there, it doesn’t seem like...I don’t want to say ‘special’, but...it seems normal. Here you (have things separate), here once a week you come here, but there, it’s every day, you’re part of it, you’re living it.”²⁷⁷ The “here” to which he was referring was, physically, an elementary school which had opened its doors that summer for the Tibetan language lessons and music practices,²⁷⁸ but the physical space was a transformed space, a space symbolizing the intentional gathering of Tibetan people, speaking Tibetan together, living Tibetan life. In Toronto, people have to choose to be a part of the community, whereas in India it is normative. To

²⁷⁵ See Turino’s *Music as Social Life* for an in-depth description of participatory music’s societal significance.

²⁷⁶ One Tibetan restaurant and one store selling Tibetan artefacts.

²⁷⁷ F14.

²⁷⁸ All officially sanctioned lessons (religion, music, language, dance etc.) are usually held at the Gangjong Choedenling, but due to renovations had been moved to the Queen Victoria public school in Parkdale, a temporary but much more accessible venue.

facilitate this choice, to give an option for community so far from the exilic capital, the Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario (CTAO, a branch of the CTA or Tibetan Government in Exile), with the help and blessing of the Dalai Lama, has opened the Tibetan Community Cultural Centre in Toronto, a physical space iconic of Dharamsala, in turn iconic of Lhasa, an icon of Tibet itself.

THE TIBETAN COMMUNITY CULTURAL CENTRE, ICON OF DHARAMSALA, ICON OF TIBET

In reality for Tibetans in Toronto, most nostalgia seems to be directed towards another utopia, Dharamsala, the place built with the sole intention of preserving Tibetan culture in its purest form, and an icon which has arguably become more real than that which it iconicizes. Dharamsala (often called “little Lhasa”) is a representation of the same (Lhasa) and in turn an icon of old Tibet, for “(diasporic Tibetans claim) that they have preserved the authentic Tibetan culture that existed before it was destroyed in Tibet, and transplanted it to Dharamsala.”²⁷⁹ Dharamsala has therefore replaced Lhasa and all other traditional holy places of Tibetan Buddhism as a site of pilgrimage (with the presence of the Dalai Lama replacing the physical geography of the Potala Palace and the Jokhang Temple,²⁸⁰ still among the main sites of pilgrimage for Tibetans in Tibet). It also contains the essence of Tibetan culture, for as mentioned before Dharamsala is “a temporary home preserving historical culture in its pure form.”²⁸¹ As Yeh notes, despite the “temporal” designation, “some Tibetans have begun to see it, rather than Lhasa, as the center of Tibetan symbolic geography and as the locus of authentic Tibetan culture.”²⁸² Dharamsala, as the sole possessor of legitimate Tibetan culture, is a physically enterable space representing the ethereal Tibet of old (and the only one, since not only do diasporic Tibetans have great difficulty entering Tibet, but also because the Tibet of old has been destroyed and now only exists in memory and in Dharamsala).

²⁷⁹ Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*, 661.

²⁸⁰ The Potala Palace was the residence of the Dalai Lama before 1959, and the Jokhang was his summer palace. Both are still standing in Lhasa. From where my wife and I lived in Sichuan, Tibetan pilgrims would take the six month journey over the Himalayas to these two holy sites, prostrating themselves over every inch of the way.

²⁸¹ Anand, *A guide to little Lhasa*, 13.

²⁸² Yeh, *Exile Meets Homeland*, 663.

It could be useful here to see Lhasa (representing Tibet as a whole) as one of Michael Foucault's *utopias*, "sites with no real space,"²⁸³ which "present society itself in a perfected form."²⁸⁴ The Tibetan Government in Exile, from its seat in Dharamsala, attempts to propagate this permeating utopic vision, thereby homogenizing communities throughout the diaspora. The creation of an imagined utopia is certainly not exclusive for Tibetans. Wong speaks of how, for Lao, Hmong, Khmer and Vietnamese refugees, "yearning for the place of the past is no maudlin exercise but rather a very necessary exertion of presence and will,"²⁸⁵ and Korom, speaking of Muhammed Anwar's study of Pakistanis in Britain, posits "the construction of an imaginary homeland fills a necessary, nostalgic void in the lives of migrants and refugees."²⁸⁶ This cognitive utopia is significant in helping Tibetans centre their identity and cultivating a shared memory. Indeed such shared identity is, as Agnew claims, part and parcel for refugee communities, partly defined by "a sense of community transcending national frontiers,"²⁸⁷ the transnational community being largely created through officially sanctioned government extensions. In 1978, when only a handful of Tibetan refugees had been permitted entry to Canada, "the Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario (CTAO) was formed under the approval and guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama."²⁸⁸ The head office is now in Toronto, at the recently established Gangjong Choedenling (Tibetan Community Cultural Centre).

Logan underlines the importance of the Gangjong Choedenling in creating a Tibetan sense of home, being "represented (through photographs) by four participants and mentioned as an important place

²⁸³ Michael Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces" *Diacritics* 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986):24.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Wong, 26.

²⁸⁶ Korom, 4.

²⁸⁷ Vijay Agnew, "Language Matters," in *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search For Home*, edited by Vijay Agnew, (University of Toronto Press: 2005), 4.

²⁸⁸ The Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario, "Ctao Background," CTAO http://ctao.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1 (accessed March 20, 2011).

by all of the others.”²⁸⁹ It is the physical representation of the symbolic “here” to which F14 was referring. According to O6, the Tibetan community in Toronto is, “outside of India, one of the best communities in the world...because we have a Tibetan community centre, we teach languages, musics to the younger generation” (both taught in the Centre). To borrow an essence of Foucault’s utopias, it might be said that the Gangjong Choedenling’s “role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled...the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation.”²⁹⁰ The TCCC (Gangjong Choedenling) is a physical structure (not illusion) at the same time symbolic of the Tibetan culture *par excellence* to be preserved, as well as a providing a kind of compensation for the great cultural loss experienced in exile—not only the loss of the motherland which happened so long ago and which few actually experienced (which is why the sense of loss must be cultivated in the young), but now also the loss of Dharamsala, the place many more Tibetans see as home. It is therefore the symbolic home of the officially sanctioned continuation of Tibetan culture in diaspora and the place of the most legitimized Tibetan communal activities in Toronto. Lakhpa Tsering from Toronto sums up the Tibetan sense of allegiance: “Our geographical home is Canada, our spiritual home is India (where the Dalai Lama lives) and our heart is in Tibet.”²⁹¹ In the geographical home of Toronto, the Gangjong Choedenling serves as the link to both the spiritual home and the heart.

It is necessary to see the importance of the Gangjong Choedenling beyond the mere provision of a common space for Tibetans to meet. I propose that it is in fact a tangible representation of Dharamsala—politically, religiously, communally and structurally. Politically, it houses the officially sanctioned extension (the CTAO) of the religiously sanctioned continuation (the Government in Exile) of the historically legitimate religio-political leadership (the Dalai Lama as God-King). Religiously (and politically) it was commissioned personally by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is the site of religious

²⁸⁹ Logan, 110.

²⁹⁰ Foucault, 27.

²⁹¹ An interview with Lakhpa Tsering in V. Radhika, “Canada's Little Tibet Holds On to Its Identity,” Tibet.ca <http://www.tibet.ca/en/newsroom/wtn/6842> (accessed December 9, 2010).

classes and religious teachings (by lay monks, high lamas and even the Dalai Lama himself) and houses many Buddhist statues and religious icons and imagery (like the monasteries of Dharamsala and Tibet). Communally it is the site of many social Tibetan activities, especially the most important cultural events, including the Dalai Lama's birthday, the anniversary of his Nobel Peace Prize (clearly a recent addition to the Tibetan celebratory traditions, but one of the biggest celebrations in the diaspora) and His Holiness' "private" teachings²⁹² (representations of the Dalai Lama's home in Dharamsala), and also everyday events: religion, language, music, and performing arts classes on the weekends, and open daily for anyone (mostly the elderly) to meet and spend time with other Tibetans (as occurs "naturally" in the Tibetan-majority diasporic capital). Structurally, the Gangjong Choedenling is currently undergoing major renovations to metamorphose from a fifty-thousand square foot factory to an architecturally authentic Tibetan centre. All the funds raised by the Dalai Lama's public talks at the Roger's Centre were put towards these renovations, and when His Holiness spoke at the Gangjong Choedenling in October 2010 he gave official and religious recognition to the centre (numerous religious rites were performed beforehand to prepare the centre for this officially legitimated blessing rendering the centre an officially sanctioned representation of Tibetanness). In a sense, the iconic Gangjong Choedenling serves as a threshold of and portal to the "real" Tibet of old.²⁹³

Beyond providing a portal to the past, the Centre also facilitates cultural continuation. Concerning the transmission of culture in Toronto, O2 responded:

²⁹² The Dalai Lama, when he came to Toronto, spoke publicly at the Roger's Centre where there were mostly "white" faces and comparatively few Tibetans in the crowds. He also spoke at the Gangjong Choedenling, but this was all in Tibetan and was therefore more "private" in nature (not as conducive to public interest).

²⁹³ I believe further in-depth study on the Gangjong Choedenling, other similar Cultural Centres established throughout the diaspora, and the layout of the Tibetan house might provide insights into Tibetan culture on the level of Bourdieu's revelations regarding the Kabyle house as an "inverted microcosm" (Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 317) of the Kabyle world, or the gardens of Persia mentioned by Foucault, "a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with...the naval of the world at its centre." (Foucault, 25) Logan's study of the Tibetan sense of "home" has certainly touched on this, providing photos by Tibetans on their conceptualization of "home" and offering through interviews an understanding of the meaning and function of "home" for Tibetans, which also includes many references to the Gangjong Choedenling. I believe a future study in this area would further illuminate Tibetan cultural understanding and the importance of Tibetan-style architecture.

It might be a little bit easier now, we have a bigger population, we have our own community centre now, it's a good meeting place. Two groups are very important for that community centre I think. One is the youth, you know 4 years old to 18, and the second group is the elders, 65 years and older. For those two groups, I think the community centre is very important. The elders, they always have a place to meet and mingle. Cause right now they have a lot of time on their hands, their life is mainly doing prayers, doing mantras...but I think over there, they get to see people (in their group? *Difficult to hear on the recording*), they get to talk, and the kids...they see other Tibetan kids, they have something in common. They have language classes there, Tibetan dance classes there. Those steps, I think it helps in future to preserve the culture.

According to O2 (and the many who share his opinion), the Gangjong Choedenling is an invaluable institution for the community and the continuation of Tibetan culture in exile. Home to language classes, music classes, art classes, communal gatherings, religious teachings, performances, festivals and commemorations, in essence it is the physical place in which all the elements of the cultural equation co-exist and co-mingle to produce *Tibetanness*.

Music and the Gangjong Choedenling

The presence of music in the Gangjong Choedenling might be seen as the mortar which fixes all these co-mingling cultural elements together. Not only is it the site housing all the group music classes, but as O6 said, "almost all of the events have music."²⁹⁴ On my own numerous visits I cannot recall a time when there was not some instance of Tibetan music, and traditional and modern music often occurred during the same event; however, if a differentiation could be drawn, instances of *only* modern music seemed to be spacio-temporally associated with community celebrations and entertainment, whereas traditional music more often indicated sacred festivals and continuity with the past. Chapter 6 will focus more on the key role the Gangjong Choedenling plays in framing performances of *Tibetanness* through music.

THE RELIC OF LANGUAGE

For us, Tibetan is not just a second language, as is the case (with Hindi or English) in other schools; it includes a strong emphasis on Tibetan culture as well.²⁹⁵

-Tibetan Rector

If one doesn't have words, how does one think?

-Iris Murdoch

²⁹⁴ O6.

²⁹⁵ Nowak, 67.

Language, like music, is a functional relic, operating largely in three ways to aid in the maintenance of cultural identity. For one, it serves to distinguish Tibetans from other ethnic groups.²⁹⁶ It can also produce controlled socialization: if one speaks a different language from others, or if the language the individual is most comfortable using differs from the surrounding majority, it encourages the speaker to seek out and socialize within the same linguistic group. If an individual's interaction is mainly among people with similar backgrounds, there are likely to be more *transactions of equivalence*²⁹⁷ (shared experiences through which two individuals arrive at more or less the same understanding), therefore providing more opportunities for collective cultural habits to form in the mind. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, language forms and patterns cognitive schemata. Language is organized and informs cognitive mapping, creating schemata into which future language is placed. Likewise, language forms the criterion through which and by which we think, for "many sociologists believe...that culture, embedded in language and everyday practices, constrains people's capacity to imagine alternatives to existing arrangements"²⁹⁸ and that "language is embedded in cultural norms."²⁹⁹

Language transmission and appropriation serve as one example of how that which is being transmitted is not a transaction of equivalence *per se*, and is certainly not being transmitted as a whole. If language, among the most quantifiable and objectifiable cultural elements, is not being transmitted in its entirety, how much more difficult it is to imagine the more abstract elements of the habitus, the "feel for the game," the blind belief of common-sense, being wholly appropriated by the next generation. Instead language, like other aspects of culture, is being appropriated piecemeal, taking up residence in the cognitive toolkit alongside other languages despite intensive efforts from the diasporic leaders to homogenise and instil a "pure" Tibetan language in the hearts and minds of the next generation.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 98.

²⁹⁷ Gearing.

²⁹⁸ DiMaggio, 268.

²⁹⁹ Agnew, 41.

The toolkit, as Swidler argues, is a cognitive storage facility containing “symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views,” i.e. functional tools to make sense of the world (tools such as languages) “which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems.”³⁰⁰ Whether Tibetan émigré youth are ‘torn between two cultures’ or gifted with the “double-vision”³⁰¹ of a refugee, the linguistic worlds presented to them (P17’s “one our culture, one the new culture”) are both being appropriated into the diaspora youth’s cognition, and as both take residence in the same cognitive map they are being placed in the same toolkit and structuring the individual habitus (Bourdieu’s “something that one is”³⁰²). It therefore seems appropriate that neither one need be labelled “new culture” for those in whom there were no prior cultural cognitive structures. Historic Tibetan cultural aspects, other-cultural aspects appropriated and transmitted by parents (i.e. Indian/Nepali), and the plethora of cultural histories facing Tibetan youth, are all entering equally and being selectively appropriated into the toolkits of the youth, and thus all encountered structures are elemental components in their habitus.

