RESISTANT HYBRIDITIES

New Narratives of Exile Tibet

Edited by
Shelly Bhoil

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It's a regret that I couldn't timely reach out to scholars who could have enriched this study of Tibetan exile narratives by contributing on Tibetophone writings, contemporary paintings, dance practices, or Buddhist literature's development in exile. Works such as Tibet's first social exile Gendun Choephel's *Treatise on Passion* besides his poetry and travelogues, Pema Tsewang Shastri's Tibetophone novel *Nub kyi grang dang shar gyi drod 'jam* (Cold West and Warm East), Thubten Samphel's novel *Falling through the Roof*, Tenzin Dickyi's *Old Demons New Deities: 21 Short Stories from Tibet*, Tsering Kyi's poetry and Bhuchung D. Sonam's poetry and prose collections deserve to be studied not only because of their novelty and literary merit but also relevance in understanding the progressive Tibetan exile community in relation to traditional Tibet as well as China-controlled Tibet.

I hope this book will propel more scholarly works in the area of Tibetan exiles' literary, art, and cultural narratives, and soon we will have a sequel.

Shelly Bhoil
São Paulo, Brazil

Introduction

Françoise Robin

THE ADVENT OF THE TERM CULTURE IN OFFICIAL CIRCLES OF EXILE TIBET

Robert Ekvall, in 1960, inquiring in India among newly arrived Tibetan refugees about the way they defined themselves, noted the absence of a corresponding term for *culture* in Tibetan. Thubten Norbu Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama's brother, had to resort to English and Chinese to "discuss the meaning of the word" with him.[1] Indeed, in exile, the Tibetan translation of the English word *culture* fluctuated between four terms over the years, until *rig gzhung* finally prevailed.[2] The absence of a Tibetan term corresponding to *culture* does not preclude a strong attachment to one's way of life and civilization: Ekvall made it clear that, in his conversations with Tibetans, he did "feel that the Tibetan way of life—Tibetan culture as they newly recognize the concept—is something coherent and distinctive for which they are willing to struggle and risk much. . . . As befits a people with a rich and distinctive culture, they have always had a strong cultural awareness."[3] A speech the Dalai Lama delivered in Dharamshala (India) on March 10, 1961, to mark the second anniversary of the Tibetan uprising in Lhasa, confirms that Tibetans not only value their culture but refuse to relinquish it: "thousands of our people have been killed for the only reason that they asserted their right to live in the manner they desired to do, following their *cultural and religious heritage*."[4]

Several authors have observed that the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGiE)[5] posited the preservation of Tibetan culture, or heritage, as a key objective, taking precedence over plain politics, from the mid-1980s onward: "'preservation of culture' [became] a long-term goal with high priority in exile."[6] For Martin Saxer, "cultural survival" became the main slogan in exile political speeches after the abandonment of independence of Tibet as the key political goal in 1987.[7] The crucial and central role of culture in political struggle is not a Tibetan specificity: Sudeep Basu has noted "the global emergence of 'culture' as a favored idiom of political mobilization for indigenous, minority, and diasporic groups."[8] What singularizes the Tibetan exilic case is the porosity between *culture* and *religion* (read: Buddhism), already present in the Dalai Lama's 1961 speech

quoted above. And, indeed, saving Tibet, writes Basu, has meant and still means for the TGiE, "the preservation of Tibet's *spiritual heritage*, [so that] a particular construction of Tibetan *religion* and *culture* itself becomes the object of political action."[9]

FILLING THE LACUNA

To date, the complex and sometimes contradictory dynamics of both individual and collective identity construction for exile Tibetans have been analyzed in academia mainly through the lens of such classical and expected grand domains as politics,[10] economy,[11] or even psychology, and trauma.[12] So, given the centrality of culture (or culture-cum-religion) related discourses in the exile Tibetan self-definition and politics, it is an urgent task to address the issue of cultural production in exile, not so much from an official point of view, now well known and studied, as from the standpoint of individuals—a question that the present book precisely tackles, filling a lacuna in our examination of exilic life for Tibetans.

In reality, cultural life in exile has not always been a *terra incognita*, uncharted by academics. In 1997, Frank Korom, in his introduction to the edited volume *Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora*, lamented the fact that "there has been very little attempt to look at the interactive dynamics of the Tibetans' emergent culture in their new homes."[13] But by "emergent culture," Korom mainly referred to popular culture and craftsmanship. Cultural performances were otherwise treated by contributors of his book as collective and motivated by political agenda. For instance, Meg MacLagan concurred that Tibetan culture in exile was presented as "a locus of endangered spirituality"[14] mainly embodied by Tibetan clerics wishing to put forward political claims.

