

Videos:

Dzongsar Pottery School

- video on fine arts class, now have sponsors to preserve tradition - organized efforts
- one teacher left, very skilled but old
- like the guy who carved prayer stones

Solar Power Project

- new solar power water boilers, donated by groups (Canada)
- allow women to simply boil water with the dish instead of foraging for plants
- cuts down on electricity, etc. - mostly eases the lives of the working women
- replaces tinder, yak dung
- helps out widowers as well - those without women in the families

Nuns at Dolma Ling Nunnery

- very structured lifestyles - organized breakfasts, study early in the day, fetch stuff
- classes, meals, prayer, tea, lots of good stuff
- video made by an organization that supports nuns

Gesar Bard

- bard from Gesar - focused on preserving culture, traditional scriptures
- crossover between Tibet and China - works with Chinese people, wins Chinese awards
- earthquake destroyed a lot of historic files, scriptures - “everything is impermanent”
- grew up - chosen to be a monk
- very well known - Chinese students come to ask him about things
- performed for Chinese gov’t, they support him now
- contrast between visits to major cities and the small Tibetan towns, both developing
- commentary on noise, air pollution, connection to spirits and the world around him
- deeply spiritual culture - struggle to maintain during tumultuous development
- reconstruction post earthquake - heavy Chinese influence, impact
- has faith in reconstruction, his people, Gesar, that things will get better

Vultures of Tibet

- Tibetan sky burials - holy, ancient traditions - now becoming tourist events
- double standard - Chinese tourists crowd around to see Tibetan funeral; reverse is not tolerated
- no longer a sacred, but a profitable spectacle
- people focus on the graphic aspects - images of the body/flesh vs. understanding the culture
- only becoming more popular as development continues near the sacred sites

Images:

Guy who looks like Chance (Sodhon)

- traditional art style, portrait style with bright colors and strong shapes
- surrounded by American/western/modern imagery (McDonald’s, Avatar, CNN, etc.)
- backdrop is Tibetan, as well as the subject in question
- focus on commodification of life, as well as the blend of Tibetan + modern life
- communicates through drawing tablet - rainbow flowing out of traditional art
- blend of two styles - not a critique/satire of either, but demonstration of balance
- hints at artists creating their own art style, separate of both tradition + modern

- everything is now hybrid - e.g. Shapaley and his Tibetan rap
- image shows diverse influences on Tibetan people

Ice Cream (Tenzin Nardo)

- very traditional style, depicts Tibetan concepts of yaks, travelling, snow-capped peaks, plateaus
- mountains in all four directions, south is ice cream
- clearly referencing global warming + impact on Tibet
- melting ice cream, white “snow”, even the fabric of the art (Tibetan life) is impacted
- perhaps the south is being associated with temperature rises
- depiction of migration, away from the melting -> new home

Faces of the Buddha

- very edgy, modern/western style
- mish mash of global influences + Tibetan/Buddhist base
- metaphor for Tibetan identity, influence of the west/modern world on Tibetan culture/ID
- a blueprint of sorts - Tibetan/Buddhist ID being built by global influences, pop culture -> etc.
- Tibetan ID being built by, competing/overwhelmed with all of these things
- a chaotic mix of tradition and modernity
- reference to iconometry - portraits of cultural/religious icons, with the precise grid
- new icons and an unfinished/blemished Buddha

Tenzin Phakmo

- yaks in a distinctly modern, western style city
- reference to nomadic culture and impact of modern western world on Tibet
- subtle references to commodification, Tibet is out of place and a spectacle in the west
- very western style oil painting - difficult to decipher any traditional elements
- only visible references to Tibet are the yaks and their attire
- a lack of people - purely cultural, the people have already assimilated into the background

Tserang Dhundrup

- portrait - photorealistic style as opposed to a traditional Tibetan painting w/ decorations
- a more modern depiction of a more modern Tibetan man
- macho culture showing through - flexing off western clothing now (post-pelts)
- expensive, western clothing/accessories - nike windbreaker, iPhone in clear sight
- has fully embraced western culture, save his hair + hair accessories
- gazing off to the side (east) - China? regardless, not forward like a normal portrait/iconography

// TODO: readings for each section

ART:

This exam question concerns 5 images attached here for you to examine before the test and to refer to in your answers.