Bourdieu notes the importance of the first language, or “mother-tongue,” in socialization:

As Claudel put it, ‘connaitre, c’est naitre avec’, to know is to be born with, and the long dialectical process, often described as ‘vocation’, through which the various fields provide themselves with agents equipped with the habitus needed to make them work, is to the learning of a game very much as the acquisition of the mother tongue is to the learning of a foreign language.³⁰³

The language one is “born” with (or rather the language that first structures the cognitive linguistic schemata), which is at the same time a socializing force, is more or less unconsciously acquired and cognitively “a part of us,” much like everything else created by the habitus. Further, through the first language, “children are acquiring social knowledge as they acquire knowledge of language structure and use.”³⁰⁴ According to Schieffelin and Ochs, the “language of socialization” includes “appropriate uses of

³⁰⁰ Swidler, 273.

³⁰¹ Hua, 195.

³⁰² Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 73.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁰⁴ Bambi B. Schieffelin and Elinor Ochs, “Language Socialization,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 163-164.

language (such as politeness routines and formulaic expressions),”³⁰⁵ and such socialization is not necessarily that of the majority group (e.g. “working class” English vs. “middle class” BBC English in England). In the case of refugee communities, this is all the more apparent. Tibet has a long history of, for lack of a better word, “classed” languages, although some of these may also be considered dialects. The dialect of the historically nomadic *Khampas* of the East, for example, is considered impolite and harsh, lacking the Lhasan *la*’s (honorifics). Likewise, the Khampas view the Lhasa language as “posh” or stuck-up, although it may have an aesthetic sonority to their ears (much like the speech of middle to upper class British English to the ears of the commonwealth countries).

Maintaining/creating a “standard” unifying language is imperative for the Government in Exile in propagating a sense of unity throughout the diaspora, for:

Cultural and linguistic unification is accompanied by the imposition of the dominant language and culture as legitimate and by the rejection of all other languages into indignity (thus demoted as *patois* or local dialects). By rising to universality, a particular culture or language causes all others to fall into particularity.³⁰⁶

Through the school systems and the durability of the old class senses of the historic habitus, a canonization of Lhasa Tibetan has occurred in Exile. Along with all things considered truly Tibetan, this too has been endowed with a sacred purity not to be tainted. Although indeed helpful in maintaining Tibetan cultural preservation, it is not a concept new to exile. Diehl writes of the “historical status of the Tibetan language as sacred (*tsawa chenpo*),”³⁰⁷ seen through the sentiment of the Tibetan rector who told Nowak that Tibetan language is “not just a second language;”³⁰⁸ MacPherson and Ghoso write of the concept of purity in Tibetan language, and how ironically the English word “pure” was often interjected by the Tibetan respondents when speaking of the need to stop code-switching.³⁰⁹ Regarding these unifying efforts, Nowak observes how “the schools, by teaching the Lhasa (Central Tibetan) dialect as

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Bourdieu et al., *Rethinking the State*, 8.

³⁰⁷ Diehl, 212.

³⁰⁸ Nowak, 67.

³⁰⁹ MacPherson and Ghoso, 191.

standard Tibetan for all refugees in exile, are consciously setting out to produce a more homogenous younger generation who are learning to put their national identity ahead of regional loyalties.”³¹⁰ Indeed, the homogenizing efforts of the Government in Exile causing Lhasa Tibetan to “rise to universality” may be proving advantageous in their struggle for cultural preservation. Tibetan language ability of youth growing up in the tightly controlled Tibetan school systems may well enjoy more longevity than that of those outside (MacPherson and Ghoso 2008), for as Ghoso recounts in her own experience of TCV life:

TCV was more of a home than a school because so many students were orphaned or had parents in Tibet. Almost everyone in the school was Tibetan, so Tibetan was the main language of communication, although English, Hindi, or Nepali words were interjected. English was used as the language of instruction until the Tibetanization movement of the early 1990s, which re-introduced Tibetan as the language of instruction at the elementary level. In conversational Tibetan, we were encouraged to speak in *Sheysa*, the Tibetan honorific language, used to speak in a more respectful manner.³¹¹

Diehl’s “canonization” of old Lhasa culture certainly extends to language—the regional dialects of Tibetans from other ethnic areas (Kham, Amdo) being virtually ignored³¹²—and despite the claim to Tibetan cultural preservation and the apparent attempts “to celebrate and preserve the diversity of Tibetan culture,”³¹³ these dialects are “falling into particularity” in exile.

Beyond its perceived sacredness, language socializes Tibetans and, as for any human, forms much of the way they think. One outside observer even identified the language of thought as an indicator of how “Tibetan” he is: “I don’t know if I feel more Tibetan on a day-to-day, or if I feel more Canadian. I think it’s your thought too, I mean do you think Tibetan³¹⁴ or do you think in English, do you...it’s how you think. Personally, I would probably say I’m more Tibetan, but I can’t say I’m a hundred percent

³¹⁰ Nowak, 65.

³¹¹ MacPherson and Ghoso, 198-199.

³¹² One exception is in music, where students learn the songs and dances (and therefore sing in the dialects) of the Kham and Amdo regions of Tibet, although the one student who mentioned this noted they didn’t understand half the words in those songs.

³¹³ Diehl, 14.

³¹⁴ While O2 did not specifically say *in* Tibetan, I infer from the context that he is referring to language (as he follows with “in English;” however, it might be plausible to suggest he was referencing a Tibetan conceptualization of reality, different from a Western understanding of the same, through which everything is thought and experienced.

Tibetan, it wouldn't be true.”³¹⁵ As he inferred, however, Tibetan is not always the “mother-tongue” of Tibetan youth growing up in Toronto. Despite Tibetan usually being the language spoken at home from birth, much of a young child's time is spent in daycare and watching TV. Then full-time Canadian schooling begins (around five years old), where (barring the occasional occurrence of Tibetan classmates) all interactions are necessarily in English. Time (or lack thereof) spent with family is having great impacts on Tibetan culture and language socialization. The same parent noted the Western cultural sense of progression contrasted with a Tibetan sense of loss:

Now, people are...becoming more involved with their career, more involved with their work... Now, I don't know if it's progression or not...they are progressing in *that* sense, they're getting better jobs, they get more money, they're going to spend more time at work... But as those things go on, you're getting less and less time for your children... they may not have that extra time to take them to the only one place we have (the Gangjong Choedenling) to drive them over there, to take a language class...I know that's going to be very tough for them. For any kids, trying to get them to learn a language, they're just not interested. I know it happens. It happened to me! Poor mum and dad...I can just imagine how much I put them through, trying to take you places you don't want to go...³¹⁶

This constant struggle between the cultural (and financial) responsibilities of living in cosmopolitan Toronto and living with the responsibility of passing on culture to one's children, especially in a social situation where the children are “just not interested,” puts a lot of pressure and strain on Tibetan families, often resulting in feelings of regret over a perceived failure in cultural continuation (which many consider to be their greatest responsibility).

Through the interviews there was no question that language was considered a prominent element of Tibetan culture among every group interviewed, especially for the adults. For one parent, a major disparity between India and Toronto was language: “The huge difference is they speak more English. In India, you find that you have to try every day for them to speak in English, but here we have to tell them to speak in Tibetan!”³¹⁷ Another parent said “we always try to push our kids to learn the language.”³¹⁸ Speaking of his children, O2 said, “I'll try to talk to them as much as I can in Tibetan at home,” noting:

³¹⁵ O2.

³¹⁶ O2.

³¹⁷ P17.

As time goes on and one generation gets more and more diluted, like for example me, if my parents could read and write, for my generation for me as a parent, I can't read and write Tibetan. I can speak it, but it's already been diluted, I'm already losing that one important part of 'being' Tibetan, of knowing Tibetan, so now I know it's going to be that much harder for my kids to learn to read and write.

Teachers likewise put a heavy emphasis on language, voicing concerns that O2's observations of language dilution were true: "some of the students here can't speak Tibetan. That's the big problem."³¹⁹

Asked what the most important part of culture to preserve was, FT unhesitatingly replied, "Language, language is most important. If you don't know the language, how can you learn the singing or understand? If you know the language, you can learn singing, everything." She responded likewise regarding the best way to teach the next generation: "Of course language classes. If you know language, you can read the Tibetan writing, or singing, understand, so that's why."

A common theme seemed to be that language was a necessary base for all subsequent learning. One parent suggested language as a kind of fundamental element of culture from which everything else flowed (and without which nothing could come): "In order to learn Tibetan music and songs, you have to have learned Tibetan language and writings, right? So, even our religion, Buddhist, right, so if (you want to) practice, if you want to learn, first you have to have learned the language first, which will stress them to learn the language first and then music next."³²⁰ Some students responded similarly. Asked the best way to preserve culture, M3 said that "the big thing is just to teach Tibetan language at home," and F19 offered that she feels the most Tibetan "when there are not many English (i.e. Injis), we can't talk in English, only in Tibetan." Almost all the students reported that they could speak Tibetan and that they spoke it at home and when with Tibetan friends. F20 even said her Tibetan got better after coming to Toronto from India. From my own experience listening to Tibetan youth in Parkdale and on public transit, Tibetan seems to be a fairly prevalent medium (although it is often interspersed with English).³²¹ Closely

³¹⁸ P25.

³¹⁹ MT.

³²⁰ P25.

³²¹ It would thus appear that the commonly expressed Tibetan adults' accusations of the next generation's lack of interest in language (which came out more in informal personal communication than the interviews) is valid only to

paralleling P25, F5 (a music student), when asked what the main part of culture was, answered, “I guess language...language would be the biggest. But then dance and everything ties into language, right? But language I think, that would be important.”

Music and the Transmission of Language

As P25 and FT said, you need language for music; thus the desire to learn music itself can serve as a catalyst for language learning, which as has been seen is considered fundamental to cultural preservation. Likewise, while one does not necessarily need music for language, it can serve well as a medium through which language enters cognition and is more easily retained. Tashi Sharzur capitalized on this music function in his CD *Semshae* (Heart Songs), a CD made primarily for the transmission of the Tibetan language through song. The entire project was a result of Sharzur’s own children, his realization that Tibetan was being neither learned nor practiced as there was little need for it in the cultures where many Tibetans were now growing up. A note from the artist reads: “The foundation of Tibetan culture, which is based on peace, love and compassion, is the Tibetan language.” This is a particularly telling (and commonly expressed) claim, the antithesis of which being Tibetan culture does not exist (at least not fully) without the Tibetan language. The lyrics are particularly indicative of this statement, and of collective émigré values and methods of socialization. *Heart Songs*, the title track, clearly represents this sense of responsibility as culture bearers and the pressure instilled in parents to teach and children to learn the Tibetan language in all aspects:

Mother, if you love me,
Mother, please speak to me in Tibetan.
Father, if you love me,
Father, please teach me to write Tibetan.
Grandma, if you love me,
Grandma, please teach me songs of Tibet.
Grandpa, if you love me,
Grandpa, please tell me a story

an extent, perhaps to the extent that the socializing power of the habitus at work in the parents is also at work in their children. The youth appear to have an *idealistically* strong yet largely unpragmatic cultural attachment to the Tibetan language, often producing feelings of guilt and regret when those ideals are not met. When asked what he thought of when he heard “Tibetan culture,” M14 responded: “The reading, writing. I don’t practice enough, and I feel kind of bad.” Although the majority of interviewees could speak and understand Tibetan, most were unable to read and write, and in this lies the paradox of *idealism* (reading and writing is part of Tibetan culture, must be preserved, etc) vs. *functionality* (reading and writing takes a lot of time and effort, and is a rarely employable tool in Toronto).

Dear relatives, if you love me,
Take me back to Tibet once at least.

Here other common values can be seen as well, the importance of traditional songs originating in Tibet of old and the strong sense of belonging in their homeland (“take me *back*” [to a place I have never been]).

This imagined place of return can be found in track nine, *Beautiful Tibet*, a particularly Shangri-laic symbolic ode to *Tibet as rightful homeland*:

Our Tibet, Our Tibet, Has
Snow white mountains, snow white mountains,
Snowy mountains, snowy mountains,
Snowy mountains, my homeland, my homeland

Our Tibet, Our Tibet Has
Snow lions, snow lions,
The snow lions, snow lions,
Have long turquoise hair

Our Tibet, Our Tibet, has
Huge green meadows, huge green meadows,
On the meadows, on the meadows,
Are our yaks and dzomos.

Our Tibet, Our Tibet,
Has big blue lakes, big blue lakes
In the big blue lakes, in the big blue lakes,
Are fish and ducks

Beautiful homeland,
Beautiful homeland,
Our Tibet, Our Tibet

Here empirically real images such as mountains, lakes and meadows, which most Tibetans in exile have seen at some point, and yaks and dzomos (yak-cow hybrids), which most have never seen, co-exist with mythical beings (snow-lions) which no human (save the purest of heart³²²) has ever perceived. All the enhanced and mythic imagery adds to the utopian sense of Tibet as an almost tangible yet unattainable dream world.

Intentionally made to transmit language (complete with simple word use and translations), the *Sem Shae* CD can certainly be seen (at the level of Thirdness) as a symbolic-Argument. However, if the only goal were language transmission and the music just a vehicle, a more pragmatic method would have

³²² It is believed that the mystical snow lion can only be seen by those with a pure heart.

been to employ popular English melodies, surely the most popular children's music medium in any given diasporic community. The choice to use Tibetan music (both modern and traditional) in the CD suggests that music is not only a vehicle for cultural transmission, but an integral part of culture as well.

Virtually all Tibetan music (save some Lhasan pop singers) contain Tibetan lyrics, thus when the language is understood it always operates at the symbolic level. When every Tibetan song heard contains Tibetan lyrics, the music becomes a "pure" index of language and even an icon of the Tibetan language, cognitively conceived of as always being together, sharing an essence which does not necessarily exist. Perhaps due to the sacredness of the language and music, one student commented, "If you don't understand the words...even if you're not fluent, you still feel Tibetan when you sing."³²³

M3's acknowledgement of Tibetanness sans understanding reveals a definitively Tibetan view of language differentiated from meaning, one which Diehl often encountered in Dharamsala. She noted how, while the intelligibility of Tibetan sung lyrics was of utmost importance to Tibetan concert-goers, it was not necessarily the semantic meaning which mattered; at times they were "primarily disappointed not to have clearly *heard* the words."³²⁴ The multiple signs of the Tibetan language in music, not only understood through Peircian theories but actually conceptualized as such by Tibetans, can be seen semiotically as interpreting symbolically (the literal meaning of the lyrics), indexically (the familiar sound of Tibetan indexing continuity and successful preservation), and iconically (when seen as being the very foundation of Tibetan culture). This conceptualization is by no means a recent development. The recitation of texts and mantras without "understanding" them on an intellectual level is an ancient practice in Tibet; in monastic chant only the higher-level *Rinpoches* (living Buddhas) understand the literal meaning of certain esoteric texts (which have been intentionally blurred), although they are chanted by monks at all levels. Likewise, the majority of Tibetans in the diaspora can sing the Tibetan national anthem from memory, even though its semantic meaning is inaccessible for most. Diehl explains how, for Tibetans, the inability to "understand or explain the literal meaning of the words" seems to be fairly

³²³ M3.