That same year, in 1997, Korom also published *Constructing Tibetan Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*.[15] Covering both exilic Tibet and China (occupied) Tibet, that collection of essays not only offered a welcome perspective on individual artistic creation in exile but also revealed the contestation by some musicians and painters of the younger Tibetan generation (both in Tibet and exile), of the dominant cultural paradigm elaborated by the TGiE authorities and the West—that of a perennial, unmoving, everlasting, classical Tibetan culture anchored in Buddhist spirituality—thus complexifying the cultural scene. Keila Diehl confirmed that tension in her 2002 monograph dedicated to pop and rock music in Dharamshala.[16] The preservation of an idealized and essentialized Tibetan culture did not easily cohabit with a sizable portion of a Tibetan exile youth's growing exposure to outside influences (Indian, western) and eagerness to explore artistic venues beyond the traditional Tibetan limitations.

After that promising start, though, academics mostly remained silent about exile cultural life in the Tibetan community. In 2018, Shelly Bhoil co-edited with Enrique Galván-Álvarez *Tibetan Subjectivities on the Global Stage: Negotiating Dispossession* on the reimagining of Tibetan cultural identity both in Tibet and exile.[17] Most articles confirmed the questioning of the preservationist paradigm, that of an essentialized, idealized, monolithic, unproblematized, and timeless Tibetan culture, but the volume did not include any article dedicated to *cultural creation* in exile, such as literature or arts, although five of them analyzed the current literary scene in China's Tibet.

The present volume is thus welcome, as it focuses entirely on literary, filmic, musical, and testimonial narratives of Tibetans in exile. Before turning to a presentation of each article, I would like to offer some musings about the possible reasons for a lack of scholarly interest in exilic Tibetan cultural productions in the last two decades.

ERASURE OF EXILE TIBET IN THE WESTERN EYES?

Among the manifold reasons why cultural achievements in exile Tibet did not keep pace after 2002, a prominent one is the rise of China as a global power in the last twenty years, and, concomitantly, the development of Chinese and minority studies in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The growing access to fieldwork in Tibet shifted many researchers' attention from exile Tibet to Tibet proper, at least until the Tibetan uprising of 2008. More generally, and beyond academic circles, the western Tibet fever, created by the attribution of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 to the Dalai Lama in the wake of the Lhasa uprising in 1987–1989, wore off over the years along with interest for what now appears as a protracting and seemingly unsolvable Sino-Tibetan dispute. That slow erasure was only made more acute after the 9/11 incident, that shifted the world's attention away from Tibet, and particularly exile Tibet, to the Middle East and Islamic terror.

EXILE FROM EXILE

While the western world's attention drifted away from the Tibet scene, and notably its most accessible point, Dharamshala, radical changes were affecting the exile Tibetan community itself, which only makes it a more urgent task to study it from the angle of culture. The first change is demographic—whereas the influx of refugees from Tibet was standing at *ca.* 2000 per year between the mid-1980s till 2007, this figure dropped to 770 in 2010, 150 in 2013, 87 in 2015, to attain the all-time low figure of 70 in 2017.[18] This can be mostly attributed to the quasi-sealing off and the heightened militarization of the Nepal-China (Tibet) border after the 2008

uprisings in the Tibetan plateau, as well as the upgrading of the social surveillance system, which has deterred many Tibetans from undertaking the risky crossing of the heavily guarded border. China's economic growth and the cash boon brought by *yartsa gumbu*,[19] moreover, may also have contributed to the decrease in newly arrived Tibetan refugees: although this material improvement in life condition has certainly not translated into any political gain, it has meant tangible material benefits and greater economic opportunities for many citizens of the PRC, Tibetans included. The interruption of arrivals from Tibet has had a negative impact on the mutual nurturing of cultural practices between exile and China's Tibet, as explained by a Dharamshala resident, who had fled Tibet in 2004: "People who come from Tibet they bring the culture things, not just their persons, they bring a lot of cultures, so it connects culture, people together."[20]

