Tibetan Borderlands

EDITED BY

P. CHRISTIAAN KLIEGER

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TIBETAN BORDERLANDS

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On the cover: Sir Charles Bell, flanked by H.H. the 13th Dalai Lama and H.M. King of Bhutan on the right and the H.M. Maharaja Kumar Sidekyong Tulku of Sikkim on the left at the Imperial Durbar at Calcutta, 1910. (Photo: Courtesy of Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford).

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INTRODUCTION
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P. Christiaan Klieger (California Academy of Sciences)

Identity is a slippery affair. One's self-perception does not always correspond with how one would wish to be represented to the outside world, a dilemma that most ethnographers have encountered in the field. To increase the difficulty, most people maintain multiple, overlapping affiliations and loyalties—one's tribal, caste, national, and 'passport' identification can all be different, especially in pluralistic societies such as India and China. But as these papers argue, a clear pattern of identity has emerged.

To a large extent, the people that live along the margin of the former Tibetan polity no longer show a great affinity or loyalty to their homeland. No doubt Tibet has lost considerable prestige as a conquered area of origin. The peoples of Sikkim and Bhutan, for example, are adamant in separating themselves from Tibetans, especially from the relatively recent Tibetan refugees. The disappearance of the State of Tibet and the destruction of its aristocracy and great monastic centers of learning are important agents in this 'distancing' of the peripheral peoples. Economic and political advantages of being allied with India, Nepal, or independent Bhutan are essential to the survival of the peoples of the borderland. Furthermore, strong identification with the discredited 'lamaist state' of the Dalai Lama is perceived to invite invasion fears from the People's Republic of China. Like former Roman citisens in fifth century Gaul and Germany, it seemed best for many to let go of one's former imperial political affiliation, language, and values for new 'national' ones.

The papers presented in this volume, then, examine some of the current dynamics observed in the civilising missions of India, Nepal, Myanmar, and China upon the widely dispersed Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples living within these modern national territories. What here is 'tribal', 'scheduled tribe', '*minzu*', or 'ethnic minority' to the central governments of these large polities are often simply peoples caught on the wrong side of the border as empires expanded and contracted.

Undoubtedly some of the far-flung Tibetan groups are where they are due to past expansions of Tibet's own empire. The artificiality of national borders is most evident at their margins, where the civilising missions of the current and past centers tend to become diffuse and lose their appeal and impact upon resident peoples. In some isolated regions, such as the Khampa villages in highland Burma, Khampa Tibetans in material culture, language, religious beliefs, and general lifeways, are not generally even aware of the historical existence of the former Lhasa government of the Dalai Lama, or the current military regime of Yangon, although both polities have long considered the region part of their territory.

The collection of papers presented in the volume were read at the Tenth meeting of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, presented at Wolfson College, Oxford University, in September 2003 through the auspices of the Michael Aris Trust. The participants focused their presentations on the theme of 'greater Tibet', the extensive region around the current Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China that expresses, in some way, its Tibetan cultural affinity and historical roots (Figure 1). In most cases, the cultural expressions of the peoples of this region are far from the 'classical' lifeways of U tsang and the sophisticated society of its capital, Lhasa. Out in the borderlands, influences and anxieties generated by other civilising missions come into play, be it China, India, the West, or even Burma. People on the periphery often react to the forces of the centre by establishing ethnic boundaries and borders that serve to bolster a sense of shared experience and unique destiny. While linguistic, cultural, and physical similarities note a common heritage, members of these border groups are usually first to point out the differences. Such appears to be the case in numerous examples along the Tibet periphery.

The Oxford panel attempted to have representation from all the major regions around Tibet: a circular region encompassing the Balti borderlands of Pakistan, through the southern flanks of India, Nepal, and Bhutan, to the highlands of Burma, the China borderlands, Gansu and Inner Mongolia, and back through Central Asia. When the panel was first suggested, it generated an unexpectedly overwhelming response in the numbers of scholars wishing to participate. This may be an artifact of the reality of anthropological fieldwork in Asia—it is generally easier for an ethnographer to get permission to reside among a group whose ethnic affinities are poorly understood by the central gov-

ernment than it is to live among those groups whose activities and attitudes would seem to challenge the integrity of the State (e.g. Tibetans of Lhasa). About 2/3s of this arca was covered through the papers presented in this book—not an exhaustive look at the ethnic minorities of the Tibetan world by any means, but a fairly detailed examination of the complexities of the world of Tibetan borderlands.

To help obtain a conceptual framework for the analysis of ethnic dynamics between 'central' and 'marginal' Tibetans, Sara Shneiderman's paper is presented first. "Barbarians at the Border" examines the relationship between the largely atheoretical discipline of Tibetan Studies and the comparative realms of literary criticism, history, anthropology, and postcolonial studies. The absence of analytical frameworks for understanding the process of ethnicity among Tibetan peoples impedes the understanding of the role of Tibetans in their relationship to Chinese civilising missions as well as their own relationships to Tibeto-Burman speakers on the margins.

This is followed by Mark Turin's paper on rethinking the old linguistic construct of Tibeto-Burman as it relates to identity. As Franz Boas and others pointed out generations ago, language, race, and culture are largely autonomous entities. In Turin's argument, speaking a Tibeto-Burman language does not imply cultural affinity with those speaking a Central Tibetan language. The Tibeto-Burman language family derives its name from two dominant literary languages of antiquity, *viz.* Tibetan and Burmese, not from the historical circumstances of their geographical and historical origination and distribution. Turin gives examples from the Newari peoples of Nepal, Tibeto-Burman speakers who are more clearly a part of the Nepalese world than of the Tibetan. He also presents current debate among the Thangmi of eastern Nepal and other groups who, now literate, wish to write their native languages in a script most appropriate to their ethnic affiliations. Does one then choose Devanagari or Tibetan script? The matter demonstrates some of the complexities currently being addressed by the people living within the so-called Tibeto-Burman linguistic community.

In the third general point of the analysis presented in the volume, Dibyesh Anand assumes a postcolonial theoretical position on the conceptualisation of Tibet. When the Western Self discovered the non-Western Other in Tibet, an 'archive' of preconceived, Orientalist images provided a resource by which the encounter was made sense of. Through his discussion of 'Exotica Tibet', Anand argues that the cre-

ation of knowledge stemming from the encounter is marked by political asymmetries—the will to know about Tibet is also the will to possess it. In the modern era, Tibetans, especially in exile have in turn incorporated many of these Western archival images for their own construction of identity, which subsequently reshapes the archive itself. This has important implications for those 'marginal' Tibetan peoples represented in this volume who may lack access to the archive now so readily disseminated by the international media. The nationalism of 'Greater Tibet', perhaps most vociferously articulated by Tibetan refugee activists around the world, most assuredly is not universally shared by Tibeto-Burman speakers surrounding the Tibetan plateau.

Fernanda Pirie discusses the practices of law in Tibet, which have varied widely over geographical distance and over time, from the remote villages of Ladakh, in the west, to the feuding tribes of Kham in the east, and from the politically motivated manoeuvrings of the Lhasa judiciary to the interventions of the lamas in the tribal conflicts of the Amdo pastoralists. In the late twentieth century national governments, Chinese, Indian, Nepalese and Bhutanese, as well as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, have introduced further legal regimes and practices into the region. In this paper Pirie describes the practices of dispute resolution found in the villages of Ladakh, on the western borders of ethnographic Tibet, now part of India. The legal practices found here are of particular interest because in recent decades a new regional form of justice, explicitly based upon village practices, has been developed. This operates in parallel to, but quite separate from, the legal structures of the Indian national and State governments.

Marriage, fertility, and illegitimacy are compared in two borderland Tibetan societies by Geoff Childs. Tibetans living in Kyirong along the Nepal border experienced a total fertility rate of 4.4 in the mid-twentieth century, whereas Tibetans living in exile in Nepal and India registered 1.2 births per woman in 1998. It might be tempting to view this radical change as a vicissitude of exile; however, a more elegant explanation lies in the apparent divergent levels of illegitimacy in Kyirong and the refugee communities. High tolerance for illegitimate children in Kyirong is expressed in the healthy fertility rate, whereas the lower numbers in exile are symptomatic of a greater stigma for out-of-wedlock children and more controls over having or admitting to having illegitimate children. Childs argues that the exile figures correspond well to the general change in attitude toward family, pregnancy, and chastity

seen in exile communities since emigration from Tibet. From a demographic perspective, the loss of the role of the illegitimate child or *nyelu* as an accepted part of the community has resulted in a precipitous decline in the fertility rate, a serious issue for the future of Tibet in exile.

The Gurungs of Nepal speak a language classified as Tibeto-Burman, practice a form of Tibetan Buddhism, and live within a Hindu state. Their history links them to Tibet, yet the Gurungs have had a complex and ambivalent relation to Tibetan culture and identity over time. The political and economic forces that shape their relationship to Tibet have changed enormously in the three decades during which the author has conducted research in Nepal. Ernestine McHugh's paper maps the ways in which the Gurungs, as a people on the margins of Tibetan culture, have shifted their identity in reference to Tibet, in response to political trends within Nepal and larger processes of globalisation.

Anna Balikci-Denjongpa has examined expressions of cultural identity and change in ritual among the Lhopos in Sikkim. The Sikkimese Lhopos came to this region on the south face of the Himalayas from Chumbi and Ha from the 13th century. In the 17th century the Namgyal dynasty established the Sikkimese kingdom. Until the late 19th century Sikkim considered itself a vassal state of Tibet. When the British created a protectorate in 1890, the Sikkimese were discouraged to continue relations with the central Tibetan State, and the two peoples drifted farther apart. Massive immigration of Nepalese in the 19th century left the Lhopos a minority in their kingdom. After 1959, the border with Tibet was closed, and in 1975 India annexed the state. Balikci argues that the creation of a powerful ethnic identity, different from both its Tibetan roots and its Hindu majority became an expedient after all these political transformations. Having gone into exile, the high culture of Tibet and the aristocracy of Lhasa were no longer sources of prestige. A grassroots ethnic movement prevailed in its stead. Language instruction was shifted from Tibetan to *lho skad*, or Sikkimese. Books were still written in Tibetan script, but with a vastly simplified spelling system. In keeping with the change of focus to the local, worship of the local deities of the land and sacred places within the landscape increased. The mountain god Kangchen dzonga reached national significance as an icon of Lhopo identity.

Vibha Arora also tackles the issue of Sikkimese identity. Both the Bhutia of Sikkim (Lhopos) and the Tibetans have lost national independence. The cultural similarities and differences between the two groups are explicit in the visual archives available on the region. To locate the perception of ethnic and national identities in a historical perspective she has analysed the histories embedded in the Bell photographic collections of the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford.

The Rgyal rong (*Jiarong*) Tibetans, studied by Marielle Prins, live along the far eastern border of the Tibetan culture area in Sichuan Province in the People's Republic of China. Although previously marginalised by both Tibet and China, they are now being incorporated officially within the Tibetan national minority. This has profoundly affected the way that the people of Rgyal rong view themselves *vis-à-vis* the outside world, and has hastened the demise of a separate identity. This may be seen in the decline of the traditional 'hearth speeches' that were characteristic of the New Year's celebrations.

Jan Magnusson presents a rare look at Muslim Tibetans of Northern Pakistan, the Baltistani, a report that helps topple the old Ekvall/Goldstein/Klieger view of the centrality of Buddhism to Tibetan identity. Modern Balti, in political opposition to Pakistani nationalistic schemes, have revitalised their affiliations and have found a certain solidarity within their historic Tibetan roots. The development of new institutions, the recent favoring of *Dbus chen* script and the abandonment of the Perso-Arabic alphabet for transcribing Balti are indicative of this trend. This is markedly different from many Tibetan-origin groups in Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan, who have established identities in studied contrast to their Tibetan origins.

Wim van Spengen examines the remote border area between Tibet and Gansu, China in the period of 1880-1940. The regions of Chone and its Thewu dependencies were characterised by diffuse, even overlapping political authority, isolation, and extreme marginality from the Chinese central government. Although ethnically Tibetan, it had never been a part of the central Tibetan State of the Ganden Phodrang in Lhasa. Van Spengen's paper thus provides a great example of the disparity between the cultural and political Tibetan worlds. The local prince of Chone only had limited authority that was easily outmatched by the local monasteries and feuding villages. This lack of authority, combined with poverty, exacerbated the general lawlessness of the region, as noted by Rock and other explorers of the era.

A similar situation of autonomy existed along the border between Kham and Burma from the late 19th century onwards. Here the Tibeto-Burman speaking Rawang and the tiny *T'rung* group live in close proximity to Khampa immigrants to Burma. Until recently it was a region of general lawlessness where Chinese and Tibetan raiding parties would assault Rawang villages to capture small-statured individuals as slaves for gathering valuable medicinal herbs and animal parts. The T'rung are presently caught in a tripartite nationalistic discourse: as Dulong they are one of the *minzu* of the People's Republic of China; as Lhopo or Monpa they are ethnicised cousins of the Tibetans; finally, as a minority group of Kachin State they are part of the tribal unity rhetoric of the Government of Myanmar. This paper provides a glimpse of a group on the edge of the Tibetan world whose rediscovery not only demonstrates the extreme diversity and complexity of the massive Tibetan cultural area, but also raises long-buried ethical issues on the presentation of little-known societies to the outside world.

As a result of the handicaps of the past, limited diet, and general poverty, the numbers of T'rung and Rawang peoples have steeply declined. Klieger takes a critical approach to outdated colonial descriptions of these people that are still in currency, especially to those utilising salvage paradigms and the imperatives of wildlife conservation.


Xinjiang
CHINA
Nei
Mongolia
Gansu
Chone & Thewo
AMDO
Qinghai
Ladhaki
U-TSANG
< Dharamsala
Tibet Autonomous Region
Rgyal rong
Gurung
Kyirong
Nepal
KHAM
Sichuan
Lhopo
Thangmi
Bhutan
T'rung
INDIA
Myanmar
Bangladesh
Yunnan

BARBARIANS AT THE BORDER AND CIVILISING PROJECTS: ANALYSING ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE TIBETAN CONTEXT

SARA SHNEIDERMAN (CORNELL UNIVERSITY)

INTRODUCTION: A CALL FOR CRITICAL TIBETAN STUDIES[1]

During her presidential address at the opening convocation of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Janet Gyatso called for Tibetan Studies to engage with emerging trends in interdisciplinary critical theory.[2] Noting that studies of Tibetan society often place themselves outside the broader comparative frameworks offered by literary criticism, history, anthropology, postcolonial studies and other disciplinary areas, Gyatso suggested that Tibetology would benefit from engaging in dialogue with such scholarly approaches.[3] As a contribution to that larger project, here I take some preliminary steps towards opening a productive dialogue between Tibetan Studies and contemporary anthropological theory on the topic of ethnicity. My goal here is to trace the genealogy of 'ethnicity' as a concept through Tibetan Studies as a discipline, and offer some observations on its use, or more often, lack thereof, in a manner consonant with its theoretical deployment in cultural studies of other world areas.

I suggest that the absence of a nuanced analytical framework for understanding ethnicity in the Tibetan context is linked to the difficulty of recognising Tibetan roles as dominant orchestrators of their own 'civilising projects' in addition to being victims of Chinese ones. 'A civilising project', as defined by Stevan Harrell in the Chinese context, "is a kind of interaction between peoples, in which one group, the civilising centre, interacts with other groups (the peripheral peoples) in

[1] I thank Mark Turin, Viranjini Munasinghe, and Robbie Barnett for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Any errors remain my own.

[2] St. Hugh's College, Oxford, September 7, 2003.

[3] Gyatso's statement follows in a long tradition of such pleas for broader theoretical engagement on the part of Tibetologists. See particularly Aziz (1989) and Miller (1993).

terms of a particular kind of inequality" (1995: 4). Such projects are the historical precursor to systems of ethnicity, which are established in modern nation-state contexts as a means of hierarchically categorising social difference. Ethnicity codifies the relations of power between dominant groups at the centre and subjugated populations at the periphery initially constructed through civilising projects. In this paper, I suggest that we must recognise the difference between 'Tibetan' as a dominant *national* identity which contains its own networks of ethnicity established through civilising projects, and 'Tibetan' as a peripheral *ethnic* identity within other national contexts, such as China, Nepal and India.

In order to understand the dynamics of power and cultural contestation in contemporary Tibetan contexts, we must ask how social difference has been organised at different times and places. How have central Tibetans historically treated the peoples at their borders, such as the groups now commonly called Monpa, Lhopa, Thangmi, and others?[4] Furthermore, how do groups with different regional and linguistic identities, such as Amdowa, Khampa, or Gyalrongpa, relate to central Tibetans and to each other, and how have they done so in the past? Answering such questions will entail extensive ethnographic work at local, regional, national and transnational levels to document how ethnicity is understood and enacted in variously constituted Tibetan worlds.

The present paper is based on a review of existing literature in Tibetan Studies, and is therefore largely analytical in nature. Future ethnographic work will refine the suppositions made here. However, in the belief that theory and ethnography constitute each other dialectically, it is my hope that this set of observations may help clarify some of the questions requiring further research, even if I cannot at this point provide the answers.

In writing about ethnic identity for the Thangmi (Shneiderman and Turin 2000; Shneiderman 2002), who have populations both in contem-

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[4] These ethnic names all indicate the marginal position of those who carry them from the perspective of Tibetan speakers: Monpa literally translates as 'barbarians', Lhopa as 'southerners', and Thangmi as 'border people'. Samuel suggests that the Mon area was culturally and politically linked to Tibet from the 12th century onwards, and cites 1982 Chinese census figures which show 6248 Monpa (Menba) and 2065 Lopa (Luoba) living within the TAR (1993: 103-104). It is not clear whether the latter ethnonym represents Tibetan *lho pa* ('southerner') or *klo pa* ('barbarian').

porary Nepal and the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), it has become increasingly clear to me that the academic worlds of Tibetan Studies and what we might call Nepal or Himalayan Studies are operating with distinctly different sets of analytical assumptions about ethnicity.[5] Nepal and the TAR share a lengthy modern border, as well as a rich history and many cultural, religious and linguistic practices that extend to broader Tibetan regions. In studying a group of people who cross this border on a day-to-day basis, I have found it necessary to consider ways to bridge the two academic frameworks.

I have approached Tibetan Studies from a distinctly southern perspective, coloured by my ethnographic experience in Nepal, where ethnicity is a gatekeeping concept at all levels of academic, political and lay discourse.[6] In the anthropology of Nepal, it is accepted without question that in most cases the primary marker of social difference is in fact ethnic identification. The terminological absence of 'ethnicity' as a key category of analysis in Tibetan Studies stands out by contrast. One of the questions I pose here is whether the different analytical frameworks applied within Nepal versus Tibetan Studies derive from genuine indigenous differences, or are simply the result of different disciplinary histories. Although the terms 'ethnic Tibetan', 'ethnically Tibetan' and 'Tibetan ethnicity' are used frequently in Tibetan Studies, there is very little discussion of what these terms actually signify, or of ethnicity as a relational system. Religious and regional differentiation is written about, but little attention is paid to the question of ethnic identity *within* the overarching category 'Tibetan'. Several scholars have discussed what unites so-called Tibetans (Shakya 1993; Ramble 1993), but I am more interested in what divides them. In other words, what are the relevant forms of social difference and ethnic classification, past and present, for those living within 'politico-cultural' Tibet?

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[5] Known as 'Thami' in Nepali, this group of approximately 40,000 people find their 'homeland' in areas of the Dolakha and Sindhupalcok districts of Nepal contiguous with the Tibetan border. There are substantial migrant populations living on the Chinese/TAR side of the border between Zhangmu/Dram/Khasa and Nyalam/Tsongdu/Kuti. Many Thangmi, along with members of other groups, make use of the 1992 Sino-Nepali treaty which allows residents within 30 km of the border on each side to travel freely within 30 km on the other side.

[6] Here I make use of Brackette Williams' (1989) tripartite framework for discussing ethnicity.

A Note on Terminology: Ethnographic Tibet and Tibetans

As in any attempt to deal with a contested identity, I face the problem of how to refer to the various people, groups, and identities I am discussing without reifying the terminology already in use. 'Tibet' and 'Tibetan' are particularly challenging terms because they have been used to mean so many different things within as many contexts over time. As Toni Huber summarises, these terms are problematic because "they evoke the existence of stable or unitary social and geopolitical entities that readily gloss over an enormous actual complexity and fluidity both past and present" (1999a: viii). Here I outline several solutions to this problem proposed by contemporary scholars. My own approach emerges in the article throughout.

Several scholars have made the case for a distinction between 'political' and 'ethnographic' Tibet (Richardson 1984; Samuel 1993; Goldstein 1998; Huber 1999a). Building upon Hugh Richardson's writings, Melvyn Goldstein describes political Tibet as the polity historically ruled by the Dalai Lama, and roughly equivalent to today's TAR within China. Ethnographic Tibet is much broader, and includes "ethnically Tibetan areas of Amdo and Kham that are today part of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces" (1998: 4). This distinction is useful, since it allows an acknowledgement of the broad parameters of 'Tibetan culture' (itself a vague term) while recognising the distinctive political histories of each area.

According to Goldstein, even the broader category of ethnographic Tibet includes only "the 4.6 million ethnic Tibetans who are now part of China, that is, those living in the heartland of Tibetan Buddhism" (1998: 4). It excludes those communities often referred to as the 'ethnically Tibetan' populations of the Indian and Nepali Himalayas. However, it is these communities who have provided much of the empirical information for anthropological studies of 'Tibetan societies' (Samuel 1993: 41), and other scholars have accordingly attempted to include them in even broader formulations of the Tibetan cultural world. For example, Charles Ramble has proposed the term 'Tibetosphere' to refer to the trans-Himalayan geographical region unified by similar cultural practices in modern China and beyond (personal communication). András Höfer has suggested the somewhat uncomfortable term 'Tibetanid' to describe peoples outside of Tibet whose cultural practices are similar to those inside Tibet (1979: 43). The very

fact that scholars have found it necessary to go to such lengths to find appropriate terminology, which nevertheless remains unsatisfactory, demonstrates the genuine complexity of the situation.

These frameworks are complicated further by the fact that, "it has now become apparent that since 1959 two quite different although related Tibetan societies, one in South Asian exile and the other under Chinese administration, have begun to emerge" (Huber 1999a: 9). For this reason, I take up George Dreyfus' proposal of 'politico-cultural Tibet' as a unit of analysis. As Dreyfus puts it, "the Tibet with which Tibetans have identified in previous times is not a nation-state defined by a boundary. It is a politico-cultural community whose existence is fleeting and can rarely be identified with established powers" (1994: 206). This formulation at once transcends the historical boundaries of any particular nation-state, yet locates the Tibetan sense of collective identity in a politico-cultural context. For the most part, I refer to this broadly defined field of identity production as the 'Tibetan context' or the 'Tibetan situation' rather than as simply 'Tibet'.

One of the problems with the argument for 'ethnographic Tibet' as a unit of analysis is that it takes ethnic identity for granted, as evidenced by Goldstein's use of the term 'ethnic Tibetans' to describe those living within China. There is no clearly understood definition of 'ethnic Tibetan' that does not reify either the Chinese state's or the Dharamsala Government-in-Exile's classificatory uses of the term.[7] For this reason, it is even more difficult to offer a functional definition of the subjectively defined terms 'Tibetan' and 'Tibetan-ness'. I argue below that 'Tibetan' refers to both a national and an ethnic identity, and that these two meanings of the term must be analytically separated. This separation will entail an eventual shift in terminology, which for the moment, I effect by using the qualifiers 'ethnic' or 'national' in front of the term 'Tibetan'.

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[7] See Gladney (1991) and Harrell (2001) for general discussions of the dialectical relationship between state-promoted ethnic categories and subjective identification in China.

Theoretical Framework: Now You See Them, Now You Don't

Anthropologist Brackette Williams' definition of ethnicity provides a useful theoretical lens through which to consider the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism in the Tibetan context. She writes:

> In sum, *ethnicity* labels the visibility of that aspect of the identity formation process that is produced by and subordinated to nationalist programs and plans...*ethnicity* labels the politics of cultural struggle in the nexus of territorial and cultural nationalism that characterizes all putatively homogeneous nation-states. As a label it may sound better than tribe, race, or barbarian, but with respect to political consequences, it still identifies those who are at the borders of the empire. Within putatively homogeneous nation-states, this border is, however, an ideologically produced boundary between 'mainstream' and peripheral categorical units of this kind of 'imagined' social order (Williams 1989: 439).

The key point here is that ethnicity is a relational system that is fundamentally constituted within national frameworks. Following this logic, one reason why ethnicity may not have been developed as a major analytical category within Tibetan Studies is that Tibet never became a fully modern, independent nation-state, and therefore lacked the structures of ethnic identification typical of modern nations.

This explains the Tibetan situation in part, but does not fully account for its historical particularities. I suggest that structures of difference that articulate the constitutive distinction between "'mainstream' and peripheral categorical units", as Williams puts it, may have existed in pre-1959 Tibet and may continue to exist today. The apparent absence of ethnicity in Tibet may be an illusion, perpetuated both by political and academic discourses that fail to acknowledge Tibet as a full-fledged national entity in itself, complete with all of nationhood's negative implications, despite its political incorporation within China.[8]

There is a certain irony here, since the objective of many Tibetan political activists in exile is to assert Tibet's right to national independence. Working from the position of having lost the nation, Tibetan refugee activists have attempted to reclaim all of the positive aspects of nationhood by claiming it as a homogeneous whole, while distancing

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[8] This is not to suggest that Tibet continues to be an independent *state* in the international geo-political sense, but rather that it remains a distinctive *nation* in the consciousness of its inhabitants. It is important to note that this is not at odds with the Chinese perception of 'Tibetan' as a minority 'nationality'.

themselves from the negative aspects of nationhood that subvert heterogeneity at the borders. In other words, if we are to accept the proposition that Tibet was and is an independent nation, we must also critically engage the underlying nationalist rhetoric that constitutes it—as we do for other 'putatively homogeneous' nations.

Part of this process entails recognising how the nation manages the 'barbarians' at its borders, be they categorised as tribal, racial or ethnic others. Françoise Pommaret describes the Tibetan treatment of peripheral groups as: "a certain condescending and despising attitude towards the surrounding regions which did not, in the eyes of the central Tibetans, reach what they considered to be the epitome of culture. This attitude could, in modern terms, be compared with a 'colonialist' attitude" (1999: 53). But by casting Tibetans as victimised ethnic others *vis-à-vis* the Chinese, and emphasising Buddhist ideals of egalitarianism and inclusion, the political agenda in exile has managed to avoid acknowledging these potentially less pleasant aspects of the Tibetan national past.[9] This results in the paradoxical political representation of Tibet as a less-than-complete nation without ethnic (or other) differences, which has been echoed by academic literature.

Williams' discussion of 'cultural invisibility' (1989: 410) adds another dimension to our understanding of the Tibetan situation. According to Williams, "to be detribalized is not necessarily to be empirically de-ethnicized; it is simply to become invisible" (1989: 412). This perspective clarifies the process by which dominant groups within any national context become invisible in the larger ethnic picture. Tibetans perform a rather unusual "now you see them, now you don't" trick in this regard. When the unit of analysis is China or the broader Himalayan region, Tibetan-ness is a marked, minority ethnic category. However, when the unit of analysis is the Tibetan nation, Tibetan-ness takes on the invisibility of dominance. In other words, 'Tibetan' operates as both an ethnic and a national category in different contexts, with Tibetan-ness slipping in and out of visibility accordingly. There is a parallel slippage in much academic literature, which generally fails to distinguish the ethnic category of Tibetan from a national one. Most scholarly work configures Tibetan-ness as a marked eth-

[9] I do not intend to belittle the genuine and extreme suffering that Tibetans have experienced. Rather, I am calling for a balanced view that both acknowledges Tibetan victimisation and sees them as agents in the production of their own national identity.

nic category within other nation-state frameworks, such as China, India, or Nepal. This identification is then transposed to other contexts without a careful consideration of how 'Tibetan' represents the unmarked dominant category within the putative 'Tibetan nation'.

Religious Tibetans: Insiders and Outsiders

The history of Tibetan Studies is inextricably linked to Buddhist Studies, and by the same token Tibetan cultural identity has often been conflated with Buddhist religious identity. Donald Lopez (1995, 1998) has extensively documented the histories of early Buddhist Studies and Tibetology, which in their philologically-motivated quest for a repository of 'pure' Buddhism in Tibet, initiated a pattern of research that overemphasised religion to the exclusion of other aspects of Tibetan sociality.

The important point to make here is that in the Tibetan context 'religion' has often been interpreted as synonymous with 'culture'. This conflated concept has been grafted onto Tibetan society as a homogeneous category in a manner reminiscent of structural-functionalist anthropology's tendency to equate single, discrete cultures with single societies. There is no question that this genre of scholarly portrayal is linked to certain Tibetan self-representations that highlight Buddhist religious identity as the most important aspect of Tibetan-ness. In a 1960 article that is probably the first attempt to address these issues after the 1959 flight into exile, Robert Ekvall presents the following scheme for understanding Tibetan views of themselves:

> Listed in the order of their importance, as the Tibetans state and rate them, these criteria are: (1) Religion...; (2) Folkways...; (3) Language...; (4); Race...; (5) Land... In both importance and sharpness of definition these five criteria are not equal. The first (religion) is the dominant one; the last two, (race and land) are admittedly of lesser importance (1960: 376).

Ekvall goes on to describe how the concept of 'religion' (Tib. *chos*), is in fact a broad, almost ecumenical one which subsumes all 'arts, literature and science', 'law', and in fact any sort of written document or literature. According to Ekvall, "This wide inclusiveness is symptomatic of the dominance of religion in Tibetan life" (1960: 376). However, he does not question the easy equation between Buddhism and religion,

and therefore Buddhism and Tibetan identity. He and several other writers (Klieger 1992; Huber 1999a) describe the central differentiation that Tibetans make between themselves and others as that between *nang pa* and *phyi pa*—terms that literally translate as 'insider' and 'outsider'. Although these are vernacular rather than scriptural terms, they have come to be synonymous with 'Buddhist' and 'non-Buddhist', so that the primary metaphor used to describe *cultural* inclusion and exclusion is one of religious membership.

To demonstrate this principle, Ekvall gives the example of "individuals who...are no longer *Nang Ba*...Such persons and the members of certain communities on both the extreme western and northeastern borders of Tibet who have become Muslims, [and therefore] are no longer recognised by the Tibetans as being unequivocally Tibetan" (1960: 377). In this example, Ekvall presupposes the categorically Buddhist nature of 'the Tibetans', thereby assigning the privilege of deciding who is in and who is out to those who are already members of that category by virtue of their Buddhist identity. This move defines Tibetanness as a primarily religious identity, rather than as a national category within which various religions may be represented.

While Ekvall's emphasis on religious identity undoubtedly represents well the views of many central Tibetans at that time (and perhaps in the present also), it does not account for the potentially different viewpoints of Muslims or other non-Buddhists (or non-normative Buddhists in the case of practitioners of Bön and other variations on the Buddhist theme), who might see themselves as nationally and/or culturally Tibetan while not religiously Buddhist. In short, just as there are Buddhists all over the world who are not Tibetan, why can there not be Tibetans who are not Buddhist? The following quotation from the website of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile hints that, at least for Tibetan Muslims, the relationship between religious and national identity is far more complex:

> Mr Yusaf Naik, an official of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, is no different from his colleagues. He speaks fluent Tibetan, follows Tibetan customs, has complete faith in the leadership of the Dalai Lama and prays for the freedom of Tibet, but strangely enough he offers *namaz*, like any other Muslim, despite being a Tibetan.
>
> Perhaps the most interesting aspect of his community is that while staunchly Islamic in their faith, the Kache, as the Tibetan Muslims are called, are thoroughly Tibetan in every other aspect. In a predominantly Buddhist nation like Tibet, they were able to preserve their identity and

> at the same time absorb Tibetan social and cultural customs (PCT News Service: 2000).

The assertion that "strangely enough he offers namaz...despite being a Tibetan" indicates that such disjunctures between religious and national identity remain difficult for the dominant Buddhist Tibetan community to understand. Yet coming from an official Dharamsala publication, this article underscores the need to address such issues.

Goldstein provides a more up-to-date analysis of the relationship between religious, cultural and national Tibetan identity by describing Tibetan Buddhism as "a dominant ideological framework for both day-to-day life and the ultimate questions dealing with the meaning of existence and life" (1998: 5). He goes on to situate Buddhism as "the *raison d'être* of the Tibetan state", thereby highlighting the hegemonic linkage between Buddhist identity and state power. Here Goldstein acknowledges the very real conflation of religious and state power historically operating in what he calls 'political Tibet'. These forces taken together create the framework within which hegemonic subjects—like Ekvall's Tibetan informants—equate cultural and national identity with religious identity. In casting Tibetan Buddhism as an ideological force rather than an essential identity, Goldstein opens a space for alternative identities to exist within the overarching framework of the hegemonic Tibetan state. This is the context in which a diversified discussion of religious and ethnic identities within the Tibetan context can unfold.

Ethnic Tibetans

Who exactly is an 'ethnic Tibetan'? The term 'ethnic' is often used as an adjective to modify the term 'Tibetan', but the noun 'ethnicity' is rarely, if ever, used to describe a larger set of social relationships in which such ostensibly 'ethnic Tibetans' participate. In order to better understand the provenance of such terms in the Tibetan context, I look first at how the classic literature locates Tibetan notions of difference in race and tribe, rather than ethnicity. I then consider how the term 'ethnic' has been used to describe 'Tibetans' in three contemporary politico-cultural and geographical contexts: the Himalayas, the Tibetan refugee settlements of Nepal and India, and, to follow Goldstein's usage, the ethnographically Tibetan areas of China.

Race and Tribe

Several writers (Ekvall 1960; Richardson 1984; Karmay 1998) use the term 'Tibetan race' in a descriptive manner without considering the broader analytical implications of a racialised notion of Tibetan identity. Ekvall notes that it is impossible to make a case for racial purity in Tibet, since Tibetans are phenotypically very diverse, and "unquestionably many peoples and tribes have been incorporated into the ethnic unit which the Tibetans consider distinctly Tibetan" (1960: 380). R.A. Stein concurs that "the fact that different groups exist is plain" (1972: 27). Yet despite this known historical diversity, Ekvall claims that "the Tibetan believes he is the member of a unique race, and cites that belief as one of the criteria on which his self-image is based" (1960: 381).

There are two issues to note here. The first is that these authors use the concept of 'ethnicity' almost interchangeably with that of 'race'. Ekvall asserts the 'Tibetan race' as a unitary identity, yet suggests that other 'peoples' and 'tribes' have been incorporated into this 'ethnic unit'. Stein similarly blurs these two categories: "Much the same is true of ethnic make-up. Different racial types live side by side or coalesce" (1972: 27). The second point of note is that for both of these writers, the category of 'tribe' is hierarchically subordinated to the joint category of 'Tibetan race/ethnicity'. The concept of 'race' seems to imply a greatness linked to 'civilisation' and literacy, while 'tribe' denotes a 'primitive', pre-literate orientation. This tendency is nowhere better illustrated than in Himalayan anthropologist Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf's introductory note to the 1978 *Himalayan Anthropology* anthology, a seminal attempt to develop shared categories of analyses across borders in the Himalayan region:

> In the Valleys of this great mountain range Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages dovetail and overlap, populations of Caucasian racial features characteristic of North India met and merged with Mongoloid ethnic groups, and the two great Asian religions Hinduism and Buddhism coexist there and interact in various ways. In neither of these spheres are boundaries clear-cut, nor are the sequences of events which brought about the present kaleidoscopic pattern easily discernible. While chronological data relating to developments within the great historic civilizations of the area are fairly well established, very little is known about the history of the many preliterate tribal societies which for long filled the interstices between the domains of more advanced cultures…for centuries [this area] has been a meeting point of distinct races and two of the great civilizations of Asia (1978: ix-xii).

For Fürer-Haimendorf, 'race' seems to equal civilisation at the centre, while 'tribes' fill the interstitial spaces between great civilisations. If this was the accepted academic framework, it is hardly surprising that earlier Tibetologists went to great pains to assert Tibetan identity as unitary and racial, as befitting a great literate civilisation, in contrast to the fragmented, pre-literate, and ethnic 'tribes' at its borders.

We might easily forgive this formulation as an artefact of past scholarship that made use of accepted terminology at the time, were it not for the fact that similar descriptions persist in otherwise astute contemporary works. Samuel speaks of "the 'wild' nomadic and bandit areas within the borders..." (1993: 148), while Huber describes the "hostile tribal peoples with a penchant for ambush" (1999a: 4) with whom Tibetan pilgrims had to contend before 1959. To retrace the steps of my argument here in conjunction with Williams' framework, as introduced above: if 'Tibetan race' was early on equated with dominant civilisation at the centre, and 'ethnicity' was understood as synonymous with race, in opposition to 'non-Tibetan tribes' who were located entirely outside of the ethnicity paradigm, then we can begin to see how those termed 'ethnic Tibetans' are in fact the invisibly dominant group at the centre.

The most plausible explanation for the persistence of these otherwise conceptually problematic terms is that they closely reflect dominant Tibetan vocabularies for articulating difference. As I discuss in the final section of this paper, there is ample evidence of indigenous Tibetan ontologies which use the term 'barbarian' to describe those at the borders, but it is less clear that Tibetans use anything like the terms 'race' or 'ethnic' to describe themselves. Ekvall offers the term '*Mi Rigs gCig*' as an indigenous Tibetan category, which he translates as, 'human lineage one'. He then uses 'lineage' and 'race' synonymously in his further discussion. Although *rigs* may be translated as lineage, its literal and broader meaning is 'type'.

This confusion suggests that we need to look more closely at Tibetan language terms dealing with kinship and descent in order to understand indigenous epistemologies of inclusion and exclusion. Anthropologists Barbara Aziz (1978) and Nancy Levine (1981) begin to address these questions in their work on individual Tibetan communities, by discussing the concepts of *rgyud pa* (lineage) and *rus* (bone) respectively. Such work on kinship and descent is linked to an extensive literature on territoriality as a feature of Tibetan identity. The concept of territory as

a Tibetan identity marker is almost as well developed as that of religion, with scholarship primarily focusing on mountain deity cults (Blondeau and Steinkellner 1996; Blondeau 1998; Buffetrille and Diemberger 2002) and sacred space (Macdonald 1997; Huber 1999a, 1999b). A thorough discussion of these bodies of literature is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say that revisiting classic anthropological literature on these subjects may provide important foundations for articulating theories of ethnicity in Tibetan contexts.

Himalayan Tibetans

The primary obstacle to using such studies as a foundation for future work on Tibetan ethnicity is that much of the existing research on kinship, descent, and territory has been conducted in Himalayan areas of Nepal, rather than inside political or ethnographic Tibet. Although it is clear that general Tibetan cultural practices traverse political borders on all sides, it is impossible to ignore the impact of the Nepali, Indian, and Bhutanese nation-state frames in which culturally Tibetan populations define their identities. For example, it is unquestionable that both the subjective experiences and academic portrayals of 'ethnically Tibetan' communities within Nepal have been affected by the legally codified Nepali ideology of caste. Levine (1981) describes how the Nyinba people of northwest Nepal with whom she worked use the Hindu/Sanskrit concept of *jāt* as a synonym for the Tibetan *rus*, which gives an initial indication of how such group identities are shaped by the national framework in which they live.

In a subsequent paper Levine describes the relationships between caste, state and ethnic boundaries within Nepal in detail (1987). Graham Clarke's article on blood and territory as idioms of national identity in the Himalayas (1995) proceeds in a similar vein. These and other works on what are alternately termed 'Tibetan', 'Tibetanid', and 'Tibetan-speaking' populations in Nepal demonstrate clearly that 'Tibetan' becomes an *ethnic* identity when it is subsumed within the Nepali national framework of ethnicity.[10] Levine shows how communities in the northwestern Nepali district of Humla shift identity from

[10] The Muluki Ain, which was propagated in 1854 and continued to serve as Nepal's primary legal code until the 1960s, categorized ethnic identity in a fixed hierarchy. Although now officially outlawed, its provisions continue to shape Nepali understandings of ethnicity and difference (cf. Höfer 1979).

Tibetan to Byansi, Bura and Chetri (all Hindu caste identities) and back again (1987). Similar shifts are well-documented for the Thakali ethnic group of Myagdi and Mustang districts (cf. Fisher 2001). In these cases, 'Tibetan', or Bhotiya (*bhoṭiya*) in Nepali, identity operates at the level of ethnicity within a broader national hierarchy of identities.

At the same time, however, Charles Ramble argues that Nepal's Tibetan communities are *not* a unified ethnic group. They do not possess national ethnic organisations like Nepal's other groups, and instead tend to cluster regionally. Ramble suggests that local territorial affiliation is the primary marker of identity for Tibetan-speaking groups all across Nepal's northern borders. In his view, "the Bhotiyas are not so much a distinguishable ethnic group as a sort of matrix from which ethnic groups crystallise, or whose members assume, for periods of varying duration, the names of Nepalese peoples" (Ramble 1997: 394). Here ethnicity is constituted exclusively *vis-à-vis* the Nepali state, rather than internally among Tibetan groups themselves in relation to each other. This description is in line with the common anthropological understanding that ethnicity is an effect of modern nation-states which is felt only within their borders. The same may also be true for politico-cultural Tibet: diverse groups may constitute their identities at the local level, with the systemic features of ethnicity only becoming apparent at the national level. In other words, 'Tibetans' may not be a single coherent 'ethnic group'—but rather a multiplicity of groups—for the same reasons that Nepal's Bhotiyas are not. The difference between the Nepali case and that of politico-cultural Tibet is that in the former, the term 'Tibetan' is used to name a minority ethnic identity within the overarching Nepali national context, whereas in the latter, 'Tibetan' must be understood as a dominant national identity within which ethnic difference may be articulated locally. Along these lines, we must work towards understanding how diverse sub-groups living in the TAR and elsewhere in China identify themselves in relation to the national rubric of 'Tibetan', and differently yet again in reference to the overarching state rubric of China.

Chinese Tibetans

Ramble likens Tibetan communities resident in Himalayan states to those inside the TAR because both "regard their ethnic distinctiveness as being menaced by more vigorous cultures pressing on their boundaries" (1997: 386). Indeed, within the framework of the Chinese state, 'Tibetan' has been constituted as an official minority 'ethnicity' or 'nationality' since the 1950s. Since the TAR and other Tibetan areas have been politically subsumed by China, Tibetans have been compelled to reify their *national* identity as an *ethnic* minority one in order to avoid persecution by the Chinese state, as well as to gain benefits from it.[11] It is then hardly surprising that Tibetans in China have begun using the language of 'ethnic minority' to describe themselves, as required by the Chinese state. Here, Tibetans have certainly been compelled "to submerge the cultural distinctions within them and to present themselves as a single ethnic group" (Ramble 1997: 390).

Historically, 'Tibetan' was a national, and at times even imperial, identity on par with 'Han', 'Mongol' and 'Manchu', to name the competing historical powers. Several works deal with the relationships between the pre-modern Tibetan nation and these other entities (Shakabpa 1967; Smith 1996; Shakya 1999). Intriguingly, this position has been implicitly acknowledged by Chinese politicians since Sun Yat-sen first named the Tibetans as one of the five distinct 'peoples' that comprised the Chinese nation in the 1920s. Chiang Kai-shek reaffirmed this notion in 1939 by calling Tibetans one of the five 'great races' (Gladney 1991:83). Returning to the discussion of 'race' above, I would argue that these Chinese political pronouncements superficially subvert Tibetan (as well as Manchu, Mongolian, and Hui) national identity by converting it into a purely racial identity subsumed within the larger Chinese nation. The very need to acknowledge these five groups in particular as 'races', rather than simply 'tribes', implicitly acknowledges their history as national-level identities. In fact, it is the potential of these putative 'nations' to challenge the integrity of the Chinese nation as a whole that has required subsequent political figures to emphasise the language of 'race' in describing these particular groups. Although contemporary anthropological work must situate contemporary Tibet within the Chinese state, if we represent Tibetans

[11] See Mackerras (1995) for a scholarly approach that follows Chinese state views on this issue.

only as an ethnic minority within China without acknowledging their national history—as most Chinese ethnology does—we may obfuscate the genuine complexity of ethnicity in the Tibetan context.

Refugee Tibetans

The discourse on Tibetan identity emerging from the Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala, India, has in certain paradoxical ways colluded with Chinese representations to reinforce the image of Tibetans as a victimised ethnic minority. As mentioned earlier, this is ironic because the overarching narrative emanating from Dharamsala is one of Tibetan independence and strength. But in order to make the case for sovereign power in the future, Tibetan activists often portray themselves as powerless victims in the present. P. Christiaan Klieger describes how this dynamic is similar for what he calls 'homeland' (inside China) and 'exile' (outside China) Tibetans:

> In both Shangri-La and Chinese centrist philosophies, Tibetan culture is supposed to vanish as a natural and evolutionary outcome of regional modernization. Of course, no groups of people relish the thought of becoming extinct—the strategy for Tibetan people in general, at least since the occupation in the 1950s, is to perpetually define oneself as different from the powerful 'Others' encroaching upon their territorial, political, and religious borders (2002: 2).

The primary 'Other' is of course China, the entity responsible for making national Tibetans into refugees in the first place. In the refugee context, however, Tibetans have had to contend with several more 'Others', such as the Indian and Nepali states, and the various ethnic populations of those countries. As Klieger notes, "strong ethnic barriers have been formed between the immediate hosts (Indians and Nepalese) and the refugees" (1992: 111). In a process of diasporic identity construction that is well-documented for other refugee groups, exile Tibetans have attempted to create a homogeneous narrative of authenticity, largely based on Buddhist ideals of egalitarianism and non-violence, in order to assert their Tibetan-ness as an ethnic identity within the pluralistic Indian and Nepali states in which they now live. This process has become a popular subject for researchers interested in 'Tibetan culture' (Nowak 1984; Klieger 1992; Korom 1997; Frechette 2002; Klieger 2002), since refugee communities are far more easily accessible than political or ethnographic Tibet, and constitute an ostensibly clearly defined unit of analysis.

In reference to the process of Tibetan identity construction in exile, Frank Korom notes that "the rapid dispersion of Tibetan ethnic groups gradually led to the establishment of a global communication network with Dharamsala at the hub. From this central location, Tibetan politicians attempt to maintain and project a self-perceived homogeneous culture" (1997: 2). Intriguingly, Korom's statement suggests that upon arrival in exile, Tibetans were members of different 'ethnic groups', but after 40 years as refugees they have come to accept the 'homogeneous culture' propagated by Tibetan politicians and other figures of power. Korom later returns to this issue by identifying 'authenticity' as the 'central problematic' of Tibetanness (1997: 7). This hints at the ongoing difficulties of reifying a diverse group of peoples as a single *ethnicity*—Korom implies that there were multiple authentic ethnic narratives in pre-1959 Tibet, and the need to distil these to a single authoritative one in the context of refugee politics does not sit well with historical experience. More effective, perhaps, would be a clear separation of *national* Tibetan identity from the diverse array of *ethnic* identities present under the larger Tibetan rubric. Pragmatically speaking, this is difficult, since there is no modern state within which to define that national identity, and instead, exile Tibetans must live within other states where they will be classified as ethnic whether that suits their purposes or not. However, actors on both the political and academic levels can become more aware of these nuances and work towards a clearer analytical distinction between these categories.

National Tibetans

The lynchpin of my argument is that the history of Tibetan-ness as a dominant national identity, both pre-modern and modern, must be examined in order to expose the networks of ethnicity that may have existed in relation to that national identity at different historical moments. George Dreyfus makes the case for indigenous forms of proto-nationalism and nationalism within the Tibetan politico-cultural community in two articles that situate Tibetan nationalism within the general theoretical literature on this topic (1994; 2002). Dreyfus begins by asserting that Tibetan identity "cannot be adequately characterised in solely ethnic or religious terms", but is essentially "political as well" (1994: 205). He argues that this sense of political identity dates to the

thirteenth century at the latest, but labels the pre-1959 phase as 'proto-nationalism' (following historian Eric Hobsbawm's use of the term), upgrading it to full-fledged 'nationalism' only in the post-1959 era, because "there is no denying that nationalism and its concomitant, the nation-state, are modern phenomena" (1994: 206).

This periodisation in terms of modernity paradoxically appears to accept the fundamental premises of the Western model of nationalism which Dreyfus otherwise challenges with the Tibetan example. Despite this and other ambiguities, the Dreyfus paradigm may provide a working model for understanding contemporary Tibetan national identity, particularly since the historical links between Tibetan proto-nationalism and nationalism are made clear: "[proto-nationalism] prefigures nationalism in several ways and explains the ease with which Tibetans have stepped into nationalist modernity" (Dreyfus 2002: 39).

Dreyfus continues to suggest that Tibetan nationalism is explicitly religious in its emphasis on Buddhist identity, rather than secular, as all genuine nationalisms are presumed to be by Western literature on the topic. Tibetan forms of nationalism were developed long before Tibet had any contact with the West, and thereby constitute a fundamentally different model which contrasts with "the representation of nationalism as an exclusively modern phenomenon coming from the West" (Dreyfus 1994: 206). Collective memory forms the basis for Tibetan national identity in the pre-modern era, particularly the memory of "Tibet as a non-Buddhist country civilized by Buddhism" (Dreyfus 1994: 208), and its ensuing development by a series of great Buddhist kings. These national memories are expressed in religious 'treasures', which provide a unifying narrative for otherwise disparate groups of people.

Dreyfus' first article concludes with the interesting assertion that 'memory is also an act of forgetfulness' (1994: 215) in reference to the convenience of forgetting undesirable aspects of the national past. He gives the example of the reimagination of Songsten Gampo as a quintessentially *Buddhist* king. In fact, historical records show that although Songsten Gampo is credited with introducing Buddhist ideas to Tibet, he himself was never a Buddhist but rather practised territorial deity worship (Dreyfus 1994: 215). The intimation that a great deal of Tibet's complicated national past has been 'forgotten' in the modern construction of national memory paves the way for a recognition of other forgotten aspects of Tibet's past: recognising ethnic heterogeneity in the

borderlands and the central Tibetan elite's less than favourable approach to such ethnic others might be a next step.[12] In a manner similar to acknowledging that Songsten Gampo was in fact not a Buddhist, recognising the diverse ethnic make-up of Tibetan society would once again lay bare Tibet's identity as "an originally barbarous country civilised by Buddhism" (Dreyfus 2002: 39). Perhaps central Tibetans are in part averse to acknowledging ethnicity in this way because they are constantly struggling to overcome the hint of 'barbarity' in their own self-identity. There is no better way of doing that than to project barbarity on to the 'Others' at their borders, while claiming 'civilisation' for themselves.

Tibetanisation Projects

Dreyfus concludes his second article by assessing the emerging dark side of Tibetan Buddhist nationalism. In his understanding, modern Tibet "is a nation-state and the loyalty toward such an entity is a form of modern nationalism, with all the potential dangers this implies" (Dreyfus 2002: 42). Although Dreyfus portrays these dangers as an unpredictable future possibility, their precedent is very clearly outlined in past histories of 'Tibetanisation' as a pre-modern Tibetan state project (cf. Samuel 1993; Goldstein 1998; Huber 1999a). Geoffrey Samuel describes this as a 'missionary orientation', explicitly articulated since at least the seventh century by the religio-political institutions of the Tibetan state to promote Tibetan Buddhist religion, language, and culture in 'tribal' border areas (1993: 148). Goldstein extends this concept to the national, and even imperial, level by suggesting that

> Tibetans considered themselves the agents of their own Buddhist civilising project with regard to the spiritual life of the Mongols and Manchus, including the Manchu emperors of China.... Religious sophistication and greatness, therefore, were at the heart of Tibetans' identity and self-image (1998: 6).

Finally, Toni Huber contributes to the Tibetanisation debate with a rumination on the tribute relationships between elite central Tibetans

[12] This phenomenon is in no way unique to Tibet; Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) now classic edited volume *The Invention of Tradition*, as well as Trouillot's (1995) ethnohistorical work address the power of memory in constituting national consciousness elsewhere.

and borderland 'tribal' groups in Southeastern Tibet, as enacted through pilgrimage:

> One might be tempted to interpret the entire scenario that took place at Tsari as a kind of exercise in Buddhist subjugation of barbarian borderland peoples and what they represented, or even as a form of Buddhaization or Tibetanization. In my thinking, and that of my informants, the relations between Tibetan and tribal populations...could not be regarded as exercises in subjugation or conversion (1999a: 158).

Nowhere in these statements is a critique of these 'civilising projects' advanced. Instead the authors seem to commend Tibetan Buddhism's efficacy as a 'civilising' agent. This may well reflect the attitudes of their central Tibetan informants, but we are left to wonder what non-dominant, or 'subaltern', to borrow a term from postcolonial studies, views of the 'Tibetanisation' process might look like. This lack of critique stands in stark comparison to the literature on Sanskritisation in South Asia, for example, in which the hegemonic encroachment of structurally similar aspects of Indic culture on erstwhile 'tribal' groups has been clearly problematised from multiple anthropological perspectives (cf. Srinivas 1989).[13] In contrast, several key assumptions are made in the Tibetan context: First, that Tibetanisation was/is a positive experience of liberation rather than one of subjugation, and, second, that the process of Tibetanisation is essentially complete, and therefore the concept of 'Tibetan culture' as a unitary juggernaut subsuming tribal groups in its wake can be substituted for that of ethnicity.

These assumptions are problematic for several reasons. First, although Tibetanisation may have had certain beneficial effects on the populations that experience(d) it, negative or ambivalent consequences must also be appraised. Light can only be shed on such details through historical and/or anthropological work that acknowledges the agency and subjective experiences of the subject populations of such civilising projects.[14] Second, even if several of the populations that experienced

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[13] Ramble makes the link between Sanskritisation and Tibetanisation in the context of 1990s Nepal (1997: 405-409). He uses the term 'Tibetanisation' to describe the contemporary process by which groups living in Nepal's Himalayan borderland areas emphasise their links to 'high Tibetan culture', a process often fuelled by Western interests in Buddhism and idealised images of 'Tibet'.

[14] Although Huber's work does indeed address the relationship between central Tibetans and borderland 'tribes', his ethnographic informants all belong to the former category. His information on the 'tribal' side of the relationship is almost exclusively provided by early colonial-anthropological accounts of those populations, such as those

'Tibetanisation' at early stages now would consider themselves intrinsically 'Tibetan', we must recognise 'Tibetanisation' as an ongoing process rather than as a historical *fait accompli*. This shift in perspective opens up the field for a more nuanced anthropological understanding of the process itself and the ethnic complexity of its results, rather than presupposing the accomplished unity of 'Tibetan culture'. Third, rather than viewing Tibetanisation as a uni-directional process from barbarian 'Other' to civilised Tibetan, the multi-directional aspects of ethnic change over time must be acknowledged, just as it is now widely recognised that Tibetan Buddhism has been as much influenced by non-Buddhist shamanic practices as the other way around (cf. Samuel 1993).

Such qualifications have not yet been incorporated into most political or academic discourses on Tibetan nationalism. If we accept Dreyfus' claim that Tibetan proto-nationalism and modern nationalism are historically continuous with each other, it follows that proto-nationalist Tibetanisation projects, complete with the assumptions embedded in the accounts above, must be understood as part of the underlying framework of contemporary Tibetan nationalism. Klieger validates this supposition in his description of the 'inclusive' aspects of refugee Tibetan identity as "a process of 'Tibetanization' whereby outsiders may be incorporated within native categories" (1992: 145). As part of the Western tendency to idealise Tibetan refugees that reached its peak in the late 1980s, Klieger writes, "this high level of inclusiveness is perhaps based on the egalitarian, caste and color-blind ideals of original Buddhism" (1992: 146). Although such Buddhist ideals are unquestionably at the root of Tibetan identity narratives emanating from Dharamsala, there remains little scholarly examination of the potential disjunctures between these religious ideals and the realities of dominant Tibetan attitudes towards ethnic, religious, and cultural 'Others'.

In this respect, Tibetan Buddhist claims of benevolent inclusivity are eerily reminiscent of the 'essentially Hindu' pluralism and tolerance asserted by the Hindu nationalist movement in India (van der Veer 1994: 203).[15] Just as scholars of Hinduism have begun to interrogate the

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by von Fürer-Haimendorf. Such sources cannot be placed on equal methodological footing as the extensive interview-based ethnography which Huber conducted with those on the Tibetan side of the equation.