³²⁴ Diehl, 211-212.

inconsequential, for “they all know that their anthem is a statement of humanitarianism, of faith, and, ultimately, of the inevitable victory of Buddhist dharma over the ‘destructive camp.’”³²⁵ In the case of the national anthem, the sign, though lyrically sung, likely interprets most strongly at the level of Secondness. For other texts, such as chanted mantras and Tibetan music which the listener does not understand (due to esoteric meanings, dialectic differences or general lack of fluency), the musico-lyrical sign would tend to interpret iconically as “felt Tibetanness.”

THE RELIC OF FAMILY

For Tibetans, family is one of the highest values, and I suggest not only the individual family unit but the conceptualization of current Tibetan families as a continuation of the institution forged in old Tibet. The current family unit might be difficult to comprehend as a relic in itself, yet it is the ideal to which it aspires, the cognitive type of family as it once existed, which here affords the designation of cultural relic. Thus while both tangible and functional, families are also precious relics of Tibetan past which require daily maintenance. Indeed in many of the interviews, *family* (specifically parents) came to the fore as the most important tool for cultural transmission, with the failure of the family to successfully transmit culture signifying a breakdown in the highly fragile and increasingly endangered relic itself.

Cavalli-Sforza et al. label cultural transmission through the family as *vertical* transmission, and find vertical transmission especially strong particularly in religion and politics in their study of cultural transmission in Taiwan. Although a comparative study (a large-scale quantitative study on cultural transmission) does not yet exist on the Tibetan community in Toronto or anywhere else, it is possible, using the cultural transmission methods examined in this paper, to suggest the extent to which vertical transmission functions in the Tibetan community in Toronto, and especially to judge the attitude towards the parental role in passing on culture.

Logan in particular identifies the importance of family for cultural continuation, and for a sense of cultural normalcy and identity, as evidenced in many of the photovoice responses: “The connection of

³²⁵ Ibid., 218.

family and friends to 'home' is important because it solidifies one's sense of belonging and inclusion,³²⁶ thus fundamental in constructing one's own identity. Further, the interviews conducted for this study reveal a heavy sense of responsibility placed on the parents to "pressure their children" and pass down the tenets of Tibetan culture and belief. One parent responded to the question of the problems of Tibetan cultural continuation in Toronto as follows:

P25: The thing is, the main problem for us, for the young generation, is obviously it's a minority, you know, like once if they go to school, they have to learn everything. Once they watch TV, everything, you know, it's so tough for our kids to keep that culture. But, you know, our, as parents, we always try to push our kids to learn the language, learn the music, you know. Even (my son), initially when he started, I had to push him, I had to, you know, force him to learn it.

Similarly another Tibetan adult stressed the key role family life played above other means of cultural transmission:

O6: Because really my parents have taught me to do that, to study that, so therefore our parents play—at the beginning as they have before—parents play such an important role in learning the Tibetan culture, especially Tibetan Buddhism.

...

John: What, in your opinion, is the best way for Tibetan culture to be passed on?

O6: The community centre itself won't do that. The best way is the parents. For example, myself. When I was a kid, I'd sit next to my dad when he'd have visitors—naturally Tibetans. When they talk, they talk about politics, Tibetan history, Tibetan culture. I get a chance to sit next to him and listen. I learned how to listen. When I listened I learned lots of things. So that's why Tibetan parents, especially in the west, they should always make their kids accustomed to sit next to them, to make them listen to what they're talking about. That's the best way to pass on cultures, because listening, we get the knowledge, then we do what we need to do. So parents are the most important thing for passing on our cultures to the younger generations.

As Miller observes, the "transmission of "culture" is the transmission of an individual "mapping" of behaviors, associated ideas, and interpretations of those behaviors and ideas."³²⁷ Here it is important to return to the theory of cultural transmission, and to take note of Miller's query: "But why do they want to transmit these patterns? Presumably because they wish to maintain an environment that they, the senders, have learned and found useful to survival."³²⁸ As the old patterns useful for survival will not logically work in the new society, why do Tibetans transmit their culture? To preserve it....but preserve it for what? The original purpose was to preserve Tibetan culture "in its pure form before an inevitable return to the

³²⁶ Logan, 103.

³²⁷ Miller, 324.

³²⁸ Ibid.

original homeland.”³²⁹ Now, despite attempts to maintain its intensity, much of that original hope has been lost. As previously mentioned, even if Tibet were to one day “be free” it is uncertain whether many Tibetans would return. If the “inevitable return to the original homeland” is not as inevitable as thought, if the conditions which once produced those patterns in the original homeland indeed no longer exist, what then is the purpose in attempting to transmit the patterns that once “worked” but do so no longer? Perhaps it is similar to Keil’s pessimistically optimistic sociomusicological mission statement: to “save the world for posterity;”³³⁰ to preserve it because it is worthy of being preserved, because no one else will preserve it if they do not.

The responsibility of saving their parents’ cognitive maps (or rather the elements of their grandparents’ cognitive maps patterned and appropriated by their parents—that is, the perceived pure Tibetan culture) lies heavily on the shoulders of Tibetan youth, and weighs equally on their minds. For many Tibetan children, home and family is therefore possibly the space of the most cultural conflict. If not for family pressures on the young, the intentional inclusion of events and memes meant to structure the old Tibetan structures, those Tibetan youth would have slim chances of ever being capable of transmitting the same patterns to the next generation since those structures would be non-existent in themselves. One parent related his own experiences of rebellion growing up in Toronto, saying “I remember putting up a big fight, making it really tough on my parents, not coming home at the right time.”³³¹ He now credits his parents’ insistence on participation in Tibetan events and language classes with his own sense of Tibetanness and the culture he aspires to pass down in his own family. F5, speaking of Tibetan music students in general, reiterated this family pressure, noting that “not all the students have genuine interest. A lot of them are forced by their parents.”

The Role of Music in the Family

³²⁹ Anand, *A guide to little Lhasa*, 13.

³³⁰ Keil, 304.

³³¹ O2.

While it seems most parents are interested in language classes, statistics show enrolment in language classes to be significantly lower (around twenty-five) than music (at times soaring to over a hundred). MT suggested this shift in focus occurred largely as parents left India, where the Tibetan community was relatively homogenous and there was a bigger parental focus on language learning, and came to heterogeneous places like Canada where they realized “you have to show your own culture to the other people.” Recently, while parents have been putting more pressure on their children to attend music classes, MT has called for further parental involvement (not just sending their children off to music class and assuming they will learn): “they say, ‘oh yeah, I’ll send my children over there,’ but you have to see by yourself what they’re doing, are your children in the right place or not.” FT, the other teacher, noted that although not all the music students were interested, she had seen a recent improvement in parental support:

FT: ...parents are helping a lot

John: Yeah, I’ve noticed more parents are coming

FT: Yeah! You know, cause if the kids didn’t want to learn—some—they want to learn (*speaking of/to two girls who have come and joined us*), but some of them, you know? Let me see...say they are not singing, and I ask, “why are you not singing,” “Oh, I am not interested.” “And then why do you,” I ask, “Then why do you come here?” If you’re not interested, this is Canada, not India, right? So you can do everything. (Oh! It’s really hard to force them? *Difficult to hear on the recording*). But most of them, you know, like this one (*points to girl sitting with us*) are very good. I’m not (just) saying because they are here!

Despite initially being pushed to study music by their parents, a number of students I interviewed noted an eventual change in their own attitude, and eventually came to embrace the classes; other students even initiated the music learning themselves (the remarkable achievements of the hard-working group will be discussed more in the next chapter).

In regards to musical semiosis perhaps traditional music functions here most strongly as an index, for “indexical relations are grounded in personal experience” and are “most prominent in intimate groups such as...families.”³³² Two music student interviewees noted how the music classes have created a bond between their parents and them: “Sometimes I’ll tell them something I’ve learned, and they say how they learned the same thing. They know what you’re going through,”³³³ “When they’re new songs we don’t

³³² Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 235.

know, but our mums know, and we can dance together at home.”³³⁴ Thus music learning and knowledge can be seen to indexically weld families together through shared experience.

Beyond classroom learning as well, Tibetan music, both traditional and modern, has a strong potential for indexing family. It became apparent that students do not usually choose Tibetan music for individual personal consumption (it is not, generally speaking, on their ipod); rather, they indicated the majority of Tibetan music took place at home with their parents (interestingly dad was most often specified as being the music protagonist, sometimes both, but never mum alone), as evidenced in the interviews:

M1: Usher (rap), Tibetan music at home “if there’s nothing else to do”

M9: “mainstream stuff you hear on the radio” hip-hop, rap. Tibetan music: “My dad plays it on his computer, so when he plays it, then I guess I listen to it”

M12: Tibetan music, Phurbu T. Namgyal, TIPA; Pop music, the Black Eyed Peas

M7: Anything on the radio. Tibetan music: “when I have nothing to do, I listen to it”

M3: Mainstream: pop; Favourite: Techno; Tibetan pop: played by his dad

M14: “Stuff you hear on the radio, like pop, stuff like that;” Tibetan: “in the car, my parents will play Tibetan music, and in the house sometimes”

M8: Everything

F5: mainstream, her dad introduced her to the Beatles, dad transcribes Tibetan songs

F20: country, musicals. “On my ipod, there’s mostly Western music, so when I’m on the subway, I’m mostly listening to Western. But I’m here, doing this a lot, so I guess I listen to a lot of Tibetan music. And my dad, he plays Tibetan music at home a lot.” (modern Tibetan music)

F19: “when I’m with my mum and dad, some typical music like what my teacher taught us” “Usually I listen to Hindi music;” Western: Taylor Swift

F11: R&B. Tibetan: No. Dad listens to it at home.

F16: R&B. Favourite: Taylor Swift. Tibetan: sometimes on her own, sometimes with parents

F4: Pop, Justin Bieber; Tibetan: yes

F13: R&B, Pop, Hip-hop, “anything that sounds good to me;” Tibetan: sometimes

³³³ M14.

³³⁴ F19.

Clearly Tibetan youth's music consumption is spacio-temporally broad and its styles are widespread. Indexical signs "continually take on new layers of meaning while potentially also carrying along former associations," what Turino calls "*semanitic snowballing*."³³⁵ Whatever music is consumed in whatever circumstance might become an index of any phenomena encountered during that instance, meanings potentially snowballing into infinity; however, as instances of Tibetan music listening are relegated to the home (and occasionally the car) with dad/parents, it is as if the snowball stays in the family yard. Thus the songs heard with parents at home, provided they are generally heard there and not elsewhere, will create a kind of "pure index" of family and home.

THE RELIC OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism is widely held to be synonymous with Tibetan culture, not only to Western academics but to Tibetans themselves as evidenced in my own experiences in the worldwide Tibetan community (Toronto, Minneapolis, Nepal, India, Tibet, England) and in the literature. In the assignment Nowak gave her Tibetan students (mentioned earlier in this paper) she notes an overall sense in all responses of "the unique association of Buddhism with Tibetan identity."³³⁶ Indeed, every student answered the question "What do you mean when you say 'I am Tibetan'" with some reference to Buddhism: "I have grown up till now under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama...I am practicing the Buddhist religion, which is the only religion of Tibetans;" "my religion is also the same as (that of my forefathers);" "I am under the spiritual leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and worship him as a God. I have adopted the religion of Buddhism which has enlightened Tibet and the Tibetan people from the very beginning of our civilisation. I practice and preserve my religion;" and "we should preserve our religion." Logan noted how "having a prominent shrine in the home is a daily reminder of one's origins and was selected as an important feature by 6 of the 11 participants,"³³⁷ and "the importance of daily ritual and prayer in the

³³⁵ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 235, italics in original.

³³⁶ Nowak, 88.

³³⁷ Logan, 94.

home was articulated by most.”³³⁸ The prominence of Buddhism and its interconnectedness with Tibetan culture came out in many of my interviews as well:

John: What other ways is Tibetan culture being passed on?

M3: Religion, religion is a big part of Tibetan culture as well. Monks come here once in awhile, do teaching and prayers.

John: What other ways is Tibetan culture being continued in Toronto? Like, Tibetan classes?

F19: Tibetan classes, um...our teacher teaches us like, some...Buddhism stuff, Buddhist religion, dharma, like in the morning.

In an interview with O6 (notably an ex-monk who still performs many lay monastic duties), a distinct differentiation was made between religion-specific and general lay Tibetan practices, which was not apparent in any other interviews. When asked what problems he saw in the continuation of Tibetan culture in exile, he responded:

In India, I would say there would be not much problem, but in the West, if you talk about the West, especially Toronto, younger generations that, they are more (exceptionally?) learning Tibetan dances, music and songs, but learning about Tibetan Buddhism, that’s the biggest problem. We organized Tibetan dharma classes or religious Buddhist talks, for the Tibetan younger generations as well as adults. It’s always getting, at the beginning maximum, then everything minimize, minimize, minimize, minimize. I still don’t know why. So therefore...that is my biggest problem in our community centre, why Tibetans are... have... because as a Tibetan, we *must* know our culture. And our culture is based not (only?) on the dances and music, it truly, historically, is based on Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism is like a culture, because we are born with that. Whether we know music or dance doesn’t matter. But we must know about Buddhism.

Where most Tibetans appear to see little distinction between Buddhism and Tibetan culture, O6 objectified the two in vastly different ways, strongly inferring that in Buddhism alone lie the fundamental structures which must be transmitted and appropriated if the historic Tibetan culture is to survive.