This demographic disruption has been moreover intensified since the mid-2000 by another new phenomenon: massive departure from exile towards western countries. This exile in exile is the indirect consequence of a joint United States and TGiE relocation program launched in 1991, which facilitated the resettlement in the United States of 1,000 exile Tibetans chosen by way of lottery. Migration outside South Asia, once the exception, not only became acceptable socially but became even desirable, with its promise of better material life and meaningful rights.[21] With the lifting of the taboo on westbound migration, Tibetan exiles who could not go North America looked for other venues, a move that was facilitated by the 2008 Tibet uprising: migration authorities in France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland became more favorably inclined to offer refugee status to Tibetans who claimed to have fled their homeland after the Tibet spring.[22] The success of this program has proved a curse for the tight-knit Tibetan community that was living in South Asia. The demographic bleeding was reinforced after 2011 when the Dalai Lama abdicated his political powers and entrusted his political authority to an elected prime minister (now called Sikyong). Although this major political shift was originally motivated by a will to train exile Tibetans to a more democratic and less centralized exercise of power, preparing them for the post–Dalai Lama period, it ripped Dharamshala and India from their symbolical and centripetal role. Moreover, Nepal, home to around 20,000 Tibetans exiles, has become over the years an ancillary state of the PRC, not to mention the 2015 earthquake that ravaged the Kathmandu Valley, where many Tibetan refugees had settled.

This rush toward the West seems unstoppable. Deserting *en masse* the settlements, schools, and monasteries that had been painstakingly built and administered by the TGiE since the 1960s, and which for fifty years had channeled, facilitated, and contributed to cultural transmission in an uprooted but re-rooted and well-organized Tibetan community, the Tibetan diaspora is now increasingly scattered over the planet. Although reli-

able figures are difficult to obtain, New York and Toronto each host more than 10,000 Tibetans, while Paris could have as many as 8,000 compared to a few hundred until the mid-2000s, and these doubly exiled Tibetans cannot rely any longer on TGiE-organized, culturally sheltered, and demographically condensed facilities, totally disrupting communal life.

As if this were not enough, that new social and cultural situation is complicated with the paradoxical situation in Tibet proper, in the PRC. On the one hand, culture and religion in the broad sense are officially the beneficiaries of state support,[23] but many observers agree that they are mostly undergoing cosmetic commodification for booming internal touristic consumption or that they are instrumentalized to be a showcase designed to counter accusations by western or exile authorities of cultural genocide, a claim that has been put forward by the TGiE since the early 1990s. But against (or precisely because of) this dark backdrop, an enterprising new generation, coming to grips with a harsh capitalistic and hostile political reality, has in its turn invested the hazy realm of Tibetan culture as a niche to explore innovative ways of existing as meaningfully as possibly as Tibetans in China—a move described by Saxer as "tactical 'ethno-preneuralism.'"[24] Grassroots and arthouse Tibetan films are thriving, state-sponsored publications and individual initiatives regularly enrich the rich corpus of Tibetan literature, cultural cafés are booming, ethnic entrepreneurship (clothes, incense, food, for instance) is taking up, and indie music does not show any sign of slowing down so far.

As a consequence, Tibetans in exile are increasingly acknowledging that contemporary Tibetan culture can also be preserved, invented, or refashioned by Tibetans in Tibet itself, belying the widespread and decade-long repeated belief that exile Tibet was the sole locus of preservation of the authentic and endangered ancient Tibetan culture—a role it certainly had until the mid-1980s. Signs of a positive reassessment of China's Tibet cultural production among exiles is, for instance the publication of PRC-based Tibetophone writers' works (Lhashamgyal, Tsering Dondrup, Takbumgyal, Jamyang Kyi) by the TGiE-supported Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, an institutional validation that reflects perhaps also the will to create a greater cohesion between the two communities across the Himalayas. Pop singers living in Tibet like Sherten, to name only one among many, are also highly appreciated in exile, testifying to cultural continuity, curiosity, and acceptance, between Tibet and exile.[25]

Given these sweeping changes (scattering in the West of an already limited population, cultural resistance in Tibet proper), what space can Tibetan exiles carve for themselves in the realm of cultural production? How do they invest in the field of culture? In an increasingly demographically diluted but still very politically active Tibetan exile society, how is traditional Tibetan culture reinvented? How does exile, an estrangement from one's community, interact with one's exilic background and up-