[15] I am grateful to P. Christiaan Klieger for highlighting the fact that the 14th Dalai Lama has been greatly influenced by Gandhian ideals of egalitarianism, suggesting that the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist ideals of inclusivity as developed in Dharamsala and Hindu pluralism in India is even closer than is immediately obvious.

relationship between ideals of pluralism and the realities of inequality and violence in India, scholars of Buddhism and Tibetan societies must inquire in more detail about the consequences of Tibetanisation for those on the receiving end, both positive and negative, from a perspective that considers Tibetanisation as an ideological project containing its own relations of power. I am not suggesting that these aspects of Tibetan national history are unforgivable, but rather that they must be deconstructed in a balanced manner akin to what postcolonial studies has done for other world areas. The rhetoric of victimisation, along with the genuine suffering that many Tibetans have experienced, has made it very difficult to unearth such aspects of the Tibetan national past. Ultimately, however, only through acknowledging these histories can Tibetans lay claim to a truly modern national identity.

Conclusions: Indigenous Tibetan Ontologies

In deconstructing Tibetan national histories, evidence for a pre-modern Tibetan framework for ethnicity may emerge. Or perhaps we should call this 'proto-ethnicity', since it is contemporaneous with Dreyfus' 'proto-nationalism'. This would imply acceptance of the general formula that ethnicity as we know it is an effect of modern nation-states. If we agree that ethnicity and national identity are linked, and accept Dreyfus' vision of Tibetan nationalism, then the conceptual space for a relational notion of ethnicity within the rubric of Tibetan national identity will begin to open. But just as Dreyfus' articulation of Tibetan nationalism challenges dominant Western models, thereby calling into question the distinction between 'proto-nationalism' and full-fledged nationalism, a comprehensive theory of Tibetan ethnicity might challenge existing anthropological models for ethnicity by broadening the parameters of the presumed 'nation-state' in which ethnicity takes shape to include non-geographically bounded entities like 'politico-cultural' Tibet.

A few recent publications of Tibetan texts in translation have provided some empirical foundations for reading Tibetan understandings of 'otherness' in different historical periods. E. Gene Smith provides an English introduction to a fifteenth century Tibetan encyclopedia (*bshad mdzod*, or 'Treasury of Explanation'), which includes chapters on 'The Tribal Structure of the World', 'The Geographical Divisions of Tibet' and 'Classification of the Languages of the World' (2001: 218-24). The

scheme outlined in this text could be reproduced as a series of concentric circles, with 'the four original Tibetan tribes' at the centre, through to the 'tribes that have strayed' and 'the lineages that are still more errant', with the 91 types of 'barbarians' at the outmost periphery. Michael Aris reproduces a similar sort of cosmological outline from an eighteenth century Tibetan text by the well-known Buddhist teacher Jigme Lingpa that describes the inhabitants of India and other 'foreign' lands (1995: 65). Jigme Lingpa's framework was etched on the scapula bone of a sheep or goat, and includes the 'Tibetan regions' in the centre with the '36 barbarian frontier regions' to the far west; 'China', 'Nanchao', and 'Hor' (Mongolia) to the north; and 'India', 'Kashmir', and 'Persia' to the south (Aris 1995: 65). In an eclectic article, Dan Martin casts the late eighteenth century Tibetan lama Nomonhan as an indigenous anthropologist who published his observations of cultural practices in India and Assam as one of the first 'ethnographies' in the Tibetan language (1990: 127). Several other indigenous Tibetan 'ethnographers' are referenced in E. Gene Smith's work, such as the 18th century lama Situ Panchen, who described in detail the borderland groups he encountered on his way from Tibet to Kathmandu.[16]

Taken at face value, these texts do not immediately clarify the status of ethnicity in pre-modern Tibet. However, they do suggest that there is a large body of literature awaiting careful analysis. Clearly, historical texts written by members of the Buddhist elite cannot be taken as normative expressions of lay Tibetan views, but they do give some indication of the categories used for discussing otherness and 'ethnic-like' differentiation at the time they were written. Careful consideration of literature like this, along with the literature on kinship, descent, and territory, could provide the foundations for understanding historically Tibetan ontologies of 'self' and 'otherness'.

In this paper I have suggested that scholars of the Tibetan world must reevaluate current usages of terms like 'ethnicity', 'race', and 'civilisation' in order to develop theoretically consistent, clear terminology to represent and analyse social difference. In particular, I have argued that 'Tibetan' as an ethnic category and 'Tibetan' as a national category must be analytically separated and carefully defined according to the specifics of each empirical situation. Doing this requires us

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[16] See also Franz-Karl Ehrhard's brief overview of the Sixth Zhwa dmar pa's autobiographical account of his journey to Nepal (1997).

to situate the concept of ethnicity within broader national frameworks, and look beyond the particular 'ethnically Tibetan' groups and historical moments we describe to consider the overarching web of social relations constituting ethnicity in the Tibetan context. These moves pave the way for a more thorough examination of the dynamics of power within the 'Tibetanisation process', wherever and whenever it is occurring.

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RETHINKING TIBETO-BURMAN: LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES AND CLASSIFICATIONS IN THE HIMALAYAN PERIPHERY

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INTRODUCTION

"To be human you must have a tribe. To have tribe you must have mother tongue" stated a Shona tribesman, when asked by the fieldworker John Hofman for a definition of his identity (Hofman 1977: 289). While by no means a universal truth, this assertion encapsulates a widespread sentiment held by both indigenous peoples and those who study them: that language and identity are inextricably linked. In this short article I offer some structured reflections on linguistic identities along the Tibetan margins and the classificatory tools that are used to define them. In particular, I argue against the uncritical extension of models of linguistic classification to categorise ethnic communities in the Himalayan periphery.[1]

INVOKING AND DEBUNKING TIBETO-BURMAN

It is common practice for scholars to refer to many of the minority ethnic groups of the greater Tibetan and Himalayan region as 'Tibeto-Burman'. The terms 'Tibeto-Burman ethnic group' and 'Tibeto-Burmese people' often appear as erroneous shortcuts for an array of standard characteristics believed to be shared by various peoples: being more egalitarian, consuming alcohol and meat, practising shamanism and animism, and generally not being part of one of the 'great' religious traditions of Hinduism or Buddhism which surround them.

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[1] I am grateful to Professor Dr. George van Driem, Dr. Daniel Barker, Heleen Plaisier, and Sara Shneiderman for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper. Sections of this paper were presented at the Agenda of Transformation: Inclusion in Democrary conference in Nepal in April 2003, then under the title 'The many tongues of the nation: ethnolinguistic politics in post-1990 Nepal'.

The incorrect deployment of linguistic terminology to convey ethnic or social characteristics is extremely common in Himalayan studies, as illustrated by the following few examples. The anthropologist James Fisher writes that the "predominantly rural population at the periphery, whether Tibeto-Burmese [*sic*] or Indo-Aryan, was too remote, scattered, poor, and uneducated to launch an effective movement against the powerful groups which controlled the centre" (Fisher 1997: 13). The French scholar Gérard Toffin addresses the "classifications of the Tibeto-Burman hill tribes into Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Rai, Thakali" (cited in Gellner *et al*. 1997: 15), while Christian Schicklgruber suggests that 'the Khumbo' are distinct from "many other Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups" in terms of marriage practices (Schicklgruber 1993: 343). The Nepali intellectual Prayag Raj Sharma describes the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley as being of "mixed Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman extraction" (Sharma 1993: 364) and the British-trained anthropologist Gil Daryn describes the Magar and Rai communities as "both of Tibeto-Burmese [*sic*] origin" (Daryn 2003: 171). Healthcare professionals are also wont to conflate linguistic with ethnic classifications, as illustrated by Pratima Poudel Acharya and Fiona Alpass who posit that their "data analysis showed Indo-Aryan and lower caste ethnic groups had significantly lower weight babies than Tibeto-Burman and Newar groups" (Acharya and Alpass 2004: 40). As a final example of the imprudent mainstreaming of linguistic classification to map ethnic or social categories we need look no further than the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the bastion of trusted popular information, from which we learn that:

> Of the three principal ethnic groups in the Indian subcontinent—Indo-Europeans, Tibeto-Burmans, and Dravidians—the first two are well represented in the Himalayas, although they are mixed in varying proportions in different areas (2004).

Although widely used and generally accepted, such uses of the term 'Tibeto-Burman' warrant closer examination and critical re-evaluation. First of all, no group or person can be said to be, or speak, 'Tibeto-Burman', since Tibeto-Burman is simply the language family that comprises all extant and extinct languages under its umbrella. Tibeto-Burman is therefore neither an 'ethnic' category nor is it a classification that can be used to impute socio-cultural behaviour. Just as nobody actually speaks 'Romance', or is 'Germanic', so too there are no speak-

ers of a language called 'Tibeto-Burman' and no clear set of cultural characteristics which can be attributed to all ethnic communities who speak languages belonging to this family. Instead, we may simply say that the Himalayan region is home to millions of mother-tongue speakers of languages that are part of the Tibeto-Burman language family. Finally, the term 'Tibeto-Burmese', illustrated in two of the above examples, is as linguistically inaccurate as it is ethnically dubious. While referring to the language family as 'Sino-Tibetan' or 'Sino-Bodic' rather than 'Tibeto-Burman' implies that one is taking a stance on the genetic affiliations of subgroupings within the language family, the term 'Tibeto-Burmese' is simply incorrect and conveys no specific cultural or linguistic meaning.

There are several reasons why the above point is worth making. First, the phrase 'Tibeto-Burman (speaking) ethnic group' betrays a widespread misunderstanding of linguistic classification and a reluctance on the part of many non-linguists to examine what the term actually conveys in the greater Himalayan context. Second, and more importantly, the proliferation of this vague ethnolinguistic category implies a sense of cohesion between an ancestral origin and a contemporary, spoken mother tongue, when in fact such cohesion rarely exists. Similarly, just because English and German are related languages, it does not necessarily follow that this close linguistic relationship engenders an intimate social tie or shared cultural worldview between English and German speakers.

In the context of Nepal, for example, a case in point are the Newar, who speak a Tibeto-Burman language but whose culture has been so profoundly influenced by values from the south, that it would be incorrect to represent the whole Newar population as sharing cultural traits with ethnic groups in Yúnnán—who also speak Tibeto-Burman languages—solely on the basis of linguistic classification. This point was succinctly made by the Newar linguist Kamal Prakash Malla when he spoke of Newar literature being the "most tangible evidence of the symbiosis between a Tibeto-Burman language and the Indo-Aryan culture" (Malla 1982: 4).

Malla's example is particularly apt since the term 'Tibeto-Burman speaking' is often used to convey the sense that a community has no historical literary tradition or documented written culture. The Newar of the Kathmandu valley and beyond, with their ornate architecture, refined art and classical language, are thus Tibeto-Burman in linguistic

classification only and share few of the typical or ascribed characteristics of minority ethnic communities who speak Tibeto-Burman languages. Similarly, aside from linguists, it is distinctly rare for scholars of or from Tibet to refer to Tibetans as speaking a 'Tibeto-Burman language', even though the classification would be correct. Literate forms, such as Tibetan and Burmese, are thus commonly held to be the parent languages from which other spoken tongues derive, placing them hierarchically above modern 'Tibeto-Burman languages'.

Discussing language and ethnicity in South and Southeast Asia, Harold Schiffman draws a useful distinction between what are historically presented as the "overt manifestations of 'high' linguistic culture", the codified, written and official forms, and the covert or 'folk-cultural' aspects which are more likely to be implicit, unstated and unofficial (Schiffman 1999: 431). The same conceptual distinction may be extended to Tibetan and Himalayan studies, in which Tibetan, Dzongkha and Newar comprise the former category, and ethnic groups speaking unwritten Tibeto-Burman languages make up the latter. Now that activists in many minority ethnic groups across the Himalayan region are engaged in the highly political process of re-creating or 'inventing' written traditions and developing scripts for their previously oral languages, and while countless rural Tibetans remain illiterate, it is apparent that we need to move towards a more nuanced understanding of what, if anything, constitutes 'high' and 'low' linguistic culture.

A further hazard in using the term 'Tibeto-Burman speaking' as a convenient ethnic label is that it appears to locate the peoples and groups it describes in a geographical space specifically related to Tibet or Burma. What of the minority groups in Yúnnán, Baltistan, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Spiti, who speak Tibeto-Burman languages but who may have no dealings with Tibet or Burma? It serves us well to remember that the Tibeto-Burman language family draws its name from the status of two dominant ancient literary languages, Burmese and Tibetan, and not from a field-based appraisal of contemporary linguistic distribution and diversity.

While the linguistic classification of languages as Tibeto-Burman (versus Austro-Asiatic or Indo-Aryan) is precise, the use of linguistic terminologies and models of classification to label ethnic groups is much more problematic. The construction of any group's ethnicity cannot simply be reduced to a one-to-one correlation with their spoken language. As Joshua Fishman notes:

> …the language and ethnicity link itself has also been subjected to a good deal of scrutiny and speculation, some of it going back (and still ongoing) across millennia of philosophical and scientific inquiry. Although language has rarely been equated with the totality of ethnicity, it has, in certain historical, regional and disciplinary contexts, been accorded priority within that totality (Fishman 1999: 4).

The linguistic classification of a spoken language is clearly not diagnostic for the cultural habits or ethnic worldviews of its speakers. For most ethnic groups across the Himalayas, a spoken mother tongue is but one of several important elements in the constellation of interlinked factors making up their ethnic self-image, which also include descent structures, residence patterns and religious practice.

Many publications in Nepal, both in English and Nepali, nevertheless continue to use the phrase 'Tibeto-Burman speaking' or even 'Mongolian', to attribute putative ethno-racial characteristics to communities speaking related languages. The political scientist Selma Sonntag, writing on language planning in Nepal, favours the term 'Tibeto-Nepalese' instead (Sonntag 2001: 165). While not in widespread use, this term conveys the sense that the languages spoken by the groups in question are both less than the totality of the Tibeto-Burman language family and firmly rooted within the national borders of modern Nepal.

An interesting issue emerges when organisations struggling for the uplifting of specific ethno-linguistic groupings take on, proliferate or even actively conscript the same essentialist terminology which social scientists have sought so hard to reject. Such stereotypes then insinuate themselves into ethnic communities' own descriptions and representations of themselves as indigenous and homogenous. It becomes clear that as linguists, social scientists and area studies scholars, we still lack an effective metalanguage for describing and categorising lived ethnolinguistic reality. As Nancy Dorian put it, we require "a language for talking about language" (Dorian 1999: 33).

Lessons from the Indosphere

As a relatively young discipline, Tibetology may benefit from a critical appraisal of the theories which have been formative for other area studies, specifically Indology. In India, as many have noted, language has

long been intimately interwoven with the religious complexes of the subcontinent. Schiffman suggests that the most salient feature of ancient Indic linguistic culture may have been a "concern for the preservation of sacred texts and the purity of the language in which they were composed" (Schiffman 1999: 433). This, in turn, has shaped modern Indian views towards spoken tongues, linguistic change and lexical borrowings, and has helped scholars better understand such attitudes. Prejudice towards variant linguistic forms is also attested in the Tibetan context, as noted by Nicholas Tournadre and Sangda Dorje in their introduction to the *Manual of Standard Tibetan*:

> Many Tibetans, as well as some non-Tibetans consider that only Literary Tibetan has a true grammar. Educated Tibetans are mildly disparaging of their spoken language, which they consider "vulgar" or "ordinary" (Tib. *phal skad*). Only classical Literary Tibetan is well regarded enough to be "blessed" with grammar (Tournadre and Dorje 2003: 26).

The sense of wonder at the elegance and sophistication of classical or literary languages is one that is shared by many observers. Sir William Jones, the great Orientalist, was alleged to have praised Sanskrit for its 'wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either' (de Bary 1958: 590), a sentiment echoed to this day by some textual scholars of Tibetan and Sanskrit. A result of such an approach, as so clearly noted by András Höfer, can be that scholars approach the unwritten and endangered languages spoken by Himalayan ethnic groups as deviant or 'broken' forms of a poorly-remembered classical language, rather than as viable linguistic varieties in their own right (Höfer 2000: 234-35).

Moving on from Tibeto-Burman: the Thakali Exercise in Forgetting

In the remainder of this paper, I turn my focus to two ethnic communities in Nepal, the Thakali and Thangmi, who offer compelling, contrastive examples of the shifting nature of ethnolinguistic awareness and self-identification.

According to the contested *Population Census of Nepal 2001*, less than half of the total Thakali population of 13,000 speak Thakali—a Tibeto-Burman language—as their mother tongue (see Turin 2000 for a critique of the census). While the Thak Khola valley of lower

Mustang district, Nepal, was their traditional homeland, new business and trading opportunities have resulted in mass Thakali out-migrations to urban centres and the lowlands bordering India. The declining use of the Thakali language, however, predates the shift in residence patterns and is more closely linked to the negative values associated with rural speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages and their cultural habits which emanate from the Nepali nation-state at the centre. While the Thakalis' growing alliance with Hinduism and their concomitant turning away from shamanism and village Buddhism are well documented by anthropologists working in the Himalayas, their changing speech patterns have been rather overlooked. As early as 1958, Iijima reported that Thakalis generally did not converse in Thakali (Hutt 1986: 16), and the trend continues to the present day. Despite pleas by the Thakali Central Cultural Committee, few Thakali are making an effort to learn their language and practically no children from the community speak Thakali as a mother tongue. Nevertheless, most Thakali adults continue to believe that the existence of the Thakali language is central to their sense of a collective Thakali identity, even if they themselves do not speak the language.

While the traditional portrayal of ethnic Thakali as willing converts to the social ideology of Hinduism (Tucci 1952; Fürer-Haimendorf 1966) continues to be challenged (Fisher 1987, 2001), the fact remains that Thakali society has undergone dramatic transformation in the space of two generations. The concomitant decline of the Thakali language is generally presented by members of the Thakali community as an unfortunate by-product of the necessary urbanisation and internationalisation of the Thakali community and its growing alliance with the norms of Hindu Nepal. Critics from within the community suggest that the previous generation inadvertently threw the baby out with the bath water in that the Thakali language was jettisoned along with the cultural, dietary, religious and marital practices which were thought to be unfashionable and undesirable within the context of a rapidly modernising nation. In its present endangered state, the Thakali language has become the focus of a campaign for preservation and documentation, led in part by members of the Thakali Research Centre.

Living Tibeto-Burman: the Dynamism of Thangmi

Articles in the popular and academic press inform us that the world's endangered languages are dying out. There are books devoted to language death (Crystal 2000) which attempt to find a mathematical basis for predicting the inevitable decline of indigenous and unwritten languages in the face of the juggernaut of national and international, written and official languages. This portrayal is symptomatic of a simplistic and backwards-looking fatalism which dictates that progress necessarily challenges traditional socio-linguistic life when the reality is often more complicated. There are signs of hope amidst the otherwise grim visions of language decline and extinction, as illustrated by the following example.

In contrast to the Thakali case outlined above, 19,000 of the around 30,000 ethnic Thangmi population of Dolakha and Sindhupalcok in eastern Nepal still speak their Tibeto-Burman language as a mother tongue. In many of the remote villages where Thangmi is spoken, the language is still vibrant and growing even while it is being eroded elsewhere by the widespread use of Nepali. There are numerous signs of linguistic vigour and life: new songs in the Thangmi language, Thangmi first names replacing the Hindu Krishna and Shanti which were so prevalent among the previous generation, and Thangmi neologisms coupled with an indigenous desire to preserve oral traditions narrated in the mother tongue.

Specific examples of activities which help to reinvigorate the Thangmi language include parents giving their children names of culturally-important plants and animals, or of well known Thangmi shamans from times past, and Thangmi men and women creating new Thangmi words, such as the intentionally ironic *ban-pali* (friend-pl) for 'Maoists', or *wakhe-badi* (voice-box) for 'radio' and *mesek-ban* (eye-friend) for 'spectacles'. If these neologisms catch on, and many do, they may quickly become adopted by whole hamlets of Thangmi speakers.

On the language documentation side, there are at least three Thangmi individuals pursuing dictionary projects. Their focus has been exclusively on word collection or lexicon hunting and they compete with one another, and with foreign linguists such as myself, about how many words they have collected. Some are more rigorous than others, and word counts can be artificially bolstered by incorporating a massive number of loan words from Nepali.

The real search, however, is for a script, which Thangmi language activists hope will validate their claims to antiquity and autochthony. While most Thangmi are reconciled to using a slightly modified form of the Devanagari script to write their language, and sensibly believe that they never had their own unique writing system, some of the more militant members of the community are eager to unearth any indication of a uniquely Thangmi script. It is often said that the Thangmi language once had its own script but has since lost it, a kind of fall from linguistic grace. Such a belief reflects the widespread if mistaken assumption that all 'real' languages were once written as well as spoken.

Indigenous Languages in Search of their Scripts

The desire for a script is understandable from many perspectives, particularly when one bears in mind the verdict of Nepal's National Language Policy Recommendations Commission. The Commission presented its report to the government on April 14, 1994, including a four-fold stratification of languages spoken in Nepal, ranked on the basis of having a written tradition. At the top, ranked in first position, were those languages with elaborate and well-attested written traditions, such as Nepali, Newari, Maithili, Limbu, Bhojpuri and Awadhi. In second position came languages "in the process of developing a written tradition" such as Tamang, Gurung and numerous others (Sonntag 2001: 169); in third position came those languages without a written tradition, while the dying languages, such as Raute, were listed last. In this hierarchical caste-system of languages, in which script and literacy are placed as the highest units of value, it is of no surprise to learn that language development activities by ethnoactivists and language promoters commonly include the following components: 'graphisation' or the establishment of an orthography and spelling conventions; 'standardisation' which is the process of making one speech variety a 'super-dialectal' norm, and 'modernisation', the extension of the lexicon to cope with the experiences of the modern socio-linguistic world (Webster 1999: 556).

All but eight of the many languages spoken in Nepal as mother tongues by indigenous peoples have no literate tradition. The lexicalisation of a language and the development, or resurrection, of a suitable script or set of orthographical conventions are prerequisites for intro-

ducing a language into education as the medium of instruction, the latter being a primary aim of many language activists.

A few general issues relating to language documentation and lexicalisation are worth noting. First, the process of standardisation required for a pedagogical grammar, textbook or dictionary necessarily results in a degree of language simplification. Just as divergent spellings of words and regional variations of speech were constrained by the standardisation of English grammar and spelling by Samuel Johnson, so too the development of writing systems for Nepal's indigenous languages are resulting in the standardisation of the spoken language and the concurrent elevation of one speech variety or dialect to a normative position. There are at least two dialects of Thangmi, for example, and in the process of developing a suitable writing system and corpus of pedagogical materials in the language, one variety (or a synthetic mixture of both) will necessarily be promoted as standard and representative. Given the highly diverse and heterogeneous ethnolinguistic tapestry of Nepal in particular, and the Himalayan region in general, the process of linguistic standardisation can be expected to be complicated. Minority groups the world over will sooner learn a national language than adjust their own speech forms to resemble that of their immediate neighbours.

Second is the issue of which script to choose or whether to invent an entirely new one. Various scripts exist within Nepal, the two dominant ones being the Nepali or Devanagari script and the Tibetan script. Other languages with attested pre-existing scripts include Newar, Limbu and Lepcha (or Lapche). Indigenous peoples speaking languages without a literate tradition have three realistic options for developing scripts: Nepali, Tibetan or devising their own.

The advantage of the Nepali script is that it is widely recognised and understood by citizens from different ethnic backgrounds, largely on account of the growing education sector and the boom in print media post-1990. The disadvantage is that the phonetic basis of the Devanagari script imposes orthographical constraints on the sounds it is able to represent. In addition, many of the indigenous communities in Nepal who speak Tibeto-Burman languages are loath to use a script derived from Indo-Aryan languages to which their language is genetically unrelated. The 'Nepalification' through script or lexicon of indigenous Tibeto-Burman languages is strongly resisted by many members of the ethnic nationalities movement in Nepal.

The advantage of the Tibetan script, on the other hand, is that it derives from a language in the same language family as many of Nepal's indigenous and unwritten Tibeto-Burman languages. Some phonological features of Nepal's extant Tibeto-Burman languages, such as tone or breathiness, may therefore be more easily represented using the Tibetan script. At a symbolic and political level, 'Tibetan-ness' makes reference to a cultural heritage alternative to the dominant traditions championed by Hindu Nepal. The disadvantages of choosing the Tibetan script, however, are overwhelming. Most of Nepal's Tibeto-Burman languages are very far removed from modern Tibetan, both in terms of grammar and phonology. Membership in the same language family in no way guarantees linguistic similarity or the applicability of one script for all languages in the category. The complex spelling rules of modern Tibetan are also entirely inapplicable to unwritten languages which have no classical literary form.

Finally, some indigenous peoples of Nepal are developing new scripts for their mother tongues. While these attempts are laudable, they are also often unrealistic given the generally poor level of educational attainment of those involved in the process and the practical challenges in disseminating new scripts (publishing outlets, computer fonts, special schools). There are few professionally-trained lexicographers or linguists among those indigenous activists working on the development of scripts or compiling language corpora for these endangered languages. The desire for a script is an understandable aspiration given the psychological link often made between script = literate tradition = classical language = recorded history = cultural authenticity and power. Many indigenous people across Nepal see the development of a script for their language as important primarily because of the status that this will accord their community on the national stage, rather than for any resulting mother tongue or bilingual education programme that may ensue.

The challenge of finding the 'right' script is best illustrated through an example. Tamang, one of Nepal's most widespread ethnic languages, is spoken by over 1 million people or 5.19% of the total population of Nepal. The Nepal Tamang Ghedung, an ethnic organisation representing Tamang concerns at a national level, writes its name in three scripts: Nepali (Devanagari) for the benefit of most ethnic Tamang who are functionally literate and have passed through the Nepali education system; a modified Tibetan script (dispensing with

the complicated spelling conventions) on account of the language's place in the Tibeto-Burman language family and also because a growing number of Tamang Buddhists are versed in the Tibetan scriptures and its script; and English for its international audience. Such a triscriptural approach, while catering to all parties, is clearly pragmatically unworkable as a long term solution.

The Last Word

My focus in this short article on the need for precise terminology for describing and analysing Himalayan cultural diversity is intended as a cautionary reminder that ethnic and linguistic categories should not be conflated. While scholars and activists across the Himalayas are addressing the standardisation and documentation of unwritten languages, there is insufficient discussion about the social and political implications of choosing one script over another to represent endangered spoken forms. Recognising that many minority language communities have accepted the idea that a 'proper' language must be written, I have focussed on the motivations which inform decisions for or against the use of certain scripts in the representation of these languages.

Dictionaries of endangered languages will be valuable both as records of the cultural wealth of their speakers and as useable resources for language acquisition. While it is likely that many of Nepal's minority languages will be reduced from communicative vernaculars to markers of symbolic identity within a generation, this tragic loss should not overshadow language revival activities such as those described above for Thangmi. The cultural values and political valences attached to languages, rather like linguistic forms themselves, are dynamic and changing. As scholars, we would do well to recognise this and to develop analytical tools that are robust and yet flexible enough to make sense of shifting ethnolinguistic identities.

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ARCHIVE AND THE POETICS OF 'EXOTICA TIBET'

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INTRODUCTION

Tibet has remained at the edge of postcolonial theory while the latter too has only made minor skirmishes into Tibetan studies. My paper sends a postcard from the edge to the study of Tibet and the Tibetans within Tibetan Studies. This paper is about the writing of Tibet in the international imaginary by recourse to an archive. When Western Self 'discovered' the non-Western Other, pre-given images provided an 'archive' from which the encounter was made sense of. Through a discussion of Exotica Tibet, the paper argues that the creation of knowledge about the colonial Other has not been a neutral, apolitical scientific exercise. The will to know is the will to possess, especially in a context marked by political dominance. 'Tibet' in the contemporary period emerged out of an Orientalist representational regime and archive has played a crucial role in producing and circumscribing this regime. The paper critically examines how the archive of imageries and imaginaries of Tibet shaped the ways in which Tibet was encountered and the encounter in turn (re)produced new imageries and imaginaries re-shaping the archive. Thus, the emphasis here is on imaginative practices that went into the identity of 'Tibet'.

The poetics of 'Exotica Tibet' (a shorthand for the exoticised—both positive and negative—Western representations of Tibet) requires a critical postcolonial analysis of Western representations of Tibet. It is a story of Western interactions with Tibet during various historical periods—it is about the production of images of Tibet within these interactions as well as about how the interactions were in turn framed under specific imaginative regimes. These interactions offered opportunities for new images and imaginations; yet, they in turn acquired their mean-

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ing through these imaginations. Though Tibet was always in the process of being created, partly in accordance with changing European fantasises, "the place of Tibet also gave coherence to these fantasies" (Bishop 1989: 12). The 'truth' about Tibet was not discovered, but produced out of specific processes of imageries and imaginaries. An archive of pre-existing images and imaginaries as well as the archiving of new ones were central to the way initial encounters were made sense of. This constitutive relation between Western interactions and imaginations of Tibet is the subject of this paper. Following Roxanne Doty (1996: 3), these Western interactions can be seen in terms of 'imperial encounters' which conveys the idea of asymmetrical encounters in which "one entity has been able to construct 'realities' that were taken seriously and acted upon and the other entity has been denied equal degrees or kinds of agency".

Tibetanness (referring to the discourse of Tibetan national identity which emerged after the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama and more than a hundred thousand Tibetans into exile) is a typical postcolonial narrative of identity politics combining processes of migration with the human desire for fixity. The very idea of 'Tibet' and what it means to be 'Tibetan' is constructed and contested within a matrix of identity and representation discourses (see Korom 1997a, 1997b). Power not only contains and constrains but also produces and reproduces. Representations have productive influence over the discourses of Tibetanness since the Tibetans, especially those living in diaspora, self-reflexively appropriate these images as a part of their own identity. The language of stereotype about Tibet "not only creates knowledge about Tibet, in many ways it creates 'Tibet'", a 'Tibet' that exiled Tibetans deploy to articulate their own identity and to gain international support for the independence of their country (Lopez 1998: 10). Though it is not our concern here, it is important to point out that interaction with a Western audience is a very important dynamic shaping Tibetan identity/Tibetanness in the diaspora. This is an area that has received substantial attention from scholars only in the last decade of the twentieth century (see Dodin and Räther 1998; Harris 1999; Korom 1997a, 1997b; Lopez 1998).

Untill the beginning of the twentieth century, Tibet was seen as an absence on the map, as Perceval Landon put it, the "last country to be discovered by the civilised world" (1905: xi). This was also because it "was never the actual place [of Tibet] that fired the imagination of

romantic seekers: it was the idea of Tibet, far away, impenetrable, isolated in the higher spheres of the earth" (Buruma 2002). Wholly predigested facts about Tibetans were often of the proverbial kind. Tibet was seen as the quintessential Asia of the Western imagination, the poor oppressed land with an ancient culture and spirit (Feigon 1996: 22). Exotica Tibet has been full of contrasts and superlatives.

A significant characteristic of Exotica Tibet is its richness in terms of imageries and imaginaries. "Tibet is, in Foucault's terms, a heterotopia, a plurality of often contradictory, competing, and mutually exclusive places simultaneously positioned on a single geographical location" (Bishop 2001: 204). Representations of Tibet range from extremely pejorative ('feudal hell') to extremely idealistic ('Shangri-La'). Tibet for some is a blank space[2] upon which they can write their desire; for others, it is an overcoded space juggling the fantastic with utter simplicity.

The richness of imaginal diversity (see Bishop 1989, 1993) has often lent itself to ambivalence and contradiction. Typical is Frederick O'Connor's statement:

> Every Tibetan, high or low, is a curiosity who ought to be in a museum. His salutations, gestures, clothing, and general *tout ensemble*, stamp him as something apart from the rest of the inhabitants of the globe. Yet with all this they are a highly civilised race (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 192).

Exotica Tibet is a site of the play of opposites: the pristine and the polluted, the authentic and the derivative, the holy and the demonic, the good and the bad. Harrison Forman wrote:

> in the heart of ageless Asia, brooding darkly in the shadow of the unknown, is to be found a veritable explorer's paradise-Tibet, the strange and fascinating, forbidden land of magic and mystery…where the opposites are kin and the extremes go hand in hand (Forman 1936: vii).

What imaginal archive lies behind Exotica Tibet? This is the concern of this paper.

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[2] One aspect of the story of 'Tibet as a blank space' is the denial of any quintessential Tibetan civilisation. Many commentators commented that what passes as 'Tibetan' is merely a mix of 'great' neighbouring civilisations (Chinese and Indian). William W. Rockhill is typical: "Present advanced degree of civilization is entirely borrowed from China, India, and possibly Turkestan, and Tibet has only contributed the simple arts of the tent-dwelling herdsmen" (1895: 673).

The Archive (and the Archiving) of Imaginations

As Jacques Derrida says,[3] "[n]othing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive'" (in Featherstone 2001: 162). An archive is commonly understood as a place or collection containing records, documents, photographs, film, or other materials of historical interest. But, "archives are as much products of historical struggle as they are primary sources for writing histories" (Lynch 1999: 167). Not everything is archived: the selection reflects dominant power relations. Therefore, one often has to resort to reading the dominant texts against its grain in order to write history from non-dominant perspectives. "The archive contains primary sources, at the same time that it is always already a secondary trace of historical discourse" (Dirks 2001: 195).

'Archive' can be taken to refer to a repository of stored memories or information, often outside the purview of statist discourses. As Harriet Bradley writes, the "archive is the repository of memories: individual and collective, official and unofficial, licit and illicit, legitimating and subversive" (1999: 108). These memories and information can be based on 'real' encounters or on fictional ones. Archive in this sense is a collection of communal imaginations and imageries. To a certain degree it fosters a sense of communal identity as it sifts the relevant from the non-relevant, sayable from the non-sayable. What is remembered and what is seen as worth remembering says more about those who are remembering than those who are the subject of remembrance.The archive of Western memories and representations of Tibet says more about the West than about Tibet.

An archive plays more than a depository role. Through cataloguing and classification it makes the collected/stored data intelligible. For Michel Foucault, 'archive' is essential to any 'archaeology of knowledge'. It is "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements existing at a given period within a particular society" (Foucault 1972: 130). This archive determines both the system of enunciability of a statement-event and its system of functioning; in other words it constitutes the site of rules which define the limits and forms of (i) expressibility, (ii) conservation, (iii) memory, (iv) reactivation, (v) appropriation (Smart 1988: 48). Thus, Foucault stresses that an

[3] In his *Archive Fever*, Derrida points out the multiplicity of ways in which the archive is constructive of the very event that it allegedly 'records': "The archivization produces as much as it records the event" (1995: 17).

archive is composed of multiple and varying discourses, some limiting, others enabling. This characteristic of an archive explains mutability of imaginative regimes such as Exotica Tibet.

Representations of other cultures draw upon archives in both senses of the term: a collection of documents as well as a communal set of imaginations and imageries. During the Victorian age the "archive was not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junctions of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire" (Richards 1993: 11). What was knowable then was shaped by imperial prerogatives as well as pre-existing 'knowledge'. This included those found in classical writings, religious and biblical sources, mythology, traveller's tales (which in any case made little distinction between description and legend), and fictional writings. These provided the cultural framework through which others were seen, described and represented.

Let me briefly illustrate this with some comments on Christopher Columbus's encounter with the Native Americans/Amerindians. Instead of being an encounter with radical otherness, it drew upon an already existing archive of images, preconceptions, and representations. Columbus did not discover a world as it existed in itself; nor could he have. He discovered a world of otherness, a world of promise and danger, utopian bliss and barbaric cruelty, innocence and corruption, simplicity and mystery, all filtered through a late medieval culture of perceptions, conceptions, aspirations, faiths, anxieties, and demands. His discovery was an encounter (Connolly 1991: 36).

Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney write that Columbus "does not really see the Amerindians; instead, he engages them as merely a category of otherness as revealed in the authoritative texts with which he is familiar" (1996: 74). These authoritative texts included books like *The Book of Marco Polo*, Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis*, and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, all of which masqueraded as travel adventures. Unsurprisingly then, "Columbus had to meet the cannibals. Pliny and Mandeville had already forewarned him…. Europe needed cannibals.… It invented them; and then used them as a justification for a range of purposes" (Sardar 1992: 500-1).

Archive here functions in a manner similar to Edward Said's (1978) notion of 'strategic formation'. Using the methodological techniques of strategic location and strategic formation, Said calls into question the

underlying assumptions that form the foundation of Orientalist thinking. While strategic location is "a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he (*sic*) writes about", strategic formation is "the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large" (Said 1978: 20).

Often visions about one 'Oriental' culture were unproblematically invested into another. Orientalism itself performed an archival function—generalisations abounded as the attitude was "pick an East, any East" (Sardar 1999: 66) and the story will be the same. As Said puts it:

> In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics (1978: 41-42).

In situations where the culture was relatively unknown—like the Tibetan—hearsay, legends, and fantasies performed an ever more important archival function.[4] Representers of Tibet especially before the twentieth century drew upon these archives, supplementing the rare missionary and travellers' accounts. Hugh Richardson argued that the early allusions of Westerners reveal little more than that the Tibetans had a reputation in neighbouring countries for "strange ways and rare magical powers" (1962: 61). This reputation persisted during the twentieth century as the production of knowledge about Tibet continued to be inspired by Tibetophilia, fascination with religious and social practices of Tibetans, the spread of Buddhism in the West, counter-cultural movements in the West, and so on.

The fantastic has always been a part of image/knowledge about Tibet: works have drawn upon an archive of pre-existing representa-

[4] Rumour and gossip also had direct political implications. For instance, the insistence on the part of the British Viceroy in India, Lord Curzon, on sending an expedition to Tibet was fuelled by bazaar gossip and rumours about activities of Buriyat monk Dorjieff (considered as Russian spy) and a Sino-Russian deal (on Tibet) around the summer of 1902. Curzon's belief, which led to British Lhasa Mission in 1903-04, shows that the line separating 'intelligence', rumour and fraudulent claims to legitimise wars and invasion is fuzzy.

tions. First contact between British and Tibetans was made in the late eighteenth century. Letters and gifts from the Panchen Lama (referred to in contemporary writings as Teshoo or Tashi Lama) to Warren Hastings both before and after the first British mission to Tibet (under George Bogle) in 1774-75 did not fall into an imaginative vacuum. Indeed, they activated hearsays and vague fragments of knowledge that had been, beginning with the ancient Greeks, steadily accumulating over the centuries (Bishop 1989: 29). In 1924, Charles Bell mentioned that Herodotus' account refers to a rumour about a race of enormous ants that delved for gold in a country northwest of India (in Sharma and Sharma 1996: 83-84). Ptolemy spoke of the nation of the Dabasa, which may be a Roman transliteration of the modern province of U in central Tibet and also referred to ants that were gold diggers (Francke 1907: 14-16).

At the end of the thirteenth century Franciscan ascetic Odorico of Pordenone went East and wrote the following account about Tibet (it is doubtful if he even travelled across it): women have "a couple of tusks as long as those of wild boars", and to pay respect to his dead father, a son after rituals "takes his father's head, and straightaway cooks it and eats it" (in MacGregor 1970: 15, 20). The legendary traveller Marco Polo (1958) refers to "Tebet" (*sic*) in the late thirteenth century. Apart from other things (such as cannibalising of human beings put to death by the authorities, "canes of immense size and girth", natives as idolators and "out-and-out bad"), Marco Polo fetishises Asian promiscuity. He highlights a marriage custom where "no man would ever on any account take a virgin to wife" for "a woman is worthless unless she has had knowledge of many men", and therefore Tibetans offer their women to travellers to "lie with them" and thus make them fit for marriage (but once is marriage takes place, it is a "grave offence for any man to touch another's wife"). He jokes: "Obviously the country is a fine one to visit for a lad from sixteen to twenty-four" (1958: 79-80, 142, 144, 142-43). The image of strange, tantalising, inviting, available East waiting and inviting Western men persisted during the colonial era.

While early missionaries' main interest in Tibet was to find traces of Christianity ('lost brotherhood' or 'lost Christian kingdom'), by the seventeenth century there was a realisation that though there might be similarities between Tibetan religion and Catholicism, Tibetans were not Christians. The Portuguese merchant Diogo d'Almeida was proba-

bly the first to mention the word 'lama' in the Western vocabulary. While some missionaries—for instance Jesuits Stephen Caçella and John Cabral in the early seventeenth century and Ippolito Desideri in the early eighteenth century—were more open-minded, others like Johann Grueber and Albert D'Orville in the early seventeenth century and the Capuchin missionaries in the early eighteenth century were less accommodating.

Grueber and D'Orville, the first Europeans to physically visit Lhasa, declined to meet the Dalai Lama, describing him as "that devilish god the father who puts to death those who refuse to adore him" (Richardson 1988: 23). In 1762, Antonio Giorgi published Alphabetum Tibetanum Missionum Apostolicarum (a Latin-Tibetan dictionary of 35,000 words) in Italy based on the works of Capuchin Father Francesco Orazio della Penna (who lived and studied in Tibet from 1716-1732). Here he collected 'facts' and 'myths' about Tibet and in his equation of some Tibetan gods with ancient Egyptian gods, one can see the beginning of a view, which later became an essential part of Exotica Tibet, of "Tibet as a secret abode of prolific syncretism" (Kaschewsky 2001: 18). While George Bogle and Samuel Turner headed two British missions to Tibet toward the end of the eighteenth century, in 1811 Thomas Manning went to Lhasa in a personal capacity and experienced what he himself described as "the strangeness of sensation" (in Richardson 1988: 33).

The lack of European interest in 'real' Tibet is evident from the fact that only Turner's account was published as a book (*An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in 1800*; the second edition came out in 1806 and then it was virtually forgotten until the end of the century), while Bogle and Manning's accounts were collected and published only more than half a century later by Clement Markham in 1876. The only other foreigners to stay in Lhasa during the entire nineteenth century were French Lazarist missionaries Evariste Regis Huc and Joseph Gabet. The fact that during most part of nineteenth and early twentieth century Tibet was closed to foreigners led to Europeans investing even more fantasies in Tibet. It also led to a 'race for Lhasa', competition among the explorers and adventurers to be the first into the 'Forbidden City'. Who would count as competitors in this race was of course to be decided by the Europeans. Native explorers and spies (known as pundits) like Sarat Chandra Das who managed to reach Lhasa and made geographical mapping of Tibet possible were ineligi-

ble, even though they too had to travel in disguise, either because native surveyors:

> become so engrossed with the details of their work that they forget to use their eyes and make those general observations on the people and the scenery about them which is a most important objective of their journeying (Holdich 1906: 233)

or because

> suffering from the limitations of disguise and the need to move principally among the lower orders of society, [they] produced more valuable reports on topography and communications than on social, economic, and political conditions in Tibet (Richardson 1962: 74).

Perhaps it was simply because "it was easier for the Asiatics and therefore the race was among the Europeans" (Hopkirk 1983: 157). This comes as no surprise because in the imperialist imagination, exploration was a possession of 'civilised man'. In his biography of Richard Francis Burton, Byron Farwell (1963) begins by stating that "the explorer is always a civilised man; exploration is an advanced intellectual concept". Therefore, he argues, it is a concept unknown to primitive peoples, and one that remains incomprehensible to women' (see Kabbani 1986: 86).

The paucity of first hand accounts until the beginning of the twentieth century did not mean the absence of Tibet (and its 'Grand Lama') from the Western thought-scape. Rather, it allowed the investment of all sorts of fantasies and negative evaluation into the idea of Tibet (see Bishop 1989, 1993; Lopez 1998).

Thus, we see that evaluation of Tibet and its people was based on an archive that made very little distinction between myths, legends, hearsay, and facts (see Klieger 1997). Western writers constructed 'facts' not by referring to the place of Tibet but through repetition and cross-reference. There were only three European works on Tibetan Buddhism before 1895—Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum* (1762), C. F. Koppen's *Die Lamaische Hierarchie und Kirche* (1859) and Emil Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet* (1863)—all were compilations by authors who had never been in contact with Tibetan people. In 1895 L. Austine Waddell, who went on to become the 'authority *par excellence*' on Tibet, published his *Tibetan Buddhism* based on known 'facts' and interaction with some Tibetan Buddhists on the Indo-Tibetan border. The conclusion of his 'scientific' study would come as a shock to a

contemporary audience, which is used to seeing Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama in a positive light:

> With all their strivings and the costly services of their priests, the Tibetans never attain peace of mind. They have fallen under the double ban of menacing demons and despotic priests. So it will be a happy day, indeed, for Tibet when its sturdy overcredulous people are freed from the intolerable tyranny of the Lhamas, and delivered from the devils whose ferocity and exacting worship weigh like a nightmare upon all (Waddell: 572).

Imbued with a sense of European supremacy and imperial arrogance, after visiting the geographical Tibet for the first time (he was the cultural 'expert' during the 1903-4 British invasion of Tibet), Waddell found nothing new to add to his book as his knowledge of Tibet was already complete. Characterising Tibetan Buddhism as "a disastrous parasitic disease which fastened on to the vitals of the land…a cloak to the worst form of oppressive devil-worship" (1905: 25), Waddell, like many other contemporary experts on Buddhism (see Lopez 1995), argued that it was an 'impure', a 'degenerate' form of Buddhism.[5] The examples of such writers show that despite the Western Enlightenment's claim to the sanctity of scientific observation, 'authority' had more to do with imperialism and ethnocentrism. This construction of Tibet, of the 'Orient', through self-referencing (where the self is the 'West'), is well captured by Said's concept of 'strategic formation' mentioned above: "Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he (*sic*) refers and on which he relies" (Said 1978: 20).

Archive and Utopia

The fact that Tibet was never colonised by Europeans meant that there was "no factory for the production of official knowledge", leaving mostly unofficial knowledge, produced by travellers and enthusiasts;

[5] As Lopez argues, Classical Buddhism was the hypostatised object because it had been created by Europe, could also be controlled by it, and it was against this Buddhism that all of the Buddhisms of modern Orient were to be judged, and to be found lacking. Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism was the most degenerate and inauthentic one. See Lopez 1995: 2-7.

"institutes, libraries, archives, and museums were not created, either in Tibet or in a European metropole" (Lopez 1998: 157, 161). This facilitated creation of a utopian archive best evident in James Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon* (1933). In the case of Tibet, utopia and archive came together in the guise of Shangri-La. Shangri-La is the mythical name given by Hilton to the lamasery in a secret valley somewhere in the Himalayan region which combines Western physical comfort and Western classical cultural relics with Eastern wisdom.

The myth of Shangri-La, that there exists a secret utopian place somewhere in Tibet, has been integral to Western representations of Tibet throughout the twentieth century (see Bishop 1989; Dodin and Räther 2001; Klieger 1997). Describing the imagination of Tibet as a Shangri-La as 'Rampaism', Agehananda Bharati (2002) summarises this attitude:

> There is, somewhere hidden in the Himalayas (invariably mis-stressed on the penultimate 'a'), a powerful, mystical, initiate brotherhood of lamas or similar guru adepts, who not only know all the mysteries of the world and the superworld, who not only incorporate and transcend the teachings of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, but who also master all the occult arts—they fly through the air at enormous speeds, they run 400 miles at a stretch without break, they appear here and there, and they are arch-and-core advisors to the wise and the great who hide these ultimate links to supreme wisdom and control.

Integral to the Western imagination of Tibet, beginning in the late nineteenth century with theosophists and taken to its extreme in the *Lost Horizon*, has been a notion of utopia—Tibet as a sanctuary from the materialism and violence of modern times, a sanctuary for those disaffected with modernity and seeking peace and wisdom. Matthias Hermanns, an ethnologist in Amdo during the 1930s and 1940s, made use of this concept, which soon gained wider currency: "Tibet as a repository of archaic forms of biological and—more important—social life. Tibet as a sanctuary" (Kvaerne 2001: 54). This sanctuary is placeless (lacking definitive physical location) and yet placed (located) in

[6] Interestingly, in Hilton's Shangri-La, Tibetans were largely relegated to the role of native workers. Father Perrault, the High Lama, was a Luxemburger and most inhabitants of the lamasery were Europeans. Perrault explained that the lamasery once had a Japanese who was not a fine acquisition; "Tibetans are much less sensitive than outside races and die sooner, even though they are charming", Chinese are slightly better; the "best subjects, undoubtedly, are the Nordic and Latin races of Europe" (Hilton 1967: 110).

Tibet. Shangri-La for Hilton is a secret 'archive state' hidden somewhere in the mountains of Central Asia.[6] The High Lama here has a strategic conception of a utopian archive (with the best of Western and Eastern worlds), a fortress as well as a museum, a survivalist archive: Shangri-La "represented an archive achieved and maintained by the state (here, explicitly as a state) without recourse to military force" (Richards 1992: 124-25, 128). Inhabitants of the lamasery indulged in various intellectual pursuits—writing manuscripts, doing pure mathematics, coordinating Gibbon and Spengler into a vast thesis on the history of European civilisation, formulating new theories about *Wuthering Heights*, and so on. This was in line with the principal rationale for the existence of Shangri-La: to act as a sanctuary. The purpose of Shangri-La was to be a 'war refuge' for preserving the best of modern civilisations (Hilton 1933: 191-92).

"The archive is also a place of dreams" (Steedman 1998: 67). It reflects not only the achieved but also the achievable and dreams of achieving the non-achievable. Thus, Shangri-La is a repository, a repository of mental peace, spiritual wisdom, 'high' culture, and physical wealth. It is a repository of desires—Western desires which leave little room for cultural and historical specificity of Tibet. Western travellers' search for the 'real Tibet' often takes them beyond actual Tibetans:

> The real Tibet I was searching for was not out in the open. It was not in the magnificent temples and palaces, in the colorful bazaars, in the happy and carefree life of its farmers or in the entrancing charm of Lhasa's social life. Real Tibet transcends politics and economics; it is invisible, beyond sense-perception, beyond intellect. It is the mysterious land of the psyche, of what lies beyond death, a universe to which some Tibetans have the key and which their subtle soul seems to have explored as thoroughly as Western scientists have explored our physical universe (Riencourt 1950: 262).

As Jamyang Norbu argues, for the followers, Tibet, the nation of the Tibetans, is nowhere as relevant as that of Tibet, the "repository of a secret wisdom to save a materialistic and self-destructive West" (1998: 22).

Connected to the myth of Shangri-La is a fear of loss—either a loss that is inevitable because Tibetan civilisation is endangered by modernisation or communism or a loss that has already occurred. The latter is nostalgia for a Tibet that exists mainly in the Western imagina-

tion: a pristine, virgin territory giving way to forces of progress; a sacred place trampled by the onslaught of modern forces, first the British and then the Chinese and then globalisation. In the twentieth century, there was a strong sense of "time running out" in Western accounts of Tibet (see Bishop 1989). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this fear is seen as having been realised. Tibet is condemned to almost certain death. "Unless, of course, there is that last-minute miracle" (Patterson 1990: 226). Here we see obituaries already being written even before the 'death'.

> Time is running out for Tibet—a nation that has refused to hold the world to ransom by hijacking planes, kidnapping, perpetrating senseless violence on innocent victims—a nation that for 1-2000 years has lived in peace and wants no more than to be free and to continue to live in peace (Kewly 1990: 381-82).

Thus, through the twentieth century, Shangri-La has come to be synonymous with Tibet, a Tibet that has been lost, a Tibet that may be lost, or a Tibet that still may have hope.

The twinning of wisdom/archive/library with contemporary Tibet is seen in the sentiments of many Western supporters of Tibet. For instance, Hollywood actor Richard Gere, probably one of the most famous supporters of the Tibetan cause, said in an interview:

> Now the Tibetan situation right now is pretty amazing because they are the repository of all this extraordinary wisdom, at the time their libraries have been destroyed almost entirely by the Chinese. Bits and pieces of books come in from nomads and all over Asia, it's extraordinary to see these libraries come piece together (Frontline 2002).

Knowledge and Power

The role of the archive, in its more conventional sense of a collection of texts, as a social space "in which materials of historic or aesthetic interest are stored, presented and ordered" (Brown and Davis-Brown 1998: 30), is also relevant for our discussion here. Direct correlation between imperialism and the gathering of information can be seen through the Tibet-related collection of the British Library in the UK – the majority of documents stem from central and southern Tibet, due to British political interests of the time. The volume of 'acquisition' of Tibetan books mirrored political events; not surprisingly the first and

the biggest wave of new acquisitions (later called the Waddell or Lhasa collection) of the India Office Library and British Museum's Oriental Collection reached Britain in 1905 and consisted of books collected during the Younghusband expedition (Pagel 1990: 725-32). The close connection between imperialism and Orientalism, the assertion of political influence and information gathering, power and knowledge is exemplified in this expedition.[7] It had 'scientific' staff consisting of surveyors, naturalists, geologists, anthropologists (Younghusband in Hayden 1927: vii)—of course, their military and 'scientific' roles overlapped. For instance, Waddell was an authority on Tibetan Buddhism, a medical officer, as well as a collector of texts, plants,[8] and birds. The encyclopedist Waddell and the imperialist Waddell were not separate, but inextricably linked.

The Western Self was constituted by imperialism and Orientalism, by power and knowledge. Exotica Tibet is an example of the Western Self consolidating, validating, challenging itself through its encounter with the non-Western Other. Though affirmation of the Western Self was the ultimate force behind most representations of the non-Western Other, some also deployed specific representations to question the Self. "I delightedly forgot Western lands, that I belonged to them, and that they would probably take me again in the clutches of their sorrowful civilisation", exclaimed French traveller Alexandra David-Neel (the first Western woman to enter Lhasa) (1991: 61), while suggestive observations presented in the *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* are meant as an

[7] And so is a close relation between use of force to appropriate exotic curiosities. For an excellent study of looting of Tibetan monasteries during the Expedition, see Carrington 2003.

[8] Waddell, along with Captain Walton, is credited with 'discovering' the Lhasa poppy (see Fletcher 1975: xxi). Similarly the blue poppy's scientific name is *Meconopsis baileyi*, named after its 'discoverer', Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Bailey; the wild sheep *argali* and Tibet antelope *chiru* are *Ovis ammon hodgsoni* and *Pantholops hodgsoni* after Brian Hodgson, the British resident at the Nepalese court. This practice is reflective of the Orient as a passive object to be discovered and appropriated by the West. Tibetans (and maybe many non-Tibetans too) were familiar with the flower all along. But it required a Western 'man' to name it, taxonomise it in a 'universal' scheme of things, and thus become its discoverer. Interestingly, in the movie "The Face of Fu Manchu" (1965, Directed by D. Sharp), the eponymous villain learns how to distil a vicious poison from the 'Black Hill poppy' of Tibet thanks to the papers of the Younghusband expedition where the complete secret of the plant is meticulously laid down. In some instances scientific names are hybrid such as *Ovis ammon dalailamae prezavalskii* (1888) (named after the Dalai lama and a Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky) for one variant of *argali*, the wild sheep.

aid to "awaken the Occident to the extreme dangers into which it has been led, in large measure by a medical science ignorant for the most part of the Art of Dying, they will have furthered the prayers of the lamas by helping to dissipate that Darkness of Ignorance which, as the Buddha realised, enshrouds the world" (Evans-Wentz 1949: xii-xiii).

Tibet is seen as offering essential spiritual services to humanity. Its survival is thus considered more important than that of many other postcolonial national groups. Richard Gere uses the analogy of David and Goliath to offer hope to the Tibetans and reminds them, "You must maintain that sense of uniqueness and that genuine cultural commitment to nonviolence. If you pick up arms and become like the Palestinians, you'll lose your special status" (in Schell 2000: 56). This reflects the stranglehold of the myth of Shangri-La. Tibet here becomes a service society for the West, offering resources by which the West can criticise itself, question its values. Tibetans on the other hand are treated as objects in stories of heroic achievement by outsiders, or as victims of abuse who are incapable of agency. Exasperated with this scenario of exoticisation that decorporealises Tibetan culture, Tibetan intellectual Jamyang Norbu writes: "However hopeless their cause…Tibetans are better off living their own reality than being typecast in ethereal roles in the fantasies of the West" (Norbu 2001: 378).

Conclusion

Throughout the twentieth century the imaginative space of Tibet was coded through various representational strategies, some complementary, others contradictory. 'Tibet' in the contemporary period emerged out of this representational regime and 'archive' has played a crucial role in producing and circumscribing this regime. The archive of imageries and imaginaries of Tibet shaped the ways in which Tibet was encountered and in turn (re)produced new imageries and imaginaries adding on to the archive. This process of archivisation goes on and its significance requires a critical engagement with it—understanding while questioning, negotiating while resisting.