Accordingly, whether Tibetans see Tibetan culture as “part and parcel” of Tibetan Buddhism or vice-versa, any attack on the Tibetan identification with Buddhism is harshly criticized. Åse Piltz identifies this in the motivating factors behind the Tibetan backlash to the movie *We Are No Monks*:

Monks, and thereby Buddhism, are for many Tibetans Tibetan-ness *per se*, and considered their only way to survival: both their culture as such, and the recipe for its survival. Their public identity is strongly linked to them being Buddhists, and it is considered a threat to their situation, should they become ‘like everybody else’ (i.e. stripped of their religion).³³⁹

³³⁸ Ibid., 96.

³³⁹ Åse Piltz, “Being Tibetan: Internet and Public Identity among Tibetan Youth,” *Anpere*, (2006): 7.

Since Buddhism is so conceptually intertwined with Tibetanness, it is necessary to understand how it too is being transmitted to the next generation.

A key method of religious transmission is through symbols (though not necessarily in the Peircian sense), and this is especially true in the Tibetan context, where Buddhism is such a pertinent aspect of collectively understood Tibetan culture. In order to more fully understand the transmission process, as Pascal Boyer writes, “we must first consider the function of material tokens in cultural transmission.”³⁴⁰ The material objects in themselves have no predetermined interpretant—a conch shell for a zoologist conjure images of a conch replete with encyclopedic information from their CT; for myself growing up in land-locked Ontario it represents the sound of the ocean I had never seen; for the Tibetan (practicing Buddhist or not) it represents Buddhism, or Buddha’s voice, or Tibet, or all the above. Any interpretation “depends on the causal properties of the mind that perceives them,”³⁴¹ which is perhaps why the understanding of the power of Buddhist symbols (again, not used in the Peircian sense) in continuing Tibetan culture is so important in understanding Tibetan cultural transmission.

Tibetan Buddhist material tokens are indeed everywhere in the Tibetan community in Toronto, and whether Tibetans *understand* them at the level of Thirdness or not (in the Judeo-Christian sense of understanding their religious symbolic “meaning” and the truth behind them), they *mean* something to Tibetans, and they communicate an assurance of cultural preservation. They are icons (in the common sense) that in the Peircian sense interpret at the levels of Secondness and Thirdness as signs of Tibetanness. I have often asked lay Tibetans what specific religious symbols (common usage) meant, with the majority unable to give a salient answer; and yet these tokens are everywhere, are sacred and important, and for many Tibetans they signify Tibetan Buddhism and therefore Tibetanness. Not just on the shrines found in the majority of Tibetan homes (with auspicious symbols, butter lamps, offerings, and invariably a photo of the Dalai Lama centrally positioned) but also the eight auspicious symbols woven into Tibetan carpets, on door hangings, in the pillows on the couch; the *thankas* hung on the walls, often

³⁴⁰ Boyer, 882.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

covered for preservation and to denote sacredness; the prayer flags strewn across balconies; the *khatas*³⁴² given on every meaningful occasion; the robes of a monk, the prayer wheels spun by Tibetan elderly women, the prayer beads rubbed by elderly men, ever seen walking the streets of Parkdale; the *chordens* marking the entrance to the Gangjong Choedenling, the symbol *par excellence* of Tibetan cultural continuation outside the homeland; all these are continuously indicating to Tibetans that their culture is alive and well, structuring the structures of the historic habitus to the extent that it exists in every Tibetan.

Music and the Transmission of Buddhist Identity

Save a brief mention alongside language, not much has been said here regarding monastic music (nor will it be), of which Geoffrey Samuel said, “The greatest and most original musical achievements of Tibetan culture can doubtless be found in the monasteries, with their extraordinary and deeply moving chanting and instrumental music.”³⁴³ It could indeed be argued that monastic music is an icon and “pure index” of Tibetan Buddhism, as it is normally only ever performed to denote intensely religious events or sacred space (although with monastic CD releases and Tibetan shops appealing to a New Age crowd this may be changing). As my own study is concerned with non-monastic music, however, I will leave its semiotic interpretation to someone else, but I hope such a study does not remain absent from the literature for long.

Despite the strong distinction between religious and lay music in Tibetan traditions, traditional music and modern music both come to interpret strongly through symbols, indices, and even icons (as shown in figure 7). Through the fundamental understanding of Tibetan Buddhism as synonymous with Tibetan culture, every instance of anything Tibetan (including music) potentially creates signs on multiple levels interpreting religiously; however, the following will highlight some of the less mediated signs. Symbolically, many songs pay lyrical homage to His Holiness the Dalai Lama (traditional songs doing so to past incarnations, modern music to the present one), and lyrical reference to Buddhism as the religion

³⁴² A khata is a white scarf covered in Buddhist symbols given more or less as flowers are given in many Western cultures, although free of any gender constraints or romantic connotations.

³⁴³ Samuel, *Music of the Lhasa Minstrels*, 19.

of Tibetans is manifest. As indices, traditional songs are often heard spacio-temporally with religious events. When the Dalai Lama visited Toronto in the summer of 2010, the music students performed numerous times in his presence, and even performed a traditional dance to “clear the stage” before his public appearance at the Rogers Centre. Many popular traditional songs are attributed to the fifth Dalai Lama, thus highly iconic of the religious figure. Further, due to certain responses in the interviews, music appears to be an icon of Buddhism. When asked why he had chosen to study Tibetan music, M7 responded: “I just thought it was going to be a good experience for me, cause it was going to be something religious, and a lot of my friends were doing it, so I thought I may as well.” In offering music practice as religious practice, he is suggesting an equation between music and religion perhaps deeper than an indexical relationship. Another music student states the icon even more clearly. When asked the same question, F19 responded: “I think it’s important, it’s our religion, and I don’t want to lose my religion.” Thus it can be inferred that, for some, Tibetan music *is* religion, and not in the sense that an American musician calls his music ‘his religion,’ but as an icon which is believed to embody the object.

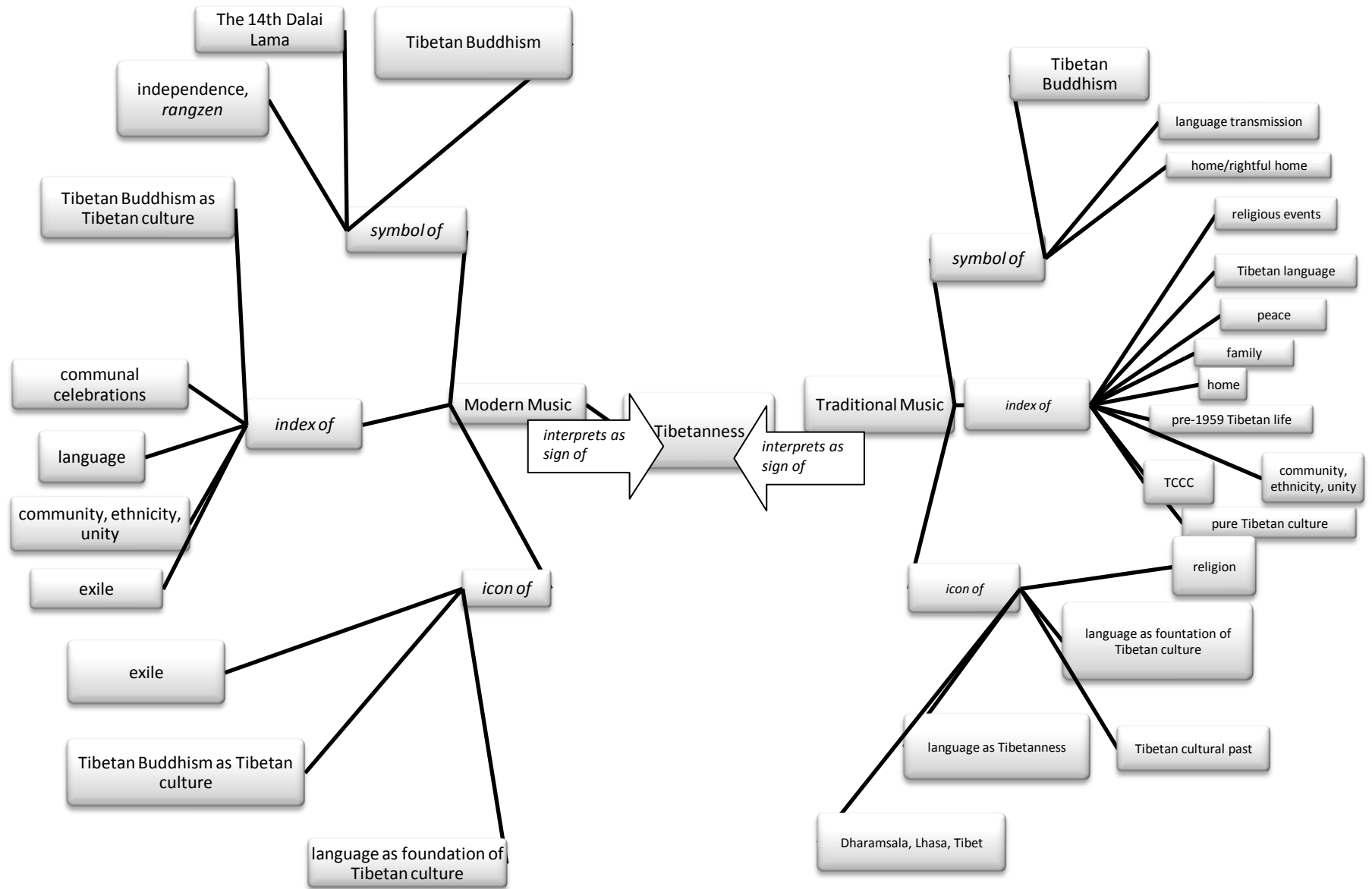


Figure 7. How music interprets as signs of Tibetanness

MUSICAL WELDING

As can be seen in figure 7, all these relics and cultural elements (objects) are welded semiotically to the music, every instance of music producing them as icons, indices or symbols, and consequently interpreting them as signs of Tibetanness. The pluck of a dranyen string, for example, an instrument extant in both modern and traditional music, might simultaneously symbolize the imagined realm of Tibet, index the pure Tibetan culture of created memory and the reality of exile, and iconicize Tibetan past and the sense of loss, all interpreting as signs of Tibetanness. Every spacio-temporal co-existence of music with any of these Tibetan cultural relics thus strengthens their musical correlate, potentially creating and reinforcing the connections between these otherwise disparate objects. Music is the mortar that binds them together, and the multifarious and polyphasic nature of music to produce sign-interpretants is invaluable if the Tibetan collective habitus is to endure. All the relics mentioned here are painstakingly taught through the community in Toronto, parents having to teach their children to recognize what is and is not Tibetan (as when P17 said, “here we have to show them, teach them ‘this is our culture’”), yet music, once the sign-interpretants have been created, can do this in an instance.

Turino notes the power of music “to condense great quantities and varieties of meaning...even within a single sign.”³⁴⁴ Due to the general spacio-temporal confinement of Tibetan music to Tibetan social space, the “great quantities and varieties of meaning” each individual appropriates have great potentiality to be the same (at least similar) as those of collective society in general. Through the sound of the dranyen any and all cultural elements mentioned above can be brought to mind, having been welded together through co-occurrence. Provided this process of semiosis has occurred and the structuring structures have sufficiently been produced within the conscious and sub-conscious of the perceiver, each sign of music will cognitively bring forth any or all corresponding correlates, each instance flowing along with the predisposed habitus, thus producing and reproducing a sense of genuineness and truth. There is no need to say “this is Tibetan,” for through the music it is *felt* to be so, because it has been felt to be so before, and with every instance its sense of naturalness is strengthened. The ultimate expression

³⁴⁴ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 235.

of Tibetanness, then, is that which incorporates the most signs simultaneously: the Tibetan performing arts.

Chapter 6

Learning and Performing Tibetanness

For Goffman, a performance can “[highlight] the common official values of the society in which it occurs.” When the “expressive bias of the performances” conforms to and confirms society’s rules, that is, when the performance is attuned to the perceiver’s habitus, it is in that moment perceived “as reality.”³⁴⁵ Goffman’s dramaturgical theories, of course, use the theatrical stage as a metaphor for the societal performances conducted through daily interaction: Shakespeare’s *all the world’s a stage* (although Goffman in fact said “all the world is not a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn’t are not easy to specify”³⁴⁶). It is argued here that for many émigré Tibetans the performance space might be where the “real” Tibetan world is recreated, and the staged performance the vehicle through which that world is experienced. For the performers themselves, the rehearsal space is where the Tibetan world is structured, with the stage the place where that world is performed. Classed in Goffmanian terms, the music practices might be termed the *back region*, and performances the *front region*, although in the back region of Tibetan performing arts lessons the lines between performance and practice are often blurred.

The following will examine the preparation for and performance of the performing arts, by exploring the process of music teaching methodologies of the music teachers; the appropriation of Tibetanness through music classes; the framing of the performance; the re-creation of Tibetan space; and the staged performance itself. When the properly framed performance moves fully to the front (the physical stage) and is accepted by the audience as authentic (authenticity being dependent upon the frame and the performance itself), it becomes a definitive sign of Tibetanness and, for many, a fulfillment of the *raison d’être* in exile.

LEARNING TIBETANNESS: MUSIC TRANSMISSION AND APPROPRIATION

³⁴⁵ Erving Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life [1959]” in *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, 59.

³⁴⁶ Goffman, 72.

The Gyenlas

The officially sanctioned possessors of Bourdieu's cultural capital are the gyenlas, "delegated agent[s] of the state,"³⁴⁷ who, bearing the right and responsibility of passing on and legitimating the legitimate national culture, do so by "engag[ing] the symbolic capital they have acquired"³⁴⁸ (through membership in the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts). They are for Edward Shils the "authorities of their societies" who tend to be "more sensitive to the 'sacredness' of 'pastness,'"³⁴⁹ and through whose example their "less dutiful countrymen"³⁵⁰ are spurred on to action. Membership (past or present) in any capacity gives the impression, at least to the majority of the non-TIPA trained émigré community, that the individual has been embodied with the cultural element of music (perhaps similarly to any monk being looked upon as an authority of sorts on religion). Thus to be "ex-TIPA" (to have ever belonged to the renowned group) is a title holding significant cultural capital and a certificate of musical proficiency. Within the TIPA society, however, the degree of cultural capital seems to be more or less incremental to the duration of involvement. Even of some currently renowned Tibetan performers, other ex-members have made comments to me such as "he was only in TIPA for a couple of years."