bringing? Covering three artistic or intellectual disciplines (creative literature, visual arts, and testimonial narratives), the twelve articles in this volume show that cultural creation exists now beyond and outside of the reach of TGiE-supported institutions. It also seems that the recurrent and official association between *religion* and *culture* at work in TGiE-sponsored public representation of Tibetan culture does not hold for those exile Tibetans who take part in cultural life in exile. Individual artists, especially writers, filmmakers, and musicians, are negotiating a new path between the alignment with an official narrative and their own individual subjectivity as exiles. They share the quandary of identity-building in their convoluted and uncomfortable in-betweenness (homelessness and uprootedness; a shaky present and an uncertain future; their existence as para-citizens of a para-state;[26] speakers of a language that has a glorious past but no current international currency and a dim future in Tibet and even more in exile). The most salient illustration of this in-betweenness is, in the case of literature, the post-colonial choice of English as a credible and legitimate language to express Tibetan-ness, not a trifling matter given the richness, sanctity, and aura of the Tibetan-language literary heritage. Exile artists surveyed in this volume also take advantage of their in-betweenness to deal with memory and history with much greater freedom than their counterparts living in China-controlled Tibet. One of their important contributions certainly lies in narrating in literature or visuals their version of the past, and in debunking the official Chinese narrative about the so-called *Liberation*, a stance that is not even a remote option in China-controlled Tibet, at least publicly and openly. Last, the room occupied by political concerns, and the rise of human rights–based testimony as a new literary genre, as shown in this volume, testify to the vibrancy of the political struggle that always lurks in the background in exile Tibet's cultural life.

The articles presented here live up to the title of the volume, *Resistant Hybridities: New Narratives from Exile Tibet*. The hybridity's plural refers to the multiple combinations of the encounters between exile Tibet in South Asia, exile Tibet in the West, China's Tibet, contemporary Tibet, traditional Tibet, but also India, the West, and China. Resistance too is multifaceted: it can be understood, quite predictably, as a resistance to the China dream[27] and its assimilationist stance toward Tibetans (and other minorities), as well as to the Chinese-centered grand narrative about the liberation of Tibet in the 1950s. It also includes a resistance that exile individuals offer to the Tibet dream as it is nurtured by the westerners' expectations and the TGiE's positive responses to them, with Buddhism at the heart of public cultural performances. Lastly, works surveyed here also display a certain amount of perplexity toward popular, grassroots conservative internal values, especially when it comes to religion, cultural preservation, and gender, as these do not accord to a new and hybrid

Tibetan-ness built out of the encounter with non-Tibetan (Indian, western) urban worlds and nurtured by mass education in exile.

The case studies offered in the first part of the book center upon Anglophone literature, reflecting the marginality of Tibetan language for literary expression in transnational exile. Four articles out of five do share an anxiety about the English language as a legitimate and valid medium to express Tibetan subjectivity.[28] But these articles demonstrate how English language literary production in exile can also be perceived as a medium freed from allegiance to conservatist positions, and be consequently particularly apt at questioning and contesting some mostly religion-based cultural postures. The emancipatory potential of English, as against Tibetan, in literature, does not only apply to themes or ideas. One of the first English-language authors in exile, Ngodup Paljor (1948–1988), who had been trained as a monk as a child in Tibet, composed beautiful *haiku*-like English language poems when he moved to the United States. His widow Denise Lassaw Paljor explained this linguistic choice in her postface to a collection of Ngodup Paljor's poems, *Songs of the Wild Yak*: "When writing in Tibetan he felt he should conform to the traditional poetic forms while English allowed him a freedom from form."[29]

In the first article, Matilda Perks offers a close reading of English-language poetry written by the celebrated, controversial, and iconoclastic Tibetan lama Chögyam Trungpa (1940–1987). Chögyam Trungpa played a crucial role in introducing Tibetan Buddhism in the United States, in the 1970s and 1980s, by adapting it to a western audience at the peak of American counterculture. Perks argues that, even though most of Chögyam Trungpa's poems were in English, and however much they were influenced by Zen, they were indebted to Tibetan poetic tradition, in which Chögyam Trungpa was well versed and trained since his childhood in Kham (Eastern Tibet).

Enrique Galván-Álvarez, in the second chapter, analyses how Tsering Wangmo Dhompa (b. 1969), a leading Tibeto-American writer, offers subtly perplexed and personal views about Buddhism, gender, and identity in her first collection of poems, *Rules of the House* (2004). Dhompa's poems, Galván-Álvarez argues, reflect the "resistant hybridity" fostered by exile. Standing "at the crossroads of expectations and grand narratives," she successfully transforms, through her words, the "uncertainty and incomprehensibility" of her own status as a doubly subaltern subject (that of a Tibetan woman in exile), to express her "resistant in-betweenness," facing "the epistemic dissonances between two generations" and "interrogat[ing] the connection between exile and Tibet."