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INSISTING ON AGREEMENT: TIBETAN LAW AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN LADAKH

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Studies of Tibetan law have generally taken as their starting point the legal codes developed in the Tibetan polities from the fourteenth century onwards, along with records of the decisions of the Lhasa and other courts (Meiserzahl 1974; Schuh 1973, 1976, 1984a, 1984b; Schuh and Phukhang 1979; French 1995). It is claimed in the Tibetan chronicles that the legal codes were based on the Buddhist moral rules created by Songsten Gampo in the seventh century, although scholars now argue that this is an *ex post facto* attribution by subsequent rulers establishing moral justification for their rule (Uray 1972: 59; Sørensen 1994: 35; Kapstein 2000: 56-57). Studies of these codes, therefore, provide insights into the religio-moral world of Tibet's ruling elites, processes of government and the exercise of power. They do not, however, reveal a great deal about legal practice within the wider Tibetan area, the ideas, principles and moralities according to which order was maintained and disputes were resolved in the regions, villages and pasture lands.[1] Legal practices are far more extensive and have generally operated quite independently of the ideologies and administration of the rulers.

Practices of law in Tibet have, of course, varied widely, over geographical distance and over time, from the remote villages of Ladakh, in the west, to the feuding tribes of Kham in the east (Jamyang Norbu 1979), from the politically motivated manoeuvrings of the Lhasa judiciary (Goldstein 1989) to the interventions of lamas in the tribal conflicts of Amdo pastoralists (Ekvall 1954; 1968). In the late twentieth

[1] Although French claims she is describing general legal practices and the 'mundane perspective' (1995: 15-16, 59-60) and she presents a number of interesting studies of legal cases from 20th century Lhasa, her work is very much based on elite sources. Ann Frechette (1996) points out that the lack of social and political context means that legal ideology is conflated with legal processes and legal structures. Toni Huber (1998: 88-89) criticises French, *inter alia*, for attributing an esoteric Buddhist cosmology to those whose religious practices are, in fact, "saturated with non-Buddhist values".

century, national governments—Chinese, Indian, Nepalese and Bhutanese, as well as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile—have introduced further legal regimes and procedures into the region. In this paper I describe the practices of dispute resolution found in the villages of Ladakh, on the western borders of ethnographic Tibet, now part of India.[2] The legal practices found here are of particular interest because in recent decades a new regional form of justice, explicitly based upon village practices, has been developed in Leh, the capital. This operates in parallel to, but quite separate from, the legal structures of the Indian state.

Ladakh's villages have long maintained a considerable degree of autonomy from the centre, among other things containing and resolving disputes within their own boundaries. This paper describes these practices in the context of the social and political structures of the community, the villagers' moral universe, their cosmological concerns and religious practices. I suggest that the local legal realm is best characterised as a series of cultural practices, above all a concern to maintain order within the community. This is realised in the responsibility which the villagers assume, as a body, for resolving conflict and the perceived necessity for ceremonial reconciliation between protagonists. It is founded upon an epistemological construction of the nature of disorder and underpinned by a secular morality. It is these village 'traditions' that Ladakh's elites have been able to develop into a new, centralised mediation service within the context of the modern nation state.

Ladakh: Historical Judicial Practices

The western part of the Tibetan plateau came under the influence of the early Tibetan emperors of the seventh to ninth centuries. On the collapse of the empire it reverted into a series of petty states, kingdoms and lordships but in the tenth century was substantially conquered by members of one of the former ruling families of Tibet who established a kingdom which endured, despite incursions from both Kashmir and Tibet, until the mid-nineteenth century. Buddhism initially spread into

[2] Eighteen months of fieldwork were carried out in 1998 and 2003, the majority of the time being split between Photoksar, a relatively remote village in the Lingshed area, and the main town, Leh.

the region from Kashmir and from the eleventh century onwards was re-established by Tibetan monks, whose monasteries were patronised by the Ladakhi kings. These kings created a hereditary aristocratic class of ministers, rewarding their families with lands and charging them with responsibility for the collection of revenues and mobilisation of the population for war.[3]

There is little evidence of extensive judicial activity within the Ladakhi kingdom. There were no Ladakhi legal codes, for example, nor evidence that they referred to those used in Tibet. The Ladakhi chronicles, compiled from the seventeenth century onwards, indicate that from the time of King Nyima Namgyal, in the early eighteenth century, the rulers employed advisers, drawn from both the nobility and commoner classes, to help decide cases (Francke 1926: 118; 1998: 116; Petech 1977: 83). The legal system does not, however, appear to have been very elaborate. There is evidence that decisions were sometimes taken by casting lots or submitting the parties to ordeals (Francke 1998: 116-17; Cunningham 1841: 262-68).[4] One document contains an instruction to the parties of a land dispute to cease to quarrel and it is only this injunction, not the actual details of the decision, that are recorded (Schuh and Phukhang 1979: Doc LIII). The restoration of good relations between quarrelling parties also lies at the heart of Ladakh's village practices.

Within the Ladakhi kingdom the aristocratic families were nominal administrators of different areas of Ladakh but their main duties were towards the kings' household and their contact with the more remote areas was limited. The *lonpo* (*blon po*)[5] who was formerly in charge of the area in which I did fieldwork, told me that his ancestors used to visit the villages to collect revenue and give an annual party. They also 'gave the law', *trims tangs* (*khrims btang*) to the villagers, he told me. However, the villagers had to come to his residence, a journey of several days, in the event of a dispute, and the villagers themselves never mentioned this aspect of the *lonpo*'s activities.

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[3] This is a much simplified version of what was a complicated situation with considerable variation regionally and over time. Further details are found in Carrasco 1959, Petech 1977 and Riaboff 1997.

[4] Similar practices have been found elsewhere in Tibet, in reports of cases in Lhasa and Sakya (della Penna 1876:324; Schuh 1984a: 227; Cassinelli and Ekvall 1969: 171-76) and in legal codes (Dawa Norbu 1974: 78; Schuh 1984b: 292-93).

[5] I transcribe Ladakhi words according to their local pronunciation and provide the orthography, if different, according to the Wylie system, in brackets.

The rulers of Kashmir, the Dogras, invaded and conquered Ladakh in 1843, shortly before the region was incorporated into British India. They made many of the aristocrats into officials within their administration, established a police force, courts and land settlements and undertook a certain amount of development throughout the century of their rule. Administrative control over the villages remained light, however, and as far as local disputes were concerned, the aristocrats were said to retain jurisdiction within their own districts. There is no evidence of a body of law which was imposed at local level, nor that the central justice system was easily accessible from the remoter areas (Muhammad 1908; Galwan 1923; Cook and Shakya 1983).

Since Indian independence Ladakh has been administered as part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. A local bureaucratic government has been established, taxes have largely been abolished and major landholdings broken up. Since the 1960s there has been considerable development in the form of road-building, education and healthcare, and tourism has been encouraged. Local courts, part of the state's legal system, have been set up. However, officials in this bureaucracy, many of whom are Indians from Kashmir or Jammu, usually do not care to travel to the more remote villages, which may be several days' walk from the nearest road. Central control, therefore, remains light. The villagers largely continue to maintain their own internal political structures with a rotating headman, to organise their own property relations, village duties and taxes, rituals and festivals, and to settle disputes within their own boundaries. The Ladakhi villages, therefore, continue to maintain a high degree of autonomy from central administrative control.

Village Organisation

The sparse Ladakhi population remains largely clustered into more or less isolated, distinctly bounded villages, organised around the complex irrigation systems that make agriculture possible in this high, arid region. The villages are usually separated by acres of pasture and wasteland, which makes communications slow and assists in the maintenance of autonomy from the centre. The vast majority of the population belongs to the commoner class, including all those in Photoksar,

where I carried out fieldwork.[6] This village consists of a cluster of 22 households, comprising around 200 people, who depend largely on their agriculture and livestock rearing for subsistence. The household is the basic organisational unit of the village, of far greater importance than any kin group, and village duties rotate annually between them. Despite differences in size and wealth, all households are deemed to be equal as far as these duties and corresponding privileges are concerned.

The administration of village affairs is nominally in the hands of the headman, but this post rotates between all the households of the village, regardless of the abilities of the men within it to take on a leadership role.[7] In fact, the post is regarded as a burden rather than a privilege. It is the most onerous village tax, which requires the holder to travel to Leh, to negotiate with the authorities, entertain visiting officials, organise meetings and take responsibility in cases of conflict. In practice, too, the headman's power is limited by the fact that all important decisions concerning agricultural and ritual events, the management of the irrigation system, the building of new walls and paths and so on, are made by the village meeting, a gathering of all the adult men. These men, the *yulpa*, are the ultimate political authority of the village, taking decisions about village taxes and creating new rules from time to time. They also act as the ultimate judicial authority in the village, quickly and decisively resolving serious cases and those that the headman has been unable to settle. In order to understand their procedures, however, it is necessary first to consider the moral and epistemological understandings of conflict and its consequences within the village.

The Moral Universe

The Photoksar villagers have firmly expressed and clearly articulated attitudes to all forms of fighting, arguing and quarrelling, to abusive and insulting language. These are all considered to be unequivocally

[6] Here, in the eastern part of Ladakh, the population is predominantly Buddhist, but in the west, the Kargil area is overwhelmingly Muslim. There is also a significant Muslim population in and around Leh.

[7] The system of rotation for choosing the headman was established by most villages in Ladakh in the twentieth century, when the tax demands of the centre lessened. The system, in fact, mirrors the use of games, contests and the drawing of lots to make political appointments, which have been noted widely throughout Tibet, particularly in the peripheral areas (Ramble 1993; Sagant 1990; Goldstein 1989: 178, 188; Pirie 2005).

undesirable, even dangerous. If a quarrel is reported people shake their heads and they shudder at the mention of fighting. Merely to express anger is considered bad. These judgments are distinct from reactions to behaviour that merely breaches local customs, which is greeted with amusement and embarrassment. The fact that anger is reprehensible was a definitive and commonly expressed judgement. Conflict in the form of antagonistic behaviour in which anger is expressed and demonstrated is, therefore, normatively controlled as part of the local moral order.

Related moral attitudes are found in the disapproval of those who fail to cooperate with others, those who are selfish or lazy and, for the most part, the villagers avoid behaviour which displays such characteristics. Alcohol drinking is also much criticised, but the rules of hospitality demand that beer is brewed, offered, and drunk in very large quantities. This inconsistency was admitted by one of my informants: "most of us just fall asleep when we have been drinking", he explained, "but beer makes some men feel tall and then they start arguing". It is quarrels and fights that are the real object of the villagers' disapproval. The attitude to adultery is similar. One man explained that it was a common, although disapproved of, practice but that problems only arise when a child is born to an unmarried woman. The villagers' moral scheme is, therefore, firmly oriented towards the community. Mere drunkenness and adultery can be ignored, but fighting and unmarried mothers are a problem. Likewise, to be proud or lazy and to stir up trouble tend to create tensions within the community and to disrupt social relations. Therefore, it is the perceived consequences for community relations that are at the heart of the local moral scheme and the overwhelming disapproval of anger and fighting.

There is never any mention of religious or cosmological concerns, on the other hand, amidst these frequently expressed moral judgements. The Ladakhi people have for centuries regarded themselves as Buddhist but for the villagers the ritual practices of the religion are directed at a pantheon of deities who occupy superior positions in their cosmological world. This world is dominated by the local numina and it is these spirits who have the most immediate impact on daily life, being responsible for sicknesses, deaths and all manner of natural disasters. None of these spirits is seen as being concerned with social relations. Within the frequent discussions of disputes, the expressed horror of fighting and firm moral disapproval of the protagonists there was never any sugges-

tion that this type of activity might have cosmological consequences. Disputes are not thought to disturb the cosmos or its inhabitants in any way.

Fürer-Haimendorf, in his survey of non-Hindu peoples in south Asia, points out that "not all religions provide supernatural support for moral prescriptions—we have seen that many tribal populations do not perceive any link between the cult of their gods and the observance of the moral code recognised by their society" (Fürer-Haimendorf 1967: 216). What is particularly interesting about the Ladakhi case is that this should be the case despite the long acceptance of Buddhism, with its eschatological theory of karma. Buddhism is one of the world religions that have, as Obeyesekere (1968) says, 'ethicized' religious life, incorporating ethical values into the religious ideology. Corresponding to this process of ethicisation within world religions is the attribution of religious value to secular morality. As a world religion, Buddhism incorporates moral codes, such as the *mi gewa rchu* (*mi dge ba bcu*), the 10 non-virtuous acts, as well as the *duk sum* (*dug gsum*), the three fundamental poisons, which are said to be at the root of all immoral acts. But despite the close parallels between the contents of these codes (anger is one of the *duk sum*) and the secular moral world of the villagers, the Ladakhis themselves do not make any express connection between their moral scheme and their religion. Nor is there any evidence of how the latter might have come to shape the former. Even during conversations I had with educated elites in Leh such a link was never firmly expressed.

Most forms of Buddhist practice are considered to be the responsibility of the monks, a clerical body which is supported by the laity, and who are regarded as performing their rituals on behalf of the whole population. Apart from the need to say mantras and propitiate the deities in their temples and shrine rooms, the religion is not seen as making many demands of the villagers' daily lives, however. Certain activities, principally killing and alcohol drinking, are thought to have bad karmic consequences, which need to be counter-balanced with meritorious mantras, prostrations and pilgrimage. However, even the disapproval of anger is not expressed, locally, as a Buddhist principle. It is, therefore, a secular moral universe that underlies the villagers' attitudes to conflict and disorder. Their practices of conflict resolution, along with their local political organisation, form a realm distinct from that of their ritual practices. To this extent, village practices are based

on very different principles from those underlying the legal codes developed in the Tibetan polities, which sought ideological justification from the moral schemes of the religion. Therefore, contrary to what is suggested by French (1995: 15, 59-60), the moral and cosmological principles underpinning these codes cannot be generally attributed to local practices within the region.

Disputes as a Community Problem

Within the Ladakhi village clashes of interest arise in all manner of ways: between husband and wife, within wider household relations, over property, agricultural and herding practices. Incipient quarrels between individuals usually attract the involvement of other members of the family, who initially try to resolve differences pragmatically. If matters seem intractable neighbours will intervene or a mediator will be called in, to help resolve marital difficulties, for example. In the case of unresolvable differences he might agree the terms for a divorce with the help of the couple's fathers. All sorts of problems are resolved in similar ways, by families, neighbours and mediators. Unless it erupts into overt antagonism, such an event is hardly even conceptualised as a dispute. Once differences give rise to public shouting and abuse, to quarrelling or fighting, on the other hand, the problem is considered to affect the wider community and to require an immediate solution. If families and mediators cannot resolve the quarrel, or if it has erupted into outright violence, then the village headman or even the whole village meeting must become involved. An unresolved dispute involving overt antagonism or violence is an ongoing problem for the community.

People would often use phrases meaning 'within' or 'inside' when they discussed the resolution of such conflict. Particularly when considering the wider region, or the potential involvement of the police, they would express a clear preference for the settlement of conflict within their own community.[9] There is, a strong sense of the local com-

[9] This was also evident in Leh, the main town, which operates to a great extent as a series of villages, each with its own headman who organises water distribution, festivals and meetings. These and the superior water officials are under a duty to solve the frequent quarrels that arise during the irrigation season. These officials all described the need to resolve such problems 'within' the immediate community.

munity as an autonomous unit and the place within which all conflict must be contained. There is also a strong sense that ongoing conflict is damaging for the community and that a collective response on the part of the villagers is required in order to resolve it. What is dangerous is not so much the disagreement in the form of a difference of opinion or clash of interests, as the quarrelling and fighting that result from it. It is this antagonism that is thought to disrupt the order of the community and to require intervention.

The successful mediation of a dispute is correspondingly marked by a ceremony of reconciliation, which involves the offering of *yal*, locally-made beer poured from a brass jug decorated with butter, commonly used on formal occasions. In addition, *khatag*s (*kha btags*), white scarves offered as marks of respect, are often employed. The resolution of conflict always involves the symbolic restoration of good relations between the protagonists. In some cases an underlying antagonism remains between two individuals but a level of workable relations is almost inevitably restored. In the case of one fairly serious fight between four individuals, the mediation carried out by the village meeting culminated in a ceremony of *yal* in one of their houses, following which all four protagonists emerged laughing and talking together with the meeting's representatives. Good relations had, obviously, immediately been restored. I commented on this later to one man who said that of course everything had been resolved now that the *yal* had been given. The gravity of a dispute and the success of its resolution are, therefore, judged in terms of the disruption to community relations and the restoration of amity amongst the villagers.

The Authority of the Community Over the Individual

The mediation of conflict, when it does arise, is a deliberate and hierarchical process. People would describe it as starting with the intervention of family and neighbours, continuing in the efforts of a mediator or the headman, and culminating in the authority of the village meeting. In all cases of fighting heavy fines are imposed by the villagers on the protagonists. My informants were quite specific about the sort of fines they would impose in different cases: a bad fight would attract a fine of between Rs 6,000 and Rs 9,000, they said, but only Rs 1,000

would be required if the quarrel is less serious.[10] If it is just an argument then the protagonists will only have to offer each other white scarves and *yal*. The authority of the police to deal with such matters is regularly acknowledged but in practice their involvement is almost always avoided. "They simply come and take money and beat people up", they told me. In a neighbouring village even a suspicious death was kept from their attention and resolved with the imposition of heavy fines on the suspected culprits by the village meeting.

The authority of the *yulpa* was demonstrated in the villagers' responses to a number of fights that occurred during my fieldwork and prompted the most decisive political activity I witnessed in the village. When two fights occurred during a wedding, not an uncommon occurrence given the amount of alcohol inevitably consumed, a whole village meeting was called immediately and culminated, the next day, in the payment of fines and ceremonies of reconciliation. If the fight is seen to have been unequal, one party more at fault in violence used than the other, then he will generally be required to pay a fine directly to the victim, the level of which has to be agreed between them. But both will also have to pay fines to the village, "because of the fight". When the fight is serious enough to warrant a full village meeting the *yulpa* will generally also require the protagonists to sign an agreement undertaking not to fight again and to pay a significantly higher fine to the village in the event that they do so. The *yulpa*, therefore, exercise considerable authority over the individuals within their community. Although their purpose is always to bring the parties to agreement, the resolution of fights may well involve an element of punishment. They told me firmly that if they caught a thief the headman or the *yulpa* would beat him.

In all these discussions they talked about what 'we' do when there is a fight or what the '*yulpa*' will decide to do. It is the *yulpa* who make up the village meeting. This they explained as being 'all the men'. At the meetings a ballot can be taken, one vote counted from each household. However, this is rarely necessary because in practice consensus is almost always reached. Differences of opinion may initially be expressed but people let an agreement emerge. There is no question of opposing camps forming, either before, during or after a meeting. Men

[10] In 2000 there were around Rs70 to the pound, but the amounts are very significant in local terms.

never lobby their neighbours to secure support for a controversial proposal. In practice, certain men talk more than others at the meetings, some go to more meetings than others, some are listened to more respectfully than others, but when people discuss the events of the meeting afterwards the influence of individuals is never acknowledged. Those who attend always report what 'we' agreed. In effect, lasting disagreement between the individuals who form the meeting is precluded by the expectation of unanimity and the rhetoric of agreement which clearly deny any lingering differences of opinion.

It is, therefore, the *yulpa* as a group who have the ultimate authority to control and organise the activities of the village, including the resolution of conflict. The will of the meeting is expressed in the form of decisions said to have been taken by 'everyone' and this also exemplified in the written records of their judicial decisions. These are normally signed by the headman and his assistants, but always refer to the *yulpa* as if they were a party to the agreement. Most agreements also contain a phrase indicating that these people were all in agreement. It is, therefore, the idea of absolute inclusion among the villagers and the ideal of a unified, ordered community that is the foundation of the authority enjoyed by the *yulpa*. Their authority is based on a rhetoric of unity and inclusiveness within a group of equal individuals, not by reference to any established authority or status, or to any religious or cosmological ideas. The same ideology is, as I have described, at the heart of the local scheme of morality: the ideal community is one in which divisions and factions are avoided and individuals live non-confrontational, cooperative lives.

Mediation, Adjudication and the Restoration of Order

As I have already mentioned, it is only antagonistic conflict that is regarded as a community problem. When a dispute or a fight does occur, it is the fact of the conflict, not the clash between competing rights, that is the focus of attention. What is discussed by the villagers are the details of the argument or fight, not the underlying rights and wrongs of the situation. An analysis of individual claims and interests is striking in its absence.

When a quarrel arises it soon becomes the talk of the whole village and people were usually happy to divulge the details to me, soon wide-

ly known in any event. What they were much more reluctant to do, on the other hand, was to express an opinion on the rights and wrongs of the situation, who had been at fault in the underlying disagreement, whose turn it really was to take the sheep to the mountains or who was responsible for the loss of a horse, for example. After settlement, those involved were similarly prepared to tell me about the fines imposed, the offering of beer and scarves, but remained reluctant to express an opinion on the question of fault. The level of fines and offering of *yal* was, in any event, always determined according to the course of the quarrel, rather than to the underlying merits of the situation. The first to use harsh words would have to offer the first beer, but if the other had used harsher language he or she would have to offer both beer and a scarf for example. It was only the members of the household in which I lived who would offer me any opinion about the real causes and merits of these quarrels and only when I had come to be regarded almost as part of the family. But these were always privately expressed opinions, never matters of general, let alone of public discussion.

This overwhelming need to restore order rather than definitively to determine rights and interests underlies the Ladakhis' basic attitude to conflict and disputes. It can be seen most clearly in one case, which arose out of the rotating village obligation to protect the (unfenced) barley fields from livestock in the summer. Rigzin's household had that year's obligations and another woman complained to her when she found that some of her crops had been eaten by the sheep and goats. Rigzin objected to the complaint, however, and a quarrel ensued, during which Rigzin was generally seen to have been at fault, not for failing in her village duties, a point which was never finally established, but in escalating the quarrel. The village headman went to discipline her but she refused to apologise and started shouting at him, at which point the matter was considered to have become very grave. She was being insubordinate. At the next village meeting a delegation went to demand that she apologise to the headman and when she again refused to do so they decided to threaten her with a social boycott. This is the ultimate sanction that can be imposed by the villagers on one of their members, because it would be impossible to continue to live in the village without the cooperation of other households. Faced with this threat Rigzin backed down, apologised and order was restored. In the meantime the underlying cause of the original dispute was completely for-

gotten. There was no question of the other woman demanding or being offered any compensation for her damaged crops.

Most quarrels and arguments can be seen as arising out of competing claims, interests and rights, but this is not how the people analyse such events locally. It does not explain the villagers' attitudes to and perception of what conflict is and what its consequences are. What the villagers are doing is to preclude the expression of individual rights by the form of their discourse and explanations. What could be analysed as a clash of interests is only described as a disturbance to order. In the village the language of conflict reinforces the primacy of the interests of the community and the need to maintain order above the interests and autonomy of the person. This, in turn, radically affects the villagers' practical approach to the problems of conflict and disorder, the language of their discussions, the nature of their intervention, the village meeting's use of its powers to impose fines or a boycott and, as a concomitant of all the above, the individuals' attitudes to others' attempts to mediate and their acceptance of their negotiated solutions.

The Legal Culture of the Ladakhi Village

Dispute resolution in this Ladakhi village is, therefore, characterised by an emphasis on the need to restore order above the protection of individual rights and by a strong concept of the local community as the place within which disputes must be contained and order maintained. The village community has considerable authority to impose punishments and threaten boycotts within these boundaries and this is based on an ideology of unity and agreement between them. Nevertheless, order can only be restored by a reconciliation between the protagonists. The legal realm is thus characterised by a system of cultural patterns.[11] Most important is the epistemological construction of the nature of order and disorder according to which all antagonistic behaviour is regarded as disorderly, morally reprehensible on the part of the individuals involved and dangerous for the community.

One of the most significant practical consequences of such cultural

[11] To describe them in this way is inspired by Geertz's (1983) article on law, although he himself used the phrase 'local knowledge' rather than 'cultural practice'.

practices is the absolute need for agreement in order to resolve a conflict. Resolution cannot be achieved by the imposition of an authoritative judgement. This distinctive feature of the practice of justice is consistent with the apparent willingness of the rulers of the Ladakhi kingdom to let the villagers settle their own disputes, rather than 'giving them the law'. A similar attitude also seems to be embodied in the legal document mentioned earlier, which emphasised the need for the disputing parties to cease quarrelling once and for all. It is also consistent with the reported use of lots and ordeals to settle intractable cases in earlier times. The implication is that if justice cannot be achieved through agreement it has to be sought in the transcendence of the supernatural or systems of chance rather than in the word of an authoritative judge imposed upon reluctant parties.[12]

Modern Developments in Ladakh

The cultural practices of the Ladakhi village can be seen to underlie a new form of regional legal practice which has developed in Ladakh in the late twentieth century. Ladakh has been part of the Indian nation state since its independence in 1947, but local elites have been agitating for greater autonomy for the region since before that date. The Ladakhi Buddhist Association (LBA) has been at the centre of these developments. Its origins lie in the 1930s in the activities of a group of Kashmiri political activists but it began organising agitation in favour of regional autonomy in the 1980s. These activities culminated in violent clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in 1989. Its activity diminished somewhat thereafter, as negotiations took place which lead to the foundation of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council which gave the region a measure of autonomous government in 1996. Despite these developments the LBA has subsequently continued to agitate for increased autonomy, organising demonstrations in the late 1990s against the proposal to include the region in an independent Kashmir,

[12] Such elements are also found in legal practices elsewhere in the Tibetan region. For example, in the use of lots mentioned in the law codes and legal cases (see n. 3, above), in a Lhasa court's reluctance to accept jurisdiction over a case from Kyidong (Schuh 1984a: 227) and in the practices of judges in both Lhasa and Sakya of devolving responsibility for disputes to the lowest levels (Goldstein 1968: 93; Cassinelli and Ekvall 1969: 92-93).

for example.[13] The democratic structures of India have allowed a level of local political activity which would be unthinkable in Chinese Tibet.

The LBA has always carried out a certain amount of dispute resolution. Initially, the President and senior members were merely called to advise on the difficult question of social hierarchy. In the 1990s, however, following a period of increased power and activity, the LBA set up a formal dispute resolution committee. Cases are still heard weekly in Leh. These are generally brought by the sending of a letter of complaint, after which the committee summons all relevant parties to a hearing. Three of the elder members of the LBA habitually hear the cases but the President often joins them. The majority of the cases, they say, concern family matters and land division[14] and they do not deal with criminal matters. However, this statement was little more than a gesture towards the authority of the police and the courts. One case I saw had involved an assault and the committee was concerned to resolve it themselves so as to ensure, they said, that the police complaint was dropped. Like the villagers, the LBA is ready to acknowledge the authority of the police but quick to ignore it in practice.

The hearings are always informal, the parties sitting around a room with no particular place for the mediators or either party and no set procedures. When a dispute comes to them from within a village they often call for that village's headman to attend the hearings and they defer to the headman's knowledge of the people and the situation. The parties are allowed to have their say, but they often interrupt each other, or the mediators intervene and friends and relations contribute to the discussion. The mediators are accorded very little formal respect, allowing themselves to be frequently interrupted and contradicted. There are no references to precedent, law or custom but the mediators seem quickly to reach a common view without consultation, even in cases of disputed evidence. The bulk of their work then lies in trying to persuade the parties to accept whatever solution they suggest. Acceptance is crucial, and they may put considerable moral pressure on both parties to agree. In one case a woman had made an allegation that she had become pregnant by a man from her village, a charge he denied. The mediators

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[13] Details about the LBA's activities are substantially derived from van Beek (1996; 2001).

[14] Five out of the nine cases I saw concerned marriage and children and one concerned inheritance to land.

clearly thought that the man was lying but spent most of the hearing trying to make the man admit this, pointing out the weaknesses in his story. Eventually they sent everyone away and told the two principal witnesses to look at themselves carefully in a mirror and reflect that if they lie once they will have to lie one hundred times. There is no question of simply making a judgement against one party.

The whole ethos of the hearings is to get the parties to agree to a solution. The concept of individual rights and claims never enters the discussion. The mediators are primarily concerned to find a workable arrangement for the future. So in one case a woman was saying that she wanted to divorce her husband on the grounds that he was a drunkard but the mediators exerted considerable pressure on her to stay with him for the sake of their four children and discussed how she might deal with his alcoholism by locking up the drink. In another case, a couple had already separated but were arguing over the children and the wife was also complaining of her husband's alcoholism. The husband, on the other hand, had promised not to drink any more and the mediators were suggesting that he sign a written undertaking to this effect. In yet another, the wife was spending time away from home because of her work, which was making her husband suspicious. The mediators told me later that the real problem was that the husband had a 'straight mind', believing whatever pernicious gossip people suggested to him, so they were trying to make him understand the wife's position.

Although the LBA has been responsible for violent political agitation in the past, its expressed concern, when resolving disputes, is to prevent the escalation of any conflict that could have political overtones. The most serious case that I saw, in that every hearing was attended by the LBA President, had started as a simple assault on a bus driver by a group of youths in a village where his bus had temporarily halted. One of the driver's relatives was in the police force and had, the villagers alleged, used his influence to secure a letter from the headman in that area alleging a history of harassment by the village youths.

This letter was sent to the village, but also to the police, the LBA, the bus drivers' union and a number of politicians. The LBA committee took the matter very seriously and called not just the villagers, who were very keen to resolve the affair, but also the chief headman of the whole of Ladakh, the chief officer of the area police and the head of the bus drivers' union to a series of hearings.

The President told me before the first hearing that he was anxious to prevent this from becoming a big dispute and that his primary interest was to correct any misunderstandings between the headman and the villagers. In the hearing the President, backed up by the other LBA members and the villagers, put pressure on the headman and the driver's father to settle the matter then and there and to write a letter withdrawing what had been said in their first one. They told the parties that the dispute should have been brought first to the LBA who could have resolved it by calling evidence and this was supported by the villagers who said that they could have involved the village elders and made the guilty boys understand and apologise for their misdeeds.

The President talked, during the hearing, about the size of the dispute and how bad it was that two villages should be in conflict, and one of the village leaders backed this up by saying that it was the headman's action in going to the police which had been shameful. The case was ultimately resolved with a letter written by the headman to the villagers, in which he acknowledged that he had used 'harsh language' in his previous letter, that he did not want to cause bad relations between the villages and that it was important to maintain peace and harmony.[15] The LBA members emphasised to me afterwards their view that the headman should have referred the dispute to the LBA first, before approaching the police.[16]

The informality of the hearings and the rhetoric of the mediators both represent an orientation towards agreement and the wider community. The emphasis is on finding a solution that is acceptable to both parties, albeit under pressure in some cases, rather than on weighing up and judging competing claims. Likewise, the parties are encouraged to see their disputes in the context of the consequences for the wider community—their family, village, even Ladakhi society as a whole—and the interests of harmony within this wider sphere are presented as a reason for reaching agreement. The formal apology with scarves and beer is also frequently used as part of the final settlement.[17]

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[15] This language, in fact, closely mirrors that of a settlement meeting after a Lhasa court case recorded by French (1995: 278-86).

[16] They evidently see their court as a type of court of appeal for disputes that cannot be solved at village level and they were anxious that I remind the people in Photoksar that they should follow this route.

[17] Similar procedures are followed within the Muslim community in Leh. Most cases are solved within the villages, my informants told me, but the community has central committees staffed by elders who consider intractable problems. In theory they

The LBA's court is popular, especially among villagers who have easy access to the centre and connections with life in the town. The LBA, however, has no official sanctions at its disposal and very few informal ones. The President, in fact, was quite frank about the LBA's recent decline in power. Between 1989 and 1995, he told me, when the LBA was strong, and had to be strong for its political fight, the committee could simply give a judgement and people would comply. Now, however, they have to use more negotiation in the process and cases take a lot longer to resolve. They are using "the traditions of the people more," he said. The authority that the LBA evidently enjoys to settle disputes can, I would suggest, be seen as an extension of the authority exercised by the *yulpa* in the villages.

The headman and other members of the community often attend the hearings, and the arguments used by the LBA also appeal to the moral and social values expressed within the villages. In particular they appeal to the idea of unity and the need for order and agreement within the boundaries of Ladakh. In the bus driver's case many of the speeches expressed a concern for unity within the general Ladakhi community and the President frequently used the phrase *yul chig* (*yul gcig*), one country. *Yul* is a general word which indicates a sense of belonging and is usually used to refer to one's village.[18] The notion is central to the village processes of dispute resolution. However, it is general enough to refer to a country or region. The LBA was therefore successfully exploiting the local concept to extend the people's sense of community from the village to the region as a whole. The ideas at the heart of local dispute resolution are, thus, being extended by the LBA to create a sense of Ladakhi unity as the basis for resolving regional disputes.

Conclusion

The LBA's mediation service can be seen as an extension of long-established Ladakhi village practices, a new form of procedure based on the

decide upon Sharia law but it is evident that punishments are practically unknown. Social boycotts may be applied and they described the same concern to promote agreement between parties and achieve a ceremonial restoration of good relations that characterises the village processes.

[18] It is also the root of the word *yulpa*, 'villagers'.

indigenous legal culture of the Ladakhi village. Central to it are the importance of containing conflict within community boundaries and restoring the social order, the absolute need for ultimate agreement between the parties and the establishment of a consensus around a pragmatic arrangement for the future, rather than an authoritative determination of individual rights.

The development of such a centralised mediation service has only been possible within the particular political circumstances of Ladakh, its relatively liberal administration, a state legal system which is regarded as inadequate by the people, the political successes of the regional party and the continuing stability of the structures of village authority. The political trajectories of most other Tibetan regions have, of course, been different. In Ladakh, however, the process of change and adaptation to the modern world has allowed the development of a new form of legal process. This is firmly based on well-established Ladakhi traditions but has considerable resonances with wider Tibetan cultural patterns.

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*NAMA*S (*MNA' MA*) AND *NYELU*S (*NYAL BU*): MARRIAGE, FERTILITY, AND ILLEGITIMACY IN TIBETAN SOCIETIES

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OUTLINING THE ISSUE

Let's start with two numbers: 4.4 and 1.7. Each of these represents a Total Fertility Rate (TFR)[1] for two different Tibetan societies. The first, 4.4 births per woman, was the fertility rate during the mid-twentieth century for Kyirong (Skyid grong), formerly a district-level administrative unit (*rdzong*) in Tibet (Childs 2003). The second, 1.7 births per woman, was the fertility rate in 2001 calculated from an unpublished household survey of Tibetan exiles living in India and Nepal (Childs *et al*. 2005).[2] The discovery of two considerably different TFRs among a single ethnic group should come as no surprise, since reproductive behavior is rarely uniform across time and space. Reasons behind the discrepancy involve a complex matrix of economic, political, and cultural factors that influence reproductive decision-making processes. Fleshing out all these causes is beyond the scope of this paper. The more limited objective is to investigate one contributing factor, namely, the divergent levels of illegitimacy in Kyirong and the exile communities. Data will be introduced to support the argument that the status of the bastard (*nyal bu*; pron. *nyelu*)[3] in Tibetan society has undergone a

[1] A TFR is an estimate of the average number of children that would be born to each woman in a population if current age-specific fertility rates remain constant.

[2] Research on Kyirong and in the exile communities of Nepal and India was facilitated by an Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in Anthropological Demography at the Demography Program of the Australian National University. I would like to thank Kunchok Tsundue and Namgyal Chonzom of the Planning Council, Dharamsala, for permitting me to work with the unpublished data from their office's 2001 Socioeconomic Survey. My understanding of demographic trends in the exile communities was greatly enhanced through conversations with these two scholars. I take full responsibility for all views expressed within this paper.

[3] Illegitimacy in Tibetan societies can be defined in one of three ways: children born to unmarried mothers; children resulting from an affair between a married woman and a man who is not her husband; children of an incestuous union. This paper focus-

significant transition for the worse. Whereas relative tolerance for out-of-wedlock childbearing resulted in a high level of illegitimacy that helped maintain a robust fertility rate and a modicum of population growth in Kyirong, the low level of illegitimacy in exile contributes to an anemic fertility rate and possibly to population decline. This paper focuses on a cultural transformation that has discernable demographic implications.

Unlike neighbouring India and China where marriage was traditionally a prerequisite for childbearing and premarital sexuality was closely monitored (Das Gupta 1987; Lee and Wang 1999), out-of-wedlock births in many Tibetan communities are common. Although empirical data to support this claim is scant, a glance at the ethnographic record does provide some evidence. Aziz, who did not have recourse to statistical data, characterises the illegitimacy rate in the trading town of Gangar as being 'high' (Aziz 1978: 38). Schuler estimates that 9 per cent of all Chumik Tibetans are illegitimate (Schuler 1987: 127). Goldstein reports that married females in one Tibetan community of western Nepal had an average of 3.3 living offspring, while unmarried females had an average of 0.7 living offspring (Goldstein 1976); 6 of 51 (12 per cent) of the births between 1973 and 1977 were to unmarried mothers (Goldstein 1981). In at least two settings the magnitude of illegitimacy was enough to overcome the fertility-depressing impact of polyandry and generate a slow but steady rate of population growth (Goldstein 1981; Childs 2003). From a demographic perspective, births to unwed mothers represent a significant contribution to the overall level of fertility. In general, the frequency of illegitimacy in traditional Tibetan societies is reasonably high, and attitudes toward illegitimate children and their mothers are forbearing with some exceptions (see Levine 1987). Evidence of contrary attitudes will be presented to argue

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es exclusively on out-of-wedlock childbearing. Jäschke equates *nyal bu* (son resulting from copulation) and *nal 'phrug* (incest-child) with 'bastard' (Jäschke 1972: 187, 304). He also cites the colloquial version *nal le* (*ibid*.: 304), which is rendered as *nya le* by Chophel (Chophel 1996: 16). Another dictionary defines *nal bu* and the synonym *nal phrug* as "a child born as the result of a relationship between a man and a woman who do not conduct themselves in a proper manner", which I presume refers to an unmarried couple, and "a child born from the union [of a couple] of the same bone", which connotes an incestuous relationship (*Tshig mdzod chen mo* 1993: 1523). Goldstein cites *byis phrug* for 'illegitimate child' (Goldstein 1999: 146), which is etymologically distinct from *phyi phrug* (outsider-child), a term used in Kyirong to distinguish between *nang gi bu* (insider-son; son of the household) and *phyi'i bu* (outsider-son; son not of the household).

that the same generalisations do not hold among exiles living in India and Nepal.

Case 1: Illegitimacy in Kyirong

Kyirong society during the 1950s is used here as an example of out-of-wedlock childbearing in a traditional Tibetan setting that will provide points of contrast with attitudes and behaviours that are now evident in exile. By 'traditional', I do not mean to imply that the people of Kyirong were cut off from the rest of the world and existed in some pristine state of cultural coherence. Kyirong was not immune from the impacts of social, economic, and political forces that swept the region. Nevertheless, Kyirong was more traditional than the exile communities in the sense that the inhabitants engaged primarily in an agro-pastoral subsistence strategy, were governed through an indigenous administrative system at both the village and regional levels, had not been exposed to modern secular education, and were not privy to the usages of modern contraception.

Kyirong was formerly a district-level administrative unit (*rdzong*) of Tibet bordering Nepal. My study of Kyirong historical demography has been facilitated by a household register (*sgo khra them gan*) that was compiled in 1958 for tax purposes.[4] The document lists all 2845 government subjects in Kyirong by village, household, name, age, and relationship within the household (Childs 2003). In the course of research I interviewed roughly 180 elderly exiles from Kyirong in order to reconstruct their household structures and domestic processes. The overall objective is to situate statistics derived from the household register into a solid ethnographic context in order to better understand the various processes that go into shaping demographic outcomes such as the fertility rate.

Kyirong society was divided between those who held heritable land titles from either the government or a monastery, and those who did not. The former were designated as *khral pa* if they farmed government

[4] The full title of the text is *Sa khyi lo'i Skyid grong rdzong rgya dgu'i sgo khra them gan*. I am indebted to Tashi Tsering (Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamsala) for informing me about the existence of the document, Lobsang Shastri (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala) for his generous support in locating and facilitating access to the document, and Jamyang Tenzin (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala) for his painstaking efforts in generating a typeset copy.

lands and *sger pa* if they farmed monastic lands. The latter were referred to as *dud chung ba*, and represented a class of landless agricultural laborers who worked the fields of *khral pa* in exchange for food (see Goldstein 1971).

The colloquial term for an illegitimate child in Kyirong is *nyelu* (from *nyal bu*), except in the Lende (La ldeb) valley where they are called *arken*.[5] Legitimate children of *khral pa* fathers were themselves *khral pa*; legitimate children of *dud chung ba* assumed the status of their fathers as well. The illegitimate child of a *khral pa* woman, regardless of the status of his or her father, was eventually relegated to *dud chung ba* status. As such, the male *nyelu* stood no chance to inherit his father's land and animals. According to one informant,

> We did not consider it that bad to have children without being married. *Nyelu* themselves could get married, but they did not receive inheritance (*pha gzhis*). They would become *dud chung ba*. There were many *nyelu*. The father would not have to give anything [to the mother or child].

Although little social stigmatism was attached to the *nyelu*, the same cannot be said about an unmarried pregnant woman. In Kyirong, such a woman was banned from entering the households of others without undergoing a brief purification ceremony. In some cases she was not even permitted to reside at home, but would inhabit a small structure built beyond the village boundaries so that her defiled condition would not negatively affect the health and welfare of humans, bovines, or crops. According to one man,

> A woman [who was pregnant with a *nyelu*] could not even come under the eaves of our roof. She had to stay outside. If she were a girl of our own household, we would not allow her to stay within the house. We would send her outside to another house. There were small houses for this purpose.

Numerous instances of illegitimacy were encountered in the 1958 household register. Table 1 summarises how one household appears in the document:

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[5] The etymology of this term is unclear. Brigitte Huber, who has completed a substantial linguistic study of the Lende dialect (Huber 2002), suggests that it could be spelled *ar mkhan* and may be related to the term *ar gon* (personal communication), identified by Jäschke as a Ladhaki term meaning "an offspring of parents not having the same rank, nor the same religion, and not belonging to the same nation" (Jäschke 1972: 606).

Table 1: Spang zhing #10[6]

NAME	SEX	AGE	RELATIONSHIP
Norbu	M	71	*'dzin mi*
Pelmo	F	74	*mna' ma*
Dawa	M	25	*bu*
Zangmo	F	25	*za zla*
Drolma	F	44	*bu mo*
Purbu	F	24	*bu mo*
Sonam	F	20	*bu mo*
Pelchor	M	10	*bu*
Migmar	F	5	*yang bu mo*

According to a former resident of this household:

> Norbu was the grandfather (*mes mes*). Pelmo was not his wife; she was his elder sister who lived in Norbu's home after her husband died. Dawa was Norbu's son, Zangmo was Dawa's wife. Drolma was Dawa's elder sister. She did not get married; she just had *nyelu*s [Purbu and Sonam]. Pelchor and Migmar were also Drolma's children, but they were not *nyelu*. They had a father who was from Spang zhing. He died. He and Drolma did not marry, but just stayed together after falling in love. He was *dud chung ba*.

In this case Drolma did not marry but remained in her natal household. Two of Drolma's children were considered *nyelu*s (Purbu and Sonam), whereas the other two were not (Pelchor and Migmar). The key distinction seems to be the fact that Drolma lived together with the father of the latter two, and hence their union was socially recognised even if they had not undergone a formal marriage ceremony.

Although listed in the document as members of their natal households, unmarried women did not necessarily reside together with their married brothers. Kyirong residents distinguished between one-hearth (*thab gcig*) and a two-hearth (*thab gnyis*) households. The latter were those households that had divided for various reasons (e.g., one broth-

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[6] All names have been changed since many of the people listed in that document are still alive. The heading above the table designates the village where the household was located. A number is assigned to each household for the purpose of keeping the data organised.

er in polyandrous marriage took his own separate wife; dispute between elder generation and daughter-in-law), although they were still considered to represent a single household for tax purposes. Two-hearth households generally consisted of the main house (*grong ba*) and an adjunct house (*zur khang*); the latter was also often referred to as a *rgan tshang* (residence for the elderly) when used as a retirement home for the senior-most generation.

Although Tibetans generally consider a son's filial obligation to include care for his parents in their old age, in reality old-age care was often provided for by unmarried daughters in Kyirong who resided with their parents in a *zur khang* (see also Schuler 1987).[7] Table 2 summarises a household that had entered the latter stage of its development cycle:

Table 2: Gra #8

NAME	SEX	AGE	RELATIONSHIP
Migmar	M	62	*khyo*
Kyipa	F	63	*za bzla*
Zangpo	M	43	*bu*
Rabten	M	30	*bu*
Norbu	M	30	*bu*
Pema	F	19	*bu mo*
Dawa	F	34	*mna' ma*
Tenzin	F	13	*bu mo*
Sumchog	F	37	*bu mo*
Kunzang	M	5	*bu*

Migmar and Kyipa's children were, in descending order of age, Zangpo, Sumchog, Rabten, Norbu, and Pema. The three brothers had a common wife, Dawa; only one child of theirs was alive in 1958 (daughter Tenzin). Sumchog had never married, and therefore was still listed as 'daughter' (*bu mo*) despite her relatively advanced age. We know from

[7] In the ethnically Tibetan village of Sama in Nubri, Nepal, parents often designate one daughter to be a nun. She does not reside in a convent, but in her natal home until the time when her parents retire to a small house on the grounds of the village temple. The nun-daughter moves as well, cares for her aging parents, and then inherits the temple home after they pass away (Childs 2001). This is another way in which daughters end up as the primary caretakers for elderly parents in a Tibetan society.

her name that she was the third born daughter in the family.[8] Whether her elder sisters had died or married into other households is not known. According to a close relative of this household,

> Sumchog was the mother of Kunzang. She did not have a real husband, but stayed in a separate residence with her mother Kyipa. She did not go as a *mna' ma*, but gave birth to a *nyelu* and then stayed together with her mother.

The fate of illegitimate children in Kyirong was mixed. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many died young, perhaps an indication (but certainly not proof) that they were not cared for as well as their legitimate counterparts (see Levine 1987). The main disadvantage of being illegitimate was economic. As stated by one former Kyirong resident,

> *Nyelu* would not get *pha gzhis*. They would stay with us [in the *khral pa* household]. When they got older they would not go out of our houses, but would remain and work with us. If they had children we would not throw them away, they stayed together with us as well.

In this respect illegitimacy assured a steady supply of labour to some households through the continual creation of *dud chung ba*. They were not cast aside to fend for themselves, but were retained within the household where their labour contributions were highly valued. Due in part to the heavy burden of tax obligations, labour was at a premium in Kyirong.

Having a *nyelu* reduced, but did not eliminate, a woman's marital potential. If a woman did marry subsequent to having a *nyelu* she often left that child behind when she moved to her husband's household. Numerous cases of *nyelu* abandonment were uncovered during the course of research. The reasons behind the practice are not entirely clear, but presumably relate to issues of inheritance and succession. The household in Table 3 had one such case:

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[8] Sumchog (Gsum chog) means 'Three is Enough'. The fact that many high parity females bear the names Sumchog, Zhichog (Bzhi chog; 'Four is Enough'), and Ngachog (Lnga chog; "Five is Enough") is related to the fact that it was difficult to find marital partners for such women, so they were likely to remain spinsters and have illegitimate children. Parents who did not want to have a surplus of daughters made their preference clear through this naming custom.

Table 3: Skyid zhol #50

NAME	SEX	Age	RELATIONSHIP
Zangpo	M	36	*khyo*
Pasang	F	36	*za zla*
Yangdzom	F	24	*dman*
Drolma	F	11	*bu mo*
Dawa	F	10	*bu mo*
Tsering	F	17	*bu mo*
Wangmo	F	0	*bu mo*

According to a former member of this household:

> Zangpo had two wives; they were *a ji nu mo* (siblings; elder sister and younger sister) [Drolma and Dawa were Pasang's children, after having them she presumably suffered from secondary infertility; Wangmo is Yangdzom's child]. Tsering was a *nyelu*. Her mother had her, then later left her in her brother's home and went as a *mna' ma* [to another house in Skyid zhol].

A more subtle form of abandonment was to send the child off to a monastery. Although instances of such a practice were documented, their frequency is unknown.

Not all *nyelu*s suffered economic hardships. As one person noted, "Nyelus could inherit land if there were no other [sons]. It was up to individual choice. He was permitted to go as a *mag pa* or to bring a *mna' ma* [into the household]".

Consider the following case, presented in Table 4, of the *mag pa* Tenzin:

Table 4: Gyes phug #19

NAME	SEX	AGE	RELATIONSHIP
Nyima	F	32	*dman*
Tenzin	M	34	*go mag*
Tashi	M	8	*bu*
Dolma	F	6	*bu mo*
Purbu	F	2	*bu mo*

According to a former neighbour:

> In the past there was a *jo mo* (nun). She gave birth to Tenzin. He had no inheritance since his father was separate [from his mother; i.e. not married]. Nyima had a brother who died. Then Nyima [a daughter of a household and sole inheritor] brought in a *mag pa*. He was the *nyelu* [Tenzin] who went as a *mag pa* and got land.

Although more details of his life history are unclear, one thing is certain—Tenzin was able to rise above his illegitimate status. By marrying into a taxpayer household he was elevated from *dud chung ba* to *khral pa* status.

In summary, the Tibetans of Kyirong did not consider *nyelu*s to be outcastes. There was little overt stigmatism associated with their illegitimate origins. Although most *nyelu*s were automatically relegated to the socially and economically inferior status of *dud chung ba*, they could attain a higher status through marriage as a *mag pa* or by becoming a monk or nun. As for their mothers, a woman while pregnant with an illegitimate child was deemed to be spiritually polluting, and hence had restrictions placed on her movement and contact with other members of the community. Any defilement associated with illegitimacy was removed once she gave birth and she and the child underwent appropriate purification rituals. Although her marital chances were negatively affected, having a *nyelu* did not disqualify a woman from betrothal.

Illegitimacy in Kyirong was tolerated, but was it frequent? The answer to this question is difficult to quantify with absolute certainty, yet an estimate can be derived from a statistical analysis of the 1958 tax document. As pointed out elsewhere (Childs 2003), relationship terms in the tax document indicate whether or not a woman had ever been married. Those listed as *mna' ma* (bride) or *za zla* (*sic*: *bza' zla*, wife) were currently married. Those listed as *ma* (mother) or *dman* (woman; wife) were either currently married or had become unmarried through divorce or the death of their spouse. Those women listed as *bu mo* (daughter) had either yet to marry and still had the potential to become betrothed (e.g. women in their 20s), or were likely to be lifelong spinsters (e.g. women in their 30s and above).

As mentioned above, the Total Fertility Rate for Kyirong during the 1950s was about 4.4 births per woman. This figure was arrived at through the use of an indirect method of fertility estimation (the own-children method, see Cho, Retherford and Choe 1986; see Childs 2004

for a full methodological discussion with respect to the Kyirong data). To estimate non-marital fertility the women were separated according to marital status. The following assumptions were made: (1) all children born to women identified in the document by the relationship terms *mna' ma*, *bza' zla*, *ma*, and *dman* are legitimate, (2) all children of a woman listed as *bu mo* were born outside of a formal marriage and therefore are potentially (but not definitely) illegitimate. Before presenting the results of the analysis, it is necessary to clarify these assumptions.

For the most part the first assumption is an accurate assessment of marital fertility among the taxpayer (*khral pa*) population for the simple reason that all women identified by the above terms were, or had been, married within such a household. It is possible that some women labeled *dman* bore illegitimate children after they had divorced or been widowed, or that some women labeled *mna' ma*, *bza' zla*, *ma*, and *dman* bore illegitimate children prior to getting married. Missing such children, who are difficult to detect given the nature of the data source, results in a slight under-enumeration of illegitimacy.

With regard to assumption number two, I have intentionally refrained from claiming that all births to women labeled *bu mo* are *nyelu* for the simple reason that an informal marriage convention existed in Kyirong. Many 'nonmarried' women resided in stable and long-term relationships with men who had either been born as *dud chung ba* or who had forsaken their *khral pa* status in a polyandrous household in order to form families of their own with those women who were unable to marry into a taxpayer household. According to one former Kyirong resident:

> *Nyelu*s were born in our village. My father was the '*thus mi* (village representative), then there were two *rgan po* (village elders). There were many women who did not get married. A particular round stone would be wrapped in a cloth and then sealed. Each month all [unmarried] girls had to see if they were the same as the stone, to determine whether or not they were pregnant [i.e. if she was the same as the stone then she was not pregnant since stones do not give birth]. If the girl said she was not the same as the stone, they would ask her to bring forth the father. If the father admitted [to paternity], and if the couple had a wish to get married, then the *'thus mi* and the *rgan po* would give *g.yar kha* (sp?, ceremonial butter placed on the forehead). By getting *g.yar kha* in this brief ceremony, they became married.

Some (but not all) women who underwent this truncated marriage ceremony were listed in the tax document as *bu mo*, yet their children were socially recognised as being legitimate. For this reason the level of fertility estimated for women labeled *bu mo* represents births to all women who were not formally married within taxpayer households, and therefore is different from a true measure of the illegitimacy rate. Therefore, it should be read as the absolute upper limit of illegitimacy in Kyirong.

Analysis of the data contained within the 1958 Kyirong household register reveals that those women who were not formally married gave birth to roughly one-third the numbers of children as their formally married counterparts. Married women were experiencing 6.2 births each, a level of marital fertility that is consistent with a pre-transitional, non-contracepting population wherein children were highly valued for a variety of reasons (household labour contributions, continuity of lineages, old-age care, establishing or maintaining social networks through marriage, etc.). Nonmarried women gave birth on average to 2.2 children each. To put it into a different quantitative perspective, of the 233 children aged 0-4 who are listed in the document, 61 (26 per cent) were born to non-formally married women. Even if half of these were born to women in stable yet informal marriages, the rate of illegitimacy would still be very high.

Summing up the evidence, illegitimacy in Kyirong was both widespread and tolerated. Whether or not this was the case in other Tibetan areas during the same time period remains to be seen. My unsubstantiated suspicion is that Kyirong was not unique in this regard.

Case 2: Marriage, Family Planning, and Illegitimacy in Exile

In 1998 the Planning Council, a branch of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA, a.k.a. the Tibetan Government-in-Exile based in Dharamsala, India), completed the first-ever demographic survey of Tibetan Exiles living in India and Nepal (henceforth 1998 TDS) which was followed in 2001 by the Socioeconomic Survey (henceforth 2001 SES). Data from the latter was used to determine that the Total Fertility Rate for exiles in 2001 was 1.7 births per woman (Childs *et. al*. 2005), which is below the level of fertility that a population needs to replace itself. To place this figure in context, consider that the bulk of the refugees live, marry, and reproduce in Nepal where the national TFR

was 4.6 births per woman (Pradhan *et. al*., 1997) and in the Indian states of Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh where the TFRs were 2.9 births per woman and 3.0 births per woman respectively (PRC and IIPS 1995a; PRC and IIPS 1995b). By international standards the Tibetan exiles would be classified as a society having a low fertility rate, comparable to the 2004 rates of China (1.7), Sweden (1.7), and the U.K. (1.7) (PRB 2004).

Data on illegitimacy obtained from the 1998 TDS is indirect, but nevertheless revealing. Among women of reproductive age (15-49), only 47 of 21,220 (0.2 per cent) are classified as 'single mothers' (Planning Council 2000b: 202). The manual that instructs the enumerators in how to carry out the survey defines single parents in the following terms:

> SP [single parent] includes those who have become mother/father without undergoing the process of marriage as recognized by law or society. Such respondents need not be probed further and marital status as reported may be recorded.[9]

The published data does not tell us how many births there were to single mothers. Nevertheless, the fact that single mothers represent a statistically insignificant minority of the female population who are of reproductive age (15-49) is compelling evidence that illegitimacy is either very rare, or instances of illegitimacy have been underreported.

The following discussion will wind its way toward illegitimacy via the topics of marriage and birth control in relation to political and religious ideologies. Demographic statistics compiled by the CTA will be analysed in conjunction with my own data from in-depth interviews and from an anonymous, self-administered, bilingual survey of married and unmarried women in Dharamsala, India (henceforth Dharamsala Survey).[10] The objective is to highlight the relationship between public

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[9] I would like to thank Namgyal Chonzom for providing this information.