It should be noted here that all TIPA are not trained equally. Diehl writes of TIPA's threefold responsibilities: "to preserve the Tibetan performing arts for the Tibetan community by training professional performers; to present these traditions to others; and to train arts teachers for the Tibetan K-12 schools throughout the South Asian diaspora."³⁵¹ Some members are talented young (at times very young) students who have been recruited from across the diaspora in India and Nepal, and many of these recruits stay on at TIPA for years; others join later in life due to a personal interest, generally operating within the Diehl's first two categories (trained as professional performers to present Tibetan traditions to

³⁴⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society* 14, No. 6 (November 1985): 732.

³⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Social Space*, 731.

³⁴⁹ Shils, 140.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Diehl, 69.

the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan community, and the world). Those functioning in the third capacity (K-12 music teachers), however, are “generally teenagers who did not pass their Class 10 exams and have little or no prior interest, developed talent, or background in the arts.”³⁵² Migmar Lhamo, one of the briefly trained music teachers now teaching at a rural school in India, told Diehl that “preserving traditional music in Dekyi Ling was solely her responsibility, since no other musicians were living in the settlement.” Diehl goes on to note how, unlike the teachers in most settlements, all of the teachers in the Tibetan schools of Dharamsala “have extensive training and experience.”³⁵³

All the current teachers in Toronto certainly come with “extensive training and experience,” and many were once teachers in Dharamsala.³⁵⁴ The head teacher (receiving the honorary distinction of “gyenla” without the necessitation of any other clarifying identification), who had begun in TIPA when he was young (twelve or thirteen), was identified by F13 as having been her gyenla in India (with his teaching style and character in Toronto and India being reported as being the same). Another teacher had joined when she was twelve, with her parents’ encouragement, and had been involved in TIPA for some sixteen years. She noted that one of the other gyenlas now teaching in Toronto, her gyenla who had first taught her dranyen, had been *the* gyenla when she joined. Therefore regarding the quality of music transmission it would appear that the Toronto community is in fact far better equipped than many exile communities in India, a wealth that does not go unnoticed:

All the teachers that are there now, they’re all former TIPA members. TIPA in a sense is probably the highest music level, the high end of actual Tibetan music...They’re teaching them first hand, and they get to perform with the teachers, the instructors. I think there’s something natural in that transition, the youth are going to pick up on it because they’re going to get so much better, they’re learning so much better, they’re getting taught as close as you can possibly get to a teacher from Tibet.

Since these teachers were taught by those renowned pre-1959 Tibetan performers, and as they are believed to have copied the original performers as closely as possible, they are the living embodiment of performers past. Moreover, as the original performers have passed on and the conditions which produced

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid., 74.

³⁵⁴ My gyenla is often referred to as gyenla by many in the current adult community in Toronto as well, for he was their gyenla years ago when they studied in TCV in Dharamsala.

them are no more, the current gyenlas in Toronto are essentially among the only remaining connections to the conceptually real, pure music of Tibet.

There is a sense that the very continuation of Tibetan music hinges on the ability of the students to correctly mimic their teachers and embody the songs and dances being transmitted to them. Indeed, although creativity and ingenuity is often said to “separate us from the other animals,” Aristotle may have put it better when he claimed imitation as that mark of separation: “Man...is the most imitative (*mimetikotaton*) of all animals and he learns his first lessons through mimicry (*dia mimesos*).”³⁵⁵ When learning traditional Tibetan music, the goal is not that of imaginative creation, but rather that which Aristotle suggested as humanity’s primal disposition. Musical patterns are learned, embodied, to be passed down in the hopes that one day they will return to their rightful home untarnished by time. Hence despite numerous Tibetan musicians creating new music—and even TIPA has a group (the Ah-Ka-Ma band) focussed on producing modern Tibetan songs—the primary goal is always preservation, always achieved through mimesis.

The songs of Tibet were initially passed down through TIPA by “former Tibetan opera stars, famous Lhasa musicians, individuals well versed in Tibetan folk songs and dances, and several monks expert in performing sacred monastic dances”³⁵⁶ to the first generation of TIPA performers, the current teachers, and now those possessors of *legitimate national (music) culture* are passing down what they learned to the next generation. However, while transmitting Tibetan music to new bodies (who can then continue the process) is imperative for cultural preservation, and while one cannot ask for teachers better prepared for the task, the pre-existing structures conducive to precise transmission are (in the Western sense) lacking.

Where a trained classical pianist might play a song they had never heard before simply by reading the notation, the same is not true of Tibetan music. The learning of Tibetan songs requires experience with the sound of the music (often through personal interaction with those who know and play it), for

³⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics*, Part IV.

³⁵⁶ Calkowski, 52.

traditional Tibetan lay music (the focus here) was never formally transcribed, at least not in a uniform style³⁵⁷ (unlike monastic music, which has long contained a detailed notation system). Many of the songs being transmitted are contained in a Tibetan music booklet called *Nangma and Toeshey*. The booklet is notably absent of English (save copyright information) and contains only Tibetan song script and instruction, even though the majority of Tibetans over fifty-four are illiterate³⁵⁸ and the situation is not that different for the younger generations (I have met few Tibetans in exile who can read and write Tibetan well, particularly among those under twenty). The copy I possess was published in 1992 and closely resembles other similar booklets, all of which have been produced in exile for the maintenance of Tibetan music.

All traditional and some modern music (including all songs in the *Nangma and Toeshey* book and any other traditional songs outside those traditions [therefore outside the compilation]) is transcribed through a form of numerical (cipher) notation, with solfege for oral instruction and self-teaching.³⁵⁹ While the numerical values given are clear to the musician, other elements are less so. The only non-numerical (non-solfege) indicators on the page are for quarter notes (no underline), eighth (single underline), quarter (double underline), and various vertical lines to indicate introductions, endings and repeats. Beyond this there is nothing to indicate speed, rhythm, beat or “feel.” As M3 said, “the rhythm is never on the sheet, it’s taught by the teachers.” Thus the learning of any new songs will virtually always involve (or be preceded by) some level of socio-musical interaction even for the most accomplished of musicians (an exception being the possible use of a DVD alone at home).

Music Teaching

When Tibetan students learn music together, it is in no way a passive process. The majority of time, from observations of music classes and personal experience through individual lessons, the learner

³⁵⁷ Ian Collinge, “Developments in Musicology in Tibet: The Emergence of a New Tibetan Musical Lexicon” *Asian Music* 28, No. 1 (Autumn, 1996 - Winter, 1997): 87-114.

³⁵⁸ Diehl, 213. (time factor taken into consideration—Diehl claimed age forty-five).

³⁵⁹ Instead of singing the lyrics, my teacher will often sing the note names (do la do la-do), presumably to aid in my learning, and to indicate which song introduction he wants me to play.

is actively producing, and not just in Wong's sense of "listening as a kind of making"³⁶⁰ or the production of cognitive structures (both of which are indeed taking place), but *energetically* producing, actually playing/singing/dancing. This begins with the first lesson, a process of mimesis that continues until the learner is proficient enough to reproduce the structures perfectly. A novice sits next to a gyenla; the gyenla plays a part, and the student copies. Once the student is able to reproduce the pattern alone, the gyenla might continue to play along or stay their hand and listen closely for correction. The first lesson, at least for the dranyen (I cannot speak of others as it is the only instrument I have learned or observed being learned from the beginning), is comparable to "scale runs," except the key never changes (as it does for the pianist). During our interview, my gyenla related the teaching methodology:

John: What happens during a music class, when you teach. How do you teach music... I mean, with the children, is it about the same as what we do?

MT: I was in India working with the TCV school, you know? First, we teach them the 'do re me fa so la ti do', upward, downward, something like that. Then we have to put them to the 'two re's, two do's, to mi's', something like that, you know? That's the basic for beginners, how to teach them dranyen music.

John: Do you find that you...do they follow you more, or do you have the students play more?

MT: Ah, that's a really good question...usually we teach them... everything, the do re mi fa so la ti do, then we give them instruments, dranyen, to all the students, then they will follow us...they have to do more practice, they have to make their hands more comfortable, and they have to know all the notation.

Thus the teacher plays "do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do," and the student copies. The same pattern is repeated then reversed (do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do, do, ti, la, so, fa, mi, re, do). When a student is comfortable, the notes are doubled, then tripled, and the pattern repeated (do do, re re [...] re re, do do/do do do, re re re [...] re re re, do do do), with attention paid to the plucking direction (strings are generally plucked with an upward rising motion, as opposed to the guitar where the primary stroke is usually downward). A third aspect of the first lesson, a universal trait inherent in virtually all Tibetan music, is the introduction of the "typical" Tibetan rhythm. Samuel writes of the "strong tendency to divide the basic pulse into an iambic (short-long) sub-rhythm,"³⁶¹ thus *do do, re re* is played *do...do--re...re--mi...mi*, and the triplets produced as *do...do-do--re...re-re--mi...mi-mi* and so-on. This "groove" (to borrow from Keil) is not restricted to one Tibetan genre, but is "a rhythmic pattern found widely in Tibetan ritual chant and also in folk song,

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Samuel, *Music of the Lhasa Minstrels*, 17.

and perhaps could be called typically ‘Tibetan;’³⁶² it is also found in singing (particularly apparent in the glottal ornamentation) and dance steps. The initial lesson thus serves as the foundation of all future lessons and is the basis of Tibetan music in general. The fact that MT regarded my second question as “really good” might indicate the importance placed on mimesis, for regardless of how complex the music becomes, it seemingly always follows the same pattern: *listen-copy-produce*.

Group Learning

Aristotle’s *dia mimesos* can be clearly observed through the Tibetan group music practices. Here too, as in one-on-one lessons, pastness is passed on through mimicking the *gyenlas*, but this process of learning through mimicry extends beyond this and can be seen as a pervasive cultural value. When asked about the best way for Tibetan culture to be passed on, M14 replied, “You need to do it as well. Smaller kids see it and copy it, and it continues like that. My little brother’s doing it at home now (he’s copying me).” M14’s every instance of “it” refers to Tibetan music production (indicating a strong affiliation with Tibetan culture and music), revealing an ingrained sense of responsibility at his young pre-teen age. F4 even said her favourite part of music class was “watching the big kids dance.” This copying was often evident in the group performances, shown here through excerpts from my observation notes:

Three young boys are sitting on the floor next to the musicians, mimicking the dranyen dance (particularly the part where they are playing the dranyen behind their heads), and appearing to mouth along to the lyrics;³⁶³ Younger girls are on the sidelines watching the older girls, trying to copy their parts. As the older boys dance, waving their Khampa-style (long hair) wigs, younger boys (wigless) try to imitate them.³⁶⁴

Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the practices was the extent of participation by non-participants. Students who were not “on” at the moment (or children who were too young to enrol [the youngest enrolled at that time was six years old]) would stand slightly behind the performers and copy the dances, some having reached a level of apparent intermediary proficiency. Further, this behaviour was never corrected and appeared to be encouraged, even in the dress rehearsal for important public

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Observed dress rehearsal, Saturday August 14th 2010.

³⁶⁴ Observed group music lesson, Saturday July 24th 2010.

performances in Toronto and New York (in which such behaviour might inherently cause distraction for the performers).

A commonly expressed aspect of group practices was their communal element. When asked what had prompted a decision to study Tibetan music, M7 attributed his participation (along with its religious attributes) to the fact that a lot of his friends were doing it; M14, responding to his favourite part of group practices, noted that “you don’t do it alone, you have friends to do it with, and you can relate to them;” M12 responded his favourite part was “being with friends;” F20 (along with other reasons), “it brings us all together, and we’re comfortable with each other;” F16, “when we dance;” M1, “where we learn group dances.” M1 further noted how “some kids really enjoy Tibetan class, cause they get to meet new people, dance with new people, and it’s really good.” The opportunity to connect with other Tibetan youth, therefore, is given a high value, and a major factor for the youth regarding active voluntary (rather than forced parental) participation.

Becoming Tibetan in the Back Region

This spacio-temporal rehearsal space was often a cacophony of sounds and activity, sometimes fluctuating between performance and practice, as it did on Thursday August 19th 2010:

Sitting on a bench in the gymnasium, young boys are sitting next to me chatting about food and games (in English, but not directed towards me). A group of girls, all dressed in chubas, is practicing singing to the side. Another group is setting up in front of a video camera, which would be filming for a Tibetan documentary. The group in front of the camera (all dressed in traditional Tibetan clothes) begins playing the Tibetan version of “This Land is Your Land,” written by Jamyang Norbu (ex-director of TIPA and renowned in the Tibetan diaspora). The sound of a piwang can be heard being tuned outside the auditorium. A small girl in a chuba (possibly the youngest of the performers) starts crying, and being held (by her mother?) manages to escape the obligation of performance—for today, with a camera a few metres away focussed on their every move, definitely has a sense of performance rather than practice. A little girl runs behind the video camera, and is chastised by the camera crew and then the teachers (behaviour that usually goes unnoticed in practices, where students [who are not a part of the piece being immediately practiced] generally ‘do their own thing’ and make plenty of noise without fear of reprisal). The resulting “shhhs” from the girl’s footsteps seems to have alerted the video-game playing boys beside me to the unacceptability of excess noise today, as they quickly exit. [Outside the gymnasium, in the foyer]: There’s a marked difference when the students are practicing (they have another run-through of “This Land” before the camera comes on). A couple of the boys in the back sit down, and one of the girls scratches her arm. The “stage smiles” are absent from their faces. The camera goes off to the side to capture the older girls singing and dancing (the rest are out of the camera’s performance-inducing frame). The musicians (also outside the visually framed performance) play, and the older boys, who have nothing to do now, stay in their spots looking bored. [Back in the gymnasium]: A group of girls (between 9 and 11 years old) and three boys are playing a dranyen song, one segment played successfully with the dranyens behind their heads. While the group is playing, I look around the gymnasium. An elderly man is rubbing his prayer beads; Tibetan boys (teenagers) are hanging from basketball hoops. More parents have gathered now,

*sitting on benches along the wall. Two girls are playing volleyball, but they get yelled at and the ball is taken away. The younger girls have all kept their chubas on, but the older ones' disappeared the minute the filming was over, and no boys can be seen in their chubas anymore.*³⁶⁵

While students are preparing for the stage in the Goffman's back region of rehearsals and music lessons, they are not just practicing for a staged musical performance. Rather they are (potentially) appropriating that which they will perform, namely Tibetanness; they are, in a sense, *becoming* Tibetan. The music lessons are more than just the learning of music skills, for as M1 observed, "lots of kids in Toronto, little kids don't know how to speak Tibetan, so if they come here, they'll learn how to speak Tibetan, and they'll learn about the culture, about Tibet." Participating in practices is, potentially, participating in Tibetanness, and for such cultural learning to take place in Toronto, it must be taught.