The following article by Kalsang Yangzom focuses on another key figure of the exile Tibetan literary scene, Tenzin Tsundue (b. circa 1975). Home, individual identity, religion, and the Tibet cause feature prominently in Tsundue's poems, complementing Dhompa's works where gender features prominently and politics is much more discrete. Kalsang

Yangzom compares exile identity building to a "multicursal maze," whose several centers and several routes urge Tibetans to navigate between the aspiration to a home and its impossibility, and between the global and the indigenous. Kalsang Yangzom borrows Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory to show that poetry, itself built upon memory, can also contribute in its turn to building a memory that will be passed on to the next generation, especially in the case of uprooted exiles.

The fourth chapter, "Hybrid Cartographies: Mapping in *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes*," examines the US-settled Tibetan intellectual Jamyang Norbu's successful novel published in 1999. Establishing links between maps of Tibet presented in the novel, and a charting of Tibetan identity, Kristen Guest suggests an understanding of identity as a "provisional space in which multiple cultures, histories, and experiences intersect," reminiscent of the "multicursal maze" suggested by Kalsang Yangzom in the third chapter.

In the final article dedicated to literature, Bhoil, editor of this volume, searches (and finds) in the first English-language Tibetan novel some elements that testify to the presence of national consciousness in pre-1959 Tibet. *Idols on the Path* was written in 1966 by Tsewang Yishey Pemba (1932–2011), born in Tibet but educated in northern India and in England, where he became a successful surgeon and wrote his autobiography and his first novel.[30] Bhoil resorts to Anthony Smith's concept of "ethno-symbolic nationalism" to put forward her argument. Smith posits that some ethnic groups, which he calls "ethnies," can develop proto-nationalist views, in so far as they are equipped with a set of features.[31] By summoning references to Tibet's mighty seventh to ninth century empire, describing a functioning multi-secular Tibetan government, and establishing Buddhism as a defining feature of what it meant to be Tibetan in pre-1959 Tibet, *Idols on the Path* demonstrates, according to Bhoil, that Tibetans had developed a premodern type of nationalism before the clash with the newly established People's Republic of China.

Resistant Hybridities then shifts to musical and visual arts. In the first of its four articles, "The Institutionalization and Transmission of Tibetan Music in Exile: The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts," Anna Morcom reconsiders the role played by the official Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA), established in 1960 by the then newly created TGiE, in the emergence of a contemporary, hybrid musical scene. Contrary to the common view according to which TIPA has fossilized Tibetan musical tradition, Morcom argues that it has achieved "the maintenance of . . . the provision of some kind of shared heritage across the whole exile population" and played a crucial role in grooming artists capable of successfully adapt to the new North American diasporic context.

The following article, "Struggle to Inscribe Individuality: Tibetan Pop Singers in India and Nepal," Tatsuya Yamamoto also tackles the contemporary music-related scene in exile, but from the unexpected angle of

authorship and copyrights. Both were unknown in traditional Tibet, where music and performance were community-based and collective, and in the early days of exile, TIPA centralized and controlled exile musical creation and performance. The author shows that musicians and performers in exile today have had to defend their "individuality," a defining feature of modern Tibetan subjectivity.

Mara Matta, in the next chapter, explores the world of a nascent exile Tibetan cinema. She shows that, like their Tibetan counterparts in the PRC, India-based filmmakers have searched for a distinctive voice that hosts both individual lives and collective fate and wants to debunk stereotypes about Tibet. But Matta also points to important differences between them: Tibetan *masala* cinema's hybridized aesthetics, she writes, is influenced by Bollywood, by the production of light comedy, and above all by the possibility of engaging in "historiophoty," a concept elaborated by Haden White in 1988 to refer to "the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse."

In the last chapter in the second section of the volume, dealing with visual culture, Anurima Chanda examines refugee children's imagination through some drawings published in *The Art of Exile: Paintings by Tibetan Children in India* (1998). The drawings indicate, according to her, that young exile children develop a visual imagination of their putative homeland that is mixed with their Indian everyday surroundings. Like Kalsang Yangzom, Chanda summons the notion of postmemory to explain the presence of elements of their "imagined homeland."

The third and last part of *Resistant Hybridities* focuses on testimonial narratives. Given their wide availability in exile, one could be tempted to think that they belong to a traditional Tibetan genre. But Carole McGranahan has suggested that the first instance of a testimonial practice in Tibetan goes back only to 1957, when the India-based *Tibet Mirror*, one of the earliest and certainly the longest-living newspaper in Tibetan language, published testimonies, and drawings made by witnesses of the violent exactions exerted by the Chinese People's Liberation Army onto the Tibetan communities in Eastern Tibet.[32] The first two articles of that last part confirm that it was the Chinese invasion and the encounter with the West that nurtured testimony, or life narrative, as a new genre in the Tibetan language, as a means to both suit a new aim (political rather than religious) and target a new audience (foreign, mainly western, rather than Tibetan). Jill J. Tan, in "Circulating Pluralized Selfhood: Testimony and Witnessing in Protest Pamphlets as Emergent Narrative Genre," analyses the content of protest pamphlets published mostly under the aegis of Guchusum, an association of ex-political prisoners. Claiming that they were born out of "frustration of having orientalist mouthpieces drive the narrative of Tibet," she describes their evolution over six decades: shifting away from their initial individual-centered "straightforward portrayal of victimhood," they then privileged a collective "presen-