[10] The survey was conducted in the autumn of 2000 at my own initiative and expense, and benefited from the advice and assistance of Namgyal Chonzom and Kunchok Tsundue (Planning Council, CTA), and Jamyang Tenzin (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives). The survey does not cover a scientific sample of the population, so all generalizations based on the results are tentative. My intent was not to use the survey as an instrument to quantify the level of certain behaviors, but rather to document the range of responses to open-ended questions about marriage and family planning. In this regard the survey was a success. Ever-Married: n = 130, mean age = 35. Never-Married: n = 392, mean age = 19.5.

discourse and private behaviour in order to better understand the topic of reproduction among Tibetans living in exile.

To start with, the low TFR among Tibetan exiles is related to the marriage pattern. Table 5 compares marriage by age for Tibetan women in exile (1998) with women in Kyirong (1958) and, for an additional comparative perspective, with women in Nepal (1996).

Table 5: Never-Married Females (per cent) by Cohort

Age	Tibetan Exiles (1998)	Tibetans in Kyirong (1958)	Nepal (1996)
15-19	98.8	96.5	56.0
20-24	78.9	81.1	14.8
25-29	43.8	57.3	4.6
30-34	18.1	49.5	1.9
35-39	8.7	35.1	1.5
40-44	5.1	31.1	1.1
45-49	4.5	28.6	1.4

(Childs 2003; Planning Council 2000; Pradhan *et al*. 1997)

The marriage pattern for exile women falls between that of 'traditional' Kyirong and contemporary Nepal, where many exiles now reside. In Nepal marriage is early and universal: nearly 85 per cent of women are married before the age of 25 and nearly 98 per cent by age 30. Marriage is also nearly universal for Tibetan exiles. Only 5 per cent remain single by age 45. This represents a major departure from the pattern in Kyirong, where nearly 30 per cent of women had never engaged in a formal marriage by the time they were approaching the end of their reproductive potential. Yet, similar to Kyirong and in contrast to Nepal, a large proportion of exile women delay marriage until well into their 20s and 30s.

Monogamy has become the marital form of choice in exile, which probably accounts for the fact that a low percentage of women remain permanently unmarried compared to Kyirong (compare the 40-44 and 45-49 year old age groups in Table 5). Nearly universal marriage dimin-

ishes the potential for out-of-wedlock births, and thereby helps explain the lack of illegitimacy in exile. However, universal marriage does not account for why there are so few *nyelu*s born to women *prior to marriage*. The data in Table 5 shows that a large percentage of women in their 20s were unmarried at the time of the census (the mean age at marriage for women was roughly 27), so clearly the potential for widespread illegitimacy exists. Do most exile women remain sexually inactive before marriage? Or are pre-marital pregnancies averted through contraception and other means?

Any attempt to answer these questions is complicated by current attitudes toward reproduction and family planning. For the past several decades Tibetan exiles have been forming families amidst a pronatalist discourse (see Goldstein 1978; Nowak 1984), one that is in part guided by the perception that Tibet is being depopulated through coercive birth control policies and demographically swamped through migration (e.g. Kikhang 1997). One consequence is that much of the discussion about family planning occurs not in reference to the refugee's current socioeconomic conditions, but in reference to the future of Tibet and the Tibetans. For example, in a position paper outlining an envisioned polity for a liberated Tibet, the current prime minister of the exile government writes:

> Birth control may not be immediately necessary [in an independent Tibet] keeping in view the small population of the country at present; however, other issues related with family planning, e.g., minimum age for marriage, gap between two children, etc., will be resolved through legislation, if necessary (Samdhong Rinpoche 1997: 32-33).

Sandhong Rinpoche's recommendations are in line with a long-standing pronatalist discourse in the exile communities. In the 1980s, one anthropologist noted:

> As a result of this threat [the perception that genocide is underway], Tibetans of all ages feel a deep responsibility to keep their culture alive, a goal that underlies the Tibetan government's encouragement of endogamy [marrying only within the Tibetan community] and a high birth rate.… But the constantly reiterated slogan of the Indian government's birth-control program—"A small family is a happy family"—does, if only verbally, challenge the Tibetan government's desire for a high birth rate among its people. Yet the students in the Tibetan schools, though exposed to innumerable radio commercials, billboards, and posters, all extolling the benefits of limiting family size, nonetheless have their way of thinking already decided in the other direction before

> they graduate. As one eleventh grader put it, "Family planning may be beneficial for Indians because there are so many of them. But our people are being killed in Tibet, so we should be increasing, not limiting our population" (Nowak 1984: 95).

This same message was reiterated in some of the responses to the Dharamsala Survey. Women were asked how many children they would like to have. Several responded in the following manner:

> Three to five [ideal number of children], because we would contribute to the Tibetan population (age 47, carpet weaver, married mother of five).
>
> Two boys and two girls, as we have very less population as compared to our land and also we are in great danger of losing our human resource (age 27, administrator, unmarried).
>
> Four, to raise the population of Tibet (age 21, student, unmarried).
>
> Three, because our Tibetan population is very low and Tibet needs more citizens (age 23, teacher, unmarried).
>
> Only girls because girls will help increase the population of Tibet (age 30, secretary, unmarried).
>
> I will give birth to as many as I can because I wish my people to increase (age 22, seamstress, unmarried).

Not only is the ideology of procreation for ethnic salvation alive and well in Dharamsala, but also its proponents pose obstacles to the provisioning of reproductive health services through the CTA-administered community health system. Recent attempts by the CTA's Department of Health (DOH) to provide family planning services for the refugees were met with opposition from various sources within the exile communities.[11] As a result, no contraceptive methods other than condoms could be provided by the DOH during much of the 1990s. The distribution of condoms was permissible not as a means to prevent pregnancy, but as a way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, Tibetan exiles live in two countries, Nepal and India, which have well-publicised family planning programs and where many forms of contraception are readily available. The CTA has a monopoly on neither the information about nor the means for preventing pregnancies. In fact, many Dharamsala

[11] Personal interview, January 2000, with an official of the Health Department; name withheld.

Survey participants responded to the ideal number of children question by writing Indian family planning slogans, such as "*hum do humare do*" (we two, and our two), and "a small family is a happy family".

Although the ideal of having a small family seems acceptable to exile women, achieving that goal through the use of contraception is another matter due, in part, to ambivalent cultural attitudes. For instance, Monro found that many women in her research area consider the use of contraception to be 'sinful' (*sdig pa*) (1999: 175-82). She quotes the thoughts of a female CTA official on this matter:

> Tibetans are devout Buddhists who hold reverence for all life forms and specially so for human life which is believed to be very precious. This is because of their belief that to be born a human being is to get a chance to attain enlightenment. To practice abortion is to deprive a human being of that opportunity and to submit to sterilization is to prevent a person who deserves to be born from being so born. Therefore, the act of performing abortions and sterilizations is considered sinful and it is particularly offensive to Tibetan women, since the killing of a sentient being is a sin (Women's Desk of the CTA's Department of Information and International Relations, 1995; cited in Monro 1999: 175).

The Dharamsala survey reveals similar sentiments. Several women responded to the question on their opinion about contraception (*skyes 'gog*—the most commonly used term) by simply writing '*sdig pa*' in Tibetan or its English equivalent 'sinful'. One even alluded to the Buddhist philosophy that all actions have future consequences:

> In religious view, contraception is not good. Most of the people who use them will have future problems (age 23, student, unmarried).

Contrarily, in a personal interview, another woman defended the use of contraception by referring to the cultural concept of when life begins. According to the Buddhist viewpoint, the consciousness principle (*rnam shes*) of a person enters the nascent fetus the instant that sperm meets egg (Khangkar 1986: 83-117). By this reasoning:

> This [contraception] is not sinful because he [the potential fetus] has no *rnam shes*. If the soul has not arrived, the child does not exist.

Perhaps the term that Tibetans have adopted for contraception contributes to the moral ambiguity. The most common term is *skyes 'gog*, which in a verbal sense means 'to prevent a birth'—not to prevent a conception. The term is actually a contraction of the more technical term *skyes sgo 'gog thabs*, which translates as "means for obstructing

the birth canal". On the Dharamsala Survey several women confounded the term with abortion, which to Tibetans is an unambiguously sinful act (Tsomo 1998). For example, one wrote,

> A child is god's gift to us; we have to accept it happily. We don't have right to kill a child. That child has its own life and hasn't seen the world. We must never use this bad method to kill a child (age 18, student, unmarried).

Not all respondents to the Dharamsala survey expressed negative opinions about contraception. Several unmarried women recognised the benefits of birth control for those engaging in premarital sexual activities:

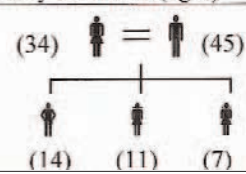
> It is very important to each and everyone to know about this [contraception] in case you meet someone with whom you don't spend your life (age 22, worker, unmarried).
>
> In a way, it's helpful. But again on in another way it spoils the character of the female these days, as they go for sex thinking they can always use contraception (age 21, administrator, unmarried).
>
> Clever to use to prevent or delay pregnancy if you're not fully matured or not fully settled by yourself (age 28, administrator, unmarried).
>
> Good because many times, out of ignorance or being cavalier, there occur unwanted pregnancies which may ruin a woman's life (age 19, student, unmarried).
>
> It's ideal if you don't need the baby before marriage (age 18, student, unmarried).

The Dharamsala Survey asked respondents to list contraceptive methods that they knew or had heard about. Most women listed more than one method, with IUDs, the pill, and condoms figuring most prominently in their responses. Yet only 23 of 131 (18 per cent) married respondents admitted to *ever using* (not just current usage) any form of contraception since marriage.[12] This finding should not be interpreted to indicate low contraceptive usage among the surveyed population. Such a conclusion would be contradicted by the low fertility rate which can only be accomplished through abstinence or a high level of contraceptive usage, with the latter being the more likely scenario. The lack

[12] In deference to ethnical concerns, unmarried women were only asked to state their general opinions about contraceptive usage rather than to report on their actual behaviour.

of positive responses should be interpreted as evidence that women feel inhibited to admit usage, which should come as no surprise given the sensitive nature of the topic. Researchers working on family planning issues in other areas have found that people are often reluctant to report behaviors that may conflict with social expectations (e.g. see Bleek 1987; Helitzer-Allen, Makhambera and Wangel 1994), or to verbalise thoughts about proscribed topics (Castle 2001). Results from the Dharamsala Survey highlight the sensitive nature of contraceptive usage in exile since many women were reluctant to admit using birth control even in the format of an anonymous, self-administered survey. Evidence that some women were not forthcoming in their answers can be gleaned from apparent contradictions between self-reported behaviors and reproductive outcomes. The following is not an anomalous example of how a woman, in this case a 34 year-old wife with three children, responded to the questions on ideal number of children and birth control usage.

Table 6: Discrepancy between Stated and Actual Behaviour?

Family Members (ages)	Woman's responses to survey questions
	Q: Ideal number of children? A: 3 Q: Have you ever used contraception? A: Never used contraception.

If this 34-year-old woman does not suffer from secondary infertility, or if her 45-year-old husband is not impotent, then the couple has either ceased engaging in intercourse or they use some method to prevent conception. The recurrence of similar examples prompts the conclusion that a combination of pronatalist discourse, cultural ambivalence toward birth control, and the very private nature of family planning compromise the validity of survey data that seeks to quantify the level of contraceptive usage among Tibetan exile women.

Whereas survey results show low contraceptive usage among married women, frank conversations with women whom I have known for years and who trust me enough to engage in an open dialogue lead me to believe that knowledge about contraceptive methods is extensive and usage is high (see also Monro 1999: 174). Some married women regu-

late birth spacing by using the pill, IUDs, diaphragms, hormonal injections, or the rhythm method. The famous physician Dr Lobsang Dolma even tried to develop a Tibetan version of the birth control pill (Maiden and Farwell 1997: 18). Others resort to more permanent solutions such as tubal occlusion after they have achieved a targeted family size. Although exile women are aware of the pronatalist discourse, they are just as concerned with the pragmatic economic equation of raising children. For example, one woman who felt that having two children is sufficient, stated:

> I think that education is more important than [the] population [issue]. If children receive a good education, and if Tibet gains freedom in the future, then they can do whatever is possible up there [in Tibet]. It is not just a question of how many people there are.[13]

The political and cultural discourse on birth control has a direct bearing on the issue of illegitimacy. As mentioned above, a mere 0.2 per cent of women aged 15-49 are classified as 'single mothers' in the 1998 TDS. The apparent lack of *nyelu*s can be interpreted in one of three ways: (1) unmarried women refrain from most if not all sexual activity; (2) unmarried women who are sexually active take measures to prevent pregnancies or terminate pregnancies should they occur; or (3) illegitimate births were under-enumerated in the 1998 TDS for the simple reason that people are reluctant to admit to them in face-to-face interviews with survey staff members.

The answer is probably a combination of the three. Although chastity and modesty are culturally valued traits for exile females (McGuckin 1996), many young people live in schools or work in places far away from the social controls imposed by their families. That, combined with the pattern of delayed marriage, means that the potential for illegitimacy certainly exists. The high level of knowledge about contraceptive methods, combined with their availability in Nepal and India, means that exile women are fully capable of preventing pregnancies. On the other hand, if and when unplanned pregnancies occur, it is certainly possible that the outcomes—whether prematurely terminated or brought to bear—may be concealed from the prying eyes of public administrators.

Abortion, from a Buddhist perspective, is tantamount to murder (Tsomo 1998). Any Tibetan woman who chooses to undergo such a

[13] Personal interview, December 2000, 35-year-old mother of 4; name withheld.

procedure would have to do so in the utmost secrecy in order to escape moral rebuke. In an interview about contraceptive usage among Tibetans in Nepal, one woman gave the following response to the topic of abortion:

> If you make a child within your womb, you must bear the child. This is because we are Buddhists. In the Buddhist religion if you extract that child it is a great sin. My opinion is that it is better to bear that child and to avoid sin. I am unable to say [whether any Tibetans in Nepal have abortions] because those who do it do it in secret. If a woman admits to this [having an abortion] she will be scorned by others. They will say, "You had a child within you, and you took that child out. That is dreadful". Therefore it is done in secret. I am unable to say whether or not many Tibetans do this. But it is possible. That is because many young people do not know the thoughts of old. If a woman has a husband she will not get an abortion. However, some women have sex before marriage, and they would be the ones to have an abortion. They think that if they have a child, then in the future they will have a worse chance of getting a husband. Thoughts like this are very bad.[14]

The above testament should not in any way be interpreted as proof that Tibetans in exile undergo abortions. Nevertheless, abortion is legal and available in India, where its usage has risen concomitantly with the introduction of prenatal sex-determination technologies as a means to prevent the births of unwanted female offspring (Das Gupta and Mari Bhat 1997). Abortion was illegal in Nepal when the above interviews were conducted, yet was readily available in urban areas such as Kathmandu and Pokhara where the majority of Tibetan exiles live (Thapa and Padhye 2001).[15] Regardless, the fact that abortion is considered morally reprehensible by many Tibetans provides adequate incentive for women to act clandestinely. Although it is possible that some premarital pregnancies are terminated by exile women, firm evidence to support this allegation does not exist.

There is also a strong possibility that the status of those *nyelu*s who are brought to term is not openly admitted to officials who gather statistics in the exile communities. The current attitude toward illegitimacy is a topic that has not been studied in depth, yet sufficient anecdotal evidence suggests that a very negative attitude toward out-of-wed-

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[14] Personal interview, 12/00, 35-year-old mother of 4; name withheld.

[15] Abortion was legalised in Nepal in 2002. I would like to thank Ellen Bangsbo (personal communication) for pointing this out.

lock childbearing prevails among the exiles today. Through conversations with friends and colleagues I have heard that *nyelu* children are teased by their classmates; that some *nyelu* children are abandoned with relatives when their mothers subsequently marry a man who is not their father (as many were in Kyirong); and that unintended pregnancies sometimes result in rushed marriages so that the families can avoid the stigmatism of illegitimacy. As further substantiation of the current mind-set, consider a recent article in Dharamsala's first tabloid-style publication, Mirror on Society (*Spyi tshogs me long*). The article is entitled "The Girl Tsering Diki",[16] and is accompanied by a posed studio photo of a young Tibetan *femme fatale* dressed in a sari:

> All sorts of purity and evil, goodness and suffering are present in every society. Even within our own society there have from former times been prostitutes and promiscuous people. Let's take the girl Tsering Diki as an example. Her father's name is Wangdu, and her mother is Pasang. The family members are dispersed. They sell shoes and small items for a livelihood. Her father customarily drinks wine and spirits, so he is always looking for something at the end of each day. Since the family did not have a place to live, they wandered about searching in all directions. Because of this life condition, the girl Tsering Diki had been led astray by age 15 when she gave birth to a child. Today the child is 3 and she is 18. Those who know her say that this is consistent with her situation. Not only has no father of the child been identified, some say that until now three children have emerged from her womb.
>
> Recently, in August 2000, Tsering Diki's family came to Kangra in Himachal Pradesh. While there, the boy Gyurme and the girl Tsering Diki were attracted to each other. When Gyurme's family members learned of this they placed obstacles to prevent the two from meeting. A few days later the girl Tsering Diki appealed to officials in Dharamsala and to the courts of India. She knew that she was pregnant with child, and demanded 100,000 rupees. The final outcome was the court made Gyurme pay 5,000 rupees to Tsering Diki (Anon 2000: 5).

The story lays bare how some (but certainly not all) members of the exile community think about illegitimacy and unwed mothers. The beginning few lines set the tone by associating the girl with prostitution and promiscuity. Afterwards, Tsering Diki is simultaneously portrayed as a passive victim of parental neglect and as a conniving gold-digger who tries to enrich herself through carnal temptation followed by a

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[16] Even though the people's actual names are used in the article, I have changed them here for obvious ethical reasons.

paternity suit. The vehemence directed at an unwed teenage mother demonstrates an attitude of intolerance toward out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Conclusions

Reasons behind the shift from tolerance to intolerance of illegitimacy have not been investigated. As a preliminary hypothesis, I will suggest that the attitudinal change is rooted in the social composition of the exile community and in the cultural milieu within which the exiles live. Regarding the former, political and moral discourse in the exile community has been dominated by the clergy and by members of Tibet's former aristocracy. In conformity with the tenets of Buddhism, members of the clergy tend to view all procreative activities in a rather negative light given that they perpetuate the sufferings inherent in cyclical existence. Furthermore, conversations with members of Tibet's former nobility lead me to believe that there used to be a class-based dimension to illegitimacy. One man stated bluntly that moral laxness characterised the lower classes, in contrast to the upper classes who were chaste and comported themselves in an ethically sound manner. Illegitimacy, he said, was primarily a problem among the commoners. The nobility had far more at stake in terms of social prestige and family honor than did commoners, and so the sexuality of young aristocratic women was perhaps more closely regulated by their parents and relatives. If the former nobility did have a less tolerant attitude toward illegitimacy than the commoners, then their prominence in guiding the exile discourse on social matters may have led to the broad-based acceptance of what used to be a class-based ethos.

Tibetan exiles are also heavily influenced by the cultural environments in which they have lived for the past four and a half decades. To a great extent the CTA has succeeded in fostering cohesion among the refugees through a policy that is intended to limit assimilation by promoting secular nationalism (Goldstein 1978; Klieger 1992). Nevertheless, Tibetan exiles in India and Nepal are surrounded by neighbours who consider illegitimacy to be extremely reprehensible. In this respect, Tibetans may be conforming to South Asia cultural norms. Other forms of assimilation in the domestic sphere have been documented, for example Dawa Dargye (1994) notes and laments the rise of

dowries among Tibetan exiles. Boundary maintenance, although a successful strategy in many regards, does not entirely insulate Tibetans from adopting the cultural norms of their neighbours.

In summary, we know that *nyelu*s were common in Kyirong (and probably throughout Tibet) prior to the 1960s, yet are comparatively rare in exile society today. The statistical evidence, albeit far from perfect, indicates quite clearly that Tibetans in exile have experienced a precipitous decline in out-of-wedlock childbearing. Qualitative evidence, introduced to illustrate the environment in which fertility decisions are now made, hints at some of the disincentives against having, or admitting to having, illegitimate children. In the past the frequency of illegitimacy contributed to population growth in Tibetan societies; today the absence of illegitimacy may contribute to population decline. From a demographic perspective, the demise of the *nyelu* has exacerbated the magnitude of the fertility decline in the exile communities. This particular instance of culture change has major implications for the future of the exile communities.

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FROM MARGIN TO CENTRE: 'TIBET' AS A FEATURE OF GURUNG IDENTITY

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INTRODUCTION[1]

Gurung identifications with Tibet, while strong, have long been ambivalent. Tibetans had been accorded a low status when the caste hierarchy was imposed by the Hindu state, through the *Muluki Ain*, on the peoples of Nepal in the nineteenth century. In conducting research in a Gurung village in the southern foothills of the Himalayas during the 1970s, I discovered a complex set of beliefs and feelings about Tibetans, including ideas about real spiritual power, pretended spiritual power, moral laxity, moral strength, and so on. Gurung beliefs and feelings about Tibetans bore an interesting relationship to the national culture of Nepal and to stereotypes of Tibetans that had been expressed in Nepali literature and codified in law. Though Gurungs were believed (by themselves as well as others) to have migrated many centuries ago from Tibet, this connection tended to be downplayed.

As globalisation and revolution altered the political and economic landscape of Nepal, Gurung perceptions of Tibetans have altered profoundly. Over the past thirty years, there has been a firm shift from conceptualising the Tibetans as sharply distinct (possibly dangerous, sometimes quite holy) to viewing them and publicly pronouncing them to be part of the Gurungs' historical line of descent. This is enacted in the sponsorship of rituals, change in patterns of worship, collective pilgrimages, and is confirmed from the Tibetan side in a variety of ways, such as the identification of *tulku* from the Gurung community. As the Gurungs with whom I worked have become more urbanised and self-conscious about ethnic identity, and as the global media has re-contextualised Gurung perceptions of Tibetans, the representation of Gurung-

[1] Many thanks to P. Christiaan Klieger for organising the panel "Identity and Change: Along the Margins", at which a preliminary version of this paper was presented, and to Charles Ramble for convening the IATS seminar at which the panel took place.

Tibetan history and relations has been dramatically recast. The juxtaposition of present discourses with those that existed earlier in the village setting reveals a great deal about how the definition and significance of Tibet has shifted among Gurungs, and about how the value of being Tibetan has changed as the fundamental reference points for articulating identity have altered.

Aims and Orientations

The fact that ethnicity and identity are multi-layered terms has been well established by scholars of the Himalayas and beyond (Adams 1996; Chatterjee 1989; Elteren 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Holmberg 1989; Khare 1984; Mumford 1989; Nandy 1983; Ortner 1989; Pigg 1992). Here, I would like to develop these ideas further, looking at the ways in which ethnic definition and identity formation have unfolded over time among the Gurungs of Nepal. My paper will examine features of ethnic definition and their relation to specific historical and political conditions, and will also suggest some analytic and methodological approaches to identity. The social changes I consider here involve a strong re-positioning in terms of Gurung associations with Tibet, a re-positioning that is as much a matter of an imagined referent and invented tradition as it is about real relationship.

My discussion is based on research conducted from 1973 to the present, initially in a Gurung village I call Tebas (1973-75, 1978, 1980-82, 1999) and more recently in the urban centre of Pokhara (1987, 1999), among Gurkhas in England (2001), and with immigrant Gurung families in New York City (2002, 2003). Across these spaces, I have continued to work with members of the families I have known since 1973, and so have been able to map a trajectory of continuity and change in people's lives.

During the mid-1980s, prominent families from Tebas began to relocate to town, building Western-style houses, and eventually acquiring televisions, motorcycles, computers, cars, and satellite dish receivers. Their children have grown up in wide-ranging places—Hong Kong, Singapore, and Kathmandu or Pokhara—spending only their early childhoods in the village, if that, and occasionally returning to visit less affluent or more elderly relatives. Some of the small children of that generation are now growing up in New York and London.

Such relocations throw questions of identity into relief. They involve profound shifts in orientation that challenge the moral universe and social order within which people had previously negotiated life. This challenge and the responses that follow it are an aspect of identity formation to which it is critical to attend. While moral universes and social orders are always provisional, they do, when operational, have sufficient coherence and consistency to provide a working model for behavior and a basis for identity. Here, I will explore what happens when that is no longer the case, and will examine the ways in which Gurungs draw on Tibetan institutions, associations, and religious models of life in order to organise their present experience and reconfigure their identities.

Trajectories of Change

Let us now traverse a trajectory of time and examine some vignettes that illustrate Gurung articulations of identity in four different contexts: 1) the locale of the village; 2) the nation-state of Nepal during the Panchayat era; 3) the urban setting of post-democracy Nepal; 4) the global domain.

In the village of Tebas in the early 1970s, identity was cast in proximate terms. People fit themselves into the human world through the organising principle of *rhonse mai*, 'our own people'. This is a concept both highly differentiated and far-reaching. Gurung kin terms are very precise, involving categories like *kaie*, "father's parallel cousin who is younger than father but oldest in his own sibling group," but they are also capable of vast extension, since the Gurung clan system provides a set of categories that can render complete strangers metaphoric kin. In Tebas, proximity also provided *entrée* into the domain of 'our own people', as those with whom villagers regularly interacted were assigned a kinship term or even formally adopted. Tibetans, defined by language, dress, and custom, were considered beyond the pale of 'our own people', a point that I will elaborate later.

In Tebas village during the 1970s, people oriented themselves not only through a grid of kinship and the larger model of 'our own people', but also in relation to configurations of the land. Tebas stood on a mountainside between two rivers, an area villagers referred to as *rhonse yul*, 'our own country', a place believed to have its own integrity, and

in relation to which national jurisdictions were conceived as only vaguely relevant.[2] There was a felt affinity with "our own country" and people reported feeling safe within it. At that time, the village was the locus of relevance and value. It was where public evaluations mattered: the context in relation to which one was *theb*, 'big' or *tsomb*, 'small', terms that conveyed social standing and connected powerfully with a sense of inner worth.[3]

Divinity was considered palpably present there—the fierce goddess Chandi, above and east of the village; the earth god Bhumi, to the west and below; and the lineage deity, or *kul deota*, in the forest to the north. Various spirits, witches, and troll-like beings called, *ban manchhe*, were also believed to inhabit the area in and around the village. There was also the more diffuse presence of *bhagawan*, to whom families lit butter lamps each day above the hearth. When I attempted to classify this divine being in terms of a set of academic categories, by inquiring whether this was Buddha *bhagawan* (a term used locally for the Buddha), or a Hindu *bhagawan*, or a *bhagawan* of the locality, people remonstrated that *bhagawan* was for everyone, not particular to any religion or place.

Gurung villagers of this time were well aware of Tibet and Tibetans, and recognised some similarities of language, but considered them a remote people, and somewhat suspect. Refugees and traders passed below the village and they were thought to be potential thieves, with rather lax standards of personal hygiene. Grubby children were told they looked like Tibetans, and I was warned not to walk alone on the trails, lest an outsider, like a Tibetan, attack me.

Gurungs were ambivalent about Tibetan lamas, venerating Rinpoches who passed through the area, and seeking blessings and amulets from them, but criticising celibate monks from Tibetan-speaking monasteries and comparing them unfavorably to Gurung lamas who married and were part of the community. The headman's middle-aged sister explained in 1974:

> You can trust the Gurung lamas. They have families; they live like the rest of us…. Those northerners don't marry. They claim to be monks but they cast their eyes at women. If there is a daughter in the house where

[2] M. Des Chene 1992 describes a similar orientation among the Gurungs with whom she worked, as do (somewhat more obliquely) A. Macfarlane 2003 [1976], 1990 and B. Pignède 1966.

[3] See McHugh 1989 for a more extensive analysis of such interconnections.

> they are doing a ritual, you have to watch them.… There are some high lamas in the north. Kalsan lama is high. He is very learned and the abbot of a small monastery. He is a *tulku*, you know, a reincarnate lama. He used to be very high, then one of his nuns got pregnant and he married her. Now he is not quite as high as he was. He is still respected for his learning, though. He has studied as far as they go. Some of the northern lamas are truly holy. There was one many years ago that came down from Tibet. He was a young man, an important *tulku*, and was traveling south with a small entourage. He was a very high lama and they carried him in a palanquin. The lama and his people stopped in Tebas at your father's house. He stayed in that little room you used to sleep in, above the courtyard. He had become ill on the journey and was very sick by the time they reached Tebas. He knew he was dying. He told his followers exactly when he would die and assumed a meditation position, sitting straight with his legs crossed. When the time arrived, he died but he stayed in that position for three days after death. Finally he fell over and they cremated his body. When they performed his funeral, lamas came from all around. It was a huge ceremony.

Admired or reviled, Tibetan lamas were considered 'other' among Gurungs in Tebas. Like other remote people, including Westerners, they were criticised on points at which their behaviour or demeanour departed from local custom.

The local orientation of the Gurungs with whom I lived was challenged by the nationalising project of the *Panchayat* system, which was introduced in the 1960s but only seriously took hold in the 1970s in Tebas, when ambitious men began to run against the traditional leaders, who initially held *Panchayat* offices, and the New Education Plan was introduced. Under the *Panchayat* system, the government mandated that village council meetings be conducted in Nepali, and all administrative officials wear *doro sarwal*, Nepali national dress, when carrying out their duties. Education was conducted entirely in Nepali and school texts promoted Hindu beliefs, allegiance to the state, and the value of development.

High-caste Hindu hegemony had long been an issue for Gurungs: the headman of Tebas, who was also a district official, asserted in a formal speech (while wearing his *doro sarwal*), "*Yo hamro Gurung-Magar panchayat ho; Bahun-Chetri panchayat hoina*". (This is our Gurung-Magar *panchayat*, not a Brahmin-Chetri *panchayat*.) Still, the pressures of the state promoted a Gurung public identity distanced from any association with Tibetans, who had been placed near the bottom of

the state's legal ordering of ethnicities, the *Muluki Ain* of 1854,[4] which, though replaced in 1962 by a more liberal legal code, still provided a template for hierarchy that had become embedded in Nepali society. In defense of their own status, Gurungs offered a story of origin asserting that they had been high-caste Hindus who were deprived of their sacred threads through the trickery of servants, who usurped their status (thus inferring that this had been the original condition of present day Brahmins and Chetris). In this representation of ethnic identity, neither Tibetans nor Buddhism figure at all.

Since 1990, as democracy has allowed freer dialogue and urbanisation has intensified, the local orientation and the social power of the state have changed dramatically. Gurungs who have been in service in the Gurkha regiments of the British army are wealthy, relative to both their poorer kin and to many Brahmins and Chetris who also inhabit the urban areas, and this has shifted the balance of power in Pokhara, the town nearest Tebas, to which many villagers have moved.

One couple from Tebas village illustrates the orientation toward community and ethnicity current among many Gurungs. Sita and Bir Bahadur Gurung, now in their late forties, are well respected in both the village and the town of Pokhara, where they have lived for over twenty years. Sita, who studied to class eight as a girl, manages their home and her husband, who went into Gurkha service as an adolescent, has now retired from the army. They were both educated under the New Education Plan, but have moved away from the Hindu-centered view that their education provided. They are cosmopolitan, having raised their children in Hong Kong and Pokhara, with shorter periods in Tebas, and are now well settled in Pokhara, and are active members of the Gurung association and of the local Buddhist *gomba*.

Reconfiguring Identity

In Pokhara, community and its attendant obligations are seen very differently by Gurungs, including those who have moved there from the villages. People reported that though they are cordial to their neighbours, unless they are direct relations they no longer consider them 'our own people'. The space surrounding neighbourhoods has no sacred

[4] See Höfer 1979 for a complete exposition of the terms of that code.

markers, and people assert either that witches, spirits, and troll-like creatures never existed, or that one only encounters them in the village, not in the town.

Even the localised universe of the village is said to have lost its core and its vitality. Prominent families have left and people remaining speak of Tebas as peripheral. It is conceived by many as no longer a locus of value, but as a place where one gets left behind. In the city, there is a new representation of Gurung identity fueled by the *janajati* movement, whose project is to promote the welfare of ethnic groups and resist high-caste Hindu domination. In service of this, Gurung men are writing genealogies that trace Gurung descent from the north, in Tibet. They are distancing themselves from Hinduism and in the late 1990s circulated letters in the community stating that the Hindu festivals of *Dasain* and *Tihar* should no longer be celebrated in Gurung homes. Gurung ethnic attire, in the 1970s long since abandoned by all but the elderly, is now proudly worn at ethnic rallies and at celebrations of the newly adopted *Losar* New Year's festival (referred to in Gurung as *Lhochhar*).

In spite of incorporating a New Year celebration and rooting their genealogy in Tibet, Gurungs in Pokhara do not explicitly identify with Tibetans and are strongly committed to retaining a distinct Gurung identity. Yet though their *Lhochhar* is observed about eight weeks earlier than the Tibetan *Losar*, the festival is clearly borrowed, and their practice of Buddhism comes increasingly in a Tibetan idiom.[5] Lay people take instructions from Tibetan and Tibetan-trained teachers and there are at least three *gomba* in Pokhara sponsored by Gurungs, though in the village there had been no formally defined *gomba* at all. The lamas at the largest of the new *gomba*, endowed by a wealthy Gurung ex-Gurkha, have named two of this sponsor's grandsons as incarnate lamas, or *tulku*. In each of these new Gurung *gomba*, a *Nyungne* retreat takes place, a practice that neither occurred nor was spoken of in the village.

Religious practices underline identity and shore up community in Pokhara. Nearly all the Gurung women I knew participated in the *Nyungne* retreat, and marriages, another social marker, now take place

[5] Cf. Mumford 1989 for a thorough and engaging discussion of the Tibetan influence on Gurung religious practice in a village setting. The terms of that influence differed during the time of his study, as 'Tibetan' was not then used as a counter to 'Hindu' in the idiom of Gurung identity, which was at that point less politicised.

in the *gomba*, rather than in the previous venue of the Hindu temple, though the ceremony itself has changed very little. In 1999, affluent Gurungs, who are bonding now according to class and lifestyle as well as kinship, boarded a bus and went on pilgrimage to Buddhist holy places, completing their journey by taking blessings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala.

Morality, Community, and Self

As the social basis for moral orientation and personal identity become fragmented with the loss of the coherent community of the village, personal religious practices and universalised moral precepts become important. These offer a sense of inner stability for people negotiating immense social change. Most Gurung houses I visited in cities, including New York and London, had altars, not to a diffuse *bhagawan*, but with an image of the Buddha, and an array of Tibetan-style offerings. In this way, sacred space, once pervasive in the village, is now defined and located within the household.

The more canonical Buddhism taught in the *gomba* also provides Gurungs a model of the cosmos and of moral causation, offering a sense of orientation in a world where old markers no longer exist. In 1999, one woman who moved to Pokhara from Tebas, described her enlarged sense of moral engagement in relation to the *Nyungne* practices, as follows:

> This way I wash away the sins I have committed, and it will be better for me when I die. But to think this way is itself a sin. You need to do the practices in order to wash away the sins of all breathing beings, so that they will all have better rebirths. You have to think of the welfare of everyone, not just your own.

This extends the obligation felt toward neighbors and kin in the village, to put others' needs before one's own, and places it in a much larger frame of reference, one that works in a far less personal world.

The association of Gurungs with a more canonical Buddhist tradition and the identification of their ancestry with more northern peoples, especially Tibetans, should not be mistaken for Buddhicisation or Tibetanisation. The *char jat* Gurungs with whom I lived had been Buddhist for centuries, and their association with Tibetans was used rhetorically to reinforce a boundary separating them from caste

Hindus.[6] What they wished to represent publicly was their own distinctiveness and value.

Identity is, however, never wholly about public perceptions. Identity and identifications express and inform a sense of self and shape relationships within a community. Gurungs' present sense of Tibetans as a related people and their adoption of some of their central beliefs and institutions contribute both to Gurung social and political solidarity (as the *gomba* becomes a center of community life) and to their inner resilience in a fragmented world.

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[6] While peripheral, awareness of Western idealisations of Tibet may also have served to make identification with Tibetan culture attractive to Gurungs. See Huber 2001: 363-64 for a discussion of the influence of foreign paradigms of Tibet on exile Tibetans themselves.

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Plate 1: Bhuju, mother of Bir Bahadur (mentioned below)
at Tebas, 1974, wearing Gurung ethnic garb

Plate 2: The wedding of the daughter of Sita and Bir Bahadur at Pokhara in 1997. Note Tibetan ceremonial scarves

Plate 3: Gurungs in New York City celebrate Lhochhar, 2002

RITUAL IN SIKKIM: EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND CHANGE AMONG THE LHOPOS

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Since the 1970s when they lost their kingdom and joined the Republic of India, the Sikkimese have felt the need to properly define their language and culture as distinct from Tibetan or other Himalayan people for a number of reasons. The first part of this essay examines some of these reasons and what form this expression of cultural identity has taken in recent years particularly in relation to ritual, both in the village of Tingchim[1] in North Sikkim and generally elsewhere in the state. The second part describes a ritual performance where lamas and shamans officiate together on the occasion of a curing ritual. I argue that this form of ritual is perhaps one of the best expressions of Sikkimese cultural identity that developed over time on the fringes of the Tibetan cultural area.

SOME BACKGROUND TO MULTI-ETHNIC SIKKIM

The Tibetan settlers, ancestors of today's Sikkimese Lhopos or Bhutias as they are commonly referred to, came to Sikkim from the neighbour-

[1] Tingchim is an agricultural village of 54 landowning Lhopo households located in Sikkim's North District (this does not include its landless Nepalese population). The village lies on the eastern bank of the river Teesta at an altitude of 1300 metres, halfway between Phodong monastery and Mangan, the North District headquarters.

After a few months of preliminary research in Sikkim 1991 and again in 1992, I returned in October 1993 to carry out fieldwork research in Tingchim proper between June 1994 and December 1995 with two additional fieldtrips to the village in May and December 1996. The research results are available in my doctoral dissertation, Buddhism and Shamanism in Village Sikkim (SOAS 2002). The research on which this article and the dissertation are based was generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Frederick Williamson Memorial Fund, University of Cambridge, and the Additional Fieldwork Award, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. I am indebted to my thesis supervisor Lionel Caplan for his unfailing patience and support over the years and to my research assistant Lopen Dugyal who guided me nearly every step of the way and introduced me to the village's conceptual world.

ing valleys of Chumbi and Ha and regions beyond these southern valleys such as Kham Minyak, from the thirteenth century onwards and established the kingdom in the seventeenth century.[2] Although the Tibetans contracted a blood brotherhood with Sikkim's indigenous Lepchas when they first arrived, it is only in the seventeenth century that the kingdom was established when three Tibetan Nyingma lamas enthroned Puntsok Namgyal as Chogyal.[3] Sikkim was then ruled by the Namgyal dynasty, a monarchy of Tibetan origin, from 1642[4] until 1975. In time, the Tibetans' descendants developed their own language and culture and now call themselves Lhopo (*lho pa,* people from the south) although they are generally known as Bhutia, Sikkimese or even Denjonpas, the people of Denjong or Demojong (*bras mo ljongs*, the fruitful valley, often translated as the 'valley of rice'). Since the term 'Bhutia' can also refer to any Buddhist highlander of Tibetan origin living in the Himalayas, and 'Sikkimese' may be confusing considering that the Lhopos are now a minority in the state, I will refer to them as Lhopos, the term they themselves prefer. However, in official documents they are referred to as Bhutia, an acknowledged mistake that has led to countless confusions and political arguments that are still being debated today.

Until Sikkim came under the rule of the British in 1890, when Sikkim became a protectorate of the Empire, the Sikkimese considered themselves a vassal state of Tibet. For example, in times of trouble the Chogyals often took refuge or sought help from Tibet, the Sikkimese royal family usually married within the Lhasa aristocracy and Sikkimese lamas often travelled to Tibet for the purpose of pilgrimage and education to their head monasteries of Dorje Drak, Mindrolling and Tsurphu in Central Tibet. Tibet was the source of Dharma, and Lhasa the source of culture at the centre of the Tibetan cultural area of which Sikkim was a minor state. After Sikkim became a British protec-

[2] The possibility of a Lhopo settlement in Sikkim prior to the thirteenth century is a debated issue which needs to be addressed by archaeologists and historians. M. Aris mentions (1979: 40) that the neighbouring black and white temples built in the Ha Valley date perhaps to the time of Songtsen Gampo (seventh century). Considering that Ha was part of Sikkim until the valley was retained by Bhutan following the early eighteenth century Bhutanese occupation of Sikkim, the possibility of a pre-thirteenth century Lhopo settlement in Sikkim is not a baseless hypothesis.

[3] Chogyal is the title of the Sikkimese kings. From *chos*, Dharma and *rgyal po*, king, or the one who rules according to religion.

[4] Some argue that the year was actually 1641 or 1646.

torate, relations with Tibet were discouraged, and in the course of time, the Sikkimese found themselves increasingly isolated from their northern neighbour. Eventually, the border with Tibet was closed following the take-over of that country by China in 1959.

Ever since the temporary Gorkha occupation of West Sikkim at the end of the eighteenth century and the massive Nepalese migration of the nineteenth, the Lhopos and the Lepchas have felt increasingly threatened from within their own borders. Indeed, British policy encouraged Nepalese migration in order to help develop the state's economy with the result that by the end of the nineteenth century, the indigenous Sikkimese were already a minority in their own kingdom. Following the birth of political parties in the 1940s and influenced by the winds of democracy blowing on the Subcontinent, the Nepalese majority was soon encouraged to demand its democratic rights. This led to revolts and India's eventual intervention. Since Sikkim became India's 22nd state in 1975 and the Nepalese-speaking majority took over the reins of power, both the Lhopos and the Lepchas have been increasingly faced with threats to the survival of their political and economic rights as well as to their language and culture. Indeed, the Lhopos and the Lepchas today represent less than 20% of Sikkim's population of half a million.

In an effort to help preserve the rights of the indigenous Sikkimese after the merger, India took a number of measures. Chief among these were the provisions of Article 371F of the Constitution of India that protect old Sikkimese laws such as Land Revenue 1 that precludes the sale of Bhutia (*Lhopo*) and Lepcha land to any other ethnic community. By virtue of the Representation of People's Act, India also ensured that twelve seats be reserved for the Bhutia-Lepchas plus one for the Sangha (Sikkimese lamas) in Sikkim's 32-seat Legislative Assembly. In 1978, the Bhutia-Lepchas were declared a Scheduled Tribe by the Constitution Order of 1978, a status that ensures seat reservation in education, scholarship, and employment in the State and Central Governments to India's indigenous people and makes them the beneficiaries of a number of allocations and welfare schemes.

After Sikkim was annexed to India, the provisions granted by New Delhi to Sikkim's indigenous Sikkimese and intended to to help maintain some of their political and economic rights, sparked some jealousies among the Limbus, Tamangs, Gurungs and other communities residing in Sikkim. Among these, the very small minority of Tsongs

(Buddhist Limbus of Sikkimese origin) were probably the most unfairly treated since they are considered by all to be one of Sikkim's three indigenous communities.

During the 1990s, in their efforts to be included among Sikkim's Scheduled Tribes, the Limbu association started building a number of Buddhist temples, the word 'Buddhist' having practically become synonymous with the word 'tribal' in Sikkim. Some Limbus, descendants of immigrants from Nepal, have been gradually converting to Buddhism as well, which I was told mainly meant that they are cremated by the Teesta instead of being buried, and abstain from animal sacrifices during the Nepalese festival of Dasain.

The Tamangs and the Gurungs also formed Buddhist associations and, like the Rais, the Magars, the Sunwars and the Bhujels, instigated similar procedures hoping to be granted tribal status by New Delhi. As part of their efforts, the religiously mixed Limbus, Tamangs and Gurungs went out of their way to promote their 'tribal identity' by rejecting Hinduism and publicising their participation in Buddhism. This became particularly evident around the time of the main Hindu and Buddhist festivals in Gangtok when leaflets were distributed around town, calling for the boycott of Dasain while the celebration of Gangtok's '*Bum bskor* was attended by an increasing number of people from these communities. For the last few years, the Tamangs have even started holding an independent '*Bum bskor* procession and the Gurungs have created their own New Year's festival called Lochar. All these efforts eventually paid off and the Limbus and Tamangs were granted the much-coveted tribal status in 2002.

Returning to the 1970s, troubles for the Lhopos intensified when the Lhopos in Gangtok went through a crisis following an accusation made by a Nepalese politician in the late 1970s. This had widespread repercussions on the education of Lhopos throughout the state. The question of seat reservations for Bhutia (*Lhopo*) and Lepcha tribals in Sikkim's Legislative Assembly was discussed in the Assembly in the late 1970s. A Nepalese-speaking minister, in an effort to obtain seat reservations for people of Nepalese origin,[5] is said to have suggested that the Bhutias (*Lhopos*) had no rights to seat reservations. According to him, they were not among Sikkim's indigenous people. Nepalese, on the other hand, or at least a very small minority of the Nepalese such as the

[5] Their political rights were being threatened by an influx of plains people after the merger.

Tsongs (Buddhist Limbus of Sikkimese origin), are thought to have been in the state since time immemorial. He argued that Lhopos were foreigners who came from Tibet and thus cannot claim the privileges of tribal status that is reserved for India's original inhabitants. Curiously, he argued in such a way even though the Bhutias' (*Lhopos*) ancestors had been the founders of Sikkim as a kingdom, a state that was not Indian but part of the Tibetan cultural area and paid tribute to Lhasa. To back his argument, he pointed out that the language Lhopo children studied in vernacular classes was Tibetan,[6] the language of a foreign land. This accusation had great consequences and fueled the Lhopos' need to distance themselves from everything Tibetan and start cultivating and asserting a Sikkimese Lhopo identity of their own.

Although the Lhopos had always felt very different from Tibetans, emulating them by looking towards the Lhasa aristocracy and high Buddhism as the cultural ideal was no longer to their advantage in post-1975 Sikkim. This attraction to Tibetan high culture had mainly been the concern of the Sikkimese aristocracy, high lamas, and urban Lhopos, a concern that had not affected Lhopo villagers who had always had their own Sikkimese ritual culture and traditions.

Following this attack however, the Lhopos became more aware of themselves as a community under threat, sharing a common language, history, traditions, and religion that all needed to be properly defined and promoted as having a distinctive and unique Sikkimese character. It led to the introduction of Sikkimese or *Lho skad*[7] language classes and the teaching of Sikkimese history in the vernacular classes for Lhopo children in Government schools. Until then, Sikkimese had been written using the Tibetan script, which, it was felt, did not suit its pronunciation. A new simplified script was elaborated,[8] and language text books were written. Histories were compiled for Class VI to XII relating the important phases of Sikkim's early history, clearly highlighting

[6] Although Sikkimese speak their own dialect, the Palace had encouraged the teaching of standard Tibetan in schools in order to promote the teaching of Buddhism, since Buddhist scriptures used throughout the Tibetan cultural area are all written in *Chos skad*, the 'language of religion'.

[7] Southern Tibetan dialect spoken by the Lhopos. Also called *'Bras ljongs skad*, Sikkimese or Bhutia.

[8] The new *Lho skad* script still used Tibetan characters but greatly simplified the Tibetan way of spelling. Although criticised by Tibetans who considered this an offence to their script, those who elaborated it thought that if the use of *Lho skad* language was to survive, it had to be made easier to learn.

the blood brotherhood established between the Lepchas and Lhopos in the thirteenth century and the Lhopos' role in the creation of Sikkim as a Buddhist kingdom in the seventeenth century. Finally this new program was implemented and reached the schools in the 1980s.

The need for the Lhopos to assert their original Sikkimese or 'sons of the soil' identity found perfect expression in their worship of the deities of the land, a trend that continued in the 1990s. Indeed, the worship of local and ancestral deities and sacred locations (*gnas*) clearly highlights the Lhopos' ancient relationship with the land that distinguishes them from Tibetans, Sherpas and other people of Nepalese origin who, as recent immigrants, and unlike the *lho men tsong sum*,[9] generally do not recognise the territorial deities of Sikkim with the exception perhaps of Kangchendzonga, Sikkim's national mountain deity. In addition to the monasteries and their ritual culture, the domestic rituals that in many cases are a celebration of the territorial and ancestral deities further contributed to promote the Lhopos' distinct identity.

Promoting a Rediscovered Lhopo Identity: The Importance of the Deities of the Land and the Sacred Landscape

Sikkim's monasteries, the powerful sacred sites and their rituals, are one of the most important aspects of culture left to the Lhopos that confer on them a sense of identity and a focus for their past history. In this context, the most relevant are the deities of the land who come under the leadership of Kangchendzonga, the chief mountain deity of Sikkim, and not the high Buddhist deities that are shared by the Tibetan Buddhist world at large, with the exception of Guru Rinpoche who is said to have visited Sikkim and tamed all the spirits of the land in historical times. Rituals promoting the sacred land, its rituals and history have undergone a certain revival in recent years.

During the days of the kingdom, the mountain deity Kangchendzonga played a central role as a national symbol and it is said that all ethnic communities, whatever their origins and whether Hindu or Buddhist, used to recognise and worship Kangchendzonga if

[9] Lhori (Bhutia), Menri (Lepcha), Tsong (Buddhist Limbus), *gsum* (three) are considered the three original inhabitants of Sikkim.

they considered themselves first and foremost as Sikkimese. Pang Lhabsol was the most important ritual of Sikkim held at the Palace's chapel (*gtsug lag khang*) in Gangtok and simultaneously in every monastery and village prayer hall throughout the kingdom. Pang Lhabsol was the national ritual of the land, held at the end of the monsoon in September, the main day falling on the 15th of the 7th month of the lunar calendar. This was the occasion when the royal family and members of the State Council would renew their vows to serve the country once the Pemayangtse[10] lamas had invoked Kangchendzonga and other deities of the land to stand as witnesses. Pang Lhabsol was also a celebration of the blood brotherhood that was sworn in the thirteenth century between Kye Bumsa, the ancestor of the Chogyal, and the Lepcha chief Thekongtek at Khabi Longtsok where Dzonga was for the first time invoked to witness their alliance (Balikci-Denjongpa 2002).

The performance of Pang Lhabsol at the Palace's chapel was initially maintained after the merger but was suspended around 1990 when Chogyal Wangchuk Namgyal undertook a three year three month meditation retreat under the supervision of Chadral Rinpoche in Nepal. Upon his return to Gangtok in the early nineties, the performance of Pang Lhabsol was not resumed as it became the subject of misunderstandings between the Chogyal, some politicians and the Sikkimese youth. Eventually, the Sikkim Tribal Youth Association and the Pemayangtse lamas decided to once again perform the rituals and its *'cham* dances in 1993 within the precincts of the Pemayangtse monastery in West Sikkim. They had first been performed there when Chagdor Namgyal (1686-1717), the third Chogyal of Sikkim, established the Pemayangtse monastery just above the former Sikkimese capital of Rabdentse upon his return from Tibet. (See Plate 1).

This re-appropriation and revival of a national land ritual was followed by two other examples. The youth and lamas of Rabong monastery that is very close to the Barfung-Lingdam area of South Sikkim, an area considered to be the fountainhead of 'true' Sikkimese

[10] The premier monastery of Sikkim is Pemayangtse as it was responsible for the performance of the Chogyal's coronations and other royal rituals such as the annual monastic dances performed at the Palace's chapel in Gangtok. The other important monasteries are Tashiding and Phensang for the Nyingmapas, and Rumtek (not to be confused with the Karmapa's Dharma Chakra Centre also located at Rumtek), Ralang and Phodong for the Kargyupas.

culture, also started performing a Pang Lhabsol ritual and *'cham* dance in honour of Kangchendzonga. But perhaps the most creative revival of Pang Lhabsol was the one instigated by a Lhopo minister on the site of the Statue of Unity. The statue, which the minister had put up in the centre of Gangtok town, commemorates the thirteenth century pact of blood brotherhood between the Lhopos and the Lepchas. Once a year it is transformed into an altar where Lhopo lamas and Lepcha shamans hold common rituals on the occasion of Pang Lhabsol in order to commemorate the blood brotherhood, and as the Lhopo politician would wish it, hopefully consolidate Lhopo and Lepcha unity and promote himself as a common leader.

Another example, this one concerned with preserving the sacred sites of the area of Yuksum in West Sikkim, was the object of a successful campaign against the planned construction of the Rathong Chu hydro-electric power station in 1995. The project was to be carried out in the sacred area of Demojong, known to be the abode of Sikkim's protective deities and where the first Chogyal was crowned in the seventeenth century. In this case, the preservation of the sacred sites became a rallying issue for the Lhopo to unite and wake up to the fact that they were losing their identity and strength as a community because of personal financial and other political interests. This campaign was successfully led by a group of urban Lhopo activists[11] known as the Concerned Citizens of Sikkim (Schaefer 1995).

But perhaps one of the most significant and least publicised developments of the nineties in terms of revival of Sikkimese religion rooted in the land's sacred history and geography, was Chogyal Wangchuk Namgyal's opening of an impressive college and mediation centre at Taktse near Gangtok and at the Palace chapel for the education of Sikkimese lamas. The intention behind these institutions was not only the proper education of lamas but also the preservation and transmission of Buddhist teachings and lineages specific to Sikkim, such as the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* revealed by Tibetan Nyingma lama and Dzongchen master Lhatsun Namka Jigme (1597-1650) as a *gter* in the seventeenth century. Lhatsun Namka Jigme, who is represented on the altar of the new college, is thought to have brought Buddhism to

[11] The main members of the Concerned Citizens of Sikkim were Sonam Paljor Denjongpa, Chum Chukie Topden, daughter of Rai Bahadur Libing Athing, and Pema Namgyal, son of Netuk Tshering (Executive Councillor 1967-70).

Sikkim and to have opened the gates to the *sbas yul* of Sikkim as a sacred hidden land. Chogyal Wangchuk Namgyal has gone to great lengths to study and preserve the teachings and empowerments of this spiritual lineage indigenous to Sikkim.

Other developments illustrating the Lhopos' need to promote their distinct identity include the Sikkim Tribal Youth Association re-organisation of the Sikkimese New Year's celebrations, called Losung. In Gangtok, Losung celebrations got larger every year throughout the 1990s, with drama, cultural shows, archery competitions and concerts added to the list of events. The Association, in addition to organising Gangtok's festivities, put on historical dramas clearly illustrating episodes of ancient Buddhist history in Sikkim.

This Sikkimese ritual revival of the 1990s, from the Lhopos' perspective, was very much concerned with Sikkim's particular form of Buddhism, its powerful sacred sites, local deities, religious history and Pang Lhabsol as Sikkim's national ritual. The 1990s were a continuation of the trend started in the late 1970s when the Lhopos first felt the need to properly define their language, culture and rituals as distinct from Tibetan or other Himalayan people in order to promote their ancient 'sons of the soil' identity. Considering the importance of ethnic politics in Sikkim, the importance of the tribal status and the urgent need to defend their economic and political rights, the capacity to define and promote a distinct Sikkimese identity is not likely to lose its importance in the coming years.

Household Rituals and their Survival in Post-1975 Sikkim

Community membership entails mandatory participation in a number of domestic rituals that are, in many cases, a celebration of the territorial deities and the lineages' ancestral deities. These rituals help ensure the health, fertility and prosperity of the individual, the land and the household. The most important ones are the household rituals and social gatherings that mark an individual's passage from one social status into another held after birth, at the different stages of marriage, when a family moves into a new house and establishes an independent corporate household, when a boy joins the monastery, when someone enters a state of severe or chronic illness, and at death.

All these occasions are attended by at least one and sometimes two members from each corporate household in Tingchim, and as in all other Lhopo villages, various amounts of money—usually not less than Rs 50 along with *chang* and sometimes one or two kilos of uncooked rice—are given in the name of each household in order to help those holding the rituals. The amount of money and the name of the donor are inscribed in one of two separate registers, the first for weddings and funerals, and the second for all other occasions. All Lhopo households throughout Sikkim, including those residing in Gangtok, keep such registers and, when they are in a position to have to reciprocate the donation they previously received on a similar occasion held in their house, they will first consult their registers and give a slightly higher donation than they had originally received from that household on a similar occasion. Guests are then entertained with food and *chang*, or at least with tea and snacks, and may be given a piece of raw meat to take home if an ox or pig was killed for the occasion.