“Although this may still strike some as evidence of the impurity of the Tibetan present, where an unhappy hybrid culture prevails, the artists were attempting to make a more complex point. As each of them recalled in interviews, they aimed to show that Tibetans could sample from a range of sources and were evaluating many diverse influences, arising not only from within Tibet or China but from beyond.” -

Claire Harris reading, p.233. Pair this quote with comments and analyses found in Leigh Miller's article about the artist Gadé. An A answer will also mention how this issue does or doesn't pertain to other forms of contemporary Tibetan art.

Take a look at the above analysis - younger contemporary artists tend to have a hybrid style

Traditional artists are older and have more cynical viewpoints, use traditional styles

Common themes

Commodification/response to this

Criticism of international influences/Chinese government

Criticism of gender structures/modernization

Hybrid styles - pay attention to icons such as the Buddha/Dalai Lama

Iconography + heavy imagery - won't be subtle, refer to above analysis

GENDER:

What are some of the perennial traits of gender roles and relations in Tibetan society?

In what ways have gender relations changed? What and who are the driving forces?

I'm purposely leaving this open but several of our readings were entirely about gender and women and I'd like you to pull out all of the important strands and come up with a multi-faceted picture of overall situation.

Gender equality:

Male-dominated monastic society - men are viewed as the ideal monk, pure

Women are viewed as weaker, more impure - most monasteries discriminate

Women are viewed as caretakers, indoors

Ironically, CCP is doing a lot in terms of equality

Anti-Tibetan/Buddhism = pro-modernization, equality - get women in the workforce

Beauty pageants - Tibetan idea, women used as vehicles to portray Tibetan ideals (not respected)

Push women out of monasteries, villages - goal is education and money

Monks are viewed as third gender - perfection of MALE sex/masculinity and balance

Women are viewed as transgender, not transformed

Despite androgyny, women cannot truly be equally as androgynous

Women viewed as weakness of both mind and body, and thus unable to transcend either properly

Pelt burning - thru the lens of gender

Viewed as act of egalitarianism - everyone joining in, men burning their displays of wealth

Women burned what little they did, but quietly vs. the male public spectacles

Men returned to boasting their wealth/fashion with modern clothing instead

TRADITION AND MODERNITY:

In what ways – and by whom – are these two characterized as in opposition to each other?

- Dondrup Gyal - Waterfall of Youth mentioned that Tibetans should look at the youth, not the ancestors; “A thousand brilliant accomplishments of the past cannot replace the present.”
- Division of Heaven and Earth by Shokdung -- Buddhism is an obstacle to modernity in Tibet, as Tibet has not made any contributions to the world’s economic/cultural progress

How is tradition being deployed in the service of present-day concerns?

- Through the use of modern Tibetan songs, where issues are discreetly discussed in raps
- Ideology on environmentalism -- one must not exploit the environment under any circumstances because “karma is karma”

In what ways is religion still important in Tibetan society and culture?

- Identity politics in terms of Tibet vs China
- Socioeconomic status, where monks make laws and are greatly respected
- Traditionally defined gender roles (females as more impure) (nuns vs monks)
- Large following of the Dalai Lama

What are the challenges faced by traditional culture?

- Commodification of culture (Lurol festival, use of furs in the Khampa Arts festival)
- Resettlement (not as important to discuss)
- Loss of culture by Sinified kids

Tip: focus your notes on intra-Tibetan debates when possible. In other words, keep these notes distinct from those for the next topic (as much as possible).

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, PROTESTS, AND SELF IMMOLATIONS:

Revisit the articles about the pelt-burning movement and the wave of self-immolations. Make a lists the various causes and objectives that are cited by the Tibetans and by the scholars. Identify the continuities and discontinuities between the two events.