tation of the resilience, peaceful forbearance and nonviolent nature of a nation and of individuals." "Human Rights Practice and the Evolution of Testimony in the Tibetan Diaspora" by Julie Fletcher complements Tan's article by establishing a chronology of the evolution of text-based testimonial practice in exile. Testifying, she writes, first found its root in the refugee camps as early as 1959, shaped by the TGiE and above all by needs of the Western-led institutions in search of legible, acceptable, and meaningful materials. After TGiE-backed local NGOs took over in the 1970s, the 1980s saw a widening of the audience of such texts to the general public. Fletcher concludes insightfully that testimonial culture "has become a key form of Tibetan cultural production and rights-based political action in the diaspora."

The book's last chapter, "A Tibetan Odyssey in *Coming Home to Tibet*: A Memoir of Love, Loss, and Belonging," shifts to the literary narrative as testimony. Martin Kovan delves into *Coming Home to Tibet* (2016) by Dhompa, the leading Tibetan author who was also the focus of the second chapter of this volume, to underline her value as a "poet and ethnographer." Insisting upon her "ambivalent secular skepticism," and her acute sense of irony, Kovan argues that Dhompa's original voice accommodates both her complex, subtle and original diasporic individual subjectivity, as well as her "absence of home, truth, center, certainty and self," a pillar of exilic situation.

CONCLUSION

For Palestinian intellectuals, writes Zeina Halabi, exile and displacement have been a "catalyst for change and emancipation."[33] This is true to a certain extent for Tibetans, as the articles in this volume tend to show. But while exile Palestinians share with adjacent peoples (Iraq, Lebanon) a limited but real commonality of religion and language, Tibetans face a different situation: their language is not shared by many people, and no nation-state accepts it as an official language. Moreover, their religion, Vajrayana Buddhism, sets them apart from other Buddhist practitioners—being only shared with Mongols, Kalmyck, and Bhutanese. As Dharamshala and the tight-knit Tibetan community in India are quickly losing their centripetal power as a reference point, linguistic and cultural continuity becomes more elusive. For Tibetans, dilution is not an abstract threat. Several authors suggest in this volume that Tibetan culture (be it cinema, literature, poetry, but also food culture, as well as fashion) could help make sense and use of the *bardo* (an intermediary state between death and life) in which exiles find themselves. It is interesting to note that Tibetan artists, whose association with Buddhism in their work is rather discreet, resort to a Buddhist concept to make sense of their uneasy situation. In Tibetan Buddhism, *bardo* can designate a limbo, the transi-

tional space between two existences, between an individual's death and their next life. In the present case, *bardo* is summoned as a liminal space that enables Tibet exiles to temporarily, as Matta writes, "re-assess past and re-imagine future" or, in other words, to rationalize their anomalous and uncomfortable situation of collective homelessness. As Kalsang Yangzom writes about Tsundue, Tibetans in exile all undergo a "traumatic experience of dislocation from a locus defined as a home, which is mitigated and mediated through memory, desire, and nostalgia." But this anxiety does not grip exile Tibetans only; it is also deeply felt by Tibetans in Tibet. To what extent does China-controlled Tibet constitute a home worthy of that name? The acclaimed Amdo-based poet Ju Kalsang published a short and elegant eulogy called "One's home" in the early 2000s.[34] One's home, to summarize Ju Kalsang's short essay, is the place where one feels secure, where one is happy, and where no one notes down your words. His description of home goes on for three pages. Why should a famous Tibetan writer compose what seems at first glance a very commonplace prose piece? In 2006, the same acclaimed author had dedicated a very moving elegy to the disappearing nomadic tent, a poetic comment, and lament about the massive and sweeping resettlement programs that have brought herders' traditional dwellings to a sudden end in the 2000s.[35] One's home could also be interpreted as the pursuit of the interrogation of what constitutes a home under such circumstances. But one could push the exegesis a little further and wonder if it does not echo the cultural and linguistic dispossession acutely felt by many Tibetans nowadays in the PRC, trapped in a subaltern subjectivity on their own homeland. If Tibetans in Tibet proper long for a real home, what to say of Tibetans outside Tibet, who are twice uprooted (first from Tibet, and then from South Asia) in an increasing number? This is perhaps where literary and artistic creation (novel, poetry, testimonies, music, drawings) can play a role in building, consolidating, inventing, deconstructing and rebuilding, transmitting, and passing a sense of what it means to be a Tibetan today in exile. Whereas artistic creation in the West, especially in unproblematic nation-states, has acted since the nineteenth century as a vehicle to shake bourgeois certainties and conservative social order, it can be expected to fulfill other roles in the case of a diasporic or dispossessed people. As Matta writes in the present volume, art can help "make sense of the past and project oneself into the future" when both time and space are shaky concepts. Artists and creators in exile Tibet are facing the daunting task of having to invent new narratives that are at once globalized and Tibetan, to ensure cultural continuity in a national vacuum.