While attendance at community Buddhist rituals held at the village's prayer hall, the important monasteries and at the Palace's chapel have gradually diminished since the end of the Buddhist monarchy, attendance at household rituals held for rites of passage, particularly weddings and funerals, have been well maintained. There is a strong sense of obligation and solidarity that finds expression in these gatherings and the financial contributions that are offered on these occasions. Through the use of the registers, these rituals bind all the village's corporate households into a strong network of mutual help. Participation in the system is mandatory and defines a corporate household's membership in the village community. Non-attendance at someone's household ritual is unthinkable as the non-represented householder would then become a social 'outcast' by effectively breaking away and cutting himself off from one of the most basic ties that bind villagers together. Quarrelling households on non-speaking terms are not exempted and must attend each other's household rituals as well as make the prescribed contributions. In such cases, the quarrelling parties will not attend in person but may instead send a son to deliver the offerings. The importance attributed to this practice may be reflected in the fact that each contribution made on the occasion of a specific rite of passage bears a different name, although some of these have now been forgotten. For example, money offered at a wedding or any auspicious occasion in Tingchim is called *sba 'da'* while the money offered at a funer-

al is called *thugs gso,* and exchanging these terms inadvertently is considered inauspicious.

Although these frequent obligations are often viewed as a burden on a family's financial resources, the solidarity and equality among households they generate is highly valued and all are very much aware that one day or another, it will be their household's turn to be the beneficiaries. Weddings and funerals are expensive and demand considerable time and labour. Many would be incapable of holding them if it were not for the contributions that they are certain to receive. This sense of social obligation is so strong that the tradition has been well maintained in Gangtok, where it gained a new dimension following its adaptation to the larger social networks of the urban setting. Although participation is no longer necessary to ensure the exchange of agricultural labour, it does ensure the proper performance of funerals for all rural and urban Lhopos. A funeral, from a religious point of view, is a person's most important rite of passage. Today, urban Lhopos find themselves not only having to attend numerous weddings and funerals in town but in all corners of Sikkim where they entertain social relations with extended family, colleagues and friends. It is common for urban Lhopos to keep meeting at Dechenling, Gangtok's funeral ground, at least once, if not two or three times a month or whenever a common Lhopo relative, friend, colleague or someone within their households passes away. In town, contributions offered at funerals, weddings and other rituals may at times amount to half the monthly salary of a civil servant.

While State and Buddhist community rituals held in Sikkim's monasteries were attended in large numbers before 1975, the community aspects of their celebration have since met with an increasing level of resistance. For example, the villagers of Tingchim (where I did my fieldwork) say that in those days, people had much stronger faith and all religious specialists were more powerful. They insist that before the end of the Buddhist monarchy in 1975, the Buddhist rituals held at the village's prayer hall for the benefit of the village as a whole were far better attended than they are today. Now, they complain that these rituals have become too expensive, that the price of meat, essential in such celebrations, has gone up, that their cardamom fields do not produce as much as they used to, that the buying power of the rupee has gone down and that they don't trust those who manage the funds collected for the celebrations of community rituals that require a contribution.

But it also seems that all these community Buddhist celebrations that marked Tingchim's participation in the Buddhist kingdom and enhanced its sense of belonging lost some of their attractiveness after Sikkim's accession to India and the end of its Buddhist monarchy. From then on, the village's relation with the State and the outside world developed on very different grounds, and the role of religion in helping to create a sense of identity among villagers took a different turn. Indeed, since the end of the monarchy, the household rituals held for the rites of passage are far more numerous and better attended today than the Buddhist annual rituals such as *Drug pa'i tshes bzhi* or *Lha babs dus chen*. These rituals, held at the village's prayer hall or the important monasteries, were attended by large gatherings during the time of the Buddhist kingdom and are now only attended by lamas. It seems that today, it is the household rituals and not the Buddhist rituals held at the monastery that are the main fora for social interaction and that in turn maintain and define the community.

Lhopos are proud of their domestic ritual culture that has shown no sign of decline among its young urban generation. However, as we have seen in the previous section, community rituals such as Pang Lhabsol that honour territorial deities, and thus highlight the Lhopos' history and long-term relation with the sacred land, have seen a certain revival in the 1990s among politically conscious lamas and urban Lhopos. In villages such as Tingchim that are more isolated and not so much affected by developments elsewhere in the state, Pang Lhabsol has gradually lost its importance since the end of the monarchy. Although the day is still being observed in Tingchim, the rituals have been simplified and it is now only celebrated in Tingchim by a few monks at the village's prayer hall.

Considering the lack of political unity and leadership among the Lhopos since the end of the monarchy and the end of State rituals, large household rituals held on the occasion of weddings and funerals and other such occasions have become an important venue for Lhopos all over Sikkim to meet on neutral ground beyond their political and other differences. They are the main avenue left to the Lhopos to define and celebrate their common ritual culture, especially though the complicated steps of the marriage procedure that are distinctively Sikkimese. Interestingly, the most important moment of the wedding is the chanting of the *khas len*, an invocation when the officiating ritual specialist invites the ancestral gods and lineage protectors (*pho lha mo lha*) of

both the bride and the groom to witness and legitimise the alliance. The union of husband and wife may only gain recognition once the *khas len* has been pronounced. During the *khas len*, the *pho lha mo lha* of both the bride and the groom are individually invoked, along with the local deities of Sikkim and those specific to the area, and given offerings of *chang* and libations (*gser skyems*), with the dual purpose of introducing the new couple so that the ancestral deities may witness the new alliance, as well as announcing the spouses' respective lineage, and ancestors to the guests. (See Plate 2).

The maintenance of the domestic rituals after the merger have contributed to defining an original Sikkimese ritual culture outside the monastic establishment. Tibetan lamas and *rin po che*s who found refuge and employment in Sikkim's Buddhist educational establishments after 1959 usually do not recognise or encourage rituals that celebrate the sacred land, its deities and the lineage protectors. 'Proper' Tibetan Buddhism had always been associated with Tibetan rinpoches and Sikkimese learned lamas in a world that villagers aspired to but nevertheless lay beyond the boundary of the village. In opposition to this, the practice of household rituals in honour of the protectors of the country and the lineage deities has always belonged to villagers, and it is thus not surprising that they have survived and even flourished in an environment where it is now necessary to affirm a Sikkimese identity distinct from Tibet and the Buddhism of its monasteries. These rituals have even gained new dimensions as they are one of the few remaining avenues left to the Sikkimese to define themselves as a community in face of an ever growing and more powerful population of outsiders. While these rituals strengthen the ties of the indigenous community, they also reaffirm its long-standing relation with the sacred land, its supernatural population and the ancestral gods who reside in the high mountains.

Ritual Healing: Taming the Deities of the Land and its People

The performance of domestic rituals and the underlying need to assert a distinct cultural identity has also indirectly helped the survival of what may be called 'village religion' or the co-existence of shamanism and Buddhism at the village level. Village Buddhism has indeed sur-

prisingly well integrated aspects of what villagers call *bon*.[12] Although *bon* rituals are the domain of the *dpa' bo* and the *rnal 'byor ma*, these Lhopo shamans have become practically non-existent in Sikkim and aspects of their practices, which do no require possession, have been integrated and survive in the rituals of certain village lamas, particularly those concerned with the celebration of the sacred land and its harvests. Although many historical and cultural factors (that cannot be addressed here) have encouraged this form of ritual integration, the late Buddhification of certain areas of Sikkim is definitely an important consideration. (See Plate 3).

In Tingchim village, the time when a *dpa' bo* in trance first asked for a Buddhist ritual to be performed and villagers did not know what he meant, is still remembered. It is difficult to say when this could have been, but the Kargyu monastery of Phodong, the first to be built in the North District, was established as late as 1740, a whole century after the founding of Sikkim as a Buddhist kingdom. Until the 1930s, no men from Tingchim were lamas in Phodong, and the monastery, located some 15 kilometres south of the village, was visited only once a year by Tingchim villagers on the occasion of the exorcistic rituals and annual *'cham* dances held before Losung, the Sikkimese farmers' New Year. In those days, Buddhism was primarily confined to the monasteries, their surrounding villages, the capital and the Palace. Although villagers have always considered themselves Buddhist, there were no lamas in Tingchim at the end of the nineteenth century. For all rituals performed for the benefit of the individual, the household, the lineage and the village, people were dependent on different types of shamans who were numerous and powerful.

Until the 1930s, the practice of Buddhism in Tingchim was limited to the undertaking of meditation retreats in the forest by a few aspiring lamas. The knowledge they acquired seems to have been for their own benefit and accumulation of merit although the tantric powers they gained in the course of their practice were also used for the benefit of villagers when asked to perform household rituals for the sick during the winter. Their knowledge of Buddhism was limited to the practice of meditation, the use of mantras, the recitation of ritual texts of which

[12] What they call *bon* has probably little relation with the Bon religion of pre-Buddhist Tibet and certainly no relation with the tradition of the modern Tibetan Bonpo monasteries. In Tingchim, the term *bon* refers to specific oral ritual texts that are chanted and considered to be the core of the *bon* specialists' ritual knowledge.

they usually did not understand the meaning, and the procedures to be followed during funerals that in those days were still a simple affair. In the 1910s, there were only two or three such lamas in Tingchim, and by 1930 there were seven of them who were, for the most part, affiliated to the Phodong monastery. There were no Buddhist community rituals nor did the lamas celebrate the important days of the Buddhist calendar. Until 1930, community, lineage, household and, to a large extent, individual religious matters, were still in the hands of the shamans. Only in the 1930s did Tingchim lamas start celebrating the annual Buddhist rituals on a regular basis within the village's prayer hall.

An important development, which had significant consequences for the expansion of Buddhism all over Sikkim, was the arrival of Tibetan Nyingma and Kargyu *rin po che*s and highly knowledgeable lamas from Tibet who settled in Sikkim as refugees from the late 1950s. The most prominent *rin po che*s who have made contributions to Sikkim's Buddhist development are, among the Nyingmapas, Dudjom Rinpoche and Dodrupchen Rinpoche, the latter having established the large Chorten monastery at Deorali near Gangtok mainly for Bhutanese monks from eastern Bhutan; and among the Kargyupas, the 16th Karmapa who established the international headquarters of the Karma-Kargyu at the Dharma-Chakra Centre at Rumtek. Although his monastery was mainly for Tibetan monks, the 16th Karmapa had considerable influence over the minority Kargyu villages of Sikkim such as Tingchim, just as Dudjom Rinpoche did over the Sikkimese Nyingma villages around the same period. Other knowledgeable Tibetan lamas and *rin po che*s found employment in the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (founded in 1958) and the government of Sikkim's first Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (founded in 1960) that was reserved for the education of Sikkimese lamas. These institutes and monasteries became the first centres for higher Buddhist teachings within Sikkim.

But with the new educational opportunities offered by the Tibetan lamas, the traditional patterns of learning and practice were changed. Lama-students now study in large institutes from an early age and meditate in special centres instead of following in the footsteps of their ancestors, who retreated to the mountain above their village for meditation. As a result, the new lamas do not study Sikkim's particular Buddhist traditions brought by Lhatsun Namka Jigme or have any knowledge of the supernatural beings of the land, their own *pho lha mo*

lha, or how to serve the simple needs of their fellow villagers. Nor have they established ties of mutual help and future ritual obligations with villagers who would have brought them food during their retreats above the village. They have been segregated and elevated above their community and are now said to look down upon the senior lamas of their own village monasteries. It is thus not surprising that the Tibetan lamas' reformist efforts and lack of interest in Sikkim's particular form of ritual rooted in the land's history and sacred geography has inevitably contributed to reinforce the notion that these should be used to define Lhopo ritual culture. However, not all villages were affected by this attempt at 'purifying' Buddhism in their midst. So far, the new Buddhist education system has mainly affected the younger generation of lamas who, for reasons that cannot be explained here, generally do not return to their village of origin upon graduation in order to help raise their fellow village lamas' level of education, but instead seek employment in government offices and schools.

Tingchim village has not yet been seriously affected by the new Buddhist curriculum, with the result that the rituals of village religion performed by village lamas and shamans are still largely concerned with the fertility and prosperity of the fields, the patrilineage and the village, or with providing a remedy when these are threatened by illness, hail, curses or other misfortunes. Taking control of the supernatural beings of the land that are thought to be at the root of people's misfortune is probably the most important ritual function of a village ritual specialist. The prevention and countering of disease in Tingchim is the central platform where the two forms of ritual, *bon* and Buddhist, and their specialists are made to interact, collaborate and sometimes compete. Perhaps because of its pervasiveness and potential fatal consequences, illness and its proper diagnosis and treatment have provided the richest ground for the development and expression of the relation between *bon* and Buddhism.

It is indeed around the subjects of greatest concern to villagers, such as illness, crop failure and land disputes, where the relationship has been the most intense. And it is over such problems that their interaction has contributed the most to the creation of rituals that are, as in the example below, neither entirely *bon* nor purely Buddhist and that in some cases call for the unusual direct and indirect ritual collaboration

of lamas and shamans.[13] This form of ritual is perhaps one of the best expressions of a distinct Sikkimese cultural identity at the village level today.

Ritual Solutions to the Lingering Souls of Dead Kin Members

Funeral rituals are preventive in nature as they ensure, among other things, that the soul of the deceased does not linger around the village creating problems for the living. When funerals are not performed correctly or simply not performed at all, or when there is excessive attachment, either on the part of the deceased or on the part of a living kin member, the soul of the dead relative may be prevented from continuing on its normal path towards its next incarnation. It may try to remain in its former house, near its children, or the general surroundings of its past existence. When this happens, curing rituals are held so as to free the lost soul, in this case called *gshin 'dre*, that simultaneously help the affected living relatives to let go of the painful loss of a dear one. Until a *gshin 'dre* can be freed, it is offered a plate of rice with curry and *chang* in order to persuade it not to trouble living relatives and other villagers.

When a lost soul or *gshin 'dre* roams around the village, it will first manifest itself by causing illness to the living. When the affected person consults the *dpa' bo* for diagnosis, the *gshin 'dre* will speak through the medium of the *dpa' bo* and express his problem. Various rituals, depending on the situation, may then be performed in order to resolve this situation and send the *gshin 'dre* onto its proper path that, if successful, will simultaneously cure the sick relative. First, the *dpa' bo* will invoke the *pho lha mo lha* and ask them to take care of the *gshin 'dre*, and if this fails, a high lama will perform a ritual so as to help it on towards a good rebirth. Such a case took place some years ago, when a young mother of four passed away in her thirties and then, it is said, refused to leave the house. She stayed there for three years, inflicting illnesses on anyone who entered the house except members of her immediate family. She would regularly speak to them and to other villagers through the medium of her sister, the *rnal 'byor ma*, during the

[13] On the relation between lamas and shamans in Sikkim, see my dissertation, Buddhism and Shamanism in Village Sikkim (SOAS 2002).

harvest rituals or whenever someone was ill. After many failed ritual attempts, asking for the *pho lha mo lha* to help her, her husband eventually consulted the 16th Karmapa who is said to have liberated her in a single ritual. From that day on, anyone could enter the house without fear and she never manifested herself through the *rnal 'byor ma* again.

During fieldwork, a new case of *gshin 'dre* presented itself that opened the door to an original ritual cooperation between lamas and shamans. In fact, this ritual is a rare example where specialists from both the *bon* and the Buddhist traditions officiate together for a common purpose. In this ritual, both *bon* and Buddhist specialists performed together, simultaneously combining their skills and efforts to free the *gshin 'dre* of someone who had passed away some ten years earlier. Officiating ritual specialists were: 1. the *dpa' bo*, the male shaman of the Lhopo, who specialises in maintaining good relations with the ancestral gods and lineage protectors (*pho lha mo lha*) through possession and the offering of rituals; 2. the *bon ban bongthing*,[14] a specialist who never gets possessed and performs the offering rituals for the supernatural beings of the locality; 3. the Sesung Gomchen (*ser bsrung sgom chen*), the weather controlling lama of the village, considered to be a great practitioner; and 4. Lopen Dugyal Acharya, my research assistant, considered to be one of the most educated lamas of Tingchim village. (See Plate 4).

The *gshin 'dre* first manifested itself by causing stomach pain and general weakness to its nephew's wife, a mother of five whom I shall call Lhamo. Many diagnoses and rituals were performed before the *gshin 'dre* finally revealed its identity and stated his predicament with the help of the *dpa' bo*. In the initial stage of the illness, the *dpa' bo*, who is a regular social visitor in Lhamo's house, was the first to be consulted and prescribed a ritual (an offering displayed on a banana leaf) for a troublesome local supernatural entity. After this simple ritual, Lhamo was taken to the hospitals of Mangan and Gangtok where she was given medicine.[15] When the medicine failed to cure her, a case of

[14] *Bon ban* is a reversal of the more usual form *ban bon*, 'Buddhist and Bon priests' (*ban* is an abbreviation of *ban dhe*, from Sk. *vandya*). However, Jäschke's entry for *ban bon* includes the definition 'a Bon-priest', in which case, however the word probably would be *bon ban*. However, for Tingchim villagers, *bon ban* simply means "the one who can recite the oral texts of *bon*". *Bongthing* is a term borrowed from the Lepcha language that is often used to refer to the *bon ban* of the Lhopos who are thought to act like the *bongthing*, the male ritual specialist of the Lepchas.

[15] I do not know what the doctors diagnosed since they rarely explain the nature of the ailment to their patients from rural areas. Questions are only asked by the doctor

malicious poisoning was suspected and Lhamo was given a herbal antidote by a villager who had been trained in this art by his Lepcha father-in-law.[16] When this also failed to produce results, Lhamo's father, the village's lama head-teacher, performed a divination[17] (*mo*) for his daughter in order to prescribe some Buddhist rituals. Accordingly, a *Gu ru drag dmar gtor rgyab* was performed, followed by a prayer by four monks in honour of Tara two days later, and a *mdos* ritual for Korda Gyepo several days after that, which all failed to improve her condition.

Under normal circumstances, at this stage, the *bongthing* or the *dpa' bo* would have been consulted again in order to make a fresh attempt, probably through trance, at divining the cause of Lhamo's ailment. But fearing that this would lead to the need to offer an animal life, her father (the lama head-teacher) opted for a consultation with a *rin po che* in Gangtok. In the early 1960s, when the 16th Karmapa designed a ritual for Tingchim villagers to be performed in lieu of blood offerings, the lama head-teacher was the person to be initiated in its performance and took the vow never to perform animal sacrifices again. Under these circumstances, instead of consulting a *bon* ritual specialist, he took his daughter to Gangtok where Dodrup Rinpoche[18] recommended the recitation of 50,000 Vajrapani mantras and to take Lhamo to the doctor. Her condition finally improved after Rinpoche's recommendations were followed.

Soon after this incidence the *dpa' bo*'s annual retreat began. The four-day event also corresponds to the annual ritual of the *rgyam mtsho'i shus mo* lineage to which the *dpa' bo*, the head lama-teacher and Lhamo belong. The successive possessions of the *dpa' bo* over a period of four days allow members of the lineage to converse with their ancestors and receive advice from their *pho lha mo lha*, especially about illness, upcoming obstacles and right behaviour. Accordingly, as

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and the interview is concluded with the issuing of a prescription.

[16] Lepchas are considered far more knowledgeable in herbal medicine than the Lhopos.

[17] Divination or *mo* by a lama is not done in the same way as by the *dpa' bo* or the *bongthing* who divine by casting dice or rice, or in the case of the *dpa' bo*, through possession. Village lamas use a Buddhist manual from which the divination's answer and recommended ritual can be read. On the other hand, like the *bon* ritual specialists, *rin po che*s do not require the use of a manual and will interpret the result of the dice, or the answer obtained by counting the beads of a rosary, through their own clairvoyance or by invoking the powers of a particular deity.

[18] Dodrup Rinpoche is currently the most important Buddhist figure residing in Sikkim and serves as a uniting force for its Buddhist population.

soon as Lhamo joined the ritual the following morning, the *dpa' bo*, possessed by the spirit of Ajo Bongthing (the present *bongthing*'s father) addressed Lhamo and volunteered a new explanation for her illness. Her problems were caused by the *gshin 'dre* of 'Tashi', her husband's paternal uncle, a village lama who had died some ten years ago at the age of 32. Nothing more was said or done about this as Lhamo was feeling better at the time. But a few days later, as Lhamo was suffering a relapse, a harvest ritual that was being held in her father's house by the *dpa' bo* offered a new opportunity for the diagnosis to be elaborated upon.

This time, the *gshin 'dre* of 'Tashi' himself took possession of the *dpa' bo* and addressed the audience for the first time since he had passed away in 1985. He mentioned that Lhamo's excessive attachment to his memory was contributing to his difficulty in pursuing his normal path. Although he was returning his affection to Lhamo, as is always the case with a *gshin 'dre*, his affection was involuntarily turned into poison and was the cause of her illness. And in addition to this, he had become the prisoner and the slave of the same supernatural being who had taken his life, a malevolent *bdud* who kept him working endlessly without ever giving him any food. The *gshin 'dre* of 'Tashi' begged his family to help him escape from the clutches of this tyrannical *bdud* by asking the *pho lha mo lha* to liberate him and take him into their midst.

Lhamo's case illustrates how the on-going relation between *bon* and Buddhism unfolds in Tingchim, or how villagers find ways to skirt around the conflicts and contradictions of both traditions while still making full use of them. For example, the head lama-teacher had initially refrained from directly consulting the shamans for fear of being pressured to perform a blood sacrifice since he had taken the vow not to resort to such practices again. Thus, instead of seeking their help directly, a diagnosis was pronounced by the *dpa' bo*, *en passant*, during the annual retreat and then again during the head lama-teacher's regular harvest offering. Once the diagnosis had been made, it became difficult or improper for him to ignore it and not perform the recommended rituals. On the other hand, the *dpa' bo* was perfectly aware of the situation and the lama-teacher's vulnerability, since the latter's need for *bon* in this particular situation was heightened by the fact that his daughter might have been suffering from a life-threatening disease and that he had already performed a large number of Buddhist rituals that had not been entirely successful. It is interesting to note that according

to the *dpa' bo'*s diagnosis, which was pronounced when he was temporarily in a position of power, the particular *gshin 'dre* responsible for Lhamo's illness happened to be a deceased lama. If the latter became the prisoner of a *bdud*, it is a clear message from the *dpa' bo* to the lama-teacher and other villagers that even the lamas may still be dependent on *bon* when it came to taking control of troubling supernatural beings of the land.

Once a *gshin 'dre* has become the prisoner of such a supernatural being, it becomes the domain and responsibility of the *bon* specialists to liberate it. A ritual is performed by the *dpa' bo* and the *bongthing* who together attempt to separate or liberate the *gshin 'dre* from its captor by distracting the latter through the offering of an animal life. The *bongthing* performs the sacrifice outside in the hope that once the *bdud* sees the blood, he will be distracted enough so as to relax his grip on his prisoner, who will then be able to escape and be directed towards the *pho lha mo lha* by the *dpa' bo* who officiates in the altar room of the house. Since it was impossible for the lama-teacher's family to hold such a ritual, the Sesung Gomchen performed a substitute ritual that would not involve any sacrificial killing. This was designed by the Sesung Gomchen at the time when animal sacrifice was banned in Tingchim.

A few days later, when the harvest ritual was being held in the house of Lhamo's father-in-law ('Tashi's' older brother), and while the altar of 'Tashi's' *pho lha mo lha* was being erected for the occasion, the Sesung Gomchen was asked to perform his new ritual. While the *dpa' bo* and the *bongthing* were holding the harvest offering in the altar room of the house, the Sesung Gomchen, with the help of my teacher Lopen Dugyal, built a *mdos* of black thread in the courtyard of the house, and under that they placed a *glud* or effigy of the *bdud*. By performing the *bdud mdos* ritual, they invited the *bdud* to take a seat at the centre of this palatial string structure so they could cut the link between him and 'Tashi'. The *mdos* was to replace the sacrifice of an animal, and, as planned, once the *bdud* took his seat in the effigy, the *gshin 'dre* of 'Tashi', who was continuously being called by the *bongthing* and the *dpa' bo* in the altar room, managed to take advantage of the *bdud*'s distraction, escape and take possession of the *dpa' bo*. At this point, the freed *gshin 'dre* was instructed by the *bongthing* to take a seat on a little *gtorma* placed on the altar next to Masong[19] who would protect it and from where it would, from then on, be safe from the *bdud*'s sight

and tyrannies. The *bdud*, who soon realised what had happened, took possession of the *dpa' bo* and bitterly complained that they had taken his man away. From now on, 'Tashi's' new *gtor ma* became a permanent *gtor ma* on the altar of this particular household and was included whenever they performed an offering to their ancestral gods in subsequent rituals.

Bon ritual specialists never officiate at funerals that are the exclusive prerogative of the lamas and a person's most important rite of passage. The lamas will generally argue that the deceased, if not sent directly to heaven through the *'pho ba* ritual, will at least find his way to his next incarnation if he receives a proper funeral. But in reality, dead people who receive adequate funerals sometimes do end up not only as *gshin 'dre*, but in the *bon* paradises (*Rig 'dzin gnas* and *Me tog padma gling*) located in the high mountains from where they manifest themselves to their descendants through the medium of the *dpa' bo* during possession rituals. In this sense, they may even stay around the village for generations instead for moving on to their next incarnation as the lamas would advocate. Such contradictions are not entertained nor are they the object of discussions. It seems that these apparent contradictions are maintained so as to offer a certain freedom of choice, interpretation and adaptation to everyone.

As we have seen, even the Buddhist teacher of the village is free to sanction the performance of a *bon* ritual aimed at liberating the soul of a lama. In the end, he is engaging in a *bon* ritual, something he will accept mainly because the ritual was changed and adapted to Buddhist principles. But despite this adaptation, the bottom line remains that during the ritual, the lamas were performing in the courtyard outside the house while the *bon* specialists had the place of honour as they performed within the altar room. The *gshin 'dre* of 'Tashi', the former lama, was not entrusted to a Buddhist deity but to Masong, a mountain

[19] Masong (Ma sangs khyung 'dus), also known as Sgang ring btsan, is a mountain deity residing in the range separating the Bhutanese Valley of Ha and the Tibetan Valley of Chumbi close to the Sikkimese border. He is the most important lineage protector in Tingchim, the great pho lha and victorious leader and head of all the btsan. For the men of the lineage he is the king of dgra lha and protects them when going to war. For the women of the lineage, he is their zhang lha, the protector of women who follows them from their a zhang, or mother's brother's house to the house of their husband. It is said that he rules the sun and the moon that all worldly deities regard as the highest supernatural beings. He is the mountain deity of the residents of Ha and Chumbi and was brought to Tingchim by the villagers' forefathers and other Lhopos when they migrated to Sikkim.

deity and *pho lha* of the lineage; and *bon* ritual specialists were invited to resolve a situation where lamas had initially failed. This tolerance and general attitude of 'give and take' between *bon* and Buddhism at the village level has contributed to the creation of many rituals in Sikkim, but in most cases, it would now be impossible to trace in which way the exchange actually took place. It is in this sense that the unfolding of this ritual was particularly revealing.[20] Unable to resist continuing the debate after the ritual, Lopen Dugyal added that although the *gshin 'dre* of 'Tashi' the lama was now free of the *bdud* and in a much better position under the protection of a *pho lha*, a high *rin po che* such as the 16th Karmapa would have liberated 'Tashi's' *gshin 'dre* by sending him directly to heaven.

In an attempt to cover all possible causes of Lhamo's illness, or perhaps in order to avoid a situation where Lhamo's recovery would have to be attributed to an exclusive success of *bon*, elaborate Buddhist rituals called *bla 'gugs* and *brgya bzhi* were held soon after the *bdud mdos* rite. In true Tingchim style, after all this, a *Chetri jhānkri* was consulted. He recommended a ritual for the protector of Lhamo's elder brother's house, and two days later, fearing that she might have an ulcer, Lhamo was taken to a private doctor in Gangtok as she could feel a lump moving in her stomach. This doctor, who has a very good reputation in Sikkim, dismissed the possibility of an ulcer and prescribed some medicine, after which Lhamo gradually recovered to everyone's relief.

As this example illustrates, dealing with the malevolent supernatural beings is an important function of village lamas and shamans. In Tingchim, taking control of these is the main object of everyone's ritual practice and in villagers' eyes, the measuring stick of their ritual powers. What is perhaps unusual in Tingchim in comparison to other Tibetan Buddhist communities is that, in all practical terms, the shamans are usually considered more capable than the village lamas in precisely identifying the cause of an illness and how to re-establish the imbalance. Powerful *rin po che*s are of course considered far superior to village lamas and *bon* specialists, but their superiority remains somewhat theoretical as they are rarely asked to intervene in such worldly

[20] Diemberger has also observed co-operative rituals between lamas and *lhabon* in Khumbo where the *lhabon* is invited to recite his invocation as part of the lamas' ritual (1996).

matters by villagers. The location, attributes, likes and dislikes of each local deity are best known by the shamans, a form of local knowledge that usually makes them more powerful than the village lamas when dealing with serious cases of illness.

Although all the supernatural beings of the land were tamed by Guru Rinpoche in historical times, these malevolent beings are thought to have forgotten their oath of submission to the Dharma and to have returned to their untamed or unbound state. This regression is said to have occurred because, in the distant past, the villagers' forefathers succumbed to the practice of animal sacrifice with the hope of saving the lives of sick relatives. Now that these wild supernatural beings have been spoiled by the offerings of blood, lamas, *dpa' bo*, *rnal 'byor ma* and *bongthing* invoke their respective pantheons and methods with the hope of pacifying the wrath of these beings during curing rituals. This form of ritual would probably be considered heretical by any well-educated Tibetan or Sikkimese lamas who would instead question the 'taming' of those who entertain the local deities in their un-subdued state. Karmay has indeed mentioned that "the subjugation of the spiritual inhabitants of the country is an extremely important part of the process in the Buddhist conversion of the people who believe in their existence" (1998 [1996]: 446). And like the villagers who acknowledge their existence, the local deities may be capricious and one day have a preference for *bon* rituals and the next for Buddhist ones.

This ambivalence and the resulting relation that has developed between the powerful Tibetan *rin po che*s who have recently settled in Sikkim and these unruly Sikkimese entities is an interesting one in this context of identity. A respected Tibetan Nyingma lama currently residing in Sikkim apparently flatly refuses to have anything to do with Sikkim's local supernatural beings. The 16th Karmapa tamed them and composed a ritual for the people of Tingchim to perform in lieu of the sacrificial rituals of *bon*, but eventually some villagers reinstated the practice of animal sacrifice in the very rare case of life-threatening illness while the village lamas looked the other way.

The high lamas' 'failure' is conveniently excused by saying that these Sikkimese supernatural beings have a great dislike for foreigners and that, however powerful and accomplished the Tibetan *rin po che*s may be, any attempt on their part to subdue and gain control over them would inevitably be futile. And just like the supernatural beings of the land, one side of the Lhopos seems to want to boldly retain their

ambivalent Sikkimese identity by resisting complete submission to foreign Buddhist ideals of discipline, celibacy and scholarship since, unlike Buddhism, village religion does not aim to tame or transcend the polarities of human nature. It only seeks to deal with the problems and obstacles of life in this impermanent world.

The *bon* aspect of such rituals should not be seen as a survival or a remnant of an ancient form of pre-Buddhist ritual but as a living tradition that has known many phases and encounters in its recent history. Nor should this challenge to Buddhism be seen as an unfortunate display of ignorance. I believe it to be a healthy indication that what is fundamental to the Sikkimese way of thinking is not about to disappear. Such a reaction may be compared to Sonam Chhoki's observation for Bhutan, where the *pawo nejum* (*dpa' bo rnal 'byor ma*) complex in the village she studied could well be a local tradition that "grew in interaction with and in response to the overwhelming pressures and constraints of the religious-political orthodoxy" rather than viewing it as a primitive pre-Buddhist *bon* tradition (Chhoki 1993: 9). However, in the case of Sikkim, the local response would not have been directed towards the state's oppressive religious-political orthodoxy but rather towards Tibet, in an effort to define and assert autonomy from a more disciplined, scholarly, celibate and politically powerful Tibetan monkbody.

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Plate 1: The mountain deity Kangchendzonga (Gangs chen mdzod lnga) appearing during the *'cham* dances of Pang Lhabsol (*dpang lha gsol*) held at Pemayangtse monastery in 1993, West Sikkim

Plate 2: Bride and groom at a wedding held in Gangtok in February 2004

Plate 4: The *bongthing* of Tingchim village making ritual offerings to local supernatural beings (altar on the left) and to the household's lineage protectors (altar on the right)

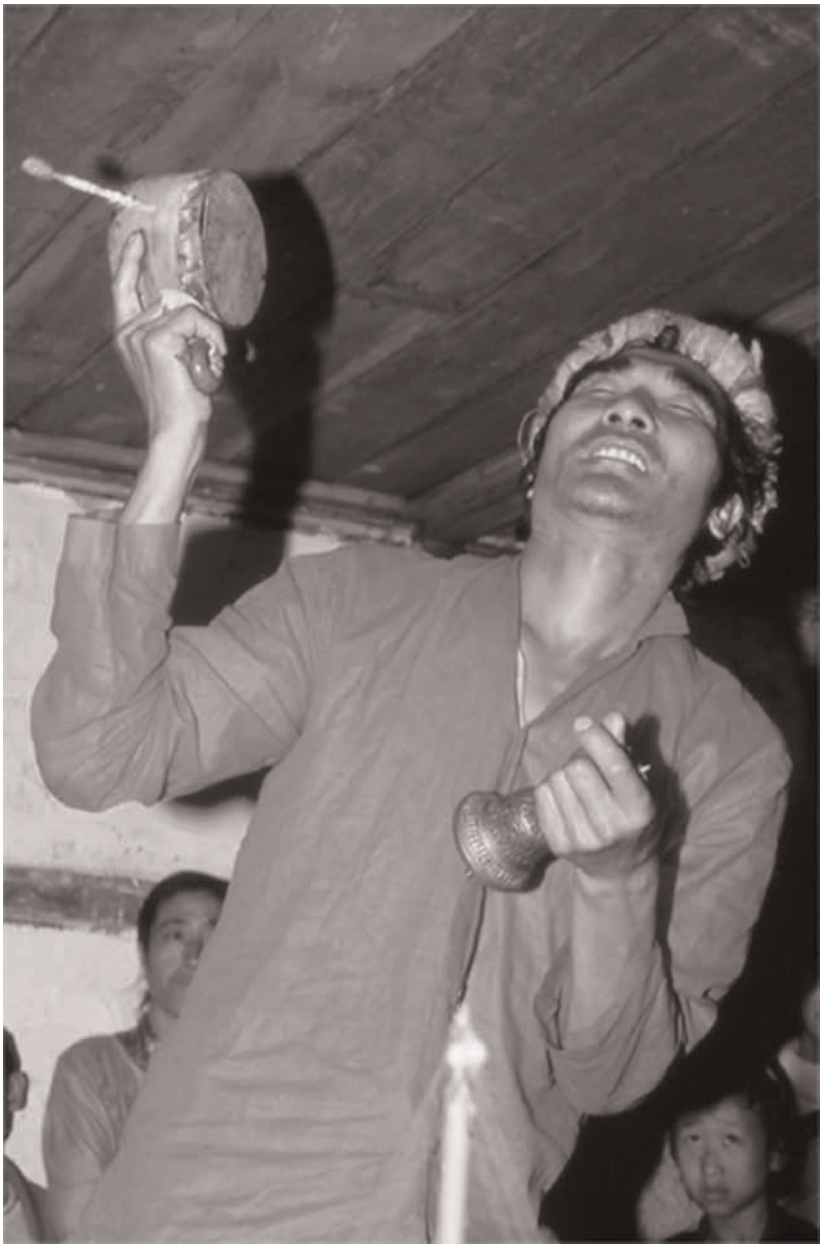

Plate 3: The *dpa' bo* of Tingching village in trance during a ritual held for his lineage protective deities (*pho lha mo lha*) in 1994. He is wearing a woollen crown called *bal thod* said to embody the power and knowledge of his predecessor and tutelary deity

"WE ARE THE LHOPO OF SIKKIM. WE DO NOT HAVE TIBETAN ORIGINS. THE TIBETANS ARE THE REFUGEES": CHANGES IN THE PERCEPTION OF BHUTIA AND TIBETAN IDENTITIES IN SIKKIM, INDIA

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The above statement by my Bhutia interlocutor indeed emanates from the margins of Tibet, but it is not the voice of a historically marginalised ethnic Tibetan group. In discussing the Tibetans in exile[1] residing in contemporary Sikkim, India, I argue how in certain contexts, alterity is embraced while in others it is politicised into hostility or even escalates into ethnic conflict.[2] Identity and alterity are produced simultaneously through the application of degrees of distinction and distanciation. In Sikkim, the emphasis on differences between the Lhopo or the Bhutia[3] and the Tibetans can be attributed to cultural, regional and nationality differences. My analysis emphasises the shifting and situational character of identities, images and the imagination of nations. I emphasise how identities are influences by changes in the wider socie-

[1] I am not concerned with the identities of the Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

[2] The argument draws upon my doctoral thesis which was submitted and approved by the University of Oxford in 2005. The thesis is based on multi-sited ethnographic research and archival research in Sikkim and India, and England between August 2001 to October 2002, and December 2003 to January 2004. I am grateful to my supervisors, Profs. Marcus Banks and David Parkin for their comments, support and encouragement. I am indebted to my thesis examiners, Profs. Caroline Humphrey and Wendy James and Dr. Robert Parkin for their critical comments. My studies have been funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, United Kingdom, and grants for fieldwork were given by the Beit Fund for Commonwealth History, Oxford, and Linacre College, Oxford. My fieldwork was approved by the Chief Secretary of the Government of Sikkim, and the Office of the Commanding Officer of the Army at Gangtok, Sikkim. The most important contributors are the people of Sikkim. I am also grateful to E. Edwards for her advice, and Jocelyn and Kate of the Pitt Rivers Museum for access to and permission to use the Charles Bell images in this publication. I would like to thank the staff at the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in enabling access to the Williamson Collections. Last but not the least, I acknowledge my debts to Charles Ramble of the Oriental Institute, Oxford and Ralf Kramer of the India Institute Library, Oxford for their support.

[3] I have used Bhutias and Lhopo interchangeably in this paper. Some other anthropologists have used Lhopo (see Balicki-Denjongpa 2002: 5; Vandenhelsken 2003: 57), however I prefer using Bhutias as their term of self-identification, it is used in the titles of cultural and political associations, and by the administration.

ty, and how identities are imagined and their images consciously selected and circulated to imagine communities and nations.

In Tibet and the Himalayan region, the term Bhutia connotes people of Tibetan descent and using one of the Tibeto-Burman languages.[4] In contrast, Lhopo is a term used by Tibetans for the people living to the south of Tibet. I begin by critically examining the self-definition of the Lhopo or Bhutia groups in Sikkim and their contemporary relation with the Tibetans in exile. The assertion of indigenous identities by the Bhutias cannot be reduced to an identity-maintenance mechanism. Ethnic identities may correspond to national identities and imagined nations (Cohen 1974a, 1974b; Anderson 1983). The major reasons cited for the inclusion of Sikkim in India in 1975[5] are the annexation of Tibet in 1959, and the Sino-Indian war on Sikkim's border in 1962-1963. Both the Bhutia of Sikkim and the Tibetans have lost their national independence. Contemporary ethnic differences between them pertain to emplacement and displacement and the rise and fall of Tibet and Sikkim as nations. The cultural similarities and differences between the two groups are explicit in the visual archives available on Tibet and Sikkim. To locate the perception of ethnic and national identities in a historical perspective, I have analysed the raw histories embedded in the Sir Charles Bell photographic collection placed at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. Significantly, Sir Charles Bell was the second Political Officer of Sikkim, the author of several monographs on Tibet, and regarded as the architect of the Anglo-Tibet policy. The images of the Bell collection narrate the continuities and discontinuities in the images of Sikkim and Tibet, and enable us to understand the maintenance of ethnic boundaries by culturally similar groups in contemporary Sikkim.

PART I

The contemporary period displays two contradictory yet related processes of identity-maintenance among the Tibetans and the ethnic

[4] Ramble has a good discussion on the identity of Bhutias residing outside Tibet (Ramble 1997).

[5] Historically Sikkim has been a *de facto* protectorate of British India since the treaty of 1861, and the treaty with India in 1950 continued Sikkim's status as a protectorate until its incorporation in 1975 (Singh 1988: 191-97; Bajpai 1999: 121).

Tibetan groups such as the Bhutias of Sikkim. In brief, the self-reflexive institutionalisation of the Orientalist construction of Tibet as a Shangri-La by the Tibetans in exile (Klieger 1997; Korom 1997; Dodin and Räther 2001) transpires in sharp contrast to the self-assertion by the Bhutias in Sikkim who categorically distance themselves from the refugee identities of the Tibetans in exile. The Bhutias of Sikkim feel insulted if they are mistaken for the Tibetan refugees. Physically, culturally and linguistically, Bhutias are similar to Tibetans and both are Buddhist. In the past and in the present, the two ethnic groups have intermarried frequently; hence people in wider society do conflate the two ethnic groups. Historically Sikkim and Tibet have maintained close relations, and Sikkim has looked towards Tibet for patronage, knowledge, and political intervention during its conflicts with Nepal and Bhutan.

There are broadly perceived to be three ethnic categories in Sikkim: Lepcha, Bhutia, and Nepali.[6] While the Lepchas and Bhutias are regarded as indigenous, the diverse Nepali groups are considered immigrants, and in the contemporary period, Tibetans are identified as refugees. The Nepali groups are numerically the majority with about 75 per cent of the population while the Lepchas and Bhutias comprise 22 per cent of the population. The Bhutias are a numerical minority; however, they overwhelmingly comprise the nobility and the ruling elites of Sikkim. I argue that in contemporary Sikkim, the merger of the political and the symbolic dimensions is evident in the group's self-definition, in the politicisation of ethnic differences, and the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. In my understanding, I am guided by Anderson's seminal argument that identities are dynamic constructions, and they are imagined (Anderson 1983).The Bhutias of Sikkim are strategically underplaying their historic migration from Kham[7] in the fourteenth

[6] The Nepali category is not a homogeneous group. It comprises groups which migrated from East Nepal such as the Limbu, Rai, Magar, Yakha, Khombu and Mechi that have histories of migration and settlement in Sikkim, and there are other Nepali groups such as Gorkha, Newar, Chetri and Sunwar. Many of these communities have multiple identities and there are degrees of inclusion and exclusion in social relations between ethnic groups.

[7] Goldstein has placed Kham in ethnographic Tibet and not in political Tibet, which was under the rule of His holiness the Dalai Lama and is presently identified as the Tibet Autonomous Region. The political separation between ethnographic Tibet and political Tibet has been bridged by religion (Bell, 1927: 5-8; Goldstein 1998: 4), although as evident in the founding of the Kingdom of Sikkim, the influence of sectarian differences and regional politics cannot be ignored.

century by emphasising their contemporary status as the indigenous group of Sikkim along with the Lepchas. This is constitutionally validated by their status as a Scheduled Tribe in Sikkim. There are twelve seats reserved in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for members of the Lepcha-Bhutia groups and one seat for the Buddhist monasteries.

To further understand the (re)construction and imagination of ethnic identities, I direct my attention to the regime of entitlements and political rights associated with ethnic status. In Sikkim ethnic identity is connected with national origins and it determines the group's access to political power and economic opportunities.

The Bhutias distinguish and distance themselves from the Tibetan refugees; however, the subjective ethnic boundary is between the indigenous Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepali immigrants. The ethnic boundary with the immigrants defines the alliance between the Lepchas-Bhutias. Following the implementation of the Scheduled Tribe order in 1978, the Bhutia category was expanded by the inclusion of the Kagatey, Sherpa, Chumbiapa, Dopthapa, Tibetan, and Dokpa groups. Incidentally the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (henceforth SIBLAC) was established in 1998 to explicitly oppose the implementation of the Scheduled Tribe Order of 1978 and protect the rights of the Lepchas-Bhutias in Sikkim. During my fieldwork, I asked some Bhutia politicians: why were these groups included in the Bhutia category? I was given the embarrassing answer:

> It is a politically calculated step undertaken in 1975 during the process of negotiating the terms of incorporating Sikkim within India. To demonstrate our numerical strength and justify the disproportionate allocation of seats in the Sikkim legislative assembly, we expanded the Bhutia category.

In this broader definition of Bhutia, some tensions persist with the Tibetans because of their economic success, and the Sherpas due to their rising numbers. The Sherpa are considered Nepali, although they are Buddhists. The translation of Bhutia identities into national identities is further evident in the reasons cited for the assertion of difference with both Tibetan and Sherpa groups.

Who are the Lhopo?

The Lhopo are defined as the descendants of Khye Bumsa (a prince of the Minyak dynasty of Kham) and other Khampas who historically

migrated to Sikkim in waves between the fourteenth century and the eighteenth century. The fourteen clans that migrated with Khye Bumsa are listed in the *Gazetteer of Sikhim* and the manuscript of History of Sikkim (Risley 1894: 28; Dolma and Namgyal 1908: 9-13). Kabi is the site where in 1366 the historic blood-brotherhood treaty between the Lepcha shaman, Tekong Tek, and Khye Bumsa, acting as the representatives of the Bhutias, was solemnised. The oath was marked by the erection of sacred stones by keeping the sacred mountain of Kanchenjunga as the witness.

This historic treaty marked the migration of Bhutia groups and legitimised their settlement in Sikkim. The historic event is commemorated in the ritual of *dpang lha gsol*.[8] It is believed that the Buddhist Kingdom of Sikkim was established in Yoksum with the installation of Phuntsog Namgyal[9] as the first *chos rgyal* in A.D. 1642 by three high-ranking lamas[10] belonging to the Nyingmapa sect, who had fled Tibet fearing their persecution with the ascendancy of the Gelgupa sect in Tibet (Waddell 1899: 50-51; Dolma and Namgyal 1908: 11-12). The Bhutias proudly proclaim, "history and civilisation of Sikkim began with our [Bhutia] settlement in Sikkim and at Kabi and in Yoksum". Identities are embodied in land, and personal and collective identities are bound with place, however, in the Tibet and the Himalayan region. This belonging is expressed in the idiom of the sacred and in rituals of sacred landscapes.

I have argued elsewhere how the worship of ancestors in *pho lha gsol*, in rituals of the *yul lha, gzhi bdag*, and at various *gnas* indeed indicate the symbolic dimension of the Bhutia political attachment and utilitarian association with land and landscape.[11] The significance of identity with sacred landscape informs the core argument of the activists and lamas that raised objections to the implementation of the

[8] Kabi is the primary site of my fieldwork in Sikkim. A brief discussion is also available in an article entitled, "An anthropology of knowledge and being in sacred landscapes among the Lepcha and Bhutia tribes of Sikkim, India" in a forthcoming volume *Ethnicity, Identity and Social Movement in North-east India*, Bhadra, R.K. (ed.), Delhi: Rawat publications, 2005-6.

[9] Identified as a descendant of Khye Bumsa.

[10] The Kingdom was founded by Lhatsun Chenpo, Ngadak Senpo Chenpo and Kartok Rigdzin, and it is believed they were following Padmasambhava's prophecies.

[11] For details refer to chapter 4 and 5 of my doctoral thesis, *Just a Pile of Stones! The Politicization of Identity, Indigenous Knowledge and Sacred Landscapes among the Lepchas and the Bhutias of contemporary Sikkim, India.*

Rathongchu hydroelectric project in Yoksum, west Sikkim during 1993-97.[12] During the agitation the Buddhist lamas threatened to burn their *gnas gsol* texts if the project was implemented as it would desecrate their sacred landscape, and strike at the roots of their identity and belonging in Sikkim.

My Bhutia interlocutor emphasised: "Tibetans do not worship Mt. Kanchenjunga, and we do". According to the *gnas yig*, in the eighth century Padmasambhava converted Kanchenjunga[13] to the Buddhist faith and made him the guardian of the Sikkim and treasures. He is regarded as the protector of Sikkim's sacred places, wealth and *gter* and worshipped annually in *dpang lha gsol. Dpang lha gsol* was regarded as the national day of Sikkim in the erstwhile Kingdom and is celebrated on the tenth day in the seventh month of the Tibetan calendar. I am told *dpang lha gsol* was discontinued following Sikkim's merger in India in 1975. The Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association revived it in 1994 as a religious festival.[14]

The collective memory of the blood-brotherhood treaty at Kabi, the recounting of myths, and revival of Buddhist rituals such as *dpang lha gsol* play a significant role in maintaining the indigenous identities of the Lepcha and the Bhutia, and in expressing their nationalist sentiments. The Bhutia sense of belonging in Sikkim is expressed in the idiom of Buddhism and maintained by the performance of various domestic, lineage and religious rituals. I consider the Buddhism in Sikkim's nationalism as the Buddhism of nationalist practice, and this has been true for other Buddhist countries such as Tibet and Sri Lanka (Kapferer 1988; Goldstein and Kapstein 1998).

Significantly the term Lhopo is a politicised expression of groups identified as Bhutia in Sikkim, and the term came into prominence after the implementation of the 1978 Scheduled Tribe order that included the

[12] My doctoral thesis has an extended discussion of the controversies around the Rathongchu hydroelectric project and they are discussed by my paper 'Text and context in Sikkim' forthcoming in the volume Religious Texts and Contexts edited by E. Arweck and P. Collins, Ashgate, 2005-6.

[13] The Tibetan name of Kanchenjunga is *Gangs chen mdzod lnga*, which means the five repositories or ledges of snow and it is physically descriptive of its five great peaks. The mountain is also referred to in the Tibetan language as *Mdzod lnga rtse*, which means the 'five peaks with treasures'. The eastern peak is the store of salt, the second peak is the store of gold and turquoise, the third peak is the store of scriptures and dharma, the fourth peak is the store of armaments and the fifth peak is the store of medicines.

[14] To educate the public, souvenirs are published and circulated by the committee.

Dokpa, Dopthapa, Kagatey, Tibetan, Chumbiapa and Sherpa within the Bhutia category. Lhopo gained currency since the early 1990s. Lhopo is a term used by the political elites and nobility drawn from the Bhutia groups and it critically expresses their desire to maintain boundaries and distance themselves from the Tibetan refugees in India. The term Lhopo evokes an imagining of a pure ethnic category and this explains my reluctance to further its use in academic discourse. Historically and as evident in contemporary social practices, there is substantial evidence of intermarriage between the Bhutia, Lepcha, Tibetan, and Chumbiapa, which does not permit any ethnic imagining of a pure Lhopo category of Sikkim. Historically, even some consorts of the chos rgyal of Sikkim came from the Lepcha nobility while in other cases marital alliances were established with the nobility of Tibet and Bhutan.

I documented the use of Lhopo in contexts of cultural revivalism, political representation, and in the identification of lineages that are entitled to enrol their lamas in the Pemagayantse monastery of Sikkim (see Dolma and Namgyal 1908: 140). The following excerpt is from an interview with a leading member of Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha association and encapsulates many of the arguments succinctly.

> The major objective of SIBLAC's agenda is the restoration of the pre-1978 definition of Bhutias. We now use Lhopo to distinguish ourselves from the other Bhutia groups in the region. We are the Lhopo or Denjongpa. Lhopo refers to the people who reside to the south of Tibet, and in Sikkim. We migrated historically here in the fourteenth century, and we cannot now be termed Tibetans or merged with the Tibetan refugees.... The Kingdom of Sikkim was founded in the seventeenth century by three Nyingmapa lamas following the prophecy of Padmasambhava. They fled Tibet in 1642 to avoid being persecuted by the RGelugpa sect that had become very powerful in both religious matters and in the polity of Tibet.... The 1978 Scheduled Tribe order that includes the Sherpa, Dokpa, Tibetan, Dopthapa, Kagatey and Chumbiapa in the Bhutia category is a genocidal definition of the Bhutias, and a gross violation of Article 371f of the Indian Constitution. It denies us our rights and privileges.... Historically Sikkim has been an Independent Kingdom, the *chos rgyal* of Sikkim has been recognised as being independent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Tibet. The polity of Sikkim has functioned independent of Tibet and the spiritual leader in Sikkim is not His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but the leader of the Kargyupa sect or the Nyingmapa sect of Mahayana Buddhism. We have immense respect for H.H the Dalai Lama and we empathise with the situation of Tibetan refugees, but we cannot be clubbed with the Tibetans.

> In religious scriptures such as the *gnas yig* our land is considered as a place of refuge for Tibetans fleeing the immoral order in Tibet, and we extend compassion to them on these grounds. However this certainly does not mean sharing our rights as the indigenous communities and our homeland with them. They have to fight for their rights in their homeland of Tibet.

I have collated some of the arguments that differentiate between the Bhutia and the Tibetans. These ethnic markers accentuate the customary and sectarian differences between them. The linkages of ethnic identity with national identities and between emplaced and displaced groups are clear. It is emphasised that the Lhopo are the indigenous groups of Sikkim, and this is expressed in their role in founding of the Kingdom of Sikkim. The Lhopo community is divided into clans, and celebrated in lineage rituals and governed by the rule of the elders. The customary code of the Lhopo is designated as Barfung-Lingdam[15] *lugs srol* after the places where it is believed that Lhopo culture originated and spread in Sikkim. These customary usages and traditions that relate to birth, marriage, death and lineage rituals are differentiated from those followed by Tibetan community. The Lhopo speak a distinct language termed Lhoke,[16] which is distinct from Tibetan. The language has been notified as the official language of Sikkim (along with Lepcha and Nepali) in 1958, and this was affirmed in Article 371f of the Constitution of India.

The economic and sectarian differences between Sikkim and Tibet, and the Bhutias and the Tibetans are also highlighted in their argument. For instance Sikkim's economy was based on agriculture while Tibet's economy was primarily dependent on trade and commerce. The religious and political leader of the former kingdom of Tibet was the reincarnate Dalai Lama, while pre-democratic Sikkim was governed and ruled by the chos rgyal, a hereditary monarch who ruled according to Buddhist principles. In Tibet, the Gelugpa sect predominates although the other sects are also followed. However, in Sikkim only the Nyingmapa and the Kargyupa sects are evident. The Lhopo worship the mountain Kanchenjunga as the guardian deity of Sikkim, and offer *gnas gsol* prayers to the other *gzhi bdag* and *yul lha* that protect Sikkim. While the Tibetans worships their own specific sacred mountain's and place deities. In Tibet the majority of the lamas are celibate, dependent

[15] These are names of two places located near Ravangala in South Sikkim.

[16] It belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group, and is a Tibetan dialect.

on the monasteries for maintenance, while in Sikkim the lamas are householders. They are an integral part of Sikkim's political economy as farmers or traders who need to earn a livelihood. The lamas in Sikkim were never dependent on State patronage for their maintenance, unlike the case in Tibet.

The strongest objections on the inclusion of Tibetans in the Bhutia category are voiced in the realm of politics. History and historical habitation in the landscape are repeatedly cited to justify prior claims to scarce resources and opportunities for economic development within Sikkim. The Bhutias claim privileges and rights as 'sons of the soil' in Sikkim, and these claims accentuate the ethnic differences and nationality distinctions. The following voice articulates these ideas concisely:

> The Tibetans are international refugees and we have allowed them to settle here in Sikkim on compassionate grounds. We have had historical ties with Tibet and culturally we are closer to Tibet than to India. However we cannot give Tibetans any political rights here and make them citizens of Sikkim. The Tibetans cannot demand the same rights and share in resources in Sikkim as we can. We never had any claims in Tibet. Why should they have any in Sikkim? This is our homeland and the Tibetans are now refugees, they have to fight for their homeland. They cannot take over ours. The 1978 Scheduled order is unjust....

In April 2003, the Scheduled Tribe order of 2002 was implemented. The recognition of two Nepali groups, the Limbu and Tamang, as Scheduled Tribes therein accords them the status of indigenous groups of Sikkim, and threatens the existing privileges of the Bhutia and Lepcha as the indigenous group. Hence in June 2003, SIBLAC modified its stand and functionally it accepted Tibetans and "all those using the suffix Bhutia in their names now have the right to represent the Bhutias". Many members of the Bhutia community expressed their unhappiness at this decision and political compromise. This acceptance of Tibetans as Bhutias henceforth includes those Tibetans who have Sikkim subject status and historically migrated to Sikkim due to religious, trade and kinship reasons, and some who migrated between 1959 and 1975.[17] In a telephone interview in June 2003, a representative of SIBLAC confessed, "the emergent need is to safeguard our rights and privileges with the recognition of the Limbu and the Tamang as Scheduled Tribes in Sikkim".