In places like Dharamsala, where F14 said "it's every day, you're part of it, you're living it," Tibetan culture is everywhere in the periphery; its sights permeate the landscape, its sounds and smells penetrate the air, its tastes are palpable and its touch tangible. To deny the influence of Tibetanness on the senses is veritably impossible, for at least to some degree its sedimentations are received into the body, often subconsciously. In Toronto, however, such presymbolic acquisition of cultural essence will not occur naturally; the transference of Tibetanness requires more intentionality on the part of the transmitter, and there is significant onus on the individual agency of the recipient. Eyes and ears must be opened to hear and identify Tibetan sounds, mouths taught to create *nyenpo* (aesthetically pleasing) speech, hands loosened to play, feet instructed to dance. In the back region of music practices, even the body must be taught how to stand, how to walk, how to gesture. Indeed particular attention is paid to these aspects which Bourdieu terms bodily hexis, "political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking."³⁶⁶

For Bourdieu, these elements of the habitus are seen to be preconditioned, inherent to the social conditions which create them; yet when growing up in a culture where the periphery is *not* replete with the conditions of the past, these conditions must be recreated in the community. This re-creation is partly

³⁶⁵ Observed group music lesson, Thursday August 19th 2010.

³⁶⁶ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 69-70.

done through the observation of staged performance, thus more than anyone else it is imperative for the performers to emulate the bodily hexis of Tibetanness. In order for the performance to be authentic, the bodily hexis which arose out of these conditions must be taught in the back room, outside the conditions which created it (for my observations the ‘back region’ was a Canadian gymnasium, due to the temporary closure of the Gangjong Choedenling for renovations).

During rehearsals, the gyenlas would walk around, moving students’ hand and legs, positioning them in the proper Tibetan performance stance. In this practice space, at least in the moment of a song’s rehearsal, correct bodily hexis must be maintained by the potential performers (and unlike the mimesis by non-immediate participants, this body stance is not always in accord with an agent’s will):

Five boys are dancing, the only sounds the rhythm of the dancers’ feet, the cymbals played by a female student, and the driving beat of the gyenla’s drum. The boys have finished their dance, and as all other dancing, percussion and movement stop, two girls begin to sing (heavily ornamented, “typically Tibetan” style). The five male dancers now stand at the back, and while the girls are singing, two of them try relaxing their hands. Catching sight of this, the head teacher goes and quickly makes them return to their proper position. The second the teacher turns around, one boy resumes his nonchalant stance, and perhaps out of spite for this correction, his relaxed stance is more obviously stated than before.³⁶⁷

During another practice, I noted significant attention paid to seemingly minor gestures in the *Yak Dance*, a mostly spoken and largely comedic act portraying nomadic Tibetan family life of a mother, father, a son and two yaks (all played by students, with each yak requiring two students, a front and a back). The performance begins with the mother and father alone on stage, gesturing to indicate the beauty of the landscape (indexing the physical land and its loss). The mother and father converse, and then call their son, who groggily enters the stage and is told to get the yaks ready, to milk them (rather, to milk the *dri*³⁶⁸) and take them somewhere. The son prepares the yaks (with some comedic difficulty), milks the dri, and gives the milk to his mother who churns it into butter. In this performance the actors encounter conditions which they have never experienced in real life. Through performance the conditions are re-created, allowing them to at least mimic the experiences of the past. F5 said of staged performance how “for a few minutes, you actually get to experience what it was like back then.” F8 similarly noted, “When

³⁶⁷ Observed group music lesson, Thursday August 12th 2010.

³⁶⁸ A *dri* is a female yak, and as such some Tibetans have pointed out that “Dri Dance” would be a more appropriate title.

you do the music, you've got to wear the clothes, you act like you're in Tibet." Indeed *acting* here is key, for unlike the actions which emerge naturally from the habitus reacting to an environment, the Tibetan youth actors are attempting the portrayal of a people whose habitus differs from that of the actors themselves (as is the case when any actor tries to "get into character," to imagine their subject's bodily hexis and feelings). To briefly return to the metaphoric iceberg: that which was manifest by the body in old Tibet arose from the pre-symbolic conditions in which was created, that is, the tip was a manifestation of the subconscious; the tip which is now presented through performance, however, is a conscious mimesis of the previous manifestation, and an attempt to recreate the conditions necessary for traditional cultural production (and I doubt the paradoxical complexity of this task is lost on the teachers). Just as the conditions which produced the old Tibetan habitus must be re-created, the reactions to those conditions must also be taught. For example at one point the son, enraged by one of the yaks, kicks it; this seemingly simple performative action, intended to recreate the impression of an energetic response, received considerable correction, as did the manner in which the imaginary yak (rather dri) milk was swirled in the imaginary bowl before being poured into the imaginary churn (in the entire act, the only props are yak costumes and nomadic clothes). The actors, having never gotten angry at a yak, milked a dri or churned butter, must be taught by those who have had the experience (or by those who were taught by those who had had the experience, for I do not know whether any of the teachers themselves had ever milked a dri either). This mimesis is not the same as that of a nomadic son learning how to herd yaks by copying his father; it is instead an actor learning from another actor how to produce a believable impression.

It should be noted that the transmission of bodily hexis during practices was not always, or even usually, accomplished through force or express instruction, nor did it generally face overt resistance on the part of the receivers; rather I sensed the majority of students were participants of their own volition, and receptive to the legitimated culture which they encountered, accepting it as the true Tibetan traditions passed down from of old and grateful for the opportunity they had through the TIPA gyenlas. As O6 said, "I think it comes back to the students, they have the desire to learn; the parents, to push the students to go there; and the experience of the teachers." During one rehearsal, I was particularly moved by watching

my own teacher, who has been credited by many as having initiated the transformation of Tibetan music learning in Toronto:

*Gyenla looked like the master conductor, pushing, pulling people into different spots, walking among them, drawing everyone in the midst of the song, dancing around the dancers, moulding them and leading them, sometimes stern, sometimes grinning, but always focussed on his task, tired as he was, spurred on by the desire to keep the traditions he so painstakingly learned alive in the generation to come.*³⁶⁹

In this instance gyenla was indeed instructing, yet at the same time the entire process seemed fluid, natural. It is of times like this, after hours of gruelling practices, “*when music makers and dancers are in sync,*” when all the signs of Tibetanness come to the fore through performing together, that Turino makes this presymbolic semiotic claim: “*signs move beyond felt resemblances to experienced fact of social connections and unity.*”³⁷⁰ As M3 said, “you...feel Tibetan when you sing.”

PERFORMING TIBETANNESS

Recreating Tibetan Space

Bourdieu observes that “practices cannot be deduced either from the present conditions which may seem to have provoked them or from the past conditions which have produced the habitus;” rather they can only be understood “by relating the social conditions in which the habitus that generated them was constituted, to the social conditions in which it is implemented.”³⁷¹ Just as the habitus structures might only be understood by placing oneself within the process, so might they only be created by recreating the conditions in which they were first produced. For Tibetans, I posit this might be accomplished through the liminal spacio-temporality provided through Tibetan events, the enactments of which are performances in themselves.

It has already been shown that Tibetan pastness is a relic from history; however, for it to be interpreted as such it must first be indexical, that is, it must signify through co-occurrence with its dynamic or immediate object. Since the immediate object, Tibet, is no longer accessible, the Tibetan community has provided an alternate object: Parkdale, where community is recreated through restaurants

³⁶⁹ Observed group music lesson, Tuesday August 10th 2010.

³⁷⁰ Turino, *Signs of Imagination*, 241, italics in original.

³⁷¹ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 55-56.

(six), shops (two, one mostly retailing in Tibetan clothing, CD's and DVD's, one focussing more on religious artefacts), two businesses (a computer repair shop and a lawyer's office), prayer flags, a general Tibetan presence, and community events at the Gangjong Choedenling (TCCC). The TCCC, as has been seen, is the tangible representation of Tibet in Toronto, thus signifying as an immediate object through which culture can be tangibly experienced. When performances are experienced in community there, the music, a sign of Tibetanness, signifies through co-occurrence with its object, indexing the TCCC, Dharamsala, Tibet, and potentially the fullness of Tibetanness.

Indeed the performance space (here concerning not only the stage but the internal space in which it is housed) is, in the entirety of its sensual periphery, a re-creation of conceptually believed Tibetan pastness. The *taste* of Tibetanness can be experienced through the ever-present butter tea and (frequently) *momos*.³⁷² Even the many Indian-influenced dishes (which were indeed absent in old Tibet) are so different from common Canadian foods, and so closely indexical of family and Tibetan cultural events, that upon these too might be bestowed a presymbolic air of Tibetanness or at least of habitus-induced cultural belonging. Through the *touching* of prayer wheels, prayer beads, Tibetan carpets, door hangings, familiar Tibetan greetings, and the feel of traditional Tibetan clothes brought out for such sacred cultural events, the reality of Tibetan culture can be tangibly experienced. The ability of *sight* to produce deeply meaningful sign interpretants is perhaps the main factor in recent massive renovations on the Gangjong Choedenling (besides spiritually practical reasons for architectural structures, which have a long history in Tibet). Already, *thankas*³⁷³ line the walls of the large warehouse, which seats at least four thousand people comfortably, with another giant *thanka* lining the middle of the ceiling. Two large screens hang at the front, to the right and left of the stage, to allow for a clearer observation of performances,³⁷⁴ and at least

³⁷² A momo is a Tibetan dumpling, the most popular and most Tibetan of all Tibetan dishes.

³⁷³ Buddhist wall hangings.

³⁷⁴ Although this is indeed a "break from tradition," as there was no such technology in Tibet, the use of television to augment visual perception (or to transmit messages from His Holiness, for which they are also employed) are what Eco calls prostheses which "extend the range of action of an organ" (Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 361). Thus they

three giant statues stand behind the stage.³⁷⁵ Planned renovations will transform the current warehouse into a fully Tibetan replication of similar structures in Dharamsala and Tibet, and thus the TCCC will become a visual representation of Tibetan architectural design. Tibetan *sounds* penetrate the entire performance space, including the familiarity of Tibetan speech patterns, the occasional monastic chanting (often marking particularly sacred temporal space), and other Tibetan music played on CD and performed live. *Smells* also permeate the recreated reality: greeting participants upon arrival is the scent of burning juniper emanating from the large incense burners located a few metres from the front entrance, and inside the air is filled with the familiar smells of Tibetan incense (a composite of over thirty ingredients, uniquely identifiable as “Tibetan”). Thus everywhere one turns, all five senses conceptually place the perceiver *inside* Tibetanness. The participant finds themselves, at least for a time, surrounded by the signs (as much as can be recreated outside the geographic landscape of Tibet) and conditions which created the structures of historic Tibetan habitus.

Framing the Music Performance

Turner claimed that for self-inspection a society must “cut out a piece of itself” which necessitates “[setting] up a frame”³⁷⁶ inside of which the selected cultural elements might be viewed. This cultural slice can be seen as the iceberg tip, the manifestation of culture, from which the lower strata of culture, the signs of Firstness and Secondness, might be inferred. For what I propose are the most conceptually Tibetan of performances the frame is the recreated space of the Gangjong Choedenling, although there are other frames as well. Thus the manifestation is framed and presented, but the interpretation of that manifestation is conjuncture. Like any observer we must move from the seen to the unseen, working backwards from what we know so that we might see how we came to know what we know. Indeed the objectification of structures through the application of semiosis is, like any theory,

might not be viewed in the same way as other cultural variations; rather they are methods used to augment human abilities (as in sight) which already existed.

³⁷⁵ The Gangjong Choedenling immediately following the Dalai Lama’s visit, October 24th 2010.

³⁷⁶ Turner, 468.

ultimately imperfect. The structures can but imply, we can but infer. Through the interpretants produced, it is possible to trace back the *potential* process of semiosis and thus *postulate* the base of the iceberg, the structuring structures of the habitus, at least as far as regards the interpretants of that particular performance. This, I propose, is the natural process of any interested observer, Tibetan or other, and both the frame of the performance and the disposition of the observer will strongly influence the interpretation of the performance sign.

For Tibetans, the iceberg tip of musical performances has become a means of objectifying the community's adherence to collective preservation goals: "Because of their performative, public format, the performing arts in particular have come to be closely scrutinized measuring sticks of the success of cultural preservation in exile."³⁷⁷ In the recreated space of the Gangjong Choedenling, the "cut out" pieces of Tibetan culture are placed, performed, and interpreted, thus providing the necessary frame for communal assessment and instruction. Thus any given performance for Tibetans serves as an indication of their community's commitment to the Tibetan cultural responsibility, to preserve culture in its purest form in exile and to pass it on to the next generation. When evidence of preservation is produced *through* the next generation, the observer can infer the completion of both goals. The perception is that the Tibetan youth have appropriated the culture incrementally to the level of musical proficiency achieved (as with the perception that the language learner who has attained a level of fluency has, along the way, appropriated other cultural traits associated with the language³⁷⁸), and that the Tibetan culture, through its believed embodiment in the youth, has been preserved for another generation.

The manifest cultural elements and the performers who display them, both framed in Tibetanness, become Peircian signs; in Eco's words, they are "a physical presence referring back to something

³⁷⁷ Diehl, 77.

³⁷⁸ As musical ability and musical understanding inheres through time spent appropriating the available structures, it is reasonable to presume that any fluency therein is incremental to the time spent in like cultural conditions. For example, the second language speaker who has assumed a level of proficiency is more likely to be seen as an 'insider' due to the presumed length of cultural exposure deemed necessary to achieve such a level of fluency. The 'native' speaker thus presumes (correctly or not) that the second-language speaker has acquired other cultural aspects related to the native speaker's culture, thus making them more approachable as the second-language speaker is deemed to be culturally similar. Thus the observable "iceberg's tip" of musical performance can be seen to suggest deep cultural acquisition.

absent.”³⁷⁹ As signs, they are iconic, indexical or symbolic of something; framed in Tibetanness, they are signs of the same; and, provided the habitus of those in attendance accepts the cultural manifestation as doxic, that is, if the conditions to which the group habitus has been attuned have been correctly recreated, the performance will be a sign of authentic Tibetanness. A successful performance, therefore, is a presentation of ideal cultural values, signs that all the “cut out” cultural elements are still intact in their original form, preserved for all to see, and that Tibetan culture is indeed alive and well. In simple metaphor, if the iceberg tip seen today mirrors the iceberg tip believed to have been observable in the past, then the unseen foundations of both are likewise presumed to be more or less the same.