Common themes:

- Development and moral economy
- Oppression/Suppression

Goals:

- Equality
- Bridging the wealth gap
- Supporting the dalai lama’s stances

Pelt burning - viewed as protest against commodification of Tibetan culture

Very public burning of expensive things

CCP begins to shut down these events - viewed as acts of Tibetan extremism

Pelt burning supported by clerical authority = opposed by Chinese government

Similar to the anti-slaughter movement and conservation

One thing agreed upon - environmentalism

Self immolations - in response to Chinese oppression of clerical structures

Very public suicides, carried out generally by monks and sometimes commoners

Very prolific and powerful due to the power of the young people + Internet presence

Commodification of Tibetan life/culture

Festivals e.g. Lurol Festival now tourist attractions, much louder + more opulent than before
Things are more colorful, draw in more visitors, no longer traditional Tibetan routines
Sky burials in particular - once were quiet, peaceful things with religious undertones
Now they've become incredibly popular with tourists, people spread images on the Internet
Very disrespectful in general towards Tibetan culture, people

Chinese government incursions into Tibet

Black Fox Valley is a satire of Chinese bureaucracy and people rushing to accept them
General discontent towards Chinese - rushing in, taking away Tibetan jobs/land
Governed by people who wish to destroy original way of life (Dalai Lama, Buddhism)
Harsh crackdowns on monasteries and protests, especially post Sino-Tibetan wars
Notable: 2008 Tibetan Unrest/Riots (3-14, mostly in Lhasa/cities)
Response to Chinese dispersing/cracking down on protests commemorating war -> riots
Very publicized due to press + Internet

Summaries of readings for the four topics:

Art:

Gender:

"Body of a Nun" by Charlene Makley

- Ratio: female/body/inside/profane/household :: male/mind/outside/sacred/monastery
- Third gender is androgynous, males can be but females can't
- People gossip about nuns in Labrang monastery due to traditional divides
- **Perennial traits: Males have more good karma from past lives than females**
- **Changed: Deng Xiaoping liberalized Tibet, CCP forced more gender equality (healthcare, educational opportunities), leading to the opening of nunneries, Larung Gar (as opposed to Labrang)**
- **Who/what are the driving forces: Community (both for hindering and helping progress), Dalai Lama (speeches in Dharamsala), CCP**

Tradition and Modernity:

- "Tibetans are not active agents in the construction of Tibetan nationalism. Those who participate are classified by the current government as 'splittists'." (Carole McGranahan, "Miss Tibet")
- "Tibetan khenpos assert that Tibetans need a form of development consistent with the teachings of Buddhism." (Gaerrang, "Development is an Entangled Knot")
 - "Massive slaughter will result in disaster and misfortune rather than the real development that Tibetan people need."
- On the other hand, Division of Heaven and Earth by Shokdung -- Buddhism is an obstacle to modernity in Tibet, as Tibet has not made any contributions to the world's economic/cultural progress
- Also, Dondrup Gyal waterfall of youth; "A thousand brilliant accomplishments of the past cannot replace the present." look at youth not ancestors
- **Focus on intra-Tibetan debates**
- **Opposition to each other:**

- Through Dondrup and Shokdung's essays, and by the PRC (brief mention)
- Tradition being deployed for present day concerns:
 - Songs (Gangchenpa, Our Flag) that mention the Potala Palace (critiquing issues)
 - Tibetan environmental movement ("karma is karma")
- Challenges faced by Tibetan culture:
 - Modern day Tibetan youth being Sinified
 - Commodification of Tibetan culture (Lurol festival)
 - Miss Tibet
-

Social Movements/Protests/Self immolations:

"Blazing Pelts and Burning Passions" by Emily Yeh

- **"the act of burning was a search for and an attempt to promote a more egalitarian agenda"**

"Black Fox Valley" by Tsering Dondrup

- Satire on the oppression and excessive, yet meaningless Chinese development
- **Themes: Development; moral economy**

Pelt Burning:

Causes:

Began as a result of Dalai Lama's speech

Chinese commodification

Objectives:

Something that aims to promote equality and lessen the division of wealth

Protests/Self-immolations:

Causes:

Protest "modes of sacrifice" so that Tibetans get freedom - Tsering Shakya
Buddhist response to government restraints on practise of religion

Objectives:

National protest against Chinese stranglehold on Tibetan expression

Continuities:

Chinese viewed this as national threat

Pelt-burning, forced tibetans to wear despite outlawing these

Discontinuities:

Dalai lama does not speak out about pelt burning