[17] April 1975 was the cut-off point for the establishment of Sikkim subject status.

Despite the stated ethnic differences between the Bhutia and Tibetan groups in Sikkim, it is possible to locate the social and economic assimilation of Tibetan refugees. This is evident in their inter-marriage with the Bhutias, their visible enrolment in educational institutions and monastic schools, their membership in various monasteries, employment in the bureaucracy, and in their ownership of trade and commercial establishments in Sikkim. It is stated that approximately 5-7 thousand Tibetan refugees are residing in Sikkim. The majority of Tibetans are grateful for the refuge offered in Sikkim, "living in Sikkim is not such a dislocation as we share cultural values with the Buddhists in Sikkim". However this does not preclude odd voices from emphasising the superiority of Tibetan culture over Sikkimese culture.

The other side of this assimilation of the Tibetan groups in Sikkim is their contemporary denigration as international refugees having stigmatised identities following their displacement from Tibet. The trope of denigration furthermasks the feelings of envy at the rapid social mobility of the Tibetansin-exile. This has been the chief reason for Bhutia antagonism towards Tibetans. Tibetans that originally came as refugees have been transformed into owners of hotels, restaurants, shops, small-scale businesses, farmers and traders and some of them are even employed in the government while many have excelled in religious education. The following excerpt is from an interview with a 30-year-old Tibetan youth who acted as my driver-guide in North Sikkim. In this excerpt he details the diverse opportunities afforded by his Tibetan refugee identity:

> Oh! It is indeed easy for us Tibetans to get a visa to go to USA, if we use the passport issued by the Tibetan government in exile. I will not use my Indian passport for applying for a visa to the United States. I have used the Indian passport when I visited Bangkok, it was easier for them to verify our particulars and issue a visa to Indian nationals as checking particulars of refugees takes time.
>
> Tibetans are welcomed in USA and a lot of the members of our community and some lamas have opened monasteries and settled in USA. There are so many associations that fund our travel, give us shelter on humanitarian grounds, and invite our lamas to give lectures and the Americans sympathise with the cause of free Tibet.
>
> I have been driving a jeep for this tourist agency during the last few tourist seasons to earn money and gain some work experience. I have taken a diploma in Tourism from the college here. These international tourists tip me well, and comment that my English is good. My brother is a lama and is settled in Los Angeles and is constantly engaged in

> teaching Buddhism to many Americans, another cousin who graduated from the medical school at Dharamsala is now an assistant to a Tibetan healer in California…my brothers will sponsor my visit and help me get the visa. I can easily earn more money over there or come back after a few years to start a business here in Sikkim.

The Tibetan diaspora is responsible for the contemporary global effervescence of Tibetan culture. The Tibetan diaspora is responsible for the contemporary global effervescence of Tibetan culture and spread of Buddhism.nce of Tibetan culture and spread of Buddhism. The Tibetan refugees are cited as an economic success story. What has contributed to this economic success of the Tibetans? Studies by both Klieger and Frechette emphasise how the Tibetans have maintained their refugee images by resisting assimilation with their host communities by maintaining ties with the Tibetan government-in-exile, and emphasising their client status with the inter-governmental, non-government organisations and international agencies of aid and relief (Klieger 1997; Frechette 2002). Other factors that have contributed to the Tibetan success story include responsive host governments in Nepal, in the former *chos rgyal* of Sikkim and in government of India; the cultural propensity of Tibetans for trade and hard work; the supportive attitude of the Tibetan government-in-exile; and lack of competition in the host context.However, I concur with Frechette (2002) that the international aid agencies and patrons have played the most important role here.

The Bhutias of Sikkim distance themselves from the Tibetans refugee images; however it is precisely this refugee image of Tibetans, which is responsible for making the community an economic success. As the following section demonstrates, the contemporary image of the Tibetan community is a reversal of the historic images of Sikkim and Tibet. Identities are social constructs and images play a central role in the construction and perception of ethnic and national identities, and this is what I seek to demonstrate in the next section.

PART II

Today both Sikkim and Tibet have lost their identity as nations but nationalism persists in the collective memory and the imagination of the people.This paper correlates ideas and theories of identity, ethnicity, and nationalism with the unexplored and unrelated dimensions of

images, which are available in the visual archives. Photographs are raw histories—the unprocessed and the painful (Edwards 2001: 5). Visual archives can be considered social biographies, which encode memory, identity and yet overcome history in their performative functions in the present (see Edwards 2001). My analysis here is restricted to the Bell photographic collection[18] placed at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. This photographic collection is biographical yet documentary in relating to the larger picture of political relations between British India, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. These historic images reveal the process of construction of images of the people and polity of Sikkim and Tibet, and enable us to understand the linkages between perception of identities and visual documentation and representation. The emergent analysis explains continuities and discontinuities in the perception of ethnic identities and their relation with national identities.

Images and Imagining Sikkim: the Bell Photographic Collection

The paper began by citing an assertion of empowerment by a Bhutia interlocutor residing along the margins of Tibet. Historically Sikkim's marginality is evident in the absence of both ethnographic and visual documentation on it. This contrasts with the Western preoccupation and fascination for Tibet.[19] Does Sikkim even have a historic image? What are the continuities and the discontinuities in the images of contemporary Sikkim? Are there any inter-relations between the images of Sikkim and Tibet? These questions pertain to history, and require an understanding of the relation between Tibet, Sikkim and British India between 1817-1947.[20] The historic images of Tibet as an independent,

[18] The collection does not necessarily comprise photographs taken by Bell himself (or by Rabden, his Lepcha orderly) but includeds the images that Bell collected. Some of these images can be traced to work of commercial photographers such as Johnston and Hoffman and Spencer Chapman, who have collections of their own.

[19] Select references include Bishop's *The Myth of Shangri-la* and *Dreams of Power*; Allen's *The Search for Shangri-la*, Dodin and Räther's edited volume *Imagining Tibet*; Korom's edited volume *Constructing Tibetan Culture*; Lopez jr.'s *Prisoners of Shangri-la*; C. Harris' *In the Image of Tibet*.

[20] The reason I have selected this time period is due to the occurrence of the following historic events: 1817 marks the entry of the British Raj in the region and in Sikkim; 1835 marks the British annexation of Darjeeling from Sikkim; in 1861, Sikkim became a protectorate of British India; in 1889, J.C. White was appointed the first Political Officer of Sikkim; although British interests were furthered in Tibet in 1904 with the Younghusband mission and the establishment of trade agencies in Tibet; 1909-

exotic Shangri-La sharply contrasts with that of Sikkim as a peripheral borderland under imperial dominance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sikkim was perceived as the threshold and the key to opening the trade route that connects British India with the riches and mystic splendour of Tibet (Lamb 1986 [1960]; Singh 1988). Significantly these historic images of Tibet and Sikkim are a result of British imperial policies, and the cultural poetics of that time (Klieger 1997; Korom 1997; McKay 1997; Dodin and Räther 2001; Lopez 2001; McKay 2001).

Since 1861, Sikkim has been a protectorate of British India. In 1889 the first Political Officer of Sikkim, John Claude White was appointed—subsequently the participation of the *cho rgyal*[21] in Sikkim's internal administration became minimal. The geographical and demographic profile of Sikkim was radically changed in the mid-nineteenth century following the annexation of Darjeeling by British India in 1835, and the large-scale settlement of Nepali groups in Sikkim in the late 1870s. In 1918 limited internal autonomy was granted to the *chos rgyal*-Maharaja although in practice the Political Officers continued to exercise an influential role. The efforts of *chos rgyal* Palden Thondup Namgyal and Queen Hope Cook, his American wife, towards reasserting Sikkim independent identity during 1947-75, were short-lived and counter-productive. They alarmed the Government of India (Gupta 1975; Datta-Ray 1984). Political instability within Sikkim, and democratic aspirations of the Nepali groups, and the rising middle class finally led to the referendum and the incorporation of Sikkim into India in 1975 (Rose 1969; Gupta 1975; Datta-Ray 1984; Rustomji 1987).

The role of politics of representation is evident in the practices of ethnographic and photographic documentation during the colonial period. In contrast to the plethora of literature that is available on Tibet there are only a handful of studies and books that can be used to reconstruct the life and culture of the people in the former Kingdom of

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12 marks the period of the exile of the Dalai Lama in Sikkim and in British India and strengthening of Anglo-Tibet ties; and significantly 1947 marks the exit of the British from India and the region.

21 After White's tenure, '*chos rgyal*' was replaced by use of 'Maharaja' and this further indicates the ascendancy of British raj.

22 Such literature includes material such as sections in the volume *Tribes and Castles of Bengal* and the seminal volume of the *Gazetter of Sikhim* (Risley 1891; Risley 1894); a book on Lamaism/the parctices of Tibetan Buddhism (Waddell 1894); two monographs on the Lepchas (see Gorer 1938; Morris 1938) and a dictionary of

Sikkim (up to 1947).[22] The photographic practices document the richness of Tibetan culture while Sikkim is a shadowy marginal presence in these images. What explains this lack of a historic image of Sikkim as a nation and of ethnographic studies on the people and culture of Sikkim? Political histories are undeniably partial histories and they may have deliberately effaced or denied the status of nation to Sikkim. However the absence of written histories and ethnographies does not prevent the communities from imagining their history and reconstituting the memories of a nation. Sikkimese nationalists and members of the nobility continually narrated the glory of the former Kingdom of Sikkim during my fieldwork in Sikkim. Given the paucity in literature and in scholarship on Sikkim, reconstructing an image of Sikkim as a nation became a challenging task for me. Hence I turned to the visual archives on Sikkim. Treating these photographs as social biographies enables me to trace the continuities and discontinuities in the imagination of communities and nations in contexts where ethnographic documentation is limited, as is the case of Sikkim.

The credit for fashioning the historic and contemporary image of Tibet is attributed to the Tibet cadre[23] (Korom 1997; McKay 1997; Dodin and Räther 2001; McKay 2001).[24] Why focus on the Charles Bell photographic collection? Initially it was the semiotic strength of the collection that impressed me.However the chief architect of these images and imaginings of Tibet and Sikkim has been Sir Charles Bell, who was the Political Officer of Sikkim between 1908 to 1921 and 1919

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their grammar and language (Mainwaring 1876); a collection of myths and folklore (de Beauvoir Stocks 1927 [reprint 1975]); the writings of some political officers who served in the region (Macdonald 1929; Macdonald 1932; White 1971; Waddell 1978; Williamson and Snelling 1987); travelogues (Hooker 1891; Brown 1922; Temple 1977) and some scattered articles. Even the text History of Sikkim that glorifies the Namgyal dynasty of Sikkim includes a narrative of Sikkim as a country constantly being invaded by the Gorkha of Nepal or the Bhutanese neighbours. Herein Sikkim emerges as a weak polity constantly approaching either H.H the Dalai Lama in Tibet or requesting the British to intercede as peacemakers. The text ends in 1908. Significantly the second half of the text narrates an alternative perspective on Anglo-Sikkim-Tibet relations and ends with White's departure in 1908, and Charles Bell's entry into Sikkim (Dolma and Namgyal 1908).

[23] This refers to an elite band of 20 British officials who served in various capacities as Political Officers of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, as trade agents and medical officers in the region, and shaped the Anglo-Tibet relations between 1904 and 1947 (McKay 2001).

[24] It is admitted that the voices of the subalterns and other Europeans were suppressed or muted by the politics of representation, censorship and the commercialisation of the Tibet mystic image by the Tibet cadre (McKay 2001).

to 1921 and stationed at Gangtok in Sikkim (McKay 1997; McKay 2001). During 1920-21 Sir Charles spent a year as the head of the Lhasa mission to Tibet. In 1910 Sir Charles had befriended H.H. the Dalai Lama who was living in exile in Sikkim and India, and subsequently played a major role in the negotiation of treaties between British India, China and Tibet during this period (McKay 1997; McKay 2001: 78-90).

Apart from the manual on colloquial Tibetan, Sir Charles Bell has authored three influential monographs on religion, culture and people of Tibet that have become classics on the subject (refer to Bell 1927; Bell 1928; Bell 1968). However there is hardly anything comparable either in either literature or in images on Sikkim. The lack of documentation on Sikkim is intriguing given his association with the region dates back to 1904.[25] Undoubtedly Sir Charles was preoccupied with administrative responsibilities in Sikkim. Perhaps this explains his lack of interest in inscribing the familiar and known of everyday life in comparison to documenting a unique opportunity offered in the Lhasa mission. The lack could be explained by his political role in Sikkim, his personal social background and training, and partly by the elitist orientations of the Tibet cadre.

Many photographs from the collection were used by Sir Charles to illustrate his books, and these early pictures fashioned the image and western imagining of Tibet and Sikkim to the world. Photographs are little theatres of history, while privileging some experiences they have the capacity to destabilise the broader historical narrative (Edwards 2001: 16-21). The Bell pictures are black and white and well composed. The richness of the photographic collection is evident in the diversity of themes and contexts pictured that range from economic pursuits, culture, rituals, landscapes, architecture, the material culture of people of Tibet, and of Sikkim. How has Sikkim been pictured in the Bell collection? There are approximately 200 images on Sikkim in a large collection of approximately 850[26] photographs placed at the Pitt Rivers Museum.[27] The majority of the images pertain to Bell's stay in Tibet

[25] He was given the administrative charge of Chumbi valley between 1904-5, and acted as the Political Officer of Sikkim between May-November 1904, September 1906-January 1907, and then until White's retirement in October 1908 (McKay 1997: 43, 229).

[26] About 822 images have been catalogued, and members of the staff state that there are about 30-40 other images that have yet to be catalogued, and some of these are of poor quality (see Harris, Shakya *et al*. 2003: 143-44).

[27] Some images from the Bell collection are available at http://visualtibet.org/.

during 1920-21, and the collection is supplemented by an exchange of photographs with other British officials.

The Lhasa mission of 1920-21 led by Bell is regarded as the first diplomatic mission to Tibet. During this eleven-month period, Sir Charles was the honoured guest of H.H the Dalai Lama and in an enviable position. In contrast pictures on Sikkim inscribe the trade route between Tibet and Sikkim, and events connected with negotiations between Tibet, Sikkim and the British Raj. Thematically these Sikkim photographs depict the people of Sikkim (predominantly the Lepchas and Bhutias with the Nepali being framed out); the natural scenery of Sikkim's mountains, valleys, rivers and passes; its various monasteries and lamas; the places connected with the trade route between Sikkim and Tibet; the members of Royal Family and the nobility of Sikkim; ceremonial State occasions and the Royal Durbar of 1911; and biographical moments from Sir Charles' life in Sikkim as indicated in pictures capturing his lifestyle, members of his family and friends, and the Residency staff working for him.

The Bell collection can undoubtedly be categorised under the genre of 'picturing empire' (Ryan 1997). These images document the ascendancy of British Raj in Sikkim, and confirm the elitist orientation of the photographer. However the colonial gaze cannot be blamed for lack of comparable visual documentation on Sikkim, as this is explained by the differences in material culture and political presence of two nations. Perhaps the scale and the splendour of the Tibetan empire precluded Bell's interest in the picturing of Sikkim. The Bell images are indeed elitist,[28] and images of commoners are too few and are overshadowed by the emphasis on the inscription of the riches of Lhasa. The magnificence and opulence of Lhasa, Tibet's capital, are a remarkable contrast to Gangtok, Sikkim's capital. Gangtok became the capital of Sikkim under the British in 1894. Gangtok is pictured and at that time a big hill with some houses, with the Maharaja's palace and the British residency just below it (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.14 see Plate 1). Pictures of the Gangtok palace are entirely missing, as if it has no architectural, aesthetic and photographic significance. In biographical mode there are some pictures of the residency at Gangtok where Sir Charles Bell lived (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.28; 1998: 285.10).

[28] Indeed only the elite had the resources for photography during this period.

The bias for Tibet is further evident in the comparable documentation of Buddhist rituals and monasteries in Tibet and Sikkim. The Bell collection has three images connected with Pemagayantse monastery. The main being one with some of its lamas standing outside Pemagayantse although it is regarded the apex monastery of Sikkim (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.341 see Plate 2). In contrast the Bell collection has numerous pictures of the Potala (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.80), and the other grand monasteries of Tibet such as Sera (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.210; 1998: 285.294), Reting (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285-367), Drepung (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.425), Ganden (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.367), and Samding (PRM new catalogue: 1998: 285.135). Sir Charles Bell concentrated attention on Lhasa, and circulation of these images has underplayed the regional differences and inequalities within Tibet. The Lhasa images have exoticised Tibet for the Western imagination (Harris, Shakya *et al.* 2003). The Lhasa images of Tibet have directly contributed to the marginality of ethnic Tibetan groups such as the Bhutia residing in Sikkim.

The differences in the construction of historic images and visual representation of Sikkim and Tibet are salient in the style of picturing of the temporal rulers of Tibet and Sikkim. Images of H.Hthe 13th Dalai Lama sitting on his ceremonial throne in the Norbu Lingka, Lhasa (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.87) contrast with the lack of any comparable picture for the Maharaja of Sikkim. Although Sir Charles' relations with the three Maharajas of Sikkim (Thutob Namgyal, Sidekyong Tulku, and Tashi Namgyal) are documented as being cordial. Undoubtedly these relations were delimited by the parameters of the interests of the British Raj (Singh 1988; McKay 1997). We find the Maharaja of Sikkim pictured with Sir Charles Bell in a subordinate position or rather Sir Charles Bell assumes the position of the central figure as observed in a group picture taken after the wedding of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal wherein the royal couple is sitting on either side of Sir Charles Bell (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.98 see Plate 4). Another interesting image (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.512) depicts the H.H 13th Dalai Lama and Sir Charles Bell sitting with Maharaja Kumar Sidekyong Tulku standing diminutively between them. Regional disparities, and internal conflicts between H.H the Dalai Lama and the Tashi Lama, and the latter's machinations for autonomy with China's help are silenced in these images.

The Bell images have contributed to H.H the Dalai Lama's identity as the undisputed ruler of Tibet. In another picture H.H the 13th Dalai Lama is framed in the centre on either side with Sir Charles Bell on the left and the King of Bhutan on the right (PRM new catalogue 1998: 285.98), and the picture was taken in 1910 during the Imperial Durbar at Calcutta. In the hierarchy of positioning in this frame Maharaja Kumar Sidekyong Tulku is placed on the left of Sir Charles Bell as his charge while the King of Bhutan has his nobles on his side. In all these images, Sikkim is depicted as a dependent state while Tibet is projected as an independent nation, despite the 13th Dalai Lama being in exile when these photographs were taken.[29] In these pictures the figures pose formally for historical inscription. It is the British Raj that is centrally positioned and represented forcefully in the paternal figure of Sir Charles Bell.

Sir Charles' photographs have effectively framed the parameters of the identity and nationality, and constituted the image of Sikkim and its ethnic groups. In many ways these images have misrepresented Sikkim by not documenting the changes in its ethnic profile. Sir Charles Bell's predecessor, J.C. White's colonial policies of mass immigration of Nepali groups are responsible for altering the demography of Sikkim and accountable for the contemporary ethnic turmoil in Sikkim (McKay 1997: 36-37). Sikkim is ethnically pictured as the land of the Lepcha and the Bhutias in the Bell photographs. There are one or two images of Nepali as labourers in Sikkim. Significantly it is during the tenure of Sir Charles Bell that the landmark law of Land Revenue Order no.1 was implemented. This law prohibits the sale and purchase of the Bhutia-Lepcha lands by non-Bhutias-Lepchas. The construction of Bhutia-Lepcha group as the indigenous inhabitants of Sikkim is evident in the picturing of Sikkim. While the immigrant Nepali presence is framed by their absence as subjects worthy of documentation.

These silences demonstrate the constraints and pitfalls in using photographs as social biographies. However there are alternative histories present in other photographic collections, and sometimes in isolated images that were taken by European travellers. It is in these sporadic spontaneous photographs of market scenes, of agricultural fields and

[29] Following Bell's advice, Tibet consciously adopted the signs and symbols of independence such as flag, currency and stamps. Tibet strengthened its military and economy with guidance from the British (McKay 2001: 78).

tea gardens, and in the routes travelled and inscribed that the silences established by the Bell collection are challenged. The ethnic diversity is visibly alive among people playing the tug-of-war, running races, playing musical chairs, market scenes and in the State ceremonies documented in the Williamson films and photographic albums[30] placed at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge. For instance, a random picture (P.96365.WIL in Album 1 of the Williamson collection see Plate 5) taken in October 1931 at Kyosing market in South Sikkim documents the multi-ethnic composition of Sikkim and inscribes the presence of the Nepali in the market.

In another picture entitled 'Gangtok sports' (P.97324 in Album 4 of the Williamson collection) one finds a crowd of people looking at two players struggling to outbalance each other over a pole. The crowd of onlookers inscribed in the pictures demonstrates the substantial presence of Nepali groups in Sikkim.

Significantly, these photographic collections enable us to see narratives, the continuities and discontinuities in images and imagining of Sikkim. Undeniably the past and present is constantly being reinterpreted in both images and imaginings of communities and nations. I conclude this paper by stressing that ideas of centrality and marginality of identity are dynamic constructions in ethnic and nationalist discourses. This is explicit in contemporary discourses on Bhutia and Tibetan identities and their relation with the historic images on Sikkim and Tibet.

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[30] The Williamson collection comprises 5 albums containing about 1731 images, with 535 on Tibet, and 486 on Sikkim. It is a rich photographic collection having both documentary and autobiographical elements in it. The formal pictures are balanced by the visual inscription of the humane encounter between the Williamsons and the nobility of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. I have detailed my analysis of the Williamson collection in a separate article.

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Plate 1: Gangtok, Sikkim. Sir Charles Bell. Pitt-Rivers Museum

Plate 2: The lamas of Pemagayantse Monastery. Sir Charles Bell. Pitt-Rivers Museum

Plate 3: Sir Charles Bell, flanked by H.H. the 13th Dalai Lama and H.M. King of Bhutan on the right and the H.M. Maharaja Kumar Sidekyong Tulku of Sikkim on the left at the Imperial Durbar at Calcutta, 1910. Pitt-Rivers Museum

Plate 4: Marriage of the Maharaja Tashi Namgyal with Sir Charles Bell in Centre. Pitt-Rivers Museum

Plate 5: Kyosing market in southern Sikkim. Sir Charles Bell. Pitt-Rivers Museum

THE RGYAL RONG NEW YEAR: A CASE HISTORY OF CHANGING IDENTITY[1]

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INTRODUCTION

The Rgyal rong (*Jiarong*)[2] Tibetans[3] live at the far eastern border of the Tibetan culture area in west Sichuan Province, in the People's Republic of China. The Rgyal rong area consists of steep mountains intersected with deep valleys and fast-flowing rivers. Here, the Rgyal rong farm steep-sloping terraced fields, growing barley, wheat, and potatoes. These high altitude farmers live in small villages or clusters of houses spread out over the mountains.

Scholars have long thought that the Rgyal rong speak an archaic dialect of Tibetan. Thought the classification of Rgyal rong is still an issue of debate, especially among scholars in the PRC, it is becoming generally accepted among linguists that Rgyal rong is actually a distinct language belonging to the Qiangic branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.[4] There are an estimated 150,000-200,000 Rgyal rong speakers.[5]

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[1] The original title of this paper, as read at the 10th IATS conference, was "A mye sgo ldong: the hero of the Rgyal rong Tibetans. A pre-Buddhist New Year celebration".

[2] I give all proper names in romanised Tibetan spelling first, with a Chinese *pin yin* equivalent (if available) in brackets on the first occurrence.

[3] Defining the term 'Rgyal rong' is fraught with difficulty. First, 'Rgyal rong' is not a self-appellation but a loan word from Tibetan, the term by which outsiders refer to some aspect or other of 'Rgyal rong-ness'. Second, the term can carry different meanings, depending on whether it is defined by historical, political, geographical, or linguistic arguments. Here I use 'Rgyal rong' to indicate both the historical entity of the Eighteen Principalities (see below) and the area of the distribution of the Rgyal rong language. This last usage of the term has only recently become more common, perhaps because of linguistic work published in and outside of the PRC, which uses the term in a narrow sense. This paper centres around the geographical area of present day 'Bar khams (*Maerkang*) County, historically in the Situ area [region of the Four Tushi: Dam pa (*Dangba*), Song 'gag (*Songgang*), So mang (*Suomo*) and Cog rtse (*Zuokeji*)].

[4] Cf. Sun Hongkai 1990, Wang 1992, Lin 1992, and Mkhyen rab 'od gsal 1995. Much of the discussion concering the classification of the Rgyal rong language within the PRC is informed by political arguments deriving from the *minzu* or 'nationality' identification project of the 1950s. For a discussion of the term *minzu* and the language criterion see Crossley 1990. See also Prins 2002: 29-30.

Until the 1950s the Rgyal rong lived in principalities, of which there were traditionally 18, administered by hereditary chieftains under the Chinese *tushi* system. The authority of the chieftains dervived from the emperor in Beijing, but the chieftains ruled in their areas as virtually autonomous kings.[6] The *tushi* system, which in some of the Rgyal rong principalities remained unchanged until the establishment of the PRC,[7] ensured contact with and influence from Han areas for a period of several centuries.

The Rgyal rong largely adhere to Tibetan Buddhism, with many Bon communities throughout the area. Religiously, the Rgyal rong are oriented towards Lhasa.

From a historical perspective, the Rgyal rong are a definitive people of the margins. At the farthest edge of the Tibetan culture area, their Tibetan Buddhist orientation ensured a strong link with the Tibetan entity as a whole. But as people of the Eighteen Principalities, ruled by chieftains under the emperor, their politics were always oriented towards Beijing.

This position on the margins, sandwiched between two giants, relying on both for different resources (political power from Beijing; religious authority from Lhasa) afforded the Rgyal rong a sense of indepenence and separate identity. This status was altered radically in the 1950s with the abolition of the last *tushi*. The Rgyal rong not only lost their visibility as a separate political unity, they were also incorporated into the newly created Tibetan nationality as a result of the government's project to make an inventory and award minority status to non-Han peoples living within the PRC. This status ideally confers benefits on groups so recognised, ranging from political representation and language recognition to economic development and preferential policies in education and family planning.

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[5] Lin 1993: 1. Demographics for Rgyal rong are a complex issue. Because the Rgyal rong are considered part of the Tibetan nationality there are no separate figures for their population. Also, it is by no means clear what the criteria for inclusion in the Rgyal rong group should be. The application of historical, geographical, or linguistic criteria would each yield different results. Even the estimate of speakers as quoted aboute is not clear. The Rgyal rong area is linguistically diverse, and there is an ongoing discussion as to the parameters of Rgyal rong language. See Sun 2000.

[6] Though the Rgyal rong *tushi* ruled by the authority of the emperor, they were kings in their own realms.

[7] The lineage of Dam pa (present day Dangba Township in 'Bar khams County) continued into the new era, with the last chieftain taking up a position as an official in the local administration of Dam pa in the PRC government.

The PRC's project to identitfy minority groups and award them minority nationality status has been well documented, including various studies on the criteria used in identifying and recognising minority groups, the difficulties in applying those criteria and curious outcomes of 'identity' and 'ethnic consciousness' of the groups involved.[8] In the case of the Rgyal rong Tibetans, the administration of the PRC was inclined, mainly on the grouds of linguistic arguments, to grant minority nationality status to the Rgyal rong. This drew protests from Tibetan scholars, who perceived it as an attempt to break up the larger Tibetan cultural entity. In the end the Rgyal rong wer placed within the Tibetan minority nationality.[9] Today the Rgyal rong remain part of the Tibetan nationality as defined by the present administration of the PRC.[10]

According to Barth, cultural differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence.[11] Harrell has noted that ethnic consciousness, in the sense of an awareness of belonging to an ethnic group, can arise when there are new kinds of interactions between peoples, i.e. when life's circumstances change.[12] Presumably, the more drastic the change, the more pronounced the sense of ethnic consciousness or ethnic identity. Harrell also remarks that civilising projects,[13] as the one undertaken by the PRC's government, can lead to newly developed ethnic identities when none existed before, or to a re-focussing of an already existing one.[14] It is also commonly acknowledged that self-identification played no significant role during many of the nationality identity discussions.[15]

Virtually nothing is known about Rgyal rong self-perceptions, either for the period before the establishment of the PRC or afterwards.

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[8] See the case studies of McKhann 1995; Harrell 1996; Diamond 1995. For a more general overview see Harrell 1995.

[9] Prins 2002: 29.

[10] Discussion of Rgyal rong identity issues is complicated by the passions stirred up in the 1950s and 1980s, during the PRC's process of granting minority nationality status. The controversy surrounding the Rgyal rong recommendation for separate *minzu* status should be viewed against the background of the larger ethno-political issues at stake for Tibetans and administrators of the PRC. As far as I know, the Rgyal rong are quite happy with their present status, but the issue remains a sensitive one to many scholars in the PRC, both Tibetan and Han.

[11] Barth 1969: 10.

[12] Harrell 1995: 28.

[13] *Ibid*.: 3-36.

[14] *Ibid.*: 27.

[15] See Diamond 1995: 108.

Regarding the issue of Rgyal rong identity before radical changes of the 1950s, is it possible to learn anything about how the Rgyal rong perceived themselves, especially as a group in constant contact with and dependent upon the Han and Tibetan entities? Second, how has the establishment of the PRC, with its minority nationality surveys and incorporation of the Rgyal rong into the Tibetan nationality, influenced that perception?

The Rgyal rong, while perceived by many on the outside as transmitting their culture in a primarily oral mode, actually possess a corpus of literature that has only recently come to the attention of scholars.[16] A number of these texts concern the Rgyal rong New Year, centering on the hero of the Rgyal rong, A mye sgo ldong (AS). To this day the New Year festival is celebrated in parts of the Rgyal rong area. During the festival each family individually welcomes the warrior hero AS, who comes each year to do away with evil forces in the region. Each household that welcomes AS comes under his protection and blessing until his return the following year. The traditional Rgyal rong New Year celebration is a crucial occasion for the expression of local Rgyal rong identity. I describe the practice of the Rgyal rong New Year festival, first as it was under the *tushi* system and then as it is still celebrated in some areas.

First, I chart the contours of Rgyal rong identity and self-perception as it was before the 1950s. I describe the New Year festival as it was celebrated at the court of Dam pa (*Dangba*),[17] one of the old Rgyal rong principalities that can serve to exemplify the larger Rgyal rong entity. The picture of Rgyal rong self-perception I derive from one of the Rgyal rong classical texts is based in a hearth speech that was part of the New Year's celebration at the court of Dam pa.

Second, I give a description of modern New Year practices in Mkho no (*Kong long*).[18] The festival as celebrated today is a mere shadow of

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[16] I am pleased to acknowledge the support of the Trace Foundation for the project of making available a number of these texts from the collection of Professor Ngag dbang tshul khrims of Chengdu to the public.

[17] Present day Dangba Township, Maerkang County, Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Dam pa was one of the smaller Rgyal rong principalities; it was invested with the imperial seal only as late as the 18th century. Today Dam pa is a quiet farming community of about 3,000 people.

[18] Kong long village, in Jiaomuzu Township, Maerkang County, Aba Prefecture, Sichuan. The area, formerly part of Rdzong 'gag (*Songgan*) Principality, is also a quiet farming community.

the elaborate festivities that were once common throughout the Rgyal rong principalities. Observation of the modern variant of the festival gives some clues about Rgyal rong self-perception under the altered circumstances of modern society and incorporation into the Tibetan nationality.

I focus on the ceremony and ritual that take place on the first day. The hearth speech is a common feature of Rgyal rong culture in both Dam pa and Mkho no. Important facets of Rgyal rong life are recounted by an elder duing this speech, tending to reinforce values and worldview. The speeches from Dam pa[19] and Mkho no represent traditional society and current practice, respectively, and demonstrate a clear shift in perception of Rgyal rong identity.

The New Year Celebration at Dam Pa

The celebration of Rgyal rong New Year at the court of Dam pa was a grand occasion. The festival would start off with a solemn gathering in the great hall of the king's palace. The entire royal family, the royal household, all the nobles and headmen and many of the commoners would be present. After the ceremony and ritual there would be great feasting with dancing and singing. For a period of about two weeks, the people of Dam pa would celebrate. The king and his headmen would visit families of commoners, bringing presents and wishes of good luck for the new year. The emperor would send gifts and good wishes to the king. The A mye sgo ldong festival was the event of the year.[20]

At the heart of this celebration was not simply the turning of one year into the next. Rather, it was a festival deeply rooted in origin myths concerning the formation of the Tibetan people, and the specific place of the Rgyal rong among them. This is told through the actions of their hero, the Tibetan A mye sgo ldong. This is clear from the content of the ceremony held on the first day. During the solemn gathering, the king's speaker, also master of ceremonies, would give a hearth speech after welcoming the guests. A *bsangs* or smoke offering was an intergral part of the moment.

[19] The Dam pa hearth speech, judging from textual evidence, probably dates from the 19th century.

[20] Li 1995: 946, 957-63. Though Li's description is actually for a New Year's gathering at the court of Rdzong 'gag, the Dam pa hearth speech gives more than enough internal evidence to apply Li's description to the principality of Dam pa as well.

According to Karmay,[21] myth, in the Tibetan tradition, is an integral part of the rite. Together with ritual action it forms a 'model' (*dpe srol*). The myth is the 'account', and ritual action is the re-enactment of the mythical past.

For this paper I present an abridged New Year's hearth speech in the court of Dam pa. The focal language of the speech reflects its importance and the high status of the royal personages. It is read in a very high register, and garlanded with flowery language. There is extensive use of Tibetan loanwords, especially for technical, religious terms. This reflects the esteem in which the Tibetan language is held.

The text begins with an introduction in which the stage is set. The king, his household, and other guests are welcomed, and the narrator proceeds to give the reason for the gathering, i.e. the celebration of the hero AS.

There follows a section of accounts or myths. The narrator talks about the origins of the world, winding his way down (through the origins of *lha, klu,* and humans; the origins of good and evil; a creation account; and the origins of royal lineages) to the principality of Dam pa, its position in the natural and political world. The second section forms the core of the hearth speech, which recounts the formation of the Tibetan *rus chen* and the defeat of the demonic forces of the *bdud* by the Tibetan tribes.

These accounts are followed by three rituals: an offering of wine and food to AS as guest of honor and to the other guests. A *bsangs* or smoke offering for the warrior deities[22] of the Tibetan tribes; and a banquet for the protector deities and the hindering forces.

The text concludes with a section of well wishing and prayers. The core of the hearth speech, the accounts of the formation of the Tibetan tribes[23] and the war against the *bdud,* goes back to a text of the 13th century call *Dbu nag mi'u 'dra chags* ("the appearance of the little black headed man"). This text is concerned with the formation of the Tibetan tribes. Apparently the text is based on an oral tradition preserved in a dialect from Khams.[24] The existence of this text, and the oral tradition

[21] Karmay, 1998: 245.

[22] Literally 'enemy gods', but serve the role of protectors.

[23] *Rus chen*, not necessarily an anthropological designation.

[24] Karmay 1998: 245-81, 413-22, remarks that the language of the text is obscure and that the story is incoherent. He links these difficulties to the text being based on oral tradition in a Kham dialect. This remark immediately raises the question

on which it is based, demonstrates that some form of the AS festival, the traditional Rgyal rong New Year, dates back at least as far as the 13th century.

Dbu nag mi'u 'dra chags relates the story of a man named Khri tho chen po who married a *gnyan* woman. They had three sons, Ldong, Dbra, and 'Gru. Then he married a *dmu* woman and they had one son, Dmu tsha sga. Then he married a *srin* woman, and they had two sons, Dbal and Lda. These sons beame the six great tribes of Tibet.

The narrative continues: One day Khri tho chen po's yaks are stolen by *bdud* bandits. Khri tho chen po chases the robbers, but his *gnyan* wife, afraid that he may get hurt, tries to waylay him in the form of a frog. Khri tho chen po, already angry at the loss of the yaks, kills the frog, not knowing she is his wife. The father of the wife hears her cries, and thinking his daughter is dying, shoots an arrow that kills Khri tho chen po.

At the murder, Khri tho chen po's six sons first demand compensation from the *gnyan* for killing their father; when they receive the compensation they take revenge on the *bdud*. The payment consists of various animals. Four of the brothers are content—their animals become the *dgra bla*, the warrior deity of each of their tribes. But two brothers are unsatisfied with the compensation offered. They take no further part in the expedition to revenge the yak stealing. The warriors of 'Gru, the successful tribe, obtain the *chang* of the *bdud*, which is the 'nectar of rejuvenation'.

This is the essence of the myth from Dam pa as well. The name of the father Khri tho chen po has been changed to Rgyal bum thing ka. And the victorious tribe of 'Gru has become a solitary hero, the Tibetan A mye sgo ldong, who defeats all the demonic forces.

Immediately after the accounts of the Rgyal bum thing ka and A mye sgo ldong in the hearth speech of Dam pa follows the section concering the *bsangs* or smoke offering. The *bsangs* offerings are made to each one of the warrior deities of the six great Tibetan tribes, and their blessings for those tribes are invoked. Samten Karmay[25] has pointed out that the *bsangs* is basically a purification ritual. When someone performs an impure deed the gods are offended by what he is doing to him-

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of whether the oral tradition may have been an early form of the AS legends, and if so, if the 'dialect' involved may have been Rgyal rong or a related language.

[25] Karmay 1998: 380-89.

self and his environment. Consequently, the gods withdraw their favour. *A bsangs* ritual takes away the defilement and so restores the balance between humans, gods, and the environment. One act that causes defilement is murder, especially if it is a killing within a family or a clan. And murder is at the heart of the myth of origin in the Dam pa hearth speech and in *Dbu nag mi'u 'dra chags*, with the husband killing his wife (Rgyal bum thing ka), killing the frog and the *gnyan* killing his son-in-law (the *gnyan* killing Rgyal bum thing ka). The *bsangs* in the Dam pa hearth speech functions to cleanse the defilement of the past year of the people and the land of *Dam pa*, so as to restore harmony in the universe and make a fresh start of the New Year.

When the *bsangs* is performed once a year by the whole community, as indicated by the hearth speech in *Dam pa*, it assumes a sociopolitical character. Participation in the ritual implies that one places oneself under the protection of the deity to whom the offering is made, and it implies total integration into the community. This brings about inherited social, political, moral, and individual obligation and responsibility. Another aspect is the affirmation of communal solidarity in the face of external aggression—problems and conflicts within the community offend the deity. As favor is withdrawn, the power and prosperity of the community is decreased.[26]

The importance of the ritual enactment of the Rgyal bum thing ka and A mye Sgo ldong myths for the community of Dam pa is that it reconfirms the identity of the people as belonging to AS and to each other, a group bound by mutual obligation and positioned under the renewed protection of AS and the King of Dam pa, as opposed to any other group or individual.

The above represents the framework for *Rgyal rong* identity as represented in Dam pa. The Dam pa hearth speech is concerned with the origins of the Tibetan *rus chen* and with the appropriate way of maintaining the favour of the tutelary god of each tribe. The perspective of the text is clearly 'Tibetan', however difficult is would be to define that term. Quite apart from the references to religious concepts, and the listing of 'Tibetan' symbols such as the Eight Auspicious Emblems and the Seven Royal Treasures, the text explicitly links the royal family and the people of Dam pa with the Tibetan culture area.

[26] *Jiarong Zangzu Diaocha Cailiao*: 16-17.

Plate 1: Stencil of the sun in tsampa is placed on the wall for New Year's

Plate 2: Construction of an altar decoration

Plate 3: Completed New Year's altar

THE BALTISTAN MOVEMENT: TIBETAN HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN THE NORTHERN AREAS OF PAKISTAN

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INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with recent attempts to relocate the dislocated identity of the Tibeto-Burman speaking people of Baltistan, a region in the Northeast corner of the Northern Areas of Pakistan, bordered by India in the south and the Karakoram Mountains and China in the north. They are spearheaded by a group of activists who have launched a number of projects in order to create and promote a new sense of 'Baltiness'. I intend to deal with the concept of 'identity' in a social movement context rather than one of critical theory. The purpose is to shed some light on the most important building blocks in the activists' discourse of Baltiness. As Gamson (2003: 36) has pointed out, "Clear categories of collective identity are necessary for resistance and political gain.… Fixed identity categories are both the basis for oppression and the basis for political power".

In an interesting contribution to *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, A.J. Norval (2001: 183) discusses how South Africa's memory of the past was negotiated and reconstructed by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in order to 'suture the fissures' that opened up as a result of the period of deep dislocation following the transition from apartheid. A similar argument can be made about the Northern Areas of Pakistan after Partition. The end of the British rule and the splitting of the subcontinent into two states—India and Pakistan—threw the region into a period of dislocated identities. In the Northern Areas of Pakistan a number of groups looked to become part of a pan-Islamic nation. With the Kashmir dispute remaining unresolved, however, the Northern Areas have become a 'disputed area' and its people still lack full citizenship and civil rights. During the last two decades various movements in the area have started to promote contending, non-Pakistani identities, rein-

venting pre-Partition and sometimes even pre-Islamic elements of local histories.

In his study of nationalist discourse in the Northern Areas, German anthropologist Martin Sökefeld (1999) identified two main patterns in this development: 1) the celebration of a cultural and historical unity of the region and a shared identity of its people in order to constitute the Northern Areas as a nation, and 2) the activists engaged in these issues are mainly young men who went south to Pakistan for higher education, and then returned to the Northern Areas to fund organisations like Balawaristan National Front, Hunza-Nager National Movement, Boloristan Democratic Front, Karakorum National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan Jamhuri Mahaz, etc.

When referring to their culture and history, the activists in the Baltistan Movement often visualise a Golden Age when Baltistan was under Tibetan influence, and to their 'brothers' in Kargil and Ladakh. In accounts of Baltistan's history it is often stated that the Tibetans occupied Baltistan while attempting to gain control over Turkistan (Xinjiang), and that Tibetan dbu chen scripts as well as Buddhist doctrine was introduced during this time.

It is clear that Baltistan has been influenced by Tibetan culture from its early history up to today. Some of my informants have told me that Buddhists from Ladakh and even Tibet used to visit these sites on pilgrimage up to Partition. But the strongest reminder of a Tibetan past is the fact that the majority of Balti still speak an archaic dialect of Western Tibetan related to Purig and Ladakhi. Unlike in Dbus gtsang, many of the words are pronounced the way they are spelled. Over the years dbu chen more or less fell out of use and was replaced by the Perso-Arabic script (Nastaliq) used to write Urdu. But despite modern attempts to introduce additional letters it has been very difficult to adapt Nastaliq script to the phonetics of Balti.

What does the historical relationship between Tibet and Baltistan look like? Reading the history of the Western Tibetan empire and of Baltistan (e.g. Beckwith 1987; Hoffman 1990), one realises that there are not many sources to draw on. At a conference in Tibetan studies I consulted two of the world's leading experts in the field. They argued for hours without reaching a conclusion.

Pakistani historian Ahmad Hasan Dani writes about two distinct periods of Buddhism in the history of Baltistan: the period between the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. when Buddhism was introduced either from

Kashmir or Gilgit, and at the time of the Tibetan conquest of Baltistan in the 8th century (Dani 2001: 213). According to Dani (2001: 214), the Tibetan interest in the region was a result of the consolidation of dynastic rule in Tibet. At the end of the 9th century, however, a new state power started to develop and Baltistan remained independent until the time of the Mughals. Despite this, the Mughals considered Baltistan as part of Tibet and their expansion did not really touch the region until the end of the 16th century. It was only under the rule of emperors Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb that Baltistan came under Mughal rule.

The people of Baltistan had most likely become Muslims before the Mughals arrived. Francke (1998) has argued that since the rulers of Baltistan invented a Muslim pedigree going back to Sultan Sikandar at the end of the 14th century, Islam was probably introduced at that time. Dani, however, argues that Buddhism was practised until the time of the Muslim saint Amir-i-Kabir Sayyid Ali Hamadani in the 15th century (Dani 2001: 232).

From the mid-19th century up to Partition, Baltistan was ruled by the Dogra, who were a Kashmiri dynasty. It was backed by the British seeking to protect the northern frontier from Russian influence. At Partition, the maharaja of Kashmir, Sir Hari Singh, despite the fact that the large majority of people in the region were Muslims, decided to incorporate his domain in the Indian state. But strong Muslim forces in Baltistan and elsewhere in the Northern Areas (then called Gilgit Agency) wanted to be part of the new Islamic State of Pakistan and a rebellion broke out. Pakistan's new government was supportive of the rebels' claim. Subsequently Kashmir was split into two parts and Baltistan came under Pakistan's control (see Lamb 1991). Up until Partition, public administration, economic relationships (trade and property), and family bonds reached across Baltistan, Kargil, and Ladakh. The ties were reduced to a minimum with Kargil and Ladakh on the Indian side of the LOC (Line of Control).

What is going on in Baltistan today has, so far, attracted little attention from the outside world but is nevertheless interesting since it involves attempts to recreate an identity that cuts through the present geopolitical boundaries of the region. It is of vital importance for the future development of the Kashmir issue and the bilateral relations between Pakistan and India. Although the developments in Baltistan fit well within the general development in the Northern Areas since the

1980s, it is distinguished from other parts of the region by its Tibetan heritage.

Contrary to the patterns identified by Sökefeld, the new Baltiness is not based on a sense of kinship with other groups in the Northern Areas but on a sense of belonging to a Tibetan cultural area and identification with the people of Kargil and Ladakh. The Balti activists often speak about a cultural affinity with Kargil and Ladakh as 'unchanged twins'.

The contradictory patterns can perhaps be overcome if we try to move beyond the identity paradigm used by Sökefeld, and look at patterns of social change in general. Although the new organisations vary in ideological content, voice, and specific purposes, they share a common property, namely that the large majority of them have been formed at approximately the same time. The argument here is that the emergence of these organisations signifies a social change in the making, and a social movement moving towards new identities. They can be seen as markers of social change. They have competing religious, ethnic, and political affiliation but they all fall back on the situation created by the disputed territorial criteria, promoting identities that are different from a Pakistani identity, and some form of autonomy based on various combinations of the sub-regional areas stretching from Chitral in the west via Gilgit and Baltistan to Ladakh, Kargil, Azad Kashmir, and Kashmir.

The primary data for this paper, especially the ethnographic account of the case of the Baltistan Cultural Federation, and the far-reaching network of present and former members of the Baltistan Student Federation (BSF), stems mostly from interviews with people who are either active in the Baltistan movement or are part of its network. Some of these interviews were carried out over the last 2-3 years although most of them were made during a field study in Baltistan in the summer of 2004. The research project is being carried out in cooperation with Mohammad Hassan (Skardu Government College in Baltistan) and Ole Jensen (Department of International Development and Geography, Roskilde University Centre, Denmark). The field study in Baltistan was funded by a grant from SASNET (Swedish South Asian Studies Network).

New Organisations and Social Change

The organised activities in the Baltistan Movement are identified as being of the same kind as many other interactions in the Northern Areas today. Although promoting its own and often distinctive Balti context, the Baltistan Movement is an indication of great social change in the region. It reflects the common perceptions of the nearby societies in the Northern Areas.

One way of studying social change and social movements is to focus on the emergence and practices of new organisations outside the established organisational fields. Perhaps the most recognised representative for the hypothesis of a correlation between social change and the emergence of new organisations is American sociologist Arthur Stinchcombe. His main argument is that the structure of an organisation can be seen as an impression of the surrounding social structure (1986). This is not a static state where society reproduces organisations in its own image, but a dynamic mechanism where large changes in the social structure cause new types or organisations to emerge and multiply rapidly. In such a perspective, the organisations emerging in the Northern Areas of Pakistan over the last decades emulate each other and are similar despite their political, religious, and ethnic differences. They are active in the same political field and organisational space. The opening of the field and space is of itself is indicative of social change. Since new organisations are dependent on the present social conditions and available resources to survive, their very existence indicates that there must be certain structural conditions allowing them to be active. From this, one can also deduce that the activities and ideologies are reflecting broad attitudes in the surrounding society.

The process of change is conducive for new organisations as it opens spaces, uninhabited organisational no-man's lands where they could get a foothold (Papakostas 1995). They do not have to be formal or recognised by any authority, e.g. a political party participating in a parliamentary process. They can be small, medium or large groups of people who share a common ideology and interact and cooperate in various kinds of activities.

For the remaining part of this paper I will discuss the dynamic of the present state of social change in Baltistan as reflected in the Baltistan Movement and the new organisations within it. What social changes are reflected in the activities and ideas of various organisations? What

roles are the organisations playing in the social mobilisation of the people of Baltistan? Which are the most important building blocks in the Baltistan Movement's discourse on Baltiness?

Social Movement Theory and Social Mechanisms

Contemporary social movement theory often follows one of two directions. One: emergence of social movements is seen as a result of extensive social changes (the European tradition?). Two: attention is focused on particular social movements and the organisational structure, as well as political opportunity structures (the American tradition?). In my discussion of the emergence of Tibetan identity in Baltistan I want to try to add something to both of these traditions by focussing on the social mechanisms linking actors, events, activities, and structure in the production of a social movement, and how these mechanisms can help explain the dynamics of the movement.

'Mechanisms' in social science theory refer to "recurrent processes generating a specific kind of outcome or event; mechanism statements are accordingly statements of recurrent processes" (Mayntz 2003: 1). A basic idea in this approach is to substitute the descriptive emphasis on correlational analysis with a focus on the explanation of social regularities and the mechanisms that link them together. Causality, in this perspective, moves away from statistical relationships to explanation of social phenomena, in this case the emergence of a social movement in Pakistan, "by identifying the processes through which it is generated" (Mayntz 2003: 2).

Although much of the theoretical work in this tradition has concentrated on macro-social processes and structures, mechanisms should probably be conceived as a mid-range sociological concept. Perhaps it would be better to think about smaller-scale social mechanisms that are not 'social laws' but conceptual tools to explain a dynamic interplay of various forces that produce a particular social movement.

An analytical model for the study of social movements based on the concept of smaller scale social mechanisms was recently introduced by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001 in their work *Dynamics of Contention*. The authors (2001: 24) draw on a number of historical cases to prove how some causal mechanisms "recur in different combi-

nations with different aggregate consequences in varying historical settings". The main thrust of their argument is that regardless of what case we chose, we will be able to recognise similar and recurrent mechanisms. The other side of the argument is that regardless of what case we are confronted with we can make sense out of it by searching for these mechanisms.

In the classical social movements agenda social movements are seen as responses to social change and their success/failure is coupled to factors like political opportunity structures, organisational forms, framing of claims, and the strategy and tactics of actors. Although they accuse it of being too static McAdam *et al.* are not really challenging this agenda. Their quest is to identify mechanisms that are relating the various factors to one another and to different actors. The interplay of these factors, through families of similar and recurring mechanisms, produce a dynamic of contention shaping the development of the social movement.

For this paper I have two particular families of mechanisms in mind for my analysis: the mechanisms involved in social mobilisation and the mechanisms involved in political identity formation. The former family is associated with social change and focus on opportunity and threat, social appropriation, framing, and innovative forms of collective action. For instance, in the case of the Baltistan Movement it is obvious how cultural framing of its claims has paved the way for local tolerance and support of this side of the movement. In a comparison, the politically framed activities of the Baltistan Student Federation and pro-Balti journalists are repressed and its proponents persecuted.

The political identity formation family of mechanisms is associated with changes in awareness and alterations in connections between actors. One of McAdam *et al.*'s points here is that a political identity is structurally similar to other political identities, another that social movements tend to appropriate already existing identities, a third that politically relevant categories are usually grounded in ties created by previous contention. On this analytical level the Baltistan Movement and its organisations are similar to a range of movements/organisations in Pakistan's disadvantaged Northern Areas that have emerged in the last fifteen years. What is more, they make similar claims. What separates the Baltistan movement from the others though is its appropriation of Tibetanness based on spoken language and a historical period when Baltistan belonged to the cultural sphere of the Tibetan empire.

The BSF Network and the Case of the Baltistan Cultural Federation (BCF)

Contemporary Baltistan is wedged in between India and China in the Northeast corner of Pakistan. At Partition of 1947, local armed forces fought to be integrated into the new state of Pakistan but ended up as a part of the disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Because of its disputed status the Northern Area cannot be fully integrated in Pakistan, and is presently under the direct control of the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs in Islamabad. There is a Northern Areas Council but the body does not have any political or fiscal decision making power. The current welfare structure in Baltistan relies heavily on Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) which is part of the Switzerland based Aga Khan Network. Aga Khan is the spiritual leader of the Nurubakshi Muslims, and his main followers are to be found in the Hunza area of the most northern part of the Northern Areas. The network runs NGO-based support programs in several countries but mainly in North Pakistan. NGO work is a major local livelihood strategy in Baltistan (complementing government jobs and tourism business) and employs a large number of local people.

As described by Sökefeld (1999) and Jensen (2001) it was because of the migration of Balti students to the South that a new Balti awareness started to develop. The driving force in the Baltistan Movement (activists, radical journalists, and ideologists) is composed of present or previous members of the Baltistan Student Federation (BSF). The organisation was founded on November 11, 1986, at a meeting in Abyssinia Road in Karachi. At this point the students from Baltistan had run into conflict with the students from Gilgit in their joint organisation Gilgit-Baltistan Student Federation, and decided to break the relationship to form their own independent organisation.

When the Karakoram Highway was constructed in the 1970s the communication between the Northern Areas and the rest of Pakistan increased, and many young men left their homes to look for opportunities in employment and higher studies down south. Studying at universities in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi the students found themselves in need of a distinct Balti *identity* to be able to relate to other student groups from other parts of Pakistan. For many of them it was their first experience of difference and ethnic belonging. But it was also a prag-

matic necessity since the various student groups competed over the university's limited resources.

The growing political awareness was underpinned by the lack of job opportunities for the returning students. When a halt in recruitment was imposed by the administration of the Northern Area and the salaries of non-local officials increased 25%, a number of protests and strikes were staged. Many of the political organisations in the Northern Areas were started during this period (Sökefeld 1999).

Today, returning students go to work in Baltistan as government officials and NGO officers. Some enter business and some work as journalists writing pro-Balti and government critical articles in local papers such as *K2*, *Siachen*, and *Kargil International*. Yet others work as medical doctors and local politicians. A network of former BSF members now saturates all sectors of Balti society. A very clear pattern in the Baltistan Movement is the division between the political activities of BSF and the radical journalism on one side, and the cultural NGO activities on the other. Both activities can be seen as expressions of the new Baltiness: the former promotes political rights of the Balti people while the latter promotes cultural rights. Both activities refer back to the same idea of Baltiness and the Balti people as different from the people of Pakistan and with their own rights to power and culture. The activities are thus in direct contrast to inclusive Pakistani nationality promoted by the Government of Pakistan. However, what is interesting is that while the direct political activities, such as public demonstrations, and radical journalism is clamped down on and discouraged, cultural activities are tolerated and sometimes even supported.

Looking at the Baltistan movement today one can clearly distinguish between a radical political direction arguing for political autonomy and a more moderate direction looking for cultural recognition within Pakistan.

The activists in the political direction speak about reunion between Baltistan, Kargil, and Ladakh. Sometimes Gilgit, Kashmir, and even Chitral are included in this disparate political entity. Talking about the reunification one informant drew a parallel with East and West Germany. "Both sides speak the same language and share the same culture and history", he said, "If they are re-united their common language and culture will flourish again". He also argued that history shows that Baltistan Kargil and Ladakh should be together and that a reunion will protect Baltistan from [Pakistani] cultural influences. The activists in

this direction are under constant surveillance and frequently arrested for anti-Pakistani activities.

One BSF leader who often spoke in public about how Pakistan has been denying political rights to Baltistan, how the region has been militarised, and how Pakistani authorities have surpressed civil rights activists, was persecuted by Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI). After being arrested and tortured in connection with a BSF demonstration he fled to Canada where he applied for political asylum (UN General Assembly A/50/44: 39).

The moderate direction of the movement is putting its efforts into cultural projects, seeking money from foreign donor agencies:

> Different aspects of the culture like folk dances, folk music, handicrafts, built heritages, language and literature, sports, food and beverages etc. are especially given attention so that the richness in this almost forgotten culture can be restored (Hasnain, undated funding proposal).