Not only does the performance serve as an objectifiable “slice” of Tibetanness, but through the performance the performers themselves, in a semiotic sense, cease to be themselves and become signs; that is, they (potentially) become ideal types of Tibetans embodying Tibetanness. This can be illustrated through Eco’s attempt to answer an unanswered question posed long ago by Peirce of a “drunkard exposed in a public place by the Salvation Army.”³⁸⁰ Eco visualizes this man placed, by the Salvation Army, on a stage:

As soon as he has been put on the platform and show to the audience, the drunken man has lost his original nature of “real” body among real bodies... He has become a semiotic device; he is now a sign...a physical presence referring back to something absent. What is our drunken man referring back to? To a drunken man. But not to *the* drunk who his is, but to *a* drunk. The present drunk—insofar as he is the member of a class—is referring us back to the class of which he is a member. He *stands for* the category he belongs to. There is no difference, in principle, between our intoxicated character and the word “drunk.”³⁸¹

To borrow Eco’s example for the Tibetan students: the moment they have entered the stage and become visible to the audience, they have become semiotic devices, signs referring not back to *them*, but to the class of which they are members. In the Salvation Army context, of course, the drunk is a sign of deviance and depravity, what one *should not* be, whereas the Tibetan performers exemplify conformity and virtue, what one *should* be. The manner of that sign’s interpretation, however, is largely dependent

³⁷⁹ Eco 1977, *Peirce’s Notion of the Interpretant*, 110.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 100, italics in original.

upon the frame within which it is viewed. What if, as Eco muses, the drunk had been placed in a revolutionary frame? “Would he have still signified ‘vice’ rather than ‘responsibility of the system,’ ‘the results of a bad administration,’ ‘the whole starving world?’”³⁸² When placed in a Chinese political frame, a Tibetan performance might serve as an image of another “happy minority” (happy to be a part of the China), reinforcing the propagated ideology of a “harmonious society.” Or it may be framed by its similarities (actual or invented) to Han Chinese cultural elements. Similarly in Canada, when placed within the Canadian political frame (which Tibetan performances often are, with high-level Canadian politicians attending many of the major events), they may signify multiculturalism, one element in the cultural rainbow through which much of Canadian national identity is derived. Such an interpretation can easily serve to reinforce the politicized belief that Canada is open to all cultures and free of racism (the reality of which has been brilliantly argued against by Razack), even though the majority of Canadians have no understanding of Tibetan culture per se.

In the cases exemplified here, however, Tibetan performers have been framed within the exilic discourse, and Eco’s drunk has been exposed by the Salvation Army. “The fact that the drunk has been exposed under the standards of the Salvation Army obliges the audience to associate his presence to a whole system of values.”³⁸³ To paraphrase Eco, the fact that the Tibetan performance has been exposed under the standards of an official legitimate cultural event obliges the audience to associate the performers’ presence with the whole Tibetan exilic system of values. Thus the performers stand for Tibetans, which they are, but framed by the Gangjong Choedenling, surrounded by cultural artifacts, and presented under the banner of legitimate culture, they stand for the ideal type of Tibetans and Tibetanness: they are Tibetans *par excellence*.

Other Frames

Just as the Tibetan community is not alone in Parkdale, neither is their performance of culture done in isolation. Due to the politicization of Tibet, such performances (even the most Tibetan-framed)

³⁸² Ibid., 117.

³⁸³ Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 117.

are unlikely to have Tibetans as their sole receptors, a truth that is not lost on the Tibetan populous. Regardless of the frame, there are always multiple groups to which Tibetans must negotiate their identity, including: the hegemonic “White” Canadians; the other ethnicities in Toronto; and the Tibetan community itself. Keeping in mind that the performance of Tibetanness is always interpreted in various ways by variegated groups, this study will briefly explore some of the other frames within which the performances are placed before objectifying a performance in the Gangjong Choedenling (a most Tibetan of performances, as not only was it framed in the most Tibetan of places, but also as I was the only non-Tibetan in attendance). Although the content of any performance is virtually the same, and while no performance has solely one purpose, the main interpretation of the content is largely dependent upon the context. For example, the performance immediately following my two weeks of daily Tibetan music practice observations, held at Harbourfront (a public stage on the lake in Toronto hosting numerous Asian performing groups that summer), was explicitly framed by the event organizers (not Tibetans) through the following description offered on their website: “Trained Tibetan traditional dance and music teachers and students of all ages preserve and promote the Tibetan cultural heritage and contribute to the cultural diversity of Canada.”³⁸⁴ Although it is unknown whether the organizers had ever read Goffman or Turner, they succinctly presented three frames: the frame of cultural preservation, the frame of cultural transmission (promotion) to the next generation, and the frame of Canadian multiculturalism and performed diversity. The audience that day was comprised of a few Han Chinese (I overheard some asking, in Mandarin, “Is this from *Xizang* [Tibet]?”), other Asians, white Canadian families, some Caribbean women, and a good number of Tibetans. The performance was, by all objectifiable judgments, brilliant. Speaking to one Tibetan (non-participant) after the show, he proudly exclaimed, “They’re perfect now!”

Besides the overall quality of the performances, the thing which struck me most was the grand finale, the Yak Dance:

³⁸⁴ “Worldroutes,” Harbourfront Centre, <http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/worldroutes/festivals.cfm?id=2262> (accessed May 15, 2011).

Both parents, and especially their son, added English into the mainly Tibetan script, to which the audience exuberantly responded. The irony was clear: a typical nomadic family portrayed in a traditional narrative, intertwined with expressions such as “I’m too tired [to milk the yaks],” “I went clubbing last night,” “come on, yaks!” and “Where do you want me to take them? New York, 7th Avenue?,” all spoken in a Toronto youth accent with slang and “man” thrown in fluently. Along with being ironic and hilarious, this was perhaps the only example of an attempt to include the non-Tibetan audience.

Possible reasons for the English inclusion (and the exclusive use of Tibetan in all other performances) are numerous, although perhaps it boils down to a simple practicality: as music is often seen to “speak for itself,” and the Yak Dance is the only act which contains long periods of speaking without music, some English use may be seen as necessary to keep from losing the non-Tibetan audience’s attention. Still, this shows the importance Tibetans place on inclusivity of its English-speaking audience, and also reveals that the frame may well be different from that typically conceptualized through the performances at the TCCC, that is, that the main intention is cultural representation to the outside world rather than cultural transmission within the Tibetan community. It should also be noted that, while the Tibetan appeared to be heavily scripted, the English use suggested a fair amount of ad-libbing, as evidenced by the fact that I had never heard English used in the rehearsals of the same (and by the fact the son once said “ass”).

Two other non-TCCC performances I attended were as part of an annual Parkdale community celebration in 2009 and 2010, where the Tibetans were clearly framed within the multicultural mixed salad of one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Toronto. Here it could be said that the variegated ethnic enclaves were each ‘cutting out a piece of themselves’ for public examination, or perhaps that the neighborhood of Parkdale was offering up slices of itself. The first year consisted of variegated performances, including African drumming, a martial arts performance, a guitarist including random children present in percussion, a dranyen player (myself), all culminating with the Tibetan youth performance. The first Tibetan act, as has been the case for the vast majority of Tibetan performances, was *Tashi Shopa*, an auspicious ritual mask dance believed to clear the stage of evil spirits (also said to bring good luck to the village in which it is performed, in this case presumably to Parkdale), followed by another dance, then myself (sitting and playing a familiar tune on the dranmnens purely instrumentally, unlike the following performance by Tibetan children who skillfully sang, danced and played

simultaneously), and then the finale: the ever popular Yak Dance. Although there were many representatives from various ethnicities, Tibetans were definitely the majority, making up roughly sixty percent of those in attendance.

Although both years the Tibetans outnumbered the other ethnic communities, the second year, though smaller (due to rain and the performances being moved inside), held a significantly higher Tibetan majority. I counted some sixty Tibetans in the audience (not including performers), and only fifteen to twenty non-Tibetan faces, mostly Roma who had recently moved into the community, a few West Indian, and maybe three visibly Canadian-born observers. Again the Yak Dance closed off the ceremonies, but unlike the Harbourfront festival, there was very little English use and many more jokes in Tibetan, to the immense pleasure of the Tibetan audience members. Following the finale, closing thanks were given by one of the event organizers (in English), but then a Tibetan came forward and spoke, in Tibetan, followed by applause. Here lies an example of the multiple representations of Tibetanness. Was it a Tibetan performance framed in multiculturalism, multiculturalism framed in a Tibetan performance, or something else? Were the performers primarily presenting their culture to the outside world, or rather to the geographically inside world (Parkdale), or was its goal Tibetan cultural transmission to other Tibetans, and all else peripheral? It seems from my own observations that in this performance, like all Tibetan performances, a variety of frames were being employed as Tibetans attempted to negotiate their identity both for themselves and for others. In a sense, this particular example was of Tibetanness framed within a Tibetan frame, framed in multiculturalism; however, it is possible to speculate that the Tibetan frame might here have been attempting to further the Tibetan frame to encapsulate the multiculturalism of the other performances within itself, thus portraying Tibetan cultural predominance in Parkdale both to the Tibetan community and to others.

While virtually all performances of Tibetanness in Toronto are framed in a Tibetanness of sorts (language, clothing, music, instruments and dance, all meant to interpret as Tibetan), this study now turns to the most Tibetan of frames, a physical space where signs of Tibetanness (and Tibetanness alone) abound: the Gangjong Choedenling. Here any performance of Tibetanness has the greatest potential to

correlate the fundamental elements and create an ever deeper sense of Tibetan identity, community and habitus by recreating the conditions in which the ancient Tibetan habitus is believed to have been conceived.

The Tibetan Frame (Performing Tibetanness)

Logan recounts Tibetans' attitudes towards the Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations held at the Gangjong Choedenling in 2010, saying "this 'performance' of Tibetanness was in some ways perceived as more authentic than their everyday lives."³⁸⁵ Such hegemonically sanctioned performances at the Gangjong Choedenling (during which many of the music students perform) help create the habitus of the group, inevitably reinforcing Goffman's "common official values,"³⁸⁶ thus perceived as natural, as "more authentic" than current daily life, because (as has been seen in chapter 5) the Tibetan collective teaches its members that their current lives are not fulfilled, in a sense that they should not be attuned to the field which their habitus encounters daily (although their habitus may indeed be attuned to it). They feel, or are at least socialized to feel, that their everyday existence is not where they belong; what is being recreated through festivals and ceremonies, however, is iconic of where they do belong, the reality of what should have been. Thus theoretically, as Logan noted, the 'performance,' for some, truly is more real than the reality of life in Toronto.

As was mentioned in the interviews, almost every Tibetan event at the Gangjong Choedenling of late has involved performances by the Tibetan youth music troupe. O6, who had worked extensively in the TCCC, observed that "almost all of the events have music, because we want to show, we want the public to know how much these kids are working hard, how much these teachers are working hard." The ultimate display of this hard work was no doubt when the youth performed, four times in three days, during the Dalai Lama's 2010 visit to Toronto. They performed on Friday at the airport when His Holiness arrived; they performed at the Rogers Centre before the Dalai Lama's public talks (notably their

³⁸⁵ Logan, 114.

³⁸⁶ Goffman, 59.

first performance at the Rogers Centre was Tashi Shopa, thus purifying the stage before their spiritual leader and living deity took his place); they performed on Saturday before the Dalai Lama's private (Tibetan only, or rather given in Tibetan) talks and the official ritual legitimization (by the spiritual leader) of the Gangjong Choedenling; and lastly they performed on Sunday, immediately following the Dalai Lama's departure. In their final performance of this most auspicious of weekends, the Tibetan youth were not only the featured act, but were in fact the only staged performers of the evening.³⁸⁷ The event was in no way simply an "add-on" to the weekend, for it cost twenty dollars a ticket (strictly enforced) and drew a significant crowd. The attendees were, as far as I could tell, all Tibetans (myself excluded). The frame was set for a purely introspective "emic" cultural performance, a sign of pure Tibetanness and communal success, provided the performance would be accepted as authentic by the community.

The event began as usual with Tashi Sholpa, and included many performances I had seen either performed or rehearsed before, as well as a few new ones (such as one "roof stomping" dance, a traditional dance done to flatten and harden a roof). Dances such as this one are ideal examples of traditions preserved for preservation's sake, the original functionality no longer existing. As with the Yak Dance, this can be seen the unique opportunities provided through performance for a re-creation of reactions to a past condition, even though the condition no longer exists. The object (the dance itself) is the same, but it has a new sign, for where the roof stomping dance was once a sign of a new house and a roof being flattened, and the action of herding and milking yaks a sign of herding and milking yaks, its staged performance is now a sign (along with all traditional Tibetan music) of Tibetan pastness, of the way life was, and the preservation of Tibetan culture in its purest form.