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NOTES

1. "The Tibetan Self-Image," *Pacific Affairs* 33, no. 4 (December 1960): 375.

2. Trine Brox, "Tibetan Culture as the Battlefield: How the Term 'Tibetan Culture' is Utilised as a Political Strategy," in *Buddhismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit im Buddhismus*, ed. Lambert Schmithausen (Hamburg: Universität Hamburg, 2006), 6.

3. "The Tibetan Self-image," ibid.

4. "Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the Second Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day," accessed October 5, 2019, https://www.dalailama.com/messages/tibet/10th-march-archive/1961. Emphasis added. In the Dalai Lama's speech in 1962, the word *heritage* was used in place of *culture*: "the rich spiritual and temporal heritage of our history."

5. Established on April 28, 1959, in India, after the Dalai Lama and his cabinet, traditional and historical holders of political authority in Central Tibet, fled into exile following the March 1959 anti-Chinese uprising in Lhasa.

6. Brox, "Tibetan Culture as Battlefield," 5. In fact, in a speech delivered as early as October 9, 1964, the Dalai Lama emphasized that "the survival of [Tibet's] spiritual and cultural heritage depends largely on [exile] Tibetan settlements" (*Speeches of His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama (1959–1989)*, vol. 1 (Dharamshala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2011), 44). Interestingly, in the same decade as culture was becoming a central part of the Tibet activists' discursive apparel, human rights–centered discourse was taking precedence over political discourse to defend the Tibetan cause.

7. "The Moral Economy of Cultural Identity. Tibet, Cultural Survival, and the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage," *Civilisations* 61, no. 1 (2012): 77.

8. "Interrogating Tibetan Exilic Culture: Issues and Concerns," *Sociological Bulletin* 61, no. 2 (May–August 2012): 250.

9. Ibid., 251, emphasis added. When the TGiE first organized itself into several departments to administer its freshly arrived refugee population in India, Nepal, and Bhutan in the early 1960s, a Religious Council was soon created, for there were numerous monks among the first cohorts of refugees. The Religious Council soon expanded to take charge of institutional cultural platforms like song and dance ensemble, library, archives, etcetera, so that the administration corresponding now to what is called in secularized states as Ministry of Culture was re-labeled in the TGiE as Department of Religion and Culture.

10. Trina Brox (ed.), *Tibetan Democracy: Governance, Leadership and Conflict in Exile* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016); Stéfanie Roemer, *The Tibetan Government-in-Exile: Politics at Large* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); Fiona McConnell, *Rehearsing the State: The Political Practices of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

11. Thomas Kauffmann, *The Agendas of Tibetan Refugees: Survival Strategies of a Government-In-Exile in a World of Transnational Organizations* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017).

12. Honey Oberoi Vahali, *Lives in Exile: Exploring the Inner World of Tibetan Refugees* (New Delhi, Routledge, 2009).

13. *Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997a), 2.

14. "Mystical Visions in Manhattan: Deploying Culture in the Year of Tibet," in *Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora*," ed. Frank J. Korom (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 89.

15. *Constructing Tibetan Culture. Contemporary Perspectives* (St.-Hyacinthe: World Heritage Press, 1997b).

16. *Echoes from Dharamsala: Music in the Life of a Tibetan Refugee Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

17. Bhoil and Galván-Álvarez, *Tibetan Subjectivities on the Global Stage: Negotiating Dispossession* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018).