A number of smaller projects have been proposed to increase people's awareness about Balti identity. A signboard project and a schoolbook project will be discussed more in detail below. Apart from them there have been initiatives to establish a cultural museum in Skardu with the purpose of preventing the sale of Balti antiques to tourists, and a Balti-Tibetan cultural centre for interaction with other Tibetan societies. A bilingual (Balti & English) Balti-Tibetan cultural journal has yet to publish its first issue.

Why have the cultural identity projects been more successful than the political? After all, it is surprising that any kind of non-Pakistani struggle is tolerated, not to mention the promotion of pre-Islamic history. An explanation that I want to suggest is that the cultural projects activities managed to find their way through a familiar NGO structure under the wings of the former BSF members network.

This seems to be clear in the case of the Baltistan Cultural Federation (BCF). At the time of the fieldwork for this paper BCF could be described as an auxiliary to the Aga Khan Cultural Support Program (AKCSP). BCF was formed in 1998 under the Social Welfare Ordinance. Up until 2002 it was under the leadership of Abbas Kazimir, a charismatic and well-known local historian. In 2002 the organisation was restructured and re-registered under the Societies Registration Act. Kazimir was replaced by Ahmed Ali Khan, an NGO manager and former BSF member. Before its reconstruction BCF carried out two proj-

ects directly related to Balti identity, namely the erection of store signs in dbu chen in local bazaars, and the production of Tibetan textbooks for elementary school. The UK-based Tibet Foundation, with close ties to the exile-Tibetan community, funded both projects. The purpose was to revive the use of U Chen script but also to increase people's awareness of a 'unique Balti heritage'. About 100 store-boards were put up, while the 1000 printed textbooks were never allowed to enter elementary school. There were several reasons for the failure of the textbook project. One of the most important was probably the publication of a competing textbook written by a person propagating the use of Perso-Arabic script for Balti. Pitched against Perso-Arabic, dbu chen Chen was labeled as 'unislamic' and local support for the project was lost. Strangely enough, the store-boards were not taken down and many of them are still up there, mostly because the storekeeper wants to save the cost of having a new one painted.

Around this time BCF caught the attention of AKCSP that had recently started to work in Baltistan. Using the same model as AKRSP, AKCSP focues on cultural support work, including the promotion of local professional skills as well as the restoration of local heritage objects. Encouraged by its successful restoration of Baltit Fort in Hunza, AKCSP wanted to repeat the project with Shigri Fort and Khaplu Fort in Baltistan. The basis of the working model is to take over the ownership of the building through a donation by the owners, buy surrounding land, restore the building, convert it to a hotel business, and then hand it over to a local community organisation. The restoration work is paid for by donor money, in this case NORAD, the Norwegian development aid organisation. To create local legitimacy AKCSP works through a local partner organisation, and it was in this context that BCF was identified as a suitable partner. As a result of the partnership BCF was reconstructed. With the help of AKCSP the organisation received an initial Rs 1,030,000 (appox. Euro 13,000) donation from NORAD. In 2004, (at the time of my fieldwork) the restoration of Shigar Fort was complete enough for it to be open for business, and the work on Khaplu Fort was about to start.

Many issues may be raised over this model and its implementation, and it is not without conflict with the local community. But the fact remains that because of the restoration projects Baltiness and Balti history is being showcased, celebrated and promoted. Explanations of the history of the heritage buildings must deal with questions about the

past, and the uniqueness of Baltistan and its history comes to the fore. The sites are also promoted for tourism and at nearby locations one finds traces of Tibetan influence in the form of rock carvings in Tibetan script, and ruins such as, for instance, the interesting archaeological site above Shigar Fort locally referred to as the 'Buddhist pologround' (*bodhi shagharan*).

The point with this case has been to explain how the Baltistan Movement as a social movement adapts to political fields by following the opportunity structures. With political opportunity structures closed and pursued at the price of persecution, the movement finds its way into a cultural opportunity structure represented by the familiar and well-organised local branches of AKN's support programs. This is reinforced by NGO workers belonging to the BSF network that facilitates the access of pro-Balti cultural projects. In addition the NGO structure also gives an access to funding that would have been impossible without this opportunity.

Conclusion

In *Dynamics of Contention* (2003), McAdam *et al.* talk about collective interaction between the government and new, self-identified actors as transgressive contention. In contrast to contention between the government and established actors that often reproduces the social structure, contention between the government and new, unestablished actors is more likely to lead to social change, the authors argue.

In this paper I have described how the Baltistan Movement and its organisations and activities have, in various ways, been emulated on other similar movements and organisations in the Northern Areas. A common trait for these organisations is the contention with Pakistan's central government over national identity. Whereas the government has promoted an all-inclusive Pakistani national identity, the organisations have promoted new non-Pakistani self-claimed national identities based on local histories pre-dating the formation of the state of Pakistan, and to a certain extent Islamic culture. What is more, the claims voiced by the organisations have not yet been allowed to operate freely in public (or at least without repercussions), and have had to look for alternative forms and opportunities.

In the case of Baltistan, the emergence and multiplication of contending organisations in the Northern Areas was the start of an opportunity spiral for Balti claims. Students migrating south for higher education formed their own student organisation to propagate a Baltiness impregnated with Tibetan elements, a sense of affinity to the people of Ladakh and Kargil on the Indian side of the LOC, and claims for political independence.

The main individual actors in the Baltistan Movement are former BSF members. They have formed a network that enables the movement to take form in an already established and accepted local NGO structure. Instead of organising a separate group that probably would have been ostracised, they were spread out individually as professionals working in the public and private sectors of Baltistan. From their positions they could facilitate the activities initiated by the cultural direction of the movement. This conclusion is supported by the case of BCF. In the beginning the unaffiliated BCF had a hard time promoting Baltiness. After the organisation had gone into partnership with AKCSP the work quickly moved to a larger scale with access to `more funding and support. The restoration of heritage buildings has brought Balti history and traditions into the public discourse while the partnership with the established organisation AKCSP has given BCF and the cultural projects initiated in the Baltistan Movement a legitimate public platform.

Political mobilisation has not been working well so far and political activities have been met by resistance and repression from Pakistan's government. Although most members of the network share a common political ideology, there is no political platform in the NGO structure, and most of the members of the network do not speak up in public on political matters.

The two most important building blocks of the new Baltiness have been the sense of affinity to Kargil and Ladakh, and to other Tibetan speakers (history and language as signifiers of identity). From this perspective the Balti people is misplaced on the Pakistani side of the LOC. There are no other groups in Pakistan that speak the same language. A reunion of Baltistan, Kargil and Ladakh thus becomes a political vision.

Apart from this, a historical Golden Age when Baltistan was part of the Tibetan empire forms another important part in the new Baltiness. It is interesting how this connection is emphasised more than the fact

that Baltistan was independent for several centuries after the Tibetan influence in the area had waned.

Tibetanness is often equated with Buddhism. It is stated that being Tibetan is belonging to the community of Buddhists. But religious belief does not seem to be an important part of the new Baltiness. When asked about this, my informants did not see any contradiction between being Tibetan and being Muslim, and often expressed surprise over the question. And from a historical point of view Muslims are of course as much a part of the Tibetan nation as Buddhists.

The Sunni Muslim community in U Tsang goes back as far as the 12th century. Its presence in central Tibet probably reflects the situation in the margins of the Western Tibetan cultural area where Buddhists and Muslims communities co-exist. Tibetan Muslims were among the refugees that fled Tibet in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and part of the settlement program in India (Mondal 2001). Being a Tibetan Muslim in Pakistan is thus not as odd as it may seem at first glance.

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UN General Assembly A/50/44.

Plate 1: Balti Store Sign in U chen and Perso-Arabic script

Plate 2: Balti Store Sign in U chen and Perso-Arabic script

Plate 3: Balti store sign in U chen and English

CHONE AND THEWU: TERRITORIALITY, LOCAL POWER, AND POLITICAL CONTROL ON THE SOUTHERN GANSU-TIBETAN FRONTIER, 1880-1940

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On March 14, 1927, Joseph Rock was rounding the hill at Pashitega[1] along the trail of the Pai shui river in upper Thewu. He was on his way out from the Chone prince's domain, when suddenly his caravan was attacked by some twenty Thewu robbers.[2] They were armed with rocks and huge iron cogwheel clubs, but were no match for Rock's rifle-armed party. As it later turned out, three of the attackers were killed.[3]

To explain this apparent lack of political authority in the outlying parts of the Chone principality, it is necessary to look at the geographical and historical interfaces of the events concerned. We must also inquire into the physical isolation of the Thewu habitat, its peripheral location over much of its history, and the degree of Thewu dependence on the Chone prince's jurisdiction as expressed in a hard-to-define political territory. We should also try to disclose the nature of the Chone prince's local forms of political control as set within the wider history of Chone and Thewu. This implies paying attention to the

[1] Pelshe Denkha, referring to the nearby gompa of the same name. See A. Gruschke 2001. *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces: Amdo*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press, II, 50.

[2] *Rock Diaries VIII*. Cho-ni to Sung-pan via The-wu country, March 9, 1927 to April 22, 1927. Unpublished, Library of the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh, Scotland, U.K., 23. A copy of the Rock Diaries has kindly been made available to me by Jane Hutcheon of the same library. See also Walravens, H. 1992. J. F. Rock (1884-1962)—Sammler und Forscher. Eine übersicht. *Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz* 29, 257; Walravens, H. (ed.) 2002. *Joseph Franz Rock (1884-1962). Berichte, Briefe und Dokumente des Botanikers, Sinologen und Nakhi-Forschers.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 37-39, 41, 257; Aris, M. 1992. *Lamas, Princes, and Brigands. Joseph Rock's Photographs of the Tibetan Borderlands of China*. New York: China House Gallery, China Institute in America, 25. The full photographic archive of Rock's botanical exploits of 1925-1927 can be accessed at http://via.harvard.edu:748/html/VIA.html. The manuscript maps and the gazetteers can be consulted at www.arboretum.harvard.edu/library/tibet/map.html.

[3] *Rock Diaries VIII*: 26

effects of a growing military incorporation of the Chone domain into a centralising Chinese state after the Revolution of 1912, and the consequent erosion of traditional political authority. Inextricably linked is the question of the extent to which the Tibetans of Chone were able to guard their territoriality, in other words, how they succeeded in the persistent attachment to their specific territories against encroachments so diverse as Chone tax collectors, Christian missionaries, American explorers, Muslim warlords, and Chinese soldiers.

Although the history of northeastern Tibet, mainly on the basis of Tibetan and Chinese sources, is increasingly in the process of being unraveled, I propose here to highlight the contribution the older European literature, both published and unpublished,[4] can make to this attempt at historical interpretation. After all, travellers and missionaries had a chance to see and hear things, which, when put in their proper context, provide us with an additional perspective on the frontier history under review. The southern Gansu-Tibetan border region in particular deserves further elaboration, as the local history of Chone and Thewu is generally less well known than the historical vicissitudes of the neighboring monastic centers of Kumbum and Labrang.

Territory and Political Authority

The concept of *territory* in western social science generally refers to an undivided space over which a political power holder has full jurisdiction. Such a conceptualisation immediately runs into difficulties when interpreting the territorial regime of the Chone principality. It is quite impossible to map the Chone territory as a single spatial unit, because jurisdiction, especially in the outlying areas, was more over families

[4] Unpublished sources about Chone and Thewu are of two sorts: missionary and exploratory. The first category comprises mainly the records of the Christian & Missionary Alliance as to be found in the C&MA Archives, Colorado Springs, CO, USA. In this connection I should like to thank Brian Wiggins for sending me copies of archival materials, especially the unpublished *Christie Letters, May 1891 to October 1907*; the unpublished manuscript of the diary of Jamieson, M.H. *Kansu: Some Old Ways of China*; as well as several articles from *The Alliance Weekly*, which can now be accessed at http://archives.cmalliance.org. Related materials are to be found at the Billy Graham Centre Archives, Wheaton, Illinois, USA, access through the website www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/, in particular the transcripts made from interviews held over the years with veteran missionaries (e.g. C.H. Carlson, R.D. Carlson, and R.B. Ekvall). For the second category of sources, the exploits of Joseph Rock, see note 2.

than over land.[5] Consequently political spheres of influence tended to intertwine and even to overlap, creating exclaves in adjacent territories.[6] In addition, loyalties in peripheral regions were often centered on kinship, and in physically isolated terrain on the lower scale level of village territories, rather than some vague and distant overlordship.[7] Jurisdiction in the Chone principality was no exception to this rule and despite the fact that theoretically the land belonged to the prince,[8] he had little authority over outlying clans and villages.[9] Inter-village feuding was common in the peripheral valleys but the prince could do little about it.[10] Village-based local order tended to gravitate around the many smaller monasteries,[11] but these too could not always keep the local population in check. In particular the villages in Upper Thewu were difficult to control.[12]

The Chone principality was set within the wider context of a long history of political relations between China and Tibet. Chone belonged to a class of Tibetan frontier states that, like Mili and Chala, recognised Chinese political overlordship, but internally managed their own

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[5] Tafel, A. 1914. *Meine Tibetreise. Eine Studienfahrt durch das nordwestliche China und durch die innere Mongolei in das östliche Tibet*. Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, I, 159; *Rock Diaries V*, From Sining to Cho-ni via Shünhoa, Labrang, November 21, 1925 to April 22, 1926, 81; Farrer, A. 1926. *On the Eaves of the World*. London: Edward Arnold, I, 164.

[6] As was for example the case with the Tan Shang [Danchang] and Chago outlyers to the east and south of the main Chone domain. *Ibid*.: 194.

[7] Cf. Clarke, G.E. 1996. Blood, territory and national identity in Himalayan states. *In* S. Tønneson and H. Antlöv (eds) *Asian Forms of the Nation*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 206, 211.

[8] Carrasco, P. 1959. *Land and Polity in Tibet*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 156.

[9] Farrer 1926: 111, 164; Ekvall, R.B. 1938. *Gateway to Tibet. The Kansu-Tibetan Border.* Harrisburg: Christian Publications, 134; *Rock Diaries II*, Ch'eng-tu to Cho-ni, March 17, 1925 to May 23, 1925, 181; *Rock Diaries V*: 67; *Rock Diaries VII*, To West China and Tibet, August 24, 1926 to February 28, 1927, 8.

[10] See for example *Rock Diaries VII*: 17; cf. Karmay, S. and P. Sagant 1998. *Les Neuf Forces de l'Homme. Récits des Confins du Tibet.* Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie, 140ff.

[11] Ekvall, R.B. 1939. *Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 65; cf. Karmay, S. 1998. Amdo, one of the three traditional provinces in Tibet. *In* Karmay, S. (ed.) *The Arrow and the Spindle. Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet*. Kathmandu: Mandala Bookpoint, 528; A list of monasteries in the Chone district may be culled from Joseph Rock's Gazetteer that goes together with his hand-drawn map VII, see note 2.

[12] Tafel II: 275, 276-83, 299; Carol S. Hammond Carlson, T1 Transcript, 3, see note 4; Carlson, C.E. 1939. A leper cleansed. *The Alliance Weekly* 74, 265; *Rock Diaries V*: 67; *Rock Diaries VII*: 21-22.

affairs.[13] This was done through the office of a so-called *t'ussu* or 'native chief', and the Chone prince undoubtedly was the most important native chief in Gansu.[14] Historically speaking, however, the princely state of Chone, which centuries earlier had wielded power over lands as far as the Kokonor region,[15] had politically become less important. At the beginning of the twentieth century it had considerably shrunk in power compared to former times and that power in turn was wielded within a much smaller domain.[16] In particular, after the establishment of the Republic in 1912, the *t'ussu*-ship, which was very much a Ch'ing instrument to keep its border marches under control, felt the increasing pressure of the new Chinese administration.[17] Generally speaking, the farther away from the Chinese provincial governor and his prefects, the less Chinese influence was felt,[18] yet in times of rebellion the imperial and later the republican Chinese arm could be surprisingly long, as was shown for example by a number of punitive expeditions along the full length of the Sino-Tibetan border, Chone and Thewu not excluded.[19] But these were intermittent affairs, separated by long years of Chinese

[13] Ekvall, D.P.. 1907. *Outposts or Tibetan Border Sketches.* New York: Alliance Press, 124-125; cf. Nietupski Labrang, P.K. *A Tibetan Buddhist Monastery at the Crossroads of Four Civilizations.* Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 113 (note 75).

[14] D.P. Ekvall: 125; Teichman, E. 1921. *Travels of a Consular Officer in North-West China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 134; cf. Gruschke : II, 44.

[15] Yang Ho-chin 1969. *The Annals of Kokonor.* Bloomington: Indiana University, 29.

[16] Though still "about as large as Scotland", see Kingdon Ward, F. 1910. *On the Road to Tibet.* Shanghai: The Shanghai Mercury, 55. This is too optimistic an estimate. Cf. Pereira, G. 1912. A visit to Labrang monastery, South-West Kan-su, North-West China *The Geographical Journal* 40(October), 420, who made it "about one-third the size of Scotland" which is nearer the truth. See also note 23.

[17] Snyder, C.F. 1929. Tibetan life. *The Alliance Weekly*, 64(May 4), 282; Ekvall 1939: 6; cf. Sørensen, A.B. 1951. *Ad Asiens Ukendte Veje. En Beretning om en Rejse fra Shanghai til Egene Nord for Lhasa og Tilbage Igen.* Købnhavn: Gyldendal, 142 ["the Chinese also try to control the number of Living Buddhas", referring to the 1920s]. I should like to thank Rikke Mikkelsen, MA, for helping me with the translation from the Danish.

[18] Futterer, K. 1900. Land und Leute in Nordost Tibet. *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde* 35, 335.

[19] Shu-hui Wu 1995. *Die Eroberung von Qinghai unter Berücksichtigung von Tibet und Khams 1717-1727 anhand der Throneingaben des Grossfeldherrn Nian Gengyao.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 261-62 ['Pacification' of the Thewu under Yongzheng in 1724]; Tafel II: 286 [expedition against the Thewu involving 800 Chinese soldiers from Szechuan and 2200 from Gansu, summer 1907]; Farrer I: 287-88 [punitive expedition in early June 1914 against the Tibetans west of Siku]; Carlson, C.E. 1928. Our warlike Tibetan neighbors. *The Alliance Weekly* 63(March 24), 186 [summer 1914 Chinese expedition against the Thewu].

inaction. As a consequence, everyday life on the Gansu-Tibetan frontier had an autonomous quality,[20] though not always a quiet one.

We must now pay attention to the geographical setting of Chone as in times of conflict and rebellion geography becomes even more important than in times of peace. Chone territory is basically a transitional area between the undulating Gansu loess landscape and the mountainous Tibetan high plateau. In central Chone there is a lateral alpine uplift by the name of Min Shan that stretches from WNW to ESE, presenting a formidable barrier between the northern part of Chone and its southern Thewu dependencies. Only two passes of close to 4000 meters give access to the southern Thewu part. The central Min Shan of the Chone territory is flanked on its northern side by the Tao river and its tributaries, the most densely settled part of the Chone district. Higher up the valley, the terraced landscapes of the Tao ho give way to more eroded and wooded upper valleys that emerge near its headwaters on the treeless steppe plateau.[21] On the southern side of the Min Shan flows the Pai shui chiang, a far wilder river than the Tao ho, passing by some terrific gorges. Its middle reaches are quite forested, interspersed with fields and villages that become less in the more steeply eroded upper valley. To the north of the Tao ho the land rises again to the fringe of the Tibetan plateau, abutting in its northeastern Chone part in the Lienhua Shan .[22] South of the Pashui river are the convoluted mountain ranges of the Yangpu Shan the southern limit of Chone.

In this area, covering slightly over 10,000 km^2,[23] lived at the time perhaps 65,000 people,[24] the majority of whom had a Tibetan cultural background. As far as I have been able to establish, there was no sharp cultural borderline in this Gansu-Tibetan frontier region in the early

[20] David-Néel, A. 1933. *Au Pays des Brigands Gentilshommes*. Paris: Plon, 81.

[21] Towards Shitshang gompa, Gruschke II: 49; the latter author has confirmed by personal communication that Shitshang can almost certainly be identified with the Schin-se monastery. See Futterer, K. 1901. *Durch Asien. Erfahrungen, Forschungen und Sammlungen während der von Amtmann Dr Holderer unternommenen Reise, Band I—Geographische Charakter-Bilder*. Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer, 404ff. See Plates.

[22] See Farrer II: 304, plate facing.

[23] Marshall, S.D. and S.T. Cooke 1997. *Tibet outside the TAR* [CD-ROM] Washington D.C.: The Alliance for Research in Tibet, 1361-62 [Chone + Diebu = 10,245 km^2]; cf. Allwright, G., Y. Osada and K. Atsushi (eds) 2000. *Mapping the Tibetan World.* Reno: Kotan Publishing, 180-81.

[24] D.P. Ekvall: 125; Mannerheim, C.G. 1969 [1940]. *Across Asia from West to East in 1906-1908.* Oosterhout: Anthropological Publications, 578; Rock, J. 1933. The land of the Tebbus. *The Geographical Journal* 81 (February), 111.

twentieth century, rather Chinese population and culture faded into Tibetan ways of life as the mountains became higher.[25] To the west of Minchow, at the eastern Chone border, sedentary farming households dominated,[26] at least so in the middle reaches of the Tao ho. Their families were of mixed Chinese-Tibetan stock,[27] and subject to further Chinese immigration.[28] In the upper Tao valley region, as well as in the Pai-shui river gorges of upper Thewu, Tibetan[29] mixed farming households were frequent.[30] These in turn gave way to the nomads of the plateau. On the whole a tendency towards sedentary life by the fringe-dwelling nomads was noticeable.[31] I will now discuss in more detail the forms of political authority in the Chone principality.

Chone and Thewu first appeared in detail on the mental map of European scientists from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. It is true, the toponyms of Chone and Thewu had been mentioned already in 1730 by Orazio della Penna di Billi,[32] were periodically excavated,[33]

[25] Futterer 1900; Futterer 1901: 405; Futterer, K. 1903. *Geographische Skizze von Nordost-Tibet. Begleitworte zur Kartenaufnahmen des Reiseweges vom Küke-nur über den oberen Hoang-ho und durchs Thao-Tal nach Min-tschôu, Ergänzungsheft 143 zu Petermanns Mitteilungen.* Gotha: Justus Pertes, 45-54; cf. Ekvall 1939: 30, 44-46.

[26] Futterer 1900: 316; Carey, W. 1902. *Travel and Adventure in Tibet. Including the Diary of Miss Annie R. Taylor's Remarkable Journey from Tau-chau to Ta-chien-lu Through the Heart of the Forbidden Land*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 174; Kingdon Ward: 53; Mannerheim: 574; Tafel II: 300, 309; *Rock Diaries II*: 142; Rock, J. 1928. Life among the lamas of Choni. *The National Geographic Magazine* 54(5) (November), 584, color plate III; Ekvall 1939: 29-47; Sørensen: 151; Stübel, H. 1958. *The Mewu Fantzu. A Tibetan Tribe of Kansu.* New Haven: HRAF Press, 4-6; see also Hermanns, M. 1949. *Die Nomaden von Tibet. Die sozial-wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen der Hirtenkulturen in A mdo und von Innerasien.* Wien: Verlag Herold 258-72.

[27] D.P. Ekvall: 15; McGillivray, M.C. 1915. The work at Choni station, Kansuh. *The Alliance Weekly* 44 (May 15), 105; Robert Dean Carlson T1 Transcript, 7, see also note 4; Baradiin, B.B. 1992 [1926] Buddiiskie monastyri. *Orient Al'manakh* 1, 77; Ekvall 1939: 31, 39; Pereira, G. 1925. *Peking to Lhasa.* London: Constable, 91; Fletcher, J. 1979, M.E. Alonso (ed.). *A Brief History of the Chinese Northwestern Frontier in China's Inner Asian Frontier. Photographs of the Wulsin Expedition to Northwest China in 1923.* Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum; for the Wulsin expedition see also Cabot, M.H. 2003. *Vanished Kingdoms. A Woman Explorer in Tibet, China & Mongolia 1921-1925*. New York: Aperture Foundation, Boston: The Peabody Museum; but see Rock 1933: 118 ["The upper Tebbus…have kept from intermarrying with the Kansu Chinese"].

[28] Ekvall 1939: 36; Hermanns: 258; Karmay: 528.

[29] And, partly, tibetanised Mongolians. See Futterer 1903: 47; Tafel II: 298-99 (note); Ekvall 1939: 10.

[30] Stübel: 5; *Rock Diaries III*, Cho-ni to T'ie-pu and Lan-chou, May 26, 1925 to August 31, 1925, 27, 120, 145.

[31] Futterer 1900: 316, 322, 326; Hermanns: 29.

[32] Petech, L. 1953. *I missionary Italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal*. Roma: La Libreria

known to a few missionaries and explorers by the first decade of the twentieth century.[34] but were only given currency to a wider public by Joseph Rock in his 1928 article for the *National Geographic*.[35] Chone town and monastery had already been visited by the Russian explorer Potanin and his party at the beginning of June 1885.[36] They were entertained by the then Yang *t'ussu* and his non-reigning father and brought back the first portrait of him.[37] From 1905 onwards, William Christie was the first missionary to live in Chone for a longer time,[38] and since then it became a stopover for many missionaries and travellers to and through the area, culminating in Rock's two-year stay from 1925 to 1927.[39] It is to these missionaries and explorers that we owe most of our European language based knowledge of Chone and Thewu for the period of 1900-1940.

Chone for the better part of those years was ruled by Yang Chi-ching,[40] a hereditary Tibetan chief that combined temporal rule with religious authority.[41] When Pereira met the Chone prince in May 1912, the latter was twenty-three years old and looked "more Chinese than Tibetan in his manners and descent".[42] Although supposed to represent the twenty-second generation of a long line of Tibetan ancestors,[43] the

della Stato, III, 52. [Cenisgiugnbà (Chone gomba) and Tebò (Thewu)].

[33] By Georgi, A.A. 1987 [1762] *Alphabetum Tibetanum.* Köln: Editiones Una Voce, 424; Ritter, C. 1834. *Die Erdkunde im Verhältniss zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen*. Berlin: G. Reimer, IV, 217; Markham, C.R. 1971 [1879] *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*. New Delhi: Manjusri Publishing House, 313.

[34] Futterer 1901: 435; D.P. Ekvall: 124-25, 127, 148; Kingdon Ward: 52-73; however, the first modern traveller to visit Chone was the Russian explorer Potanin who stayed there from May 29 to June 7, 1885. See Potanin, G.N. 1893. *Tangutsko-Tibetskaia okraina Kitaia i Tsentral'naia Mongoliia. Puteshestvie G.N. Potanina 1884-1886.* St. Petersburg: Izdanie Imperatorskago Russkago Geograficheskago Obshestva, I, 237; cf. Kiuner, N.V. 1907. *Geograficheskoe Opisanie Tibeta*. Vladivostok: Tipo-Litografia pri Vostochnom Institute, I, 70; Bretschneider, E. 1962 [1898] *History of European Botanical Discoveries in China*. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR, 1013.

[35] See note 26.

[36] Potanin: 237.

[37] *Ibid*.: 242-44.

[38] Christie Letters from Chone (Nov.19, 1905, Oct.6, 1907). See note 4.

[39] Rock came to Chone monastery for the first time on April 23, 1925 and left Chone for good on March 10, 1927. *See Rock Diaries II*: 146 and *Rock Diaries VIII*: 7.

[40] Already referred to as Yang *t'ussu*, or simply prince Yang.

[41] *Rock Diaries II*: 147.

[42] Pereira 1912: 420.

[43] *Rock Diaries V*: 82; allegedly there was also Alashan Mongolian blood in his family.

prince admitted later to Rock that he was not of direct descent.[44] Moreover, his mother was Chinese.[45] Rock, who first met prince Yang when the latter was in his mid-thirties,[46] described him as "a tall, slender man with a little black mustache, a bit effeminate, and dressed in Chinese style". At festivals he donned a stunning Tibetan costume,[47] but by October 1926 the political situation had deteriorated so far that he was obliged to wear a Chinese garb on such occasions.[48] He must have taken the throne around 1905,[49] when Christie first entered Chone. David Ekvall, in 1907, described him as a "for all practical purposes, independent [ruler], receiving taxes in money or kind from his people, without having to pay any tribute to the Chinese emperor". Yet he himself was subject to squeezing and bleeding by the local mandarins.[50] Rock, twenty years later, portrayed him as "a feudal lord, cruel and rapacious, yet also hard pressed by the Chinese authorities".[51] The prince was a moderate opium smoker,[52] but his son was a real addict.[53] He was friendly to missionaries and explorers alike.[54] Next to his offi-

[44] Rock 1928: 569.

[45] D.P. Ekvall: 188-89. That she had married a Tibetan was resented by the inhabitants of the town of her childhood, a thing that she rudely discovered when she returned to Titao around 1905 "for the purpose of marrying her daughter to the son of [D.P Ekvall's] well-to-do Chinese neighbors.… Her rather independent girl was called a 'big footed half Tibetan' and the marriage came to nothing".

[46] Rock, J. The principality of Cho-ni (no date), Series I, Unpublished writings, folder 9, p. 3. Manuscript held at the Arnold Arboretum Archives of Harvard University, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA. In this connection, I should like to thank Joseph Melanson of the same institute for sending me a copy.

[47] *Rock Diaries II*: 147; Rock, J. The principality of Cho-ni, 3. For photographs of the prince see Rock, J. 1925. Experiences of a lone geographer. American agricultural explorer makes his way through brigand-infested Central China en route to the Amne Machin range, Tibet. *National Geographic* 48(3), 342; Rock 1928: 570; see also Aris: 78 (Plate 5.3), 81 (Plate 5.6).

[48] *Rock Diaries VII*: 137. By this time he had Chinese assistants too, *ibid*.: 138.

[49] As the young prince of Chone is said to have accompanied his widowed mother on her miscarried journey to Titao. See Ekvall: 189.

[50] *Ibid*.: 125.

[51] Rock, J. The principality of Cho-ni, 2.

[52] *Rock Diaries V*: 86.

[53] Rock, J. The principality of Cho-ni, 3; cf. Sutton, S.B. 1974. *In China's Border Provinces. The Turbulent Career of Joseph Rock, Botanist-Explorer*. New York: Hastings House, 161.

[54] Carol Hammond Carlson T1 Transcript, 2; *Rock Diaries II*: 147; after Blanche Griebenow, *Reminiscences*, March 1953, T2 Transcript, side one, p. 12, taped in Nyack, NY, transcribed by Mei Griebenow, quoted by Nietupski, 50, 113-14, note 96.

cial *yamen* located within the precincts of the Chone monastery,[55] prince Yang had houses in Taochow New City[56], the village of Poyü,[57] and the village of Zhega[58] and "wielded absolute power over every one of his subjects".[59] Such autocratic rule was bound to generate opposition, and on Feruary 3, 1926, posters were suddenly put up at Chone denouncing the prince.[60] The following year, he was shorn of his hereditary rights by the 'Red General' Feng Yu-hsiang[61] and when the Nationalists came to power in Gansu in 1928, was made into "a Defence Commisioner, liable to removal at the pleasure of the Chinese provincial authorities".[62] The rise of the Chinese military in Gansu in the latter half of the 1920s, once again provoked Muslim power in the area. In November 1928, 25,000 Hui led by Ma Zhongying broke out of the Heichow plain, headed south into the Tao region, and sacked the Chone monastery.[63] This meant the loss of much symbolic power to the Chone Prince, but he hung on for a couple of years as warden of the Tao marches, before being murdered by his own servants in the early 1930s.[64] Some commentators considered the political future of Chone as an independent princely state to be at stake,[65] and it is true that the Chinese seized the opportunity to appoint a Magistrate of their own. But the Chone Tibetans protested, and the Chinese knew nothing better than to appoint Yang's opium-addicted son.[66]

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[55] Rock 1928: 569.

[56] *Rock Diaries III*: 18.

[57] *Rock Diaries III*: 61 (a summer home across the Tao river near Chone).

[58] *Rock Diaries VII*: 48, Zhega in the lower Maya ku valley: "here the Choni prince has a house"; Farrer noticed that the prince was building a new palace in Tibetan territory across the Tao ho at a place called Bao u Go. See Farrer II: 139. Its location is shown on Farrer's end map accompanying volume I.

[59] Rock, J. The principality of Cho-ni, 3.

[60] *Rock Diaries V*: 83.

[61] Rock 1928: 569, note; cf. Sutton: 159-60. See also Sheridan. J.E. 1966. *Chinese Warlord. The Career of Feng Yü-Hsiang*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[62] Snyder: 282; Nietupski: 92.

[63] Lipman, J.N. 1981. The Border World of Gansu, 1895-1935. Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, Stanford, 265.

[64] Ekvall 1938: 167; Sutton: 160; Nietupski: 50.

[65] Ekvall 1938: 167.

[66] Sutton: 161; cf. Jagou, F. 2000. Le controle des marches sino-tibétaines à l'époque de la Chine républicaine. *Géographie et Cultures* 34, 5-24; these disturbances may be the same as those referred to by Chen Wenjian, one of the biographers of the 6th/9th Panchen Lama in his *Banchan da shi Dong lai shiwu nian dashiji* (Chongqing, 1943), 25: "On the 26th of February 1933, the 48 banners of Zhuoni in Gansu created

The Chone territory in these times was largely inhabited by Thewu Tibetans, a basket name that conceals differences in clan territories, habitats, dialects, and especially degrees of control by the Chone prince. Although not familiar with dichotomies such as "the wild and the tame" or "the raw and the cooked", he told Rock that the Thewu on the southern side of the Min Shan were more or less lawless, but better behaved in the region he controlled.[67] In his royal residence he kept a painted wooden panel, featuring tribal types and a map of the Chone domain.[68] The literature repeatedly mentions that the prince ruled over forty-eight tribes,[69] yet the palace panel only featured some ten types, a number to which Rock stuck.[70] The crux of the matter seems to be that to know, or still better, to quantify your subjects is to control them,[71] in the case of the Thewu a brilliant illusion.

The prince does not seem to have been very well informed about his subjects.[72] Yet he was very much interested in what he could get from them. This brings up the question to what extent peasants were exploited by the local princely court and its henchmen. A tentative answer points first and foremost to the tax collection villagers had to face and the political structure through which the actual collection was made possible. As a member of the nobility, prince Yang Chi-ching had many

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disturbances when the provincial government replaced the indigenous chiefs by revocable civil servants". I am grateful to Fabienne Jagou for this reference and its translation from the Chinese.

67 *Rock Diaries II*: 181.

68 *Rock Diaries II*: 148; Rock 1928: 77, Plate.

69 Tafel II: 305, "achtundvierzig Stämme"; Mannerheim: 580. Referring to the situation in 1908: "The prince reigns over 41 divisions (*shokhua*) of the tribe varying in size between 60 and 300 families. Each *shokhua* has its own chief and banner, under which it assembles to wage war"; Ekvall 1939: 6; Fletcher: 27, 48 wild tribes, after Wulsin.

70 *Rock Diaries II*: 148, mentions eleven tribal names: "Those in the north are the Shang-chi, Shoukua (cf. Mannerheim's *shokhua*), and Ta-la, those in the south are known as Tie-pa. Around Wu-tu or Kai-chou there is a tribe which comes under his rule, under the name of Heifan"; this may refer to one of the exclaves Farrer passed by. See Farrer II: 43, 60. "In Cho-ni proper are the Cho-ni-tzu [cf. Baradiin 1992: 77], the Shang and Hsia T'ie-pu and La-pu-shi …. There is also a small tribe called Chang-ye, that lives at Sho-wa near a lake northwest of Lien-hua Shan"; *Rock Diaries V*: 81 ("about ten different tribes").

71 Harrell, S. 1995. Civilizing projects and the reaction to them. *In* S. Harrell (ed.) *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers.* Washington: University of Washington Press, 8-9 (after Edward Said).

72 *Rock Diaries III*: 159 ("he knows nothing of his own territory"); *Rock Diaries V*: 81-82.

servants. Among them was a special class of *yamen* runners, the so-called *t'ou-mu*, prince's spies who reported everything to him.[73] To enforce payment of taxes, he sent out these men in the company of soldiers to squeeze the village headmen and the peasants. Although appointed by the prince, the headmen sometimes acted as a buffer between the tax collectors and the peasants. At other times, however, village headmen developed into 'district overseers', collaborating with the tax collectors, pressurising peasants into payment. It was the family households that were taxed, not the villages.[74] Although Robert Ekvall, a long-time resident in the area, was not convinced of the excessive nature of the tax burden,[75] Rock called this tax collection 'inward plunder', especially because there were no return services from the prince.[76] But in fact, the latter was thoroughly squeezed himself by Chinese magistrates and other officials.[77] At one time he paid 3,000 dollars to the Chinese Magistrate at Taochow New City.[78] If there was any reciprocity between the Chone prince and his peasant subjects, it was the idea that the prince could remain in power, which was preferred by the local population to Chinese rule, because the Chinese were hated even more than the autocratic prince. That is why in times of war, the prince, through the village banner system,[79] was able to mobilise the necessary militia, which tried to keep the Chone territory free from invaders.[80] But the price of the system was high. Princely high-handedness, injustice and cruelty were the order of the day.[81] Rock noted several servants with only one ear, the other said to have been cut off at the prince's order for not listening fast enough. He showed great cruelty too, to his wives and personal slaves.[82] In the end he had hundreds of

[73] Rock, J. The principality of Cho-ni, 3; cf. Pollard, S. 1921. *In Unknown China.* London: Seeley, Service & Co., 137-45 (on the Yi of the Taliang Shan).

[74] Tafel II: 306.

[75] Ekvall 1939: 31.

[76] *Rock Diaries III*: 159; *Rock Diaries VII*: 22, 26.

[77] D.P. Ekvall: 125; *Rock Diaries VII*: 26.

[78] *Rock Diaries V*: 84-85.

[79] Ekvall 1939: 31; cf. Carrasco: 156, 266 (note 83), who mentions as his source personal communication with Joseph Rock.

[80] *Rock Diaries III*: 156 ("The prince of Cho-ni can call 2,000 men to serve as soldiers"); *Rock Diaries VIII*: ("Once he tried to subdue [the Ta-ra people] and fought them with 2,000 soldiers"); In the beginning of August 1926, the prince had three thousand soldiers in the field. *Rock Diaries VI*, Cho-ni to Radja and Jupar, April 23, 1926 to August 20, 1926, 285, 286.

[81] Pereira 1912: 420.

[82] *Rock Diaries V*: 83; Rock, J. The principality of Cho-ni, 3-4.

men shot or beheaded and their heads displayed in public places.[83] No wonder he was murdered in the 1930s by his own men.[84]

Under the prevailing rule of succession in Chone, the elder son of a reigning prince was to succeed his father, while the second would become abbot of the monastery. But as Yang had no brother he was made abbot as well.[85] However, since Yang was not an ordained monk, his religious duties were performed by an incumbent priest-official.[86] In this connection, the question arises to what extent were monks and monastic institutions able to counterbalance whatever political authority was lacking in the outlying districts? As monasteries often performed a key role in local society, we may expect a moderating influence. Whether this was also the case in the peripheral parts of Chone and Thewu remains to be seen. Northeast Tibet was dominated by the Gelukpa order and the Chone monastery was a Gelukpa establishment as well. Although Chone as one of the largest and oldest monastic institutions in the area[87] had a supra-regional importance,[88] its religious and political influence had waned since the eighteenth century, possibly as a result of the growing influence of neighbouring Labrang.[89] But within the Chone territory it remained the supreme hardware symbol of Gelukpa power, harboring from 500 to 700 monks,[90] sheltering five Living Buddhas, and celebrating two important religious festivals a year that were visited by thousands of spectators.[91] In addition, there

[83] Cf. Nietupski: 50, after Blanche Griebenow. See note 54. This was not entirely a new thing. In 1885 Potanin on his visit to Chone already noticed two cages standing near the gate in the wall surrounding the town, containing the heads of two "Tangutan Tebbu". See Potanin: 243-44.

[84] Sutton:160-61.

[85] Farrer II: 83 ("No abbot in 1914"), 110-11; *Rock Diaries II*: 147-48; Rock 1928: 572.

[86] *Ibid*.: 572.

[87] Gruschke 2001 II: 44-46. According to this author, Chone was founded as a Nyingma establishment, converted into a Sakya monastery and eventually drafted into a Geluk institution during Tsonkhapa's first reformist wave of activity in the fifteenth century. This may partly explain Rock's discovery of a Nyingma temple within the Chone precincts. See *Rock Diaries VII*: 200.

[88] Amongst other things because of its printing establishment, Rock 1928: 581, 602 (Plate).

[89] Nietupski 1999.

[90] Kingdon Ward: 55 ("five hundred resident priests"); Pereira 1912: 420 ("a large Tibetan monastery with five hundred monks"); Fletcher: 91 ("it has about 400 lamas", after Wulsin 1923), see also the photographs of Chone monastery (1923) in *ibid*.: 91, 92; Rock 1928: 576 ("now only 700 reside there").

[91] Rock 1928.

were other not inconsiderable monasteries, like Nalang,[92] later burned to the ground.[93] Then there was Chhöshe gompa, or Che pa kou hsin ssu, quite an imposing affair judging from the existing photographs.[94] For years there was bitter animosity between Chone and Che pa kou hsin ssu, on account of the former trying to get more temporal and spiritual influence in the latter.[95] Yet another example of a somewhat larger Gelukpa monastery is Rock's Pa shi gong ma[96] at Dengkha, where the Carlson missionary family lived for a couple of years before the mission station was burned to the ground in 1934.[97] Although the Gelukpa were the dominant order in the area, there were a few Nyingma and Shakya establishments too.[98] The total number of monasteries in Chone was perhaps forty,[99] however, many containing less than a hundred monks. In its southern Thewu parts, there were also a number of Bon monasteries, adjacent to the stronger Bon representation in the neighboring districts of Dzöge and Sharkhog.[100] Bon certainly had

[92] Seen by Farrer on July 11, 1914 and described by him as "a hitherto unsuspected abbey, a rich and flourishing place of many curling roofs, and well-painted handsome [chapels], and monastic buildings clean and white-washed". Farrer II: 140.

[93] *Rock Diaries III*: 153.

[94] D.P. Ekvall: 48 photo facing, which may be the same as the monastery shown by Tafel I: 304, photo facing. On page 301, Tafel mentions this large Gelukpa monastery, which goes by the name of Gaser gomba, Gawo se or Gomba se. Rock's description of the place fits the photographs mentioned. See *Rock Diaries III*: 148. The one thing that does not fit this theory is that Tafel calls the river valley Wong tschü. Or did he simply mean Rong chu?

[95] D.P. Ekvall: 148-49; Tafel II: 301.

[96] *Rock Diaries VIII*: 24; cf. Gruschke's Pelshe Dengkha Gompa, Gruschke II: 50-51; Carlson 1928: 186; Carlson, C.E. 1930. Making our way among the Tebbus of Tibet. *The Alliance Weekly* 65 (34), 547-48.

[97] Rev. C.E. Carlson—Personal file—C&MA Archives, Colorado Springs, CO, USA. See note 4.

[98] Especially in the southern part of Chone. For example, Pai ku ssu, a small Sakya monastery, just before reaching the southern boundary of the Chone domain at the village of Yang pu, *Rock Diaries VIII*: 42; These few Sakya monasteries are remnants of an earlier Sakya fond dating from before the Tsonkhapa reforms. See also Gruschke II: 50-51; cf. Anon. 1994. Lamaism in Gansu. *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 26(3), 50, mentioning one Sakya monastery in Diebu, and two Nyingma ones in Chone, information dating from the early post-communist revolutionary period.

[99] The Gazetteer accompanying Rock's Arnold Arboretum held Chone and Thewu Map (see note 2) gives twenty nine monasteries. If we add the ten monasteries or so as to be found in the *Rock Diaries* that are not marked on Rock's map, we come to perhaps forty monasteries for the whole of the Chone domain, including its exclaves. Of course these are all, for various reasons, approximate figures.

[100] Futterer 1900: 337; *Rock Diaries V*: 120 ("Today, 24 March 1926, came into my courtyard a Bonbö sorcerer from the Samba valley"); *Rock Diaries VII*: 18 (the Bon

influenced the local population and although the people tried to be good Buddhists in everyday life, they also adhered to their mountain gods and earth spirits.[101] In particular the worship of local mountains ranked high on the annual festival calendar, because it was the root ritual in the cosmological relationship between man and his territory.[102] Powerful mountain gods in Thewu were Nike, name giver to the Nike Tewa crags in the central Min Shan,[103] and Tsareshina near Tsarekika more to the east.[104] But in the more densely settled Tao ho valley Gelukpa power prevailed. Robert Ekvall was of the opinion that the sedentary Tibetan farmers were more completely under the domination of the monasteries than the nomads of the plateau,[105] and his father had already written that "the power even a common priest exercises over the laity can hardly be imagined".[106] Let alone a Living Buddha! In the upper Tao valley centering on Chone and Taochow, there were a dozen of these incarnations, and the Chone *t'ussu*, prince Yang, had to reckon with effective opposition.[107] Farther away from the Chone monastery, the Living Buddhas were often the sole effective authorities,[108] but their number dwindled in more peripheral and sometimes Bon-oriented valleys. Yet we may conclude that monastic institutions and their monk populations had a generally mitigating influence on local village society,[109] yet they could be very conservative in their view of all things new and foreign.[110] For the Thewu lands south of the Min Shan this meant in particular that in absence of any regular political

lamasery of Sarang gomba), 18-19 (on his visit to the 'black monastery' called Chichhi gomba); altogether eight Bon monasteries were reported for Diebu [Thewu] in the 1950s [Anon.: 50]; see also Gruschke II: 184 (Map); cf. Karmay: 528.

101 Ekvall 1939: 33-34.

102 D.P. Ekvall: 141; cf. Karmay and Sagant: 59-79.

103 *Rock Diaries III*: 139-40.

104 *Rock Diaries VII*: 98.

105 Futterer 1900: 25; Ekvall 1939: 12, 65.

106 D.P. Ekvall: 127.

107 Ekvall 1939: 32.

108 As was the great Living Buddha of Labrang in Rock's time, who despite being banned from his home monastery, and temporarily living in Chone territory, was able to mobilise 70,000 Tibetan warriors in the summer of 1925. See *Rock Diaries III*: 9-10.

109 For example, Farrer and Purdom were besieged at the Chone village exclave of Chago, 7 May, 1914. See Farrer I: 188 ("The monks told that they had come in peace, but that they had difficulties in controlling the villagers"); also when Rock on various occasions was helped by monks and Living Buddhas to achieve his ends without mishap (for example going to Amnye Machen).

110 Nietupski: 50 (on Chone being more conservative than Labrang).

authority by the Chone prince, the monasteries had to keep order in the local villages. Order was difficult to keep. Inter-village feuding was rife, and robbery the order of the day. How to explain such chronic disorder?

The outside and the inside

History and geography have intertwined sometimes to produce pockets of quite independent populations in isolated and inaccessible areas that because of a meager resource base and political pressure from outside have developed into hotbeds of resistance against territorial ambition. Such was the case with the upper Thewu of Chone on the southern side of the Min Shan, who were perceived by outsiders as thieves and robbers,[111] but in their semi-arid and drought-prone habitats could only sustain a meager mixed farming system liable to crop failure and animal loss in bad winters. They had a long-standing reputation of being brave, but given to highway robbing. It has been the singular bad luck of the upper Thewu to be caught in the swirl of the history of Nian Gengyao's eighteenth century campaigns of Manchu expansion into Northeast Tibet, in order to strengthen the empire's presence among the Amdo tribes.[112] According to Wu's 1995 study of the Manchu military advance into Amdo and Khams in the decade 1717-1727,[113] the four Thewu village federations of Salu, Chonglu, Zuolu and Le'ao were attacked in 1724[114] as part of a larger swoop to get rid of the robbers of the Gansu-Amdo mountain fringe.[115] As is the case with many of these historical place names, they are difficult to identify on the map. I think it may concern the upper Thewu region of Chone.[116] In the event, the

[111] See a.o. Carol S. Hammond Carlson, T1 Transcript, 3; Ekvall 1928: 104; Farrer I: 236; Farrer II: 120 ("their demoniac reputation"); Carlson 1928: 186 ("they did a great deal of thieving"). However, Jamieson: 79 expressed herself more cautiously: "the Tebus were thought to be wild and warlike".

[112] Fletcher: 38.

[113] Wu; see note 19.

[114] Under the Yung cheng Emperor (r. 1723-1735).

[115] Wu: 261.

[116] Chonglu may be the same as Rock's Changlo, a gorge with a hidden robber haunt near the passes of Tsarekikha in the eastern Min Shan. In fact the whole stretch of the trail between the lateral gorge of Dollo and Changlo were subject to robbery; cf. *Rock Diaires III*: 63. Salu may refer to Tsa-ru (or Ch'a lu kou), the main branch of the Pai-shui Chiang going in the direction of Takstang Lhamo. Zuolu may be the

Thewu suffered a two-pronged attack, one from Chinese soldiers from Hezhou, supported by an unknown number of *t'ussu* warriors,[117] and the other by Chinese soldiers from Sungpan.[118] Wu, on the basis of an analysis of imperial records, holds that within seven days of fighting 2,100 Tibetans were killed and 41 villages destroyed.[119] It turned out that there were only minor spoils to be gained from the Thewu villages, which testifies to their poverty.[120] The interesting point in this account is the participation of *t'ussu* soldiers. If they were from Chone, it looks as if its Gelukpa masters took this one-time chance of increasing their hold over the partly Bon-oriented Thewu, a scenario that was repeated in the two Gyarong or Chin-ch'uan wars later in the same century.[121] Be that as it may, Thewu society was probably thoroughly disrupted.

Such political, military and religious shock therapy was not easily forgotten, and although European language sources are largely silent on the nineteenth-century predicament of the Thewu,[122] their reemergence in twentieth century accounts shows that the situation had not changed for the better. The Thewu were still seen as thieves and robbers,[123] and the Chone hold over them was slight. The Chinese government had occasionally sent troops a short distance into Thewu territory, but never with success.[124] When Tafel skirted the land of the Thewu in 1907, another 'Thewu war' was going on.[125] This time too, the Thewu were

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neighbouring valley of Tso ru (or Tso lu kou), an upper branch of the Pai shui too. The latter two valleys were still in Rock's time qualified as notorious robber haunts, *Rock Diaries III*: 131. They were in fact regarded as 'no-man's land' that started on the southern slopes of Mt. Ban chu, comprised the two river valleys mentioned, and faded into largely unknown mountainous country towards the Szechuan border in the south. See *Rock Diaries III*: 49-51, *Rock Diaries VII*: 13. Le'ao remains unidentified.

[117] Can it have been Chone soldiers?

[118] Wu: 261.

[119] Whether these were all Thewu remains yet to be established.

[120] Wu: 262.

[121] Cf. Mansier, P. 1990. La guerre du Jinchuan (rGyalrong): son contexte politico-religieux. In *Tibet: Civilisation et Société*. Paris: Éditions de la Fondation Singer-Polignac, 125-42; Martin, D. 1990 Bonpo canons and Jesuit cannons. On sectarian factors involved in the Ch'ienlung Emperor's second Goldstream expedition of 1771-1776 based primarily on some Tibetan sources. *The Tibet Journal* 15(2), 3-28.

[122] With the exception of Potanin: 243-44. See note 34.

[123] See note 108. There may be some hyperbole in this point of view. At times, the Thewu, or at least some of them, were seen as peaceful traders. See Ekvall, R.B. 1952. *Tibetan Sky Lines*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 128, photo facing.

[124] Kingdon Ward: 63.

[125] Tafel II: 275 ("Täwo Krieg"). Kingdon Ward: 63 refers to the same military expedition of 1907.

caught in a pincer, 800 soldiers approaching from Sungpan in Szechuan, and another 2,200 from Lanchow in Gansu.[126] The immediate cause of the expedition was the robbing of a Chinese Mohammedan trading caravan by the Thewu.[127] While the Sungpan soldiers quietly waited on the steppe plateau, those of Lanchow tried to enter the river gorge country of upper Thewu, but were ambushed with several men either killed or taken hostage. This brought summer-long negotiations in which several neigbouring chiefs and Bon po monks took part. By the beginning of September 1907 it was decided that the Thewu had to give up a hundred swords, fifty lances, and fifty gabled flintlocks. They were allowed to keep the 12,000 ounces of silver they had taken from the Mohammedan traders.[128] The role of the Chone *t'ussu* in this whole affair remains unclear. Tafel was not even sure whether the Chone prince had still much to say in upper Thewu.[129] This impression may have been due to the recent accession to the throne of the then still very young Yang *t'ussu*.

Disturbances came not only from the Thewu side of the Min Shan. The general convulsion of China after the revolution of 1911 produced regional warlords and social banditry that started to affect the middle Tao ho valley from 1914 onwards. In eastern Gansu an army of dislodged and wayward peasants under the command of Pailung,[130] reinforced with bandits from local secret societies,[131] went on the rampage in the years 1912-1914.[132] In May 1914, Pailung and his hordes appeared at Minchow,[133] east of Chone. The town was thoroughly looted before the bandit leader proceeded upstream. The Chone monastery due to

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126 Tafel II: 276.

127 *Ibid*.: 299; the wider context may have been the general forward policy by the Chinese, especially into Kham territory, following the Younghusband expedition to Central Tibet in 1904 and the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1906. See Epstein, L. (ed.) 2002. *Khams pa Histories. Visions of People, Place and Authority, PIATS 2000*. Leiden: Brill.

128 Tafel II: 301.

129 *Ibid*.: 298 ("Der Dschoni Tu se der Oberherr des ganzen Täwo kiang ts'a-Gebietes *ist oder war*"), italics mine.

130 Sometimes misnamed 'White Wolf'. See Lipman, J.N. 1997. *Familiar Strangers. A History of Muslims in Northwest China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 192, note 59.

131 Hegel, C.B. 1959. The White Wolf. The Career of a Chinese Bandit, 1912-1914. unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia University, New York, 24. For the workings of local secret societies in the area at the time, see Ekvall, D.P.: 102-12.

132 Hegel 1959; Lipman 1981: 189-203 ("The White Wolf in Gansu").

133 Jamieson: 128-29.

local opposition was passed by, but the Muslim enclave to the west of Chone, and especially the trading town of Taochow, bore the brunt of the final spasm of the Pailang movement. On May 25, 1914, the town was thoroughly sacked, and 7,000 or more of its inhabitants were killed.[134]

The Christian & Missionary Alliance workers from Minchow, Chone, and Taochow had fallen back on the former Tibetan monastery of Lupasi on the southern bank of the Tao,[135] which they had been able to buy from its Tibetan masters around 1905.[136] Originally called Da rge gomba,[137] the missionaries had smashed its icons, broken down the solidly built chanting hall, and sent the massive timbers floating down the Tao ho for the new church to be built at Titao.[138] Some of the carved wood ended up in Chicago's Field Museum through the agency of Dr. Berthold Laufer who happened to be in the area.[139] Over the years Lupasi had developed into a retreat for the missionaries, where they went on outings and withdrew in times of social and political turmoil.[140]

Less than three months after the Pailang atrocities, there materialised a new and quite unexpected threat, this time from across the Min Shan. In the middle of August 1914,[141] about an hour after midnight, the missionary station at Lupasi was being attacked by a band of Thewu, said to have numbered a couple of hundred.[142] By good chance a

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[134] Plymire, D. 1959. *High Adventure in Tibet*. Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 41 ("seven thousand bodies"); Lipman 1981: 197-98 ("Between 8,000 and 15,000 people died in the sack of Taochow").

[135] Jamieson: 139.

[136] Ekvall 1938: 26-28, 58-59; *A Missionary Atlas. A Manual of the Foreign Work of the Christian & Missionary Alliance*. Harrisburg: Christian Publications, 1950, 103; the missionaries knew the place already since 1895 when Ekvall and Christie retreated there shortly after their first arrival at Taochow to escape the threats of the Muslim rebellion of 1895-1896 (Christie Letters, July 2, 1895), see also note 4; cf. Ekvall: 33; for a photograph of Lupasi see Carlsen, W.D. 1985. *Tibet. In Search of a Miracle*. Nyack, NY: Nyack College, 39.

[137] Ekvall 1938: 155, 158.

[138] Robert Dean Carlson T2 Transcript, 3.

[139] Jamieson: 98. Incidentally, Laufer was greatly assisted in his Tibetan studies by a lady missionary by the name of Grace C. Agar.

[140] Cf. Ekvall, D.P. 1912. Present conditions of foreigners in Kansu. *The Alliance Weekly* (March 23), 395.