The roof stomping dance (the third performance in) has just finished, and the youngest performing group has just come out to wild cheers from the audience. Their every mistake is enjoyed immensely by the crowd, sending peals of laughter through the aisles... The middle class is performing now, and in the centre of the group stands a highly accomplished 11-year-old girl, one of the participants in my interviews. The performance has two lines of seven girls each, all playing dranyen, two boys on yangchin at the back, and one girl on dranyen and singing in the middle. Another song begins, one which I had never seen before: Five girls are kneeling on the stage now and singing accapella, each girl taking a turn singing a verse then coming together in the chorus. During each verse, there are parts where the audience laughs (not in the same way they did with the young children, for the lyrics must be intentionally humorous). The song ended,

³⁸⁷ There was a brief break in the performance where basketball awards were presented, but besides this relatively brief staged phenomenon the youth music troupe was the only presence on stage.

and the general song repertoire (ones which I had seen many times before) resumed: *Nine girls and three boys (in the middle age group, between eight and eleven years old) are playing dranyen, dancing and singing, at one point doing all three with the dranyen played behind their heads.* Many more performances passed, with an intermission precluded by a large, acrobatic drum dance, where the girls play hand-held drums while turning them around their bodies and dancing. During one particularly virtuosic segment, the boys took turns spin-jumping (arms outstretched, body angled as horizontally as possible) or performing other acrobatics (such as back-flips and break-dancing). Following the intermission, which began after two hours of straight performances, the youth troupe began again, the final performance ending around 11pm: *All the performers have gathered together on the stage now. The song begins with two female singers singing off each other with “typically Tibetan” solo vocalization (highly ornamented, relatively unfixed rhythm). The instrumental melody begins, the students all join, singing in unison. The crowd is clapping along, and I’m thinking this will be the last one.*³⁸⁸

After the performance, while eating rice, dhal and curry and drinking butter tea, I congratulated the students and talked to many Tibetans who said how wonderful the students had been. The performances observed were re-enactments of the past, cultural manifestations meant to mimic and *be* the past, bringing it back to life. Thus audience judgement is not of creativity per se, but of adherence to conceptualized historic structures. “This,” says O6, “is the main reason behind events having dance and music: to show, to prove to ourselves that we do preserve our culture.” These Tibetan performances, as re-creations of the past, cannot theoretically surpass the past which they try to recreate. Praise is given to the performance which correctly represents its perceived object of the past, the one that mirrors the memory of that which it represents. For the Tibetans who have grown up in exile the assumption is that this performance would indeed have interpreted semiotically as an authentic display of Tibetanness, for their cognitive types of Tibet and their Tibetan habitus, their memory of truly Tibetan performances, has been largely created through similar performances. The highest praise, then, must come from those whose memory derives from lived experience with the direct object of the past, that is, those who can remember the past performances that all current diasporic Tibetan performances attempt to recreate. Indeed such an honour was bestowed this night upon this performance, by a woman who had once performed the same songs and dances in Lhasa. The performance, for her, was not only iconic of a memory created through the greater nuclear content of a group, nor was it solely an index of other recreated events in exile: rather, it was indexical of her own direct experiences in Tibet, iconic of the very songs she used to sing. In a

³⁸⁸ The Gangjong Choedenling immediately following the Dalai Lama’s visit, October 24th 2010.

conversation after the performance, she shared with me how she “felt” something when the students performed; she reminisced that watching the young girls performing reminded her of herself as a girl performing the same songs in Tibet; and she acknowledged that, truly, they had been performed exactly the same way.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

When first embarking on this study I sought to discover and present an emic understanding of culture, find an appropriate methodology through which to view cultural transmission, and determine music's role in that process. It has been argued here that Tibetan culture is generally conceptualized as an entity consisting of the collectively agreed upon historic narrative of Tibetan past leading up to 1959, at which time Tibetan culture was essentially suspended. For the past fifty-two years, the *raison d'être* of the Tibetan émigré communities has been to preserve this entity in its purest form until an eventual return. In order to do so, core elements of the entity have been recreated, in the hopes that these are not only “showpieces” but individually appropriated cultural structures creating the person and producing a sense of Tibetanness. To the best of my ability, music has been shown as invaluable in the creation of the underlying structures of habitus and the transmission of all core cultural elements, and its public performance, particularly by the gyenlas and music students in Toronto, as a frame in which the Tibetan community might judge their fulfillment of the preservation mandate.

The results of the gyenlas' and students' efforts have been clear: blessings bestowed by His Holiness, international competitions won against performers who had been playing far longer, official and unofficial recognition by the Tibetan community in Toronto at large, and numerous accolades from Western observers. Nationally renowned news anchor Seamus O'Regan, following the performance at the Rogers Centre and prior to His Holiness' public talks (all the proceeds of which were to go to the Gangjong Choedenling), spoke of the goal of the Tibetan Community Cultural Centre to preserve Tibetan language, religion, art, and music. He concluded with the statement: “And we have definitely seen that culture preserved here today.”

The presentation of this preserved culture, as has been implied through this paper (and more explicitly in the writings of Korom,³⁸⁹ Ashild Kolas,³⁹⁰ Diehl,³⁹¹ Jan Magnusson et al,³⁹² Nowak,³⁹³ Christine J. Yeh and Mary Y. Hwang,³⁹⁴ and others), is not necessarily the historic reality. Jamyang Norbu³⁹⁵ has expressed how TIPA, under his jurisdiction, made intentional changes to the old performances, certain performances had to be recreated from highly fragmented memories, and new traditions have indeed been introduced. Likewise the common Western-held assumption of Tibet as a historically peaceful Shangri-La is not necessarily entirely accurate, for Piltz argues the Tibetan story is not only being “re-written” for Tibetan ears, but also to conform to the popular hegemonic ideals of the West: “The Tibet that is now proclaimed – and proclaimed to have always existed – is a community in which the people conform to these ideals: the people of Tibet is, and has always been, religious and non-violent, respecting all living beings, never fighting or mistreating other humans, animals, or the environment.”³⁹⁶ Such a recasting of history, the impossible culture of a mythic people to which they must conform, can cause great emotional stress for the actors expected to play these heroic roles. This internal and external conflict is explored in the Tibetan movie *We Are No Monks*, attempting to demystify the assumption that Tibetans should live up to the angelic roles given them as the ancestors of the

³⁸⁹ Korom, 1995.

³⁹⁰ Kolas, 1996.

³⁹¹ Diehl, 2002.

³⁹² Jan Magnusson et al., “South Indian Tibetans: Development Dynamics in the Early Stages of the Tibetan Refugee Settlement Lugs zung bsam grub gling, Bylakuppe,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 4 (December 2008): 31pp.
<http://www.thlib.org/collections/texts/jiats/#jiats=/04/magnusson/all/#ixzz0yEL9dx00> (accessed September 12, 2011).

³⁹³ Nowak.

³⁹⁴ Yeh and Hwang, *Interdependence in Ethnic Identity*.

³⁹⁵ Jamyang Norbu, “Introduction,” in *Zlos-Gar: Performing Traditions of Tibet* ed. Jamyang Norbu, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives: Dharamsala, India, 1986.

³⁹⁶ Piltz, 2.

heavenly Shangri-La, and should not escape the literature; however the CCP's version of the story, the only other major narrative, is an attempt to re-create Tibetans in *their* image.

The Tibetan version is, at least, told by the actors themselves (or rather the representatives of those actors, the sanctioned teachers and performers, the monks, the politicians), recreated in the image they desire for themselves, not imposed upon them by someone else. It is as though the Tibetans were the metaphoric tortoise in Chinua Achebe's story:

Once upon a time the leopard who had been trying for a long time to catch the tortoise happened upon him on solitary road. *Aha*, he said; *at long last, prepare to die*. And the tortoise said: *Can I ask one favour before you kill me?* The leopard saw no harm in that and granted it. But instead of standing still as the leopard expected the tortoise went into strange action on the road, scratching with hands and feet and throwing sand furiously in all directions. *Why are you doing that?* asked the puzzled leopard. The tortoise replied, *Because even after I am dead I want anyone passing by this spot to say, yes, a fellow and his match struggled here.*³⁹⁷

By claiming Tibetans are trying to tell a story, and to re-create a history and culture that may in some ways appear incongruous with the "reality" of the past, is not to say the story being told is any less in accord with history than the story being told by other societies, and indeed may be closer to it. What difference is there between North American-born and socialized students performing a school play re-enactment of the first European settlers' "peaceful" arrival to the Americas than to Tibetan youth performing the romanticization of nomadic life in the Yak Dance? It would in fact seem the North American stories more closely resemble the "peaceful liberation" rhetoric of the CCP. Certainly many such North American school performances do not include the brutal treatment of First Nations societies by the "pioneers" (a name with positive connotation, as opposed to "colonizers" or "imperialists" given by North Americans to others who in fact did the same thing). Nor do any Tibetan exile performances denote anything but an idealized, harmonious, peaceful society pre-Chinese occupation. At the CCP-run University where I taught, the memory I saw re-constructed (through both discourse and performance) was that of the feudalistic, poor and oppressed Tibetan society prior to the arrival of the liberating Chinese Red Army. The factuality of history can never be truly recreated; it is always written through the

³⁹⁷ Chinua Achebe, "Anthills of the Savanah," in *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, ed. Vijay Agnew (University of Toronto Press, 2005): 298, italics in original.

eyes of someone, and usually through those of the conquerors. For the refugee, the recreated memories at least serve as a story to counter and question that of the conquerors, who are usually the only ones allowed to speak. In this case the Tibetan populous has, through the exile community, been granted the Tortoise' dying wish: the chance to tell their story.

It should be remembered that Tibetans, despite the massive world attention and “pop-star” status awarded in certain Western discourse, truly did endure intense physical and emotional hardship upon leaving Tibet, and it was in that moment the job of the Dalai Lama's government (like any government) to unite the people and give them a *raison d'être*, an identity and a hope in the face of pain and loss on a magnitude unimaginable to most. Now that the initial pain has subsided, it is (ironically) in their best interests, and in the interests of national (diasporic) unity, to recreate some semblance of that pain in the current generation (as was discussed in chapter 5) alongside the many other fundamental cultural elements.

Since the ultimate goal of the Government in Exile essentially *is* cultural preservation, it would serve to purpose that the hegemonic discourse of the diaspora should pour their energies into the vehicles most capable of reproducing the rich heritage of Tibet. As has been seen through this paper, the most appropriate vehicle is in fact a cultural element in itself: traditional music, expressed through the performing arts. The certificate of approval ex-TIPA members receive is significant, yet the legitimate cultural capital TIPA members have been given by the state is perhaps the only capital awarded them. In word, of course, the Government in Exile indeed legitimizes TIPA as cultural ambassadors, Bourdieu's delegates of the state; however in practice there are significant discrepancies. Diehl relates how the Dalai Lama's government has “faced criticism over the years from Tibetan performers, teachers, and supporters of the arts” who believe support for TIPA from their governing body (The Department of Religion and Cultural Affairs) has “largely been rhetorical” for:

Although the importance of preserving the artistic heritage of Tibet is often mentioned in government publications and in public statements by officials, TIPA has never been allotted the financial or promotional

support necessary to ensure that this heritage is, in fact, well learned, let alone *lived*, by young Tibetans born in exile.³⁹⁸

Thus despite its ability to weld disparate cultural elements into a conceptual whole, operationalize multiple sign interpretants in one instance, and allow the participants to temporarily “enter in” to the conditions of the past, the performing arts usually take economic second chair to other cultural elements (even ones which are strongly indexed and iconicized through music, such as Buddhism and language). To borrow Wong’s argument, “The ephemerality of performance is no less a mode of cultural production than those institutions (i.e. government, religious life, the law, the workplace) often taken more seriously as spheres of determination and influence.”³⁹⁹ Through the research conducted here, I hope the potentiality of the tangible relic of Tibetan performance to fulfill the *raison d’être* of Tibetan exilic life has been made manifestly clear, presented not only as an equal mode of cultural production to those “often taken more seriously,” but rather as an invaluable mode of cultural transmission to be taken very seriously if the goals of cultural preservation are to be maintained in exile.

Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout the process of conducting research for this project, many new questions presented themselves. If music indeed has a powerful socializing effect, and if it might (at least to some degree) be contingent upon time, what portion of Tibetans’ lives are spent actually listening to Tibetan music, or more generally, spent in Tibetan socio-cultural contexts? Much of the research conducted here was qualitative and theoretical, and a more quantitative music-focussed study is certainly warranted. Perhaps such an undertaking might follow Logan’s use of photovoice, replacing disposable cameras with personal recorders, with agents recording every time they heard a song. A study of this magnitude would certainly be time-consuming, but the results would provide concrete data on the actual structures which are subconsciously forming the cognition. Another issue in Tibetan cultural preservation anywhere in the diaspora, and particularly in Toronto, is the co-habitation of Tibetans among other cultural groups. This

³⁹⁸ Diehl, 72, italics in original.

³⁹⁹ Wong, 210.

study has focussed on the transmission of Tibetan culture through performance to Tibetans; however, Tibetans are not alone, and as they negotiate their place among the vast sea of cultures in Toronto, in what frames do they present themselves, and is their presentation of Tibetanness to others the same as their presentation of Tibetanness to themselves? Does their presentation to the hegemonic “white” Canadian majority discourse differ from their presentation to other minority groups? Lama and Yeh⁴⁰⁰ touch upon this in the Tibetan communities of the San Francisco Bay Area and Boulder Colorado, but no such study exists in Toronto, arguably the most multicultural city in the world. A study of these interactions might prove invaluable not only for Tibetan research but for diasporic and refugee studies throughout the world.

Final Thoughts

One concern I have with this paper is its failure to properly acknowledge the import of individual agency, which I will attempt to remedy here. For while the signs structuring the habitus often inhere presymbolically (thus subconsciously), the onus is on the individual to seek out situations in which these signs of Firstness and Secondness might be encountered and sediment themselves within the body. Indeed, when the agent is forced into conditions with the *potential* for cultural appropriation they maintain the agency to resist the structures being enforced (as with unwitting students all over the world in English classes, where the end result rarely produces English speakers, or similarly my own inability to converse in a language I studied from grades three to ten).

As stated earlier, Bourdieu equated bodily hexis and habitus as “something that one is.”⁴⁰¹ Similarly Marx and Engels posited a direct correlation between production and being: “As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.”⁴⁰² Therefore it is not only the material conditions but the philosophical, political, ideological and perceived historical conditions that determine “the nature of

⁴⁰⁰ Lama and Yeh.

⁴⁰¹ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 73.

⁴⁰² Marx and Engels, 83.

individuals,” and through which individuals determine themselves. These conditions which determine individuals and are individually determined result from both *subconscious* sedimentation (first language, ways of standing, sitting etc.) and *intentional* appropriation (subsequent languages, picking up an instrument or sport later in life). Marx & Engels’ “so they are” and Bourdieu’s “something one is” coincide: we are produced from our conditions, products of our experiences, and whatever is produced in us, *is us*. Paradoxically, agency allows to varying degrees for the production *of* our conditions, providing some determinacy of our experiences, therefore not purely a passive *being produced* but an active *producing* is also *us*. True, we are created by our conditions; yet the fact that we have some control in determining those conditions means we also possess the power to create ourselves. Further, we do not only produce structures in ourselves, but in doing so we generally produce them in others. “Becoming” (with the possible exception of certain yogis and other ascetics who devote their existence to meditation in a cave) is invariably a social experience. Thus when music enters the process, when we surround ourselves with the structures of music and participate in its production, we not only engage in our own constitution but join also in the creation of those around us, becoming a part of society and creative agents in social construction. Perhaps in this way we not only “save the world for posterity,”⁴⁰³ but also have a hand in creating it.

⁴⁰³ Keil, 304.

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