18. Bod kyi dus bab [Tibet Times], "'Das lor bod nas rgya gar nas yong mkhan 87 'dug" [87 arrivals from Tibet in India last year], accessed October 3, 2019, http://tibettimes.net/2016/01/17/144519/; "Tibetan Migration Into India Down to a Trickle," VOA, accessed October 3, 2019, https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/tibetan-migration-india-down-trickle. The VOA news article adds that, in the month of June 2018, only two Tibetans had crossed the Himalayas to find shelter in the Dharamshala Reception Centre, which has a capacity of about 500 beds.

19. *Yartsa gumbu* is the Tibetan name of a caterpillar of the high Himalayan plateau. Once parasitized by a fungus, it turns into a *materia medica* highly sought after in Chinese medicine, and it can fetch higher price than gold. It can represent up to 70 percent of the annual income of Tibetans, accounting for a sizable portion of the increase of income that they have experienced for the last decade or so. For more on that topic, see Emilia Sulek, *Trading Caterpillar Fungus in Tibet: When Economic Boom Hits Rural Area* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

20. VOA, "Tibetan Migration."

21. India and Nepal, where most Tibetan of the 130,000-plus exiles used to live until 2000, have not signed the 1951 Geneva Refugees Convention, nor its Protocol in 1967. As a consequence, these countries do not offer the provision of an official status, nor citizen's rights, to displaced persons such as Tibetans, Burmese, or Afghans. In India, they are officially considered like long-stay foreigners, and in Nepal, they live in an administrative and legal limbo. Moving to a western country means the perspective of obtaining in the long run a foreign citizenship, making its recipient eligible to applying for a Chinese visa, as any western citizen. If secured (naturalized Tibetans often face difficulties obtaining it), it allows one to visit one's family in Tibet. This has become a pressing hope for many Tibetans arrived in South Asia in the 1990 or 2000 and whose parents are in their seventies, and whom they wish to see once before they pass away.

22. Tibet Spring is the name casually given, in reference to other "springs" (Prague Spring, Arab Spring, etc.), to the uprising that swept some areas of the greater Tibetan plateau in March-May 2008, in the wake of the Beijing Olympics. It resulted in a much tighter control of Tibetan-populated areas of the PRC.

23. Saxer, "Moral Economy."

24. The expression "ethno-preneuralism" is borrowed and adapted by Saxer from John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 27.

25. The reverse is true: during a field trip in Tibet in summer 2019, songs by Phurbu T. Namgyal, a famous US-based exile singer, and others, could be heard in Amdo as well as in Lhasa, in spite of some of them being forbidden for the nationalistic content of their songs.

26. This expression is taken from McConnell, *Rehearsing the State*, who also uses the expression "pseudo-state."

27. The expression "China dream" (Chinese: Zhongguo Meng) has been popularized by the current PRC supreme leader, Xi Jinping, since 2012. It refers to the ideal of a rejuvenated and proud Chinese nation that plays a significant role in a globalized world, based upon its own cultural and political values that it hopes to disseminate internationally. Seen as centered on and driven by Han cultural values, and shrouded in Chinese Communist Party ideology, it is not easily embraced by Tibetans.

28. Parallels can be made with Sinophone Tibetan literature in Tibet (on which see Lara Maconi, "One Nation, Two Discourses: Tibetan New-Era Literature in the Diglossic Context of 'China's Tibet': The Language Debate," in *Modern Tibetan Literature and Social Change*, ed. Lauran R. Hartley and Patricia Schiaffini-Vedani, 173–201 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), and Kamila Hladíková, *The Exotic Other and Negotiation of Tibetan Self: Representation of Tibet in Chinese and Tibetan Literature of the 1980s* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2013). But, in the case of Chinese language, the sensitive problem of the association with the colonizing power cannot be transferred to the use of English.

29. *Songs of the Wild Yak* (n.p.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).

30. Bhoil wrote the preface to his second and posthumous novel (*White Crane, Lend me Your Wings* [Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2017]), also written in English.

31. These are "a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, a shared memory of rich ethnohistory, differentiating elements of a common culture, an association with specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of population" (Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* [London: Penguin, 1991], 21).

32. *Arrested History. Tibet, the CIA and Memories of a Forgotten War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 69–73.

33. *The Unmaking of the Arab Intellectual: Prophecy, Exile and the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 20.

34. Ju Kalsang, *'Ju Skal bzang gi lhug rtsom phyogs bsgrigs* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2016), 1–4.

35. See Ju Kalsang, "The Call of the Black Tent," trans. Françoise Robin, in *Human Rights and the Arts in Global Asia: An Anthology*, ed. Theodore W. Goossen and Anindo Hazra (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 121–25, for my English translation.

Part I

Resisting Representation: The Anglophone Tibetan Literature