[141] Farrer II: 59 ("between the ninth and sixteenth of August").

[142] Robert Dean Carlson T2 Transcript, 3; Van Dyck, H. 1956. *William Christie. Apostle to Tibet*. Harrisburg: Christian Publications, 93 ("said to number 170"); Ekvall 1938: 67 ("seven hundred Tebus").

Chinese woman who could understand Tibetan[143] had forewarned the missionary community about the impending attack. In the event, they had armed themselves more than usual,[144] and when the attackers appeared had repelled them after a fierce fight, leaving three Thewu dead.[145] According to Robert Ekvall it was the largest raiding party of Tibetans that had ever come down into the border country.[146] In the aftermath of the attack, a punitive expedition from Lanchow was sent against the Thewu, in the course of which three of their villages were burned.[147] The Chinese general who led the expedition, seconded by the missionaries, secured a thirty-year truce, after which the Thewu caused no troubles again outside their homeland.[148] To understand why the missionaries had incurred the wrath and perhaps the greed of the Thewu will perhaps always remain a mystery. Robert Carlson thought that the chance of wiping out the whole mission group "at one fell swoop" may have played a role,[149] but there were also rumours of a large amount of silver buried somewhere on the monastery grounds. According to Carlson it was perhaps more the silver than anything else that may have lured the Thewu into an attack.[150]

After the Chinese punitive expedition and the negotiated truce, the Thewu retreated into their recesses. Again it is hard to judge the inside workings of their local village societies. For a start they were very much against others encroaching upon their territory.[151] That applied especially to a section of the upper Pai-shui chiang that Rock calls consistently Upper Thewu. Here we find the Tsa-ru and Tso-ru valleys, noted robber haunts in an acknowledged no-man's land.[152] Adjacent to these is a stretch of land along the upper Pai-shui valley called Pa she

[143] Robert Dean Carlson T2 Transcript, 3.

[144] *Ibid*.: 2; Van Dyck: 92, 94.

[145] Carlson 1928: 186; Ekvall 1938: 67-68; Van Dyck: 94-95.

[146] Ekvall 1938: 67; see also Farrer II: 159.

[147] Van Dyck: 97.

[148] Carlson 1928: 186.

[149] But *who* would have benefited from such a move, or even may have instigated the attack remains unclear.

[150] Robert Dean Carlson T2 Transcript, 3.

[151] Carol S. Hammond Carlson T1 Transcript, 3. At this point in the interview "there is a thirty-two minute blank space on the tape. Apparently Balmer—the interviewer—had accidentally taken the recorder out of the record mode", T1 Transcript, 4. When the transcript resumes its course Balmer and Hammond Carlson are still talking about the Thewu.

[152] *Rock Diaries III*: 49-51, 131; cf. note 116.

te ka or Dengkha, where the inhabitants always carried guns and swords.[153] From 1931 to 1933, it became for a few years the place of a missionary station run by the Carlson family.[154] However, the local population destroyed the mission house in 1934 when the Carlson family was on leave.[155] Further downstream is located the Ta ra valley or Tara ku, a southern side valley of the Pai shui chiang. Its inhabitants had succeeded in remaining completely independent from the outside world. The Chone prince warned Rock not to go there, as the valley was supposed to be full of robbers.[156] As such, they seem to have formed a 'closed' community and although they were reckoned as subjects of the Chone prince, none of his headmen dared to enter the Tara ku. Consequently, the people of Ta ra paid no taxes and were "a law unto themselves".[157] It is interesting to note that in summertime they were relatively peaceful, but in wintertime came out of their hidden villages across the ice and terrorised the villagers of the lower Thewu region.[158] This may have been because of their poverty, but their victims were not much richer.[159] At one time, the Chone prince thought it opportune to subdue the Ta ra community once and for all. He mobilised 2,000 soldiers and tried to penetrate into the wild Ta ra valley. But the Thewu laid huge logs across the trail, and from behind kept up a constant fire. The Chone prince's expedition suffered severe casualties and as a result he had to abandon the expedition. Even at Rock's time in Chone, the Ta ra Thewu were still the masters of their own land, paid no taxes, and recognised no one as their overlord.[160]

Such stories tend perhaps to distort everyday reality of Thewu village life. Carlson was of the opinion that robbery was a sideline and not the main occupation of the people.[161] In line with his reasoning, it is far more likely that the inside workings of village life were primarily con-

153 *Rock Diaries VII*: 16; *Rock Diaries VIII*: 31.

154 Carlson 1928, 1930, 1939; Carol S. Hammond Carlson T1 Transcript, 3-4. According to Robert Carlson it was "pioneer evangelistic work", Robert Dean Carlson T1 Transcript, 7.

155 Rev. C. Edwin Carlson – Personal File, see note 97; *Missionary Atlas*, 102; Robert Dean Carlson T1 Transcript, 4.

156 *Rock Diaries VII*: 21.

157 *Ibid.*: 25.

158 *Idem*.

159 *Ibid.*: 26, 76.

160 *Rock Diaries VIII*: 32.

161 Robert Dean Carlson T2 Transcript, 2.

ditioned by ordinary concerns of local people over resources in a poverty-stricken environment.[162] The struggle for survival in a harsh mixed farming habitat,[163] in the relative absence of social cohesiveness, produced strife and discord. Inter- and intra-village feuding may have concerned quarrels over land and cattle, over debts, and over women. The stories of these quarrels lived on in clan and village memory, to which each generation added its share. The scale of these protracted fights can be learned from a terrible feud that broke out in the Dengkha area around 1925 and lasted for a couple of years. It occurred when members of one family clan started to argue with another clan federation bordering on its territory. The precise reason is unknown, but the situation deteriorated so badly that in the end even women and children were legitimate prey.[164]

Conclusion

If we come to characterise and assess the situation in Chone on the Gansu-Tibetan frontier for the period 1880-1940 in terms of territoriality, local power and political control, we first have to conclude that there was incomplete territorial jurisdiction by the Chone *t'ussu*, to the extent that there were clusters of villages in secluded Thewu valleys south of the Min Shan which could not be controlled in anyway except by the local monasteries. Local power in a few cases was in the hands of the villagers themselves, who did not bother to pay taxes to the Chone prince and lived a life somewhat apart from the Chone political-monastic nucleus. The Thewu living in these frontier lands occupied a niche in an outlying part of Tibetan civilisation that in a political sense had never pressed them too hard. Yet the Thewu realised that they also lived on the edge of the Chinese empire, not an enviable location, because when they tried to relieve themselves from their poverty either by harassing their clan enemies over local resources or robbing a caravan passing by, soldiers sometimes appeared on the horizon and burned their villages and punished their headmen.

If we finally have to decide on a characterisation of the Chone principality and its Thewu dependencies in the period under review, we

[162] *Rock Diaries VII*: 26; cf. Carlson 1939: 265.
[163] Given the prevailing level of technology.
[164] Carlson 1939: 265.

may point to its existential poverty, its internal exploitation by its prince, and its external territorial harassment by the Chinese. But we may also conclude that the historical *t'ussu*-ship, however eroded it may have been in the end, provided a mechanism for the relative independence of Chone and Thewu.

A TALE OF THE TIBETO-BURMAN 'PYGMIES'

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Fill in the Blanks

Regions along the margins of the Tibetan world often seem more isolated than the Central Asian plateau itself—its peoples even more unknown to the outside world. Attempts in recent years to colour in this seemingly blank area of the world ethnographic map with new 'discoveries' have brought back old ethnic arguments about anthropological representation. How to classify a small group of Tibeto-Burman speakers, the small-statured T'rung (Ch. *Dulong*) whose remarkable isolation have kept them viable for generations and relatively secure from former slave-raiders of Kham and Yúnnán and the warlords of Kachin State? Faced with the creation of a national park on their land, suffering from endemic goitrism, and a genetic dwarfism, the surviving T'rung of the eastern extreme of the Himalayan Range are now the focus of considerable, and often unwanted, outside attention.

The T'rung are caught in a tripartite nationalistic discourse—as Dulong, they are one of the *minzu* of the People's Republic of China; as Lhopo or Monpa, they are ethnicised cousins of the Tibetans; finally, as a minority group of Kachin State, they are part of the tribal unity rhetoric of the Government of Myanmar. This paper provides a glimpse of a group on the edge of the Tibetan world whose rediscovery not only demonstrates the extreme diversity and complexity of the massive Tibetan cultural area, but raises long-buried ethical issues on the presentation of little-known societies to the outside world.

As Mark Turin has remarked in this volume, there is a general sentiment in Tibet studies that the linguistic term Tibeto-Burman has a general cultural equivalent, and that the people that are represented in this category are somehow peripheral to the classic core of Tibetan civilisation of U Tsang, Amdo, and Kham, and marginal to the great

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Hindu and Buddhist centres of south and southeast Asia as well. This conceptual marginality is further exacerbated by the political and geographic remoteness where many 'Tibeto-Burmans' reside. This general ambiguity, together with the misty veil of Shangri-La reportage that is still prevalent in modern popular culture, has contributed in recent years to the portrayal of rediscovered Tibeto-Burman societies demonstrably within a mid-Victorian naturalist or salvage style of ethnographic reporting.

This is an interesting phenomenon, but unsettling. Like many nineteenth century positivist paradigms, non-literate cultures portrayed in this manner are seen to be especially subject to extinction at the agency of 'higher' cultures. And the application of this highly deterministic viewpoint is not limited to non-literate cultures: much of Western popular literature on Tibet is still constructed around the premise that the classic culture of the plateau is on the verge of extinction. Tibetan exiles too, for their part, have achieved much by stressing the urgency of the message of their imminent extinction. If Tibet is marginal in the modern geopolitical world, how much more amorphous those 'Tibeto-Burman peoples' are who share an ancient comment descent with the inhabitants of Tibet proper. Lineages die out and languages disappear but are the T'rung 'Pygmies' of the Hkakabo Razi Range[2] in the Himalayas (Map 1) bound for extinction?

Challenged by deterministic interpretations of T'rung fallibility seen in current popular literature, I planned a survey of all T'rung villages surrounding Hkakabo Razi, in Burma, Yúnnán, Dzayul and Tsarong valleys in Kham, and the Lohit Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, India. I hoped that our photographs of the T'rung would not seem as tragic as C. A. Wolley's photographs of Trucanini, the last indigenous Tasmanian who died in 1876.[3]

Two field sessions took place between 2001 and 2003 to deal with this question (Map 2).[4] The survey had two goals: First, with Myanmar

[2] Hkakabo Razi is an isolated peak of 5,923 m (19,250 feet) on the border between Tibet and Burma. It is the easternmost great peak of the Himalayan Range and the highest point in Southeast Asia.

[3] See Vivienne Rae-Ellis 1992. The Representation of Trucanini. *In* Elizabeth Edwards (ed.). *Anthropology & Photography*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

[4] I thank the National Science Foundation (USA) and the Lindsey Fund for Research at the California Academy of Science for supporting this research. It is ironic that the particular NSF fund that I applied to identifies itself though a salvage trope,

governmental plans for the curtailment of the endangered animal and botanical products trade with the establishment of a Hkakabo Razi wilderness preserve, great changes to the traditional ways of life seem to be occurring for the T'rung and other Rawang peoples,[5] as well as the members of the border region Khampa community. To what extent has the traditional salt trade continued in this region? As long as there has been documentation, Rawang, Tibetan, and Chinese have been trading salt, tea, and other commodities for forest products such as animal pelts, musk, ginseng, goral horn, and other medicinals (plus rubies, jade, and gold collected farther downstream). Second, the project relates to the larger issue of how and why peoples such as the T'rung have maintained an ethnic separateness from the great civilising projects of their neighbors (Tibet, China, Burma, and the ubiquitous West). Perhaps the Rawang are old hands at dealing with the push-pull of empires, and that this latest challenge will be adroitly handled as before.

The Last Village?

A clear example of a current retrograde, positivist style applied to the interpretation of a Tibeto-Burman speaking culture is seen in wildlife biologist Alan Rabinowitz's *Beyond the Last Village* (2002), with his assessment of the T'rung residing in northernmost Burma within the Hkakabo Razi range. Here the five remaining T'rung 'pygmies' from the village of Karon,[6] all siblings, are poignantly portrayed as the last of their kind, silently awaiting their own extinction like the final, lonely passenger pigeon on its perch in Cincinnati Zoo. Nearly seventy years ago the American Museum of Natural History reported on an upcoming expedition to Southeast Asia:

> Because many forms of wildlife in the interior of Indo-China may become extinct, the American Museum of Natural History is sponsoring an expedition to gather as many specimens of jungle life as possible.[7]

'High Risk Exploratory Research', which is based on the premise that the cultural phenomenon or people proposed to be studied might have disappeared by the time the researcher actually arrives in the field. Presumably, expectations of harvests of rich data are reduced.

[5] The Rawang consist of several groups, notably the Daru, Mutwang, Tangsar, Lungmi, Htalu, and T'rung peoples.

[6] Burmese transliteration of 'T'rung'

Not much has changed, as Rabinowitz's primary mission was to collect specimens, dead or alive, on behalf of the Wildlife Conservation Society and its Bronx Zoo. In *Last Village*, the T'rung are depicted as the only example of Asian genetic dwarfism known, the last survivors of an older group of Tibeto-Burman mountain people habitually preyed upon by Chinese and Khampa Tibetans. Over time they were forced deeper and deeper within isolated mountain valleys, presumably shrinking all the time, like the diminutive mammoths of Catalina Island at the end of the Pleistocene.

The main problem with this lineal evolutionary style, other than its quaint colonialism, is that the T'rung are far from extinct. Where there are indeed only five 'pure' T'rung left in Burma, just 20 miles over the border in China there are hundreds of other T'rung.[8] How could this be overlooked? The trope that looks upon cultural assimilation as an inevitable product of nation-building hegemonies seems not able to accommodate sustainable cultural pluralism. Rabinowitz, in his efforts to create a nature preserve along the Tibet-Burmese border region in cooperation with the Burmese-dominated Myanmar Government, has perhaps unintentionally marginalised the Rawang peoples even further by depriving them of an international audience that might understand their continuing existence and thus appreciate their inherent indigenous rights.

There are numerous examples of depopulating indigenous peoples to expedite the creation of wilderness reservations—in 1933 the Timbisha Shoshone were removed from Death Valley by American President Herbert Hoover to create a national monument out of their land.[9] A nature preserve has no room for the 'evils' of human agency, even autochthonous ones. The language of inevitable tribal extinction becomes an expedient for the creation of these vast wildlife management regions.

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[7] *New York Times*, February 14, 1936.

[8] The difficulty encountered here is that the world is round and interconnected—not flat with edges. One is often surprised at the disjunctive collision of imagination and reality. From an anecdote told by my high School English teacher Donna Rice, it's like spending the day climbing Mt. Vesuvius only to find a Coca-Cola vending machine at the summit; I am also reminded by Donald Lopez's cover shot of the lama with sunglasses in *Prisoners of Shangri-La* or the incongruency of the Dalai Lama scratching his nose.

[9] Fifty individuals refused to leave. The Shoshone got their land back in 1998 after years of negotiations. Steven Haberfeld, Government-to-government negotiations: how the Timbisha Shoshone got its land back. www.indiandispute.com/article/timbisha.htm

The insidious uses of salvage paradigms for the promotion of the Western agenda were examined by Crosby, who saw the concept as

> predicated on the concept of a dead or dying people whose culture needs to be 'saved'. Those doing the saving choose what fragments of a culture they will salvage. Having done this, they become both the owners and interpreters of the artifacts or goods that have survived from that dying culture, artifacts that become rare and therefore valuable.[10]

Although Crosby's analysis was within the realm of ethnic art in the West, the same could be said about the carving up of a populated landscape by conservationists who overlook the continuing needs of thus displaced indigenous peoples.

Those interested in biological systematics are primarily concerned with the process of speciation and the development of differences between organisms. It is highly problematic to lift this evolutionary model and apply it to human societies, however, as Marx did in the nineteenth century and Leslie White in the twentieth. This social Darwinism and the rhetoric of human difference and extinction is compelling for popular audiences, though, even if the science supporting may be fractious and discredited. As Root puts it:

> The problem seems to occur when cultural difference is construed through particular systems of authority and is charged or energized for its own sake or, to put the issue somewhat differently, when the interest goes out of balance in such a way that the fact of difference itself is able to produce intense excitement and pleasure at the cost of neglecting the people or culture that is the source of interest.[11]

Because the presenter of exotica usually operates within a privileged position within a presumed geographic vacuole, she or he might feel justified to fill the blanks with descriptive styles borrowed from some perceived glorious age, such as the Western Age of Discovery. In our example, discovering new species of mammals and lost tribes along the way, Rabinowitz assumes the stance of the last of the grand terrestrial explorers, and is thus posited in apparent continuity with Magellan, Cook, LaPerouse, and Lewis and Clark. Root further cautions:

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[10] Marcia Crosby 1991. Constitution of the imaginary Indian. *In* Stan Douglas (ed.) *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*. Vancouver: Talon Books, 274. I am reminded of an episode of the television cartoon *The Simpsons* wherein Grandpa Simpson flails at encircling vultures, screaming the admonition, "But I'm not dead yet!".

[11] Deborah Root 1996. *Cannibal Culture*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 30.

> Exotic images feed particular cultural, social, and political needs of the appropriating culture. This is why colonial adventures continue to be romanticized and why the consumption of the spectacle of difference is able to make the alienated Westerner feel alive.[12]

The apparently alienated Hkakabo Razi plant hunter Frank Kingdon Ward felt highly animated in the village of Tehuandan when he encountered a brilliantly flowering cherry tree:

> This, the most magnificent hardy flowering tree I have ever seen…was quite leafless and just a mass of blossom, stark crimson…*Prunus puddum*, as it grows in the Adung valley, is one of the largest of the deciduous trees. It grows eighty to a hundred feet high, and its branches have a very wide spread. The ruby-red flower-buds appear about the middle of March, in compact clusters towards the ends of the branches, and the tree is swiftly transformed into a frozen fountain of precious stones.[13]

Kingdon-Ward went on to wallow in the sentimentality of the time that looked upon the blue poppy as a tea-room metaphor for the delicate exotica of Shangri-La.[14]

The seminal work in the study of the consumption of the exotic Other was Edward Said's *Orientalism*,[15] which contributed significantly to the 1990s deconstruction of the Shangri-La paradigm in Tibet studies. Having myself emerged from the latter exercise a bit roughed up, it is disconcerting to see other Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples being re-exoticised and used as a *raison d'être* for continued salvage exploration (and cultural appropriation through ecotourism development)[16] in remote areas of the eastern Himalayas.

One of the more usual methods of creating a perception of difference in Orientalist representation is to portray the Other as somehow passive, lethargic, ugly, and diminutive. The natural shortness of the T'rung is a convenient icon for Rabinowitz to demonstrate difference, as it is for his Burmese colleagues, and it was for his British predecessors in Upper Burma. Notably, he barely mentions the "robust, tall,

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[12] *Ibid*.

[13] *Ibid.*, 168.

[14] cf. Dibyesh Anand, this volume.

[15] Edward Said 1978. *Orientalism* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

[16] To replace traditional hunting and trade in the new Hkakabo Razi National Park, the Myanmar Government is promoting ecotourism to mitigate the deleterious effects of the ban on hunting and collecting in the Park. They also envision a helicopter accessible skiing resort in Hkakabo Razi, unique for Southeast Asia.

handsome, energetic, and materially prosperous"[17] Khampa of the district who live nearby and constantly interact and trade with the T'rung and other Rawang. In fact, the Khampa and Rawang have what appears to be a well-balanced system of trade, providing goods and service specialties for each other. The T'rung are hardly isolated from the trade networks that span from Yúnnán to India, the Tibetan plateau to the Burmese lowlands. The discovery of profound Otherness in the T'rung, and the group's presumed disappearance, then, helps justify the need for a national park preserve to protect what's left of this natural world of extreme biodiversity. Who knows what other species and lost tribes might be discovered, even though the park, with its limitations on hunting and collecting, might destroy the indigenous inhabitants' traditional way of life.

Based almost exclusively on a rhetoric of wildlife conservation urgency, one wonders if the T'rung are indeed among the most endangered tribes on Earth?[18] Using a genre not heard of in mainstream anthropology since the days of Radcliffe-Brown, Rabinowitz writes:

> The Taron [T'rung] houses were more decrepit than those of other Rawang groups, as were the Taron themselves. Although they had a lighter facial complexion than the Rawang, my first impression was that the few Taron left looked much like the typical portrayals of Stone Age people. They were disheveled and dirty, their simple cotton clothing almost in tatters, as if they cared nothing about their appearance.[19]

Rabinowitz not only considered the T'rung repulsive, but suggested that they themselves thought so. According to Rabinowitz, the T'rung decided to end their line for this reason and by the fact that they were having defective babies. Rabinowitz assumes, perhaps from an earlier study of Colonel Saw Myint in the 1960s, that the T'rung, who migrated to Burma in the late nineteenth century, lost contact with their tribe in Yúnnán and began to condone marriages of close relations—thus the extremely high incidence of mental retardation and infant mortality. "If my understanding of Dawi's [the 'last' T'rung man] words were correct, the Taron had become active participants in their own extinction".[20]

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[17] My subjective comments.
[18] *Ibid*.
[19] *Ibid*., 141.
[20] P. 266.

Our research would demonstrate that these five T'rung are simply a family of a much larger group of T'rung still living in Yúnnán and possibly Kham and Arunachal Pradesh, India. The Burmese T'rung had only been isolated from other T'rung since 1950—much less time for the evolutionary process to show up in a statistically valid manner within a human population. The matter is considerably more complex than Rabinowitz or his predecessors had ascertained, and the consequences of apparent self-imposed eugenics among the T'rung have been unfortunate.

Rabinowitz's statements about inbreeding come directly from the Burmese government surveys of the people in the 1950s and 1960s, the style of those studies based on earlier British colonial reporting standards. In a sense, the civilising missions of the Western empires appear to have persisted from the late nineteenth century to today. Their tenacious postures are unfortunate not only for their political presumptions, but also because they represent medical and genetic understandings at least a century old. These are being used to describe and determine Myanmar government policy regarding the isolated T'rung at present. Let us examine a few of these foundation blocks to current Myanmar policy toward the Rawang peoples:

The Western Civilising Mission in Hkakabo Razi

In 1895-96, the French Prince Henri d'Orléans and party 'discovered' the source of the Irrawaddy in the Hkakabo Razi Range. This great river's main eastern branch is the Dulongjiang, since 1961 a part of China and known locally as the T'rung (Stony) River from which the people derive their name. They appear to be a group that several centuries ago settled in these highlands, prior to the arrival of Khampa Tibetans in the area in the early twentieth century. Most distinctive about the T'rung is their extremely small stature, and they do indeed appear to be among the smallest of all groups of East Asian origin. Unlike the Negritos of the Philippines, Malaysia, and the Adaman Islands, however, the T'rung are otherwise similar in physical characteristics to other Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman speaking groups, complete with distinctive Asiatic characteristics as epicanthic eye folds, shovel-shaped incisors, sparse body hair, and minimal sexual dimorphism.

Along the upper Dulongjiang, Prince Henri provided the first Western description of the shy T'rung:

> The men mostly had a twig or thorn in the ear as ornament; the women sometimes a large silver ear-ring. The latter also were tattooed in green round the mouth. Formerly they used to be unmolested, but the Loutses made war on them, and it was then that they lived for precaution in holes under the trees.The natives who came in with food were well formed, though diminutive, almost naked, and wholly dirty....[21]

This French Belle Epoch presentation is typical of other Western colonial styles of the times. Somewhat earlier, William Rockhill also recorded the presence of slavery on the Tibetan side of the Hkakabo Razi range:

> While speaking of the Tsarong it is proper to note that the slavery exists there in a more aggravated form than in any other portion of Tibet.... [The slaves] are taken from among the Lissus and other non-Tibetan tribes inhabiting the country.[22]

Bailey in 1911 also portrayed the T'rung people as exploited slaves by Tibetans living along the upper Salween or Nujiang, one valley east of Dulongjiang, in the Khampa county of Tsarong:

> Menkong used to be a centre for the slave trade, and we found many slaves of a dwarf race (probably Nungs) who had been brought from a country called by the Tibetans Tsong Yul, seven days journey south. Edgard measured some typical ones. A man was four foot four inches…one woman had a tattooed face.[23]

Kingdon Ward, visiting the eastern Himalayan gorges in the 1920s and 1930s, wrote about T'rung victimisation:

> We were once more ferried across the Salween…the loads being carried by dwarf Nung slaves, both women and men. The former were tattooed with indigo from between the eyes....[24] Most of them were slaves of the Tibetans—pygmies from the Taron.[25]

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[21] Henri D'Orléans 1999 (1898). *From Tonkin to India by the Sources of the Irawad*i. Bangkok: White Lotus, 248.

[22] William Rockhill 1881. *Land of the Lamas: Notes on a Journey through China, Mongolia, and Tibet.* New York: Century Co., 285-86.

[23] F.M. Bailey 1945. *China-Tibet-Assam. A Journey, 1911.* London: Jonathan Cape, 89.

[24] Frank Kingdon Ward 1923. *The Mystery Rivers of Tibet.* London: Seeley Service Co. Ltd., 284. My photographer, Dong Lin, told me that the elderly Dulong women in Yunnan were still tattooed, and this was done to prevent their abduction.

[25] Kingdon Ward 1937. *Plant Hunter's Paradise.* London: Jonathan Cape, 276-77.

To this day the Rawang are trying to live down these old descriptions of their people as a 'slave race'.

In the literature of exploration, the T'rung are also known as Dulong, Daru, Kiutzu, Nung, Tellu, and Taron, usually spelled according to local pronunciation. The T'rung are perhaps related to the Tibeto-Burman speaking Lhopa/Monba who live north of Assam, as well as the Mishmi of India, Thangmi of Nepal, and other marginalised Tibeto-Burman speakers of the eastern Himalayas. Most of the non-Rawang terms for the T'rung are derogatory.

In Burma, along the Adung Long (or Adung Wang) tributary of the Irrawaddy, Kingdon Ward further described the indigenous people as two distinct types, a pygmoid type not over five feet high and a "taller muscular, well-built strain". He believed the T'rung 'pygmies' were stunted as a result of diet. Further west in Dza Yul in Tibet, about 40 km west of Mt. Hkakabo Razi, he continues to describe a population that:

> consists of two distinct elements, Tibetan and aboriginal. The aborigines must have swarmed off some common stock long ago, and remained in undisturbed possession of Zayul until comparatively late years. They are pygmies and now form the serf population…shapeless pygmies with fat round face and wide nose.... They dress in drab sacking, and for decoration wear only a multitude of bright yellow bead necklaces…it hides the goitrous lump in the neck.[26]

The goitrous condition observed is no doubt a result of the lack of iodine in the diet, a condition seen in pre-modern, inland mountainous regions everywhere. The critical need for salt carrying trace amounts of iodine is clearly evident historically. Kingdon Ward noted further west of Dza Yul, he had seen Tibetanised pygmies in almost every village he passed through. Similarly, Kaulback noted in 1938:

> On the way down we saw a couple of dwarfs on the path, driving cattle. There are a few of these [dwarfs] in Zayul.... I now think they must be the remnants of an aboriginal race.... The dwarfs that remain are more or less slaves.[27]

Clearly, a pattern of historical distribution emerges that much more widespread than Rabinowitz perhaps realised.

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[26] Kingdon Ward 1934. *A Plant Hunter in Tibet.* London: Jonathan Cape, 45-46.

[27] Ronald Kaulback 1934. *Tibetan Trek.* London: Jonathan Cape, 253-54.

While Bailey[28] commented that slaves could be purchased for 45 *sang*, Harold Fletcher stated rather unfortunately that the prices of a slave "were a dagger for each limb, a sword for the head and a sack of flour for the body!"[29]

Until around 1932, Tibetans and Chinese raiders still used to annually assault the Adung Long valley in Burma, forcing the T'rung to collect ginseng and other medicinals. They also were prone to carry some T'rung Rawang off for use as domestic or farm slaves, according to Santiago Lazcano Nebreda.[30] One might conclude that the population of pygmoid slaves noted in Dza Yul and Mendong are captured T'rung rather than indigenous peoples. However, the oral history of the T'rung themselves refer to their most recent homeland being along the upper reaches of their namesake T'rung River, thus very close to Mendong. The T'rung moved into Burma due to harassment by Khampas moving into Tsarong. Since the Younghusband expedition in 1904, the Chinese feared incursions into the border regions. Local lamas and Chinese administrators vied for control after local Tibetan administration broke down. According to Wim van Spengen, this was the primary cause of banditry in the region of southern Khams.[31]

Despite the T'rung emigration, however, they were still raided upon in Adung Long. British control over the region (through Ft. Hertz at Putao) seems to have brought an end to the slave raids into the Hkakabo Razi region, but it is hard to verify because no additional Western explorers entered the area until Rabinowitz and the present author arrived.

This gap in reportage, and subsequent exoticisation of the indigenous people in Hkakabo Razi, is quite similar to the episodic rediscovery of Tibet by Western explorers as changing political horizons permitted or forbade entry. The themes of isolation, rediscovery, and extinction appear again and again as the door opens and shuts.[32]

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[28] F.M. Bailey 1957. *No Passport to Tibet.* London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 219.

[29] Harold Fletcher 1975. *A Quest for Flowers: The Plant Explorations of Frank Ludlow and George Sherriff.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 188.

[30] Santiago Lazcano Nebrada 1999. La Cuestión de la servidubre en el sudeste de Tíbet y regiones colindantes del Himalaya Oriental hasta la ocupación Chine de 1950. *Separata del Boletín de la Asociacion Española de Orientalistas*, 35, 229-46.

[31] Wim van Sepngen 2002. Frontier history of southern Kham: banditry and war in the multi-ethnic fringe lands of Chatring, Mili, and Gyethang, 1890-1940. *In* Lawrence Epstein (ed.) *Khams pa Histories: Visions of People, Place, and Authority.* Leiden: Brill.

To a large extent, the independent Union of Burma inherited the civilising mission of the British Empire in Asia. Until the annexation of Upper Burma in the late nineteenth century, the Burmese portion of the Hkakabo Razi region was largely composed of the independent Kingdom of Khampti Shan. Consolidation of the tribes in the border regions in the north and northeast was (and still is) a priority. In 1954 Burmese Colonel Saw Myint rediscovered the T'rung of Adung Long. Like explorers before him, he was amazed at their very short stature, their very high rate of mental retardation, and their significant rates of infant mortality. Myint concluded that this was the result of the build up of recessive genetic characteristics due to inbreeding. In his report he warned that the population would soon be extinct if the T'rung practice of clan endogamy didn't stop.[33]

In the mid-1960s, under the direction of Dr M. Mya-Tu, a team of physicians of the Burma Medical Research Society visited Hkakabo Razi, accomplishing the first national field research in population genetics. They visited the villages of Htalatu and Karon on the Adung Long River and surveyed all 68 remaining adult T'rung and all 24 Htalu, a related tribe of the larger Rawang group. Those with at least one T'rung grandparent were considered T'rung. The Burmese staff collected standard anthropometric data, measured physiological parameters and general fitness, examined T'rung haematology, inventoried T'rung nutrition and diet, looked for parasites, took family histories, and analysed their water supply. The T'rung were apparently terrorised by the experience.[34]

The Burmese survey found the mean height of adult T'rung males at 1.43 m (4'6") and females 1.40 m (4'5"). Anthropometric measurements confirmed that the T'rung were of East Asian origin, and had no Negrito characteristics like other small-stature peoples of Asia. The T'rung appeared to have an adequate diet with sufficient protein and vitamins. However, a very high incidence of goitre was found, along with mental retardation, hypertension, and 'enormously high' infant mortality, similar to earlier explorers' accounts. It also appeared that the population was dwindling.

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[32] Subtitle to *Beyond the Last Village* is "A Journal of Discovery in Asia's Forbidden Wilderness".

[33] *In* M. Mya-Tu, *et al*., 1966. *The Tarons of Burma*. Rangoon: Burma Medical Research Society.

[34] *Ibid*.

The 1960s team interviewed many local people familiar with Longdam on the Dulongjiang in Yúnnán, the ancestral home of the parent stock of the Burmese T'rung. All informants concurred that the Longdam people there were of short stature *vis-à-vis* other Rawang—they did not become short upon moving to Burma. It is unknown, however, if the three original settlers in Karon were short. The Burmese medical team concluded that there was no relationship between hypothyroidism and short stature, that the former was probably the result of iodine-deficiency, a common occurrence in salt-deficient mountainous regions of the world. There was no clinical evidence for the T'rung short statute—in the physicians' opinion, the T'rung are moderate and proportionately built but very small as a result of inheritance, as in the case of the Ituri Pygmies of the Congo and the Negrito peoples of Coastal Asia.

The T'rung perhaps were genetically isolated over many, many generations, a condition exacerbated by their move to even more isolated valleys to escape more powerful neighbours. The high rates of mental deficiency and infant mortality noted by the Burmese medical team, and earlier Western observers were then thought to be expressions of homozygous recessive traits increasing in relative reproductive isolation. The T'rung were undoubtedly lectured by both Western and Burmese scientists and explorers to refrain from marrying amongst themselves and to begin to partner with the neighboring Htalu. This is reflected in a statement recorded by the T'rung Dawi, as cited by Rabinowitz:

> For many years the Taron only marry each other. But when we have babies, the babies have small brains and small bodies. It was no good.... We don't want Taron babies anymore. Long ago, the Taron decided not to have babies with each other. Only with Htalu. Some Htalau marry Taron, many do not want to. If Htalu won't marry Taron, then we die alone.[35]

Then Rabinowitz wipes away our tears with a sentimental flourish:

> Dawi shifted his body away from me again and faced the fire. It must have taken a lot for him to tell me what he did, to face images of a past that was gone and a future that would never be. Kingdon-Ward called the Taron 'one of nature's unsuccessful experiments'. I think Dawi might have agreed.

[35] Quoted in Rabinowitz, 145-46. Dawi's dialogue throughout is represented in broken English. Of course, Dawi was speaking fluent and ostensibly perfect T'rung

Finally, using phrases similar to those describing the extinction of the last Tasmanian thylacene or the passing of Kroeber's Ishi, he referred to Dawi as "among the last. And he was dying alone".[36]

When I interviewed a fit and healthy Dawi in 2003, he mentioned that he planned on crossing the border into Dulongjiang valley to visit his relatives and perhaps find a T'rung wife! He was wearing a red and white elf's hat at the time that a visiting tourist couple had left as a Christmas present. The American tourists, whom I had met on the trail, had intended on visiting the 'Pygmies' after being intrigued by Rabinowitz's new book.

The study of human genetics has certainly come a long way since the days of Prince Henri and poppy-obsessed Kingdon Ward. Observed T'rung mental deficiency is most probably a symptom of severe, developmental hypothyroidism—a chronic lack of iodine from conception onwards. Inland mountain-dwelling peoples, especially those of the eastern Himalayas, have rather severe iodine deficiency from the lack of iodised salt. 'In-breeding', although perhaps a factor in this high rate of mental deficiency, has not been statistically substaniated among the T'rung population.

The T'rung's short stature, however, is probably a genetic stratum similar to the Pygmies of the Ituri Forest in Africa and the Negritos of South and Southeast Asia. Modern human genetics indicates that the problem may lie in the regulation of the gene that produces an insulin-like growth hormone. Rather than stimulating growth through adolescence, this gene apparently shuts down at puberty in typical achrondroplasia, terminating long bone growth and usually resulting in club-like limbs. However, both the Ituri Pygmies and the T'rung have bodies that are generally proportional, like children, and unlike typical achrondroplastic dwarfs. It is possible that the gene switches off earlier in pygmoid groups, resulting in a child-like body.

Most types of achrondroplastic dwarfism are genetically dominant, so the characteristic would tend to proliferate in a population even less isolated than in the remote valleys of the eastern Himalayas. Genetic achrondroplasia, once established and kept relatively isolated, would thus tend to persist in a population. Short stature is not by itself a physical impediment for reproductive success. Debilitating recessive characteristics would disappear over time, as they do in most populations.

[36] Rabinowitz, 146

It seems reasonable to summarise that among the T'rung, short stature is a genetic characteristic while severe mental retardation, goitre, and high infant mortality are developmental factors caused by an environmental lack of dietary iodine. The two are conflated in explorers' accounts, and most likely explained to the T'rung by Burmese and other authorities as the cause of their reproductive debilitation. Exogamy was suggested to promote good eugenics and save the remaining T'rung from extinction.

In addition to the civilising missions of Western and Burmese explorers to the northern borderlands of Burma, evangelical Baptist and other missionaries from America penetrated the region in the late 1930s. Jehovah Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists followed the Baptists. One could image what messages they brought the T'rung and other Rawang peoples regarding the former's apparent lack of reproductive fitness and their apparent endogamous marriages.

The T'rung's own oral history makes clear the brief time the inhabitants of Karon have been in residence. It also suggests that the Rawang people moved into the deep river valleys from the Northeast Asian lowlands fairly recently. Like the inhabitants of the Tibetan plateau, the T'rung have only been relatively isolated throughout history and are 'lost' only in the sense that the Western world has been ignorant of them. The T'rung appear to be at the end of a queue of Rawang groups who have moved into Burma from the north. The Rawang groups in general migrated from the eastern Tibetan plateau perhaps 2,000 years ago following their most prized game animal, an ox they call *ngapuk* (Bur. *myintun; Bos javanicus birmanicus*), which is now semi-domesticated. Following the Mekong valley downstream, they eventually crossed over the ridge into the Salween drainage, then over the Gaoligong Shan into the Dulongjiang valley. In fact, the name Rawang is a contraction of the phrase, *re we wang she* 'the people of the Middle River'. The vanguard of the Rawang entered Burma at the Khampti Plain in what is now Kachin State. From there, some went east to Thailand and others went west to India (only a couple of days' walk).

In the late nineteenth century, the T'rung entered modern Burma over the Thalak La from Dulongjiang, establishing the village of Karon in the remote Adung Long valley, the lower parts of the Irrawaddy drainage having been previously settled by other Rawang. Tellingly, all the T'rung in Burma are descended from just three men: Adung Long Hpone, brother Thala Long Hpone, and Soomdum Hpone—all from

Longdam on the Dulongjiang. Their history describes their grandfather and great-uncle having a fierce argument with Limbu, their Tibetan landlord, which resulted in Adung, Thala, and Soomdum eventually moving west. At the time, the entire Dulong or T'rung river drainage was politically part of the British province of Upper Burma. The nexus of interaction at that time was primarily between Rawang and Khampa Tibetans, as it remains to this day.

The Rawang oral history is substantiated by early Western accounts. According to Roux, the geographer on Prince Henri's trip, the eastern T'rung in 1895-96 were still obligated to pay tribute to the Tibetan chiefs, who 50 years before (ca. 1845) came from the Mekong valley and had made war on them. This also fits the general pattern of Khampa migration southwards in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At this time, the T'rung allegedly began to sleep in trees and live in caves to avoid human predation. The three T'rung families of Adung Long valley kept in touch with the T'rungs of Longdam, exchanging matrimonial partners, until a series of earthquakes in 1949-1951 blocked the trails. Obviously, the period of isolation between Karon and Longdam from 1949 to the present would not have been sufficient for evolutionary forces to be seen in the human phenotype. Clearly, the T'rung must have been short, or had the genetic predisposition for a type of achrondroplasia, in Dulongjiang, Dza Yul, and Tsarong before the three kinsmen moved to Burma. This is well noted in the ethnographic record.

Although a history written in Burmese by Rawang cultural leaders is currently in press, missionary influence has destroyed considerable cultural memory of the old religion. But there are a few legends and myths that have been collected by the linguist Randy La Polla.[37] Broad-based material culture work by French anthropologist Stephane Gros in Dulongjiang Valley is also in progress at this writing.

The T'rung in Dulongjiang were also investigated by Chinese biological anthropologists in 1989. The T'rung here appear to be somewhat taller than the T'rung of Burma, although they are smaller than most of the other minorities in Yúnnán and the general population of 16 cities in China. For males, the average for T'rung of Dulongjiang is 1.58 m (4'9.7") for males 18-25 years old and 1.46 m (4'7.6") for females of the same cohort. The average height for China is 1.69 m for

[37] Unpublished manuscript.

males and 1.58 for females.[38] The weight of both sexes among the T'rung was lower than all other groups surveyed.

Khampa Traders and T'rung Collectors

The Khampa Tibetans of Burma have been key to the survival of the Rawang living in the remote Hkakabo Razi region, for they are the middlemen, the traders that bring forest products collected by the Rawang to the market places in Dza Yul and Putao in Burma, and bring back salt and other necessities for Rawang consumption. A Burmese social survey of 1997 reported the existence of about 200 Tibetans living in three villages, Saden, Maden, and Tehaundan in northernmost Myanmar.[39] Saden is located along the Seinkhu River, a western tributary of the Nmai Hka River. Maden is on the eastern branch, the Thala Long, and Tehaundan is on the middle stream, the Adung Long, near the T'rung town of Karon. The rivers, which drain the southern flanks of the Hkakabo Razi Range become the Nmai Hka downsteam, which is the central tributary of the Irrawaddy. Tehaundan is only about 6 km from the T'rung village of Karon, just a short walk in fact.

Other than a handful of Burmese administrators, the Khampas are the most recent migrants to Hkakabo Razi. I learned from the elders of Tehaundan that their grandparents came into the Adung valley during the period of warfare between local Khampas and the Kuomingtang Army of the Republic of China for control over Kham. This would have been in the 1930s. Kingdon Ward in 1931 noted Tibetans already in Tehaundan, were they had built substantial houses of logs. He described tall Tibetans living in multi-roomed, windowless houses, and noted that they lorded over the diminutive Daru Rawang.[40] In 2003, about 100 Khampas occupied Tehaundan, most of whom still live in frame houses covered with hand-hewn wooden planks. No Rawang now live in Tehaundan, although the Htalatu Rawang headman of Karon claimed to be ruler of Tehaundan as well. There does not appear

[38] Ding Ming, Jian Guomin, Yu Zhanjun, Jiao Yunping, Liu Guihua, Lu Wenpin, Wang Yaping, Yang Zhenxiang, Jiang Zhuchun (n.d.). *Investigation of T'rung Body Type*. Yunnan Family Planning Research Institute, Kunming, China, 89-96.

[39] Unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

[40] Kingdon Ward 2003. *In the Land of the Blue Poppies.* New York: The Modern Library, 196.

to be any Burmese administration whatsoever at Tehaundan, although a sole resident Theravada monk reports to superiors at Naung Mung.

Tehaundan lies in the deep valley of the Adung Long, about 5 km beyond the end of the green canopy of broadleaf deciduous forest, and well within the scattered pines and rhododendron of the Himalayan foothills. Flowering *Prunus* are typical, as described so vividly by Kingdon Ward.

The Burmese Khampas I interviewed related that the town of Dza Yul or Rima, immediately northwest of Hkakabo Razi in Tibet, was their original home. To reach the Adung Valley their ancestors walked into Assam following the Lohit River, then crossed over Diphuk La into Burma.

I was able to ascertain that the Burmese Khampas now are primarily engaged in trade between the main Rawang market town of Putao (with an airport and daily jet flights to Yangon) and the Rawang villages north of that town, and settlements across the border in Kham. Rawang apparently do not engage in itinerant trading; Tibetans and Chinese native to the PRC no longer enter northern Burma for trade along this route. In the past, Tibetans from Mendong and Dzu Yul comprised the bulk of the trading caravans to this portal to Southeast Asia. Modern Burmese Khampa trading activity to the south occurs only during the sunny, dry months of December and January, and to the north in July and August, when the Tehaundan Khampas cross the high Himalayan passes to Dza Yul and Jite, Tibet. The latter town is about 50 km north of Tehaundan, over Namni La, in Tsarong, Kham. Recently a Chinese frontier post was established there. The route over Dhiphuk La enters India briefly before turning north to Tibet. Technically this border has been closed since the student uprisings in Burma in 1989. Understandably, informants were reluctant to discuss whether they transited India illegally or not. Heavy monsoon rains, which wash out the simple rattan bridges, cause landslides, and fill the forest with bloodthirsty leeches, make travel at other times in the region uncomfortable if not impossible.[41]

The continued existence of trade caravans into Burma confirmed one of the main hypothesis of the research survey—that Tibetans still trade between Yúnnán and Tibet and Southeast Asia, and the Rawang

[41] We had to turn back about half way to Hkakabo Razi in 2001 due to bridges being out. During the winter of 2002-2003, we returned during the dry season.

people are essential components of this trade, and producers and consumers of trade good. Significantly different from the past however, is that Tibetans from China apparently do not now cross the border into Burma for trade through this route. The vital commodity of trade is salt, which keeps the mountain-dwellers alive and the rate of endemic hypothyroidism at bay. It is interesting to note that Burmese Khampas appear to have no visible incidence of hypothyroidism, whereas the adjacent T'rung do. It is entirely possible that the addition of iodised dietary salt is relative new to the T'rung diet. The Khampa, like most Tibetans, have a long history of enjoying salted, butter tea.

We met several trading parties on the trail between Putao and Tehaundan. The first, consisting of four young Tibetan men, were encountered in mid-December at the bazaar at Naung Mung, two days walk northeast from Putao. They were buying tea for the year, and selling forest-based medicines. Most likely they would be hiring local Rawang porters to help carry the goods the 200 kilometers back to Tehaundan. Farther north along the trail we met a Tibetan man and his young son returning from Putao, carrying household goods to their home at Tehuandan. Among other wares, they carried a large aluminum wok, a fluorescent lamp, rice, maize-wheat *tsampa*, salt, and brick tea.

One large group of Tibetans, about 30-40 individuals , was met coming down to Putao. It did not appear that they were transporting a significant amount of goods to Putao, with the possible exception of ginseng and some other medicinals. It would be safe, then, to assume that cash would be the medium of transaction for goods bought in Naung Mung and Putao, perhaps some medicinal plants and animal parts as well. We met the same group returning to Tehaundan, fully loaded with rice, tea, tobacco, and household supplies. The clothes that these young Tibetans wore were a combination of western style shirts and pants of Thai or Chinese manufacture. Most wore Chinese army boots, which are lightweight, cheap, and rugged, perfect for jungle trails. Most of the large group consisted of young men and teenage boys, nearly the entire younger generation of Tehaundan.

At Tehaundan we stayed with the Tibetan man and son we had met on the trail, and noted the day-to-day routine, material culture, crops raised, etc. The family is polyandrous—two brothers share a wife and have seven children. This is rare among Khampas, but seems to work in a manner similar to other polyandrous Tibetans—husbands rotate being home and away on trading trips or in pastures, characteristic of the two

forms of transhumanance that support the functionalist interpretations of polyandry. The family seemed quite well off, with resources far above those of neighboring Htalu and T'rung Rawang people.

Our host's home was typical of houses in Tehaundan, with the exception of being a bit larger. The floor and walls were made of hand-planed timbers, with a beamed roof covered with slate tiles. There were three large rooms—a living room with central fire pit, a kitchen that also served as the main sleeping room, a private bedroom, and a small storeroom. A central hallway provided egress, and a small balcony surrounded the house. The whole house was raised up on timbers, about 2 meters off the ground. The house was devoid of modern fixtures and conveniences save a small radio, a lightbulb and wires. The family had acquired a small solar panel and battery charger, which could power the two electrical appliances. The head of the household showed me ginseng and other medicinal plants he had collected and preserved in rice wine. He commented on the top prices he received for these products when sold at the market in Putao and in China.

The Khampa elders of Tehaundan interviewed said that they traditionally transported animal skins and parts (goral horn, musk, tiger teeth, etc.) and medicinal plants collected to the Chinese markets in Tibet, receiving cash for the purchase of salt, rice, and household goods. A similar trade is carried on to the south at Naung Mung and Putao.

In addition to the itinerant trading activity, the Tibetans of Tehaundan are also farmers who cultivate maize, vegetables, wheat, and millet on small family farms, raise chickens and pigs, and keep *Bos javanicus* for dairy and meat. They also hunt wild game (goral, monkey, barking deer, etc.) for food as well as trade.

The Khampa Tibetans from Tehaundan are Buddhist and are attended to by a visiting Nyingmapa lama from Tibet. As one may imagine, they are extremely isolated from the font of Tibetan culture in Lhasa, from population centres in Khams, and from more recent groups of Tibetan immigrants to South Asia. The Burmese Tibetans are the only known population of Tibetans living permanently in Southeast Asia.[42] The modest younger husband of the family I stayed with in Tehaundan, Aung Tse, was the first man to reach the summit of 19,296 foot Mt.

[42] Upon hearing this report, His Holiness the Dalai Lama dispatched a large amount of srung mdud and tshogs to bless the Tibetans living in Burma.

Hkakabo Razi, although the Japanese leader of the team is usually given the credit in the outside world.

Trade, Change, and Ethnicity along the Tibeto-Burmese Border

The T'rung illustrate an interesting case in population genetics, physiological adjustment, and social dynamics responding to the extreme physical challenges of the remote eastern Himalayan valleys. It appears that for hundreds of years they have been partners with the Khampa Tibetans, coerced perhaps, to help collect the valuable plants and animals that are used as medicines in China and Tibet proper. Since the 1930s, coercive labor has been replaced with barter trade with the Rawang, with Khampas still serving as the primary caravan traders and the Rawang groups as hunters and gatherers.

Rawang were not seen working as porters for the Khampas. The traditional trade patterns in the region, i.e. salt for animal parts and medicinal plants, are envisioned by the Government of Myanmar to eventually disappear with the establishment and enlargement of Hkakabo Razi National Park. In its place, ecotourism is envisioned as a panacea for the disruption of livelihood the park might create. Rawang and Tibetan traders will now conceivably become porters and guides for hordes of tourists, according to the Burmese government, following the model most notably established in Nepal.

However, with only a handful of foreign visitors entering Hkakabo Razi National Park since its inception in 1998, ecotourism has not yet drastically altered many traditional cultural practices relating to long-distance trade. And without the resources and perhaps the will to enforce the rules against hunting endangered wildlife, the Burmese authorities have yet to significantly interfere with the day-to-day life of the Burmese Khampa and their Rawang trading partners. Indigenous people in the reserve are allowed to hunt and gather for subsistence only—not to collect forest products for trade. The government and the private sector thus far have lacked capital resources to develop the infrastructure that would encourage significant foreign tourism interest in northern Burma. Roads, landing strips, hotels and restaurants, and even telephones and electricity, would have to be built to provide even the most basic of international tourist services. And not insignificantly,

the Myanmar regime remains a pariah government to most of the world—tourists may well stay away until the government restores basic human rights in Burma.

Even if ecotourism completely replaces traditional trade patterns in the eastern Himalayas, it is not necessarily fatal to continued Rawang and Tibetan cultural identities in the region. Leach and his students, in fact, have portrayed highland Burma cultures as a classic example of relational ethnicity. From Valene Smith's consummate *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*,[43] and its updated version,[44] to Swain's work on tourism in China,[45] anthropologists have been investigating the close link between tourism and ethnicity in developing parts of the world. In Tibet, the impact of the visitor industry has been studied by Epstein,[46] Klieger and Liker,[47] Klieger, and others. 'Successful' cultures possess long histories of adaptation, operating favorably under agents of change—the boundaries of the ethnic unit may not shift—but their cultural 'contents' may. One could image a scenario in the eastern Himalayas wherein social agents that normally define or condition ethnic identity are routinely transferred, with traditional cultural activities being modified to serve the needs of tourism. This processual model of "continuous change, perpetual identity" may be useful in projecting the potential effects of ecotourism upon the Rawang and Khampa Tibetan people of northern Burma. It is conceivable tourism development may offer current Rawang and Tibetan traders a sustainable niche in the overall economic system of the region not wholly dissimilar to the Sherpas of Nepal.

And Dawi and his children might also continue to go about their goral hunts and ginseng gatherings in the isolated mountain valleys of Hkakabo Razi, roasting popcorn and sipping brick tea around their ancient hearths.

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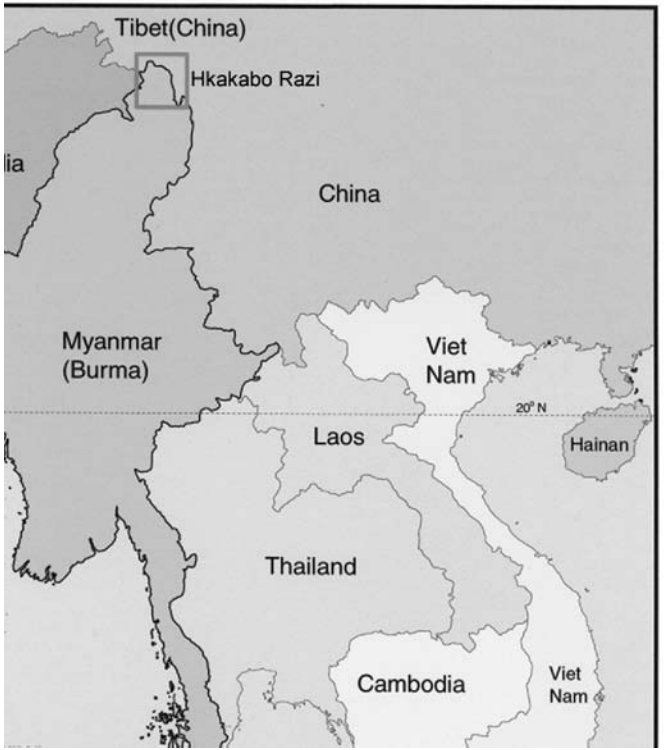
[43] Valene Smith 1977. *Hosts and Guests: the Anthropology of Tourism.* College Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

[44] Valene Smith and Maryann Brent (eds) 2001. *Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century.* Elmsford, NY: Cognizant Communication Corp.

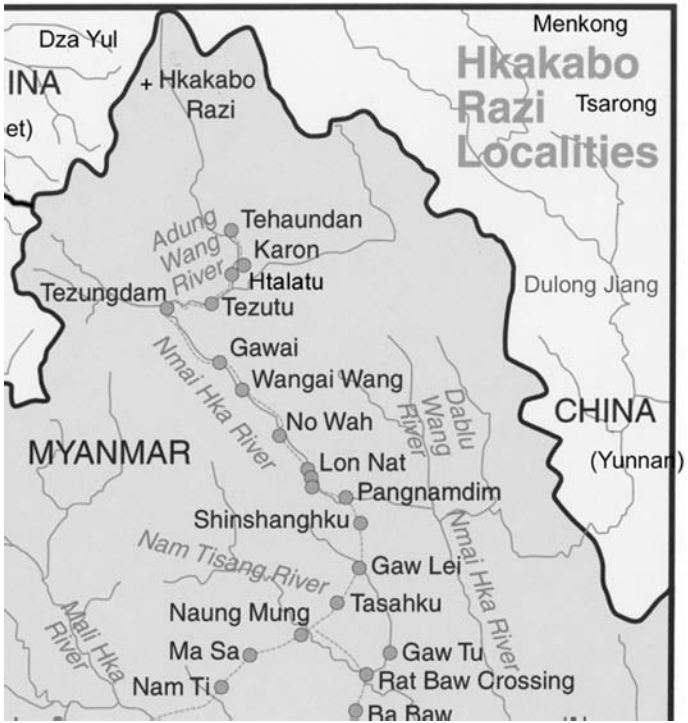
[45] Margaret Swain (ed.). *Tourism in Rural China and SE Asia.* Elmsford, NY: Cognizant Communication Corp., in press.

[46] Lawrence Epstein and Peng Wenbin. Tourism and the culture of identity in Jiuzhaigou. *Xinan Wenhua Yanjiu (Southwest China Culture Research)*. Kunming: Institute of History, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, in press.

[47] P. Christiaan Klieger and Keith A. Liker 1988. Tourism, politics, and relocation in Tibet. *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 12(4).



Map 1: Hkakabo Razi Region in SE Asia



Map 2: Author's 2002-2003 Expedition through Hkakabo Razi National Park, Burma

Plate 1: During the interview with Dawi, I was reminded of the old British school of social anthropology where informants "will be found to answer more freely when the interrogator places himself on the same level as themselves, i.e. if they sit upon the ground he should do the same" (Portman, M.V. 1896. Photography for Anthropologists. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, 77; photo: Dong Lin)

Plate 2: Aung Tse, Burmese Khampa who first climbed Mt. Hkakabo Razi (Photo: Dong Lin)

Notes on Contributors

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